

Deaf Literacy Needs Assessment

A survey of Deaf learning needs in Nova Scotia

Metro Deaf Literacy Network

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Deaf participants across Nova Scotia

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Introduction: Deaf Learners in Nova Scotia

In 1994, the Metro Deaf Literacy Network was started with financial assistance from the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture and Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). In association with local literacy associations, a full time academic upgrading program for Deaf adults was established in Halifax. Part time programs were also established in Truro, Sydney and Halifax/Dartmouth. Financial help came from various sources including Community Learning Initiatives and

Deaf learners are usually not able to access existing community and local literacy programs because of communication barriers.

HRDC. The programs were established to improve the literacy of Deaf adults who leave “residential” schools and other programs with a grade 3 to 4 English literacy level. These people are usually not able to access existing community and local literacy programs because of communication barriers.

The full time program runs five days a week from September to June. There are two instructors, one Deaf and one hearing. Classes are taught in American Sign Language (ASL) using the bilingual/bicultural philosophy.

The program can accommodate fourteen learners. Its goals include academic upgrading and career development, which in turn help students enter other educational programs or gain employment. The part time program runs two nights a week from September to June. There are one Deaf tutor coordinator, one Deaf instructor, and several volunteer Deaf and hearing tutors. A wide range of topics are covered, from computer skills and math to driving test preparation. The program is very flexible and designed to meet the needs of individual learners.

The Deaf Literacy Needs Assessment

The Deaf Literacy Needs Assessment (DLNA) was initiated by the Halifax-based Metro Deaf Literacy Network with financial support from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS). The purpose of the assessment was to determine the literacy needs of Deaf people across Nova Scotia. Learners filled out questionnaires. The goals of the assessment were:

- to survey Deaf, hard of hearing and late-deafened people across Nova Scotia to identify their literacy needs.
- to search the internet for information from around the world that might help meet the needs of Deaf learners here.

The questionnaire was developed based on samples provided by the Community Learning Initiative (CLI). (See Appendix A for the questionnaire sample.) The priority was to make sure that Deaf learners could understand the survey, so questionnaires were developed in ASL. The questionnaire was successfully tested on a few members of the part time Deaf Literacy Program at the Nova Scotia Community College.

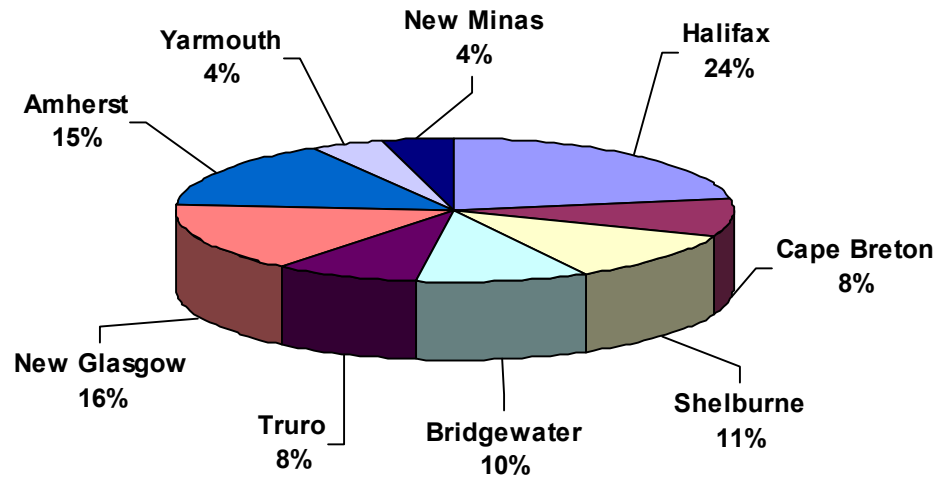
The survey was conducted in other regions using CLI's regional zones and local contact people. Two project workers assisted adult learners with the questionnaire by using ASL and Maritime Sign Language (MSL). The survey package included a list of resources such as the Community Learning Initiative, Human Resources Development Canada, Metro Deaf Literacy Network, Employment Assistance for Persons with Disabilities, Deafness Advocacy Association Nova Scotia, and Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians, as well as literacy agencies.

The information in this report was collected from the surveys filled out by Deaf adult learners across Nova Scotia.

The purpose of the assessment was to determine the literacy needs of deaf people across Nova Scotia.

Percentage of survey respondents from each area

This chart indicates the percentage of total completed DLNA questionnaires submitted by each region. Seventy-three questionnaires were completed. The highest number of learners responded from the Metro Halifax area, at 24%. The lowest number of respondents came from Yarmouth and New Minas, at 4%.

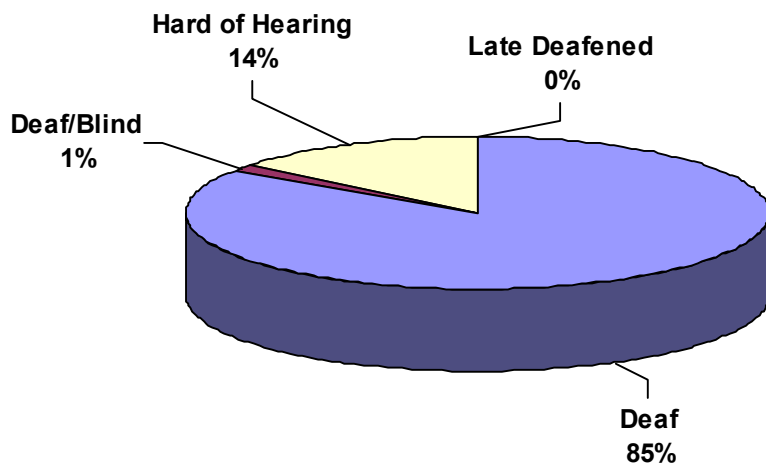


Total number of survey respondents

Location	Female	Male	Total
Halifax	11	5	16
Cape Breton	2	4	6
Shelburne	5	3	8
Bridgewater	3	4	7
Truro	4	2	6
New Glasgow	8	3	11
Amherst	7	4	11
Yarmouth	1	2	3
New Minas	2	1	3

How survey respondents identified themselves

Learners surveyed identified to which of four groups they belonged: deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened and deaf/blind.



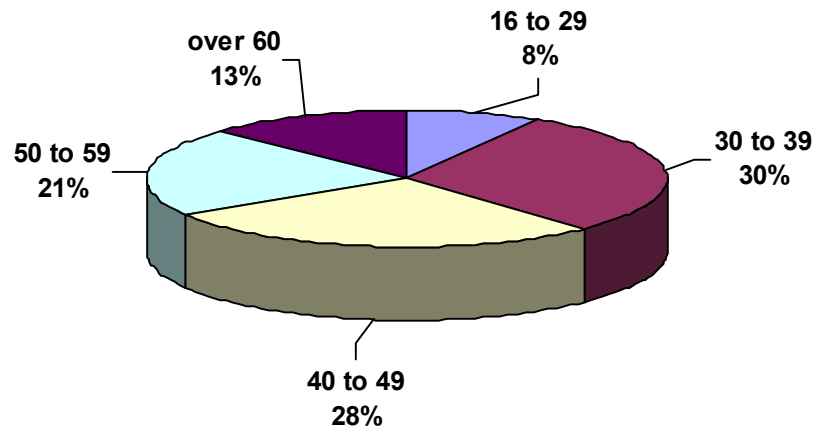
Total number of survey respondents

Location	Deaf	Deaf/Blind	Hard of hearing	Late deafened
Halifax	14	1	0	0
Cape Breton	6	0	0	0
Shelburne	6	0	2	0
Bridgewater	3	0	4	0
Truro	6	0	0	0
New Glasgow	10	0	0	0
Amherst	10	0	1	0
Yarmouth	2	0	1	0
New Minas	3	0	0	0
Total	60	1	8	0

Age Categories

Most of the learners surveyed were between the ages of 16 and 49. The largest single group was between the ages of 30 and 39. Only 8% were under the age of 30.

Almost one-third of the learners surveyed were between the ages of 30 and 39.

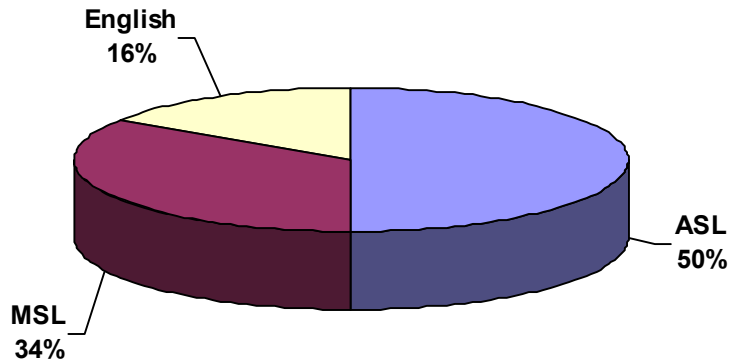


Total number of survey respondents

Location	16 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60+
Halifax	4	2	8	2	0
Cape Breton	0	1	0	3	2
Shelburne	0	0	1	7	0
Bridgewater	0	4	3	0	0
Truro	0	0	5	0	1
New Glasgow	0	6	1	1	3
Amherst	0	5	1	2	3
Yarmouth	1	2	0	0	0
New Minas	1	1	1	0	0
Total	6	21	20	15	9

First Language

The adult learners surveyed were deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind, and late-deafened. They live across Nova Scotia and have various backgrounds and needs. The survey asked them to identify their first language learned and understood. Half indicated that ASL was their first language, 34% used Maritime Sign Language (MSL), and 16% English.



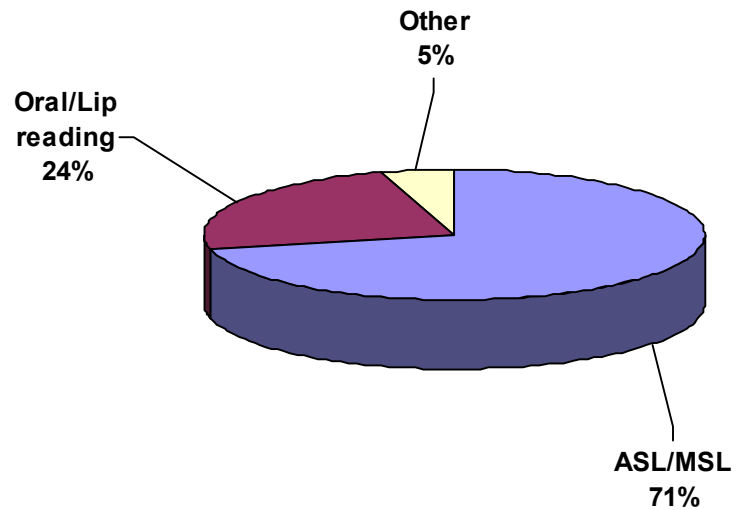
ASL was the first language of half the learners surveyed.

Total number of survey respondents

Location	ASL	MSL	English
Halifax	13	7	3
Cape Breton	6	1	2
Shelburne	6	8	0
Bridgewater	1	4	2
Truro	5	4	0
New Glasgow	7	3	5
Amherst	9	4	2
Yarmouth	2	2	2
New Minas	2	2	0
Total	51	35	16

How survey respondents communicate every day

Survey respondents used a variety of methods for communicating on a daily basis. Almost two-thirds used sign language.

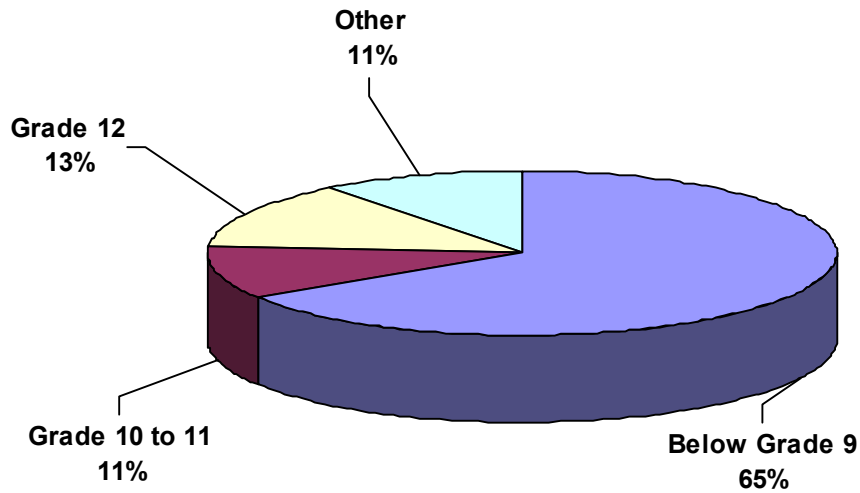


Total number of survey respondents

Location	ASL/MSL	Oral/Lip Reading	Other
Halifax	15	2	0
Cape Breton	6	2	0
Shelburne	8	4	1
Bridgewater	5	3	3
Truro	6	0	1
New Glasgow	9	3	0
Amherst	7	5	0
Yarmouth	3	2	0
New Minas	3	0	0
Total	62	21	5

Education levels of survey respondents

Survey respondents generally had quite low education levels, with only 13% reporting grade 12 completion.



65% of those surveyed reported an education level below grade 9.

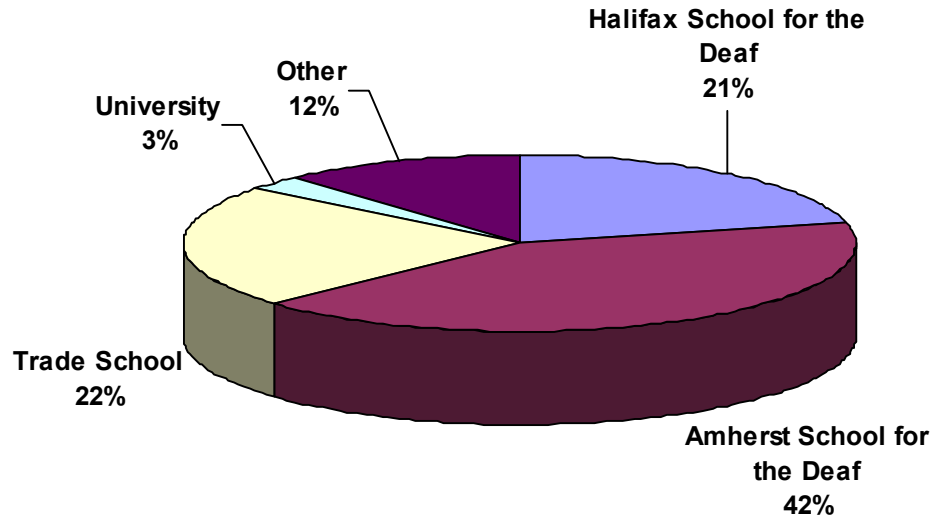
Total number of survey respondents

Location	< gr. 9	gr. 10 - 12	gr. 12	Other
Halifax	4	0	3	0
Cape Breton	5	0	0	2
Shelburne	5	0	0	1
Bridgewater	1	1	0	1
Truro	2	1	0	0
New Glasgow	5	0	0	0
Amherst	1	1	2	0
Yarmouth	1	0	0	0
New Minas	1	1	0	0
Total	25	4	5	4

Institutions attended by survey respondents

Most survey respondents, 63%, attended schools for the Deaf in either Halifax or Amherst. A large number also attended trade schools.

Only 3% of learners surveyed had attended university.

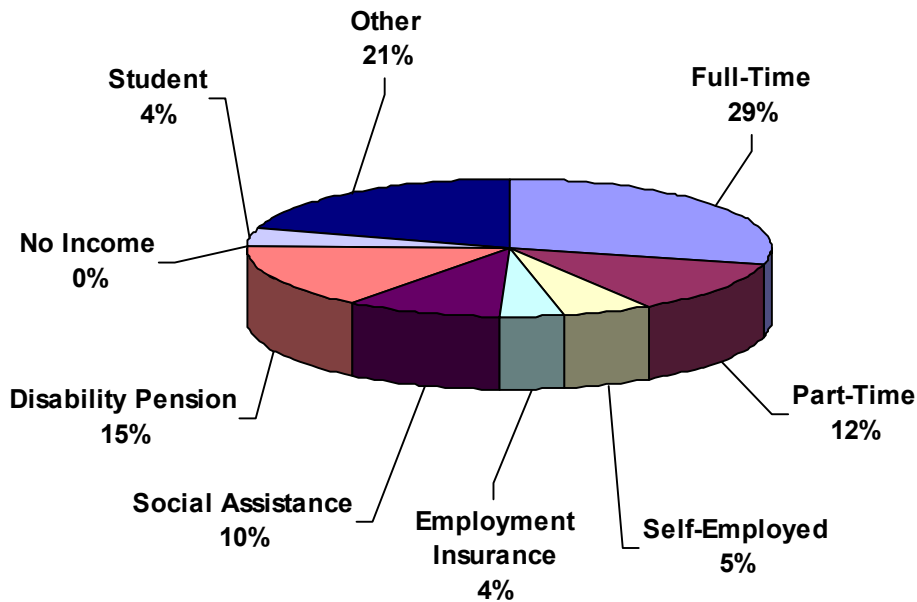


Total number of survey respondents

Location	Halifax school	Amherst school	Trade school	University	Other
Halifax	4	9	4	0	2
Cape Breton	3	3	2	0	1
Shelburne	5	7	1	0	1
Bridgewater	0	5	2	0	1
Truro	2	5	3	0	1
New Glasgow	3	4	4	1	2
Amherst	4	6	3	1	3
Yarmouth	0	1	2	1	0
New Minas	1	3	2	0	1
Total	22	43	23	3	12

Income source

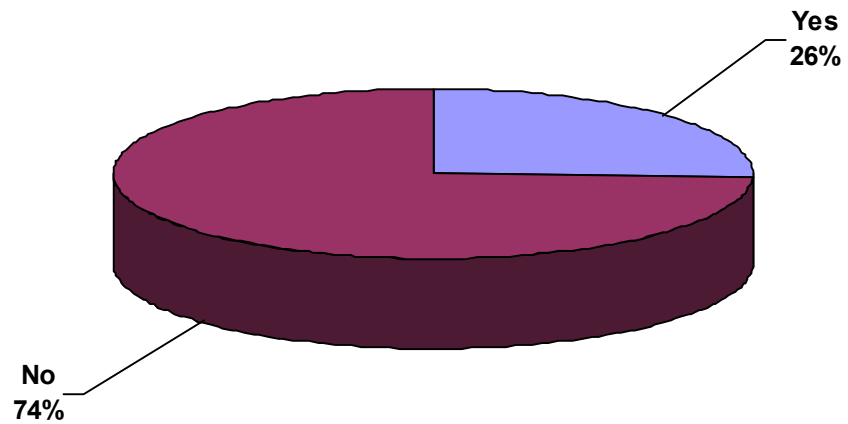
This chart shows the source of income of survey respondents. A total of 46% were employed, either full or part time. 33% were either students or receiving government assistance.



29% of those surveyed receive government assistance as their main source of income.

Single parent learners

Slightly more than one quarter of the learners surveyed were single parents.

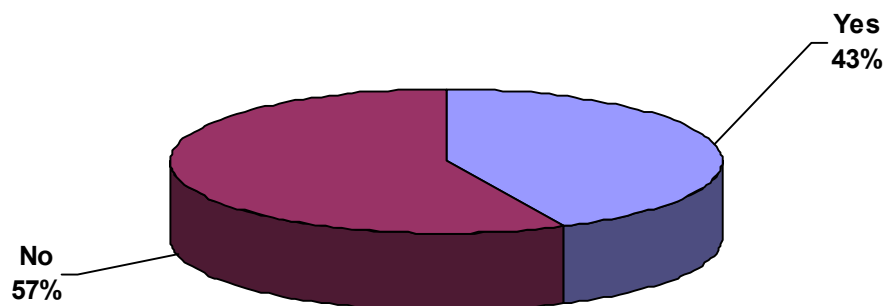


Total number of survey respondents

Location	Yes	No
Halifax	1	13
Cape Breton	3	3
Shelburne	1	6
Bridgewater	3	4
Truro	2	3
New Glasgow	3	6
Amherst	1	8
Yarmouth	2	1
New Minas	0	2
Total	16	46

Assisting children with homework

Survey respondents were asked if they helped their children with homework. Slightly more than half, 57%, said no.



Fewer than one half of those surveyed help their children with homework.

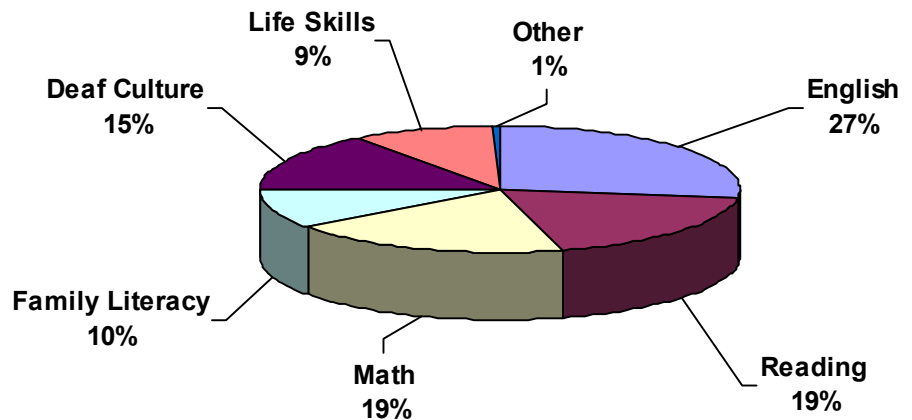
Total number of survey respondents

Location	Yes	No
Halifax	3	8
Cape Breton	1	3
Shelburne	3	3
Bridgewater	3	3
Truro	2	4
New Glasgow	5	2
Amherst	3	5
Yarmouth	0	0
New Minas	2	1
Total	22	29

What Deaf learners want to study

In order to capture what motivates Deaf learners, survey respondents were asked to identify their reasons for returning to learning. Most returned for English, reading and math. Others returned for Deaf Culture, family literacy, and life skills. 1% identified motivations other than those listed.

“I want to learn Reading and English anything I want more learn.”
 ~ Survey Respondent

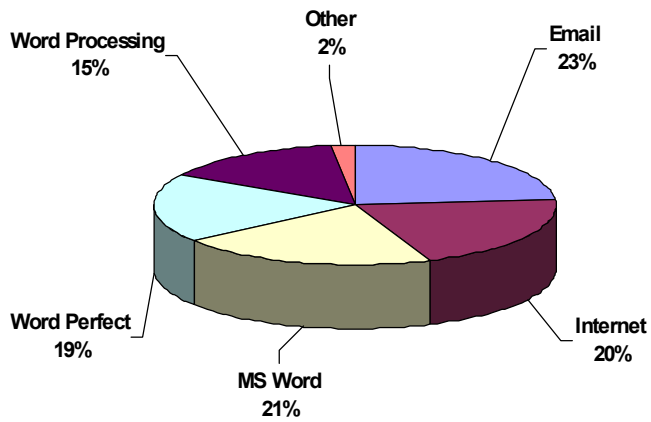


Total number of survey respondents

Location	English	Reading	Math	Family Literacy	Deaf Culture	Life Skills
Halifax	13	8	6	3	7	2
Cape Breton	6	4	4	1	5	4
Shelburne	3	2	1	1	2	2
Bridgewater	2	3	4	2	2	2
Truro	5	3	3	1	3	1
New Glasgow	9	8	8	5	5	3
Amherst	6	3	3	4	3	1
Yarmouth	2	1	2	1	0	1
New Minas	3	2	3	0	1	1
Total	49	34	34	18	28	17

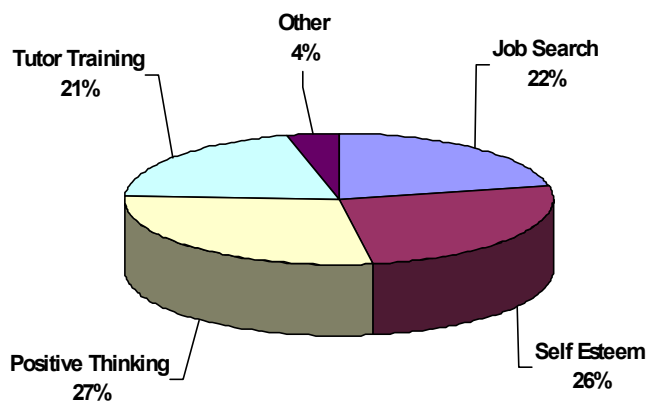
Computer skills

Survey respondents wanted to learn a variety of computer skills.



Workshops

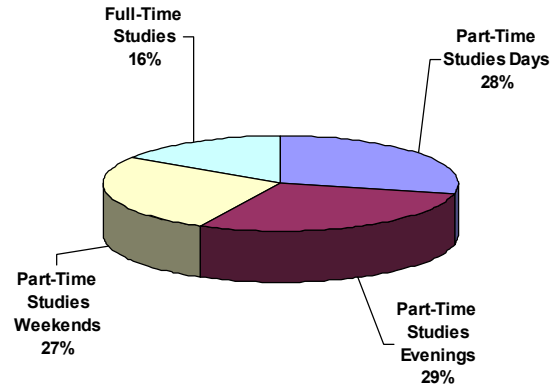
This chart demonstrates the percentage of learners who wanted to attend workshops in Job Search, Self Esteem, Positive Thinking, and Tutor Training.



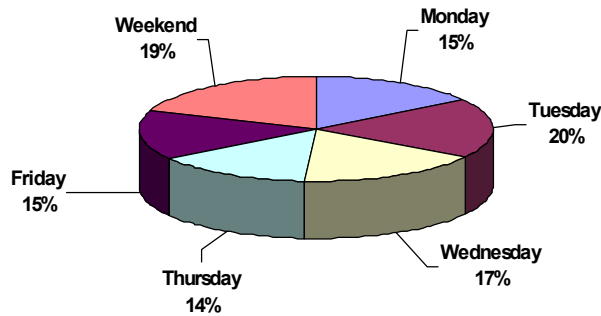
When and where Deaf learners want to study

Survey respondents were asked when and where they preferred to study. The following charts show how much time learners want to spend, when they want to study and where.

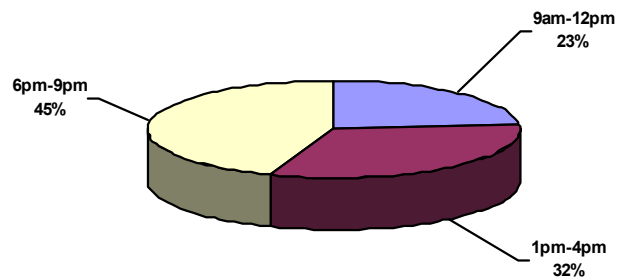
How long?



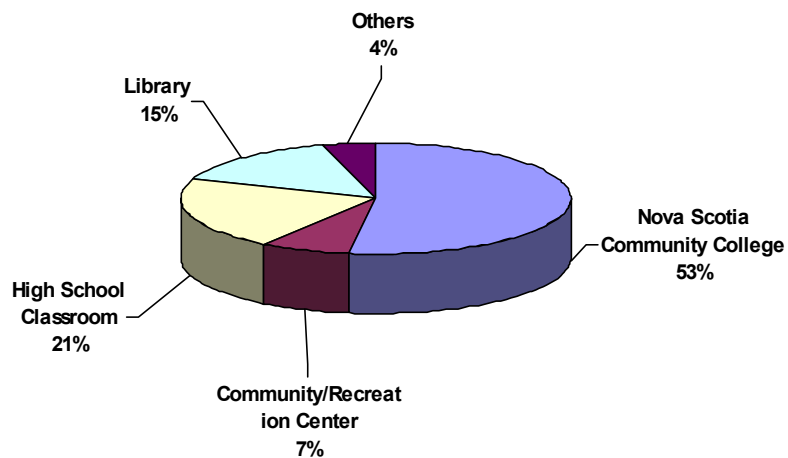
What days?



What time?

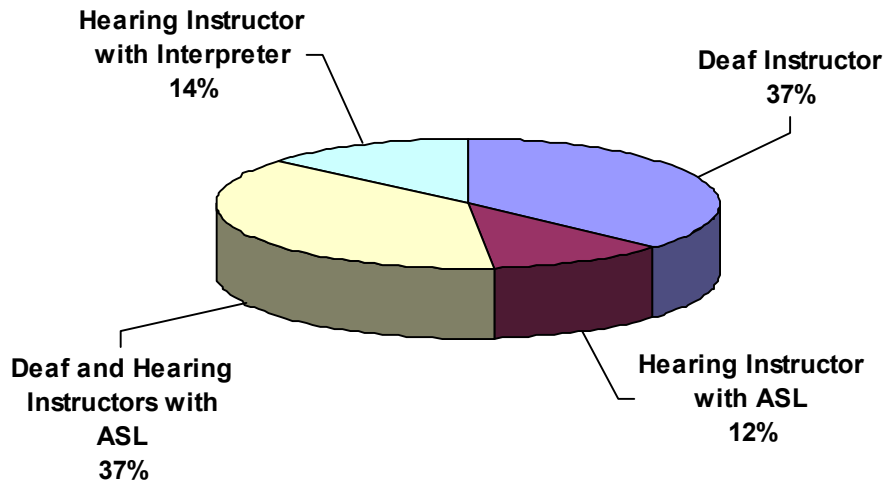


Where?



Instructor preference

Survey respondents were asked what kind of instructor they would prefer. Most preferred a Deaf instructor or Deaf and hearing instructors with ASL.



I try my best when Deaf instructors will teach us, we will be happy.
 ~ Survey Respondent

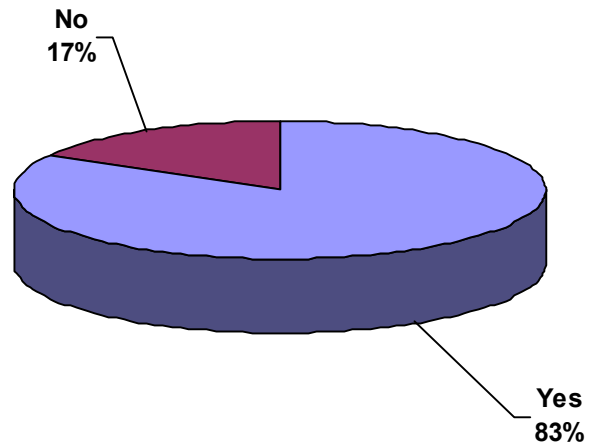
Total number of survey respondents

Location	Deaf	Hearing w/ASL	Deaf & Hearing w/ASL	Hearing w/Interpreter
Halifax	11	4	10	4
Cape Breton	1	1	4	1
Shelburne	6	1	2	1
Bridgewater	1	0	4	0
Truro	5	1	1	0
New Glasgow	5	3	9	4
Amherst	3	0	5	0
Yarmouth	0	1	0	2
New Minas	3	0	1	1
Total	35	11	36	13

One on one tutoring

As this chart demonstrates, a large majority of the survey respondents would like one on one tutoring.

83% of those surveyed wanted one on one tutoring.

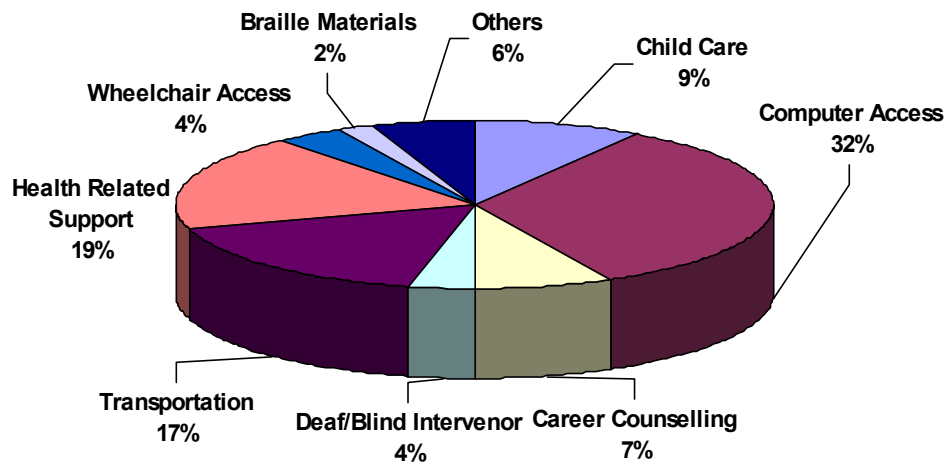


Total number of survey respondents

Location	Yes	No
Halifax	11	0
Cape Breton	3	0
Shelburne	5	0
Bridgewater	2	3
Truro	4	1
New Glasgow	5	1
Amherst	2	1
Yarmouth	1	0
New Minas	1	1
Total	16	46

Accommodations needed by survey respondents

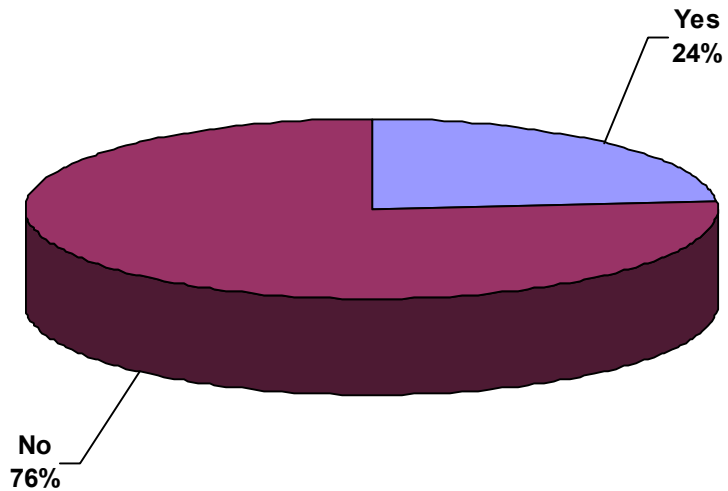
Survey respondents were asked to identify what accommodations and services they need to make literacy programs more accessible in their region. Computer access was by far the most often identified.



Access to resources

Survey respondents were asked to compare their needs with the resources available in their areas. 76% of learners indicated they had no access to the resources they needed.

76% of learners surveyed said they had no access to the resources they need.

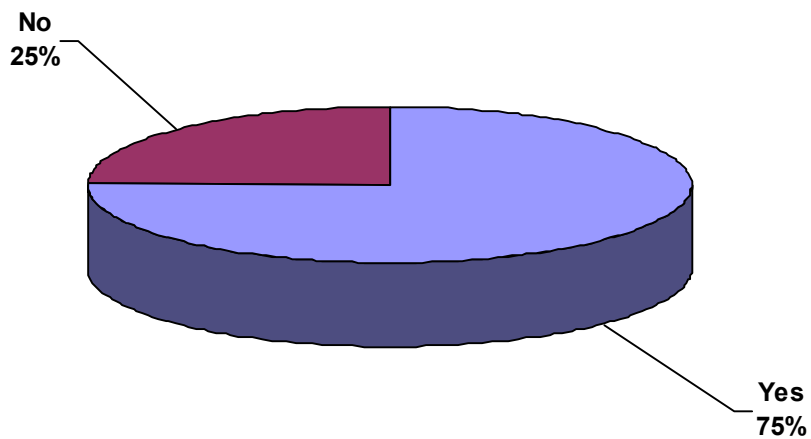


Total number of survey respondents

Location	Yes	No
Halifax	4	8
Cape Breton	2	3
Shelburne	0	8
Bridgewater	2	2
Truro	1	5
New Glasgow	2	6
Amherst	1	6
Yarmouth	1	1
New Minas	0	3
Total	13	42

Interest in adult literacy

Survey participants were asked if they were interested in participating in an adult upgrading program. Three-quarters indicated an interest.



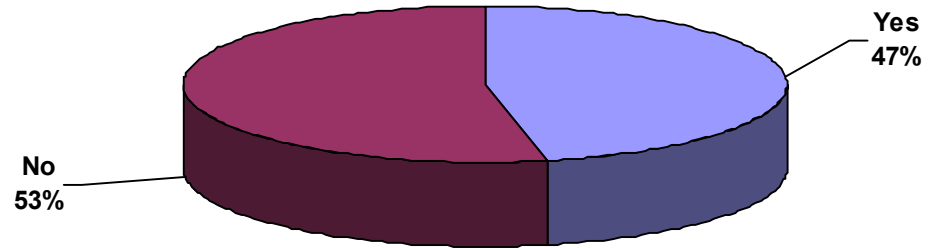
Total number of survey respondents

Location	Yes	No
Halifax	10	4
Cape Breton	5	1
Shelburne	7	1
Bridgewater	3	3
Truro	6	0
New Glasgow	8	2
Amherst	3	4
Yarmouth	1	0
New Minas	3	0
Total	46	15

Familiarity with workplace literacy

Slightly over half of the survey respondents were not familiar with workplace literacy.

I need to improve my literacy skills very badly. I had reason with problems to read and write.
~ Survey Respondent

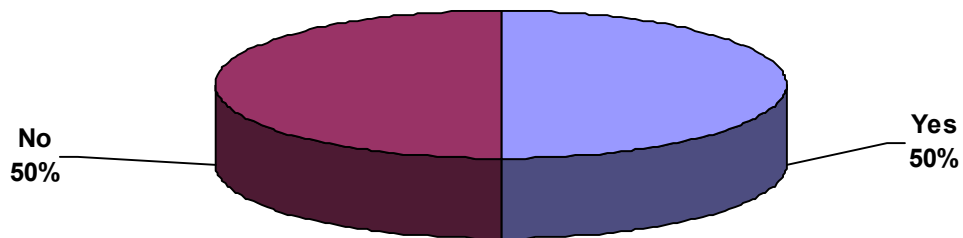


Total number of survey respondents

Location	Yes	No
Halifax	6	10
Cape Breton	2	3
Shelburne	4	3
Bridgewater	2	5
Truro	2	1
New Glasgow	6	5
Amherst	3	5
Yarmouth	2	0
New Minas	2	1
Total	29	33

Training offered by employer

Survey respondents were asked if they were offered more training by their employers.



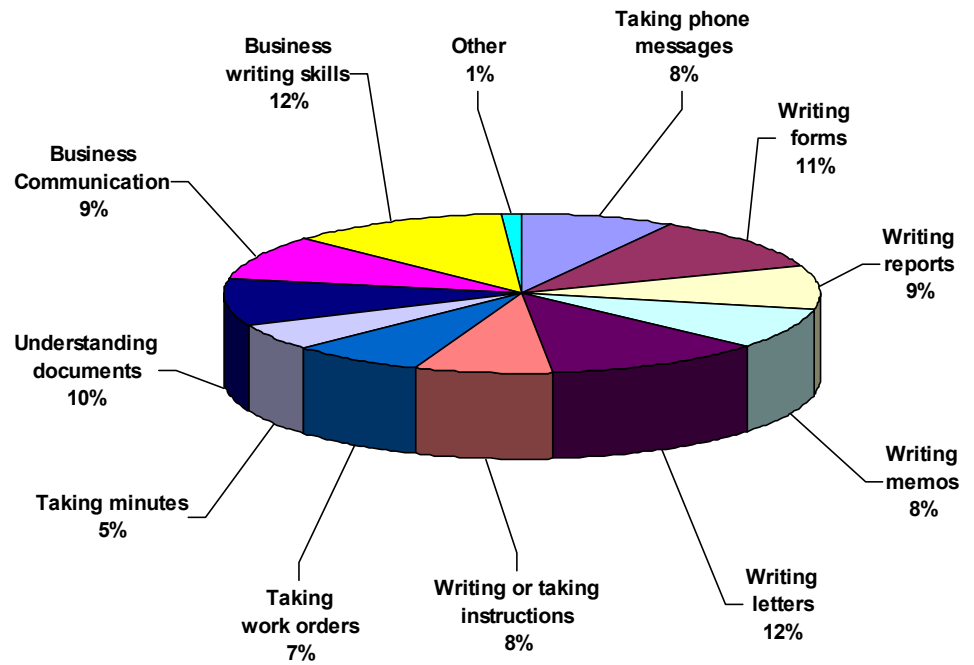
Only half of those surveyed had been offered further training by their employers.

Total number of survey respondents

Location	Yes	No
Halifax	8	6
Cape Breton	2	1
Shelburne	4	3
Bridgewater	3	1
Truro	1	4
New Glasgow	4	4
Amherst	3	3
Yarmouth	0	1
New Minas	0	2
Total	25	25

Workplace literacy needs

This chart shows the areas in which survey respondents need workplace literacy upgrading.



Conclusions

The Deaf Literacy Needs Assessment has helped the Metro Deaf Literacy Network to identify Deaf literacy needs across Nova Scotia. Notably, of the Deaf learners surveyed, 65% had an education level below grade nine. Only 3% had attended university.

Learners identified English, reading and math as the subject areas in which they most needed upgrading. A large majority, 83%, also wanted one on one tutoring. 75% were interested in attending an adult literacy upgrading program. Many survey participants indicated a strong interest in learning a variety of computer skills, although lack of computer access was noted by one-third of respondents.

The surveys identified a number of issues face by Deaf learners. Interpreters and funding for interpreters are not as readily available in rural areas as in urban areas of Nova Scotia. Access to literacy programs, Deaf resources and materials in rural areas is inadequate, with just under one-quarter of survey respondents having access to the resources they need. The survey also showed a real need for workshops to build better local Deaf leadership and improve confidence and self-esteem for Deaf people.

Deaf literacy needs could be better met by training volunteer tutors who have sign language ability to communicate with Deaf people in rural areas across Nova Scotia. Deaf learners also need better access to resources, programs and one on one tutoring. Now that the needs of Deaf learners in Nova Scotia are more clearly identified, opportunities for literacy upgrading could be made available through a partnership with the Community Learning Initiative Networks and other local literacy organizations.

The survey showed a real need for workshops to build better local Deaf leadership and improve confidence and self-esteem for Deaf people.

Appendix: Deaf Literacy Needs Assessment Sample Questionnaire

Reference Number: _____ Date: _____
Town/City: _____
Location of Interview: _____
Name of staff person conducting the interview: _____

What for survey? We want to know who interested taking upgrading or literacy program in your area and across province. All information you give us only for statistical purpose. All information kept confidential. Thank you for completing this form.

General Information

1. Gender: Female Male

2. Are you:
 Deaf Hard of Hearing
 Deaf/Blind Late-Deafened

3. Your age:
 Between 16 to 29 Between 50 to 59
 Between 30 to 39 Over 60
 Between 40 to 49

4. Your first language?
 ASL English (spoken/written)
 MSL Other _____

5. Communication how?
 ASL/MSL oral/lip reading Other _____

6. Highest Education Level:
 below grade 9
 Grade 10 to 11
 Grade 12
 Halifax School for the Deaf
 Amherst School for the Deaf
 Trade school (computer, business, vocational school)
 University (if completed, Year _____, Degree _____) or
 (did some university studies, Year _____, Studies _____)
 Other _____

7. Are you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> working full-time | <input type="checkbox"/> unemployed, receiving EI |
| <input type="checkbox"/> working part-time | <input type="checkbox"/> unemployed, receiving Social Assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> self-employed | <input type="checkbox"/> receiving Disability Pension |
| <input type="checkbox"/> with no income | <input type="checkbox"/> student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ | |

8. You single parent with child/children at home? Yes No

9. Things you need help if you attend literacy program:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Health-related supports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career counselling | <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair access |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf/Blind Intervenor | <input type="checkbox"/> Braille materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

10. You have any literacy resources, workplace literacy, and curriculum that match your needs in your area? Yes No

Deaf Literacy Needs

11. You want to learn what?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Literacy | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf Culture | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Skills | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Skills: | <input type="checkbox"/> Email |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Word |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> WordPerfect |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> word processing |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

12. You interested take workshops in?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Search | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive Thinking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self Esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor Training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

13. You interested to help your children with homework? Yes No

(If answer yes or no, please explain _____)

14. You interest take adult upgrading program? Yes No

Workplace Literacy

15. You know what mean workplace literacy?

Yes No

16. Your employer ever ask you if you interested more training?

Yes No

17. At work, you need improve in?

take telephone message

writing forms

writing reports

writing memos

writing letters

writing/taking instructions

taking work orders

taking mintues

understanding documents

business communication

business writing skills

other, explain: _____

If you are interested in taking Literacy, do Part A.

If you are interested in taking Workplace Literacy, do Part B.

	A. Literacy	B. Workplace Literacy
18. Which you prefer?		
Part-time studies – days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part-time studies - evenings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part-time studies - weekends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full-time studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Which day prefer?		
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weekend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Time prefer?		
9am-12pm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1pm-4pm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6pm-9pm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. Prefer?

- Deaf instructor
- Hearing instructor with ASL
- Deaf and Hearing instructors (with ASL)
- Hearing instructor with interpreter

22. If you take literacy course, want one-to-one tutoring? Yes No

23. Prefer where location if you take literacy program?

- Nova Scotia Community College
- Community/Recreation Center
- High school classroom
- Library
- Other _____

Comments:

Information requested:

(Optional)

If you want us to contact you about class or one-to-one program, please give us the contact details. Note that all information kept confidential.

Name:

Address:

Phone number:

Email address:

