



Literacy Quebec

Line Chart



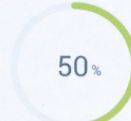
Bar Chart



Pie Chart



Easy Pie Charts



# Literacy Quebec COVID-19 Survey Report II

May 2021  
9 respondents

## Changes to services since the start of the pandemic

While the pandemic has forced a lot of swift changes, the majority of Literacy Quebec's member organizations have been able to adapt.

In fact, **8 out of 9 respondents claimed to have successfully transitioned at least some of their programs and services online.**

However, while most organizations were able to move to some type of online-learning model, **a select few reported having no available tutors/volunteers.**

Some of the reasons ranged from a lack of interest (i.e. volunteers originally signed up to interact with others in person), or a lack of confidence in using technology.

### How organizations are breaking isolation

*"[We] developed a series of activities mainly directed at seniors to help break isolation."*

*"Our programs have (...) been designed to break isolation, provide connection, and create a sense of escape through 'virtual voyages'"*

*"[We] piloted an online version in Fall of 2020 in 6 communities....delivered food & recipes and host[ed] interactive workshops on Zoom."*

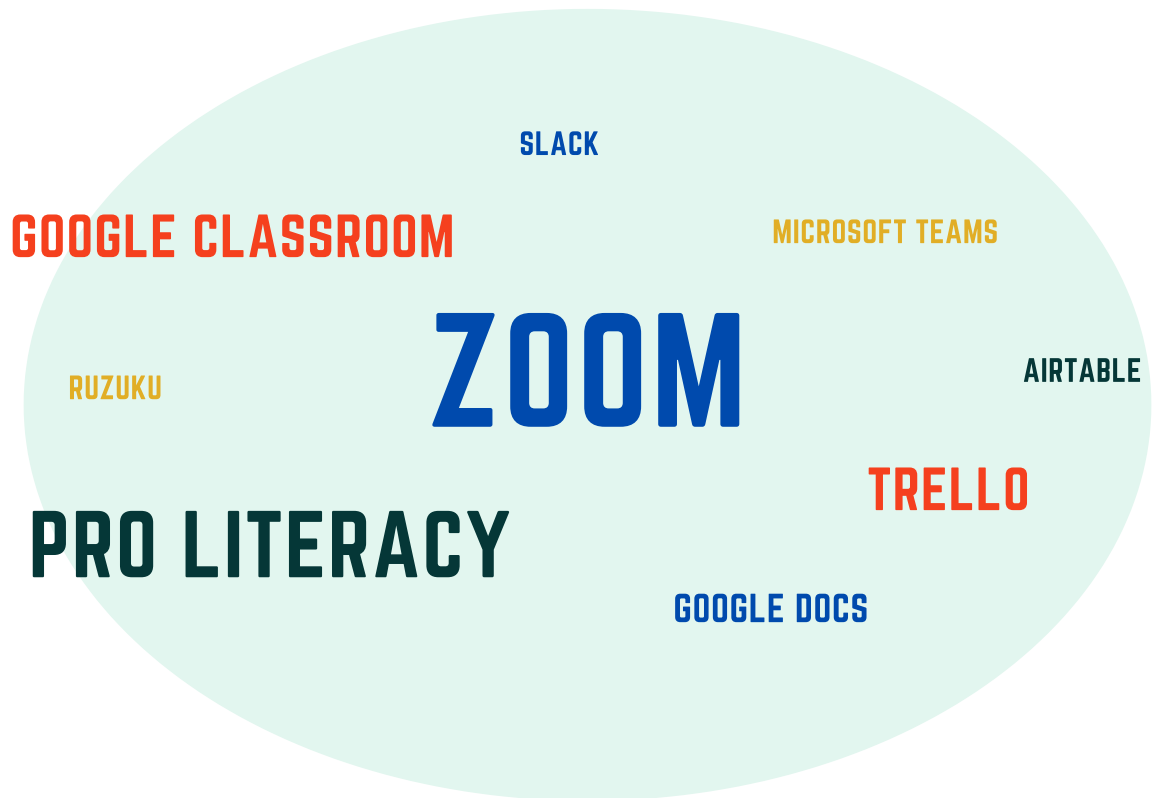
### Biggest challenges to organization & services

*"We do not have any volunteers at the centre presently."*

*"Our face to face tutoring has stopped, and the majority of our students and tutors have chosen not to transition to an online version for a number of reasons."*

*"We suspended our Computer Literacy Drop-in days, and staff offered one-to-one support on a needs basis."*

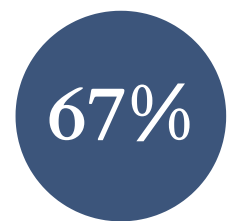
## Platforms & softwares being used for eLearning:



While there were many software and platforms listed in the survey responses, the reliance on Zoom, with 8 out of 9 respondents listing it in their answers, marks an interesting, albeit not surprising, commonality.

Pro-Literacy was the 2nd most-used software, according to respondents.

Trello, as well as Google Classrooms, were also software programs/platforms leveraged by more than one organization.

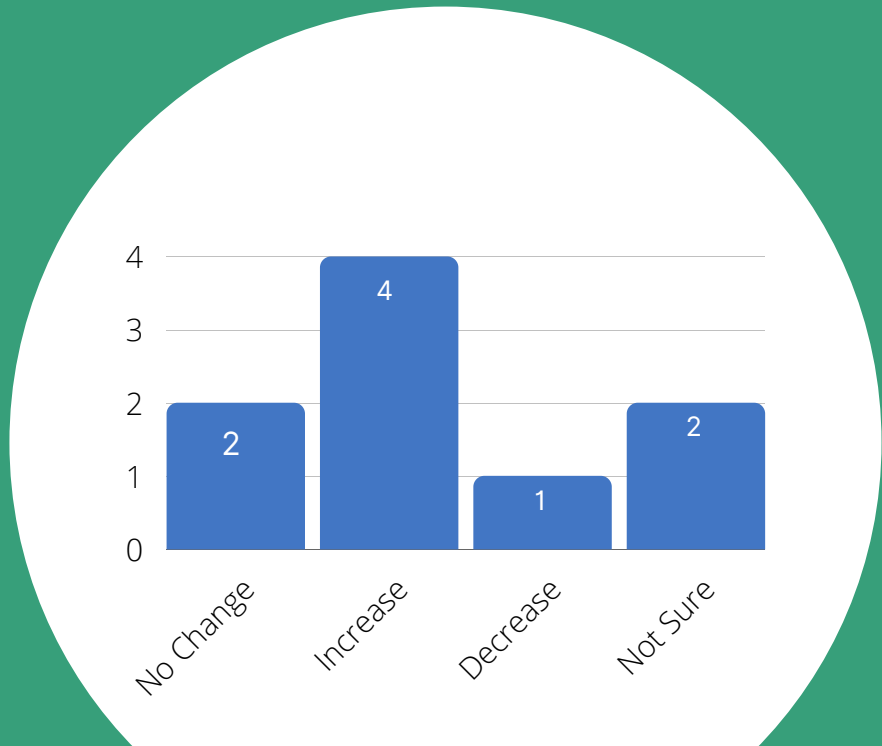


6 out of 9 respondents adopted Zoom **after** the pandemic began.

## Current demand for services

Despite the many challenges brought on by COVID-19, when asked if there had been a change in demand for their services, **the majority of partner organizations claimed to have experienced an increase in demand.**

While 2 respondents claimed to have seen no change, and 2 being unsure, **only 1 respondent reported seeing a decrease in demand for services.**



## Impact of the pandemic on staff

When asked about how these changes have affected staff, **a topic that came up in most of the respondent answers was the positive and negative implications of working remotely.** Although some enjoyed the convenience, many missed working with others in an office setting.



While there were 6 individual references regarding the difficulties of working from home (citing isolation, lack of spontaneity, burnout, etc.)



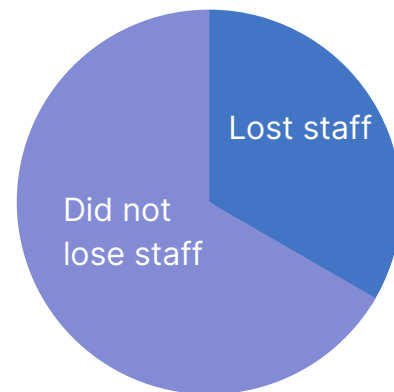
...There were also 6 individual references to being proactive and meeting virtually, or in person (when allowed) in order to boost morale.

3 out of 9 respondents also explicitly noted the new need to be flexible with staff during these times.

## Status of staff since the onset of the pandemic

Since the onset of the pandemic, 6 out of 9 respondents stated that their organizations had **not** lost any staff members.

Out of the 3 respondents who did lose staff due to the pandemic (or attributing factors brought about by the pandemic), 2 were able to find and train new staff.



However, one of the respondents who stated they had lost staff but gained new team members after, also went on to say:

*"I believe we are a much stronger organization due to the pandemic."*

## Unique COVID-19 challenges

When asked about new challenges influenced by the pandemic, there was no shortage of answers. However, **one unforeseen challenge included trying to access accurate information regarding current health guidelines for in-person meetings.**

*"Everyday is an unforeseen challenge."*

Another challenge mentioned was **the new need for an at-home workspace.** With many distractions, finding a suitable and comfortable place to work was difficult.

*"[It's challenging] not having in-person exchanges/meetings."*

Finally, simply switching to an online work model encouraged unforeseen challenges, with respondents finding it difficult to:

- Keep volunteers engaged
- Adapt to online platforms
- Maintain services to populations that [they] could not serve with live programs

*"Working alone to manage all aspects of the office [is a challenge]."*

## Solutions to staff challenges

Not surprisingly, most survey respondents were proactive in coming up with solutions to their aforementioned challenges.

2 respondents mentioned the need to get individuals back into the office quickly (i.e. to break isolation). These organizations arranged for processes to be put in place, like allowing people to book appointments in order to go into the office.

Adapting programming or sessions that would normally have taken place in-person to online was also listed as a solution by several respondents.



*"Working from home was challenging to some but not to others."*

*"Zoom is not an option for everyone...New adult intake is at a low; everyone is staying home. They are putting aside that feeling of getting help."*

## The pros and cons of

While **Zoom was quoted as being a "lifesaver"** by some for allowing organizations to continue providing programming, sessions, and events online, several respondents made reference to "**Zoom burnout.**"

Some solutions to this problem suggested by one respondent included:

- Limiting meetings to a certain time, or requiring breaks should meetings surpass this time limit
- Using the phone as an alternative whenever possible

## Impact of the pandemic on volunteers

Unlike with staff, the pandemic seemed to have more of a direct impact on organizations in regards to their volunteer network.

When asked about the state of their volunteer network, the majority of respondents (6/8\*) had lost most, if not all of their volunteers.

Only 2 organizations did not mention losing volunteers.

\*Note: 1 respondent did not answer this question.



### THE GOOD NEWS

- By maintaining weekly contact with each individual volunteer, one organization was able to retain all of their original volunteer network.
- Out of the 2 organizations that did not lose volunteers, one was able to attract *new* volunteers, this year.
- Despite losing most of their volunteers, one organization claimed that they were able to find new volunteers who were keen to replace them.

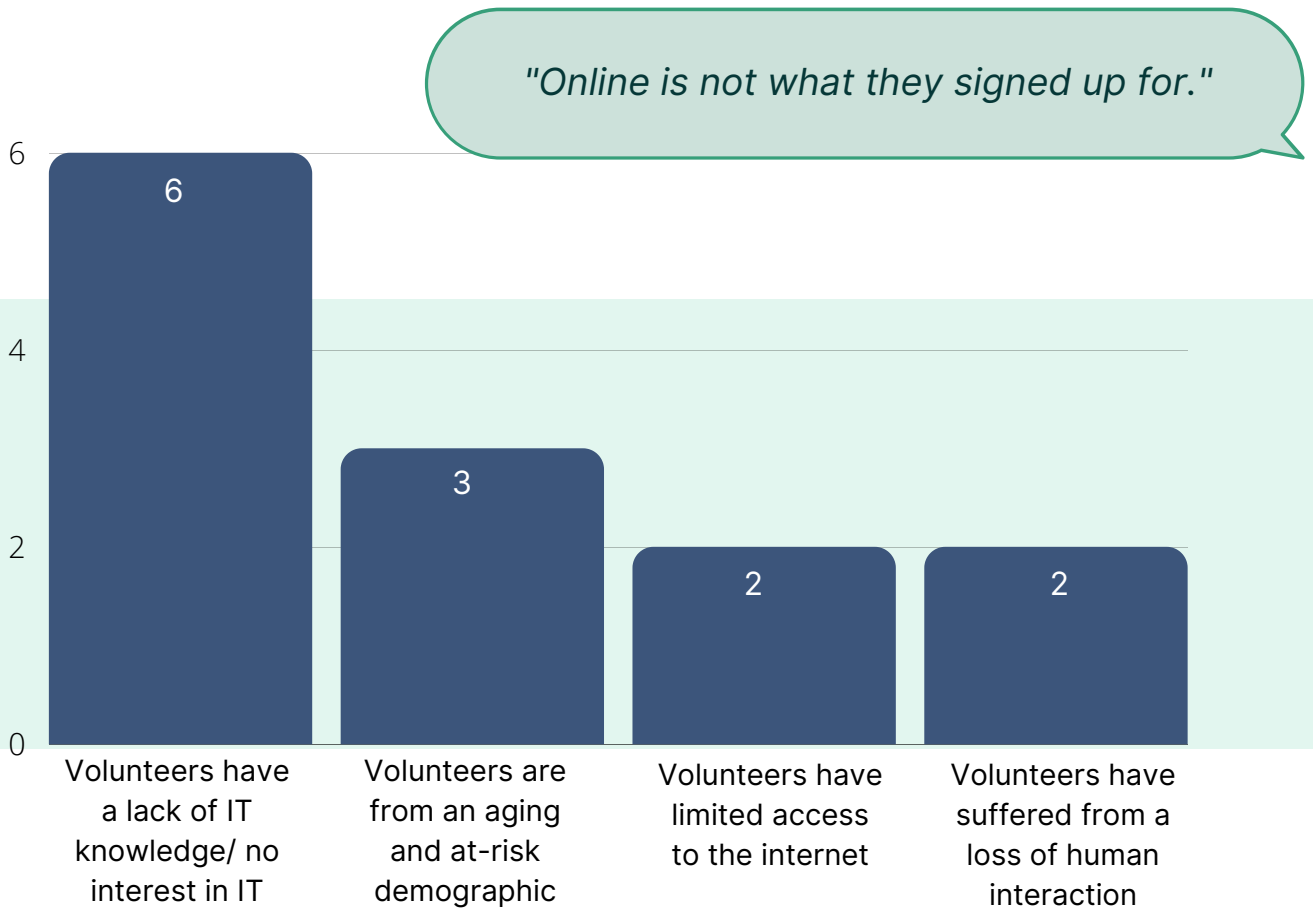
*"It has been a very difficult time, [Organization] lost most of their volunteers as they are seniors and [were] just too uncomfortable to continue [and] switching to online platforms was not easy."*

*"Many new volunteers are very comfortable with IT & have increased availability at different hours. Past volunteers struggle with adapting to online tutoring but working on learning IT"*

## Unique challenges for volunteers

Although this question was open ended, many of the answers provided by the respondents were strikingly similar.

Without a doubt, the biggest challenge to befall volunteers (stated by 6 respondents) during the pandemic was the transition to an online model. Because many of the volunteers are from an aging population, they lack knowledge or interest when it comes to technology, and found it difficult to continue.



Another unique concern that was raised regarding volunteers from an aging population was their fear of developing COVID-19, since they are particularly at-risk.

Lack of internet access for volunteers who may have been open to remote sessions was a challenge also raised by 2 respondents.

And finally, 2 respondents cited the loss of human interaction as a unique challenge to volunteers, who may have looked forward to spending time with others, during these sessions.



## Solutions to volunteer challenges

Despite the obvious challenges of teaching new skills remotely, several respondents have put resources in place in order to empower their volunteers.

*"We have organized free tech support for our members from a local tech consultant. We are planning to make a video course to teach people about ways to do remote tutoring, and to build confidence to do so."*

*"As of now, [Organization] has had 53 individual or group training sessions..."*

*"[Organization] has offered training sessions with local community partners [on] how to use various platforms, such as Zoom and Facetime to connect with families."*

*It took months but [we've gotten] very positive feedback about upgrading skills to work and communicate online.*

*We have a number of tutors trained to work within the community, this is a very positive result."*

However, a respondent did note that not everybody is comfortable with this format.

## Impact of pandemic on learners

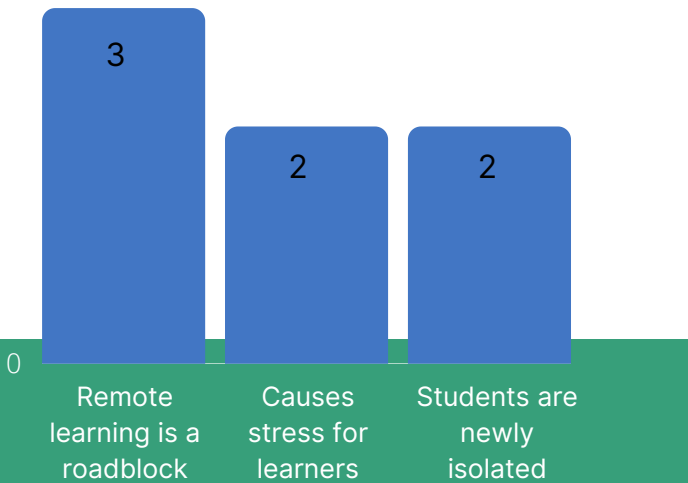
While the pandemic has not been easy, our respondents were able to list positive, neutral, and negative impacts on learners, giving us a more holistic idea of their experience.



In regard to positive impacts, one respondent noted that learners now had an increased availability, while another noted an increase in learner-motivation.

*"[There are] high levels of stress. [Learners are] not in the mind frame for traditional "tutoring" sessions, but will call for help with specific things [like] digital literacy, location of a resource in the community, just to talk, etc."*

Not surprisingly, the pandemic seems to have had more negative impacts on learners than any other.



3 respondents reported that the pandemic/remote learning was a definite roadblock to learning.

2 respondents also noted that it has caused a lot of stress for learners.

And finally, 2 respondents made reference to the isolation that this situation has caused.

## Impact of pandemic on long-term learners

When asked about the status of their legacy learners and whether or not the pandemic had impacted their engagement, the results were split.

4 respondents agreed that the pandemic had not affected their long-term learners, while 4 claimed that it most definitely did.



Note: 1 respondent did not answer

*"Yes...but again, sometimes change is good. We have seen who was really dedicated to their literacy goals..."*

*"Yes. We touch bases with them, but they don't want to meet face to face, and they aren't comfortable or equipped to do online learning."*

*"It has affected all our learners, [they are] not really interested, [they are] missing the human contact and activities."*

## Distribution of print material

When asked if organizations were able, or in a position to distribute print material to learners, 5 out of 8 respondents answered yes.



Note: 1 respondent did not answer

However, the 3 organizations not distributing print material, were still providing learners with online resources.

*"We share materials online, due to the size of the territory [it is] very expensive to mail documents."*

*"Yes, someone delivers to homes or school for pick-up. Online resources available via our web[site]."*

*"Yes. Book kits...stress management tools, ABCLifeLiteracy Digital Literacy tip sheets [via] porch drop offs... 1:1 appointments...or by mail."*

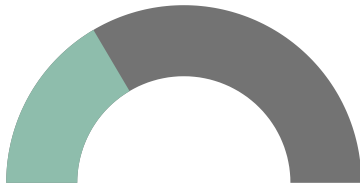
## Gauging how learners have been coping

When asked about how learners seem to be coping, many respondents had similar answers, despite the survey question being open ended. For example:



4/9

made mention of their learners struggling to adapt, or feeling stressed and discouraged.



3/9

noted however, that their learners seemed to be adapting alright, and one even made mention of their learners being motivated.

## Preparing learners to participate remotely

When asked if the organizations had faced any challenges getting learners prepared to participate remotely, 8 out of 9 respondents answered "yes."

However acquiring a reliable internet source/access to internet was suggested by multiple respondents as a definite roadblock and a driver of the digital divide.

*"We don't always have the answers to help them with the digital literacy challenges. We don't want to create more stress... **The connection they seem to want is human connection** at this time, more so than lessons.*

*We try to offer fun activities that support learning (games, challenges, scavenger hunts), but not "homework and lessons."*

## Ways learners can access assistance

During times of change and uncertainty it is important that learners are given different avenues to request assistance, For example, if a remote learner cannot connect to the internet, they will not be able to request assistance via online services like email, Zoom, or teams, etc.



Luckily, **8 out of 9 respondents listed phone as a way in which learners could access assistance**, should they need to.

## Status of projects since onset of COVID-19

Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic, along with social distancing guidelines has negatively affected or hindered projects for 8 out of 9 survey respondents.



## Adapting/overcoming pandemic challenges

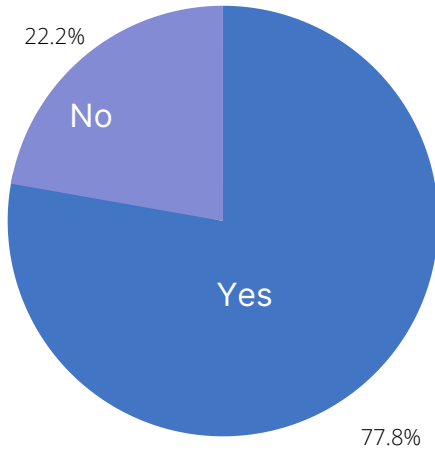
In an effort to be proactive and make sure that learners have access to other individuals and resources, most organizations have successfully moved their programming and events, etc. online in order to overcome the challenge of social distancing.

*"We are simply concentrating on tutoring and will resume activities when we can."*

*"We have increased our word of mouth and referrals through other community partners, and used new ways to recruit (i.e. posting on Indeed)."*

*"We put what we could online however are not yet reaching the most vulnerable and at risk."*

## New projects on the horizon



Despite the current challenges, we asked our respondents **if they had been able to plan any new projects** since the pandemic began, and **7 out of 9 answered: yes.**

Additionally, 1 of the respondents who answered "no" also stated that they had planning measures in place, but "nothing definite."

Some of the new projects listed by the survey respondents included:

- Lunch and learns
- Journaling club
- Virtual/outdoor literacy clubs
- PACTE project to map community resources during a pandemic
- Magic of Reading Youtube series (coming soon)
- Lifelong literacy initiatives for seniors
- Trivia time

## Covid-19's impact on funding

Out of the 8 respondents (1 did not answer), **5 agreed that their funding had been impacted by the pandemic.** However, these 5 organizations were not all impacted in the same way.



For example, **while some respondents mentioned not being able to plan, or having to scale back**, due to uncertainty and decreases in funding (or increased costs), **others noted new positive opportunities** (funding, donations, etc.).

## Out-of-the-box ideas

When asked about some of the out-of-the-box ideas that came about because of the pandemic, here are a few things respondents had to say:

*"As a community organization, we have learned to adapt in order to survive and meet the needs. One example of this was to promote literacy and give a boost to morale in our community by circulating Love Literacy Kits, hand made kits based on "orders" of books, activities, health and digital literacy tools, and some Valentines treats to those feeling stressed and isolated at home. It allowed us to promote literacy awareness, provide tips and tools, and let people know that we are here."*

*"Using the Zoom platform, the document camera and having a YouTube channel to share some of our activities with the general public."*

*"We have been creative about finding new ways to reach people, break isolation and provide connection and the response has been positive."*

*"Switching to online has helped our organization due to the vastness of our territory. [Organization] is becoming more visible to the community, with all our activities being online. We have increased our outreach."*

# Literacy Helpline



Free Literacy  
Helpline

1-888-521-8181



Literacy Quebec

[literacyquebec.org/helpline.html](http://literacyquebec.org/helpline.html)



How we live during COVID has changed. Do you need support to connect with services and programs online for work, learning, and life?

Literacy Quebec volunteers will help English-speaking Quebecers (16+) who need information and support for tasks that require reading, writing, and/or digital literacy skills.