

# SCOOP

## **Creeks and Waterways, Preschool Programs and Return to Public Engagement**

DATE: **June 2021**



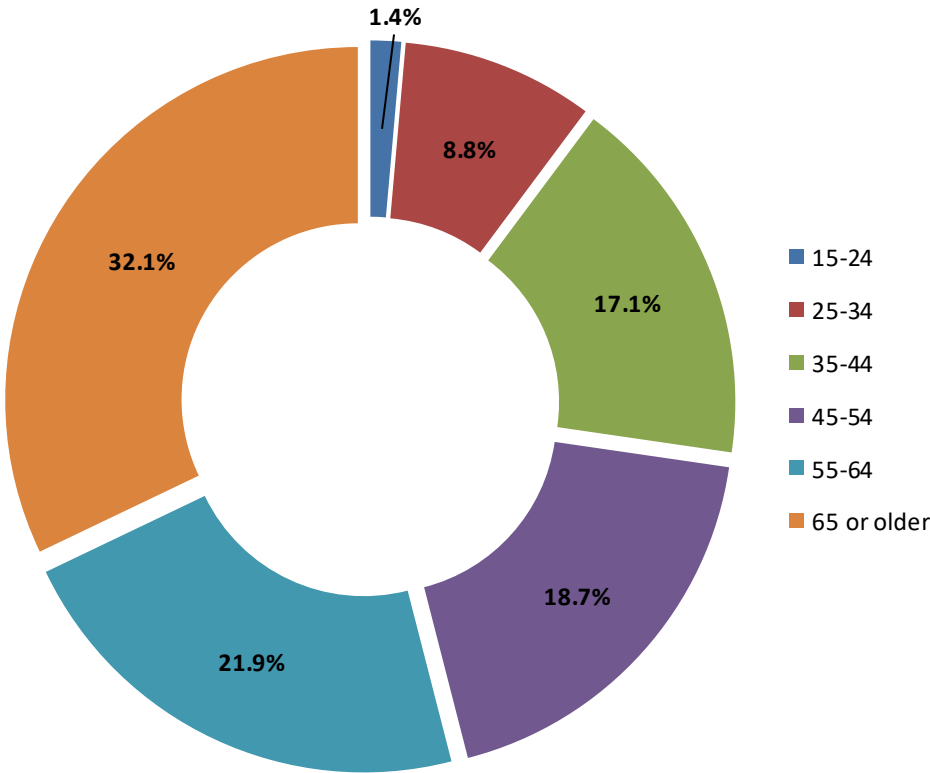
In June 2021, Strathcona County conducted a regular online survey as part of its Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP) initiative. This project consisted of different survey topics with a number of questions asked within each topic area. This survey was exclusive to residents who signed up to be part of SCOOP.

# Survey Highlights

The Summer mixed-topic survey consisted of questions on creeks and waterways, pre-school programs and return to public engagement. There were 576 responses to the mixed-topic survey.

## WHO RESPONDED?

- 74% of the participants lived in Sherwood Park, 23.4% came from rural parts of Strathcona County, and the remaining 2.6% worked in Strathcona County but did not live there.
- 58.7% of the participants were female while 41.3% were male.
- The age group breakdown of the survey respondents is shown below.



## Creeks and waterways

- A series of questions were asked about the creeks and waterways in Strathcona County. As seen in Table 1, Mill Creek and Point-Aux-Pins Creek were the most recognizable of all the systems in Strathcona County, with Oldman Creek a distant third. Most residents were only slightly aware (at best) of the remaining creek systems.

**Table 1**  
**Awareness of creeks in Strathcona County<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>Very aware</b>	<b>Moderately aware</b>	<b>Slightly aware</b>	<b>Not at all aware</b>
Mill Creek	21.8%	27.2%	30.4%	20.6%
Point-Aux-Pins Creek	11.5%	16.7%	24.9%	46.8%
Oldman Creek	9.0%	11.6%	22.5%	56.9%
Astotin Creek	4.9%	7.1%	23.7%	64.4%
Ross Creek	4.3%	7.0%	18.5%	70.2%
Fulton Creek	3.6%	6.8%	25.0%	64.6%
Hastings Creek	2.9%	4.6%	22.5%	70.0%
Irvine Creek	1.2%	3.0%	7.6%	88.2%

- Respondents were then asked if they knew that all creeks in Strathcona County drain into the North Saskatchewan River. Overall, 58.5% knew about this while the remaining 41.5% did not.
- Respondents were asked whether they would change their behaviour of water use knowing that the source of drinking water was from the North Saskatchewan River. Almost 40% were unlikely to change any of their behaviors with respect to water use as they are already doing everything to conserve water. However, just over 26% indicated that they were either very likely or somewhat likely to alter their use of water due to the knowledge imparted on them in the survey.
- Respondents were also asked to indicate their familiarity with particular digital applications (ebird, Naturelynx, I-naturalist or any other digital programs). Most residents, regardless of where they lived, had no familiarity with any digital applications. The application ebird was the most recognizable, with 8.7% being slightly aware, 3.8% being moderately aware and 4.0% being very aware of this program.
- Respondents were then asked about their awareness of particular organizations. It can be seen from Table 2 that the Beaver Hills Biosphere and the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance were the most familiar to respondents. There were no differences in awareness based on where people lived, though familiarity

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in this table add up to 100% by rows for each creek named in the table.

with the Beaver Hills Biosphere was higher among rural residents (55.8% very/somewhat familiar) compared to urban (45.4%).

**Table 2  
Awareness of particular organizations<sup>2</sup>**

	<b>Very familiar</b>	<b>Somewhat familiar</b>	<b>Not very aware</b>	<b>Unaware</b>
Creek Watch	0.8%	4.8%	6.5%	88.0%
Lake Watch	1.5%	6.5%	8.5%	83.6%
Cows and Fish	3.5%	7.2%	5.2%	84.1%
Beaver Hills Biosphere	13.9%	34.8%	16.8%	34.5%
North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance	8.8%	33.3%	18.8%	39.0%

- People were also asked what they thought of when they heard the term “Resiliency” in relation to creeks and waterways. Based on a list that was presented, the following trends were found:
  - 84.4% - The natural area can repair itself and recover from the impacts of things like flooding and drought.
  - 31.5% - There is more variety of plants and wildlife in the area.
  - 22.2% - More natural spaces versus more engineered.
  - 7.6% - I have no idea what this term means relative to creeks and waterways.
  - 4.0% - I have never heard this term before, so I don’t know.

## Preschool programs

- Overall, 7.9% of the 193 respondents who answered questions in this section of the survey had enrolled one or more children in a preschool program after January 2020.
- When asked where they look for information when they begin planning for preschool it was found that while preferred sources of information varied, 65.3% of respondents preferred websites and other people they knew (word of mouth, 60.5%). 86.8% chose at least one of these two options. Lesser forms of information sources included social media (37%), newspapers (26%), and posters/flyers (8%).

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<sup>2</sup> Percentages in this table add up to 100% by rows for each digital application named in the table.

- All respondents were then asked what reasons would motivate them to choose one preschool program over another if COVID-19 was not a factor. While responses were open-ended, the following themes emerged:
  - Cost
  - Timing (time of day/full day)
  - Location
  - Specific programming (academics, physical activity, other languages, etc.)
  - Philosophy (Reggio, Montessori, religious affiliation, etc.)
  - Employee qualifications
  - Employee attitudes/engagement with children
  - Class sizes
  - Reputation/recommendations from others
- 70.7% of families that had children in preschool had enrolled their children in programs not run by Strathcona County. Main reasons factoring into their decision included the timing worked better for their schedule (28%), location was more convenient (25%), couldn't find what they were looking for through the County (20%) or used fulltime childcare instead of preschool (15%).

## Return to public engagement

- Respondents were asked if they had participated in any digital engagements with the County since COVID restrictions went into effect. Overall, the majority of participants (85.1%) had done at least one online survey prior to the June mixed topic survey. It was also determined that 31.7% participated in at least one of the SCOOP discussion boards and 21.8% participated in a digital face-to-face engagement via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Only a small percentage (8.3%) had not done any type of online engagement prior to this June mixed topic survey.
- All respondents were then asked about when they might be ready to do an in-person public engagement event with Strathcona County. A person's readiness does vary, though it was determined that 63.6% would be ready by early Fall (Sept/Oct) of this year.
- All respondents were then asked about preferences toward digital engagement and in-person engagement. Overall, people were leaning toward a digital (31%) or a combination of digital and in-person engagement (30.4%) as opposed to a sole in-person engagement experience (17.2%). Just over 21% felt that it would depend on the topic.
- The final question pertaining to a return to in-person engagement was for respondents to indicate what safety protocols should be put in place (above and beyond those mandated by public health). These included:
  - 58.5% - Providing hand sanitizer
  - 52.0% - Pre-registration for events to limit crowds

- 50.8% - Limitations on number of participants at events
- 46.4% - Maintain physical distancing between participants
- 41.9% - Use of masks (staff and participants)
- 18.0% - Barriers between participants (i.e. plexiglass) when the engagement is unable to be well distanced.
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- 16.0% - Additional safety protocols are not important to me

## What's Next?

The SCOOP Mixed Topic Surveys usually run monthly and cover a variety of topics. Our next Mixed Topic Survey results will feature topics covered in our Summer 2021 release.