



Portrait of the English-Speaking population of

Saint-Léonard





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Québec 

REISA

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Contents

Introduction	4
Overview of the region	5
Understanding Montréal's boroughs and CIUSSS regions	5
English speakers in Montréal	6
First official language spoken	8
Origins of the immigrant population	9
Education	10
Employment	11
Unemployment	13
Income	14
Low-income measure (after tax)	15
Access to services and community inclusion	16
Conclusion	17
References	19
Resource guide	19

Introduction

The following profile provides insight into employment, economic development, and community vitality within Saint-Léonard's English-speaking community. REISA – The East Island Network for English Services, has produced the following portrait. REISA is a community-based organization working to increase access to health and social services in English for residents of Montreal's East and North end, through collaboration with public, private and community stakeholders. Established in 2005, REISA has assisted partnership development in three main areas: expansion of local-level services, outreach to new services and community capacitybuilding. Keeping the English-speaking communities' needs in mind, REISA has identified four priority development sectors: Youth, Seniors, Special needs and Mental Health. By working



Parc Guiseppe-Garibaldi. <https://strollerparking.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/DSC00343-870x580.jpg>



Visite de caverne Saint-Léonard. Spéléo-Québec. https://elguzyz.stripocdn.email/content/guids/CABINET_2edc2dcbb-b1434571007e64bc6a02bcdef1c6d587f8f74f935e093d6acfb93e7/images/parcours_decouverte.jpg

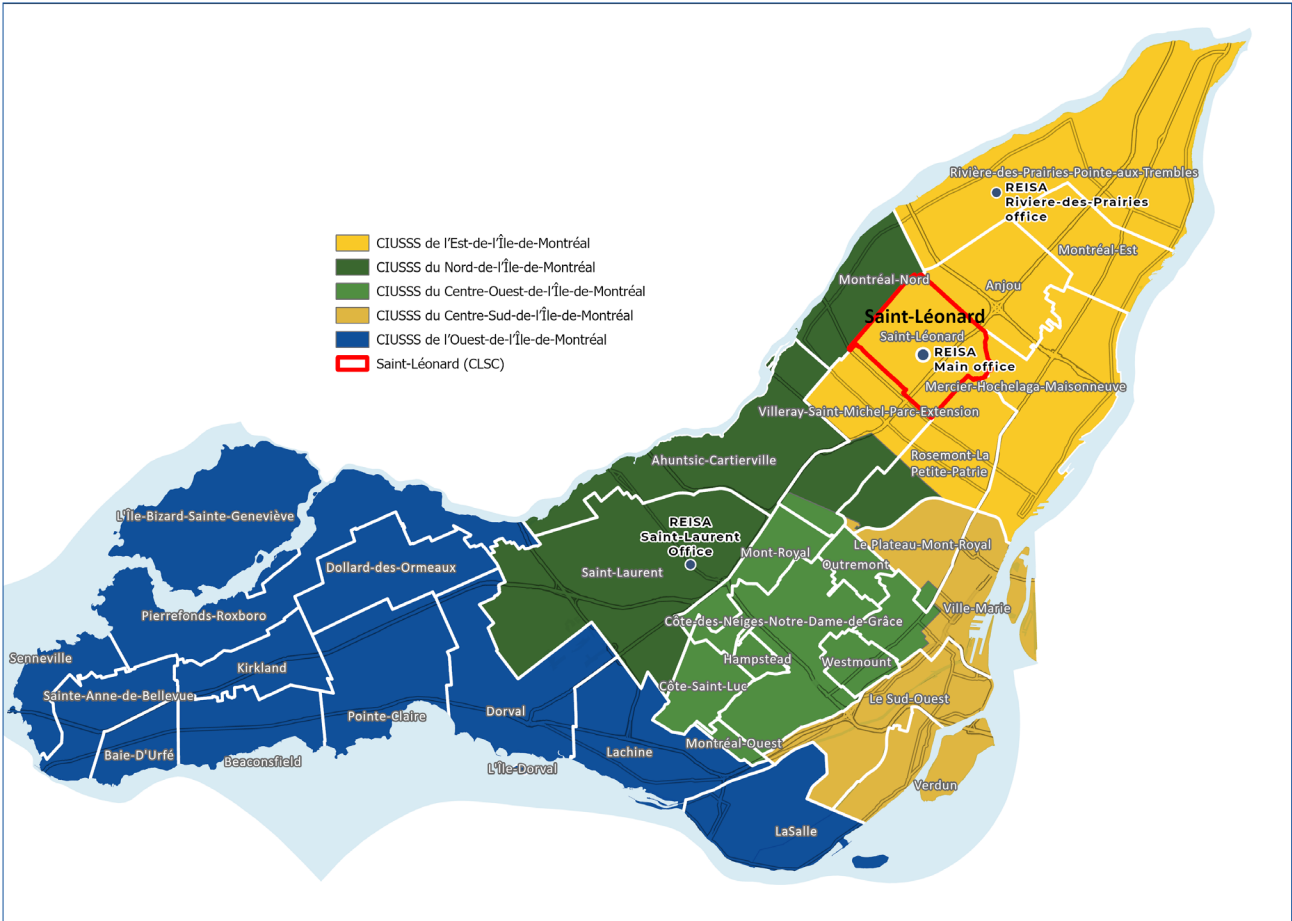
towards achieving these priorities, REISA will strengthen and improve the vitality of the English-speaking minority community in the East and North ends of Montreal.

Overview of the region

This portrait presents key statistics that contextualize the English-speaking population of the borough of Saint-Léonard, whose territory is equivalent to the CLSC Saint-Léonard. Where relevant, comparisons are made with the French-speaking population, as well as within different segments of the English-speaking community. The data is derived from the latest 2021 Statistics Canada results.

Understanding Montréal's boroughs and CIUSSS regions

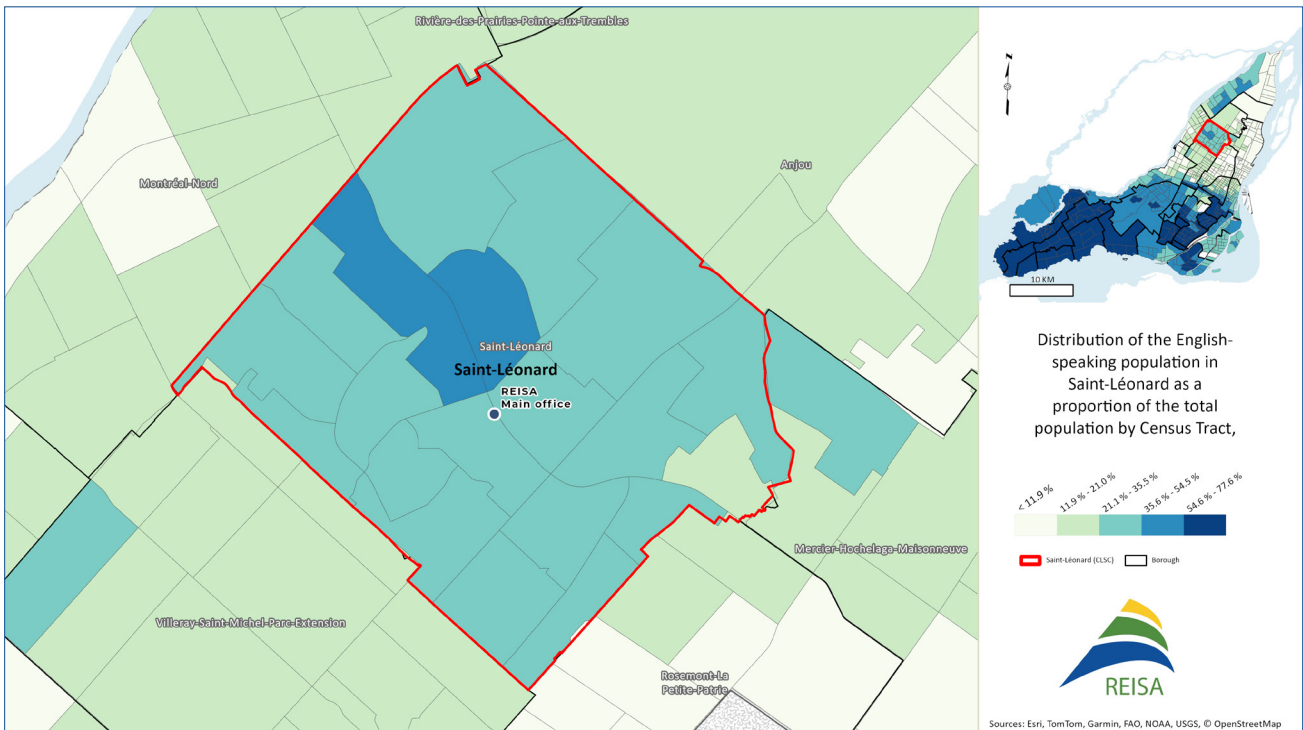
The population of the borough of Saint-Léonard is served by the East CIUSSS (Integrated University Health and Social Services Centre). The total Saint-Léonard population of 78,725 is spread over an area of 13.9 square kilometers.

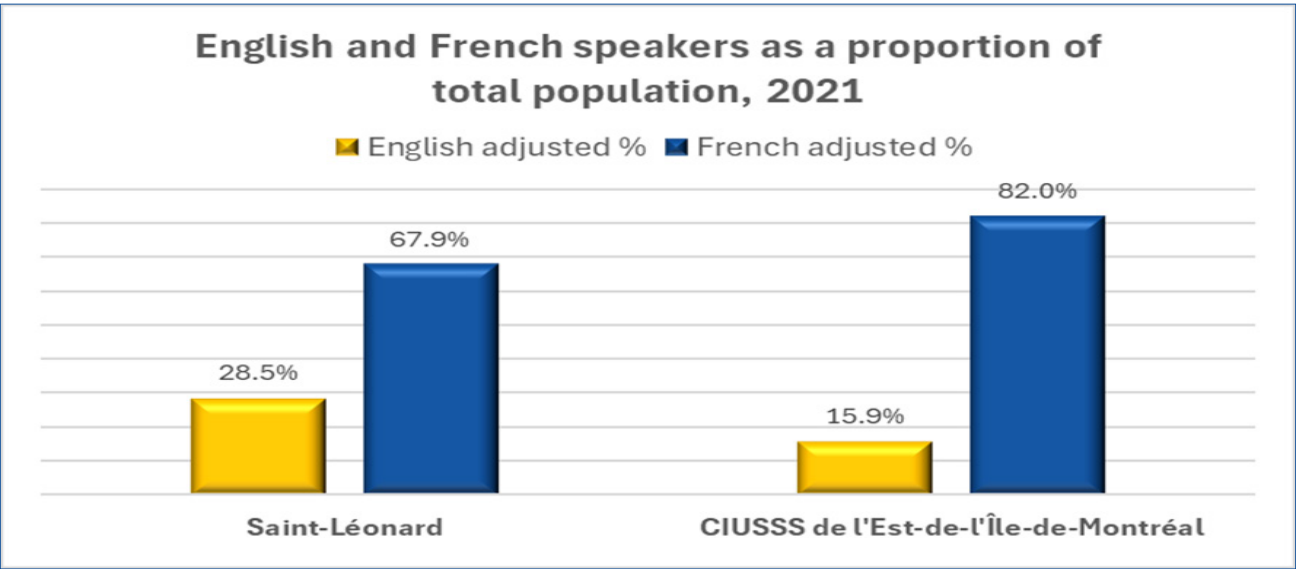


English speakers in Montréal

There are approximately one million (**1,009,700**) individuals living in metropolitan Montréal whose first official language spoken (FOLS) is English. Montréal's English-speaking communities comprise **23.8%** of the population of metro Montréal. However, these communities vary widely in size and weight across boroughs. The **22,035** English speakers in Saint-Léonard represent **28.5%** of the total population and are distributed across **20** small neighbourhoods (census tracts). The proportion of English speakers in these small neighbourhoods varies considerably from **20.5%** to **48.5%** of the total population. There is also a notable variation of **2.1%** to **4.9%** of the total population speaking neither English nor French.

The variation in the proportion of the population and its geographic distribution across small neighbourhoods is an important factor to consider when evaluating gaps in service demand, service delivery and the optimization of the active service offer to the English-speaking population. The variation in proportions also has an important social impact on social support networks and social connectivity. All three factors: the English speaker's population numbers, their weight or proportion in the total population and the variation in geographic distribution need to be considered when designing policies and programs.

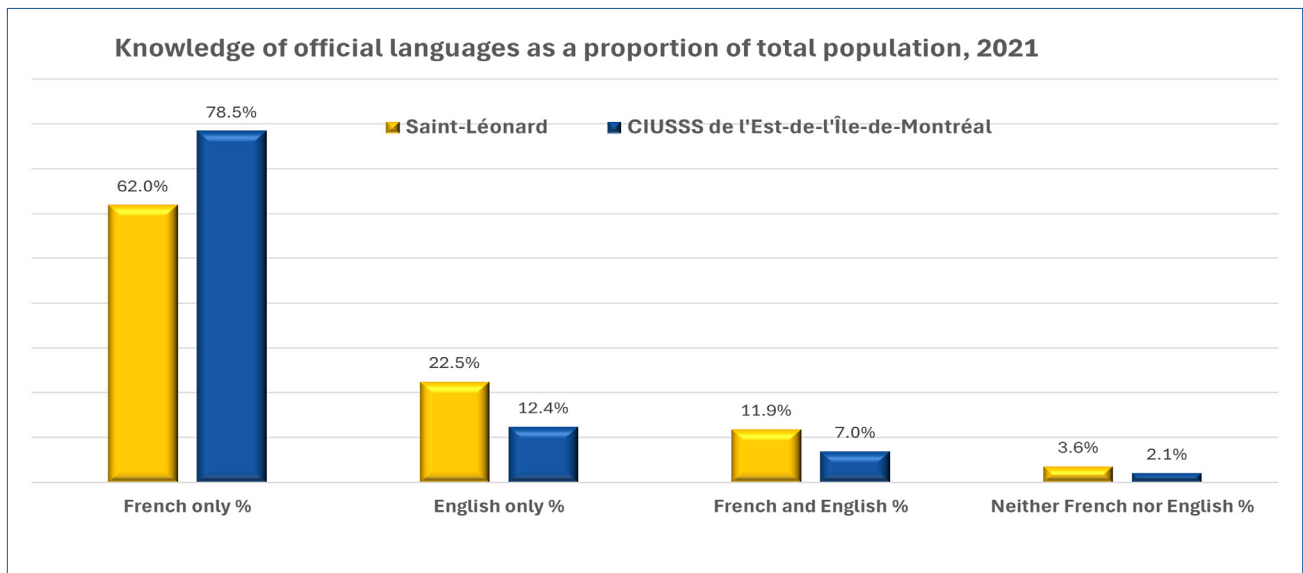




In 2021, the linguistic profile of Saint-Léonard shows a predominance of French speakers, with **67.9%** of the population reporting knowledge of French, compared to **20.5%** for English. When compared to the broader territory of the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, Saint-Léonard presents a higher proportion of English speakers (**20.5% vs. 15.9%**) and a lower proportion of French speakers (**67.8% vs. 82.0%**).

This indicates that while French remains the dominant language in Saint-Léonard, the borough has a relatively more significant English-speaking presence than the overall CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal territory. This linguistic diversity may reflect the borough's multicultural composition and suggests a continued need for accessible services in both official languages.

First official language spoken



The distribution of knowledge of official languages in Saint-Léonard highlights a predominantly French-speaking population, with **62.0%** of residents reporting knowledge of French only. This proportion is notably lower than that of the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (**78.5%**).

At the same time, a significantly higher proportion of residents in Saint-Léonard (**22.5%**) report knowledge of English only, compared to **12.4%** in the broader CIUSSS territory. Additionally, **11.9%** of the population is bilingual in both French and English, which is higher than the **7.0%** observed in the CIUSSS.

A small proportion of residents (**3.6%**) report speaking neither official language, slightly above the **2.1%** recorded in the broader territory.

Overall, these figures point to a more linguistically diverse profile in Saint-Léonard, with a stronger presence of English speakers and bilingual individuals. This reflects the borough's multicultural composition and suggests the need to ensure services are accessible to populations with varied language profiles.

While quantitative data highlights a linguistically diverse population with a strong presence of English speakers and bilingual individuals, qualitative findings suggest that this diversity is not always reflected in service accessibility.

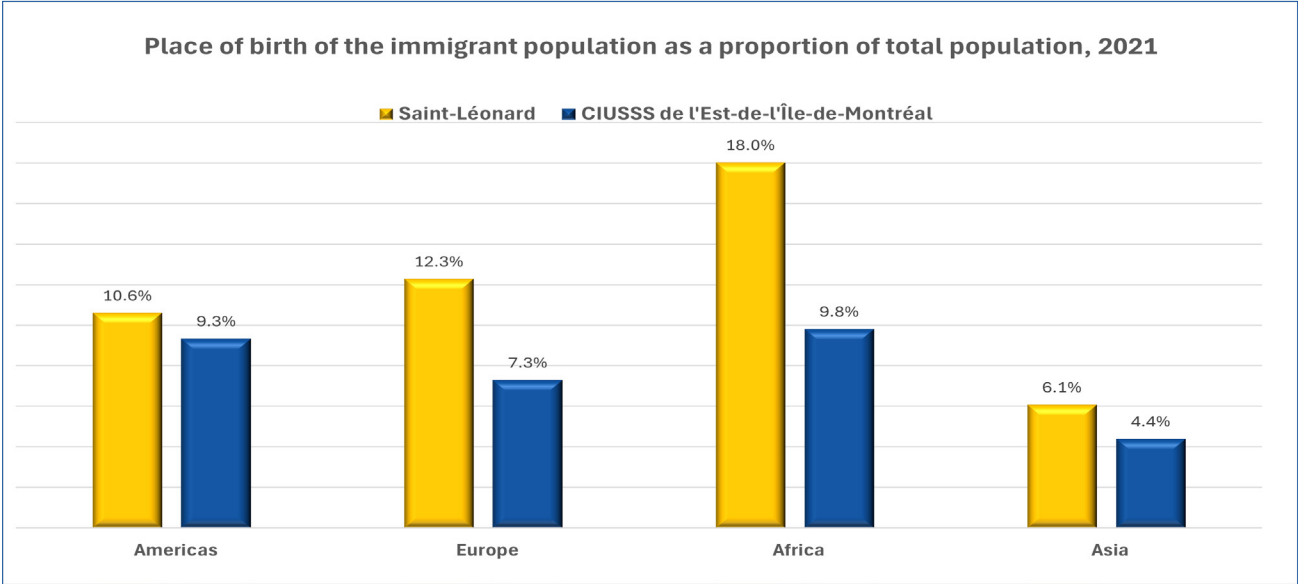
Many participants reported that, despite living in a multilingual environment, services are predominantly offered in French, and access in English often depends on individual effort or specific circumstances.

“All services are offered in French”

“I can only get help if I speak French.”

This indicates a disconnect between the borough’s linguistic composition and the practical availability of services in English, suggesting that linguistic diversity does not necessarily translate into equitable access.

Origins of the immigrant population



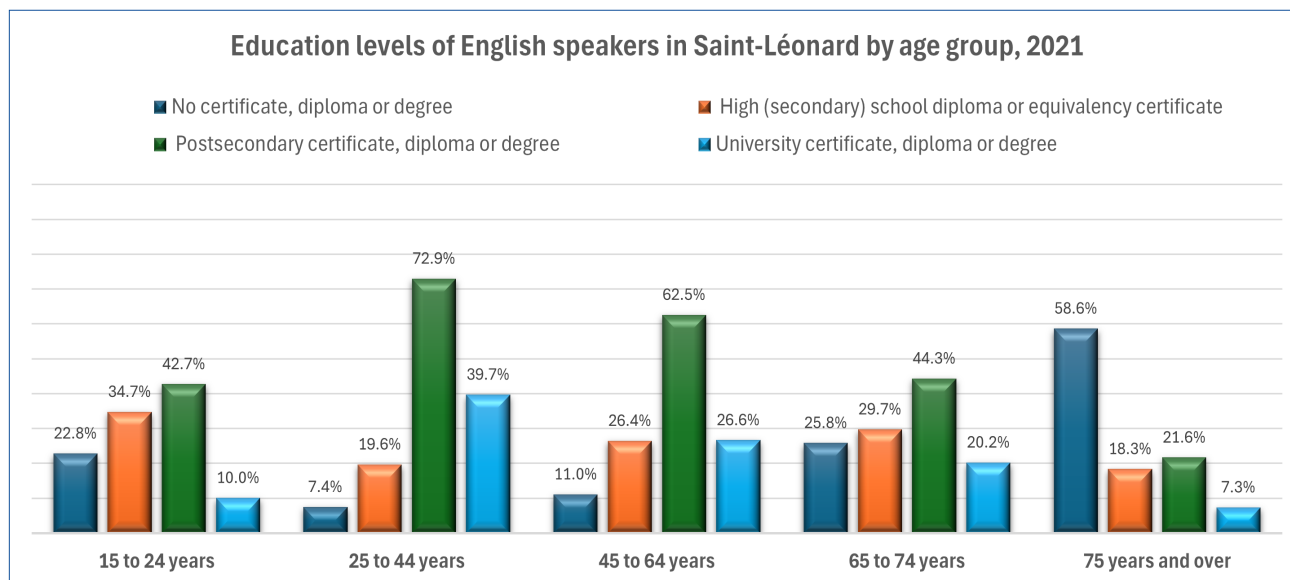
The place of birth of the immigrant population in Saint-Léonard reveals a distinct composition compared to the broader territory of the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal. A higher proportion of immigrants originate from Africa (**18.0%**), significantly exceeding the **9.8%** observed in the CIUSSS.

Immigrants from Europe (**12.3%**) and the Americas (**10.6%**) are also more represented in Saint-Léonard compared to the broader territory (**7.3%** and **9.3%**, respectively). Similarly, the proportion of immigrants from Asia (6.1%) is higher than in the CIUSSS (**4.4%**).

Overall, these figures point to a highly diverse immigrant population in Saint-Léonard, with particularly strong representation from Africa. This distribution reflects the borough’s multicultural character and suggests the importance of adapting outreach and service delivery approaches to a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Education

“ I was expected to learn French in just a couple of weeks”



Education levels among English speakers in Saint-Léonard vary significantly across age groups, reflecting generational differences in educational attainment. Among individuals aged **25 to 44**, a large majority (**72.9%**) have completed postsecondary education, with **39.7%** holding a university degree, indicating strong educational attainment within this group.

Similarly, those aged **45 to 64** also show relatively high levels of education, with **62.5%** holding postsecondary credentials and **26.6%** having a university degree.

In contrast, older age groups display lower levels of formal education. Among individuals aged **75 years and over**, a majority (**58.6%**) report having no certificate, diploma, or degree, while only **7.3%** hold a university credential. Those aged **65 to 74** present a more balanced distribution, though still with lower university attainment compared to younger cohorts.

The **15 to 24** age group shows a transitional profile, with higher proportions holding a high school diploma (**34.7%**) or pursuing further education.

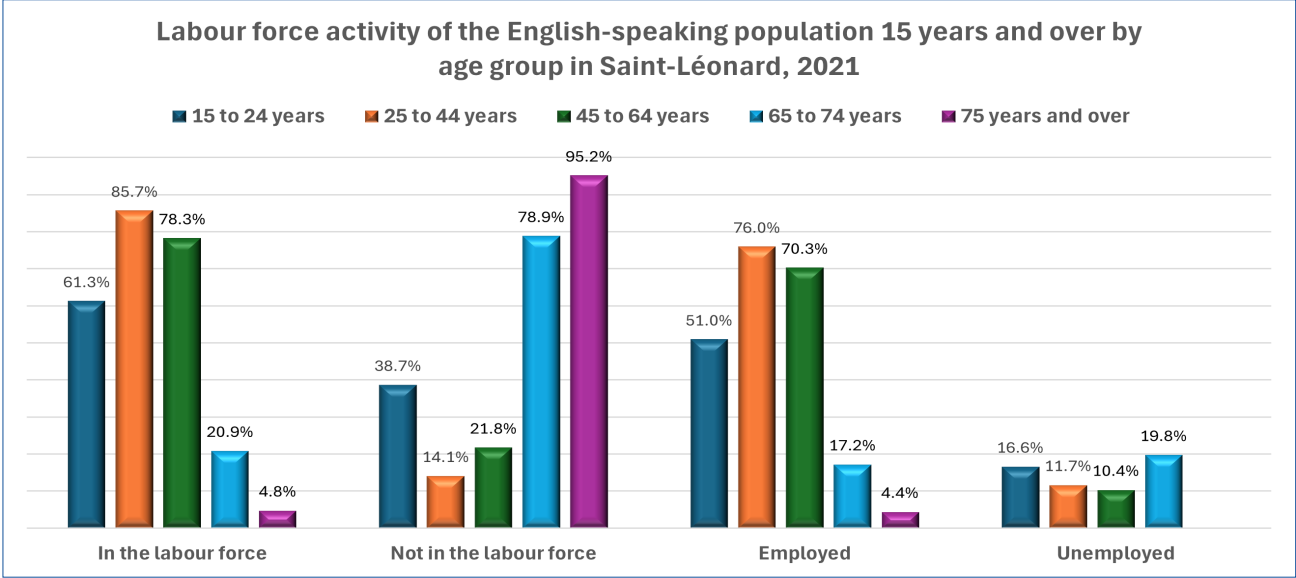
Overall, these patterns highlight a clear generational shift toward higher educational attainment among English speakers in Saint-Léonard, while also pointing to the need for approaches that address the distinct realities of both younger and older populations.

While educational attainment among English speakers shows strong progress across younger generations, qualitative findings reveal structural challenges related to access to English-language education. In particular, access is often contingent on eligibility criteria, such as holding a certificate of eligibility, which can limit options for some families.

Additionally, some participants expressed concerns about the broader English education system, including perceptions of reduced funding and declining access to English schools.

These concerns suggest that, beyond educational attainment, issues related to equity, accessibility, and long-term sustainability of English education remain significant for residents.

Employment

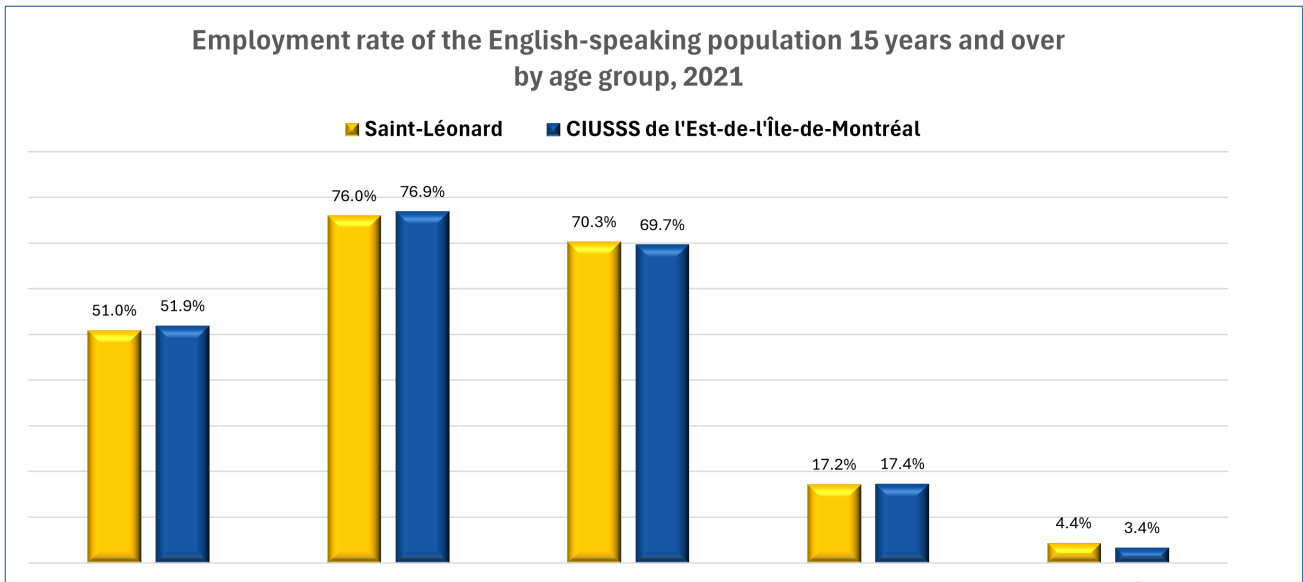


Labour force activity among English-speaking individuals in Saint-Léonard varies across age groups, with the highest participation observed among those in their prime working years. Individuals aged **25 to 44 (85.7%)** and **45 to 64 (78.3%)** show strong participation in the labour force, reflecting high engagement during peak employment years.

Younger individuals aged **15 to 24** also demonstrate notable participation (**61.3%**), likely balancing work and education. In contrast, participation declines significantly among older adults, with only **20.9%** of those aged **65 to 74** remaining in the labour force and very limited participation among those aged **75 and over (4.8%)**.

Employment rates follow a similar pattern, with the highest levels among individuals aged **25 to 44 (76.0%)** and **45 to 64 (70.3%)**. Meanwhile, unemployment rates are more pronounced among younger individuals (**16.6%**) and those aged **65 to 74 (19.8%)**, suggesting potential challenges related to labour market entry and re-entry.

Overall, these trends reflect a typical life-cycle pattern of labour market participation, while also indicating the need for targeted support for younger individuals transitioning into employment and older adults facing barriers to continued workforce engagement.



Employment rates among the English-speaking population in Saint-Léonard are generally comparable to those observed across the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, with slight variations across age groups. Among individuals aged **25 to 44**, the employment rate reaches **76.0%**, closely aligning with the **76.9%** observed in the broader territory.

Similarly, those aged **45 to 64** show slightly higher employment levels in Saint-Léonard (**70.3%**) compared to the CIUSSS (**69.7%**), indicating strong labour market participation among mid-career individuals.

Younger individuals aged **15 to 24** also present comparable employment rates (**51.0%**) to the broader territory (**51.9%**), suggesting similar patterns of labour market entry. Among older adults aged **65 to 74**, employment remains limited (**17.2%**), while it is minimal among those aged **75 and over** (**4.4%**).

Overall, these figures suggest that English-speaking residents in Saint-Léonard experience labour market outcomes that are broadly aligned with regional trends, particularly among working-age populations.

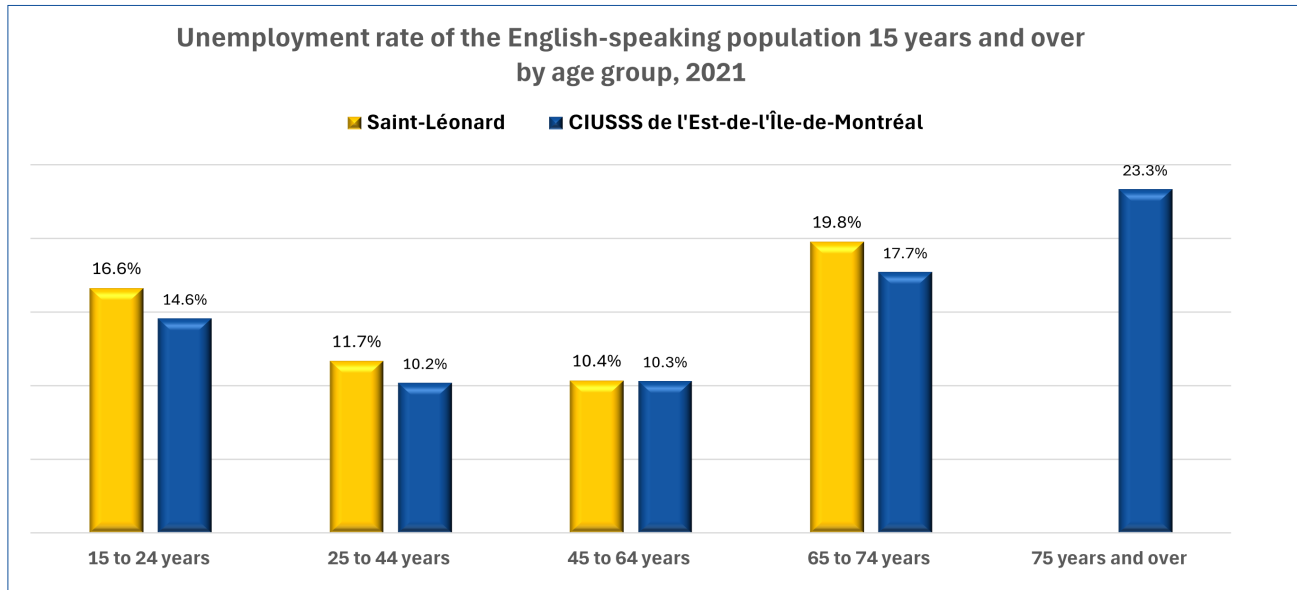
Although employment rates among English-speaking residents are broadly aligned with regional trends, qualitative data highlights significant barriers related to language requirements in the labour market. Many youths reported that strong French proficiency is often a prerequisite for employment, effectively limiting access to job opportunities for those more comfortable in English.

Some participants described losing opportunities due to language constraints, with one noting that they

“didn’t get a position because another candidate spoke French stronger.”

Beyond practical barriers, these experiences also contribute to a broader perception of inequality, with some individuals expressing feelings of exclusion or disadvantage within the job market. This suggests that while employment outcomes may appear stable, access to opportunities is not experienced equally across linguistic groups.

Unemployment

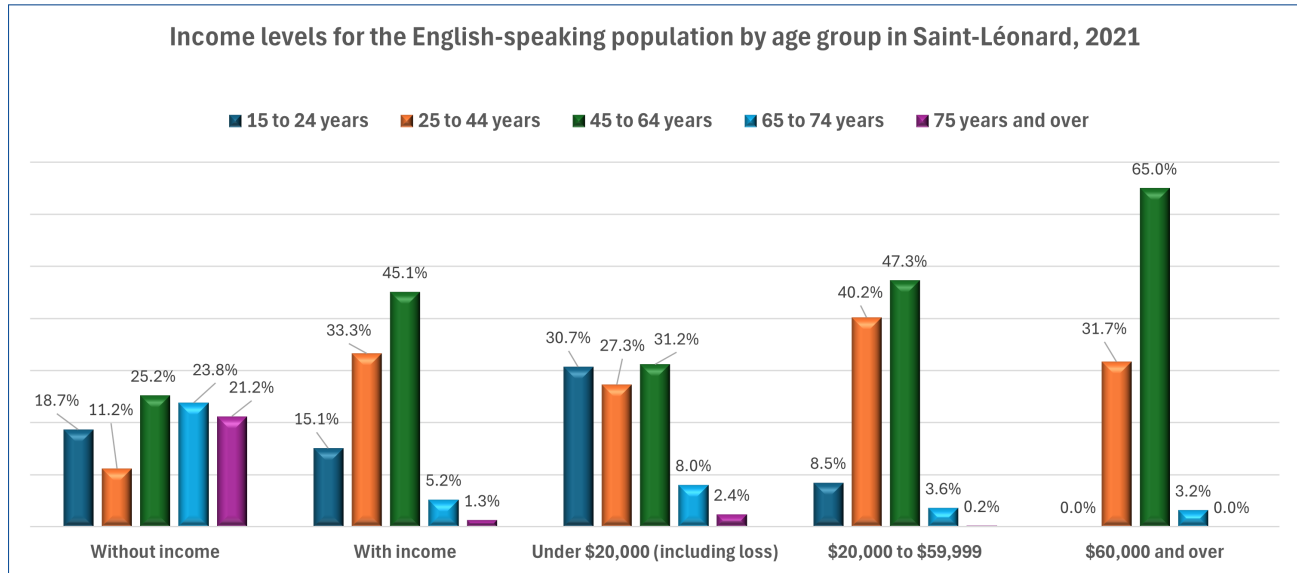


Unemployment rates among the English-speaking population in Saint-Léonard are generally comparable to those observed across the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, with some variations across age groups. Among individuals aged **25 to 44**, the unemployment rate is **11.7%**, slightly higher than the **10.2%** observed in the broader territory. A similar pattern is seen among those aged **45 to 64**, with **10.4%** unemployed in Saint-Léonard compared to **10.3%** in the CIUSSS.

Higher unemployment rates are observed among younger individuals aged **15 to 24** (**16.6%**) compared to **14.6%** in the broader territory, suggesting potential challenges related to labour market entry. Among older adults aged **65 to 74**, unemployment is also somewhat elevated (**19.8%**) compared to the CIUSSS (**17.7%**).

Overall, these figures indicate that while unemployment levels in Saint-Léonard are broadly aligned with regional trends, certain groups—particularly youth and older adults—may face additional barriers to securing stable employment.

Income



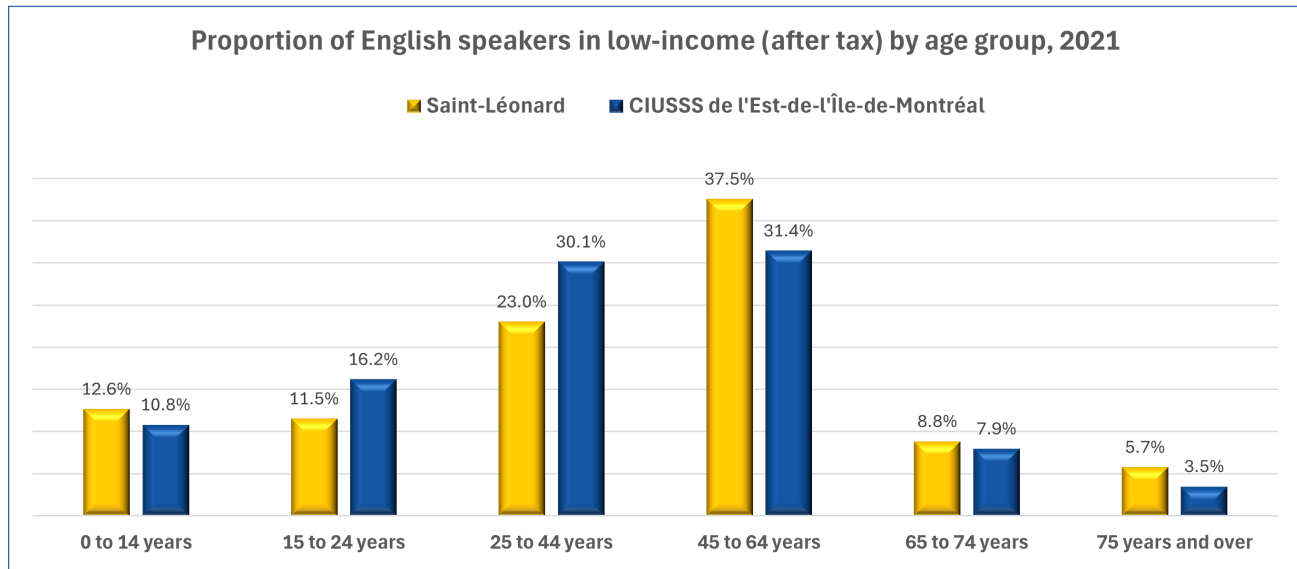
Income levels among the English-speaking population in Saint-Léonard vary across age groups, reflecting different stages of economic stability throughout the life course. Younger individuals aged **15 to 24** are more likely to report lower income levels, with **30.7%** earning under \$20,000 and **18.7%** reporting no income, likely linked to ongoing education or limited labour market participation.

Among individuals aged **25 to 44**, a larger proportion report having an income (**33.3%**), with many concentrated in the \$20,000 to \$59,999 (**40.2%**) and \$60,000 and over (**31.7%**) categories, indicating stronger economic integration. Similarly, those aged **45 to 64** show higher income levels overall, with **65.0%** earning \$60,000 and over, suggesting a high level of financial stability during mid-career stages.

In contrast, older adults aged **65 to 74** and **75 years and over** are more likely to have lower or fixed incomes, with smaller proportions in higher income brackets and some reporting no income.

Overall, these patterns highlight clear differences in financial well-being across age groups, with stronger economic outcomes among mid-career individuals and greater vulnerability among younger and older populations. This suggests the importance of supporting income stability and economic integration across different stages of life.

Low-income measure (after tax)



The proportion of English speakers living in low income (after tax) in Saint-Léonard varies across age groups, with notable differences compared to the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal. Among children aged **0 to 14**, **12.6%** are living in low-income households, slightly higher than the **10.8%** observed in the broader territory.

Youth aged **15 to 24** show a lower proportion (**11.5%**) compared to the CIUSSS (**16.2%**), suggesting relatively better outcomes for this group. In contrast, working-age adults experience higher levels of low income, with **23.0%** of those aged **25 to 44** and **37.5%** of those aged **45 to 64** living in low-income situations. The latter is notably higher than the **31.4%** observed in the CIUSSS, indicating increased financial vulnerability among mid-career individuals.

Among older adults aged **65 to 74**, **8.8%** are living in low income, slightly above the **7.9%** in the broader territory. For those aged **75 and over**, the proportion reaches **5.7%**, compared to **3.5%** in the CIUSSS.

Overall, these figures suggest that while low-income levels in Saint-Léonard are comparable to regional trends in some age groups, certain populations—particularly individuals aged **45 to 64**—experience higher levels of financial vulnerability. This highlights the need for targeted strategies to support income stability and reduce economic disparities within the community.

Access to services and community inclusion

Qualitative findings reveal that English-speaking residents in Saint-Léonard face notable challenges in accessing services and fully participating in community life. While services may exist, they are often primarily offered in French, and access in English is inconsistent or requires explicit request.

This dynamic extends to community activities, which, although available, are largely conducted in French and not always adapted to the needs of English-speaking families. As a result, some parents report that their children feel uncomfortable or excluded from participating, with one noting that “my children feel intimidated.”

These barriers also influence social behaviors, as some families choose to remain within English-speaking networks rather than engage in broader community activities. This reflects a pattern of partial inclusion, where services are technically available but not fully accessible in practice.

Overall, these findings suggest that the key issue in Saint-Léonard is not necessarily the absence of services, but rather the lack of linguistic inclusivity in how they are delivered.

Conclusion

Overall, the profile of the English-speaking population in Saint-Léonard reflects a highly diverse and relatively well-integrated community, while also revealing specific socio-economic vulnerabilities across certain groups. The linguistic composition stands out with a lower proportion of French-only speakers and a stronger presence of English-only and bilingual individuals compared to the broader CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal. This highlights a more multilingual environment shaped by the borough's multicultural population.

This diversity is further reinforced by the composition of the immigrant population, with strong representation from Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Asia. Such a distribution reflects the complex cultural landscape of Saint-Léonard and points to a wide range of linguistic, cultural, and integration needs within the community.

Educational attainment among English speakers demonstrates a clear generational shift. Younger and mid-career individuals show high levels of postsecondary and university education, while older populations are more likely to have lower levels of formal education. This suggests ongoing improvements in access to education, alongside the need to consider the realities of older adults who may face barriers linked to educational attainment.

Labour market indicators suggest that English-speaking residents in Saint-Léonard experience outcomes that are largely aligned with regional trends. Employment rates are comparable to those of the broader CIUSSS territory, particularly among working-age groups, while unemployment levels show only slight variations. However, certain groups, including youth and older adults, continue to face challenges related to labour market entry and retention.

Income patterns reveal stronger financial stability among individuals in mid-career stages, particularly those aged 45 to 64, who show higher proportions in upper income brackets. At the same time, younger individuals and seniors are more likely to experience lower or more limited incomes. Notably, a higher proportion of individuals aged 45 to 64 are living in low-income situations compared to the CIUSSS, indicating that financial vulnerability can persist even among working-age populations.

Taken together, these findings highlight a community that is both diverse and dynamic, with generally stable labour market integration but uneven economic outcomes across age groups. Addressing these disparities will require approaches that recognize the borough's linguistic and cultural diversity, while also supporting economic inclusion and financial stability for more vulnerable populations.

While quantitative indicators suggest that the English-speaking population in Saint-Léonard is relatively well integrated in terms of education and employment, qualitative insights point to a more complex reality. They highlight persistent challenges related to language accessibility, particularly in employment, public services, and community participation.

These challenges contribute not only to practical barriers, but also to a broader sense of exclusion among some residents, who report feeling disadvantaged or less included within

the community. This underscores the importance of moving beyond formal access to services and toward ensuring meaningful linguistic inclusion, where residents can fully participate in their preferred language without additional barriers.

References

Ville de Montréal en statistiques: <https://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/>

Sources:

Custom table J W Comm/VEQ/Jeffery-Hale Community Partners

CO-2459 Table 1 - Total population, excluding institutional residents, by selected sociodemographic characteristics (36), first official language spoken (7) and age (16) for selected geographies, 2021 Census - 100% Data

CO-2459 Table 4 - Population in private households by selected sociodemographic characteristics (161) first official language spoken (7) and age (16) for selected geographies, 2021 Census - 25% Sample data

Resource guide

REISA'S Resource Guide: <https://reisa.ca/document-center/resources/>

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