



Perceptions on the Northeastern Ontario Health Care System

Strengthening Northeastern Ontario's Health Care System and Enhancing Home and Community Based Care – Summary of Survey Responses

March 2015



Ontario

Local Health Integration
Network
Réseau local d'intégration
des services de santé

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Cover photo:

Care providers and Northerners such as Denise Parry of North Bay (right) joined NE LHIN CEO Louise Paquette (left) in North Bay in February 2015 to learn more about NE LHIN investments in home and community care and how they are supporting older adults who want to live independently for as long as possible.

Acknowledgement

Perceptions on the Northeastern Ontario Health Care System is a summary report that houses the input received from 1,009 Northerners in a November/December 2014 survey which asked how the home and community based system of care can be strengthened across the NE LHIN region. Following the high rate of participants, KPMG undertook a thorough analysis of all responses received. The NE LHIN acknowledges and thanks KPMG for their expertise and analysis applied to this important NE LHIN engagement.

Introduction

On December 9th, 2014, the North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) closed its survey, *Strengthening Northeastern Ontario's Health Care System and Enhancing Home and Community-Based Care*, intended to solicit the perspectives of Northeastern Ontario residents and health care providers as to the current and intended future state of health care across the region. Overall, a total of 1,009 responses were received – the equivalent of 23,500 responses to a province-wide survey – addressing ten questions as to how the health care system could be strengthened, with a particular emphasis on home and community-based care needs.

The results of the survey are presented in two sections within this report:

- The first section outlined the responses received to one survey question –What is the single most important thing that can be done to improve home and community care for you in Northeastern Ontario? This section, which was previously provided to the NE LHIN, was prepared separately to support the NE LHIN's submission to the provincial Expert Group on Home and Community Care. The Expert Group submitted their report to the provincial Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at the end of January 2015 and the report is expected to be made public in March 2015.
- The second section provides a summary of the responses for the remaining nine questions in the survey.

Overall, a total of 1,009 responses were received, covering a range of potential strategies, improvements and enhancements. The survey provides an important step in enhancing health care in Northeastern Ontario by providing a perspective of how residents and health care providers both view the current situation and their suggestions on potential improvements.

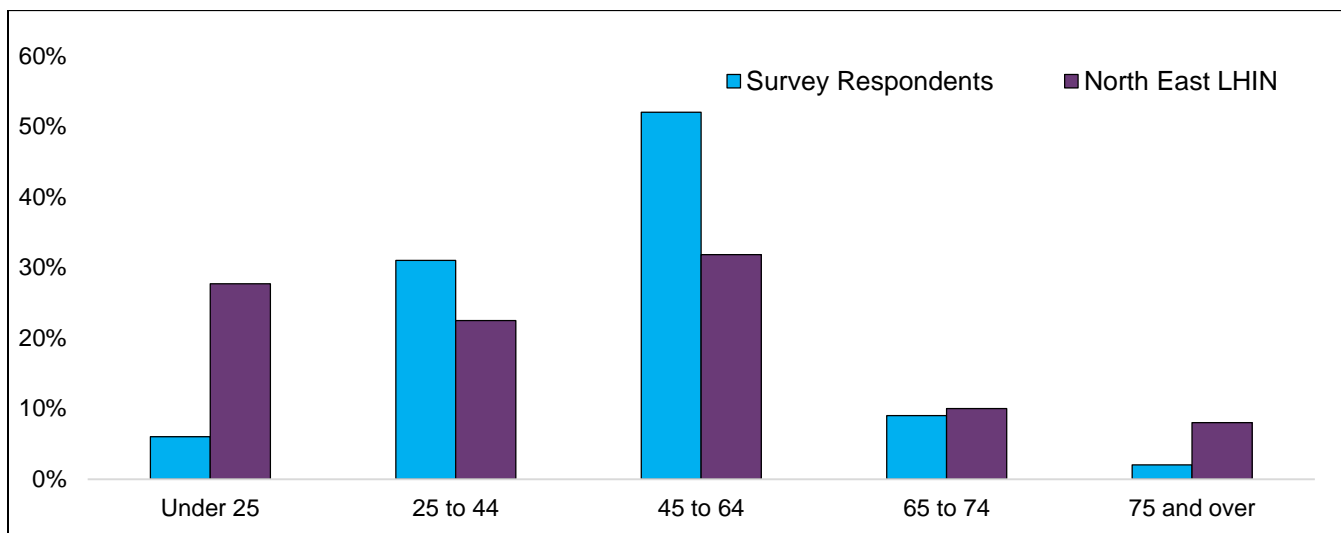
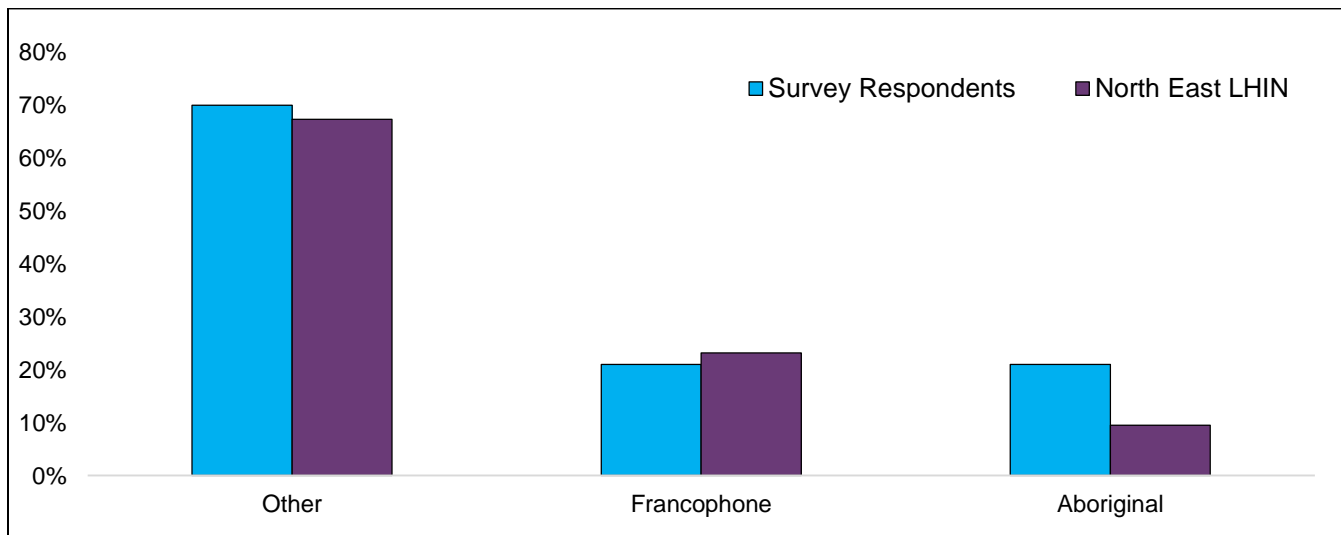
The NE LHIN will ensure the outcomes of this engagement will contribute to the 2016-2019 NE LHIN Integrated Health Service Plan (IHSP) and that the input received by Northerners is considered in NE LHIN decision making with regards to targeted investments and programs and services to increase access to care.

The North East LHIN used the following vehicles to encourage survey responses: mail, fax, email blasts once a week to 2,500 email subscribers, blogging, built survey into existing engagements – both internal and external to the NE LHIN, virtual coffee break and pod cast, post to web, social media, live polling software.

Overview of Survey Respondents

To a large part, survey respondents are generally reflective of the overall population served by the NE LHIN from a cultural perspective, although there appears to be a higher percentage of survey respondents that identified as Aboriginal in comparison to the NE LHIN's resident population. Given that both Francophone and Aboriginal residents of Northeastern Ontario often have different and more pronounced health indicators, the fact that the survey represents at least the same proportion of these populations as the NE LHIN's overall resident base is viewed as positive.

With respect to the demographic profile of survey respondents, the distribution by age does not match the NE LHIN's resident base, understandably so given that certain segments of the population (e.g. children under the age of 14) could not reasonably be expected to respond to the survey.



While respondents did not indicate whether they were individuals or health care providers, through analysis, it appears that the majority of respondents (93%) were individuals as opposed to health care providers.

Overview of Survey Questions

The general intent of the survey was to solicit the views of residents of Northeastern Ontario, as well as health care providers within the NELHIN's service area, on a range of topics, including:

- The greatest challenges facing health care in the region;
- The best ways to influence the health care system;
- Areas that are in need of improvement in relation to home and community care;
- The greatest source of frustration of those in need of home and community care as well as their families and unpaid caregivers and what changes could be made to address the frustrations;
- The identification of three ways that providers of home and community care can better meet the needs of individuals and their families/unpaid caregivers and if participants were aware of new and innovative ways to improve upon home and community care;
- Other issues of importance regarding health care in Northeastern Ontario; and
- Whether the NELHIN is making a difference in strengthening health care across the Northeast.

Survey questions were either close-ended where participants were asked to select from a list of options, or open-ended, where respondents provided commentary. For certain close-ended questions, respondents were able to both provide an 'other' response, as well as provide specific comments.

In certain instances, survey respondents were invited to provide more than one response to a specific question, with the result being that the number of responses exceeds the number of survey respondents.

A copy of the survey is included as Appendix "A".

Summary of Survey Themes

Given the large number of responses received (1,009), there is considerable variety in the nature of the suggestions provided. Based on the results of our review, we have identified six key themes that have emerged from the responses received:

Access:

Access to a variety of services necessary to allow residents to receive the care they need in their homes and communities represented the largest portion of responses received throughout the survey. These comments extended beyond the traditional suite of primary care to include supportive and assistive living services that could be provided in-home, including housekeeping, maintenance and transportation.

Funding and Accountability:

These responses involved suggestions as to better efficiency and value-for-money with respect to health services, including improved measures for accountability for results. Included in these responses were the view that the NE LHIN has an important role in ensuring the effective use of taxpayer dollars.

Coordination and Integration:

These responses tended to focus on better coordination and integration among the various care providers, including the desire for one point of access for primary health care services.

Health Human Resources:

These responses addressed the perceived need for clinical resources in Northeastern Ontario and were not limited to the viewpoint of simply ‘we need more doctors’. Rather, a number of responses identified the need for increased resources across a variety of allied health providers, including but not limited to registered nurses, nurse practitioners and personal support workers.

Communication, Education and Engagement:

These responses provided suggestions on how best to engage relevant groups in Northeastern Ontario, as well as the appropriate means of disseminating and sharing information.

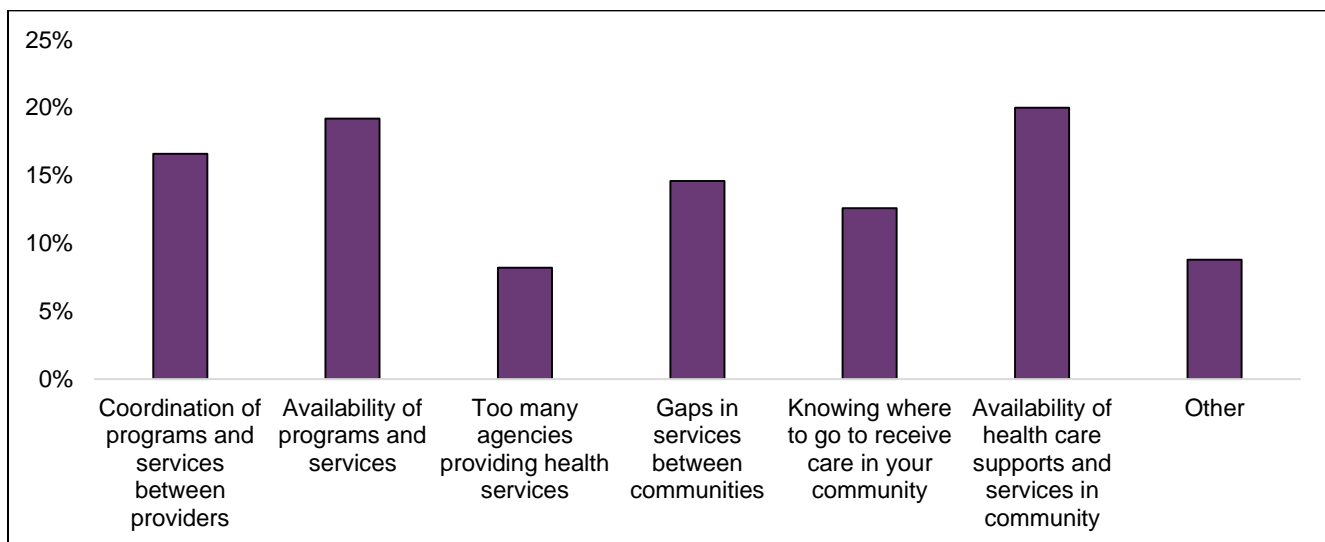
Cultural Diversity and Northern Perspective:

The responses outlined the need to ensure that health services addressed the specific needs of two key groups – Francophones and Aboriginals – as well as addressing perceived gaps in health care between Northern and Southern Ontario, including disparities resulting from the need to travel longer distances to access primary care.

Summary of Question Responses

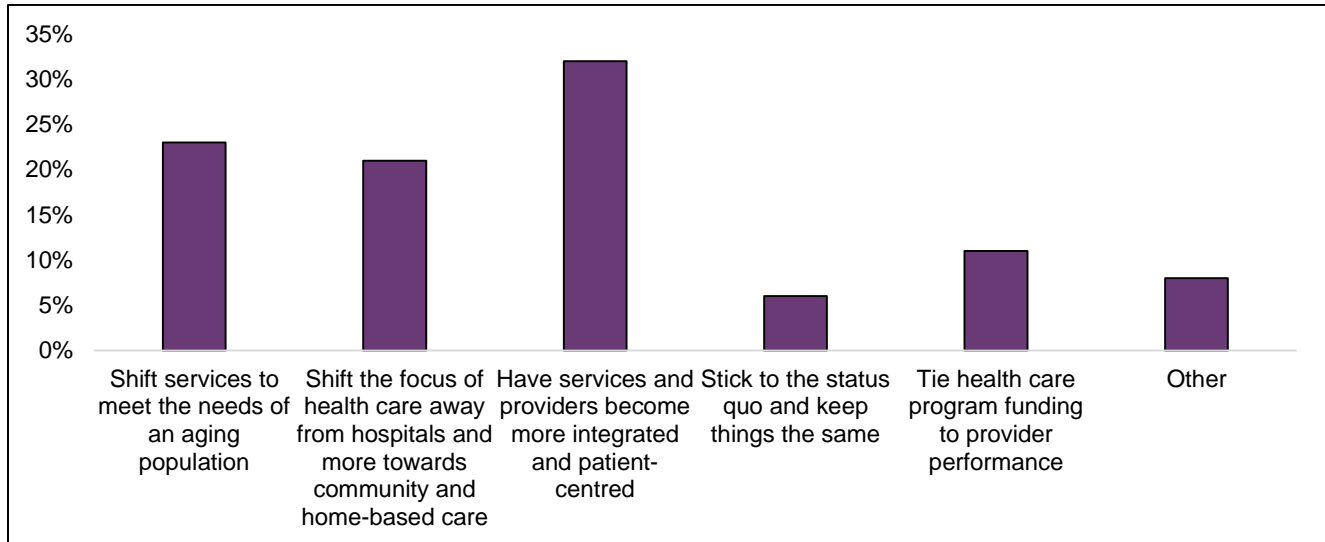
Question 1: What do you think are the greatest challenges facing health care in Northeastern Ontario today?

Based on the responses provided, the greatest challenge facing health care in Northeastern Ontario is the availability of health care supports and services in the community with 20%. The key theme of responses to the listed options appear to focus on the availability of supports and services appears to be the main challenge followed by how service providers interact and knowing where those service providers are.



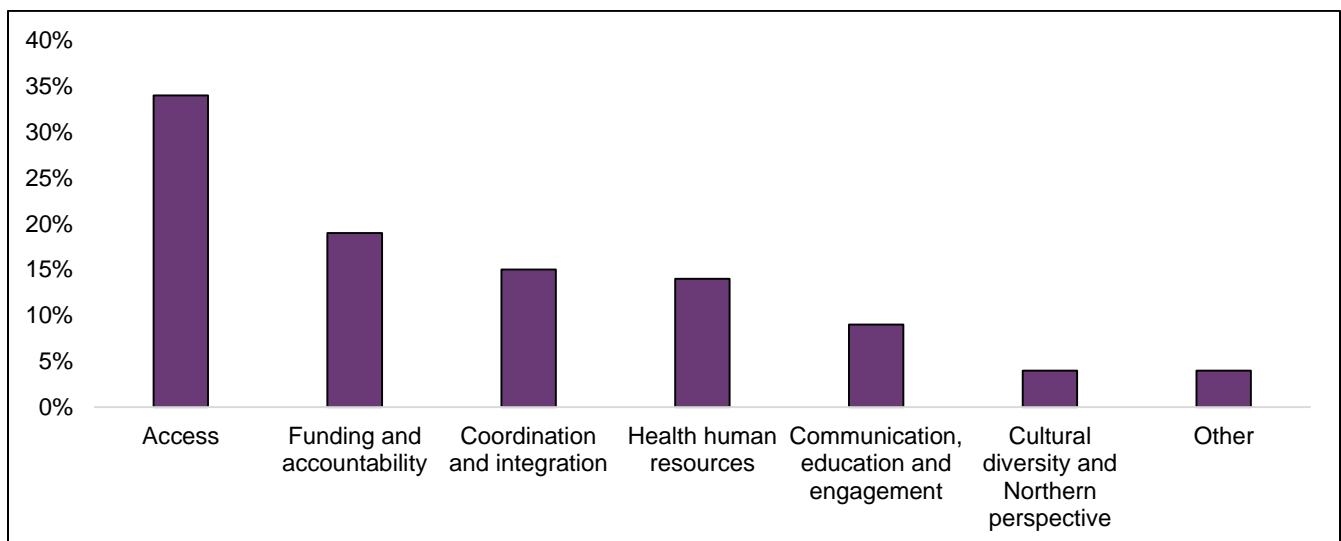
Question 2: What are the best ways to influence our health care system?

Participants appeared to favour services and providers becoming more integrated and patient-centred with just over one-third (31%) of respondents choosing this option. The next two potential ways of influencing health care were shifting services to meet the needs of an aging population and shifting the focus of health care away from hospitals and more towards community and home-based care with 23% and 21% respectively.



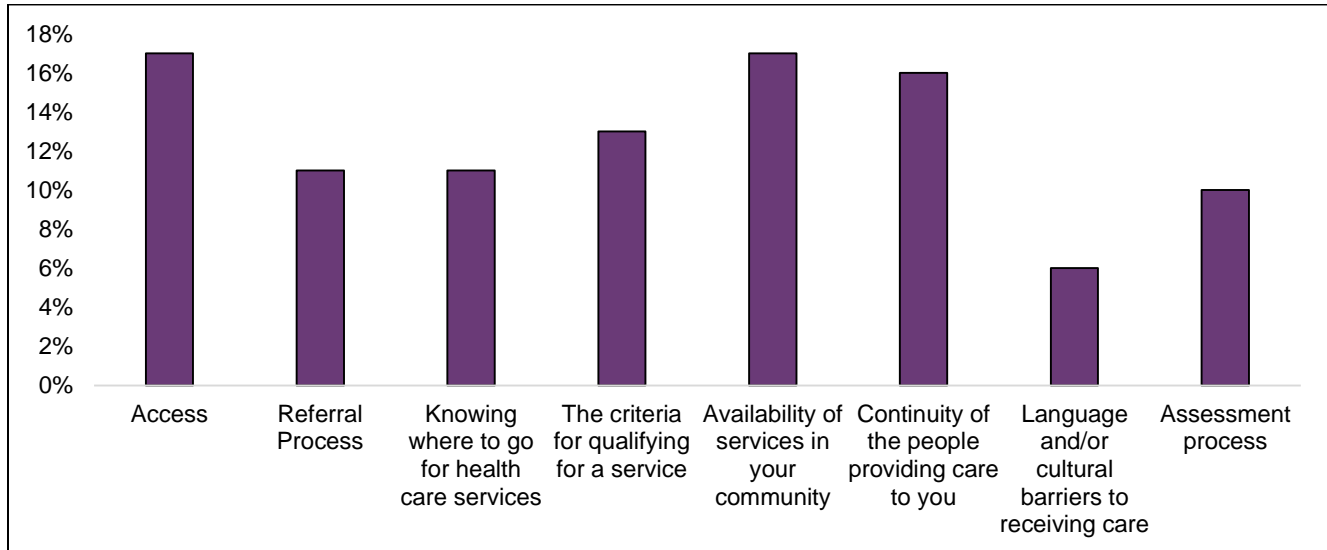
Question 3: What is the single most important thing that can be done to improve home and community care for you in Northeastern Ontario?

Based on the survey responses, the single most important thing that can be done to improve care in Northeastern Ontario was to improve access to health care services with 34% of respondents answering with this response. Other responses included suggestions for better efficiency and use of health care dollars (19%), and suggestions for better coordination and integration among health service providers (15%).



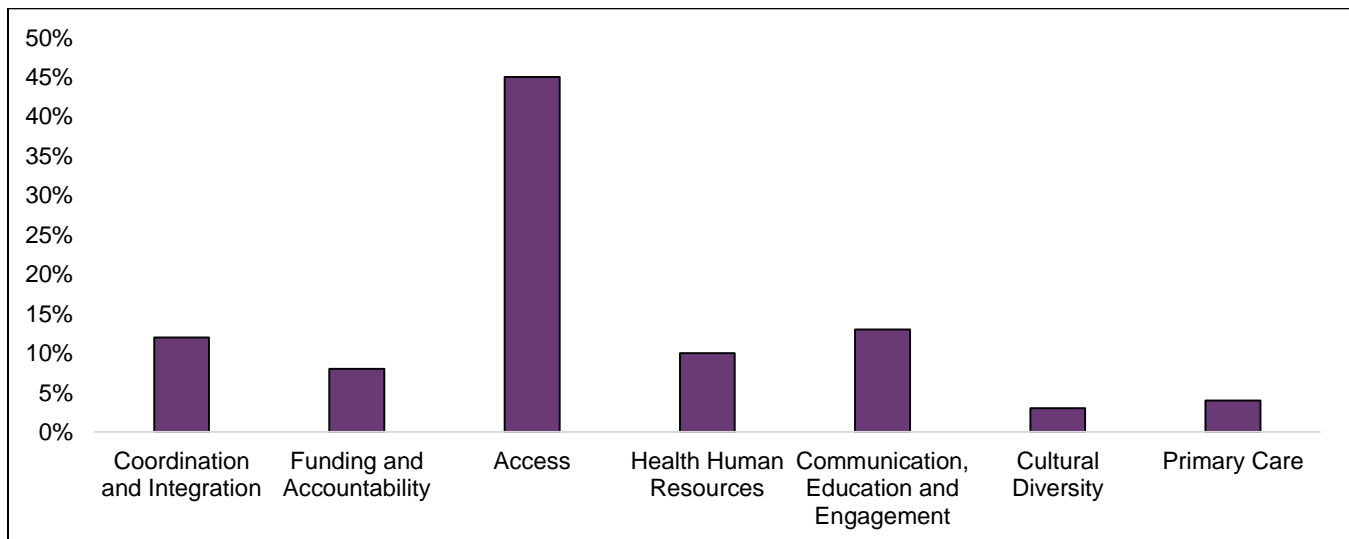
Question 4: Which of the following areas need improvement when it comes to delivering home and community care?

The main areas where respondents believe needs improvement relate to access and the availability of services in their community with each area receiving 17% of all responses. Beyond access and availability of services locally, respondents indicated that continuity of care providers (15%) and the criteria for qualifying for a service (13%) were also areas need improvement.



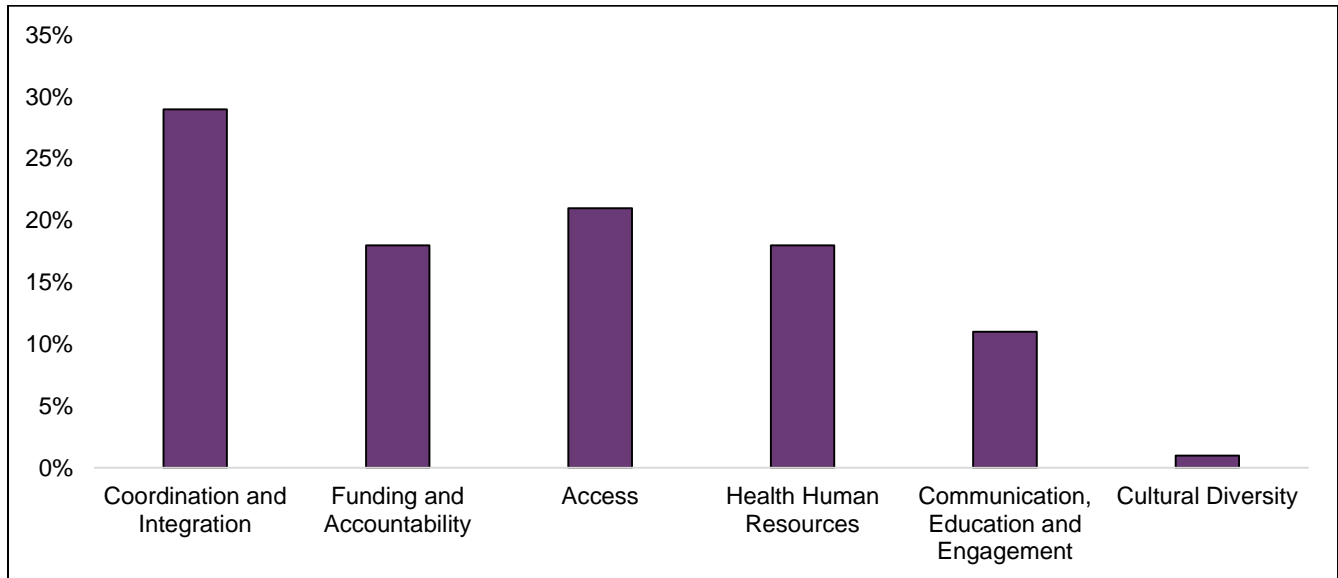
Question 5: What do you think are the greatest sources of frustration for people who need community and home care service, as well as their families/unpaid caregivers?

Based upon the survey responses, the greatest source of frustration for those who need community and health care services relates to accessing those services with 45% of respondents touching upon this theme.



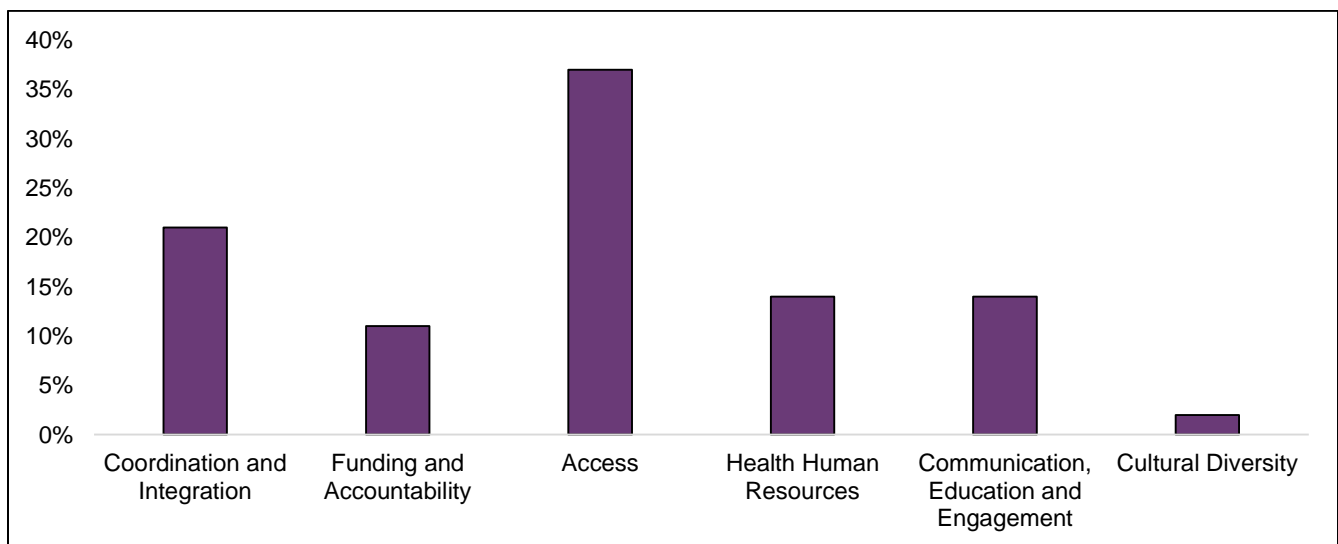
Question 6: What change(s) could be made to address these frustrations and/or build on these successes?

Common responses received noted the need for greater integration and coordination of services in a health care system where everyone communicates with one another. Additionally, there is a need for greater access to services in a system where there is a sufficient number of health care professionals.



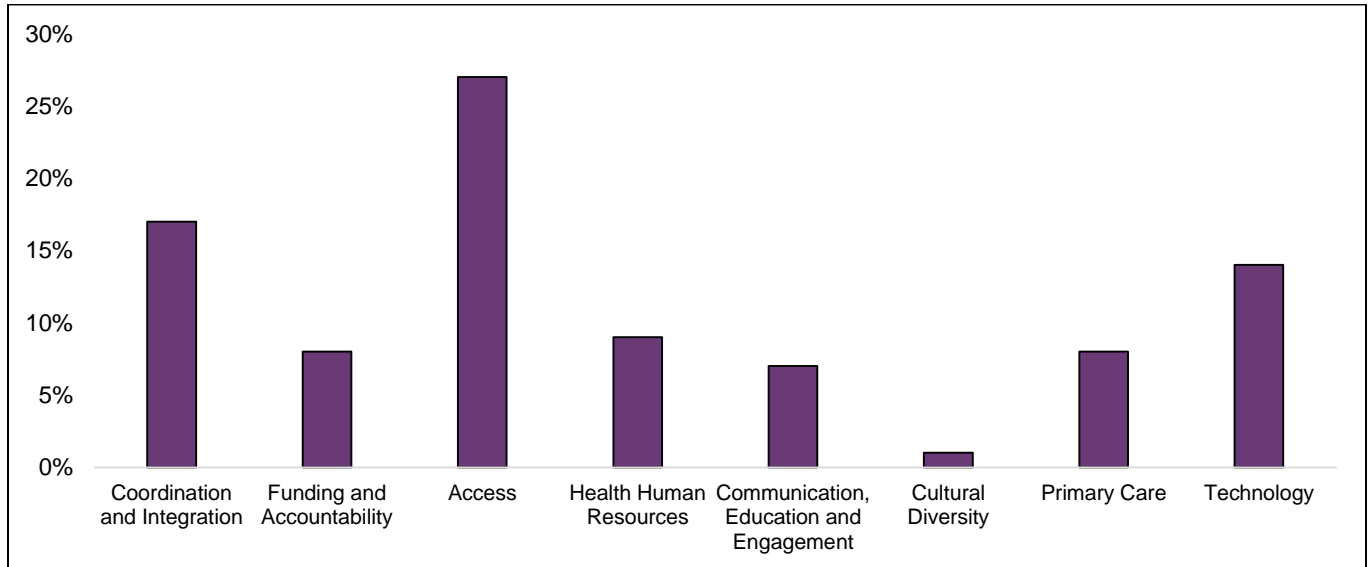
Question 7: What are three ways that providers of home and community care could better meet the needs of individuals and their families/unpaid caregivers?

Greater access to the services ranked as the most common response (37%) followed by having better coordinated/integrated services (21%). 14% of respondents believe that there is a need for more health care professionals to provide these services and a need for better communication from those currently delivering home and community-based care.



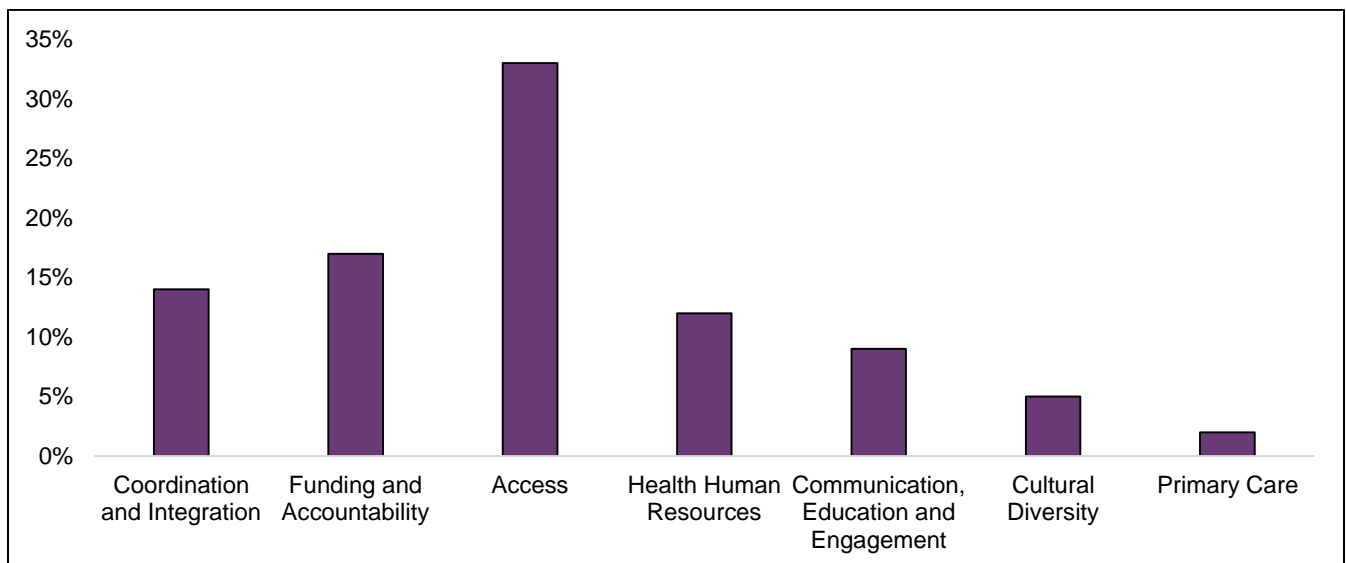
Question 8: Are there any innovations or new approaches to care delivery that you know of that could improve home and community care?

More access and availability to home and community care may not be innovative or new, however 27% of respondents listed these methods as a way to improve upon home and community care. Interestingly, better use of technology and new technological tools received 8% of the responses received.



Question 9: Are there any other issues that you feel are important to strengthening Northeastern Ontario’s health care system?

Responses received for the ninth question mirror those consistently provided throughout the rest of the survey questions. Opinions shared for this question were that residents in Northeastern Ontario are seeking greater access to health care services, that the health care system is in need of additional funding, particularly in Northern Ontario, and that services need to be provided in a more coordinated fashion where everyone in the system communicates with each other.



Question 10: In your opinion, is the North East Local Health Integration Network making a difference in strengthening health care across the region? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?

Of the responses received, 48% believe that the NE LHIN is in fact making a difference. 35% disagree and 17% of those who responded to this question are unsure about the impact the NE LHIN is having on health care in the region. Three key themes emerged for each response:

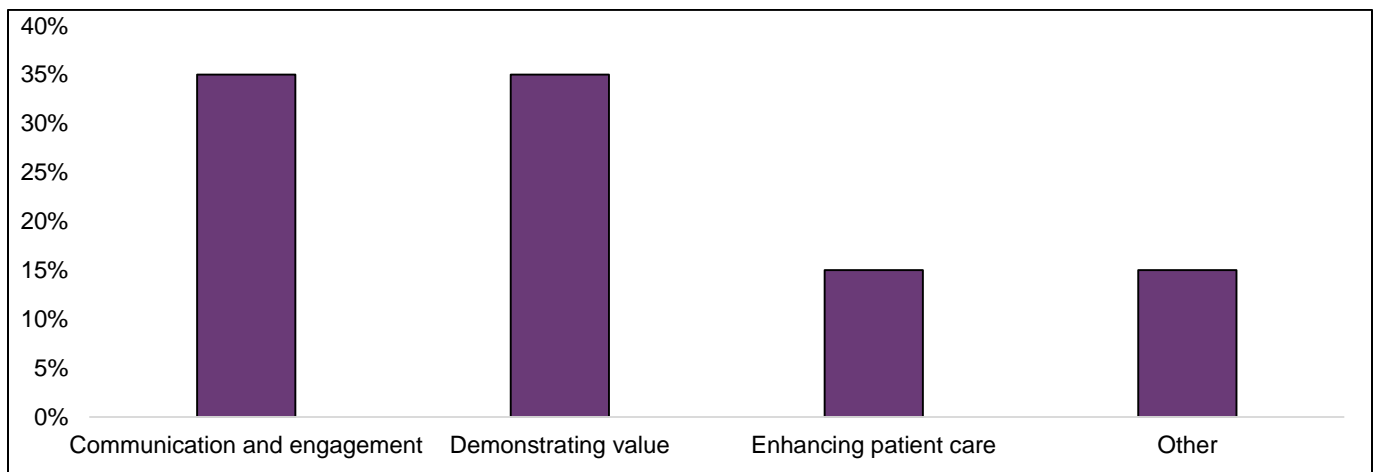
Yes

- Communication and engagement
- Demonstrating value in improving health care
- Enhancing patient care

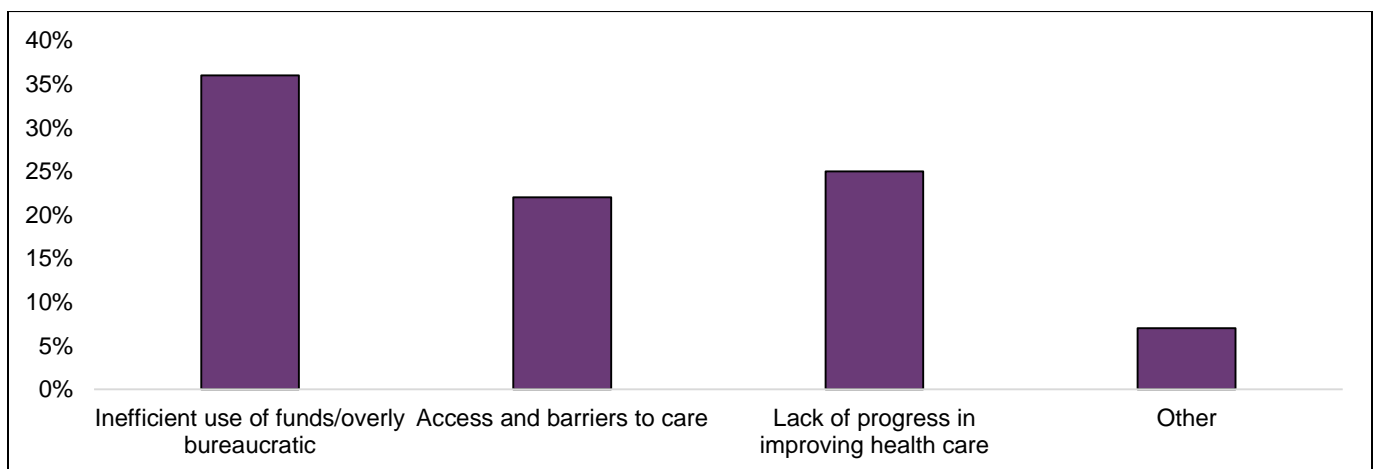
No

- Inefficient use of funding/overly bureaucratic
- Access and barriers to care
- Lack of progress in improving health care

Summary of “Yes” responses:



Summary of “No” responses:



Appendix “A”: Survey – Strengthening Northeastern Ontario’s Health Care System and Enhancing Home and Community-Based Care

North East LHIN

Survey – Strengthening Northeastern Ontario’s Health Care System and Enhancing Home and Community-Based Care

This short North East LHIN survey is being done to touch-base with fellow Northerners midway through our strategic plan.

We are looking for your feedback on how to continue to strengthen our health care system generally, with a special focus on home and community-based care needs.

Community-Based Care includes services that support people to live independently, such as meals, transportation, home based-care and social activities.

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey and offer your input into building a more people-centred Northeastern Ontario health care system that helps Northerners access timely care when and where they need it.

Completed surveys can be returned to the North East LHIN by email, fax, or mail:

Email: engagingwithyou@lhins.on.ca

Fax: 705-840-0142

Mail: North East LHIN, 555 Oak Street East, North Bay Ontario, P1B 8E3

Demographic Information

1. Name (optional): _____
2. Email address (optional): _____
3. Organization and job title (if applicable): _____
4. Community in which you live: _____
5. Do you identify yourself as: (please circle)
 - a. Aboriginal/First Nation/Métis Person
 - b. Francophone
 - c. Other
6. What age bracket do you represent? (please circle)
 - a. Under 25
 - b. 25-45
 - c. 46-65
 - d. 66-75
 - e. 76-85
 - f. 86 and over



Questions

(1) What do you think are the greatest challenges facing health care in Northeastern Ontario today? *(please rate each from 1 to 4, with 1 being greatest)*

- Coordination of programs and services between providers
- Availability of programs and services
- Too many agencies providing health services
- Gaps in services between communities
- Knowing where to go to receive care in your community
- Availability of health care supports and services in community
- Other (please write in):

(2) What are the best ways to influence our health care system: *(please rate each from 1 to 4, with 1 being greatest)*

- Shift services to meet the needs of an aging population
- Shift the focus of health care away from hospitals and more towards community and home-based care
- Have services and providers become more integrated and patient-centred
- Stick to the status quo and keep things the same
- Tie health care program funding to provider performance
- Other (please write in):

(3) What is the single most important thing that can be done to improve home and community care for you in Northeastern Ontario?

(4) Which of the following areas need improvement when it comes to delivering home and community care? *(please rate each from 1 to 4, with 1 being greatest)*

- Access
- Referral process
- Knowing where to go for health care services
- The criteria for qualifying for a service
- Availability of services in your community
- Continuity of the people providing care to you
- Language and/or cultural barriers to receiving care in your home/community
- Assessment processes

(5) What do you think are the greatest sources of frustration for people who need community and home care service, as well as their families/unpaid caregivers?

(6) What change(s) could be made to address these frustrations and/or build on these successes?

(7) What are three ways that providers of home and community care could better meet the needs of individuals and their families/unpaid caregivers?



North East LHIN

(8) Are there any innovations or new approaches to care delivery that you know of that could improve home and community care?

(9) Are there any other issues that you feel are important to strengthening Northeastern Ontario's health care system?

(10) In your opinion, is the North East Local Health Integration Network making a difference in strengthening health care across the region? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?



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