

# Long-Term Care and Services for Francophone Seniors in Ontario: From Challenges to Strategies for Improvement



- Background**
- ▶ Nearly **21%** of Franco-Ontarians are aged 65 and older (approximately 123,600 people, according to Statistics Canada, 2023).
  - ▶ The proportion of **Francophones aged 75 and older** is slightly higher than that of Anglophones in the same age group (except in the Southwest region).
  - ▶ The proportion of seniors living in **rural areas** is significantly higher among **Francophones** than among Anglophones (Bouchard et al., 2025).

## For health services:

- ▶ The French Language Services Act (FLSA) applies to **designated care providers**, who must ensure an active and permanent supply of services in French (**3 to 4.7%** of long-term care homes).
- ▶ **Identified service providers** are required to work toward obtaining their designation under this Act (**6 to 8.4%**).
- ▶ **Non-identified service providers** have no obligation to offer services in French (**87% to 92%**).
- ▶ The vast majority of private agencies providing home care and services are not subject to the FLSA.

(FLHSN-EO), 2020; Belanger et al., 2024)

## Objective

To understand the experience of language-related issues in the care provided to Francophone seniors residing in long-term care homes (LTCH) or receiving home care (HC) in Ontario.

## Method

Qualitative approach, 90 interviews (\*) conducted between January 2023 and September 2024 with individuals working in or receiving services from 21 long-term care homes and 22 home care and home services agencies.

\* 19 managers, 31 frontline service providers, 35 residents, home care users and family caregivers, and 5 key contacts from the French-language health planning entities.

## KEY FINDINGS...



### What is the experience of long-term care and services for Francophone seniors in Ontario?

The importance of care in the language of choice is increasingly recognized, and language needs are being better addressed. However, the ability to provide services in French remains inconsistent depending on the language status of the facilities.

« And then, especially when we have patients with mild dementia, who aren't quite sure where they are, hearing something in their own language gives them such a sense of... It's a sense of confidence and peace. (Manager #4, designated LTCH, translated) »

- The provision of services in French is:**
- ▶ better established in designated or Francophone-oriented homes and agencies;
  - ▶ more limited and variable in identified and non-identified organizations, where bilingual resources and active offer practices are less prevalent.



### What are the linguistic challenges and what are the consequences?

- ▶ The **shortage of bilingual resources, organizational limitations, and communication barriers** undermine the active provision of services in French.
- ▶ **Language barriers** have significant **psychosocial and clinical effects** on Francophone individuals. Furthermore, they increase the risk of isolation (particularly for people with cognitive decline) and misinterpretation of needs, as well as the burden on family members who must compensate for communication breakdowns.

« They had to call me a couple of times to come because Mum didn't want to go to bed or put her pyjamas on. [...] They were speaking [in English] and Mum didn't understand what was going on. (Caregiver #2, designated FSLD, transl.) »

« It's just that during my respite time, I can't leave because there's a communication issue between the two. (Family caregiver #17, home care, transl.) »



## How can French-language services (FLS) be improved?

Study participants suggested various strategies



Note: ● Mentioned for the 2 types of services ● Mentioned mostly in LTCH ● Mentioned for HC

## What's next?



The **preferences and expectations** of an increasingly diverse aging Francophone population deserve further study.

**Designation** remains a preferred method for ensuring the provision of FLS, but other models that reflect the **cultural and linguistic needs** of seniors can be considered, such as culturally oriented homes, smaller and more personalized housing units, and home care contracts with agencies created by and for Francophones.



## References to research reports

- van Kemenade, S., Benoit, J., Bouchard, L., Sauv -Schenk, K., Savard, J. (2025). *Experiences in Long-Term Care Homes and Language Challenges in Ontario: Perspectives of Francophone Seniors, Family Caregivers, Frontline Care Providers, and Managers*. University of Ottawa. [Summary report](#)
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## References

- Belanger, C., Timony, P., Glaude, N., & Bouchard, L. (2024). *Study of aging populations and access to French-language long-term care in Ontario* [[Research Report](#)]. University of Ottawa.
- Bouchard et al., (2025, 6 mai). *Sant  de la population francophone et anglophone  g e de 65 ans et plus de l'Ontario* [[affiche](#)].
- French-Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario (FLHSN-EO) (2020). *Provincial FLHS Report, prepared for the MOH and the MOLTC, powered by OZI*. [2020 Provincial FLHS Report](#)
- Statistics Canada (2023). *Key facts on the French language in Ontario in 2021*. Report prepared by Nicolas Auclair, Catherine Frigon, and Gabriel St-Amant. Ethnicity, Language, and Immigration Thematic Series . Catalog No. 89657X2023017 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2023017-eng.pdf?st=W1xhPPSx> Accessed May 11, 2026.