
Who are the French Canadians?

The French Canadians are descendants of the French colonists who came to North America in the 17th and 18th centuries. Mostly concentrated in the province of Quebec, they have also migrated into the United States mainly into the Mississippi River Valley with high concentrations in Louisiana and the Northeast. The French Canadians are primarily Roman Catholic but because of the “Quiet Revolution” of the 1960s and the secularization that occurred, much of the influence of Catholicism has declined and has led to a drop in church attendance.



Population in North America:

7.5 million in Canada
2.4 million in the U.S.

Languages Spoken by French Canadians:

Quebec French
Canadian English
American English

Top Locations with Highest Population of French Canadians in North America:

Quebec
Maritime Provinces
Ontario
Louisiana
Maine
Massachusetts

What is their heritage?

The first French in Canada were explorers and Jesuit missionaries. As they settled they became farmers and loggers. Some tension has existed historically between French immigrants and French Canadians because French immigrants tended to be well-educated while most of the first French Canadian immigrants were farmers and received little if any formal education. Small groups or individuals of French Canadian descent settled in the U.S. after the major periods of exploration in the 17th century. Some fled the aftermath of the Patriot Rebellion of 1837, when hostility toward the French was high. The influx of French Canadians into the U.S. in the years following the American Civil War resulted from the initiative of American businessmen to expand the textile and shoe industries. The French Canadians in America sought to build a sense of community much like what they were used to in Canada. It centered on a parish church and school and combined both the nuclear family and the extended family. French Canadians became a minority in Canada by the 1850s. Even though they became a minority they were essential in the formation of Canada's government. Today, French is one of Canada's two official languages and it is the only official language of Quebec.

“Currently, most French Canadians do not practice any religion.”

What are their beliefs?

Historically, French Canadians were staunch Roman Catholics. This did not change when they immigrated to the U.S. The church was an integral part of the early settlements and often the priest acted as counselor in secular matters as well as spiritual leader. In the U.S., some French Catholics converted to Protestantism. Currently, most French Canadians do not practice any religion. In general, however, those in Quebec are the least observant, while those in the U.S. and other places away from Quebec tend to be the most observant.

How can we pray?

- Pray that God will lay a specific concern for these people on the hearts of your church members.
- Pray for the existing gospel-centered churches in Canada to continue to try and reach the lost.
- Pray that the secular attitude of Canada will diminish and they will see their need for Christ and that people will see God at work in the world around them.
- Pray that God will break through the traditional Catholic mindset of the French Canadians and they will see their need of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Pray for opportunities to live and share your faith with French Canadians.

What can my church do?



Endvisioning — beginning with the end in mind

- Conduct a Peoples Search (available from the North American Mission Board, SBC) and do other investigative work to locate French Canadians in your community and beyond.
- Continuously monitor public events or needs that surface among the French Canadians for new ministry opportunities.
- Spend time walking among the French Canadians, looking specifically for things you find there that can be celebrated and actually facilitate a bridge to church planting.
- Go forward expecting to reach French Canadians with the gospel, making disciples in their own community. Inviting them to your church is okay, but it is better to help them form an indigenous French Canadian fellowship that can become a church.
- Intentionally launch with the intention of starting churches that multiply.
- Identify existing resources, including language learning opportunities or believers who can serve as Christian translators.

Prayer — focusing on the people as well as calling out workers to the harvest

- Produce a prayer calendar for 30 days of praying and have Sunday School classes or small groups choose a different month to use the guide so that praying covers an entire year.
- Identify and become a part of existing prayer networks.
- From the relationships you have developed, begin praying specifically by name for people to come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Networking for Evangelism — identifying relationships

- Get out into your community and ask questions of French Canadians to get to know them and learn from them.
- Develop a specific evangelistic ministry for tourists and other short-term visitors (traveling Christian businessmen or students, for instance), especially for those going to Canada.
- Explore possible outreach events on college campuses.

Starting Small Groups — that can become churches

- Be intentional about making disciples that know how to witness and start new small groups.
- Train members of your church to start and lead highly relational small groups that can become churches.
- Evangelize groups of people that can keep gathering in small groups.
- Identify existing gatherings of French Canadians and join in whenever they meet. (Examples: sports teams, cultural group, family group, classes, etc.) Look for opportunities to offer to lead a spiritual discussion or a Bible study within the group at a separate time.

Leadership Training — identifying and equipping

- Have a plan and a strategy ready for the potential new leaders you will have to train.
- Identify and equip those in newly formed small groups to become the pastor.
- Train other leaders in the group for specific ministries as the new church is formed.
- Involve other Christians who have some cultural or language connections with French Canadians in a long-term mentoring relationship.
- Model lifestyle learning behaviors.

Scripture

- Help provide Bible knowledge through home Bible studies.
- Provide the Scriptures in French in both written and audio forms.
- Learn Bible storying methods to conduct Bible studies in an oral format that is highly reproducible.

(continued page 4)

What can my church do? (cont'd)

Communications

- Network with others reaching French Canadians to learn from them and encourage one another.
- Provide ESL classes where needed.
- Look for cultural events to attend and help promote.

Mobilization

- Recruit Christian teachers from other people or places to relocate into communities that are least-reached or under-reached.
 - Stay aware of current events in Canada and be ready to reach out to the French Canadians when they are most in need of help.
 - Be creative and flexible in thinking up ways to reach the French Canadians with the gospel.
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www.peoplegroups.info

If you cannot locate this people group in your community, find them online at

www.peoplegroups.info, a site sponsored by the North American Mission Board, SBC.

What are their needs?

French Canadians need to know that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Those with a Catholic background need to know that they have access to God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ and not Mary. Those who have no religious ties need to know the gospel. They need friends that will listen to them and build relationships with them. There is a lot of stress and tension in their lives.

What is keeping the gospel from them?

The strong ties to the Catholic religion keep many from the truth of the gospel and salvation by faith, not works. The lack of religion for some French Canadians also keeps them from the gospel, as they do not believe they have a need for God in their lives. Materialism and secularism are also keeping them from exposure to the gospel. Many evangelical believers do not speak the French of French Canadians. Learning their heart language creates a barrier that must be crossed.

Information may be updated by writing peoplegroups@namb.net.

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