



Canada's Children Need a Professional Early Childhood Education Workforce

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

In 2021, the Government of Canada committed to providing sustained funding to provinces and territories [to expand access to more affordable child care](#). The ultimate goal is to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care plan to drive economic growth, support women's workforce participation, and give every Canadian child a head start. Achieving these objectives requires a qualified early childhood education workforce.

The early childhood education workforce is large, with 300,000 plus members representing more than 1% of the working population. Workforce members can be found in many sectors, including licensed child care, health, education, family support, and settlement services. Every Canadian jurisdiction has legislation governing the provision of regulated, or licensed,¹ child care services. This report focuses on those working in child care centres or group care. It provides a status report on today's child care workforce and the challenges it faces, along with promising practices. It concludes with a series of recommendations. The intent is to draw attention to the centrality of educators in creating Canada's newest social program and the policies and resources they require to make it a success.

Information was compiled using data from Statistics Canada; extensive discussions with early childhood educators, program leaders, and government officials; and reviews of recent [workforce surveys](#) and provincial/territorial reports.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the many educators and officials who facilitated this work and generously shared their insights and experiences.

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Kerry McCuaig, Emis Akbari, Ph.D., Allison Correia

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For this report and accompanying documents, visit: <https://ecereport.ca/en/workforce-report/>

¹ This paper uses the terms "regulated" and "licensed" interchangeably to refer to group child care services covered under provincial/territorial legislation.

The Early Childhood Education Workforce

BY THE NUMBERS

302,000 people across Canada work in early childhood education, child care, and family support programs, and as home child care providers.



96% are women.



76% work full-time.



90% are aged 55 or younger.



25% are self-employed, compared to 15% of all other workers.



1/3 are immigrants or non-permanent residents compared to 1/4 of workers in all other occupations.

Source: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00005-eng.htm>

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS (ECE) AND ASSISTANTS INDIGENOUS/NON-INDIGENOUS

5%

Indigenous
ECEs/ECAs

95%

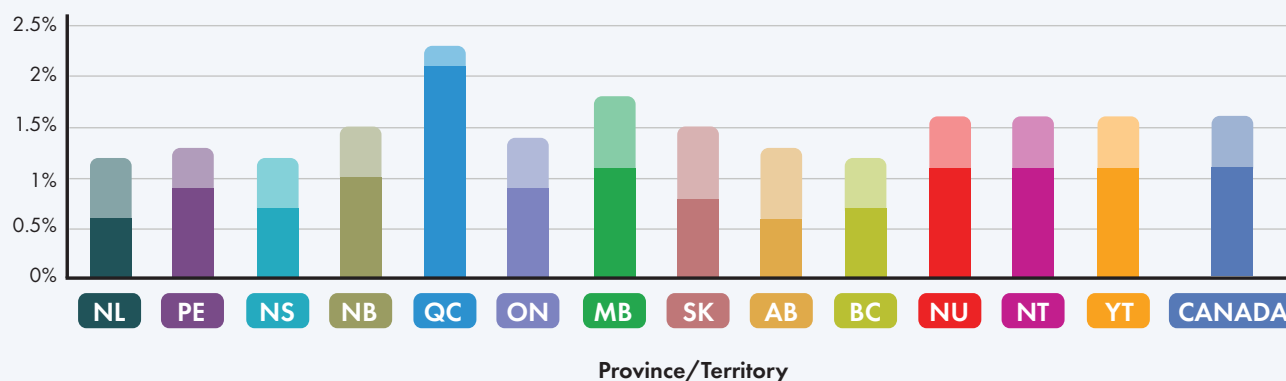
Non-Indigenous
ECEs/ECAs

5% are Indigenous, higher than the proportion of Indigenous workers represented among all workers (4%). A slightly higher proportion of Indigenous workers are represented among early childhood assistants.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS, ASSISTANTS, AND HOME CARE PROVIDERS AS PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYED IN CANADA, 2016

HOME CHILD CARE PROVIDERS • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS & ASSISTANTS



Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), Early Childhood Assistants (ECAs), and home child care providers make up more than 1% of the employed Canadian population, and represent over 2% of the working population in Quebec.

Source: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210625/cg-a001-png-eng.htm>

OPPORTUNITIES

An early childhood education diploma is a valuable qualification. Early childhood educators are in demand in schools, health care, family support, and settlement services, as well as in child care. With growing opportunities to ladder into higher education, many ECEs are building rewarding careers in academia and government services.

CHALLENGES

Attracting and keeping qualified staff in regulated child care are major challenges for the sector.

Workforce Shortages

- Of the 58,867 ECEs registered with Ontario's College of Early Childhood Educators, 44% do not work in licensed child care.
- Employment in child care dropped 21% during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to 3% among other workers.
- 32,000 additional educators are needed to meet the goal of serving a minimum of 59% of Canadian preschool-aged children within the next five years.

Density

- 50% of the regulated child care workforce in Canada have post-secondary qualifications.
- An Ontario study found that 30% of positions in licensed child care² requiring an early childhood education credential were filled by staff without the necessary qualifications.

Retention

- 62% of child care centre operators in Canada had to recruit staff in the last two years.
- 82% had difficulty hiring staff with the necessary qualifications.
- 6% had unfilled staff vacancies lasting over four months.
- Among ECEs who resigned their position in Ontario, the majority sought other employment outside of licensed child care.

Source: https://ecereport.ca/media/uploads/wr-downloads/workforce_surveys.pdf

Low Compensation

- In 2021, the median hourly wage for staff working in licensed child care in Canada was \$20.
- One-third of the licensed child care workforce receive no health benefits.
- 41% receive no paid personal leave.
- Only 17.7% have access to RRSPs or private pensions through their workplace.

Source: https://ecereport.ca/media/uploads/wr-downloads/workforce_surveys.pdf

² Malatest, R., (2017). *Workforce Study for Early Years and Child Care Employees Final Report*. Toronto: Ministry of Education.

The Benefits of a Qualified Workforce

Developing and sustaining a skilled workforce requires several fundamental policy approaches:

- Making high-quality education and pre-service training available
- Providing evidence-based training that is compatible with the needs of the sector
- Foreseeing and preparing for the skills and demand needs of the future
- Providing adequate compensation that reflects the value of the work

Regulations governing the physical environments, the total number of children permitted in a classroom, and the ratio of qualified educators to children are also important factors.

When harnessed successfully, these approaches foster innovation and [create more productive and rewarding work](#).

When working environments and compensation do not reflect or value educators' work and training, many "job hop" or leave the sector altogether.

WHY IS THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE IMPORTANT?



CHILD OUTCOMES

Educators are essential to creating quality early learning environments. Children benefit most and show the most positive outcomes when [educators are engaging and stimulating](#) in their interactions and are emotionally warm and supportive. Skilled educators support children's essential [literacy and numeracy competencies, as well as problem-solving, social-emotional, and behavioural skills](#). These factors contribute to children's [overall academic, behaviour, and health outcomes](#).

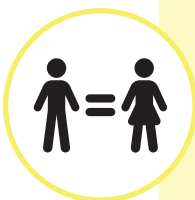


SUPPORT FOR PARENTS' LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The availability of early learning and child care has a direct impact on women's labour force participation. When child care isn't available, [parents report](#) needing to change their work schedule (36%), working fewer hours (31%), or using multiple or temporary care arrangements (29%).

Among parents who could not secure child care, 41% postponed their return to work. Canada-wide, the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the portion of women aged 15 and over in paid work to [56.7%, a level last seen in 2002](#). Economists call this the "she-cession".

Staffing shortages prevent child care programs from returning to pre-pandemic capacity and curtail future space expansion, impeding women's employment. Fewer women earning results in decreased purchasing power, creating a drag on economic recovery.



GENDER EQUITY

There has been a consistent increase in women's labour force participation as well as levels of educational attainment, often outpacing that of men. However, women continue to face widespread barriers in securing equal treatment in employment. Reliable child care lowers gender disparities, allowing women to upgrade their skills and take advantage of employment opportunities.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE WORKS FOR CANADA



JOB CREATOR

Every \$1 million invested in early learning and child care would create at least 40 jobs, 43% more jobs than the next highest industry, and four times the number of jobs generated by \$1 million in construction spending.



ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Every dollar invested in early learning and child care increases economic output.



TAX GENERATOR

Earnings from women's increased employment send back \$0.90 to \$1.05 in tax revenues to federal and provincial/territorial governments for every dollar invested, meaning investment in child care virtually pays for itself.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PAYS BIG DIVIDENDS

Numerous made-in-Canada studies indicate the economic benefits from investing in early childhood education

Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care (1998) Cleveland and Krashinsky	\$1.00 spent = \$2.00 in benefits
Northern Childcare: Childcare as Economic and Social Development (2007) Prentice	\$1.00 spent = \$1.60 in benefits
Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project (2010) Peters, Bradshaw, Petruka, Nelson, Harry, Craig, Arnold	\$1.00 spent = \$2.00 in benefits
Economic Consequences of Quebec's Educational Childcare Policy (2011) Fortin, Godbout, St-Cerny	\$1.00 spent = \$1.05 in benefits
Economic Impact Analysis of Early Learning and Care for Children (2012) Fairholm	\$1.00 spent = \$2.50 in benefits
Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care (2017) Alexander, Sackman, Macdonald, Renner, Stewart	\$1.00 spent = \$6.00 in benefits
Early Learning and Childcare as Key Economic Infrastructure (2021) Deloitte	\$1.00 spent = \$1.60 to \$5.80 in benefits

ISSUES TO ADDRESS

WAGES

[Half the licensed child care workforce](#) barely earn above the minimum wage. The COVID-19 pandemic brought additional hardships. Declining enrolment resulted in layoffs and unpredictable hours. Many educators took jobs elsewhere where they earn more. Getting these educators back into child care will take bold action.

BENEFITS

Paid leave and decent health and pension benefits are essential recruiting tools, particularly for a young workforce with its own family responsibilities. Among child care staff with benefits, half cited access to benefits as a reason for staying with their employer.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Staff want decent pay, but they also want the support needed to do their jobs well. This includes paid time for planning and professional development, as well as pedagogical leadership and access to other specialists who can assist children and families in distress or with greater needs.

PROFESSIONAL DENSITY

Fewer than half the staff working in regulated child care have post-secondary credentials in early childhood education. Increasing the density of trained staff contributes to a more professional learning community.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Educators need career opportunities and an infrastructure that supports professional practice. Similar to teachers in public education, early childhood educators need the option of working directly with children or pursuing related career paths. This enables programs to attract and retain professional staff with the experience, education, and longevity that enhance program quality.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Positive organizational culture and professional working conditions depend on program leaders. Yet few jurisdictions require additional [qualifications](#) for centre directors, and directors themselves have few resources to support their work.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The early learning and child care deals signed between provinces and territories, and the federal government all commit to adding child care capacity and lowering parent costs to a daily average of \$10 within five years. Not all agreements to date contain language addressing educator pay. Few include [staff pensions and benefits](#), improved working conditions, or raising the status of the early childhood education workforce.

Creating a professional workforce requires action on all these fronts simultaneously.



The Starting Point: Being an ECE in Canada

THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE ECE WORKFORCE 2021

	NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	NU	NT	YT
Managed salary and fee scale in licensed child care	✓	✓ ³		✓ ²	✓ ¹⁰		✓ ¹						
ECEC curriculum framework in regulated child care	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ⁷	✓	✓ ⁸
ECEC curriculum framework use is mandatory in regulated child care		✓ ³	✓ ⁹	✓ ²	✓	✓	✓ ⁴			✓ ⁶		✓	
At least 2/3 of staff in regulated child care for 2–4 year olds are qualified		✓ ³	✓		✓ ¹⁰	✓ ¹¹	✓			✓ ¹⁶			
Kindergarten educators require ECE qualifications		✓	✓ ¹⁷	✓	✓ ¹⁵	✓ ¹²	✓ ⁵	✓ ¹³			✓ ¹⁴	✓ ⁵	
Salaries of ECEs are at least 2/3 of teachers					✓								
ECE professional certification required	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
ECE professional development required	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓			
Mandatory benefits		✓ ³			✓ ¹⁰								
Pension provided					✓ ¹⁰		✓						

¹ MB has a wage floor

² In Designated Early Learning Centres

³ In Early Years Centres

⁴ Required to develop a curriculum statement based on the curriculum framework in all programs

⁵ 4-year-old programs staffed by teacher or ECE

⁶ In BC StrongStart

⁷ NU curriculum in development

⁸ YT curriculum out for consultation

⁹ In Pre-primary and in regulated child care programs receiving public grants

¹⁰ In Centres de la petite enfance

¹¹ In groups of 24 preschool-aged children

¹² Designated ECEs work in educator teams with teachers in full day Kindergarten for 4- and 5-year-olds

¹³ ECEs work with teachers in Pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds when more than 16 children present

¹⁴ Kindergarten staffed by teacher or ECE

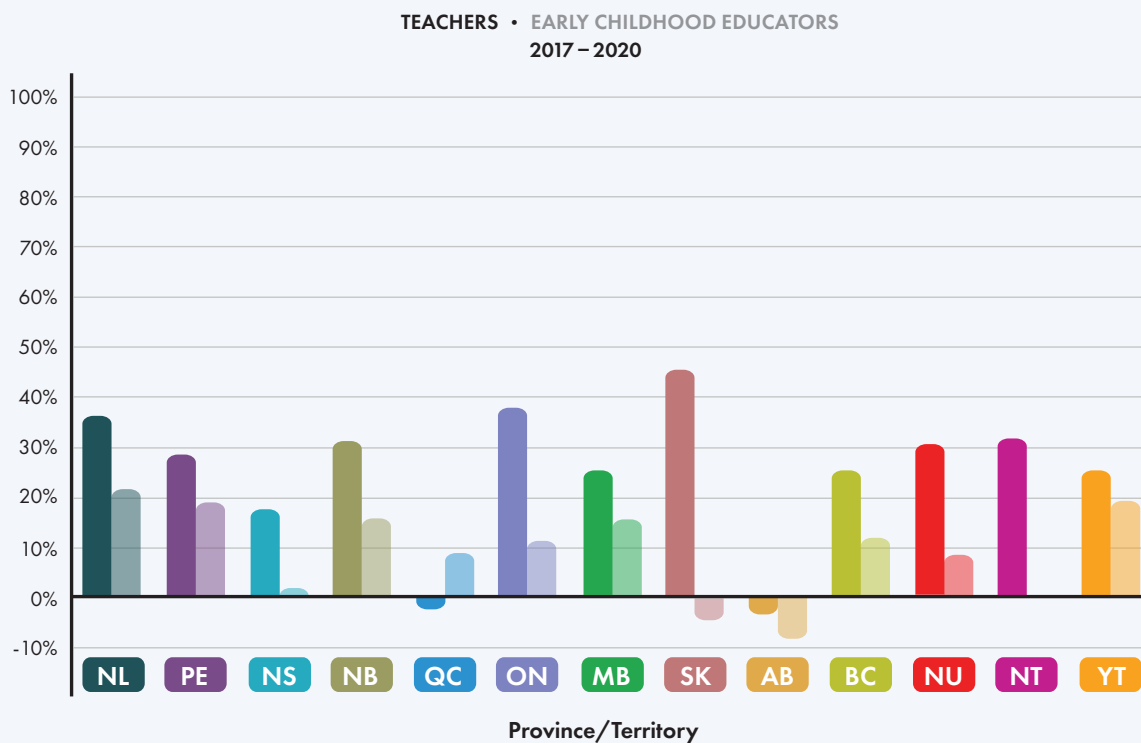
¹⁵ ECEs work with teachers in Kindergarten for 4-year-olds

¹⁶ In groups of children 3-years-old and younger

¹⁷ In Pre-primary programs

WAGES

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN SALARIES FOR TEACHERS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

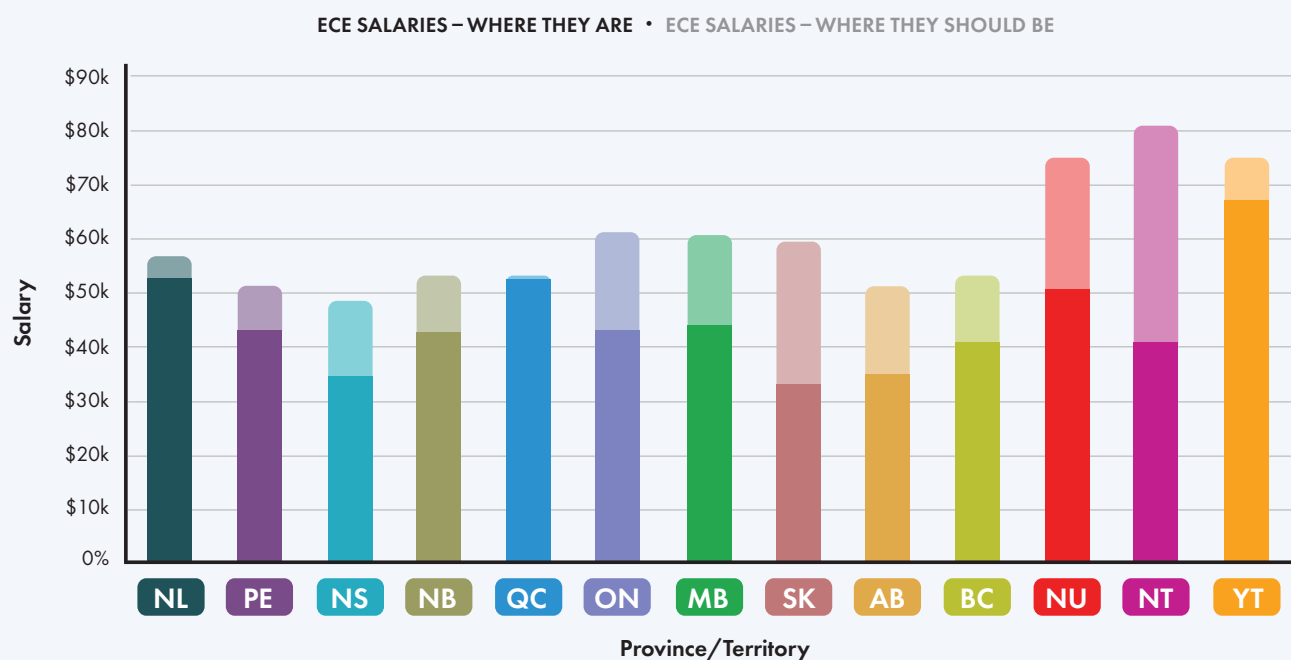


Percent change in salaries of ECEs compared to elementary school teachers for the years 2017 and 2020, demonstrating the comparative value placed on the work of ECEs.

Sources: Akbari, McCuaig, & Foster, 2021, *Early Childhood Education Report 2020*; and Akbari and McCuaig, 2017, *Early Childhood Education Report 2017*.

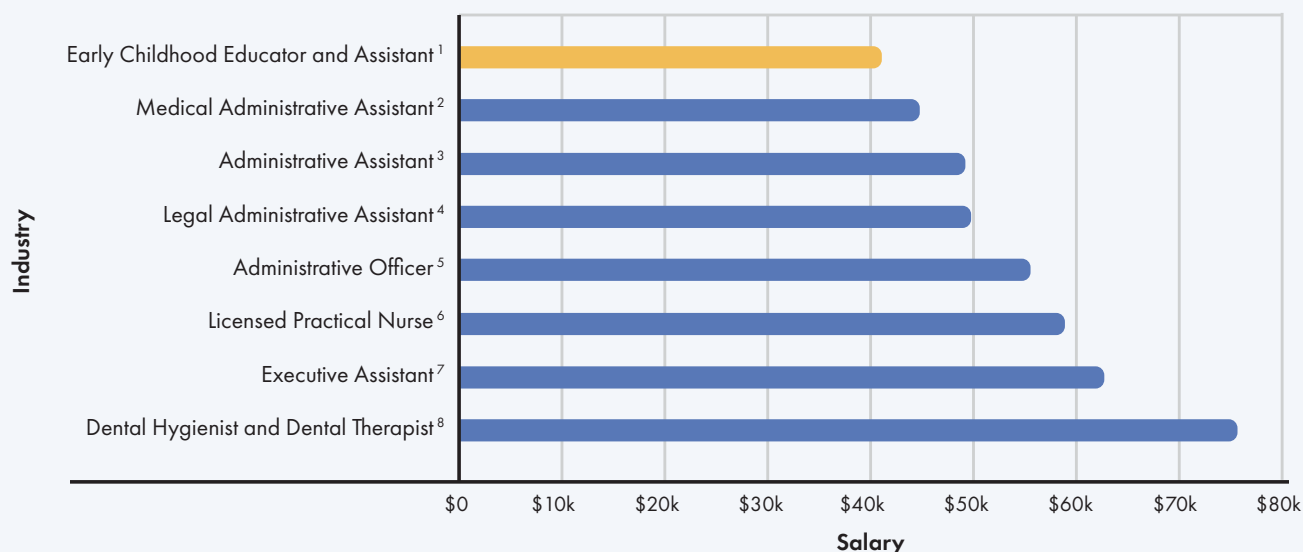


WHERE ECE SALARIES ARE AND WHERE THEY SHOULD BE AT MINIMUM BASED ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT BENCHMARK 2020



The benchmark for ECE salaries in the [Early Childhood Education Report](#) is set at 66% of the average teacher's salary. Selected in consultation with pay equity experts, the benchmark takes into account the educational differences between teachers and ECEs. The graph above shows existing salaries for top earning ECEs and the salary increases required to reach the two-thirds benchmark in each province and territory.

ECE SALARIES COMPARED TO OTHER FEMALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRIES WITH SIMILAR EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS 2021



Compared to other female-dominated professions requiring comparable education and training, ECE/ECA salaries are amongst the lowest, far below the [average Canadian salary](#).

Sources:

¹ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/5180>

² <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/25791>

³ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/24789>

⁴ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/1565>

⁵ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/12462>

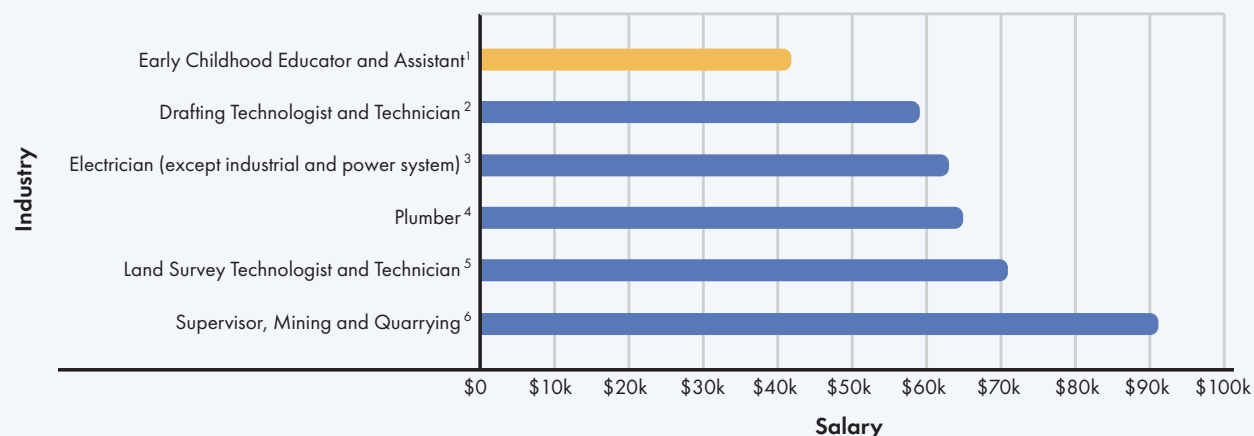
⁶ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/4383>

⁷ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/527>

⁸ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/18315>

Salaries calculated using hourly median rate x 40 hour week for a full year (52 weeks). For hourly wages, click on source links above.

ECE SALARIES COMPARED TO MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRIES WITH SIMILAR EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS 2021



When compared to male-dominated professions with comparable education and training requirements, the wage gap is even more staggering.

Sources:

¹ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/5172>

³ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/20684>

⁵ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/18091>

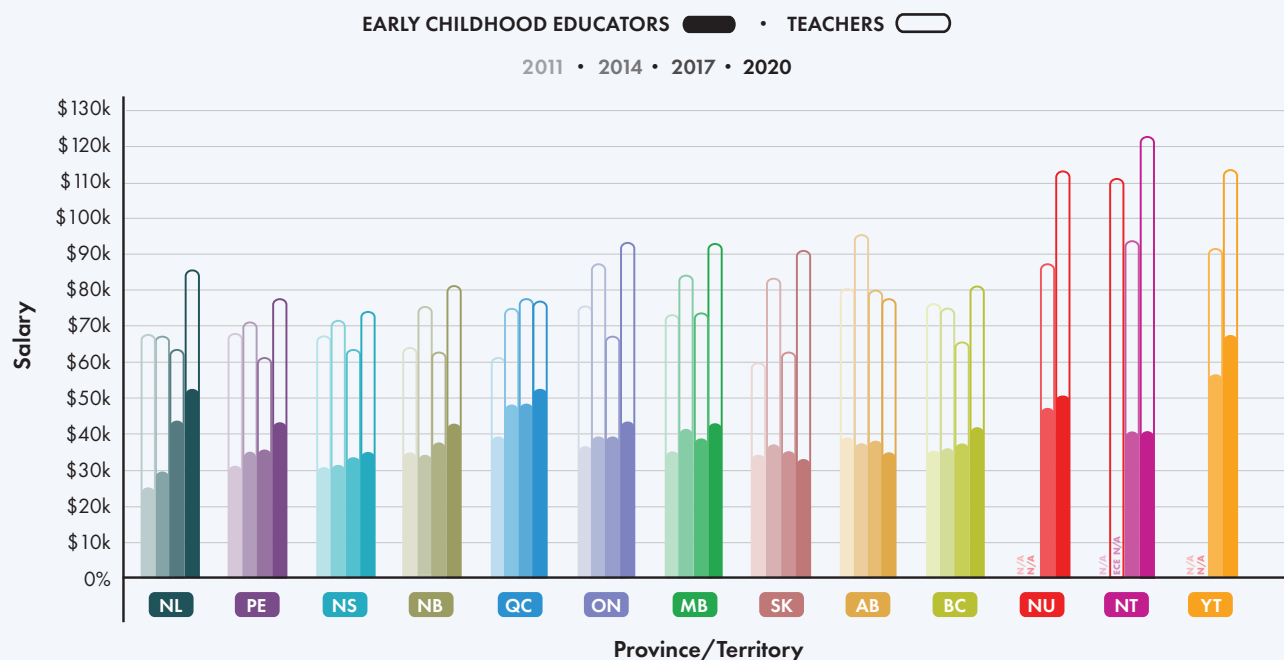
² <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/3435>

⁴ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/4747>

⁶ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wagereport/occupation/20089>

Salaries calculated using hourly median rate x 40 hour week for a full year (52 weeks). For hourly wages, click on source links above.

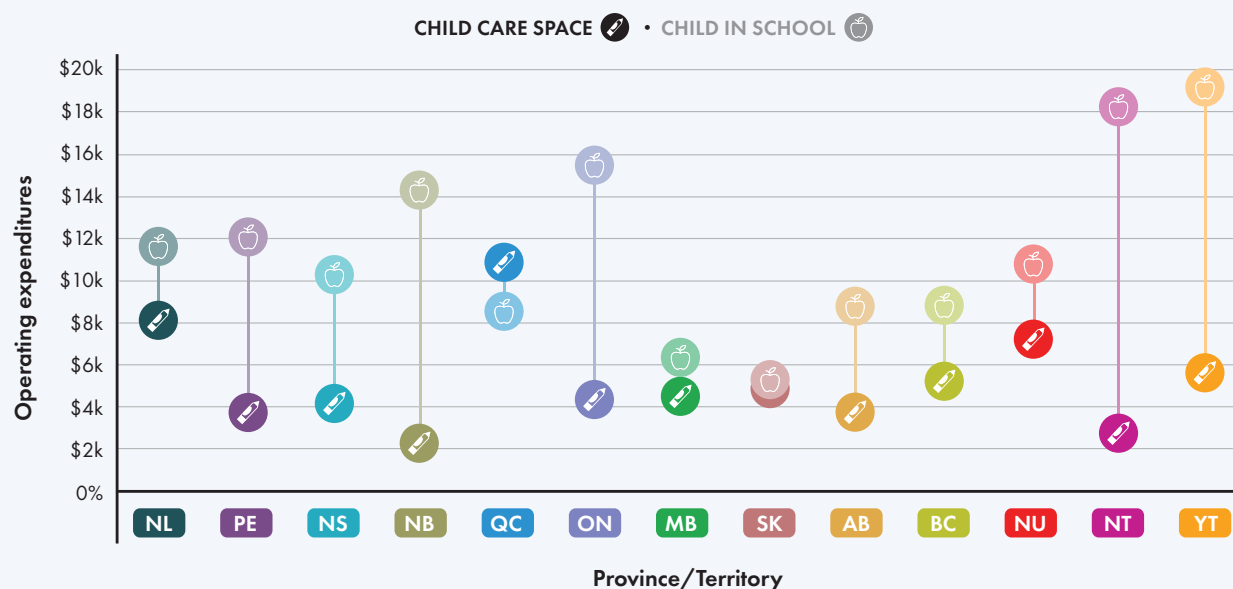
SALARY CHANGE OVER TIME FOR TEACHERS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS



When examining salary changes over time for ECEs and teachers, in many jurisdictions teacher salaries have received increases on par with the cost of living, while ECE salaries have largely stagnated.

Source: Akbari, McCuaig, & Foster, 2021, *Early Childhood Education Report 2020*.

AVERAGE EXPENDITURES PER CHILD CARE SPACE AND PER CHILD IN SCHOOL 2020



The difference in educator wages is highlighted by funding inequalities. In all jurisdictions except Quebec, per space spending on child care is considerably less than what governments spend on a child attending school. Since labour costs make up 85% of both education and child care budgets, that differential is expressed in the earning gaps between educators working in licensed child care and those working in schools.

Source: Akbari, McCuaig, & Foster, 2021, *Early Childhood Education Report 2020*.



WAGE TOP-UPS ARE NOT ENOUGH

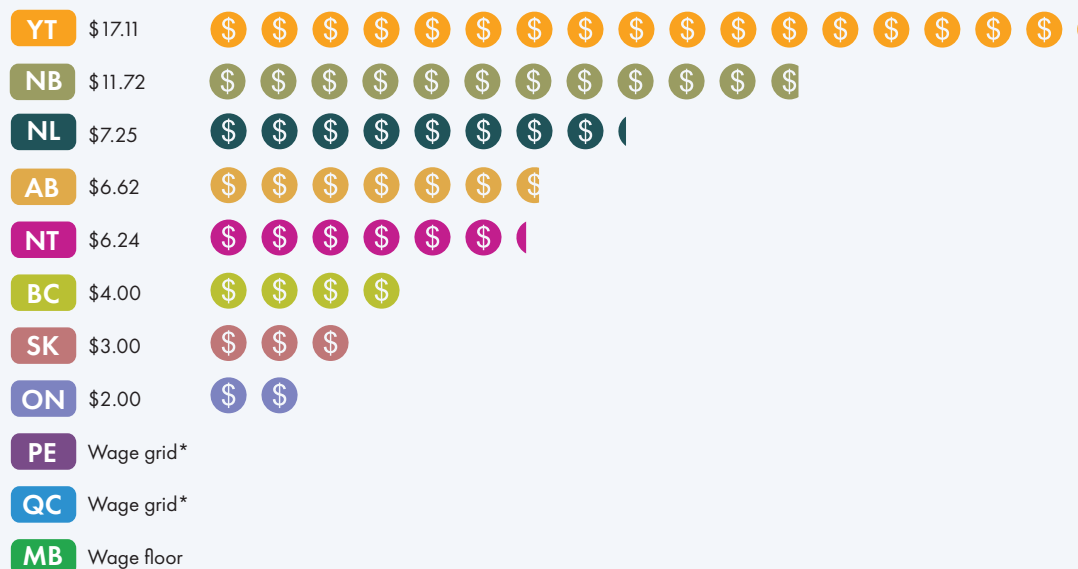
Pay levels create systemic problems in the early childhood education workforce. Licensed child care centres in particular have difficulty enticing new graduates and keeping existing staff. Higher starting rates and sector-wide wage grids have been offered as a means to boost educator earning power and provide wage transparency. Yet wage grids are not a panacea. [Quebec's wage grid](#) in its publicly managed Centres de la petite enfance (CPEs) covers everyone from directors to cleaning staff. It takes 10 years for a fully qualified ECE to move from a starting rate of \$20.96 to the top of the grid at \$27.76. It took [rotating strikes](#) by educators to win increased earnings.

Prince Edward Island's child care staff launched a public campaign to get a [boost to its wage grid](#) after years without an increase.

Yet more pay hasn't resolved labour shortages. In December 2020, the Quebec government [launched a recruitment drive](#) to bring in another 1,000 ECEs to its CPEs, just to plug holes in the current system. The demand for educators will only grow as Quebec follows through on its [guarantee of a child care space for every child](#).

Trying to get in front of the problem, some provinces and territories top up educator wages. In April 2021, the [Yukon added another \\$5 an hour](#) to what was already the most generous pay package in the country. Yet even publicly-funded wage supplements have not resulted in an influx of ECEs into regulated child care, reflecting broader challenges in the sector.

MAXIMUM HOURLY WAGE SUPPLEMENT FOR ECEs IN LICENSED CHILD CARE 2021



*PEI's top wage for ECEs with Level III qualifications was \$22.06 in 2021. Top pay for ECEs in Quebec is \$27.76. Source: Atkinson Centre 2021.
Source: Akbari, McCuaig, & Foster, 2021, *Early Childhood Education Report 2020*.

EDUCATOR TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

No jurisdiction in Canada requires that all those working with young children in regulated child care settings hold post-secondary level credentials. Two-thirds of staff working directly with children holding qualifying credentials is considered the international minimum. Meeting this standard is one indication of the value placed on educators and early childhood education in general. Improvements have been made in educator training and qualifications, including the following:



New Brunswick has gone from one in four staff with early childhood qualifications working in child care centres to one in two thanks to a ministry-initiated training initiative.



Nova Scotia has instituted minimum training for all staff and has hired early childhood development consultants to support educators in licensed child care.



Prince Edward Island offers a quality enhancement grant to assist staff working in child care to attain certification and to increase the credentials of qualified educators.



Newfoundland and Labrador has increased training requirements and expanded graduate bursary programs.

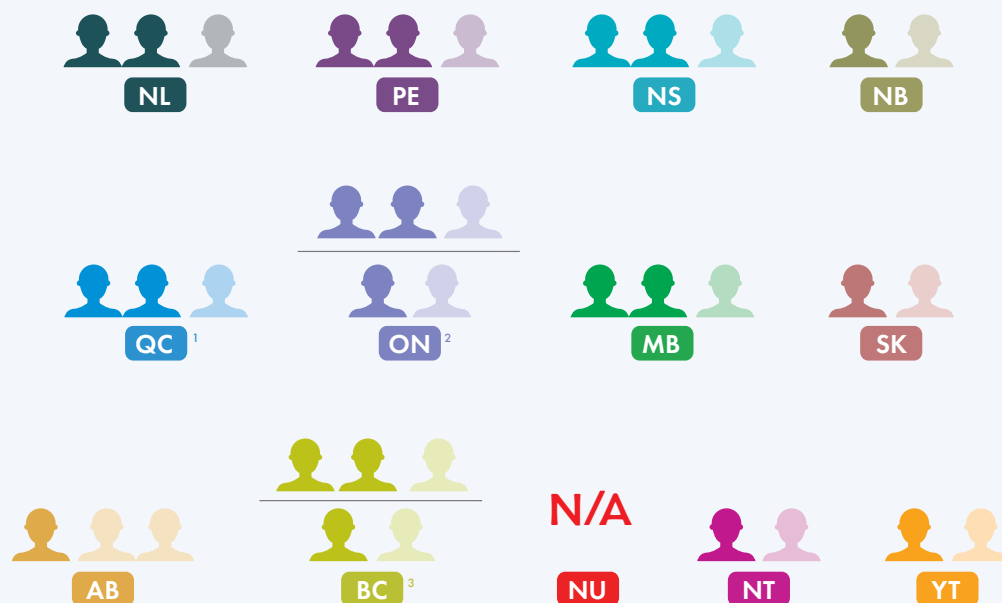


British Columbia has funded 1,003 additional ECE student spaces at 13 public post-secondary institutions.

Educator shortages have led some provinces to reduce qualification requirements. For instance, [Ontario's](#) legislative amendments remove ECE training requirements for staff working in licensed child care serving children aged 4 years and older. [Alberta](#) no longer administers the child care accreditation system, which encouraged the hiring of qualified staff in centres. All jurisdictions allow programs temporary leave to operate without the [requisite number of qualified staff](#).

[Click here for a list of post-secondary institutions offering early childhood education credentials.](#)

RATIO OF QUALIFIED ECES TO UNQUALIFIED STAFF IN PRESCHOOL AGE GROUPS IN CHILD CARE CENTRES 2021



[No jurisdiction](#) requires all staff working with children in licensed child care to have diploma- or certificate-level post-secondary training in early childhood development. While some jurisdictions encourage educators to obtain a degree, no legislation requires it. Some jurisdictions require unqualified staff to have basic entry level training.

¹ In Centres de la petite enfance (CPEs).

² 2:1 for groups of 24, 1:1 for groups of 16.

³ Two trained staff and one assistant in groups of 9–12 children in centres serving children 0 to <36 months; 1:1 ECE to assistant in centres serving children 36 months to age 5.

TRAINING FOR LEADERS

Child care supervisors and directors develop, support, encourage, and motivate staff teams, as well as model high standards of practice, knowledge, and care. They are responsible for the health, safety, and well-being of everyone in the centre in addition to managing administrative functions, performance, and financial targets. Yet few jurisdictions require additional qualifications for supervisors working in regulated child care. In those jurisdictions with additional requirements, the training requirements are often not reflective of the demands placed on the position.

Focusing on training and support for program leaders, as well as training for front line staff, would help raise the standards in child care programs.

[Click here for a list](#) of legislated qualifications for educators and supervisors in each province and territory.



Employers Make a Difference

Different entities operate early learning and child care programs

NON-PROFIT CHILD CARE

The governance of non-profit child care falls under provincial/territorial non-profit or cooperative corporations legislation. [Specific criteria](#) may vary, but all prohibit personal financial gain to directors or members.

Non-profit child care may be operated by:

- Boards of directors operating single or multiple sites for the sole purpose of providing child care
- Multi-service agencies that provide child care in addition to other community or social services
- Religious denominations

Public child care is also non-profit and may be operated by:

- Post-secondary education institutions
- Municipal or regional governments
- First Nations Band Councils
- School boards
- Public sector workplaces such as hospitals or government offices
- The Canadian Armed Forces

FOR-PROFIT CHILD CARE

For-profit child care is incorporated as a business and organized to make a profit. Excess income or profit can be distributed to the owner/shareholders.

For-profit programs may be:

- Single or multiple centres operated by a single owner or owner group
- Private or share-issuing corporations offering child care only or as part of other products or services

Depending on the type of operator, there may be differences in access to public funding, operating standards, and parent fees. For those working in the sector, their employer's auspice can make significant differences in compensation, benefits, and working conditions.



THE FOR-PROFIT CHALLENGE

The early learning and child care agreements allow provinces and territories to use federal funds for quality improvements and to lower parent fees in all regulated child care programs, both profit and non-profit. Funding to develop new child care capacity is largely restricted to public and non-profit operators and family child care providers.

There is little public child care in Canada, and depending on the province/territory, the non-profit sector can also be quite small. Regardless of auspice, [opening a new early learning and child care \(ELCC\) facility is a challenging endeavour](#). Agencies need members of the public to volunteer their time to sit on a board of directors responsible for the oversight of the centre. Directors are often the overtaxed parents of the children attending the centre, with neither the knowledge nor interest in taking on the construction, equipping, staff recruitment, and management of new facilities. The rate of failure is high, with many new [facilities opening, just to close](#) within a few years. This results in inconsistent services for communities and the squandering of public resources.

With the ability to bypass public and parent engagement and to borrow money from private financial institutions, for-profit companies have expanded their reach except

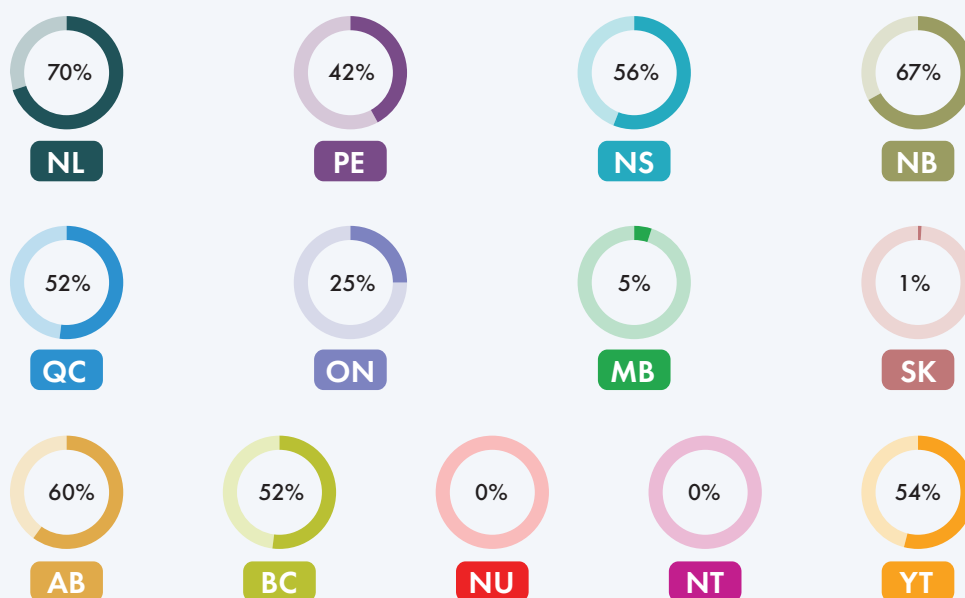
in some jurisdictions (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut, Northwest Territories) that restrict their presence.

There are ethical concerns about public money paying for profit-making child care. Equally problematic is the documented [poorer quality of the care and workforce](#) conditions in for-profit child care.

Some jurisdictions manage for-profit care through regulations and policies that include government-established staff wages and benefits and controlled parent fees (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick); eliminating profit lines and restricting eligible costs to elements directly involved in the care of children (City of Toronto); mandating parent advisory boards (Prince Edward Island, Quebec); or requiring the public reporting of financials (Prince Edward Island) and quality ratings. Under these conditions, some operators have left the business or incorporated as non-profit entities. It is assumed that as the public/non-profit sector grows, families will become less reliant on for-profit providers.

However, without direct government involvement in the start up of new child care spaces, it is highly unlikely that jurisdictions will meet their expansion goals.

PERCENT OF FOR-PROFIT FACILITIES 2020



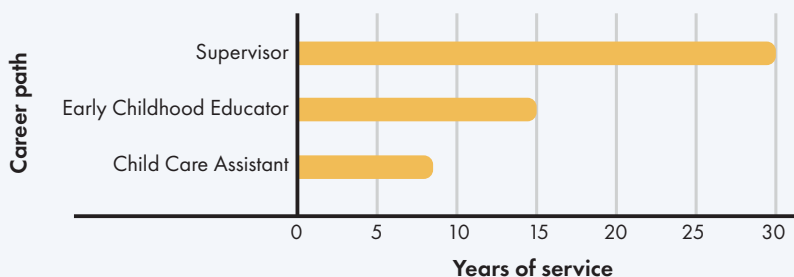
Source: Akbari, McCuaig, & Foster, 2021, *Early Childhood Education Report 2020*.

THE PUBLIC ADVANTAGE

Publicly-operated child care does not have the same staffing challenges as other providers.

Similar to teachers in public education, public child care is able to offer staff the option to remain working directly with children or to pursue related career paths within the public network or with other public service divisions. This enables public child care to attract and retain professional staff.

PUBLIC CHILD CARE: MEDIAN YEARS OF SERVICE AT TORONTO EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE CENTRES



Adapted from: *The Review of Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services*.

https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Publications/TELCCS_REPORT.pdf

PROFESSIONAL DENSITY AND LEADERSHIP

Public child care is more likely to have a comprehensive management structure allowing educators to focus on children and families. Supported by a resourced management team, centre supervisors are able to provide day-to-day pedagogical leadership and family support, and undertake community outreach.

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

Public child care is also well suited to help community child care agencies through mentoring, resource sharing, training, and/or a combination of similar supports. It has the potential to act as centres of excellence, piloting and refining new initiatives.

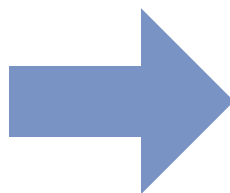
For example, [Toronto's Early Learning and Child Care Services](#) partnered with George Brown College's [School of Early Childhood](#) to design and deliver training for community providers in Ontario's curriculum framework to reinforce the transition from theme-based pedagogy to a child-centred, play-based learning approach. Toronto's Children's Services also supported the modelling of the early learning framework, teaching teams and extended-day options adapted for full-day Kindergarten in Ontario.

In addition, public child care is more likely to have the capacity to support research and development. The [Assessment for Quality Improvement](#), the only made-in-Canada tool designed to assess all aspects of play-based learning in early childhood settings, was jointly developed by Toronto's Children's Services and researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. The tool is publicly available at no cost and city staff help train other jurisdictions in its use.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO COVID-19

As part of a larger public structure, public child care is able to mobilize around emergencies, including those related to natural disasters, families experiencing homelessness, or the arrival of refugees. The value of public child care became clear during the unprecedented circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The capacity of public programs to respond in an emergency was not paralleled by the rest of the sector.

As recovery from the pandemic evolves, the challenge of an even greater shortage of child care spaces and actions to stabilize the child care sector will require urgent public intervention.



EFFICIENT SERVICE

Public child care centres operate efficiently with lower-than-average administrative and related costs.

GOOD JOBS

Public child care provides high-quality jobs to a largely low-wage, racialized, female-dominated workforce.

Adapted from: *The Review of Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services*.
https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Publications/TELCCS_REPORT.pdf

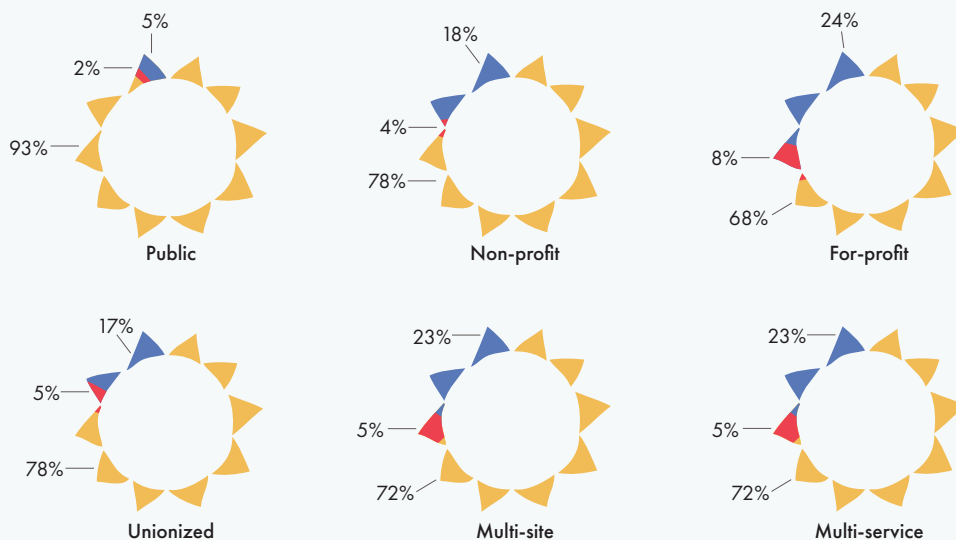
EFFICIENCY

Public operators spend significantly more of their budgets on their staff but display significant efficiencies due to centralized administration. They also benefit from economies of scale in their ability to buy food and supplies in bulk.

A comparison of budget breakdowns in publicly-operated programs compared to other types of operators shows that 93% of budgets are devoted to salaries and benefits, with the remainder used for administration, food, and supplies. No other comparison group comes close to this in terms of the portion spent on salaries and benefits. The operating efficiencies in terms of lower administrative cost are notable, even compared to large multi-site operators that should also benefit from economies of scale.

SPENDING BY CATEGORY AND AUSPICE 2020

SALARIES & BENEFITS • ADMINISTRATION • OTHER EXPENSES

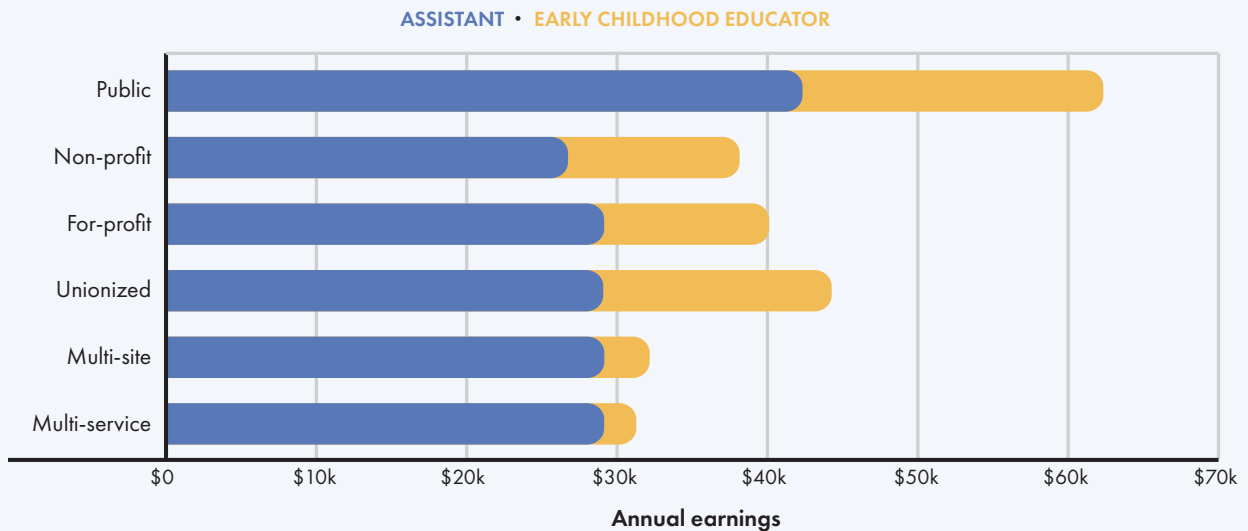


Adapted from: *The Review of Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services*.
https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Publications/TELCCS_REPORT.pdf

EARNING DIFFERENTIALS

Child care is a sector dominated by women, many of whom are racialized. The efficiencies made possible in publicly-operated child care provide for significantly higher earnings for staff compared to those working in centres operated by other types of employers. Salaries in public child care are in line with the average for employees with similar education levels in non-STEM fields.³

AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS BY EMPLOYER TYPE 2018

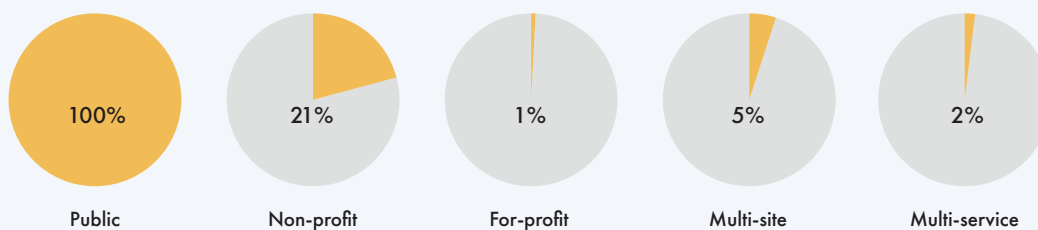


Adapted from: *The Review of Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services*.
https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Publications/TELCCS_REPORT.pdf

UNIONIZATION

Staff working in publicly-operated centres are more likely to enjoy the benefits of unionization. Child care unionization outside of the public sector is uncommon. Those programs next-most-likely to be unionized are stand-alone non-profit and larger agencies that offer child care only. Commercial programs and those providing child care along with a range of other social and community services are least likely to be unionized.

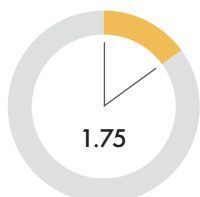
THE RATE OF UNIONIZATION BY CENTRE TYPE



Adapted from: *The Review of Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services*.
https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Publications/TELCCS_REPORT.pdf

³ Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016280.

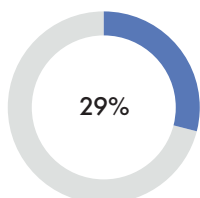
Voices from the Sector



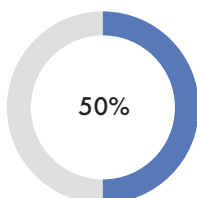
hours per week of unpaid overtime



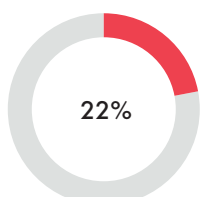
hours per week preparing work-related materials at home



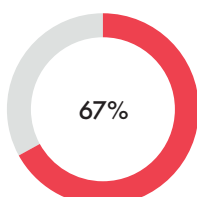
of employers offer paid time to communicate with parents



of employers offer regular paid preparation time



of staff in licensed child care feel their pay is fair



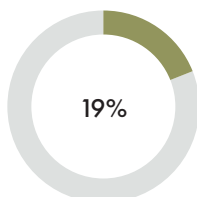
of staff in licensed child care feel their salary does not adequately reflect their work

Nova Scotia's Pre-primary school program recruited a third of its workforce from qualified ECEs who returned to the profession.

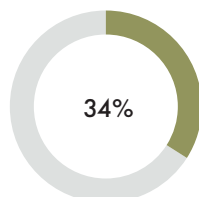
Many who had left the province took advantage of the employment opportunities in Pre-primary to return to Nova Scotia.



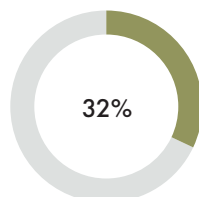
Reasons given by respondents who resigned from a child care position



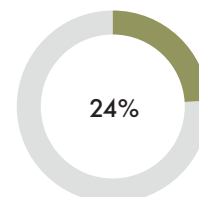
Lack of promotion



Culture/quality of the centre



Poor management



Couldn't reconcile their own child care needs

Click here for summary of recent surveys: https://ecereport.ca/media/uploads/wr-downloads/workforce_surveys.pdf

Steps for Success

Educators' work environments are children's learning environments

Children depend on educators who are not only skilled, but also have their own well-being and needs supported. Just as children's environments can support or impede their learning, educators' work environments can promote or hinder educator practices, ongoing skill development, and the overall quality of the learning environment.



The [status of the early childhood education workforce and the quality of programming](#) where small children spend their days are interdependent. Educators who express significantly less economic worry and higher levels of adult well-being work in programs rated higher in quality. In turn, higher quality ratings are associated with staff being more likely to promote children's learning.⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

COMPENSATION

Most jurisdictions have addressed gender wage differentials through pay equity processes covering their public sector workforce. Some have extended the mechanism to the broader public sector, which includes community-based child care. Setting wages in regulated child care to mirror those of comparable positions in the public sector would validate the work and bring an immediate increase in earnings.

In jurisdictions where the public sector comparators are regional governments or school authorities, pay equity would also address differences in the regional cost of living and extend incentives for those working in remote or underserved communities.



BENEFITS

One-third of the licensed early childhood education workforce receive no health benefits. An equal number receive no paid leave or overtime pay. A full 70% have no pensions. Among those with benefits, half cite them as a reason for staying with their current employer. It would require legislative change, but ECEs and other child care employees could be brought into public sector pension and benefit plans. Alternatively, governments could take responsibility for establishing sector-wide plans for staff working in child care, similar to what is available for teachers.



⁴ Whitebook, M., Schlieber, M., Hankey, A., Auston, L.J.E. & Philipp, G. (2018). *Teachers' Voices: Work Environment Conditions That Impact Teacher Practice and Program Quality*—New York. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.



WORKING CONDITIONS

Experiences in child care, as well as health and home care, show that [financial incentives alone are insufficient](#) enticements to attract and retain staff. Staff want decent pay and decent work, but they also want the support required to do their jobs well. Factors that enable good teaching practice include sufficient staffing, such as providing staff to cover paid non-child contact time for the completion of professional responsibilities, reflection with colleagues, professional learning, and opportunities to provide input into decisions that affect classroom practices. As with long-term care, standards for child care should be developed, applied across programs, and enforced as part of pending national child care legislation.



LEADERSHIP

Skilled supervision, leadership, and [ongoing professional learning](#) are the levers that promote quality child care. Enhanced public management should optimize administrative efficiencies, allowing centre directors to focus on pedagogical leadership. Supervisors also require opportunities to keep pace with the demands of their position. Their work is complex, with more children living in difficult environments. Professional development is required in the areas of mental health, health and safety, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, Indigenous ways of learning and knowing, and anti-racism.



CAREER ADVANCEMENT

A bachelor's degree with an early childhood education specialty, with certification for lead teachers and centre directors, should be required. Minimum requirements should be established that reflect foundational knowledge (credentialing) for all teaching staff. The workforce would benefit from a legislated association providing professional oversight and the promotion of best practices.

CREATING AN EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE SECTOR COUNCIL

Taken together, the above recommendations create the foundation for early learning and child care sector councils. Bringing together governments, associations of child care operators, training institutions, and ECE professional organizations would provide opportunities for consultation and problem solving as new child care systems emerge.

Decent work should be more than just a slogan; it must be the foundation of equitable and concerted public policies. Governments must prioritize decent work through strong legislation and equitable policies to ensure that children receive the high-quality early education and care they deserve.



TERMINOLOGY

The early childhood education workforce refers to persons working in early childhood services, including regulated group and home child care, Aboriginal Head Start, family support programs, settlement and health services, academia (training colleges and research), government administration and oversight, as well as school-operated Kindergarten, Pre-Kindergarten, Early Kindergarten, Junior Kindergarten, Nursery School, Pre-primary, Maternelle, and parent and child centres.

Early childhood educator (ECE) is the professional designation for individuals with post-secondary qualifications in early childhood development.

Qualified educators/workforce includes persons with post-secondary credentials in early childhood development.

Child care workers/workforce includes persons working in regulated group and home child care. Not all persons working with children in regulated child care are qualified ECEs.

Click here for a full list of terms and definitions: <https://ecereport.ca/en/resources/terms-definitions/>

