



Preschool Program Survey Summary Report



Report Prepared by Inshtrix Research Inc.
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Summary of Findings

- Social skill development is the most valued aspect in a preschool program across all regions. Strong interest in outdoor nature-based programs is noted, especially among Sherwood Park residents.
- Program content and time are Sherwood Park residents' top considerations in choosing a preschool program, while rural residents prioritize location. Optimizing program locations and schedules and further study on program needs in terms of content and types are recommended.
- Awareness of Strathcona County's preschool programs is modest as less than a quarter know that their preschool program activities are not duplicated throughout the week. Just above half look for information about preschool programs via strathcona.ca website.
- More than half report their child currently attends or will attend a preschool program or pre-kindergarten program not run by Strathcona County. Suitable program content, schedule, location as well as reputation are common reasons for selecting those programs. This group is less likely to refer to strathcona.ca website for preschool program information compared to their counterpart.
- More proactive promotion of strathcona.ca website with up-to-date and easy-to-navigate program information would help improve awareness and adoption of Strathcona County's preschool programs. Explore other channels, such as social media, to communicate the County's preschool programs to a broader audience.

Methodology

The survey questions were initially submitted by department representatives from Recreation Parks and Culture and then finalized and reviewed by members of Survey Central. The review process included a final check of the content by selected members from Strathcona County's Legislation and Legal Department (LLS) prior to the release of the survey to the public.

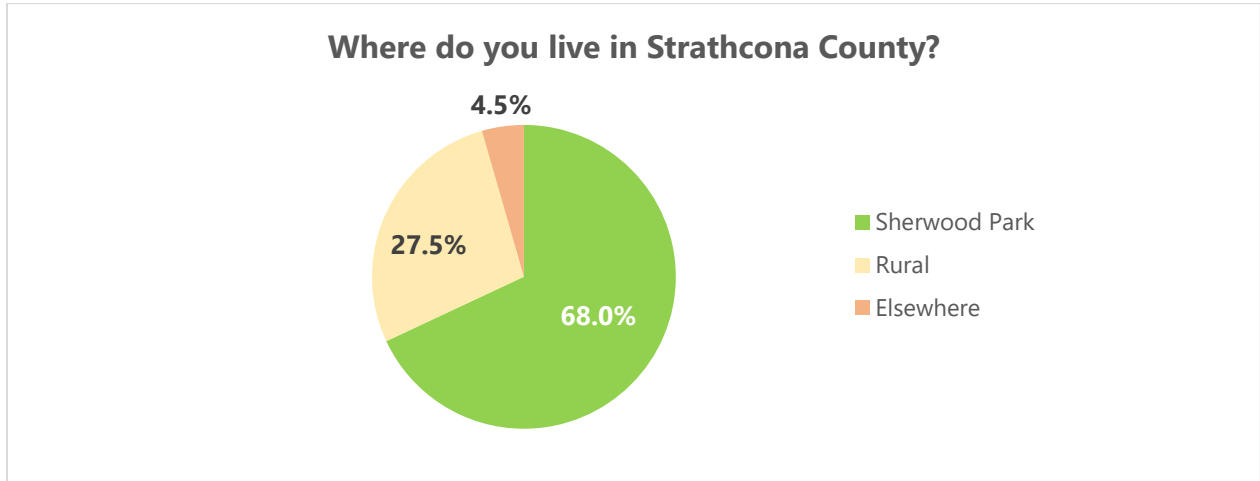
The survey was made available online on two platforms. The first was through the Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP). A total of 114 SCOOP members completed the survey from Jan 17, 2022, to Jan 30, 2022. The other was an open online survey through Alchemer, targeting residents of Strathcona County who were not members of SCOOP. To encourage participation, the Alchemer survey was promoted through social media platforms, County website, eNewsletters, and posters at various facilities. Eventually, 155 residents completed the Alchemer survey from Jan 14, 2022, to Jan 30, 2022.

In this report, results of the SCOOP survey and the Alchemer survey are combined and analyzed altogether with a total of 269 respondents.

Survey Results

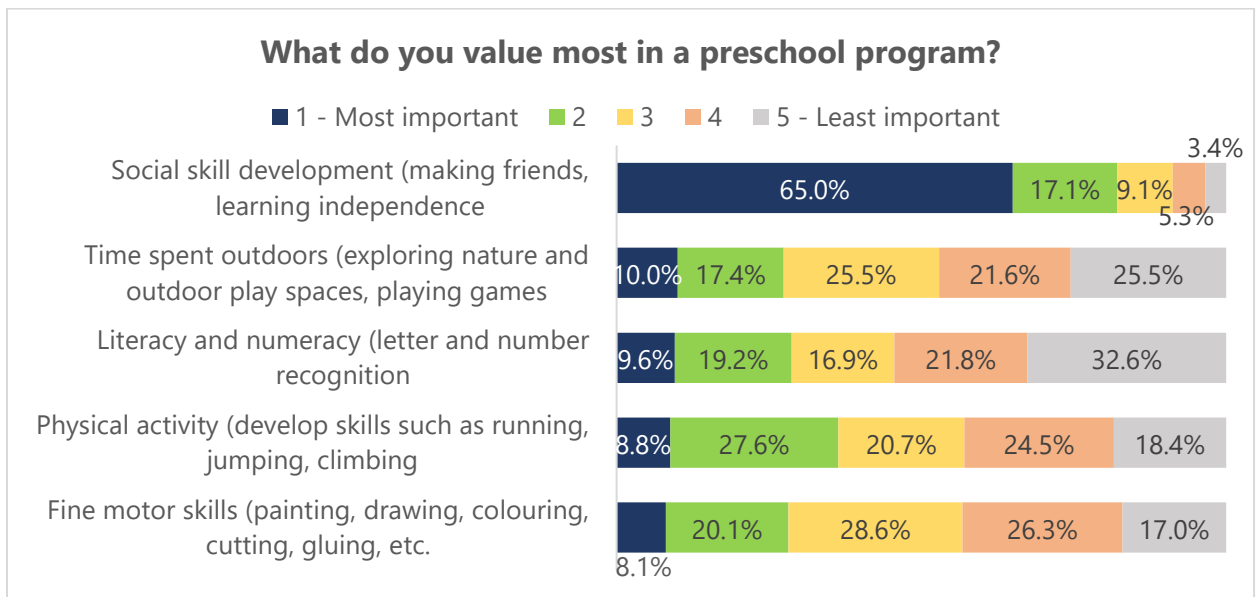
1. Demographics

More than two thirds (68.0%) of respondents live in Sherwood Park and above a quarter (27.5%) in rural areas. Given the small number of respondents from elsewhere, caution is advised when looking at results among this group.



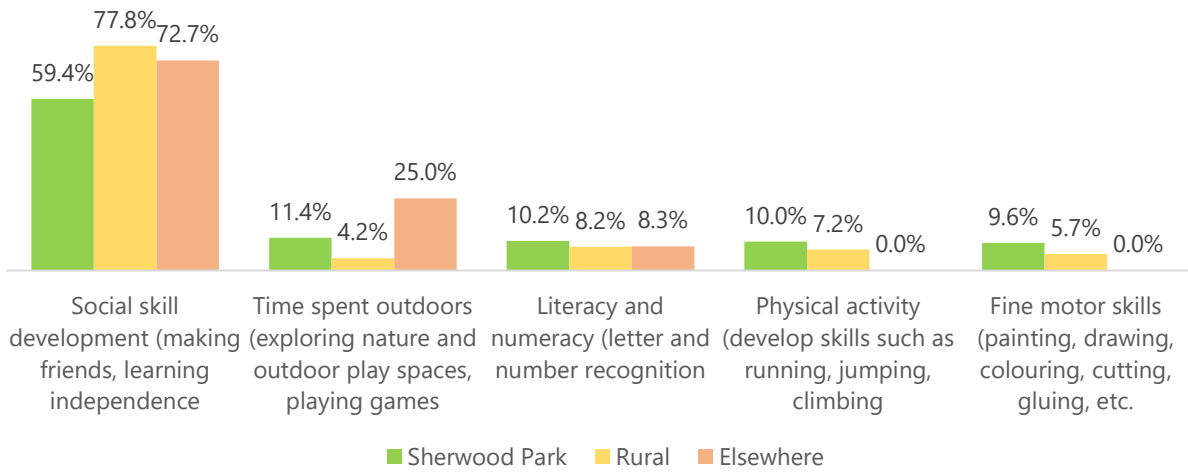
2. Most Valued Area in a Preschool Program

Social skill development is dominantly the most valued aspect in a preschool program across all regions, followed by time spent outdoors, literacy and numeracy. Music learning is commonly cited as other important area¹.



¹ Verbatims for other mentions are listed in Appendix.

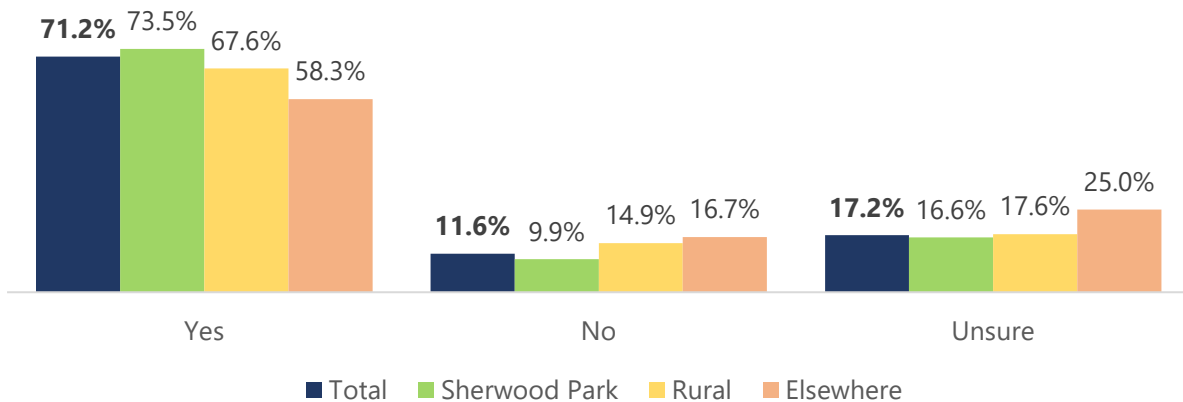
What do you value most in a preschool program? (% 1 - Most Important)



3. Interest in an Outdoor Nature-based Preschool Program

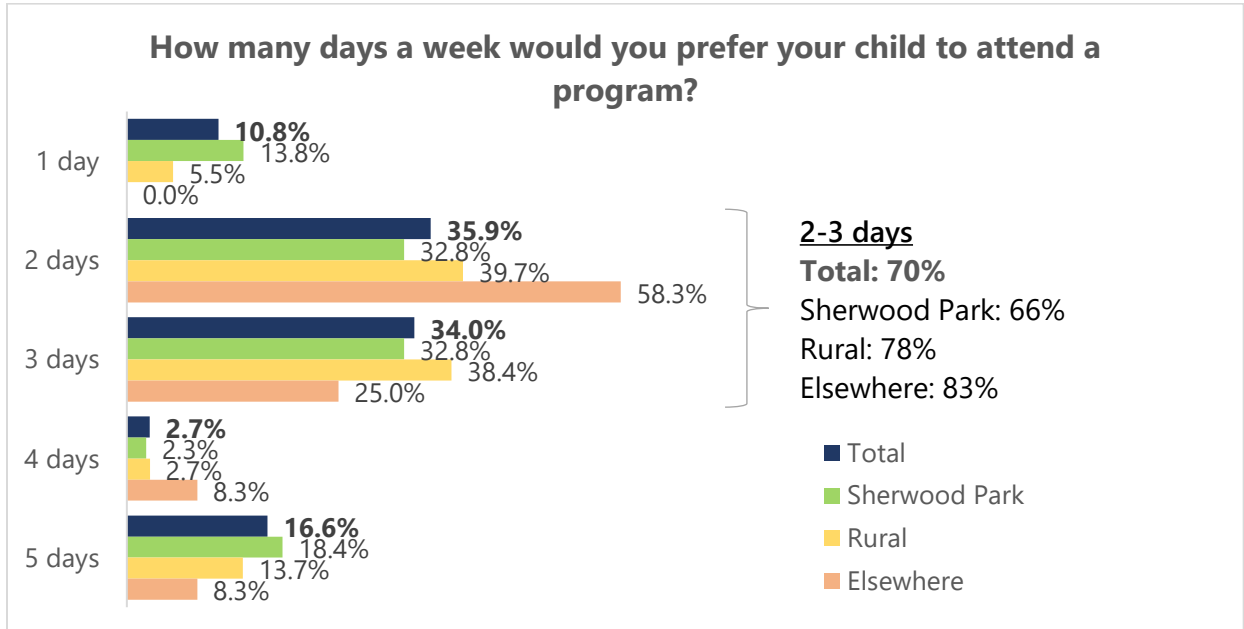
Vast majority (71.2%) of respondents are interested in sending kid(s) to an outdoor nature-based program. This idea is most appealing to residents of Sherwood Park with almost three quarters interested in the program. Perhaps due to lacking information, almost one fifth (17.2%) are unsure of their preference of sending kid(s) to such program.

Would you be interested in an outdoor nature-based program where preschoolers spend most of their time outside?

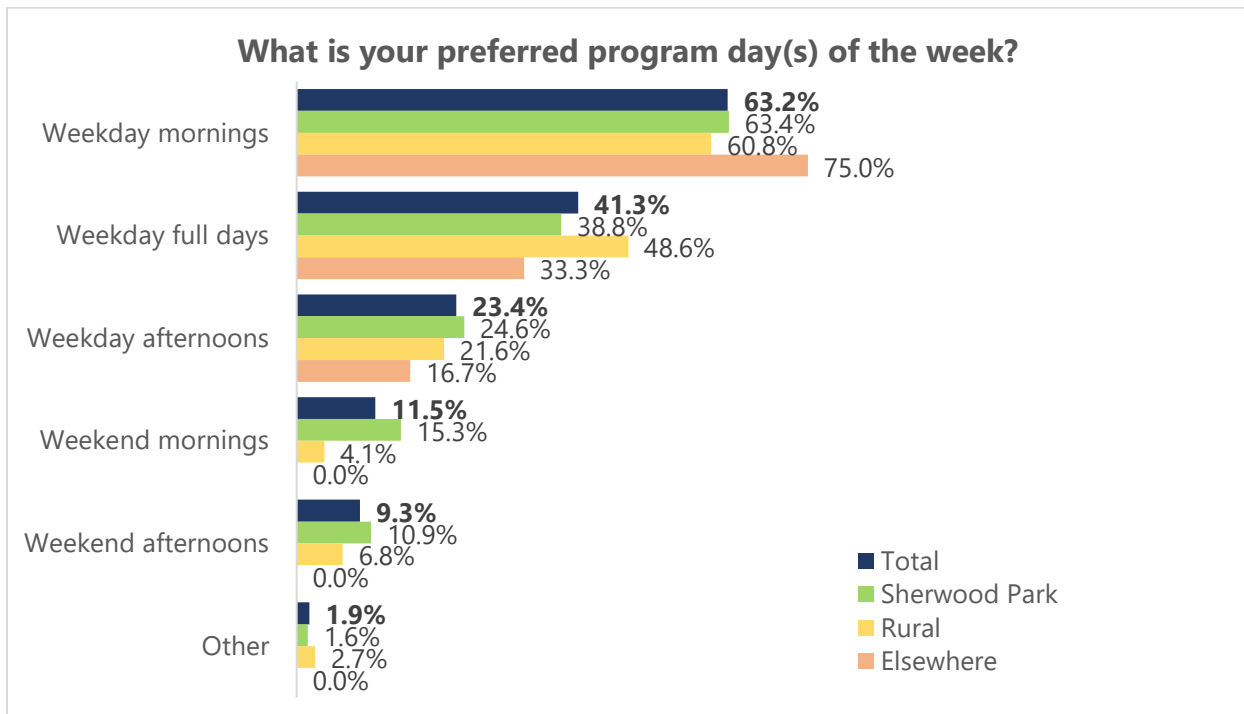


4. Preferred Program Schedule

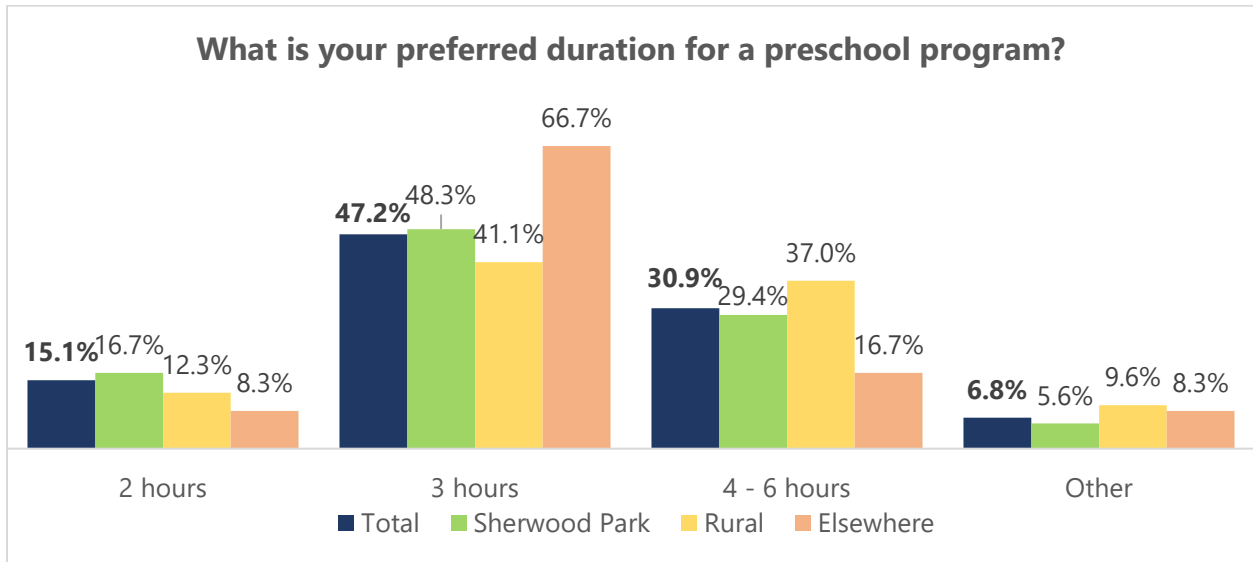
A 2- or 3-day preschool program is most preferred in general (70%), especially for those living outside of Sherwood Park. Five days (16.6%) and one day (10.8%) are the next preference, both being more attractive to Sherwood Park residents.



Weekday mornings is the most preferred program time across regions (63.2%), followed by weekday full days which appeals to rural residents the most. Weekend programs, either in the morning or afternoon, are of low interest, particularly for rural residents.

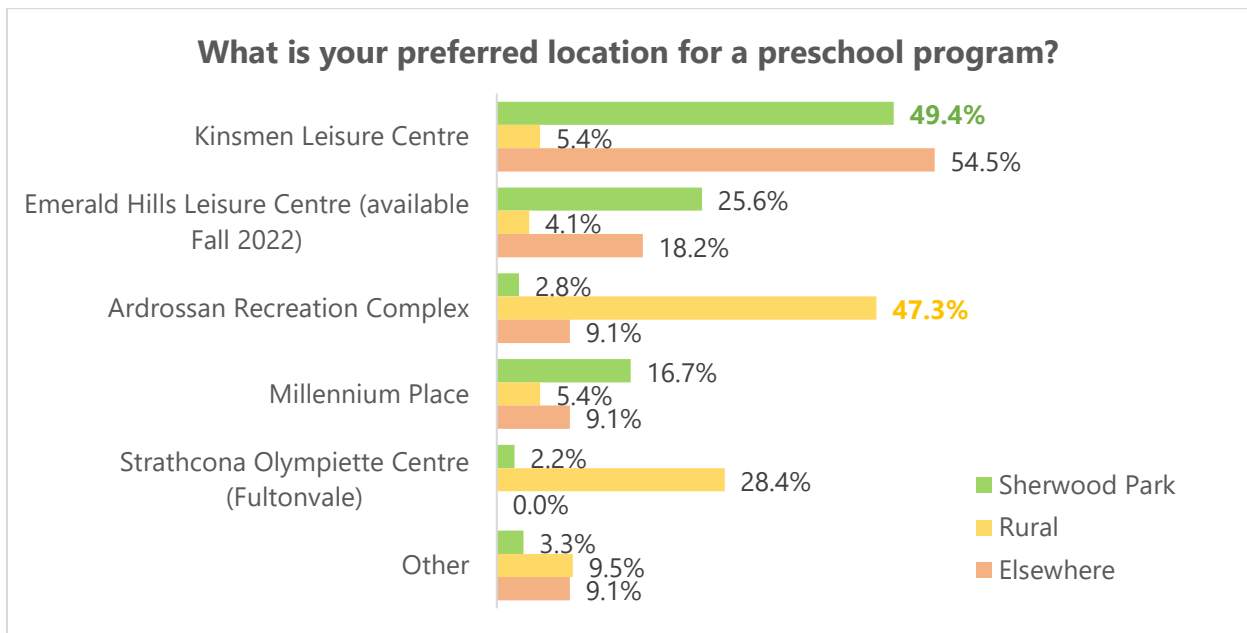


In general, almost half (47.2%) prefer a 3-hour preschool program and three in ten (30.9%) opt for a 4 to 6 hours' schedule. The former is more appealing to non-rural residents while the latter is most favoured by rural residents.



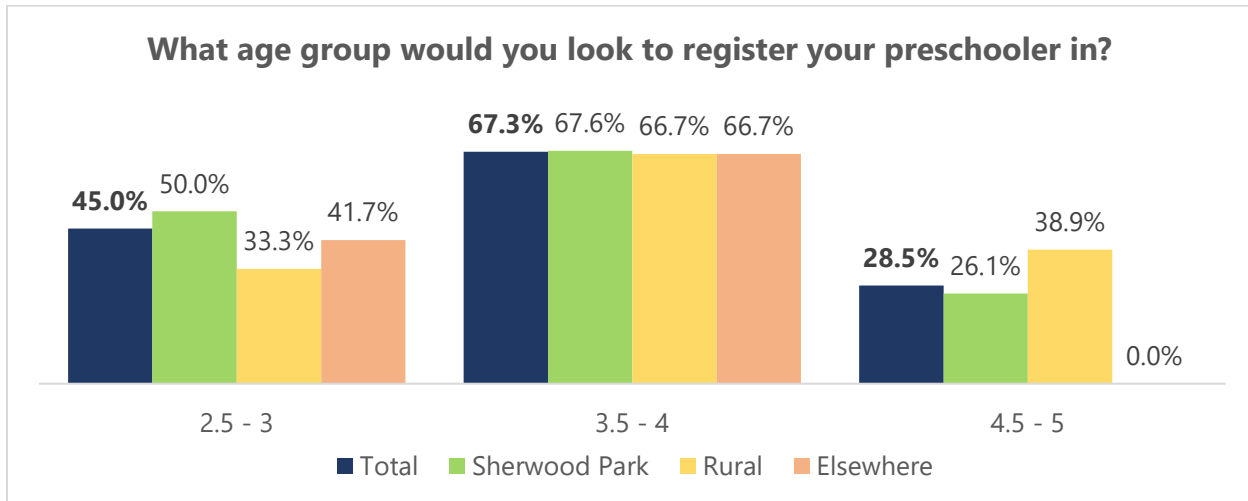
5. Preferred Program Location

Preference on preschool program location varies by region. Kinsmen Leisure Centre is the favourite location for Sherwood Park residents (49.4%), followed by Emerald Hills Leisure Centre (25.6%). Rural residents prefer Ardrossan Recreation Complex the most (47.3%), and Strathcona Olympiette Centre the next (28.4%).



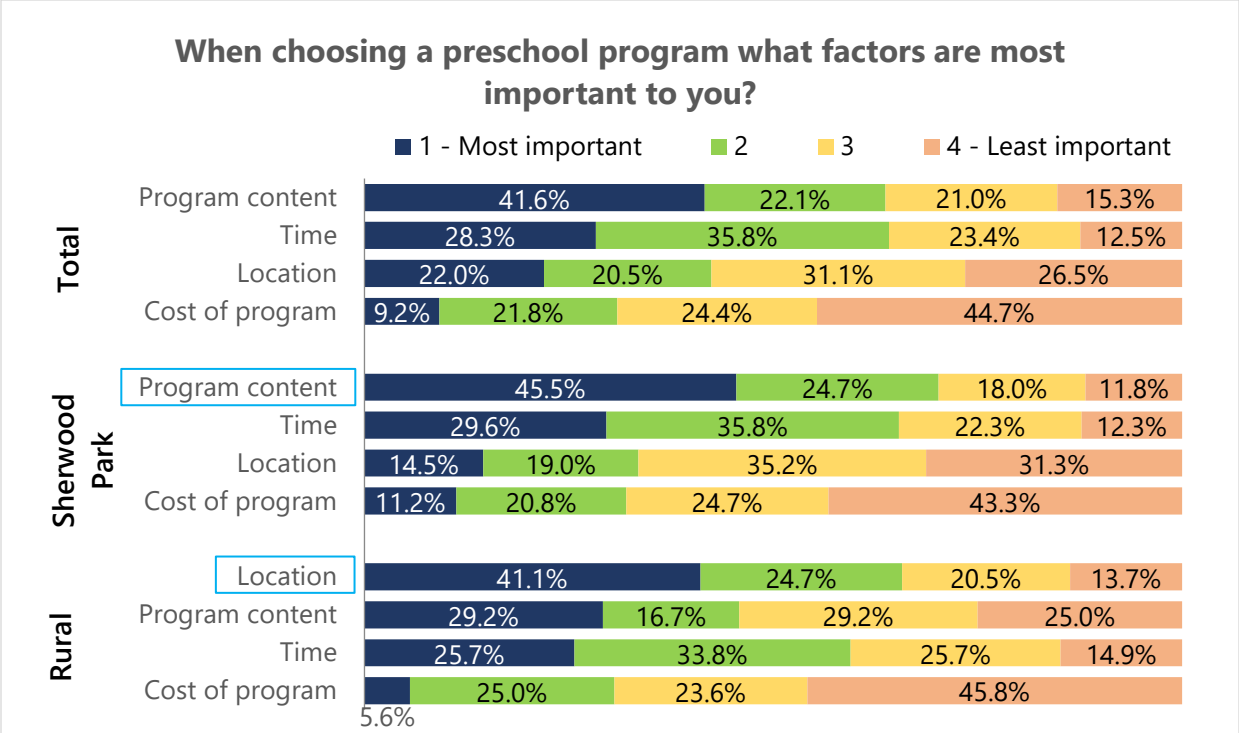
6. Preschool Program Age Group of Interest

Two thirds of respondents (67.3%) across all regions claim they would look to register their preschoolers in the age group of 3.5 to 4 years. One half of Sherwood Park residents also show interest in registering in the age group of 2.5 to 3 years (50.0%). 4.5-5 age group's programs are most interested by rural residents (38.9%).



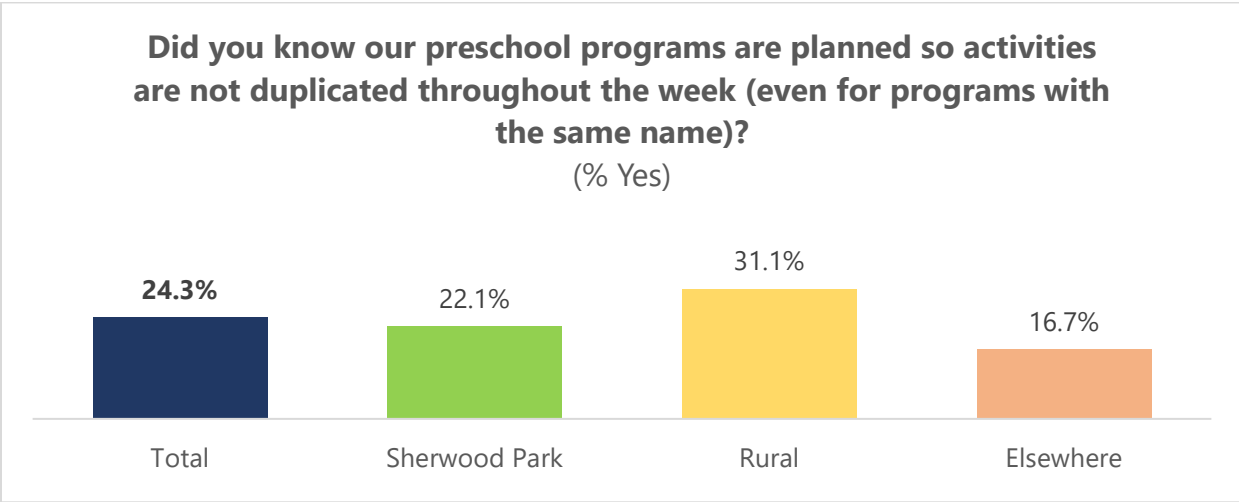
7. Most Important Factor in Choosing a Preschool Program

Residents of Sherwood Park and rural areas have different considerations when choosing a preschool program. Breaking down the most important (1 – most important) ratings, program content (45.5%) and time (29.6%) are most important factors for Sherwood Park residents while location (14.5%) and program cost (11.2%) are less critical. Rural residents prioritize location (41.1%) before program content (29.2%) and time (25.7%). Cost of program is less important for rural residents (5.6%) than those from Sherwood Park.



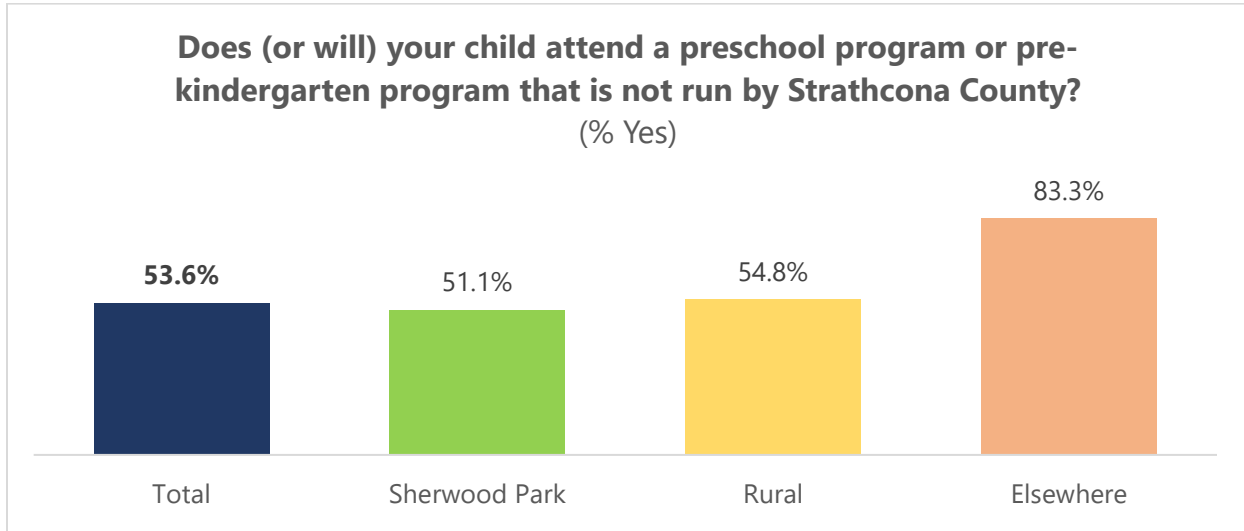
8. Awareness of Strathcona County's Preschool Programs

Overall, less than a quarter (24.3%) know that activities of Strathcona County's preschool programs are not duplicated throughout the week even for programs with the same name. Awareness is a bit higher among rural residents (31.1%).

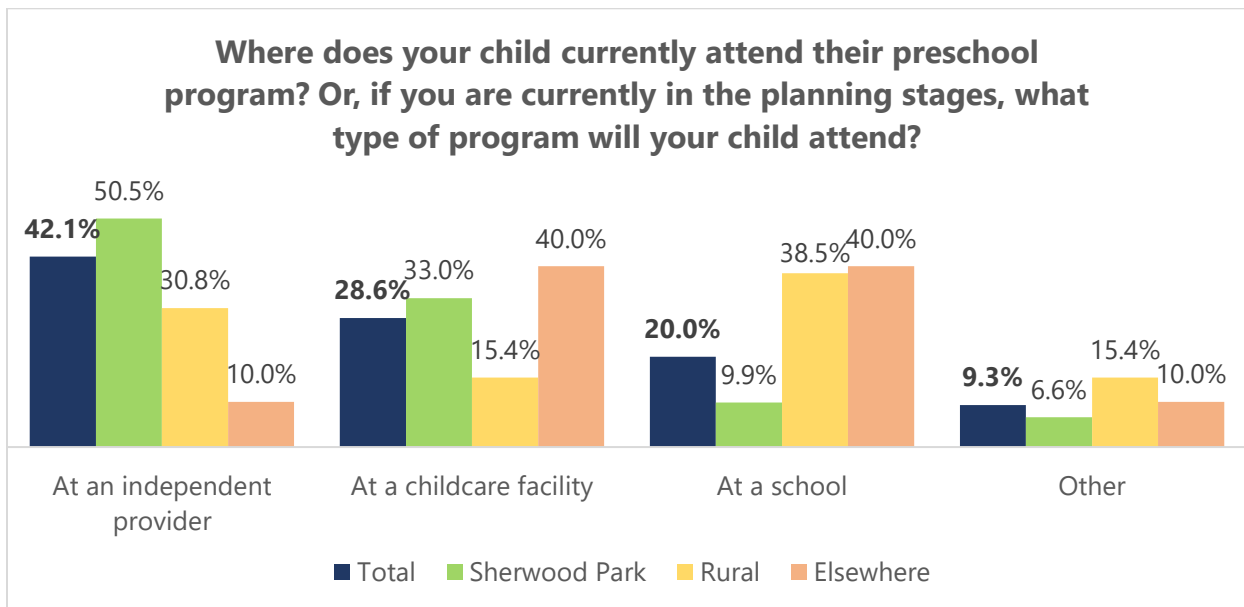


9. Usage of Preschool / Pre-Kindergarten Program not Run by Strathcona County

Overall, more than half (53.6%) report that their child currently attends or will attend a preschool program or pre-kindergarten program not run by Strathcona County. The proportion is highest among those who live in elsewhere (83.3%).



Other than the County's preschool programs, those offered by an independent provider (50.5%) is Sherwood Park residents' most popular choice, followed by those at a childcare facility (33.0%). In addition, quite a few residents of Sherwood mention programs operate by churches. In comparison, preschool programs at schools (38.5%) and independent providers (30.8%) are much more common than childcare facilities (15.4%) in rural areas.



There are various reasons for selecting preschool program not run by Strathcona County. In addition to the important factors in choosing a program – program content, location, time and cost – that mentioned earlier, special programs, program reviews and reputation, quality teachers are commonly cited. Fitting parents’ work schedule is also a top consideration for rural respondents.

Reasons for selecting preschool program not run by Strathcona County
Sherwood Park
Would need it to fit with my work schedule.
Sports oriented, staying active, learning through play
Poor experience with overcrowded daycare
Dance preschool program
Location, year-round consistency (with same teacher and peers for the year). And get to pay by the month.
Great reviews
Love that you have programs that are 3 hours, the very short programs are just difficult for me to get out and do other things. Staff are SO wonderful and kind. I also love the content, my little one always comes home singing and telling me about all the fun activities he did that day.
Early childhood educators leading the programming.
It is a childcare centre that offers preschool, kindergarten, and out of school care options with half and full day program options. Their Montessori approach offers play based learning and outdoor space. Welcoming environment. Had positive interactions and experience at open house which lead to decision. Another preschool our child attended was faith based and at our church.
availability
The staff and programming
It was geared toward active kids and less structured. Very affordable
Accessibility one on one in a pool where there are only 2 children at a time
Gymnastics
French Immersion programming, emotional regulation strategies a very important core value for the program, location
Both parents work full time so needed full time care.
The reputation of the program is exceptional. The main teacher who runs the classes has won a national award.
Cost, location, duration
Covid restrictions and prices
3.5-hour length
I like what the county has to offer but the time / duration of the program limits me from registering
Programming
Highly recommended, close to home
Francophone education
pALS for speech therapy assistance
Days of the week, cost and location.
It runs all through the year, sept-June
Specialized programs
Availability and schedule. Continuation of current care
Location, availability

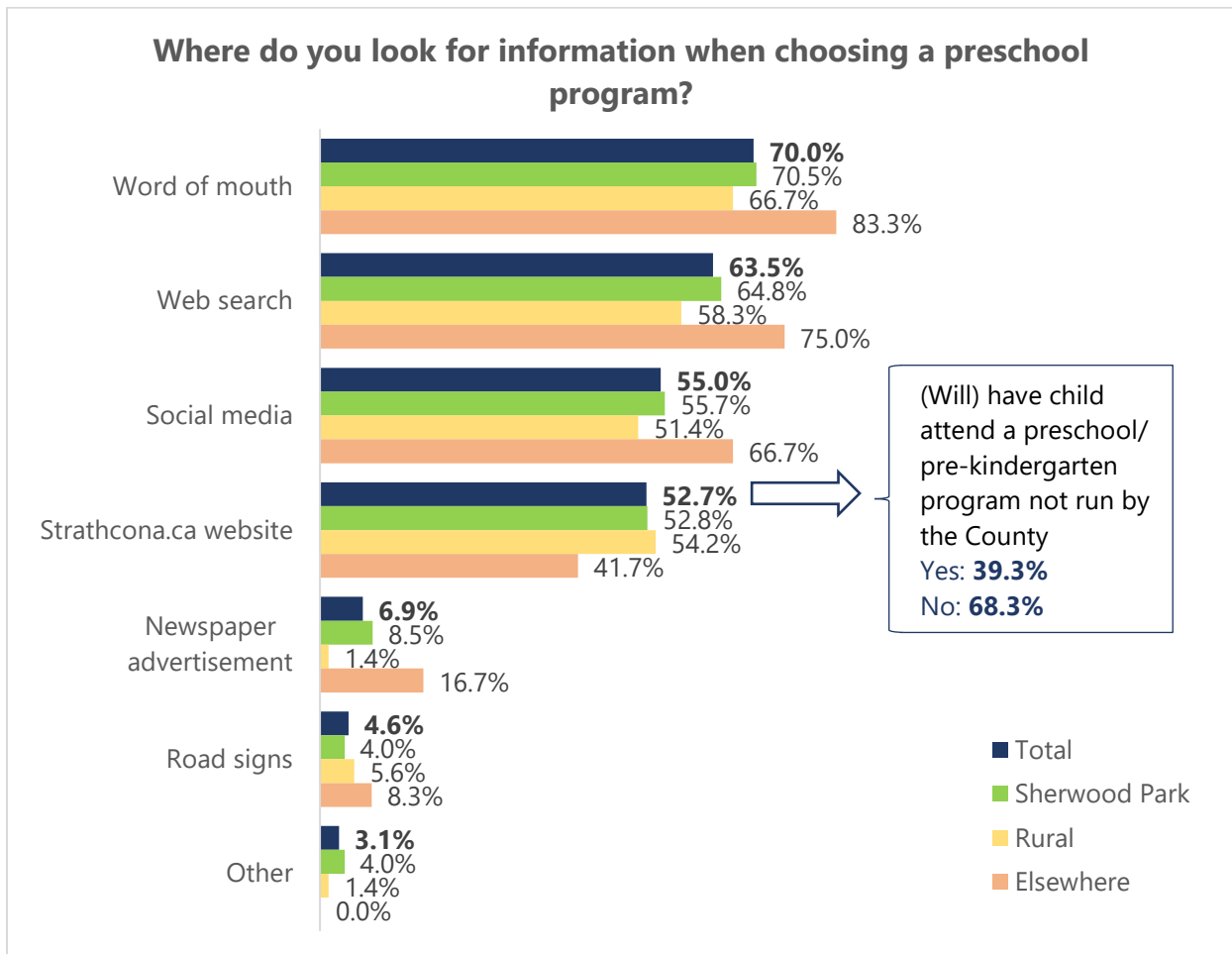
Schedule
High level of recognition provincially for the instructor
Matches my work hours and has high standards for the learning and great food provided to kids
Cost
PUF funding for speech delay
Programming, masks not required, outdoor programming, cost
Good recommendations for active kids academy. Big focus on play and movement. Got to do a meet and greet with the teachers before registering
Had a good program, provided meals, open early enough to accommodate variable work schedule, and close proximity to house (walkable).
Exceptional approach, experiential learning, student-centered, creative, blend of structure & unstructured work
French
Location and cost and availability
Other parent recommendations.
Location and teaching philosophy
Time, location and cost
Reputation
Socialization and education components
Good reviews
Focus
Flexibility
Price and full-time availability
Our child goes there for daycare and will be able to stay in the same building all day
First child, first place we met with, they accepted subsidies
Physical activity component
Word of mouth, reputation
Was already at the daycare
Availability and faith
We go to the church and they are very close to our house
Combined literacy program in a classroom and physical activity program with access to a gym, including outdoor activities.
Recommended to me
availability and timing; I can't take off at 3 or 12 to pick up my kid.
teachers and the content of the program
It was close to my Dayhome. Financing available.
Program content, ratio of teachers to students, location
High quality teachers
The program offered by the provider.
They introduce a different language to prepare my child for immersion program
Rural
My child is interested in dancing, music and art. This program also suited our schedule.
Location, rural Strathcona county is really missing the Olympiette center option. I would have registered my child for it if it had a variety of times/options available as I do not love the full day option for a preschool program we will currently have to register in
Location
Location and referred by a friend

Recommendations from other community members
Ease - he's already at the daycare so I don't need to drive him to and from.
Completely outside up to-20 (then inside), emergent activity planning, encourages independence and creativity
Special program based on child's needs
Christ based.
The hours mean she can learn while I am at work.
Location and that it is already integrated into a school. Will make my child more comfortable starting kindergarten
Close to home. Same school he'll go to kindergarten, so he gets familiarity early
Availability. Referred by a teacher friend. Transparency in following covid protocols and cleanliness protocols. Proof of vaccine required for adults in the building. Location and time preferred.
Close location to my home
Qualification of teachers (all of them are specialists such as occupational, speech pathologist, teacher with degree), ratio is teacher and kids, provided healthy snack, no volunteer, no fundraising
Parent recommendations on the program, 5 days a week availability, location.
This program offered speech support for my child/children.
I was able to Make it work with my work schedule as my day home takes her to the preschool and picks her up.
Pals program for speech delays
Option of full day care in rural Strathcona county
Time - it was the most consistent hours - 3 mornings per week. Location - rural close to home
Speech development specialist
Reputation of the program
Special programming and supports
Teacher has won provincial award as well as national teaching awards
Because it is included in their day care program. I cannot take time off work to shuttle my kids around between programs during the workday.
It is full day and is on the non-kindergarten days, therefore by combining it with kindergarten, we get full childcare most weeks.
Early learning - EIPS funding (speech therapy)
Christian program content with teachers we trust and know.
Elsewhere
There were no programs available where we live
Full time childcare required to work.
I like that it can be one, two or three days a week and that the day is 3 hours. Starting at 9 allows enough time for drop off at school for my older child and less rush to get to preschool on time.
German Bilingual
No extra pickups and drop offs.

10. Preschool Program Information Sources

Word of mouth (70.0%) and web search (63.5%) are residents' primary information sources of preschool programs, especially for those living in Sherwood Park. Over half rely on social media (55.0%) and Strathcona.ca website (52.7%). Strathcona.ca website is much less used by respondents whose child attends or will attend a preschool/ pre-kindergarten program that is

not run by the County, suggesting opportunities in increasing Strathcona County's preschool program signup by improving website awareness and information relevance. Social media might be another beneficial channel to communicate preschool program information.



Appendix

a. What do you value most in a preschool program?

Other
Sherwood Park
Fun- crafts and music
It would be nice to have some options for preschool on Fridays. That's my day off work and would love to take my son to some activities
The most important preschool piece for us as parents, is how attuned the adults are. Social skills are wonderful, but I would like my little one to have a good relationship with another adult.
Affordable childcare option that is offered in a safe environment. Opportunity to experience the indoor playgrounds/play spaces.
Getting my child into the routine of school like packing lunch and snacks packing backpack.
I only say outdoor time as last because I have my little in BGC nature school so he gets lots of outdoor time as well, this is very important to me!!
Montessori based. Play based learning. Nature, outdoor learning. Loose parts play. Teach children about social emotional skills, the environment, cultures, and diversity.
More options for three-year old's.
Not having any COVID restrictions, i.e., useless masking, social distancing, fearmongering, etc. which is severely impacting our children's development and mental health.
Music and performing arts.
Assuming 1 is most important the 5 is least important. Your survey was not clear.
Scale wasn't clear. I did: Most important - 5 Least important - 1
Since it's preschool, I value the introduction of structure and social expectations to listen to a task the instructor gives, then the ability to follow it through. The introduction of organized learning.
Working with and encouraging others, not competing against. Sharing ideas, projects, Becoming community. Non-competitive environment
Imagination games.
New experiences, introducing new activities that may be of long-term interest
Helping with special needs kids and learning inclusion
Access/recognize speech and physical delays, get PUF funding, confirm that my child is normal? (Or do I think talking like a hillbilly, lisping, hitting, biting is ok at age 3?)
Musical education
Rural
The development of communication skills is also critical. More and more in this age group, children are lacking the ability to both understand and use language to communicate with people in their environment.
never tv. WE have all the tv time at home that a child could possibly watch.
Early detection of learning disabilities such as speech assessments
Life skill - clean up, preparation, lean to organize, respect others, manners, music/rhythmic movement
It was great when SOC had a preschool/preK program there.
Other than swimming and baby laptime, there really isn't any programming available for preschool students and younger. Also, there's only two classes for parents and their young child to exercise together. It would be nice to see the selection expanded.
I am assuming 1 is most important and 5 least. But, I am not sure.
Music
Second (or third, etc.) language acquisition

Elsewhere

As a preschool teacher I value a "learn through play" approach as the basis of a great program

b. What is your preferred program day(s) of the week?

Other

Sherwood Park

Weekend all day

I need to work fulltime so half days is difficult.

Morning or afternoon. Need a combination

Rural

weekday full days on a similar schedule to daycares, allowing parents to work an 8-hour day around drop off/pick up

c. What is your preferred duration for a preschool program?

Other

Sherwood Park

All day 8-10 hours

I need to work fulltime so would need full days as 1/2 days is difficult due to requiring childcare, someone to pick up/drop off.

6-8 hrs

4

4 hours

Rural

full day, similar to daycare so parents can work

6-8 hours

d. What is your preferred location for a preschool program?

Other

Sherwood Park

Glen Allen Rec

Currently at a daycare/ preschool but find it is not person centered **i.e.** My child at 3 1/2 does not want to nap so is keeping others awake, wanting to play, **etc.** and apparently this is a problem as staff **can't** have their **lunch because** she is up.

East Urban Sherwood Park

Rural

rural locations - perhaps community halls

Fort Saskatchewan

Would do private preschool

Day Care

Uncasv

e. When choosing a preschool program what factors are most important to you?

Other
Sherwood Park
I would love to send my daughter to preschool but I work full time so I don't think it's possible
The philosophies, style of programming, qualifications of educators are most important. Nowadays, additional health and safety measures and open dialogue about procedures and protocols are equally important. Cost and timing are an additional consideration as well as the style of the environment " is it welcoming? Is there natural light? Will children spend time outdoors? Will children learn through play or is the program academic focused? Will there be screen time or not (we'd prefer the latter)? Will there be masking and smaller class sizes (we'd prefer yes)?
That they do not force masks on children and recognize that children to develop social, emotional and language skills need to see their caretakers face too.
Again, scale isn't clear but to be consistent: Most importance - 4 Least importance - 1
I would like to see programs for kids in kindergarten where there is a class for kindergarteners that offsets their school days
Masks not required
It would be nice for working parents if at least one drop off/pick up could be done on 'lunch break' 12-1:00
Ability to transport from daycare
Please exclude my responses, when I clicked on taking the survey I thought I would have the option to specify that I am not in the target response group.
How inclusive the program is and the skills of the teachers.
Opportunities for parents to volunteer; whether other siblings can come along as needed (e.g. on field trips, when parent volunteering)
My child feels happy there
Rural
Outside play is critical
It is also important to me that the qualifications of staff include a well rounded profile of education, experience, excellent communication skills, and current knowledge of development and childhood research.
Worker (qualification)
I assume cost is most important, so i chose a 1. Again, I am not sure.
Combo of location/time - rural residents face long commutes and often have to sit and wait at programs because there's no time to go home.
Qualification of preschool teachers
Uncas
Elsewhere
A preschool program near Lakeland ridge would meet the needs of many children in that area

f. Where does your child currently attend their preschool program? Or, if you are currently in the planning stages, what type of program will your child attend?

Other
Sherwood Park
At home
Drealee

At a church
Church
Church
Treehouse
Rural
Boys and Girls Club Rewild Program
Christian based one
Dance studio
planning stages.
At a church
Church
Church
Elsewhere
DKK

g. Where do you look for information when choosing a preschool program?

Other
Sherwood Park
Old school calling around
Personal contacts
Rec guide
Sherwood Park Moms Group
Government websites
Experience
Rural
School flyer

h. Do you have additional comments about Strathcona County preschool programs?

Sherwood Park
I'm not very familiar with county programs. I hear more about private facilities.
Please bring back your old preschool programming. I have 1 older child who did it all and we loved it. 1 middle child who has now missed out on everything for the last 2 years. And 1 youngest who will be missing out if these programs don't start again. We will be forced into booking into a private preschool. We absolutely loved Tots on the go, Preschool clay class on Wednesday's, Stem science class, and Cooking class. My oldest got such a wide variety of classes that let him experience everything from art to science and food. What a wonderful experience. It all started because we went to tots on the go and learned how much fun stuff the county offered. It's so beyond disappointing that none of these classes are offered anymore. My youngest is going to be too old for tots on the go soon. And it's one of the hardest parts of the pandemic. How everything has been taken away from these toddlers. They have no experiences available to them, why? We need programming during the weekdays, as now with older kids our weekends are filled with sports
The option to pay monthly instead of the entire amount up front would be much appreciated. It's hard to be able to afford one large payment at the beginning.
Don't make the kids wear masks- it's bad hygiene and don't protect them as they don't know how to wear them

It's hard to find programs for my three-year-old as they are expected to be "fully potty trained". I know very few three-year-old who fit that mold. My three-year-old is currently potty training but still needs support
HOW is SC going to address \$10/day daycare?
Thank you, teachers for being punctual, patient, and thorough.
I love your programs. Also love your break camps throughout the year. As my child gets older, I imagine I will enroll him in a full day pre-k
My son is currently attending a preschool program at Millennium. I am not sure how it's going besides the comments my child provides, given he is only 2.5, his feedback is limited. I would be interested in what activities take place during his time there and how he is doing? Does he socialize? Do the other children? ETC.
More information about the program and what a day would look like for the child attending, covid protocols.
Again, the ineffective COVID mandates need to end. They are causing a way more harm than good, especially in children.
Would be nice to receive newsletters on programs available?
I would like to have my kids in the program but need it to compliment my working schedule of 8 hr days
They are extremely limited. I worked full time & the preschool program schedule never worked with my work schedule. My child was not able to attend preschool since there were 0 Programs on the weekends.
I would send my kid to a preschool program, even once/week, IF it was full time. Unfortunately, preschool is very much geared for non-working parents.
What had happened to all your programming?? I get covid but 2 years later you still haven't brought anything back. My youngest is quickly getting too old and I have been watching your rec guides for the last year and have been sadly disappointed every session. I would love to do some parented programs with them like I did with my older children. You have cancelled everything except lil motzarts. Sadly, the one I looked forward to most with my oldest "tots on the go" hasn't ran at all Pretty soon my youngest will be too old and will have missed out on that opportunity. You're losing an entire generation of preschoolers because you aren't engaging them or their parents. We have to find independent programs, and that means you'll lose those kids for preschool too. Looking at your site, again none of the fun programs are running. No little chefs, no stem science class, no clay tots. All the classes my oldest loved and thrived in are gone. We loved picking 3 random classes each week to fill our preschool schedule with well-rounded experiences. I'm going to be quite upset if you choose to never bring these back. And sadly, from what I see in this survey, it only looks like you're interested in outdoor programs. Not exactly fun for a 3-year-old at -30. They need a wide variety of experiences, but just being bundled in layers and trying to do fine motor skills through giant mitts. Bring back what you used to do! We loved it
Teacher Chelsea has been amazing so far. My little one loves the program and is doing so well in such a short amount of time. Ideally would love to be able to send them 2x/week instead of just one day/week
I can't recall what time my first child started preschool, but with my second child I'm worried about having enough time to get them there after doing regular school drop off for my first.
Doesn't seem to be enough programs and none on weekends
We are so grateful that you've continues to do these classes. Our children (three kids) have each enjoyed and valued the energy and learning from your programs!
I wish the full day programs were longer than 6 hours to accommodate working parents better
We've had 2 children in the programs, the teachers and space are fantastic.

My child attends daycare during the week so only weekend programs would work
bring back Tots on the Go
These don't work well for the working parent. I can't leave work to move my child from the childcare that matches my work hours to your program and back again. I also don't want to pay for two programs, since your programs don't cover my full workday.
Not really aware of many county run ones. I'd say in that regard they are poorly advertised.
I wish the workers would be more outgoing with the parents. At the start it's hard to feel they are safe, if the instructors aren't outgoing/talking with the parents/kids
1) I did not know there were SC run pre-school programs until I completed this survey. 2) My children attend full time daycare. I didn't really see anything in the survey to indicate a selection for this as I think it might skew your results. I definitely think that pre-school programs are important and valuable for the students & community - but due to my children already being in a full-time childcare program - I don't intend to send them to preschool.
I think they are fantastic and am so grateful that they are available!
no
Rural
3 hours is not long enough for rural residents. Spend more time driving
Would love to see classes run out at the Ardrossan rec center!
I do not like the masking requirements for pre-school participants in Strathcona facilities
No
In the rural setting, Ardrossan or SOC it would be nice to have different days available, in the past it was only on Wednesdays, so I had to find alternative programming as that day didn't work for my family. Only Wednesday was offered session after session for the whole year. I understand it works for some families but not all.
Parent information about what is happening in preschool needs to increase (from when my daughter was in a preschool program in 2019-2020).
Preschool programs are difficult for working parents. Without a full day option, the drop off and pick up times do not work well with a workday. The only way my child is able to attend is due to maternity leave with younger siblings.
Would like a preschool program that teaches French to prepare kids for French immersion kindergarten.
teachers are busy chatting instead of taking care of kids.
Please consider Programs in rural areas. Thank you
Please do not add more programs that are 3 hours in length. There are tons of those options available in the community. For the bulk of working families these have limited value. Zero value if you have no family to help with transportation.
It is hard for working parents to put their kids in preschool. Many people work 8-430 so cannot accommodate a 9-1130 or 9-2 schedule for preschool.
More nature based and more consistent hours
I know my child will most likely be unable to attend this program because both parents in our household work full time. I think if the county is using public resources for a program like this, it should be available to all. I would love if the county could offer daycare, or partner with daycares, to support these kids. Currently, preschool seems like an option only available to those families privileged to have one parent at home or working part time.
I would have loved for my children to have a SC program as an option, but limiting these to weekdays makes it so children with working parents cannot participate. Creativity needs looked at - we're not all stay at home moms.

There NEED to be more options for rural residents other than Ardrossan & Fultonvale. The county goes all the way to TWP 510 south and RgeRd 202 east, and all those residents face long commutes to get to places like emerald hills/millennium/kinsman - all north and central Sherwood Park.

Our child went to the preschool at the SOC - it was a wonderful program and setting and I hope it continues to be funded.

Elsewhere

Will they be included in the new subsidies?

Currently attending music class with Chelsea/Chelsey. This is our first class and so far it's been great. It's been tricky because not a lot of classes have been open due to Covid.

The Library programs are wonderful for preschoolers