

knowing u numbers

A community approach to understanding
the early childhood education workforce



United Counties of Prescott and Russell





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The regional data presented here are part of the larger provincial early childhood education workforce study **Knowing Our Numbers** (KON). The United Counties of Prescott and Russell is one of 43 regional children’s service districts that participated in the study. In total, this represents over 91% of all regions in Ontario. Details on the project, methodology, and province-wide results can be found [here](#). In the **Executive Report**, the counties are part of the ‘East’ data region. Census data provided on the following page allow readers to put the results into the context of regional demographics.

This report should be cited as:

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United Counties of Prescott and Russell

Population and Family

Population		Average number of children per family	1.8
2021	95,639		
2016	89,333	One-parent families	13.1%
<i>Change since 2016:</i>	<i>+7.10%</i>		
Population density per sq km	47.7	Lone-parent families	
		Women	9.5%
Median age	44.8 years	Men	3.6%
Racialized population	5.2%	Marital status	
		Married or living common-law	63.7%
Multi-generational households	2.3%	Not married or living common-law	36.3%
		Married or common-law with children	39.7%
Immigrant population	5.7%	Language most often spoken at home	
		English	42.7%
Indigenous identity	4.4%	French	51.4%
		Other	1.3%
Education		<i>*Estimates associated with Indigenous languages are more affected than most by the incomplete enumeration of certain reserves and settlements in the Census of Population.</i>	
No certificate, diploma, or degree	16.9%	Home ownership	
High school diploma or equivalent	30.4%	Owner	77.3%
Post secondary certificate, diploma or degree	52.8%	Renter	22.7%
<i>*15+ years old</i>		Spending more than 30% on shelter costs	14.9%
Education obtained outside Canada	3.1%		
<i>*25-64 years old</i>			

Employment and Income

Labour force participation rate		Commuting duration (mins)	Total %	% Men	% Women
Women	60.7%	Less than 15	29.1	25.1	34.3
Men	68.2%	15 to 29	22.7	22.2	23.4
Unemployment rate		30 to 44	27.6	29.1	25.7
Women	7.3%	45 to 59	12.4	13.7	10.6
Men	5.9%	60 minutes and over	8.2	9.8	6.1
Prevalence of low income (LIM)		Income distribution	Total %	% Men	% Women
0-17	7.0%	In bottom half of the distribution	41.1	40.1	42.1
0-5	7.5%	In bottom decile	6.5	6.3	6.7
18-64	6.4%	In second decile	7.8	7.4	8.2
<i>*LIM: Low Income Measure reflects those whose incomes are below half of the median of the adjusted income distribution</i>		In third decile	8.4	8.2	8.6
Median employment income	\$44,800	In fourth decile	8.7	8.6	8.8
		In fifth decile	9.7	9.7	9.8
Median employment income in 2020 for full-year full-time workers	\$67,000	In top half of the distribution	58.9	59.9	57.9
		In sixth decile	10.8	10.8	10.7
Median total income of household in 2020	\$95,000	In seventh decile	11.7	11.7	11.6
		In eighth decile	12.9	13.2	12.5
Median after-tax income of household in 2020	\$83,000	In ninth decile	13.8	14.1	13.5
		In top decile	9.8	10.1	9.6

Reference: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Prescott%20and%20Russell&DGUIDlist=2021A00033502&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&HEADERlist=0>

Sample Characteristics

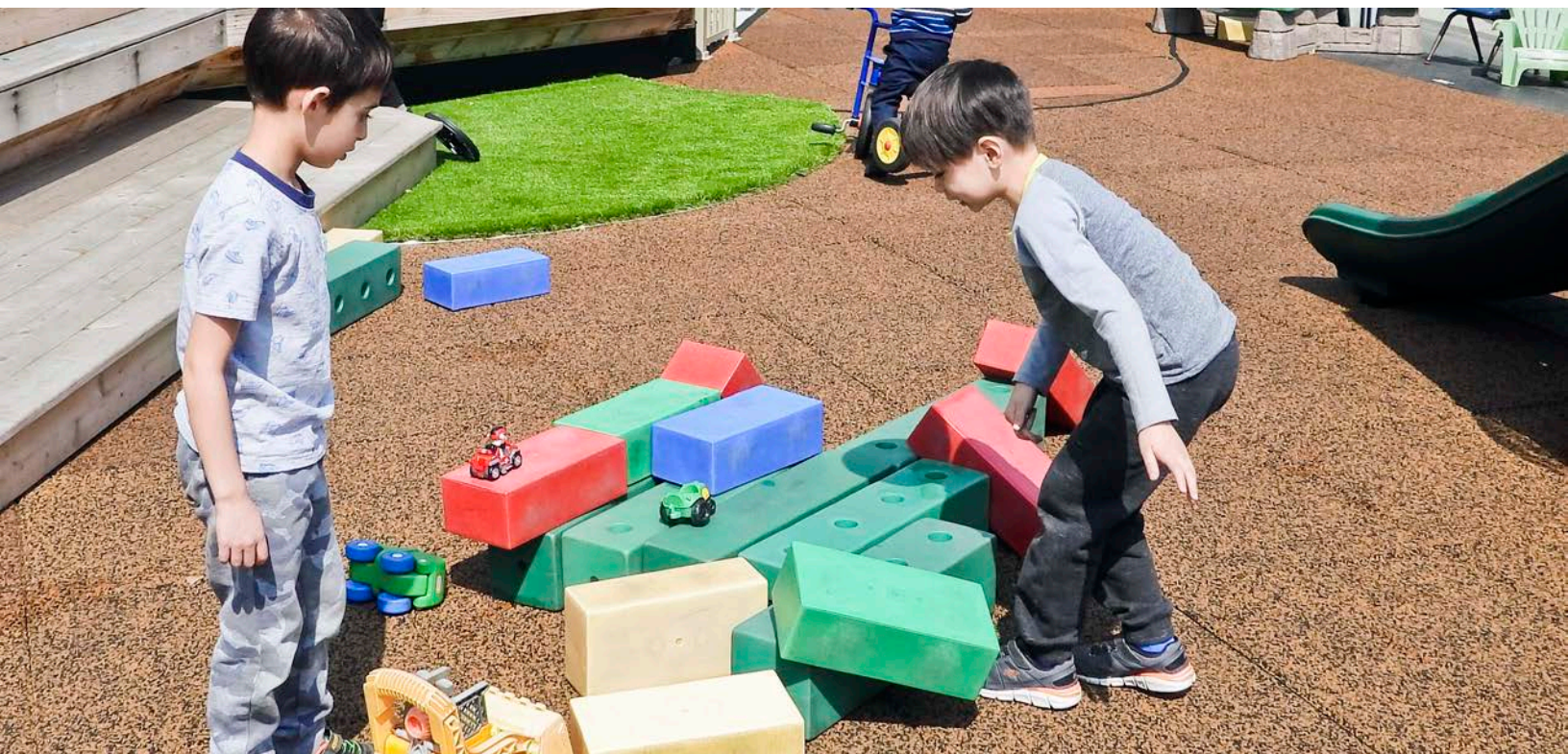
Due to low response rates for the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, local data are not presented; these data are included in the [Executive Report](#) as part of the 'East' data region. In April 2024, a focus group was conducted with nine participants from the region. Qualitative data from this focus group are presented here.

OVERVIEW OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

The children's services division of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell operates a comprehensive early childhood service system, including a home child care agency and three EarlyON family centres. It oversees 34 child care centres, with 29 operating solely in French. The

Municipality of Russell Township, which is part of the United Counties region, directly operates six centres.

Some 99% of licensed child care sites in the region opted into the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan, resulting in a fee reduction of 52.8% for families with children under 6 years of age. The province allocated 207 new CWELCC-funded spaces for the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, which include 197 spaces for new school-based locations and 10 spaces in the community. The CWELCC-funded child care expansion will focus on supporting children with disabilities, children from diverse communities (including francophone and racialized), and children from low-income and newcomer families.





STAFFING CHALLENGES

Focus group discussions identified staffing shortages as a primary concern. Staffing in the counties has been significantly impacted by the migration of educators to the region's four school boards, which offer better compensation and less stressful work environments.

Approximately 100 RECEs have transitioned to school positions. This has exacerbated service provision challenges, particularly for francophone families. Conversations highlighted the importance of supportive work environments and adequate resources to stem the exodus. As one participant noted, *"It's fundamental to provide paid professional development, pension*

plans, insurance, and the necessary tools for staff to effectively support the children and foster a healthy workplace culture."

Participants noted differences in working conditions between municipal and community-based centres, but also indicated that inflation is affecting the living standards of even better-paid educators. Many staff members manage multiple jobs to cope with low wages, highlighting the sector's financial strains. *"Even with benefits like insurance and a pension plan, salaries at municipal centres are better than many other places but are still not sufficient,"* explained a participant, emphasizing the need for improved compensation to retain skilled staff.

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Staffing shortages have broader implications, particularly when serving children with disabilities. Reports of resource staff being reassigned to regular duties, leading to inadequate support for children with varying needs, are particularly concerning. Parents are even known to conceal their child's diagnosis out of fear they may be denied enrolment, although participants took great pains to explain that excluding children occurs infrequently.

Related services for children with disabilities are also scarce. *"A [disability evaluation] can take up to two years now, and accessing services in French is even more difficult,"* a participant explained.

"Even Indigenous families with access to Jordan's Principle funding can't overcome staffing shortages, particularly the shortage of special needs resource consultants," she continued.

BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

Not all children have diagnosed disabilities. Behavioural challenges, particularly those emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic when isolation delayed children's development, are manifesting in programs. *"We are in a culture that doesn't tolerate violence, but there is a lot of violence in our workplace, and it's something that we just accept because they are kids,"* said a participant.

"I do have one classroom with a number of children with behavioural challenges. It's stressful for the staff who sometimes feel they lose control of the group. You can see by the end of the day they're all exhausted. They need that extra support that I can't give them because half the time I'm on the floor myself or I'm busy," a supervisor explained.

This underlines a systemic problem where the infrastructure does not meet the diverse needs of all children. Participants called for significant policy changes and resource allocation to ensure inclusive education environments.

"It shouldn't be stressful to do this job. It's supposed to be fun. And I feel like there's not as much fun anymore."





PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF RETENTION

Professional development is an integral part of career advancement; however, challenges such as unpaid training sessions discourage staff participation.

“It’s difficult to get staff to commit to after-hours professional development, even though they express a desire to improve skills such as behaviour management during annual appraisals.”

Long working hours and personal commitments make evening sessions particularly unattractive.

“We can’t find enough before- and after-school staff, leading to nine-hour workdays. It’s unreasonable to then expect participation in webinars from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.”

STRATEGIC FOCUS ON ADULT LEARNING

The region has focused on adult learning approaches that are evidence-based and proven to be effective, replacing one-off sessions with a community of practice model that supports lasting change. Responding to the needs of the sector for more professional development opportunities and following the science behind

what makes effective adult learning, the region has developed a comprehensive professional learning community.

“We know one-offs do not work. You need a community of practice and a workplace culture to support the change that you want to bring to your program.”

This approach involves leadership support, in-person opportunities, and continuous reminders of learned practices to ensure they become part of daily operations, known as *boosting*. The region also supports centre directors and managers to ensure that educators’ learned new practices and knowledge can be incorporated in programs—a key element of efficacy. In addition, checks and balances are in place to ensure continued success of the initiative. This work is an example of best practice for professional learning and demonstrates the alignment of science and policy. Nevertheless, the availability of French language resources and key learning materials continue to be a challenge.

Investing in staff through better pay, more opportunities for professional development, and providing a supportive workplace culture is crucial. As a leader aptly said, *“Investing in our staff is investing in the quality of service we provide to our children.”*