

The Francophonie in figures

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The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, founded in 1970, brings together 88 member states and governments, to which observers and associate members are added.¹ Every four years its Observatoire de la langue française publishes a reference report on the presence and use of French in the world. The 2022 edition counted 321 million French speakers, 21 million more than in 2018, of whom 19 million were in Africa. According to that edition, 62 per cent of daily speakers lived in Africa, where the sub-Saharan Africa–Indian Ocean zone showed the strongest growth, of 15 per cent since 2018.²

The 2026 edition puts the figure at 396 million speakers, an increase that partly reflects a change of method: the Organisation now includes children aged six to nine who are schooled in French in countries where that language is official or is the medium of instruction, and defines a French speaker as any person able to communicate in French, orally or in writing.³ French has around 90 million native speakers. Nearly 150 million young people use it, or 30.6 per cent of the French-speaking population.⁴ The number of pupils and students taught in French as a first or second language is close to 170 million, to which are added 51 million people learning French as a foreign language, nearly 70 per cent of them in Africa.⁵

Demographic projections give these figures a forward-looking dimension. If the United Nations projections for Africa materialise, the number of French speakers could reach 751 million in 2050, the bulk of that growth coming from the African continent, whose population could exceed 2.5 billion.⁶ The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie makes clear that these projections depend on conditions relating to education in the countries where French is the language of instruction.⁷

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Indicator (OIF)	Value
Speakers, 2022 edition	321 million
Speakers, 2026 edition	396 million (new method)
World ranking	fourth language
Native speakers	around 90 million
Share of daily speakers in Africa (2022)	62%
Learners of French as a foreign language	51 million, nearly 70% of them in Africa
Share of the French-speaking area in world GDP	16.5%
Share in world merchandise trade	20%
Share in mineral and energy reserves	14%
Projection for 2050	751 million

Key point. 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. 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. Its growth is African.

1 Notes

1. Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, *La langue française dans le monde*, 2022 edition, summary, francophonie.org, for the number of members; “Le français, langue d’avenir”, *Actuailes*, 14 January 2025, for the date of foundation. ↩
2. Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, 2022 edition, cited above; French National Assembly, amendment no. 134 to the Finance Bill, 2022, for the distribution of new speakers. ↩
3. *Français du monde*, 18 March 2026, cited above; ONFR, 26 March 2026, cited above. ↩
4. ONFR, 26 March 2026, cited above. ↩
5. Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, *La langue française dans le monde*, 2026 edition, summary, francophonie.org; 2022 edition, cited above. ↩
6. “Le français, langue d’avenir”, *Actuailes*, 14 January 2025, citing the projections of the UN and the OIF. ↩

7. Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, 2022 edition, cited above. ↩

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