



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

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

Between 1992 and 2026, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) has developed [fifteen versions](#) of *Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Canada* and several accompanying reports. This report series is unique in a number of ways, reliably serving as Canada's sole source of consistently collected and presented, cross-Canada, longitudinal data and information about regulated child care, kindergarten, and parental leave.

From 1992 and 2006, with the support of federal contribution agreement funding from Human Resources Development Canada (Employment and Social Development Canada 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 programs for child care research, development and community capacity building ended in 2006, CRRU competed for two federal contracts 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 gathered from sources other than federal funding. These included funds and donations from unions and foundations, pro bono contributions, and online "crowd funding," which raised donations from many supportive individuals and organizations.

Following the 2015 federal election and a change of government, CRRU approached Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) for funds for *ECEC in Canada* once again.

The 2016 version was again federally funded through a contribution agreement with ESDC and was published by CRRU in 2018. The next version, also funded by the federal government, began very late in the cycle, so it became *ECEC in Canada 2019*, not 2018. It was published in December, 2020.

The 13th edition, *ECEC in Canada 2021*, covers the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent introduction of the Canada-wide early learning and child care (CWELCC) 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 13th edition was funded by the federal government under a contribution agreement with ESDC.

The next editions of *ECEC in Canada, 2023 and 2024/2025*, and the *Interim Space Statistics* reports, covered by one federal contribution agreement, cover the period from the implementation of CWELCC through the end of the first round of agreements. The 2024/2025 report captures the many policy and provision changes motivated by this significant change to Canadian child care.

### ***ECEC in Canada's content***

*ECEC in Canada's* data comes primarily from administrative data/information provided by provincial/territorial officials through a consistent process developed and refined over the years. *ECEC in Canada* also uses data from Statistics Canada (including some data from special runs commissioned) and from a variety of other sources. Where these are available and appropriate, it and the administrative data are synthesized to make up each report. 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 presents 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 a wide a variety of ELCC data 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 Early Learning and Child Care (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 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 terminology 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 uses 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 online, is broken up into manageable, downloadable pieces, is designed to be user-friendly and inclusive technically and visually.

### ***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.

*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](#) at no user-charge.

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