

Survey on Access to Health Care and Social Services for the English-speaking Community of Laval

Survey Respondent Profile

Of the 1,580 respondents to the 2019 survey, the majority (75%) were women which is consistent with the fact that women continue to occupy the primary caregiver role within Quebec families. Many comments offered by the survey respondents concern children and aging parents aside from the personal health access experience of the individual respondent.

The English-speaking community of Laval is growing with a high proportion of young families relative to minority language communities in other regions of the province. This demographic reality is reflected in the large number of respondents located in the 35-44 (40.90%) and 45-54 (38.04%) age groups.

Commentary offered by respondents reveals a high level of English/French bilingualism. A defining characteristic of Quebec's urban English-speaking communities is a high level of cultural diversity and this is notable in the region of Laval. Consistent with this reality, 70.26% of survey respondents claimed English as their mother tongue while a fair portion claimed a language other than English or French. For example, 219 respondents reported Italian as their mother tongue and 123 reported Greek. Commentary revealed newcomers to the province who are in the process of learning French among survey respondents.

Overall, a substantial number of survey respondents have a college or university degree as their highest level of educational accreditation and the majority are earning \$50,000 or more as an annual income.

Use of Services

Overall, a wide array of medical services had been used by survey respondents. When respondents were asked what services in Laval they would consult first in the event of illness, distress or need, 50.81% answered that they would consult the services of their family doctor, 16.21% would turn to a medical clinic and 10.19% would dial info-santé/info-social. In keeping with this pattern, the health and social services most frequently used by English speakers in Laval in the last two years according to the survey was CLSC services (63.87%), doctor in a private office or clinic (61.29%) followed by hospital emergency room or out-patient clinic (45.32%).

The health and social service establishments most frequently visited by respondents either for themselves or another person were Hopital de la Cite-de-la-Sante (64.22%), CLSC de Sainte-Rose (23.46%) and CLSC du Ruisseau-Papineau (Boul.Chomedy) (15.52%).

Reception: Q 11. *When you go to a public health care facility in Laval for an in-person visit, is the receptionist able to communicate with you in English (within a reasonable amount of time)? (answer options: Always, often, sometimes, rarely, never)*

The majority of survey respondents indicated that the receptionists of the health and social service institutions in Laval were sometimes (36.62%) and rarely (33.40%) able to communicate in English. Only 12.09% indicated often being able to communicate in the English language.

Commentary:

I speak in French to get better service.

They always speak French even though I speak in English.

They don't speak English, refuse or are rude about it. I try my best to speak French but am not from Quebec and still learning.

It is particularly difficult in the event of an emergency... both stressful and dangerous for patients.

No effort is made to speak English. I waited two years for service in English for my autistic daughter.

Health or social service professional: Q 12. *When you go for in-person care at a public health care facility in Laval, is the professional able to communicate/provide services in English (within a reasonable amount of time)? (answer options: Always, often, sometimes, rarely, never)*

The majority of survey respondents indicated that professionals working in the health and social service institutions of Laval were sometimes (39.33%) and rarely (28.48%) able to communicate in English. Only 17.56% indicated often being able to communicate with professionals in the English language.

Commentary:

The doctors at Cite speak English but there is no English from the nurses.

At Cite de la Santé I was treated for pneumonia under 2 years ago, and needed a blood transfusion. The nurse treating me did not speak one word of English.

For mental health services, I had to leave Laval and go to Montreal because I was not able to access someone who could speak English here.

I am forced to go private to get therapy for my son who has been waiting for English service for over a year

Communication errors have occurred with regards to medications.

If you speak English, you have to wait longer for help.

Telephone Communication: Q 13. *With regards to phone calls, when you make or receive a call to or from the Laval public health care system, is the person able to communicate in English (within a reasonable amount of time)? (answer options: Always, often, sometimes, rarely, never)*

The majority of survey respondents indicated that phone calls to or from the health and social service institutions in Laval sometimes (36.52%) and rarely (31.20%) provided communication in English. Only 16.10% indicated often being able to communicate in the English language by phone.

Commentary:

Calls back for booking a specialist are in French only.

They speak English at info-santé and info-social.

I always need assistance to make calls. I have developed extreme anxiety when I have to call and advocate for myself or get health information or appointments.

Messages left are always in French.

Support to Communicate in English

Research has demonstrated that reliance on informal support in the communication between patient and health professional can contribute to problems such as delay in pursuing diagnosis and treatment; miscommunication in assembling the patient's medical case history and error in prescribed medications; and nondisclosure of symptoms due to privacy issues (For example, the presence of a family member or friend might inhibit the reveal of potentially stigmatizing mental health symptoms, an addiction or even an unwanted pregnancy).

We learn from the survey that in the absence of formal interpretation services, English speakers residing in Laval often rely upon friends and family, institutional staff if any can be found who speak English and volunteer assistance from an English-speaking community organization for support to communicate in accessing health and social services. It is important to note the high level of need for communication assistance among this sample of survey respondents who, as mentioned, are relatively young (35-54 years of age) and likely to be primary family caregivers (majority female). In other words, the need for communication assistance when ill or in distress cannot be assumed to be limited to an older (55+), more unilingually English, segment of Laval citizens.

Q14. *With regards to accessing social and/or health care services in Laval, do you rely on support to communicate in the English language? Yes* **41.02%**

Top Three Sources of Communication Assistance:

Friend or family member **54.81%**

Help from health and social service institution staff **33.26%**

Assistance from a community organization **3.35%**

Commentary:

I do not receive an equal standard of treatment compared to a bilingual patient.

The English speaker should not have poor treatment based on language. Older citizens are scared...

I go to Montreal so I don't have to rely on support.

I have them write it and then I use Google Translate.

Information in English

Information: Q16. *In the last two years, have you received information about public health prevention or promotion programs in English from the public health and social services system of Laval?*

No **88.95%**

Yes **11.05%**

Q17. *If yes, how did you obtain the information?*

Mostly through **internet/social media** or **word of mouth (friend and/or relative)**

Q18. *Do you feel adequately informed about the different health care and social services provided in the English language by the CISSS Laval?*

No **86.96%**

How could access to information be improved?

Top Four Recommendations

More English on CISSS website **80.60%**

Reference guide for English speakers **60.84%**

Newspapers **26.69%**

Community organizations (presentations, workshops, support groups) **25.81%**

Commentary:

More bilingual staff and professionals are needed.

Distribute information through English language schools.

Mail to home address or use an email list of English-speaking Laval residents.

Out-of-Region Services

Q20. *Have you received services from outside of Laval in the past year?*

A substantial 66.39% of survey respondents received services from outside the Laval region in the past year.

Yes **66.39%** No **33.61%**

Q21. What is (are) the reason (s) for seeking services outside of Laval?

Top Five Reasons

My family doctor is outside of Laval **51.56%**

Specialist not available in my region **26.07%**

Service unavailable in English **23.18%**

My family doctor referred me outside of Laval **20.42%**

I believe waiting times are shorter outside of Laval **14.65%**

Commentary:

I go out of Laval to be able to communicate in English without discrimination or disrespect.

English-speaking staff and professionals... to feel comfortable and safe.

I fear not being understood and not fully understanding what might be explained to me by health care professionals if I seek attention in Laval.

I don't want the extra stress of worrying about language when I am ill.

We pay out of pocket for quicker and better quality service.

The ambulance took us to Montreal.

Recommendations for Improving Access from Survey Respondents

There should be more help in English schools... early intervention and support to parents is essential.

Visibly identify English-speaking health workers, i.e. badge or sticker.

Employ a translator in hospital emergency room.

Sensitivity training for staff and professionals to improve attitude/English language training for staff/ improve awareness of health impact of language barriers "I am not buying shoes, this is my health".

Establish a volunteer program in the hospital for English translation.

Need to remind everyone of English language rights when it comes to health.

