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Reading achievement of Canadian students in minority language school systems and French immersion programs

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Presentation Outline

- Context
 - Organization of Education
 - Official languages policy
- Provincial variation in reading achievement
- Achievement of students in minority language schools
- Achievement of students in French Immersion programs

Context: Organization of Education in Canada

- Education falls under provincial/territorial jurisdiction
 - 13 education systems (10 provinces, three territories)
 - no national or federal department of Education
- Government of Canada plays a support role in education
 - Mandates of several government departments intersect with education
 - Postsecondary education funding
 - Human Resource Development
 - Official languages

Context: Official Language policy

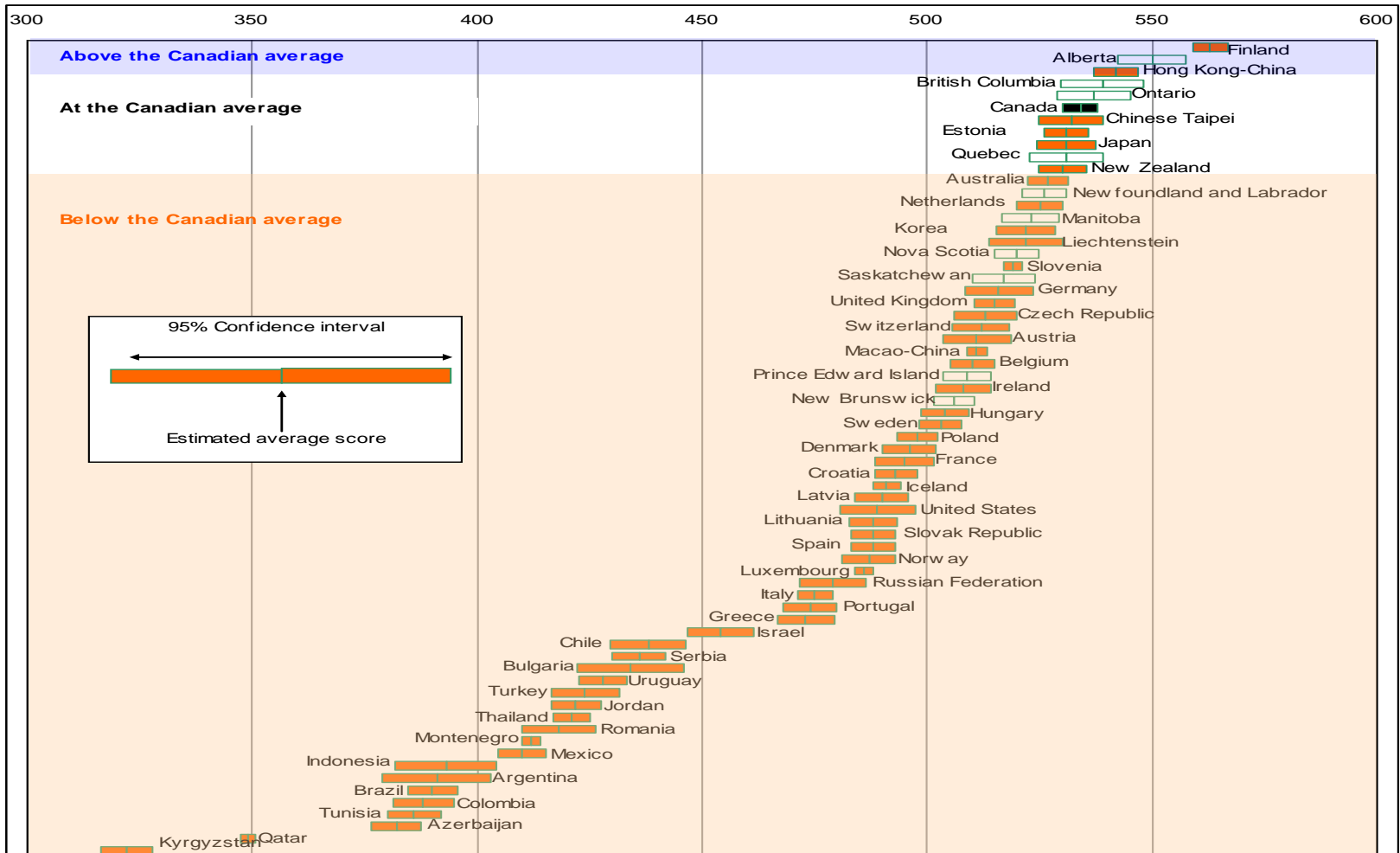
- Official Languages Act (Section 41)
- The Government of Canada is committed to
 - (a) enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development; and
 - (b) fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society
- Implemented through the Official Language Support Programs

Official Language Support Programs

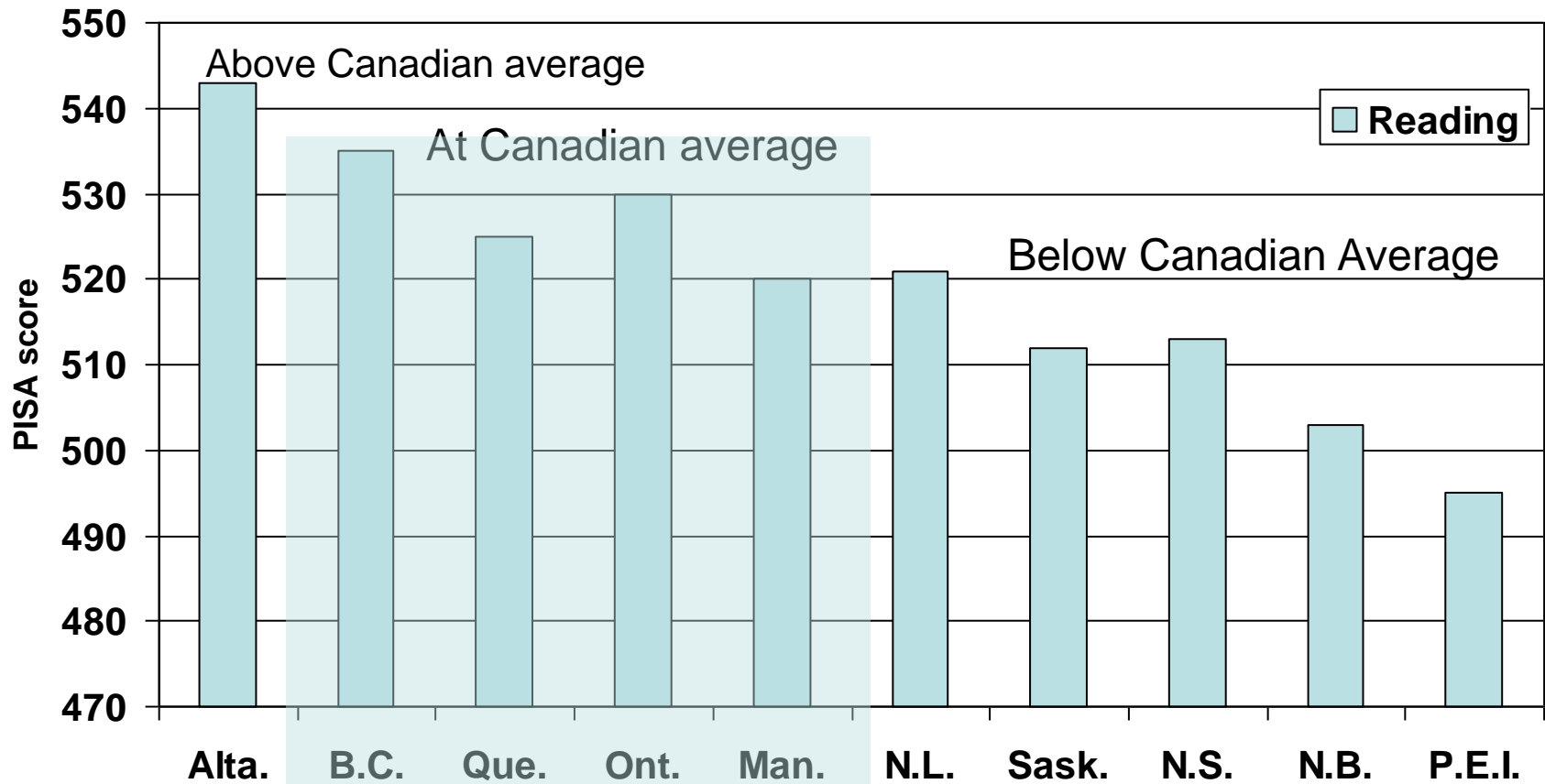
- Minority language education
- Second Language learning
 - Funding to the provinces with CMEC
 - Goes to support second language programs in schools
 - Core French and English
 - Extended (French)
 - Intensive (English and French programs)
 - Immersion (French)

What we already know →

Canada performs among the top in PISA



Provincial differences in performance exist



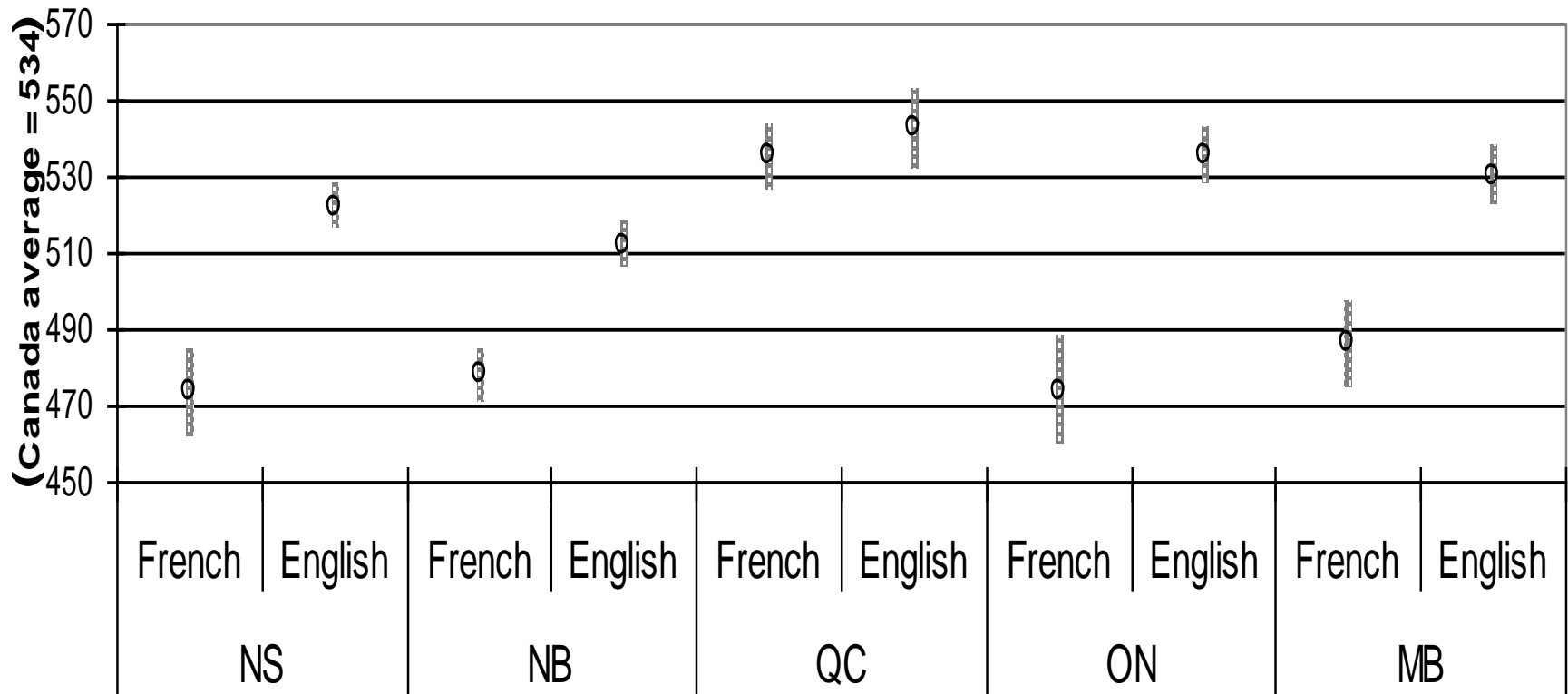
Explaining Provincial variation

- Students' family background
 - About 40% of the variation in provincial mean scores is attributable to students' family background (gender, socio-economic status, foreign-born)
- School practices and policies
 - Some of the variation is attributable to measurable aspects of school resources and classroom and school policy and practices
 - Effects of any particular factor are fairly small
- Results for 8 of the 10 provinces are quite similar after controlling for above factors

Minority language performance

- French schools outside of Quebec and English schools in Quebec
- Test language = minority language
- Minority language school systems sampled separately in 5 provinces
 - Nova Scotia (N.S.)
 - New Brunswick (N.B)
 - Quebec (QC)
 - Ontario (ON)
 - Manitoba (MB)

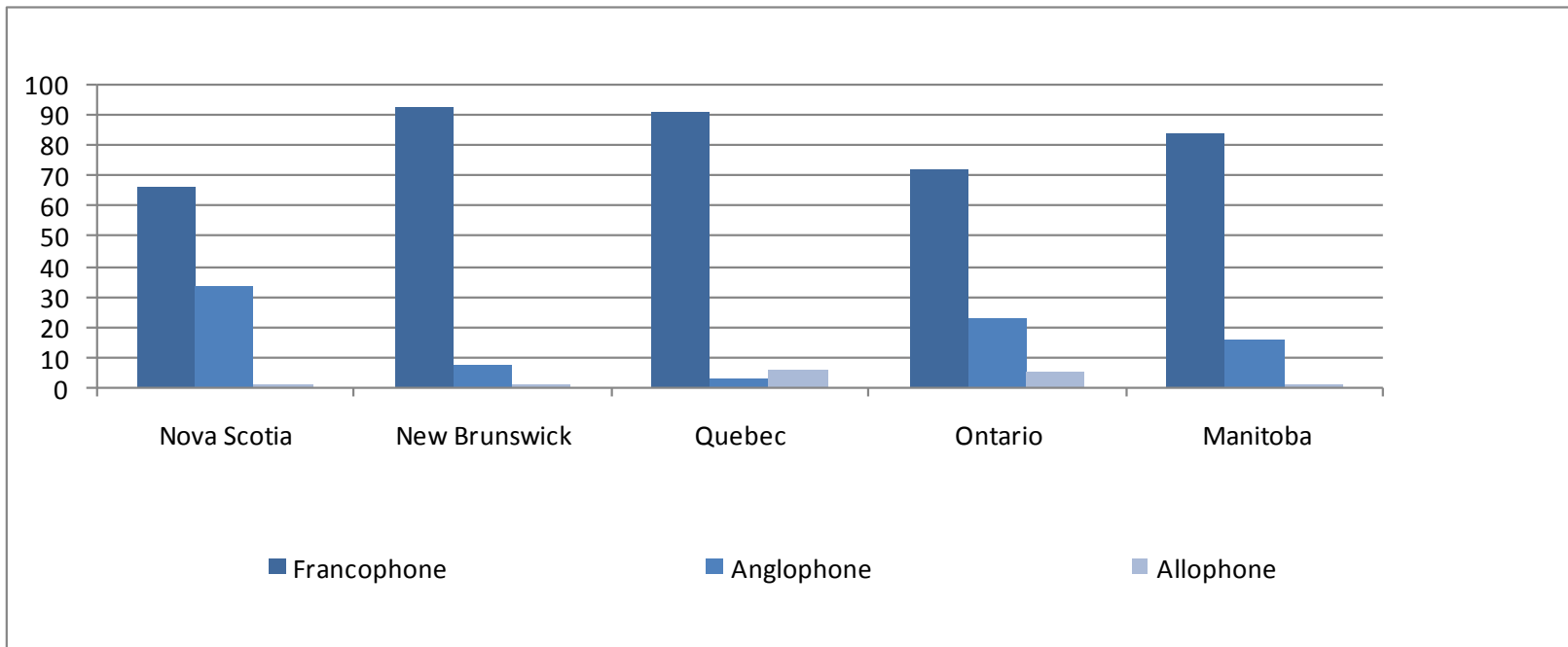
Reading achievement of students in minority language schools



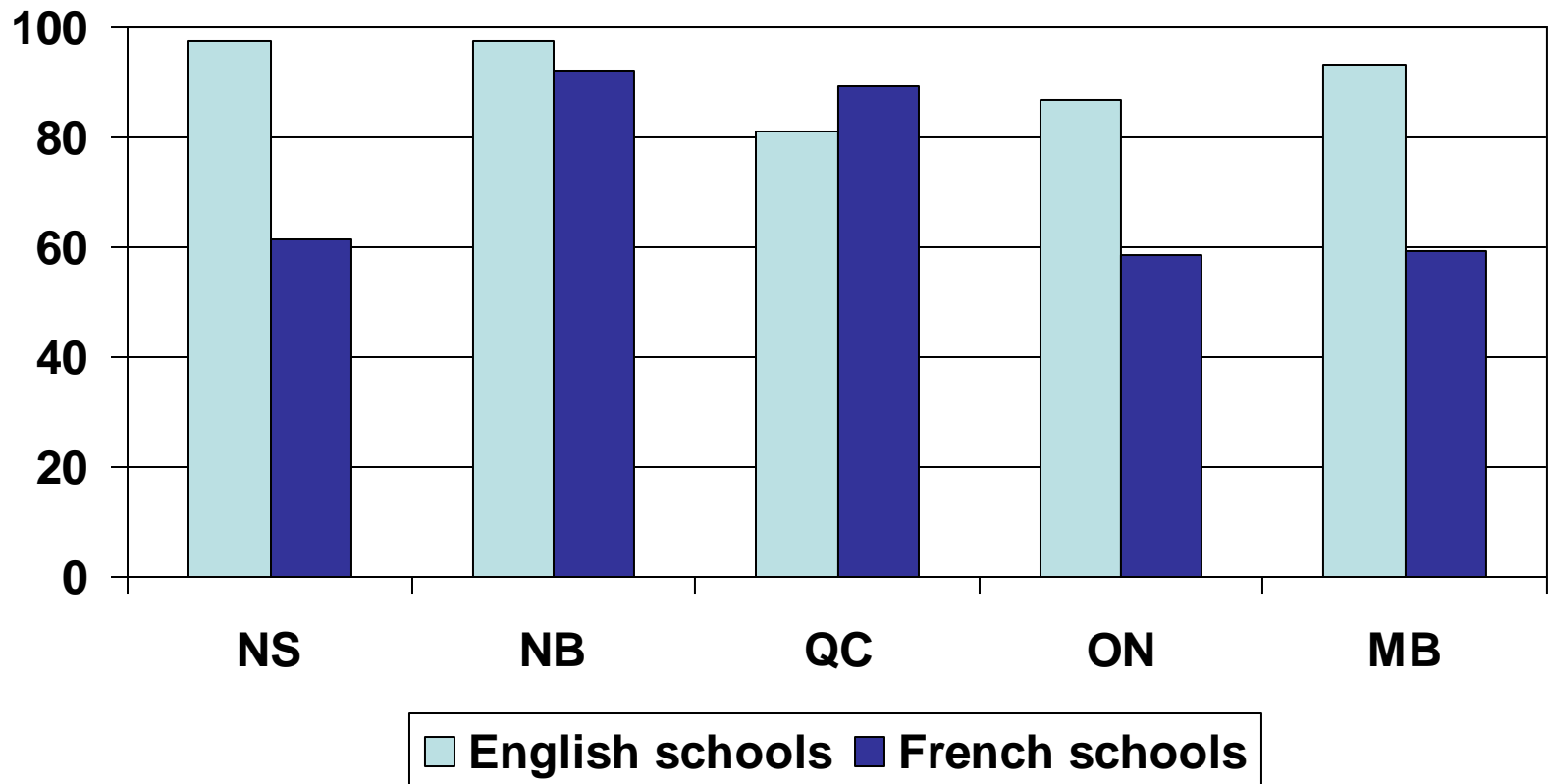
Do students in minority language school systems differ from those in majority language schools?

- **A number of important factors were identified which distinguish students in minority-language schools from those in majority language schools.**
 - **Mother tongue, language use at home and exposure to the language in the community**
 - **School resources**
 - **Family background**

Mother tongue of students in minority language schools

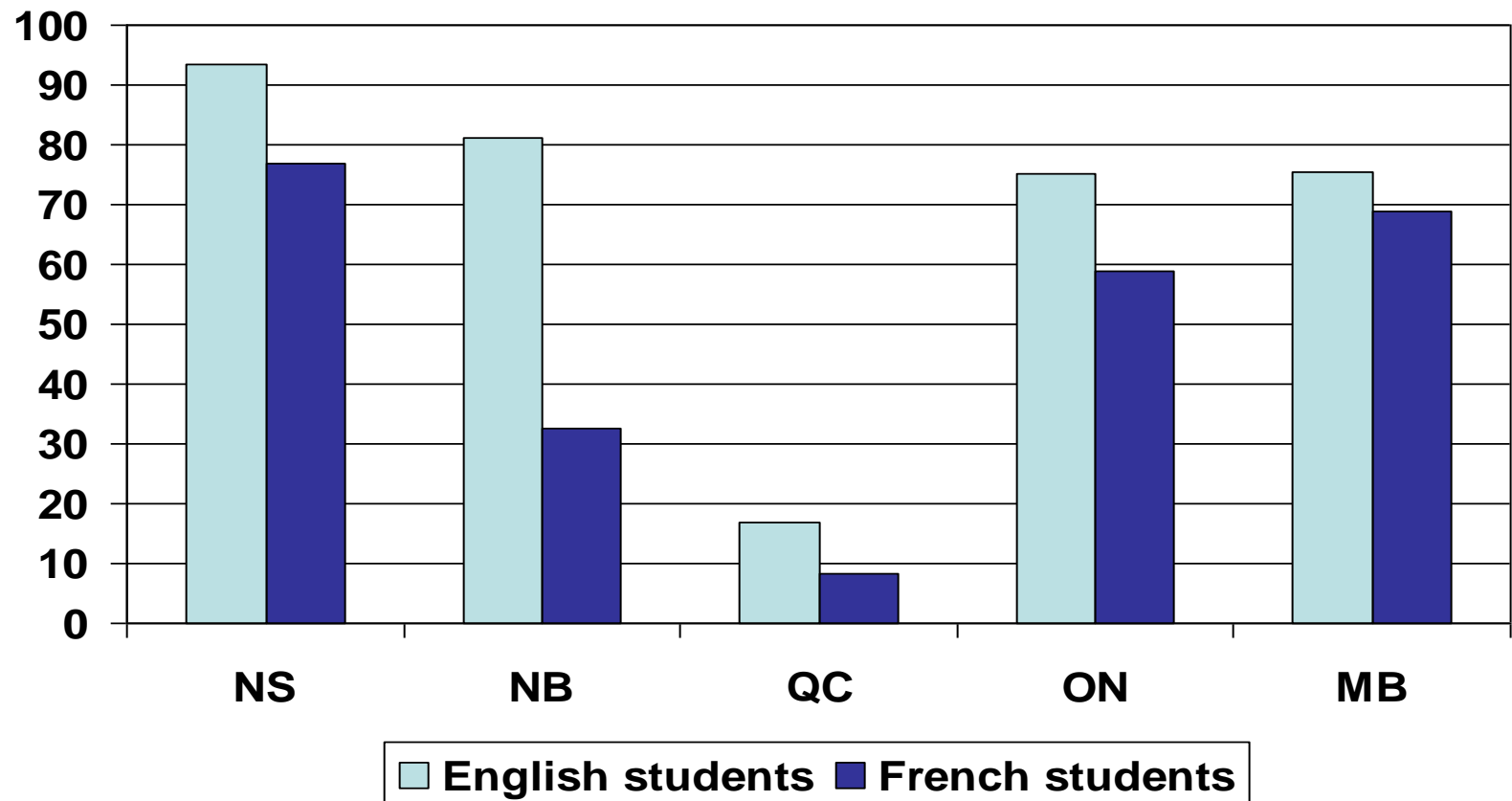


School language use at home



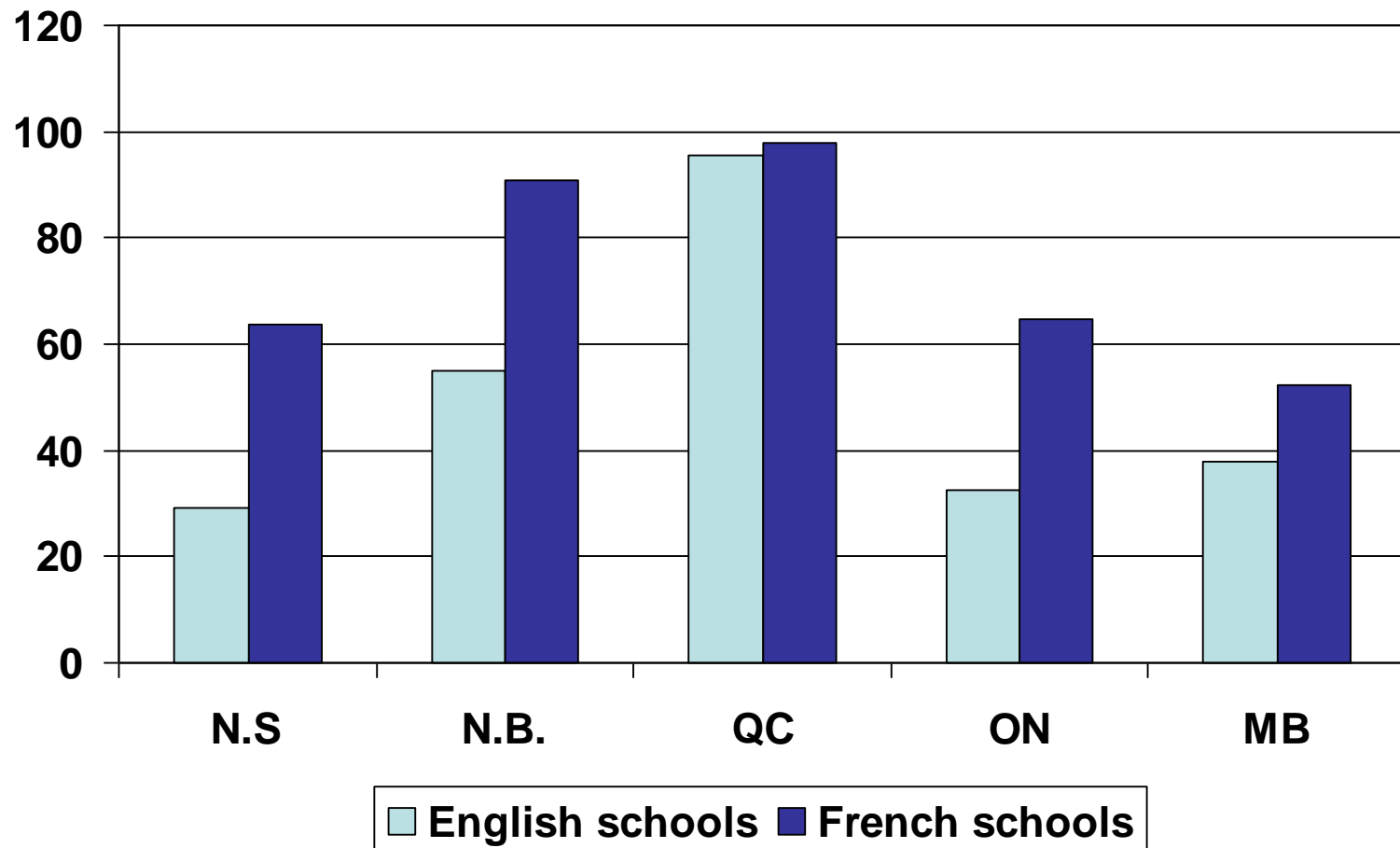
Language exposure in the community

Average % of anglophones in community



Use of French in the community

% of francophones who speak french at home



School characteristics

- Students in minority language schools were more likely to be in schools
 - with lower student-teacher ratio
 - where principals were more likely to report that inadequate material resources and teacher shortages hindered student learning
 - Hindered by inadequate instructional resources

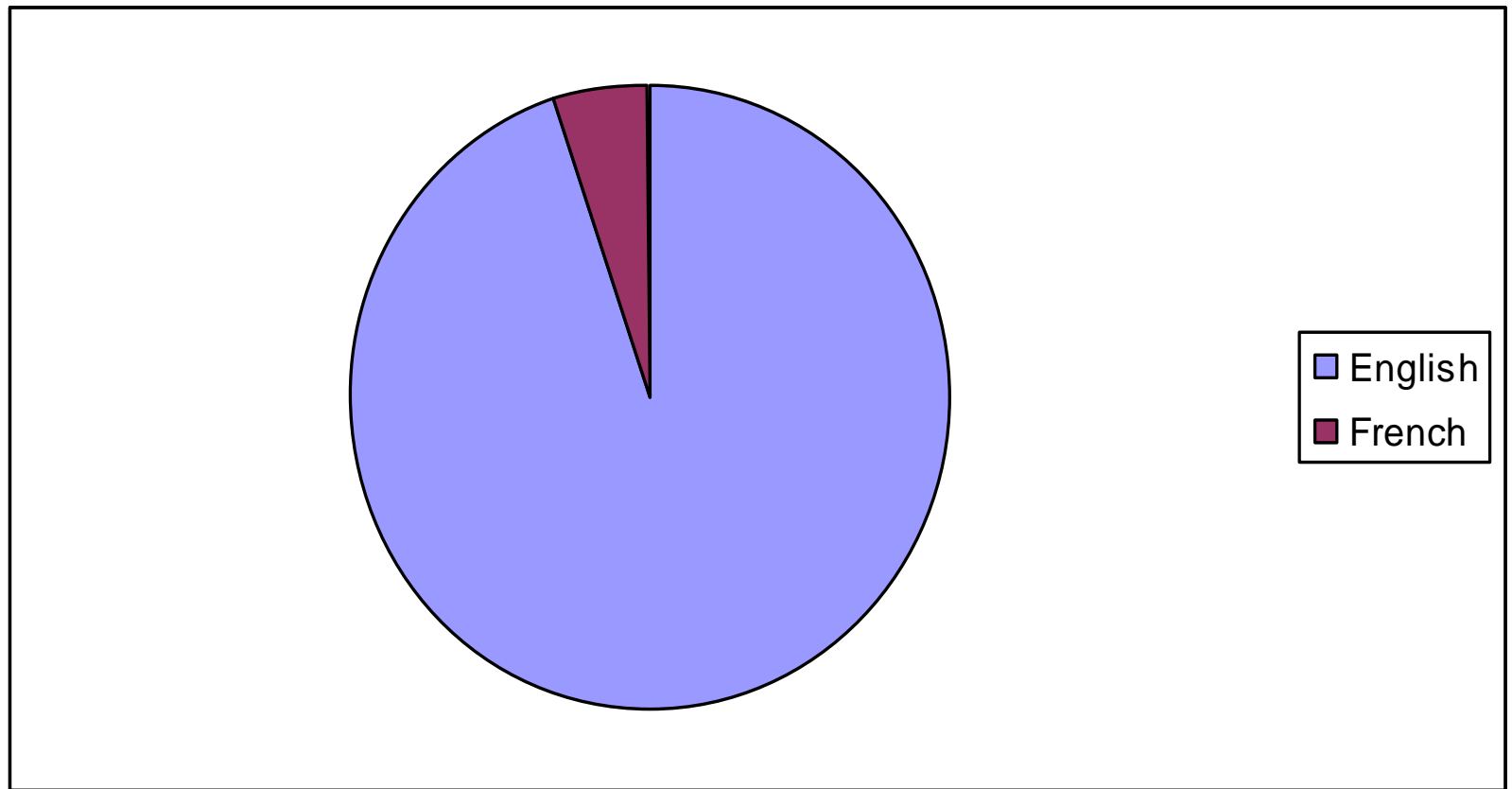
Minority language performance summary

- Minority language students have lower reading achievement
- Profile of minority language students differ with respect to a number of important variables (family background, school resources, community characteristics)
- However differences are not consistent across province
- In each provinces, students appear to be influenced by different combinations of factors

Reading achievement of students in French Immersion programs: background

- French Immersion programs exist in English-language schools in all 10 provinces
- For this presentation French Immersion programs are defined as programs in which 25% or more of instruction is provided in French
- Test language is language of major PISA domain
 - Complex to identify since domain may be offered in both languages
 - Majority of students tested in English

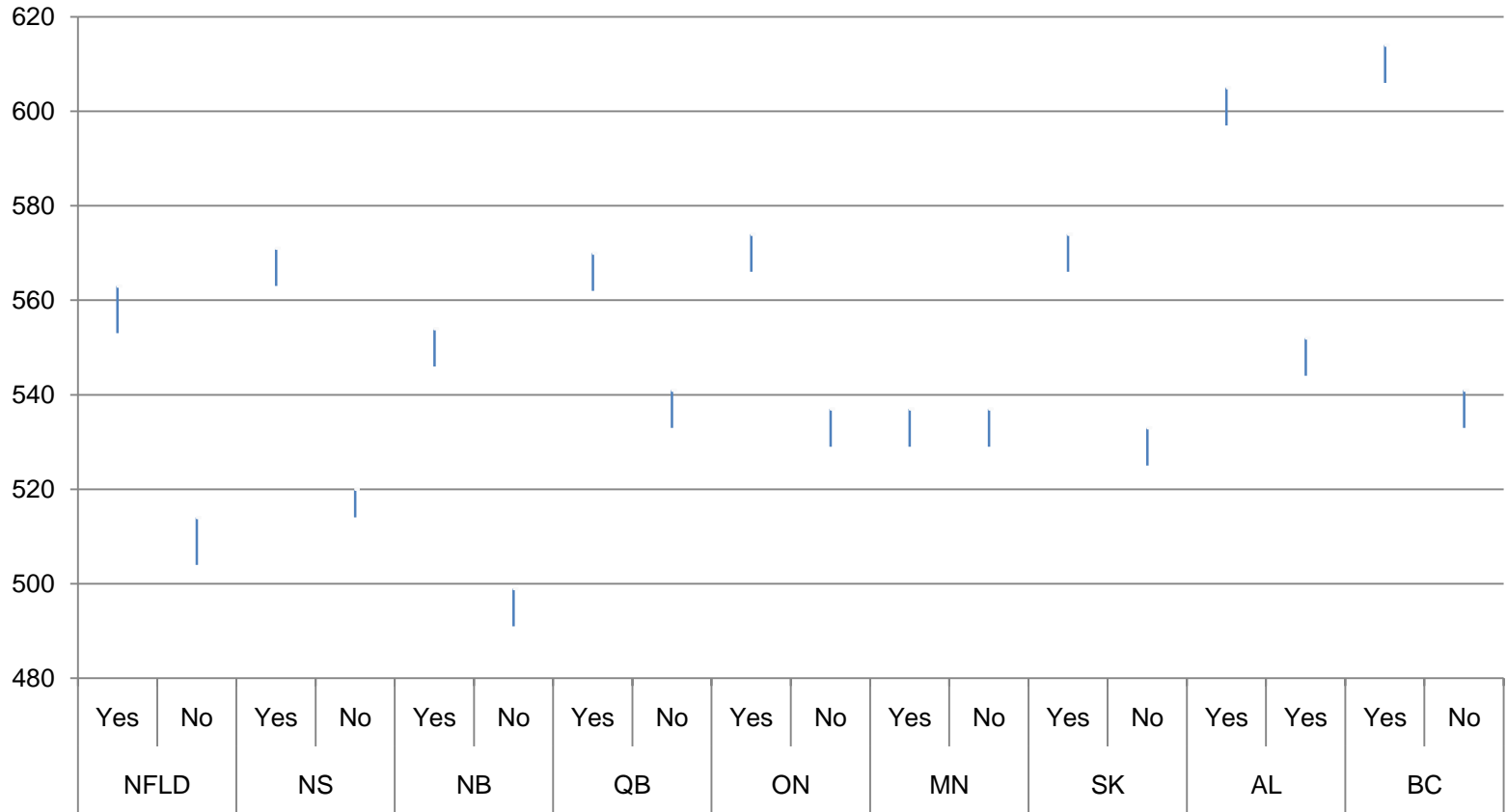
Language of PISA test for French Immersion students




Proportion of students enrolled in French Immersion programs

	Enrolled in French immersion	Enrolled in Immersion and had started before grade 4 (early immersion)	Girls	
			Immersion	Non-immersion
			Percentage of students	
Newfoundland and Labrador	7	57	64	50
Prince Edward Island	20	59	58	51
Nova Scotia	12	21	58	49
New Brunswick	32	39	61	46
Quebec	22	74	52	48
Ontario	6	57	64	51
Manitoba	6	90	60	48
Saskatchewan	3	87	65	48
Alberta	4	80	59	47
British Columbia	2	55	61	49

Students in French Immersion have higher achievement



Note on performance of French Immersion students



- Students in French Immersion programs took a minimum of 25% of their classes in French
- 95% of students wrote the PISA assessment in English
 - was the language of instruction in major domain (Reading) or
 - language of instruction was mixed and thus decision on test language was made by School Contact
- Students performed well in PISA test in English despite receiving at least 25% of their classroom instruction in French

What accounts for the higher performance of students in French Immersion programs?

- Factors examined
 - Gender composition of students in French Immersion programs
 - Socioeconomic background
 - Parental education

Gender Composition of students in French Immersion programs

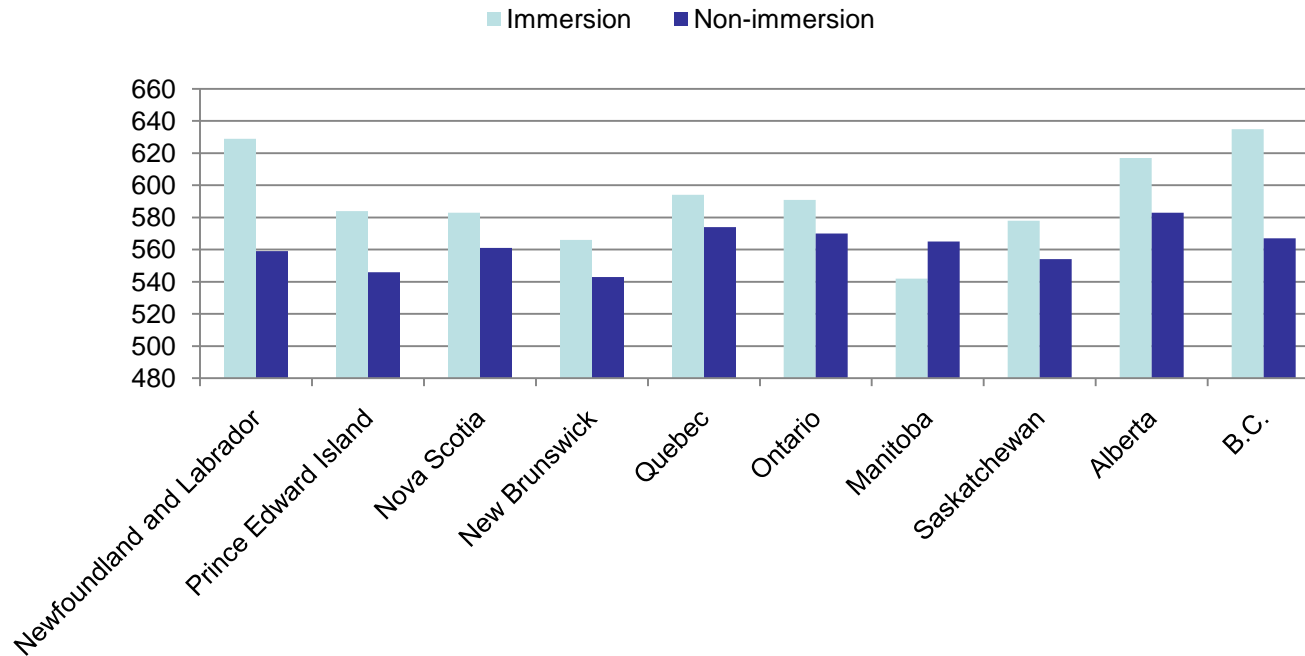
- Girls consists of the majority of students in French Immersion programs (52-65% across provinces)
- Girls have higher reading achievement
- Explains only part of the difference
- Reading performance is still higher after controlling for gender

Students in French Immersion programs come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds

	International Socio-economic Index of Occupational Status (highest parent) (Canada average = 53)		% of students in top Canadian quartile of family socio-economic status	
	Immersion	Non-immersion	Immersion	Non-immersion
Newfoundland and Labrador	59	46	41	13
Prince Edward Island	55	48	26	17
Nova Scotia	58	51	34	18
New Brunswick	56	49	31	16
Quebec	57	55	36	27
Ontario	58	54	35	27
Manitoba	53	50	21	18
Saskatchewan	55	51	26	19
Alberta	60	54	43	25
British Columbia	55	53	27	24

Differences in performance still exists when controlling for socio-economic background

Reading achievement of students with family socioeconomic status in the top quartile



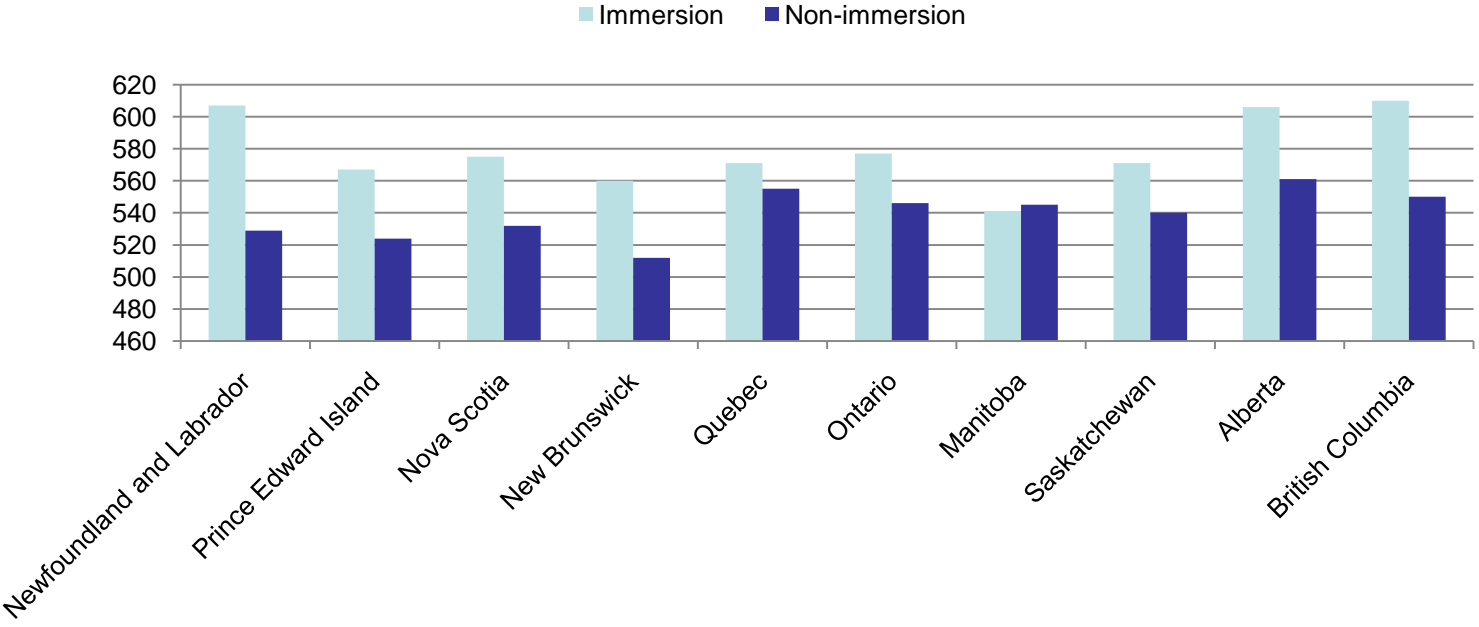
Parents of French immersion students are more likely to have postsecondary education

Percentage of students with at least one parent with a postsecondary education

	Immersion	Non-immersion
Newfoundland and Labrador	83	57
Prince Edward Island	74	60
Nova Scotia	77	59
New Brunswick	70	53
Quebec	73	65
Ontario	77	68
Manitoba	61	56
Saskatchewan	71	58
Alberta	86	63
British Columbia	63	64

Differences in performance still exists when controlling for parental background

Reading achievement of students with at least one parent with postsecondary education



Performance of students in French Immersion programs: Summary

- Students in French Immersion programs have higher reading achievement
- Gender composition, socioeconomic background and parental education do not account for these differences
- Other factors may be involved
 - Environment in which students live and learn
 - Student selection
 - Attrition from French Immersion programs