

Research Study Summary: 811 Use in Nova Scotia

This survey was completed from November 2019 - January 2020, prior to COVID-19

What is 811?

811 is a telephone and online service, available 24/7. You can call and speak with a Registered Nurse to receive health advice and guidance on seeking the right level of care based on your symptoms. 811 was introduced in 2009 to increase public access to care, encourage self-care and reduce burden on the health care system.

Did you know?

Based on a previous evaluation, about **8%** of Nova Scotians use 811 each year.

What did we do in this research study?

The Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit (MSSU) team in Halifax conducted a study to understand why Nova Scotians do or do not use 811. We also looked to see whether certain factors, such as education, income, or age, are related to service use.

How did we do it?

1. 

289

Nova Scotians completed the survey. Respondents were asked to share their 811 experience and their general comfort accessing health information online.

2. 

Participants completed the survey online or in-person through an interview with a research team member.

3. 

The findings were analyzed to identify common factors among the experiences reported by participants. Patient Partners and community members provided feedback.


What were the main findings?

68% of respondents were users of 811.


- Users were slightly younger and more likely to be female.
- 33% were very satisfied with their experience.
- 51% were very likely to call again.

32% of respondents were non-users of 811.

- Non-users were more likely to be retired or to be new residents of NS.
- 83% of non-users indicated that they were aware the service existed, yet hadn't used it.



Factors such as education, income, and ethnicity were not related to respondents' use of the service.



75% of respondents were not aware that 811 had a website or that it could be used as a source for health information.

By analyzing the survey responses, the research team identified **six factors** that impacted whether or not someone used 811.



Why people used 811

- Accessibility of the service
- Avoiding travel and wait times
- Trustworthiness of speaking to a Registered Nurse
- Support navigating the health system

Why people didn't use 811

- Lack of awareness, specifically for older men and new residents to NS
- Difficulty remembering to call
- Expectation to be redirected to emergency room

What is the main take away?

811 is viewed as a trustworthy and reliable source of health information. People appreciate knowing the service is available when they need health advice. However, in order to increase use of 811, there is a need to increase understanding of what 811 can do, and when it is appropriate to call. There is also a need to ensure 811 is trustworthy to everyone, and that nurses are trained to provide care to groups which may be underserved by the health care system.