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Early childhood education and care in Canada 2023
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■ LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) team lives and works across Turtle Island, on the land now called Canada. We are located in downtown Toronto, the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples, the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. This territory is covered by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, a treaty between the Three Fires Confederacy, the Iroquois Confederacy, and allied nations promising to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Working towards a universally accessible, publicly funded, inclusive early learning and child care (ELCC) system in all of Canada cannot be done without First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives defining what the aspects of this system mean to Indigenous children, families, and communities. As a Canada-wide policy research organization, CRRU commits to continuously examining and acting on its role and responsibility in working proactively with Indigenous stakeholders to address systemic barriers preventing Inuit, First Nations, and Métis communities from participating in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services anchored in their knowledge and ways of living.

■ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From its beginnings at the end of the 1980s, developing this report has been a collective effort, relying on the knowledge and cooperation of a number of individuals and organizations. We especially wish to acknowledge and thank the provincial/territorial early learning and child care officials who have provided the core data and information for so many years. As with other versions of *ECEC in Canada*, we underscore that this publication would not have been possible without the expertise and collaboration of these officials. We extend our gratitude to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat (Employment and Social Development Canada), Statistics Canada, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Early Childhood Development Working Group, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, and Christa Japel who offered advice and/or provided additional data used in this report. Huge thanks to social research assistants Laura Feltham and Alisha Tax for working with us to get the final publication out, and to Billie Carroll, Sonya V. Thursby, and Jocelyne Tougas who continue to provide their superb graphic, website, and translation work to CRRU.



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Canada


■ ABOUT THE CHILDCARE RESOURCE AND RESEARCH UNIT

The Childcare Resource and Research Unit is an independent, non-partisan policy research institute that focuses on early childhood education and care and social and family policy. Its mandate is to work towards a universal, high quality, publicly funded, and inclusive ECEC system. CRRU works collaboratively with other researchers, non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups, and government policy makers across multiple levels of government and the early childhood education community. We operate on the premise that the best possible evidence about policy and practice, drawn from multidisciplinary research and policy analysis, has a key role to play in informing, developing, and interpreting public policy. All CRRU publications may be downloaded at no cost from the [CRRU website](#).

■ ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is the 14th version of *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada* developed by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit. The report series has served as Canada's sole source of consistently, reliably collected and presented cross-jurisdictional, longitudinal data and information about regulated child care, kindergarten, and parental leave. The publications provide relevant demographic information, profiles of ECEC services and policies in each province/territory, and information on kindergarten and child care including funding, regulations, the workforce, governance, and spaces by age, type, and auspice. A series of summary tables presents longitudinal data across Canada, providing a retrospective view of trends from 1992 to the present. For further details, see the [Backgrounder](#).

This report is a short version of *ECEC in Canada*, featuring numerical data for the period 2021 – 2023, together with limited descriptive information. The numerical data are specific (as much as possible) to this version's snapshot date, March 2023. It will be followed in 2025 by *ECEC in Canada 2024*, which will be longer and more detailed, similar to previous versions. The 15th version will include 2024 data and up-to-date descriptive information about policy, programs, funding, and much more. For further detailed information through April 2023, please refer back to [ECEC in Canada 2021](#).



The data for this report follow the first phase of implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan and its substantial new federal funding. CWELCC, through agreements between the federal government and provinces/territories, is focused on fulfilling agreed-upon aspirations. Thus, this version of *ECEC in Canada* forms part of the tool kit for governments, researchers, and the community to assess CWELCC’s progress, opportunities, and remaining gaps. Consequently, it is important that the data in this report are reliable and consistently collected and presented using clear and transparent methodology.

One of *ECEC in Canada*’s hallmarks has been that its data are relatively consistent and comparable, despite the challenge of comparing administrative data collected differently by multiple jurisdictions. CRRU’s methodology, which has been strengthened over the years (most notably for the 2021 version), includes the following elements:

- a) Focus on provincial/territorial data and information as the centrepiece of the reports;
- b) Inclusion of relevant Statistics Canada demographic data, federal data, and information and data from other research sources;
- c) Refinement and clarification of terms, concepts, timelines, and units of analysis across jurisdictions and over time;
- d) Collection and refinement of provincial/territorial data through common working “templates” and short, topical questionnaires for each jurisdiction’s review, completion, and comments, both in writing and by meeting when necessary; and
- e) Ongoing assessment and modification of data collection and review methods.

In presenting data from two years after the initial federal early learning and child care announcement in 2021, this *ECEC in Canada* report can be a useful tool for assessing and improving early learning and child care provision Canada-wide.

■ DATA SOURCES

In addition to the sources listed below, provincial/territorial data in this report were primarily provided by provincial/territorial or federal officials or, in a few instances, obtained from publicly available sources. The sources for any other data or information are included as notes throughout the document.

Number of children 0 – 12 years (2023)

Special tabulation based on the Labour Force Survey, 2023 Annual Average. Conducted by Statistics Canada.



Children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2023)

Special tabulation based on the Labour Force Survey, 2023 Annual Average. Conducted by Statistics Canada.

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

Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (2023 annual), Table 14-10-0396-01.

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

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census, Table 98-10-0075-01.

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

Children 0 – 14 years by marital status of family

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census, Table 98-10-0135-01.

Children 0 – 14 years identifying with an Indigenous group (2021)

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census, Table 98-10-0264-01.

Children 0 – 14 years by language spoken most often at home (2021)

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census, Table 98-10-0169-01.

Parent fees

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 Centre for Policy Alternatives.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit early learning and child care

Public Health Agency of Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, First Nations Health Authority (British Columbia), provincial/territorial officials.