

Young, rural Albertans need better access to optometrists

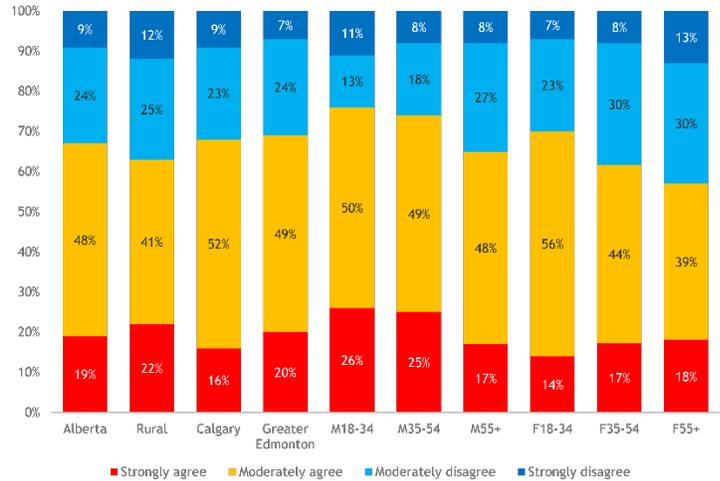
Survey

- A survey was conducted by One Persuasion from Feb. 23-25, 2022, on behalf of the Alberta College of Optometrists.
 - 754 adults, margin of error +/- 3.6% 19 times out of 20
- 63% of rural residents agree that their communities should have better access to eye care services than they do today.
- At all education and income levels, at least 65% of Albertans agree that rural communities should have better access to eye care services than they do today.
- 22% of rural Albertans have experienced delays in accessing eye care services.
 - Men and women between the ages of 18 and 34, across the province, have experienced the most delays accessing eye care services (M: 35%, W: 25%)
- Rural Albertans have to travel furthest to receive eye care (20% travel 50-250 kms).

General

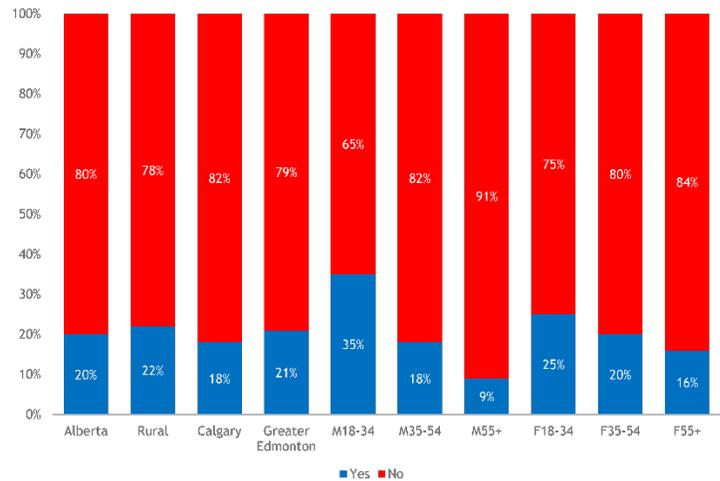
- Optometrists, or Doctors of Optometry, provide the majority of primary vision care services in Alberta and practice across rural Alberta and in more than 100 communities.
- Optometrists are educated and trained to examine, assess, measure, diagnose, treat, manage and correct diseases and disorders of the human visual system, the eye and its associated structures.
- In addition to an undergraduate Bachelor of Science degree, they must complete a 4-year Doctor of Optometry degree (O.D.) before successfully passing the Optometry Examining Board of Canada Exam.

Do you agree or disagree that rural communities should have greater access to eye care services than they do now?



By Region, Age and Gender

In the past few years have you experienced a delay in accessing eye care services?

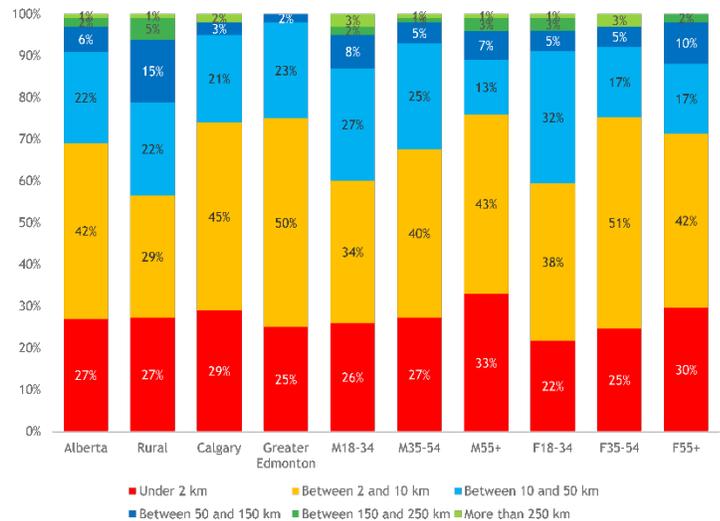


By Region, Age and Gender

Expanded Scope of Practice improves eye health care

- The ACO has submitted a proposal to government to modernize its practice by including superficial skin procedures and limited laser procedures.
- Expanding optometrists’ scope of practice protects the public interest by improving access to eye care.
- New training and technologies have created opportunities to enhance the delivery of optometry services to better meet Albertans’ eye health needs safely and efficiently.
- Doctors of Optometry are trained and can be certified to safely provide these services in their own community care clinics.
- An expanded scope would also reduce pressures on family physicians and walk-in clinics by diverting patients to optometrists that are trained and equipped to diagnose and treat eye disorders, diseases, and injuries, and reduce delays in accessing ophthalmology clinics.

How far have you had to travel to seek eye care services?



By Region, Age and Gender

Benefits of this scope expansion request include:

- Greater access to vision care services in all areas of the province. This is especially important to rural, remote and Indigenous populations.
- Reduced doctor billings to Alberta Health Care from the elimination of mandatory referrals for treatment. This will result in greater efficiencies and real cost savings in the health system.
- Reduced government payments for glaucoma medications for seniors.
- Improved health outcomes.
- Reduced pressures on family physicians and Walk-In Clinics.
- Reduced pressures on Emergency Departments. This is especially important during the COVID pandemic.

To learn more, please review a series of fact sheets that describe the procedures requested in the ACO scope expansion: https://collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/aco_fact_sheets_20210918b.pdf

You can also watch our short video describing the training of optometrists and the technology to conduct these procedures: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPADi1WVyu-QKu5SMzqQYUg>



The Alberta College of Optometrists is extremely pleased to celebrate 100 years of protecting the public interest while providing highly skilled and competent vision care services to Albertans.

For more information please visit:
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