



## Service Use: Languages & Countries of Origin

This profile provides an overview of the languages and countries of origin of immigrants and refugees accessing services in Waterloo Region in 2018. Data was compiled from seven service providers that support newcomers.<sup>i</sup> It is meant to assist local organizations and groups in planning services to respond to demographic shifts and changes in the newcomer population.

### Top Languages of Service

While each of the seven local organizations served different types of immigrant clients (immigrants, refugees, refugee claimants, etc.) there was overlap in the top languages of service or interpretation requested by their clients.<sup>ii</sup> The most common top languages of service or interpretation across the organizations were:

1. Arabic
2. Tigrinya
3. Spanish
4. Amharic
5. Farsi/Persian
6. Somali
7. Mandarin



Other languages mentioned were: Punjabi, Turkish, Serbian, Dari, Swahili, Kurdish, Urdu, Rohingya, Vietnamese, Gujarati, Burmese, Chin, Afar, Belin, Anuak, French, Karen, Oromo and Portuguese. These languages were spoken by anywhere from several hundred clients who spoke Arabic at several of the organizations to a handful of clients that spoke some of the latter languages.<sup>iii</sup>

The 2018 Immigration Partnership (IP) Partner Survey also asked about top languages. Partners from almost 40 local organizations shared a similar list of the top languages requested by newcomer clients. The top seven languages were the same, with the remaining languages including many of the languages noted above as well as Cantonese, Korean, Nepali and Shona.

According to the 2016 Census, there were over 120,000 residents of Waterloo Region whose first language is not English or French. While many of them have also learned one of Canada's official languages, there were more than 9,000 Waterloo Region residents who were not yet able to communicate in English or French. The languages with the largest number of individuals in Waterloo Region who did not

know English or French were: Portuguese, Arabic, Mandarin, German, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Spanish, Serbian, Farsi/Persian and Romanian. Refer to the Waterloo Region Immigration Fact Sheets and Census Bulletins at [www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/factsheets](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/factsheets) for more information about local languages.

## Emerging Language Needs

Each of the service providers shared information about languages where they found that additional interpretation support is needed.<sup>iv</sup> The languages mentioned were:

- Oromo, Somali, Amharic, Tigrigna, Afar, Belin and other languages spoken in Eritrea/Ethiopia
- Chin
- Vietnamese
- Turkish
- Urdu
- Arabic

## Top Countries of Origin

There was some variation in the countries of origin among clients accessing services at local organizations in the past year.<sup>v</sup> The most common top countries of origin across most organizations were:

1. Eritrea
2. Syria
3. Iraq
4. Afghanistan

Other countries included: Turkey, Ethiopia, Iran, China, Columbia, South Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Myanmar/Burma, Congo, Burundi and Venezuela.

The 2018 Partner Survey report (<https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/partnersurvey2018report>) contains further information about significant changes in the immigrant/refugee population experienced by IP partners in the past year, as well as anticipated changes, demographic shifts or emerging issues.

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### NOTES

<sup>i</sup> Information in this profile was provided in late 2018 and early 2019 by the YMCA Immigrant Services, Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre (settlement and interpretation programs), Reception House Waterloo Region, Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support, Public Health (immunization and dental programs), Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre, and Family & Children's Services of the Waterloo Region.

<sup>ii</sup> Q: Other than English, what are the top 10 languages that might be needed by clients at your organization?

<sup>iii</sup> Some of the organizations that provided data for this profile had most of their clients preferring to use a language other than English to access services (Reception House or Public Health immunization clinics). Other organizations had either a bit more than half (KW Multicultural Centre) or a bit less than half of their clients preferring other languages (YMCA Immigrant Services, Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support or Public Health dental programs).

<sup>iv</sup> Q: From your experience, what are the significant or emerging languages where additional interpretation support is needed in Waterloo Region?

<sup>v</sup> Q: In the past 12 months, what were the most common countries of origin of your clients?

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