

Child care workers in Canada ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpt from the overview

With provincially and territorially mandated lockdowns and restrictions on child care services imposed throughout the pandemic, child care workers experienced a 21% drop in employment from February 2020 to February 2021. This compares with a 3% decline in overall employment.

A new study released today, *Child care workers in Canada* ^[2], presents an overview of the personal and job characteristics of child care workers in Canada and how these characteristics may have changed over time.

The study shows that nearly 302,000 people were employed as child care workers in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The vast majority of them were women, accounting for 96% of early childhood educators and assistants, as well as home child care providers. It also found that child care workers were younger than the average worker in Canada, were overrepresented among immigrant workers and were more likely to be self-employed. In addition, the study found that they earned, on average, less than half the income of other workers.

The study, based on data from the Labour Force Survey and the 2016 Census, also examines how this specific group of workers has been impacted by the pandemic.

Immigrants and non-permanent residents are overrepresented among home child care workers

Immigrants and non-permanent residents were overrepresented among child care workers, particularly home child care workers. In 2016, 33% of child care workers were immigrants or non-permanent residents, compared with 25% of all other workers. Those working as home child care providers were much more likely than early childhood educators and assistants to be non-permanent residents (11% versus 1%), and somewhat more likely than early childhood educators and assistants to be immigrants (33% versus 27%).

In addition, child care workers were more likely than all other workers to belong to a population group designated as a visible minority. Specifically, 39% of home child care providers belonged to such a group, compared with 24% of early childhood educators and assistants and 21% of all other workers.

Filipino workers were particularly overrepresented among home child care providers—21% of all workers in this occupation in Canada were Filipinos, compared with 3% for all other occupations.

Quebec has the highest proportion of child care workers

Based on data from the 2016 Census, Ontario (35%) and Quebec (33%) accounted for the largest share of child care workers, reflecting their larger proportion of the total employed population. When the distributions of early childhood educators and assistants and home child care providers are examined separately by province and territory, early childhood educators and assistants were more likely to work in Quebec; however, Ontario had proportionally more home child care providers. In Quebec, the higher number of early childhood educators and assistants relative to home child care providers can be explained in part by the high number of organized child care establishments (*centres de la petite enfance*).

The ratio of child care workers to the total employed population also varied by province and territory. In 2016, Quebec (2.4%) had the highest proportion of child care workers among all provinces and territories, while Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest (1.2% each).

These differences can be explained in part by provincial and territorial differences in child care programs. For example, Quebec's partially subsidized child care program offers the lowest cost of child care in Canada and, as a result, a greater proportion of parents use child care services in this province. Other factors, such as the age structure of the population, family composition and the employment characteristics of mothers, at the provincial and territorial level, may also explain these differences.

In 2019, one in four child care workers is self-employed

Data from the Labour Force Survey show that child care workers were more likely to be self-employed than other workers. In 2019, 25% were self-employed, compared with 15% among all other workers.

Child care workers who were paid employees were less likely than other workers to be members of a union or to be covered by a collective agreement (26% vs. 31%), and to have a permanent job (82% vs. 88%).

Furthermore, they earned less than other workers overall. In 2015, the average annual employment income of all child care workers (\$24,100) was less than half that of other workers (\$53,800). This difference was particularly pronounced for home child care providers, whose earnings (\$17,300) were notably lower than those of early childhood educators and assistants (\$26,800).

Despite the recent employment losses in this sector during the pandemic, the number of child care workers is expected to grow, in response to the planned investment in the 2021 federal budget for a new Canada-wide early learning and child care plan.

Excerpts from study

This study uses data from the Census of Population and the Labour Force Survey to examine the personal and job characteristics of child care workers and how some of these characteristics have changed over time. It also studies the changes in employment among child care workers since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Based on data from the Labour Force Survey, in 2019, there were nearly 302,000 individuals employed as child care workers across Canada, making up 1.6% of the total employed population.
- According to the 2016 Census of Population, approximately one-third of child care workers are immigrants or non-permanent residents, while they represent one-quarter of workers in all other occupations.
- The self-employment rate among child care workers is higher than the rate for all other workers in Canada, though it has been declining over time. In 2019, 25% of child care workers were self-employed, down from 59% in 1987. By comparison, 15% of all other workers were self-employed in 2019.
- Paralleling the rise in dual-earner families over time and the demand for child care services, the proportion of child care workers working full time has been increasing over time. In 1987, 57% of them worked 30 hours or more per week. This proportion had increased to 76% by 2019.
- Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, employment among child care workers has fluctuated more, compared with employment in Canada as a whole. In February 2021, a year after the pandemic hit Canada, employment among child care workers was 21% below that in February 2020. In comparison, total employment in Canada decreased by 3% over the same period.

Region: Canada ^[5]

Tags: child care workforce ^[6]

economics ^[7]

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