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# Child care centre workers serving children aged 0 to 5 years in Canada, 2021 to 2022



by Thomas J. Charters and Leanne C. Findlay

Release date: December 19, 2024



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# ***Child care centre workers serving children aged 0 to 5 years in Canada, 2021 to 2022***

by *Thomas J. Charters and Leanne C. Findlay*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202401200004-eng>

## **Abstract**

In 2021, the federal government of Canada committed over \$27.2 billion in funding through bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories towards building a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system. As part of these agreements, a multilateral workforce strategy was proposed in recognition of the central role of child care workers in providing high quality child care services, and the need to attract and retain qualified and committed individuals in the sector. This study fills information gaps related to the centre-based child care workforce providing care to children aged 0 to 5 years. First, it describes the composition, training and roles of employees in child care centres; pay and benefits; and turnover. Second, it describes how these differed across models of service delivery, jointly determined by ownership (not-for-profit or government-operated, or for-profit) and organizational structure (single site or multisite). This study uses the 2022 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services, the first national survey to give an overview of child care services in Canada from the perspective of child care providers. A typical centre offering full-time services had about 12 employees on average, of whom about two-thirds were staff providing direct care to children. About three-quarters of centres provided benefits to employees, and about two-thirds of centre budgets were allocated toward paying employee wages. Turnover and vacancies in centres were highest for employee positions requiring training in early childhood education. Models of service delivery were frequently associated with differences in the characteristics of centres and staff, particularly in relation to employee pay and benefits.

Keywords: early learning and child care, centre-based child care, licensed care, child care workforce

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## Introduction

Use of child care in Canada has increased over time with a notable increase in the use of centre-based child care for children aged 0 to 5 years. Among children with employed mothers, use of centre-based care rose from 6% of children aged 0 to 5 in 1973 to 34% in 2023 (Cleveland, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2023). Child care spaces in licensed centres have correspondingly increased from an estimated 200,000 in 1986 (Cleveland, 2022) to nearly 630,000 in 2021, sufficient to provide full-time spaces to 27% of children in Canada aged 0 to 5 years (Beach et al., 2023).

The expansion of child care has required the growth of a workforce specialized in the care of young children. In 1996, there were 95,200 early childhood educators and assistants (ECEAs) working in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019), increasing to 207,830 in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2024).<sup>1</sup> According to the National Occupational Classification definition, early childhood educators plan, organize and implement programs for children from infancy to 12 years of age and lead these programs with support from assistants. In 2006, over half of ECEAs worked in child care centres (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2009), but many also worked in family child care, schools, children's homes and commercial settings (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2009).

The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted the child care sector in Canada. With most jurisdictions mandating the closure of schools and daycares, nearly three-quarters of centres were closed as of April to May 2020, while most remaining centres restricted care to the children of essential workers (Friendly, Forer, Vickerson & Mohamed, 2021). During this time, child care workers experienced greater and more prolonged employment losses compared with workers in other sectors (Statistics Canada, 2021; Uppal & Savage, 2021), and child enrolment remained below pre-pandemic levels as of 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2023). The challenges arising from the impacts of the pandemic reinforced the importance of child care services as essential social and economic infrastructure, particularly in supporting women's employment (Beach et al., 2023).

## Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system

In 2021, the federal government committed up to \$27.2 billion over five years in funding through bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories to build the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system (Department of Finance, 2021; Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022a). Investments were allocated to build on five foundational pillars of the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework: provision of accessible, affordable, inclusive, flexible and high-quality care (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2017). The Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework was also co-developed separately following consultations between the Government of Canada and Indigenous partners in 2017, reflecting a vision for high-quality child care with foundations respecting Indigenous culture and aspirations (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022b). Commitments in Budget 2021 included setting fee reduction targets for regulated care (to an average of \$10 per day in provinces outside Quebec<sup>2</sup> by 2025/2026), increasing child care spaces, expanding before- and after-school care, improving physical accessibility of child care spaces, and providing training and development opportunities to child care workers (Department of Finance, 2021).

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1. Because these numbers are derived from different occupational classification schemes (the 1991 Standard Occupational Classification for 1996 estimates and the 2021 National Occupational Classification [NOC] for 2021 estimates), they may not be directly comparable. Each classification scheme similarly includes those working with children in preschool environments (daycare, nursery school, or preschool workers, teachers and assistants and early childhood education workers or assistants), while the NOC provides more detailed exclusion criteria (administrators, kindergarten teachers and elementary school teaching assistants) and is more expansive in its description of service locations.
  2. Quebec was not a signatory to the bilateral agreements but has received funds as part of an asymmetric agreement to further improve its child care system (Department of Finance, 2022).

The child care workforce was identified as a cornerstone of the early learning and child care (ELCC) system. Ministers at the federal, provincial and territorial levels agreed to develop a Canada-wide multilateral workforce strategy to improve the working conditions and compensation of child care workers to be commensurate to their education, responsibilities and experience (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023). Various initiatives affecting child care workers have been taken by provinces and territories, including increasing the number of early childhood education (ECE) graduates, incentivizing child care workers to obtain ECE credentials, offering additional professional development training and offering leadership training to program directors (Pasoli, 2019). Additionally, several jurisdictions have implemented or have committed to introducing wage grids that specify higher wages and expected paths to advancement (Beach et al., 2023).

## Characteristics of centre-based child care workers

### Demographic and socioeconomic profile

In Canada, regulated centre-based child care services typically include daycare centres, nursery schools and preschools (Beach et al., 2023). According to the 2021 Census, 207,830 ECEAs were active across Canada, with about 7 in 10 employed in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2024). In 2016, the large majority of ECEAs were women (96%), and over one-quarter were immigrants or permanent residents (28%) and one-quarter were racialized (24%).

Provincial and territorial regulations mandate minimum levels of training for centre staff in early childhood education (ECE) at the program level,<sup>3</sup> including specialized training for the ELCC environment (Beach et al., 2023). Previous findings have found that 8 to 9 out of 10 centre staff have post-secondary ECE credentials (Doherty et al., 2000; Flanagan et al., 2013). Staff with ECE credentials have been found to provide more personalized, interactive and developmentally appropriate care (Bigras et al., 2010; Fukkink & Lont, 2007). Approximately 11,000 students graduated from ELCC-related programs each year in Canada between 2017 and 2020 (Frank, 2023).

### Pay and benefits

While ECEAs have higher levels of postsecondary education (79%) than other workers in Canada (65%) (Uppal & Savage, 2021), they receive lower wages than comparably educated workers outside the ELCC sector (Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009b). The incomes of child care workers in Canada were nearly half of the average of all other workers (Uppal & Savage, 2021), and about 8% of ECEA worker families had low income in 2016 (Choi, 2022). Prior to the Canada-wide agreements, several provinces and territories offered wage subsidies to educators in licensed centres to supplement incomes. These amounts varied considerably by province and territory, ranging from \$2.00 per hour in Ontario to \$17.11 per hour in Yukon in 2021<sup>4</sup> (McCuaig, Akbari & Correia, 2022).

Compensation through benefits is also limited for child care workers. The 2012 You Bet We Still Care! survey found that under half of staff had supplementary health coverage, about two-fifths had a pension plan or Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) contribution, and nearly two-thirds received paid sick days or personal leave days (Flanagan et al., 2013).

### Retention and recruitment of staff in child care centres

Low wages and benefits have repeatedly been identified as sources of job dissatisfaction and contributors to higher staff turnover in child care centres (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002; Doherty et al., 2000; Fairholm &

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3. Training requirements mostly apply to centres and may stipulate that a certain percentage of staff possess a given ECE diploma or certificate, or that a given number of staff per room or group possess this credential. Some provinces and territories also stipulate minimum individual-level training requirements.

4. Wage supplements are becoming less common within the CWELCC system, as several provinces and territories have introduced (or are in the process of creating) wage grid systems.

Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009b; Flanagan et al., 2013). Fairholm and the Centre for Spatial Economics (2009b) estimated that the separation rate of child care workers was roughly 50% higher than the rate for women across all occupations. Because centres must meet conditions related to minimum staffing levels for children, centres must recruit new staff to fill departures if they are to continue serving the same number of children. Recruitment challenges include difficulties finding skilled applicants (Flanagan et al., 2013), movement of recent ECE graduates into higher-paying sectors (Beach & Flanagan, 2007; Dhuey, Pan & Seward, 2022) and excessive administrative costs directed toward recruitment (Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009b).

Recent evidence showed that job vacancies among ECEA workers in Canada doubled from an average of 2,935 in 2017 to 7,356 in 2021, according to the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey (Frank, 2023). These difficulties in the recruitment and retention of the workforce reduces ability to meet demand (Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009a), contributes to staff burnout (Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009b) and potentially lowers the quality of care (Huntsman, 2008; Loeb, Fuller, Kagan & Carrol, 2004; Mocan, 1995).

## Models of service provision

### Not-for-profit status

Several factors related to auspice and organizational structure may influence working conditions for centre staff and, subsequently, rates of turnover. Auspice relates to centre ownership and largely constitutes two types: (1) not-for-profit centres, which are organized and operated for purposes other than profit (e.g., education or community support), and (2) for-profit centres (sometimes called commercial centres), wherein revenue in surplus of operational costs is distributed to owners as profit. Additionally, a small number of centres are operated by government bodies such as municipalities or school boards (Friendly, Vickerson, Mohamed, Rothman & Nguyen, 2021). Not-for-profit centres tend to provide higher salaries and benefits to employees (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002; Doherty et al., 2000), employ higher numbers of workers with ECE, and experience lower turnover (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002; Doherty et al., 2000; Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009b). Not-for-profit child care centres tend to receive higher ratings of structural and process quality of care than for-profit settings (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2009; Japel, Tremblay & Cote, 2005; Sosinsky, Lord & Zigler, 2007).

### Independent and multisite organizational structure

The second dimension of interest is organizational structure, which differentiates child care locations that are independent stand-alone sites (i.e., single site)<sup>5</sup> from multisite centres. A multisite centre is defined as when an individual or organization holds licenses for multiple centre-based child care locations. Nearly two in five centres sampled in the 2012 You Bet We Still Care! survey were part of multisite programs (Flanagan et al., 2013). Multisite centres have the potential to benefit from centralized administration and economies of scale, such as for purchases of materials, equipment, and food, which may improve administrative efficiencies of operation<sup>6</sup> (Akbari et al., 2021) and enable them to devote comparatively higher proportions of their budgets to salaries and benefits. However, allocation of resources to these areas likely still remains below that of not-for-profit or public centres, and some evidence shows that salaries in multisite centres were lower than in independent for-profit settings (Akbari et al., 2021; McCuaig et al., 2022). Some Canadian evidence suggests that staff in multisite centres have lower job satisfaction (Flanagan et al., 2013) and poorer retention (Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009b) than staff working in independent centres. International studies have suggested that multisite

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5. While these centres are independent with respect to child care operations, they may be affiliated with or sponsored by other organizations (e.g., a workplace, college or university, or family service organization).

6. Similar arguments have been made of publicly operated child care centres (McCuaig et al., 2022).

child care centres tend to provide lower quality of care than other centre types (Rush, 2006; Sosinsky et al., 2007).

## Objectives of the current study

Nationally representative data provide researchers and policy makers with a crucial tool to gain insights into the child care workforce in Canada. Census or Labour Force Survey data provide workforce estimates and demographic characteristics but omit information specific to the child care context.

This study used the Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services (CSPCCS) to explore the centre-based child care workforce in Canada during the pandemic period and at the outset of the CWELCC system. While the unit of analysis in the CSPCCS is the child care service (i.e., child care centre or home) and data are reported by representatives of these child care services, the survey provides detailed information pertaining to child care employees. For the purpose of this study, employees in centres include **supervisors** (directors, managers and supervisors), child care **staff** (employees who provide direct care to children) and **support workers** (employees such as cooks and accountants who do not provide direct care to children). Unpaid workers such as volunteers and students are not considered employees. This study addresses the following research questions:

- Within child care centres, what was the composition of employees, what was their training and what were their roles?
- Within centres, what were the typical rates of pay and benefits available to employees?
- In 2021/2022, how many employees were hired at or departed from child care centres and how many vacancies existed?
- Did these characteristics differ by model of service provision related to auspice and organizational structure?

## Materials and methods

### Data source

The 2022 CSPCCS is a cross-sectional survey conducted by Statistics Canada in partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The survey provides a snapshot of child care services in Canada in 2022 for children aged 12 and younger at the national, provincial and territorial levels. Survey collection took place from April to July 2022. The target population consisted of child care services, including centre-based child care services, as well as licensed and unlicensed home-based child care providers.<sup>7</sup> The survey frame was constructed from (1) businesses identified as child day-care services (North American Industry Classification System code 62441) on Statistics Canada's Business Register as of February 2022 that reported at least \$2,500 in annual revenue and (2) publicly available provincial and territorial lists of licensed child care services. More information on the frame is available elsewhere (Statistics Canada, 2022a). A sample of 20,000 units was contacted, and the response rate for child care centres was 71%. In this report, only child care centres that provided care to children aged 5 years and younger (in addition to older children, potentially) were included. Centres that operated dedicated before- and after-school programs (commonly operated under separate regulatory frameworks by school boards) and centres with implausibly high counts of employees<sup>8</sup> (potentially representing multiple centres) were excluded. The resulting sample size was 3,114 child care centres.

7. Home-based child care is excluded from the present study. In-depth information on licensed and unlicensed home-based child care can be found in a separate report (Charters & Findlay, in preparation).

8. Where the total of all full- and part-time employees exceeded the 95th percentile.

## Measures

Representatives from child care centres responded to questions on (1) the number of employees and the capacities in which they worked, (2) rates of pay and benefits, and (3) employee turnover and vacancies. Information was representative as of April 6, 2022, unless referencing a specific period. Centres were categorized as not-for-profit or government-operated if they either had legal not-for-profit status or were directly operated by a government agency such as a school board or district, municipality, regional district, or public health authority. Otherwise, centres were considered to be for-profit or commercial enterprises. Organizational structure related to whether the individual centre was part of a multisite program or independently operated. If the child care program operated more than one centre at different addresses, the centre was identified as multisite. Otherwise, the centre was considered to be independently operated (single-site centre). Four categories of centres were identified to explore associations between auspice and organizational structure: (1) for-profit and multisite, (2) for-profit and independent, (3) not-for-profit or government-operated and multisite, and (4) not-for-profit or government-operated and independent.

Respondents reported the number of full-time employees; part-time employees;<sup>9</sup> and casual, on call or supply employees. Employees include supervisors, child care staff providing direct care to children and support workers.

Respondents provided details on the ECE qualifications held by supervisors and full- and part-time staff (no ECE-related training; ECE course or workshop of less than one year; one-, two- or three-year ECE certificate or diploma; and four-year ECE degree or higher). The last two categories were combined to indicate the presence of staff with any postsecondary ECE certificate, diploma or degree.

Respondents also reported the most typical hourly rates of pay for supervisory staff and for staff with and without ECE credentials or training, including wage enhancements but excluding provincial top-ups. Further, respondents identified whether centre employees had access to any benefits, including supplementary health or dental plans; life insurance or disability insurance; top-ups to maternity or parental leave; pension plan contributions or group RRSPs; paid sick leave; paid vacation leave; paid breaks or compensation for overtime; paid time for documentation, meetings or program planning; reduced child care fees for their own children; and financial assistance or paid time for training. Respondents were also asked about the percentage of the centre's operating budget going toward paying employee wages.

In addition, information was collected on staff turnover and vacancies. Centres reported the number of employees who were hired and who had departed in the 2021 calendar year in addition to the number of vacant positions in April 2022 for supervisory staff and employees with and without ECE credentials or training. Hires included new hires, rehires from termination or voluntary resignation, recalls from layoff, and hires who previously left during the calendar year. Departures included employees who quit, retired, were dismissed or laid off permanently, left temporarily on maternity or parental leave, or were laid off temporarily. Hires and departures did not include transfers or promotions within multisite centres run by the same organization, independent contractors or consultants, and employees from temporary help agencies. Vacant positions included positions that currently existed, for which outside hires were currently being pursued and that could be filled within 30 days. These did not include positions that had been filled but whose incumbent started at a future date, or positions to be filled internally or by recall from layoff. To account for variation in centre size, hires, departures and vacancies were expressed as ratios per 10 total centre employees (total full- and part-time paid centre staff). Finally, respondents indicated specific difficulties filling vacant positions (lacking time to recruit; lacking money or funding for recruiting; applicants lacking skills, experience or qualifications; having few or no applicants to choose from; applicants' needs not being met; and facing competition from other centres or schools).

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9. Full time refers to 30 hours or more per week, and part time refers to less than 30 hours per week.



## Analytical strategy

Descriptive analyses provided a snapshot of the characteristics of centre-based staff in April 2022, both overall and disaggregated by the categories of auspice and organizational structure. To reduce bias in mean estimates related to implausibly high values (outliers), values above the 99th percentile for the number of hires, departures, vacancies and children enrolled were excluded.

Statistically significant between-group differences in both the indicator and mean estimates were assessed using unpaired t-tests. To avoid the possibility of erroneously attributing statistical difference by chance as a result of performing multiple comparison tests, a Bonferroni correction was implemented to adjust the nominal p-value threshold (0.05) by the number of comparisons [ $4(4-1)/2=6$ ] as  $0.05/6=0.0083$  for a more conservative threshold for significance (Gelman, Hill & Yajima, 2012). Analyses were performed in SAS Enterprise Guide 8.3 using G-estimation macros (G-Est 2.03.004) for domain and variance estimation (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

## Results

The study sample represented 11,820 child care centres providing care to children aged 0 to 5 years across Canada. Of these centres, 1,324 were for-profit multisite centres (11%), 4,419 were for-profit independent centres (37%), 2,618 were non-profit or government-run multisite centres (22%), and 3,459 were non-profit or government-run independent centres (29%) (**Table 1**). Centres were split almost evenly by auspice (51% were not-for-profit or government-run), while two in three centres were independent. Centres employed an estimated 136,900 people working either full or part time (not including casual or on-call staff, unpaid students, or volunteers). **Chart 1** shows the number of centre-based full- and part-time employees by province or territory (the territories were aggregated into a single regional group because of sample size limitations). About 15,670 employees worked in for-profit multisite settings, 47,970 in for-profit independent settings, 36,110 in not-for-profit or government-run multisite settings, and 37,150 in not-for-profit or government-run independent settings.

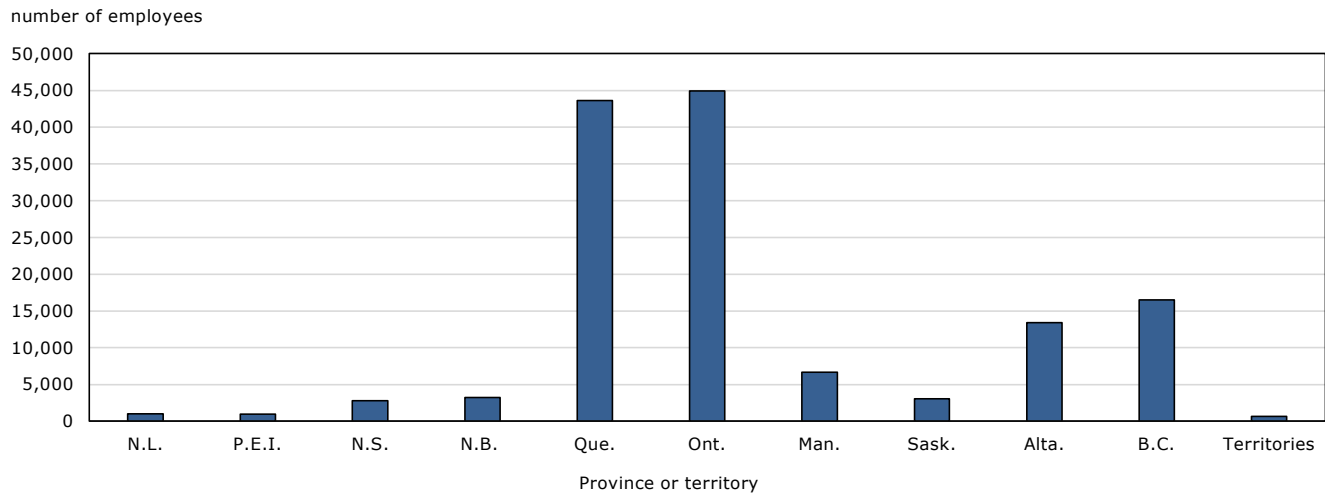
**Table 1**

**Profile of centre-based child care services, Canada, April 2022**

	Multisite centres		Independent centres		Total	
	weighted number	percentage	weighted number	percentage	weighted number	percentage
For-profit centres	1,324	11.2	4,419	37.4	5,744	48.6
Not-for-profit or government-run centres	2,618	22.1	3,459	29.3	6,077	51.4
Total	3,942	33.4	7,878	66.6	11,820	100.0

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services, 2022.

**Chart 1**  
**Employees in child care centres, Canada, April 2022**



**Notes:** Employees include full-time and part-time supervisors, child care staff and support workers. The territories include Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services, 2022.

**Table 2** shows the composition, training and roles of employees in child care centres. A typical centre employed about 12 people (full- and part-time supervisors, staff and support workers) and had an average of 56 children enrolled on a full- or part-time basis. About 1 in 10 centres provided only part-time care. Nine in 10 centres employed full-time supervisors (88%) and staff (92%), while comparatively fewer centres employed part-time staff (52%) or casual, on-call or supply staff (31%). Over 9 in 10 centres had hired one or more full- or part-time staff member with a postsecondary ECE credential. In a typical centre offering full-time services, about two-thirds of employees (an average of 7.9 individuals) provided direct care to children, with the remaining third divided between supervisors (1.7) and support workers (1.6).

**Table 2**  
**Composition, training and roles of employees in child care centres, Canada, April 2022**

Characteristic	Total (weighted N=11,820)		Group A: For-profit multisite centres (weighted N=1,324)		Group B: For-profit independent centres (weighted N=4,419)		Group C: Not-for- profit multisite centres (weighted N=2,618)		Group D: Not-for- profit independent centres (weighted N=3,459)	
	percent	mean	percent	mean	percent	mean	percent	mean	percent	mean
<b>Centre characteristics</b>										
Offers part-time care only	10.4	...	6.4 <sup>D,E</sup>	...	6.2 <sup>D</sup>	...	4.1 <sup>D,E</sup>	...	22.2 <sup>ABC</sup>	...
Total child enrolment (full and part time)	...	56.2	...	59.5 <sup>D</sup>	...	53.5 <sup>C</sup>	...	66.1 <sup>BD</sup>	...	50.9 <sup>AC</sup>
Total employees (full and part time)	...	11.6	...	11.8 <sup>C</sup>	...	10.9 <sup>C</sup>	...	13.8 <sup>ABD</sup>	...	10.7 <sup>C</sup>
<b>Full-time employees</b>										
Supervisors	88.0	1.7	90.7 <sup>D</sup>	1.8	88.1 <sup>CD</sup>	1.7	92.8 <sup>BD</sup>	1.7	83.0 <sup>ABC</sup>	1.6
Staff	92.1	7.9	96.6 <sup>D</sup>	7.9	95.4 <sup>D</sup>	7.6 <sup>C</sup>	96.1 <sup>D</sup>	8.9 <sup>BD</sup>	83.2 <sup>ABC</sup>	7.6 <sup>C</sup>
Support workers	46.8	1.6	42.1 <sup>C</sup>	1.5	46.0 <sup>C</sup>	1.4 <sup>CD</sup>	57.6 <sup>ABD</sup>	1.6 <sup>B</sup>	41.3 <sup>C</sup>	1.8 <sup>B</sup>
<b>Part-time employees</b>										
Supervisors	14.8	1.5	15.3 <sup>E</sup>	1.5	13.5	1.3	15.6	2.0 <sup>E</sup>	15.8	1.3
Staff	52.4	2.8	53.1	2.7	43.0 <sup>CD</sup>	2.3 <sup>CD</sup>	59.2 <sup>B</sup>	3.4 <sup>B</sup>	59.0 <sup>B</sup>	2.9 <sup>B</sup>
Support workers	24.7	1.6	20.5 <sup>D</sup>	1.5	21.2 <sup>D</sup>	1.5	26.5	1.5	29.5 <sup>AB</sup>	1.6
<b>Casual, on-call or supply employees</b>										
Supervisors	2.7	1.9	4.4 <sup>E</sup>	1.9	3.8 <sup>D,E</sup>	1.5	F	x	1.6 <sup>B,E</sup>	1.9 <sup>E</sup>
Staff	31.2	2.8	31.6	2.4 <sup>C</sup>	26.1 <sup>CD</sup>	2.0 <sup>C</sup>	35.7 <sup>B</sup>	4.4 <sup>ABD</sup>	34.2 <sup>B</sup>	2.4 <sup>C</sup>
Support workers	7.1	1.6	8.2 <sup>E</sup>	1.8 <sup>E</sup>	6.6	1.5	5.1 <sup>E</sup>	1.8 <sup>E</sup>	8.7	1.6
<b>ECE qualifications of supervisors</b>										
No ECE-related training	12.9	1.4	11.9	1.3	16.6 <sup>CD</sup>	1.4	9.2 <sup>B</sup>	1.4	11.2 <sup>B</sup>	1.3
ECE course or workshop of less than one year	8.0	1.3	7.9 <sup>E</sup>	1.2	10.5 <sup>C</sup>	1.4	4.9 <sup>B,E</sup>	1.3	7.1	1.1
<b>Any ECE certificate, diploma or degree</b>	83.3	1.7	88.7 <sup>B</sup>	1.9 <sup>D</sup>	77.2 <sup>ACD</sup>	1.7	89.0 <sup>B</sup>	1.8 <sup>D</sup>	84.9 <sup>B</sup>	1.6 <sup>AC</sup>
One-, two- or three-year ECE certificate or diploma	71.2	1.7	79.3 <sup>B</sup>	1.8	62.2 <sup>ACD</sup>	1.6	78.9 <sup>B</sup>	1.8 <sup>D</sup>	73.8 <sup>B</sup>	1.5 <sup>C</sup>
Four-year ECE degree or higher	17.4	1.5	16.9	1.4	20.1	1.6	14.7	1.4	16.3	1.4
<b>ECE qualifications of full- and part-time staff</b>										
No ECE-related training	50.0	3.7	50.9	3.7	48.9	3.7	49.2	3.9	51.7	3.5
ECE course or workshop of less than one year	46.9	3.1	60.2 <sup>BCD</sup>	3.0	48.5 <sup>A</sup>	3.0	40.6 <sup>A</sup>	3.4	44.5 <sup>A</sup>	3.1
<b>Any ECE certificate, diploma or degree</b>	91.9	6.9	90.3	6.6 <sup>C</sup>	90.9	6.5 <sup>C</sup>	94.0	8.2 <sup>ABD</sup>	92.4	6.6 <sup>C</sup>
One-, two- or three-year ECE certificate or diploma	87.7	6.5	87.4	6.5 <sup>C</sup>	85.5 <sup>C</sup>	5.9 <sup>C</sup>	91.9 <sup>B</sup>	7.8 <sup>ABD</sup>	87.4	6.2 <sup>C</sup>
Four-year ECE degree or higher	16.7	4.0	13.2 <sup>B</sup>	2.6 <sup>BCD</sup>	20.7 <sup>AC</sup>	4.0 <sup>A</sup>	12.9 <sup>B</sup>	4.2 <sup>A</sup>	15.9	4.3 <sup>A</sup>

... not applicable

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

<sup>A</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for for-profit multisite centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>B</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for for-profit independent centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>C</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for not-for-profit multisite centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>D</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for not-for-profit independent centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

**Notes:** ECE = early childhood education. Percentages are percentages of centres, and means are mean numbers of employees or children within centres.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services, 2022.

Not-for-profit centres that were part of a multisite organization had more employees overall (13.8) and were most likely to employ support workers full time (58%), compared with other categories. On average, these centres also had more children enrolled at a single location (66.1) than both types of independent centres. For-profit independent centres were least likely to have supervisors with ECE training (77%), and for-profit multisite centres were most likely to have one or more employees with ECE workshop-level credentials (60%).

The pay and benefits of child care centre employees are shown in **Table 3**. Hourly rates of pay represent the most typically paid rates, including wage enhancements but not provincial top-ups. The average hourly rate was \$27.80 for supervisors, \$21.90 for staff with an ECE credential or training, and \$18.00 for staff without ECE credentials. On average, two-thirds of centre budgets (67%) went toward paying employee wages. About three-quarters of centres (76%) reported providing benefits to their employees. More than two-thirds of centres (68%) provided paid time for documentation, meetings or program planning. About 6 in 10 centres offered benefits such as supplementary health or dental plans (60%), paid sick leave (61%), paid vacation leave (60%), and financial assistance or paid time for training (62%). About half of centres provided life insurance or disability insurance (53%) and had paid breaks or compensation for overtime (54%). About one-third of centres offered pension plan contributions or group RRSPs (37%), and one-quarter had reduced child care fees for employees' own children (27%). Top-ups to maternity or parental leave were offered by 1 in 10 centres.

**Table 3**  
**Pay and benefits of centre-based child care employees, Canada, April 2022**

Characteristic	Total (weighted N=11,820)	Group A:	Group B:	Group C:	Group D:
		For-profit multisite centres (weighted N=1,324)	For-profit independent centres (weighted N=4,419)	Not-for-profit multisite centres (weighted N=2,618)	Not-for-profit independent centres (weighted N=3,459)
mean					
<b>Most frequent hourly rates of pay</b>					
Supervisors	27.8	25.2 <sup>CD</sup>	25.7 <sup>CD</sup>	30.5 <sup>AB</sup>	29.4 <sup>AB</sup>
Staff with an ECE credential or training	21.9	20.7 <sup>CD</sup>	21.3 <sup>CD</sup>	22.8 <sup>AB</sup>	22.3 <sup>AB</sup>
Staff with no ECE credentials or training	18.0	17.5 <sup>CD</sup>	18.0 <sup>C</sup>	18.5 <sup>ABD</sup>	18.0 <sup>AC</sup>
percent					
<b>Benefits available to centre employees</b>					
Any employee benefits	75.5	78.7 <sup>BC</sup>	61.6 <sup>ACD</sup>	93.4 <sup>ABD</sup>	78.5 <sup>BC</sup>
Supplementary health or dental plans	59.8	65.0 <sup>BC</sup>	41.0 <sup>ACD</sup>	85.6 <sup>ABD</sup>	62.3 <sup>BC</sup>
Life insurance or disability insurance	52.6	54.1 <sup>BC</sup>	32.2 <sup>ACD</sup>	80.8 <sup>ABD</sup>	56.6 <sup>BC</sup>
Top-ups to maternity or parental leave	10.0	7.4 <sup>E</sup>	6.8 <sup>CE</sup>	13.8 <sup>B</sup>	12.2
Pension plan contributions or group RRSPs	36.8	20.7 <sup>CD</sup>	19.3 <sup>CD</sup>	62.8 <sup>ABD</sup>	45.8 <sup>ABC</sup>
Paid sick leave	61.4	54.9 <sup>BCD</sup>	43.3 <sup>ACD</sup>	84.0 <sup>ABD</sup>	69.8 <sup>ABC</sup>
Paid vacation leave	60.2	55.0 <sup>BC</sup>	43.1 <sup>ACD</sup>	85.5 <sup>ABD</sup>	64.8 <sup>BC</sup>
Paid breaks or compensation for overtime	53.8	52.6 <sup>BC</sup>	37.5 <sup>ACD</sup>	79.1 <sup>ABD</sup>	55.9 <sup>BC</sup>
Paid time for documentation, meetings or program planning	67.5	71.2 <sup>BC</sup>	51.6 <sup>ACD</sup>	89.9 <sup>ABD</sup>	69.6 <sup>BC</sup>
Reduced child care fees for their own children	27.4	46.8 <sup>BD</sup>	23.2 <sup>AC</sup>	34.7 <sup>BD</sup>	19.7 <sup>AC</sup>
Financial assistance or paid time for training	61.8	66.3 <sup>BC</sup>	46.9 <sup>ACD</sup>	84.1 <sup>ABD</sup>	62.3 <sup>BC</sup>
Percentage of operating budget going toward paying wages of employees	66.7	65.2 <sup>BCD</sup>	60.5 <sup>ACD</sup>	73.5 <sup>ABD</sup>	69.9 <sup>ABC</sup>

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

<sup>A</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for for-profit multisite centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>B</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for for-profit independent centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>C</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for not-for-profit multisite centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>D</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for not-for-profit independent centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

**Notes:** ECE = early childhood education. Means are means of most frequently paid hourly rates of pay within centres (\$CAD) and percentages are percentages of centres. RRSP = Registered Retirement Savings Plan.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services, 2022.

Rates of pay were highest for supervisors and staff with ECE credentials in not-for-profit centres, whether multisite or independent. Not-for-profit multisite centres devoted the highest share of their operating budgets (74%) to employee wages, while for-profit independent centres contributed the lowest (61%). Not-for-profit multisite centres were most likely to provide employee benefits (93%), while for-profit independent centres were least likely to do so (61%). Not-for-profit multisite centres were about three times more likely to provide pension plan contributions or group RRSPs than both independent and multisite for-profit centres. While not-for-profit independent and for-profit multisite centres were similarly likely to provide benefits overall, not-for-profit independent centres were more likely to offer pension plan contributions or group RRSPs and paid sick leave, while for-profit multisite centres were more likely to offer reduced fees for employees' own children.

**Table 4** shows information related to turnover and vacancies in child care centres. Almost one in five centres (18%) had hired one or more supervisors in 2021, while two-thirds (66%) had hired one or more ECE-trained employees and half (51%) had hired one or more non-ECE-trained employees. In the same period, less than one in six centres (15%) experienced the departure of one or more supervisors, while 59% saw the departure of one or more ECE-trained employees and 38% experienced the departure of one or more employees without ECE training. About one-third of centres had vacant positions available for employees with ECE credentials (35%), higher than for employees without ECE training (16%) or supervisors (4%). The estimated number of vacancies in April 2022 was 7,560 for ECE positions and 2,960 for non-ECE positions (not shown). Commonly cited reasons for vacant positions being difficult to fill included applicants lacking skills, experience or qualifications (72%); having few or no applicants to choose from (61%); or applicants' needs not being met (61%).

**Table 4**  
**Staff turnover and vacancies in child care centres, Canada, April 2022**

Characteristic	Total (weighted N=11,820)		Group A: For-profit multisite centres (weighted N=1,324)		Group B: For-profit independent centres (weighted N=4,419)		Group C: Not-for-profit multisite centres (weighted N=2,618)		Group D: Not-for-profit independent centres (weighted N=3,459)	
	percent	mean	percent	mean	percent	mean	percent	mean	percent	mean
<b>Employee hires in previous calendar year</b>										
Supervisors	18.4	1.9	19.3	2.1	17.0	1.7	19.4	1.5 <sup>D</sup>	19.2	2.1 <sup>C</sup>
Employees with an ECE credential or training	66.0	3.2	76.1 <sup>D</sup>	3.2	68.4 <sup>D</sup>	3.3 <sup>C</sup>	67.3 <sup>D</sup>	2.7 <sup>BD</sup>	58.3 <sup>ABC</sup>	3.7 <sup>C</sup>
Employees with no ECE credentials or training	51.1	3.2	51.4	3.2	49.9	2.9 <sup>D</sup>	53.5	2.9 <sup>D</sup>	50.7	3.9 <sup>BC</sup>
<b>Employee departures in previous calendar year</b>										
Supervisors	14.8	1.5	12.9 <sup>E</sup>	1.3 <sup>D</sup>	12.1	1.3 <sup>D</sup>	17.9	1.2 <sup>D</sup>	16.5	2.0 <sup>ABC</sup>
Employees with an ECE credential or training	59.2	2.6	69.8 <sup>D</sup>	2.7 <sup>C</sup>	59.9	2.7 <sup>C</sup>	61.1	2.0 <sup>ABD</sup>	52.8 <sup>A</sup>	2.9 <sup>C</sup>
Employees with no ECE credentials or training	38.2	2.7	43.1	2.7	35.9	2.4 <sup>D</sup>	43.2	2.5 <sup>D</sup>	35.3	3.4 <sup>BC</sup>
<b>Current vacant positions</b>										
Supervisors	4.4	1.1	6.7 <sup>E</sup>	1.4 <sup>E</sup>	4.7 <sup>E</sup>	1.1	4.9 <sup>E</sup>	0.8 <sup>D</sup>	2.9	1.3 <sup>C</sup>
Employees with an ECE credential or training	35.0	1.8	38.2	2.2	36.9 <sup>D</sup>	1.9	38.8 <sup>D</sup>	1.6	28.6 <sup>BC</sup>	1.8
Employees with no ECE credentials or training	15.9	1.5	19.0	2.0 <sup>E</sup>	13.3 <sup>C</sup>	1.4	22.7 <sup>BD</sup>	1.4	12.9 <sup>C</sup>	1.6
<b>Difficulties faced by centre when filling vacant positions</b>										
Lacking time to recruit	22.6	...	23.0	...	18.5 <sup>C</sup>	...	26.4 <sup>B</sup>	...	24.7	...
Lacking money or funding for recruiting	25.8	...	29.2 <sup>C</sup>	...	27.7 <sup>C</sup>	...	17.6 <sup>ABD</sup>	...	28.2 <sup>C</sup>	...
Applicants lacking skills, experience or qualifications	72.1	...	81.3 <sup>BD</sup>	...	71.0 <sup>A</sup>	...	78.1 <sup>D</sup>	...	65.5 <sup>AC</sup>	...
Having few or no applicants to choose from	61.4	...	71.4 <sup>BD</sup>	...	56.8 <sup>A</sup>	...	63.8	...	61.5 <sup>A</sup>	...
Applicants' needs not being met	60.7	...	60.2	...	58.2 <sup>C</sup>	...	68.1 <sup>BD</sup>	...	58.6 <sup>C</sup>	...
Facing competition from other centres or schools	53.6	...	59.0 <sup>D</sup>	...	50.2 <sup>C</sup>	...	64.6 <sup>BD</sup>	...	47.3 <sup>AC</sup>	...

... not applicable

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

<sup>A</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for for-profit multisite centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>B</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for for-profit independent centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>C</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for not-for-profit multisite centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

<sup>D</sup> estimate is statistically different from corresponding estimate for not-for-profit independent centres at  $p < 0.0083$  (adjusted for multiple comparisons)

**Notes:** ECE = early childhood education. Percentages are percentages of centres, and means are mean numbers of employees (hires, departures, vacancies) standardized as ratios per 10 total centre employees (all full- and part-time staff).

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services, 2022.

Some evidence supports not-for-profit independent centres having lower turnover of ECE-trained staff because centres in this category had the lowest likelihood of hiring employees of this type (58%), a lower likelihood of experiencing departures (53%) compared with for-profit multisite centres (70%) and generally the lowest vacancy rate (29%). Vacant positions for non-ECE employees were higher in not-for-profit multisite settings (23%), compared with both independent categories. Vacancies for supervisory positions differed very little by category of centre. Not-for-profit multisite centres were least likely to face difficulties related to lacking money or funding for recruiting (18%).

## Discussion

This report provides an overview of employees working in child care centres across Canada, focusing on the number and type of employees, salaries and benefits, and recruitment and retention. A typical centre offering full-time services had about 12 employees, on average. About two-thirds of them were staff providing direct care to children, with the remaining third divided between supervisors (who may also work with children) and support workers such as cooks and accountants. Over 9 in 10 centres had one

or more employees with a postsecondary ECE credential. One in 10 centres offered only part-time services. On average, about three-quarters of centres offered employee benefits, and about two-thirds of centre budgets were put toward paying employee wages. The results showed that vacancies were more common for positions that required ECE training than for other positions, being found in about one-third of centres. All centre types were likely to identify applicants lacking skills, experience or qualifications as a difficulty in recruitment.

Rates of pay (including wage enhancements) were higher among supervisors and lowest among staff without ECE credentials or training, consistent with prior research (Flanagan et al., 2013). Furthermore, this report observed higher pay in not-for-profit or government-run centres, corroborating past work (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002; Doherty et al., 2000), while it also found that pay rates did not differ by organizational structure. About three-quarters of centres provided employee benefits, and nearly one-quarter did not (where benefits additionally included compensation for additional time in training or participating in other activities related to child care). The proportions of centres providing supplementary health or dental plans and pension plan contributions or group RRSPs are comparable to recent estimates from the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development (McCuaig et al., 2022). Providing benefits to child care employees not only benefits their health and long-term financial stability, but also has been identified as a means to improve employee retention (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002) and potentially has advantages for children. Additionally, providing time and compensating staff for activity planning to facilitate active learning are seen as important contributors to child care quality (Bigras et al., 2010).

Turnover among child care employees and subsequent workforce shortages have been identified among the main challenges impacting the child care workforce (Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009b; R.A. Malatest and Associates, 2009; McCuaig et al., 2022; Toronto Children's Services, 2023). Findings from this study generally support not-for-profit independent centres having lower rates of turnover and vacancies for ECE-trained employees. Higher overall pay and benefits in not-for-profit and government-operated centres have previously been found to be important predictors of job satisfaction and employee retention (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002; Doherty et al., 2000; Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009b; Flanagan et al., 2013). Unexpectedly, among not-for-profit centres, employee vacancies were lower in independent centres than in multisite ones, despite the latter providing comparable rates of pay and more benefits. Meanwhile, ECE employee departures were most common in for-profit multisite centres. Multisite centres (particularly for-profit chains) have been characterized as having top-down management styles that reduce employee autonomy, initiative and ultimately job satisfaction (Royer & Moreau, 2016; Rush, 2006). Further work may investigate how organizational structure, in addition to unmeasured characteristics (geography, unionization and general education), influence these relationships.

This study has several limitations. While the CSPCCS contains information relevant to the child care workforce, it was designed as a survey of child care services (in this case, centres). As such, interpretation is limited to the level of the centre and is not necessarily reflective of the distribution of characteristics across the workforce. Information on retention (such as subjective experiences, intentions or job satisfaction) would be more appropriately collected in an employee-level workforce survey. Sample size limitations precluded an in-depth analysis at the provincial and territorial level, which would have added valuable insights into how the characteristics of centres varied by jurisdiction.

The CSPCCS sampling frame also had limitations. It was drawn from the Canadian Business Register and publicly available lists of licensed and regulated child care centres, which may have excluded some centres administered by schools or school boards. Finally, there was a limitation with the wording of the questionnaire in terms of wages. Respondents were asked to include wage enhancements but to exclude provincial top-ups. However, income supplements vary across jurisdictions, possibly resulting in different interpretations of this question.

## Result summary

In April 2022, 11,820 child care centres provided care to children aged 0 to 5 across Canada, employing 12 employees and enrolling 56 children on average. Not-for-profit multisite centres hired more employees (14) and had more children enrolled (66) than other centres, on average.

About 9 in 10 centres had full-time supervisors and staff, while about 1 in 10 provided care only on a part-time basis. Not-for-profit independent centres were the most likely to offer part-time child care services only. About half of centres employed support workers such as cooks and accountants on a full-time basis (higher in not-for-profit multisite settings). About 8 in 10 centres employed one or more supervisors (lowest in for-profit independent centres), and 9 in 10 centres had one or more employees with postsecondary ECE credentials.

Rates of pay were highest for supervisory staff, then ECE-trained staff, then for staff without ECE credentials. Rates of pay for supervisors and ECE-trained staff were higher in not-for-profit settings (regardless of organizational structure) than in for-profit settings. About three-quarters of centres offered any employee benefits (highest in not-for-profit multisite centres). About two-thirds of centre budgets went toward paying employee wages (highest in not-for-profit multisite centres).

It was more common for centres to have hired or to have experienced the departure of one or more employees with ECE credentials than employees without ECE credentials or supervisory staff. About one-third of centres had vacant positions for employees with ECE credentials, less than one in six had vacancies for employees without ECE credentials and less than 5% had vacancies for supervisors. Generally, vacancies, hires and departures were lowest in not-for-profit independent settings. Difficulties in filling vacancies related to applicants lacking skills, experience or qualifications were most frequently identified across all centre categories.

## Overview of categories of child care centres

### A: For-profit multisite centres

#### Overview

1,324 centres, 11.2% of all centres

12 employees and 60 children enrolled, on average

#### Composition

These centres mostly employed staff on a full-time basis, with 6% of centres offering only part-time care.

#### Education

Most centres had one or more supervisors and staff with post-secondary ECE credentials.

#### Pay and benefits

Hourly rates of pay for supervisors and staff with ECE credentials were lower than those in not-for-profit centres. About 8 in 10 centres offered any employee benefits and spent about two-thirds of their budget on employee wages.

#### Turnover and vacancies

About 4 in 10 centres had vacancies for ECE employees, 2 in 10 for non-ECE employees and less than 1 in 10 for supervisors. Seven in 10 centres had experienced the departure of one or more ECE employees in the previous year.



## **B: For-profit independent centres**

### **Overview**

4,419 centres, 37.4% of all centres

11 employees and 54 children enrolled, on average

### **Composition**

These centres mostly employed staff on a full-time basis, with 6% of centres offering only part-time care.

### **Education**

Most centres had one or more supervisors and staff with postsecondary ECE credentials (least likely to have supervisors with these credentials).

### **Pay and benefits**

Hourly rates of pay for supervisors and staff with ECE credentials were lower than those in not-for-profit centres. For-profit independent centres were the least likely centre type to offer any employee benefits (about 6 in 10 centres) and spent the smallest share of their budget on employee wages (about three-fifths).

### **Turnover and vacancies**

About 4 in 10 centres had vacancies for ECE employees, over 1 in 10 for non-ECE employees and less than 5% for supervisors. Six in 10 centres had experienced the departure of one or more ECE employees in the previous year.

## **C: Not-for-profit or government-run multisite centres**

### **Overview**

2,618 centres, 22.1% of all centres

14 employees and 66 children enrolled, on average

### **Composition**

These centres mostly employed staff full time, with 4% of centres offering only part-time care.

### **Education**

Most centres had one or more supervisors and staff with postsecondary ECE credentials.

### **Pay and benefits**

Hourly rates of pay for supervisors and staff with ECE credentials were higher than those in for-profit centres. Over 9 in 10 centres offered any employee benefits, the most of any centre type. On average, they spent nearly three-quarters of their budget on wages, the most of any centre type.

### **Turnover and vacancies**

About 4 in 10 centres had vacancies for ECE employees, 2 in 10 for non-ECE employees and 5% for supervisors. Six in 10 centres had experienced the departure of one or more ECE employees in the previous year.

## **D: Not-for-profit or government-run independent centres**

### **Overview**

3,459 centres, 29.3% of all centres

11 employees and 51 children enrolled, on average

### **Composition**

These centres mostly employed staff full time but were more likely than other centre types to offer only part-time services (over 2 in 10 centres).

### **Education**

Most centres had one or more supervisors and staff with postsecondary ECE credentials.

### **Pay and benefits**

Hourly rates of pay for supervisors and staff with ECE credentials were higher than those in for-profit centres. About 8 in 10 centres offered any employee benefits, and these centres spent about 7/10 of their budget on wages.

### **Turnover and vacancies**

About 3 in 10 centres had vacancies for ECE employees (lower than most categories), 1 in 10 for non-ECE employees and less than 5% for supervisors. Five in 10 centres had experienced the departure of one or more ECE employees in the previous year.

## **Conclusions**

This study provides a snapshot of the centre-based child care workforce across Canada in 2022, focusing on the number of employees, salaries and benefits, and recruitment and retention. The child care workforce has been described as a cornerstone of the ELCC system in Canada. Insights into factors that influence the recruitment and retention of qualified employees have a significant impact on the expansion and sustainability of a high-quality child care system. Future research may continue to explore the composition and experiences of the child care workforce and the effect of ongoing reforms associated with the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care system.

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