

EARLYON SERVICE DELIVERY REVIEW PARENT AND CAREGIVER SURVEY

York Region Findings Report – 2021

November 2022

INTRODUCTION

From July 14 to August 22, 2021, The Regional Municipality of York (York Region) conducted an EarlyON Service Delivery Review Parent and Caregiver Survey to help meet the needs of families with young children when planning EarlyON programs in York Region during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of the survey was to:

- Determine how a virtual method of service delivery is working for families
- Determine how the variety of service delivery methods are working for families
- Identify platforms that work best for virtual service delivery, such as Zoom, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram

The findings of this survey will inform service system delivery and strategies to raise awareness of EarlyON Child and Family Programs in York Region.

As the Service System Manager of EarlyON Child and Family programs, York Region must ensure programs and services are responsive to the needs of local communities and promote inclusion of all families. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way programming is delivered and created additional opportunities for flexible service delivery methods. Different service delivery methods will support the ongoing needs of families and stakeholders, as well as recovery and renewal planning post-pandemic.

The data collected through this survey will inform service planners how virtual service delivery is working for families, the level of participation in EarlyON Child and Family Programs during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as parent/caregiver preferences of service delivery methods.

It will also assist service planners at York Region to better understand the level of awareness of EarlyON Child and Family programs among families in York Region.

The survey was jointly administered by the York Region EarlyON team, Social Services Branch, and Strategies and Partnerships Branch, Community and Health Services Department.



DEFINITIONS

Infant – Zero to 12 months

Toddler – 12 to 24 months

Preschooler – 24 months to 3.5 years

Kindergartener – 3.5 years to six years

METHODOLOGY

The survey was administered from July 14, 2021 to August 22, 2021, through SurveyMonkey, targeting parents and caregivers of children prenatal to six years of age who:

- Currently attend EarlyON Child and Family Programs
- Have attended EarlyON Child and Family Programs in the past, but not currently; and
- Have never attended EarlyON Child and Family Programs

Families in York Region were invited to participate in the survey through the Region's various communication channels:

- York Region EarlyON webpage: york.ca/EarlyON
- Social media, organic (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram Stories) and paid posts (Facebook)
- Community Investment Funds eblast, sent on July 21, 2021
- Emails to EarlyON agencies from the York Region EarlyON team

Participants provided informed consent prior to survey data collection.

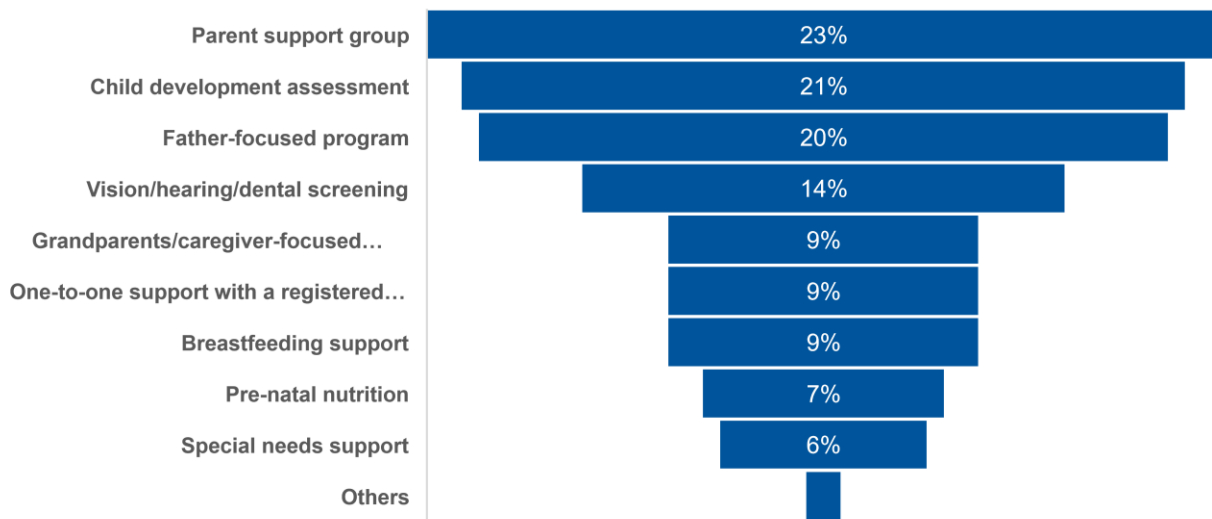
FINDINGS

Key findings from the 230 individuals who completed the survey

Preferred programs

- Programs of most interest were: Age group-focused programs (51%), learning activities for parents and children to do together (49%), and early literacy/story time (47%). Families have also expressed interest in attending other programs, such as understanding my child's development (34%), parenting skills program (30%), and speech and language (27%)
- 11% indicated that they were expecting a child, 24% indicated that they currently care for an infant up to 12 months of age, and 23% care for a toddler under the age of two
- Out of all respondents, most (54%) were interested in four-season outdoor programming

Additional programs families preferred in EarlyON Child and Family Centres



Location preference for outdoor programs

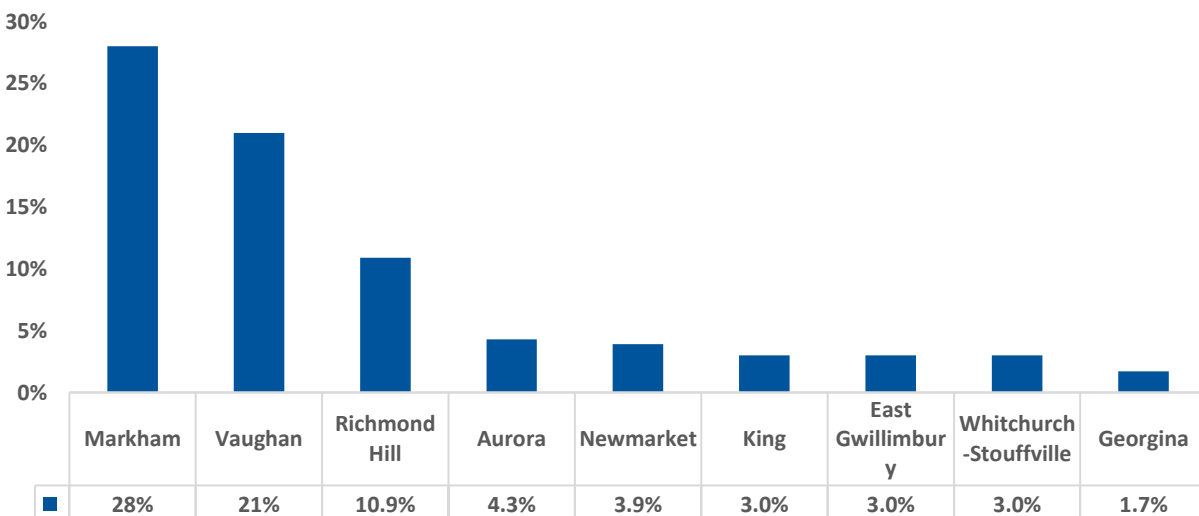
- Respondents indicated that they prefer to attend programs in local parks (51%), followed by trails (43%), and forests (37%)

Families with children of different age groups

- Most respondents indicated they cared for both infants (zero to 12 months) and kindergarteners (10%) as well as both infants and preschoolers (9%)

Location of respondents

- When analyzing where respondents reside, most live in Markham (64 or 28%) and Vaughan (49 or 21%). Most grandparents who take children to EarlyON programs live in Markham (18 or 38%).



Preferred languages

- Most popular language requests across all municipalities were for French, Mandarin, Cantonese and Italian programming options.

Who is or who would be taking child(ren) to the programs

- Most respondents indicated that parents (75%) would be taking their child to programs, followed by grandparents (21%).

Participation in EarlyON Child and Family Programs

- 35% of respondents indicated that they currently participate in EarlyON programs; 34% indicated that they have participated in the past, but not currently; 10% of respondents indicated that they have never participated

What worked well for families so far

- Across those who previously participated (n=78), 65% indicated that the inclusive and welcoming environment of the program works well at their EarlyON Child and Family Centre, followed by 56% saying that the programs were relevant to their child's needs, and 49% who indicated that it was the easy-to-get to location of the program that works well

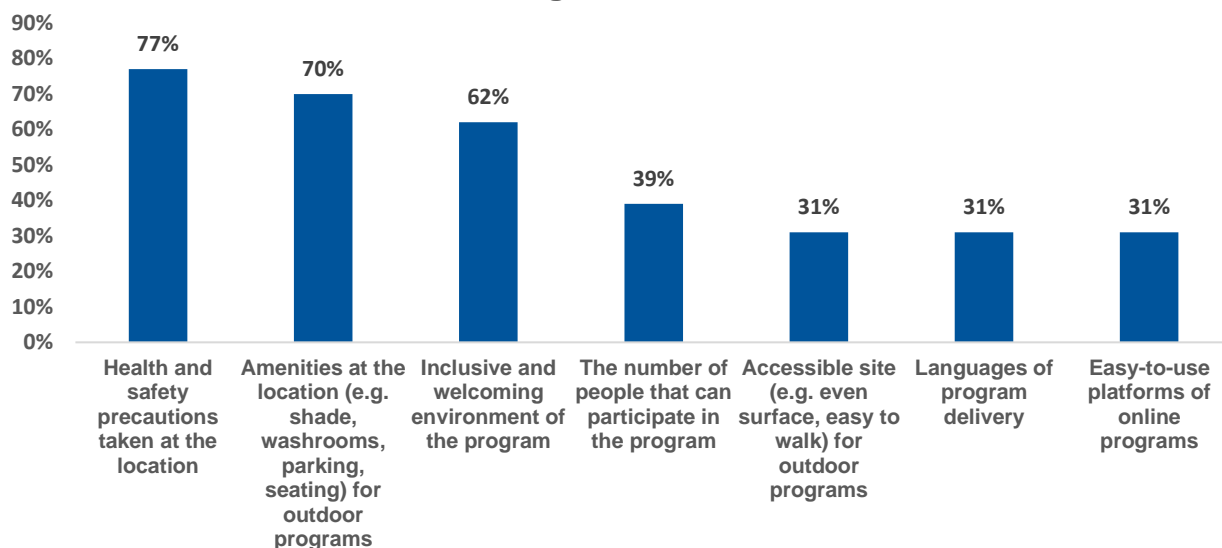
What is currently working well for families

- Across those who currently participate (n=81), 63% indicated that the relevancy of the program to their child's needs works well at their EarlyON Child and Family Centre, followed by 62% saying that the easy-to-use platforms of online programs work well, and 54% who indicated that it was the inclusive and welcoming environment of the program that works well

What factors help you decide if a program is right for you and your child

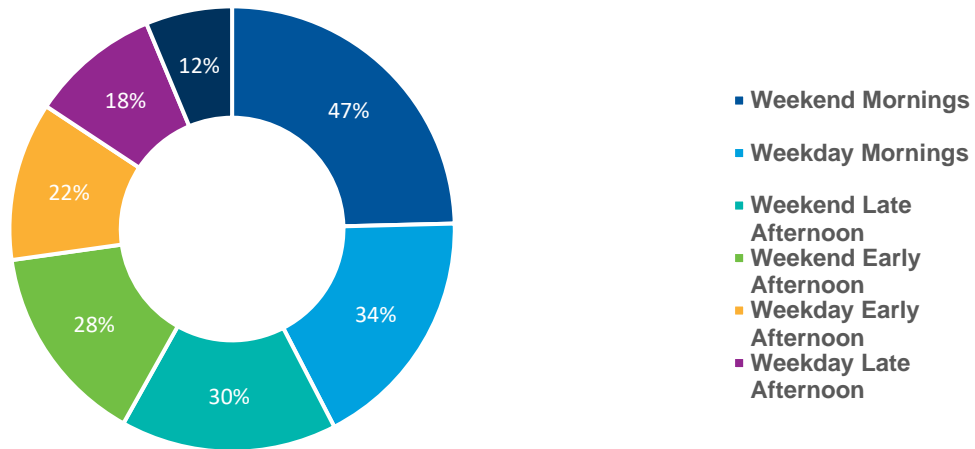
- Respondents consider flexibility of hours (85%), easy-to-get-to location (85%) and relevancy of the program to their child's needs (85%) to decide if a program is right for their child

Additional factors families consider to decide if a program is right for their child



Preferred times

- 34% of respondents indicated that they preferred weekdays mornings and 22% indicated they preferred an early afternoon time slot
- On the weekend, 26% and 20% of respondents indicated that they preferred Saturday and Sunday morning time slots, respectively

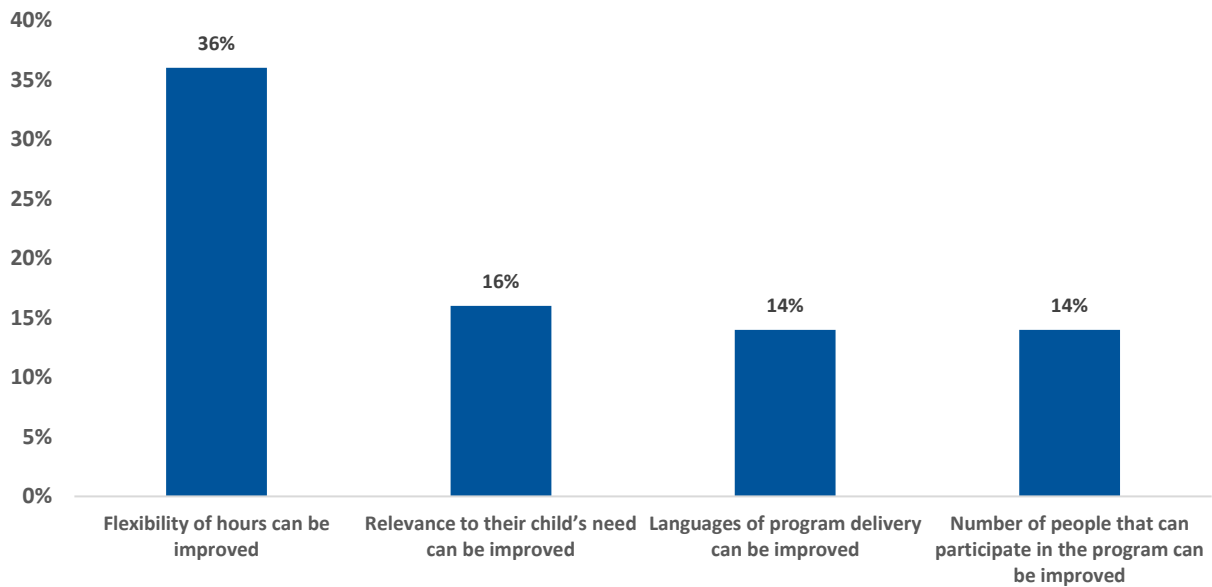


Virtual delivery methods

- Most respondents (52%) indicated that they would prefer in-person outdoor programming, followed by in-person indoor (44%) and live virtual programming (25%)
- The highest proportion of respondents (47%) indicated that Zoom is their preferred platform for virtual programming, followed by YouTube (15%), Facebook (10%), and Google Classroom (9%)

How programs can be improved

- In terms of how programs can be improved for those currently attending EarlyON programs, respondents indicated that:



- As 10% of respondents indicated that they have never participated in an EarlyON program because they were not aware of the programs offered, it will be critical to continue to promote EarlyON programs and services, and offer a range of service delivery methods to support families and local communities in York Region

ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE

Based on survey results and feedback received

- EarlyON agencies have enhanced year-round outdoor programming by implementing the “Walking together through the Four Seasons” training sessions with educators, in partnership with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- EarlyON agencies provide a variety of service delivery options including indoor/outdoor and virtual programming

NEXT STEPS

Moving forward

- We will use the survey results to inform future service planning and work with EarlyON agencies to determine how actions will be prioritized and addressed accordingly, based on need, location and support required. Some of the action items to consider include:
- Age-specific programming, programming offered in different languages, continue to offer year-round outdoor programming, and ensure families with young children and expecting parents are connected to the right services and programs in their local communities
- To ensure families with young children and expectant parents are connected to the right services and programs, in the fall of 2022, families and caregivers will see increased programming from our Public Health partners, including the Brain Story agency refresher and parent and caregiver sessions. The Brain Story describes how experiences shape our brains.

As such, it is also a story about human relationships, because we depend on those around us for the experiences that build our brain architecture.

York Region EarlyON will report the findings of this survey to EarlyON agencies and families in York Region.