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## **FIRST-OF-A-KIND STUDY ON THE HEALTH OF FRANCOPHONES IN MANITOBA**

*Study finds health status of Francophones in the Province improving with each generation*

A new study from the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Medicine says Francophones in Manitoba are getting healthier with each new generation.

Research has typically shown Francophones to be in poorer overall health than non-Francophones. In the first study of its kind in Manitoba, researchers found similar results with a small twist. On average, each generation of Francophones seems to be getting healthier presumably as French language laws and policies have evolved. Older Francophones in Manitoba measured less healthy than non-Francophones, while younger Francophones were healthier than non-Francophones.

Led by Dr. Mariette Chartier from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, the report looked at 76 health indicators. They compared Francophone and similar groups of non-Francophone Manitobans.

"We found things like life expectancy to be very similar between Francophones and non-Francophones," says Dr. Chartier. "After adjusting for things like age, sex, and socioeconomic status, Francophone females should live until about 83.7 years old while non-Francophone females are expected to live for 83.1 years. Francophone males have a life expectancy of 78.8 years compared to 78.1 years for non-Francophones."

Francophones' health status was higher than non-Francophones in 15 areas. Graduation rates were higher for Francophones, as were screening rates for breast and cervical cancer. Francophones generally had higher rates of immunization for the flu. Francophones also had lower rates of diagnosis for mental health issues, hypertension, and diabetes.

On the other hand, Francophones fare worse in nine areas. On average, Francophone kids were not as ready for school in Kindergarten as the groups of non-Francophone kids. Rates for heart surgery were also higher for Francophones, as were waiting

times to get into a personal care home. Francophones were admitted, on average, in 13.2 weeks versus 8.0 weeks for non-Francophones.

“We also found regional differences,” says Dr. Chartier. “In what used to be the Assiniboine, Brandon, and Central regional health authorities, the life expectancy of Francophones was longer than non-Francophones.”

Provincially, no significant differences were found in immunization rates between Francophone children and non-Francophone children, says Dr. Chartier. “Rates appeared higher for children in the Francophone cohort in some rural settings and lower in most urban settings.”

The study will be used by health officials across Manitoba to create new programs or refine others.

“This is the first large-scale study of the health of Francophones in Manitoba and we have been anticipating these results with considerable excitement. It will inform policies and service planning in addressing the health needs of the Francophone population. This is a very big step because until now we had very few data on the health of Francophones,” says Annie Bérard, executive director of the Conseil communauté en santé du Manitoba. “On a national and international scale, we feel this study will contribute to our knowledge of the health of minorities.”

*MCHP is a research unit in the department of community health sciences in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Manitoba. Research scientists and their collaborators at MCHP study health services, population and public health, and the social determinants of health using data from the entire population of Manitoba. Most of the research answers questions of interest to policy makers based on a formal association with Manitoba Health and input from other government departments.*



**Dr. Mariette Chartier is available for interviews.**

**For more information, please contact Jack Rach, communications officer, Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, at: 204-789-3669.**

**The summary and full report will be available for download on June 19 from <http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html>**