

## The Francophonie as a market — overview and summary

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The French-speaking world is a market whose dimensions are rarely measured by financial actors, who are accustomed to thinking in terms of countries or regions. According to the sixth report of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, presented in Québec in March 2026, French is spoken by 396 million people, which makes it the fourth most widely spoken language in the world, after English, Mandarin and Spanish. The French-speaking area generates 16.5 per cent of global gross domestic product, 20 per cent of world merchandise trade and 14 per cent of the world's reserves of mineral and energy resources.<sup>1</sup> This chapter describes that market — its geography, its demography and its economy —, examines the segments most relevant to the Geneva financial centre and analyses the developments that will transform it by 2050.

### 1 Notes

1. “Francophonie : sept chiffres qu’il ne faut pas manquer dans le rapport de l’OIF”, ONFR, 26 March 2026; “Le français, désormais quatrième langue mondiale”, Français du monde, 18 March 2026. ↩

### 2 In five sentences

1. French is the fourth most widely spoken language in the world, with 396 million speakers according to the 2026 report of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, which brings together 88 member states and governments. The French-speaking area accounts for 16.5 per cent of global gross domestic product, 20 per cent of merchandise trade and 14 per cent of mineral and energy reserves.
2. The French-speaking market is made up of Europe, its economic core with 42 per cent of French speakers, the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa,

the most populous and most dynamic grouping, North America, the Near East and the Indian Ocean.

3. The segments relevant to Geneva are French-speaking wealth management, commodity trading with the producer countries, trade and infrastructure finance, advisory services, philanthropy and impact finance, and education and training.
4. By 2050 the French-speaking market will become predominantly African, young and urban, with 751 million speakers according to the projections, subject to education, linguistic competition, technology and geopolitical developments.
5. Geneva, French-speaking and without a colonial past, has singular advantages for this market in the face of Paris, Luxembourg, Casablanca, Dubai and London, provided it invests in knowledge, presence and training.

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