

Rural Canada and the COVID-19 Pandemic

In Brief

- Approximately [18% of Canada's national population live in rural regions](#).
- Rural communities are [central to Canada's economic prosperity](#). They contribute to nearly 30% of the country's total GDP.
- Rural communities [experience crises differently](#), and so it is vital that economic recovery and stimulus funding be rural specific.

As the COVID-19 pandemic progresses, reports suggest that [rural Canada is experiencing ongoing challenges](#) including: production and service disruptions due to the implementation of social distancing regulations, [disruptions in engaging foreign labour](#) due to travel restrictions (nearly 44,000 foreign workers have been impacted), disruption of transportation links, changing marketplaces, and [decreasing demand for certain products and services](#).

The pandemic has also reinforced the urgency of addressing some of the disparities rural communities already face. With many services including educational and health services transitioning online, rural communities without access to reliable high-speed Internet have [experienced significant hardships](#). This is an issue that both the [federal](#) and [provincial](#) governments have committed themselves to addressing. Additionally, there are already [ongoing initiatives within the not-for-profit sector](#) that are expanding broadband access at the municipal level.

Canadian academics, including [Heather Hall](#) at the University of Waterloo and [Ryan Gibson](#) at the University of Guelph, and colleagues continue to study rural development and [resiliency in rural communities](#). Considering the differentiated experiences of Canadians in rural places will be an important component of building a sustainable recovery.