

# Young, rural Albertans need better access to optometrists

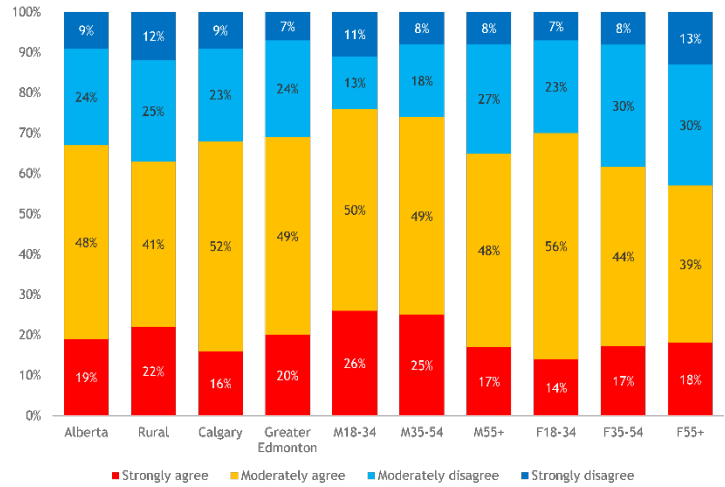
## Survey

- 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

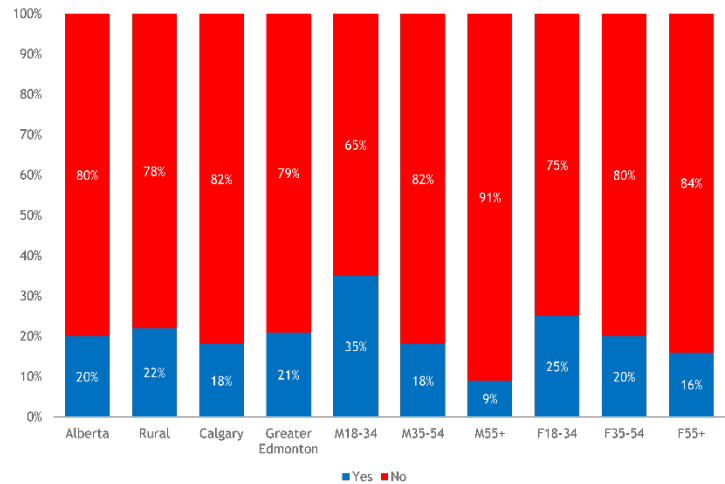
- Optometrists, or Doctors of Optometry, provide the majority of primary vision care services in Alberta and practice across rural Alberta and in more than 100 communities.
- Optometrists are educated and trained to examine, assess, measure, diagnose, treat, manage and correct diseases and disorders 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?

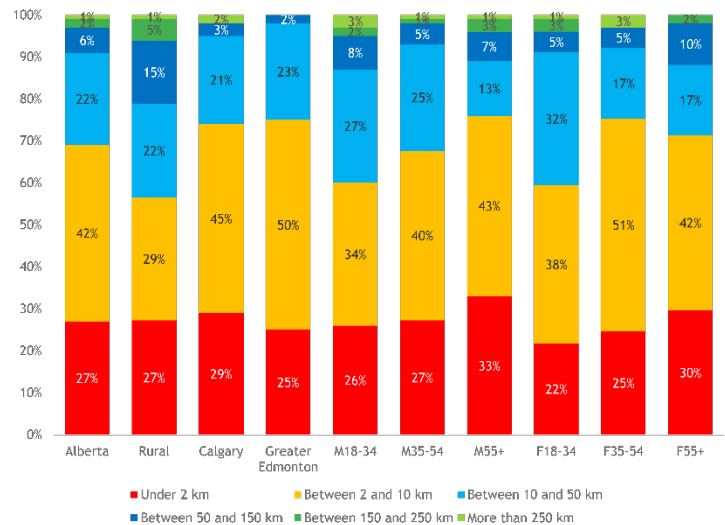


By Region, Age and Gender

# 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](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>