

Rural VIP No. 22: Changing Demographics in Rural Communities

The twenty-second survey for the members of the Rural Voice Information Panel (Rural VIP) was sent out on November 4, 2021 to 216 members.

Demographic statistics show that seniors (those 65 or older) are the fastest growing population in rural Alberta. However, not all rural communities are the same, and some rural communities may find that their population is getting younger instead of older.

For this month's survey, we asked participants about changes in demographics in their communities that they have noticed.

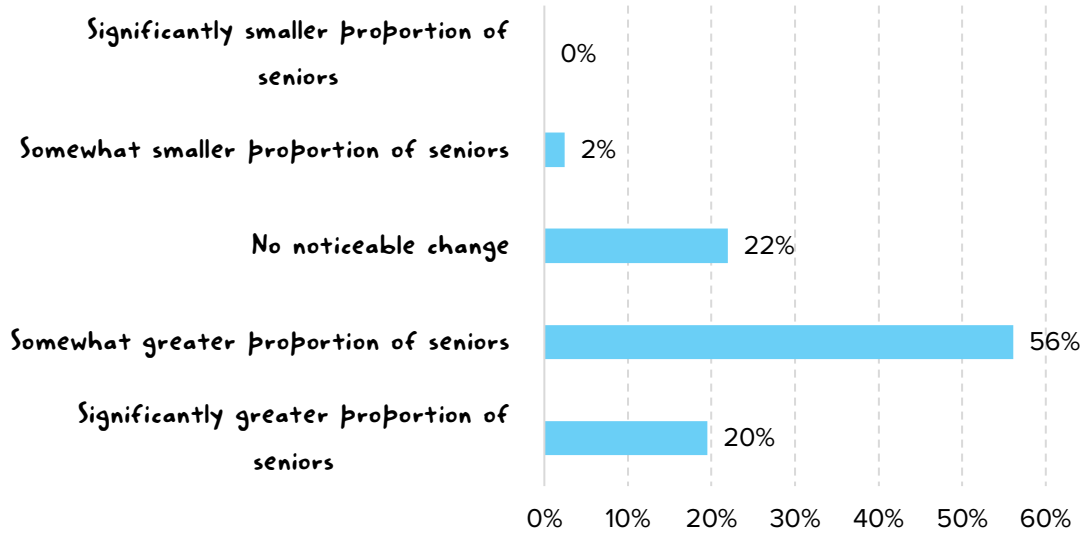
This document provides a summary of the responses.

Key Learnings

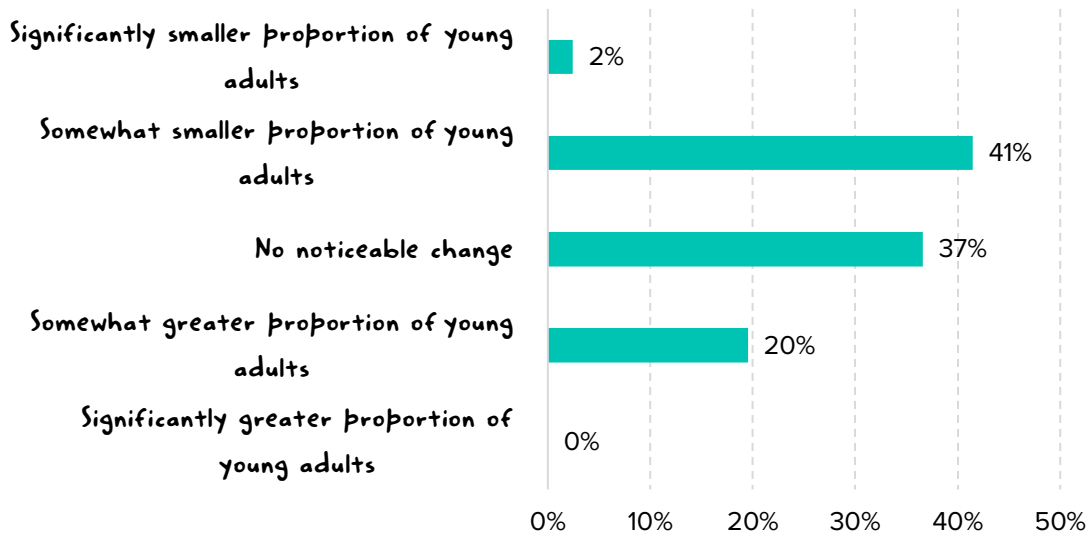


- **Q1-3:** Three quarters of respondents have noticed an increase in the population of seniors in their communities over the last ten years. Respondents are twice as likely to have noticed a decrease in the proportion of young adults and children in their community than to have noticed an increase.
- **Q4:** Respondents attribute the changing demographics of their communities to a wide range of factors, including residents having fewer children, lack of employment opportunities for young adults, and seniors moving to their community to retire.
- **Q7:** A quarter of respondents have indicated that their communities have made changes to accommodate the changing demographics. Examples provided of these changes include increased activities and programs to assist senior residents.

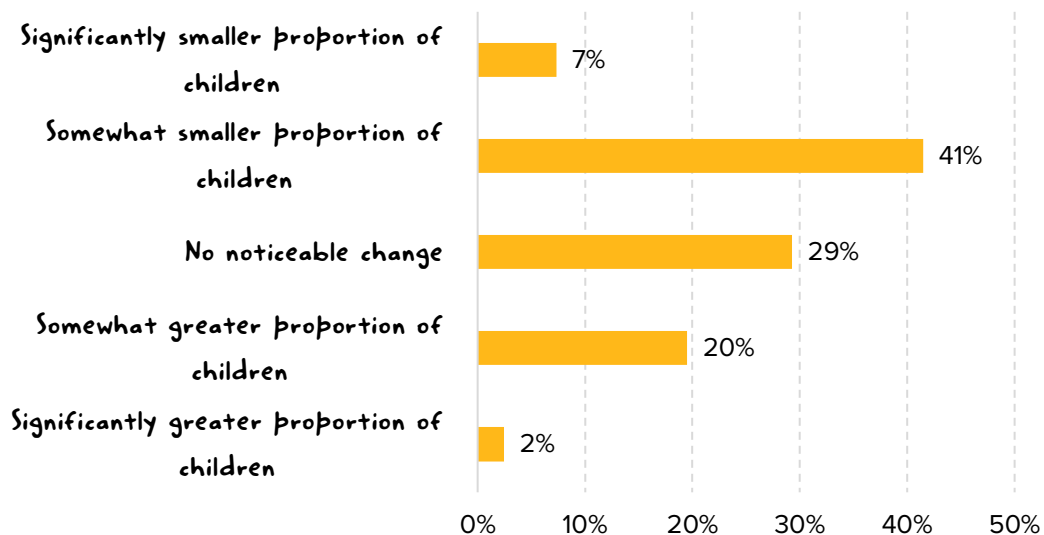
1. How has the senior population (those 65 or older) changed in your community over the last ten years?



2. How has the young adult population (aged 18 to 25) changed in your community over the last ten years?



3. How has the population of children (under 18 years old) changed in your community over the last ten years?



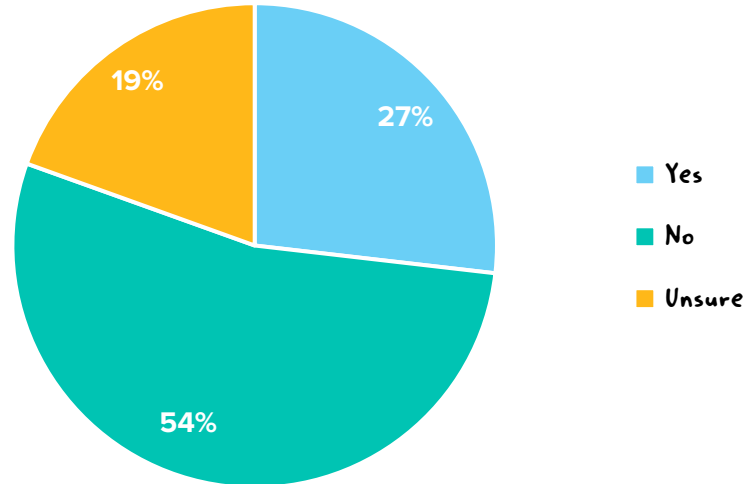
4. Why do you think the demographics of your community are changing?

What you said:



- “Family size is smaller. Our overall population has stayed quite stable but **aging population** and **fewer kids** has been the reason.”
- “**Employment** or lack of it. As our youth graduate, they move away as there is limited employment and opportunities in our area. Once they leave for schooling, they often don't return.”
- “Loss of **school** in the community.”
- “Lower cost of **housing** compared to urban centres. Increased ability to **work from home** supports move from larger centres.”
- “We are becoming a “**retirement**” **destination** - especially for the summer then the snowbirds go south for the winter.”

5. Has your community made any changes to accommodate the changing demographics (for example, created more services to assist seniors)?



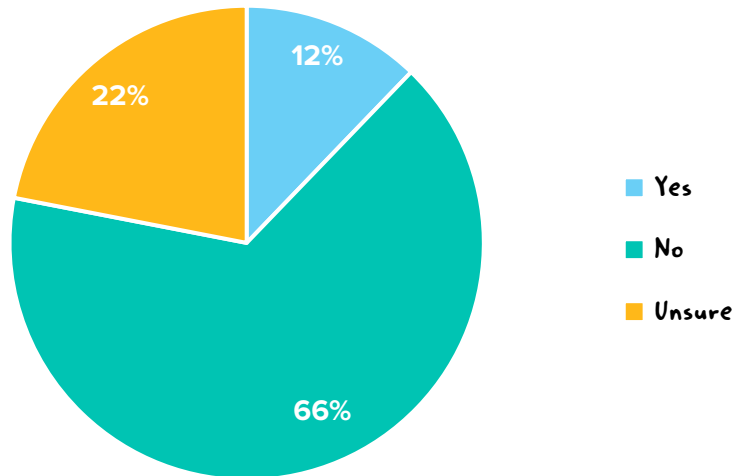
6. If you answered "Yes" to Question 5, please provide details of these changes:

What you said:



- “Drug delivery program, shut in programs.”
- “First pharmacy in our village. More alternative health services.”
- “Increased support to a non-profit providing transportation support.”
- “Tour trips for seniors, theatre shows for seniors, assistance with computers and phones.”
- “Opening of assisted living facilities, community doing more to assist seniors during pandemic such as delivery of groceries, medication and meals.”
- We have a part time "senior advisor" who works for the town that helps seniors find services. We have had expansion of the lodge. Church communities have introduced some new programs to reach out.”

7. Has your community made any changes to prevent changing demographics (for example, scholarship incentives to encourage younger families to move to the community)?



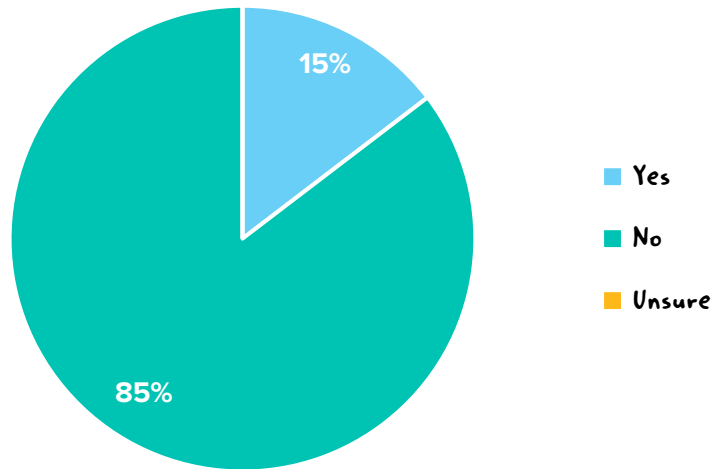
8. If you answered "Yes" to Question 7, please provide details of these changes:

What you said:

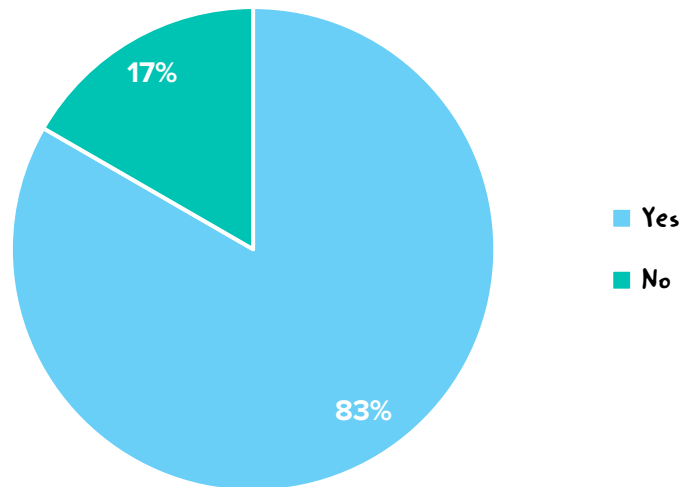


- “Working on health care scholarships.”
- “We have launched an advertising campaign encouraging young families to come.”
- “Trying to encourage businesses in the area.”
- “We have had bursaries for a number of years, so it’s not a change, but we have had more applications.”
- “Health regions have implemented signing bonuses. The local county had purchased a house for new physicians to live in temporarily at a reduced rent.
- “Ours is direct work related, and services related. School has been closed, and the fight for even keeping the ambulance is wearing people out.”

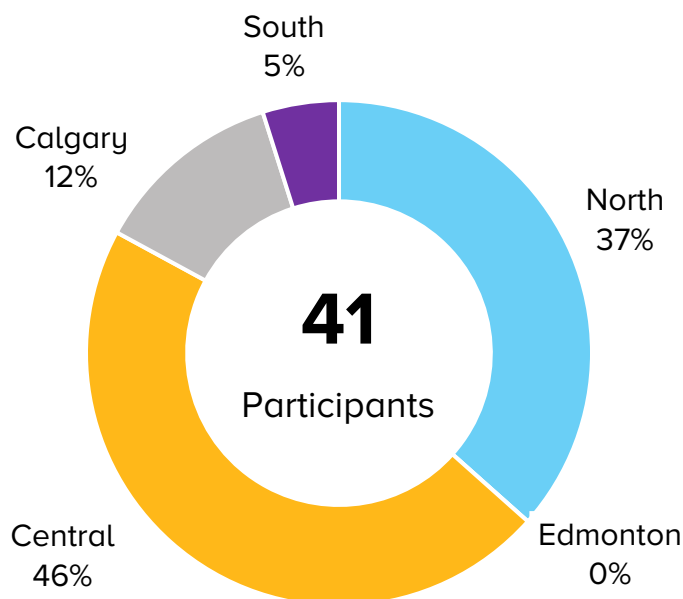
9. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, many businesses and schools shifted to work or learn from home models, allowing employees or students to work or study from anywhere. Has this shift resulted in a noticeable increase in the number of young or working adults in your community?



10. If you answered "Yes" to Question 9, in your opinion, has this increase in the number of young or working adults had a positive impact on your community?



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



** Totals may not add due to rounding*

What will we do with this feedback?

Your responses will help us understand how demographics are changing in rural communities and how rural communities are responding to these changes.

RhPAP shares learnings and feedback from the Rural VIP with health-care leaders, including Alberta Health, 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.

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