



The Turning Point?

Estimating the Francophone Economic Footprint in Algoma

January 2022

By: Raven Wheesk

Commentary
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Soutien à l'immigration
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Our main offices:

- Thunder Bay is on Robinson-Superior Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg and Fort William First Nation.
- Sudbury is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg as well as Wahnapiatae First Nation.
- Kirkland Lake is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of Cree, Ojibway, and Algonquin Peoples.
- All are home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We recognize and appreciate the historic connection that Indigenous people have to these territories. We recognize the contributions that they have made in shaping and strengthening these communities, the province and the country as a whole.

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The Northern Analyst Collective, a project of Northern Policy Institute, will allow members to "time share" a professional policy analyst. By merging our collective resources we can ensure that the smallest municipality or local charity can access high-end skills at an affordable price.

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Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay and Sudbury. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

Project Partners:

Réseau du Nord

Réseau du Nord creates links between organizations from all regions of Northern Ontario, such as: Sudbury, Timmins, North Bay, Sault-Ste-Marie and Thunder Bay, to put in place a system to facilitate the reception and integration of newcomers.

Réseau du Nord follows the objectives of the strategic plan developed by the Steering Committee:

- Increase the number of French-speaking immigrants so as to increase the demographic weight of the Francophone communities in a minority situation.
- Improve the capacity of French-speaking communities in a minority situation and strengthen welcoming and settlement structures for French-speaking newcomers.
- Ensure the economic integration of French-speaking immigrants within Canadian society and Francophone communities in minority situations in particular.
- Ensure the social and cultural integration of French-speaking immigrants within Canadian society and Francophone communities in minority situations.
- Foster regionalization of Francophone immigration outside of Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver.

About the Authors

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Born in Thunder Bay, Raven is a lifelong citizen of Northern Ontario. Interested in history and math from a young age, he graduated with an Honours B.A. in Economics from Lakehead University in 2019 and completed his M.A. in Economics from Lakehead in 2020.

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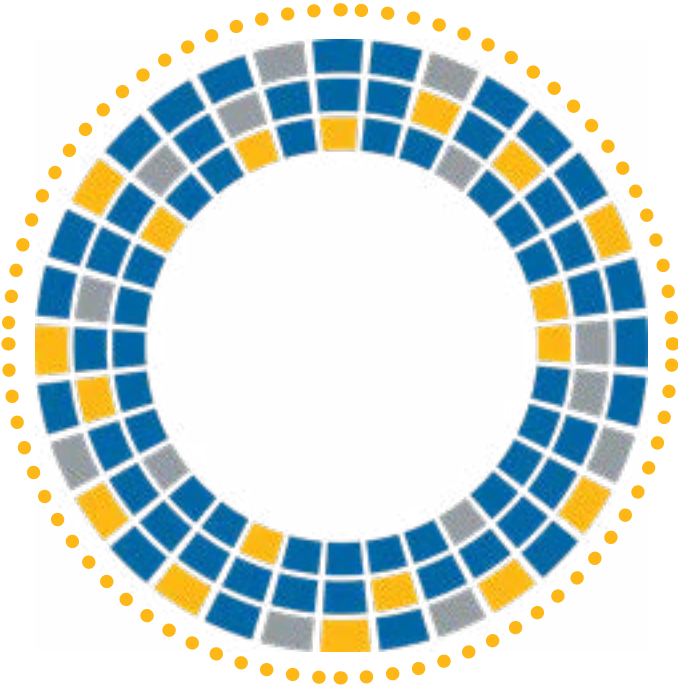
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Executive Summary

Francophones have long played an important role in the social and economic life of the Algoma District. The arrival of the railways and highways throughout Northeast Ontario created opportunities for enterprising individuals to earn a living by tapping into the resource wealth of the region. Workers drawn from Quebec to work in mining or forestry ended up calling the Algoma District home.

While Francophones' economic footprint may be sizeable now, it will continue to fade if low birthrates and youth out-migration trends persist. For communities where Francophones make outsized contributions to the local economy, and are a large share of the labour force, this is a troubling trend.

Reversing demographic trends is no easy feat. Given that only a small portion of the population is in the family-raising age range, a rebound in birth rates cannot be expected to transform Algoma's Francophone community. This would require increased in-migration, which would be similarly challenging for a district that continually grapples with the out-migration of young people.

Perhaps the best opportunity to sustain the Francophones' economic footprint is by growing the French-speaking population with French-language education. Even if French is not the language spoken at home, increasing the portion of Algoma's young population that speaks French provides a pathway for the revitalization of the Francophone community.

This increase appears to be happening, as the popularity of French immersion education has increased in Algoma. Between 2011 and 2016, enrolment increased by 20.1 per cent (Government of Ontario, Ministry of Education). As a result, 14.6 per cent of Algoma's under-25 population speaks both French and English. It should be noted that the Francophone community makes up only 4 per cent of this population. The young individuals who speak both official languages are likely to benefit from the labour market advantages of being bilingual and thus enroll their children in French immersion.

Having a large number of French speakers in the Algoma District would ensure that services continue to be provided in French. This would make the district and its communities a welcoming destination for Francophone newcomers from Canada and abroad. Given the low birth rates among the existing Francophone population, the most promising source of replacement is newcomers. Although the future is always uncertain, having a large bilingual community certainly makes the Algoma District a more attractive destination for Francophones looking to start anew.

Introduction



Like much of Northeastern Ontario, the Algoma District has long been called home by thousands of Francophones. The expansion of the railways throughout Northern Ontario in the late 19th century created jobs in forestry, mining, and transportation that attracted thousands of newcomers, including many Francophones from Quebec. To this day, the Algoma District's Francophone community plays a major role in the local economy.

Francophones represent a significant share of the population in Northeast Ontario — 23 per cent of the total population self-identified as Francophone in the 2016 census. The Algoma District has a relatively lower share of Francophones, who account for 6.9 per cent of its total population. But 4,715 of the 7,730 Francophones in the Algoma District live outside of the region's largest city, Sault Ste. Marie.

Sault Ste. Marie accounts for 64.1 per cent of the Algoma District's population but only 39 per cent of the district's Francophones. Outside of Sault Ste. Marie, 11.7 per cent of the population is Francophone. There are 1,820 Francophones in Elliot Lake, the Algoma District's other city, making up 17.2 per cent of the District's population. Most of the remaining 2,895 Francophones are concentrated in smaller communities such as Blind River (670), Wawa (615), Dubreuilville (485), and Hornepayne (110), and in unincorporated areas (305). Dubreuilville has the highest concentration, with 85.8 per cent of the community identifying as Francophone.

Given that Francophones account for sizeable shares of Algoma's smaller municipalities, they undoubtedly play an important role in the social and economic life of the Algoma District. This paper quantifies the economic footprint of Algoma's Francophone community by examining their contributions to the labour force and overall economic activity. To inform this analysis, individual and job characteristics are discussed to identify how the Francophone community differs from the overall population of the Algoma District. This can help explain whether differences in income and labour force activity are related to demographic structure or differences in other aspects of the Francophone community, such as French-language education, local industries in certain communities, and the ability to apply the French language to a different set of career opportunities.



Data



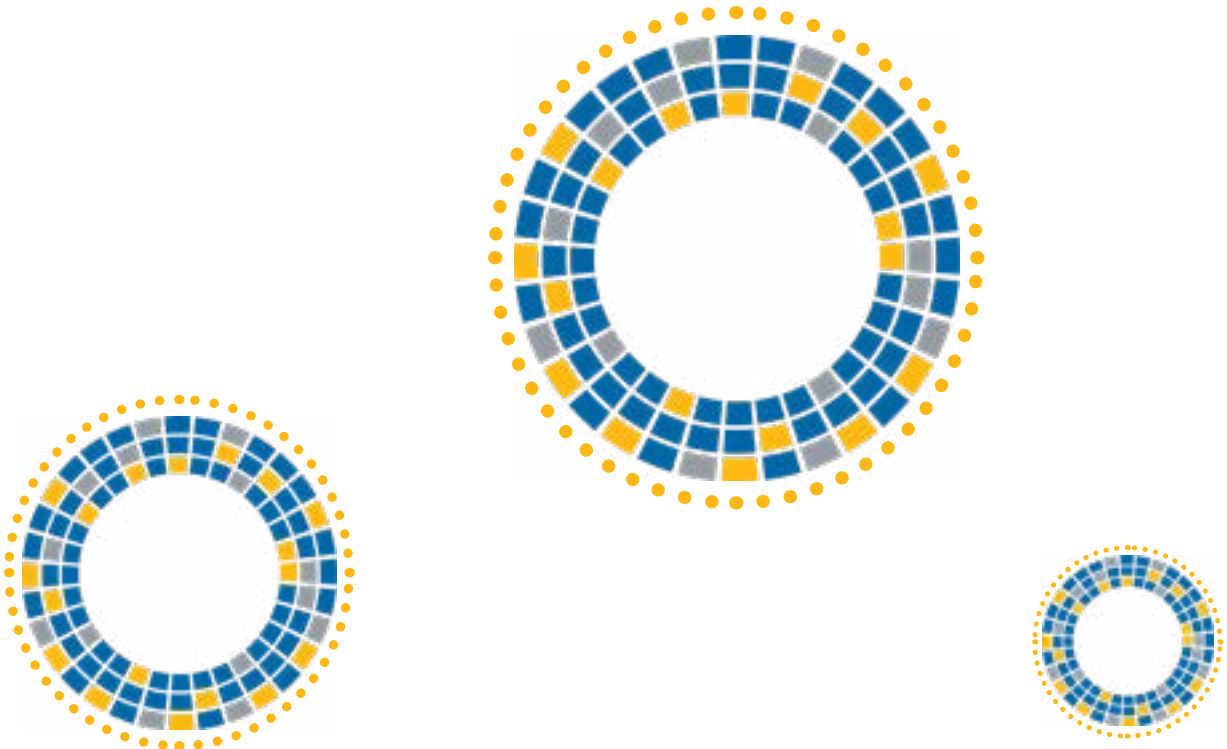
No data source provides more comprehensive information at the local level than the census. This is especially true for small communities and different subpopulations, like the Francophones. The 2016 census — which was used in the development of this paper—is nearly five years old. Despite being slightly dated, it offers the most recent and complete picture of the Algoma District's inhabitants.

The data for this paper come from individual community census profiles and custom target group profiles provided by Statistics Canada through the Community Data Program. The Francophone target group profile defines Francophones as individuals in Ontario with French as either their first official language spoken, mother tongue, or language spoken most often at home (Community Data). Target profile data are extracted from the long-form census questionnaire that is sent to 25 per cent of households rather than the short-form census questionnaire that is sent to 100 per cent of households. For comparison against the total population, the 25 per cent sample census profiles are used.

Statistics for the total Algoma District and Sault Ste. Marie give larger sample sizes and thus the most reliable estimates. This is especially important when looking at industry employment, as instances where rounding is necessary for confidentiality purposes.

This analysis looks at the Francophone shares of the population, total income earned, the labour force, and total employment in the Algoma District and Sault Ste. Marie. Other income and labour variables are used to offer insight into how the Francophone community differs from the total population by income composition, income distribution, employment in industry, and education. This enables the identification of areas where Francophones are under or overrepresented, which can shed light on how the economic footprint of the Francophone community differs from the rest of the population.

As regions in Northern Ontario will be experiencing an increase in the number of seniors in the coming years, at a proportion higher than provincial levels, future labour market shortages will emerge. With that, there will come a greater need for youth retention and migration to Ontario's northern, western, and central regions. With new government immigration programs, such as the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, the Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative, and multiple matchmaker programs, targets for Francophone and French-speaking migrants must be identified and prioritized to help fill these future shortages.



Demographics

As of 2016, 87 per cent of the Algoma District's Francophone population live in six municipalities—Sault Ste. Marie, Elliot Lake, Blind River, Wawa, Dubreuilville, and Hornepayne. Apart from Sault Ste. Marie, each of these municipalities has a Francophone community that accounts for more than 10 per cent of its population. Roughly one in five individuals in Elliot Lake, Blind River, and Wawa are Francophone. Dubreuilville is primarily Francophone, owing to its origins as a company town founded by the Dubreuil brothers, who recruited workers from their hometown of Taschereau, Quebec, to build sawmills north of Sault Ste. Marie. Today, 85.8 per cent of all Dubreuilville inhabitants are Francophone.

In 2016, there were over 5,000 fewer inhabitants in the Algoma District than in 2006 and 1,280 fewer Francophones. For the Francophones, this was a 14.2 per cent decline, which was greater than the decline of the Algoma District's total population, resulting in a lower Francophone population share in 2016.

During this period, the municipalities of the Algoma District saw decreases in the number of Francophone inhabitants and the Francophone share of the population. The fall in population share was smallest for Sault Ste. Marie (0.2 per cent), Wawa (0.2 per cent), and Dubreuilville (0.2 per cent), and largest for Hornepayne (4.7 per cent) and Blind River (2.1 per cent).

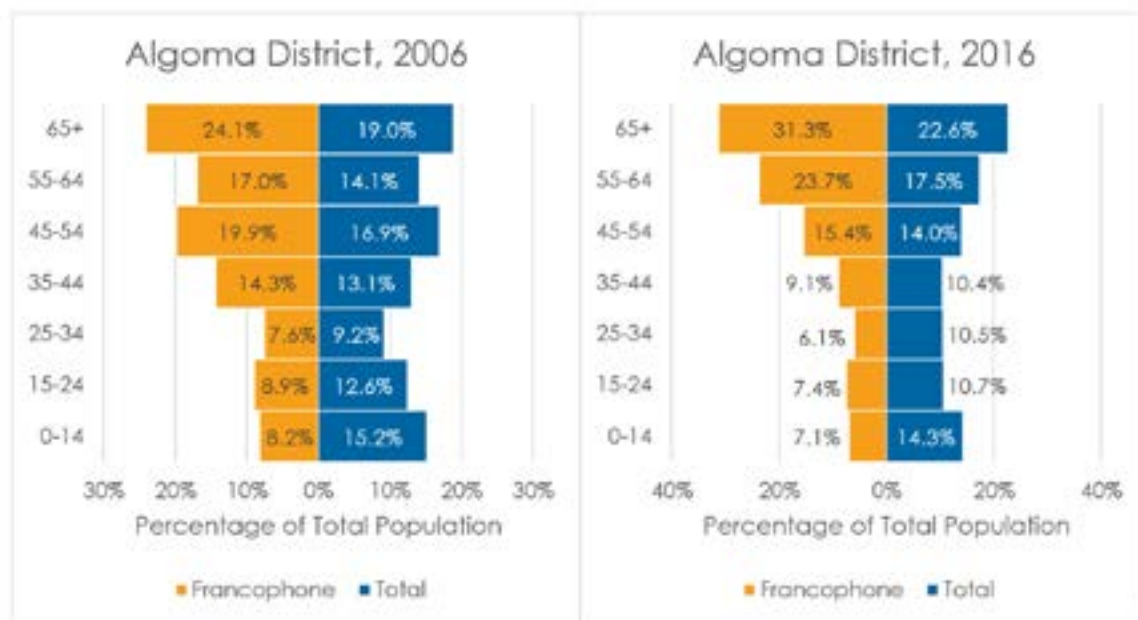
Table 1: Population of Municipalities in Algoma District with Large Francophone Communities

Population						
Geography	2006			2016		
	Francophone	Total	Francophone Share	Francophone	Total	Francophone Share
Algoma	9,010	117,461	7.7%	7,730	112,055	6.9%
Sault Ste. Marie	3,530	80,098	4.4%	3,015	71,880	4.2%
Elliot Lake	2,085	11,549	18.1%	1,820	10,580	17.2%
Blind River	825	3,780	21.8%	670	3,405	19.7%
Wawa	695	3,204	21.7%	615	2,855	21.5%
Dubreuilville	665	773	86.0%	485	565	85.8%
Hornepayne	195	1,209	16.1%	110	965	11.4%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Profiles, 2016 Census Profiles, 2006 Francophone Target Group Profile, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

With 10 years between 2006 and 2016, the changing population of the Algoma District can be explained by aging, in-migration, and out-migration. Without detailed migration data for the Francophone population, our analysis can be informed by looking at the age structure of the Algoma District. Figure 1 shows the population pyramids of the total population, and the Francophone population, in 2006 and 2016.

Figure 1: Population Pyramids for Total, Francophone Populations in the Algoma District, 2006 and 2016.



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Profiles, 2016 Census Profiles, 2006 Francophone Target Group Profile, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

Across the developed world, birth rates have been declining and baby boomers, the largest cohort, are aging. It is immediately apparent that Algoma’s Francophones have experienced these phenomena more acutely than the rest of the district’s population. In 2006, 24.1 per cent of Francophones and 19 per cent of the total population were over age 65. Furthermore, 19.9 per cent of Francophones were between 45 and 54, and 17 per cent were between 55 and 64. Only 24.7 per cent of Francophones were under age 35, reflective of decreasing birthrates in the 1980s and 1990s.

By 2016, 31.3 per cent of Algoma’s Francophones were over age 65, while only 20.6 per cent of the total population were under age 35. Furthermore, 70.4 per cent of Francophones were over age 45 but only 54.1 per cent of Algoma’s total population were. Just as in 2006, there were far fewer Francophones under age 14 than the rest of the Algoma District in 2016, indicating that birthrates among Francophones were lower between 2006 and 2016. This is likely related to the small Francophone cohorts aged 15 to 34 in 2006, which would be most likely to have children between the censuses. These cohorts were larger for the non-Francophone population in 2006, which can explain how Algoma’s total under-15 population in 2016 was more than double that of the Francophone population.

As of 2016, most Francophones in the Algoma District were over age 55. Low birth rates and out-migration among younger Francophones suggest that the decline of the Francophone population in the Algoma District is likely to continue. The following analysis will focus on the economic footprint of the Francophone population in 2016, but it should be noted that figures for total income and the size of the labour force will continue to decline unless significantly greater Francophone in-migration occurs, in addition to a rebound in birthrates.

Population is a useful baseline for understanding differences between the two related to income and labour force characteristics. If the populations were identical, then the Francophone population would have the same average income, share of employment income, income distribution, labour force characteristics, and so on. Since they are not identical, we can see where the Francophone community has the largest economic footprint.

Income

Average and Total Income

Gross domestic product (GDP) is a standard measure of economic activity within an area. There are different methods for measuring GDP at the national or provincial level than for local economies. Statistics Canada releases experimental estimates of gross domestic product for census metropolitan areas with a significant lag because of the complexity of the measurement process (Statistics Canada). These estimates consider several components: wages and salaries, supplementary labour income, mixed income, operating surplus, and indirect taxes less subsidies. Wages and salaries are the largest component of these estimates, accounting for 43 per cent of total metropolitan GDP (Statistics Canada, 2017). While other components like operating surplus and indirect taxes less subsidies can only be obtained from other statistical surveys, individual income statistics can be found in the census.

According to Statistics Canada (2018), “[a] census metropolitan area (CMA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live in the core.”

Total income in the Algoma District and Sault Ste. Marie Census Subdivision (i.e. municipalities) is calculated by multiplying the average total income of individuals in private households by the number of individuals who received total income in private households. Total income includes employment income, government transfers, and other market income, which includes investment income.

As wages and salaries are the largest component of GDP, total income is a good proxy for total economic activity within a region, especially in the absence of detailed business data. Total income gives an idea of the spending power of individuals in a community and how they are compensated for their work, investment choices, and their personal characteristics that result in government transfer payments. Although not perfect, figures for total income being generated by community members give some idea as to how much value is created by the individuals within an area. Table 2 summarizes the total income earned by the Francophone and total populations of the Algoma District and Sault Ste. Marie.

Table 2: Population of Municipalities in Algoma District with Large Francophone Communities

	Algoma	Sault Ste. Marie	Outside of SSM
Francophone Income	\$280,482,940	\$109,256,360	\$171,226,580
Total Income	\$3,793,385,700	\$2,660,551,430	\$1,132,834,270
Francophone Income Share	7.4%	4.1%	15.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

In total, \$3.79 billion in income was generated by individuals in the Algoma District in 2015. Francophones earned just under \$280.5 million in 2015, which represented 7.4 per cent of the total income generated in the district. As seen previously, 6.9 per cent of Algoma's population is Francophone, meaning that the Francophone population earned a slightly higher share of total income.

Total employment income is also calculated to show how much of the total income in the Algoma District is earned from work. Table 3 shows these figures for Algoma, Sault Ste. Marie, and the rest of the district.

Table 3: Employment Income (2015 Dollars), Francophones and Total Population, Algoma CD, 2015.

	Algoma	Sault Ste. Marie	Outside of SSM
Francophone Income	\$167,904,400	\$66,791,040	\$101,113,360
Total Income	\$2,396,528,295	\$1,726,749,495	\$669,778,800
Francophone Income Share	7.0%	3.9%	15.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

the Francophone share of employment income across the Algoma District is 0.4 percentage points lower than that for total income. This is because of a lower share of employment income in Sault Ste. Marie — the difference owing to investment income and government transfers. Outside of Sault Ste. Marie, the employment income share earned by Francophones is identical to that of total income. Of the \$167.9 million earned by Francophones in the Algoma District, \$101.1 million is earned outside of Sault Ste. Marie. The lower share of employment income earned by Francophones in Sault Ste. Marie can be attributed to the demographic structure — a higher share of Francophones in Sault Ste. Marie are over age 65 and would be expected to receive more income from government transfers, pensions, and other investments than the relatively younger Francophone population that does not live in Sault Ste. Marie.

Table 4 shows the average total income earned by individual income recipients in the Algoma District. The average Francophone income recipient earned slightly less than the total population. Since the total income share for Francophones was higher (see Table 2), the case must be that this gap in average income is bridged by a higher share of income recipients. Francophones made up 7.5 per cent of all income recipients, slightly greater than their population share in the Algoma District.

Table 4: Average Total Income, Francophones and Total Population, Algoma CD, 2015.

	Francophone Population	Total Population
Algoma	39,898	40,833
Sault Ste. Marie	40,316	42,134
Outside of SSM	38,740	36,948

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

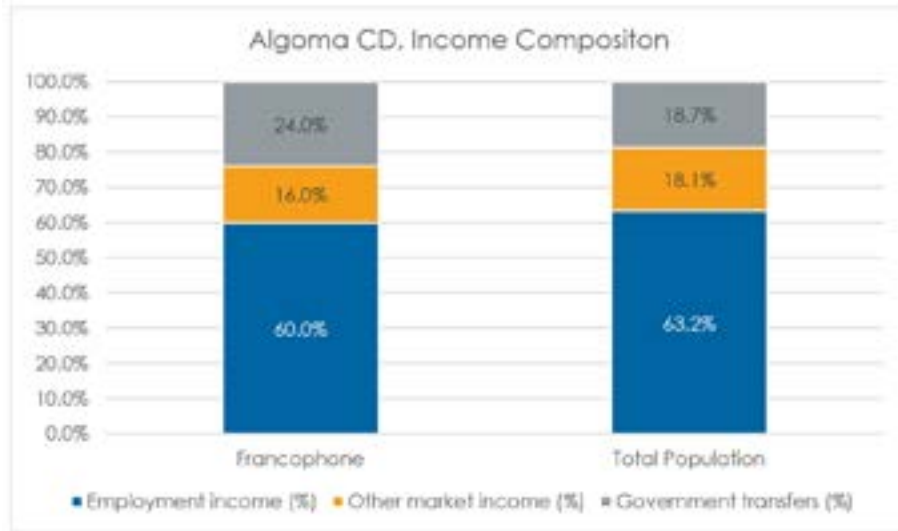
As shown in Table 2, in Sault Ste. Marie, Francophones earn 4.1 per cent of all income, which is almost exactly equal to Sault Ste. Marie's Francophone population share of 4.2 per cent. If this is the case in the largest city, the difference in income share throughout the Algoma District must be attributable to a higher income share outside of Sault Ste. Marie — which it is. 11.7 per cent of Algoma's population outside of Sault Ste. Marie is Francophone, but 15.1 per cent of the total income is earned by Francophones. This shows that Francophones have an outsized economic footprint outside of Sault Ste. Marie, which is understandable given the higher population shares in smaller communities in the Algoma District. In the communities outside of Sault Ste. Marie, average income is \$1,792 greater for Francophones than the total population.

It may also be the case that there are differences in the major employment industries in Sault Ste. Marie and the smaller municipalities, which would cause differences in compensation. This will be explored later.

Income Composition

The census breaks down income earned by individuals into different components, allowing total income to be separated into employment income, government transfers, and other market income. Other market income includes all sources of income that are not classified as employment income or government transfers, including investment income, private retirement income, RRSPs, and RRIFs (Statistics Canada). These breakdowns for the Algoma District and Sault Ste. Marie are seen in figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2: Income Composition, Francophones and Total Population, Algoma CD, 2015.



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

In the Algoma District, Francophones earn less market income than the total population — 60 per cent of total income earned is employment income and 16 per cent is other market income. For the total population, the figures are 63.2 per cent and 18.1 per cent, respectively. Meanwhile, 24 per cent of Francophone income was from government transfers, but this figure was only 18.7 per cent for the total population. This is reflective of the different demographic structure of the Francophone population, as seen previously. Given that high shares of the Algoma District population live in Sault Ste. Marie, the income composition for this municipality should be examined as well.

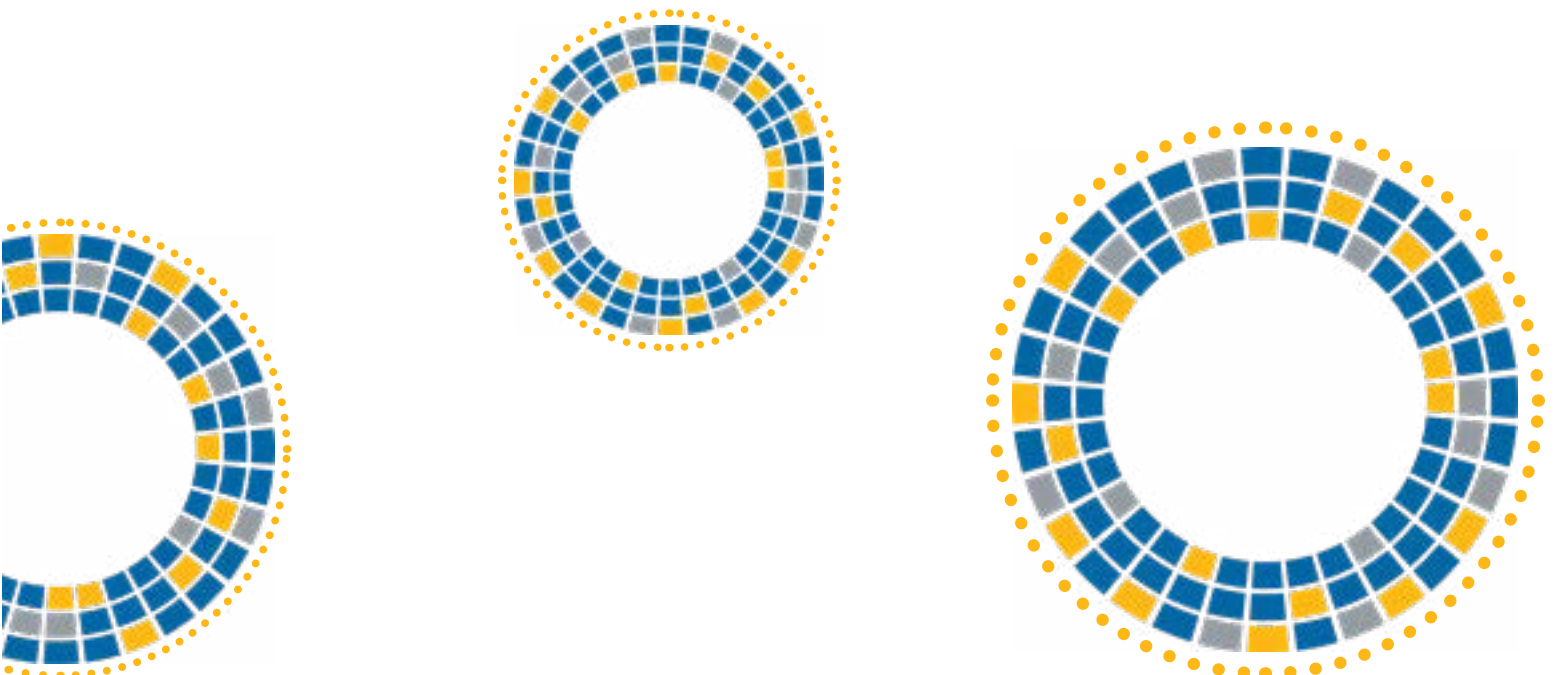
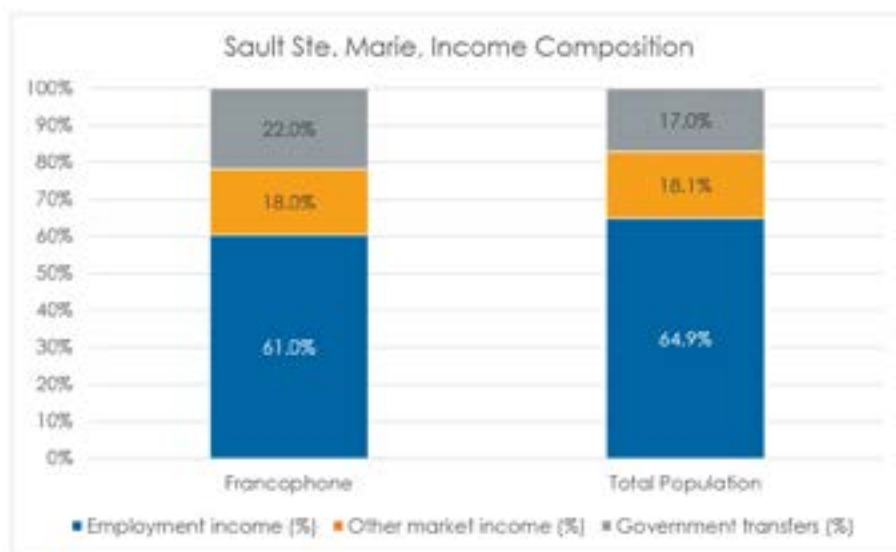


Figure 3: Income Composition, Francophones and Total Population, Sault Ste. Marie, 2015



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

When comparing both figures we can see that in Sault Ste. Marie, Francophones and the total population earn slightly higher shares of employment income compared to the overall district. This indicates that outside of Sault Ste. Marie, both populations earn lower shares of employment income than in the region’s largest city. Other market income is unchanged for the total population, but Francophones earn a slightly higher share (2 per cent more) in Sault Ste. Marie. Once again, this must mean that Francophones earn lower shares of other market income outside of Sault Ste. Marie. With many Francophones in Sault Ste. Marie being over age 65, the difference in other market income is likely due to individuals receiving higher shares of investment income in retirement.

Government transfer income is lower for Francophones in Sault Ste. Marie than the Algoma District, but it is still 5 per cent greater than the share earned by the total population. It may be the case that those in smaller municipalities receive more government transfers, which is supported by the fact that the total population also receives higher proportions of government transfers outside of Sault Ste. Marie. But transfer income still represents a higher share of total income for Francophones than the total population in Sault Ste. Marie.

Greater incidence of government transfers among the Algoma District’s Francophone community may be attributable to demographics — 22.6 per cent of Algoma’s total population is over age 65, but 31.2 per cent of the Francophone population is over 65.

This can reasonably explain much of the difference in government transfer income between the Francophone population and the total population.

Demographics can also help to explain the difference in employment income shares between the Francophone and total populations. Although Francophones on average earn similar amounts of employment income, they have a smaller core working-age population. That means they have fewer employment income recipients and more recipients of government transfers and investment income. It could be expected that a higher share of employment income would create more saving opportunities, both in personal investments and work saving plans like RRSPs. This would also be attributable to having a larger core working-age population.

Table 5: Demographic Structure of the Algoma District, 2016.

	Total	Francophone
Total Population	112,055	7,730
Age 15-64	70,695	4,770
Age 65+	25,360	2,415
Share 65+	22.6%	31.2%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

Income Distribution

Although differences in average total income are relatively small between Algoma's Francophone population and the total population, there is likely to be variation within the respective populations. This can be examined by looking at characteristics of the income distributions. Table 6 summarizes the median incomes for the Francophone and total populations of the Algoma District and Sault Ste. Marie. The median represents the level of income at which half of the population earns more than, and half earns less than, the 50th percentile of the income distribution.

Table 6: Median Total Income, Francophones and Total Population, Algoma CD, 2015.

	Francophone Population	Total Population
Algoma	\$30,745	\$31,793
Sault Ste. Marie	\$31,408	\$33,214

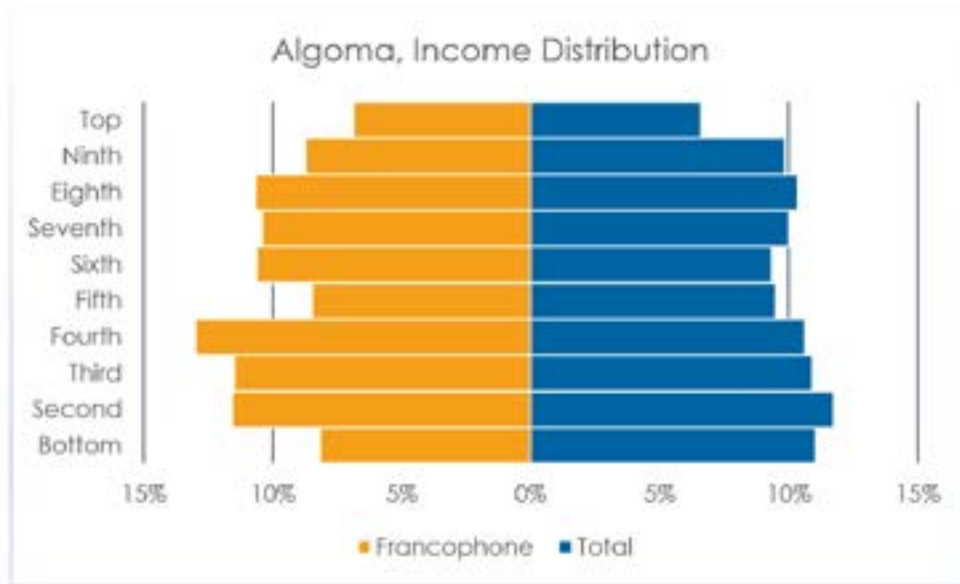
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

The median total income is slightly lower for Francophones across the Algoma District, but this would be influenced by Sault Ste. Marie, where the median Francophone earns nearly \$2,000 less than the median income earner of the total population. With this gap being smaller for the Algoma District, it must be the case that the median income earner outside of Sault Ste. Marie earns more. For both Francophones and the total population in the District, the average income is higher than the median income, indicating that the income distribution is skewed toward higher income earners. For the Francophones, average income is 29.8 per cent higher than the median income, while it is 28.4 per cent higher for the total population (see table 4). The gap in average and median income is similar across the two populations, but slightly greater for Francophones.

Income distribution pyramids can compare the shape of the income distribution between different populations. In figures 4 and 5, the Francophone population is compared to the total population for the Algoma District and Sault Ste. Marie. This enables us to see how the income distribution varies between and within the Francophone and total populations.

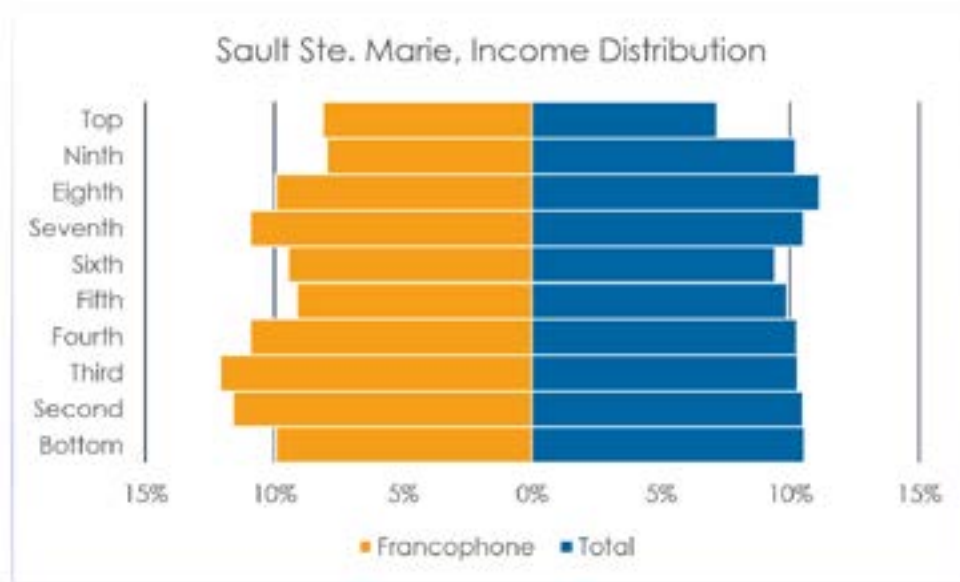
The income distribution is divided into deciles that categorize amounts of income earned. The shares of income recipients are then divided among these income deciles. If each income decile represents 10 per cent of the population, the income distribution is uniform. If there are more income recipients in the bottom half of the income distribution that means that there are more individuals earning the lowest 50 per cent of incomes than the top 50 per cent of incomes, indicating that there are fewer people earning the highest incomes. If not uniform, some degree of inequality exists.

Figure 4: Total Income Distribution, Francophones and Total Population, Algoma CD, 2015.



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

Figure 5: Total Income Distribution, Francophones and Total Population, Sault Ste. Marie, 2015.

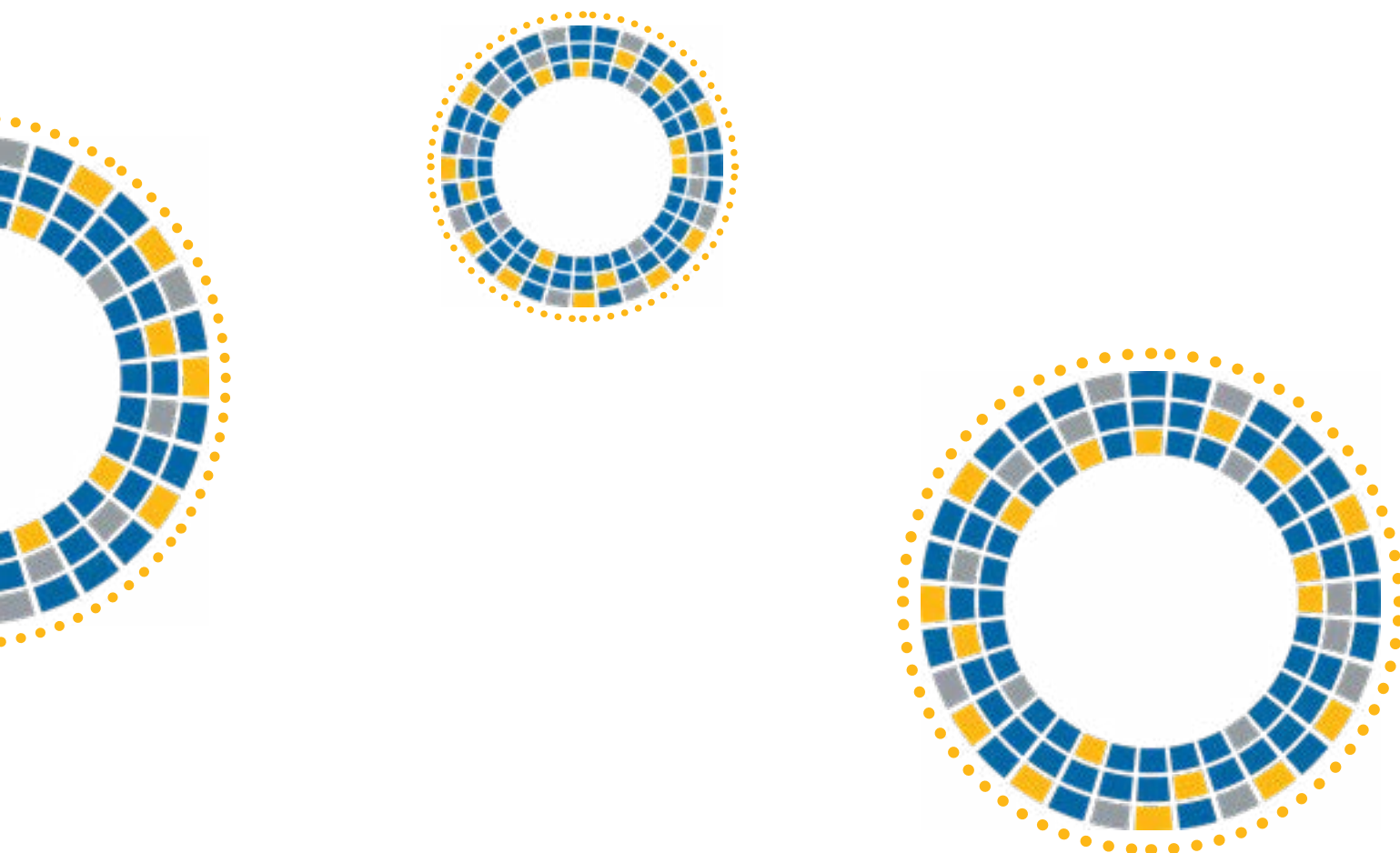


Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

Visually, it is apparent that the income distribution is more uniform in Sault Ste. Marie than in the Algoma District as a whole. With the lower population of the areas outside of Sault Ste. Marie, there is wider variation in incomes that is large enough to influence the total income distribution of the district.

In Sault Ste. Marie, the income distribution is fairly uniform for the bottom 70 per cent of total income earners. The eighth decile has a slightly higher share of individuals, while the top decile is slightly smaller, meaning that there are fewer than 10 per cent of individuals that earn the top 10 per cent of incomes. The ninth and top decile shares of the Francophone population are also smaller, while the second, third, and fourth income decile shares are higher. This indicates that the Francophone population in Sault Ste. Marie is more unequal than the total population.

For the Algoma District, which includes the areas outside of Sault Ste. Marie, the top income decile is smaller for both total and Francophone populations compared to Sault Ste. Marie. Slightly higher shares of earners in the bottom half of the income distribution for the total population illustrate that there is a greater degree of income inequality outside of Sault Ste. Marie than within. This is also more exaggerated for the Francophone population. Even though the bottom 10 per cent of incomes are earned by only 8.2 per cent of the Francophone population, the second, third, and fourth deciles have higher shares of individuals than in Sault Ste. Marie. These characteristics show that earning is more varied outside of Sault Ste. Marie. It may be the case that living in the biggest city provides more economic opportunities to a broader share of the population, while smaller municipalities can provide high incomes for relatively few but more modest incomes for much of their populations. It seems likely that the highest earners in smaller communities would be the business owners and individuals with more authority that manage larger groups of lower-paid workers. This is often the case in resource extraction industries like forestry and mining, and smaller towns are the locations for these industries in the Algoma District.



The Labour Force

The economic footprint of any community is largely related to their contributions to the local labour force. In the context of measuring economic activity, wages and salaries from employment are the largest component of gross domestic product, and the labour force activity of the Francophone community can help quantify their economic footprint. This section looks at the common metrics that measure labour force characteristics — employment and labour force participation and their associated rates, and employment by industry.

Table 7: Total Employment, Francophones and Total Population, Algoma CD, 2015.

	Francophone	Total	Francophone Share
Algoma	3,175	47,135	6.7%
Sault Ste. Marie	1,280	33,725	3.8%
Outside of SSM	1,895	13,410	14.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

In Sault Ste. Marie, Francophones compose a slightly smaller share of employment than their population share — 3.8 per cent compared to 4.2 per cent. This also causes the Francophone share of Algoma's employed population to be slightly lower. However, outside of Sault Ste. Marie, where most Francophones live, they are overrepresented among the employed population. Outside of the city, 14.1 per cent of all jobs are held by Francophones, whereas their population share is 11.7 per cent.

Table 8: Labour Force, Francophones and Total Population, Algoma CD, 2015.

	Francophone	Total CD	Francophone Share
Algoma	3,505	52,650	6.7%
Sault Ste. Marie	1,375	37,605	3.7%
Outside of SSM	2,130	15,045	14.2%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

Looking at the labour force (the population that is either employed or actively looking for work) the figures are similar to that of employment. In the Algoma District, 6.7 per cent of the labour force are Francophones, the same share of employment. Sault Ste. Marie has a slightly lower Francophone share of the labour force than total employment. Outside of Sault Ste. Marie, the Francophone share of the labour force is slightly higher. This has implications for the number of individuals who are looking for work but are unemployed. Table 9 summarizes the employment, participation, and unemployment rates.

Table 9: Labour Force Characteristics, Francophones and Total Population, Algoma CD, 2015.

	Employment Rate		Participation Rate		Unemployment Rate	
	Francophone	Total	Francophone	Total	Francophone	Total
Algoma	44.2	49.1	48.8	54.8	9.4	10.5
Sault Ste. Marie	46	51.6	50	57.5	7	10.3
Outside of SSM	42.9	43.7	48.2	49.1	11.0	10.9

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

Employment rates are lower for the Francophone population than the total population across the Algoma District. In Sault Ste. Marie, the employment rate is 46 per cent for the Francophone population and 51.6 per cent for the total population. Outside of Sault Ste. Marie, employment rates for both the Francophone and total populations are lower than in Sault Ste. Marie. The Francophone employment rate is still lower than the total population but the gap in employment rates in and outside of Sault Ste. Marie is smaller for Francophones (3.1 percentage points) than the total population (7.9 percentage points).

Employment rates are likely lower for Francophones because of a higher share of individuals over age 65, which is a common retirement age. This is also reflected in participation rates, which are 7.5 percentage points lower for Francophones than total population in Sault Ste. Marie. There is less of a gap between Sault Ste. Marie and the rest of the district in Francophone participation rates — only 1.8 percentage points.

Interestingly, unemployment rates are lower for Francophones than the total population in Sault Ste. Marie and about the same for both populations outside of the city. The unemployment rate in Sault Ste. Marie is lower for Francophones because of the lower labour force participation. This is a result of how unemployment rates are calculated by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by the labour force and not the total age 15+ population, as is done with the employment rate.

Lower labour force participation in Sault Ste. Marie can be attributed to the difference in age structures in the city and outside of it. Smaller communities have higher shares of the working-age population. Many of these individuals live in smaller communities for the work provided by the mining or forestry industries. It would not be surprising that individuals who choose to leave the workforce decide to relocate to the district's largest city, where there is a greater concentration of health and social services.



Industry Employment

Table 10 summarizes the Francophone share of industry employment. This allows for the identification of industries that have large shares of Francophone employment in Sault Ste. Marie and outside of the community. Industries in which Francophones represent a higher share of the workforce than the Francophone share of all industries combined are identified in bold.

Table 10: Francophone Shares of Employment by Industry, Algoma CD, 2015.

	Algoma	Sault Ste. Marie	Outside of SSM
All industry categories	6.6%	3.9%	12.2%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	14.0%	15.0%	13.8%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	24.0%	9.3%	28.1%
Utilities	4.8%	4.3%	5.7%
Construction	5.8%	2.7%	10.4%
Manufacturing	5.2%	3.7%	9.3%
Wholesale trade	10.3%	6.3%	20.3%
Retail trade	6.0%	3.6%	12.2%
Transportation and warehousing	8.1%	5.6%	10.9%
Information and cultural industries	5.0%	2.4%	11.1%
Finance and insurance	4.4%	1.2%	14.5%
Real estate and rental and leasing	3.9%	3.1%	6.7%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	4.7%	3.8%	7.4%
Management of companies and enterprises	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Educational services	9.1%	5.0%	18.6%
Health care and social assistance	6.4%	3.7%	11.8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	3.3%	2.5%	6.2%
Accommodation and food services	5.0%	3.0%	8.7%
Other services (except public administration)	8.4%	3.3%	19.1%
Public administration	6.4%	5.0%	8.8%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

Across the Algoma District, the Francophone workforce has the highest representation in the mining industry — 24 per cent of all individuals employed in the mining industry are Francophones. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting has the next highest representation (14 per cent), followed by wholesale trade (10.3 per cent), educational services (9.1 per cent), other services (except public administration) (8.4 per cent), and transportation and warehousing (8.1 per cent).

There is some variation in concentration by location. For example, 9.3 per cent of those employed in the mining industry in Sault Ste. Marie are Francophones, but this figure is 28.1 per cent outside of Sault Ste. Marie. This is not surprising, as there are several copper, iron, uranium, and gold mines located outside of Sault Ste. Marie that are major employers in smaller municipalities with large Francophone communities (mindat.org). For example, the largest employer in Dubreuilville is the mining industry, where 85 out of 170 workers are employed. The mining sector provides well-paying jobs for its workers, which helps explain the higher average income among Francophones outside of Sault Ste. Marie.

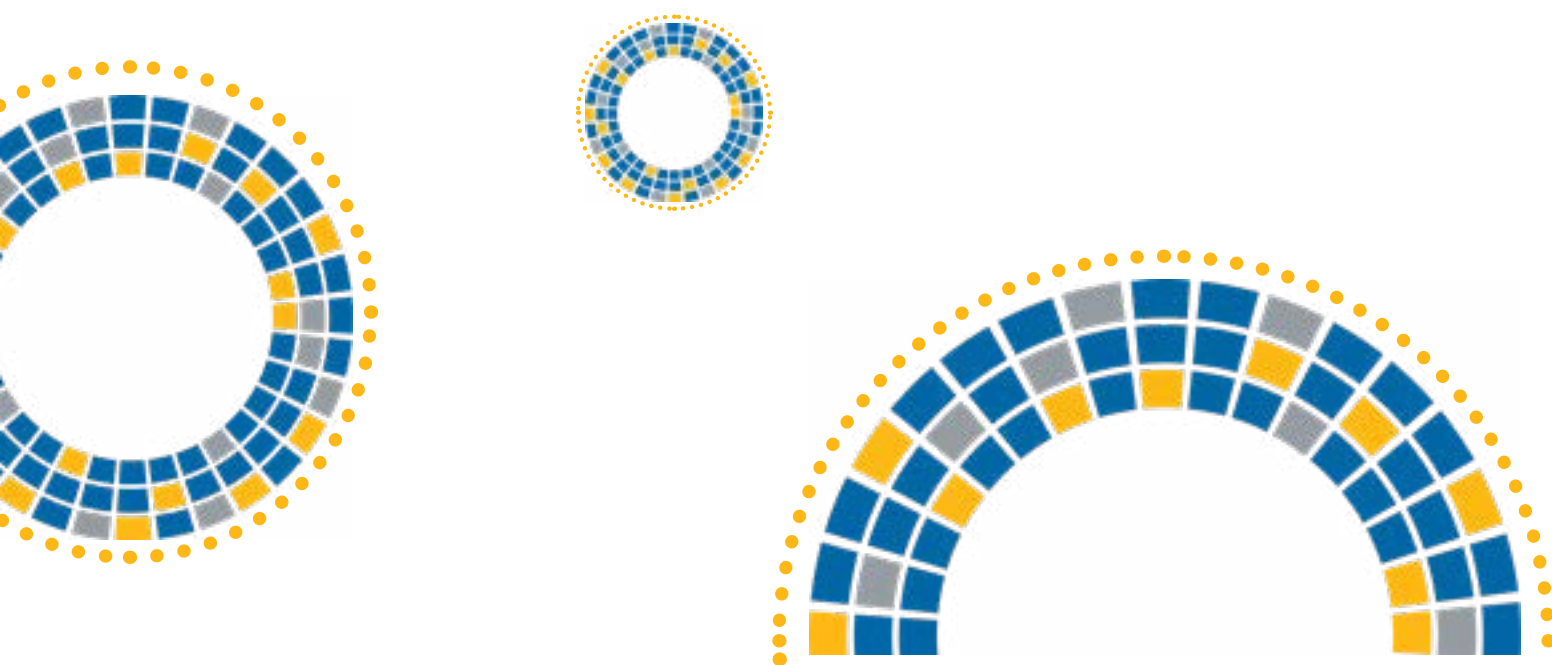
It is a similar story for forestry and agriculture. The forestry industry is not what it once was, but the location of towns and townships in the lushly forested areas north of Sault Ste. Marie make it no surprise that forestry is a major employer in communities that have many Francophones.

Relatively high shares of the wholesale trade industry are Francophone, particularly outside of Sault Ste. Marie, where 20.3 per cent of the workforce is Francophone. Wholesale trade generally has higher wages than retail trade (Statistics Canada), which can help explain the higher average wages among Francophones outside of Sault Ste. Marie.

Francophones are also overrepresented in educational services, especially outside of Sault Ste. Marie. This is likely related to the demand for French-language teaching staff in municipalities with large Francophone communities. In this instance, individuals with French as their first language are uniquely qualified to deliver educational services in French. In this regard, Francophones contribute to the continual economic success of the Francophone community through education.

Overall, certain industries have strong Francophone representation for one logical reason: towns with sizeable Francophone communities that are outside of Sault Ste. Marie happen to be sustained by a local industry. This is rather common throughout Northern Ontario. Most communities were originally founded to house workers in industries related to resource extraction or transportation. The predominantly Francophone community Dubreuilville was originally founded for forestry workers, and the community now sees many of its members employed by the mining industry.

Even in Sault Ste. Marie, the largest city in the Algoma District, Francophones make outsized contributions to the local economy through their role in certain sectors. The tremendous value that Francophones add to the economy of the Algoma District is a testament to their rich history and unique language skills.



Looking Forward



We have seen that Francophones make sizeable contributions to the Algoma District's population, labour force, and overall economic activity. But with an already-older population in 2006, the Francophone population has continued to age with little replacement in the form of births or in-migration. This poses challenges to the future of Algoma's Francophone community and the French-language services that support them. But it is not all gloomy.

A promising development has been the increase in young people that are bilingual. Although there are very few young Francophones — individuals with French as a mother tongue or their language spoken at home — there are far more young people with knowledge of English and French. Available census data show that 14.6 per cent of Algoma's under-25 population is bilingual, as opposed to 4 per cent that are Francophones. Enrolment in French immersion has significantly increased the number of young French-speakers over the past two decades.

Table 11: Age Structure of Bilingual, Francophone, Total Population of Algoma District

	Bilingual	Francophones	Total	% Bilingual	% Francophone
Total	13,680	7,730	112,055	12.2%	6.9%
0-14	2,230	545	16,000	13.9%	3.4%
15-24	1,870	575	12,035	15.5%	4.8%
25-34	1,480	470	11,735	12.6%	4.0%
35-44	1,575	700	11,645	13.5%	6.0%
45-54	1,695	1,190	15,715	10.8%	7.6%
55-64	2,155	1,830	19,555	11.0%	9.4%
65+	2,670	2,415	25,360	10.5%	9.5%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles, 2016 Francophone Target Group Profile, 2016 Knowledge of Official Languages Target Group Profile (Community Data Program).

Having a young population that speaks French and English bodes well for the future of Algoma's French-speaking community. Being bilingual makes job applicants more competitive by allowing them to qualify for positions where their knowledge of French is coveted by employers (Government of Canada, 2016). Such young people who are aware of the benefits of being bilingual could be more likely to enroll their children in French immersion, so they also enjoy these benefits. Having a significant portion of the population that speaks French, and having services provided in French, would also make the Algoma District an attractive destination for French-speaking newcomers, either from Quebec, elsewhere in Canada, or from abroad.

It seems the best opportunity for the proliferation of the Algoma District's Francophone community is to continue to encourage enrolment in French immersion or French primary-language education. If birth rates are low among Francophones, the next best thing would be to increase the number of young people that learn French. This is not dependent on birth rates and can help to foster an environment that is welcoming to Francophone immigrants.

Conclusion

The Algoma District's Francophone community is a significant minority, but its economic footprint is anything but trivial. Representing just 6.9 per cent of the district's 2016 population, Francophones earned \$280.48 million dollars in income. Of that, \$171.23 million was earned by the 4,715 Francophones living outside of Sault Ste. Marie. However, with 70.4 per cent of Algoma's Francophone population being over age 45, coupled with low birth rates and high out-migration among the younger generations, their economic footprint is poised to shrink in the coming decades.

Despite 31.2 per cent of Algoma's Francophones being over age 65, 6.7 per cent of Algoma's workforce was Francophone in 2015. Outside of Sault Ste. Marie, this figure was 14.2 per cent. The Francophone population had a lower unemployment rate than the total population — 9.4 per cent versus 10.5 per cent. It was lowest in Sault Ste. Marie, where it was 7 per cent, reflecting the special demand for French-speakers.

Outside of Sault Ste. Marie, Francophones made up 12.2 per cent of all industry employment, but Francophones were heavily overrepresented in a few industries, namely mining, forestry, wholesale trade, education, and transportation. Their heavy involvement in industries that dominate local economies means that their social and economic footprint goes far beyond what their population figures would suggest. This is especially true in the smaller municipalities like Elliot Lake, Blind River, Wawa, Hornepayne, and, most significantly, Dubreuilville. The Francophonie has been, and continues to be, an integral part of the social and economic fabric that sustains life in the communities throughout the Algoma District.

Although there are relatively few young Francophones, there has been an increase in the number of young people that are bilingual. Enrolment in French immersion education has led to large shares of Algoma's under-25 population having knowledge of French and English. This bodes well for the future of Algoma's French-speaking community, as those that speak French may be more likely to enroll their children in French immersion. Having high shares of French-speaking individuals makes the district a more appealing destination for potential Francophone newcomers, both domestic and international.

Given that the 2022 census has not yet been conducted at the time of this paper's publication, there will soon be up-to-date data on the Francophone community available. With this paper quantifying the economic impact of the Algoma District's Francophone community in 2015, the new census opens the door for further analysis. As the census will gather income and labour market information for 2020, there are many research possibilities that can build on the findings presented here. In addition to observing changes in total income, and the Francophone share of the local labour force, it would be possible to evaluate how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Francophone population of the Algoma District. It may be that the pandemic's labour market fallout disproportionately impacted Francophones living in small municipalities, or that they were largely insulated from these effects due to the strong performance of the mining and forestry industries. By measuring attributes of the Francophone community in 2015, this paper serves as a benchmark for future analyses of Algoma's Francophones.



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