

Workforce Surveys

The following represents key findings from recent surveys of staff working in licensed child care.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Exploring early childhood educators' notions about professionalism in Prince Edward Island

"... Participants also talked about education and training, qualifications, and the desire to improve as important components of professionalization in early childhood. As Ezra stated: *'[It's important] that you have the qualifications. You can be straight out of college and still be more qualified than someone with a closed mind who's been there for 30 years. By being professional, I think it is the continuing education that you want, you have to want to be professional.'*" (p.26).

"The policy shift has definitely helped professionalize practice; it set something out that everyone should aspire to, and if we're all doing our job well, we should all be on the same page in saying this is our core, this is what we should all be aspiring to." (p.27).

"Participants articulated various reactions to change, both positive and negative (Kindergarten, Early Learning Framework). Some people embraced it and engaged in it as an opportunity for growth in their career and some had a hard time reconciling past learning with new expectations." (p.27).

"... Participants identified what they needed to continue advancing their profession as early childhood educators, and what they wanted or needed in order to continue in their own professional journey. *'...We need work time and substitutes for planning time,'* while Nick commented, *'I am still in the same place I was in 15 years ago where I am going out and buying supplies on my own dollar.'* Some participants noted a need for better communication within and beyond the EC sector with partners (e.g., referral processes for children with special needs)." (p. 29).

Source: O'Keefe, A.R., Hooper, S., & Jakubiec, B.A. (2019). [*"Exploring early childhood educators' notions about professionalism in Prince Edward Island."*](#) *Journal of Childhood Studies*, 20-36.

PEI Workforce Strategy Report

"In the last 24 months Early Years Centres: hired 137 staff who would be counted in child: staff ratio. Of these, 77 individuals held a certificate, diploma, or degree in ECE. Therefore, 56.2% of new recruits had an ECE certificate, diploma, or degree. However, the 77 people hired with ECE credentials are not necessarily people who are entirely new to the ECEC sector. Directors reported that 38% of staff who left their centre did so to take a job at another." (p. 27).

"82% of the employers who responded to the survey indicated that they had trouble recruiting and retaining qualified staff in the past year." (p.13).

"Once one centre loses a staff person it sets off a domino effect in that they recruit someone from another centre, who then must recruit, etc." (p.27).

Source: Flanagan, K. (2019). [*PEI Workforce Strategy Project*](#).

NOVA SCOTIA

Unappreciated and Underpaid: Early Childhood Educators in Nova Scotia

"The survey data indicates considerable discontentment about wages in the ECE workforce. One respondent wrote, *'Pay is horrible in child care in Nova Scotia.'* Another respondent wrote that ECEs are *'unappreciated and underpaid.'* Another wrote: *'ECEs need to be paid more for what they do.'* 22% thought that their pay was fair considering their background and skills. 67% felt that their salary does not adequately reflect the work that they do." (p.16).

"...[ECEs] report working 1.75 hours per week unpaid overtime at the centre (median) and an additional 2 hours outside of the centre (e.g. preparing work related materials at home). When employers were asked, only 29% said their centres offered paid time to communicate with parents and 50% offered regular paid preparation time." (p.21).

"A significant portion of ECEs do have access to paid sick days (77%), but a much smaller portion have access to paid personal leave days (41%). Only 29% felt they had enough time off for vacation. When asked about health benefits, 68.2% of ECEs report having access. Very few ECEs report access to private pension or RRSP benefits via their workplace (17.7%)." (p.22).

"9.1% of ECEs report having none of the benefits asked about in the question." (p.22).

"The practice that the fewest centres offered was paid time to communicate with parents (29%). 50% offered regular paid preparation time. Others mentioned having access to a *'professional development fund'* and an *'emergency staff fund.'*" (p.22).

"62% of respondents report having resigned from a childcare position before. ...Lack of promotion opportunities was also important with 19% of respondents citing this as a reason they left a previous position. The child care needs of ECEs was a key reason for leaving as well, whether because they couldn't pay for it, they didn't have access to it, or they choose to stay home with their own children." (p. 27).

"15% felt that they were not progressing in their job as rapidly as they would like. 6% felt that their chances for promotion were good. On a scale of 1–5, 49% felt that their job was very secure (5) and another 27% felt it was secure (4)." (p. 27).

Source: Saulnier, C. & Frank, L. (2019). [*Unappreciated and underpaid: Early Childhood Educators in Nova Scotia*](#). Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Nova Scotia Office: Halifax, NS.

ONTARIO

From Reopening to Recovery: A plan for child care reopening in Ontario and moving to a publicly funded system

"79% of respondents described they were either concerned, or very concerned, with being required to work in an environment in which they could not protect themselves. Similarly, 75% were concerned, or very concerned, with the prospect that their program will not have access to any necessary supplies for new health and safety protocols, while 73% were concerned, or very concerned, that their program would have difficulty implementing new health and safety procedures." (p.11).

"75% of respondents are concerned, or very concerned, they will not have enough staff in the program to truly support the needs of children and families in reintegrating to programs." (p.12).

"79% of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) and early years staff expressed concerns with their ability to engage in ethical care with children due to new health and safety protocols." (p.12).

“82% of respondents indicated it would be reassuring or very reassuring to have paid sick days. 81% wanted access to information on what to do if they felt unsafe at work.” (p.12).

“RECEs and early years staff expressed that having paid preparation time before returning to work was the most important support, with 83% responding this would be reassuring or very reassuring.” (p.12).

“Staff also wanted additional staff to support increased health and safety protocols (81%), smaller group sizes (76%), and lower ratios. (75%).” (p.12).

“74% of RECEs and early years staff suggested that access to trauma informed practice to support in reopening transitions would be reassuring, or very reassuring.” (p.12).

Quotes from participants:

“Work conditions in child care settings are very stressful and demanding without the threat of a virus. Illness is something we deal with regularly, and social distancing in a daycare setting is impossible...and goes against our pedagogy as Educators...” (p.1).

“I strongly believe that all RECEs/ECEs/EAs have been underpaid for a very, very long time, and this pandemic is a reminder that our services and care of the population’s children is one that is very much required within our communities. It is time that we are compensated for the work we provide, especially if we are going back to environments where we are risking our health and those of our own families.” (p.14).

Source: Powell, A., Ferns, C. (2020). [From Reopening to Recovery: A plan for child care reopening in Ontario and moving to a publicly funded system.](#)

ALBERTA

A Workforce Strategy for Early Childhood Educators

“In Alberta, only 41% of early childhood educators have a two-year post-secondary diploma; 16% have a one-year post-secondary certificate and 43% have a single course. By comparison, kindergarten teachers in Alberta require at least a four-year degree.” (Paragraph 9).

“The 2017 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey found that the average hourly wage for early childhood educators in Alberta was \$16.81. By comparison, the average hourly wage across all industries was \$28.39 — 69% higher. Early childhood educators in Alberta earned one-third less than educational assistants and significantly less than Alberta’s elementary school teachers, who earned an average of \$41.01 per hour.” (Paragraph 18).

“Staff turnover in the early learning and child care sector is estimated to be as high as 25% per year. High staff turnover is costly for program operators. And it has a negative impact on children and families who rely on stable, trusting, long-term relationships with early childhood educators.” (Paragraph 19).

“Alberta’s Occupational Outlook for 2019 – 2028 forecasts a shortage of 4,600 early childhood educators by 2028.” (Paragraph 20).

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta. (2020). [A Workforce Strategy For Early Childhood Educators.](#)

Quality Educators, Quality Care: The role of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta

“The 2017 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey reports that 62% of employers of early childhood educators had to recruit staff in the last two years. Of these, nearly 30% reported facing hiring difficulties and 6% had unfilled vacancies of over four months.” (p.9).

“39% of workers in the regulated sector are certified as child development assistants, which means they have completed a 54-hour course. By comparison, many entry-level dog groomers have completed a 160-hour course.” (p.9).

“Even qualified early childhood educators lack the funding and support they need for professional learning and growth.” (p.9).

Source: Lesoway, M. (May, 2018). [*Qualified Educators, Quality Care: The role of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta.*](#)

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Examination of Recruitment and Retention Issues within the Regulated Early Learning and Child Care Workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador: Final Report

Summary of key findings:

- The typical practitioner is female, started her career between 21–25 years, is now 36–40 years, and has dependent children.
- The percentage of practitioners with an ECE Certification has increased from 78.1% (2007) to 93.7% (2019). 50.8% hold trainee level certificates compared with 34.7% in 2007.
- The percentage of practitioners holding a two-year ECE diploma has increased by 6.9%, from 47.4% (in 2007) to a current level of 54.3%
- Low wages and lack of benefits are the primary challenges to recruitment. The same challenges as identified in 2007.
- 65.3% of practitioners anticipate that they will continue working in the sector, (12.6%) that they were leaving and 20.8% were undecided.
- 58.7% said wages most influence their decisions to move or stay working in child care.
- The average hourly wage (centre-based) increased from \$7.00 (2007) to \$14.58 in 2019. Average gross earnings of family child care providers increased to \$43,451 from \$22,200 in 2007.
- 21.1% of practitioners are actively seeking to upgrade their qualifications.
- The majority view is that an unacceptable number of practitioners do not hold at least Level 1 certification.
- Informants expressed great concern regarding the current wait list for access to distance learning.
- Raising the sector profile — All stakeholders emphasized the need to raise the profile of the sector, and that as such must be regarded as a foundational element to any strategy designed to address recruitment and retention. Many informants supported making early learning and child care a universal publicly funded system.
- At least 100 practitioners leave the sector each year, yet there are only 50 or so ECE graduates. If this trend continues it will be impossible for the sector to secure and maintain a qualified workforce; increasingly needing to rely on hiring unqualified candidates to fill vacancies.

Source: Don Gallant and Associates, March 2019. [*Examination of Recruitment and Retention Issues within the Regulated Early Learning and Child Care Workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador: Final Report.*](#) Prepared for: Early Childhood Educators Human Resource (ECEHR) Council.