



# Evaluation of Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy

## Evaluation Findings Report 2023

22 August 2024

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## How to read this report

The Evaluation Findings Report is divided into 10 extractable modules, in addition to a sub-module for the wage enhancement program. Each module can be identified by its subject matter and, visually, by its primary and accent colours (see the table below).

Across all modules, light grey or a lighter shade of the primary colour is used to enhance the contrast between a category of interest and its comparison category—usually, though not always, 2019 data.

To help guide the reader through the text, some key words are bolded. There is no strict rule for bolding text, other than to alleviate the burden on the reader.

Module	Primary Colour	Accent colour	Neutral colour
Executive Summary	Purple		
Introduction/Methodology	Blue	Orange	Grey
Satisfaction with Child Care	Pink	Green	Grey
Perception of Child Care	Green	Grey	
Wages and Benefits	Purple	Pink	Grey
<i>Wage Enhancement</i>	Purple	Orange	Grey
Education and Certification	Orange	Purple	Grey
Workforce Development	Pink	Blue	Grey
Labour Mobility	Green	Grey	
KPIs	Blue		
Considerations and Recommendations	Blue		

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Executive Summary

In 2018, British Columbia launched the Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy (ECL R&R Strategy). It is part of a larger ten-year (“ChildCareBC”) plan, to increase the quality, affordability, and availability of child care spaces in British Columbia. Its initial \$136M investment included many tactics such as the wage enhancement and supports for professional development. While the tactics have been expanded in various ways since 2018, the ECL R&R Strategy remains with its original intent; it seeks to meet the following three overarching long-term goals:



The then Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (AEST, now Ministry of Post-secondary Education and Future Skills, PSFS) engaged the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) to lead an evaluation. The goal was to enable a mechanism for regular sector feedback on the overarching impacts of the ECL R&R Strategy. ECEBC selected Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to undertake the sector-led evaluation.

This Evaluation Findings Report for 2023 includes the main project results and lessons learned to the end of 2023. An accompanying volume, the Evaluation Technical Report contains a more complete account of the project design and activities up to 2023 as well as the full versions of tables, figures, and qualitative analyses that this findings report draws upon.

## Evaluation Strategy

The May 2019 Evaluation Strategy report finalized the evaluation design. It derived the overarching questions to answer over the evaluation period from the ECL R&R Strategy's goals and outcomes. The questions are expressed as nested questions, relating the expected medium-year outcomes to the long-term goals, as follows:

Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in the long-term goal of an **adequate and stable workforce**, comprised of qualified and skilled early care and learning professionals?

Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the ECL R&R Strategy contribute to:



- adequate supply of ECL professionals entering the workforce?
- opportunities for career growth and development in the ECL sector?
- expanded education, training, and professional development opportunities to ensure a skilled workforce?

Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in the long-term goal of ECL being viewed as a **viable, sustainable, and valued career**?



Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the ECL R&R Strategy promote

- public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of the ECL workforce?

Does the ECL R&R Strategy promote the long-term goal of **appropriate compensation plans and human resources strategies** to be put in place?



Over the medium term of the evaluation, do retention strategies

- support the long-term engagement of ECEs and others in the workforce, to help keep them in the profession?

## Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework calls for data to answer these questions using many different methods and tools. These are described briefly below and in more detail in the technical report. SRDC worked with the Sector Steering Committee to create an organizing structure for the collected data. They identified 13 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Collectively these assess the changes occurring from the ECL R&R



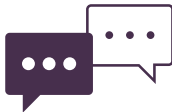
Strategy. In various permutations, as reported here, they track progress in six broad areas where BC's ECL workforce could potentially experience change as a result of the ECL R&R Strategy: compensation and benefits; education and certification; workforce development; labour mobility; satisfaction with work in child care; and perception of child care.

For the 2019 year, the project developed benchmarks (the benchmarking report was deliverable #9 published in July 2020) for the period 2015-2019. These captured the starting point for many of the changes the ECL R&R Strategy was expected to produce. Later reports – starting with the evaluation report in 2020 up to this current report – compare the data on indicators from 2023 (and sometimes from 2020, 2021 and 2022) to the equivalent benchmarking indicators for 2015-19. The comparison determines change in the KPIs. The specific combination of changes across the KPIs can signal success or failure for the ECL R&R Strategy in achieving its medium-term outcomes and indicate progress towards realizing the ten-year goals.

## Evaluation Methods and Tools

SRDC's data collection strategy relies on three broad types of data (administrative, survey, and interview data) from a variety of different sources to provide evidence along each of the project's KPIs.

In 2023, findings from the ECL R&R Strategy evaluation in this report were informed by the following data types and data sources:

		
<b>Administrative Data</b>	<b>Survey Data</b>	<b>Interview Data</b>
Child Care Workforce Contact Information Database	Annual Cross-sectional Survey of ECL Employers in BC	Key Informant Interviews (KIs) with representatives from selected Case Study Sites
Administrative Outcomes Database	Annual Cross-sectional Survey of ECL Professionals in BC	
Canadian Census Microdata		

## Results

This report includes measures of progress towards achieving outcomes and goals sought by the ECL R&R Strategy. It is the 27<sup>th</sup> deliverable of the Sector-led Evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy in BC. In general, the evaluation has proceeded as planned. It has collected data on the employment, working conditions, education, and professional development of the ECL workforce.

## Change on Key Performance Indicators

To take stock of progress against each KPI, we have cycled through results from all relevant data sources. We compare the position of the ECL sector in 2023 relative to 2019 and earlier (and also intervening years where relevant). We draw on observations from professionals working in the sector and the general public to add meaning to these statistics.

A word of caution when interpreting KPI directional results: These summaries do not allow the reader to know how close—or how far—the sector is in reaching its long-term goals. Inevitably, many nuances of findings are lost in such high-level summary. Readers are encouraged to review the findings report for a more complete story and the full results for each indicator in the technical report.

This report highlights the pressures members of BC's ECL workforce are under. It shows how they are changing. It points to how ECL professionals have used, sought, or recommended ECL R&R Strategy tactics to improve their employment situations.

The evaluation has been able to cover developments in the sector's response to the ECL R&R Strategy to the end of 2023. A final project report will summarize lessons learned and include new findings from a public opinion survey conducted in early 2024, from linked education and tax records and from key informant interviews with employers and professionals associated with implementing ECL R&R Strategy tactics. Five-year results on KPIs will provide insights into the effects of the ECL R&R Strategy and help us answer the evaluation questions set in 2018 for the 10-year ECL R&R Strategy.

### *How to Read Table 1*

The rightmost column in Table 1 presents a summary of this progress on KPIs. An arrow symbol signifies the overall trend on each indicator since the launch of the ECL R&R strategy until the end of 2023. This can be:

an **improvement**  a **deterioration**  a **mixed result** 

The arrows do not provide an indication of the magnitude of the change (i.e., large or small), only the direction of the change. Additionally, KPIs with **no arrow** reflect those for which no new information was collected since the last report.

A complete analysis of the evaluation's KPIs can be found in the table [Summary of progress to 2023 on key performance indicators](#).

**Table 1** Progress on Key Performance Indicators from 2019 to 2023

<b>KPI1</b>	ECL professional satisfaction and perception of appropriateness of compensation	↔
<b>KPI2A</b>	Average real wages and salaries of ECL professionals	↑
<b>KPI2B</b>	Benefits of ECL Professionals	↑
<b>KPI3</b>	Integration of current Sector Occupational Competencies into education and training programs	
<b>KPI4</b>	Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs	↑
<b>KPI5</b>	Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers	
<b>KPI6</b>	Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills	↔
<b>KPI7</b>	Awareness of ECL career pathway options, how to pursue them, and expectations of their feasibility in terms of finances and availability of training opportunities.	↔
<b>KPI8</b>	Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report participation in professional development activities	↑
<b>KPI9</b>	Hours of professional development per ECL workforce member per year	↑
<b>KPI10</b>	Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills	↑
<b>KPI11</b>	Employment stability of ECL workforce, including variances for staffing for providers, work hours, job tenure, job exits	↓
<b>KPI12</b>	Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value) among those already working in the sector	↔
<b>KPI13</b>	Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value of ECL work) in general population, thought leaders, mass media, youth, and parents	↑

## Provisional early answers to evaluation questions

The evaluation framework uses progress against KPIs to answer the evaluation questions over time. We are reporting on the final year of the five-year evaluation project, at the halfway mark of the ten-year ECL R&R Strategy. It remains too early to make judgements against ten-year goals. However, it is possible to identify progress. Earlier data collection, in 2020, 2021 and 2022, also captured the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of the Strategy's goals. For 2023, COVID-specific measures were dropped. There are definitely places where, despite the pandemic, the needle is moving positively on the intended outcomes and goals of the Strategy, set at the project outset in 2019, while there remain others where change has not been achieved or been negative.

Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in the long-term goal of an **adequate and stable workforce**, comprised of qualified and skilled early care and learning professionals?

While this question anticipates a decade of change, qualifications and, to a lesser extent, skills are improving.

- The number of professionals with ECL-related qualifications appears to be increasing annually.
- However, the proportion of the workforce holding ECE or ECE specialty certification still appears to be falling well short of needs.
- Staffing problems persist but 2023 is the first year of the evaluation in which they have not worsened.

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Over the medium term of the evaluation, do recruitment strategies achieve the outcome of an adequate supply of ECEs and other ECL professionals entering the workforce? [medium-term outcome]

- Census data indicate the net size of the workforce in BC did not grow from 2016 to 2021. However, there was a large increase in the number of centre-based ECEs and ECEAs accompanied by a drop in the number of home-based care professionals.
- Much of the increase in enrollment in ECE education programs has occurred at private training institutions. Compared to 2019, these programs are increasingly being delivered virtually or in a hybrid format. There is a concern that the quality and comprehensiveness of these programs may be wanting. Consequently, centres welcoming newly certified professionals are left having to provide significantly more support to develop their basic and required skills.
- While the supply of ECEs is increasing, it is still not adequate, likely due to a combination of the creation of new spaces and the high rates of exits of those with recently-earned and not-so-recently-earned credentials.



- Practicums seem to be lagging behind the increase in seats for postsecondary ECE programs and graduates earning ECE certifications are a decreasing share of program enrollees. These findings point to a need to evaluate how 'leaky' the ECE education pipeline may be.
- The qualifications most often reported lacking (by one in six employers) were basic ECE certificates.
- The proportions of employers unable to fill vacancies, who filled a position with a lower qualification than desired and who refused children due to lack of staff with the required skills were lower in 2023 than in 2019.

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Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the implementation of career pathways provide opportunities for career growth and development in the early care and learning sector? [medium-term outcome]

- The proportion of the workforce believing that there were opportunities for career growth and development within the ECL sector remained at 2019 levels (roughly six in ten).
- The proportion disagreeing was lowest, at 4 in 10, among those with more specialized qualifications, but still three in ten Responsible Adults, who should have the most opportunities for advancement, disagreed.
- In general, there has been an improvement in the proportion of employers engaging in activities to promote career advancement since 2019.

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Over the medium term of the evaluation, are education, training, and professional development opportunities expanded (or barriers reduced) so that the ECL workforce has the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to provide quality services to children and families? [medium-term outcome]

- Opportunities for professional development have expanded markedly since the launch of the ECL R&R Strategy. There is evidence by 2023 of much improved take up as well.
- Bursaries have reduced financial barriers. The number of student bursaries granted and total dollar amounts reached their highest ever level in Summer 2023.
- Since 2019, there has been a decline in the proportion of respondents who indicate facing barriers in accessing professional development activities.
- In 2023, more employers noted that their staff needed to improve on the skills of making the environment inclusive for children with support needs and communicating effectively with children's families compared to 2019.

Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in the long-term goal of ECL being viewed as a **viable, sustainable, and valued career**?

**There are conflicting trends, but mainly negative.**

- Many more in 2023 considered child care as their chosen profession than in 2019 but more also agreed that their job is temporary. The proportion willing to recommend child care as a profession declined from three in every four in 2019 to two in every three in 2023.
- More professionals expected to leave ECL within one year in 2023 compared to 2019 and the proportion unsure whether to stay on in the sector has grown markedly. The proportions expecting to leave their current employer showed a similar pattern.
- The proportion of employers who experienced net loss of staff in the previous 12 months – full-time and part-time - was higher in 2023 (but lower than 2020, 2021 and 2022) at 40 per cent compared to the 2019 benchmark, when it stood at 34 per cent.

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Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the ECL R&R Strategy promote public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of the ECL workforce? [medium-term outcome]

- The latest estimates of public confidence in the ECL profession will be obtained from the public opinion survey fielded in early 2024 due to be reported in the final project report.
- Just under half the ECL professionals surveyed believed ECL to have strong public support. While 47 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *Child care is valued by the public* in 2023, this was down from 51 per cent in 2019 but up from 44 per cent in 2022.

Does the ECL R&R Strategy promote the long-term goal of **appropriate compensation plans and human resources strategies** to be put in place?

**There are conflicting trends:**

- Excluding the wage enhancement, wages in 2023 are similar to inflation-adjusted 2019 wages. Differentials earned by those with specializations over basic ECE remain low at \$1.75 to \$2.60 hourly.
- When we consider the wage enhancement, inflation-adjusted wages have increased by an average of about \$2.15.
- The symbolic value of wage enhancement remains high. The enhancement sent a powerful signal to ECL professionals: government recognizes the problem of their remuneration and values their work.

**More employers are offering benefits to staff and more professionals report receiving benefits in 2023 than in 2019:**

- Due to legislative changes requiring the offer of sick days, many more employers (90-92 per cent) are now offering this benefit compared to 2019, though the quality of this benefit varies.
- There were modest increases in 2023 relative to 2019 in the proportion of employers who reported they offered pensions (26-31 per cent) and extended health care (62-66 per cent).
- Number of benefits received was positively associated with job satisfaction and with participating in professional development.

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Over the medium term of the evaluation, do retention strategies support the long-term engagement of ECEs and others in the workforce, to help keep them in the profession?  
[medium-term outcome]

- Retention strategies appear to be increasing workforce engagement and persistence for those they reach from 2019 levels. But the extent is modest so far.
- Regression analysis points to the important role wage enhancement plays in encouraging staff to stay at centres, decreasing the rate of resignations.
- Compared to 2019, we find higher anticipated staff departures from the ECL workforce in 2023.

## Recommendations

This report's analysis of administrative data, cross-sectional surveys, and interviews confirmed the challenging situation of recruitment and retention in BC's ECL sector. In this fifth and final year of data collection, evidence coming from the evaluation is sufficiently robust to support a number of recommendations.

Most of the recommendations relate to bolstering or upgrading already successful tactics. After five years of implementation of the ECL R&R Strategy's tactics, there are areas where workforce development appears to be moving in a positive direction, not only on the measures included as Key Performance Indicators but perceptibly to ECL professionals as well. The trends point to the need for government to continue working on the main pressure points:

- increasing wages;
- improving provision of benefits;
- supporting the development of pathways for career growth;
- mandating time off for professional development; while
- evaluating the effectiveness of the many ECE/A student pathways and credential to career trajectories currently being supported by different government investments in education and training.

### **New approaches should be added.**

Some situations such as high turnover seem impervious to the fixes attempted to date. Recommendations from this evaluation on how to innovate remain cautious, because there is limited evidence on what actually works to improve recruitment and retention.

There is considerable scope for experimenting with new innovations in combination with rigorous evidence gathering, in order to learn what works and also to better understand where there may be unhelpful interactions between policies that could exacerbate sector problems. New and better coordinated tactics need to be tested and evaluated, with those found successful added to the toolkit. The early pilots of the new wage grid appear to be following this approach.

Transforming the experiences and perceptions of an entire workforce sector sufficiently to change outcomes takes time. It remains too early to pass judgement on the overall effectiveness of the ECL R&R Strategy.

The evaluation indicates that the **deteriorating workforce development situation** that originally prompted the ECL R&R Strategy persists into 2023 but that on several fronts, the ECL R&R Strategy appears to be producing positive change or, at least, stabilization.

The situation in 2023 would be worse without the ECL R&R Strategy. Several tactics are **making a difference such as the wage enhancement and increased training for ECEs.**

The tactics have been insufficient to move the needle in the right direction on the sought goals and outcomes within five years. Thus, the importance of these kinds of policy responses has grown.

There is a concern that some supports may be vulnerable to major changes, particularly those that appear to be making a difference to individuals planning a career in ECL and to businesses currently

operating in the sector. Some stability is critical to support informed decisions of those contemplating a career or supporting others' careers in ECL—stability is also important to those who already have a career in ECL. Progressive improvement to existing tactics—as has typified the roll out of the wage enhancement and several other tactics—are nevertheless welcomed.

Systematically and coherently implemented, the ECL R&R Strategy tactics clearly hold potential. With further innovation, an incremental approach, supplemented with experimentation to find solutions to the least tractable problems could help combat some of the well-established challenges that affect ECL workforce development in BC, and even set an example to other provinces.

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**Recommendation 1:** Renew efforts to attract and retain potential workers from diverse and new sources to the sector (unchanged from 2022)

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**Recommendation 2:** Continue efforts to develop and implement a wage grid, recognizing the need to create incentives for responsible adults to acquire ECE-related credentials and for ECEAs to continue their training to certify as ECEs (updated from 2022)

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**Recommendation 3:** Recruitment and retention are affected by the availability of benefits. Intervention is needed to improve compensation packages (unchanged from 2022)

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**Recommendation 4:** Raise the profile and sustainability of existing professionals obtaining ECE credentials as well as the incentive to upskill and acquire new credentials (unchanged from 2022)

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**Recommendation 5:** Formalize mentoring and pedagogical support through creation of new local or regional coaching positions (new for 2023)

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**Recommendation 6:** Provide ongoing support to incentivize specialty certifications (updated from 2022)

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**Recommendation 7:** Systematize professional development incentives and systemic changes to ensure needed training is prioritized (unchanged from 2022)

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**Recommendation 8:** Consider financial and regulatory instruments, competency frameworks and a system of digital badges/ micro-credentials to help improve education program outcomes (unchanged from 2022)

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**Recommendation 9:** Consider new means to assess skills and competencies based on prior learning and experience (unchanged from 2022)

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**Recommendation 10:** Develop and propagate more sophisticated marketing, designed to be seen or heard by current and prospective ECL professionals as well as the general public, showcasing the role played by ECEs in the province's future social and economic wellbeing (new for 2023)

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**Recommendation 11:** Continue and enhance modes of engagement and consultation with ECL professionals themselves in the process of policy development and in operationalizing the implementation of tactics.

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**Recommendation 12:** Adopt a joined-up, systems-approach to proactively improve management of and support for decision-making in BC's child care sector. Use behavioural insights to keep each aspect of the approach simple to navigate and access at the operational end (updated from 2022).

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**Note:** Details for each of the recommendations listed above can be found in the Recommendations section of the Findings Report.

# INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Early Care and Learning  
Recruitment and Retention Strategy and its tactics





## Introduction

In 2018, British Columbia made an initial \$136M investment in an Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy (ECL R&R Strategy) for the province's Early Care and Learning sector. The ECL R&R Strategy is part of a larger ten-year plan ("ChildCareBC")

to increase the quality, affordability, and availability of child care spaces in British Columbia. The ECL R&R Strategy has been expanded in various ways since 2018, but it remains with its original intent, to meet the following three overarching long-term goals:



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In 2018, the then Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (AEST, now Ministry of Post-secondary Education and Future Skills, PSFS) engaged with the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) to lead a Sector Labour Market Partnerships project with the goal to enable a mechanism for regular sector feedback on the overarching impacts of the ECL R&R Strategy and its many tactics (such as the wage enhancement and supports for professional development) on BC's child care workforce.

ECEBC in turn selected Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) as the subcontractor to produce and implement the sector-led impact assessment framework to measure these direct and indirect effects of the implementation of the ECL R&R Strategy on the sector.

This evaluation findings report for 2023 includes project progress, results and lessons learned over the past five years of evaluation activity through to the end of 2023.

There is a companion volume, the evaluation technical report for 2023, which includes the more complete analysis of evaluation data from which this report draws, as well as a more thorough description of the evaluation methodology, updates on the project management work plan, a report on Sector Steering Committee activities, and updates on implementation of data collection.

Published ECL R&R Strategy evaluation reports can be found on ECEBC's website at [www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca).

## ECL R&R Strategy Tactics

In 2018, the Ministry of Children and Family Development outlined eight tactics intended to improve supports for BC's child care profession, though not all were the responsibility of that Ministry. Since 2022, primary responsibility for the ECL R&R Strategy has rested with the Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC).

From the outset, the option remained open that more tactics may be developed over the course of the project. Two additional tactics (incentives for transitions and the British Columbia Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP)) have since been added.

In 2022, the BC government announced that “through the Canada-British Columbia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ELCC), the Government of Canada is providing a one-time \$49.2-million investment that will reduce barriers and increase access to post-secondary ECE programs and professional learning opportunities – including in under-served communities – and will support ECE graduates to transition to the workforce” (for more information, please see the news release: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022CFD0005-000239>).

In addition, the BC PNP began prioritizing professionals with a job offer as an ECE or ECEA in BC to increase the number of ECL professionals nominated for permanent residence (for more information, please see the news release regarding this change to BC's immigration program: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022MUNI0008-000317>).

In 2022, SRDC confirmed with MECC some notable additions to the ECL R&R Strategy's tactics. The tactics now include dual credit, which enables Grade 11 and Grade 12 students to take post-secondary courses and receive credit towards both high school graduation and post-secondary credentials.

The Early Childhood Education Dual Credit Project expands dual credit programs so that high school students interested in ECL can enrol in approved training that meets the academic requirements for ECE certification in BC. Approximately 500 students have been served across 44 school districts and 13 post-secondary institutions to date.

MECC has also funded BCcampus to solicit and make available new professional development opportunities across the province in late 2023 and early 2024.

Effective December 2023, albeit too late in the year to influence findings in this report, an additional \$2 wage enhancement was made available for ECEs in eligible, licensed, non public sector workplaces. Eligible ECEs could receive a wage enhancement (WE) of \$6 per hour, while ECEs working for public sector employers will continue to be eligible for a WE of \$4 per hour, if they have reached a local agreement with their union to amend their collective agreements to implement the ECE-WE. The increase is intended to stabilize ECE wages across the province following the public sector unions' collective bargaining process in 2022, which negotiated wage increases for their members of at least 12.75% over three years.

At the same time, the government introduced grants to recognize ECEs with specialized training and announced pilots of a newly-developed wage grid for ECL professionals working in select child care centres.

The current tactics and their associated activities are depicted in the adjacent graphic. The graphic displays these as ten segments of a circle.

Taken collectively, these tactics aim to increase targeted investments into the child care sector in order to ensure that the ECL R&R Strategy can meet its goals. They are described in more detail in the companion evaluation technical report for 2023.

**Figure 1** ECE R&R Strategy Tactics, updated to 2023



# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY



## Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy is guided by a set of research questions related to the strategy's longer-term goals. Each primary research question has several nested questions, which align with the strategy's medium-term outcomes.

The evaluation questions provide guidance for the selection of data sources and the development of data collection instruments. Lines of inquiry and the sources of information included in the evaluation must, in some way, help answer these evaluation questions.

Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in the long-term goal of an **adequate and stable workforce**, comprised of qualified and skilled early care and learning professionals?

Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the ECL R&R Strategy contribute to:



- adequate supply of ECL professionals entering the workforce?
- opportunities for career growth and development in the ECL sector?
- expanded education, training, and professional development opportunities to ensure a skilled workforce?

Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in the long-term goal of ECL being viewed as a **viable, sustainable, and valued career**?



Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the ECL R&R Strategy promote

- public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of the ECL workforce?

Does the ECL R&R Strategy promote the long-term goal of **appropriate compensation plans and human resources strategies** to be put in place?



Over the medium term of the evaluation, do retention strategies

- support the long-term engagement of ECEs and others in the workforce, to help keep them in the profession?

## Data Collection Strategy

SRDC's data collection strategy relies on three types of data (administrative, survey, and interview data) from a variety of different sources to provide evidence along each of the project's KPIs.

In 2023, findings from the ECL R&R evaluation were informed by the following data types and data sources:



### Administrative Data

Child Care Workforce Contact  
Information Database  
Administrative Outcomes Database  
Canadian Census Microdata



### Survey Data

Annual Cross-sectional Survey of  
ECL Employers in BC  
Annual Cross-sectional Survey of  
ECL Professionals in BC



### Interview Data

Key Informant Interviews (KIs) with  
representatives from selected Case  
Study Sites

## Data Analysis Strategy

In 2023, the Evaluation Report for the ECL R&R Strategy presents evaluation results along six themes:

- Satisfaction with Child Care
- Perception of Child Care
- Compensation and Benefits

- Education and Certification
- Workforce Development
- Labour Mobility

Each section groups together KPIs that touch on common themes in order to present key findings from the 2023 data collection.

## Analysis of Key Performance Indicators

The evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy measures progress across 13 KPIs. These KPIs provide an organizing structure for the evaluation's data collection strategy, linking the strategy's tactics to its outcomes, its goals, and ultimately, to the data collection strategy.

The annual evaluation report updates its assessments of the ECL R&R Strategy's progress along the 13 KPIs. This table can be found in the report section [Progress on Key Performance Indicators](#)

## Comparisons with Benchmarks

SRDC relies on benchmark measures to monitor the ECL R&R Strategy's progress for each of the 13 KPIs. Benchmarks provide a starting point against which annual data can be compared and progress can be assessed. Benchmarks were derived from data collected between 2015-2019, the period shortly before the implementation of the ECL R&R Strategy.

The comparison of annual evaluation data against benchmarks determines the degree of **change** in the KPIs.



Changes in KPIs across multiple data points signal whether the ECL R&R Strategy is succeeding or struggling to achieve its medium-term outcomes and whether it is making progress towards realizing its ten-year goals.

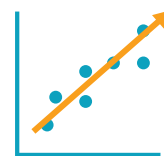
## Regression Analysis

In 2021, SRDC began using regression analyses to better understand the factors that influence recruitment and retention outcomes. The analysis is applied to data

from annual cross-sectional surveys of ECL employers and workforce professionals.

### Overview

Regression analysis estimates the relative effects of an **independent variable** (IV) on an **outcome**, while controlling for the effects of all other independent variables in the model.



Put simply, a regression model tells us the factors that are responsible for differences in outcomes, and to what extent.

The analysis uses three types of regression models, depending on the structure of outcomes variables:

- **Linear regression model** for continuous outcomes (e.g., monthly earnings or age);
- **Logistic regression model** (or logit) for binary outcomes (e.g., yes/no);
- **Multinomial regression models** for unordered categorical (or nominal) outcomes (e.g., yes/no/don't know).

### How Regression Results are Used

Regression analyses were added to the evaluation's analysis strategy to generate a deeper understanding of what factors might be the most important policy levers to improve outcomes.

Our analysis helps us uncover which independent variables (IVs) have a **non-zero effect** on outcomes and whether this effect is positive or negative.

In other words, is the positive or negative change we see in outcomes caused or influenced by an IV?



## Selection of Independent Variables (IVs)

IVs are factors that—at least in the short term—remain unchanged by an individual's experiences in child care (such as their demographic characteristics or their monthly earnings).

IVs can help explain changes in outcomes; they can also exert influence on an individual's behaviours, attitudes, and decision-making.

Some IVs are binary (Yes/No options), some are continuous (monthly earnings). Some IVs are reported on a magnitude that will allow visual comparisons with other IVs. For instance, years working in child care are measured in increments of 5 years; monthly earnings are measured in increments of \$1,000.

SRDC conducted a series of tests to select appropriate independent variables. These tests include:

- **Theoretical analysis:** Is there any evidence or any theoretical explanation that supports a **relationship**

between the IVs and the selected outcomes?

- **Correlation analysis:** Do the data in our research sample provide evidence of a relationship between selected IVs and outcomes? In other words, do IVs correlate with outcomes?
- **Collinearity between IVs:** Are some IVs strongly correlated with each other such that the influence of an IV on the outcome is not independent? For example, **wages** and **hours of work** exert an influence on each other. All else equal professionals working part time and not working in another job would have lower incomes than those working full time. **Their effect on outcomes is therefore not independent.** To avoid this problem, monthly income was chosen for inclusion in the model rather than wages. This is also the most complete remuneration variable.

The final models include the following IVs:

### Private business



Binary variable. Indicates individuals working for a private business compared to all others.

### Years working in child care



Continuous variable. One-unit increase represents **five** additional years of experience.

### Monthly earnings



Continuous variable. One-unit increase represents **\$1,000** of additional monthly income.

### Bachelor's or Master's degree



Binary variable. Indicates individuals with a bachelor or master's degree.

### Indigenous persons



Binary variable. Indicates individuals who self-identify as First Nation, Métis or Inuit compared to all others.

### Born outside of Canada



Binary variable. Indicates individuals who were born outside of Canada.

### Membership in a Union



Binary variable. Indicates individuals who are unionized compared to those who are not.

### Age



Continuous variable. One-unit increase represents **five** additional years of age.

### Number of benefits received



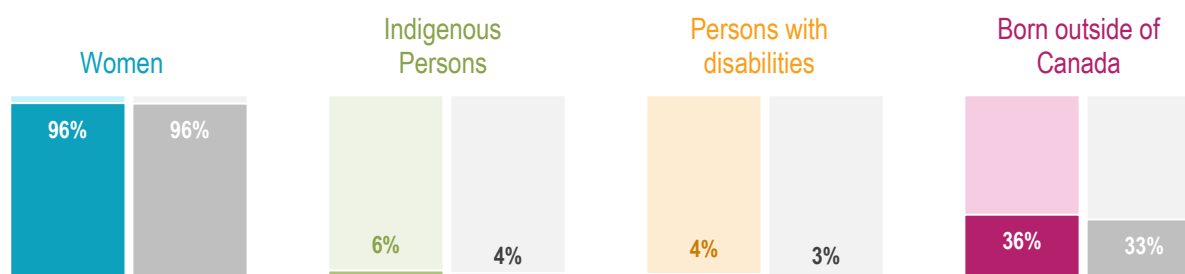
Continuous variable. Represents the count of benefits individuals receive through their employer.

## 2023 ECL Workforce Survey description of respondents

Exactly 2,189 ECL professionals were included in our analysis of the 2023 Workforce Survey.

The characteristics of survey respondents were very similar to those in 2019. In 2023, we find the **same proportion of women** respondents compared to the 2019 workforce survey sample—96 per cent in both years.

A small proportion of respondents identified as **Indigenous** (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit: 6 per cent) but this represented an increase over 2019's 4 per cent. Only 4 per cent of respondents in 2023 reported having a **disability**, slightly higher than the 3 per cent in 2019.



Slightly more ECL professionals in the sample were **born outside Canada** in 2023 than in 2019 (36 versus 34 per cent). The proportion of individuals born outside of Canada was highest among non-managers or supervisors in child care centres (44 per cent) and in before & after school programs (44 per cent), and among ECE-certified home care providers (HCPs) (43 per cent). The lowest proportion of individuals born outside of Canada was among ECEs and ECEAs not currently working in ECL (23 per cent).

The age distribution in 2023 was almost exactly the same as in 2019, with a slight increase in the proportion of 30- to 34-year-old professionals (11 per cent in 2023 vs 10 per cent in 2019) and decrease in the over 50 category (36 per cent in 2023 vs 37 per cent in 2019).

## Categorization by role and programs

Results for workforce survey respondents are divided into five categories based on their workplace and the programs they offer:

1. Child Care Centres: includes multi-age, preschool, and Seamless Day Kindergarten
2. Before-and-After School or Recreational Care
3. \$10 a day ChildCareBC Centres
4. Home Care Providers (HCPs)

5. ECL professionals not currently working in child care

Respondents who work in child care centres other than \$10 a day programs are further separated by their roles in the centre: **Managers and Supervisors** (M/S), and **other employees** (ECL professionals or “non M/S”).

HCPs are separated by whether they hold an ECE credential or not. This results in eight policy-relevant categories.

For findings where certification or qualification is relevant, such as wages, we report by certificate held (ECEA, ECE one year or five year, etc.) or qualification (RA).

## Environment

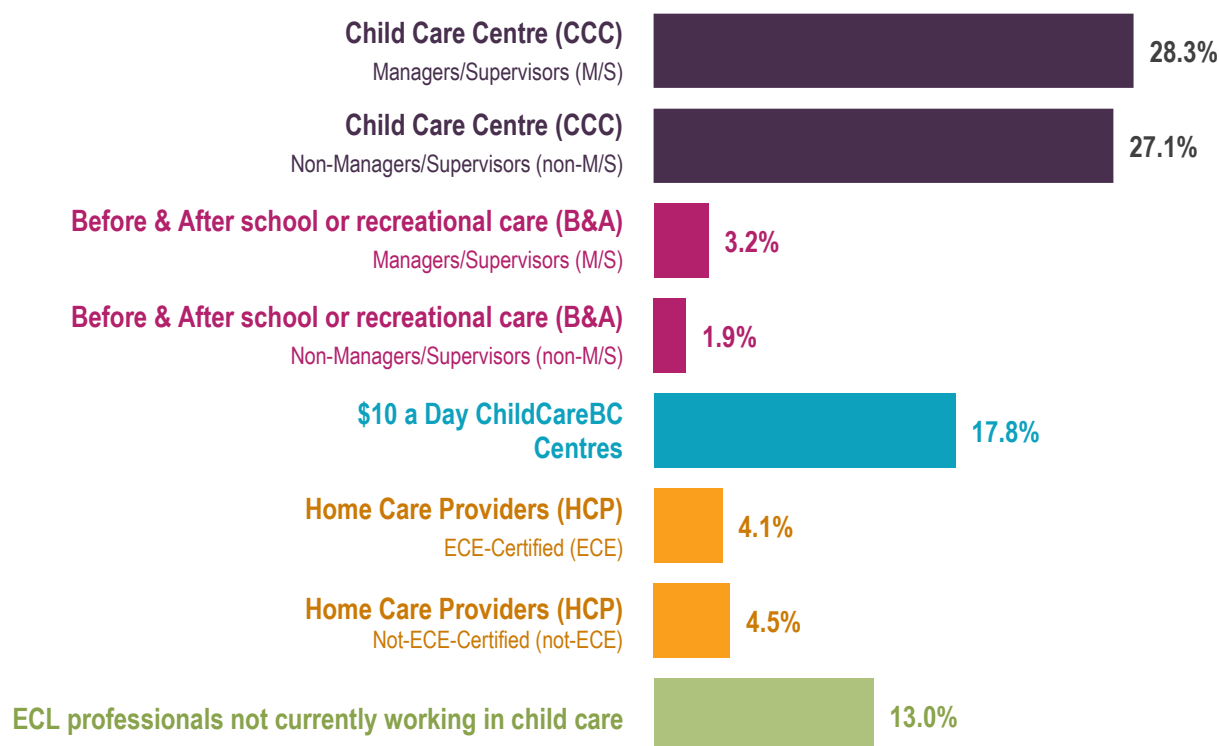
Workforce survey respondents largely worked in permanent positions (94 per cent) and about 16 per cent were unionized. Similar to 2019, the majority of those in licensed care worked in a group care setting (57 per cent), with the largest increase being the proportion of

respondents who work at a \$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centre, which increased from 3 per cent in 2019 to 18 per cent in 2023.

## Experience

Workforce survey respondents were generally well-experienced, with 38 per cent having 16 or more years of experience in ECL. Non-manager/supervisors in licensed child care centres tended to be the least experienced, while HCPs and managers/supervisors in licensed child care centres tended to be among the most experienced.

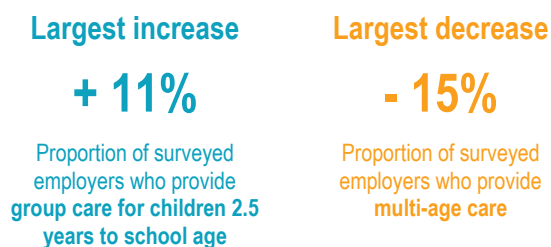
**Figure 2** Proportion of ECL Workforce Survey respondents by role and program, 2023



## 2023 ECL Employers Survey description of respondents

The 2023 SRDC survey of employers in BC includes the perspectives and experiences of **615 employers** from across the province who employed more than **7,000 full-time and part-time ECL professionals** at the time of the survey.

The 2023 employer survey respondents were generally comparable to the 2019 respondents in terms of the type of care provided.



The largest increase was in group care for 2.5 years to school age children (60 per cent, a proportion that has risen gradually from 49 per cent in 2019). The largest decrease was in employers providing multi-age care (15 per cent, down from 30 per cent in 2019).

### ECE-required workplaces

Since 2019, SRDC has used a proxy variable to determine whether the child care centres require **at least one staff member** to hold an ECE credential by looking at the **programs** offered by child care centres.

In 2023, employers were asked directly whether their child care centre required (or did not require) at least one ECE-certified staff. The results confirmed that the proxy variable is an accurate measure of ECE-required child care centres.

This variable is used to compare results between ECE-required and ECE not-required workplaces throughout the report.

**Figure 3** Proportion of employers who exclusively operate ECE-required programs and ECE not-required programs, 2023



In 2023, just under two-thirds (61 per cent) represented ECE-required child care centres, with the remaining 39 per cent in ECE not-required centres. This split is similar to 2019 when 64 per cent of workplaces had ECE requirements in all programs and 36 per cent did not.

### Other Workplace Characteristics

Most employers responded on behalf of a single workplace, with only a small minority (3 per cent) responding on behalf of 10 or more facilities.

About half of all employers operated a **private business**, down slightly from 57 per cent in 2019, and there was relatively little change in the proportion operating a **non-profit** (40 per cent compared to 37 per cent in 2019). The proportion of employers that were schools rose to 6 per cent of the sample, up from 3 per cent in all previous years.

The proportion of employers operating a **\$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centre** has increased gradually over the past few years, reaching 19 per cent in 2023 (up from 9 per cent in 2022). Of those not operating a \$10 a Day centre, half indicated that they would if they had the chance, while only 19 per cent indicated that they would not want to if eligible. Almost one third were unsure.

Nearly 40 per cent of employers were unsure about whether the transfer of responsibility for managing child care from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Education and Child Care was “good news” for their programs and for the future of ECL in BC. Only a small minority (12 per cent) thought that the transition was not good news.

# SATISFACTION WITH CHILD CARE

Satisfaction with work is one of the key dimensions that can help us understand why professionals choose to stay—or leave—the ECL sector.

This section explores the factors that increase ECL professionals' satisfaction with their work and their workplaces.

The factors that increase motivation and that contribute to burnout among professionals in the workforce are also tracked.



## Satisfaction with Child Care

Job satisfaction is an important factor when considering whether ECL professionals plan to stay or leave their current employment in child care.

There are various dimensions of a person's employment that can explain their level of satisfaction<sup>1</sup>:

- the physical spaces and resources available for children to learn and play;
- the structure of work, such as the hours professionals spend at work and their overall workload;
- the social and interpersonal relationships that professionals develop and maintain with children and parents, and with other professionals; and
- opportunities available for professionals to learn, grow, and take on new responsibilities.

## ECL Professionals' Satisfaction with Work

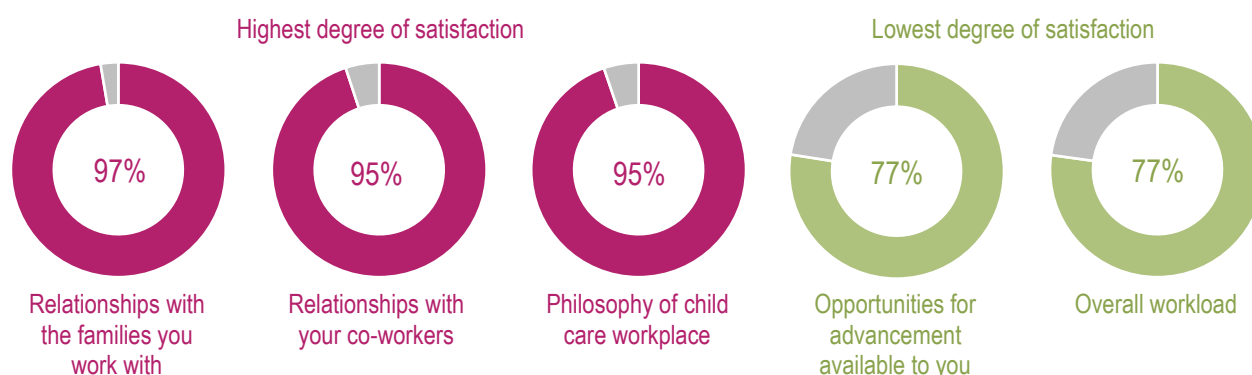
Interpersonal relationships and the philosophy of child care continue to explain ECL professionals' satisfaction with their work in child care. But the lack of opportunities for career growth and the overall workload continue to pose a problem for many ECL professionals.

In the 2023 workforce survey, ECL professionals were *most satisfied* with the **relationships** they had built with families and with their co-workers, as well as with the **philosophy** of their workplace. They are also satisfied with the **health and safety protocols** in their workplace.

However, they are *least satisfied* by their **workload** and the **opportunities for advancement** available to them.

The overall pattern is consistent with results from the 2019 survey (not shown), though the **intensity** of satisfaction (very satisfied vs satisfied) in 2023 has decreased across most dimensions, with the biggest decrease in the intensity of satisfaction found in professionals' relationship with centre management.

**Figure 4** Dimensions with the highest and lowest reported degree of satisfaction with work among ECL professionals



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.



## Satisfaction with work by program and role

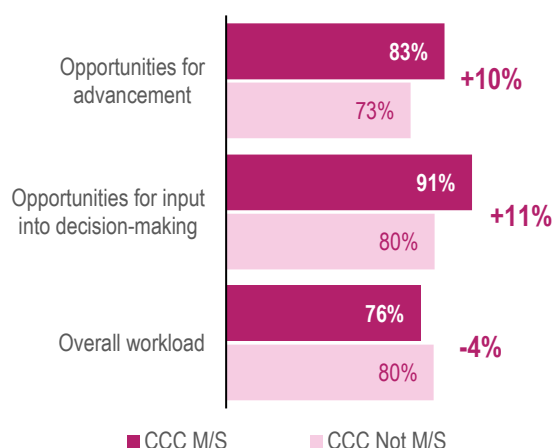
### Child care centres (CCC)

While there were similar patterns in satisfaction rates across all groups—regardless of a professional's role in the organization or the programs offered at their centre—managers and supervisors (M/S) appear to be more satisfied with their work than other ECL professionals. This result is consistent for M/S in both child care centres (CCC) and in before & after school or recreational care programs (B&A).

The biggest gap in satisfaction between managers/supervisors and other ECL professionals working in CCC was in the opportunities for advancement available (10-point difference) and opportunities for input and decision-making (11-point difference).

The only indicator where M/S in CCC were less satisfied with their work than non-M/S was in terms of their workload (5-point difference).

**Figure 5** Satisfaction with work between M/S and non-M/S in CCC



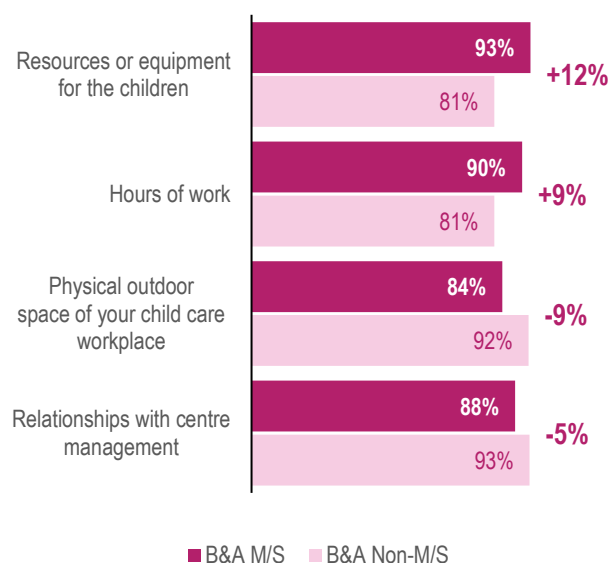
Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

### Before & After school and recreational care programs (B&A)

We find a similar pattern in B&A programs, with M/S showing higher satisfaction rates with work than non-M/S professions.

The biggest differences in satisfaction between roles in B&A programs appears to be in satisfaction with resources available for the children (12-point difference) and the hours of work (9-point difference). Among the indicators where M/S were less satisfied with work than non-M/S professionals, are satisfaction with the physical outdoor space available (9-point difference) and relationships with centre management (5-point difference).

**Figure 6** Satisfaction with work between M/S and non-M/S in B&A programs



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

These comparisons mask a wider gap in the *intensity of satisfaction*: the difference between the proportions of respondents who reported being *very satisfied*.

The intensity gap was particularly pronounced between managers/supervisors (M/S) and non-M/S when comparing satisfaction with opportunities for input into decision-making (28-point gap for B&A programs and 25-point gap for CCC). In both groups, managers/supervisors were substantially more likely to report feeling very satisfied than other professionals.



*“I believe that most ECEs are in this field because they love working with young children.*

*It's not because they want to have this huge career and like lots of money. It's because our heart belongs here.”*

For Profit Case Study Site

### *\$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centres*

Responses from professionals working at \$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centres were comparable to those from non-M/S respondents in centre-based programs.

Professionals were most satisfied with their relationships with families (96 per cent), with their workplace's child care philosophy (94 per cent), and with their relationships with their co-workers (94 per cent).

Respondents were least satisfied with their overall workload (74 per cent) and with the opportunities for advancement available to them (75 per cent).

### *Home Care Providers (HCPs)*

Similarly, HCPs were least satisfied with their overall workload (76 per cent) and with the opportunities for advancement available to them (76 per cent).

Compared to other groups, HCPs were more *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the **physical indoor and outdoor spaces** available to them for their child care workplace.

However, when compared to 2019, the proportion of HCPs that were *very satisfied* with physical spaces has decreased, while those who are only *satisfied* had increased, indicating a **decrease in the intensity of satisfaction**.

### *Highest ECL certification completed*

There is surprisingly little difference in the rates of satisfaction with work when comparing respondents according to their highest completed ECL certification.

The main differences were between Responsible adults (RA) and ECEs (1 year and 5 year) across the following dimensions of satisfaction with work:

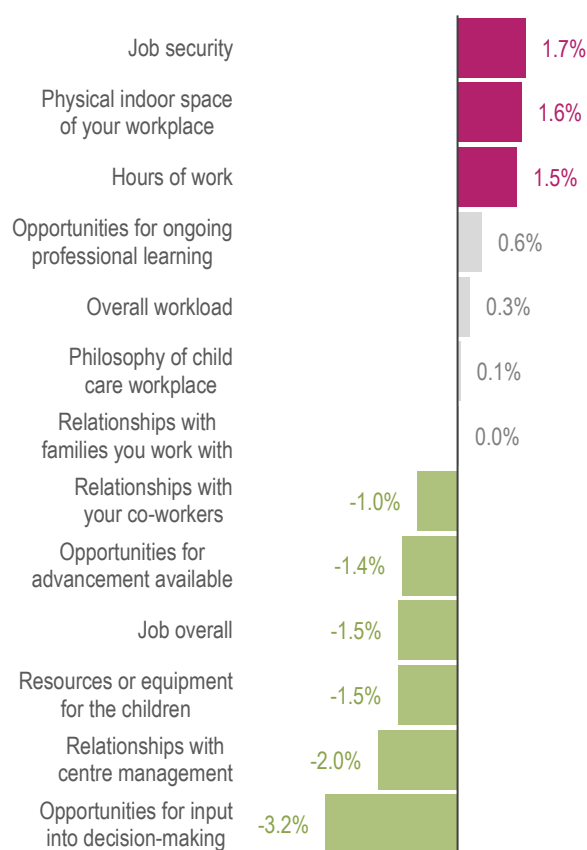
- **Work hours:** Higher satisfaction among ECE 5-year (91 per cent) compared to RA (81 per cent).
- **Physical outdoor space:** Highest among RA (92 per cent) and lowest for ECE 1-year (81 per cent).
- **Resources or equipment for children:** Highest satisfaction among RA (90 per cent) and lowest among ECEs with both SN or IT (81 per cent).

## Changes over time

Comparisons with 2019 benchmarks provides insights into which dimensions of ECL professionals' satisfaction with their work are increasing and which are decreasing.

The results in Figure 7 provide insights for changes across the sector. Some changes in job satisfaction since 2019 may be more pronounced for some groups compared to others. Nevertheless, this snapshot provides an important perspective into the aspects of their work that, according to ECL professionals, are improving.

**Figure 7** Changes in satisfaction with work, 2019 to 2023



Source: SRDC 2019 and 2023 workforce surveys.

## Increasing levels of satisfaction

When compared to 2019 data, ECL professionals seem to be more satisfied with their job security, physical indoor spaces, and their hours of work.

## Little to no changes in satisfaction

For some dimensions, we find little to no change in satisfaction across time (less than 1 per cent).

In some instances, this result confirms a **consistently high degree of satisfaction across time**, such as their relationship with families (97 per cent in both 2019 and 2023) and the philosophy of their child care workplace (95 per cent in both 2019 and 2023).

Of concern is the little change in satisfaction regarding the *overall workload*, which has the lowest level of satisfaction in both 2019 and 2023 (77 per cent), and is not improving over time.

## Diminishing levels of satisfaction

There are six dimensions in which we see a decrease in work satisfaction. The biggest downward trends are found in professionals' satisfaction with:

- Their relationships with centre management (-2.0 per cent),
- Opportunities for input into decision-making (-3.2 per cent).

Case study participants identified several factors that influence their professional satisfaction: wages, work-life balance, supportive and stable work environment, and their relationships with children and families.

## Factors associated with workplace satisfaction

A logistic regression was conducted to better understand which factors contribute to ECL professionals' satisfaction with **their job overall** and with their **workplace's child care philosophy**.

After controlling for potential explanatory factors, the analysis did not detect any significant association between any of the factors and respondents' satisfaction with their job.

## Motivation and Burnout

Survey respondents were asked to read ten statements and rate the extent to which each described how they felt about their employment position. A factor analysis was conducted on the 2019 sample and uncovered two factors:

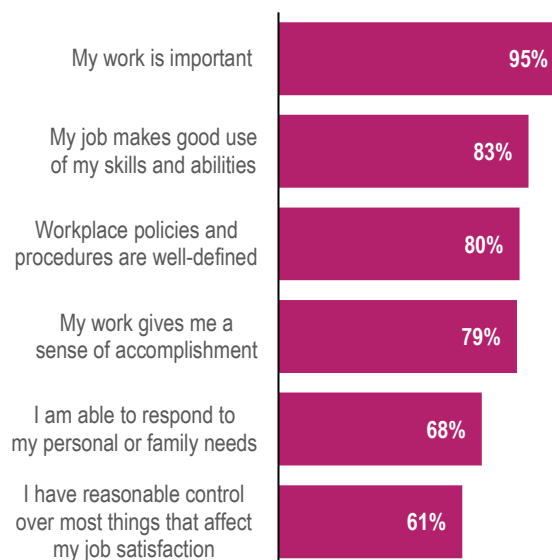
- Factors that facilitate or hinder motivation among professionals (6 items), and
- Factors that contribute to burnout (4 items).

## Motivational factors

Motivational factors are **conditions in the internal workplace environment** that facilitate or hinder staff motivation.

The six items explore the extent to which ECL professionals feel involved, engaged, and empowered by their working conditions and the work that they do.

**Figure 8** Proportion of respondents who often or always experienced motivational factors



Source: SRDC 2023 workforce survey.

The results indicate that most ECL professionals often or always experience factors that motivate them in their work.

While over half of respondents (61 per cent) feel that they have reasonable control over most things that affect their job satisfaction, this factor is experienced least often by ECL professionals.

Overwhelmingly, ECL professionals often or always feel that the work they do is important.

### Motivational factors by roles and programs

When comparing results by roles and programs, a clear pattern emerges:

**Managers/supervisors** (M/S) in centre-based care and **home care providers** (HCPs) were **more likely** to experience motivational factors often or always.



**Non-managers/supervisors** (non-M/S) in child care centres and professionals in **\$10 a day ChildCareBC sites** were **less likely** to experience these factors often or always.

The only exception to this pattern was in the ability to respond to personal and family needs. For this item homecare providers (HCPs) were less likely to report being able to respond to their personal or family needs than professionals from other groups (63 per cent for non-ECE certified HCPs and 66 per cent for ECE-certified HCPs).

### Motivational factors by highest certification completed

In general, there was little to distinguish between groups defined by ECL certification on their experience of motivational factors. This was particularly true for the statements:

- **My work is important:** nearly all respondents reported feeling this way often or always, with the average proportion ranging from 93 per cent (ECE 1 year) to 96 per cent (Responsible Adults and ECEs with both IT and SN specializations)

- **My job makes good use of my skills:** A high proportion of professionals indicated feeling this way often or always, with the average proportion ranging from 81 per cent (ECEA and ECEs with both IT and SN specializations) to 85 per cent (ECE 1 year).

Small differences in observed proportions across groups were detected with the item ***I am able to respond to my personal or family needs.***

For this motivational factor, ECEs with only one or both specializations (Special Needs or Infant Toddler) were less likely than other professionals to feel that they could often or always respond to their personal or family needs.

### Trends over time

The results are somewhat mixed when looking at changes over time in the frequency with which ECL professionals experience motivating factors in the workplace.

Overall, we see **positive changes** in professionals' capacity to respond to **personal or family needs**. The most significant improvement is found among ECE-certified HCPs (+9.0 points since 2019) and centre-based professionals (+5.7 points for M/S and +6.0 points for non-M/S since 2019).

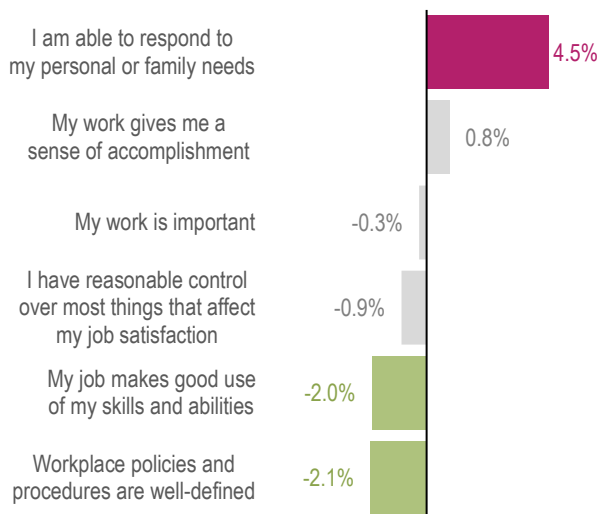
Despite the positive trend, this factor continues to be experienced often or always a relatively small proportion of respondents (63 per cent in 2019 and 68 per cent in 2023).

For three of the six factors, we find **little to no changes**. In the case of the factor **my work is important**, this is due to very high scores in both years (95 per cent in both 2019 and 2023).

The two other motivating factors that have shown little to no change since 2019 (**my work gives me a sense of accomplishment** and **I have reasonable control over most things that affect their job satisfaction** are due

to a lack of significant improvement since 2019 (79 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively).

**Figure 9** Change in proportions of respondents who often or always experience motivating factors at work (2019-2023)



Source: 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce surveys.

We find **negative changes** in the proportions of respondents who often or always experience two motivating factors:

- *My job makes good use of my skills and abilities* (the decline is most pronounced among professionals working in \$10-a-Day ChildCareBC centres, declining 5.1 points since 2019); and
- *Workplace policies and procedures are well-defined* (the decline is smaller in magnitude, but more prevalent, with ECE-certified HCPs, non-M/S in ECE-required workplaces, and M/S in B&A programs indicating an average decline of 2.4 points since 2019).

**“ECEs are struggling. We deal with children with behaviours that are not yet diagnosed or have the access to strategies in place to support them.”**

*I have met more than 30 ECEs in the past year that have had to take a stress leave or have been burnt out. There needs to be some support, for all the people who break their backs and get burnt out through the hard work load.”*

Workforce survey respondent

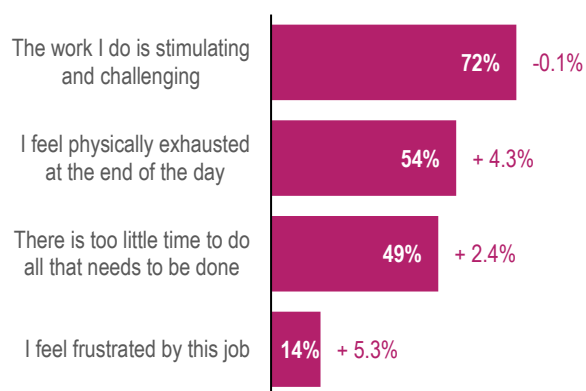
It may be important to consider that, given the rapid expansion of \$10-a-Day ChildCareBC centres, changes measured across time periods could be attributable to changes in the composition of the workforce in these workplaces and, consequently, changes in the composition of the annual workforce survey's sample.

## Burnout factors

The workforce survey measures four factors that contribute to the experience of burnout among ECL professionals.

Unlike motivating factors, burnout considers situations that contribute to discouraging feelings, such as exhaustion, frustration, and little time to complete tasks at work.

**Figure 10** Proportion of respondents who often or always experience factors that contribute to burnout (change since 2019)



Source: 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce surveys.

Indicators of burn out appear to be worsening over time—overall, as well as across respondent groups.

The experience of burnout was very similar across respondent groups defined by their qualification. However, respondents who identified as Responsible Adults deviated slightly from this pattern. RAs were the only group that reported a decline in feeling physically exhausted (-0.9 points since 2019) and also had the lowest average scores for this item (42 per cent of RAs feel this way often or always, compared to averages ranging from 52 per cent to 60 per cent for other groups).

Additionally, we find large increases since 2019 among ECEs with specialized credentials (i.e., SN and/or IT). In effect, slightly more ECEs with specialized credentials report feeling physically exhausted at the end of the day (60 per cent ECE + SN or IT; 59 per cent ECE + both SN & IT) and feeling that there is too little time to do all that needs to be done (52 per cent ECE + SN or IT; 56 per cent ECE + both SN & IT) compared to other credential groups.

As in previous years, we find more variation when analyzing the results by roles and workplaces. The most notable changes in scores since 2019 is the 9-to-10-point increase in the frequency of feeling physically exhausted among professionals working in B&A programs and among professionals in \$10 a day ChildCareBC centres. In effect, nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of professionals working in \$10 a day ChildCareBC centres reported feeling physically exhausted often or always, roughly 10 to 30 points higher than other groups.

The results also indicate a large increase since 2019 among professionals in licensed child care centres who feel frustrated by their job (e.g., +13.6 point for non-M/S in B&A programs and + 5.9 for non-M/S in CCC since 2019). Still, the proportion of respondents who feel frustrated by their job often or always in 2023 is low (14 per cent)—despite large increases since 2019—with proportions ranging from a low of 8 per cent among ECE-certified HCPs to a high of 19 per cent among non M/S in B&A programs.

Findings from the 2023 survey of ECL professionals suggest that **the experience of burnout is on the rise since 2019**. More professionals are often or always experiencing factors that contribute to burnout.



## Factors associated with burnout

SRDC conducted a logistic regression to understand the factors that contribute to burnout. After controlling for other factors, **five factors** were significantly associated with outcomes related to exhaustion and frustration with work. Importantly, regression results are taken from the 2023 workforce survey results and are therefore based on self-reported experiences.

### Find work stimulating and challenging



#### Number of benefits received

An additional **employment benefit** received is associated with:

**7% increase** in the odds that they find the work they do stimulating and challenging



#### Born outside of Canada

is associated with

**57% decrease** in the odds that they find the work they do stimulating and challenging

### Do not have enough time to get done all that needs to be done



#### Monthly earnings

An additional **\$1,000 dollars in monthly earnings** is associated with:

**11% increase** in the odds that they **do not have enough time** to get done all that needs to be done

## Feel physically exhausted at the end of the day



#### Indigenous Persons

A respondent who self-identifies as **Indigenous** is associated with:

**45% decrease** in the odds that they feel physically exhausted at the end of the day



#### Age

**Five extra years of age** is associated with:

**10% decrease** in the odds that they feel physically exhausted at the end of the day.

## Feel frustrated by their job



#### Number of benefits received

An additional **employment benefit** received is associated with:

**5% decrease** in the odds that that they feel **frustrated by their job**



#### Age

**Five extra years of age** is associated with:

**21 % decrease** in the odds that they feel **frustrated by their job**

Source: SRDC 2023 workforce survey.



## Notes on this section

### 1 How job satisfaction was measured.

Since 2019, the cross-sectional survey of ECL professionals assesses job satisfaction through respondents' answers to 15 Likert-scale questions, with responses ranging from "Not at all satisfied" to "Very satisfied."

The four dimensions of burnout were measured on a four-point scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) in the survey, and then recoded to a binary outcome with 0 indicating disagreement and 1 indicating agreement.

[Click here to go back to the text \(page 15\).](#)

# PERCEPTION OF CHILD CARE

How do professionals in the sector perceive and value their work?

This section uses ratios of positive-to-negative responses to survey questions to assess how the ECL workforce values their own work and their perceptions of how others view the work of child care professionals.



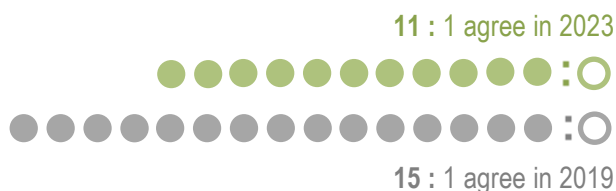
## Perception of Child Care

### Perception of ECL work from within the sector

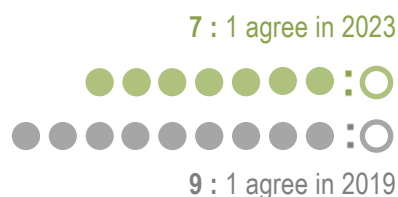
Workforce survey respondents were asked to rate their opinion on four statements regarding others' perception of their child care work. The analysis uses ratios to compare how many ECL professionals agree with various statements versus how many disagree.

In general, more ECL professionals **agree than disagree** that their friends, family, and the families of the children they work with value their work in child care, despite a decrease from 2019.

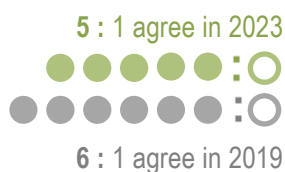
***My work is valued by the families of the children I work with***



***My work in child care is valued by my family***



***My work in child care is valued by my friends***



While the results show strong positive to negative ratios, the trends since 2019 suggest that fewer ECL professionals believe those closest to them value their work now.

When asked for their level of agreement with the statement ***Child care is valued by the public***, the results indicate that, over time, opinions have become more negative among ECL professionals. In 2023, a smaller proportion of ECL professionals believe the public values child care at 47 percent, compared to 51 percent in 2019.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, professionals who are no longer working ECL were more likely to disagree with this statement (68 per cent) than any other group.

### Perception of professionals' own work in child care

The perception that ECL professionals have towards their own work is difficult to boil down to a simple positive or negative view.

In conversations, most case study participants would recommend a career in ECL to others, though they acknowledge that a career in ECL may not be financially viable for most people. They identified career child care professionals as requiring an intrinsic motivation and a desire to work with children. This motivation can overcome the demands that come with the job.

The cross-sectional survey of ECL professionals presented five statements to probe respondents' relationship with their work in ECL. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement in order to calculate a ratio of **agree : disagree** (\***disagree : agree**, for negative statements).

***I would recommend child care as a profession***

2 : 1 agree in 2023



3 : 1 agree in 2019

***I consider child care as my chosen profession***

17 : 1 agree in 2023



9 : 1 agree in 2019

***I feel comfortable telling new people that I work in child care***

7 : 1 agree in 2023



9 : 1 agree in 2019

***My current job is temporary\****

5 : 1 disagree in 2023



6 : 1 disagree in 2019

***My current job is a stepping stone\****

3 : 1 disagree in 2023



4 : 1 disagree in 2019



*"I would [recommend ECL as a career] as long as they had a passion or wanted to work with children."*

***I don't think it's a career for somebody just wanting to make money, because then that leads to staff who just don't want to be here. They're miserable."***

For Profit Case Study Site

ECL professionals are slightly less likely to recommend child care as a profession and somewhat less comfortable telling new people that they work in child care. There is an increasingly greater ratio who consider child care as their chosen profession. Furthermore, the ratios in 2023 are nevertheless quite large and represent a significant majority of workforce survey respondents who hold a positive view of their profession.

Case study interviews point to a potential turning point in attitudes among ECL professionals regarding their profession. Some noted that in previous years, they would have been more hesitant to recommend ECL as a career, but the wage enhancement coupled with other investments in the sector and policy changes regarding ECL has made them more optimistic about the future of the sector. However, case study participants voiced some caveats:

- Child care subsidies for families has increased the number children registered in full-time rather than part-time child care, which increases the need for ECL professionals,
- The expansion of child care into schools requires more concerted planning and consultations to ensure a seamless integration, and
- Some case study participants were concerned about the implications that the move to the Ministry of Education would pose for licensing. Considering

that licensing will continue to be the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, the comments suggest a certain degree of confusion regarding ministerial responsibility and accountability .

### Ratios by role and programs

There are also clear differences in perception of child care across groups of ECL professionals, notably according to their role and programs.

The overarching consensus appears to be that the sector offers rewarding jobs that will always be in demand.

Managers and supervisors (M/S) in ECE-required child care centres, home care providers (HCPs), and any professional in \$10 a Day ChildCareBC sites were most likely to agree that **child care is my chosen profession** (26:1; 17:1; and 16:1, respectively).

There were also important differences among respondent groups to the item **I feel comfortable telling new people that I work in child care**, with M/S working in B&A most likely to agree (10:1).

### Ratios by demographic groups

Ratios of positive to negative opinions among non-M/S centre ECL professionals regarding their child care jobs varied across demographic groups.



In 2023, respondents who identified as **Indigenous** (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) had comparable ratios to non-Indigenous respondents.



Respondents who were **born outside of Canada** had slightly larger ratios for the statements *I consider child care as my chosen profession*. Fewer individuals born outside of Canada consider their current job as a stepping stone or as a temporary job compared to respondents who were born in Canada.

### Ratios by highest ECL certification

When analyzed by highest certification completed, respondents with at least an ECE certification were more likely to confirm their attachment to their profession. Respondents with an **ECE or specialized certification** (SN, IT or SN+IT) were more likely:

- to agree with the statement that child care is their chosen profession, and
- to disagree with the statements that their current job is temporary.

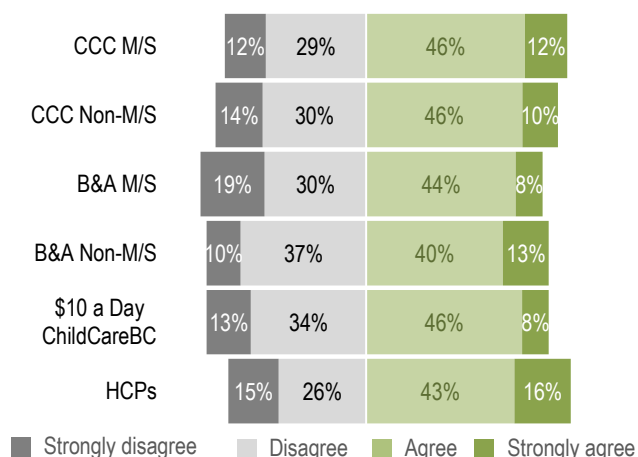
This suggests that **professionals with higher certifications feel a stronger attachment to their profession**.

However, this attachment does not increase the likelihood that professionals with at least an ECE will recommend child care as a profession. Instead, we find similar ratios for this item across all certification groups. Additionally, ECEs with both SN & IT specializations were the least likely to report feeling comfortable telling new people that they work in child care.

## Perception of the BC government towards ECL work

For the first time since the start of the evaluation, ECL professionals who responded to the workforce survey were asked to share their views on the degree to which the BC government values their work in child care.

**Figure 11** Proportion of ECL professionals who agree or disagree that their work in child care is valued by the BC government, by role and workplace



Source: 2023 workforce survey.

The results of this new question indicate that, across all roles and workplaces, slightly more ECL professionals agree that government values their work in child care.

The highest proportion of respondents who agree with the statement is among HCPs, with roughly 59 per cent who either agree or strongly agree, compared to 41 per cent who either disagree or strongly disagree.

The respondent group with smallest proportion who agreed with this statement is M/S working in B&A programs, with 52 per cent who agree or strongly agree, and 49 per cent who disagree or strongly disagree.

Respondents who responded to this question were given the option to leave a comment explaining their response.

Surprisingly, over 1,260 survey respondents shared a response, often in great detail, providing important insights into how they perceive government's value of their profession.

Open-ended responses were analyzed according to the respondents' level of agreement with the statement.

*“Educators are feeling the brunt of government inaction as they strive to open their own daycares.*

*These passionate individuals must navigate burdensome child ratio regulations that limit their ability to provide personalized care and quality education.*

*The combined base pay and wage enhancements, while appreciated, fall short of addressing the financial demands of running a daycare effectively.”*

Workforce survey respondent

### Strongly Disagree

Among the 208 respondents who **strongly disagreed** with the statement and who provided a comment, respondents generally indicated that efforts made by the government fall short of what is needed by child care centres. Specifically, they often mention the following:

- ECL professionals are underpaid and are undervalued by government;
- There is a lack of fairness in the government's tactics (e.g., some ECEs or ECL professionals are not eligible for the wage enhancement);
- Regulatory conditions affect the viability of child care centres (e.g., fee caps).

## Disagree

435 respondents disagreed with the statement that the BC government values their work in child care and provided a comment. They cite the following reason for their views:

- Similar to those who strongly disagree, they believe that ECL professionals are underpaid or undervalued by government, and there is growing impatience for a wage grid;
- Low wages are impacting the stability of the workforce;
- ECL professionals lack access to benefits, especially access to mental health supports to address the high incidence of burnout and stress among ECL professionals; and
- There is a lack of recognition of the important contribution of educators' work in educating children.

## Agree

As shown in Figure 11, most survey respondents (N=501) agreed with the statement that government values their work in child care. Among their responses, we find the following themes:

- The BC government has taken actions to improve working conditions, but more change is needed;
- The wage enhancement and investments towards \$10-a-Day child care is evidence of the government's commitment to improving child care;
- More work is needed to address staff shortages, raise wages, and increase benefits.

## Strongly Agree

The smallest number of respondents (N=120) strongly agreed with the statement that government values their work in child care. We find only a few negative comments among these responses, though most themes focus on the positive efforts of government:

- The government recognizes the important contribution of ECL professionals by providing the wage enhancement and funding various bursaries;
- Fee reductions for families demonstrates that they view child care as an essential service to society
- The decision to move ECL within the Ministry of Education recognizes that child care is a part of a broader continuum of learning and education.



*"The government has continued to keep childcare on the forefront of the political platform and has implemented many initiatives to prove their commitment to childcare."*

*"There are many summits, discussions, and feedback sessions available for ECEs to attend and share their voices and concerns. I feel listened to and acknowledged, and my feedback is valued as important."*

Workforce survey respondent



# WAGES AND BENEFITS

Wages and benefits make up the compensation package that ECL professionals receive for their work.

The evaluation looks at trends over time to assess whether compensation is meeting the needs of the workforce.

This section presents self- and employer-reported wages and salaries of ECL professionals, provides an overview of the wage enhancement program—a key tactic of the ECL R&R Strategy—and documents the receipt of benefits by ECL professionals.





## Wages and Benefits

As previous evaluation reports document, professionals' wages, earnings, and benefits are often cited as primary drivers in their decision to leave their positions or, for some, the sector entirely.

The evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy has been tracking how wages and benefits across the sector are evolving over time—by role and by certification—to uncover whether the strategy's tactics aimed at increasing compensation packages are having the desired effect. These data are tracked through several data collection points:

- **2016 and 2021 census-linked tax records**, which provide a robust estimate of total and weekly earnings in the previous year; but wages cannot be calculated due to the absence of hours of work (beyond full-time/part-time) and data are only updated every five years;
- **Self-reported wages** from SRDC's cross-sectional survey of workforce professionals, which also collects hours of work, allowing for estimates of monthly earnings;
- **Employer-reported staff wages** from SRDC's cross-sectional survey of employers; and
- **Long-term trends in wages** from the Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) Provider Profile, an annual survey of licensed funded child care facilities maintained by MECC (these data exclude the wage enhancement).

When taken together, these data provide a portrait of wage trends in the sector, including whether wages are rising compared to benchmark comparisons.

These findings are supplemented by stories shared by professionals and employers regarding the sufficiency of the wages and benefits: are they enough to attract new professionals, to retain experienced professionals, and to meet the needs of the workforce?

### Wages and salaries of ECL professionals



*"Having wages **similar to educators who work in Kindergarten** would be fair, especially if someone has their ECE and Infant Toddler and Special Needs training."*

Workforce survey respondent

### Real Wages

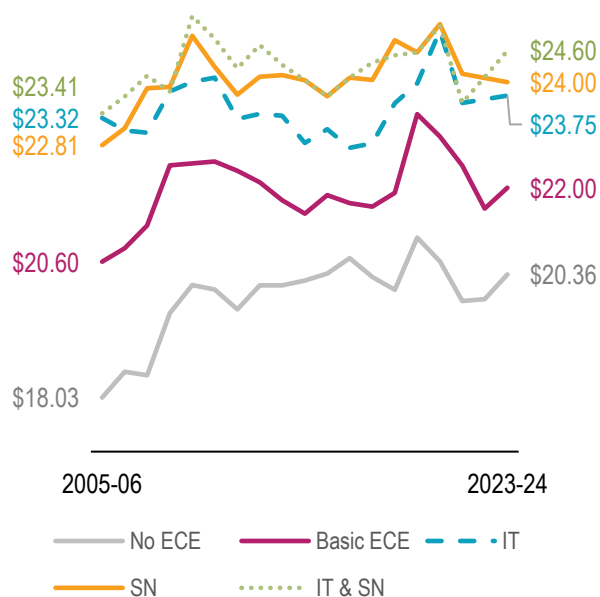
**Real wages**—comparison of wages using the Bank of Canada's Consumer Price Index to adjust dollar values to real 2023 dollars—have fluctuated since 2005 for ECL professionals. Figure 12 presents these trends by certification groups, which do not include the effects of the wage enhancement program.

The comparison of real wages makes clear that, at the median, those with **specialized certifications** (Special Needs (SN), Infant Toddler (IT), and combined SN + IT certifications) **earn more per hour** than professionals with a **basic ECE certification** (1-year or 5-year ECE certification), ranging from an additional \$1.75 per hour to \$2.60 more per hour in 2022-23. This differential in wages appears to have been narrowing since 2005. Though the size of the wage difference varies from year to year, more professionals with specialized certifications earn higher wages.

Another pattern shows that professionals with any certification receive a wage premium. In 2005, the difference in median hourly wages for professionals with a basic ECE compared to those with no certificate was about \$2.33. In 2023, the value of that premium declined to \$1.64 per hour.

Recently, after more than a year of high inflation, real wages have dropped quite markedly, wiping out nearly a decade of gradual gains such that median wages (not including the wage enhancement) in 2022-23 had a purchasing power equivalent to median wages earned in 2012-13.

**Figure 12** Median real wages for ECL professionals by certification between 2005 and 2023 (adjusted for inflation)



**Sources:** British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development/MECC. Wage enhancement not included. Data from years prior to 2023-2024 are adjusted for inflation.

## Self-reported hourly wages

Every year, SRDC's workforce survey asks ECL professionals to share information about their wages.

Several factors can influence hourly wage rates, including a person's seniority, their years of experience, their role and responsibilities, and their certifications.

SRDC compared the average self-reported wages of professionals in non managerial or supervisory roles working in Centre-based ECL (licensed centres, preschools or before and after school/recreational programs, and \$10 a Day ChildCareBC sites).

*"I definitely feel I should be paid way more for what I do. But because of the wage enhancement, I haven't complained about my wage."*

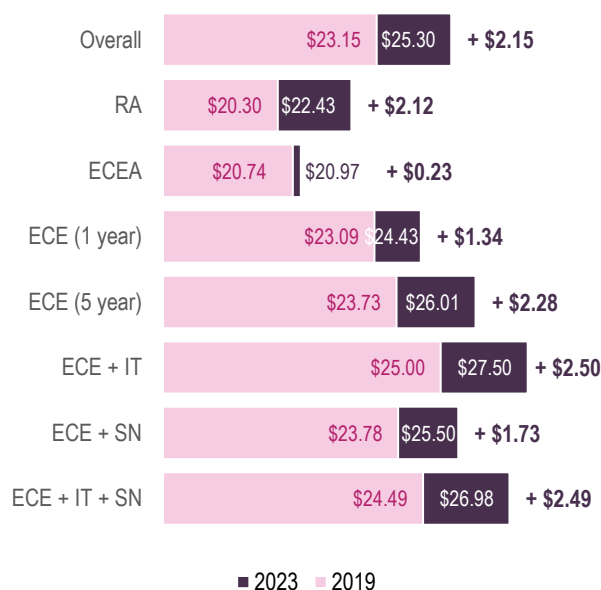
Not for Profit Case Study Site

Self-reported average wages have increased for all groups since 2019. In the 2023 survey, the average hourly wage rate across all professionals was \$25.30, a \$2.15 increase from 2019, after adjusting for inflation. Given stagnation of wages seen in other sources not including the wage enhancement, it seems likely the main reason for the increase is widespread receipt of the wage enhancement.

When we compare respondents according to their highest certification earned, we find the biggest increase in adjusted wages since 2019 among ECEs who hold an IT specialization (+\$2.50). All ECE categories (excluding RA and ECEA) report an average **wage increase at or above \$2.07** compared to 2019.

The smallest average wage increases were reported by ECEAs (+\$0.23) and ECE 1 year (+\$1.34). Notably, ECEAs are ineligible for the wage enhancement.

**Figure 13** Average self-reported wages of Centre-based non-manager/ supervisor professionals (adjusted for inflation)



**Source:** 2019 and 2023 workforce survey. 2019 wages are adjusted for inflation.

While wages have increased, there is a general feeling in the sector that **professionals are still underpaid** given their levels of education, ongoing training requirements, and responsibilities.

As expected, **roles and responsibilities** have a positive effect on wage rates in Centre-based ECL. On average, Centre-based managers or supervisors were compensated about **\$4.12 an hour more** than other professionals.

Increases in wages still have not reached parity with BC workers that hold equivalent postsecondary credentials. Using Labour Force Survey microdata from September through December 2023, SRDC estimates that **adults in BC with a postsecondary certificate or diploma earn an average of \$35.19 an hour**, nearly \$10 per hour more

than ECL professionals who responded to the workforce survey.

Of course, there is variation within these credentials and factors besides education play a role, but for people considering pursuing certificates or diplomas, the returns for ECL credentials may not appear as competitive as others.

Additional analyses were conducted—when sample sizes allowed—to assess differences in average hourly wages of Centre-based ECL professionals by **union membership** and by **organization status** (i.e., ownership or *auspice*).



Unionized professionals have **slightly higher** average hourly wages (\$28.48) than non-unionized professionals (\$26.76).

When analyzing the results by highest credential completed, the difference is only statistically significant for professionals with an ECE 5 year (\$28.76 for unionized professionals compared to \$26.98 for non-unionized professionals).



Professionals working for private businesses earn **significantly less** on average (\$23.84) than those working for not-for-profit, Indigenous, or publicly-run centres (\$26.18).

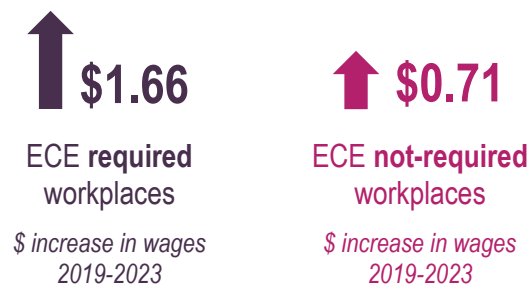
The difference is also significant for all credential groupings, with the largest gap in wages found among ECE 1-year (\$4.27 more for not-for-profit compared to private businesses) and the smallest gap among ECE + both Special Needs and Infant Toddler specializations (\$1.49 more for not-for-profits compared to private businesses).

## Employer-reported hourly wages

Respondents to SRDC's 2023 ECL employer survey were asked to share wage information for all child care staff in their organizations. Weighted average hourly wage rates are then estimated by using the number of employees by type of qualification.

The employer analysis confirms the trend seen across all wage information: **average wages, taking into account the wage enhancement, are increasing across the sector.** Nearly all weighted average wages reported by employers are higher than they were in 2019 across certifications, roles, and workplace types.

An analysis by workplace type indicates that, since 2019, wages in workplaces with an ECE-requirement **increased** by a larger amount than those without an ECE-requirement.



**Source:** 2019 and 2023 SRDC employer survey. Data from 2019 are adjusted for inflation.

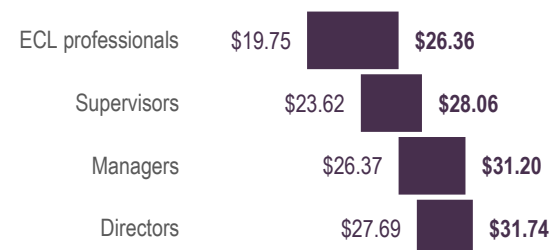
Consistent with earlier findings, wage rates in 2023 were higher for more senior positions and (usually) for those with higher certification. An exception to this trend can be found with ECEAs who generally earn slightly less than RAs across all positions in workplaces without an ECE requirement.

Average wages of ECL professionals have risen in every health authority region since 2019, particularly for ECEs compared to ECEAs and RAs. ECEs in Vancouver Island health authority region have the highest employer-reported hourly wage at \$24.92 - \$28.12 per hour. RAs in

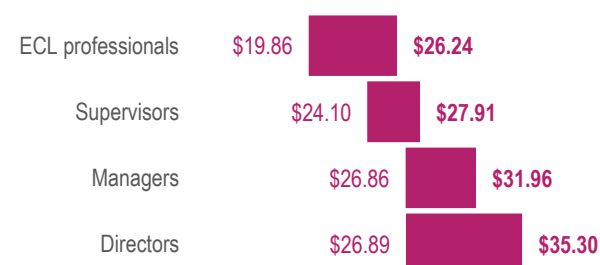
the Interior have the lowest wages at \$18.78 - \$22.33 per hour.

**Figure 14** Hourly wage range by position in 2023

### ECE-required Centre-based ECL



### ECE not-required Centre-based ECL



**Source:** 2023 SRDC employer survey.

**Note:** Range runs from lower bound (not bold) to upper bound (bold)

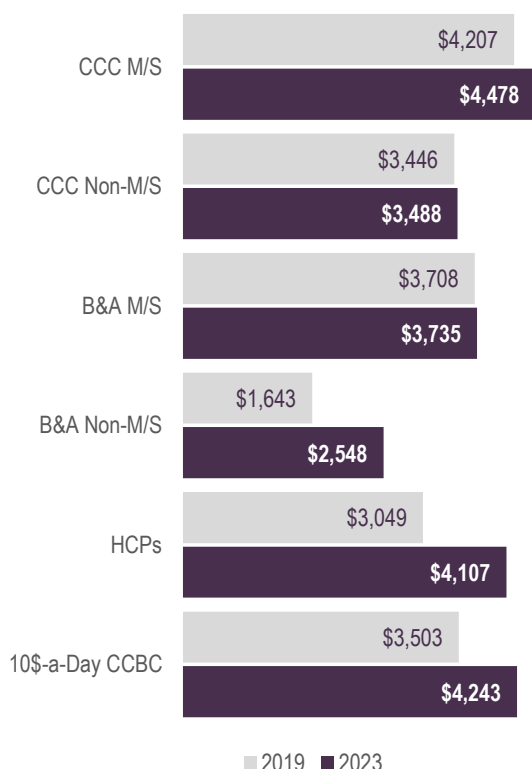
## Monthly income from ECL employment

Monthly income from child care work depends on wage rates and hours worked. The average monthly income is estimated using responses to the workforce survey and is adjusted for inflation. The data can then be separated according to respondents' roles and programs.

This includes all income sources related to ECL employment including both full-time and part-time.

### Average income by role and program

**Figure 15** Average monthly income by role and program in 2019 and 2023 (adjusted for inflation)



**Source:** 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce surveys. Data from 2019 are adjusted for inflation.

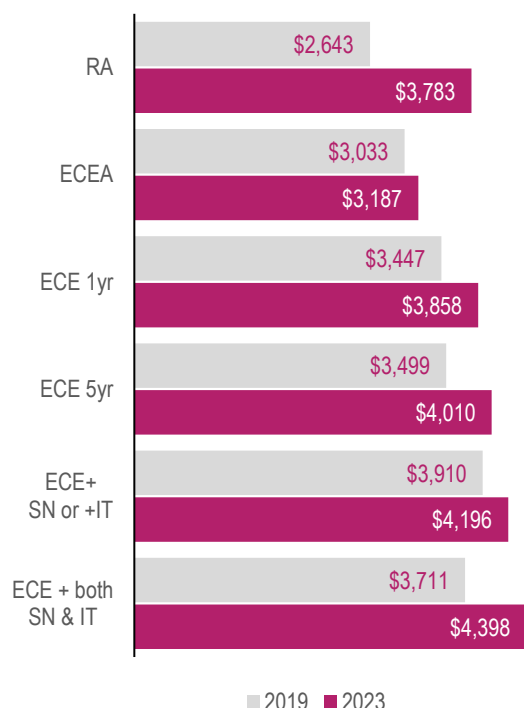
Monthly incomes increased nominally for all respondent groups, across all roles and program types, when compared to adjusted 2019 incomes.

- On average, M/S at CCC (\$4,478) have the **highest average monthly income**, higher than their adjusted average monthly incomes in 2019.
- Non-M/S professionals' average monthly income **was lower** than M/S at both types of programs (\$3,488 at CCC and \$2,548 at B&A).
- Average monthly incomes of professionals working at \$10 a Day ChildCareBC sites (\$4,243) are the second highest averages monthly incomes, likely reflecting the fact that M/S and non-M/S roles cannot be separated due to small sample sizes.
- Average monthly incomes of HCP professionals (\$4,107) were **higher than non-M/S professionals** in both types of centre-based care, and **higher than M/S in B&A programs**.

### Average monthly income by qualification

The analysis of income by qualification shows that **professionals with higher credentials**—ECE or specialized credentials—earn more, on average, than other ECL professionals, and that earnings generally increase as specializations increase.

**Figure 16** Average monthly income by qualification in 2019 and 2023 (adjusted for inflation)



**Source:** SRDC 2019 and 2023 workforce surveys. Data from 2019 are adjusted for inflation.

The only outlier in this result is **Responsible Adults** (RA). In 2023, the average monthly incomes for this group are higher than those for ECEAs and comparable to the average monthly incomes of 1-year ECE professionals.

**+ \$1,140**

**Responsible Adults**  
Biggest increase in  
nominal monthly  
incomes since 2019

**+ \$154**

**ECEAs**  
Smallest increase in  
nominal monthly  
incomes since 2019

As shown in Figure 16, the average incomes reported by RAs in the 2019 and 2023 workforce surveys represent the biggest change in monthly incomes across qualification groups. The smallest increase in average monthly earnings is reported by ECEAs.

## Wage enhancement program

In 2019, the ECL R&R Strategy introduced a \$1 wage enhancement tactic, followed by an additional \$1 in 2020 to supplement ECE wages in eligible facilities. In April 2021, the province announced an increase to the wage enhancement to **\$4 per hour**, which came into effect on September 1, 2021, with payment implemented in March 2022.

In addition, the program provides funding for **statutory benefits** (additional costs of paying employees more) in the range of 18 to 20 per cent, adjusted annually.

Changes to eligibility criteria in 2022 allowed **supervisors and managers**—who may spend less than half of their time working directly with children—to receive the wage enhancement.

This section looks at data from various sources to understand how the wage enhancement is affecting the sector, including:

- SRDC's 2023 **cross-sectional survey** data,
- **Interview data** with 2023 case study child care centre sites.



*“It’s really **life changing** for a lot of people when they say, okay, this is now entering into a wage that is **a living wage**.*

*This is a more sustainable income that we just didn’t see before. It’s always been a very underappreciated field. So just that little bit of financial recognition makes a really big difference for people.”*

For profit Case Study Site

## Eligibility and Take-up Rates<sup>1</sup>

**80%**

Eligible for the WE

Among workforce survey respondents, **four out of every five** met the eligibility criteria for the wage enhancement, higher than the proportion of respondents eligible in 2019 (71 per cent), possibly due to changes to the eligibility criteria.

**95%**

Receiving the WE  
among those  
eligible

**Nearly all eligible respondents (95 per cent)** were receiving the subsidy, with the biggest proportion working in \$10 a day ChildCareBC sites (97 per cent). This represents an important increase from 2019, when slightly more than three quarters of eligible respondents (78 per cent) reported receiving the subsidy.

**82%**

Employed in an  
eligible workplace

In addition, more than four out every five ECL professionals (82 per cent) are employed in an **eligible workplace**. Only a small number (5 per cent) of respondents did not know if their workplace was eligible for the wage subsidy.

**9%**

Not receiving the WE,  
don’t know  
if they are eligible

Among those who are not receiving the wage subsidy, only a small proportion (9 per cent) **do not know if they are eligible**.

This reveals a high degree of awareness and understanding of the wage enhancement’s eligibility requirements, as well as the sector’s willingness to take-up the subsidy.



## Wage Differentials between Wage Enhancement Recipients and Non-Recipients

To assess the effects of the wage enhancement (WE) on earnings, we conducted a series of comparisons of professionals' average hourly wages between those **eligible and in receipt of the WE** and those **eligible and not in receipt of the WE**.

In 2022, a new question was added to the cross-sectional survey of ECL professionals: **are you eligible to receive the wage enhancement?**

Those answering positively will hopefully provide a reliable identifier of eligible professionals over time, rather than SRDC deriving eligibility using other variables included in the survey.

For the analysis with 2019 data (see the Technical Report), we continue to use SRDC's derived eligibility criteria, which may not be fully accurate.

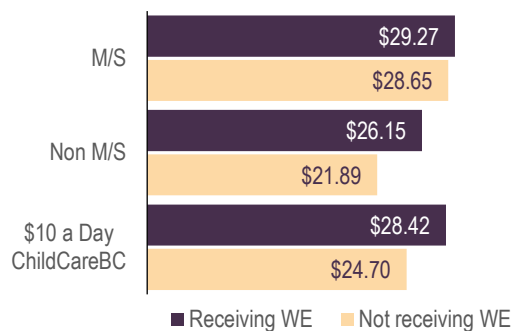
At the launch of the 2023 survey, the wage enhancement provided a \$4 per hour addition to wages.

**\$4/hr**  
WE in  
2023

The reader should keep in mind that wage differentials are influenced by a range of factors. Pre-existing working conditions (including wages) between employers who apply for the enhancement and those who do not may differ. For example, better paid employees might be less likely to receive the enhancement.

## Wage differentials by role and programs

**Figure 17** Average wages of eligible respondents receiving and not receiving the WE



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

Results from the 2023 workforce survey demonstrate that, when taken collectively, professionals receiving the wage enhancement earn more than those who do not.

The largest difference in earnings is reported by ECL professionals in non management or supervisory roles, where the wage differential is **\$4.26 more** per hour on average for those receiving the ECE WE.

However, managers and supervisors receiving the ECE WE have an average hourly wage that is only **\$0.62 more** than those who are not in receipt of the WE. This is likely due to pre-existing high wage differentials in the workplaces where WE has not been taken up.

## Wage differentials by ECE certification

The comparison between respondents with **at least an ECE certification** receiving the wage subsidy and respondents without an ECE certification (ECEA or RA) illustrates the differential in average hourly wages.



**Figure 18** Average hourly wages of respondents with an ECE receiving the WE and non-ECEs



Source: SRDC 2023 workforce survey

ECEAs and RAs are not eligible for receipt of the WE. This condition is intended to encourage ECEAs to complete their ECE certification.

Workforce survey respondents who are ineligible for the WE because of their credentials or workplace were critical of this exclusion. Managers and owners running WE-ineligible programs also commented that their exclusion from the program has made it more challenging to find and retain qualified ECEs because they cannot offer competitive wages, while the burden falls on their remaining staff to shoulder additional responsibilities when no substitutes are available to fill absences from sickness or leave.



*“I am not sure why the government isn't just being fair to ALL ECE certified people working in the field. This is the problem right here: we are never treated equally.”*

Workforce survey respondent

In case study interviews, older ECEAs who were closer to retirement age were not motivated by the financial incentive to upgrade their credentials to a full ECE. This was not the case for younger ECL professionals who were motivated by the wage enhancement to get fully certified.

Some case study participants felt that ECEAs should be entitled to the wage enhancement as they often do similar work and many ECEAs have been in the field longer than newer ECEs who automatically receive the wage enhancement.

This echoes the concern raised by experienced ECL professionals in workplaces that have fixed salary ranges. Since the wage enhancement is not adjusted for seniority, experienced ECL professionals receiving the WE who reach the maximum wage are being paid a similar wage as ECL professionals entering the field.

## What the Workforce thinks of the WE

### Increased reliance on the WE to raise wages

Case study participants continue to express appreciation for the wage enhancement. Many ECEs view the WE as essential to keep them working in the field. Many expressed that without the WE, they would be unable to afford to live in their city or stay at their current job given the cost of living.

Some participants hoped that the WE will continue to increase over time to keep pace with the rising cost of living. Others fear that the loss of the WE, as many employers cannot keep up with wage increases while still remaining profitable or breaking even due to fee caps.

### The WE is ushering a broader conversation around compensation

In case study sites, the salaries for ECEs before the wage enhancement ranged from \$21 to \$26 per hour depending on individual experience. When ECEs moved to a new centre, they negotiated similar or improved hourly rates.

When discussing salaries with their staff, centre managers are now trying to broaden the conversation to include the whole compensation package, including vacation pay, paid sick days, extended health care,

training funds, and either pensions or RRSPs with employer contributions.

Case study respondents said they were adopting this approach to differentiate themselves from other centres who may offer similar hourly rates but did not have the same range of benefits.

Results from the 2023 survey of ECL professionals echo these findings. Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with several statements about the provincial Wage Enhancement program.

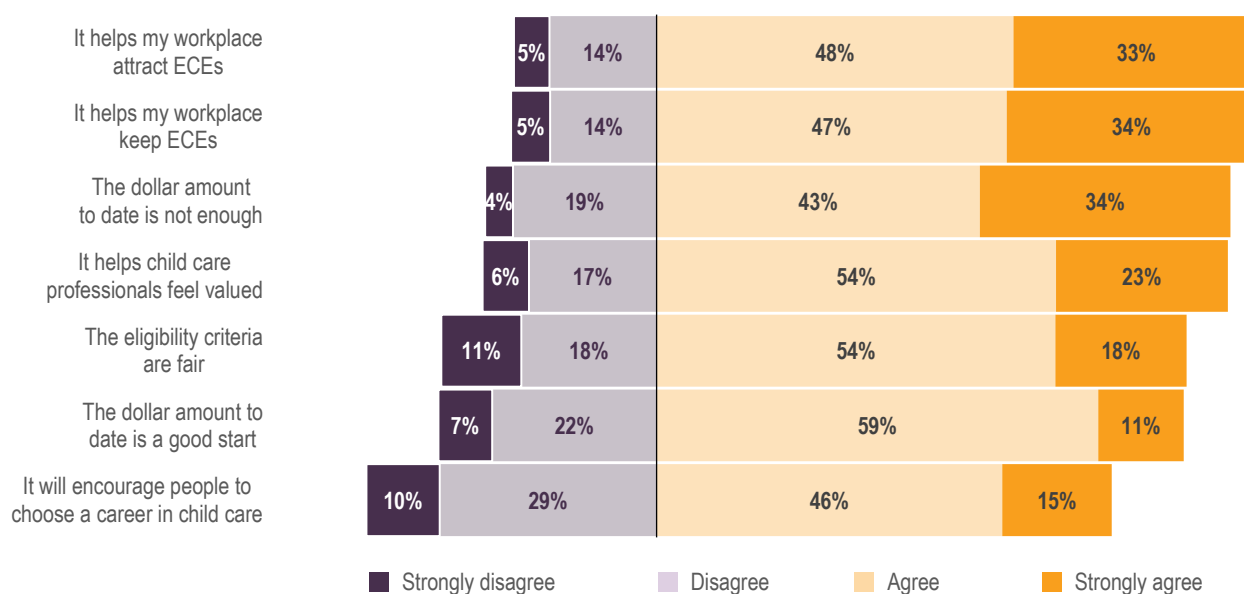
Managers and supervisors were asked to comment on the effectiveness of the WE program in recruiting and retaining ECEs in their workplaces. Overwhelming, M/S agreed that the WE attracts ECEs (81 per cent agree or

strongly agree), and an equivalent proportion (81 per cent) also agreed or strongly agreed that the WE helps retain ECEs.

Survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the wage enhancement helps child care professionals feel valued (77 per cent) and that dollar amount is a good start (70 per cent).

However, just over three quarters of respondents (77 per cent) believe that **the dollar amount to date is not enough**, and 39 per cent disagree that the **WE will encourage people to choose a career in child care**.

**Figure 19** Attitudes of ECL professionals towards the wage enhancement program



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

While case study participants were appreciative of the wage enhancement, some ECL professionals with many years of seniority believe that their wages are not commensurate with their experience, due to fixed salary ranges from their employer and because the wage enhancement does not take into consideration years of work in the ECL field.

## Employer take-up rates

In the 2023 cross-sectional survey of ECL employers, 92 per cent of employers had applied for the wage enhancement, a slight increase from previous years.

Employers who had not applied for the wage enhancement were asked to identify the main reasons for not applying.

**46%**

Of workplaces that  
had not applied were  
**ineligible**

**36%**

Of workplaces that  
had not applied said  
**staff were ineligible**

The main reason was that the workplace was not eligible (46 per cent), and the second most reported reason was that none of the staff at the workplace were eligible. Only two employers reported that the information on how to apply for the WE was unclear. For Indigenous-operated workplaces, nearly all that were eligible for the First Nations Wage Enhancement or AHS Wage Enhancement Equivalent had at least one staff in receipt (14/15 and 7/8 workplaces in the sample, respectively).

## Indigenous Wage Enhancement programs

Both provincial and federal governments have made considerable investments to increase wages of BC's ECL professional working in Indigenous child care programs. However, until 2023, the degree of awareness and reception of wage enhancement programs offered to Indigenous ECL professionals were not captured by the evaluation.

Following the analysis of the 2022 Evaluation of the Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy showing a comparatively low rate of receipt of the provincial wage enhancement by Indigenous ECEs, the evaluation committed to documenting the extent to which other wage enhancements and supplements are being utilized by eligible Indigenous ECL professionals.

### *BC Wage Enhancement Program*

The evaluation sought to understand whether access to additional wage enhancements and supplements available could explain the low take-up rates of BC's wage enhancement program among Indigenous ECEs.

Findings suggest that many Indigenous ECEs who are receiving Indigenous wages enhancements are also receiving the provincial wage enhancement (83 per cent of FNWE recipients; 77 per cent of AHS ECE-WEE; and 78 per cent of MN supplement), suggesting a strong overlap between programs.

### *AHS Wage Enhancement Equivalent (WEE)*

In 2023, the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) program began offering its ECE-Wage Enhancement Equivalent (WEE) Retroactive Funding for ECEs in AHS programs funded through the Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia (AHSABC).

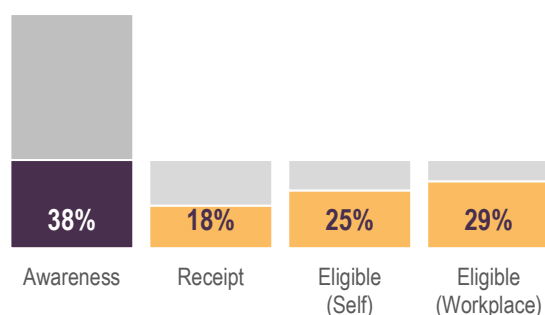
The one-time retroactive \$4/hour WEE was intended to compensate ECE professionals who worked in AHS

programs and were ineligible for the provincial wage enhancement. The amount was intended to correct a disparity in wages between ECEs working in AHS programs and those working outside of AHS programs.

Results indicate that only 38 per cent of all individuals working in AHS programs—regardless of their role or qualifications—were aware of the AHS ECE-WEE. Eligibility and receipt of the AHS ECE-WEE were asked only of those who were reported being aware of the program, of which:

- 76 per cent of those aware (29 per cent of all AHS professionals) worked in an **eligible workplace**;
- 66 per cent of those aware (25 per cent of all AHS professionals) were **eligible themselves**;
- 48 per cent of those aware (18 per cent of all AHS professionals) were in **receipt of the WEE**.

**Figure 20** Awareness, eligibility, and receipt of the AHS ECE-WEE



Source: SRDC 2023 workforce survey.

### *The First Nations Wage Enhancement (FNWE)*

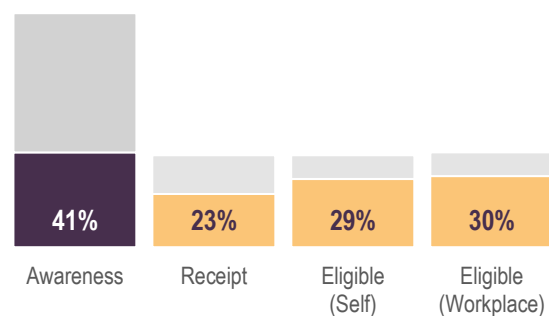
The First Nations Wage Enhancement (FNWE) is available to Indigenous and non-Indigenous ECE and ECEAs who work in a First Nations licensed or unlicensed program.

The enhancement amount is based on a wage grid ranging from \$17 to \$26 per hour and is administered by the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) with funding from the Government of Canada's Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

The questions were asked to respondents currently working in an AHS program or in a child care centre operated by an Indigenous organization (n = 80). The results indicate that 41 per cent of respondents were aware of the FNME. Subsequent questions were shown only to those who were aware of the FNME, of which:

- 75 per cent of those aware (30 per cent of professionals in Indigenous-led workplaces) reported that their **workplace is eligible**,
- 74 per cent of those aware (29 per cent of professionals in Indigenous-led workplaces) were **themselves eligible**,
- 58 per cent of those aware (23 per cent of professionals in Indigenous-led workplaces) were currently in **receipt of the FNME**.

**Figure 21** Awareness, eligibility, and receipt of the FNWE



Source: SRDC 2023 workforce survey.

### *Métis Nation ECE and ECEA Supplement*

Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) provides the Early Childhood Educator Supplement to registered Métis Citizens who hold a valid ECE or ECEA certificate and are currently working as an ECE or ECEA.

Eligible ECEs receive a payment of \$1000 and ECEAs receive a payment of \$500. The supplement is intended to recognize the valuable contribution that ECL professionals provide to the Métis Nation.

Unlike other wage enhancement programs, the Métis Nation ECE/ECEA supplement is not workplace dependent, meaning that any eligible Métis Nation citizen can apply to receive the supplement.

Questions regarding respondents' awareness, eligibility, and application to the supplement were shown to all survey respondents. The results indicate that a small proportion of respondents were aware of the supplement (16 per cent) and only 3 per cent of all survey respondents were eligible (n=58). Among those eligible, only 9 individuals had applied for the supplement.

Those who were eligible but had not applied were asked to share the reason why they had not applied. Overwhelmingly, respondents who had not applied for the supplement indicated that they did not know the supplement existed.

The results suggest that more efforts need to be made to ensure Indigenous ECEs are aware of the various wage enhancement programs available to them.

### Factors associated with receipt of wage enhancement

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to better understand which factors contribute to the receipt of the wage enhancement *among respondents who met the eligibility criteria, working in eligible facilities*.

After controlling for other factors, two factors were significantly associated with receipt of the wage enhancement.



#### **Private Business**

Working in a **private business** is associated with:

**162%** increase in the odds that they will receive the wage enhancement



#### **Born outside of Canada**

Born outside of Canada is associated with:

**147%** increase in the odds that they will receive the wage enhancement

The results of the regression analysis suggest that, all else equal, individuals working in a private business or individuals who are born outside of Canada are more likely to receive the wage enhancement.

## Benefits received by ECL professionals

Benefits are an important component of a worker's compensation, providing financial and non-financial supports to ECL professionals.

This section looks at benefits received by ECL professionals from the perspective of professionals and employers in the sector: what's available, what's changed, and whether the compensation provided is meeting the ECL R&R Strategy's goals.

*“If I started somewhere else, I might get paid maybe a couple of dollars more an hour, but then, would I be starting with two weeks holiday a year?”*

*I can't work year-round with children and not have five weeks off. For my mental health, I can't do it. that's a big holding factor for me: It's my holidays.”*

For profit Case Study Site

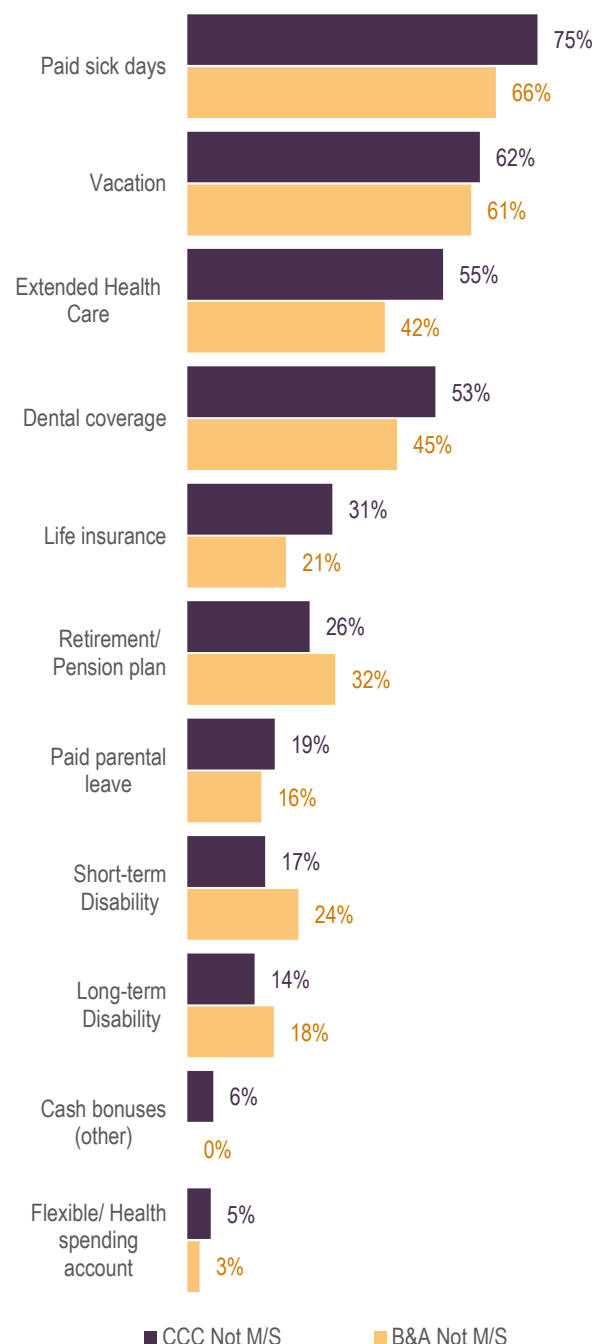
## Self-reported core benefits received

Since 2019, more ECL professionals are receiving at least one type of benefit as part of their compensation package.

In 2019, 25 per cent of ECL respondents in child care centres (CCC) and 33 per cent of ECL respondents in before and after school or recreational care programs **did not receive any core benefits**.

In 2023, the proportion of ECL professionals who are not receiving any benefits decreased to 9 per cent (CCC) and 16 per cent (B&A).

**Figure 22** Self-reported core benefits received by ECL professionals in child care centres and before & after school or recreational care programs in 2023



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

Figure 22 illustrates the proportion of ECL professionals other than managers and supervisors (non-M/S) in child care centres and in before & after school programs or recreational care programs who indicated receiving specific benefits from their employers in 2023.

In both types of centres, **paid sick leave** (75 per cent in CCC and 66 per cent in B&A) and **vacation time** (62 per cent in CCC and 61 per cent in B&A) are the two most reported benefits received by ECL professionals, followed by **extended health care** for CCC professionals (55 per cent) and **dental coverage** for B&A professionals (42 per cent).

The least cited benefits included **flexible or health spending accounts** (5 per cent in CCC and 3 per cent in B&A) and **cash bonuses** (6 per cent in CCC and 0 per cent in B&A).

The biggest increase in reported receipt of core benefits by ECL professionals since 2019 was seen in **paid sick days**, perhaps unsurprisingly given legislative changes taking effect in 2022 requiring 5 days of paid sick leave for most employees.

**+ 24%**

Receive  
**Paid Sick Leave**  
since 2019

ECL professionals in CCC

**+ 34%**

Receive  
**Paid Sick Leave**  
since 2019

ECL professionals in B&A  
programs

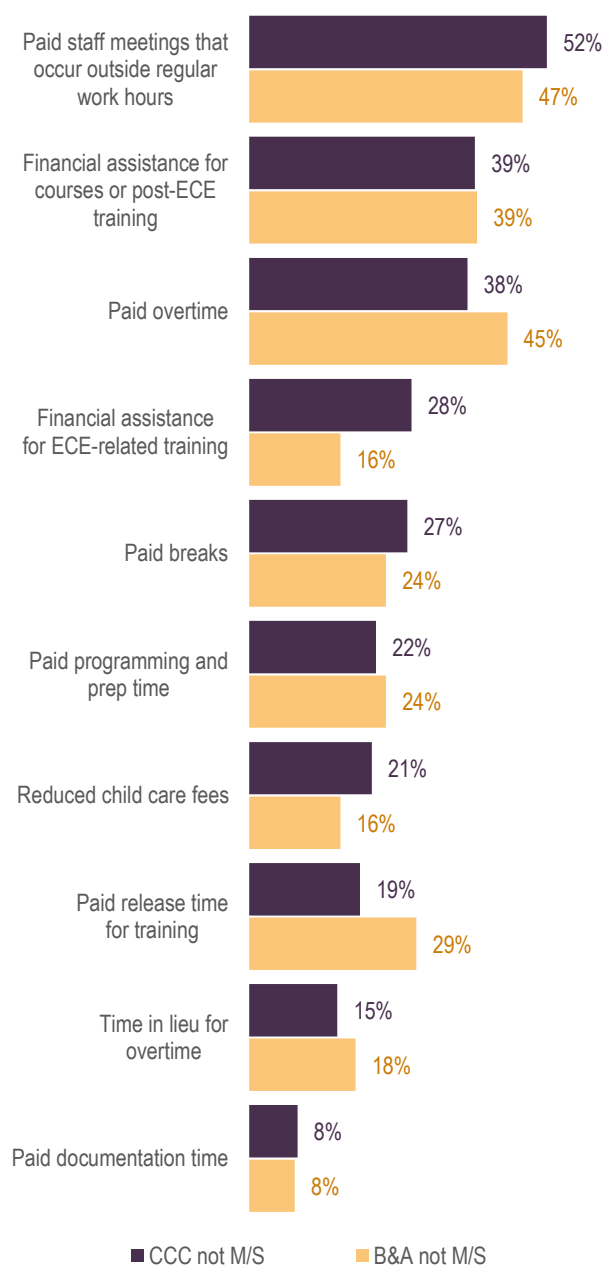
### Self-reported additional benefits received

The survey of ECL professionals also documents additional benefits provided by employers to their workforce, include paid overtime, paid release time for training, paid breaks, and financial assistance for training.

Once again, **more respondents** report receiving **at least one additional benefit** in 2023 compared to 2019: a 3-

point increase for professionals in CCC and a 5-point increase for professionals in B&A programs.

**Figure 23** Self-reported additional benefits received by ECL professionals in child care centres and before & after school or recreational care programs in 2023



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.



Roughly half of all non-M/S professionals in both CCC (52 per cent) and B&A (47 per cent) centres report **being paid for staff meetings that occur outside of work hours**.

A high proportion of ECL professionals also reported receiving **financial assistance for courses and post ECE-training**: 39 per cent of ECL professionals in CCC and in B&A programs.

Changes in reported receipt of additional benefits since 2019 are modest, and the results are mixed.

### Self-reported benefits received by auspice

Consistent with previous years, ECL professionals working for private businesses report fewer benefits than those at not-for-profits, with differences especially stark for access to a **retirement or pension plan**.



Nevertheless, there is a great deal of improvement in the offer of benefits by employers in private businesses since 2019. To start, only 18 per cent of professionals working in private businesses do not receive any benefits, down from 47 per cent in 2019.

Similarly, ECL professionals working in not-for-profits have also seen an increase in the receipt of **paid sick days** (+19 points), as well as in **extended health care** (+18 points) and retirement or pension plans (+15 points) since 2019.

### Self-reported benefits by union membership

In 2023, as in previous years, unionized workers are more likely to report receiving benefits compared to non-unionized workers.

The biggest difference is found in the proportions of respondents who have access to a **retirement or pension plan** (58 per cent of unionized workers; 26 per cent of non-unionized workers), **paid breaks** (66 per cent of unionized workers; 27 per cent of non-unionized workers), and paid parental leave (47 per cent of unionized workers; 17 per cent of non-unionized workers).



## Benefits provided by employers

The 2023 survey of ECL employers also collected information regarding the *offer of benefits* at an organizational level: benefits paid by the employer and provided to their ECL professional staff.

A consistent trend across all surveyed respondents is that the offer of benefits is increasing across the sector; **only 2 per cent of employers do not offer any core benefits, down from 20 per cent in 2019.**

However, professionals are consistently less likely to report being in receipt of benefits than employers are to report offering them. For example, nearly two-thirds of employers report offering extended health benefits, while only 42-55 per cent of non-M/S professionals report receiving the same benefits. Thus, benefits may only be offered to management-level staff by many employers, and/or awareness and uptake of benefits may be a persistent challenge.

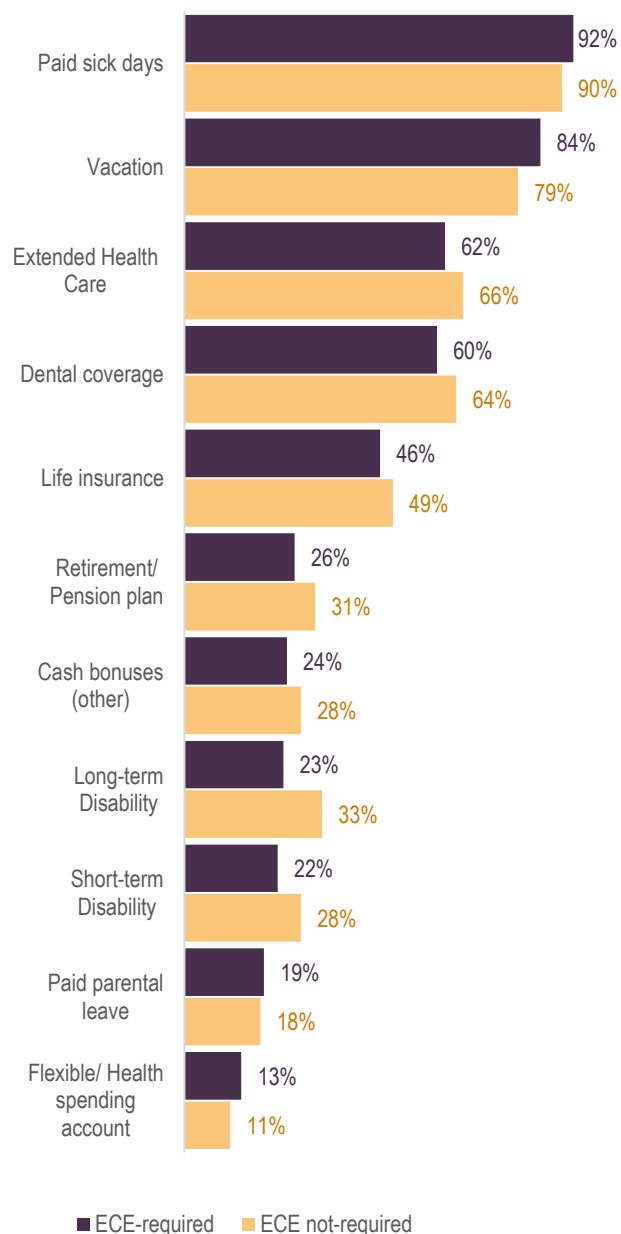
Since 2019, more employers report **providing benefits** to their staff and more ECL professionals report **receiving benefits** from their employers.

The biggest increase in the offer of benefits by employers since 2019 is **paid sick days** (+31 points for ECE-required workplaces; +29 points in ECE not-required workplaces). This increase since 2019 is consistent with the self-reported results from ECL professionals, though self-reported rates are lower at 66 to 75 per cent of professionals.

The difference between workplace types appears to be less significant than those reported by ECL professionals, with the biggest difference in the **offer of long-term disability** (33 per cent in ECE not-required workplaces and 23 per cent in ECE-required workplaces). In general, workplaces that do not have an

ECE requirement are slightly more likely to offer core and additional benefits to staff.

**Figure 24** Benefits provided by employers by workplace type in 2023



Source: 2023 SRDC employer survey.

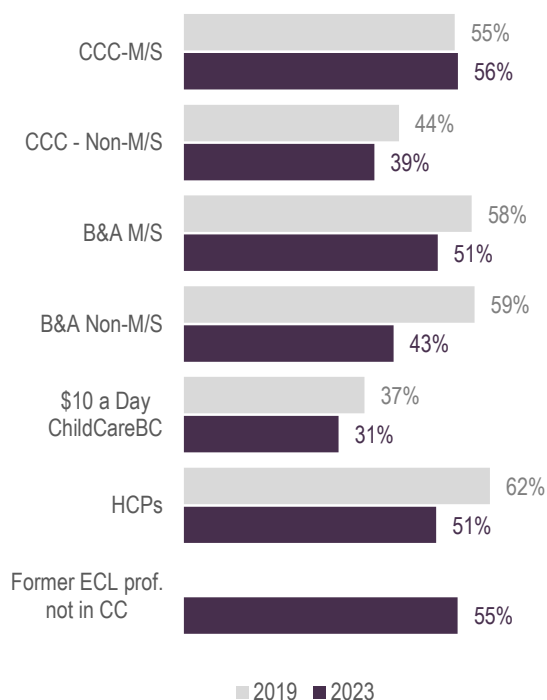
## Satisfaction with wages and benefits

### Satisfaction with wages by role and workplace

Since 2019, satisfaction with wages has decreased considerably across most groups by role and workplace type.

The only category of respondent where satisfaction with wages has not decreased is among managers and supervisors working in licensed child care centres (CCC-M/S), where satisfaction has stayed relatively stable (55 per cent in 2019 compared to 56 per cent in 2023).

**Figure 25** Satisfaction with wages in 2019 and 2023 by role and workplace type



Source: 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce surveys.

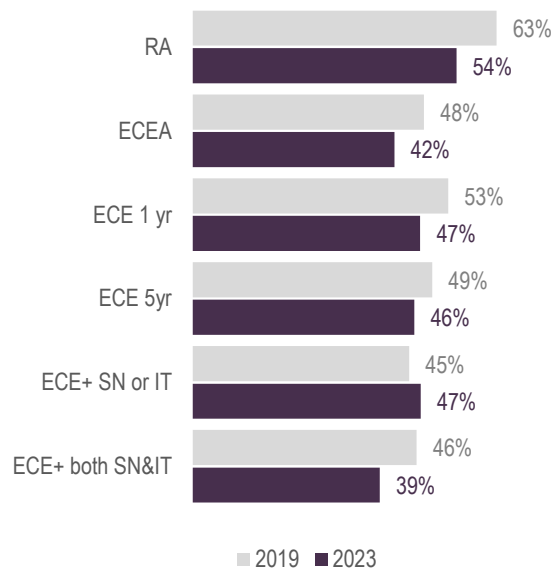
Satisfaction with wages was lowest among professionals working in \$10 a Day ChildCareBC centres (31 per cent) and has declined 6 points since 2019.

Interestingly, former ECL professionals not currently working in child care had one of the highest proportions of satisfaction with their wages (55 per cent), second only to ECL managers and supervisors in CCC. These data were not collected in 2019 and therefore comparisons over time are not possible.

### Satisfaction with wages by credential type

Analysis by credential type shows a similar pattern: satisfaction with wages has decreased for all groups since 2019, except among ECEs with either a Special Needs or Infant Toddler specialization, which saw a 2-point increase in 2023 (47 per cent) compared to 2019 (45 per cent).

**Figure 26** Satisfaction with wages in 2019 and 2023 by credential type



Source: 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce surveys.

Despite a 9-point decline in satisfaction with wages since 2019, Responsible adults continue to have the highest degree of satisfaction with their wages across all credential groups at 54 per cent.

The lowest degree of satisfaction is among ECEs with both Special Needs and Infant Toddler specializations (39 per cent). This result could be explained by the amount of education and training required to obtain and maintain these certifications, which does not translate adequately in their compensation.

### Satisfaction with benefits by role and workplace

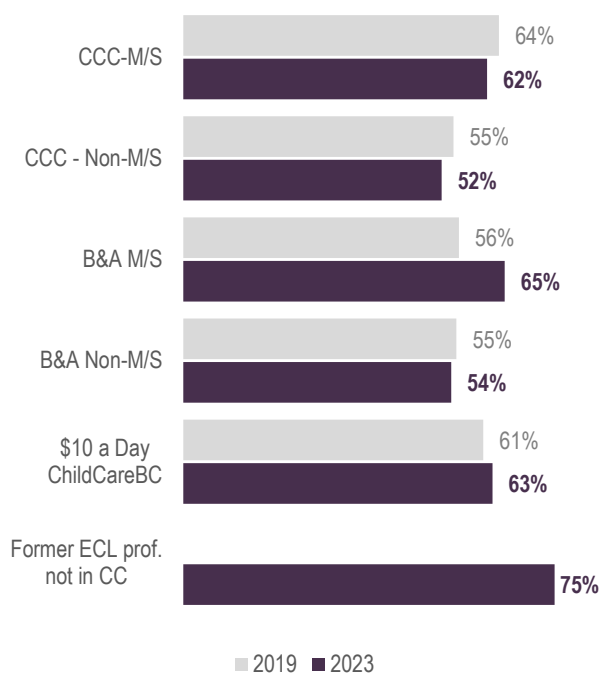
The analysis of satisfaction with benefits provides a more optimistic result. Overall, results appear to have remained somewhat consistent between 2023 and 2019, with slight decreases and slight increases in average rates of satisfaction across groups.

The biggest change is among managers and supervisors in before & after school programs or recreational programs. Since 2019, satisfaction with benefits increase by 9 points, from 56 per cent in 2019 to 65 per cent in 2023.

The lowest rate of satisfaction with benefits continues to be among non managers and supervisors working in licensed child care centres, at 52 per cent.

Once again, former ECL professionals no longer working in child care reported the highest degree of satisfaction across all groups, with 75 per cent reporting being satisfied with their benefits.

**Figure 27** Satisfaction with benefits in 2019 and 2023 by role and workplace type



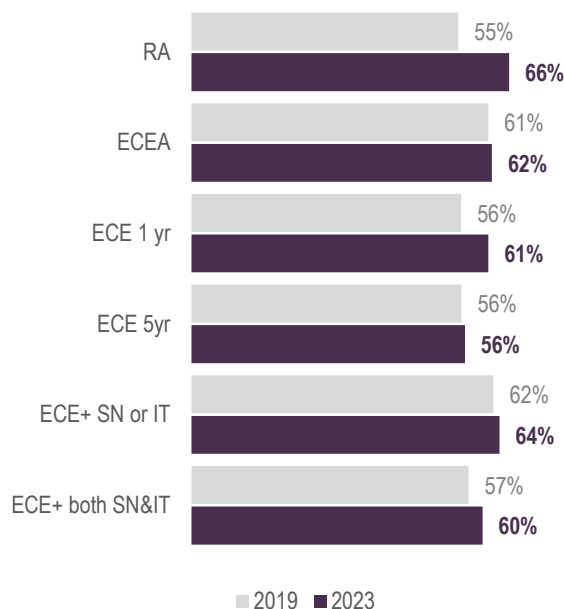
Source: 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce surveys.

### Satisfaction with benefits by credential type

When analyzed by credential type, satisfaction with benefits appears to have increased for all credential groups in 2023 compared to 2019. The largest increase in satisfaction is once again among Responsible adults (+11 points since 2019), who also have the highest rate of satisfaction in 2023 (66 per cent).

The lowest rate of satisfaction in 2023 is among 5-year ECEs (56 per cent), a rate that remains unchanged since 2019.

**Figure 28** Satisfaction with benefits in 2019 and 2023 by role and workplace type



Source: 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce surveys.

## Factors that contribute to satisfaction with compensation

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to better understand which factors contribute to respondents' satisfaction with their compensation (i.e., their wages and benefits).

After controlling for other factors, we find four factors that can significantly predict whether a person will be satisfied with their compensation.



### Monthly earnings<sup>2</sup>

An additional **\$1,000 dollars in monthly earnings** is associated with:

**26%** increase in the odds that they will be satisfied with their earnings and benefits



### Union membership

**Union membership** is associated with

**44%** decrease in the odds that they will be satisfied with their earnings and benefits



### Age

**Five extra years of age** is associated with:

**9%** increase in the odds that they will be satisfied with their earnings and benefits



### Number of benefits received

**An additional employment benefit** received is associated with:

**4%** increase in the odds that they will be satisfied with their earnings and benefits

Source: SRDC 2023 workforce survey.

The results of the logistic regression indicate that reporting higher monthly earnings and a larger number of benefits will have a positive influence on a person's satisfaction with their compensation. This result is expected and makes intuitive sense.

Age is also positively associated with satisfaction with wages and benefits. This result may not be surprising, as older workers with more years of experience may also be rewarded with higher wages. Additionally, the regression results may be capturing generational effects that are experienced not only by professionals in the ECL sector. As individuals age, they may be more settled in their lives (e.g., they may own their home, their children may be independent, they may have savings to rely on), and may be more likely to be satisfied with their earnings than someone younger.

The regression also indicates a negative relationship between union membership and satisfaction with compensation. This result is consistent with results from the 2022 evaluation report. Although unionized workers generally receive more benefits and, in 2023, slightly higher average wages than non-unionized workers, we continue to find a negative association between union membership and satisfaction with earnings and benefits.

There are a few factors that may contribute to this result:

- Case study interviews at unionized sites revealed that while these professionals generally considered themselves well-paid in the field, compensation of ECL professionals broadly was perceived as inadequate. Thus, their dissatisfaction with wages was not necessarily personal but perhaps reflective of an awareness of the need for constant pressure to improve compensation in the sector.
- As noted in the section on self-reported wages, on average, ECL professionals report earning lower hourly wages compared to similarly educated adults in BC (see page 34). Union membership may bring an awareness of rates of pay of other professionals, such as Educational Assistants and teachers, resulting in low satisfaction with wages compared to others in the union (but high compared to non-unionized ECL professionals).
- Ad hoc analyses found that unionized respondents were more likely to work in Vancouver Coastal Health Authority region than other health authority regions. While satisfaction with wages was not statistically significantly correlated with health authority region, ECL professionals from VCH had the lowest satisfaction ratings. Thus, location may be contributing to this effect as Vancouver and surrounding area is often perceived as among the least affordable areas of the province.

- The 2022 collective bargaining process with ECEs working in public sector unionized workplaces resulted in a wage increase of at least 12.75% over three years for union members. However, the roll-out of the increase took a long time, and the back pay would only have been received after the 2023 Workforce Survey. Frustration with the roll-out and the delays in receiving backpay could explain unionized workers' dissatisfaction with their wages at that time.

## Notes on this section

### 1 Eligibility for the wage enhancement

To be eligible for the wage enhancement, ECEs must: (a) hold a valid Early Childhood Educator, Infant and Toddler Educator, and/or Special Needs Educator certificate issued by the BC ECE Registry; (b) be in Good Standing with the BC ECE Registry; and (c) be an ECE Employee directly employed or self-employed on a full or part-time or substitute basis by a Licensed Child Care Facility that is in receipt of Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) Base Funding or is a \$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centre and that has been approved by the Ministry to opt in to both the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (if eligible to do so) and the ECE-WE. An ECE working as a Supported Child Development/Aboriginal Supported Child Development Worker who is directly employed by a Licensed Child Care Facility would be eligible for the ECE-WE.

[Click here to go back to the text \(page 38\).](#)

### 2 Using monthly earnings in the regression model rather than wages

The monthly earnings variable was selected for inclusion in the regression model as it is the most complete

variable reflecting income in the workforce survey dataset.

The workforce survey allows respondents to report earnings information in three different formats, according to their preferences: hourly wages (along with the number of hours worked in an average week), monthly income, or annual income. Earnings are then converted to monthly income for comparison.

Unfortunately, wages cannot be estimated for all respondents (such as those who are self-employed).

[Click here to go back to the text \(page 51\).](#)

# EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION

Credentials and education relevant to the provision of child care and that meet specific ECL needs across the province are a key component of a high-quality ECL system.

This section reviews trends in certifications and credentialization, education, and specialized skills across the province.





## Education and Certification

### Proportion of ECL professionals with ECL-relevant credentials

An anticipated consequence of the ECL R&R Strategy is that more members of the ECL workforce would hold credentials relevant to the provision of child care and that meet specific ECL needs relevant to their position.

Data on educational credentials held in the context of specific workplace roles was obtained from Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF) provider profile surveys, SRDC's cross-sectional surveys, case study sites, and administrative data such as the ECE Registry.

### ECL Certifications

As with previous years, recruitment remains a challenge for all case study sites, particularly for those in smaller and more remote communities. Case study participants reported having few applicants with the necessary credentials for their advertised positions. Some centres not able to recruit ECE-qualified staff were not operating at capacity, meaning they chose not to fill all the child care spaces they were licensed to provide due to a lack of staff.

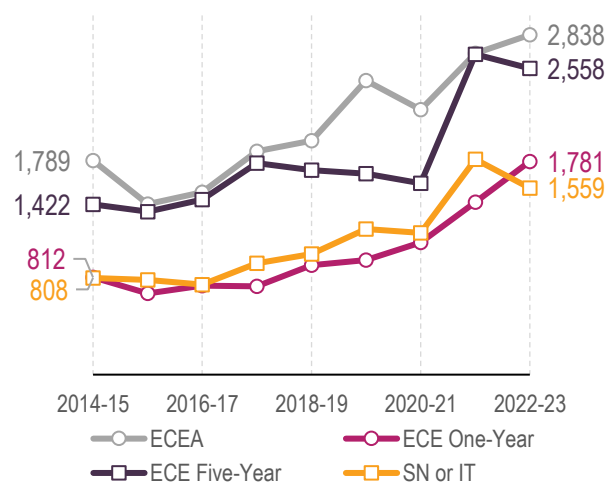
According to the ECE Registry, there were **more than 8,700 new ECEA, ECE, and ECE+ certifications issued in BC in 2022-23**. The trendline of these data over time is presented in Figure 29, which shows an overall increase in the total number of new certifications issued in the province in 2022-2023, despite a decrease in the number of ECE 5-year and ECE+ specializations (SN or IT).

While one may expect that the ECE Wage Enhancement and the Workforce Bursaries would work to encourage ECEAs to become ECEs, there is no longitudinal data available to track whether this is happening.

In effect, the proportion of the ECL workforce holding an ECE or ECE+ was lower in 2022-23 (71 per cent) than in 2017-18 and 2018-19 (73 per cent, both years).

Furthermore, the proportion of the ECL workforce with an ECE certification or additional specializations (IT or SN) continued to decrease in all five health authority regions since 2019, according to the employer survey.

**Figure 29** ECE Certifications, Fiscal Years 2014/15 – 2022/23



Source: ECE Registry

This could suggest that the non-certified proportion of the workforce is growing faster than the certified portion. For example, educational credentials may be lagging behind the pace with which new licensed ECL programs are opening to meet increased demand. It could also mean that despite the increase in new certifications, more ECEs are leaving the field than are joining.



## ECL Certifications by workplace and role

Credentialization patterns vary according to type of workplace and position.

- 84 per cent of workforce survey respondents in **licensed child care centres** had an ECE or ECE+ certification,
- 76 per cent of staff in **\$10 a day centres** had an ECE or ECE+ certification.
- 55 per cent of staff in **before-and-after school and recreational care programs** were qualified as a Responsible Adult or did not report any ECL training.

Regardless of workplace type, supervisors and managers were more likely than ECL professionals (non-M/S) and directors (management or administrative duties only) to have an ECE or ECE + specialty. **Directors were most likely to only have RA,** and this trend has increased since 2019.

**~70%**

of supervisors and managers

Have an **ECE or ECE+ certification**



*"We had the job posted for three months before we could fill it. And only one applicant who applied was qualified."*

*We have been pretty lucky because since then we have been trying to hire an ECE and we have had no qualified applicants."*

Not for Profit Case Study Site

The proportion of directors with an ECE or ECE+ certification has dropped dramatically since 2019, especially in Interior, Fraser, and Vancouver Island health authorities, to between 38 and 48 per cent. By comparison, between 61 and 80 per cent of managers and supervisors in all health authority regions have an ECE or ECE+ certification.

Since the pandemic, case study participants have noticed an increase in behaviours that they find challenging as well as developmental delays. At the same time, centres continue to struggle with recruitment for support workers, with access to funding for additional support, and with completing the assessment to qualify for additional support.

## ECL Education

The majority of workforce survey respondents had completed post-secondary education in a program specific to ECL. Those least likely to have at least a college-level education were non-ECE-certified HCPs (44 per cent) and non-manager/supervisor staff in B&A centres (28 per cent).

**ECEs and ECEAs not currently working in child care** were more likely than other groups to hold a **university degree** in a program specific to ECL.

Respondents not currently working in child care were most likely to hold a university degree or above in a program specific to ECL at 34 per cent, the same proportion as managers and supervisors in licensed child care centres. The proportion of ECE-certified HCPs with a university degree or above has dropped by 14 percentage points since 2019 to fewer than one in five.

Workforce survey respondents without an ECE credential (N=496) were asked whether they planned on becoming a certified ECE in the future. Among those who answered **no** (43 per cent), the primary reason was that the ECE credential was not a requirement for their position in child care or that they were planning to leave child care (see Figure 30).

**Figure 30** Proportion of non-ECE professionals by reason for not becoming a certified ECE in the future



Source: 2023 workforce survey.

All those participating in the case studies recognized the important role played by ECEAs role in the sector, given the current ECE shortage. While some ECEAs acquired considerable hands-on experience and were described as having the same level of experience as some newly qualified ECEs, interviewees also reflected on the qualifications required to become an ECEA and the long-term viability of the role in the sector.

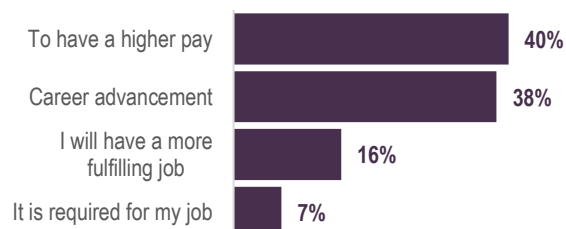
Case study participants also imparted an impression that becoming an ECEA requires minimal training. ECEAs must complete at least one early childhood education course within the previous five years in one of three topics: child guidance; child health, safety, and nutrition; or child development, or another course that is deemed

equivalent by the ECE Registry. For many Case Study participants, these requirements are insufficient to adequately prepare ECEAs for their work in ECL.

Still, there is a perception in the field that child care centres are relying heavily on ECEAs to compensate for a lack of qualified ECEs. Case study participants believe that an overreliance on ECEAs could “dilute the quality” of professionals in the field rather than bolstering them.

Among non-ECE survey respondents who do want to obtain their ECE credential (N=183), the primary reason was to have higher pay, followed closely by career advancement. Just over a quarter believe that having an ECE credential would allow them to have a more fulfilling job.

**Figure 31** Proportion of non-ECE professionals by reason for wanting to become a certified ECE in the future

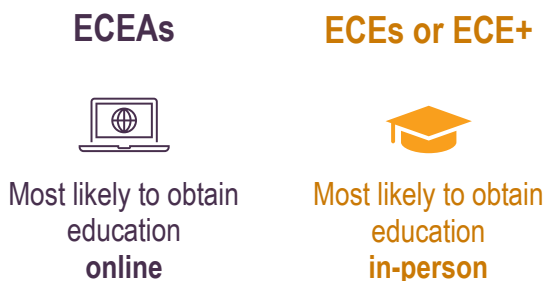


Source: 2023 workforce survey.

### Method of Education

Case study sites emphasized the need for ECEs to draw on a core set of skills and knowledge of child development. However, managers expressed a concern that the quality of ECE training across the province lacks proper oversight to ensure consistency for both in-person and online certification programs. Some interviewees described inconsistencies in ECE competencies and training quality as a threat to the sector’s professionalism.

The 2023 workforce survey revealed that 65 per cent of ECEAs completed their education online, while those with ECE (75 per cent of ECE 5-year) or ECE+ certification (71 per cent of ECE + Special Needs) are most likely to have completed their education in-person.

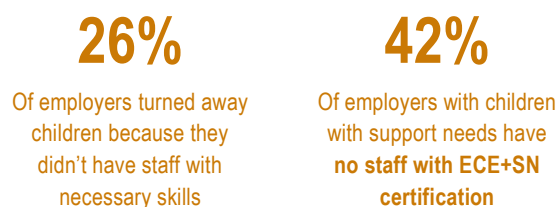


There is therefore a new association between credential and mode of instruction among new certifications that could have a bearing on how newer cohorts of ECL professionals have acquired their skills.

## Skills Relevant to Provision of Child Care

The **proportion of employers who report having children in their programs with support needs, speak neither English nor French at home, are new immigrants or refugees, or are Indigenous** has increased since 2019, regardless of whether the workplace had an ECE requirement. Workplaces without an ECE requirement were more likely to have children from these households compared to those that exclusively operate programs requiring at least one staff member to have an ECE. Most workforce survey respondents (61 per cent) reported working with at least one child with a support need.

Employers who reported having children with support needs were more likely to report a higher proportion of staff with Special Needs (SN) certification. Despite this, 42 per cent of employers with children with support needs had no staff with SN certification, showing little improvement from 40 per cent in 2019.



Managers and experienced ECEs from the case study sites called for more training to help ECEs better manage behaviours that challenge them. Among the suggested tactics, they recommend incorporating more behavioural training within all ECE programs.

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ensuring that BC's ECL workforce has access to effective and affordable professional development opportunities is a key component of the ECL R&R Strategy.

This section presents the skills assessment of ECL professionals by professionals themselves and by employers in the sector.

We also present participation in professional development activities over the last 12 months, and opportunities that facilitate career growth within the sector.



## Workforce Development

A key component of the ECL R&R Strategy seeks to ensure that the ECL workforce has access to the necessary training to improve the skills of its workforce.

The evaluation has been tracking changes in ECL professionals' skills and their participation in professional development activities.


### Possession of core and supplementary skills by ECL professionals

ECL professionals are trained to provide care and support the development of children in their early years. As part of this work, there are several skills that ECL professionals can be expected to demonstrate, including:

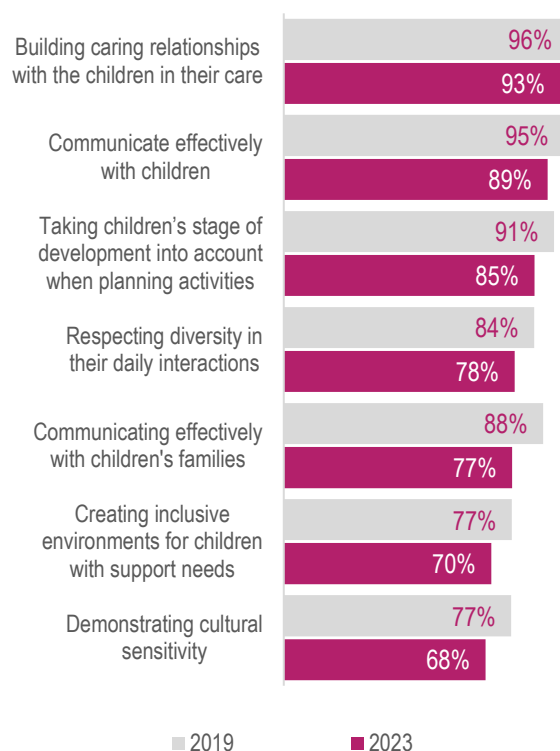
- Considering children's development stage when developing activities,
- Building caring relationships with children,
- Fostering positive communications with children in their care and their families,
- Creating culturally sensitive, respectful, and inclusive environments for all children.

### Self-assessment of ECL professionals' skills


Respondents to the ECL workforce survey were asked to assess themselves on seven relevant skills.

 ECL professionals are most confident in skills that directly concern their **interactions with children**, such as **building caring relationships** (93 per cent) and **communicating effectively with children** (89 per cent).

**Figure 32** Proportion of ECL professionals who consider their skills above average or excellent in 2019 and 2023



Source: 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

The lowest rated skills were related to **diversity and inclusion**. While most respondents still rated their skills above average or excellent, fewer ECL professionals consider their skills above average or excellent in their **ability to respect diversity** (78 per cent), to **create an inclusive environment for children with support needs** (70 per cent), and to **demonstrate cultural sensitivity** (68 per cent). 

The trend over time is somewhat worrying. Across all skills, a lower proportion of ECL professionals consider their abilities to be above average or excellent in 2023 than they did in 2019. Possibly skill levels have dropped. Alternatively, over time, professionals' interpretation of what these skills entail has changed.

### *Skills by highest certification completed*

The analysis of skills by qualifications follows a similar pattern from the overall results, with few differences across groups. Among the few differences observed, we can conclude that ECL professionals with the highest credentials are more likely to report above average or excellent skills, compared to professionals with lower credentials. Specifically:

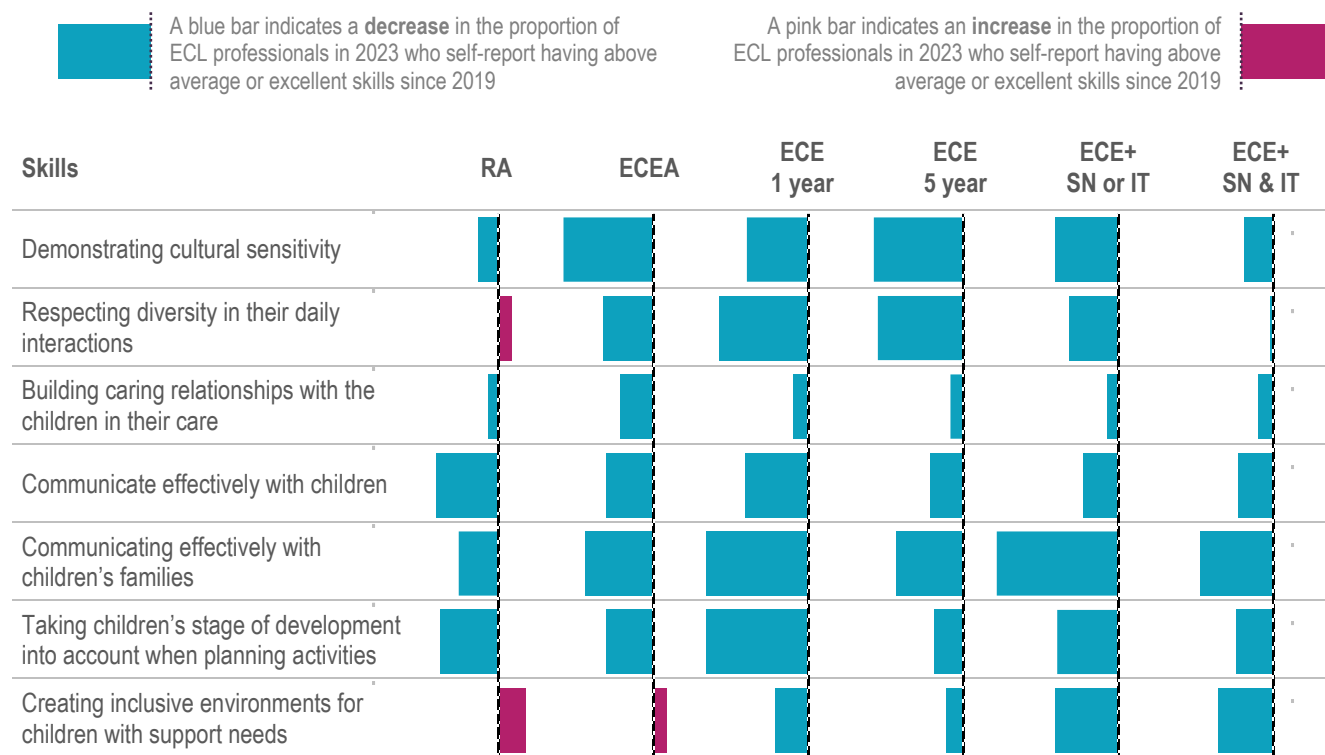
- **ECEs with SN and IT** were more likely to report having above average or excellent skills in **taking children's stage of development into account when planning activities** (88 per cent) and **in respecting diversity in their daily interactions** (84 per cent). They were also more likely to **create an inclusive environment for children with support needs** (75 per cent) and **in demonstrating cultural sensitivity** (75 per cent).
- The highest self-rated skills among **ECEs 5-year** were their **ability to build caring relationships with children in their care** (94 per cent) and **to communicate effectively with children** (90 per cent)
- **ECEs 1-year** had the highest proportion of respondents (95 per cent) who identified having above average or excellent skills for **building caring relationships with the children in their care**.

Moreover, this was the only skill where over 90 per cent of ECE 1 year rated having a high degree of skills.

- The highest self-rated skill for **ECEAs** was **building caring relationships for children in their care** (90 per cent).
- More **responsible adults (RAs)** (82 per cent) believe they have above average and excellent abilities in **communicating with children's families**, a higher proportion than any other credential group.

A comparison with 2019 results suggests that ECL professionals with higher certifications feel less confident with their ECL-relevant skills in 2023. As shown in Table 2, **all ECE groups report a decline** in their skills since 2019, with the biggest drop in their ability to demonstrate cultural sensitivity, communicate effectively with children's families, and take children's stage of development into account when planning activities.

Only RAs and ECEAs reported a slight **increase** in self-reported skills in their ability to create inclusive environments for children with support needs and in respecting diversity in their daily interactions.

**Table 2** Magnitude of change in self-assessment of ECL-relevant skills between 2019 and 2023 by ECL professionals according to highest certification completed

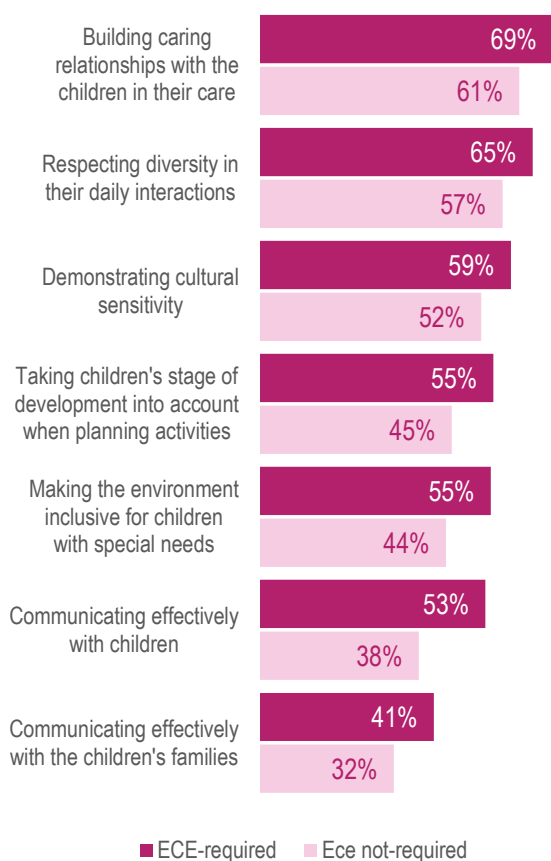
**Source:** 2019 and 2023 SRDC workforce surveys. For detailed proportions, please consult the **2023 Evaluation Technical Report**.



## Employer assessment of their ECL workforce's skills

Employers were asked about the proportion of their staff who needed to improve specific core skills. In Figure 33, we present the proportion of employers who indicated that **none** of their staff needed to improve their skills. Workplaces exclusively operating programs with an ECE requirement were generally less likely to report having staff that need to improve core skills. Overall, employer reports of core skills improved between 2019 and 2023.

**Figure 33** Proportion of employers who indicated that none of their staff needed to improve their skills in 2023



Source: 2023 SRDC employer survey.

The results indicate that the **most highly rated skillset** by both employers and ECL professionals is—and continues to be, over time—the ability to **build caring relationships with the children in their care**.

- Building caring relationships, **respecting diversity in daily interactions**, and **demonstrating cultural sensitivity** were the skills that require the least improvement.
- The skillset that requires the most improvement is the ability to **communicate effectively with the children's families** (only 41 per cent of ECE-required and 32 per cent of ECE-not-required do not need improvement). COVID-19 protocols may have had a detrimental effect on the ECL workforce's ability to communicate with families. However, the results from the 2023 survey indicate that this skillset still requires improvements despite few if any COVID protocols still in place.

## Management Skills

In the 2022 survey of ECL professionals, SRDC added new questions to understand how managers view their skills and whether there are PD activities available to help them improve these skills.

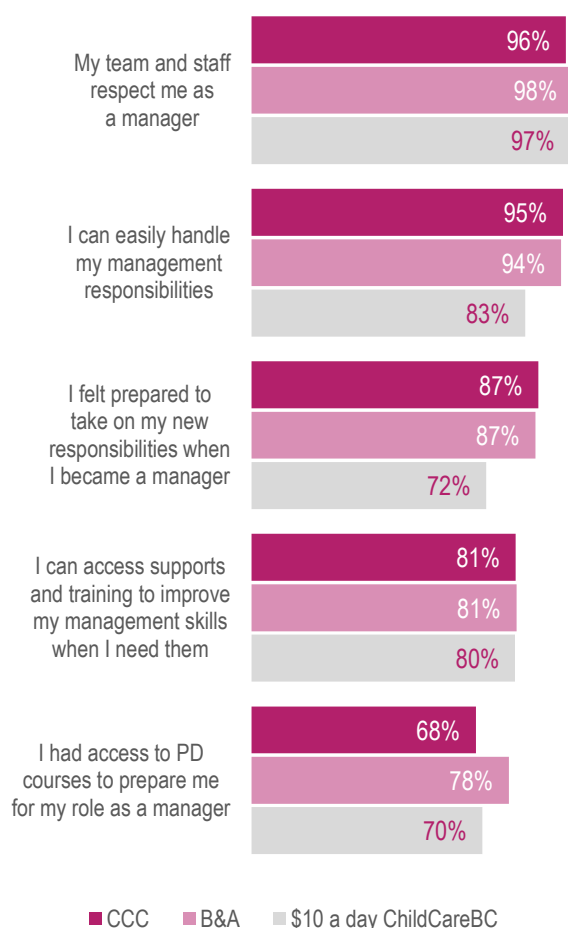
Results compare managers across workplace types: child care centres, before & after school programs, and \$10 a day ChildCareBC sites.

A nearly equivalent proportion of managers working in **CCC** and in **B&A programs** agree or strongly agree with all statements assessing their skills. The one distinction being that more managers in B&A programs (78 per cent) have access to management-related PD activities than those in CCC (68 per cent).



Conversely, managers working in **\$10 a day ChildCareBC sites** are less likely to agree or strongly agree with statements that they can easily handle their management responsibilities (83 per cent) or that they felt prepared to take on new management responsibilities (72 per cent) compared to managers from CCC and B&A programs.

**Figure 34** Proportion of management staff who agree or strongly agree with statements about their management skills in 2023



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

Nearly all ECL professionals with management responsibilities across all workplace types (96 per cent to 98 per cent) agree or strongly agree that their team and staff **respect them as a manager**. Employers also agreed that management staff are well-respected (94 per cent agreement), though were slightly less likely to endorse the statement that new management staff are fully prepared to take on their responsibilities (78 per cent).

## Professional development activities

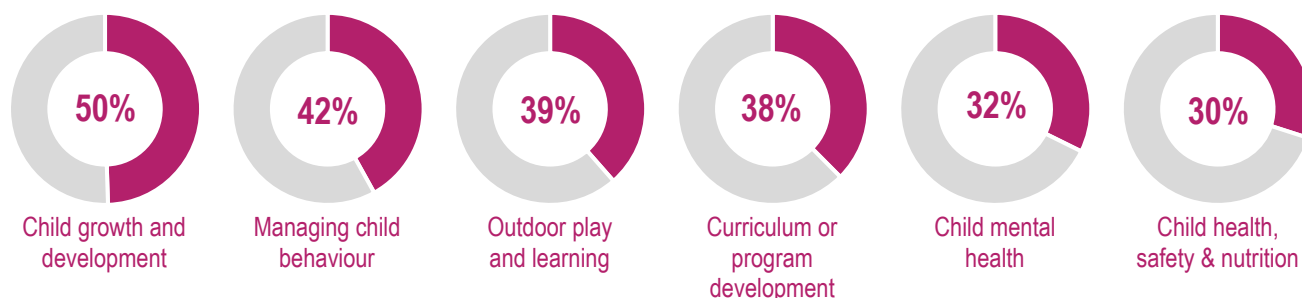
### Overall participation in PD activities

The 2023 workforce survey asked respondents to identify whether they had participated in a PD activity in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Overall, **87 per cent of ECL professionals** participated in PD activities in 2023.

Among those who participated in PD activities, respondents were asked to list the topics of the activities they completed. Figure 35 lists the six most cited topics of PD activities in 2023.

**Figure 35** Most cited professional development topics by ECL professionals in 2023



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

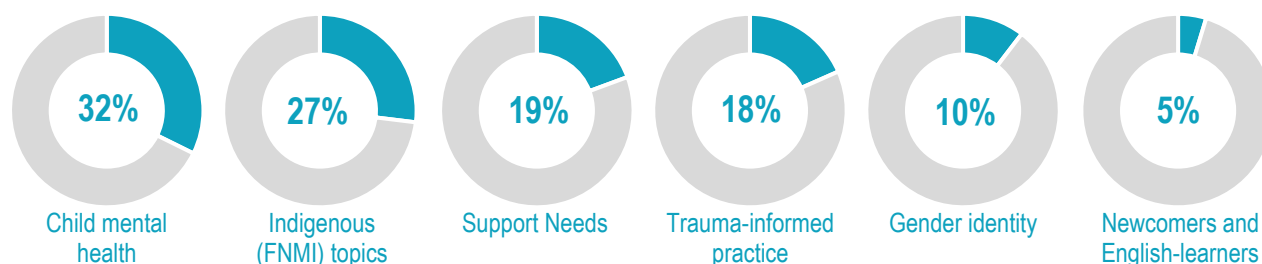
### Diversity and inclusion PD activities

As seen in previous sections, ECL professionals consistently rank skills related to **cultural sensitivity** and **working with children with support needs** lower than other skills in self-assessment questions.

This has not translated into an increase in participation in PD activities in these areas.

While child mental health was among the top choices for professional development activities, other topics related to diversity and inclusion were among the least cited, including **gender identity** (10 per cent) and topics about **newcomers** (5 per cent). A positive trend since 2019 is the noticeable increase in participation in PD activities covering **Indigenous issues**. Participation in these activities increased by 8 per centage points since 2019.

**Figure 36** Proportion of ECL respondents who participated in PD activities related to diversity and inclusion in 2023



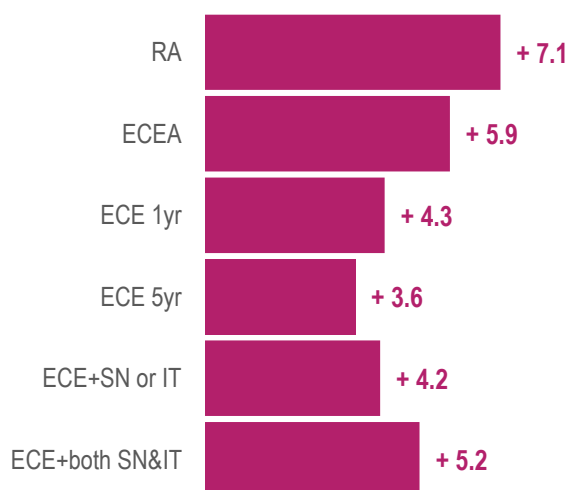
Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

## PD participation by certification

Participation in PD activities was highest among ECEs (82 per cent for ECE 1-year, 89 per cent for ECE5-year), and ECEs with SN and/or IT (90 per cent for SN or IT; 94 per cent for SN and IT). RAs were least likely to report participation in PD (66 per cent), followed by ECEAs (78 per cent).

Since 2019, participation in PD activities increased for all certification groups. The biggest increase in participation rates were detected among RAs (+7.1 percentage points) and ECEAs (+5.9 percentages points).

**Figure 37** Percentage point change in PD participation rates by highest certification between 2019 and 2023



Source: 2019 and 2023 workforce surveys.

The participation rates according to PD topics were consistent with the overall results.

- The most popular PD topic across most qualification groups was **Child growth and development**, with the highest proportions reported by ECE 1-year (64 per cent of PD-participants) to a low among ECEs with either SN or IT (43 per cent).
- The most popular PD topic among ECEs with both IT&SN specializations was curriculum and program development (46 per cent).
- **Managing child behaviour** was the second most popular among PD topic for RAs (48 per cent), 5-year ECEs (46 per cent), ECEAs (42 per cent), and 1-year ECEs (37 per cent).
- **Outdoor play** was the second most popular PD topic for ECEs with either IT or SN (43 per cent).

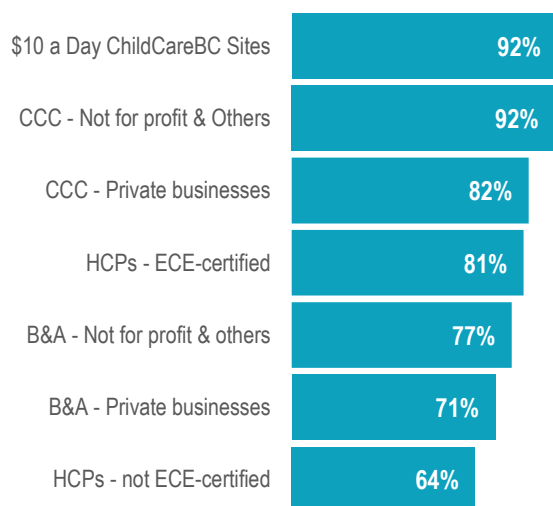
## PD participation by auspice

PD participation by auspice compares ECL professionals working in not-for-profit sites or in private businesses, in addition to the types of programs offered (Child Care Centres (CCC), before & after school or recreational care programs (B&A), \$10 a day ChildCareBC sites, and home care providers (HCPs).

Participation in PD activities was highest among professionals working in **\$10 a day ChildCareBC sites** (92 per cent) and in **not-for-profit CCC** (92 per cent).

The lowest PD participation rates were among non-ECE certified **HCPs** (64 per cent). This group has not been the focus of ECL R&R Strategy tactics and there is no requirement for this group to participate in PD.

**Figure 38** Rate of participation in professional development activities in 2023, by auspice and programs offered



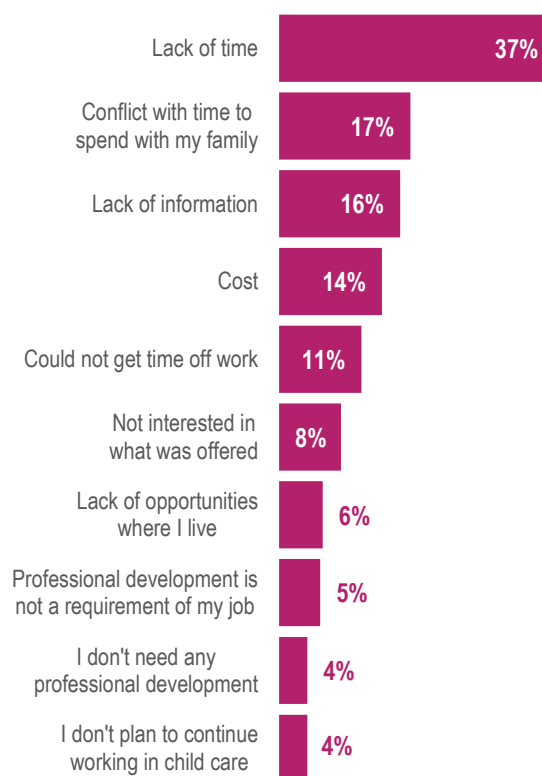
Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

## Reasons for not participating in PD

Survey respondents **not participating in PD** were asked to list the barriers that prevented them from participating.

The most common barrier, cited by more than a third of PD non-participants (37 per cent), was **a lack of time**. This was cited as the primary reason by all groups according to their role and programs, except non-M/S in B&A programs (due to the small number of respondents, data cannot be reported for this group).

**Figure 39** Proportion of respondents by main reason for not attending PD activities in 2023



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

Since 2019, there is a decline in the proportion of respondents who cite barriers to access PD activities.

The biggest drop is measured in the **lack of time available for PD activities**, a drop of 32.9 percentage point among professionals in \$10-a-day ChildCareBC centres and in the **cost of PD activities**, which dropped by 21.4 percentage points for professionals in \$10 a day ChildCareBC sites and 20.8 percentage points for M/S in child care centres.

Once again, case study interviews pointed to improved access to PD activities following changes introduced during and after the COVID pandemic.

Although more PD events are being held in-person, most PD activities are now online with some notable exceptions, such as First Aid training. Over half of case study sites had subscriptions to online ECE training providers. This approach has both increased access to training, while fostering greater flexibility.

Staff can access PD training at their convenience, can choose topics that are of interest to them, and are not expected to cover the costs themselves. Case study participants had a high degree of satisfaction with online providers, including the format and content of the training available.

Finding time to complete professional development activities continues to be a challenge, as these were often completed on ECL professionals' own time, in the evenings or on weekends. Fitting professional development into busy schedules was very challenging for most interviewed. Professionals suggested accommodating PD in a similar way as in schools, closing centres on pre-determined professional development days, allowing all staff to attend.

Regardless of how PD was accessed it was considered essential to ensure continued quality improvements in the sector.

Case study sites continued to provide annual training funds for all employees with an average of \$250. **Financial supports and access to free, online training** help explain the decline in respondents citing PD costs as a barrier.

## Factors associated with participation in professional development

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to better understand which factors contribute to attendance in professional development activities.

After controlling for other factors, we find one factor that is associated with attendance in professional development activities.



### Number of benefits received

An additional **employment benefit** received is associated with:

**17% increase** in the odds of attending professional development activities

Source: SRDC 2023 workforce survey.

## Hours spent in professional development activities

Respondents who participated in professional development activities completed an average of **31 hours** (median 20 hours) over the 12-month period preceding the survey.

This average is up by about 4.1 hours since 2019; the median has also increased by 4 hours.

Almost two in every three respondents (65 per cent) who participated in any professional development activity completed **25 or fewer hours**. Broken down further, 27 per cent of respondents completed 1 to 10 hours and 38 per cent completed 11 to 25 hours.

The median number of hours spent in PD was 20 hours for all credential groups, except for ECEAs, which had a median of 15 hours.

When considering respondents' role or programs offered, all categories had a median number of hours spent in PD at 20 hours.

The results suggest that most ECL professionals across all roles, workplaces, and credentials are spending more time in PD since 2019, and that nearly half of all professionals are spending 20 hours or more in PD.

**+4 hours**



median hours spent  
in PD activities  
since 2019

## Factors associated with hours spent in professional development activities

A linear regression was also conducted to understand the factors that contribute to the number of hours spent in professional development activities.

After controlling for other factors, one factor –number of benefits received—is positively associated with the number of hours spent in professional development activities.



### Number of benefits received

An additional **employment benefit** received is associated with:

**an average increase of 1.00 hour**

spent in professional development activities

Source: 2023 Workforce survey

## ECL Career Pathways

### Perception of career pathway options

More than **six in ten** respondents (63 per cent) currently working in the sector believed there were a **variety of opportunities for career growth and development** within the ECL sector in BC.

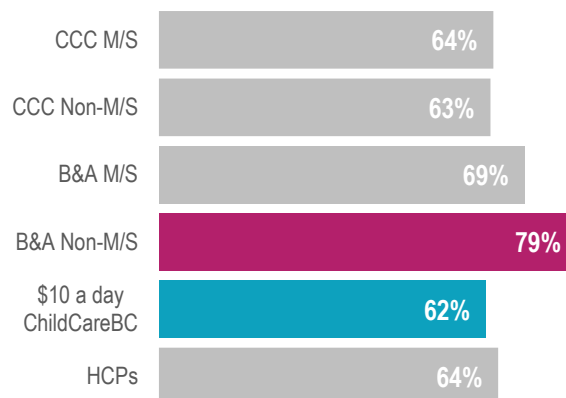


This result is similar to the 60 per cent reported in the benchmarking report in 2019.

The proportion of respondents who agree with the statement **there are a variety of opportunities for career growth within the ECL sector in BC** was similar between respondents by role and programs.

As shown in Figure 40, the highest proportion of agreement was among non-M/S in B&A programs (**79 per cent**, in pink) while the lowest was among professionals working in \$10 a day ChildCareBC centres (**62 per cent**, in blue).

**Figure 40** Proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree that there are opportunities for career growth and development in ECL in BC



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.



***“There is not much opportunity to grow. In this field, sometimes you feel like you're stuck.”***

***There are opportunities [to be a supervisor or manager] but not for everybody.”***

Not for Profit Case Study Site

## ECE Workforce Development Bursary

The **ECE Workforce Development Bursary**, one of the tactics of the ECL R&R Strategy, is intended to support career advancement by providing financial support to professionals currently working in ECL to upgrade their credentials. The bursary value is up to \$5,000 per semester for individuals working in the sector to assist with tuition and other expenses such as travel or loss of wages; students new to the sector can access bursaries of up to \$4,000 per semester to assist with tuition.

The 2023 survey of ECL professionals asked respondents about their awareness of the bursary and their intentions to apply for the bursary:

- Over **56 per cent** of workforce survey respondents were **aware** of the ECE Workforce Development Bursary.

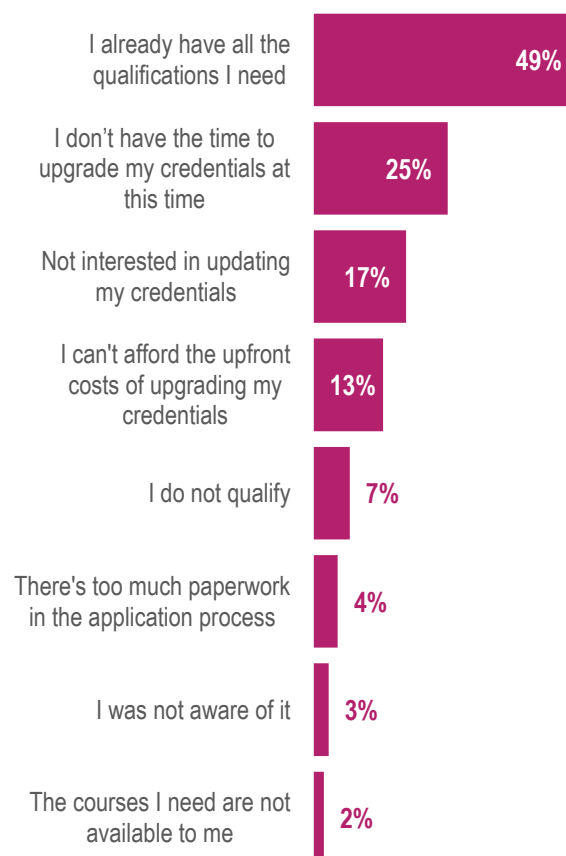
Among those who were aware:

- 14 per cent** **had applied** to the bursary in the last year,
- 21 per cent** had not yet applied but **intended to** in the future.

Over half of respondents (58 per cent) who were aware of the bursary had not applied and **had no intention to apply**.

When asked to share the reasons why they would not apply for the bursary in the future, nearly half (49 per cent) indicated that they **already had all the qualifications they needed**, while a quarter of respondents (25 per cent) did **not have the time to upgrade their credentials**.

**Figure 41** Reasons why respondents do not intend to apply for the ECE Workforce Development Bursary



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

An analysis by credential group found that ECEs and ECEs with specializations were more likely to select “I already have all of the qualifications I need” as the reasons for not applying to the ECE Workforce Development Bursary (71 per cent of ECE+SN+IT, 53 per cent of ECE + either SN or IT; 42 per cent of ECE 5-year, and 26 per cent of ECE 1-year).

For ECEAs, not having enough money to afford the upfront costs was cited most often (30 per cent), while most RAs (44 per cent) are not interested in updating their credentials. Please consult Table 57 in the 2023 Technical Report for more information.



## Employer facilitation of career advancement opportunities

Employers were asked if they had engaged in four activities that promote staff's career advancement in the 12 months preceding the survey. Figure 42 illustrates these results by workplace type: ECE-required and ECE not required child care centres.

**Figure 42** Proportion of employers who engaged in activities that promote staff's career advancement in the last 12 months



Source: 2023 SRDC employer survey.

The results show roughly similar results across workplaces. Employers of child care centres with programs that do *not* require ECE-certified staff tended to be **slightly more engaged** in activities that facilitate career advancement opportunities, though the differences were small.

Across three of the four career advancement activities, between 70 and 79 per cent of employers were engaged in these activities overall.

The only activity in which less than half of employers across both workplace types were engaged was **offering an outline of career options within their child care centre** (42 per cent for both workplace types).

The results also revealed a steady improvement since 2019. Employers' level of engagement in activities that facilitate career advancement opportunities increased by between **6 and 13 percentage points** across both types of organizations. However, for workplaces with no ECE requirement, such activities declined or plateaued in recent years.

*"It's hard to move forward.*  
*It's like you kind of get to that spot*  
*and then **a director position is***  
***your only go-to** after years of*  
*experience but it's not that much*  
*more pay."*

For Profit Case Study Site

# LABOUR MOBILITY AND WORKFORCE STABILITY

The evaluation has been tracking labour mobility to provide a better understanding of where professionals are going—inside and outside the sector—and why.

This section provides information on recruitment challenges, job shortages, new entrants to the sector, and retention issues to understand whether employers have access to the professionals they need.



## Labour Mobility and Workforce Stability

### Labour Market Information Council's Canadian Job Trends Dashboard

For the Labour Mobility and Workforce Stability section, SRDC references data from the Labour Market Information Council's (LMIC) Canadian Job Trends Dashboard to obtain job postings data.

The LMIC is a federally funded agency with the mandate to improve the timeliness, reliability, and accessibility of labour market information to facilitate decision-making by employers, workers, job seekers, academics, policy makers, educators, career practitioners, students, parents and under-represented populations.

The LMIC Dashboard provides access to data from online job postings collected from thousands of Canadian websites and job boards by Vicinity Jobs. The dashboard is updated weekly and SRDC recorded the number of postings for each month at the midpoint of the following month, with data collected covering up to December 2023 at the time this report was prepared.

These data are used to track changes in recruitment needs to the extent these are captured in advertised vacancies. They are useful for examining trends in demand for different members of the ECL workforce but do not precisely represent job vacancies. Whereas job vacancies refer to the number of available job openings that an employer wants to fill, employers may seek to fill multiple vacancies via a single job posting. Also, not all vacancies are posted online.

Finally, Vicinity Jobs captures online job postings by quarter for the two main National Occupation Classification categories for those working in ECL. These categories differ slightly from the categorizations used by SRDC in the evaluation's reports. A "+" sign indicates an LMIC data point, as defined below:

#### Early Childhood Educator or Assistant (National Occupational Classification 4214).



This includes most people working in child care centres and agencies, including those working as ECEs and ECEAs but also as Responsible Adults, who may not hold a post-secondary credential. It includes those who plan, organize, and implement programs for children between the ages of infancy and 12 years. They are employed in – using Statistics Canada's terminology – child care centres, daycare centres, kindergartens, agencies for exceptional children and other settings where early childhood education services are provided. Supervisors of early childhood educators and early childhood educator assistants are included in this unit group.

#### Home child care providers (National Occupational Classification 4411).



This group is defined as caring for the well-being and physical and social development of children. They assist parents with child care and may assist with household duties on an ongoing or short-term basis. They provide care primarily in their own homes or in the children's homes, where they may also reside. They are employed by private households and child care agencies, or they may be self-employed. Examples include: babysitter; child care provider (private home), live-in caregiver, nanny and parent's helper.

## Overall ECL workforce numbers

To analyze the overall size of the BC ECL workforce, SRDC analyzed both the 2016 and 2021 Censuses.

In both Censuses, more than 85 per cent of professionals classified within the ECE/A+ group represented “Core ECE/A” early childhood educators and assistants. The ECE/A+ category grew from 20,530 in 2016 to 25,225 people in 2021. This growth outpaced the number of BC workers in non-ECL sectors.

The number in the other ECL occupation category, HCP+, decreased in BC as in other Canadian regions, substantially from 15,180 to 8,715 during the same period. While the data available does not provide insight into why the number of HCP+ workers declined, it is possible that they either joined the ECE/A+ workforce or exited the ECL sector completely.

While the number of centre-based professionals increased between 2016 and 2021, taking both categories together the overall number in the workforce actually declined slightly. However, it is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic may have temporarily affected the Census counts of those employed on enumeration day in May 2021.

## Recruiting Professionals to ECL

### Staff shortages

Thirty per cent of employers reported they **had at least one vacant position that they have been unable to fill** over the last year. Employers with vacancies reported being unable to fill between 1-15 positions, with the average being 1.93 per employer.

As a result, 259 positions were filled by individuals with lower qualifications than wanted by employers to maintain operations. Shortages were observed in

workplaces both with and without an ECE requirement, though were more likely in those *without* a requirement.

One impact of these shortages is that more than a quarter of employers in BC had to refuse children into their program in the last 12 months due to not having enough staff. Further, 26 per cent had to refuse children because they didn't have staff with the right qualifications to accommodate the children's needs. Among employers who were unable to find staff with specific skills, the most common qualifications required but not available were an ECE basic certificate (61 per cent), support worker (40 per cent), ECE+IT (32 per cent), and ECE+SN (22 per cent).

**44%**

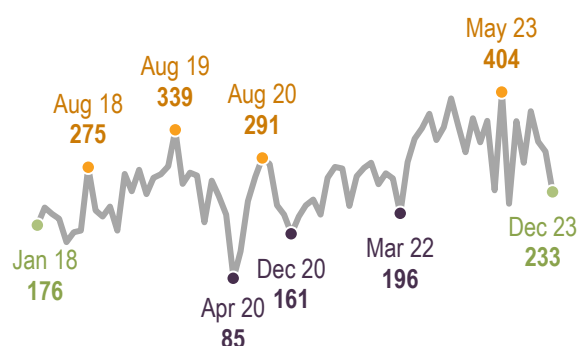
Of employers filled a vacant position with an individual with lower qualifications than desired

### Job postings

There is scant administrative data on ECL provider recruitment efforts, and virtually none on their success in hiring. However, as a proxy for labour demand, it is possible to obtain some reasonably reliable estimates of online job postings.

Despite often large monthly fluctuations, the trendline between January 2018 and December 2023 appears to be going upwards. Still, following a period of relatively high job postings, the number of monthly job postings from December 2023 (233) are only slightly higher than those in January 2018 (176). These categories cannot be separated further.

**Figure 43** Monthly job postings for Early Childhood Educators and Assistants in BC.

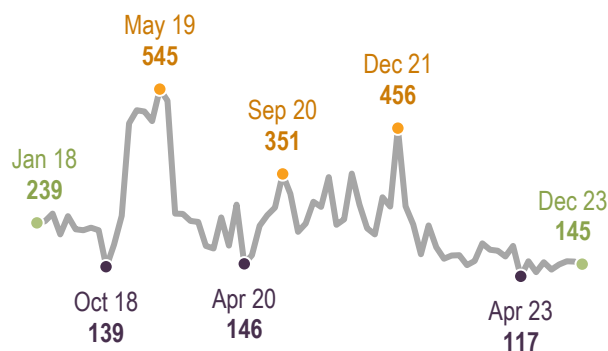


**Source:** Labour Market Information Council Canadian Job Trends Dashboard.

**Note:** The figure highlights the first and last points in the range (in green), and then local minimums (purple) and maximums (orange).

Job postings for HCPs specifically are lower in 2023 than they were in 2018, and much lower than the peaks reached during the intervening period (December 2018–December 2021). Recent data shows 145 posts in December 2023 compared to 239 six years ago.

**Figure 44** Monthly job postings for Home Child Care Providers in BC.



Providers in BC.

**Source:** Labour Market Information Council Canadian Job Trends Dashboard.

**Note:** The figure highlights the first and last points in the range (in green), and then local minimums (purple) and maximums (orange).

## BC Provincial Nominee Program

One relatively new ECL R&R Strategy tactic for attracting ECL professionals into the workforce operates through the BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP), prioritizing ECEs and ECEAs (these roles share the same National Occupational Classification) for economic immigration to Canada. Administrative data shows the impact of this program change in the last year.

BC PNP nominations for ECEs/ECEAs with a job offer in BC continue to increase: 90 individuals were nominated in 2021. With the introduction of targeted invitations to apply for ECEs/ECEAs, the number of nominees grew to 427 in 2022, and 842 in 2023.

It is important to note that not all individuals who apply will be nominated, that not all nominees will obtain permanent residency (PR), and that not all individuals who receive their PR will enter the ECL workforce.

**In 2023, the number of nominations through the BC PNP is equivalent to 10% of newly certified ECEs**

In 2023, most respondents to the employer survey were **aware** of this program (56 per cent), compared to last year when most were not. Of those who were aware, 24 per cent had used it (73 employers) and 15 per cent intended to use it within one year. However, a large proportion of employers were **unsure** (30 per cent) or **do not plan to use** the BC PNP (31 per cent). Employers with an ECE requirement were slightly more likely to have used the BC PNP than employers without an ECE requirement (23 per cent compared to 16 per cent), even though awareness was similar between the groups.

## Labour Mobility

This section describes new entrants and job changers, as well as those who expect to leave their jobs or the sector in the coming year.

We asked current ECL professionals about their intentions to remain in or leave either their current job or the child care sector, and the reasons motivating these intentions. We also asked former ECL professionals—including individuals without an ECE or ECEA certification—why they decided to leave the sector.

The information provides important insights into the underlying reasons that motivate individuals to seek employment across and outside of the sector.



*“Because we’re so short staffed, everything I believe in, everything I went to school for, I’m not seeing.*

*I don’t see teachers collaborating. Everyone’s doing their own thing and it’s like no communication. **Everyone’s burnt out.**”*

Not for Profit Case Study Site

## New entrants to ECL

New ECL professionals are those who satisfy two survey criteria:

- They started work in their current workplace in the **past year** and
- They reported having worked in child care for **less than 12 months**.

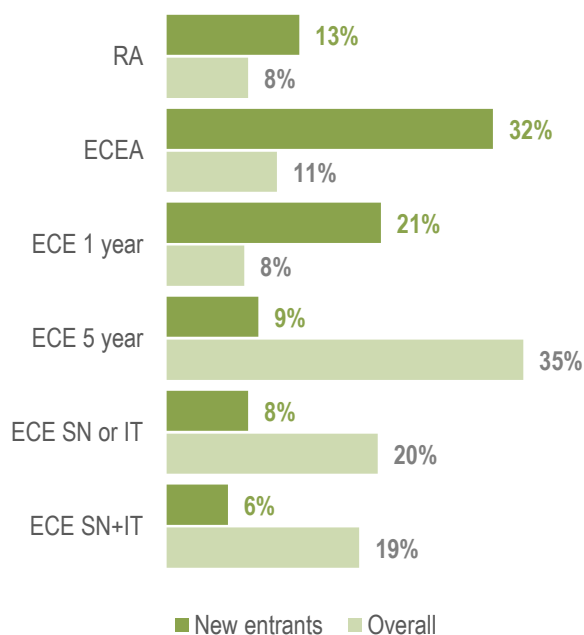
Just under 5 per cent (101 respondents) of survey respondents working in centre-based ECL positions met this description. New entrants were more likely to:

- Be **younger** (36 per cent under 30 years of age compared to 12 per cent of the total sample),
- Be **born outside of Canada** (51 per cent compared to 36 per cent), and
- Identify as a **man** (4 per cent compared to 2 per cent).

Reflecting their recent arrival in the sector, new entrants had **lower levels of qualification** than the overall sample.

As shown in Figure 45, most new entrants were **ECEAs** (32 per cent compared to 11 per cent in the overall sample), followed by **1-year ECEs** (21 per cent compared to 8 per cent of the overall sample). New entrants are also more likely to work as Responsible Adults (13 per cent compared to 8 per cent of the overall sample).

**Figure 45** New entrants to ECL by highest certification completed



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.



## Experienced ECL professionals starting a new child care job

The workforce survey can now track the labour mobility of experienced ECL professionals by looking at those who:

- Have been working in child care for **more than a year** and
- Started work in their current workplace in the **past year** (2022 or 2023).

This subgroup represents 444 professionals working in centre-based ECL positions (20 per cent of survey respondents).

When compared to the full sample, experienced ECL professionals with new jobs were:

- More likely to be under 40 years of age (47 per cent compared to 36 per cent of the entire sample)
- Slightly more likely to have **been born outside of Canada** (43 per cent compared to 36 per cent)

Experienced ECL professionals with new jobs have a comparable profile to the sample overall in terms of qualifications, though fewer experienced ECL professionals with a new job are Responsible Adults (3 per cent compared to 8 per cent for the entire sample). There is also a slightly larger proportion of experienced ECL working in a new job working in \$10 a day ChildCareBC sites (22 per cent compared to 18 per cent for the entire sample).

## Former ECL professionals

In 2023, 284 former ECL professionals not currently working in child care responded to the workforce survey. Compared to the full sample, they were:

- Comparable in age, though more over the age of 50 (42 per cent compared to 36 per cent),
- Slightly more likely to identify as **Indigenous** persons (8 per cent compared to 6 per cent).
- Less likely to be **born outside of Canada** (23 per cent compared to 36 per cent).

Respondents were asked to rank the reasons why they left ECL. Using a weighted average score, findings show that the top ranked reason for leaving was overwhelmingly **dissatisfaction with pay**.



*“In early childhood, it’s mostly moms who are your employees. And it is not a mom friendly workplace.”*

*I was a supervisor for years and the one thing I tried to do is make it easy to take time off when their kids were sick and on school holidays.*

*But it was impossible sometimes as you have no subs, sick days impossible to cover. Hours are impossible if you have kids to drop and pick up at school.*

Workforce survey respondent

The four subsequent reasons were ranked with a roughly equivalent score:

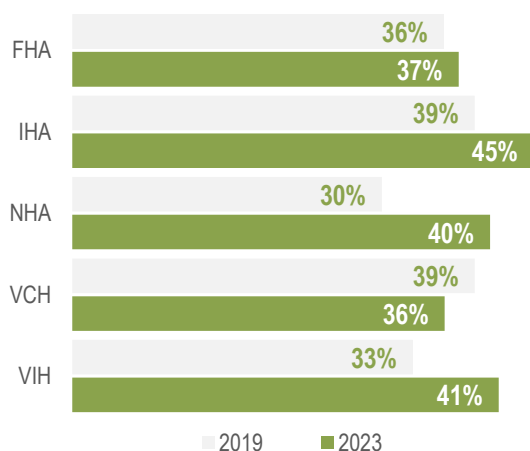
- Preference for another occupation,
- Dissatisfaction with benefits in child care,
- Dissatisfaction with working conditions in child care,
- Feeling burnt out.

## Retaining Professionals in ECL

### Staff turnover

The loss of qualified ECL professionals is a well-documented issue and remains a top concern for the field in 2023. Forty per cent of employers experienced staff net loss—losing more staff than they gained in the last 12 months. This represented a persistent challenge for both organizations with no ECE requirement (42 per cent of employers,) as well as those who require at least one staff have an ECE certification (38 per cent of employers, up 10 percentage points since 2019). **Staff net loss increased in four of five health authority regions compared to 2019**, with the largest increase in Northern Health Authority.

**Figure 46** Proportion of employers who experienced overall staff net loss by health authority region in 2019 and 2023



**Source:** 2019 and 2023 SRDC employer surveys.

**Note:** FHA: Fraser Health Authority; IHA: Interior Health Authority; NHA: Northern Health Authority; VCH: Vancouver Coastal Health; VIH: Vancouver Island Health.

The analysis of employer-reported net loss for each year between 2019 and 2023 can be found in the 2022 Evaluation Technical Report.

Net loss was observed for all positions (professionals, supervisors, managers, directors) in both workplace types in 2023. Loss was biggest for **professionals** compared to other roles, and was more acute for fulltime compared to parttime positions. In short, retaining frontline staff who work with children is a challenge across the sector.

### Job seekers

In the 2023 survey of ECL professionals, **226 ECEs or ECEAs** currently working in child care (14 per cent) said that they were looking for a new job.

The survey asked respondents to identify where they were looking for a new job. Respondents could select all options that applied to them; thus, the total exceeds 100.

ECEs and ECEAs looking for a new job are looking in:

- their **current workplace** (15 per cent),
- a **school or postsecondary institution** (34 per cent), or
- **somewhere different** entirely (65 per cent).

When asked to select all types of jobs they were looking for, 61 per cent of job seekers were looking for another job in child care, while just under half (46 per cent) were looking for a **non-child care job**, either **elsewhere** (33 per cent) or in a **school or postsecondary institution** (21 per cent).



## Job leavers

Looking for a new job is different from expecting to leave one's job.

Via the workforce survey, we sought to determine whether members of the ECL workforce expected to make a change, either by leaving their current **job with their employer** or by leaving the **ECL sector**.

### *Intention to Leave Current Employer*

Workforce survey respondents were asked whether they expected to remain with their current employer for the next year. Across all types of workplaces (CCCs, before-and-after school and recreational care, \$10 a day centres, and HCPs) and positions, fewer in 2023 expected to stay with their current employer for one year than was the case in 2019.

- Proportions expecting to stay ranged from 64 per cent for non-managers and supervisors in B&A workplaces to 82 per cent for managers and supervisors in child care centres.
- Non-managers/supervisors were much **less likely** to expect to stay than their manager/supervisor counterparts in CCCs (difference of 17 percentage points).
- Non-managers/supervisors in B&A school and recreational care programs were the least likely to expect to stay. The proportion expecting to leave increased from 7 per cent in 2019 to 11 per cent in 2023.

When analyzing intention to stay with one's current employer by the highest completed certification, we find a similar result: all groups are less likely to report staying with their current employer in 2023 than in 2019.

ECEs with both SN&IT specializations were the least likely to expect to stay with their current employer at 70 per cent, down from 83 per cent in 2019. ECEs with either SN or IT specializations and RAs were the most likely to expect to stay with their current employer at 76 per cent, though in both cases this constitutes a drop from 2019 (8 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively).

Among those who expected to leave their current employer within one year, the main reason was **dissatisfaction with pay**, expressed by 46 per cent of respondents. The next highest was **feeling burnt out** at 39 per cent.

Employers were also asked to rate their perceptions of the reasons why staff voluntarily left their organization in the last year. Overall, '**dissatisfaction with salary**' was the most common reason, up from the second-rated spot in 2019.

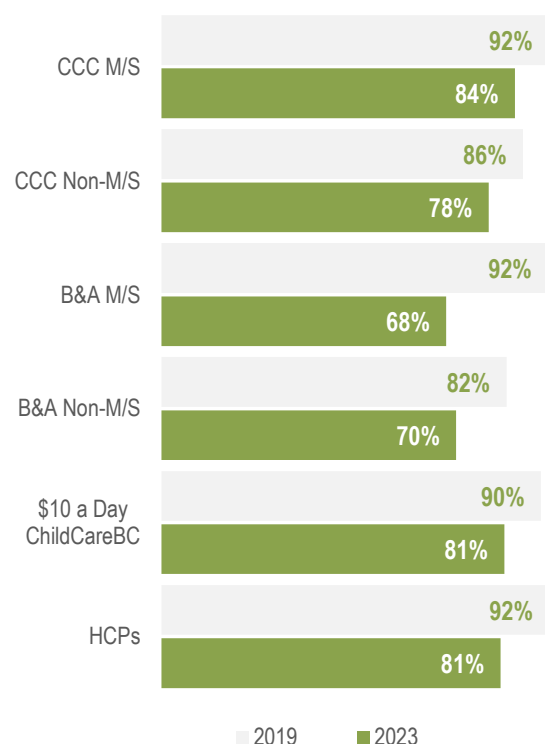
However, reasons for employees leaving differed according to workplace type. Employers at workplaces with an ECE requirement reported the most common reasons that staff left as '**burnout / job too stressful**' (up from 3<sup>rd</sup> spot in 2019) and '**accepted another job in child care**' (down from the 1<sup>st</sup> spot in 2019).

Employers without an ECE requirement reported the most common reason for staff leaving was because they '**wanted fulltime employment**' (not an option in the 2019 survey), followed by staff '**returning to school**', which was the most common reason for this group in 2019. For both workplace types, dissatisfaction with salary was the third most common reason for staff leaving.

### Intention to Leave ECL Sector

Most respondents expect to be working in child care in the year following the 2023 survey. However, across all workplace types and positions, fewer respondents expect to stay in the field in 2023 compared to 2019.

**Figure 47** Proportion of ECL professionals who expect to be working in the child care sector in the next year



Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

When looking at responses by roles and programs, the proportions varied slightly across almost groups, ranging from 78 to 84 per cent, professionals in B&A programs, where only 68 per cent of M/S and 70 per cent of non-M/S expected to be working in the sector the following year.

Across all roles and programs, **fewer ECL professionals** expect to be working in the child care sector in the next year than did in 2019.

Over a quarter of **ECEAs/ECEs not working in child care** (29 per cent) expected to be working in the child care sector within one year, potentially signaling an intent to return. Another 21 per cent were unsure.

Case study sites highlighted push and pull factors among ECL professionals.

Push factors (encouraging those to leave the field) included a combination of factors that affected workplace morale, such as high staff turnover, ineffective managements, and not enough support for staff wellbeing and mental health.

Regarding pull factors that would encourage professionals to remain in the field, participants identified several factors, including increased investments in professional development, more flexibility in work hours; better wages and benefits; and improved working conditions. Many would like to see expanded availability for coaching new staff members, additional supports for children with complex needs, and a process to ensure management follows-through on supports for staff.

*“I earn more working outside the childcare sector. There is less stress and much less physical demand. I left the field due to lack of appropriate compensation. [...] This field will implode on itself if you don’t make some serious changes.”*

Workforce survey respondent

## Factors associated with retention

A multinomial logistic regression was conducted to better understand the factors associated with child care professionals' intentions to stay in their current job or the child care sector entirely in the coming year.

The multinomial logistic regression assesses the two-way comparison of each possible category in the dependent variable with each of the predictor variables (i.e., independent variables), keeping one of the options as a base category against which the others are compared. Both dependent variables have three possible outcomes:

- **No**, the child care professional intends to leave their current job (and therefore, the sector) in the coming year.
- **Yes**, the child care professional intends to stay in their current job or the sector in the coming year.
- **Uncertain**, the child care professional has not decided whether they will stay or leave their current job or the child care sector in the coming year. We include uncertainty as it is a warning sign that departure is possible.

For this analysis, the "Yes" category (i.e., intention to stay their job or child care sector) was used as the base.

### Intention to stay in current job



#### Likelihood to leave decreases with age

**Five extra years of age** is associated with **29% lower** relative risk of **leaving their current job** compared to staying in their current job



#### Uncertainty about staying decreases with number of benefits received

An additional **employment benefit** received is associated with **10% lower** relative risk of feeling **uncertain about leaving their current job** compared to staying in their current job



#### Higher education increases the likelihood of leaving

Having a **Bachelor's or Master's** degree is associated with:  
**216% higher** relative risk of **leaving the sector**  
**119% higher** relative risk of **feeling uncertain about leaving child care** compared to staying in child care



#### The number of benefits received decreases the likelihood of leaving the sector

An additional **employment benefit** received is associated with  
**12% lower** relative risk of **leaving the sector**  
**12% lower** relative risk of feeling **uncertain about leaving child care** compared to staying in child care



#### Union membership increases the likelihood of leaving the sector

**Being a union member** is associated with  
**211% higher** relative risk of **leaving the sector**  
**82% higher** relative risk of feeling **uncertain about leaving child care** compared to staying in child care

Source: 2023 SRDC workforce survey.

# PROGRESS ON KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Since 2019, the evaluation has been tracking the ECL R&R Strategy's progress across 13 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The KPIs provide a long-term view on the ECL R&R Strategy's progress in reaching its objectives, and where greater efforts are needed.



## Progress on Key Performance Indicators

To take stock of progress against each Key Performance Indicator (KPI), we cycle through results from all relevant data sources. We compare the position of the ECL sector in 2023 relative to 2019 and earlier (and also intervening years where relevant). We draw on observations from professionals working in the sector to add meaning to these statistics.

The KPIs are listed in the first row of each table below with their corresponding number. The rightmost columns present a summary of the ECL R&R Strategy's progress on KPIs and tactics. An arrow is used to summarize the overall trend of each indicator since the launch of the ECL R&R Strategy until the end of 2023. This can be an improvement (large or small) [↑], a deterioration [↓] or a mixed result [↔]. No arrow indicates no new data related to that KPI since the last report.

A word of caution when interpreting KPI directional results: some sub-indicators may have a stronger effect on a KPI's overall progress than others. In this sense, the trends are not necessarily additive. For example, a measured improvement on a sub-indicator may have a greater effect on the overall KPI than two deteriorating results. Also, these tables do not allow the reader to know how close—or how far—the sector is in reaching its long-term goals, just the overall direction of change.







Inevitably, many nuances of findings are lost in such a high-level summary. Readers are encouraged to review the findings report for a more complete story and the technical report for the full results by KPI.

The evaluation is drawing to a close but not all available data has been included in this report. Results on KPIs will be finalized in the project final. This will also include final answers to the evaluation questions.

Readers will notice that this report has presented findings according to themes, rather than by KPIs. The KPIs have been embedded within each theme as follows:

- Satisfaction with Child Care (KPI1)
- Perception of Child Care (KPI12, KPI13)
- Wages and Benefits (KPI2A, KPI2B)
- Education and Certification (KPI3, KPI4)
- Workforce Development (KPI6, KPI7, KPI8, KPI9, KPI10)
- Labour Mobility and Workforce Stability (KPI5, KPI11)

**Figure 48** Summary of progress to 2023 on key performance indicators

KPI1	ECL professional satisfaction and perception of appropriateness of compensation	
Tactic: Wage enhancement both as symbol of recognition and additional compensation.		
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	Levels of satisfaction with different aspects of work in ECL are generally high across the sector. But the proportions satisfied have not increased since 2019. For many aspects, satisfied has become a more common response than very satisfied.	
<b>Satisfaction with Benefits</b>	The intensity of satisfaction with benefits has declined since 2019: fewer respondents are strongly satisfied with their benefits, though more report feeling satisfied.	
<b>Satisfaction with Income</b>	Rates of satisfaction with income have declined since 2019 for all ECL professionals. A period of high inflation since 2022 is likely exacerbating long-standing issues of low pay compared to similarly-educated adults. Indeed, interviews with case study participants confirm professionals' frustration with wages that are not fully aligned with the high demands of their work nor with the rising cost of living.	
<b>Motivating Factors</b>	Motivating factors remained relatively high. We also find that managers and supervisors and home care providers are more likely to report experiencing motivational factors often or always. Nearly all ECL professionals, regardless of their role and workplace believe that their work is important. A greater proportion of managers and supervisors and HCPs believe that they have reasonable control over most things that affect their job satisfaction, that their work gives them a sense of accomplishment, and that their job makes good use of their skills and abilities compared to professionals in non management responsibilities and in 10\$-a-Day ChildCareBC centres.	
<b>Burnout</b>	Since 2019, there has been a steady increase in indicators of burnout, especially among ECEs with specialized credentials (IT and/or SN), with many increasingly feeling physically exhausted at the end of the day.	

See information about this KPI in Satisfaction with Child Care starting on page 15.

**KPI2A****Average real wages and salaries of ECL professionals**

Tactic: Nine in every ten of those eligible are in receipt of wage enhancement.

There is no longer overlap between wage ranges of ECEs and ECEAs/RAs in any health authority regions.

**Changes in  
Wages and  
Income**

Including the enhancement, wages in 2023 increased by roughly \$5.50 over 2019. The real increase in wages is closer to \$2.15, after we account for the high rate of inflation in the post-pandemic period. In fact, after adjusting for inflation and excluding the wage enhancement, hourly wages in 2022-23 are at similar levels to those in 2018-19.



Considering the important effects of inflation on the cost of living, SRDC has adjusted financial information (e.g., wages and monthly earnings) to constant 2023 dollars using the Statistics Canada's monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI). Wherever relevant, SRDC uses 2019 dollars that are equivalent—and comparable—to 2023 dollars. For some analyses showing trends over time, nominal dollars (i.e., not adjusted for inflation) are used, and then contrasted with adjusted wages to demonstrate the effects of inflation on wages and earnings.

In 2023, the earnings premium of ECEs with Basic Certification over those with no certification is on average approximately \$1.64 per hour while the premium for IT or SN certifications is roughly \$1.75 to \$2.60 per hour in 2022-23.

**Wage  
Enhancement**

The wage enhancement remained unchanged at \$4/hour through most of 2023, increasing in December. The number of claims for the Wage Enhancement and percentage of those eligible claiming have both increased since 2019. Survey estimates of the latter rate increased from 78 to 95 per cent. Case study participants spoke of how necessary the wage enhancement has become to them, many stating that without it, they would be unable to afford to live in their city or stay in their current job given the cost of living. Workforce survey respondents, especially those who are ineligible for the wage enhancement, commented their dissatisfaction with what they saw as the program's narrow eligibility requirements that excluded some ECEs and other ECL professionals.



Regression findings suggest professionals born outside of Canada or working in private businesses are more likely to receive the wage enhancement.

See information about this KPI in Wages and Benefits starting on page 32.



**KPI2B** Benefits of ECL Professionals

Tactic: No direct ECL R&R Strategy tactics in 2023.

**Offer of Benefits** According to employers, benefit provision has remained stable with modest increases relative to 2019. However, the proportion of employers that do not provide any benefits has decreased, down from 19-22 per cent in 2019 to 1 and 4 per cent in 2023, which is an improvement again over 2022. Stated differently: more employers are offering benefits to their staff.



More ECL professionals report receiving financial assistance from their employer for courses or post-ECE training, 18 per cent in 2019 compared to 39 per cent in 2023 for ECL professionals in child care centres.

Some key benefits, though, such as pension and short-or long-term disability, remain available from only a minority of employers. In addition, changes in legislation that came into effect in 2022 mandated that employers offer paid sick days to most staff.

**Receipt of Benefits** Overall, ECL professionals were less likely to report receiving benefits than employers were to report offering them. Fewer professionals working in before and after school care reported receiving extended health care, dental coverage, and paid sick days from their employer. Union members were more likely to receive benefits than non-unionized workers.



See information about this KPI in Wages and Benefits starting on page 45.

**KPI3** Integration of updated Sector Occupational Competencies into education and training programs

Tactic: Work is still underway on the updated Sector Occupational Competencies.

**Industry Standards** It has not been possible to assess response to and uptake of Sector Occupational Competencies.

## KPI4 Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs



**Tactic:** Increasing numbers of student bursaries issued.

2,237 new spaces in ECE programs at public post-secondary institutions and an expanded dual-credit pathway for high school students.

In March 2022, the BC PNP began prioritizing professionals with a job offer as an ECE or ECEA in BC.

### PSE enrollment and completion rates

The growth in the numbers of ECL qualified staff continued into 2023-24. The latest numbers reported to the MECC provider profile survey approach 24,655 with 59 per cent holding ECE certifications. The growth is undoubtedly related to the increasing number of active ECE and ECEA since 2018-19 with 2022-23 seeing 8,736 new certificates granted—a 57 per cent increase over 2018-19.

Available data on PSE enrollments in ECE programs suggest the numbers seeking ECE credentials have been growing quickly, especially in private training institutions. Nonetheless, the number of students completing practicums during the period of the ECL R&R Strategy has stayed more stable, with a low of 540 in 2019-20 and a high of 855 in 2020-21 – both numbers likely affected by the pandemic. 775 completed practicums in 2021-22, somewhat above the 720 who did so in 2018-19, numbers that don't align well with the increase in seats anticipated due to the ECL R&R Strategy nor the actual increase seen in certifications in 2021-22.



### Possession of ECL-related credentials by professionals

There has been no consistent change in survey-captured proportions of ECL professionals in the workforce possessing ECL-related credentials in 2019 through 2023. Just 6 per cent of professionals in \$10 a day sites and 8 per cent of ECL professionals in other child care centres did not hold credentials at the college level or above.

BC PNP nominations for ECEs/ECEAs with a job offer in BC continue to increase: 90 individuals were nominated in 2021. With the introduction of targeted invitations to apply for ECEs/ECEAs in March 2022, the number of nominees grew to 427 in 2022, and 842 in 2023.

The majority of professionals with an ECE (median qualification year 2010) and above (median qualification year 2013) reported receiving their instruction in person. But among ECEAs (median qualification year 2021), the majority (65 per cent) have received training exclusively online, with another 4 per cent trained via hybrid delivery. Typically, less than half of directors, but nearly three quarters of managers, held an ECE certificate.

A longitudinal survey tracking educational progression of ECEAs towards obtaining their ECE credential could provide greater clarity on the ECL R&R Strategy's effectiveness in this regard. Currently, ECEAs are increasingly entering the field, which is indicative of the attractiveness of the sector, but more data is needed to understand whether new ECEAs are seeking their ECE credential.



See information about this KPI in Education and Certification starting on page 55.

## KPI5 Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers

Tactic: No direct ECL R&R Strategy tactics.

### Interest in pursuing ECL as a career

Results for this KPI mainly derive from the Public Opinion Survey. The 2024 wave of this survey is yet to be completed. In earlier reported analysis of the 2023 survey, 29 per cent of those under 18 years were interested in a career in child care compared to 39 per cent of those aged 18-24 and 42 per cent of those aged 25+ who were considering a career change. These represented increases since 2019. The updated results from 2024's survey will appear in the Final Project Report.

See information about this KPI in Labour Mobility and Workforce Stability starting on page 75.

## KPI6 Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills



Tactic: Supports include the Early Childhood Pedagogy Network and ECE Peer Mentoring Program.

### Skills Self-Assessment

Self-assessed skills mostly dropped from 2019 to 2023, especially for ECEs. In 2023, 58 per cent of RAs felt themselves skilled at making the environment inclusive for children with support needs, up from 54 per cent in 2019: the largest increase in self-reported skills. However, this skill along with demonstrating cultural sensitivity were the two lowest-rated skills overall as in earlier years. ECEs were in fact increasingly likely to rate themselves low on demonstrating cultural sensitivity in 2023 compared to 2019.

Case study participants stressed the importance of ECL quality and a concern over a perceived low level of readiness among newly trained staff, both for ECEs and non-ECE-certified professionals. Interview participants considered continuous learning to be an essential element of supporting children and their families.



### Professional Development for low-assessed skills

PD was sought out by members of the ECL workforce for many low-assessed skills, and there was an across-the-board increase in completion of training in relation to working with Indigenous children while training in relation to trauma-informed practice increased for all except ECEAs.



See information about this KPI in Workforce Development starting on page 60.

**KPI7** Awareness of ECL career pathway options, how to pursue them, and expectations of their feasibility in terms of finances and availability of training opportunities.



Tactic: Increasing numbers of workforce development bursaries issued

**Career growth opportunities** The proportion of the workforce believing that there were opportunities for career growth and development within the ECL sector remained generally positive in 2023, but still at 2019 levels.



**Support for career growth** Overall, employers were more likely to engage in activities to promote staff advancement in 2023 compared to 2019. An increasing proportion of employers (19 per cent) applied for the workforce development bursary on behalf of their staff in 2023. Among those who did not apply, the top reasons were because no staff had applied (61 per cent of employers) and employers were not aware (29 per cent).



Across the case study sites, interviewees shared the view that there has been very little change in the career pathway opportunities available to professionals in the sector. Although advancement opportunities are limited, the increased wage enhancement and improved benefits have made the sector more appealing.

**Availability of training opportunities** 19 organizations received funds from the Province, provided via BCcampus, to develop and pilot over 20 professional development opportunities around the province in late 2023 and early 2024. Child Care Resource and Referral Centres and the EYPD Hub host many professional learning opportunities, discussion rooms, and communities of practice to support child care professionals.

See information about this KPI in Workforce Development starting on page 70.

**KPI8** Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report participation in professional development activities



Tactic: Professional networks and PD Supports

**Professional Development Participation Rates** Overall PD since 2019 increased for all groups defined by qualification. Some 83 per cent reported participation within the past 12 months, identical to 2022. PD participation declined at privately-run before and after school/recreational programs. Increased take up of many topics was seen, especially in PD related to Indigenous (First Nations, Métis or Inuit) children and also personal stress management. Diversity of PD increased with respect to the types of PD taken up. More types of PD saw increases in participation than saw declines. This finding may be related to a decline in the reported number of barriers preventing PD participation since 2019.



See information about this KPI in Workforce Development starting on page 65.

**KPI9**

Hours of professional development per ECL workforce member per year



Tactic: Professional networks and PD Supports

**Hours of professional development participation**

Mean annual hours of PD ranged from 25 hours among non M/S staff at before and after school and recreational care programs to 45.5 hours among ECE-certified HCPs. Mean hours of PD were higher in 2023 than 2019, with the biggest increase recorded among ECEAs (+16 hours on average compared to 2019). For those with ECE specialization certificates (ECE + IT&SN) mean hours of PD dropped slightly since 2019, from 28.1 to 26.4 hours on average. Regression analysis suggests a positive association between workplace benefits and attending PD.



See information about this KPI in Workforce Development starting on page 69.

**KPI10**

Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills



Tactic: Professional networks and PD Supports

**Overall core skills**

In general, employers were more likely in 2023 to report that none of their staff needed to improve their skills than in 2019. This increase was observed among employers that both have and do not have an ECE requirement at one or more programs. Skills were generally rated higher among workplaces with an ECE requirement but increased more since 2019 at workplaces without an ECE requirement, indicating that the gap between the two workplace types appears to be narrowing by 2023.

**Skills of managers**

The majority of employers (between 82 and 94 per cent) felt that management staff were respected by their teams and could easily handle their management responsibilities. [not asked in 2019]

See information about this KPI in Education and Certification on page 58 and Workforce Development starting on page 62.

**KPI11**

Employment stability of ECL workforce, including variances for staffing for providers, work hours, job tenure, job exits



Tactic: No direct ECL R&R Strategy tactics.

**Shortfalls in  
qualified staff**

Nearly a third (30 per cent) of employers reported that they had at least one vacant position that they had been unable to fill in the preceding 12 months. Workplaces with unfilled vacant positions had an average of 1.93 vacancies, with some as high as 15. Forty-four per cent said they had to fill a position with an individual with lower qualifications than they wanted; this occurred for 259 positions among employers in the 2023 survey. More than a quarter of employers (27 per cent) said they had to refuse children in the last 12 months due to not having enough staff while 26 per cent refused children because they felt they did not have staff with the right qualifications to support the children. Despite the above staffing issues reported in 2023, the results represent an improvement over 2019.

Among employers who were unable to find staff with specific skills, the most common qualifications required but not available were an ECE certificate (61 per cent) and a support worker (40 per cent).



**Loss of staff**

Forty per cent of employers in the sample experienced staff net loss across all positions in the 12 months preceding the survey, up from 34 per cent in 2019. Among workplaces that exclusively operate programs in which at least one staff must be ECE certified, net loss increased by 10 percentage points since 2019 (37% of employers), while it remained stable at 41 per cent of employers with no ECE requirement. Reports of net loss increased in four of five health authority regions compared to 2019. Regression analysis found that workers are less likely to leave centres where staff receive wage enhancements.



**Intent to  
stay/leave**

Most respondents expect to be working in child care in the year following the 2023 survey. However, across all workplace types and positions, fewer respondents expect to stay in the field in 2023 compared to 2019.



See information about this KPI in Labour Mobility and Workforce Stability starting on page 74.

**KPI12**

Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value) among those already working in the sector



Tactic: No direct ECL R&R Strategy tactics.

**Ratio of positive-negative opinions of work in child care**

In general, most members of the ECL workforce held positive opinions about their work in 2023. Positive views that they considered child care their chosen profession outnumbered negative views by larger ratios than were seen in 2019. However, while other positive perceptions (such as ECL professionals feeling comfortable telling new people that they worked in child care) remained the majority view, their frequency was lower in 2023.



In the 2023 Workforce Survey questionnaire, two additional questions provided an opportunity for ECL professionals to rate the extent to which they agree with the statement “My work in child care is valued by the BC government” and to describe why they hold this view. The results were roughly equivalent, with slightly more respondents agreeing with the statement than disagreeing.

Among those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, the most cited complaint was that ECL professionals are underpaid and undervalued by government. Many either explicitly or implicitly expressed a lack of fairness in some of the government’s tactics, and in the lack of equitable recognition of child care professionals when comparing their own wages and compensation with those offered to other educators, notably K-12 teachers.

Among those who agreed or strongly agreed that the BC government values their work in child care, most responses indicated that the government has taken actions towards improving working conditions, but more change is needed. Many respondents cite the government’s commitment towards \$10-a-Day programs and the wage enhancements as evidence of the government’s commitment towards improving the child care sector.

See information about this KPI in Perceptions of Child Care starting on page 26.



**KPI13** Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value of ECL work) in general population, thought leaders, mass media, youth, and parents



Tactic: No direct ECL R&R Strategy tactics.

**Public opinions  
of work in child  
care**

Tables and figures related to KPI 13 are informed by findings from the 2024 Public Opinion Survey that will be presented in the Final Project Report.

Case study participants suggested that the public's perspective of their profession seems to be improving and moving away from the perception of ECEs as a "glorified babysitters." These improvements were attributed to various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, government investment, and the increased professionalization of the field. Some persistent challenges, such as variation in the quality of early care provided by some centres, compounded by issues of availability and lower-quality care, are affecting the public's overall impressions of the sector.



See information about this KPI in Perceptions of Child Care starting on page 30 and Labour Mobility and Workforce Stability on page 75.

# CONSIDERATIONS, PROVISIONAL EARLY ANSWERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



# Considerations, Provisional Early Answers, and Recommendations

## Introduction

This report includes measures of progress towards achieving outcomes and goals sought by the ECL R&R Strategy. It is the 28<sup>th</sup> deliverable of the Sector-led Evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy in BC.

As such it also includes updates and developments in the evaluation work plan to the point of creating this report. In general, the evaluation has proceeded as planned. It has collected data on the employment, working conditions, education, and professional development of the ECL workforce.

SRDC conducted its own survey of the workforce and ECL employers in late 2023. This provided comparable data on a wide range of indicators from similar surveys since 2019. It also gave voice to the roughly 35,000 members of the ECL workforce. Respondents provided feedback on key influences on recruitment and retention.

This report includes trends seen in the workforce since 2018, expanding on earlier analysis in several ways:

- A more in-depth analysis of the influence of the ECL R&R Strategy's tactics on everyday child care operations and workplace experiences. These data come from six case study sites and key informant interviews spanning different types of child care workplaces.
- The administrative data shed light on implementation of the different tactics that are part of the ECL R&R Strategy. They reveal trends in the experiences of ECL professionals in the labour market.

- All data appear as time series where relevant and possible, to show trends from before the launch of the ECL R&R Strategy.

## Considerations

The core messages emerging from the evidence collected are nuanced.

Over the five years of the ECL R&R Strategy so far, the ECL workforce landscape has changed in many ways. While there were several temporary upsets and additional challenges likely attributable to COVID, other changes appear structural and several of these seem likely to have been influenced by ChildCareBC and by some of the ECL R&R Strategy tactics.

While the impacts of COVID featured large in previous years, the public health implications appeared to be of much less consequence during 2023. At case study sites, we heard COVID's legacies are still felt in children's developmental delays. ECL professionals describe having to deal with more behaviours that challenge them, making their job more demanding, increasing the need (which was already pressing before COVID) for inclusive programs and more one-on-one support. One consequence is increasing demand for even more appropriately trained staff.

The increasing prevalence of \$10-a-day ChildCareBC programs means these are better represented in the surveys than before. BC has introduced new types of care in the form of recreational and school-based, seamless day programs, increasing the importance of better understanding the working conditions in these settings.

Surprisingly, given increased demand and efforts of the ECL R&R Strategy, Census data enumerating the net size of the workforce suggest it has declined slightly over this period. However, the number of centre-based ECEs and ECEAs in BC has grown while there are proportionately fewer home-based care professionals. Further analysis of the Census in the final project report may help us to better understand this situation.

ECL professionals continue to report high satisfaction with several aspects of their work associated with children and their co-workers. Differences only emerge in the intensity of satisfaction. Managers and supervisors are more likely to be *very satisfied* with centre management than non-managerial and supervisory staff and the pattern holds for many of the other metrics of satisfaction as well. In general, managers and supervisors are much more likely to be *very satisfied* (compared to satisfied) than non-M/S staff.

ECL professionals have experienced a rollercoaster ride recently in the real value of their wages but overall, the sector seems somewhat better paid than in 2019, largely thanks to government wage enhancements. ECL professionals are reporting higher incomes than 5 years ago. But satisfaction with compensation has not increased: 67 per cent of those who say they are looking for a new job give seeking higher pay as a reason.

Unfortunately, many ECL professionals could find higher wages outside of the sector. According to the Labour Force Survey, ECL professionals earn, on average, \$10 an hour less than equivalently educated non-ECL professionals.

Apart from legally mandated sick leave, progress to provide benefits to more of the sector has been slow. Provision of some key benefits such as a retirement pension seems to be heading gradually in the right direction. Some 40 per cent of those who say they are looking for a new job give seeking better benefits as a reason.

As might be expected, new arrivals to work in the sector have lower levels of qualification than the sector as a whole, pointing to the importance of tactics to promote skill acquisition and additional certification. There have been quite dramatic increases in the certification of ECEs and ECEAs, continuing a pre-ECL R&R Strategy trend since at least 2014-15. Seemingly, increased certification is having little impact on shortfalls of qualified staff at centres. ECE Specialty and Five-Year certifications do show signs of plateauing in 2022-23.

Much of the increase in enrollment in ECE education programs has occurred at private training institutions. At the same time much more of the education programming is virtual or hybrid than in 2019. If it is the case that virtual ECE training is less comprehensive or that it has been more difficult (e.g. due to COVID) to organize well-rounded practicums, then arguably more work has been created for centres post-COVID to support their incoming newly credentialed cohorts of staff in the development of basic and required skills.

Participation in professional development has increased over the five years across all qualification levels including among RAs. At the same time the proportions reporting barriers to accessing PD declined with especially marked drops in the proportions reporting of cost barriers. Lack of time remained the biggest barrier to participation in PD.

The number of hours of PD completed in general has also increased over the period, yet ECE skills shortages remain. Employers report slight improvements in many skills relative to 2019 but decline in some others. Skills necessary to make the environment inclusive for children with support needs and for communicating effectively with children's families are less prevalent. ECL professionals also tend to rate their skills on these two domains and on demonstrating cultural sensitivity in 2023 lower than in 2019.

Compared to 2019, employers are more likely in 2023 to engage in activities to promote staff advancement. There has been little change over the period in staff perception of opportunities for career growth with roughly 6 in 10 reporting they believed a variety of opportunities existed.

Employer reports of shortages of qualified staff remain high, but do not seem to be getting more acute from 2022 to 2023. Reports of staff net loss over the previous 12 months remain higher in 2023 than they were in 2019 such that four in ten employers report losing staff over the past year.

More than a quarter looking for a new job are seeking a position with more seniority: 36 per cent of those who say they are looking for a new job give career advancement as a reason.

More professionals report the expectation to leave work in the ECL sector in 2023 than in 2019 but the situation has not worsened relative to 2022.

An impression over the five years of evaluation is that both 2021 and 2022 saw very high levels of disillusionment among ECL professionals in terms of the prospects for rewarding and remunerative work in the sector such that Strategy-tactic sponsored movement into the sector could not compensate for movement out of the sector. However, this situation appears to be moderating in 2023, with somewhat more optimism infusing interviews and survey responses than in the two preceding years.

## Provisional early answers to evaluation questions

We are reporting on the final year of the five-year evaluation project, at the halfway mark of the ten-year ECL R&R Strategy. It remains too early to make judgements against ten-year goals. However, it is possible to identify progress.

Earlier data collection in 2020, 2021 and 2022, also captured the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of the Strategy's goals. For 2023, COVID-specific measures were dropped. There are definitely places where, despite the pandemic, the needle is moving positively on the intended outcomes and goals of the Strategy, set at the project outset in 2019, while there remain others where change has not been achieved or been negative.

Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in the long-term goal of an **adequate and stable workforce**, comprised of qualified and skilled early care and learning professionals?

While this question anticipates a decade of change, qualifications and, to a lesser extent, skills are improving.

- The number of professionals with ECL-related qualifications appears to be increasing annually.
- However, the proportion of the workforce holding ECE or ECE specialty certification still appears to be falling well short of needs.
- Staffing problems persist but 2023 is the first year of the evaluation in which they have not worsened.

Over the medium term of the evaluation, do recruitment strategies achieve the outcome of an adequate supply of ECEs and other ECL professionals entering the workforce? [medium-term outcome]

- Census data indicate the net size of the workforce in BC did not grow from 2016 to 2021. However, there was a large increase in the number of centre-based ECEs and ECEAs accompanied by a drop in the number of home-based care professionals.
- Much of the increase in enrollment in ECE education programs has occurred at private training institutions. Compared to 2019, these programs are increasingly being delivered virtually or in a hybrid format. There is a concern that the quality and comprehensiveness of these programs may be wanting. Consequently, centres welcoming newly certified professionals are left having to provide significantly more support to develop their basic and required skills.

- While the supply of ECEs is increasing, it is still not adequate, likely due to likely due to a combination of the creation of new spaces and the high rates of exits of those with recently-earned and not-so-recently-earned credentials.
- Practicums seem to be lagging behind the increase in seats for postsecondary ECE programs and graduates earning ECE certifications are a decreasing share of program enrollees. These findings point to a need to evaluate how 'leaky' the ECE education pipeline may be.
- The qualifications most often reported lacking (by one in six employers) were basic ECE certificates.
- The proportions of employers unable to fill vacancies, who filled a position with a lower qualification than desired and who refused children due to lack of staff with the required skills were lower in 2023 than in 2019.

Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the implementation of career pathways provide opportunities for career growth and development in the early care and learning sector? [medium-term outcome]

- The proportion of the workforce believing that there were opportunities for career growth and development within the ECL sector remained at 2019 levels (roughly six in ten).
- The proportion disagreeing was lowest, at 4 in 10, among those with more specialized qualifications, but still three in ten Responsible Adults, who should have the most opportunities for advancement, disagreed.
- In general, there has been an improvement in the proportion of employers engaging in activities to promote career advancement since 2019.

Over the medium term of the evaluation, are education, training, and professional development opportunities expanded (or barriers reduced) so that the ECL workforce has the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to provide quality services to children and families? [medium-term outcome]

- Opportunities for professional development have expanded markedly since the launch of the ECL R&R Strategy. There is evidence by 2023 of much improved take up as well.
- Bursaries have reduced financial barriers. The number of student bursaries granted and total dollar amounts reached their highest ever level in Summer 2023.
- Since 2019, there has been a decline in the proportion of respondents who indicate facing barriers in accessing professional development activities.
- In 2023, more employers noted that their staff needed to improve on the skills of making the environment inclusive for children with support needs and communicating effectively with children's families compared to 2019.

Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in the long-term goal of ECL being viewed as a **viable, sustainable, and valued career**?

**There are conflicting trends, but mainly negative.**

- Many more in 2023 considered child care as their chosen profession than in 2019 but more also agreed that their job is temporary. The proportion willing to recommend child care as a profession declined from three in every four in 2019 to two in every three in 2023.

- More professionals expected to leave ECL within one year in 2023 compared to 2019 and the proportion unsure whether to stay in the sector has grown markedly. The proportions expecting to leave their current employer showed a similar pattern.
- The proportion of employers who experienced net loss of staff in the previous 12 months – full-time and part-time - was higher in 2023 (but lower than 2020, 2021 and 2022) at 40 per cent compared to the 2019 benchmark, when it stood at 34 per cent.

Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the ECL R&R Strategy promote public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of the ECL workforce? [medium-term outcome]

- The latest estimates of public confidence in the ECL profession will be obtained from the public opinion survey fielded in early 2024 due to be reported in the final project report.
- Just under half the ECL professionals surveyed believed ECL to have strong public support. While 47 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *Child care is valued by the public* in 2023, this was down from 51 per cent in 2019 but up from 44 per cent in 2022.



Does the ECL R&R Strategy promote the long-term goal of **appropriate compensation plans** and **human resources strategies** to be put in place?

**There are conflicting trends:**

- Excluding the wage enhancement, wages in 2023 are similar to inflation-adjusted 2019 wages. Differentials earned by those with specializations over basic ECE remain low at \$1.75 to \$2.60 hourly.
- When we consider the wage enhancement, inflation-adjusted wages have increased by an average of about \$2.15.
- The symbolic value of wage enhancement remains high. The enhancement sends a powerful signal to ECL professionals: government recognizes the problem of their remuneration and values their work.

**More employers are offering benefits to staff and more professionals report receiving benefits in 2023 than in 2019:**

- Due to legislative changes requiring the offer of sick days, many more employers (90-92 per cent) are now offering this benefit compared to 2019, though the quality of this benefit varies.

- There were modest increases in 2023 relative to 2019 in the proportion of employers who reported offering pensions (28 per cent in 2023 compared to 25 per cent in 2019) and extended health care (64 per cent in 2023 compared to 59 per cent in 2019).
- Number of benefits received was positively associated with job satisfaction and with participating in professional development.

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Over the medium term of the evaluation, do retention strategies support the long-term engagement of ECEs and others in the workforce, to help keep them in the profession? [medium-term outcome]

- Retention strategies appear to be increasing workforce engagement and persistence for those they reach from 2019 levels. But the extent is modest so far.
- Regression analysis points to the important role wage enhancement plays in encouraging staff to stay at centres, decreasing the rate of resignations.
- Compared to 2019, we find higher anticipated staff departures from the ECL workforce in 2023.

## Recommendations

This report's analysis of administrative data, cross-sectional surveys, and interviews confirmed the challenging situation of recruitment and retention in BC's ECL sector. In this fifth and final year of data collection, evidence coming from the evaluation is sufficiently robust to support a number of recommendations.

The situation in 2023 would be worse without the ECL R&R Strategy. Several tactics are making a difference such as the wage enhancement and increased training for ECEs.

Most of the recommendations relate to bolstering or upgrading already successful tactics. After five years of implementation of the ECL R&R Strategy's tactics, there are areas where workforce development appears to be moving in a positive direction, not only in terms of movement on the measures this evaluation has included as Key Performance Indicators but perceptibly to ECL professionals as well. The trends point to the need for government to continue working on the main pressure points:

- increasing wages;
- improving provision of benefits;
- supporting the development of pathways for career growth;
- mandating paid time off for professional development;
- evaluating the effectiveness of the many ECE/A student pathways and credential to career trajectories currently being supported by different government investments in education and training.

### New approaches should be added.

Transforming the experiences and perceptions of an entire workforce sector sufficiently to change outcomes takes time. It remains too early to pass judgement on the overall effectiveness of the ECL R&R Strategy.

However, some situations such as high turnover seem impervious to the fixes attempted to date. Recommendations from this evaluation on how to innovate remain cautious, because there is limited evidence on what actually works to improve recruitment and retention. However, the current ECL workforce represents a knowledgeable and eager resource in developing timely, effective, and coordinated interventions.

There is considerable scope for engaging in meaningful consultation with the goal of experimenting with new innovations in combination with rigorous evidence gathering, in order to learn what works and also to better understand where there may be unhelpful interactions between policies that could exacerbate sector problems. New and better coordinated tactics need to be tested and evaluated, with those found successful added to the toolkit.

The evaluation indicates that the **deteriorating workforce development situation** that originally prompted the ECL R&R Strategy persists into 2023 but that on several fronts, the ECL R&R Strategy appears to be producing positive change or, at least, stabilization.

The tactics have been insufficient to move the needle sufficiently in the right direction on the sought goals and outcomes within five years. Thus, the importance of new and strengthened policy approaches has grown.

Furthermore, there is a concern that some supports may be vulnerable to major changes, particularly those that appear to be making a difference to individuals planning a career in ECL and to businesses currently operating in the sector. Some stability is critical to support informed decisions of those contemplating a career or supporting others' careers in ECL—stability is also important to those who already have a career in ECL. Progressive improvement to existing tactics—as has typified the roll out of the wage enhancement and several other tactics—are nevertheless welcomed.

Systematically and coherently implemented, the ECL R&R Strategy tactics clearly hold potential. An incremental approach that is rooted in innovation and experimentation will help the sector find solutions to the least tractable problems. A long-term engagement towards evidence-based solutions and a continued engagement with the sector will combat some of the challenges that affect ECL workforce development in BC and could even set the standard for other provinces.

**Recommendation 1:** Renew efforts to attract and retain potential workers from diverse and new sources to the sector (unchanged from 2022)

The government needs to renew its efforts to develop ECL R&R Strategy tactics that support employers' urgent needs to recruit, retain and develop ECL professionals.

**Sector stakeholders can work together to raise the profile of ECL work by publicizing improvements in working conditions and thereby increase the appeal of the profession to new and existing members of the workforce.**

There seems to be a pool of older adults and youth interested in working in ECL if the working conditions can be improved. Employers could look to more diverse sources to attract new staff into the profession. At the same time, sector stakeholders may need to expend **more effort to motivate existing ECL**

**professionals to stay in the field (or return in the cases of ECEs who have left child care).**

**Recommendation 2:** Continue efforts to develop and implement a wage grid, recognizing the need to create incentives for responsible adults to acquire ECE-related credentials and for ECEAs to continue their training to certify as ECEs (updated from 2022)

**Carefully designed and targeted further wage enhancement** has sent important symbolic messages and has improved incomes while incentivizing credential recognition. Carefully constructed further increases are likely to generate yet more incremental improvements, while worries about the sustainability of this approach need to be quelled.

**Employers and government must consider how the wage structures they promote affect incentives for existing workforce members to upskill,** including acquiring additional credentials in areas of shortfall, such as transitioning from ECEA to ECE, so a well-designed and broadly-implemented “wage grid” may help in this regard. These grids denote standard wage levels or floors for specific certification levels and other criteria.

The Government of British Columbia announced in its 2022 budget that, in partnership with the Government of Canada, the province would develop a professional wage grid for ECEs.

The grid could help address some challenges that wage enhancements have not, such as localized inequities. A pilot is currently underway. In advance of more widespread implementation, plausibly some professionals could be motivated to remain working in the sector simply through Government publicizing its timeline for the implementation of the wage grid province-wide.

**Recommendation 3:** Recruitment and retention are affected by the availability of benefits. Intervention is needed to improve compensation packages (unchanged from 2022)

**Intervention from government and employers may help where ECL professionals' compensation packages are falling short.** This includes pensions, extended health care and other benefits such as paid preparation and professional development time.

The approach taken in the wage enhancement to support statutory benefits could be imitated. Government could provide conditional funding to improve other workplace benefits such as pensions.

**Recommendation 4:** Raise the profile and sustainability of existing professionals obtaining ECE credentials as well as the incentive to upskill and acquire new credentials (unchanged from 2022)

**Agencies dispensing bursaries can apply lessons learned from recent behavioural innovations in student financial aid** to increase accessibility and availability of bursaries. Transparent eligibility rules, simplified and streamlined application processes that include all available subsidies, and ongoing disbursement can all help increase take up by those most in need. Upfront payment of financial assistance (or direct to the education provider) could be built in more often. This would seed fund employers, employees, and even education providers to incentivize upskilling.

More consistency in government provision of financial support could help ECL professionals see ECE tuition, education programs and related costs as affordable on an ongoing basis, while new regulation could protect time off for study.

**Recommendation 5:** Formalize mentoring and pedagogical support through creation of new local or regional coaching positions (new for 2023)

Newly-certified ECL professionals need support to acquire the full range of skills and pedagogy to provide high-quality learning experiences for the children in their care. Those with experience need updates on new approaches that have gained credibility since their initial training. While PD can help, there may be little consistency in the PD choices made between different professionals. This can lead to uneven implementation of best practices or even implementation of contradictory practices.

At the same time, experienced ECL professionals who have maximized their career growth at centres and seek additional responsibility and remuneration may want an alternative career path to moving into management.

One possible solution to both the above challenges is the expansion of a cadre of local mentors or coaches to support in-service training for centres in a specified geographic area. Coordination could operate at different levels, including through existing services such as the Peer Mentoring Project and Pedagogy Network that already support a number of educators with the development and implementation of pedagogy as well as broader learning from more experienced mentors.

**Recommendation 6:** Provide ongoing support to incentivize specialty certifications (updated from 2022)

The Findings Report 2022 recommended **incentivizing acquisition of Special Needs and Infant Toddler certification** given the shortfall in these specializations.

In January 2024, government introduced annual ECE Specialized Certification Grants for ECEs with Infant Toddler Educator or Special Needs Educator certificates. These grants are available to eligible ECEs for the next three years, through an annual application process administered by ECEBC. ECEs holding both specialized certificates will be eligible for a \$3,000 payment, while those holding one specialized certificate will be eligible for \$2,000.

The only concern at this early stage is the apparent temporary nature of the incentive. The longer-term aim may be to use the wage grid to provide the incentive, but this has not been made clear. The risk is that this grant will represent more of a welcome windfall support to those who have already acquired their specialization(s) than it will an incentive for those embarking on their career pathway to invest time and effort in the additional certifications.

**Recommendation 7:** Systematize professional development incentives and systemic changes to ensure needed training is prioritized (unchanged from 2022)

**Government promotion of a range of training incentives and nudges** could be beneficial, especially if they target the types of programs and high-priority professional development topics where evidence suggests there is relatively low take up among professionals. These topics include demonstrating cultural sensitivity and creating inclusive environments for children with support needs.

**Recommendation 8:** Consider financial and regulatory instruments, competency frameworks and a system of digital badges/ micro-credentials to help improve education program outcomes (unchanged from 2022)

The education system comprises a wide range of education providers teaching a wide range of ECL-related skills which are then assessed in different ways before certifications are granted. It becomes difficult for students and employers to know what skills graduates are expected to have acquired. There is evidence key skills are being overlooked. **Government could adopt a range of “carrot” and “stick” tools to encourage more consistency in ECE credentials in terms of program entrance requirements, required learning outcomes and assessments** including: more transparent recognition of each skill acquired through micro-credentialing; willingness to adjust institutional eligibility for funding such as eligibility for student aid and bursaries; and enforcement of education quality assurance.

**Recommendation 9:** Consider new means to assess skills and competencies based on prior learning and experience (unchanged from 2022)

Professionals who have worked in BC ECL for an extended period or who acquired their ECE credentials outside Canada can be discouraged from pursuing ECE certification. They may anticipate high costs of fees or time required for re-training to become certified ECEs, in addition to the costs of translating their documents (although a grant is now available to support translation costs). Possibly, the **ECE Registry's recognition procedures could be accelerated**. Research funders could support the evaluation of **pilots of different approaches that might encourage professionals to take up (additional) certification**, with one option including new means for determining existing competencies.

**Recommendation 10:** Develop and propagate more sophisticated marketing, designed to be seen or heard by current and prospective ECL professionals as well as the general public, showcasing the role played by the workforce in the province's future social and economic wellbeing (new for 2023)

The tactics adopted to achieve the ECL R&R Strategy medium term outcome to promote public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of the ECL workforce have not been explicit to date. They may be partially achieved through positive communication strategies, including the language used to affirm the key role played by ECL professionals in diverse government announcements, not just those concerned directly with implementing the ECL R&R Strategy itself. Plausibly, the outcome is also a by-product or side effect of other initiatives concerned with bolstering education, professional development, career pathways, remuneration and benefits.

There may be benefits from adopting some tactics more explicitly aligned with selective support of different types of media communications. Publicizing the role of ECL professionals could take many forms, such as advertisements, support for documentaries, even high profile dramas like the 2024 Canadian Stage production "Universal Child Care".

The evaluation data provides some pointers as to focus and content. To be appreciated by current professionals, messages around supporting women's work are less likely to be motivating as it risks equating ECL work to babysitting. Instead, messaging should focus on the skilled work ECL professionals do, (e.g., in terms of children's social-emotional development).

For prospective professionals, on the other hand, helping others to work was noted as an appealing attribute of a career in ECL (in public opinion survey data for 2023), so messages about the contribution the work makes to the local and provincial economy might be more effective.

**Recommendation 11:** Continue and enhance modes of engagement and consultation with ECL professionals themselves in the process of policy development and in operationalizing the implementation of tactics. (new for 2023)

ECL professionals report being unaware of ECL R&R Strategy tactics, which is likely to influence negatively their take up and impact.

This project provided professionals with an avenue to voice their concerns with the policy direction of ECL. Their feedback offers important insights that should support policy and program design.



Although this project will reach its end in early summer 2024 following the publication of the final evaluation report, consultations with the sector should continue. **Future development of both policy and implementation tactics needs to build in a more permanent means for feedback and input from the workforce to decision makers.** Early consultation and advice can improve the acceptability of the approaches and efficiency of take up of the solutions.

**Recommendation 12:** Adopt a joined-up, systems-approach to proactively improve management of and support for decision-making in BC's child care sector. Use behavioural insights to keep each aspect of the approach simple to navigate and access at the operational end (updated from 2022).

Across all stakeholders, but most especially Government, a more systemic approach is required to support decision making and manage BC's child care "system." The ECL R&R Strategy is just one strategy within ChildCareBC, but it is being implemented by multiple Ministries.

Currently, it is difficult for the sector to take stock of the Strategy's scope, intent, component tactics and their successes and challenges, let alone to meaningfully provide input on future direction.

**The province could fund a "one stop shop" dashboard to support access to key information on tactics and indicators of progress** (such as counts of licensing variances). This could help generate support for the ECL R&R Strategy given thousands of eligible workplaces and tens of thousands of members of the workforce to reach.



# Glossary of terms

## Career-Related

Term	Definition
Career Pathway	A progression of educational qualifications, credentials and training that build upon one another and enable members of the ECL workforce to advance in their careers. Career pathways can be flexible, with multiple entry and exit points, to allow the ECL workforce, made up of diverse learners and non-traditional students, to acquire the necessary career-related skills and knowledge.
Certification (Staff)	The process by which an individual or institution attests to or is shown to have met a prescribed standard or set of standards.
Credentials	Academic degrees, licences or certificates awarded to individuals who successfully complete state or national requirements to enter specialized roles in the ECL workforce.
ECL workforce; Members of the ECL workforce	The broad range of individuals engaged in the care and education of young children. Members of the ECL workforce may include teachers, caregivers, and administrative staff, as well as consultants, learning specialists, and others that provide training and Technical Assistance to programs.
Professional Development (PD)	Refers to a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with, and on behalf of, young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. Professional development encompasses education, training, and Technical Assistance (TA), which leads to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of members of the ECL workforce.
Retention (Staff)	Refers to the ability of programs to retain their employees over time.

Source: Child Care & Early Education *Research Connections* [Child Care and Early Education Glossary](#)

## Types of Child Care Programs

Term	Definition	Source
Before or After School Program	Licensed Care provided to school age (Kindergarten and up) children in a community-based facility or centre.	BC Government <a href="#">Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.</a>
Centre-Based Child Care	Child care provided in non-residential group settings, such as within public or private schools, churches, preschools, day care centers, or nursery schools.	Child Care & Early Education <i>Research Connections</i> <a href="#">Child Care and Early Education Glossary</a>
Home-Based Child Care	Child care provided for one or more unrelated children in a provider's home setting/personal residence – may be licensed/licence-not-required, paid/unpaid, listed / unlisted. In a licensed home-based child care centre, licensee is a Responsible Adult and personally provides care, within the licensee's personal residence, to no more than 7 children.	Child Care & Early Education <i>Research Connections</i> <a href="#">Child Care and Early Education Glossary</a> ; BC Government <a href="#">Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.</a> (see family child care)
In-Child's-Own-Home	Unlicensed care when parents arrange for child care within their own home (e.g., nanny, babysitter). Children from other families cannot be included in this arrangement and the care provider cannot be a relative who lives in the home. There are no legal requirements for monitoring this type of care and no specific qualifications for the care provider are required.	BC Government <a href="#">Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.</a>
Informal Child Care	A term used to describe child care provided by relatives, friends, and neighbors in the child's own home or in another home, often in unregulated settings.	Child Care & Early Education <i>Research Connections</i> <a href="#">Child Care and Early Education Glossary</a>
License-not-Required Child Care (see also: Registered Licence-Not-Required Child Care; Unlicensed Child Care)	Providers can care for up to two children (or a sibling group) who are not related to them. Can operate legally in BC. Not registered or licensed, thus not monitored or inspected, do not have to meet standards for health and safety.	BC Government <a href="#">Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.</a>

Term	Definition	Source
Licensed Child Care	Child care programs operated in homes or in facilities that fall within the regulatory system and must comply with specific requirements for health and safety, staffing qualifications, record keeping, space and equipment, child-to-staff ratios, and programming. Monitored and regularly inspected by regional health authorities.	BC Government <a href="#">Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.</a>
Occasional Child Care	A program that provides care on an occasional or short-term basis	<a href="#">BC Child Care Licensing Regulation</a>
Preschool	Licensed programs that provide early education and care to children before they enter kindergarten, typically from ages 2.5-5 years. Preschools may be publicly or privately operated and may receive public funds.	Child Care & Early Education <i>Research Connections</i> <a href="#">Child Care and Early Education Glossary</a> ; <a href="#">BC Child Care Licensing Regulation</a>
Recreational Licensed Care	Programs offered in indoor facilities other than single family dwelling house or outdoor settings such as public parks. There is no maximum group size, as long as usable floor area is sufficient to ensure the health and safety or children participating. The staff-to-child ratio is 1 Responsible Adult for 12 children from either Kindergarten or Grade 1, and 1 Responsible Adult for 15 children from Grade 2 and older.	BC Government <a href="#">Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.</a>
Registered Licence-Not-Required Child Care	Providers do not require a licence but are registered with a Child Care Resource and Referral Centre. 1 Responsible Adult per 2 children (or sibling group) who are not related to the provider. Setting is the child care provider's own home. To become licensed, operators must have completed criminal record checks, character references, home safety assessment, first aid training, child care training course or workshops.	BC Government <a href="#">Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.</a>
Unlicensed Child Care	Child care programs that have not been licensed by the regulator. The term often refers a program that can legally operate without a licence as well as a program that illegally operates without a licence.	Child Care & Early Education <i>Research Connections</i> <a href="#">Child Care and Early Education Glossary</a>

**Note:** Links were updated in 2022 to correct broken links in previous reports; however, definitions are unchanged.

## Types of Providers

Term	Definition	Source
Auspice	Auspice refers to the ownership of the ECL business (e.g., non-profit, public, etc.)	Finding Quality Child Care <a href="#">Parent Guide</a>
Centre-based ECL professional	A person who has primary responsibility for a group of children for child care provided in non-residential group settings, such as within public or private schools, churches, preschools, day care centers, or nursery schools. This person can be a Responsible Adult, ECEA or ECE.	Report terminology
Child Care Operator	The person running the child care facility. In Centre-based care this role can be termed a director and, in some circumstances, (such as for-profit centres) is also the owner.	BC Government <a href="#">Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.</a>
Child Care Provider	An organization or individual legally responsible for operating ECL services. The provider is the entity that applies for the licence(s) and/or funding for facilities.	Child Care & Early Education <i>Research Connections</i> <a href="#">Child Care and Early Education Glossary</a>
Early Childhood Educator Assistant (ECEA)	Graduates from an approved education program can work as an Early Childhood Assistant once they receive a certificate from the ECE Registry in MECC (formerly the Ministry of Children and Family Development). Can then work with young children in an early childhood setting under the supervision of a qualified Early Childhood Educator.	<a href="#">University of BC Early Childhood Education Program</a>
Early Childhood Educator (ECE)	Often used in the literature interchangeably with employees, staff, child care workers, front-line ECEs. But to be qualified to work as an early childhood educator (ECE) in BC, you are required to complete a basic early childhood education training program from an approved training institution. Graduates from an approved training program can work as an early childhood educator or assistant once they apply to receive a certificate from the provincial government (see ECE certification below).	<a href="#">University of BC Early Childhood Education Program</a>
Home Care Provider (HCP)	SRDC's cross-sectional survey definition of HCP, which denotes Home-Based Child Care (above). This group includes family child care providers, LNRs, RLNRs and nannies, but very few nannies responded to SRDC's survey.	Report terminology
Licensee	A licensee is a person, an organization, a company, or a partnership that has applied for and been granted a licence to operate a community care facility in BC. A licence is not transferable from one person to another or one facility to another. Any changes to a licensed facility, such as moving to a new location, changing managers, or making physical renovations, must be discussed with a licensing officer.	<a href="#">BC Government Child Care Licensing Regulation Fact Sheet</a>

Term	Definition	Source
Manager	Delegated full authority to operate the child care centre. Licensee must examine manager's work history and copies of diplomas, certificates, other evidence of training and skills. Manager must be physically and psychologically capable of working with children.	<a href="#">Interior Health Hiring a Manager in a Licensed Facility</a>
Owner-operators	A person who is an owner-operator, director or manager of a licensed child care centre, preschool or after school program. This person may or may not work directly with children.	Report terminology
Responsible Adult	A Responsible Adult is a person who is at least 19 years of age, has completed at least 20 hours of training, has experience working with children, and can provide care and mature guidance to children.	<a href="#">BC Government Child Care Licensing Regulation Fact Sheet</a>

Note: Links were updated in 2022 to correct broken links in previous reports; however, definitions are unchanged.

## Type of ECE certification

Term	Definition
ECE (1 year)	Certification for early childhood educators without 500 hours of supervised work experience. Requires proof of graduation from a recognized basic and/or post-basic ECE program. The One-Year ECE Certificate allows a person to act in the position of a fully certified ECE while working towards their 500 hours and it can only be renewed once.
ECE (5 year)	Certification for early childhood educator with proof of graduation from a basic ECE program recognized in BC and 500 hours of work experience under the supervision of a Canadian-certified ECE
Infant Toddler Educator	Certification for early childhood educators with an ECE (5 year) certificate and proof of graduation from a recognized ECE program recognized in BC with Infant and Toddler specific courses.
Special Needs Educator	Certification for early childhood educators with an ECE (5 year) certificate and proof of graduation from a recognized ECE program recognized in BC with Special Needs specific courses.

Source: BC Government Website – Education/training > [Become an Early Childhood Educator](#)

## Type of position

Term	Definition
Child care or ECL professional	A person who has primary responsibility for a group of children in a centre. This person can be a Responsible Adult, ECEA or ECE. Not a supervisor, manager, or director.
Supervisor	A person who has responsibility for a group of children and also has supervisory responsibility for child care professionals. This person can be a Responsible Adult, ECEA, or ECE.
ECL professional – Manager	A person with management duties (which can include hiring, payroll, performance reviews, compliance with licensing requirements, etc.). This person has administrative duties and may have child care duties.
Administrative – Director	Refers to a person who has administrative duties only.

**Source:** Child care workforce and employer cross-sectional survey definitions



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