

Report on the 2007 West Quebecers Membership Survey

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On behalf of the Regional Association of West Quebecers, November 2007

Survey Purpose

In the summer of 2007 the Regional Association of West Quebecers (RAWQ) administered an online survey to its members with the objective of answering three fundamental questions:

- 1) Who are RAWQ's members?
- 2) What are the interests of members and their assessment of RAWQ?
- 3) How can RAWQ better serve its members and the English-speaking community?

This report will focus on the first two questions by summarizing the survey responses, highlighting some interesting trends and interpreting some of the data. It aims to examine the demographic profile of RAWQ members, to understand their interests and their assessment of RAWQ activities. The knowledge gained by the survey results will be used by RAWQ's Board of Directors and staff to improve its services to members, increase its impact in the community, and set future priorities and plans. Once this report has been thoroughly reviewed and assessed by the RAWQ Board of Directors and the membership has had the opportunity to comment on it, a subsequent report will be issued detailing actions that will be taken by the association in response to the survey.

This report, therefore, will not deal with the questions and responses dealing with how specific RAWQ services and communication tools (such as the newsletter and web site) are delivered and received. This will be dealt with in the second report.

Summary

The majority of RAWQ members:

- Live in the urban part of the city of Gatineau
- Are over the age of 60
- Live alone or with one other person
- Have either been members for less than 5 years or more than 20 years
- Heard about RAWQ either through the media or through a friend or acquaintance
- Are most interested in Health and social services, political affairs, or arts and culture and believe RAWQ is most effective in these same three areas
- Originally joined RAWQ because they wish to advance English rights and services and/or because they support for community initiatives

Methodology

The survey questions were developed by Shaun Peppy (RAWQ Board Member), Joyel Singfield (former Communications and Community Liason Officer) and Kelly McGuire (a summer student employed by RAWQ).

The survey was voluntarily self-administered through Survey Monkey.com, an online survey tool. An email notice was sent out to all members who have an e-mail address on file with RAWQ inviting them to complete the survey. RAWQ staff also called several members who did not have an e-mail address in the data base and completed the survey with them over the phone. This was done in an effort to expand the survey sample beyond those members with e-mail access.

Sample Size:

125 RAWQ members, or about 1/4 of the total RAWQ membership, completed the survey. This relatively high response rate has allowed for a representative sample of RAWQ's members and lends some statistical significance to the survey results. However, several questions in the second half of the survey were skipped by half or more of the respondents. Many of these questions were ones that required respondents to take the effort of inputting a unique answer instead of simply choosing one of multiple answers provided.

Survey Responses

Who Are RAWQ's Members?

The majority of RAWQ's members live in the City of Gatineau (57.3%, excluding Buckingham/Masson Angers), are over 60 years old (58.8%, 75.5% are 50 and over). Most members live alone or with one other person which is consistent given the age profile of the majority of members (i.e. retired with no or adult children). These two statistics illuminate two challenges for RAWQ.

It is understandable that the majority of RAWQ's members would reside in the urban part of the City of Gatineau given that the majority of the region's population, including the English-speaking community, lives there (roughly 70% of the Outaouais' population lives in the City of Gatineau). The geographic distribution of RAWQ's members is therefore roughly proportionate to the overall distribution of the population in the Outaouais. However, RAWQ does have a mandate to serve the entire Outaouais region which spreads around Gatineau from Fort-Colouge/Chapeau to the west, Maniwaki in the north, and Thurso in the East.

The age profile of RAWQ's members presents a sustainability challenge for the association both in the long and short term. If RAWQ is to maintain and increase its number of members over the next decade it must attract younger members. Undoubtedly, having members over the age of 60 brings to RAWQ a wealth of experience, knowledge and strong roots and connections in the community. However, having younger members who are directly engaged in the education system both as students and parents, who are new or recent property owners and are actively involved in the workforce will better allow RAWQ to make personal connections in to the community that relate to some of its core priorities and activities. Respondents were asked how long they have been members of RAWQ (formerly called Outaouais Alliance). Answers clustered around two time periods. 29% of respondents have been members for 5 years or less while 23.4% have been members for 20 years or more. Length of membership was fairly evenly distributed between 5 and 20 years.

This suggests that there is a core of members who have consistently maintained their memberships over several years—many of whom have been members since the organization’s inception in the early 1980’s. Aside from this core group the organization has had a fairly consistent turnover in members. However, over the last decade the organization has usually been able to replace the members it has lost with new ones. In more recent years, RAWQ has been able to capitalize on the growth of the English-speaking community in West Quebec, particularly in the city of Gatineau, by attracting many newcomers as members through its New Residents Program and other means. This explains the high number of new members in the last five years. If RAWQ is able to continue attracting new members at this rate, it should be able to sustain its membership into the future given the relatively older age of its present membership. This is especially true because the majority of newer RAWQ members are between the ages of 30 and 49.

When respondents were asked how they first heard about RAWQ, two answers were most popular. 43.3% cited media coverage of the Association while 29.9% responded that they heard about RAWQ through a friend or acquaintance.

These are positive responses for the association because they demonstrate that RAWQ’s activities and the media coverage of them resonate with people enough for them to become members. Having a substantial number of people become members through personal referrals demonstrates the association’s roots in its community and the power of word of mouth within that community. Most of the suggestions offered by respondents on how RAWQ can attract new members were focused on word of mouth means, especially through interaction with other community organizations and events.

What are the Interests of Members and Their Assessment of RAWQ?

One question in particular was designed to understand the interests of RAWQ members in terms of the Association’s work: “Which of RAWQ’s field of activities interest you and/or your family most?” (Respondents could choose up to three of seven choices, including “other”) The top three responses were: Health and Social Services, 78.7%; Political Affairs, 52.1%; Arts and Culture, 42.6%.

In order to understand how well respondents believed RAWQ was serving their priority interests, the survey asked a related question: In which of the following field of activities is RAWQ most effective in terms of its overall positive impact on the English-speaking community of West Quebec (Choose up to 3 fields of activities)?” Respondents believe RAWQ is most effective in the same three fields they identified as their priorities: Health and Social Services, 73.2%; Arts and Culture, 40.2%; Political Affairs, 39%.

Respondents were also asked if there are “any services or programs that the Regional Association of West Quebecers is not presently offering that you believe it should?” Respondents provided their own unique answers which touched on a wide variety of topics, although several touched on seniors’ issues. Below is a sample of the answers provided:

“RAWQ should continue to explore ways to reach all of the [English-speaking] communities of our region and connect them into a better communications network that can facilitate the dissemination of all that's being done out there. The Cultural eBulletin was a good start and so is the OHSSN.”

“Should be more Canadian, ie. more Ethnic”

“Perhaps you could arrange a discount for RAWQ members with local merchants who offer bilingual services. It could be a win/win for us and for them.”

“Probably stronger action on education, and more sustained contact with the City of Gatineau”

Awareness of and support for RAWQ's various events was high among respondents. When asked which events they had attended, the highest response was 43.4% for both the Awards Banquet and the Annual General Meeting. These responses are understandable given the high profile of these events and the fact that they occur annually. Both of these events as well as the golf tournament were generally well received and many constructive suggestions were made on how to improve them.

Aside from the issues an organization deals with, people often join volunteer-driven community-based organizations for more personal reasons. Some people wish to use an organization as a proxy to pursue their interests while others wish to use their membership as a means to become personally active in their community. When choosing up to two reasons why they originally joined RAWQ, most respondents seemed to view RAWQ as an organization to pursue their interests on their behalf. 97.1% of respondents chose RAWQ's pursuit of English rights and services and/or support for community initiatives as one or both of their top two answers.

That members mostly view RAWQ as a proxy to pursue their interests was supported by the majority of open-ended answers given in response to the question "What do you see as the benefits of a RAWQ membership?" This question generated the most thoughtful answers from respondents. Many expressed support for RAWQ's guiding principles like supporting the English-speaking minority community while acknowledging the unique position of French speaking Quebec as a majority in Quebec and a minority in North America. Many others appreciated the fact that RAWQ is working on their behalf and viewed the association as a valuable information and resource centre.

What do you see as the benefits of a RAWQ membership?

"Living in a more harmonious community and fostering a partnership with the francophone majority as well as with other minorities experiencing the same circumstances as the [English-speaking community]."

"[It] creates a bond and vehicle for communication and action among the scattered English-speaking communities in our region."

"Support for an organization that stands for English rights in a sensible, non-confrontational way."