



## ***Early childhood education and care in Canada: Background information***

### **Context**

Between 1992 and 2023, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) has developed thirteen versions of *ECEC in Canada*. This [13-report series](#) is unique in a number of ways. As such, it has to date reliably served as Canada's sole source of consistently collected and presented, cross-Canada, longitudinal data and information about regulated child care, kindergarten and parental leave.

This is not to suggest that *ECEC in Canada* fills all data gaps; Canada continues to have many data and research gaps. To a large extent, it has been through the process of developing *ECEC in Canada* that CRRU has developed expertise on Canadian child care data and data relevant to ELCC more generally.

### ***ECEC in Canada over the years***

- Between 1992 and 2006, with the support of federal funding through contribution agreements from Human Resources Development Canada (ESDC's predecessor), CRRU assembled and published pan-Canadian data about early learning and child care about every two years. CRRU was funded by the federal government under successive federal programs supporting applied research and capacity building in child care, and *ECEC in Canada* was funded as part of CRRU's core commitment to knowledge and resource generation.
- After federal funding for child care research, development and community capacity building ended in 2006, CRRU competed for and won two federal contracts through MERX to develop the 2008 and 2010 versions of *ECEC in Canada*. The second of these contracts specified that the intellectual property for the 2010 version would belong to the federal government, not CRRU. Thus, the 2010 version was published by the Government of Canada under a different title, although the process and content are consistent with previous and later editions.
- CRRU then developed and published the "thinner" 2012 and 2014 versions using a mix of funds we were able to gather together from other than federal sources. These included funds and donations from unions and foundations, contributions of pro bono work and online "crowd funding" which raised donations from many supportive individuals and organizations to contribute to funding the work.

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- Following the 2015 federal election and a change of government, CRRU approached Employment and Social Development Canada for funds for *ECEC in Canada* once again. The 2016 version was again federally funded through a contribution agreement (ESDC) and published by CRRU in 2018. The next version, also funded by the federal government, began very late in the cycle, so became *ECEC in Canada 2019*, not 2018. It was published in December, 2020.
- The 13<sup>th</sup> edition, *ECEC in Canada 2021* covers the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent introduction of a Canada-wide early learning and child care program. Its numerical data represents the snapshot date of March 2021 and the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year but its policy and programme information cover the period up to its publication in April 2023. The 13<sup>th</sup> edition was funded by the federal government under a contribution agreement with ESDC.

### ***ECEC in Canada* content**

*ECEC in Canada's* data has come primarily from administrative data/information provided to us by provincial/territorial officials through a consistent process developed over the years. *ECEC in Canada* also uses a range of other data from Statistics Canada (including some data from special runs we have commissioned) and from a variety of other sources. Where these are available and appropriate, they and the administrative data are synthesized to make up each report.

Thus, *ECEC in Canada* uses and synthesizes both administrative data and data from a variety of other available sources.

The successive publications provide profiles of ECEC services and policies in each province/territory—information on kindergarten, child care—spaces by age, type and auspice, funding, regulations, the workforce, governance, parental leave and more. A series of summary tables present key information and data across Canada and over time, covering the period 1992 to the present in a consistent manner.

### ***ECEC in Canada's* main strengths**

- It includes as wide a variety of ELCC data as is available in one easily accessible source. As a result, *ECEC in Canada* is used widely by policy makers, academic and other researchers, the media, the ELCC field, other organizations, international, community and commercial venues.
- Its presentation of longitudinal data permits a retrospective view and assessment of trends over time—from 1992 to the present.
- Despite the challenges of working with administrative data collected in different ways by multiple jurisdictions, the reports have been developed to be reasonably comparable across Canada.
- It has proven to be, and is regarded as, a reliable source of accurate ELCC data, due to the systematic vetting and review each edition undergoes—a process that involves extensive review by CRRU, consultation with, verification and "sign off" by

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- provincial/territorial officials, and support from other ELCC experts.
- It has been produced predictably, so policy makers, researchers, civil society organizations and the ELCC field have come to expect it to appear about every two years.
  - It has evolved over time so as to reflect shifts in the ELCC field (for example, the shift from “day care” to “early childhood education and care”, the growth of full-school day and four-year-old kindergarten, expansion of parental leave, etc.).
  - It has adopted a neutral, based-on-the-numbers-and-information non-polemic content and tone.
  - It is accessible to a wide audience, as it is available at no cost on line, is broken up into manageable, downloadable pieces, is designed to be user-friendly technically and visually, and is "durable" (it does not, for example, rely on links to documents that may become broken links or on links to general Statistics Canada data pages, although the number of these includes for additional reference has increased with the 13<sup>th</sup> version).

### ***ECEC in Canada is unique in Canada***

- *ECEC in Canada* has been developed through a collaborative working process with provincial/territorial officials who provide the bulk of the data and information and other researchers and experts who have typically provided advice, consultation, review and data.
- CRRU's approach to conceptualizing, vetting and synthesizing the data and information has been systematic, transparent and consistent across Canada and over time.
- The data and information are reliably accurate. The development process ensures that the data and information are as correct as we can make them.
- The data and information are as complete as the available sources and data gaps allow.
- The data and its presentation are neutral, factual and not arbitrary, judgmental or divisive.
- *ECEC in Canada 2021* numerical information represents baseline data prior to the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) plan being implemented by provinces/territories.

*Early childhood education and care in Canada* is now published only online. All versions of it are available on the [Childcare Resource and Research Unit website](https://www.childcarecanada.org).

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