

Franco-Americans in Maine: Statistics from the American Community Survey

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Introduction:

As per the request of the State of Maine Legislative Franco-American Task Force, the following is an analysis of the Franco-American population in Maine from data collected by the United States Census Bureau. Before proceeding to analysis of the data, a few considerations must be highlighted.

About the American Community Survey:

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an annual survey conducted by the US Census Bureau to provide a broader snapshot of American life than is possible through the decennial census. The statistics gathered by the ACS are used by Congress and other agencies to determine the needs of Federal, State and local populations and agencies. The ACS is collected from randomly selected populations in every state to provide estimates which reflect American society as a whole.

The data for this report was taken from the ACS using the online tool of the US Census Bureau, American Factfinder, <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>. For the State of Maine, the Census Bureau has produced 1-year estimates extrapolated from the 2010 survey (longer-term estimates are available for smaller population units (e.g. at the county or municipal level). Although the ACS surveys all Americans, the website allows users to filter data by several categories, including ancestry and ethnic origin, thus allowing a comprehensive picture of the Franco population. Where possible, I have added US Census Bureau data on Maine as a whole, for comparison.

'French' and 'French Canadian':

The US Census Bureau's ACS poses the question "What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?" It is important to note that the ACS question has several limitations. The most important is that the ACS does not provide discrete answers from which the respondent can choose. Because the question is open-ended, respondents to the ACS in Maine are divided between those who selected 'French' as their ancestry and those who selected 'French Canadian.' Since respondents who identified as French outnumber those who identified as French Canadian by a ratio of more than 2:1, it can be reasonably surmised that many of the 'French' respondents were, in fact, of French-Canadian origin.

Therefore, this report will include aggregated statistics of those respondents who identified as either French or French Canadian. The data will necessarily include both Franco-Americans and French-Americans (a distinction which the Taskforce may or may not wish to draw), but it is reasonable to assume that the proportion of respondents who are immigrants (or descendents of immigrants) from, France is small.

A second issue raised by the use of ACS data is that it depends on respondents to self-identify as Franco-Americans. Therefore, this data can only be said to refer to self-identifying Franco-Americans. On the other hand, one could argue that any survey of an ethnic group would have this limitation.

Additionally, respondents were only permitted to choose a single ancestry or ethnic group in response to this question. So the data necessarily excludes the population of mixed Franco ancestry, most

notably those who may identify more strongly as Irish-Americans or Métis (mixed French and American Indian).

For simplicity, I will use the data for the combined 'French' and 'French Canadian' responses, referring to them below as 'Franco-Americans'

Data for non Franco-Americans was calculated by subtracting the numbers for 'French' and 'French Canadian' respondents from the numbers reported for all Mainers.

Highlights:

The ACS divides its data into several demographic, social and economic categories. In many of these, it can be seen that Franco-Americans are not significantly different than Mainers as a whole. However, there are several points of data which bear highlighting. Charts and tables for these data are each included in the appendix.

Demographics

Those who responded as Franco-Americans numbered 321,994; of which 220,994 (16.6%) responded as 'French', and 101,004 (7.6%) as 'French Canadian'. This represents 24.3% of Maine's population – the largest single ethnic group in the state (those identifying themselves as 'English' comprised 21.6%; 'Irish' 17.5%, and 'American' 8.2%)

Franco-Americans are younger than non-Francos. Maine's median age in 2010 was 42.7 years; Franco-Americans had a median age of 39.1 years, significantly lower than that of non-Francos, which was 43.7 years. This is despite an older audience for Franco-American events and outreach programs.

This statistic may be attributed to a slightly higher birth rate among Franco-Americans (see 'family' below). In addition, it seems likely that younger people, and those with children, are more likely to identify as being Franco-American.

Family

The average family size for Franco-Americans is slightly larger than that of other Mainers. Contrary to historical trends, Franco-American families are now of similar sizes to the average – Franco families contain an average of 2.91 people, while the state-wide average is 2.90 (there is a margin of error of 0.13).

Catholic traditions appear to be similarly in decline when we consider marital status – Franco-Americans are neither more nor less likely to be divorced than Mainers as a group. 14.1% of Franco-Americans were divorced, compared to 13.7% of Mainers as a group – once again, this is within the margin of error (of 2.11%).

The fertility rate is slightly higher among Franco-Americans women. Of all women aged 15 to 50, 5.35% had given birth in the past year, compared to 4.62% of Mainers as a whole. This would seem to reinforce the impression given by the marginally larger family size for Franco-Americans.

It is also possible that Franco-Americans are more likely to give birth while unmarried – 43.3% of births were to unmarried couples, as opposed to 36.6% of births among all Maine couples. However, this finding is problematic, due to the high margin of error in these statistics (16.5%, due to a very small sample size).

Education and Employment

In several categories, Franco Americans under-perform educationally compared to Mainers as a group. Franco-Americans are especially less likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher qualification. Only 21.1% of Francos hold such qualifications, compared to 28.5% of all Mainers.

However, the data for educational enrollment reveals that Franco-Americans are not significantly less likely to be *currently* enrolled in education at the college level – 27.9% compared to 28.2% - which suggests that this deficit in college education is a hang-over from an earlier era in which college enrollment was low among Francos.

In terms of employment, Francos reflect the trends of the state as a whole. The exception is that Franco-Americans are slightly less likely to be engaged in management, business or service occupations, and more likely to be involved in sales, production, and natural resource-based occupations. This may be a reflection of the general lack of education among Franco-Americans.

Reflecting historical trends, Franco-Americans are slightly more likely to be engaged in farming or manufacturing than their peers statewide. The increased proportion of Francos engaged in farming, agriculture and fishing may be a result of the clustering of Franco populations in the Saint John Valley in rural Aroostook County. The marginally larger proportion of Francos engaged in manufacturing reflects a real change from historical trends, in which these jobs were the mainstay of the community. This is probably the consequence of the general decline in manufacturing in the state – it now represents only 8.8% of all jobs; 10.5% of Franco occupations (within the margins of error).

Franco-Americans are more likely to remain in the labor force than non-Francos. 36.2% of non-Francos aged 16 and over were out of the labor force in 2012; for Francos this figure was only 33.2%. Franco-Americans are more likely to be employed (61.1% of the over-16 population) or unemployed (5.6%) compared to non-Francos (58.2% and 5.2% respectively). This is probably accounted for by the lower median age of Franco-Americans, but perhaps also by a stronger work ethic and reluctance to fully retire.

Mean earnings for Franco-Americans are lower, but comparable to those of Mainers - \$58,014 to \$61,648 – while the Median household income is higher among Franco-Americans. This represents a relatively small number of low-earning Franco-Americans skewing the mean earnings negatively. The higher median income shows that in many cases, Franco-Americans earn a little more than their peers in other Maine communities.

Mean retirement income and social security income is lower for Francos. Retired Franco-Americans earn \$16,164 compared to Mainers' \$19,984, or 80.9%. This reflects an historical trend towards lower earnings for Franco-Americans, which adversely affected their Social Security contributions.

Immigration

Contrary to their history as an immigrant group, Franco-Americans more likely to be native-born as other Mainers. 98.5% of Franco-Americans were native-born Americans, as were 95.9% of all Mainers.

Among the foreign-born Franco population, Franco-Americans are more likely to be naturalized. 66% of foreign-born Francos are naturalized, compared to 55% of other foreign-born Mainers. This is explainable due to Canadians' proficiency with English, and the length of stay of most Franco immigrants.

Franco-American immigration is mostly an historic phenomenon. As above, only 1.48% of all Franco-Americans are foreign-born; and these 4,778 immigrants represent just 10.5% of the total number of foreign-born Mainers. The data also show that 88.0% of Franco immigrants arrived in the United States before 1990.

Language

The French language is no longer central to Franco identity. Of those 5 years and older, who identified as Franco-American, only 12.3% of respondents said that they spoke a language other than English, presumably French. Furthermore, only 2.3% of respondents reported that they spoke English 'less than very well' (i.e. were monolingual Francophones). This still reflects a greater openness to foreign languages than non-Francos, 4.9% of whom speak a language other than English, and 1.5% of whom speak English 'less than very well'.

Conclusions

The findings from this analysis of the 2010 American Community Survey refute a number of preconceptions and stereotypes that are widely held among the non-Franco community. By and large, they also show deviations from historical trends among the Franco community, especially in regards to family, work and language. However, the data do highlight that access to education, especially adult education, is still a concern in this community.

Given that the US Census bureau is forbidden from asking questions about a person's religious convictions, this is perhaps the biggest omission from this analysis. Although trends in family life suggest a decline in the religiosity of many Francos and a decline in the influence of the Catholic Church, further study is needed to confirm this suspicion. It would also be helpful to study the effects of some of these changes to Franco society, especially their political affiliations. Overall, however, the study shows that self-identified Franco-Americans are still a significant group in the state, and one that is economically and demographically vibrant.

Appendix: Charts and Tables

Demographics

Table 1 - Ancestry of Maine Population, 2010

Ancestry	Estimate
Total population	1,327,567
English	21.60%
Irish	17.50%
French (except Basque)	16.60%
American	8.20%
French Canadian	7.60%
German	7.50%
Italian	5.60%
Scottish	5.40%
Polish	2.10%
Scandanavian (Swedish, Norwegian, Danish)	3.10%
Scotch-Irish	1.70%
Subsaharan African	0.60%
Other	5%

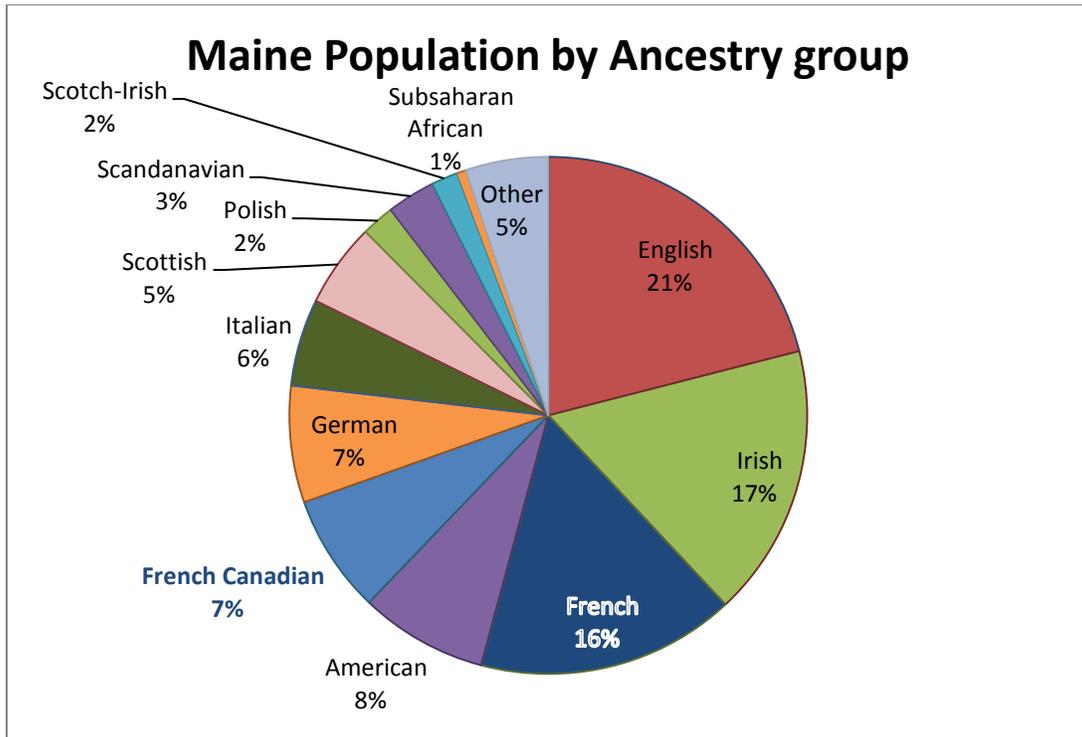
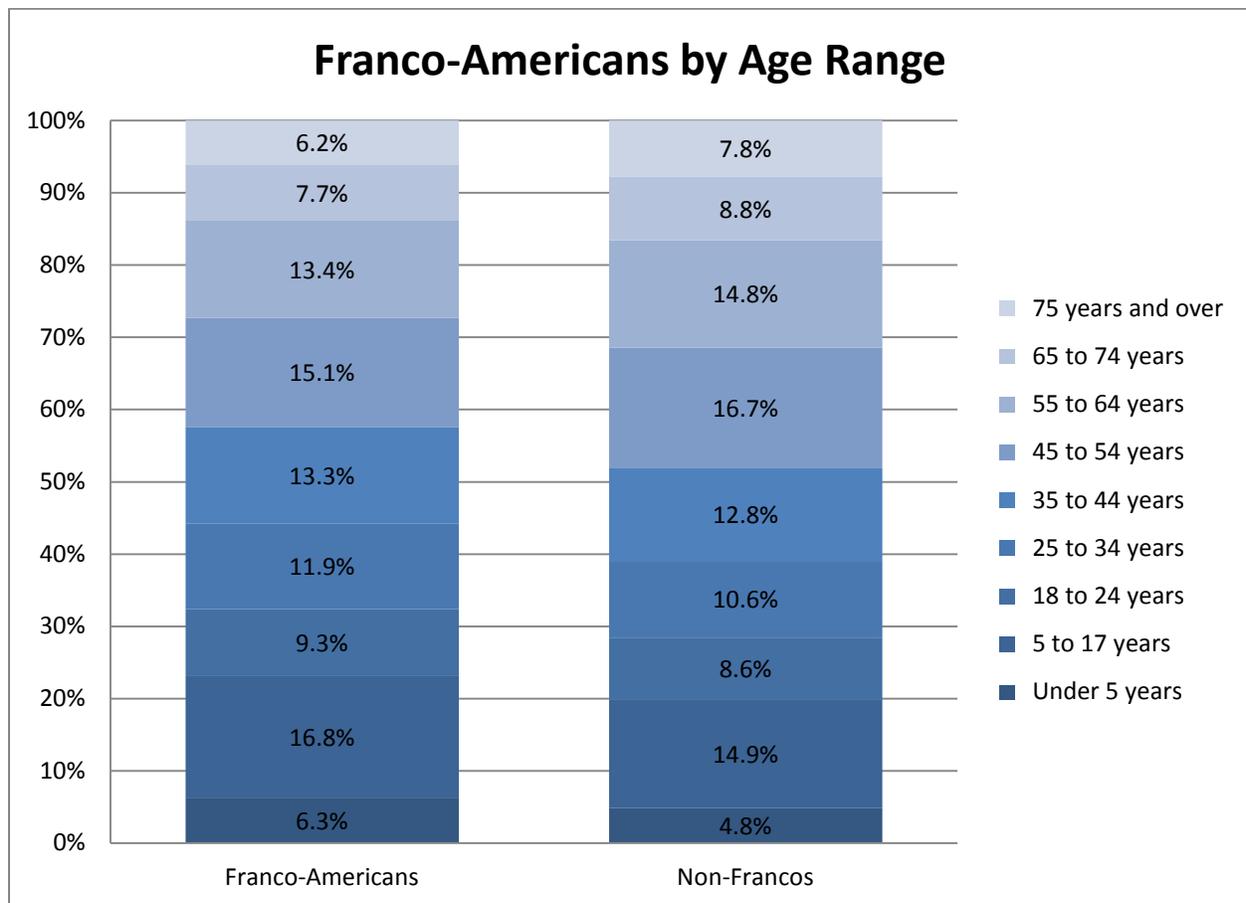


Table 2 - Age of Maine's Franco-American Population, 2010

SEX AND AGE	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Total population	321994	10603	1005573	10603
Male	47.9%	2.47	49.2%	2.47
Female	52.1%	2.47	50.8%	2.47
Under 5 years	6.3%	1.48	4.8%	1.48
5 to 17 years	16.8%	2.00	14.9%	2.00
18 to 24 years	9.3%	1.70	8.6%	1.71
25 to 34 years	11.9%	1.75	10.6%	1.75
35 to 44 years	13.3%	1.80	12.8%	1.81
45 to 54 years	15.1%	2.11	16.7%	2.11
55 to 64 years	13.4%	1.89	14.8%	1.89
65 to 74 years	7.7%	1.44	8.8%	1.45
75 years and over	6.2%	1.22	7.8%	1.22
Median age (years)	39.1		43.7	



Family

Table 3 - Household Sizes of Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Households	131031	5298	414386	7692
With own children under 18 years	27.3%	2.94	24.7%	3.05
Average household size	2.38	0.11	2.37	0.11
Average family size	2.91	0.13	2.90	0.13

Table 4 - Marital Status of Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

MARITAL STATUS	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Population 15 years and over	260158	8098	844597	8213
Now married, except separated	50.2%	3.19	51.0%	3.29
Widowed	6.1%	1.36	6.6%	1.39
Divorced	14.1%	2.05	13.7%	2.11
Separated	1.3%	0.72	1.4%	0.75
Never married	28.5%	2.72	27.2%	2.79

Table 5 - Fertility of Maine's Franco-Americans

FERTILITY	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Women 15 to 50 years	80452	3534	227764	3978
Women 15 to 50 years who had a birth in the past 12 months	4305	1005	9939	2159
Fertility Rate	5.35%	1.25%	4.36%	0.95%
Unmarried women 15 to 50 years who had a birth in the past 12 months	1865	710	3636	1445
As a percent of all women with a birth in the past 12 months	43.3%	16.50%	36.6%	14.54%

Education and Employment

Table 6 - Educational Attainment of Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Population 25 years and over	217631	7393	719383	7598
Less than high school diploma	11.5%	2.19	9.1%	2.25
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	36.8%	3.47	33.7%	3.56
Some college or associate's degree	30.4%	3.24	28.7%	3.32
Bachelor's degree	14.9%	2.78	18.0%	2.84
Graduate or professional degree	6.3%	1.50	10.5%	1.58
High school graduate or higher	88.5%	2.19	90.9%	2.25
Bachelor's degree or higher	21.1%	3.28	28.5%	3.35

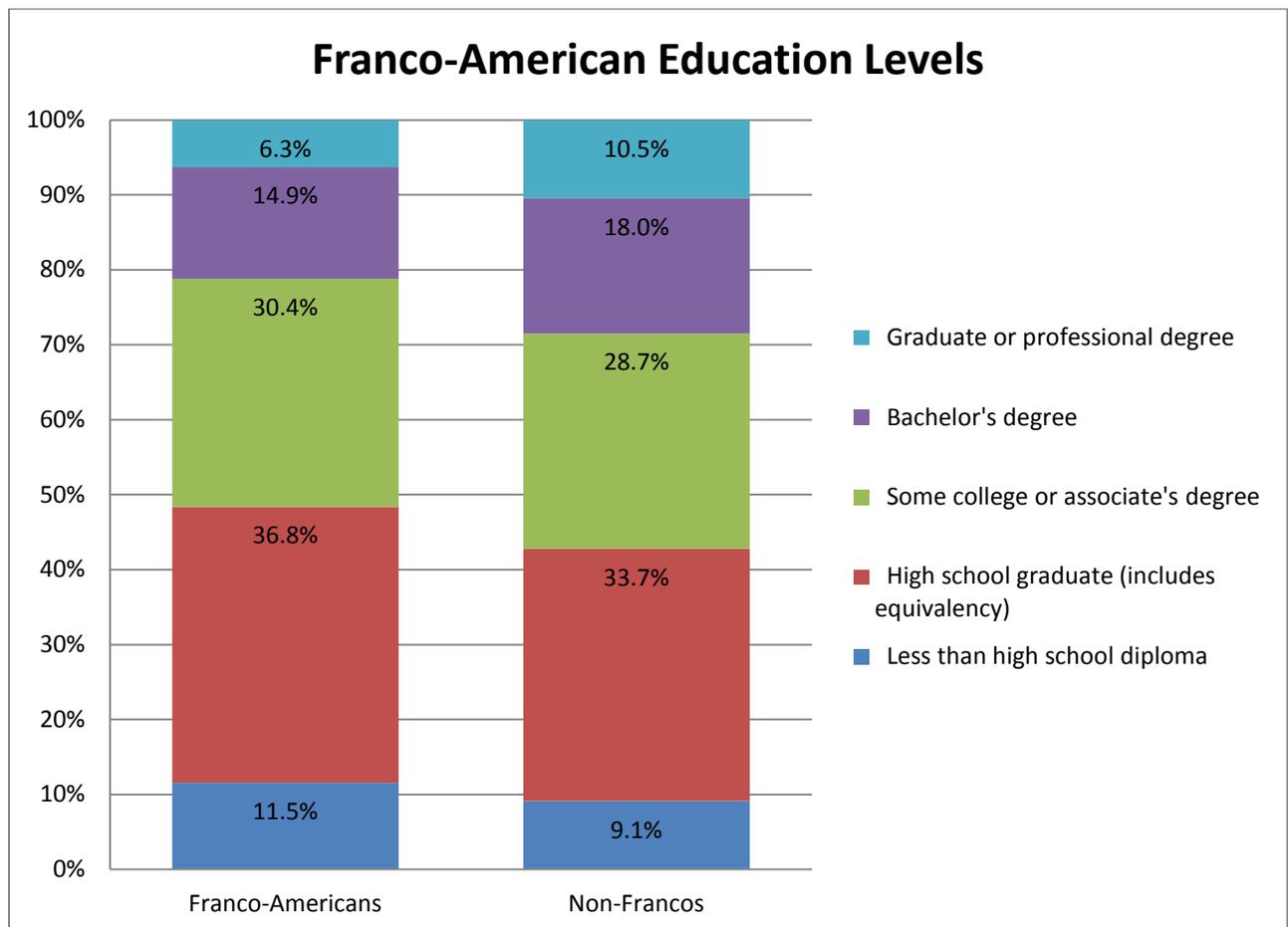


Table 7 - Occupations of Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

OCCUPATION	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	156264	5939	485401	8915
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	32.7%	4.00	36.9%	4.12
Service occupations	17.2%	2.69	17.9%	2.81
Sales and office occupations	25.7%	3.69	23.2%	3.77
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	11.8%	2.34	10.6%	2.42
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12.7%	2.55	11.4%	2.60
Male civilian employed population 16 years and over	75438	4163	244791	6433
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	27.2%	5.30	31.6%	5.43
Service occupations	11.5%	3.66	13.5%	3.77
Sales and office occupations	17.5%	4.52	17.1%	4.61
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	23.7%	4.39	19.9%	4.53
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	20.2%	4.61	17.8%	4.72
Female civilian employed population 16 years and over	80826	3830	240610	5668
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	37.8%	5.35	42.3%	5.53
Service occupations	22.6%	3.91	22.3%	4.12
Sales and office occupations	33.3%	5.17	29.3%	5.33
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	0.7%	1.24	1.1%	1.25
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	5.6%	2.56	4.9%	2.61

Table 8 - Industry of Employment of Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

INDUSTRY	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	156264	5939	485401	8915
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.6%	0.64	2.7%	0.67
Construction	7.3%	1.91	6.5%	1.97
Manufacturing	10.5%	2.56	8.8%	2.60
Wholesale trade	2.7%	1.71	2.7%	1.73
Retail trade	15.1%	2.86	12.5%	2.92
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	3.0%	1.28	4.0%	1.34
Information	1.7%	1.14	2.0%	1.18
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	6.9%	2.08	6.0%	2.12
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	7.5%	2.25	9.3%	2.33
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	27.7%	3.66	28.4%	3.75
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	7.7%	2.22	8.5%	2.30
Other services (except public administration)	4.5%	1.35	4.2%	1.38
Public administration	3.8%	1.42	4.6%	1.48

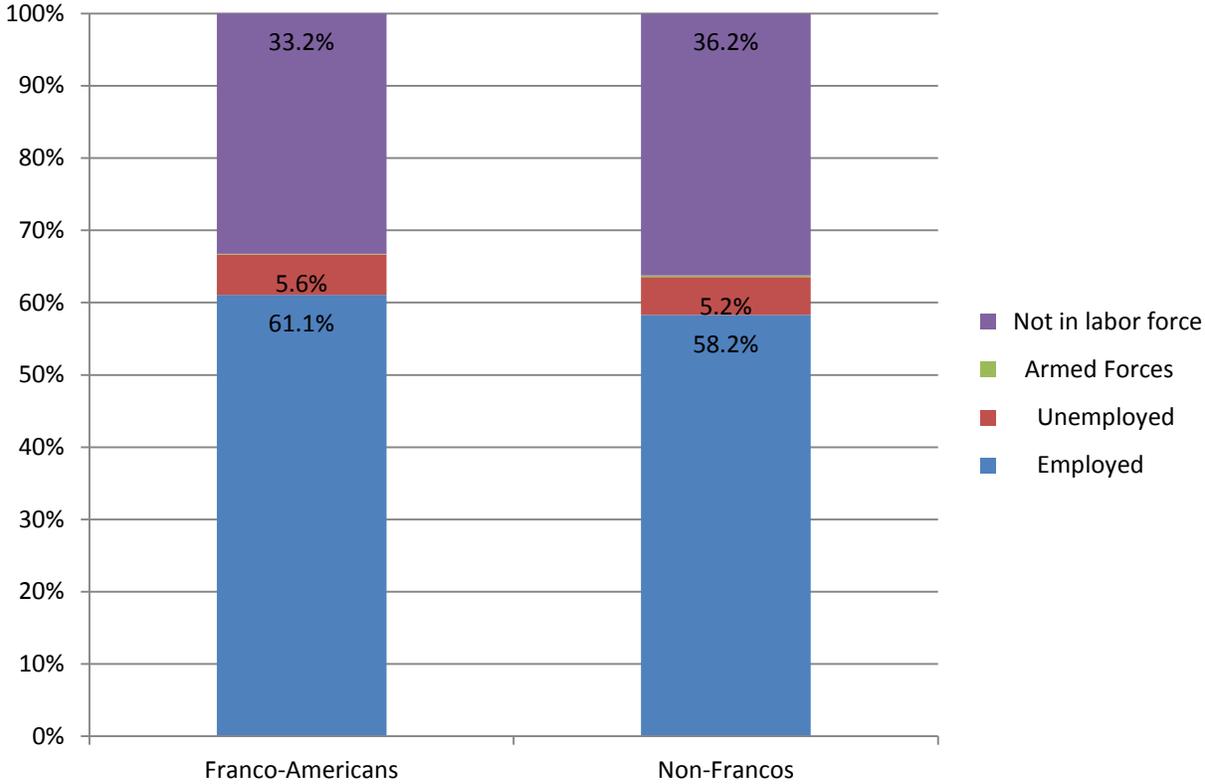
Table 9 - Income over the past 12 months of Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

INCOME	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	Moe
Total:	135543	2415	409874	6077
Less than \$10,000	9344	625	29421	2427
\$10,000 to \$14,999	8476	561	29735	3191
\$15,000 to \$19,999	8267	610	24163	2792
\$20,000 to \$24,999	7925	596	27939	2830
\$25,000 to \$29,999	7563	542	25370	2633
\$30,000 to \$34,999	7789	560	22308	2803
\$35,000 to \$39,999	7705	564	22542	2550
\$40,000 to \$44,999	7092	527	22732	2359
\$45,000 to \$49,999	6917	553	16926	2125
\$50,000 to \$59,999	11903	665	32299	3373
\$60,000 to \$74,999	16066	815	48659	3583
\$75,000 to \$99,999	18125	782	46518	3457
\$100,000 to \$124,999	9131	580	25693	2442
\$125,000 to \$149,999	4010	392	14422	1999
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2988	337	12479	2003
\$200,000 or more	2242	292	8668	1250
Median Income	\$42,610		\$40,215	
Mean Income	\$58,014		\$61,648	

Table 10 - Employment Status of Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Population 16 years and over	255929	8024	832676	8240
In labor force	66.8%	2.72	63.8%	2.79
Civilian labor force	66.7%	2.72	63.6%	2.79
Employed	61.1%	2.72	58.2%	2.79
Unemployed	5.6%	1.28	5.2%	1.32
Percent of civilian labor force	8.5%	1.84	8.2%	1.91
Armed Forces	0.1%	0.14	0.2%	0.17
Not in labor force	33.2%	2.72	36.2%	2.79

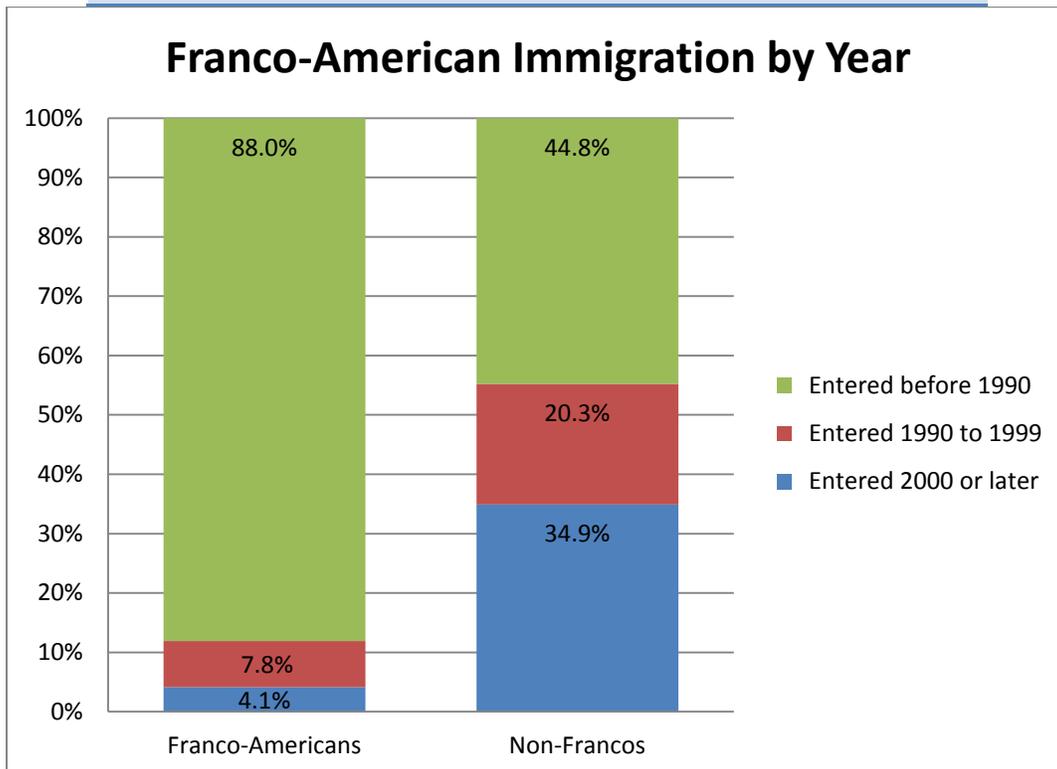
Employment status



Immigration

Table 11 - Immigration Status of Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

IMMIGRATION STATUS	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Native	317216	10409	964685	10871
Male	48.0%	2.47	49.4%	2.47
Female	52.0%	2.47	50.6%	2.47
Foreign born	4778	942	40888	3274
As a percentage	1.5%		4.1%	
Male	38.4%	18.03	42.3%	18.25
Female	61.6%	18.03	57.7%	18.25
Foreign born; naturalized U.S. citizen	3155	745	22692	2411
As a percentage	66%		55%	
Male	38.3%	22.13	43.0%	22.42
Female	61.7%	22.13	57.0%	22.42
Foreign born; not a U.S. citizen	1623	579	18196	2384
Male	38.5%	32.74	41.4%	33.21
Female	61.5%	32.74	58.6%	33.21
Population born outside the United States	4778	942	40888	3274
Entered 2000 or later	4.1%	7.14	34.9%	7.99
Entered 1990 to 1999	7.8%	9.71	20.3%	10.46
Entered before 1990	88.0%	11.81	44.8%	12.57



Language

Table 12 - Languages Spoken by Maine's Franco-Americans, 2010

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME AND ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH	Franco-Americans		Non-Francos	
	Estimate	MoE	Estimate	MoE
Population 5 years and over	301689	9729	957308	9787
English only	87.7%	2.55	95.1%	2.58
Language other than English	12.3%	2.55	4.9%	2.58
Speak English less than "very well"	2.3%	1.26	1.5%	1.28

