

Impact of Language Barriers on Access to Healthcare Services: The Francophone Experience in Canada

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Community Health and Social Services Network

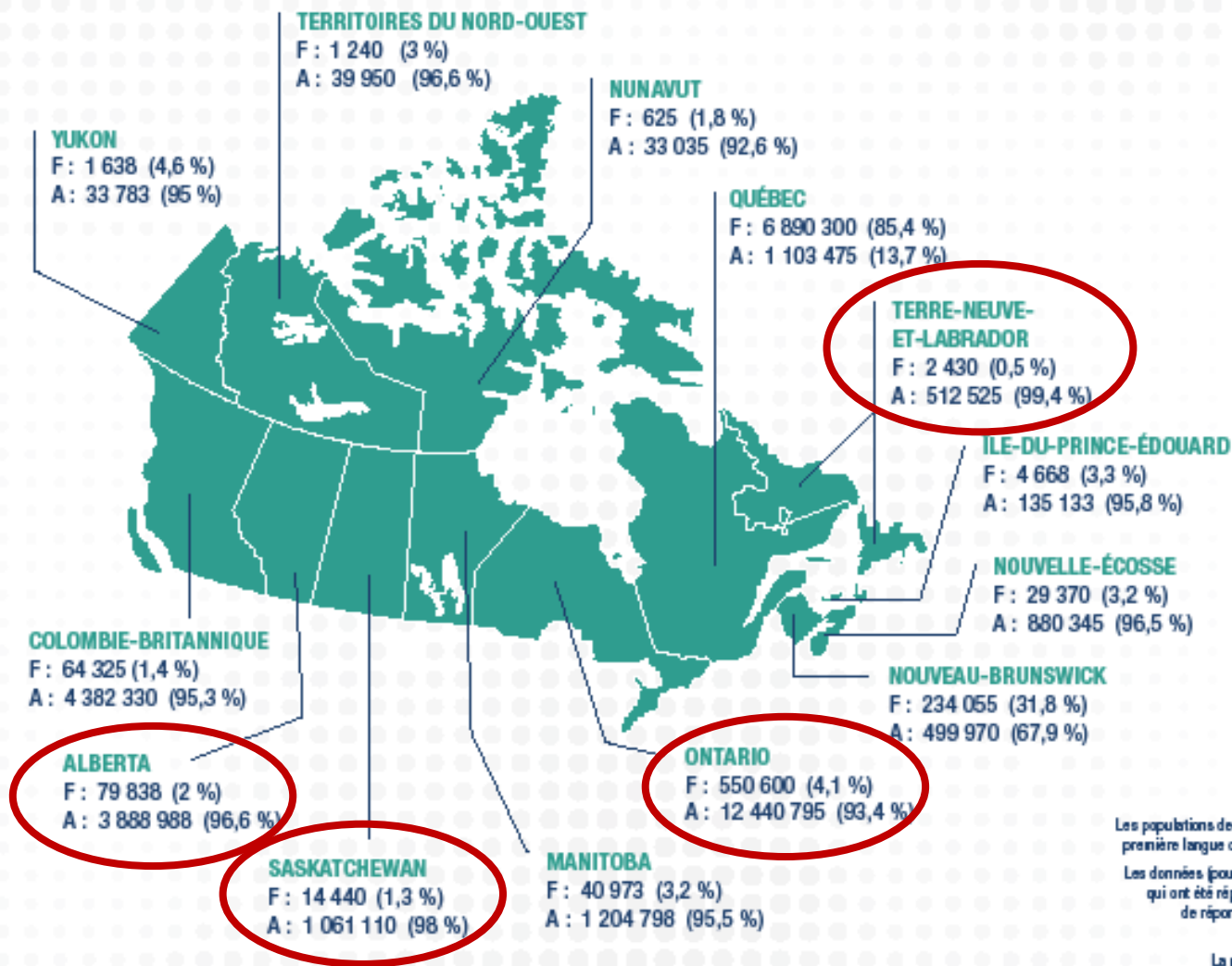


A Pan-Canadian Research Project

- In partnership with the Société Santé en Français, regional coordinators, and the community
- In four Canadian provinces (NL, ON, SK, AB)
- In minority francophone communities with a low proportion of French speakers



LES LANGUES OFFICIELLES AU CANADA



Population de langue française (F)
7 914 498 (22,8 %)

Population de langue anglaise (A)
26 216 243 (75,4 %)

Population totale

Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador	515 680
Ile-du-Prince-Édouard	141 015
Nouvelle-Écosse	912 295
Nouveau-Brunswick	736 280
Québec	8 066 555
Ontario	13 312 865
Manitoba	1 261 620
Saskatchewan	1 083 240
Alberta	4 026 650
Colombie-Britannique	4 598 415
Yukon	35 555
Territoires du Nord-Ouest	41 375
Nunavut	35 690
Canada	34 767 250

Les populations de langue française (F) et de langue anglaise (A) ont été calculées d'après la première langue officielle parlée selon la définition du Règlement sur les langues officielles.

Les données (pour la première langue officielle parlée) comprennent les réponses multiples qui ont été réparties également entre le français et l'anglais, c'est-à-dire que le nombre de réponses « Anglais et français » a été divisé par deux et le quotient a été ajouté au nombre de réponses uniques sous « Anglais » et sous « Français ».

La proportion des personnes de langue française (F) et de langue anglaise (A) par province ne correspond pas à 100 % puisque les données excluent la catégorie « ni français ni anglais » pour la première langue officielle parlée.

Research Objectives

To better understand the experience of minority francophones living in communities with a low proportion of French speakers in Canada and interpreters/support personnel/navigators with regard to:

- ⊙ Services currently available in French
- ⊙ Interpretation, support and navigation services



Key Themes

- 1) How francophones perceive their access to healthcare services in French
- 2) The importance they place on receiving services in French
- 3) The impact of the language barrier on their access to care and the quality of the services they receive
- 4) Current practices in interpretation/support

Methodology

Hybrid method

- ⊙ 21-question survey (online and paper)
- ⊙ Semi-structured phone interviews

Recruitment

- ⊙ **Survey:** Via francophone community organizations
- ⊙ **Interviews:** Survey participants who had experience with interpretation, support, or navigation services; interpreters, navigators, and support personnel

Participant Profile – Survey

297 participants

- 78.9% female
- Age range: 19 to 84 years old
- Average age: 42.1 years old
- 73% married or in common-law relationship
- Distribution by province:
 - Newfoundland & Labrador (5.4%)
 - North Simcoe Muskoka and Thunder Bay in Ontario (8.0%)
 - Saskatchewan (36.4%)
 - Alberta (17.8%)
 - 32.3% of participants did not indicate their place of residence



<https://ajsmithactionresearch.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/participants.jpg>

Participant Profile

- Education level and annual personal income
 - 63% have a university degree
 - 55.9% have an income of \$50,000 or more
- Ethno-linguistic profile
 - 68.4% were born in Canada
 - 78% are native French speakers
 - 56% reported that they were comfortable speaking English during a medical consultation

Participant Profile – Interviews

20 participants

- 65% female
- Average age: 39.4 years old
- 60% married or in common-law relationship
- **70% are from Saskatchewan**
- **70% have a university degree**
- **45% have an annual personal income of \$50,000 or more**
- 63.5% were born in Canada
- 85% are native French speakers
- **42.1% reported that they were comfortable speaking English during a medical consultation**



<https://blog.mimik.app/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/blog-post-3-2@2x.png>

Interpreter/Support Personnel Profile

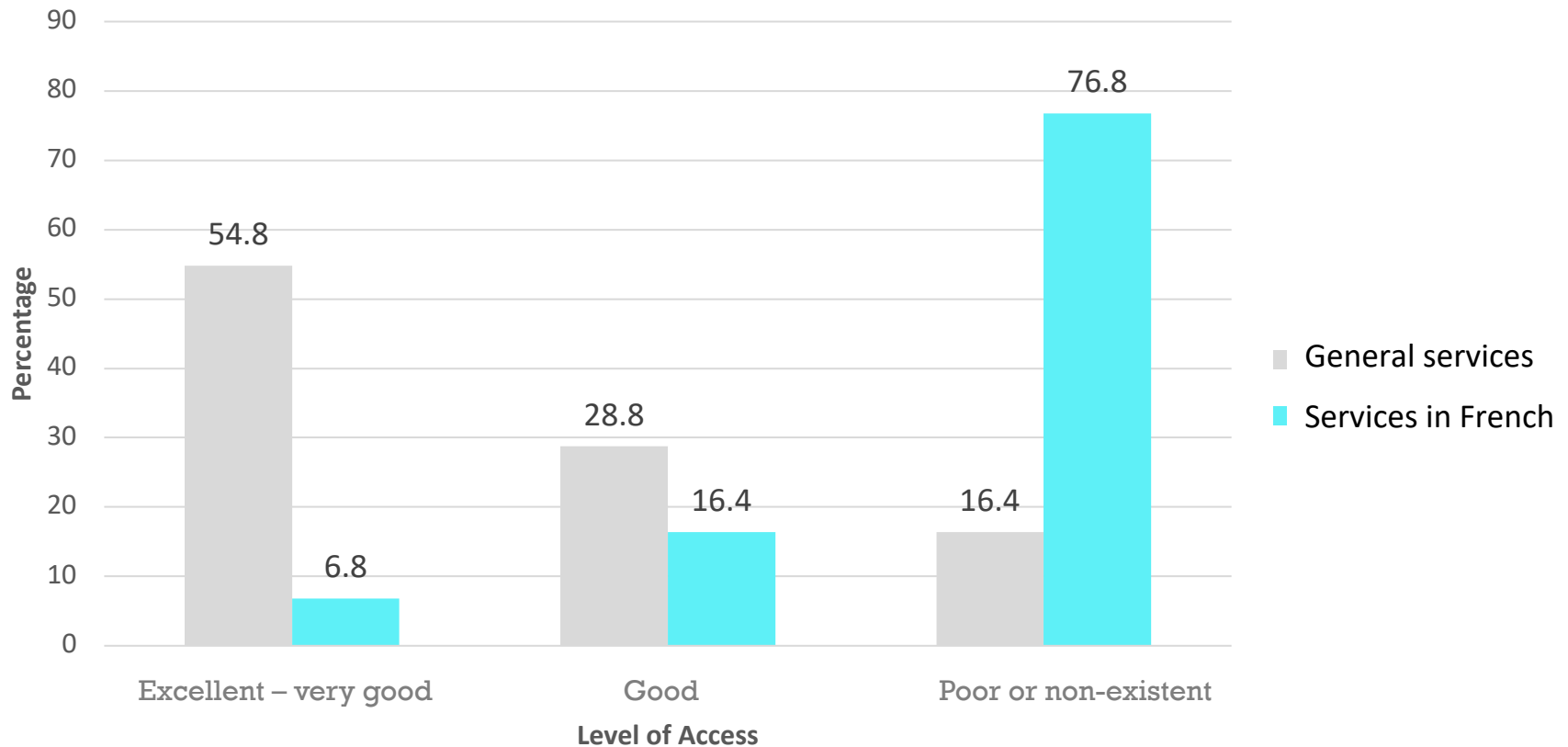
6 participants

- 66% female
- Average age: 44 years old
- All work in urban settings
- 1 works full-time, 2 share a position (coordination), and 3 are volunteers
- Years of experience: from 8 months to 19 years



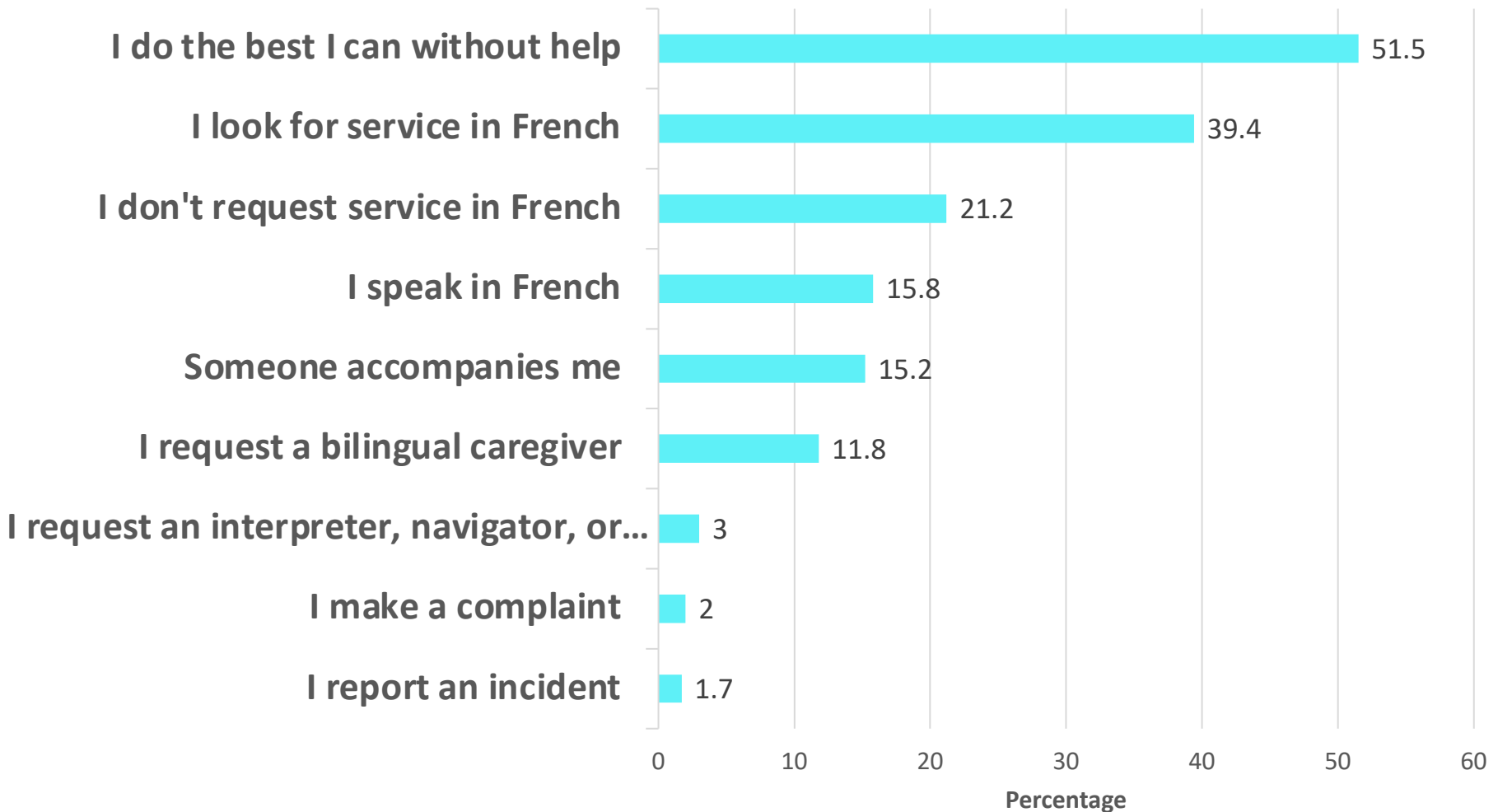
https://languagelinemarketing.force.com/s/blog_images/search-part-time-interpreter-jobs.jpg

Access to Healthcare

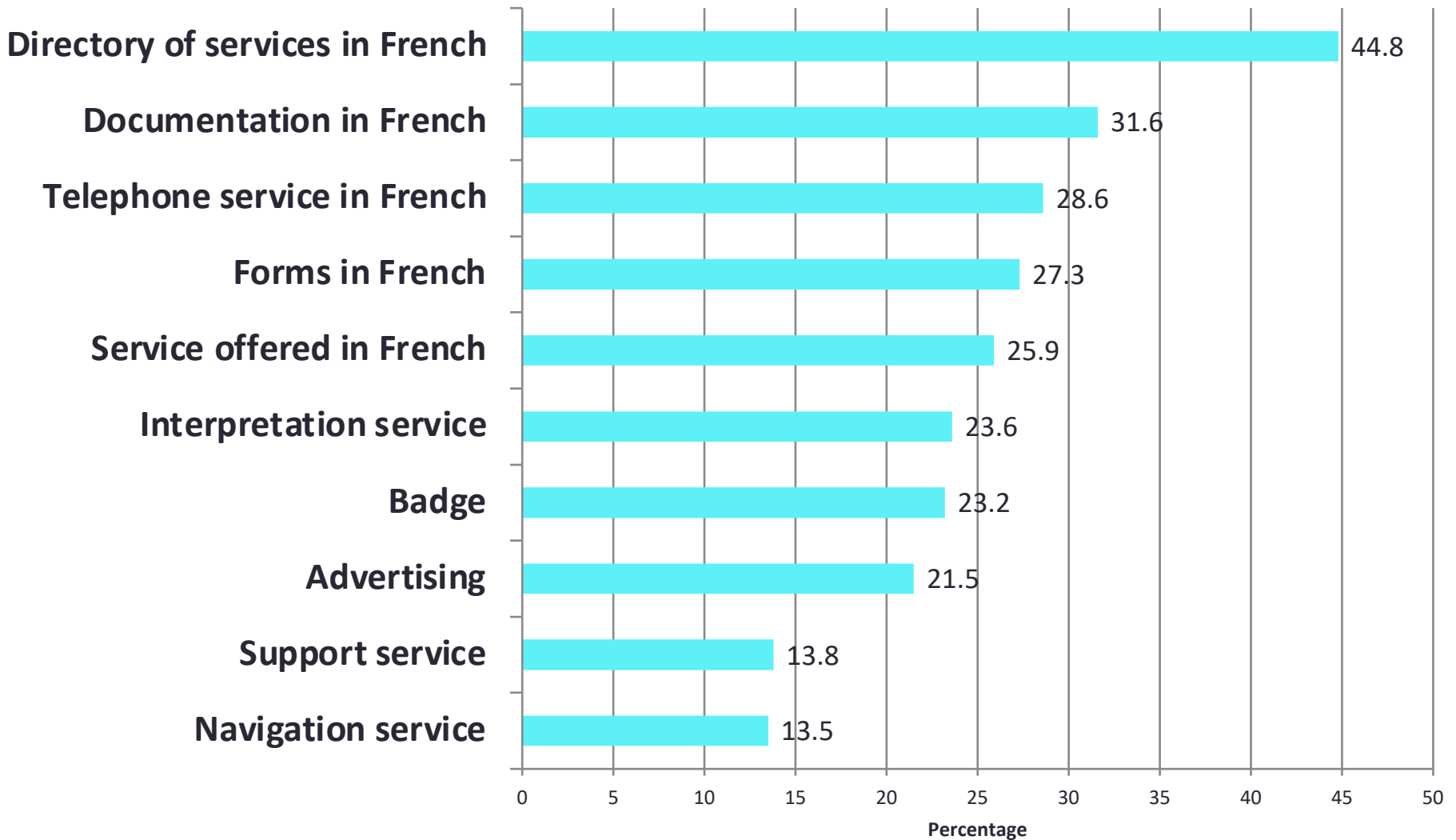


48.5% of participants reported that they have a bilingual family doctor
48.5% have received care from another type of bilingual healthcare professional

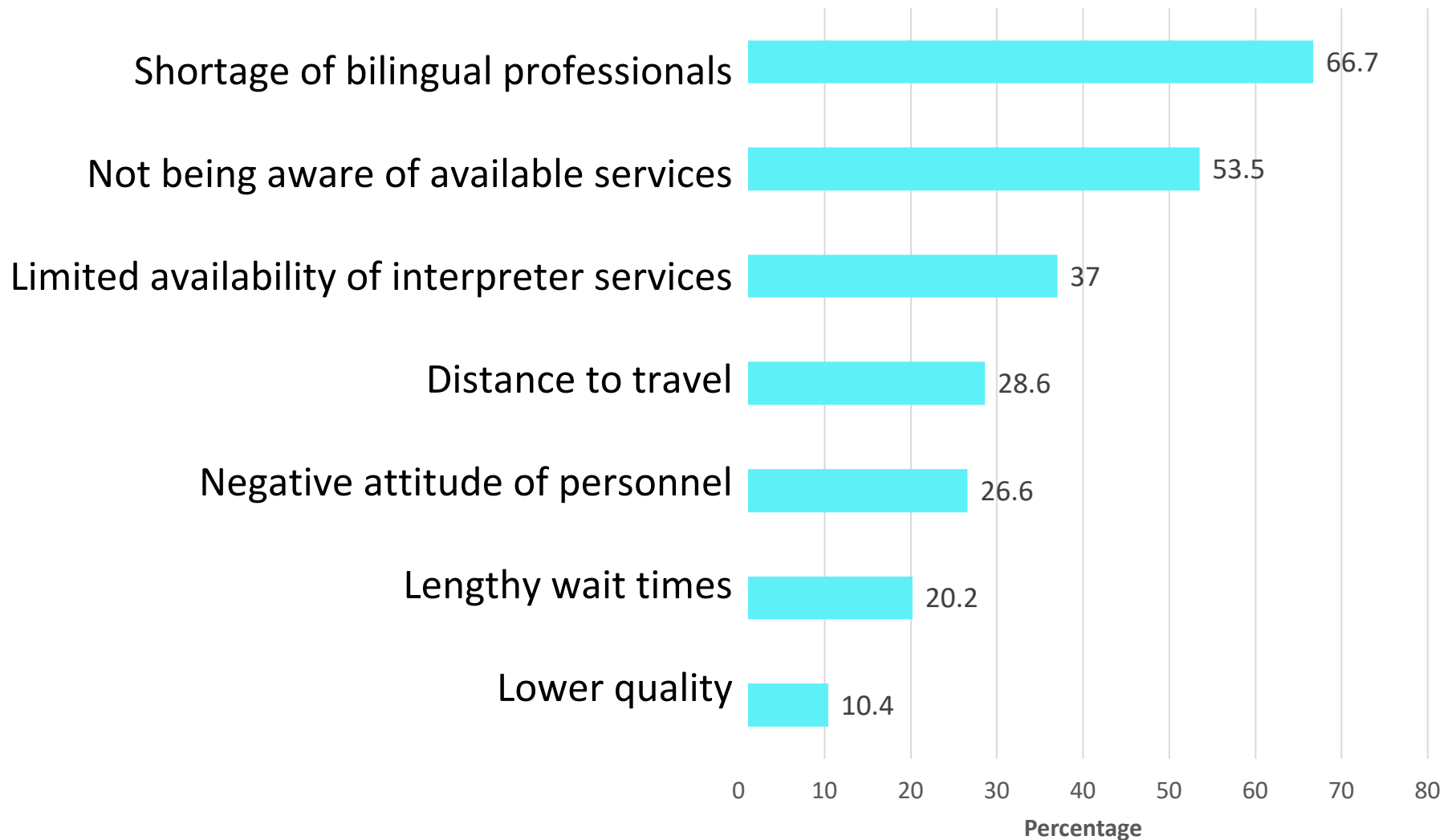
Actions Taken to Access Services in French



Access Facilitators



Access Barriers



The Importance of Language in the Health Field

Who?

- At-risk populations
- High-risk situations

Why?

- To describe symptoms (52.2%)
- To understand verbal instructions (38%)
- To receive emotional support (36%)

When?

- Consulting a family doctor
- Emergency situations and hospitalizations
- Mental health consultations



<https://i2.wp.com/sfvbareferral.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Can-You-Sue-Someone-for-Emotional-Distress.png?w=940&ssl=1>

Impact on Access to Care and Service Quality

The patient's discomfort is prolonged due to:

- Additional examinations
- Inappropriate treatment
- Prolonged wait for follow-up
- Instructions that are not followed properly
- Subsequent consultation for the same health problem

The patient is therefore dissatisfied with the quality of service until the care provider properly understands his or her needs.

Reminder: 1 person in 5 does not have access to services in French

Current Practices in Interpretation/Support

- Low demand for professional services; perceived shortage of such services
- Many users rely on loved ones to accompany them or community volunteers
- Support requested by seniors and people who live in rural areas or come from somewhere else
- These services are greatly appreciated (emotional support, easier communication)



https://www.lappui.org/var/lappui/storage/images/_aliases/news_item_block/medias/images/outaouais-images/proche-aidant/1609611-1-fre-CA/Proche-aidant.png

Challenges Associated with Current Practices

- Reluctance associated with asking a loved one for help
- Volunteers: recruitment, coordination, training in interpretation, organizational support within the healthcare system
- Multiple roles and responsibilities for the interpreter/support person during a medical consultation



Conclusions

- 1) Access to services in French matters to francophones, regardless of their level of bilingualism or place of residence.
- 2) The language barrier has a negative impact on access to care and the quality of services received.
- 3) Access inequality is felt by minority francophones in various ways, including limited services, a shortage of bilingual professionals or no active provision of services. Interpretation and support services are not well-known and are therefore not used much.
- 4) The existence of a law does not seem to translate into improved access or higher-quality services, but it does promote active demand for services in French by users.

Recommendations

- 1) The hiring of bilingual healthcare professionals and active provision of services remain priority issues.
- 2) A combined interpretation and support service could address complex healthcare needs, lack of awareness about the healthcare system, and at-risk francophones' need for social support.
- 3) Interpreters/support personnel must receive suitable training, linguistic assessment in both languages, and support from organizational policies and practices (online training, use of technology).

Thanks to:

Study participants

SSF's community partners and regional networks

(Newfoundland and Labrador Francophone Health Network, French Health Network of Central Southwestern Ontario, CHIGAMIK Community Health Centre, Réseau du Mieux-être Francophone du Nord de l'Ontario, L'Accueil Francophone de Thunder Bay, Réseau Santé en Français de la Saskatchewan, Canadian Volunteers United in Action - Alberta (CANAVUA), and Yukon Francophone Health Network)

Research committee

(Sarah Bowen, Ph.D., Yves Couturier, Ph.D., and Anne Leis, Ph.D.)

Société Santé en Français

Official Language Community Development Bureau