

Quebecers Views on Artificial Intelligence, Translation, Language Knowledge and Use

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Introduction and Methodology

These days if you're in a work environment with a mixed language group in Quebec that requires you communicate in writing with others in French, you'll likely observe frequent use of automated or machine translation via Google translate or DeepL for example. The impact of easy and quick translation both written and voice will have a critical impact on our interaction across language lines and continue to influence written as well as verbal communication. That's true in Quebec, a global hub for translators as it is in other places with mixed language demographics. It's yet unclear as to how this will affect language policies. But to-date, insufficient attention is being directed at how AI and machine translation will modify public policy objectives with respect to language planning.

The survey on the theme of artificial intelligence, translation, language knowledge and use was conducted by Léger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies during the week of September 18, 2023. The ACS-Leger survey was done via web panel with 1,000 Quebecers (798 francophones, 130 anglophones and 72 allophones). A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey for comparison purposes. A probability sample of 1,000 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

A majority of Quebecers often or sometimes use translation devices

How often do you use translation devices with automated machine learning (e.g., Google Translate, Bing Translator, DeepL, ChatGPT, etc.)? Machine translation is the process of using artificial intelligence (AI) to automatically translate text from on	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
(NET) OFTEN/SOMETIMES (1,2)	51%	51%	60%	49%	58%	56%
Often	18%	17%	25%	17%	23%	14%
Sometimes	34%	34%	35%	33%	35%	42%
Rarely	27%	27%	24%	29%	22%	24%
Never	20%	21%	15%	21%	19%	20%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Most Quebecers have relied on AI translation devices to understand or communicate written information

In which of the following scenarios have you used an automated machine learning device for translation?	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
For “assimilation” of information (when you are translating a text from a language that you don’t understand for your own personal use)	59%	59%	53%	61%	58%	44%
For “dissemination” of information (when you are trying to write something in a language that you have not mastered to share it with others)	41%	41%	39%	38%	49%	48%
For a translation-mediated interaction (usually in real-time, such as talking to a taxi driver while on holiday in a foreign country and using the translation app on a cellphone to communicate).	24%	24%	22%	24%	27%	15%
Other, please specify:	1%	0%	2%	0%	2%	2%
I don’t know / I prefer not to answer	8%	8%	7%	7%	12%	10%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Many Quebecers report being active users of machine translation

Active users of machine translation are people who actively choose to use an online translation tool or device. For instance, active users go directly to Google Translate (or some other translation device) and paste text in the site to be translated.	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
Active user	28%	27%	37%	29%	27%	23%
Passive user	23%	24%	19%	22%	29%	23%
Both active and passive	23%	23%	24%	22%	22%	29%
Neither active nor passive	22%	22%	21%	22%	20%	23%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	4%	5%	0%	6%	1%	2%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Nearly 50% of Quebecers equally trust humans and machines to conduct translation

Which of the following do you trust more to conduct a translation?	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
Human	36%	36%	32%	34%	42%	39%
Translation device	11%	10%	23%	11%	5%	22%
Both equally	47%	48%	38%	49%	44%	33%
Neither	2%	2%	0%	2%	4%	0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer.	4%	4%	7%	4%	6%	5%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Most Quebecers trust machine translation to translate entertainment

For entertainment purposes (e.g., to translate comics or anime, foreign films on Netflix, etc.) - Please rate the extent to which you would trust machine translation in each of the following scenarios	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
(NET) TRUST (1,2)	70%	70%	74%	71%	66%	75%
Trust a lot	16%	15%	24%	15%	20%	15%
Somewhat trust	54%	55%	50%	55%	46%	60%
(NET) DISTRUST (3,4)	21%	21%	20%	21%	20%	19%
Somewhat distrust	15%	15%	15%	16%	11%	16%
Do not trust at all	6%	6%	5%	5%	8%	3%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	9%	10%	6%	8%	15%	6%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

A majority of Quebecers - 63% - trust machine translation to communicate in an educational setting

In an educational setting (to communicate with a school teacher or administrator) - Please rate the extent to which you would trust machine translation	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
(NET) TRUST (1,2)	63%	63%	59%	62%	63%	63%
Trust a lot	11%	10%	24%	10%	12%	21%
Somewhat trust	51%	53%	35%	52%	51%	43%
(NET) DISTRUST (3,4)	32%	31%	36%	32%	29%	32%
Somewhat distrust	25%	25%	29%	26%	24%	24%
Do not trust at all	7%	7%	7%	7%	5%	8%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	6%	6%	5%	5%	8%	5%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

65% of Quebecers trust machine translation to communicate with colleagues at work

In a workplace setting (to communicate with colleagues or associates who speak another language) - Please rate the extent to which you would trust machine translation in each of the following	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
(NET) TRUST (1,2)	65%	64%	75%	64%	70%	65%
Trust a lot	13%	13%	18%	12%	18%	16%
Somewhat trust	52%	51%	57%	52%	52%	49%
(NET) DISTRUST (3,4)	29%	30%	19%	30%	24%	28%
Somewhat distrust	23%	24%	14%	24%	22%	20%
Do not trust at all	6%	6%	4%	6%	2%	8%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%	7%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

While most Quebecers (55%) distrust machine translation in a legal setting, 49% of Immigrants trust it for legal matters

In a legal setting (to communicate with a lawyer or judge) - Please rate the extent to which you would trust machine translation in each of the following scenarios.	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
(NET) TRUST (1,2)	38%	37%	49%	37%	40%	46%
Trust a lot	9%	8%	14%	8%	11%	14%
Somewhat trust	29%	29%	35%	29%	29%	31%
(NET) DISTRUST (3,4)	55%	56%	46%	56%	53%	47%
Somewhat distrust	29%	29%	26%	30%	30%	20%
Do not trust at all	26%	26%	20%	26%	23%	27%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	7%	7%	5%	7%	7%	7%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

50% of Quebecers trust machine translation when communicating with a healthcare provider

In a healthcare setting (to communicate with a doctor or nurse) - Please rate the extent to which you would trust machine translation in each of the following scenarios.	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
Weighted Total	1000	911	89	748	168	83
Unweighted Total	1000	914	86	798	130	72
(NET) TRUST (1,2)	50%	49%	57%	49%	50%	57%
Trust a lot	10%	9%	15%	9%	12%	16%
Somewhat trust	40%	40%	41%	41%	38%	41%
(NET) DISTRUST (3,4)	45%	45%	39%	46%	44%	37%
Somewhat distrust	29%	29%	28%	30%	27%	26%
Do not trust at all	16%	16%	11%	16%	17%	10%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%

A majority of Quebecers trust machine translation in most contexts, with the exception of legal settings

Please rate the extent to which you would trust machine translation in each of the following scenarios.	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
For entertainment purposes (e.g., to translate comics or anime, foreign films on Netflix, etc.)	70%	70%	74%	71%	66%	75%
In a workplace setting (to communicate with colleagues or associates who speak another language)	65%	64%	75%	64%	70%	65%
In an educational setting (to communicate with a schoolteacher or administrator)	63%	63%	59%	62%	63%	63%
In a healthcare setting (to communicate with a doctor or nurse)	50%	49%	57%	49%	50%	57%
In a legal setting (to communicate with a lawyer or judge)	38%	37%	49%	37%	40%	46%

Most Quebecers use machine translation to translate French or English to other languages

When you use AI/Machine Translation, from what language to what language do you most often translate	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
Weighted Total	513	460	53	369	98	47
Unweighted Total	515	465	50	398	74	43
(NET) FRENCH TO ANOTHER LANGUAGE (2,4)	60%	61%	56%	62%	61%	49%
(NET) ENGLISH TO ANOTHER LANGUAGE (1,3)	59%	59%	62%	60%	54%	62%
English to French	55%	55%	52%	59%	45%	45%
French to English	53%	53%	53%	52%	60%	46%
English to Other	7%	6%	16%	3%	13%	29%
French to other	14%	14%	17%	17%	5%	10%
Other to English	6%	4%	21%	3%	6%	31%
Other to French	9%	7%	26%	8%	7%	22%
Other, please specify:	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	2%	2%	5%	2%	4%	6%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

An important majority of Quebecers (80%) believe that using machine translation improves second language knowledge

Does the use of a translation device help improve your knowledge of the second language?	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
Yes	80%	79%	82%	80%	77%	83%
No	18%	18%	14%	18%	19%	12%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	3%	3%	4%	2%	4%	5%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

A majority of Quebecers (52%) believe that machine translation will reduce language barriers, with immigrants most likely to hold that view

Do you think that automated or machine translation will reduce language barriers between language groups?	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada	French	English	Other
Yes	52%	51%	65%	52%	53%	59%
No	33%	34%	23%	34%	34%	23%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	14%	14%	12%	14%	13%	18%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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