

HEALTH-RELATED WORK IN A MINORITY CONTEXT

TOPICS COVERED:

- The Francophone minority context
- Francophones living in a minority situation
- Access to French-language health services
- Challenges and characteristics of working in a Francophone minority context
- Best practices for care providers in a minority context



The reluctance of Francophone populations to request services in their own language, the lack of measures encouraging and facilitating the provision of French-language health services, rurality or remoteness are a few examples of challenges that face Francophone minority communities. Knowledge of minority environments, challenges that these populations must overcome and realities of working in a minority context will help care providers act with determination and assertiveness.

THE FRANCOPHONE MINORITY CONTEXT



Any French-speaking individual who lives where a majority of the population belongs to the other official language group is in a minority situation. They are referred to as official language minority communities (OLMCs). In all Canadian provinces and territories, except for Quebec, we refer to Francophone minority communities (FMCs) or French-speaking and Acadian communities in a minority situation (FACMS). In Quebec, they are called Anglophone minority communities.

FRANCOPHONES LIVING IN A MINORITY SITUATION



Because of their minority situation, Francophones need to constantly adapt their language to the context in which they live. It is not a question of preference or will, but one of adaptation resulting from recognizing the limitations of their language. Devaluing the heritage of the French language that characterizes some areas will influence the behaviours of Francophones.

Thus, in the Canadian context where English is the majority language, French is often kept to private life. It is not surprising that so few Francophones use French in anglo-dominant institutions.

Generally, Francophones are not very inclined to request French-language services. According to the Léger Report (2020), in spite of the importance given to French-language services, only two Francophones out of five usually ask for them.

Some of the factors explaining the behaviours of Francophones in minority situations:

- The historic lack of French-language services makes it seem as though it is impossible to receive them.
- Not knowing the availability of French-language services.
- The habit of adapting to the majority context becoming a reflex.
- The fear of not receiving services as quickly and getting services of inferior quality.
- Linguistic insecurity with respect to their own competencies in French.
- Fear of being considered as troublemakers, which would affect how their file is processed. (Savard et coll. 2017)
- Lack of trust in terms of a professional's ability to actually understand French and speak it fluently. (Rapport Léger, 2020)



A Francophone living in a minority situation will often have access to a limited number of services, including health and social services. In addition, this number varies depending on the share of Francophones in a given community and their geographic distribution.

French being recognized as one of Canada's official languages, it is important to ensure that Francophones have access to quality and safe health services, comparable to those provided to the Anglophone majority.

The scope of French-language health and social services is expanding. However, these services do not reach all of the Francophone population across the country. In areas where they are available, several barriers still impede access to such services.

CHALLENGES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKING IN A FRANCOPHONE MINORITY CONTEXT



As it is difficult for Francophone clients living in a minority situation to access health services in French, providing such services also poses some challenges for health professionals. Following are a few examples:

The context

- The shortage of bilingual health professionals.
- The scarcity of comprehensive services in French, which results in breaking down the continuum of health services and complicates client referrals to other services.
- The low demand for French-language health services may have negative effects with respect to recognizing the need to provide more services in French.
- The provision of services in the minority official language suffers from a lack of support. A professional may feel overwhelmed, alone and isolated.
- The lack of written resources in French (forms, information flyers, assessment tools): it means having to translate these documents for clients.

Bilingual professionals face several challenges

- Taking on the role of interpreter
- Translating or adapting assessment and intervention tools
- Having sound knowledge of a profession's vocabulary in both languages
- Writing reports in English, while having to describe treatments, side effects and processes in French to the client
- Understanding clients, regardless of their level of French, and communicating clearly with them
- Having no access to linguistic training in French
- Seeing their linguistic competencies in French weaken as they rarely have the opportunity to speak the language
- Seeing their career plans compromised, if management wishes to keep bilingual staff in their current positions and functions, because they require bilingualism
- The lack of recognition of work-related complexities for a bilingual individual (mastering two languages, translating for colleagues, searching for French resources, etc.), when quantifying tasks.

BEST PRACTICES FOR CARE PROVIDERS IN A MINORITY CONTEXT



01

Enroll in training on active offer: participate in training on active offer and on issues and needs within French minority communities.

02

Offer services in French clearly and confidently, in order to create a special relationship with clients and their families.

03

Be open to employ certain terms that the client uses, even though they are not part of the care provider's own linguistic background.

04

Be mindful of the clientele's health literacy and adjusting one's level of language accordingly.

05

Develop leadership skills so as to contribute to raising awareness about active offer, the importance of identifying Francophone clients, as well as the importance of language in referrals.

06

Raise awareness among Anglophone colleagues about the impact of language barriers.

07

Promote health-related careers in French with young Francophones.

08

Identify as Francophone or bilingual individual, contribute to the Francophone community's vitality and to the sense of belonging that exists in this community. Take part in activities that celebrate Francophone culture.

09

CONTRIBUTE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NETWORKS BETWEEN FRANCOPHONE AND BILINGUAL CARE PROVIDERS:

- It is particularly important to call on other Francophones in the workplace who are experiencing similar situations. This being said, it is as important to take the opportunity to connect with Anglophone and Francophile colleagues. It would also be very useful to have good knowledge of the specific characteristics of the Francophone community that is served and build relationships with said community, in order to strengthen one's own sense of belonging;
- Raise awareness among managers and the organization about the importance of such networks.

Providing health services in French is also... a rewarding experience

Did you know?

Although providing health services in a client's preferred language may present some challenges, it can also unfold several interesting opportunities for health professionals. Indeed, any bilingual health staff member brings added value to the care team, which needs to be acknowledged. It may be quite rewarding for individuals to know that they have an impact on the quality of care, and more broadly, on the development of the Francophone community.

(Lortie et al., 2012)

REFERENCES



Bowen, S. (2015). Impact des barrières linguistiques sur la sécurité des patients et la qualité des soins. Société Santé en français. Tiré, le 28 mai 2021 de <https://francosantesud.ca/wp-content/uploads/SSF-Bowen-S.-%C3%89tude-Barri%C3%A8res-linguistiques.pdf>

Léger (Firme) (2020). Perceptions des communautés de langue officielle en situation minoritaire : accès aux services de santé dans la langue officielle de son choix : rapport final. Santé Canada. 2020 : rapport final. Santé Canada. Tiré le 26 mai 2021 de : <http://publications.gc.ca/site/fra/9.886122/publication.html>

Lortie, L., Lalonde, A. et Bouchard, P. (2012). Cadre de référence pour la formation à l'offre active des services de santé en français. Consortium national de formation en santé. Tiré le 26 mai 2021 de : https://savoir-sante.ca/fr/content_page/item/226-cadre-de-reference-pour-la-formation-a-l-offre-active-des-services-de-sante-en-francais

CLO. Les infographies sur les langues officielles du Canada. Commissariat aux langues officielles. Tiré le 26 mai 2021 de : <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/fr/statistiques/infographiques>

Kubina, L-A., de Moissac, D., Savard, J., Savard, S. et Giasson, F. et ses coll. (Ba, H., Couturier, Y., Gueye, N. R., Ndiaye, N. D., Paquette, C., Schryburt, J.-L., Silverman, M.). (2018). Les services sociaux et de santé pour les personnes âgées francophones de l'Est ontarien et du Manitoba : lignes directrices pour améliorer la continuité des services en français – rapport de recherche. GreFoPs. Tiré le 27 mai 2021 de : <https://savoir-sante.ca/fr/outils/revues-de-litterature/download/298/472/21?method=view>

Savard, S., Arcand, I., Drolet, M., Benoît, J., Savard, J. et Lagacé, J. (2013). Les professionnels de la santé et des services sociaux intervenant auprès des francophones minoritaires : l'enjeu du capital social. Francophonies d'Amérique, (36), 113-133. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1029379ar>

REFERENCES



Savard, S., De Moissac, D., Benoît, J., Ba, H., Zellama, F., Giasson, F., et Drolet, M. (2017). Le recrutement et la rétention d'intervenants en santé et services sociaux bilingues en situation francophone minoritaire à Winnipeg et à Ottawa. Dans M. Drolet, P. Bouchard, et Savard, (dir.), *Accessibilité et offre active : Santé et services sociaux en contexte linguistique minoritaire*, chap.9, p. 229-254. Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa. Tiré le 26 mai 2021 de : <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv5vdcp0.15>

de Moissac, D., Giasson, F. et Roch-Gagné, M. (2015). Accès aux services sociaux et de santé en français : l'expérience des Franco-Manitobains. *Minorités linguistiques et société/ Linguistic Minorities and Society*, (6), 42-65. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1033189ar>

