



**IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP**  
Settle. Work. Belong.



## Top Languages for Interpretation & Translation (2021)

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 9,000 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.

### The top languages for interpretation or translation in Waterloo Region<sup>i</sup> are:

1. Arabic
2. Spanish
3. Tigrinya
4. Persian (Farsi/Dari)
5. Somali
6. Amharic
7. Turkish
8. French



Other languages mentioned by multiple organizations (most were also in the top 20 most requested languages for interpretation) were: Urdu, Rohingya, Vietnamese, Hindi, Mandarin (Chinese-simplified for written translations), Punjabi, Kurdish, Serbo-Croat-Bosnian, Swahili, Portuguese, Burmese, Afar.<sup>ii</sup>

Several languages were mentioned less frequently but focused outreach to members of these language communities is recommended: Albanian, Gujarati, Korean, Nepali Tagalog, Karen, Romanian, Armenian, Belen, Chin, German.

Some languages were more common within the following communities and population groups:

- In Cambridge (beyond the top 8) - Punjabi, Portuguese, Gujarati and Armenian
- In Sunnyside - Afar
- In Chandler-Mowat - Spanish
- Among refugees and refugee claimants - French, Rohingya, Arabic-Juba, Swahili, Burmese, Karen and Chin

## Methodology

Data was gathered from eight organizations in the week of February 8, 2021. Organizations provided their top 4-10 languages of service and KWMC provided all languages of local interpretation requests. 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 and Cambridge, Reception House Waterloo Region, Sanctuary Refugee Health Clinic, Compass Refugee Centre (previously MCRS), House of Friendship - Family Outreach Worker program, Waterloo Region District School Board, and Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region.

The top languages list was collated based on the number of requests for interpretation through KWMC as well as how frequently the language was mentioned by various service organizations. The top languages were common to at least 7 of the organization/interpretation 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> Top languages are listed in order of priority.

<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/factsheets](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/factsheets) for more information about local languages.

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