

## Rural VIP No. 24: Youth Mental Health Programs

The twenty-fourth survey for the members of the Rural Voice Information Panel (Rural VIP) was sent out on February 3, 2022 to 217 members.

In 2020, 19 per cent of Alberta's population was considered youth, which Stats Canada defines as those aged between 15 and 30 years old. Although younger people tend to have fewer physical ailments than older people, it is a different story when it comes to mental health. An estimated 10 to 20 per cent of Canadian youth are affected by mental illness or substance abuse disorders, making them the most likely of any age group to experience these conditions.

It is estimated that less than 20 per cent of Canadian youth receive appropriate treatment as they age into the adult mental health system. Rural Canadian youth are even less likely to receive appropriate treatment, due to poorer access to specialized mental health providers in rural areas. As a result, mental health care for rural youth often becomes the responsibility of their community.

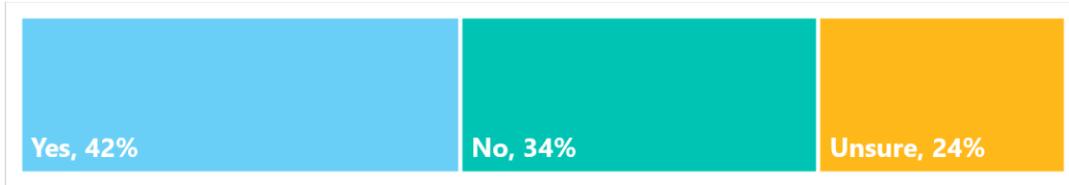
This month, RhPAP asked about the mental health supports and programs that your community provides for its youth.

### Key Learnings:



- Q3-4: Most respondents (87 per cent) indicated that their community either didn't have or they were not aware of any addictions supports or programs targeted towards youth. Known supports were indicated to be provided through AHS and FCSS.
- Q5: A decline in mental health amongst youth was noted by 79 per cent of respondents.
- Q6: A lack of educational opportunities in rural communities was noted to be a main barrier for youth who wished to post-secondary education. Cost was also noted to be a barrier for many.

**1. Does your community offer any mental health supports or programs targeted towards youth?**



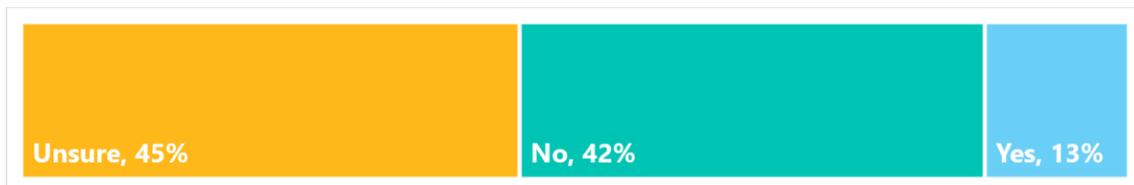
**2. If yes, please share details of these supports/programs.**

What you said:



- "FCSS has many partners that they bring in for different mental health reasons. PCN also has many mental health programs"
- "Our community has a Mental Health Capacity building project that provides prevention programming. The PCN offers counselling support. AHS has a child and youth counsellor."
- "There are mental health services available via AHS but the slot for school psychiatrist is currently unfilled. There is a general shortage of mental health specifically geared to youth aside from school based counselling."
- "AHS Addictions and mental health support - counselling - Bringing Empowerment Students Together (BEST - School Division for youth Mental Health Support (k-gr 12)"

**3. Does your community offer any addictions supports or programs targeted towards youth?**



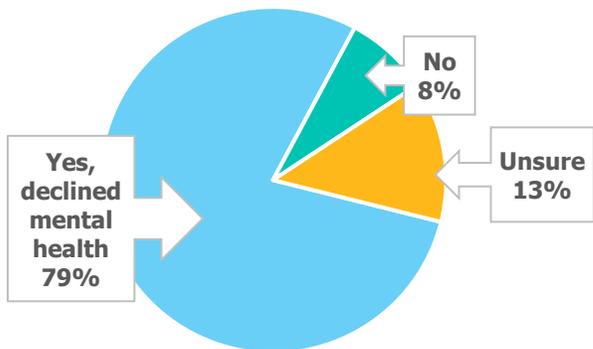
**4. If yes, please share details of these supports/programs.**

**What you said:**

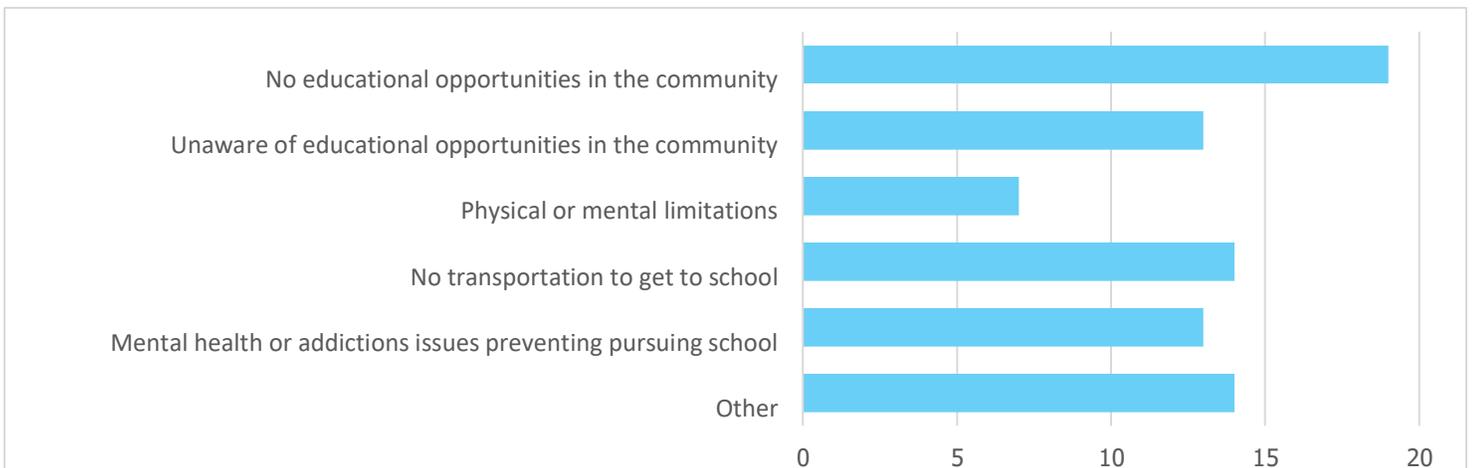


- "AHS Mental Health and addictions; Outreach supports; OPD program"
- "due to covid unable to go into classrooms to facilitate programs but offers in person one on one or virtual sessions with an addictions councilor"
- "FCSS offers this service."

**5. Have you noticed a change in the mental health status amongst the youth in your community since the COVID-19 pandemic began?**



**6. Which of the following factors act as a barrier to youth attending post-secondary education? (select all that apply)**



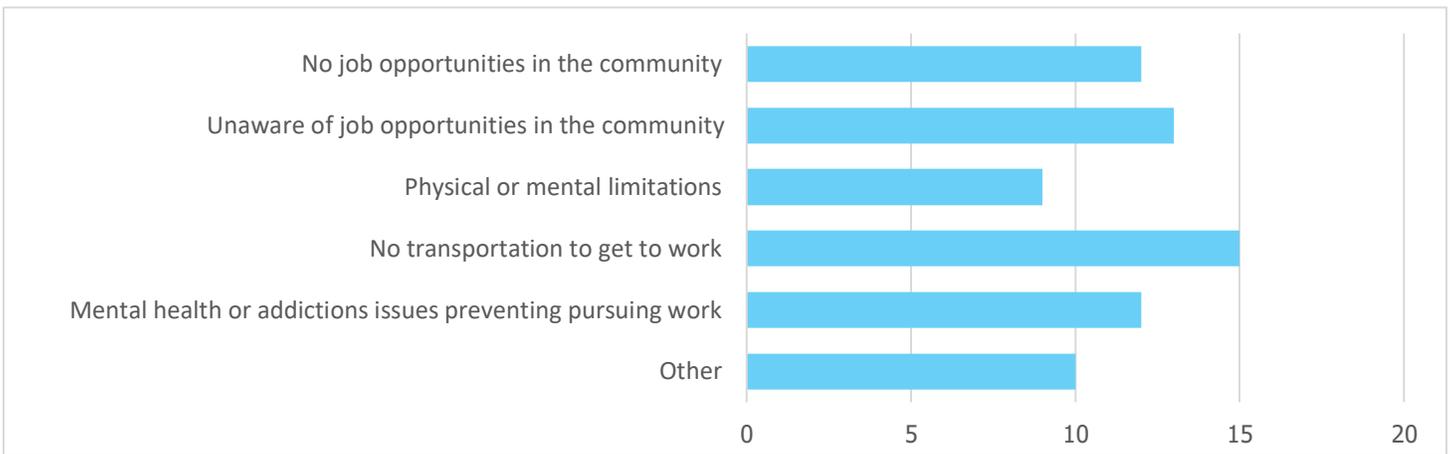
**Other barriers noted:**



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- "The ability to leave for further education is very much based on economic means. For some in the region, leaving for further education is culturally very isolating."
- "We have an arm of the Polytechnic here that specializes in agriculture, trades and upgrades. Government financing is

### 7. Which of the following factors act as a barrier to youth seeking employment in the community? (select all that apply)



#### Other barriers noted:

- "Lack of motivation due to lack of education and commitment."
- "Some employers do not want to train youth."
- "Dependency on social programs."
- "Limited job opportunities, lack of community transportation."

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### 8. In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge facing youth in your community?

What you said:



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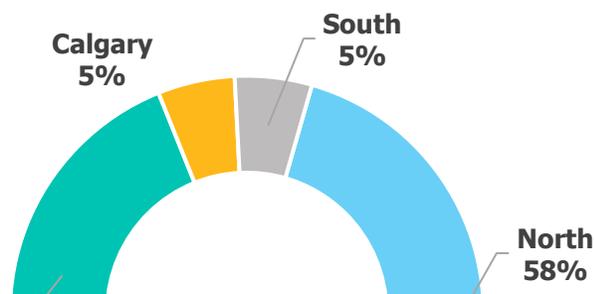
- "There are no services for them such as counselling, etc. without travelling at least 1 hour one way, and then the services are limited or not available."
- "Making them feel like they 'want' our community to be successful. We need our young people to want to 'invest' in our community."

## 9. Can you share some challenges that your community faces in helping its youth? (e.g. funding for programs, lack of volunteers)

- “Funding is probably the bigger barrier, smaller number of students therefore funding is not given towards a program that might have a hand full of kids interested.”
- “I am a member of a skating rink association, and we have trouble finding interested people to even come out to a meeting or workbee. This would be valuable experience for youth to get involved in the leadership planning for the maintenance and planning for a local rink
- “Lack of programming relevant to teenagers; Lack of diversity in reaching youth. Funding and volunteers are issues in developing programming and diversity.”
- “volunteers are always hard to find, especially for troubled youth’
- “Community is small and rural. It is also hard to attract mental health workers even if there are employment opportunities for them. ”
- “There are some good programs but they could use more staff and more funding. There is also a social stigma to accessing some of these programs.”

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





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Participants

*\* Totals may not add due to rounding*



## What will we do with this feedback?

Your responses will help us understand the impact of COVID-19 on mental health in rural communities, and what resources are available to support rural residents with their mental health concerns.

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](mailto:ruralVIP@rhpap.ca)

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