



Understanding Youth Out-Migration Among English-Speaking Quebecers: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This literature review examines research on youth out-migration among English-speaking Quebecers from the 1970s to the present. Drawing on more than 60 academic publications, reports, and demographic studies, it finds that out-migration contributed substantially to the decline of Quebec's English-speaking population between the 1970s and 2001. Lower migration losses and immigration have supported a partial demographic recovery in recent decades. Young adults remain overrepresented among those leaving Quebec, with employment opportunities and labour-market integration consistently influencing migration decisions. While French-language proficiency has increased, questions of language, identity, and belonging continue to shape decisions to stay or leave. Regional disparities create additional pressures, particularly outside Montreal, where employment and educational opportunities are more limited. Overall, youth out-migration reflects interconnected economic, linguistic, and regional factors. Important research gaps remain regarding long-term migration trajectories and the role of race, class, and immigration in shaping mobility.

Introduction

This literature review examines how researchers have studied inter-regional, interprovincial, and international out-migration among English-speaking youth in Quebec since the 1970s. It is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, its purpose is to identify and summarize the main themes and findings in the literature. More than 60 sources were consulted through a targeted search of the Bibliography on English-speaking Quebec and other academic databases.¹

Out-migration refers to the movement of people away from their home region or province in response to a combination of “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors may include economic insecurity, limited professional opportunities, political tensions, or feelings of exclusion. Pull factors can include stronger job prospects, higher salaries, or educational opportunities elsewhere.²

Researchers have increasingly questioned the limits of interpreting youth mobility solely through the lens of out-migration.³ Earlier studies often framed the departure of young English-speaking Quebecers as a negative and irreversible loss for communities.⁴ Recent work takes a broader view. It sees **migration as part of mobility connected to education, work, identity formation, and the transition into adult life.**⁵ Whether young people move to another province or relocate within Quebec, these moves are not necessarily definitive. Many maintain social, cultural, and emotional ties to their communities of origin, and some may return.⁶

These dynamics are closely tied to broader questions of community vitality.⁷ For ethnolinguistic minorities, community vitality is defined by the likelihood of thriving while coexisting with a majority ethnolinguistic group.⁸ Demographic factors (population size and distribution), institutional control and support (media, schools, hospitals), and social status (socioeconomics and language prestige) are core determinants of community vitality.⁹

- 1 Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN), “Bibliography on English-Speaking Quebec,” accessed August 19, 2026, <https://quescren.concordia.ca/en/search>.
- 2 Richard Y. Bourhis and Rana Sioufi, “Anglophone and Francophone Desire to Stay or Leave Quebec: A Study of Quebec-Born Undergraduates in Montreal,” in *La Charte: La loi 101 et les Québécois d'expression anglaise / The Charter: Bill 101 and English-Speaking Quebec*, ed. Lorraine O'Donnell, Patrick Donovan, and Brian Lewis (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2021), 94.
- 3 Marie-Odile Magnan, Madeleine Gauthier, and Serge Côté, *Youth Migration in Quebec: Survey Results Obtained from Anglophones 20 to 34 Years of Age*, trans. Rod Wilmot (Institut national de la recherche scientifique, 2007), 5.
- 4 Madeleine Gauthier, ed., *Pourquoi partir? La migration des jeunes d'hier à aujourd'hui*, Culture et Société (Presses de l'Université Laval-IQRC, 1997), cited in Magnan, Gauthier, and Côté, *Youth Migration in Quebec*, 5.
- 5 Magnan, Gauthier, and Côté, *Youth Migration in Quebec*; Richard L. Element, “Narratives of Home and Away: Rural Youth Migration from the Gaspé Peninsula” (master's thesis, Concordia University, 2003); Diane Gérin-Lajoie, “Identité et sentiment d'appartenance chez les jeunes anglophones de Montréal,” *Recherches sociographiques* 55, no. 3 (2014): 467–84, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1028375ar>; Bourhis and Sioufi, “Desire to Stay or Leave Quebec.”
- 6 Magnan, Gauthier, and Côté, *Youth Migration in Quebec*, 5.
- 7 Shannon Bell, *Community Vitality: What Is It and How Does It Apply to English-Speaking Quebec?*, Research Brief no. 21 (Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, March 2025), 1, https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/scpa/quescren/docs/Brief_21_ENG.pdf.
- 8 Bell, *Community Vitality*, 1.
- 9 Bell, *Community Vitality*.

Young people play an important role in this process; their presence supports the long-term stability of institutions and social networks.¹⁰

Research on youth out-migration among English-speaking Quebecers has shown both continuity and change over time. **Early studies published in the 1970s and 1980s concentrated on documenting the scale and consequences of English-speaking youth out-migration** rather than exploring individual motivations.¹¹ In the context of the debates surrounding language policy and nationalism, push factors were often inferred from the broader political environment rather than investigated through surveys or interviews with youth themselves. **In the 1990s and 2000s, researchers increasingly emphasized labour-market integration and regional inequality** as important factors shaping youth mobility.¹² More recent studies from the 2010s and 2020s continue to identify out-migration as an important issue despite the significant rise in bilingualism among younger English-speaking Quebecers.¹³ As a result, **researchers have increasingly turned their attention to questions of belonging, identity, and community vitality.**¹⁴

Three interconnected themes consistently emerge across the literature:

- 1 economic opportunity and labour-market integration;
- 2 linguistic identity and belonging; and
- 3 regional differences in community vitality.

Together, these factors provide the principal frameworks through which researchers have sought to explain youth out-migration among English-speaking Quebecers.

- 10 Celine Cooper, *Report on the First "Minority Community Vitality Through Education" Forum* (Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, 2019), 10, https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/scpa/quescren/docs/Forum2018Rpt_EN.pdf.
- 11 Gary Caldwell and Paule Obermeir, "Émigration de la jeunesse anglophone Québec 1971–1976," *Cahiers québécois de démographie* 7, no. 2 (1978): 3–24, <https://doi.org/10.7202/600763ar>; Gary Caldwell, "Itinéraire migratoire des jeunes qui ont quitté l'école secondaire au Québec en 1971," *Cahiers québécois de démographie* 12, no. 2 (1983): 281–93.
- 12 Uli Locher, *Intentions to Leave Quebec among Students in English High Schools and Colleges*, Research Notes no. 92-05 (Department of Sociology, McGill University, 1992), 27; David H. Kaplan, "Differences in Migration Determinants for Linguistic Groups in Canada," *The Professional Geographer* 47, no. 2 (1995): 115–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0033-0124.1995.115.z.x>; Magnan, Gauthier, and Côté, *Youth Migration in Quebec*; Bourhis and Sioufi, "Desire to Stay or Leave Quebec."
- 13 Martin Turcotte, *Results from the 2016 Census: English–French Bilingualism among Canadian Children and Youth, Insights on Canadian Society* (Statistics Canada), published on October 3, 2019, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00014-eng.htm>; Nadine Ciamarra, Patricia Lamarre, Lorraine O'Donnell, and Patrick Donovan, *Outmigration of Quebec's English-Speaking Youth*, Research Brief no. 7, rev. September 2023 (Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, 2023), https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/scpa/quescren/docs/Brief_7_2024_EN.pdf; Joanne Pocock, *Socio-Demographic Profile of Quebec's English-Speaking Youth Aged 15–29* (Community Health and Social Services Network, 2024), <https://chssn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2024-03-07-Youth-Profile-CHSSN-Final-min.pdf>; Bourhis and Sioufi, "Desire to Stay or Leave Quebec."
- 14 Gérin-Lajoie, "Identité et sentiment d'appartenance"; Marie-Odile Magnan, "Facteurs de rétention des Anglo-Québécois: Étude de deux générations de la région de Québec" (master's thesis, Université Laval, 2005), <https://corpus.ulaval.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/f49c06a6-a6e8-46fc-8eb2-098e7bb52809/content>; Marie-Odile Magnan, "Identité et rétention chez les anglophones de Québec: Un changement générationnel," *Recherches sociographiques* 49, no. 1 (2008): 69–86, <https://doi.org/10.7202/018194ar>; Daniel Caron, "Language Ideologies and Mobility: A Political Economy Approach to Quebec City's English-Speaking Minority" (master's thesis, University of Ottawa, 2017), https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/35822/1/Caron_Daniel_2017_thesis.pdf; Bell, *Community Vitality*; Jack Jedwab and Hugh Maynard, "Politics of Community: The Evolving Challenge of Representing English-Speaking Quebecers," in *Decline and Prospects of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec*, ed. Richard Y. Bourhis (Canadian Heritage and Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, 2012), 277–312; Patricia Lamarre, "English Education in Quebec: Issues and Challenges," in *Decline and Prospects of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec*, ed. Richard Y. Bourhis (Canadian Heritage and Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, 2012), 175–214, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/pc-ch/CH3-2-16-2013-eng.pdf.

Out-Migration by the Numbers

Out-migration was not new in the 1970s. However, the number of English-speaking Quebecers leaving the province—whether to move to another province or another country—increased sharply during that decade. **Nearly 20% of Quebec's English-mother-tongue population left the province between the late 1960s and the early 1980s**, with a high proportion of unilingual, higher-earning individuals.¹⁵ Pettinicchio argued that nationalist policies, including Bill 101 in 1977 and a first referendum on sovereignty in 1980, were major factors in the large-scale out-migration of this population.¹⁶

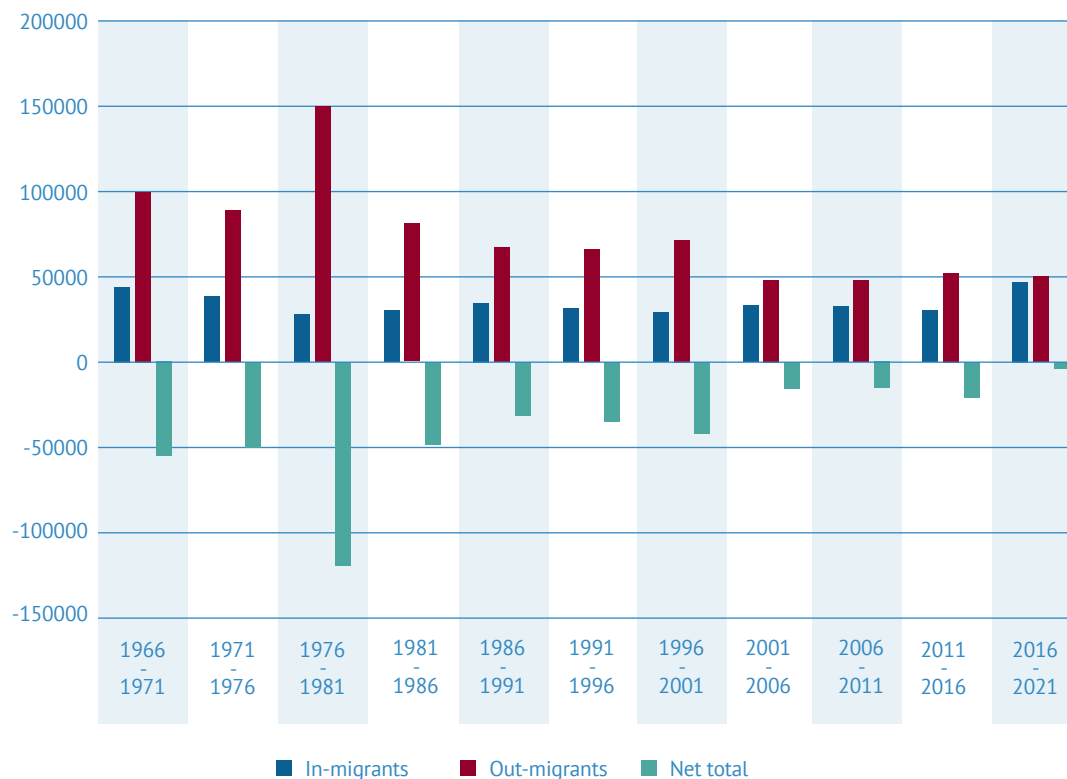
Figure 1 presents interprovincial migration among English-speaking Quebecers. While international immigration, emigration, and migration within Quebec have also shaped the demographic evolution of English-speaking communities, interprovincial migration remains the most studied form of mobility.

The largest interprovincial net losses occurred between 1976 and 1981, when approximately 149,000 English-speaking Quebecers left the province while fewer than 28,000 arrived from elsewhere in Canada.¹⁷ **Net losses remained significant in the following decades, particularly between 1986 and 1991 and between 1996 and 2001.** From 1966 to 2021, more English speakers left Quebec than arrived, but the gap became smaller after 2001.¹⁸ **By 2016–2021, in-migration (46,800) nearly matched out-migration (50,700).** Data from the 2026 Census will help determine whether this narrowing continues.

Young adults aged 20 to 29, including English speakers, are consistently overrepresented among those leaving Quebec for another province.¹⁹ As a result, debates surrounding English-speaking Quebecers' out-migration have become closely tied to concerns about youth retention.

- 15 Jac-André Boulet, *Language and Earnings in Montreal* (Economic Council of Canada and Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1980), 43.
- 16 David Pettinicchio, "Migration and Ethnic Nationalism: Anglophone Exit and the 'Decolonisation' of Québec," *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 4 (2012): 719–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00513.x>.
- 17 Gabriel St-Amant, Louis Cornelissen, and Bertrand Ouellet-Léveillé, *Interprovincial and Interregional Migration of Canada's French- and English-Speaking Populations*, Census in Brief, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 98-200-X2021017 (Statistics Canada), published on November 15, 2023, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021017/98-200-X2021017-eng.cfm>. The graph uses first-official-language-spoken data; data for 1971–1976 are by mother tongue.
- 18 St-Amant, Cornelissen, and Ouellet-Léveillé, *Interprovincial and Interregional Migration*.
- 19 Statistics Canada, "Estimates of the Components of Interprovincial Migration, by Age and Gender, Annual," table 17-10-0015-01, published on September 24, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.25318/1710001501-eng>.

Figure 1: English-speaking interprovincial in- and out-migrants in Quebec (1966-2021)



Source: Gabriel St-Amant, Louis Cornelissen, and Bertrand Ouellet-Léveillé. *Interprovincial and Interregional Migration of Canada's French- and English-Speaking Populations*. Census in Brief. Statistics Canada catalogue no. 98-200-X2021017. Published on November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021017/98-200-X2021017-eng.cfm>. Data on the first official language spoken are not available for the period from 1971 to 1976. To nevertheless give a general idea of the trends, data by mother tongue are presented for this period. However, the numbers by mother tongue are lower than what the numbers would have been by first official language spoken.

International immigration also shapes the demography of Quebec's English-speaking communities. The share of immigrants with English as their First Official Language Spoken (FOLS) represented one quarter (25.2%) of Quebec's immigrant population in 2021, down from over half (51.5%) in 1971.²⁰ It has nevertheless remained significantly higher than the share of FOLS-English in the overall population, **allowing immigration to offset outmigration in recent decades.**²¹

20 Statistics Canada, "New Historical Data Tables on Immigration and Official Languages," *The Daily*, published on January 23, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240123/dq240123c-eng.htm>.

21 Provincial Employment Roundtable, *Census 2021 Update: A Brief Review of the Latest Data on Employment among Québec's English Speakers* (Provincial Employment Roundtable, 2024), <https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/PERT-Census-2021-Update.pdf>.

Regardless of how the English-speaking population is defined, demographic trends show a substantial decline between 1971 and 2001 followed by a partial recovery. By 2001, the English-mother-tongue population had declined by roughly one quarter compared to 1971, while its share of Quebec's population fell from 13.1% to 8.3%.²² The share of the English-mother-tongue population had increased to 10.0% by 2021.²³ Using a broader First official language spoken (FOLS) measure, the share of those with English as an FOLS declined from 17.0% in 1971 to 14.1% in 2001 and increased to 16.9% in 2021.²⁴

- 22 Michel Paillé, "Migrations interprovinciales au Canada: Qu'en est-il des 'deux solitudes' de langues officielles canadiennes?," in *La Charte: La loi 101 et les Québécois d'expression anglaise / The Charter: Bill 101 and English-Speaking Quebec*, ed. Lorraine O'Donnell, Patrick Donovan, and Brian Lewis (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2021), 61–84.
- 23 Statistics Canada, *Portrait of Official-Language Minorities in Canada: Anglophones in Quebec*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 89-642-X, no. 002 (Statistics Canada), published on September 23, 2010, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-642-x/89-642-x2010002-eng.pdf>; Statistics Canada, "Interprovincial Migration by Mother Tongue and Geography for Interprovincial Migrants Aged 5 Years and over, 1971 to 2021," table 15-10-0034-01, published on November 7, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.25318/1510003401-eng>.
- 24 Statistics Canada, "First Official Language Spoken by Language Spoken Most Often at Home, Other Language(s) Spoken Regularly at Home, and Knowledge of Official Languages," table 98-10-0191-01, 2021 Census of Population, published on August 17, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810019101-eng>; Statistics Canada, "First Official Language Spoken (7), Age Groups (15) and Sex (3) for the Population, for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2001 Census of Population—20% Sample Data," catalogue no. 97F0007XCB2001049, published on March 13, 2003, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/datasets/index-eng.cfm?Temporal=2001>.

Key Factors Influencing Youth Out-Migration

Economic Opportunity and Labour-Market Integration

Research on youth out-migration among English-speaking Quebecers shows that **job opportunities are a key factor influencing migration decisions**. An early 1970s longitudinal study by Caldwell and Obermeir suggested that many viewed migration as necessary to secure better professional opportunities outside the province.²⁵

By the 1990s and 2000s, labour-market integration became increasingly central in the literature. Studies by Locher²⁶ and by Magnan, Gauthier, and Côté²⁷ found that English-speaking youth often cited employment prospects and improved future opportunities as key reasons for leaving Quebec. Stevenson's study of graduates of an English-language secondary school found that many left Quebec to pursue professional opportunities outside the province.²⁸

Recent literature continues to emphasize the importance of employment opportunities while also highlighting growing socio-economic inequalities affecting English-speaking Quebecers. A QUESCEN research brief notes that **unemployment rates among English speakers aged 15 to 29 remained higher than among French speakers in 2016**.²⁹ A related but distinct finding from Pocock found that **young English speakers were more likely than the provincial average to live on a low income**.³⁰

More recent data also report **ongoing income disparities between English speakers and Francophones**.³¹ Even though many English-speaking Quebecers are working or actively looking for work, and the population is relatively young, they continue to face significant labour-market inequalities. These include higher unemployment rates and lower median incomes than francophones across most regions of the province.³² These disparities are particularly pronounced among youth and other vulnerable groups.³³

25 Caldwell and Obermeir, "Émigration de la jeunesse anglophone," 23.

26 Locher, *Intentions to Leave Quebec*, 4.

27 Magnan, Gauthier, and Côté, *Youth Migration in Quebec*.

28 Matthew Stevenson, "Canada's Other Brain Drain: The Continuing Exodus from Quebec," *Policy Options* 21, no. 8 (2000): 63.

29 Ciamarra et al., *Outmigration of Quebec's English-Speaking Youth*.

30 Pocock, *Socio-Demographic Profile*.

31 Pocock, *Socio-Demographic Profile*; Patrick Donovan and Shannon Bell, *Income Disparities between Quebec's English Speakers and Francophones over Time*, Research Brief no. 14 (Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, August 2024), https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/arts/scpa/quescren/docs/Brief_14_ENG.pdf.

32 Sta Kuzviwanza, *Employment Profile of English Speakers in the Province of Quebec* (Provincial Employment Roundtable, 2025), <https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Employment-Profile-of-English-Speakers-in-the-Province-of-Quebec.pdf>.

33 Kuzviwanza, *Employment Profile*.

Such economic pressures likely contribute to a **perception among many young English speakers that long-term professional advancement may be easier outside Quebec.**

Researchers also argued that bilingualism does not always lead to equal access to jobs in Quebec. In 2017, Caron described a labour market in which bilingualism among Francophones is often more valued than among English speakers, leaving the latter feeling excluded.³⁴ Other studies suggest that many **bilingual English speakers still feel unwelcome in francophone workplaces**, even when their French is strong.³⁵ A 2021 survey reached the same conclusions: many bilingual English speakers report linguistic discrimination.³⁶ This is particularly clear with regard to access to promotions and public-sector jobs, where English-speaking Quebecers are underrepresented.³⁷

The literature frequently describes out-migration for economic motives as a form of “brain drain.”³⁸ Studies show that **people with higher levels of education are more likely to leave Quebec** to pursue stronger labour markets and higher salaries elsewhere in Canada or the United States.³⁹ The Advisory Board on English Education later summarized this pattern with the expression “upward mobility becomes outward mobility.”⁴⁰

34 Caron, “Language Ideologies and Mobility.”

35 Richard Y. Bourhis, “Social Psychological Aspects of French-English Relations in Quebec: From Vitality to Linguicism,” in *Decline and Prospects of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec*, ed. Richard Y. Bourhis (Canadian Heritage and Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, 2012), 325.

36 Morgan Gagnon, *The French Factor: How Language Shapes Employment in Quebec* (Provincial Employment Roundtable, 2025), 6, <https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/The-French-Factor-How-language-shapes-employment-in-Quebec.pdf>.

37 Richard Y. Bourhis, *Inclusion of English-Speaking Quebecers in the Equal Access Employment Program*, QUESCREEN Working Paper no. 12 (Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, January 2025), https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/scpa/quescreen/docs/Working_Paper_12_Bourhis_EN.pdf; Jedwab and Maynard, “Politics of Community.”

38 Lamarre, “English Education in Quebec,” 184; Stevenson, “Canada’s Other Brain Drain,” 63.

39 Paul Holley, *Push-Pull Factors Related to Student Retention and Integration in Quebec* (Association for Canadian Studies and Canadian Institute for Identities and Migration, 2017).

40 Advisory Board on English Education, *Plus ça change, plus c’est pareil: Revisiting the 1992 Task Force Report on English Education in Quebec* (Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2018), 24.

Linguistic Identity and Belonging

Early studies often treated language as a central factor in the “Anglophone exodus.” In this literature, language laws were linked to political uncertainty, declining confidence in the future of the English-speaking community, and concerns about access to education and jobs.⁴¹

Later research showed that the role of language changed over time as French language proficiency increased among English-speaking Quebecers, especially younger cohorts.⁴² Since bilingualism is both a practical skill and a means of participating more fully in Quebec society, it is often presented as a retention factor.⁴³

However, more recent research suggests that language cannot be understood solely through an economic lens. For many, **it is also tied to questions of identity and belonging.**⁴⁴ Some bilingual young English-speaking Quebecers report experiencing discrimination from the francophone majority despite their French-language proficiency, causing some to consider leaving.⁴⁵

41 Caldwell, “Itinéraire migratoire,” 281–93; Caldwell and Obermeir, “Émigration de la jeunesse anglophone”; Locher, *Intentions to Leave Quebec*, 27.

42 Turcotte, *Results from the 2016 Census: English–French Bilingualism among Canadian Children and Youth*, published on October 3, 2019, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00014-eng.htm>; Bourhis and Sioufi, “Desire to Stay or Leave Quebec”; Advisory Board on English Education, *Plus ça change*; Advisory Board on English Education, *Keeping the Door Open for Young English-Speaking Adults in Quebec: Language Learning in English Schools and Centres* (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2016), https://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/autres/organismes/CELA_memoire_Ouvrir_voie_adultesanglo_Quebec_EN.pdf; Lamarre, “English Education in Quebec.”

43 Constance Crossland and Douglas Brown, *Factors in the Regional Retention of Graduates from Health and Social Services Programs: Results of the 2019 and 2020 Surveys of Health and Social Services Career Program Students at English Colleges in Quebec* (John Abbott College, April 27, 2021), 12, <https://departments.johnabbott.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Retention-Survey-Final-Report-April-27-2021.pdf>.

44 Gérin-Lajoie, “Identité et sentiment d’appartenance.”

45 Jean-Philippe Gauvin and Antoine Bilodeau, “Une crédibilité variable: L’influence de l’accent et de la couleur de la peau dans l’évaluation des experts scientifiques au Québec et en Ontario,” *Recherches sociographiques* 66, no. 1 (2025): 119–43, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1117186ar>; Rana Sioufi and Richard Y. Bourhis, “Acculturation and Linguistic Tensions as Predictors of Quebec Francophone and Anglophone Desire for Internal Migration in Canada,” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 37, no. 2 (2018): 136–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X17714571>; Bourhis and Sioufi, “Desire to Stay or Leave Quebec”; Caron, “Language Ideologies and Mobility”; Gagnon, *The French Factor*.

Regionality and Community Vitality

Research on youth out-migration among English-speaking Quebecers increasingly emphasizes the importance of **regional differences across the province**. Early studies of English-speaking Quebecers' out-migration in the 1970s and 1980s focused largely on province-wide demographic decline.⁴⁶ But the effects of out-migration varied significantly between Montreal and the rest of the province. **While the population of English speakers in Montreal has remained stable since the early 2000s, the population has declined in several once-thriving communities across the province.**⁴⁷ This disparity is partly due to Montreal's outmigration being offset by international immigration, as well as by arrivals from other provinces and from other parts of Quebec.⁴⁸

Simply put, **there are more push factors in Quebec's regions than in its cities**. By the 1990s and early 2000s, studies found that many young English speakers left rural regions because of **limited job opportunities, lower salaries, and restricted access to postsecondary education.**⁴⁹ A 2014 survey revealed that students from English-speaking communities outside Montreal were substantially more likely to envision leaving Quebec for employment, with 27% intending to work in another province compared to only 10% of students from the Montreal region.⁵⁰

This pattern became notably visible in the Gaspé region. Element's work described how migration among English-speaking youth of this area became normalized as part of local culture, with many young people viewing departure to Montreal, Ontario, or other provinces as necessary to "make something" of themselves.⁵¹ Out-migration is interpreted not only as a linguistic or political issue, but also as a structural consequence of economic decline across Quebec's rural communities.

46 Caldwell and Obermeir, "Émigration de la jeunesse anglophone."

47 Shannon Bell and Patrick Donovan, *Demographic Decline of English Speakers in Certain Regions of Quebec*, Research Brief no. 12 (Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, June 2024), <https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/scpa/quescren/docs/Brief12ENG.pdf>.

48 Lamarre, "English Education in Quebec," 184.

49 Advisory Board on English Education, *Plus ça change*; Element, "Narratives of Home and Away"; Ciamarra et al., *Outmigration of Quebec's English-Speaking Youth*, 2.

50 Réal Allard and Rodrigue Landry, *Graduating from an English High School in Quebec: Postsecondary Education Aspirations and Career Plans* (Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, 2014), https://icrml.ca/images/stories/documents/en/english_high_school_qc.pdf.

51 Element, "Narratives of Home and Away."

In the 2000s, researchers also began paying greater attention to the **impact of demographic decline on the vitality of English-speaking institutions outside Montreal**. Studies by Jedwab, Maynard, and Lamarre emphasized how regional English-speaking communities faced growing difficulties maintaining schools and local services as younger and more educated residents left the province or relocated to urban centres.⁵² Lamarre notably argued that **English-language schools often functioned as the last major public institution serving English-speaking communities outside Montreal**.⁵³ However, declining enrolment, funding pressures, and difficulties retaining teachers contributed to school closures and institutional weakening in several regions, further accelerating demographic decline.⁵⁴

Crossland and Brown recently showed that although many young English-speaking Quebecers express openness to living outside Montreal, concerns about salaries, career advancement, and access to English-language jobs remain major barriers to their relocation.⁵⁵

52 Jedwab and Maynard, "Politics of Community"; Lamarre, "English Education in Quebec."

53 Lamarre, "English Education in Quebec," 185.

54 Lamarre, "English Education in Quebec," 185.

55 Crossland and Brown, *Regional Retention of Graduates*.

Methodological Approaches and Gaps

The literature on youth out-migration among English-speaking Quebecers relies on various methodologies. Quantitative demographic studies based on census and migration data identify long-term structural patterns, including the persistent out-migration of young English-speaking Quebecers and regional demographic decline.⁵⁶ These studies are useful for measuring the scale and continuity of migration trends but provide limited insight into personal motivations and experiences.

Surveys of migration intentions are also common in the literature. Studies by Locher; Bourhis and Sioufi; Holley; and Magnan, Gauthier and Côté examine whether young English speakers intend to remain in Quebec and what factors shape these decisions.⁵⁷ These surveys highlight the **importance of job opportunities, language, belonging, and quality of life**. However, intention-based studies cannot determine whether respondents ultimately leave Quebec or remain in the province over the long term.

Longitudinal studies are less common but provide some of the strongest evidence on actual migration outcomes. Caldwell's follow-up research on graduates of English-language secondary schools in the 1970s remains particularly important because it tracks whether respondents ultimately left Quebec after graduation.⁵⁸

Qualitative and case-study research by Magnan, Gérin-Lajoie, Element, and Caron provide a more detailed understanding of identity, belonging, bilingualism, and differences outside Montreal.⁵⁹ These approaches help explain how young English speakers interpret their relationship to Quebec society and why migration decisions vary across communities and regions.

The literature differs in the forms of mobility it examines. Most quantitative studies focus on interprovincial migration, reflecting both its historical importance and the availability of census data.⁶⁰ However, many studies are less concerned with the specific destination of migrants than with the consequences of their migration for the vitality of English-speaking communities. This is especially true in rural communities, where both interregional mobility and interprovincial outmigration affect vitality. International outmigration remains comparatively understudied.

56 Ciamarra et al., *Outmigration of Quebec's English-Speaking Youth*; Kaplan, "Differences in Migration Determinants"; St-Amant, Cornelissen, and Ouellet-Léveillé, *Interprovincial and Interregional Migration*; Statistics Canada, "Estimates of the Components of Interprovincial Migration."

57 Locher, *Intentions to Leave Quebec*, 27; Bourhis and Sioufi, "Desire to Stay or Leave Quebec"; Holley, *Push-Pull Factors*; Magnan, "Facteurs de rétention"; Gauthier, *Pourquoi partir?*

58 Caldwell, "Itinéraire migratoire."

59 Magnan, "Facteurs de rétention"; Gérin-Lajoie, "Identité et sentiment d'appartenance"; Element, "Narratives of Home and Away"; Caron, "Language Ideologies and Mobility."

60 St-Amant, Cornelissen, and Ouellet-Léveillé, *Interprovincial and Interregional Migration*, published on November 15, 2023, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021017/98-200-X2021017-eng.cfm>; Statistics Canada, "Estimates of the Components of Interprovincial Migration"; Paillé, "Migrations interprovinciales au Canada"; Richard Y. Bourhis, "Evaluating the Impact of Bill 101 on the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec," *Language Problems and Language Planning* 43, no. 2 (2019): 198–229, <https://doi.org/10.1075/lplp.00042.bou>.

Several important gaps remain in the literature. First, there is a **lack of long-term follow-up studies connecting migration intentions to actual life trajectories**. Much of the research focuses on whether young English-speaking Quebecers plan to leave Quebec rather than whether they eventually do so, return later, or remain permanently elsewhere. Second, relatively **little work examines English speakers educated primarily in French-language institutions**, despite growing bilingualism among younger generations. Third, **intersectional approaches remain limited, particularly regarding race, immigration status, and class** within the English-speaking population. Finally, much of the literature remains heavily centred on Montreal and Quebec City, leaving many regional English-speaking communities comparatively understudied.

Conclusion

The literature suggests that youth out-migration among English-speaking Quebecers is shaped by the interaction of three interconnected factors: economic push and pull factors, language identity and belonging, and regional community vitality.

While early research focused on demographic decline in a politically charged context, later studies increasingly emphasized **labour-market integration, regional inequality, and questions of identity and belonging**. Together, these factors suggest that youth mobility is not simply a response to a single cause but the **result of multiple overlapping dynamics**.

Important gaps remain, particularly regarding longitudinal migration trajectories, regional experiences beyond major urban centres, and the ways in which factors such as race, class, and immigration status shape mobility.

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