



British Columbia

■ OVERVIEW

In British Columbia, early learning and child care (ELCC) includes kindergarten, centre-based child care, and licensed family child care. All ELCC programs are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Child Care. Responsibility for child care passed from the Ministry of Children and Family Development in April 2022. The Ministry of Health continues to oversee child care licensing.

Full school-day kindergarten is available to all five-year-olds. Kindergarten attendance is not compulsory.

Licensed centre-based care includes full-day centres, part-day preschools, and before- and after-school programs. Centre-based child care is delivered by for-profit and non-profit operators, with some publicly operated spaces. Sixty-seven percent of full-day centre spaces are for-profit.

Family child care providers are individually licensed.

British Columbia has two parallel approaches to fee reduction: a gradual increase in the number of programs charging a flat parent fee of \$10/day, and funding for the remainder of centres and family child care providers to reduce fees by up to \$900 per child per month (approximately 50% reduction based on 2019 levels).

Parent fee subsidies through the Affordable Child Care Benefit further reduce fees for eligible parents in licensed and unlicensed child care.

British Columbia introduced the [Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement](#) in 2018, which was most recently increased by \$2, effective December 2023. Certified early childhood educators working in eligible licensed child care can receive up to \$6/hour of wage enhancement to a monthly maximum of 195 hours.¹ British Columbia is testing a wage grid as part of the test of the ChildCareBC operating funding model (initiated in December 2023), in which a selection of child care sites are participating. British Columbia will be gathering information through this test, which will be used to refine the wage grid.

¹ The \$6/hour wage enhancement is available to early childhood educators (ECEs) employed by non-public sector; whereas the \$4/hour wage enhancement is available to ECEs working for public sector employers, provided they have reached a local agreement with their union to amend their collective agreements to implement the wage enhancement.

British Columbia signed the Canada-British Columbia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (Multilateral Framework Agreement) on February 23, 2018. This agreement allocated \$152 million over three years; it was extended on September 18, 2020, with an additional \$52.3 million allocated to the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year, and renewed on August 12, 2021, with another \$272 allocated over four years.

The Canada-British Columbia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreement was signed by British Columbia on July 8, 2021. This agreement allocated \$3.21 billion over five years. The Canada-wide agreement does not replace but runs parallel to the Multilateral Framework Agreement.

Net growth in full-day centre spaces for children 0 – 5 years since CWELCC

| | 2021 | 2023 | Increase (decrease) 2021 – 2023 |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| For-profit | 38,023 | 44,677 | +6,654 |
| Non-profit and public | 20,567 | 21,808 | +1,241 |
| Total full-day spaces | 58,590 | 66,485 | +7,895 |

| | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Percentage of full-day spaces that were for-profit | 65% | 67% | +2% |
| Percentage of growth of full-day spaces that was for-profit | | | 84% |

Family child care spaces (2021, 2023)

| | 2021 | 2023 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|
| Family child care spaces | 12,729 | 12,342 |

■ PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Some of the following figures are rounded, while totals are based on exact figures and may therefore not equal the sum of the rounded figures.

Number of children 0 – 12 years (2023 rounded estimate)

| Age | Number of children (2023) |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| 0 | 36,800 |
| 1 | 40,400 |
| 2 | 40,700 |
| 3 | 43,700 |
| 4 | 46,400 |
| 5 | 47,800 |
| 6 | 50,500 |
| 7 | 51,500 |
| 8 | 48,800 |
| 9 | 53,900 |
| 10 | 49,300 |
| 11 | 44,400 |
| 12 | 48,900 |
| Total | 603,000 |

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2023 rounded estimate)

| <i>Age</i> | <i>Number of children (2023)</i> |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 0 – 2 | 117,900 |
| 3 – 5 | 137,900 |
| 6 – 12 | 347,300 |
| Total | 603,000 |

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2023 rounded estimate)

| <i>Age</i> | <i>Number of children (2023)</i> |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 0 | 23,200 |
| 1 | 27,700 |
| 2 | 25,800 |
| 3 | 31,300 |
| 4 | 30,800 |
| 5 | 32,700 |
| 6 | 35,300 |
| 7 | 33,600 |
| 8 | 31,700 |
| 9 | 37,700 |
| 10 | 32,700 |
| 11 | 30,100 |
| 12 | 33,300 |
| Total | 405,700 |

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (aggregated) (2023 rounded estimate)

| <i>Age</i> | <i>Number of children (2023)</i> |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 0 – 2 | 76,700 |
| 3 – 5 | 94,800 |
| 6 – 12 | 234,400 |
| Total | 405,700 |

Number of children 0 – 14 years identifying with an Indigenous group (2021)

| <i>Age</i> | <i>First Nations</i> | <i>Métis</i> | <i>Inuk (Inuit)</i> | <i>Multiple</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 0 – 4 | 12,610 | 6,025 | 120 | 570 | 240 |
| 5 – 9 | 15,260 | 7,905 | 165 | 670 | 315 |
| 10 – 14 | 16,780 | 8,190 | 180 | 685 | 355 |
| Total | 44,650 | 22,120 | 465 | 1,925 | 910 |

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2023 rounded estimate)

| <i>Age of youngest child</i> | <i>Number of mothers</i> | <i>Participation rate (%)</i> |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 0 – 3 | 96,600 | 78.5 |
| 4 – 5 | 43,900 | 79.0 |
| 0 – 5 | 140,600 | 78.7 |
| 6 – 12 | 125,800 | 83.4 |

Living arrangements by age of child by number of parents (2021)

| <i>Age</i> | <i>Living with two parents</i> | <i>Living with one parent</i> | <i>Lone mother</i> | <i>Lone father</i> |
|------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 0 – 4 | 189,400 | 24,310 | 19,465 | 4,845 |
| 5 – 9 | 198,595 | 41,710 | 32,335 | 9,370 |
| 10 – 14 | 195,210 | 55,305 | 42,685 | 12,620 |

Languages spoken most often at home (2021)

| <i>Age</i> | <i>English</i> | <i>French</i> | <i>Non-official</i> | <i>Multiple</i> |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 0 – 4 | 172,590 | 890 | 33,620 | 9,555 |
| 5 – 9 | 203,035 | 970 | 27,875 | 12,355 |
| 10 – 14 | 215,180 | 900 | 26,310 | 13,210 |
| Total | 590,800 | 2,760 | 87,805 | 35,115 |

Median after-tax income among families with children 0 – 5 years (2020)

| <i>Two-parent families</i> | <i>Male lone parent</i> | <i>Female lone parent</i> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| \$108,000 | \$54,000 | \$45,200 |

KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten enrolment (2023)

| <i>Enrolment in public schools</i> | <i>Full school-day</i> | <i>Part-day</i> |
|---|------------------------|-----------------|
| Kindergarten for 5-year-olds | 39,798 | |
| <i>Enrolment in independent/private schools</i> | | |
| Kindergarten for 5-year-olds | 6,477 | 185 |
| Total kindergarten enrolment | | 46,460 |

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT CHILD CARE

First Nations child care on reserves

British Columbia licenses on-reserve child care by invitation of a First Nation.

The most recent available data on licensed child care on reserves in British Columbia is from 2021. In 2021, there were 110 licensed centre-based child care programs on First Nations reserves. There were 636 licensed spaces for school-age children. The number of spaces for children younger than school-age is not available.

The number of unlicensed child care facilities on reserves is not available.

There were 91 licensed family child care providers on reserves in 2021.

Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR) programs may be licensed by invitation. As of 2021, there were seven licensed AHSOR programs on reserves, operating 153 spaces.

Indigenous child care other than on reserves

The most recent available data on licensed off-reserve Indigenous-led or -focused child care in British Columbia is from 2021. In 2021, there were 239 licensed child care programs not on reserve, with approximately 6,600 spaces for children 0 – 12 years. Approximately 900 of those spaces were part-day preschool spaces.

All Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) programs are licensed by the province. In 2021, there were 10 licensed AHSUNC programs operating 153 spaces.

CHILD CARE SPACE STATISTICS

Number of regulated spaces (March 31, 2023)

Full-day centre spaces

| | |
|--|--------|
| Infant/toddler (<36 months) | 18,553 |
| Preschool-age (30 months – 5 years, not yet in school) | 43,989 |

Total full-day centre spaces (children 0 – 5 years) 62,542

Part-day centre spaces

| | |
|--|--------|
| Preschool-age (30 months – 5 years, not yet in school) | 17,954 |
|--|--------|

Other centre spaces

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Multi-age (18 months – 5 years, not yet in school) | 3,943 |
| Occasional care (18 months – 5 years, not yet in school) | Not available |

Total centre spaces (children 0 – 5 years) 84,439

Before- and after-school care centre spaces (licensed or regulated)

| | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Children in kindergarten | 8,929 |
| Children in Grades 1 – 6 | 33,343 |

Note: The split between kindergarten and Grades 1 – 6 spaces is an estimate based on Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) enrolment figures.

Total before- and after-school care spaces 42,272

Total centre spaces (children 0 – 12 years) 126,711

Note: These figures include spaces at \$10 a Day ChildCareBC sites and represent 2022 – 2023 monthly average spaces.

Regulated family child care (licensed capacity)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Full-day (children not yet in school) | 11,540 |
| Part-day (children attending school) | 802 |

Total regulated family child care spaces 12,342

Note: Enrolment data in family child care is not available.

TOTAL REGULATED SPACES

(centre spaces and family child care licensed capacity) 139,053

Number of child care centres and family child care homes (March 31, 2023)

Centre-based child care

Total number of centres 3,558

Note: Some facilities in British Columbia serving more than one age group in the same facility are licensed as different centres. As a result, the total number of centres may be larger than the total number of facilities.

Centre-based programs

| | |
|---|-------|
| Number of centres providing a full-day program | 2,331 |
| Number of centres providing a part-day (nursery or preschool) program | 907 |
| Number of centres providing a part-day program for children attending school (approximately 5 – 12 years) | 1,354 |
| Number of centres providing infant and toddler care | 1,071 |
| Number of full-day centres providing preschool-age care | 1,661 |
| Number of centres providing non-standard hours care (non-standard hours as defined by the province) | 392 |
| Number of centres in publicly delivered and funded schools (K – 12) | 803 |

Regulated family child care

| | |
|--|-------|
| Number of individually licensed family child care homes (active) | 1,694 |
|--|-------|

Participation in CWELCC as of March 31, 2023

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Number of child care centres | 2,761 |
| Number of family child care homes | 1,553 |

Note: Provision for children older than 0 – 5 years in school-age centres is not eligible for CWELCC funding.

Municipal delivery

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Number of municipalities or municipal entities operating child care centres (i.e. are the licence holder) | Not available |
|---|---------------|

Auspice

Full- and part-day programs by auspice (2023)

| | <i>Number of centres</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| For-profit | 2,043 |
| Non-profit and public | 1,515 |

Centre spaces by auspice

| | <i>Full-day</i> | <i>Part-day¹</i> | <i>BASC²</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| For-profit | 44,677 | 8,120 | 16,306 | 69,103 |
| Non-profit and public | 21,808 | 9,834 | 25,965 | 57,607 |

¹ Nursery/preschool.

² Before- and after-school care (children 5 – 12 years).

\$10 a Day ChildCareBC

\$10 a Day ChildCareBC sites

| | <i>Number of centres/homes</i> | <i>Number of spaces</i> |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| For-profit | 13 | 475 |
| Non-profit and public | 156 | 8,023 |
| Family child care homes | 5 | 35 |
| Number of children receiving a fee subsidy in \$10 a Day ChildCareBC sites | <i>Not available</i> | <i>Not available</i> |

Fee subsidies

Number of children receiving fee subsidies (March 31, 2023)

| | |
|--------------------|--------|
| Number of children | 38,090 |
|--------------------|--------|

Disability support

Special needs/disability support (March 31, 2023)

| | |
|--|-------|
| Children in licensed child care receiving special needs/disability support funding | 2,724 |
|--|-------|

■ CHILD CARE ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Number of children enrolled in regulated centre-based programs (March 31, 2023)

Full-day centres

| | |
|--|--------|
| Infant/toddler (<36 months) | 24,051 |
| Preschool-age (36 months – 5 years, not yet in school) | 45,369 |

Part-day centres

| | |
|--|--------|
| Preschool-age (30 months – 5 years, not yet in school) | 24,577 |
|--|--------|

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Other | |
| Multi-age (18 months – 5 years, not yet in school) | 261 |
| Occasional (18 months – 5 years, not yet in school) | Not applicable |
| Total centre enrolment (children 0 – 5 years) | 94,259 |

| | |
|--|--------|
| Before- and after-school care (licensed or regulated) | |
| Children in kindergarten | 8,645 |
| Children in Grades 1 – 6 | 28,820 |

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Total number of children in kindergarten and Grades 1 – 6 enrolled in before- and after-school care | 40,290 |
|--|---------------|

Note: The number of children in kindergarten and the number of children in Grades 1 – 6 enrolled in before- and after-school care does not include those enrolled in a \$10 a Day ChildCareBC space, as age breakdowns are not available. The total number of children enrolled in before- and after-school care includes those in a \$10 a Day ChildCareBC space.

| | |
|---|----------------|
| TOTAL CENTRE ENROLMENT (children 0 – 12 years) | 134,548 |
|---|----------------|

■ PARENT FEES

British Columbia has two approaches to lowering child care fees. The majority of service providers receive a fee reduction through the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI) on behalf of parents, according to the age of the child and type of care.

A growing number of service providers receive core funding to offer child care for children 0 – 5 years at \$10/day. As of March 31, 2023, \$10/day spaces accounted for 8% of all licensed centre-based spaces for children 0 – 5 years.

As of April 1, 2021, to be eligible for the CCFRI, newly established child care facilities and those that have changed ownership or location must charge fees at or below the Affordability Benchmark for fees in the region for the same type of care. All providers participating in the CCFRI must limit annual fee increases to three percent of the regional median fee.²

2 Some providers facing exceptional circumstances (defined in the CCFRI funding guidelines) can raise their fees up to 10% of their regional median.

Full-time median monthly fees for centres and family child care homes in British Columbia (2021, 2023)

| | Full-time median monthly fee (2021) | Full-time median monthly fee (2023) |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Burnaby | | |
| Infant | \$1,145 | \$636 |
| Toddler | \$1,145 | \$636 |
| Preschool-age | \$890 | \$655 |
| Kelowna | | |
| Infant | \$980 | \$471 |
| Toddler | \$980 | \$471 |
| Preschool-age | \$900 | \$490 |
| Richmond | | |
| Infant | \$1,450 | \$905 |
| Toddler | \$1,450 | \$905 |
| Preschool-age | \$1,275 | \$800 |
| Surrey | | |
| Infant | \$1,120 | \$675 |
| Toddler | \$1,120 | \$675 |
| Preschool-age | \$925 | \$666 |
| Vancouver | | |
| Infant | \$1,200 | \$620 |
| Toddler | \$1,200 | \$620 |
| Preschool-age | \$1,015 | \$530 |

Note: These median monthly figures include fees from centre-based child care and regulated family child care.

Sources: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2023). *Measuring Matters: Assessing Canada's progress toward \$10-a-day child care for all*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2022). *Game Changer: Will provinces and territories meet the new federal child care fee targets? Canadian child care fees 2021*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

■ WORKFORCE

British Columbia introduced [Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement](#) in 2018, with the most recent increase effective December 2023. Certified early childhood educators working in eligible licensed child care can receive up to \$6/hour of wage enhancement to a monthly maximum of 195 hours. British Columbia is testing a wage grid as part of the test of the ChildCareBC operating funding model (initiated in December 2023), in which a selection of child care sites are participating. British Columbia will be gathering information through this test, which will be used to refine the wage grid.

■ FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (Fiscal year 2022 – 2023)

The funding figures in each category represent provincial spending, which may include both provincial funds and federal funds transferred under bilateral agreements, Canada-wide ELCC agreements, or other federal programs used for early learning and child care.

Fee subsidies

| Program | Amount |
|--|----------------------|
| Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB) | \$157,953,000 |
| Single Parent Employment Initiative (SPEI) | \$255,812 |
| Young Parent Program (YPP) | \$827,879 |
| Total fee subsidies | \$159,036,691 |

Note: These are fee subsidies in licensed or unlicensed child care. The subsidies are associated with an individual child and family. There are provincial eligibility criteria. Fee subsidies are sent to service providers, not to parents, except for care provided in the child's own home.

Operational funding

| Program | Amount |
|--|----------------------|
| Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) | \$128,638,000 |
| Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI) | \$290,151,000 |
| \$10 a Day ChildCareBC sites | \$98,719,937 |
| Child Care ECE Wage Enhancement (ECE WE) | \$98,787,000 |
| Aboriginal/Supported Child Development Program (A/SCD) | \$33,609,000 |
| Aboriginal Head Start | \$39,185,000 |
| Total operational funding | \$689,089,937 |

Note: Operational funding includes regularly paid public funding that contributes to the ongoing operation of the child care service. It may include: operating grants or formula-based funding, family child care agency operating funds, wage grants/enhancement, special needs funding, and other grants/funding that is paid on a recurring basis.

One-time funding – capital (major and minor)

| Program | Amount |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Child Care BC Maintenance Fund | \$530,691 |
| Childcare BC New Spaces Fund | \$263,383,000 |
| Start Up Grants | \$469,000 |
| First Nations Grants | \$59,631,421 |
| Total one-time funding | \$324,014,112 |

Note: One-time funding is paid occasionally or just once to a child care service and is not part of the regular operating budget. It may include: major capital, minor capital, start up, one time equipment, or repair funding.

TOTAL SPENDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (fee subsidies, operational funding, and one-time funding) \$1,172,140,740

Other ELCC funding

| Program | Amount |
|---|---------------------|
| Child Care Resource & Referral Program (CCRR) | \$17,117,000 |
| ELCC District Lead | \$8,760,000 |
| Early Childhood Pedagogy Network | \$4,804,000 |
| Others | \$4,672,000 |
| Total other funding | \$35,353,000 |

Federal transfers to British Columbia

| <i>Federal transfer</i> | <i>Amount</i> |
|---|---------------|
| Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework – Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements | \$70,093,000 |
| Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care | \$538,651,000 |

Note: The federal transfers above represent the funds allocated to British Columbia for fiscal year 2022 – 2023. These funds may be slightly different from those included in the original agreements as they are updated in line with population estimates on an annual basis. They do not represent funds carried over from the previous fiscal year or carried into the next fiscal year.

Source: Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat, Employment and Social Development Canada (2024).
