

# RESEARCH CONNECTION

## Suicidality in rural and remote communities: A scoping review

*By Kyrra Hunter Rauch, Donna Epp, Jesse Windsor, Jennifer Dauphinais, Rachel Herron, Stacey Lee, Sharran Mullins, Doug Ramsey, Kim Ryan, Andrea Thomson, & Candice Waddell*



### **Why this research is important**

This scoping review revealed a lack of research on the topic of suicide in rural Canada. This is concerning as the suicide rate has been found to be higher in rural and remote communities. The findings of this scoping review will inform future research on this topic.

### **How the research was conducted**

The librarian researcher on the project developed the search string and identified seven databases as relevant to the project. Articles were included if: (1) they were published between 2009 and July 2020 and (2) examined suicide or suicide-related behaviour in rural communities.

### **What you need to know**

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), in association with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), conducted a literature review and stakeholder consultations on suicide in 2018. Many priority populations did not have a voice in those discussions, one of those being rural and remote communities. The PHAC contracted the Centre for Critical Studies of Rural Mental Health (CCSRMH) to conduct an in-depth scoping review on suicide in rural/remote communities.

After full-text screening was complete, 63 Canadian articles remained, 39 of which were non-Indigenous. A separate focused analysis guided by Indigenous people and Indigenous ways of knowing will be required for further Indigenous study.

### **What the researchers found**

As there is no universal definition of rural, the studies reviewed employed a variety of different definitions, including population density (<10,000 population) or relying on postal codes. A number of studies did not explicitly define rural.

Many of the studies reviewed sought to identify risk factors that influence suicide. Rural residence was the most prominent risk factor—regardless of age—and can be associated with additional risk factors including

agricultural vocation, access to means, and limited access to mental health care; male sex was also a prominent risk factor. Urban residence, female sex (more likely to attempt suicide, but less likely to complete suicide), and social support, particularly family, were identified mitigating factors.

Interventions are aimed at individuals at risk for suicide/suicide-related behaviour, with the goal being prevention. Only one intervention was identified, and the results have not yet been published. No articles were found on postvention regarding support for individuals or families following a suicide attempt or death.

### How this research can be used

This review identified gaps in the current literature published on rural suicide in Canada, including a lack of qualitative research and the need for more intervention and postvention research. Most importantly, this information will act as a base for stakeholder consultations across Canada, beginning March 2021. The input from these conversations will be shared with PHAC and will inform the next steps in research and assist in identifying the next steps for suicide prevention in rural communities.

### About the researchers

Kyrra Hunter Rauch is a recent graduate, BA (Hons) in psychology and a research assistant for the CCSRMH.

[Rauchkh39@brandonu.ca](mailto:Rauchkh39@brandonu.ca)

Donna Epp is the research facilitator for the CCSRMH.

[Eppd@brandonu.ca](mailto:Eppd@brandonu.ca)

Jesse Windsor and Jennifer Dauphinais are research assistants for the CCSRMH.

Rachel Herron is an associate professor in the Department of Geography and Environment and Director of the CCSRMH.

[Herronr@brandonu.ca](mailto:Herronr@brandonu.ca)

Stacey Lee is a cataloguing and metadata librarian.

[Lees@brandonu.ca](mailto:Lees@brandonu.ca)

Sharran Mullins is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatric Nursing.

[Mullinss@brandonu.ca](mailto:Mullinss@brandonu.ca)

Doug Ramsey is a professor in the Department of Rural Development.

[Ramsey@brandonu.ca](mailto:Ramsey@brandonu.ca)

Kim Ryan is an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatric Nursing.

[Ryank@brandonu.ca](mailto:Ryank@brandonu.ca)

Andrea Thomson is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatric Nursing.

[Thomsona@brandonu.ca](mailto:Thomsona@brandonu.ca)

Candice Waddell-Henowitch is an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatric Nursing.

[Waddelle@brandonu.ca](mailto:Waddelle@brandonu.ca)

### Keywords

Rural, suicide, remote, Canada

### Publication based on this research

Epp, D., Hunter Rauch, K., Windsor, J., Dauphinais, J., Herron, R., Mullins, S., Lee, S., Ramsey, D., Ryan, K., Thomson, A., & Waddell-Henowitch, C. (2021). Suicidality in rural and/or remote communities: A scoping literature review. Manuscript submitted for publication.

### Acknowledgements

Funding for this research was provided through the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Research Connection is a periodical publication intended to provide information about the impact of Brandon University's academic research and expertise on public policy, social programming, and professional practice.

This summary is supported by the Office of Research Services, the Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies, and the federally funded Research Support Fund.

Editor: Christiane Ramsey [Ramseyc@brandonu.ca](mailto:Ramseyc@brandonu.ca)

<http://www.brandonu.ca/research-connection>

## BRANDON UNIVERSITY

Brandon University, founded in 1899, promotes excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship, and educates students so that they can make a meaningful difference as engaged citizens and leaders. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Thank you to ResearchImpact-RéseauImpactRecherche (researchimpact.ca) for their permission to adapt the ResearchSnapshot clear language research summary format.

