



**IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP**  
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## Top Languages for Interpretation & Translation (2023)

There are over 120,000 residents of Waterloo Region whose first language is not English or French. According to the latest census there are over 10,000 residents who are not yet able to understand English or French. There is a significant need for verbal interpretation and written translation in Waterloo Region. This is particularly the case in situations with legal or health implications, where there is a need for informed consent, or where information needs to be fully understood to avoid negative outcomes.

The following list of top languages for Waterloo Region is provided as a starting point for organizations to better serve our diverse population. The list compiles the most common requests for interpretation and service in languages other than English.

**Top languages for interpretation or translation in Waterloo Region (in order of request frequency) are:**

1. **Arabic**
2. **Tigrigna**
3. **Spanish**
4. **Persian (Farsi)**
5. **Turkish**
6. **Somali**
7. **Dari**
8. **Rohingya**
9. **Amharic**
10. **Urdu**
11. **Ukrainian**
12. **French (as an official language<sup>i</sup>)**



The above languages were consistently noted by many local newcomer-serving organizations. Other top languages mentioned by only some local organizations were: Vietnamese, Mandarin, Russian, Punjabi, Portuguese, Hindi, Albanian, Kurdish, Gujarati, Nepali, Yue (Cantonese), Swahili, Polish, Pashto, Afar, and Bilen. <sup>ii</sup> Focused outreach to members of these language communities may be useful.

## Methodology

Data was gathered from eight organizations in January/February 2023. Organizations provided their top 10-15 most common languages of service or interpretation. KW Multicultural Centre provided the most common languages in which interpretation was requested locally. Some organizations provided data for the last calendar year, fiscal year, or the most recent period for which their data was available – but generally in the past year.

Organizations that provided data included: KW Multicultural Centre (KWMC) - both interpretation requests and settlement services, YMCA of Three Rivers Immigrant Services - both in KW area and Cambridge, Reception House Waterloo Region, Sanctuary Refugee Health Clinic, COMPASS Refugee Centre, House of Friendship - Family Outreach Worker and Food Distribution, Waterloo Catholic District School Board – St Louis Adult Education, and Family and Children’s Services of the Waterloo Region.

The top languages list was collated based on 1) the number of requests for interpretation through KWMC, 2) how frequently the language was mentioned by various service organizations, and 3) the most common mother tongue languages for individuals that don’t know English or French from the 2021 census. The top languages were common to at least 5 of these interpretation/organization/mother tongue lists.

The process to develop this list has some limitations. This was a quick survey of local organizations serving primarily (though not solely) newcomers and it may not be as reflective of all groups of more established immigrants. The organizations surveyed are the main organizations serving newcomers but not an exhaustive list. In addition, individuals from some language groups may have varying degrees of knowledge of English.

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<sup>i</sup> French is included in the top languages for interpretation and translation as one of Canada’s official languages. While there are some requests for interpretation in French, it is not requested as often as several of the other languages among local service agencies.

<sup>ii</sup> This list of top languages is not exhaustive. There are over 50 languages for which the KW Multicultural Centre provides language interpretation in Waterloo Region. See [www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/resources](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/resources) for more information about local languages.

To request an alternate format of this document, call 519-575-4400 or TTY: 519-575-4608.

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