

# Rural Health-care Provider Survey

## Appendix

May 2022

---

**Other factors identified by respondents that continue to positively influence their decision to remain working in a rural community included the following:**

Physician comments:

- “A community that expresses appreciation for their health-care providers.”
- “[The existence of w]ork for my partner in rural areas [so they want to stay].”
- “A healthier work life balance. Money doesn't matter but a physician's family and home and community life and mental and emotional health and wellbeing do matter.”
- “Reliable ongoing Locum support.”
- “Enough physicians [to help with workload] so I don't burn out feeling like I need to take care of the community.”
- “Improving the perceived image of rural physicians. I do not feel that we are acknowledged as a distinct specialist and our role is poorly understood.”
- “More assistance with my young family...the balancing act as a young mother physician is barely manageable.”
- “The ability [for] the kids [to] have [access to a] good education and opportunities in current community.”
- “Ability to use my enhanced surgical skills with an active and functional OR and obstetrics program.”

Nurse comments:

- “More support or time to be able to keep current on skills, as a rural health care provider it is difficult to maintain skills when you do not use them very often. [I]t would be great to be able to have more mentoring experiences and time to update skills when needed.”
- “Work life balance and more rural providers being recruited and retained who want to work here not just [as a] steppingstone. More growing our own future [health-care] workers.”
- “Support [for] our rural physicians and nursing staff to ensure that people could get time off to enjoy life, within reason. Quality of life is key.”
- “Respect for registered [n]urses and what they are capable of. Allow RNs to provide more care that they are trained and capable of doing - for their patients - independently”
- “Financial stability, ... would be my number one reason to stay. If I were able to obtain a [permanent] line at the rural hospital I work at, I would stay for life.”
- “There are lots of options: long term care, obstetrics, acute care, emergency, dialysis, surgical, and homecare. Working these areas allows you to keep learning regularly [and] keep your skills fresh ... you never get [bored]!”

Allied health-care provider comments:

- “Close-knit teams in rural hospitals where all [health-care providers] view one another as teammates with different areas of expertise and patient care comes first.”
- “[I] feel there is a more wholistic approach to patient care. [We] see the patients as people, neighbours, family, friend[s] (not just another number). We go the extra mile for our patient's care.”
- “Less stress of travel time to work. A slower pace to life. Less pollution and noise. Ability to get to know and become part of a team.”
- “Local protocols/medical oversight allowing us to work to our full scope of practice instead of catering to the lowest common denominator.”
- “Working rural gives you ties to the community and the opportunity to practice skills not common in the urban settings.”

- “Smaller class sizes and [one-on-one] opportunities for my kids as they grow.”
- “[F]lexibility with work schedule and hours, [and a] supportive and caring management team.”
- “I grew up on a farm and have mostly lived rural my entire life. I do not enjoy cities or large centers. My preference for rural living influences me remaining rural.”
- “Increased financial support from the government to improve rural resources.”
- “Recognition and flexibility - more [professional development] opportunities, remote allowances, housing supports, compressed work weeks, etc.”

### Highlights identified by respondents about working, living, and playing in rural Alberta:

#### Physician highlights:

- “You are a real doctor, meaning your breadth of knowledge and scope of practice outshine anyone in an urban area.”
- “Small hospital environment. Community nature. Potential wholesome family life if work-life balance achievable.”
- “I love the sense of community in our small town. I adore my patients and how I get to know them on a much more personal level than just in the clinic/ER, as we see them out at events and get to know everyone and their families. My mother grew up in this community and my partner and I were welcomed so warmly, and I love that. I love the freedom we have living in the country - and the privacy that we are able to have as doctors in a small town. I doubt I would be able to live the acreage lifestyle we have if I worked in the city.”
- “We [practise] real medicine; we know our patients very well and we have recreational opportunities on our doorstep.”
- “Low cost of living and higher income means larger disposable income; I have more financial freedom. I have a strong connection to the community and raising my children here has been an excellent choice.”
- “Welcoming people; supportive community.”

#### Nurse highlights:

- “I love the connection to the community that I get every time I go to work and meet people from the area. I have made many close friendships through rural nursing with other [health-care] professionals, which is a strong influence on maintaining my career. I love the opportunities small towns provide for recreation and activities.”
- “Rural hospital that I work in [has] good interpersonal relationships among the [health-care] workers.”
- “The small town offers more help when raising children. [I]t feels more inclusive unlike the city which can feel anonymous.”
- “There is so much!!!!!! I feel blessed every day to be able to work, live, and play in rural Alberta!!!”
- “The close relationships with coworkers and patients. A well-rounded career. [Every day] is a new challenge. I love working in a full scope environment.”
- “Close knit community with rural activities and country quietness but good access to [h]ospital and [s]upportive [l]iving [s]ites for family/lodges.”
- “It is a peaceful way of life. There is true support from your neighbours. Rural is a place I can combine my values with how I actually live.”

#### Allied health-care provider highlights:

- “I like the ability to make meaningful connections with clients and families, allowing for myself as a [health-care provider] to provide the best patient centered care I can. I like being able to stay connected to the roots that raised me, embody the skills I learned from living rurally, and being close to my family.”
- “[C]onnection to agencies, community partners and knowing who to go to. Partnerships have been so key to getting great work done.”

- “I don't know why so many people stick to cities. There are so many more outdoor opportunities, communities are friendly, and costs of housing way cheaper. My work commute is much more peaceful surrounded by nature than busy city traffic!”
- “Most people who choose to work in rural areas have deep agricultural roots and/or family that tie them to a community. Ranching and Farming are the roots that keep families growing in rural communities. My favorite thing about working/living in rural Alberta is being able to be part of agricultural operations and have the ability to support my family with my career.”

### Some advice for health-care students considering working in rural Alberta:

#### Advice from rural physicians:

- “Try it. Spend 2 months in a rural site and really become involved in the community. Join the gym, go to football matches, and explore outdoors. Then consider whether your occupational, social, and mental quality of life will be better rural or urban.”
- “You will see that the care you provide helps make a difference and keeps people able to get good quality care close to home.”
- “Working in a rural environment can be a challenge but also so rewarding. Your colleagues will support you and I encourage every student to at least try working in a rural area in early career.”
- “Keep an open mind, be ready to learn a lot of practical things.”
- “Find a community that your spouse and family can be happy in too. It's wonderful to love your work, but if your spouse cannot handle it, you won't be happy.”
- “There is an intimacy with your health-care team that brings friendships, support and a rich medical career.”
- “You will do a lot of learning on the go and [may] have to do things you may not have experienced during training.”

#### Advice from rural Nurses:

- “[R]ural nursing is its own specialty. It a wonderful place to get experience in a multitude of different area[s]. There is a particular wonderful reward in taking care of a small community - you know you are going to see the daughter of the grandma with [c]ongestive heart failure in the grocery store. You will take care of the father of the girl who goes to playschool with your son when he's in a motor vehicle accident. It makes nursing that much more personal.”
- “Make yourself valuable by taking every extra training/professional development opportunity that you can. This will serve you well anywhere but especially in rural practice.”
- “If you want to be challenged and explore many different areas of nursing at the same time, try rural! Start with an open mind, a willingness to learn, and a positive attitude and you will not be disappointed how you will grow in your profession.”
- “Make sure you [choose to] work rurally for both the job and your lifestyle. Consider what your partner wants for a career as well.
- “Immerse yourself in the [c]ommunity. Get to know the local resources and be prepared to advocate for access to services and programs for [r]ural Albertans.”

#### Advice from allied health-care providers:

- “Do a placement in rural Alberta to get a sense of the scope of the job and how you fit in with the team.”
- “Do NOT assume that all communities are the same. [E]ach rural town has its own culture, so if you did not enjoy one of your student placements, do not "give up" on working rurally as a career.”
- “If you want an atmosphere where you're a part of a team and get a more full-scope practice, go rural! You learn so much from the other rural [health-care providers] around you.”
- “It is what you make it. If you want to belong to a community, you have to put yourself out there and make the community belong to you.”

- “The lifestyle that working in rural Alberta offers is one that is fulfilling, both personally and professionally. You are able to make and maintain small, meaningful community connections while providing diverse care.”
- “If you have never experienced rural health care, I'd definitely recommend job shadowing a small community run facility or service.”
- “Do it! You will not regret it. The sense of community in small towns is amazing and you can't find it anywhere else.”

#### Respondents' concluding thoughts or comments on living and working in rural Alberta follow:

##### Physician concluding comments:

- “Recruit medical students from the areas you need family physicians in.”
- “You find amazing opportunities you might not otherwise consider [in rural Alberta]. Working rurally, you will make a difference.”
- “We need Locums, or we are all going to burnout and slowly leave our communities!”
- “Rural recruitment and retention have a huge effect on rural communities and indirectly in my overall risk for burnout.”
- “To get more rural doctors, we need to accept more medical students from rural areas.”
- “Working in rural Alberta is very rewarding as the community appreciates you when you commit to the community.”

##### Nurse concluding comments:

- “I believe that we need to start thinking about how we can attract individuals that are in high school, who may be thinking of going into a health care profession and who live in rural communities. It would undoubtedly help retention if resources were put towards these people who have a personal connection to their rural communities. We can ‘usually’ attract people, but retention is a big problem for many rural communities.”
- “I completed most of my nursing clinical practice in a city hospital, then my final practicum in a rural hospital and since completion have worked in 3 different rural hospitals. I have felt supported and welcomed in each rural hospital and have felt valued as a member of the team. It is a much different feeling from a larger hospital and much preferred for me.”
- “If [health-care] professionals come to rural for financial incentives, then they will leave for other financial incentives. Money doesn't retain - lifestyle does”
- “When I graduated, I had NO intention of ever working in a rural setting, I have however, spent the majority of my career rurally. It has benefited me in ways I never thought possible. I have had opportunities that I would NEVER have had in an urban setting.”

##### Allied health-care provider concluding comments:

- “[I]n order to increase providers working in rural areas, we need to improve supports for prospective students who lived or currently live rurally. Many people raised in small settings do not have the financial resources to travel across the country for school [due to various barriers]. We have the technology now for remote education, but it is vastly underutilized.”
- “If rural communities would be recognized as having unique needs and challenges, [it] would be great. I can't refer my clients to [most] of the resources they need, because they are not available locally, and specialists are few and far between for access.”
- “Most of my reasoning for living and working in rural Alberta comes from growing up rurally and having the drive to have that life for myself and my future family. In many cases, choosing to be rural is more about the lifestyle than the work itself.”
- “Working in a rural [l]ab/community is awesome, but constantly working short staffed is exhausting. The metropolitan centers [often] take all new grads and there's nobody replacing an aging workforce. Many people still don't even know about the [medical lab] profession. We need more training spots [to open] up in education facilities. Distance learning with a local practicum might attract more rural students.”