according to 4,797 youth aged 15-29

Gaps and barriers experienced by English-speaking youth in accessing mental health services in Québec

Cross-cutting barriers

- lack of mental health services and resources in English.
- cultural and familial stigma surrounding mental health issues.
- concern about job prospects and future economic security.
- financial precarity, which prohibits youth who are struggling financially to access private mental health support.
- lack of trust in services or in mental health providers on the part of English-speaking youth. This includes lack of confidence in health and social services due to negative, even traumatic experiences of using these services in the past (including experiences of systemic racism and discrimination).
- sense of pressure to perform and succeed in school and other areas of life, without adequate support to do so.

Gaps related to knowledge and access to information

A lack of...

- credible information about mental health accessible to English-speaking youth.
- awareness about existing mental health services and resources.
- promotion of existing services and resources in English.

Gaps related to the health system

A lack of...

- certainty among young people that formal services would meet their needs.
- timely availability of services (very long waitlists for mental health and support services).
- affordable services in English (e.g. low-cost or free therapy).
- coordination between mental health services.
- accessibility of services for youth living in remote areas (large physical distances between youth and existing mental health services).
- staff in the community and healthcare systems.
- cultural awareness about the needs and realities of English-speaking youth on the part of French-speaking service-providers.
- a trauma-informed approach in the public mental health care system.
- English-language competency on the part of staff in the healthcare system and community sector.
- funds in the community sector and healthcare system to hire English-speaking resources.
- accessible addiction services.

Gaps related to services to meet young people's diverse needs

A lack of...

- spaces for youth to gather, express themselves and do activities they enjoy.
- support for how to manage anxiety.
- access to life-skill education (related to budgeting, financial planning, cooking, etc.).
- culturally appropriate or adapted services for especially marginalized youth (including racialized, LGBTQIA2S+, Indigenous, neurodiverse, and low-literacy youth as well as youth having exited foster care).
- support for reintegrating youth who exit foster care (and especially 2SLGBTQIA+ and Black youth) into society.
- support for young carers and for the caregivers of youth with neurodiversity.
- childcare to accompany mental health services, which creates a barrier for many young parents living on a low income in accessing mental health support.
- English-language cultural or recreational activities that promote a sense of belonging and identity.

The education system and support for academic progress and future education and work opportunities appear to be closely connected to young people's mental health.

Source: Glass, J. (2024) Youth Mental Health Initiative final evaluation report 2021-2024. CHSSN. https://chssn.org/documents/youth-mental-health-initiative-final-evaluation-report-2021-2024/

Gaps related to the education system

A lack of...

- English-speaking guidance counselors or career advisors in schools.
- English-language tutoring or academic support services outside of mainstream educational institutions.
- access to English-language resources and information regarding higher education options, scholarships, and financial aid opportunities.
- English-language workshops or training programs focused on essential life skills, such as financial literacy or job readiness.

Gaps related to youth engagement

A lack of...

- projects emerging out of a participatory planning process involving youth leadership.
- safe, non-judgmental physical spaces in which English-speaking youth of diverse backgrounds can comfortably gather.
- representation of English-speaking perspectives and voices in local decision-making bodies or advocacy groups.
- representation of especially marginalized identities and their experiences (including racialized, LGBTQIA2S+, Indigenous, and low – literacy youth as well as youth having exited foster care).

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