

## Rural VIP No. 10: COVID-19 Reflections

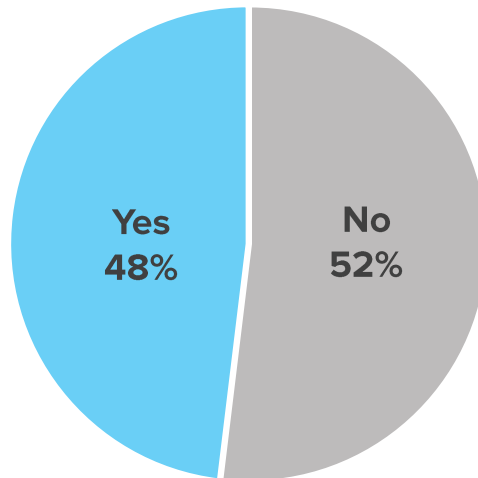
The tenth survey for the members of the Rural Voice Information Panel (Rural VIP) was sent on July 2, 2020 to 184 members. When the survey closed on July 10, 52 panel members (28%) had completed the seven-question survey.

### Key Learnings



- **Q1:** Overall, 52 per cent of respondents **did not receive** a package of free non-medical masks, while 48 per cent of respondents **did obtain the masks** that were available through restaurant drive-thrus, municipal or community providers, or by calling 211.
- **Q2:** Overall, 42 per cent of respondents reported that residents in their communities **sometimes** wear masks in public when it is difficult to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres; 31 per cent of respondents said that residents **rarely** wear masks, while 23 per cent indicated that people **very rarely** wear masks. Four per cent of respondents said that residents in their communities **very frequently** use masks in public.
- **Q3:** The majority of respondents feel **comfortable** (35 per cent) or **just okay** (33 per cent) about the lifted restrictions and relaxed public health measures that are in place for Alberta to reopen the economy, while 15 per cent feel **very comfortable**. Ten per cent of respondents are **somewhat worried**, and a combined eight per cent are **worried or very worried**.
- **Q4:** When asked about the likelihood of choosing virtual care in the future, respondents are **very likely** (23 per cent), **likely** (27 per cent), and **somewhat likely** (25 per cent) to choose this option if available to them. Eight per cent of respondents reported that they are **somewhat unlikely** to choose virtual patient care, with ten per cent who are **unlikely** and eight per cent who are **very unlikely** to opt to receive virtual services.

1. Did you receive a package of free non-medical masks that were being offered through restaurant drive-thrus, municipal or community providers, or by calling 211?

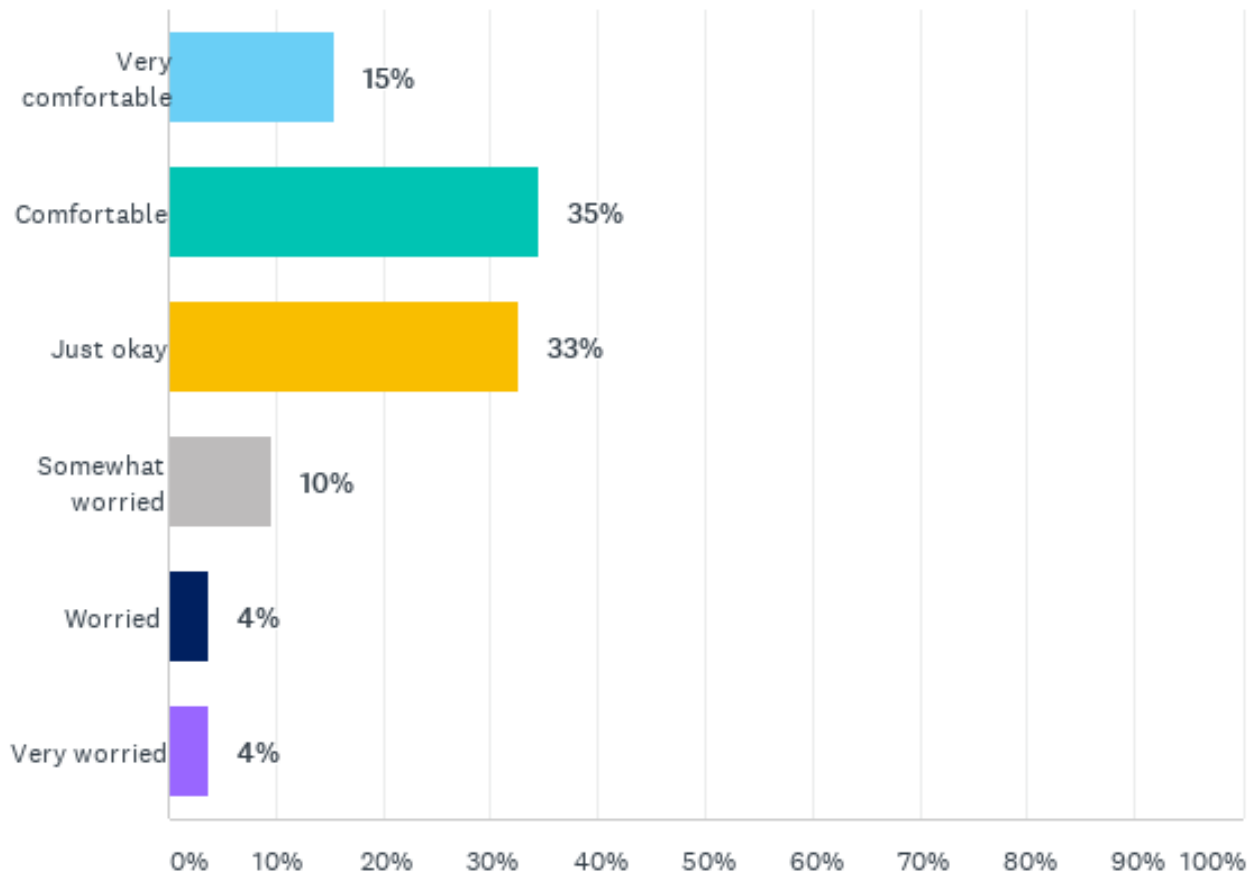


2. How often do residents in your community wear masks in public when it is difficult to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres?



● Always (0%)   
 ● Very frequently   
 ● Sometimes   
 ● Rarely   
 ● Very rarely   
 ● Never (0%)

3. How do you feel about the lifted restrictions and relaxed public health measures that are in place for Alberta to reopen the economy?



4. During the pandemic, many physicians and other care providers offered virtual services over the phone, by email, or by video. **How likely are you to choose virtual patient care if the option is available to you in the future?**



● Very likely   
 ● Likely   
 ● Somewhat likely   
 ● Somewhat unlikely   
 ● Unlikely   
 ● Very unlikely



5. In June’s survey, 80 per cent of respondents agreed, strongly agreed, or somewhat agreed that their communities identified gaps that they would work on filling in terms of crisis mitigation because of the pandemic. **If applicable, briefly describe your community’s gaps and how it may fill them to better withstand and recover from future crises.**

# of comments	Theme of the comments
9	<b>Health care</b> Accessing emergency dentistry, surgeries, hospital visits; health workforce/physician needs; more support for public health measures related to the pandemic
6	<b>Communication and information</b> Challenges accessing reliable information; poor internet connection; improve communication between groups
6	<b>No major gaps identified</b> Communities were prepared; issues were quickly fixed
5	<b>Seniors’ care</b> More supports for the elderly; challenges of isolation; more health care aids to support seniors and senior lodges
4	<b>Other</b> Daycare needs impact parents’ ability to work; rural needs different from urban

**What you said:**

- “One of the gaps is **internet connectivity and availability** [...] There are many people that have [slow] internet service or no internet service. We are continuing to work with our provincial and federal counterparts to try to improve service to rural areas. During the pandemic, internet capability was critical to receive a number of supports and ongoing care.”
- “Building or **strengthening collaboration** is key in my community to maintain communication that is up to date and relevant.”
- “We have **implemented a Community Together program** for residents to add their name as a "Fan Out" that the municipal office can call when there is a crisis to check on everyone and if they need assistance.”
- “Interagency coordination was adequate, but **improved communications** would address existing gaps.”
- “To be aware that **city** solutions do not always pertain to **rural** problems.”

6. Reflecting on how you, your neighbours, and your community have responded to the pandemic, what is the top insight you learned about your community?

# of comments	Theme of the comments
19	<b>Resilient and supportive communities</b> People are stronger together and care for each other; fantastic front-line workers; effective response during a crisis
10	<b>Strong public health response</b> Many residents complied with restrictions and directives, were cooperative and respectful; some were less concerned
5	<b>Some communities less affected</b> No confirmed, or very few, cases of COVID-19
5	<b>Challenging social and personal impacts</b> Experiencing loneliness, feeling isolated and unprotected; virtual connection not the same; concerns about mental health
5	<b>Other</b> Rural internet weaknesses, poor understanding of the pandemic

**What you said:**

**“Our youth have been incredible,** stepping up to fill jobs in several retail sectors and working a great deal of hours.”

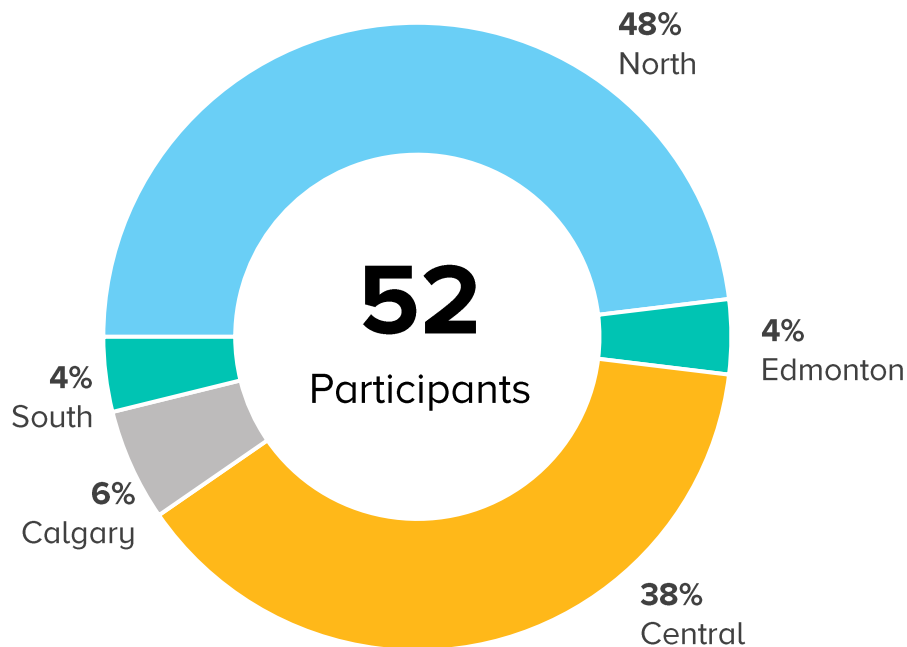
“I miss my social connections [...] **People have been inventive about connecting in other ways** - Zoom, Facetime.”

**“We pull together in a crisis.** We have a caring community where people are willing to work together and look after each other.”

“Our small community (Nanton) is **always ready to jump in to help others if there is an emergency.** Individuals and agencies started programs to ensure seniors and others were not left without the ability to grocery shop, obtain necessities, [...] etc.”



7. In which AHS (Alberta Health Services) zone do you live?



\* Totals may not add due to rounding

## What will we do with this feedback?

During COVID-19, RhPAP has shared the Rural VIP's opinions, experiences, and community learnings with health-care leaders, rural stakeholders, and the RhPAP Board of Directors, who represent the following organizations: Alberta Health Services, Alberta Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta.

You can visit [rhpap.ca/COVID-19](https://rhpap.ca/COVID-19) to read our Rural Health Beat coverage of rural Alberta during the pandemic.

To view the results of past Rural VIP surveys, click [here](#).

### Questions about RhPAP's Rural Voice Information Panel?

Email us at [ruralVIP@rhpap.ca](mailto:ruralVIP@rhpap.ca)