

WHY FRENCH IS AWESOME !

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Please email updates or corrections to Jon Shee at sheej@stlukesct.org. Last updated Aug 2025.

⇒ Who is speaking and learning French? ⇐

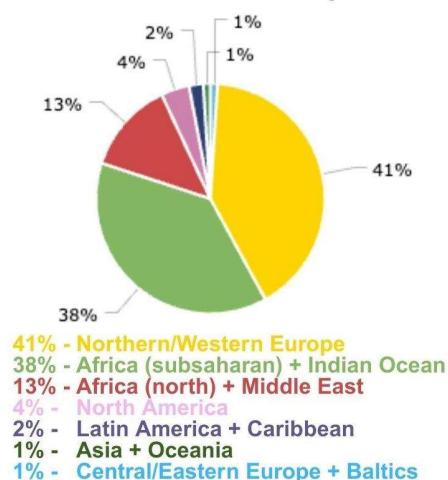
French is spoken by over **321 million people** worldwide, on all continents, with **255 million daily speakers**. (2025)^{**} (Many more stats [HERE](#).)

French is the **5th most spoken language** in the world. (2025)^{*}
(by native and secondary speakers, after English, Mandarin, Hindi, and Spanish).

There are **32 francophone countries** (21 in Africa) where French is spoken by at least 1 in 5 people.^{***}

French is an **official or national language in 29** of these countries (2025). ^{**}
The most common languages proclaimed as "official" throughout the world are English, French, Arabic, and Spanish. ^{*}

Where are the French speakers?



Countries with the most French speakers

(in millions, 2022)

	France	66		Canada (total)	11
	Congo (Rép. démocratique du)	48,9		Côte d'Ivoire	9,3
	Algérie	14,9		Belgique	8,8
	Maroc	13,4		Québec	8
	Allemagne	12,3		Madagascar	6,9
	Italie	11,8		Tunisie	6,3
	Cameroun	11,5		Burkina Faso	5,9
	Royaume-Uni	11,3		Suisse	5,9 [*]

French is the only language other than English that is **taught and spoken on all continents**.^{***}

French is the most learned secondary language in the world after English.^{****}

93 million students around the world are studying French as a secondary language.^{*}

In Asia and Africa, enrollments in French programs have been growing at a rate of 50%.^{*}

French is the **4th most widely used language on the Internet**. (2025)^{*}

French is among the **6 official languages of the United Nations**.^{*}

80 governments use French formally as a means of international communication.^{*}

In the United States & Canada:

• French is the **4th most spoken language in the United States** after English, Spanish, & Mandarin.^{*}

(This includes French Creole.)

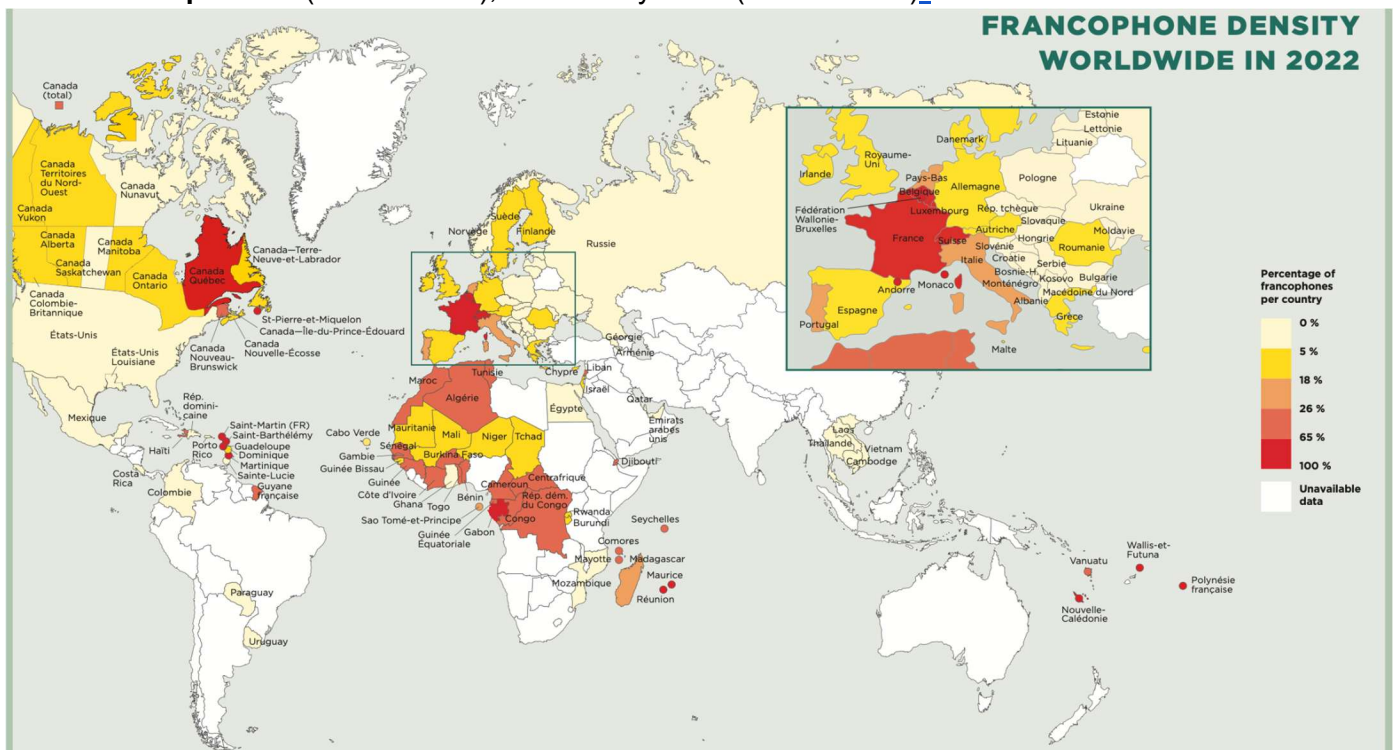
- French is the **2nd most commonly taught** language in American schools after Spanish.*
- French is the **3rd most spoken language in Connecticut** after English and Spanish.*
- French is the **most spoken language after English in 4 US states**, and after Spanish in 7 more.*
- **12.4 million Americans speak French** and 13 million claim French ancestry. (2024)*
- **16.5 million Canadians** speak French (2024).*
- **33 million people** speak French in North/South America. (2024)*
- Louisiana has 120,000+ francophones (2023)*, compared to 100,000 in 1980.
- In Louisiana, there are 5000 students enrolled in French/English dual-language immersion programs. The state joined the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie in 2018.*

In Europe:

- French is the **3rd most widely known** language and **4th most widely spoken** mother tongue in the European Union.*
- After English, French is the **most taught 2nd language in Europe**.*
- As of 2025, **28% of all Europeans** (210 million people) speak French.*

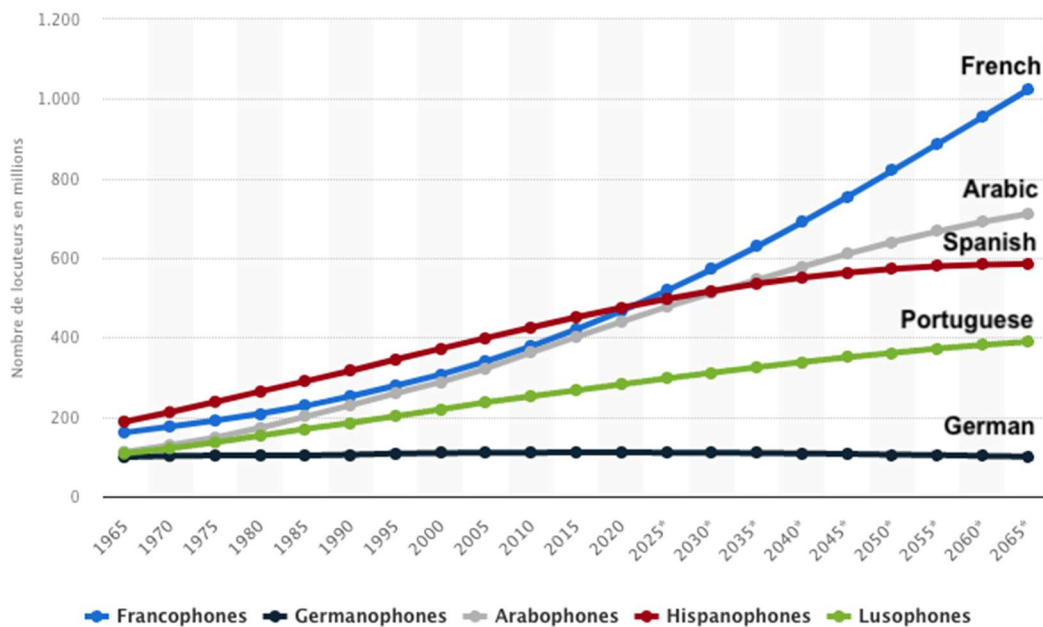
In Africa:

- **200+ million Africans speak French**. (2025)**
- **Over 50% of all French speakers live in Africa**, the continent with the most French speakers. (2025)*
- French is **an official or national language in 21 African countries** (2025)*
- French is the **main or only language of instruction** in schools in Benin, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Niger, Senegal and Togo.*
- **Kinshasa**, the capital of the Democratic Republic Of Congo, is the **city with the highest number of French speakers** (12.69 million), followed by Paris (12.16 million)*



⇒ **Is the number of French-speakers GROWING? Yes!** ⇐

By 2050, French has been predicted to be the 3rd most spoken language in the world.(2024) ***
(following Mandarin and English)



French has been called the language with the **highest growth potential** over the next 50 years.*

By 2060, it is expected that partially thanks to the rising population of French-speaking Africa, the **world's francophone population may rise dramatically to 767,000,000 people**, or 8% of the world's population.* French president Emmanuel Macron proclaimed in 2017 that "French will be the first language of Africa - and perhaps the world."*

The number of French speakers **has increased by 25%** from 2010 (and by 7% since 2018*) to over **321 million** (2025)*. The total number of French speakers in the world has **tripled since 1945**.*

Since 2010, the number of people **learning French as a foreign language** is GOING UP!*

UP 6% on average around the world

UP 7% in North Africa and the Middle East

UP 44% in sub-Saharan Africa

UP 4% in Asia and Oceania

UP 2% in America and the Caribbean

⇒ **Is French EASY to learn? YES!** ⇐

French is one of the easiest languages for English-speakers to master:**

It takes about 600 hours of study to achieve "general professional proficiency" in speaking and reading in French. This compares with 750 hours for German, 1100 hours for Russian, and 2200 hours for Mandarin, Arabic, and Japanese.*

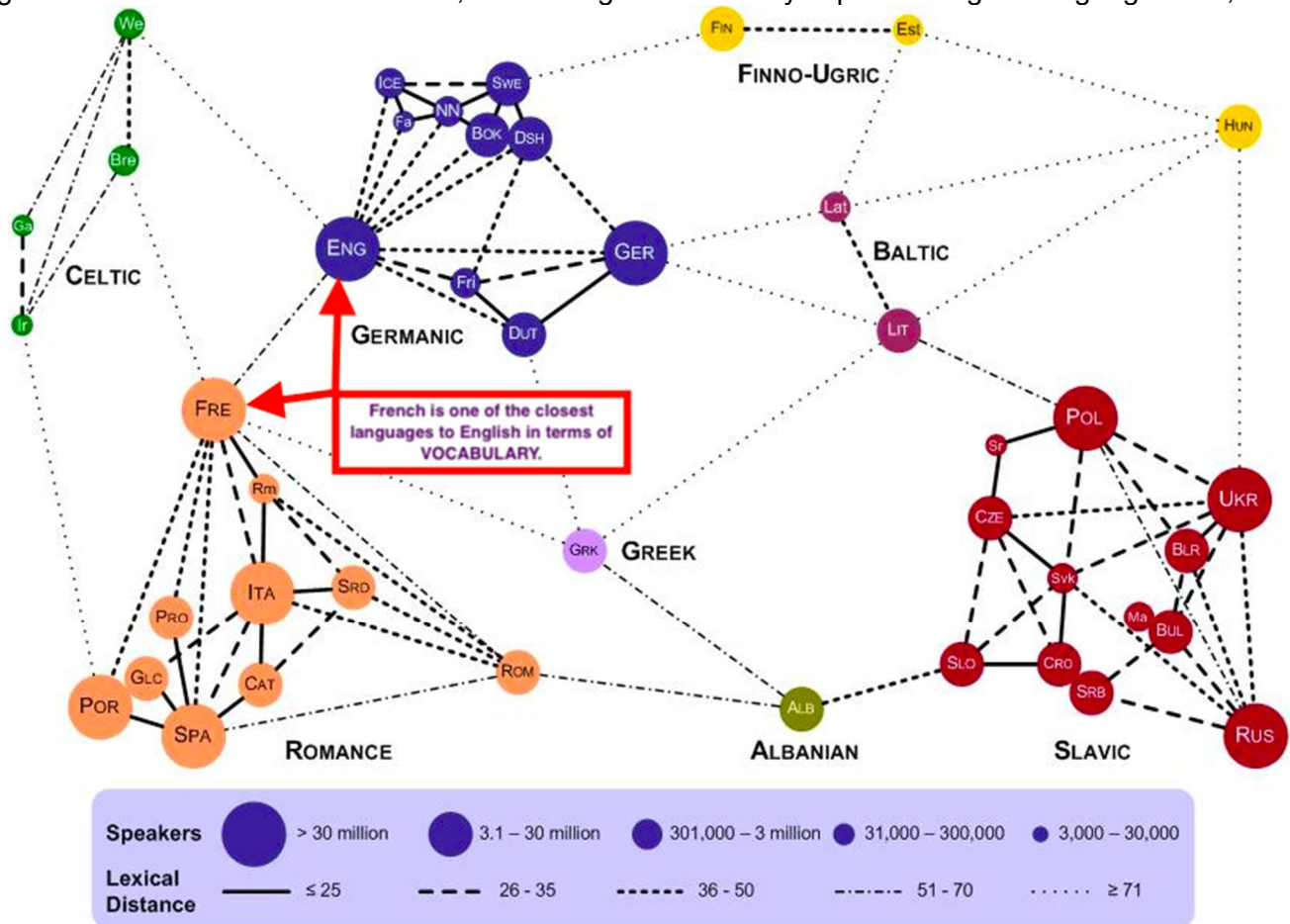
The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (USA) established the following classification of languages according to their level of difficulty for English-speaking learners to reach a high level of speaking proficiency. **French is in the easiest category**; it takes **3-4 times** the instruction hours in Category IV languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean) to reach the same level in French.*

Category I level of difficulty: French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Category II level of difficulty: German

Category III level of difficulty: Greek, Hebrew, Moro, Persian-Farsi/Afghan, Vietnamese, Uzbek
 Pushtu-Afghan, Russian, Serbian/Croatian, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish
 Category IV level of difficulty: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean.

French is considered by many to be the Romance language most similar to English; over 50% of all English words can be traced to French, so learning French surely improves English-language skills, too.*



It is estimated that an English-speaker who has never studied French **already knows approximately 15,000 words** and expressions in the French language. There are more than 1,700 true cognates: words that are identical in the two languages.* Below is a lexical map that shows how French is among the closest languages to English in terms of vocabulary.*

Emphasizing the potential French has to become the world's leading language, the Francophone world stretches across five continents and **overlaps with more than a quarter of the 6,000 languages spoken globally**. The only other language to achieve this is English.*

French vocabulary is highly present in the worlds of art, government, food, literature, architecture, science, medicine, technology, music, diplomacy, fashion, dance, and cinema. Thousands of places in the world (and in the USA) have names derived from French.

Studies show that **learning foreign languages like French improves standardized test scores**, enhances critical thinking & problem solving skills, thus helping in subjects like English, Math and Science.*

⇒ **Is French USEFUL for business & careers? YES!** ⇐

French is the **2nd*** or **3rd**** business language globally after English. (Top 3: Mandarin, French, Arabic)

French is the **2nd business language of the European Zone** after English. _*

French is ranked **2nd most useful of the world's diplomatic languages**._*

The French-speaking world accounts for **20% of business exchanges in the world**, and **16.5% of global earnings**. (2025)* France alone has the **7th largest economy in the world**. (2025)* France has one of the **largest exclusive economic zones** in the world. (2025)**_

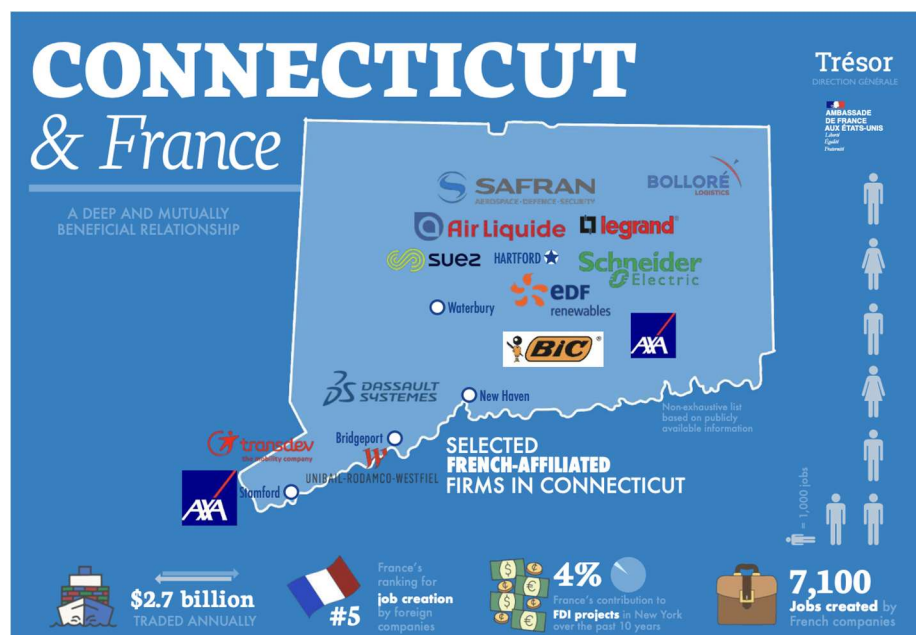
France is one of the top 5 investors in the United States and U.S. investments account for the largest position of foreign direct investments in France. (2025)*_

France is the **3rd biggest foreign employer in America** (after the U.K. and Japan).*_

Over 5500 French companies in the US alone have created **741,000 jobs for Americans** while 4600 U.S. companies employ 485,000 people in France.*_

One out of ten employees in the U.S. working for a foreign-owned company are employed by a French subsidiary.*_ There is not a single American state without a French business within its borders.**_

For Connecticut, **France is the number one country for total exports***_ and has held that position for years. Nearly 5800 Connecticut companies are involved in exporting, and France, Canada, and Belgium account for \$5 billion of purchases of Connecticut-manufactured goods.*_



For a 2024 state-by-state economic breakdown graphic, click [HERE](#).

There are more **French companies in the Fortune 500** than any other European country, and **France ranks 4th in the 2025 Fortune Global 500**.*_

France has placed in the “**Top 5**” of most attractive countries for major international investors.*_ **Canada is the primary consumer of U.S. exports**.(2025)*_

20% of Canadians' mother tongue is French, and 30% say they are conversational or better.*_

France has been ranked #1 globally for “soft power.” Soft power combines the use of political values, culture, and foreign policy rather than coercion to influence the world stage. (2017)*_

French has been ranked the **2nd or 3rd most influential language** on the global scale, based on various studies.*

French has been ranked the 3rd most requested/relied-upon non-English language by US companies (after Spanish, Mandarin).*

French was the 2nd most tested foreign language by employers, tied with Mandarin, after Spanish.*

The number of **online job listings** for workers bilingual in French **has continued to grow significantly** from 2010 - present**

Foreign language majors in the US earned the **highest average starting salary** of all liberal arts majors.*

In a study of over 4 million resumes, the college liberal arts major with the **fewest underemployed graduates** has been “Foreign Languages, Literature, and Linguistics.”*

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics has billed translation and interpretation among the **20 areas of highest need** in the country between 2014 and 2024.*

U.S. employers have a **growing demand for multilingual employees**.**

- Nine out of 10 U.S. employers report a reliance on U.S.-based employees with language skills other than English.
- One-third (32%) of employers report a high dependency on language skills other than English.
- A majority of employers report that their need for foreign languages has increased over the past five years and project that it will continue to grow.
- A third (34%) of U.S. employers reliant on foreign languages say their foreign language needs are not currently being met by their employees.
- Nearly one in four U.S. employers surveyed acknowledged losing or being unable to pursue a business opportunity over the singular lack of foreign language skills.
- **56%** of U.S. employers say that their language skill demand will increase in the next five years.
- **47%** of U.S. employers state a need for language skills exclusively for the domestic market.

⇒ ***Is France considered a world LEADER? YES!*** ⇐

France is the **world's largest net exporter of electricity** and is a leading nation in clean, safe, and efficient **nuclear power**. Nuclear energy provides more than three quarters of the nation's electricity.*

France is a European **leader in aerospace** (Aérospatiale, Arianespace, Airbus). Arianespace is the world's first commercial space transportation company and has led the launch services industry with many record-setting missions.*

France is also a **world leader in medical research and genetics**; the Pasteur Institute in Paris is world renowned. Fiber optics and the microchip were invented by French scientists. The AIDS virus was discovered by a team of French researchers.*

France has won more **Nobel Prizes** for literature than any other country, with 16 winners.*

For books, **French is the most translated language in the US**, before German and Spanish, and the **second most translated language in the world**, after English.*

U.S. News and World Report quotes Luis E. Echavarri as saying: "France has become one of the leading countries capable of exporting **technology** around the world". France is also the 8th largest producer of **video games** in the world. (2025)*

France has the **world's 7th military power** and has one of the world's largest defense industries.**

⇒ **Is France a NICE place to live or visit? YES!** ⇐

France has been voted "**best place to live in the world**" many times in the past decade by an annual index created by *International Living* magazine that ranks 194 of the 197 countries in the world.*

France has also been in the **top 10 of best places to retire** many times.*

France's high ranking is due to an unsurpassable quality of life, one of the highest rated health care systems in the world, generous vacation time, extensive family care/leave benefits, infrastructure, safety, and other lifestyle issues (Food! Wine! Cheese!)*

France is the world's top tourist destination (2025)* and has ranked as the most visited country in the world many times.*

Paris has been the world's most visited tourist destination city many times.*

And, remember: **75% of the world doesn't speak any English!***

VIVE le FRANÇAIS!

Do you have some corrections or additions to this document?

Email AATF-CT Président Jon Shee at sheej@stlukesct.org

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• Many stats at "[France & The United States: 2020 Economic Report](#)"