French, the 5th World Language

Number of users/speakers

274 million users worldwide

- 5th global language after Mandarin Chinese, English, Spanish and Arabic

    1. Mandarin Chinese
    2. English
    3. Spanish
    4. Arabic
    5. French

- French, alongside English, is the only language spoken on all continents

From 2010 to 2014, the number of French speakers increased 7%

- +15% The use of French is increasing most in sub-Saharan Africa
- +30% in countries where it is not the first language but has become the teaching language

  (such as in Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gabon, Congo, Benin and Burundi)

Teaching

- 2nd most taught foreign language after English

    1. English
    2. French

- Across the five continents, in nearly all world countries

125 million people learning French or in French in 2014

including 49 million as a foreign language

i.e. +6% on 2010

- +2% IN AMERICA (mainly in the United States and Canada)
- +43% IN ASIA
- +44% IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

+52% students in North Africa and the Middle East (where French is also used to teach science subjects)

In Europe, despite a slight decline, French is still one of the three most widely taught languages in Ireland and the United Kingdom

Thematic areas

- 3rd most important business language in the world after English and Chinese (source: Bloomberg)
    1. English
    2. Chinese
    3. French
- 2nd most useful language in trade after German and ahead of Spanish, Arabic and Chinese for UK firms (British Council)
    1. German
    2. French
    3. Spanish

The French-speaking world accounts for:

14% of world inward foreign direct investment (FDI)

15.3% of world outward FDI

- 4th Internet language in terms of users
- 3rd most widely used language in blogs
- 4th for Web content (including Wikipedia)
- 4th on social networks

Source: Report of the International Organisation of La Francophonie – 05/11/14: http://www.francophonie.org/274-millions-de-francophones-dans.html (French only)