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Characteristics of home-based child cares serving children aged 0 to 5 years in Canada, 2024



by Thomas J. Charters and Leanne C. Findlay

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Abstract

Home-based child care describes child care provided by non-relatives in residential settings outside of the child's own home. To gain insights into the state of home-based child care in Canada, this report investigates characteristics of licensed and unlicensed home-based providers and services providing care to children 0 to 5 years of age. This study uses the 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services, a nationally representative cross-sectional survey of formal child care services in Canada. An estimated 17,200 licensed and 11,700 unlicensed home-based child cares provided care to children aged 0 to 5 years in Canada in April 2024. Nearly four in five licensed and unlicensed homes were at maximum capacity at this time and were unable to care for additional children. Outside of Quebec, full-time daily fees charged to parents were on average \$40 in licensed homes and \$41 in unlicensed homes. The percentage of homes offering non-standard care options was offered by less than one-tenth of homes. Most licensed providers (79%) had attained credentials in early childhood education at a workshop level or higher, potentially indicating higher levels of training than reported in 2022.

Authors

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Introduction

Children's participation in child care in Canada has increased over time with increased participation of women in the workforce (Statistics Canada, 2016), increases in one-parent families (Uppal, 2015), and recognition of the social and cognitive benefits of high-quality care to children (Slot, 2018). In Canada, formal child care arrangements typically include child care centres (i.e., daycare centres, nurseries, preschools) and child care provided by non-relatives in residential settings outside of the child's own home. The latter, often called home-based child care or family child care homes, comprise homes that are either licensed or approved (sometimes referred to as regulated) or unlicensed. In contrast, informal care arrangements constitute child care provided by a relative or by a non-relative (e.g., nanny) in the child's own home (Geoffroy et al., 2010; Losier et al., 2021). In 2023, over half (56%) of children aged 0 to 5 years participated in formal child care in Canada with less than 1 in 10 (9%) being in a child care home (Statistics Canada, 2023). In 2022, home-based child care was provided to nearly 156,000 children aged 0 to 5 in approximately 14,435 licensed and 14,022 unlicensed child care homes across Canada (Charters & Findlay, 2025a).

Home-based child care is typically provided in private residences where the provider lives and operates a child care service. Home-based services generally provide care for mixed age groups of children, allow siblings to receive care together and enable the same provider to develop multi-year relationships with children and parents (Lanigan, 2011). Providers must routinely organize materials and activities to match the developmental level and varying ages of children. Most home-based providers work alone and take on numerous responsibilities in addition to caring for children, such as preparing meals and educational activities, cleaning, and fulfilling administrative tasks (Stitou, Bourgeault, & Kohen, 2018). Home-based child care providers may also provide care to their own children, grandchildren or other relatives (Abbes & Macdonald, 2022). Historically, home child care may have been attractive to parents for reasons such as tending to have a lower cost (Findlay & Guevremont, 2023; Macdonald & Friendly, 2023) and being more available in certain regions, such as rural areas (Swenson, 2008).

Licensing of home-based child care differs by provincial and territorial jurisdiction. Licensed or approved providers (hereafter termed licensed) are required to demonstrate licensing requirements related to provider training, child enrolment, health, safety and the condition of the physical environment in the child care home. In Canada, licensing follows two accreditation and monitoring systems. In the agency model, child care homes are monitored by organizations called child care agencies,¹ which themselves are licensed and have legal responsibility to monitor set numbers of child care homes to ensure adherence to licensing requirements (Ferns & Friendly, 2015). In other jurisdictions, child care homes are licensed by the province or territory directly and provincial or territorial officials are responsible for monitoring providers. Unlicensed home-based providers are not monitored by the province or territory or contracted agencies. However, they must adhere to regulations relating to the number of children being cared for at a given time (White, Perlman, Davidson, & Rayment, 2019). While not routinely monitored, provinces and territories may investigate unlicensed home-based child cares in the event of complaints. In 2022, nearly two-thirds of unlicensed home-based providers stated that they believed that licensing offered no benefit or was not worthwhile given the time they planned on providing care (Charters & Findlay, 2025a). Licensing sets minimum standards for care of children in part to ensure safety, although it does not necessarily guarantee higher quality care. However, evidence suggests that the quality of care may be comparatively lower in unlicensed homes and advocates have highlighted potential safety risks in unlicensed homes (Ferns & Friendly, 2015; Japel, Tremblay, & Cote, 2005; Varmuza, Perlman, & White, 2021; White, Perlman, Davidson, & Rayment, 2019).

1. Similar monitoring bodies include home child care coordinating offices, which are not licensed but are accredited by the province for set periods of time.

Provincial and territorial administrative records indicate that 22,108 licensed home-based child cares operated in Canada in 2024 (Friendly et al., 2026). In 2024, an estimated 135,008 child care spaces were held in licensed home-based child cares (Friendly et al., 2025), which represented nearly 9% of regulated child care spaces for children aged 0 to 12 years. Notably, unlicensed homes are not enumerated in administrative records so they are missing from these figures. Spaces in licensed home-based child cares increased following pandemic-related closures in 2021, although they have remained lower than pre-pandemic levels (Friendly et al., 2025).

Canada-wide early learning and child care system

Budgets 2016 and 2017 committed \$7.5 billion over 11 years (up to 2027/2028) to support the development of a child care system for children aged 0 to 5 years (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2017; Pasolli, 2019). Co-development of an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (IELCC) Framework with Indigenous partners was undertaken to establish high-quality early learning and child care programming in accordance with the unique cultures, aspirations and needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022b). In 2021, an additional \$27.2 billion was dedicated to building the Canada-wide early learning and child care (CWELCC) system through partnerships with provinces, territories and Indigenous groups (Department of Finance Canada, 2021; Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022a). This included fee reduction targets for regulated care (to an average of \$10 per day) and the creation of 250,000 regulated child care spaces by March 2026 (Department of Finance Canada, 2021). Quebec was not a signatory to the bilateral agreements but has received funds as part of an asymmetric agreement to further improve its already established reduced contribution program of child care system (Department of Finance Canada, 2022).

Federal investments in child care were guided by principles outlined by the 2017 Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2017) and IELCC Framework (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022b). These frameworks provided common guiding principles for federal, provincial and territorial governments to develop an early learning and child care system characterized by the provision of accessible, affordable, inclusive, flexible and high-quality child care for all families. Expansion of spaces was to be either fully or predominantly in not-for-profit (or public) settings, with licensed child care homes or child care agencies being effectively considered not-for-profit² for the purposes of the agreements (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2023). As such, unlicensed home child care was largely excluded.

Past research has found that characteristics of home child care, which are associated with some of these pillars, have often differed between licensed and unlicensed services. In terms of affordability, fees paid by parents differed based on the child care home's licensing status in addition to child age, region, province or territory, and subsidies (Charters & Findlay, 2025a; Macdonald & Friendly, 2023). In 2022, full-time fees were comparable or somewhat higher in licensed compared with unlicensed home child care, depending on the age of the child (Charters & Findlay, 2025a). Relating to inclusivity, research has been limited in describing levels of access to child care for many of the varied communities, such as linguistic minority populations, Indigenous children living off reserve, children from recent immigrant families and refugees, and children with additional support needs. For example, in 2022, 14% of licensed and 5% of unlicensed home child care providers reported that they currently provided services to children with disabilities (Charters & Findlay, 2025a). Overall, the availability of flexible child care arrangements was also limited. In 2022, about 5% of licensed and 6% of unlicensed child care homes offered care options during evenings, weekends or overnight, although unlicensed homes were more likely to offer drop-in or flexible care (Charters & Findlay, 2025a). Within CWELCC, many quality-related initiatives have focused on the importance of building qualifications in the child care workforce (Employment and

2. In Ontario's agreement, child care agencies are explicitly stated as being not-for-profit (Section 4.7.4), although 24% of child care agencies were classified as for-profit (Government of Canada, 2024).

Social Development Canada, 2024; Friendly et al., 2024). In 2022, nearly three in five (58%) licensed home-based providers and less than one-third (28%) of unlicensed providers had formal training in early childhood education (ECE) with other differences found in participation in professional development or training in the prior year (Charters & Findlay, 2025a). Given differences in the provision of care in licensed and unlicensed homes in addition to the relevance of the CWELCC agreements to licensed care exclusively, it is important that these forms of care be considered separately.

Objectives of the current study

This study provides a descriptive analysis of licensed and unlicensed home-based child care in Canada during a period of policy transformation associated with the continued implementation of the CWELCC by the provinces and territories. The focus of this report will be on licensed and unlicensed child care homes providing care to children 0 to 5 years of age. Descriptive analysis provides a snapshot of the state of licensed and unlicensed home child care in Canada in 2024 and demonstrates changes since earlier assessments in 2022, where possible (Charters & Findlay, 2025a). The results additionally provide insights into the perspectives of home-based providers, such as reasons for providing care and reasons for being unlicensed. This report should not be considered an evaluation of reforms associated with CWELCC and the bilateral agreements.

Materials and methods

Data source

The 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services (CSPCCS) is a cross-sectional survey conducted by Statistics Canada in partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada (Statistics Canada, 2025). The survey provides a snapshot of child care services in Canada for children aged 12 and younger at the national, provincial and territorial levels. Survey collection took place from April to July 2024. The target population consisted of centre-based child care services as well as licensed and unlicensed home-based child care providers. 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 2024 that reported at least \$2,500 in annual revenue, and (2) publicly available provincial and territorial lists of licensed child care services. A sample of 21,045 total units was contacted, with collection response rates of 56% for licensed child care homes and 41% unlicensed child care homes. More information on the frame is available elsewhere (Statistics Canada, 2025). In this report, only child care homes that provided care to at least one child aged 5 years and younger (potentially in addition to children aged 6 to 12) were included. Home child care that included only children attending school (assumed dedicated before- or after-school programs) were excluded. Services reporting implausibly high counts of children (exceeding the 99th percentile) were also excluded as potentially reflecting multiple home-based locations. The final sample comprised 1,680 licensed and 2,099 unlicensed child care homes.

Measures

Home-based child care providers responded to a number of questions on the service characteristics; the number of children being cared for and capacity; their own demographic and educational background, in addition to that of any employees; and perspectives on providing care as of April 8, 2024. Results were tabulated separately for licensed and unlicensed home child cares.

To present an overview of services provided in child care homes, information was collected on licensing, service options, fees and budgets. The year in which the child care home was established was collected and categorized as before 2010, from 2010 to 2019 and from 2020 to 2024. Licensing status included whether the child care home was licensed directly by the province or territory; approved or registered by a child care agency, association or coordination office; or was not licensed or approved. Among licensed child care homes, time since licensing was estimated by taking the difference between 2024 and the licensing year. Care options offered in home child care included full-time care (six hours or more daily and at least five days per week), part-time care (either six hours or more daily, less than five days a week or less than six hours per day, any number of days), before- or after-school care, evening (after 6 p.m.) or weekend care, and drop-in or flexible care. Providers indicated whether the child care home had accommodations³ in place to serve the needs of children with long-term conditions or disabilities. Providers specified whether one or more children enrolled received a subsidy to cover all or part of the usual parental fee (excluding the Canada Child Benefit, the child care expenses deduction, or other tax credits). Full-time daily fee rates were compiled for children aged 5 years and younger not attending school, with providers also indicating whether parents were charged for goods and services in addition to those covered by the daily fee. Providers indicated contributions from different sources (parents, government, other) to their operating budgets, not including capital and start-up funding, and further detailed how their operating budget was allocated (mortgage or rent, employee wages, building maintenance, food, supplies, other).

Other information was collected on numbers of children cared for and child capacity. Counts were provided for the number of children aged 5 years and younger not attending school and for children of any age attending school on April 8, 2024.⁴ This included children living in the provider's household, if applicable. Counts were presented both as an indicator (whether the child care home enrolled any children in each category) and as an average among those homes that had children in each category. The survey collected the maximum capacity of the home child care on April 8, 2024 (i.e., the maximum number of children the provider could provide care to at one time during regular operating hours). Subsequent questions addressed whether the home was at maximum capacity on the reference date, and, if not, the number of additional children the provider would have been able to care for. Providers further indicated whether there had been an increase, a decrease or no change in the maximum capacity of their home child care in the previous year and whether they had a waitlist of children waiting to be enrolled.

Providers and employees of child care homes are profiled through information on their demographic characteristics and training. The CSPCCS collected information on providers' gender (men+, women+)⁵, Indigenous identity (First Nations, Métis or Inuit), immigrant status (landed immigrant in the past 10 years) and whether the provider was a person with a disability. Child care homes were classified as being in urban regions if they were in census metropolitan areas or census agglomerations with or without census tracts and were otherwise considered non-urban. The highest level of provider training attained in ECE was collected as (1) no formal training in ECE; (2) a family child care-specific workshop; (3) an ECE course or workshop lasting less than one year; (4) a one-, two- or three-year certificate or diploma in ECE from a postsecondary institution; or (5) a four-year degree or graduate training in ECE. Respondents further indicated whether they had one or more paid employees providing direct care to children and whether the employees worked on a full-time, part-time,⁶ or a casual, on-call or supply basis. Among child

3. Accommodations included any characteristic of the child care environment, curriculum or equipment designed, built or altered to remove potential barriers and to facilitate full participation of children with disabilities.

4. School attendance included full- or part-day school participation.

5. Gender refers to an individual's personal and social identity as a man, woman, or a non-binary person and may differ from sex assigned at birth. Given that the non-binary population is small, data aggregation to a two-category gender+ variable was necessary. This involved random distribution of non-binary persons to the men+ and women+ gender categories (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

6. Full-time employees worked 30 hours or more per week. Part-time employees worked less than 30 hours per week.

care homes with employees, employee training in ECE was collected, in addition to the hourly rate paid to employees.

Providers with employees noted whether they offered any health and pay-related benefits, including a health or dental plan, life or disability insurance, top-up payments to maternity or parental leave, a pension plan or group Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP), paid sick leave, or other benefits. Providers further listed any training or professional development that either they or their employees had taken in the previous 12 months. Areas of training included child health and personal care or child development; incorporating Indigenous or culturally relevant ways of knowing; effective communication with parents; working with children with disabilities or training in autism spectrum disorder support; working with children with diverse backgrounds or 2SLGBTQI+ training; facilitating play, learning in literacy and numeracy, or learning in arts; curriculum implementation and pedagogical approaches or learning theories; and trauma-informed practices or emergency preparedness training.

Providers responded to detailed questions providing their perspectives on offering child care in the home. Providers were asked the primary reason they became a home child care provider from the following options: being with their own children, grandchildren or relatives; financial reasons; flexibility; safety concerns over own children; could not get another job; interest in the child care profession; and other reasons. Providers further indicated whether they were intending to continue providing child care services in their home in three years' time. Among those not intending to do so, providers reported one or more reasons: career change, return to school, children or grandchildren no longer requiring care, needing a break, financial instability, disliking working alone, retirement, planning to work in centre-based care, planning on moving, because of licensing requirements, or other reasons. Unlicensed providers also reported one or more reasons for not being licensed: wanting control over own business, no benefit to becoming licensed, not meeting all requirements for licensing, too many requirements for licensing, being in the process of becoming licensed, not planning on providing care long enough to make it worthwhile, did not know about the licensing system, costs of licensing requirements too high, not necessary to obtain licensing for business, or other reasons.

Analytical strategy

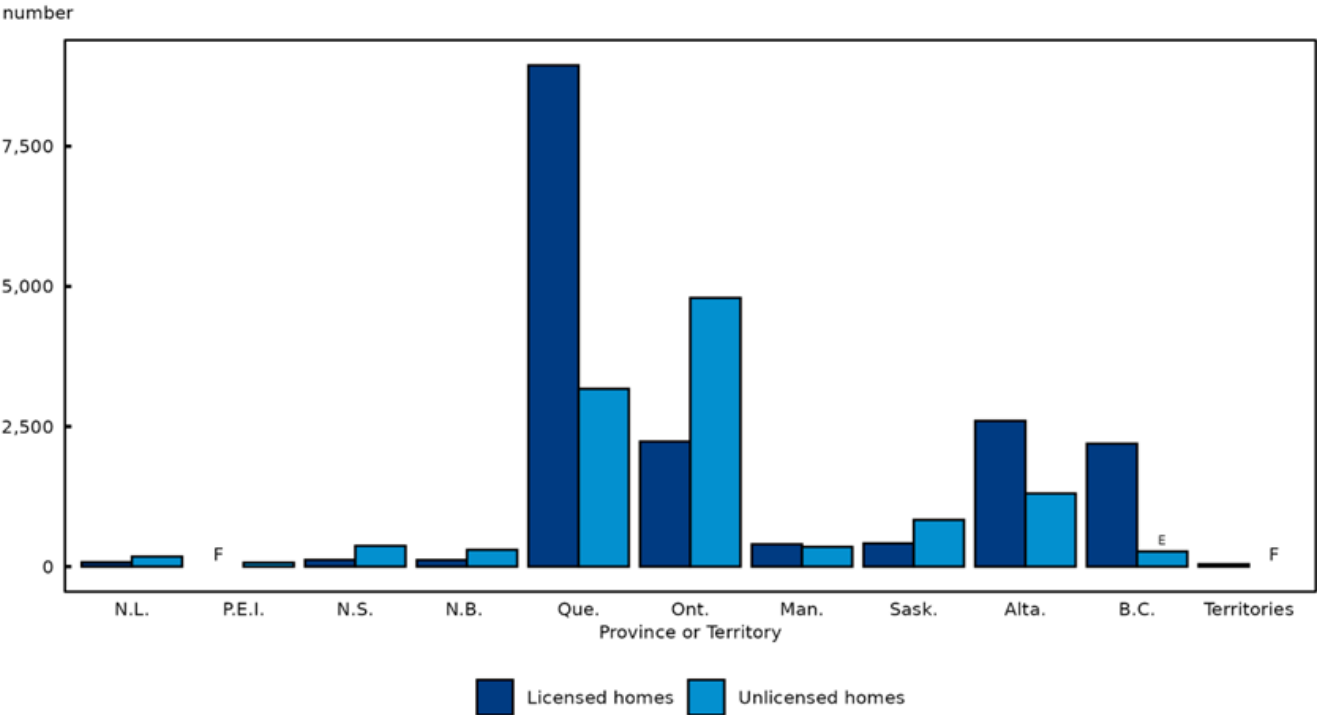
Descriptive analyses provided a snapshot of licensed and unlicensed child care homes providing care to children aged 0 to 5 years in Canada in April 2024. Analyses were performed in SAS Enterprise Guide 8.3 using G-estimation macros (G-Est 2.03.004) for domain and variance estimation using survey sample weights (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Results

In April 2024, there were approximately 17,200 licensed and 11,700 unlicensed child care homes across Canada providing services to children aged 0 to 5 years (Chart 1).⁷ Quebec had the most licensed homes (8,946), comprising over half (52%) of licensed home-based child care services in Canada. Ontario had the most unlicensed homes (4,795), about two in five (41%) of all unlicensed homes in Canada. Approximately 102,100 children 5 years and younger not attending school went to a licensed home child care and 49,200 went to an unlicensed home child care.

7. These totals exclude licensed homes in Prince Edward Island and unlicensed homes in the territories, which could not be reliably estimated.

Chart 1
Licensed and unlicensed home child care caring for children 0-5 years, Canada, April 2024



^E use with caution
^F too unreliable to be published
Note: The territories include Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.
Source: 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services.

An overview of the services provided in licensed and unlicensed child care homes is provided in Table 1. About one in five licensed (20%) and unlicensed (19%) homes had been established in 2020 or later. Over a quarter of licensed homes were licensed by the province or territory directly (28%) with the remainder (72%) approved or registered by a child care agency, association or coordinating office. Licensed homes had been licensed for 11 years on average. Most licensed (96%) and unlicensed (86%) homes offered full-time care options. Non-standard care options, such as evening, weekend and overnight care, were offered by 3% of licensed homes and 7% of unlicensed homes, with drop-in or flexible care options being offered by 8% licensed homes and 18% of unlicensed homes. A third of licensed homes (33%) and 16% of unlicensed homes had accommodations in place for children with disabilities.

Table 1

Service overview of home-based child cares providing care to children aged 0 to 5 years, Canada, April 2024

	Licensed homes	Unlicensed homes
	Percentage	
Year child care home established (proportion)		
2020 to 2024	20.0	19.1
2010 to 2019	39.1	46.0
Before 2010	40.9	34.9
Licensing status (proportion)		
Licensed by province or territory directly	28.1	0.0
Approved or registered by a child care agency, association or coordinating office	71.9	0.0
Not licensed or approved	0.0	100.0
Years since child care home licensed or approved (mean)¹	11.4	...
Options offered (proportion)		
Full time	95.5	86.4
Part time	23.0	46.3
Before or after school	14.7	26.2
Evening, weekend or overnight	3.1 E	7.3
Drop in or flexible care	7.6	17.6
Has accommodations for children with a disability or long-term condition (proportion)		
Yes	33.0	15.9
Full-time daily fee for children aged 5 and younger not attending school (mean)³	39.7	41.4
Enrols children receiving subsidy to cover all or part of usual parent fee (proportion)²		
Yes	72.1	...
Charges parents for goods and services in addition to daily fee (proportion)		
Yes	7.3	6.9
Sources of operating budget (mean percentage)		
Parents	37.6	...
Government	57.8	...
Other	4.6	...
Allocation of operating budget (mean percentage)		
Mortgage or rent	24.5	...
Employee wages	11.9	...
Building maintenance	10.6	...
Food	29.6	...
Supplies	14.7	...
Other	8.7	...

... not applicable

E use with caution

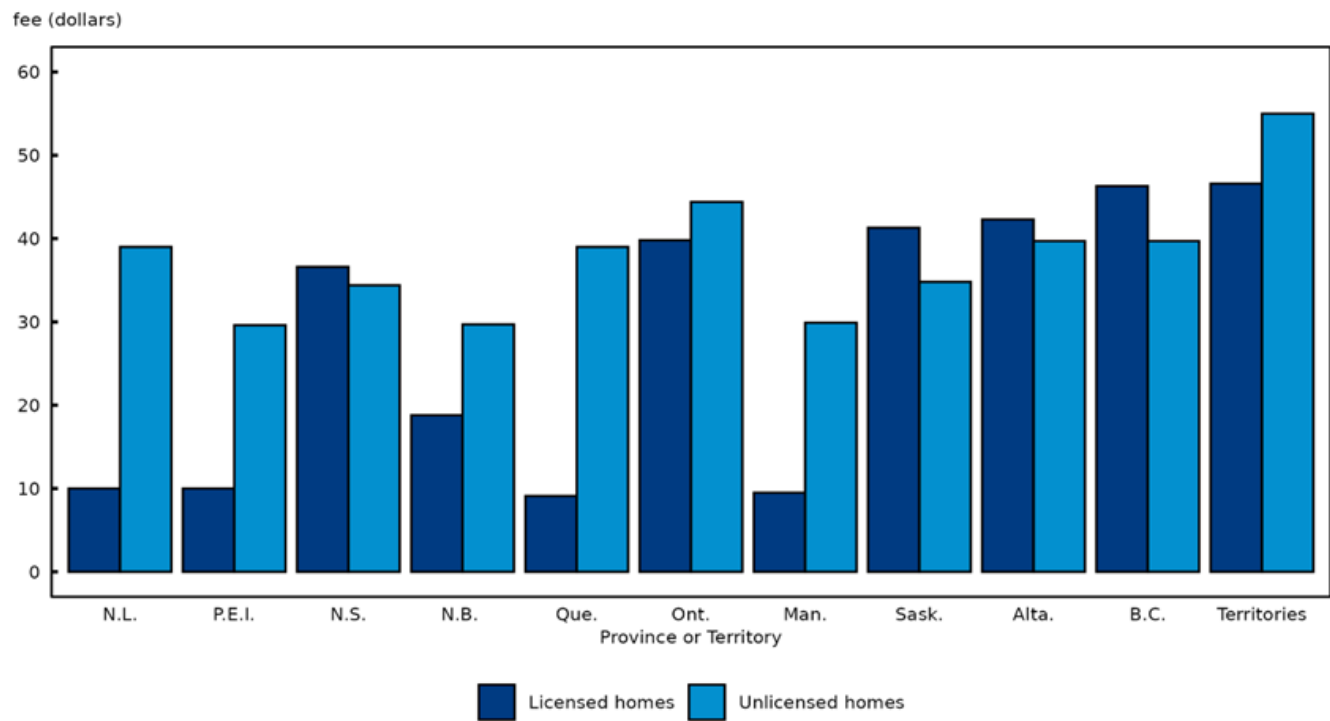
¹ Licensed child care homes only² Licensed home-based child cares outside of Quebec only³ Licensed and unlicensed home-based child cares outside of Quebec only

Source: Statistics Canada, 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services.

Outside of Quebec, licensed homes charged an average (mean) of \$40 for full-time daily fees for children not attending school, and unlicensed homes charged an average of \$41. Chart 2 shows median full-time daily fees for children aged 5 and younger not attending school by province and territory. Jurisdictions with median fees at or below \$10 per day for licensed homes include Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, and Quebec. About 7% of licensed and unlicensed homes charged parents amounts for goods and services in addition to the daily fee. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of licensed homes had one or more children receiving a fee subsidy, fee reductions available to eligible parents not reflected in daily fee rates. On average, licensed providers obtained over one-third of their operating budgets from parent fees (38%), nearly three-fifths from government sources (58%), and the remainder from other sources, including expenses covered by an employer or organization (5%). Breaking down

the allocation of operating budgets, the average provider spent the most on food (30%) and then on mortgage or rental fees (25%).

Chart 2
Median full time daily fees for children aged 5 and under not attending school: licensed and unlicensed home-based child cares caring for children 0-5 years, Canada April 2024



Note: The territories include Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services.

Table 2 provides an overview of numbers of children cared for and capacity in home child care. All child care homes in the sample cared for children aged 5 years and younger not attending school, with licensed homes caring for six children and unlicensed homes caring for four children, on average. In addition to caring for children aged 5 and younger not attending school, 2 in 10 licensed homes and over a third of unlicensed homes provided care to one or more children attending school. Over four in five licensed homes (82%) and three-quarters of unlicensed homes (75%) were operating at maximum capacity on April 8, 2024. Both licensed and unlicensed homes not at maximum capacity would have been able to provide care to three additional children, on average. Most licensed (87%) and unlicensed (89%) homes had not seen a change to their maximum capacity in the prior year. Over 6 in 10 licensed homes (62%) and less than half of unlicensed homes (44%) had a waitlist.

Table 2**Number of children cared for and child capacity of home-based child cares providing care to children aged 0 to 5 years, Canada, April 2024**

	Licensed homes	Unlicensed homes
	Percentage	
Enrolment		
Any enrolment of children aged 5 and under not attending school (proportion)	100.0	100.0
Number of children enrolled aged 5 and younger not attending school (mean)	6.0	4.2
Any enrolment of children any age attending school (proportion)	19.5	35.3
Number of children any age attending school (mean)	2.3	2.3
Maximum capacity		
Homes operating at maximum capacity (proportion)	81.8	74.7
Maximum capacity of home (mean)	6.6	5.1
Number of children child care home could provide care to (mean) ¹	3.1	2.6
Change in maximum capacity in past year (proportion)		
Increase	8.5	3.4 E
Decrease	5.0 E	7.7
No change	86.5	88.9
Has list of children waiting to be enrolled (proportion)		
Yes	61.8	44.3

... not applicable

E use with caution

¹ Child care homes that were not at maximum capacity on April 8, 2024.**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services.

Table 3 profiles providers and employees working in a home child care. Nearly all providers were women+ (99%), while 2 in 10 licensed (21%) and 1 in 10 unlicensed (10%) providers had immigrated to Canada in the previous 10 years. Very few (under 3%) licensed or unlicensed providers reported Indigenous identity or were persons with a disability. About four in five licensed (84%) and unlicensed (78%) home providers lived in urban areas. Licensed providers were most likely to have a one-, two- or three-year ECE certificate or diploma (36%), with just over 1 in 10 having no ECE credentials (11%). Unlicensed providers were most likely to not have any formal training in ECE (50%), with less than one-quarter (22%) having a one-, two- or three-year ECE certificate or diploma.

Table 3
Profile of home-based providers and employees in home-based child cares providing care to children aged 0 to 5 years, Canada, April 2024

	Licensed homes	Unlicensed homes
	Percentage	
Provider demographic characteristics (proportion)		
Women+ gender	98.7	99.0
First Nations, Métis, Inuit	1.0 E	2.5 E
Landed immigrant in last 10 years	20.6	9.6
Person with a disability	1.8 E	2.6 E
Urban or rural location (proportion)		
Urban	83.8	78.4
Provider highest training in early childhood education (proportion)		
No ECE-related training	11.4	50.0
Family child care specific workshop	23.7	8.6
ECE course or workshop lasting less than one year	15.2	8.0
ECE one-, two- or three-year certificate or diploma	35.7	22.3
ECE four-year degree or graduate training	4.4 E	2.6 E
Other level of training	9.6	8.5
Has one or more paid employees providing direct care to children (proportion)		
Yes	17.2	2.9 E
Types of employees providing direct care to children (proportion)¹		
Has one or more full time employees	56.4	25.9 E
Has one or more part time employees	32.5	43.4 E
Has casual, on-call, or supply employees	39.7	54.3 E
Employee training in Early Childhood Education (ECE) (proportion)¹		
No ECE-related training	13.7 E	84.6
Family child care specific workshop	39.4	F
ECE course or workshop lasting less than one year	24.1 E	F
ECE post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree	24.2 E	F
Health and pay employee benefits (proportion)¹		
Any benefits	41.8	F
Health or dental care plan	8.8 E	F
Life or disability insurance	F	F
Top-up payments for maternity or parental leave	14.1 E	F
Pension plan or group Registered Retirement Savings Plan	18.2 E	F
Paid sick leave	30.9	F
Other benefits	F	F
Employee hourly rate of pay (mean)¹	19.0	16.9
Training or professional development past 12 months [provider or employee] (proportion)		
Any training	84.5	28.4
Child health and personal care or child development	69.4	16.6
Incorporating Indigenous or culturally relevant ways of knowing	12.2	3.2 E
Effective communication with parents	34.3	5.3 E
Working with children with disabilities or training in autism spectrum disorder support	29.7	7.8
Working with children with diverse backgrounds or 2SLGBTQI+ training	18.3	4.4 E
Facilitating play, learning in literacy and numeracy, or learning in arts	40.4	6.0
Curriculum implementation and pedagogical approaches or learning theories	32.4	4.2 E
Trauma-informed practices or emergency preparedness training	36.7	16.9

... not applicable

E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

¹ Home-based child cares with one or more employees providing direct care to children. Total percentage may exceed 100% as child care homes may have more than one employee.

Note: ECE = early childhood education.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services.

Nearly one in five (17%) licensed homes and 3% of unlicensed homes had paid employees directly caring for children. Among those with paid employees, over half (56%) of licensed homes and over one-quarter (26%) of unlicensed homes hired employees on a full-time basis. Employees in licensed homes were most likely to have ECE training at the family workshop level (39%) and employees in unlicensed homes were most likely to not have any ECE training (85%). About 4 in 10 (42%) licensed homes that had hired employees offered some kind of health or pay-related benefits, where paid sick leave was the most common benefit provided (31%). Too few unlicensed homes had employees to provide reliable estimates of employee benefits. Professional development or training (completed by the provider or an employee) in the previous year had been undertaken in over four in five (85%) licensed homes and in over a quarter (28%) of unlicensed homes. Training in child health and personal care or child development and in trauma-informed practices or emergency preparedness were the most common areas of training in licensed and unlicensed homes.

The CSPCCS collected providers' perspectives on providing care in the home (Table 4). More than half (54%) of licensed providers stated that the primary reason that they had decided to become a home child care provider was an interest in the child care profession. Half (50%) of unlicensed providers stated their primary reason was being with their own children, grandchildren or relatives. Over four in five (83%) licensed providers and three in five (60%) unlicensed providers intended to continue providing child care services in their home in three years. Among those who did not intend on continuing providing care, retirement was the most common reason for both licensed (42%) and unlicensed (36%) providers. Chart 3 shows reasons provided by unlicensed providers for not being licensed with the most common response category being that providers wanted control over their own business (61%). Unlicensed providers were also likely to express the view that licensing was not beneficial (43%) or necessary (30%) for their home child care service.

Table 4

**Perspectives on provision of child care in the home among home-based child care providers serving
children aged 0 to 5 years, Canada, April 2024**

	Licensed homes	Unlicensed homes
	Percentage	
Primary reason chosen to be a home child care provider		
To be with own children, grandchildren or relatives	32.1	49.8
Financial reasons	3.7 E	4.0
Flexibility	3.7 E	7.7
Safety concerns for own children	F	1.5 E
Could not get enother job	F	0.3 E
Interest in child care profession	53.8	32.1
Other reason	4.2 E	4.6
Intention to continue providing child care services in home in three years		
Intending to continue providing care	83.3	59.7
Reasons why not intending on providing care in the home in three years ¹		
Ready for a career change	18.0 E	25.6
Plan to return to school	F	5.0 E
Children or grandchildren no longer require care	13.9 E	19.8
Need a break	21.3 E	8.6 E
Financial instability	9.8 E	7.1 E
Dislike working alone	2.8 E	F
Retirement	42.4	35.9
Plan to work in centre-based care	F	4.4 E
Plan on moving	7.9 E	5.7 E
Due to requirements for licensing	3.0 E	8.2 E
Other reasons	15.9 E	17.1 E
Reasons why home care service is unlicensed ²		
I want control over my own business	...	60.6
There is no benefit to me becoming licensed	...	42.5
I do not meet all the requirements	...	4.1 E
There are too many requirements	...	23.3
I am in the process of becoming licensed	...	2.5 E
I do not plan on providing care for long enough to make it worthwhile	...	22.9
I did not know about the licensing system	...	4.6 E
The costs associated with meeting the licensing requirements are too h	...	14.3
It is not necessary to obtain licensing for my business	...	30.2
Other reasons	...	11.2

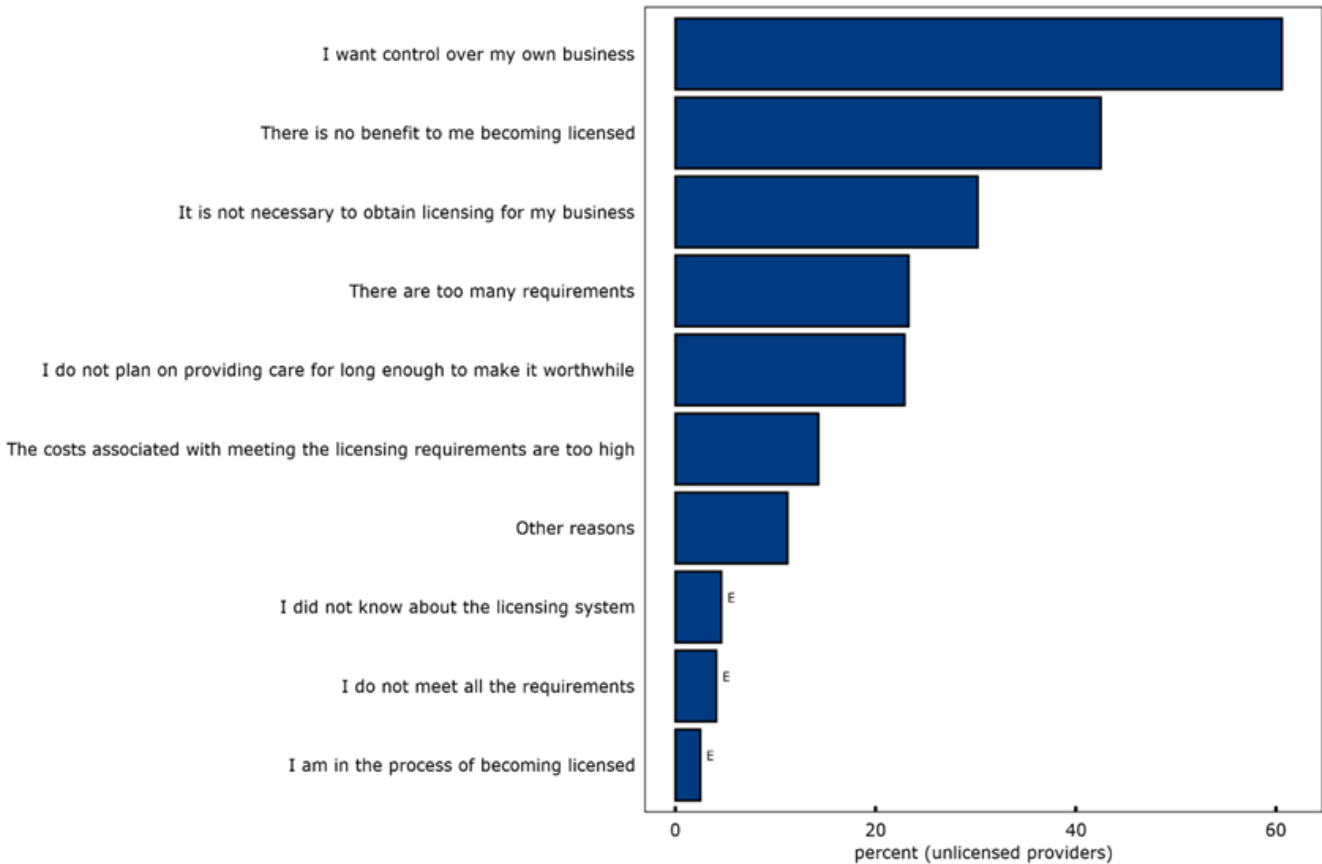
... not applicable

E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

¹ Among providers who do not intend on providing care in their home in three years time. Total percentage may exceed 100% as multiple responses possible.² Unlicensed child care homes only. Total percentage may exceed 100% as multiple responses possible.**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services.

Chart 3
Reasons why home care service is unlicensed, unlicensed home child care, Canada April 2024



^E use with caution
Note: Total percentage may exceed 100% as multiple responses were possible.
Source: 2024 Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services.

Discussion

This report provides an overview of licensed and unlicensed home child care in Canada during a period of ongoing reform associated with the implementation of the CWELCC system. In April 2024, there were approximately 17,200 licensed home-based child cares across Canada providing care to about 102,100 children less than five years and not attending school. Nearly three-quarters of licensed homes were licensed through the agency model and had been licensed for an average of 11 years. Nearly one-fifth of licensed homes had one or more paid employees who, in addition to the owner, provided direct care to children. The typical licensed home cared for six children who were five years of age and younger and not attending school. As well, in April 2024, 11,700 unlicensed home-based child cares in Canada provided care to about 49,200 children five years and younger and not attending school. The average unlicensed home cared for about four children not attending school and about 3% of unlicensed homes had paid employees providing direct care to children. Unlicensed providers were most likely to cite wanting control over their own business as the reason for not being licensed.

Service overview

The total number of child care homes enumerated in the CSPCCS remained similar between 2022 and 2024. Notably, the share of licensed child care homes increased from 51% (14,435 homes) in 2022 (Charters & Findlay, 2025a) to 60% (17,200 homes) in 2024. This may relate to incentives for providers to become licensed and participate in the CWELCC system and may corroborate findings from administrative sources on increases in the number of active regulated child care homes since 2021 (Friendly et al., 2026). The current study estimates that the home child care workforce in April 2024 comprised approximately 28,900 licensed and unlicensed providers and 5,100 paid employees. This is less than the 44,815 home care providers enumerated in the 2021 Census (Statistics Canada, 2024a). The census figure was derived from the National Occupational Classification code 44100 for home child care providers, which includes additional informal child care workers such as live-in caregivers, nannies and babysitters (Statistics Canada, 2024b) and may be expected to exceed the counts for formal home child care. Additional differences may relate to the \$2,500 revenue threshold for inclusion in the CSPCCS sampling frame (Statistics Canada, 2025), incompletely reported revenues that, and high rates of market exit in home child care (Abbes & Macdonald, 2022), which may have reduced the number of child care homes in the frame that remained active by the interview date.

Care offered during non-standard hours (i.e., outside of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays), such as evenings, weekends or overnight, was offered by less than one-tenth of homes. Drop-in or flexible care options were more common, although only among unlicensed homes, with 17% offering these arrangements. These figures are highly comparable to 2022 (Charters & Findlay, 2025a), potentially implying limited care options for parents requiring care during non-standard hours (Lero, Prentice, Friendly, Richardson, & Fraser, 2021).

Results from this study found that mean full-time daily fees outside of Quebec were \$40 in licensed homes and \$41 in unlicensed homes. Provinces outside of Quebec with median full-time daily fees for licensed home-based child care at \$10 or less included Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba. This indicates that fees of \$10 or less were charged by at least half of licensed homes in these provinces. This differs somewhat from Macdonald and Friendly's child care fee survey (2023), possibly because of differences in collection and coverage. The fee survey was restricted to 37 cities across Canada and often surveyed child care agencies rather than individual providers. Comparison of fee rates between 2022 and 2024 using the CSPCCS is difficult because fees in the former survey were reported by categories of age (Charters & Findlay, 2025a).

Nearly three-quarters of licensed homes outside of Quebec cared for one or more children receiving a fee subsidy. However, it is difficult to compare this with 2022 results because a high percentage of providers in 2022 (over 15%) were uncertain whether the children they cared for received subsidies (Charters & Findlay, 2025a). While existing or modified versions of fee subsidy programs remained active in many jurisdictions as a tool for fee reduction (Friendly et al., 2026; Macdonald & Friendly, 2023), the survey does not provide estimates of the proportion of children receiving subsidies or the amounts received. A third of licensed homes and less than one-fifth of unlicensed homes had accommodations or supports in place for children with a disability or long-term condition. Comparison with 2022 results is not possible given the 2022 CSPCCS addressed enrolment of children with disabilities and not accommodation (Charters & Findlay, 2025a). Either providers or employees of a third of licensed homes (30%) and less than one-tenth of unlicensed homes (8%) had undergone training in the past 12 months relating to working with children with disabilities or autism spectrum disorder. Inadequate funding to support inclusion of children with disabilities (Irwin, Lero, & Mayer, 2024) in addition to lack of training (Irwin, Lero, & Brophy, 2004; Mejia-Cardenas, Rivard, & Mestari, 2024) may constitute barriers to inclusion (Kerr, Findlay, & Arim, 2024).

Number of children enrolled and capacity

About four in five licensed and unlicensed homes were at maximum capacity on April 8, 2024. Additionally, about three in five (61%) licensed homes and two in five (44%) unlicensed homes had a waiting list. As with child care centres (Charters & Findlay, 2025b), these results imply low availability of licensed child care spaces in Canada. The results also suggest that unlicensed home child care also had a comparably high likelihood of being at maximum capacity as licensed homes. High continued demand for unlicensed services may relate in part to lack of available spaces in licensed homes and centres (Macdonald, 2018), although more evidence is required to support this. There are no comparable estimates from 2022 on capacity.

Providers

Provider qualifications in ECE and ongoing training and professional development activities have been associated with higher overall scores of child care quality (Bigras et al., 2010; Slot, 2018). This study found that about two-fifths of licensed providers had postsecondary credentials, such as a certificate, diploma or degree in ECE and another two-fifths had a workshop-level certification. Among unlicensed providers, half had no ECE credential and one-quarter had postsecondary ECE credentials. A comparison with 2022 suggests that the level of provider training in ECE in both licensed and unlicensed child care homes has increased. For instance, the proportion of licensed providers with a workshop-level credential increased from 27% in 2022 to 39% in 2024. In contrast, the uptake of training and professional development activities was similar in both years (Charters & Findlay, 2025a).

Among the 17% of licensed homes with employees, most employees (64%) possessed workshop-level credentials in ECE. Employees in licensed homes were paid \$19 per hour on average and about two-fifths (42%) received health and pay-related benefits. Benefits for paid sick leave were most common (31%) followed by a pension or RRSP-style plan (18%^E). Employees in unlicensed homes were paid an average of \$17 per hour. Less information on specific benefit types was available given the small sample. Information on training, pay or benefits of staff in child care homes was not collected in 2022. Evidence suggests that higher pay and benefits improve job satisfaction and reduce turnover in child care centres (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002; Fairholm & Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009), although less is known specifically about turnover of employees in home-based child care.

Perspectives on providing child care

Unlicensed providers were most likely to state that they were unlicensed because they wanted control over their own business, that they saw no benefit to becoming licensed or that it was not necessary to obtain licensing for their business. These broadly correspond to response options reported by unlicensed providers in 2022, where concepts of control and lack of necessity were prominent. Not being licensed was also related to expected tenure, where nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents felt that licensing was not worthwhile given the length of time they intended on providing care. Notably, the 2022 report did not provide national figures but found notable differences in response options by province (Charters & Findlay, 2025a).

Limitations

Limitations of this study should be addressed. Preliminary evaluation of results relating to funding from the CWELCC system found high levels of uncertain responses, which precluded further statistical analysis. Thus, it was not possible to explore characteristics of providers and services that had participated in the CWELCC system. Further, it is not advisable to ask providers about the demographic characteristics of the children they serve, nor do providers have detailed information on children receiving subsidies, information which would contribute to a greater ability to explore the status of inclusivity and

affordability of licensed home child care. This may be better addressed through survey instruments provided to parents. Finally, the CSPCCS sampling frame was taken from the Statistics Canada Business Register and publicly available lists of licensed and regulated child care providers, which may inadequately sample either unlicensed child care homes (which are not included on public lists) or homes that were associated with an agency and thus not directly identified. Additional challenges, such as incompletely reported or unreported revenues, short durations of service (Abbes & Macdonald, 2022), or high rates of non-response (Statistics Canada, 2025), may have excluded providers from the sampling frame and reduced the representativeness of the sample.

Conclusions

This study provides updated national estimates of licensed and unlicensed home child care in Canada in 2024 during ongoing reforms associated with the CWELCC system. While this study provides a snapshot of home-based providers in 2024, further comparison of findings with those from the 2022 CSPCCS may provide some insights into change within home-based child care over time. This report provides some evidence that licensed providers made up a greater share of home-based child care in Canada in 2024 compared with 2022, and shows an increase in ECE credentials among child care providers compared with 2022. Continued research in this area is necessary to understand the progression of home child care in Canada under the Canada-wide agreements.

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