



# Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance Poverty Awareness Survey Executive Summary

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## **Executive Summary**

Canada takes pride in and is recognized across the world for its high standards of health and quality of life. However, this prosperity is not shared equally across all Canadians. Since the 1990's there has been a strong trend towards greater social and economic inequality (Dunn, 2002). These growing rates of inequality have detrimental effects on citizens, compromising health and standard of living for many Canadians in addition to causing great distress to Canada's economy.

Although Canadians live in a very prosperous country, statistics show that nearly 4.9 million people are living below the poverty line, and 1.2 million are children under the age of 18 (Stats Canada, 2017). Many communities are collaborating on ways to better understand the root causes of poverty in attempts to create improved strategies to reduce, alleviate, and even eliminate poverty across Canada. Solutions to the phenomenon of poverty need to be person-centered and community-driven as the values, beliefs, and interests of the public are important factors in the development and implementation of appropriate policies and poverty reduction strategies in Canada (Thrive, 2017; Reutter et al., 2005).

## **Current Study**

The Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance (CAPRA) created a poverty awareness survey to better understand community views and opinions of the nature, prevalence, and perceived impact of poverty in Red Deer. The current study also provided an opportunity for feedback from community members for supports that are valuable in the community for poverty reduction, potential barriers experienced when attempting to access supports and resources, and what they feel may be missing. This gave community members a platform to have their voices heard and the opportunity to be included in decisions affecting the Red Deer community. It is hoped that the findings from the study will provide CAPRA and relevant community partners with more direction for strategic planning with local action, advocacy, systems change, and policy development with community responses being at the forefront of decision making.

## **Methods**

Data was collected using a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) survey which was live from February 13<sup>th</sup> to March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. Participants consisted of community members throughout Central Alberta (N=526) and were recruited using posters and postcards distributed across the city to attract participation. Through the recruitment materials, participants were

directed to the online survey link. The researchers also received the support of relevant local organizations to distribute paper copies of the poverty awareness survey. Students and Faculty at the Red Deer College were invited to complete the survey as well.

In addition, CAPRA organized a community gathering where community members were provided with the opportunity to complete the survey by filling out a paper copy. Supports were available to participants at the gathering as participants could receive assistance from researchers and volunteer students.

Responses were obtained from a diverse sample from varying locations across Red Deer and surrounding areas. Demographics revealed that 13% of respondents identified as service providers ( $n=68$ ), 61% as resident/community members ( $n=323$ ), and 17.1% as having lived experience with poverty ( $n=90$ ). Participants ranged for 18-65+ years, and 67.2% identified as female, whereas 32.2% identified as male. The sample was quite diverse and distributed across various categories for many demographics including: relationship status (single to widowed), number of individuals in household (1 to 5+), living situations (no primary residence to owning their own home), household income (below 15,000 to 200,000+ annually), employment (unemployed to full time), and education (not yet completed high school to PhD). The only demographic that did not show as much diversity was ethnicity, where 68.7% identified as Caucasian and 7.7% as Canadian. Therefore, it did not seem to be a very ethnically diverse sample.

### **Measures Used**

There were no existing pre-validated measures found in the published literature that were appropriate for the goals of this study. Material and measures that were used resembled a survey created by Vibrant Calgary. However, extensive revisions were made to create a survey that was more comprehensive to varying education levels and literacy abilities. Measures used are as follows:

- Awareness ( $\alpha=.79$ )
  - Example: “I am aware of the impact poverty has on quality of life of individuals and families in Red Deer”
- Definition of poverty ( $\alpha=.82$ )
  - Example: “Poverty is when a person’s debt is larger than their income
- Knowledge of poverty

- Example: “In Red Deer, 1 in 10 people live in poverty”
- Each analyzed individually
- Knowledge of Causes ( $\alpha=.63$ )
  - Example: “People can get out of poverty if they learn how to manage their money better”
- CAPRA Pillars
  - Opinion on level of importance of each pillar (early childhood development, economic security, education and literacy, health and wellness, justice, social environment, transportation, and affordable housing)
  - Perspectives of Red Deer in relation to eight pillars
    - Example: “People in Red Deer have access to affordable childcare” (Scores range from strongly disagree to strongly agree)
  - Each analyzed individually
- Level of Priority of Poverty in Red Deer and Canada
  - Example: “In your opinion, for Red Deer currently, poverty is a” (Scores ranged from very low priority to very high priority)
  - Analyzed individually
- Intention to Take Action ( $\alpha=.76$ )
  - Example: “Donate money to an organization that works to reduce or prevent poverty”
- Action Taken ( $\alpha=.73$ )
  - Example: “Donated money to an organization that works to reduce or prevent poverty”
- Qualitative Measures
  - Thematically analyzed- most common themes drawn from each question
    - What supports are valued in the community
    - Barriers experienced when trying to access supports
    - What is missing in the community
    - What supports elsewhere would people like to see in Red Deer

## Key Findings

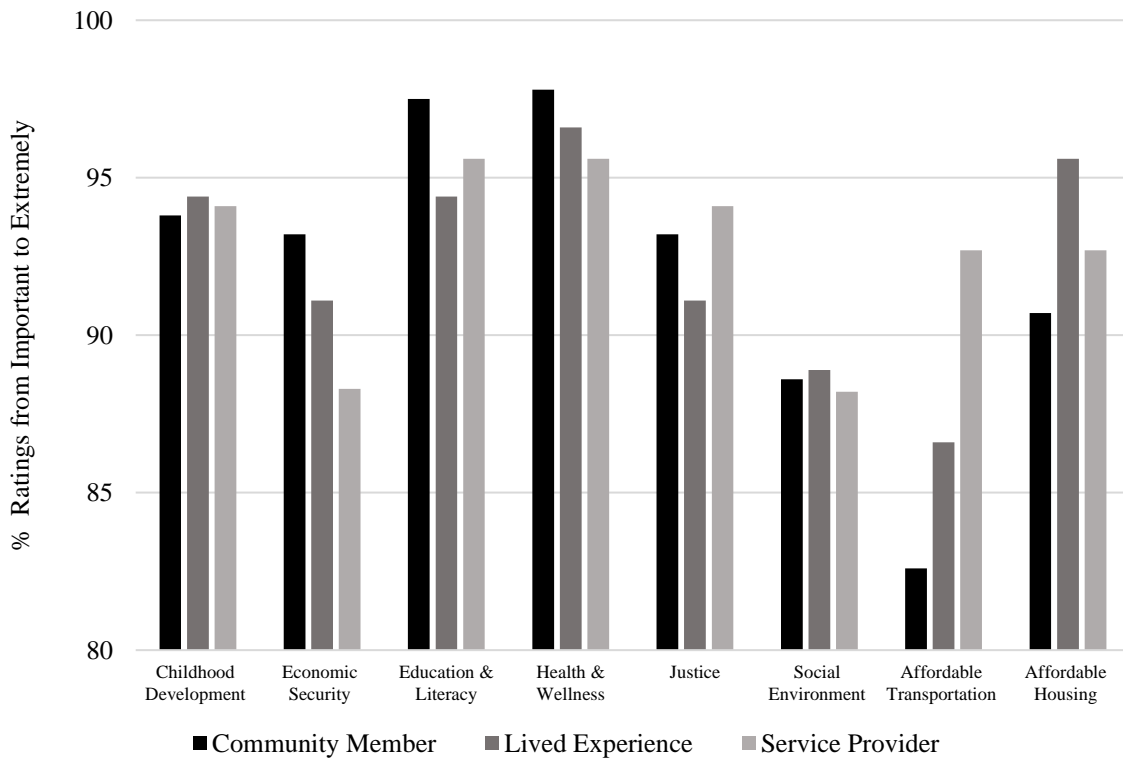
### 1. Awareness of CAPRA:

- 30.7% Aware
- 55.3% Unaware
- 14% Maybe/Not Sure

### 2. Lived Experience Awareness of CAPRA:

- 11.2% Aware
- 62.9% Unaware
- 11.2% Maybe/Not Sure

### 3. CAPRA Pillars:



*Figure 1.* Percentage of responses ranging from “important” to “extremely important” placed on each pillar across all three groups (Community Member, Lived Experience, Service Provider)

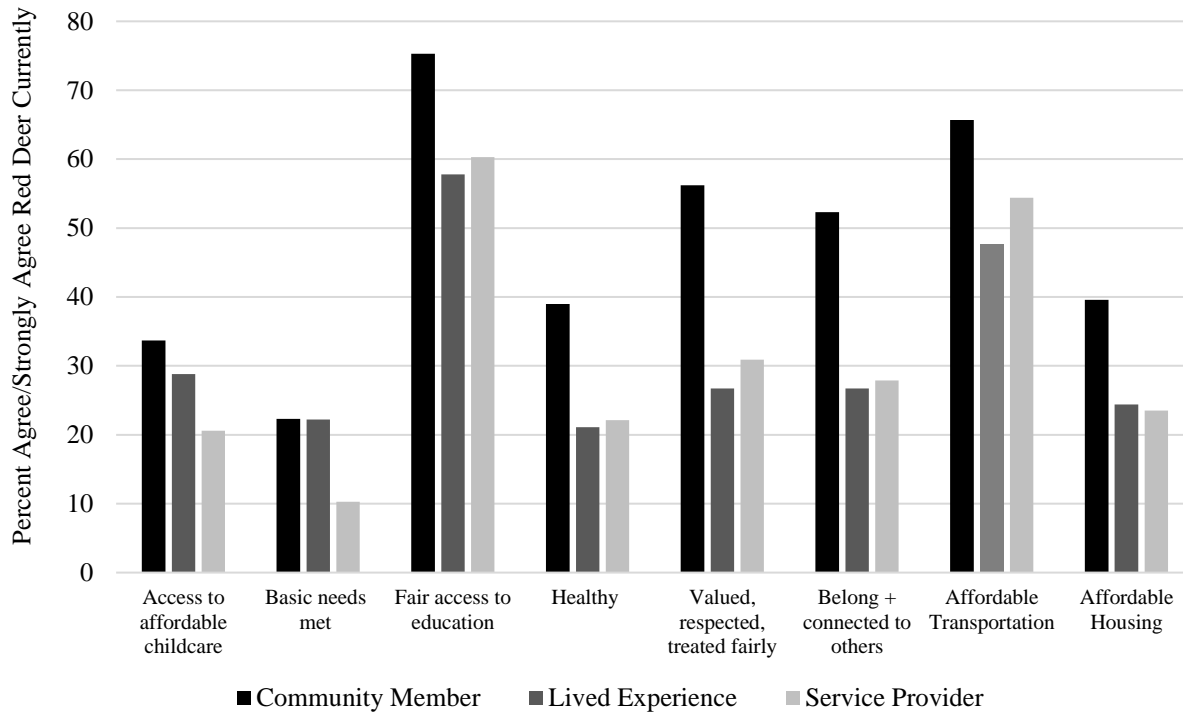


Figure 2. Perceived strength of Red Deer in reference to eight pillars

#### 4. Knowledge of Poverty

	Community		Lived Experience		Service Provider	
	% True	% False	% True	% False	% True	% False
<u>Poverty not a problem in Red Deer</u>	4.3%	94.7%	4.4%	93.3%	4.4%	94.1%
<u>Poverty can affect anyone in their lifetime</u>	96%	3.1%	93.3%	5.6%	98.5%	1.5%
<u>In Red Deer, 1 in 10 people live in poverty</u>	69%	26%	64.4%	30%	67.6%	30.9%
<u>A person may work full time and still live in poverty</u>	93.8%	5.9%	91.1%	7.8%	94.1%	5.9%
<u>Highly educated people do not live in poverty</u>	7.4%	90.7%	11.1%	87.8%	8.8%	89.7%
<u>Growing up in poverty increases likelihood of living in poverty</u>	82.4%	16.4%	66.7%	31.1%	88.2%	11.8%

## 5. Comparing Community Members to those with Lived Experience of Poverty:

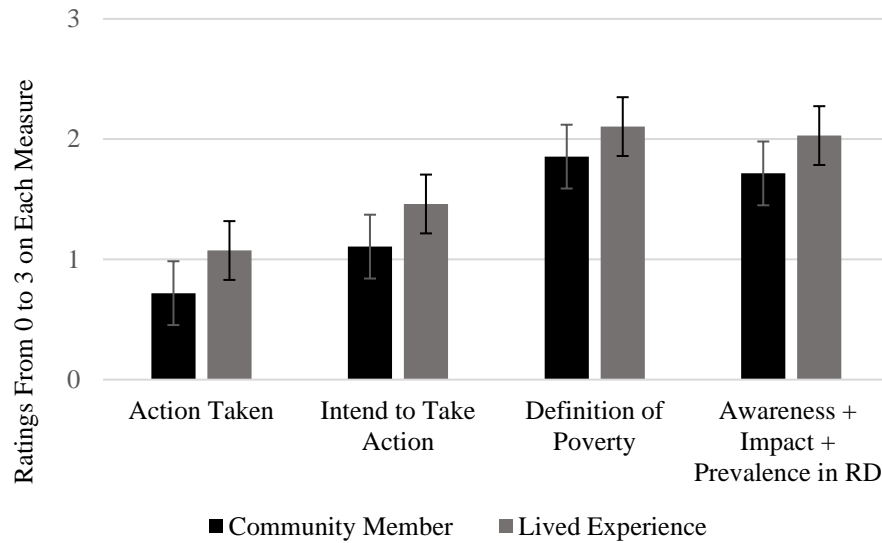


Figure 3. Comparing community member group with lived experience group on all measurements using an independent sample t-test. Scores ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree) and significant differences were found for all at  $p \leq .05$ .

## 6. Only significant difference found between service providers and those with lived experience with poverty was for statements that define poverty

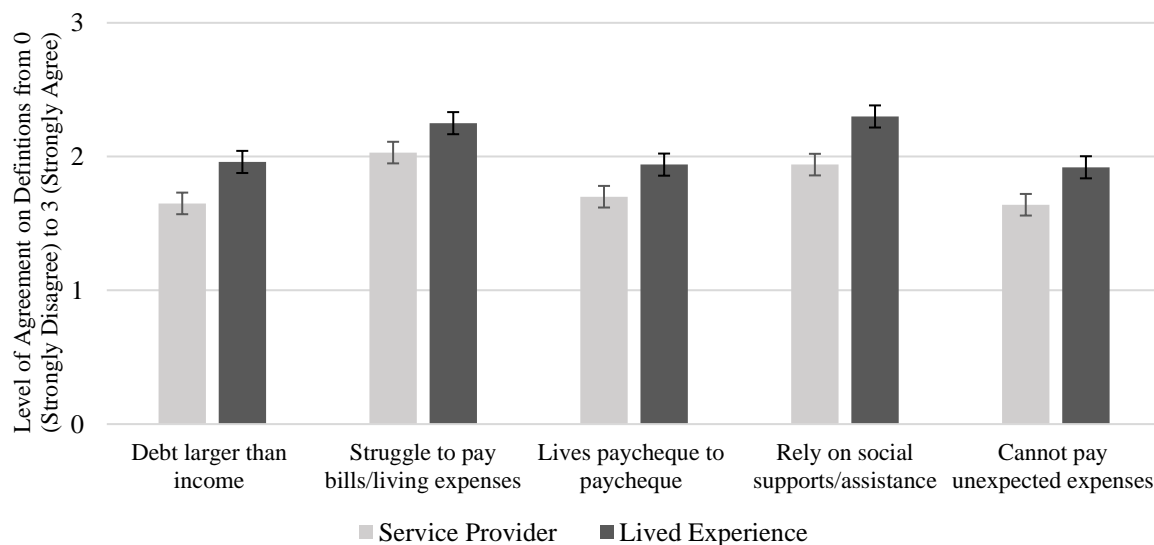


Figure 4. Comparing service provider and lived experience groups using independent sample t-test on definition of poverty. Items that showed significant differences ( $p \leq .05$ ) appear on the graph. Scores range from 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 3 (Strongly Agree).



## 7. What predicts intentions to take action to reduce poverty?

- Views on the priority of poverty in Red Deer
- Knowledge of what causes poverty
- Awareness of the impact and prevalence of poverty

## 8. Qualitative Themes

- **Table 1.** Common themes around supports that are helpful for poverty reduction in Red Deer

Themes	Participant Quotes
Food Bank	48 responses- <i>"I would recommend the food bank"</i>
Shelter Services	21 responses- <i>"Housing Authority, Housing Team, shelters (People's Place, Youth Shelter, Women's Shelter)"</i> <i>"Safe Harbour"</i>
Mental Health	18 responses- <i>"Canadian Mental Health"</i>
Mustard Seed	15 responses- <i>"I would recommend the Mustard Seed"</i>

- **Table 2.** Common themes around barriers to access supports in the community

Themes	Participant Quotes
Awareness and Information	63 responses- <i>"Lack of awareness on resources available to know how to help others or myself if need be"</i>
Stigma	26 responses- <i>"Stigmas that are attached to asking for help"</i>
Lack of Support	26 responses- <i>"There is not enough help. There is a lot of talk, but there are people on waiting lists for help."</i>

➤ **Table 3.** Common themes regarding what is missing in the community of Red Deer

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Participant Quotes</b>
Awareness and Knowledge	34 responses- <i>“EDUCATION! Many people do not support people in need because they are not educated on topics such as poverty and mental health”</i> <i>“More awareness that poverty is an issue”</i>
Housing	31 responses- <i>“There needs to be affordable housing/rental subsidies for all people that require it. There should not be a waiting list that is months or years long”</i>
Community Support	22 responses- <i>“Coordinated effort with the city and social agencies”</i>
Addiction Support and Mental Health	16 responses- <i>“Drug education, rehabilitation center, and accessible safe injection site”</i>
Centralized Information	9 responses- <i>“One central place that people can go to for help and that directs them to all the organizations available to them.”</i>

➤ **Table 4.** Themes around supports in other communities that participants would like to see in Red Deer

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Participant Quotes</b>
Addiction Resources	8 responses- <i>“Rehabilitation Services”</i> <i>“Treatment programs for addicts”</i>
Food Resources	8 responses- <i>“Kamloops food bank - they grow food and have their own refrigerated van to pick up donations from grocery stores”</i>
Health Resources	5 responses- <i>“Appropriate Hospital services for citizens that are being served in Central Alberta”</i>
Transportation	4 responses- <i>“Low Income transit pass that Grande Prairie has for its residents. I saw many individuals benefit from this and feel we need it here in Red Deer as well.”</i>

## **Future Directions**

The findings of the current study will provide an initial evaluation that will better prepare CAPRA for follow up research that will be conducted in the near future. Many participants indicated an interest in partaking in a follow up interview at a later date, which is planned to be arranged shortly after the dissemination of the survey results. These interviews will provide the opportunity to draw attention to areas where CAPRA may wish to delve deeper into issues of concern and needed areas to address in the community based on the lived experiences of its citizens. As such, these future interviews will provide more direction for future planning and strategies concerning poverty in the community.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the current survey provide a useful foundation for the Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance and other community sectors involved in poverty reduction strategies. The insights collected will afford direction for future strategic planning within local action, advocacy, systems change, and policy development regarding poverty in the community. CAPRA's main goal is to create change in the community and it is expected that the results of this study will be applied to many aspects of life in Red Deer that will lead to a stronger community that provides more and more community members with the opportunity to thrive.

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