

EVIDENCE BRIEF

The Availability and Distribution of French-Speaking Pharmacists in Ontario

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Many Francophones in Ontario live in a minority context and thus, have limited access to linguistically concordant healthcare services. Given their expanded scope of practice, French-speaking pharmacists are in a unique position to improve medication use and self-care for Francophones. This study investigated the availability of French-speaking pharmacists in relation to the distribution of the Francophone population in Ontario.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Seven percent** of pharmacists in Ontario reported being competent to provide patient care in French.
- French-speaking pharmacists had a tendency to practice in communities with **smaller** Francophone populations.
- The availability of French-speaking pharmacist per Francophone population density was **two times greater** in southern Ontario than it was in the north.
- Similarly, their availability was **two times greater** in urban versus rural communities.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Improving the distribution of French-language pharmacy services may be achieved through various strategies, including:

- Investing in the development of French language pharmacy education and recruiting more French-speaking students to existing pharmacy education programs.
- Providing recruitment and retention incentives to encourage French-speaking pharmacists to practice in underserved Francophone communities.
- Adopting the active offer of French-language services in pharmacies to ensure French-speaking patients are identified and are proactively offered services in French.
- Exploring novel service delivery models to provide linguistically concordant services, such as offering virtual consultations with a French-speaking pharmacist or ensuring translation support is available.

INTERPRETATIONS

- The distribution of French-speaking pharmacists does not match the distribution of the Francophone population in Ontario, many of whom reside in rural and northern communities.
- This maldistribution of French-speaking pharmacists mirrors that of French-speaking physicians. Further research is needed to explain and resolve this maldistribution.
- Although pharmacists contribute to providing comprehensive primary care services and can help overcome service gaps, the distribution of French-speaking pharmacists does not optimally serve Ontario's Francophone population, rather it seems to further worsen gaps in French-language services.

For more information, see: Timony, P., Waite, N., Houle, S., Violette, R., & Gauthier, A. [The Pharmacist Is In: The Availability and Distribution of French-Speaking Pharmacists in Ontario](#). *Minorités linguistiques et société/ Linguistic Minorities and Society*. 2022, (18) : 175-196.

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This evidence brief was developed in partnership with the Ontario SPOR Support Unit Francophone Initiative. Visit us at <https://savoirmontfort.ca/initiative-francophone/>