



Evaluation of the Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Final Project Report

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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 a 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 long-term goals:

- A) An adequate and stable workforce, comprised of qualified and skilled early care and learning professionals
- B) Early care and learning as a viable, sustainable, and valued career
- C) Appropriate compensation plans and human resource strategies

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 the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to undertake the sector-led evaluation.














This Final Project Report summarizes the findings of the entire evaluation from 2019 up to early 2024. The report provides information about the project’s journey and new findings since the last annual report. Results from the entire evaluation period are then summarized according to the evaluation’s Key Performance Indicators. The report concludes with answers to key evaluation questions as well as recommendations.

Key Findings

The evaluation includes measures of progress towards achieving outcomes and goals sought by the ECL R&R Strategy. 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 in BC.

A brief overview of progress on KPIs appears below in Table 1, followed by answers to the key evaluation questions. An arrow is used to summarize the overall trend of each indicator since the launch of the Strategy. This can be an improvement (large or small) [↑], a deterioration [↓] or a mixed result [↔].

Table 1 Progress on Key Performance Indicators, 2019 – 2024

KPI1	ECL professional satisfaction and perception of appropriateness of compensation	
KPI2A	Average real wages and salaries of ECL professionals	
KPI2B	Benefits of ECL Professionals	
KPI3 ¹	Integration of current Sector Occupational Competencies into education and training programs	
KPI4	Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs	
KPI5	Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers	
KPI6	Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills	
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.	
KPI8	Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report participation in professional development activities	
KPI9	Hours of professional development per ECL workforce member per year	
KPI10	Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills	
KPI11	Employment stability of ECL workforce, including variances for staffing for providers, work hours, job tenure, job exits	
KPI12	Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value) among those already working in the sector	
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	

¹ Assessment of KPI3 has not been possible to date.

Answers to Evaluation Questions

The evaluation framework uses progress against KPIs to answer the evaluation questions over time. We are reporting at the end of the evaluation and just past the halfway mark of the ten-year government plan. There are places where, despite the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the needle is moving positively on the intended outcomes and goals of the Strategy set at the project outset; however, there remain other places where change has not been achieved or has been negative.

Goal A: Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in an adequate and stable workforce, comprised of qualified and skilled early care and learning professionals?

While this question anticipates a decade of change, there are conflicting trends.

I. Do recruitment strategies achieve the outcome of an adequate supply of ECEs and other child care staff entering the workforce?

- Census data indicate the net size of the workforce in BC did not grow overall from 2016 to 2021. 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.
- 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. The proportion of employers who experienced net loss of staff in the previous 12 months was higher in 2023 (but lower than 2020-2022) at 40 per cent compared to 2019, when it stood at 34 per cent.
- Although staffing shortages are still described as an ongoing crisis, 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 (improved) in 2023 compared to 2019.

II. Does the implementation of career pathways provide opportunities for career growth and development in the ECL sector?

- 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), despite a general improvement in the proportion of employers engaging in activities that promote career advancement since 2019.

III. Over the medium term of the evaluation, are education, training, and professional development opportunities expanded so that the ECL workforce has the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to provide quality services to children and families?

- Opportunities for professional development have expanded markedly since the launch of the ECL R&R Strategy and there has been a decline in the proportion of respondents who indicate facing barriers in accessing professional development activities.
- Yet 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 than did so in 2019, suggesting skills gaps remain.

Goal B: Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in ECL being viewed as a viable, sustainable, and valued career?

There are conflicting trends, but mainly negative. 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.

IV. Does the strategy promote public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of early care and learning professionals?

- Estimates of public confidence in ECL show nuanced positive and negative changes since 2019, but overall placed high value on the profession. Ratings of government support of ECL were lower than for personal or public support, suggesting the Strategy is not the main driver of public confidence.

Goal C: Does the ECL R&R Strategy promote appropriate compensation plans and human resources strategies to be put in place?

Despite some positive trends, current approaches appear insufficient. Although the symbolic value of wage enhancement remains high, inflation-adjusted wages have increased only by an average of about \$2.15 since 2019. More employers and professionals report offering / receiving benefits, but key gaps still exist.

V. Do retention strategies support the long-term engagement of ECEs and others in the workforce, to help keep them in the profession?

- Retention strategies appear to be increasing workforce engagement and persistence for those they reach from 2019 levels, but the extent is modest so far.
- Compared to 2019, we find higher anticipated staff departures from the ECL workforce in 2023.

Recommendations

The situation in 2024 would be worse without the ECL R&R Strategy. **Several tactics helped prevent further destabilization** in the sector, such as the wage enhancement for ECEs.

Transforming the experiences and perceptions of an entire workforce sufficiently to change outcomes takes time. However, situations such as high turnover seem impervious to the fixes attempted to date. At the current rate, it seems unlikely that the ECL R&R Strategy will achieve its 10-year goals. **The tactics to date have been largely insufficient to move the needle on the sought goals and outcomes within five years.** Additionally, the changing context of the ECL system, with new demands anticipated as a result of factors like COVID and the Canada-wide ELCC agreements, has increased the importance of new and strengthened policy approaches.

Systematically and coherently implemented, the ECL R&R Strategy tactics hold potential. An incremental approach that is rooted in experimentation may help the sector find solutions to the least tractable problems; however, a bolder approach to transforming the ECL workforce may be necessary given the limited success of the current strategy so far in achieving its stated outcomes and the urgent demand for a high-quality, accessible, and affordable ECL system in BC.

Three overarching, interrelated recommendations are put forth that highlight the contextual and nuanced feedback shared by thousands of ECL professionals over the evaluation. Like the ECL R&R Strategy tactics, the recommendations intersect with, and build off, one another rather than being promoted in isolation.

Recommendation 1: Implement an ECL professional career pathway that models compensation, working conditions, and educational standards of other educators

Making structural improvements to ECL professionals' wages and benefits is essential to addressing the workforce shortage and resulting quality concerns. Raising the status of ECL professionals to (at least) that of public teachers helps prospective and current members of the workforce see ECL as a viable, sustainable, and valued career that is worth the educational investment. This recommendation incorporates the following:

- 1.1 Renew efforts to attract and retain potential workers from diverse and new sources to the sector.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 Take a sector-level approach to improving compensation packages to ensure no one is left out.
- 1.4 Apply minimum education standards to ensure that ECL professionals – and their colleagues – are well-prepared to meet the needs of children and families.

Recommendation 2: Improve consultation and outreach to affirm to the sector and public that government values the skilled work of ECEs

Prospective and current ECL professionals need to know that the government appreciates their work, recognizes that it is vital to children's learning and development, and compensates it accordingly. As the evaluation comes to an end, government should consider a means for feedback and input from the sector to reach decision-makers, as well as improved outgoing communication and change management. This recommendation incorporates the following:

- 2.1 Policy-makers should continue and enhance engagement and consultation with ECL professionals in the process of policy development and in operationalizing the implementation of tactics.
- 2.2 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 social and economic wellbeing.
- 2.3 Formalize and expand mentoring and pedagogical support through local or regional coaching positions.

Recommendation 3: Systematize, streamline, and join-up ECL under a trauma-informed, strengths-based, anti-oppressive, intersectional feminist lens

Bursaries, credentialization, professional development, and upskilling can all benefit from adopting a streamlined and standardized approach. Tactics need to be joined up, and doing so under a trauma-informed, strengths-based, anti-oppressive and intersectional feminist lens will ensure more equitable outcomes for all. This recommendation incorporates the following:

- 3.1 Raise the profile and sustainability of existing professionals obtaining ECE credentials as well as the incentive to upskill and acquire new credentials.
- 3.2 Provide ongoing support to incentivize specialty certifications.
- 3.3 Systematize professional development incentives to ensure needed training is prioritized.
- 3.4 Consider financial and regulatory instruments, competency frameworks, and other measures to help improve education program outcomes.
- 3.5 Consider new means to assess skills and competencies based on prior learning and experience.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 Address issues of systemic racism within the sector and ensure new tactics do not exacerbate existing marginalization.



Introduction

Project Overview

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 long-term goals:

- A) An adequate and stable workforce, comprised of qualified and skilled early care and learning professionals
- B) Early care and learning as a viable, sustainable, and valued career
- C) Appropriate compensation plans and human resource strategies

The then Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (AEST, now the 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. The collaboration sought to provide a mechanism for regular sector feedback on the overarching impacts of the ECL R&R Strategy and its many tactics (such as a wage enhancement and supports for professional development) on BC's child care workforce.

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

This Final Project Report summarizes the findings of the entire evaluation from 2019 up to early 2024. It is the 30th deliverable of the sector-led Evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy in BC. The report provides information about the project journey and new findings since the last annual report. Results from the entire evaluation period are then summarized according to the evaluation's Key Performance Indicators. The report concludes with answers to key evaluation questions as well as recommendations.



The Project Journey: Goals, Activities, and Milestones

Sector Steering Committee

The Sector Steering Committee (SSC) was established in early 2019 for the purpose of guiding the evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy. The SSC assists the Project Manager and ECEBC in its function of governance by providing quality control of the contract deliverables, oversight of the contractors (SRDC) engaged to complete the project, and with outreach. The SSC Terms of Reference include committee composition, roles and responsibilities, meeting frequency and confidentiality agreements. Through June 2024, the SSC has met three times in person, twice by phone, and 14 times by Zoom. Minutes from these meetings are available upon request.

Currently, the following organizations have an appointed representative to participate on the SSC²:

- Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC
- Aboriginal Supported Child Development
- BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
- BC Association of Child Development and Intervention
- BC Family Child Care Association
- BC First Nations Head Start
- British Columbia General Employees' Union
- Canadian Childcare Federation
- Child Care Professionals of BC
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Coalition of Childcare Advocates of BC
- ECE Articulation Committee
- Early Childhood Educators of BC
- Early Childhood Pedagogy Network
- Métis Nation BC
- Multi-Age Childcare Association of BC
- Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
- Peer Mentoring for ECEs in BC
- Provincial Child Care Council
- School Age Childcare Association of BC
- Supported Child Development
- UBC Childcare
- Vancouver Coastal Health

Evaluation Goals and Key Performance Indicators

SRDC worked with the SSC in 2019 to identify 13 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). As shown in Table 2 and Table 3, the KPIs provide an organized structure for the evaluation's data collection strategy, linking the ECL R&R Strategy's tactics to its outcomes and its goals. Specifically, the medium-term outcomes were used to guide key evaluation questions.

² The City of Surrey was an original member of the SSC. The list reflects current organization names.

Table 2 10 Year Goals, Medium-term Outcomes, Original Tactics, and Related Codes

10 Year Goals	Code
An adequate and stable workforce, comprised of qualified and skilled ECL professionals	A
Early care and learning as a viable, sustainable, and valued career	B
Appropriate compensation plans and human resources strategies	C
Medium-term Outcomes	Code ³
Recruitment strategies will ensure an adequate supply of ECEs and other child care staff entering the workforce	I
Career pathways will provide opportunities for career growth and development within the ECL sector	II
Education, training, and professional development will be reviewed, enhanced, and expanded to ensure a competent early care and learning workforce with the skills, knowledge and abilities required to provide quality services to children and families	III
Public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of early care and learning professionals from rigorous standards and oversight	IV
Retention strategies will support the long-term engagement of ECEs and others in the workforce, to help keep them in the profession	V
Tactics	Code
Compensation	1
Post-Secondary	2
Bursaries	3
Professional Networks and Supports	4
Professional Development	5
Industry Standards	6
Work-based Education and Training	7
Training Supports	8

³ The order and corresponding codes of the medium-term outcomes have changed since originally reported to explicitly align with the 10-year goals (see Table 3). The original order corresponds to the current order as follows (original -> current): I -> I; II -> V; III -> II; IV -> III; V -> IV.

Table 3 Key Performance Indicators

No.	KPI	Tactics	Medium-term Outcomes	10 Year Goals
1	ECL professional satisfaction and perception of appropriateness of compensation	1	V	A, B, C
2A	Average real wages and salaries of ECL professionals	1	V	A, B, C
2B	[Benefits of ECL Professionals]			
3	Extent to which updated Sector Occupational Competencies are integrated into education and training programs	6	IV	A
4	Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs	1 to 8	I-V	A, B, C
5	Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers	1 to 8	I-V	A, B, C
6	Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills	1 to 8	I-V	A, B, C
7	Awareness of ECL career pathway options, how to pursue them, and expectations of their feasibility in terms of finances and availability of training opportunities	2,3,4,5	I, II	A, B
8	Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report participation in professional development activities	4,5,7,8	II, III, V	A
9	Hours of professional development per ECL workforce member per year	4,5,7	II, III	A
10	Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills	1 to 8	I-V	A, C
11	Employment stability of ECL workforce, including variances for staffing for providers, work hours, job tenure, job exits	1,7	V	A
12	Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value) among those already working in the sector	1,4,5,6,7,8	II, III, V	B, C
13	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	1,2,3,6,8	I, IV, V	A, B, C

Note: The order and corresponding codes of the medium-term outcomes has changed since originally reported.

SRDC subdivided the second KPI to make explicit the consideration of benefits—as distinct from wages—in fieldwork and analysis. This reflects the fact that benefits are frequently bundled with salary and wages in consideration of employment compensation.

Collectively, these KPIs provided a structure to develop relevant data collection instruments that monitored changes across the child care sector in BC and provided answers to evaluation questions on the effects of the ECL R&R Strategy.

For the 2019 year, the project reported benchmarks (the benchmarking report was Deliverable #9 published in July 2020; see Appendix A). Benchmarks are derived from data from the period 2015-2019 that captured the starting point for many of the changes the ECL R&R Strategy was expected to produce. Critically, later reports—starting with the evaluation report in 2020—compare the data on indicators from 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 to the benchmarking indicators reported for 2015-19. The comparison determines **change** in the KPIs. KPIs are “neutral” in that they do not describe a positive or negative change themselves; it is the change in the KPI over time that describes the consequences and impact of the implementation tactics and the achievement of the goals. It is the specific combination of changes across the KPIs that 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.

The KPIs describe overall trends in the workforce over time. Where possible, data is disaggregated in various ways, such as by workplace type. Inevitably, the analysis is not exhaustive and may not have strong *explanatory* value for each section of the workforce. Readers are encouraged to consider how and why each trend might be relevant to their community.

A note on the presentation of KPIs

Most KPIs draw on multiple data sources and several data sources contribute to multiple KPIs. Some data sources contribute to few or even to a single KPI. Each KPI relies on multiple data points, even from a single data source. For instance, there are several ways to obtain and present information on wages and each one provides a nuanced understanding of changes over time.

Using multiple measures to track changes in a KPI improves the validity of the results and enables some level of continuity in annual reporting in a situation where not all data sources can report in every year. For example, the Census data from 2001 through 2016 included in the benchmarking report provided useful demographic information on the sector’s composition and its evolution between 2000 and 2015. However, Census data is released every five years, so changes in the sector’s composition cannot be reported on as regularly from this data source.

To maximize internal validity, we compare changes in KPIs over time only within the same data sources. As the reader will notice, each baseline KPI with more than one data source can have a slightly different value for each data source. This potentially confusing factor is due to definitional differences between data source measures. As an example, job posting data identify members of the child care workforce somewhat differently from the cross-sectional survey, and different again from the administrative data.

Nevertheless, changes across time for each data source provide a reliable assessment of how the sector is evolving, even if those data sources cannot be compared directly.

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework (Table 4) is presented according to the five key evaluation questions. Each evaluation question is associated to one or more of the Strategy's implementation tactics. The framework then identifies how each question will be answered through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), from which data collection method, and at which point(s) in time.

For example, the first KPI for the first Key Evaluation Question is the "Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs." This requires data collection on the number of ECL workforce members with credentials such as ECE and ECEA as well as the overall needs for ECL professionals in the province with disaggregation by region and Indigenous communities. Proposed data collection methods required reviews of administrative databases such as the ECE Registry and centre licensing, as well as a survey of operators about their employees and their unmet workforce needs. The final column describes the timing for data collection and reporting.

The evaluation framework is based on the Theory of Change and the potential impact pathways, all of which were reviewed with the Sector Steering Committee. The evaluation framework follows careful consideration of the long-term goals of the ECL R&R Strategy with respect to BC's child care workforce development, as well as the outcomes anticipated from the implementation of its tactics.

SRDC considers each element of the Strategy's goals and outcomes separately to hypothesize expected changes resulting from the Strategy's successful implementation. The framework ties each of the Strategy's tactics to KPI data that can be collected systematically over time to determine whether the ECL R&R Strategy is on track to achieve its medium-term (five-year) outcomes and its long-term (10-year) goals. This updated evaluation framework contains two tactics that have been added since the development of the Strategy in 2018: the Specialized Certification Grant and the British Columbia Provincial Nominee Program.

Table 4 Evaluation Framework

Key question	Implementation tactics	Key performance indicators	Data collection methods	Data collection and reporting timing
<p>I. Over the medium term of the evaluation, do recruitment strategies achieve the outcome of an adequate supply of ECEs and other child care staff entering the workforce?</p>	<p>Post-Secondary: 2,237 new spaces in ECE programs at public post-secondary institutions and an expanded dual-credit pathway for high school students, which enables Grade 11 and 12 students to take post-secondary courses and receive credit towards both high school graduation and post-secondary credentials.</p> <p>Bursaries: Funding through the ECE Education Support Fund for ECE student bursaries and workforce development bursaries.</p> <p>Provincial Nominee Program: an economic immigration program that selects a limited number of foreign nationals with the qualifications needed to contribute to the province's unique labour market needs. Nominees can apply to become permanent residents of Canada. In March 2022, the BC PNP began prioritizing the ECL sector by issuing invitations to apply to qualified workers with a job offer as an ECE or ECEA in BC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs ▪ Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers ▪ Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills ▪ Awareness of ECL career pathway options, how to pursue them, and expectations of their feasibility in terms of finances and availability of training opportunities ▪ Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills ▪ 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 	Cross-Sectional Surveys	Annually
			Child Care Workforce Contact Information Database	Annually
			Key Informant Interviews and Case Studies	Ongoing throughout project
			Public Opinion Survey	2019, 2022, 2023 & 2024
			Social and News Media Monitoring	Retroactive to 2016, then ongoing to 2021
			Administrative Outcomes Database	Annually

Key question	Implementation tactics	Key performance indicators	Data collection methods	Data collection and reporting timing
<p>II. 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?</p>	<p>Post-Secondary: 2,237 new spaces in ECE programs at public post-secondary institutions and an expanded dual-credit pathway for high school students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills Awareness of ECL career pathway options, how to pursue them, and expectations of their feasibility in terms of finances and availability of training opportunities Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report participation in professional development activities Hours of formal and informal professional development per workforce member per year Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value) among those already working in the sector 	Public Opinion Survey	2019, 2022, 2023 & 2024
	<p>Professional Networks and Support: The Early Childhood Pedagogy Network provides ECL professionals in licensed child care centres with support in creating curriculum with children, developing environments that reflect children and families' lives. A Learning Hub provides resources and learning tools so that ECL professionals can continue their professional development from anywhere in the province. More opportunities to share best practices through the Peer Mentoring Network.</p>		Cross-Sectional Surveys	Annually
	<p>Professional Development: Funds to expand opportunities for members of the ECL workforce to complete ongoing professional development with inclusion support, deaf/hard-of-hearing training, and peer mentoring.</p>		Child Care Workforce Contact Information Database	Annually
	<p>Training Supports: Funding to help ECL professionals and employers with costs associated with continuing education and training, such as travel and paid time off</p>		Key Informant Interviews and Case Studies	Ongoing throughout project
	<p>Specialized Certification Grant: As of Jan 2024, ECEs with Infant Toddler or Special Needs certification and working in licensed child care or Aboriginal Head Start with children aged 0-5 can apply for annual grants.</p>		Social and News Media Monitoring	Retroactive to 2016, then ongoing to 2021

Key question	Implementation tactics	Key performance indicators	Data collection methods	Data collection and reporting timing
<p>III. Over the medium term of the evaluation, are education, training, and professional development opportunities expanded so that the ECL workforce has the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to provide quality services to children and families?</p>	<p>Post-Secondary: 2,237 new spaces in ECE programs at public post-secondary institutions and an expanded dual-credit pathway for high school students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills Proportion of ECL professionals who self-report participation in professional development activities Hours of professional development per ECL workforce member per year Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value) among those already working in the sector 	Administrative Outcomes Database	Annually
	<p>Professional Networks and Support: The ECPN provides ECL professionals in licensed child care centres with support in creating curriculum with children, developing environments that reflect children and families' lives. A Learning Hub provides resources and learning tools so that ECL professionals can continue their professional development from anywhere in the province. More opportunities to share best practices through the Peer Mentoring Network.</p>		Cross-Sectional Surveys	Annually
	<p>Professional Development: Funds to expand opportunities for members of the ECL workforce to complete ongoing professional development with inclusion support, deaf/hard-of-hearing training, and peer mentoring.</p>		Child Care Workforce Contact Information Database	Annually
	<p>Work-based Education and Training: A pilot project to provide more options and flexibility to professionals who have considerable experience to upgrade their qualifications.</p> <p>Training Supports: Funding to help ECL professionals and employers with costs associated with continuing education and training, such as travel and paid time off</p>		Key Informant Interviews and Case Studies	Ongoing throughout project

Key question	Implementation tactics	Key performance indicators	Data collection methods	Data collection and reporting timing
<p>IV. Over the medium term of the evaluation, does the strategy promote public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of early care and learning professionals?</p>	<p>Industry Standards: Review and update of the Sector Occupational Competencies to ensure providers are delivering the highest standards of care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which updated Sector Occupational Competencies are integrated into education and training programs ▪ Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs ▪ Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers ▪ Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills ▪ Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills ▪ 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 	<p>Key Informant Interviews and Case Studies</p> <hr/> <p>Public Opinion Survey</p> <hr/> <p>Social and News Media Monitoring</p>	<p>Ongoing throughout project</p> <hr/> <p>2019, 2022, 2023 & 2024</p> <hr/> <p>Retroactive to 2016, then ongoing to 2021</p>

Key question	Implementation tactics	Key performance indicators	Data collection methods	Data collection and reporting timing
V. 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?	<p>Compensation: At eligible facilities, a \$1/hr wage enhancement for ECEs started in early 2019, retroactive to Sept 1, 2018. A second increase of \$1/hr was effective April 1, 2020 and then another \$2/hr was added in Sept 2021. An additional \$2/hr increase came into effect in Dec 2023 for ECEs at non-public sector organizations.</p> <p>Work-based Education and Training: A pilot project to provide more options and flexibility to professionals who have considerable experience to upgrade their qualifications.</p> <p>Training Supports: Funding to help ECL professionals and employers with costs associated with continuing education and training, such as travel and paid time off.</p> <p>Incentives for Transitions: As of Jan 2024, ECEs with Infant Toddler or Special Needs certification and working in licensed child care or Aboriginal Head Start with children aged 0-5 can apply for annual grants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ECL professional satisfaction and perception of appropriateness of compensation ▪ Average real wages and salaries of ECL professionals ▪ Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs ▪ Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers ▪ Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills ▪ Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report participation in professional development activities ▪ Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills ▪ Employment stability of ECL workforce, including variances for staffing for providers, work hours, job tenure, job exits ▪ Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value) among those already working in the sector ▪ 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 	Census, Labour Force Survey and other microdata analysis	Benchmark analysis in 2019, follow-up analysis in 2023
			Cross-Sectional Surveys	Annually
			Child Care Workforce Contact Information Database	Annually
			Key Informant Interviews and Case Studies	Ongoing throughout project
			Public Opinion Survey	2019, 2022, 2023 & 2024
			Social and News Media Monitoring	Retroactive to 2016, then ongoing to 2021

Note: The order and corresponding codes of the medium-term outcomes (key evaluation questions) has changed since originally reported.

Evaluation Methodology

Over the course of the evaluation, eight main lines of evidence were used to collect information related to the KPIs and key evaluation questions. They are described briefly in Table 5 and in further detail in previous evaluation reports (see Appendix A).

Table 5 Evaluation Methodology

Source	Description
News and social media analysis⁴	An analysis of child care-related social media posts and news articles news in BC, from 2019 up to 2021.
Key informant interviews (KIIs)	KIIs were a consistent feature of data collection for implementation research, case studies, and for the development of the ECL R&R Strategy theory of change.
Case studies	<p>SRDC selected in July 2019 six case study sites province-wide for onsite fieldwork. Site visits took place in September and October 2019. In 2022 as the project was being extended, three new sites were added to replace three of the original sites less keen to continue annual participation.</p> <p>Follow-up “virtual” visits were made in 2020 and 2021 (roughly September through December of each year). To the extent centres allowed, SRDC resumed in-person visits in 2022 and 2023. The fieldwork allowed evaluators to document the impact of the ECL R&R Strategy and response its tactics had on varying types of child care centres and the professionals who work in them.</p>
Census microdata	For the 2019 evaluation benchmarking report, SRDC analyzed 2016 Census microdata to create a profile of the BC ECL workforce characteristics, including family background, income, earnings, credentials, location, and well-being. Starting in early 2024, SRDC used Census 2021 data to analyze how the workforce changed since 2016. SRDC additionally used Labour Force Survey data to examine trends over the lag period between Census data collection and reporting.

⁴ Data collection ceased in December 2021 and was not pursued in the final years of the evaluation. The exercise consumed considerable resources to establish media search strings, algorithms, and analytical scope month by month, without yielding an equivalent benefit. The evidence stream was discontinued to permit more effort to be diverted to other evaluation evidence streams, primarily the public opinion survey.

Source	Description
Education and tax records	SRDC analyzed education data linked to tax records of individuals enrolling in public post-secondary ECE programs in BC, results that are used to report on education outcomes. SRDC repeated the analysis in 2024 to take stock of changes in education participation during the initial years of the ECL R&R Strategy.
Annual cross-sectional surveys of child care employers and professionals	<p>SRDC developed, revised, and administered the annual cross-sectional surveys of child care employers and professionals. Since 2020, these surveys were administered separately, with a staggered launch schedule. The employers' survey was launched in early-mid October; the survey of professionals (dubbed the "workforce survey") was launched in late-October.</p> <p>Survey instrument drafts were presented to the Sector Steering Committee and the Government Working Group for their review, input, and recommended changes every year before the launch of the survey.</p> <p>The tasks included email reminders in the event of non-completion, SSC promotion including social media and newsletter invitations, and ECEBC website publicity. SRDC staffed a helpline and email support service to respond to inquiries.</p>
Public opinion surveys	<p>Public opinion surveys were administered in 2019, 2022, 2023, and 2024, to a representative sample of BC adults aged 18+ years. An additional survey was administered to a sample of <i>emerging adults</i>, between 13 and 23 years of years, to gauge their career aspirations.</p> <p>SRDC designed and tested public opinion survey instruments. SRDC commissioned an external market research firm (Maru Matchbox) to field the survey to its representative panel of British Columbians. SRDC supported and monitored fieldwork, received and checked the quality of survey data, and undertook analysis.</p>
Administrative outcomes database	These (mostly) publicly compiled data cover aspects of tactic delivery, education pathways and additional means to take stock of the wide variety of operators and professionals working in the sector. Over a dozen datasets were collected by SRDC from different sources.

Updates and Adjustments to Original Evaluation Methodology

The original evaluation design was based on monitoring the progress and outcomes of the ECL R&R Strategy and its tactics, as launched in 2018, to the end of 2021. SRDC drafted its original description of project tasks and activities to include in the evaluation workplan in January 2019. New initiatives and expansions of the original tactics since 2018 have enhanced provincial supports for the development of BC's ECL workforce. These developments have been embraced as far as possible in updates to the evaluation work plan since 2019.

PSFS decided in late 2021 to support a two-year extension of the evaluation to cover the fourth and fifth years of the ECL R&R Strategy. Subsequently, SRDC revised its evaluation framework and updated evaluation tasks and activities. These were finalized in consultation with the SSC in June 2022.

The evaluated period since March 2020 has been subject to the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the evaluation has included additional data collection, where feasible, to identify the influence of the pandemic on workforce outcomes as distinct from those related the ECL R&R Strategy.

Additional changes to the sector during the evaluated period include shifting jurisdiction and responsibility for ECL from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Education and Child Care. Over this time, the province saw broader expansion of child care into K-12 education, such as through the Seamless Day Kindergarten program and increased role of school districts in the provision of child care. While shifts like these are not elements of the ECL R&R Strategy, they interact with it in ways that are not always possible to isolate from the effects of the Strategy. For example, the addition of Recreational Care as a licensed category in 2021 resulted in a slightly different definition of the “ECL workforce” for the cross-sectional survey compared to earlier years. Thus, some changes in outcomes reported by the workforce may have been due to the shifting demographics of the workforce rather than the tactics.

Finally, the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreements initiated by the federal government in 2021 have dramatically changed the ECL landscape in BC. The historic investment in building a comprehensive system of child care in Canada and explicitly supporting the recruitment and retention of ECL professionals has been widely praised by child care advocates. Despite the overall anticipated positive social and economic benefits of a national child care plan, it presents another significant source of “noise” into the evaluation of BC’s ECL R&R Strategy. That is, effects of the ECL R&R Strategy on the ECL workforce have become more difficult to attribute to the ECL R&R Strategy and its tactics even as some have been augmented by initiatives funded as part of the national plan. The publicity the national plan receives may also influence opinions in BC. SRDC has continued to strive for a clear understanding of the ECL R&R Strategy tactics through tailoring its data collection and analysis methods as far as possible to focus on their impact amidst other changes affecting the ECL workforce.



Key Outcomes from New Data

In many cases the most up-to-date comparisons of the situation faced by the ECL workforce appear in the most recent Evaluation Report (2023). However, some key data and analysis has become available since the 2023 report. These results are summarized below and appear in full in Appendix B.

Statistics Canada Microdata

Size and Characteristics of the BC ECL Workforce (Census and Labour Force Survey)

By examining multiple years of the Canadian Census and Labour Force Survey (LFS), SRDC has compared the numbers and characteristics of people working in the ECL sector in BC to benchmarks set before the ECL R&R Strategy began. This section describes two groups within the ECL workforce, which unfortunately do not align perfectly with definitions applied with the other datasets in this report:

- **Early Childhood Educator/Assistant+ (ECE/A+):** “Core ECE/A” professionals whose occupations are categorized as Early Childhood Educator or Assistant as well as “Additional Core ECE/A” professionals, who work in a relevant ECE industry and/or have a relevant ECE education, and whose occupation is categorized as manager in social, community, or correctional services; social and community service worker; or elementary and secondary school teacher assistant.
- **Home Child Care Providers (HCP+):** Home child care providers care for the well-being and physical and social development of children, 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 can be employed by private households and child-care agencies, or they may be self-employed.

Size of workforce

The key finding comparing results from the 2016 and 2021 Censuses is that **the net size of the ECL workforce in BC decreased between 2016 and 2021. The BC Early Childhood Educators/Assistants+ (ECE/A+) workforce grew from 20,530 to 25,225 people⁵**—growth that outpaced growth in the number of BC workers in non-ECL sectors. However, **the number of Home Child Care Providers (HCP+) in BC decreased substantially from 15,180 to 8,715** during the same period.

⁵ In both the 2016 and 2021 Censuses, the majority (i.e., > 85 per cent) of professionals classified within the ECE/A+ group represented “Core ECE/A” early childhood educators and assistants, while the remaining represent “Additional Core ECE/A” professionals distributed across relevant occupations and industries with an ECE credential.

While the data available does not provide insight into why the number of HCP+ declined, it is possible that they either joined the ECE/A+ workforce or exited the ECL sector completely.

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

Compared to the workforce in the 2016 Census, there was a decrease in the percentage of ECL professionals born in Canada by 2021 (from 61 to 57 per cent) and an increase of those who were established immigrants (in Canada for more than five years), newcomers (in Canada for fewer than five years), or non-residents (see Appendix B **Error! Reference source not found.**).

The percentage of Indigenous ECL professionals was stable between 2016 and 2021 at 7 per cent. This was higher than workers in non-ECL sectors, among whom 5 per cent identified as Indigenous in 2021.

In both 2016 and 2021, people in the ECL sector were more likely to work part-time hours compared to those in non-ECL sectors (see Appendix B Table 10). However, between 2016 and 2021, there was a decrease in the percentage of part-time ECL professionals from 37 to 34 per cent—a decrease that was largely driven by change among ECE/A+ rather than those working as HCP+.

People in the ECL workforce were more likely to attend school compared to the non-ECL workforce in both 2016 and 2021. In 2021, 21 per cent of ECL professionals attended school in the Census year—a higher rate than the 13 per cent of non-ECL workers who attended school during that same period.

Perhaps related to the higher rate working part-time hours and attending school, ECL professionals continued to earn lower income compared to those in the non-ECL sectors. In 2021, 77 per cent of ECL professionals earned less than \$1,045.40 weekly, compared to 46 per cent of non-ECL workers. Nevertheless, the share of the ECL sector earning more than \$784.05 per week grew from 31 to 42 per cent between 2016 and 2021.

There was a large increase in the percentage of HCP+ who were self-employed, increasing from 30 per cent in 2016 to 45 per cent in 2021. Compared to 2016 (4 per cent), there was an increase in the percentage of those in the ECL sector who were unemployed at the time of responding to the 2021 Census (6 per cent). In 2016, ECL professionals were slightly less likely to be unemployed compared to non-ECL workers, while the reverse was true by 2021—a possible legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Educational characteristics

In general, the ECL workforce is more likely to have a postsecondary education than the non-ECL sector; a larger share of the non-ECL workforce had a high school certificate or less as their highest credential compared to ECE/A+. For ECE/A+ in both 2016 and 2021, the most common education level was an ECL-related credential below the BA level. In contrast, few HCP+ had an ECL-related credential.

The share of ECE/A+ with an ECL or non-ECL related credential at the BA level or above increased from 21 per cent in 2016 to 25 per cent in 2021.

Earnings by education level

Inflation adjusted average earnings increased for all ECL-sector professionals between 2016 and 2021 (see Appendix B Table 14 and Table 15). Among ECE/A+ in both years, the increase in earnings between the two time periods was largest among people who had a high school diploma (23 per cent), ECL-related credential below the BA level (19 per cent), and non-ECL credential at or above the BA level (29 per cent). Average earnings also increased for HCP+, especially those with no certification or diploma.

In both 2016 and 2021, average weekly earnings varied considerably by education level for people working in both ECL and non-ECL sectors. For ECE/A+ in 2021, average weekly earnings were lowest (\$700) for those with no certificate or diploma (i.e., education below a high school credential) and highest (\$1158) for those with an ECL-related credential below the BA level. In 2021, average earnings for ECE/A+ with an ECL-related credential below the BA level were slightly higher than for ECE/A+ with higher levels of education (e.g., a BA or above), **evidence of diminishing returns to higher levels of education among ECE/A+**. For HCP+, average earnings were lower than their ECE/A+ counterparts across all levels of education, although they were unusually large for HCP+ with no certificate or diploma.



\$1158

Mean weekly employment income for
ECE/A+ with
**ECL PSE
below BA**



\$1021

Mean weekly employment income for
ECE/A+ with
**ECL PSE
BA or above**

In general, these findings imply that while the sector has been growing modestly in size, growth has been concentrated within occupations classified as ECE/A+ where PSE ECE-related credentials predominate, rather than among HCP+ where they do not. This can be interpreted as a sign of increasing “professionalization” of the sector over the five years. Proportions working full-time have increased and, no doubt for a range of reasons, earnings have also grown. These changes have not occurred in a way that favours a narrow range of demographic or socioeconomic characteristics: age profiles and proportions Indigenous have remained stable while the growth in the share of the workforce born outside Canada is on par with that seen in the BC labour force. Despite growth in earnings, the ECL sector has lower earned income than the non-ECL sector even though they are generally more educated.

ECE Public Education Pathways (Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform)

The ECL R&R Strategy is intended to increase the number of qualified ECEs working in BC partly by increasing the flow of students into ECE education and training programs and also by raising the numbers graduating and certified as ECEs. By examining linked data from Statistics Canada's Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform (ELMLP), SRDC has attempted to evaluate the changing composition of students entering and exiting public post-secondary ECE programs before and during the initial implementation of the ECL R&R Strategy. However, we cannot examine the effect of ECL R&R Strategy tactics on individuals' fully completed pathways covering transitions into, through, and out of education into the labour market because data are only available up to 2021. Instead, we have separately examined three phases: PSE entry (students who enrolled in a public BC ECE program between 2013 and 2021); PSE exit (students in the last observed year of their ECE program, up to 2020); and the first year in the labour market (ECE students observed as entering the labour market one year after leaving ECE programs as indicated through the presence of a tax record, up to 2019).

Note that private training institutions are not included in the ELMLP database; thus education pathways at private institutions are not included in this analysis (see 2023 Evaluation Report for available data from private institutions). Although many ECL R&R Strategy tactics are aimed at public institutions, many ECEs are educated at private institutions. As limited information is available for such institutions, the ELMLP is one of the most comprehensive sources of information available on ECE student pathways. Nonetheless, a comprehensive dataset containing information on both sources would be valuable.

Characteristics of BC ECE Students at Program Entry

In line with expectations of the ECL R&R Strategy, **there has been an increase in the number of people entering public BC ECE post-secondary programs since 2017** (see Table 6). Up to 2019, the number of students entering ECE programs ranged below 1,090. But in 2020, the ECE entry cohort size increased to almost 1,200. In 2021, the cohort size increased again to over 1,400.

In general, the characteristics of students entering ECE programs appear relatively stable. Over 95 per cent of students are women and over 80 per cent of programs are Certificate or Diploma programs. There are several notable changes in entry characteristics since 2018. First, there is consistent *increase* in the proportion of international students, from 11 per cent in 2018 to 20 per cent in 2021. This increase in international students is coupled with an increase in students enrolled in a program for English language learners in 2021. Second, there is a consistent *decrease* in students with previous post-secondary experience, from 58 per cent in 2018 to 47 per cent in 2021. Finally, there is a consistent *decrease* in the

proportion of students who are low-income (calculated by Statistics Canada as 50 per cent of adjusted median family income), from 28 per cent in 2018 to 16 per cent in 2021.⁶

Table 6 Characteristics of students entering public BC ECE programs, 2017-2021

ECE program entry cohort		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
PSE characteristics	Observations =	790	1,090	1,060	1,180	1,440
Previous PSE experience	Yes (%)	55.7	57.8	53.8	58.5	47.2
Program of entry	Other (%)	7.6	11.0	9.4	7.6	6.3
	Certificate (%)	32.9	34.9	32.1	33.9	27.1
	Diploma (%)	49.4	45.0	49.1	50.0	59.7
	BA (%)	6.3	6.4	6.6	5.1	4.9
	Graduate (%)	3.8	2.8	3.8	3.4	2.1
Enrolled in college or university	College (%)	72.2	72.5	60.4	66.9	69.4
	University (%)	27.8	27.5	39.6	33.1	31.3
Demographic characteristics in PSE	Observations =	790	1,090	1,060	1,180	1,440
Male/Female⁷	Female (%)	97.5	96.3	95.3	95.8	95.8
Age group	<19 (%)	16.5	14.7	15.1	13.6	18.8
	20-24 (%)	27.8	26.6	22.6	26.3	22.2
	25-29 (%)	15.2	18.3	17.0	16.1	17.4
	30-39 (%)	21.5	22.9	26.4	24.6	25.0
	40+ (%)	19.0	18.3	18.9	19.5	17.4
Immigration status	Canadian citizen	78.5	78.9	73.6	78.0	68.1
	PR or other visa	10.1	10.1	12.3	9.3	12.5
	International student	11.4	11.0	14.2	12.7	20.1
Characteristics in year prior to entry	Observations =	620	820	760	880	630
Marital status	Married/Common law (%)	35.5	35.4	39.5	38.6	38.1
Low income	Yes (%)	21.0	28.0	21.1	21.6	15.9
Has children aged 17 or under	Yes (%)	48.4	45.1	43.4	43.2	39.7

Source: Results from the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform. Descriptive results rounded to the nearest 10.

⁶ Adjusted indicates consideration of needs due to family size.

⁷ In the 2016 Census, males and females were identified by Statistics Canada's "sex of a person" variable, although gender diverse respondents could report the sex they most identified with or leave the question blank. In 2021, Statistics Canada updated the census to include separate measures representing the "gender of person" and "sex at birth." Our 2021 analysis used the former "gender of person" indicator. In this indicator, the category "non-binary persons" are included in either binary gender category—allocation that is done by Statistics Canada.

While the increase in international students corresponds with an overall increase of international students in Canada in the past five years, the decrease in proportion of students with prior post-secondary experience and low-income students in ECE programs suggest that **enrollment in ECE education has expanded to some groups who may not have chosen these types of programs in the past.**

Characteristics at Exit

As might be expected from the increase in students entering ECE programs, there is also an increase in the number of students exiting ECE programs, from 980 in 2018, when the ECL R&R Strategy began, to 1,350 in 2020. Unfortunately, available graduation numbers are not reliable due to inconsistencies in the way practicums and certifications are recorded by PSE institutions in the post-secondary administrative data.⁸

Like entry characteristics, the exit characteristics of students appear to be relatively consistent over time. Over 95 per cent of students exiting programs are women and over 80 per cent of students exit from Certificate and Diploma programs. Notably, there has been an *increase* in the proportion of students leaving ECE programs who, when they were in a BC high school, identified as Indigenous. The proportion shifts from 14 to 18 per cent in 2013 through 2016 to consistently above 20 per cent since 2017.

Characteristics during First Year in the Labour Market

As with the earlier analyses, the PSE and labour market characteristics of ECE students observed as entering the labour market one year after leaving ECE programs appear relatively stable over time. Over 80 per cent exited from a Certificate or Diploma program and over 95 per cent were women (see Appendix B Table 26). Average inflation-adjusted earnings consistently fall between \$31,000 and \$35,000. A noteworthy change is a *decrease* over the period in the proportion of individuals that Statistics Canada identifies as low income by this point in their careers from 20+ per cent to below 10 per cent.

SRDC's analysis of education pathways suggests that the introduction of the ECL R&R Strategy tactic to increase the number of seats in ECE programs has been associated with increases in the numbers of students entering and exiting ECE programs. Traditionally, the credential has attracted somewhat older students, those who are married or living common law, and those with children under 18. **Despite the growth in numbers, there is no sign that the profile of students is changing dramatically** since the introduction of the ECL R&R Strategy tactics.

⁸ Certificates are issued by the ECE Registry rather than the institution for those who have completed recognized ECE programs so Statistics Canada records do not record those certifications.

Qualitative Data

Key Informant Interviews

In early 2024, 11 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with post-secondary education providers, those involved in education, certification, and training supports, and with a large employer at a \$10-a-Day Prototype site. Three main themes emerged from the findings:

A variety of education pathways are important to meet the needs of students.

There are more than 150 ECE programs available at 34 post-secondary institutions in BC (including distance learning). In discussing benefits and challenges, KIIs identified that variation in educational formats (i.e., online/in-person/hybrid, part-time/full-time) and rolling intake schedules work well for students and ensure employers have a steady stream of new staff available. Regarding barriers, KIIs called attention to the differences in funding between full-time and part-time students:

- Most full-time students attend PSE institutions in person for at least some of their courses. **A particular challenge for FT students is they need additional money to cover living expenses as they cannot work full-time while completing their course.** Higher wages in the sector help students to repay their loans although those interviewed suggested students' financial situation remained challenging.
- Part-time students tend to register for online courses and complete them individually. KIIs suggested most of these students are working full-time in the sector. **The main challenge for PT students is the length of time it takes for them to become fully certified ECL professionals.** Specifically, it is difficult for those working in the sector and upskilling to participate in practicums, because they need to take time off from work and not all practicums are paid:

“A lot of people... just don't go any further because they know they've got the practicum to do. And sometimes I feel like if that person has been working in a day care for [many] years and has worked in all the various departments, you know, like the baby room, the toddler, special needs, if they've had that whole gamut, why wouldn't that count?”

Key Informant Interview

Tactics are not joined up under a systems-view, creating unhelpful interactions.

KIIs commented that **complex social issues are not solved by quick fixes.** They perceived many existing tactics, such as the prioritization of ECEs/ECEAs through the BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP), to be quick fixes.

“We're actively recruiting people who are short term.”

Key Informant Interview

KIIs report that **implementation of tactics created financial challenges for some students**. For example, ECE workforce and students bursaries are administered as a reimbursement even though fees for ECE courses are charged before starting the course. The rationale is that upfront bursaries can result in unfair disbursement to students who don't complete their courses, leaving later applicants short of bursaries because the pool of available funding had already been exhausted.

Better uptake of bursaries has been observed after adopting a simpler and streamlined online system. Although uptake has improved, the bursary is still not reaching all students, which creates a challenge for the students and for bursary administrators who are unable to assist after intake is closed. Indeed, most bursary applications come from new students in the sector; only about 13 per cent of the latest intake were for current employees or owner/operators upskilling to ECE or ECE+.

Another challenge in the implementation of financial tactics has arisen whereby some employers whose broader workplace is part of a public sector association appear unable to access the extra \$2/hr wage enhancement top-up for their ECL professionals. Because the wage enhancement is implemented at the workplace level, ECEs with non-provincially funded collective agreements at provincially-funded organizations are not eligible for the additional top-up.

“The government's policy on this is penalizing ... a group of early childhood educators. Nobody will tell me how to fix this.”

KII, Employer

Individual tactics may exhibit some aggregate success but this can remain unclear to those involved in their provision. One KII questioned whether they were indeed making a meaningful difference:

“So it's really hard to gauge if it's had the big enough impact that we hoped it would I feel like if the sector is still in crisis, if this is still a problem, then somewhere along the line, even after five years of funding there's kind of a mismatch with the [amount in millions] in funding and still, the sector is not better than it was when we first started.”

Key Informant Interview

ECL professionals need consistent career pathways and education standards.

KIIs felt education standards across ECE courses and institutions were variable. Since 2019 SRDC has heard regularly from its case study site fieldwork that the quality of new educators has been a concern with the problem reportedly becoming more acute in recent years. KIIs, however, generally maintained that the quality of ECEs had not changed, noting that minimum regulatory requirements

remain. Instead, some KIIs noted the changing distribution of the workforce and the standards now being applied to training and oversight. For example:

- One KII suggested that up to half of the students from a named ECE education program go directly into K-12 teaching programs after completing ECE rather than entering the ECL sector.
- Licensing officers focus on things like health and safety, but less so on quality and education.
- More attention is needed on who is educating incoming educators and the minimum standards for becoming instructors.
- Students are aware of the economic climate and which organizations offer the best benefits and working conditions. Those with full ECE are sometimes unsatisfied at workplaces that apply lower standards:

“Students are ... asking for certain things and the owner is usually just like, “well, you're just here to do this and you don't need to worry about anything else” kind of thing. But well-trained people know that there are certain things that they need to do. So, there's some frustration there.”

Key Informant Interview

- Some KIIs assert that more rigorous **minimum education standards** should be enforced to prepare students to support children through complex challenges:

“People need to have educators that can support children who are dealing with life. You know, when a little person has decided they're not a boy and their parents have decided they are... When you have 25 children in a room, you know, most families have moments.”

Key Informant Interview

KIIs suggested that requiring a higher minimum education standard, such as a 4-year degree or diploma, could help ensure that ECL professionals chose the profession because they wanted to work with children, and could ensure their colleagues/managers shared similar aspirations, reducing friction and burnout. This was referred to as “*what children deserve*”, implying tactics developed for the ECL R&R Strategy should prioritize the needs of children before those of the economy or labour market.

Case Study Departing Staff

Over the five years of the evaluation, 12 individuals from case study sites left their positions and were interviewed or surveyed by SRDC. Most of these position switchers still worked in a child care role. Among those still working in child care, **the main reasons for leaving their previous employers included working conditions** such as: being short-staffed; not having a consistent work schedule; or not feeling comfortable, supported, or appreciated at work. When asked how to encourage others to join the ECL sector, the most common response was to improve wages. Additionally, case study leavers generally supported the notion of a more qualified workforce:

“Having to pick up the slack of other staff who aren't as qualified is another really big cause of burnout because, as a supervisor especially, I'm the one who takes on the slack... If more people were higher qualified, I think that would take a lot of burnout away.”

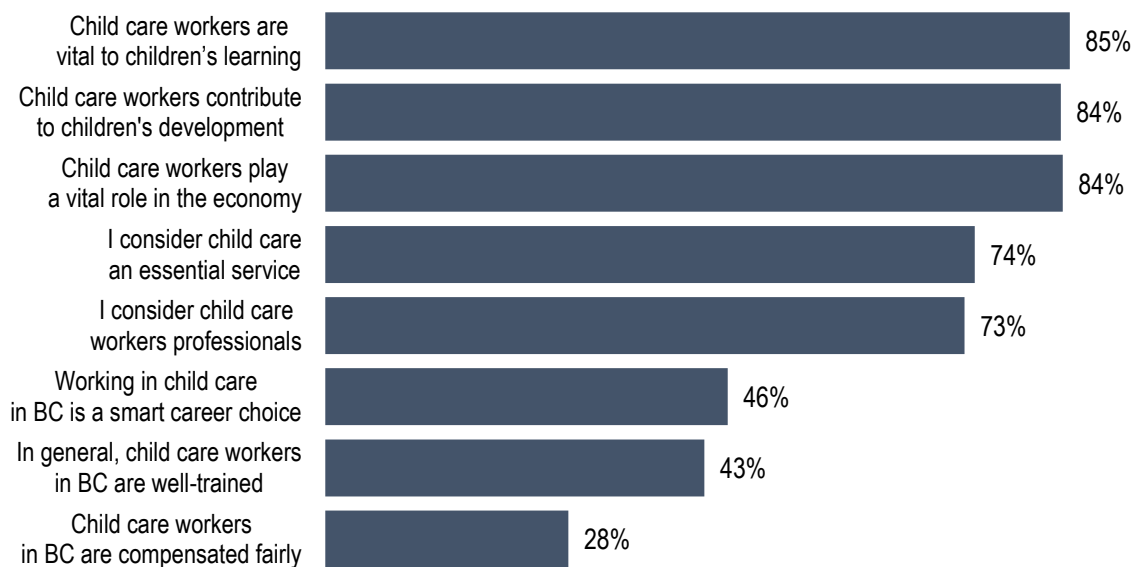
Case Study Leaver

Public Opinion Survey

Value and Perceptions of Child Care

A representative sample of nearly 2,000 adults in BC were asked about their opinions of child care work and professionals. There was **general agreement that child care professionals are vital to children’s learning and development as well as the economy** – see Figure 1. The public remains generally unsure as to whether child care professionals in BC are well-trained and fairly compensated. However, the biggest change in perceptions compared to 2019 reflects more agreement that child care professionals are well-trained (13 percentage point increase; see Appendix B Table 28). Compared to previous years, more among the public feel that child care professionals are compensated fairly, with equal proportions (28 per cent) agreeing and disagreeing and the remaining 44 per cent being “unsure”.

Figure 1 Proportion of general public who agree or strongly agree with child care statements, 2024



Source: 2024 public opinion survey.

Similar to previous years, the 2024 survey finds that **the general public maintains overall positive views of child care professionals**, with 87 per cent of adults in BC valuing the work done by child care professionals and 10 per cent being unsure (see Appendix B Table 29). Similarly, 85 per cent of teenagers aged 13-17 reported valuing the work of child care professionals.

Overall, there were few differences between female and male respondents in ratings of value of child care work. However, female respondents were more likely to “strongly” value the work done by child care

professionals compared to male respondents. Similarly, value of child care work was roughly equivalent among parents with children aged 0-17 living with them and respondents without children aged 0-17 at home, but parents were more likely to “strongly” value child care work than those without such children.

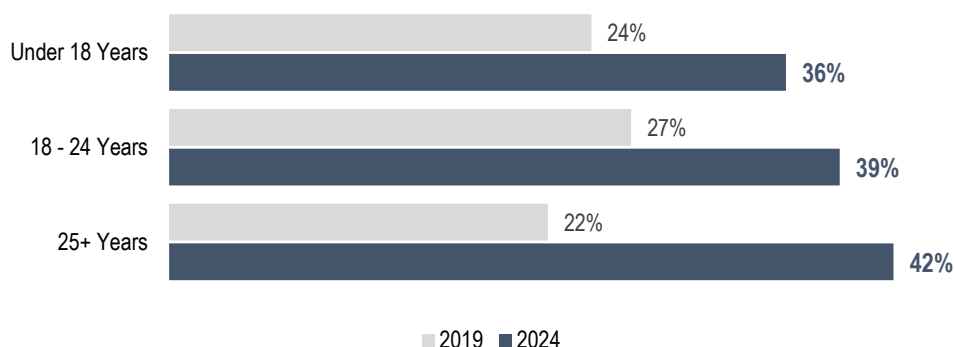
When asked how their value for child care professionals has changed since 2019, most adults responded that there has been no change (61 percent). Only 5 per cent reported they currently value child care professionals less than they did five years ago. Those most likely to report an increase in their value for child care professionals since 2019 were parents with children aged 0-17 living with them (45 per cent).

New in 2024, respondents were asked about *public* sentiments. While 87 per cent of adults personally value the work done by child care professionals, only 63 per cent agree that “the public” values the work done by child care professionals. Even fewer (46 per cent) agree that child care work is valued by the BC government. Plausibly then, **child care work being undervalued may be more perceptual than real.**

Interest in Child Care as a Career

Emerging adults aged 13-24 and adults aged 25 and over who are considering making a career change were asked to rate their general interest in working in child care, as well as interest based on a range of hypothetical working conditions. In general, **interest in working in child care increased with age**, ranging from 36 per cent of those under 18 years to 39 per cent of those aged 18-24 and 42 per cent of those aged 25+ who are considering a career change. Among adults, respondents with children aged 0-17 at home were more likely to be interested compared to those without children aged 0-17 (50 per cent compared to 38 per cent), and female respondents were more likely than male respondents to be interested in a career in child care (45 per cent compared to 36 per cent).

Figure 2 Career interest module respondents who agree or strongly agree they would be interested in working in child care, by age group



Source: 2019 and 2024 public opinion surveys.

Compared to the benchmarks collected in 2019, **interest in child care as a career increased across all three age groups**, with the biggest increase in those 25 years and up (20 percentage points higher than 2019 at 42 per cent). This age group remains the most amenable to careers in child care, though both 18 – 24 and 25+ age groups are more likely to agree than disagree that they would be interested in working in child care (with approximately one-quarter being ‘unsure’).

Among those interested in a career in child care, the main reasons provided by respondents included it being **perceived as enjoyable, well-aligned with the respondents’ skills and interests, as well as important to society**. Respondents who cited importance to society described making a difference in the lives of children and investing in the future, as well as supporting others to work:

“Because child care is necessary to the development of children. Parents are busy and they need help.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

Among those not interested in a career in child care, personal alignment, rather than aspects of the career itself, were most commonly noted. Being **interested in another career and/or not wanting to work with children were the most likely factors for lack of interest in child care work**. Many of these respondents described not liking children or not having the skills, such as patience and energy, that are required for working with children:

“That’s not where my interests or talents lie when considering a new career. Better left to those interested.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

External factors also highlighted the negative working conditions, such as the work being demanding, offering low pay or benefits, and being undervalued.

“It’s a high stress job with not a lot of gratitude or high pay.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

In general, the notion that child care is skilled work was present in both reasons for and against interest in child care work. Personal experience with children was a common theme; thus, **increasing people’s opportunities to interact and/or work with children may help individuals gain clarity on whether it is a good career option for them**.

Influence of Supportive Working Conditions on Interest in Careers in Child Care

The presence of supportive working conditions increases the attractiveness of a career in child care for all age groups (see Appendix B Table 32). **Extended health benefits and flexible work hours/days**

were the most important conditions; 72 per cent of parents stated they would be interested in working in child care if it offered flexibility. Additionally, the offer of a pension plan made child care more attractive, especially for those 25 and up. The presence of paid sick days and affordable education were also important for those 18 – 24 years of age. When asked the minimum wage required to consider a career in child care, the modal response was \$23-\$25 per hour, with only 13 per cent indicating that they would never consider a career in child care.

Predicting Interest in Careers in Child Care

New regression analyses were run to explore how demographic characteristics and perceptions of child care predict interest in working in child care among adults in BC. As explained in previous reports (see Appendix A), regression analyses tell us to what extent various factors are associated with outcomes.

Results show that **perceptions of child care professionals as well-trained, fairly compensated, and valued by government are predictors of interest in working in child care**. Additionally, being born in Canada is associated with a decrease in interest in working in child care.



Born in Canada

Being **born in Canada** is associated with:

16% decrease in the likelihood they would be interested in working in child care.



Fairly Compensated

Perceiving ECL professionals as **fairly compensated** is associated with:

11% increase in the likelihood they would be interested in working in child care.



Well-Trained

Perceiving ECL professionals as **well-trained** is associated with:

15% increase in the likelihood they would be interested in working in child care.



Valued by BC Government

Perceiving ECL professionals as **valued by government** associated with:

10% increase in the likelihood they would be interested in working in child care.

The interaction of demographic and perceptual ratings suggest that **experiences and perceptions largely drive interest in child care work**, rather than specific traits of each individual (see Appendix B Table 34). The take away for the context of the ECL R&R Strategy is that demonstrating to adults in BC that child care professionals are well-trained, fairly compensated, and valued by government could potentially increase individuals' interest in working in child care by as much as 10 to 15 per cent.



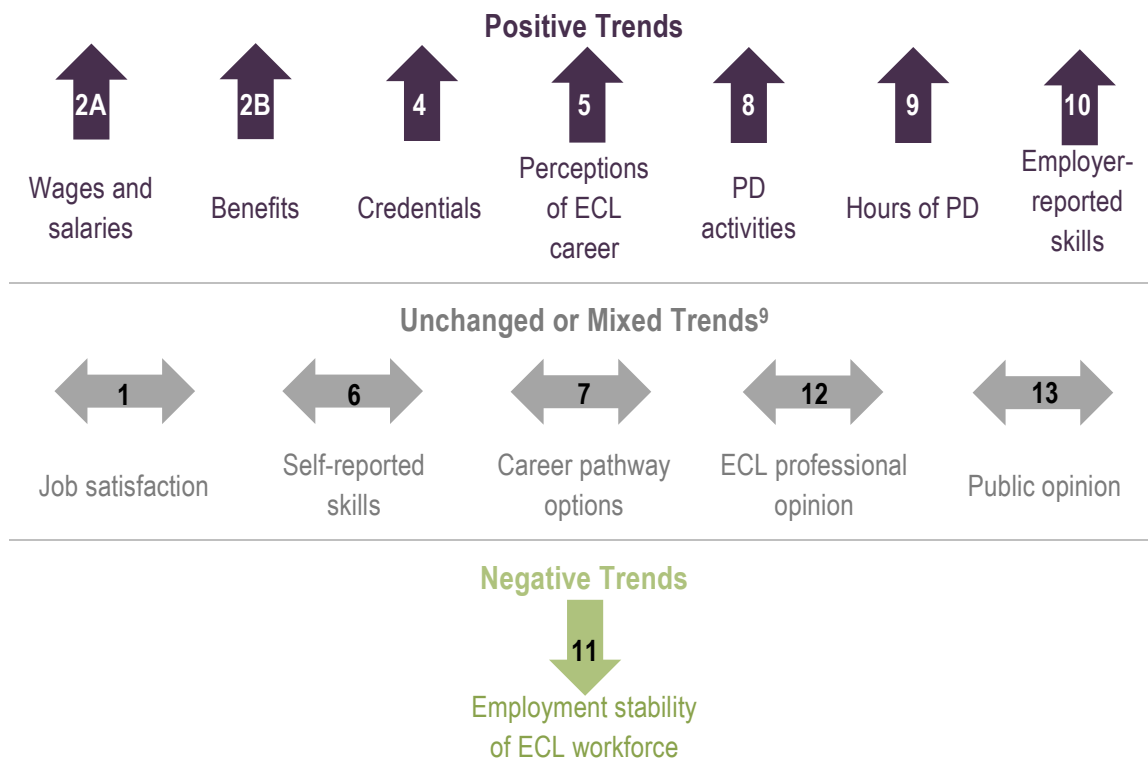
Summary of Key Findings to Date

Progress on Key Performance Indicators

To take stock of progress against each KPI, we consider results from all relevant data sources. We compare the position of the ECL sector in 2024 relative to 2019 and earlier (and also intervening years where relevant), drawing on observations from professionals in their own words to add meaning to the statistics.

The KPIs are listed in the pages below (Table 7) with a summary of the ECL R&R Strategy’s progress to date. An arrow is used to summarize the overall trend of each indicator since the launch of the Strategy. This can be an improvement (large or small) [↑], a deterioration [↓] or a mixed result [↔].







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. Thus, 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.






⁹ Assessment of KPI13, Sector Occupational Competencies, has not been possible to date.

Inevitably, many nuances of findings are lost in such a high-level summary. Readers are encouraged to review previous reports for a more complete story (see Appendix A).

Table 7 Summary of Progress on KPIs, 2019 – 2024

KPI1	ECL professional satisfaction and perception of appropriateness of compensation	
Job Satisfaction	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'.	
Satisfaction with Benefits	The intensity of satisfaction with benefits has declined since 2019: fewer respondents are strongly satisfied with their benefits, though more report feeling satisfied.	
Satisfaction with Income	Rates of satisfaction with income have declined slightly 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, despite appreciation for the wage enhancement (among those eligible).	
Motivating Factors	Motivating factors remained relatively high. Nearly all ECL professionals, regardless of their role and workplace, believe that their work is important. A greater proportion of ECL professionals other than RAs feel that they have reasonable control over most things that affect their job satisfaction and that they are able to respond to their personal and family needs compared to 2019.	
Burnout	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.	

KPI2A Average real wages and salaries of ECL professionals 	
Changes in Wages and Income	<p>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 period¹⁰.</p> <p>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 \$3.39 to \$4.24 per hour over those with no certification.</p> 
Wage Enhancement	<p>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 on their dissatisfaction with what they saw as the program's narrow eligibility requirements that excludes ECEAs, some ECEs, and other ECL professionals.¹¹</p> 

¹⁰ Considering the important effects of inflation on the cost of living, SRDC has adjusted financial information (e.g., wages and monthly earnings) to constant 2024 dollars using the Statistics Canada's monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI). Wherever relevant, SRDC adjusts 2019 dollars to be equivalent—and comparable—to 2024 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.

¹¹ 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.

KPI2B

Benefits of ECL Professionals



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 1-4 per cent in 2023, which is an improvement again over 2022. Stated differently: more employers are offering benefits to their staff.



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.

Additional benefits, such as financial assistance for ECE-related training and professional development, increased from 2019 to 2023.

Receipt of Benefits

Overall, ECL professionals were less likely to report receiving benefits than employers were to report offering them, though generally reported greater increases relative to 2019 suggesting that perhaps there is greater awareness. Fewer professionals working in private businesses reported receiving extended health care, dental coverage, and paid sick days from their employer compared to other workplace types. Union members were more likely to receive benefits than non-unionized workers.












KPI3






Integration of updated Sector Occupational Competencies into education and training programs





Industry Standards





The updated Sector Occupational Competencies, announced in 2018, have yet to be released. As a result, SRDC has not collected data on this indicator to date.


KPI4	Proportion of ECL professionals with credentials relevant to provision of child care for provincial ECL needs, including regional and Indigenous ECL needs	
PSE Enrollment	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.	
Registry Certifications	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 ECEs and ECEAs since 2018-19 with 2022-23 seeing 8,736 new certificates granted—a 57 per cent increase over 2018-19.	
Possession of ECL-related Credentials by Professionals	<p>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.</p> <p>However, employers in all health authority regions reported a decline in the proportion of their workforce with ECE or ECE+ certification from 2019 to 2023. The proportion of directors holding ECE or ECE+ has declined 19 percentage points since 2019.</p> <p>A longitudinal study 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 to the sector, but more data is needed to understand whether new ECEAs are seeking their ECE credential.</p> <p>In general, growth in the sector has been concentrated within ECE/A+—occupations where PSE ECL-related credentials predominate. This can be interpreted as a sign of increasing “professionalization” of the sector over the five years.</p>	

KPI5	Perceptions of ECL career among those making decisions with respect to their own careers	
Interest in Pursuing ECL as a Career	<p>The 2024 wave of the public opinion survey showed that 36 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 of 12 – 20 percentage points. Increased interest in child care work was often attributed to respondents gaining experience interacting or working with children and realizing that it could be an enjoyable career that aligns with their personal skills and values.</p> <p>The presence of working conditions such as flexible hours/days, extended health benefits, and a pension plan, increased the attractiveness of a career in ECL. Regression analyses showed that perceiving child care professionals to be well-trained, fairly compensated, and valued by the BC government was positively associated with interest in working in child care.</p>	
KPI6	Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report possession of core skills and supplementary skills	
Skills Self-Assessment	<p>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 special needs, up from 54 per cent in 2019: the largest increase in self-reported skills.</p> <p>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.</p>	
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 as well as an increase in PD related to trauma-informed practice for all except ECEAs.	
Self-Reported Management Skills	The majority of managers (approximately 92 per cent) felt that they could easily handle their management responsibilities, and 84 per cent felt prepared to take on their new responsibilities when they became a manager. [not asked in 2019]	


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.	
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.		
	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.		
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.		
Availability of Training Opportunities	Nineteen 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. [not assessed in 2019]		
KPI8		Proportion of ECL workforce who self-report participation in professional development activities	
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.		
	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.		


KPI9	Hours of professional development per ECL workforce member per year	
Hours of Professional Development Participation	<p>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 to 26 hours on average. Regression analysis suggests a positive association between workplace benefits and attending PD.</p>	
KPI10	Employers report of the share of their ECL workforce possessing core skills and possessing supplementary skills	
Overall Core Skills	<p>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.</p>	
Skills of Managers	<p>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]</p>	


KPI11	Employment stability of ECL workforce, including variances for staffing for providers, work hours, job tenure, job exits	
Shortfalls in Qualified Staff	<p>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, down from 43 per cent in 2019. Workplaces with unfilled vacant positions had an average of 1.93 vacancies, with some as high as 15.</p> <p>Forty-four per cent said they had to fill a position with an individual with lower qualifications than they wanted (down from 53 per cent in 2019). More than a quarter of employers (26 per cent) said they had to refuse children in the last 12 months because they felt they did not have staff with the right qualifications to support the children; this represents an improvement over 2019 (32 per cent).</p> <p>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).</p>	
Loss of Staff	<p>Forty per cent of employers in the 2023 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 per cent 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 staff are less likely to leave centres where they receive wage enhancements.</p>	
Intent to Stay/Leave	<p>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.</p>	

KPI12 Ratio of positive to negative opinions (with respect to standards of care, viability, sustainability, and value) among those already working in the sector 

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. [not asked in 2019] 

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 

Public Opinions of Work in Child Care The final wave of the public opinion survey showed that perceptions remained mostly positive but that ratios of positive to negative opinions both increased and decreased since 2019, suggesting similar nuanced changes in perceptions among both the public and those in ECL. The largest shifts in public opinion since 2019 were positive and related to child care professionals being well-trained and fairly compensated. 



Answers to Key Evaluation Questions

Summary of Findings

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 prominently in previous years, the public health implications appeared to be of much less consequence by 2023. Nonetheless, 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 behaviour that they find challenging, 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 other new forms of care such as recreational and 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. The number of centre-based ECEs and ECEAs in BC has grown while there are proportionately fewer home-based care professionals.

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; in general, managers and supervisors are 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, likely due in no small part to government wage enhancements. ECL professionals are reporting higher incomes than five 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.

ECL professionals do not have to look far to find higher wages outside of the sector. According to the Labour Force Survey, ECL professionals in BC earn, on average, \$10 an hour less than equivalently educated non-ECL professionals, in line with evidence showing diminishing financial returns on educational investments among those in the ECL sector.

Apart from legally mandated sick leave, progress to provide benefits to more of the sector has been slow, albeit key benefits such as a pension are 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.

Enrollment in ECE education programs has increased in recent years, with much of the increase occurring at private training institutions. 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. Practicums for existing ECL professionals pose additional challenges due to factors such as time away from paid work and lack of available substitute coverage.

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 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 lower than they did in 2019.

Compared to 2019, employers are more likely 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 six in ten 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 more staff than hired over the past year.

More than a third looking for a new job are seeking a position with more seniority: 36 per cent of those 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.

Public value of ECL remains high and interest in pursuing a career in the sector has increased since 2019 among both youth and especially those already in the workforce but considering a career change. Change in interest was frequently attributed to gaining experience working with children and perceptions of child care as important to society.

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 appeared to moderate in 2023**, with somewhat more optimism infusing interviews and survey responses than in the two preceding years.

Answers to Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation framework uses progress against KPIs to answer the evaluation questions. We are reporting at the end of the evaluation and just past the halfway mark of the ten-year government plan.

Goal A: Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in an adequate and stable workforce, comprised of qualified and skilled early care and learning professionals?

While this question anticipates a decade of change, there are conflicting trends.

Qualifications and, to a lesser extent, skills are improving, and the number of professionals with ECL-related qualifications appears to be increasing annually. However, the proportion of the workforce holding ECE or ECE+ still falls short of needs. Staffing problems persist but appear to have stopped worsening.

1. Do recruitment strategies achieve the outcome of an adequate supply of ECEs and other child care staff entering the workforce?

- The net size of the BC workforce did not grow from 2016 to 2021. There was an increase in the number of centre-based ECE/As+ accompanied by a large drop in the number of HCP+.
- There is a concern that the quality and comprehensiveness of ECE education programs, especially virtual or hybrid ones, may be wanting. Consequently, centres welcoming newly certified professionals are left having to provide more support to develop their basic and required skills.
- Practicums seem to be lagging behind the increase in seats for PSE 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.
- 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. The proportion of employers who experienced net loss of staff in the previous 12 months was higher in 2023 (but lower than 2020-2022) at 40 per cent compared to 2019, when it stood at 34 per cent.
- The qualifications most often reported lacking (by one in six employers) were basic ECE certificates.
- Although staffing shortages are still described as an ongoing crisis, 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.

II. Does the implementation of career pathways provide opportunities for career growth and development in the early care and learning sector?

- 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), despite an increase in the proportion of employers engaging in activities to promote career advancement. The proportion disagreeing was lowest, at four in ten, among those with specialized qualifications, but still three in ten Responsible Adults, who should have the most opportunities for advancement, disagreed.

III. Over the medium term of the evaluation, are education, training, and professional development opportunities expanded so that the ECL workforce has the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to provide quality services to children and families?

- 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 ECE 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.
- Yet 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, suggesting skills gaps remain.

Goal B: Does the ECL R&R Strategy result in 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.

IV. Does the strategy promote public confidence in the professionalism and accountability of early care and learning professionals?

- Estimates of public confidence in ECL show nuanced positive and negative changes since 2019, but overall high value in the profession. Ratings of government support of ECL were lower than personal or public support, suggesting the ECL R&R Strategy is not the main driver of public confidence.
- Just under half the ECL professionals surveyed believed ECL to have strong public support. Forty-seven per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Child care is valued by the public” in 2023, down from 51 per cent in 2019 but up from 44 per cent in 2022.

Goal C: Does the ECL R&R Strategy promote appropriate compensation plans and human resources strategies to be put in place?

Despite some positive trends, current approaches appear insufficient:

Although the symbolic value of wage enhancement remains high, inflation-adjusted wages have only increased by an average of about \$2.15 since 2019. ECL professionals in BC earn about \$10/hr less than equivalently educated adults and low pay is still the top reason why ECL professionals leave the sector.

More employers and professionals report offering / receiving benefits, but key gaps still exist:

Due to legislative changes requiring the offer of paid sick days, many more employers (90-92 per cent) are now offering this benefit compared to 2019, though the quality of the benefit varies. There were only modest increases in 2023 relative to 2019 in the proportion of employers who reported offering pensions (about one quarter) and extended health care (about two thirds).

ECL professionals working in private businesses were least likely to be in receipt of core benefits, with only 8 per cent reporting a pension compared to nearly half of employees at other workplaces. Unionized ECL professionals were much more likely to be in receipt of benefits like dental coverage (80 per cent) compared to non-union members (53 per cent).

V. Do retention strategies support the long-term engagement of ECEs and others in the workforce, to help keep them in the profession?

- 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 the wage enhancement plays in encouraging staff to stay at centres, decreasing the rate of resignations. Number of benefits received is positively associated with job satisfaction.
- Compared to 2019, we find higher anticipated staff departures from the ECL workforce in 2023.



Recommendations

Recommendations for Policy

Analysis of all lines of evidence confirmed the challenging situation of recruitment and retention in BC's ECL sector. Through the final year of data collection, evidence coming from the evaluation is sufficiently robust to support a number of recommendations.

The situation in 2024 would be worse without the ECL R&R Strategy. **Several tactics helped prevent further destabilization** in the sector, such as the wage enhancement for ECEs.

Yet, the current incremental approach has been insufficient to achieve the stated outcomes. Bold new, coordinated tactics are needed.

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 KPIs 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;
- 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 sufficiently to change outcomes takes time. However, situations such as high turnover seem impervious to the fixes attempted to date. At the current rate, it seems unlikely that the ECL R&R Strategy will achieve its 10-year goals. **The tactics to date have been largely insufficient to move the needle on the sought outcomes within five years.** Additionally, the changing context of the ECL system, with new demands anticipated as a result of factors like COVID-19 and the Canada-wide ELCC agreements, has increased the importance of new and strengthened policy approaches.

Furthermore, there is a concern that some supports may be short-lived or vulnerable to policy change, especially those that appear to be making a difference to individuals planning a career in ECL and to businesses currently operating in the sector, such as the wage enhancement. Some stability in tactics 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.

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.

Systematically and coherently implemented, the ECL R&R Strategy tactics hold potential. An incremental approach that is rooted in experimentation may help the sector find solutions to the least tractable problems. Almost certainly, a bolder approach to transforming the ECL workforce seems necessary given the limited success of the current strategy so far in achieving its intended outcomes and the urgent demand for a high-quality, accessible, and affordable ECL system in BC. A long-term investment 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 and territories.

Three overarching, interrelated recommendations are put forth that highlight the contextual and nuanced feedback shared by thousands of ECL professionals over the evaluation. Like the ECL R&R Strategy tactics, the recommendations should be seen as intersecting with and building off one another rather than being promoted in isolation.

Recommendation 1: Implement an ECL professional career pathway that models compensation, working conditions, and educational standards of other educators

Improving ECL professionals' wages and benefits is essential to addressing the workforce shortage and resulting quality concerns. Current **attempts to improve wages through the wage enhancement have helped prevent the situation from getting worse, but appear insufficient to attract and retain the number and quality of professionals that are needed.**

- Additionally, the wage enhancement has created and highlighted wage inequalities and suffers from perceptions of being temporary. As a result, many do not pursue additional education for fear that the upfront cost will not be worthwhile if the wage enhancement program ends. Thus, a wage grid that accounts for education and experience is urgently needed.
- Legislative changes to paid sick leave had an immediate and dramatic positive effect but the provision of other benefits has been patchy and inconsistent.

Improving ECL professional compensation and working conditions must be done in a transparent and structural way. **An established and scalable system already exists within the Ministry of Education and Child Care;** by raising the profile of ECL professionals to (at least) that of public teachers, government could address concerns commonly voiced by the workforce.

- This includes a transparent and adequate pay structure, improving access to health benefits, enrollment in pension plans, paid time off for preparation and professional development, access to

unions and collective bargaining, minimum education standards, being viewed as a legitimate profession, and having a concrete career trajectory.

Simply put, **raising the status of ECL professionals to that of public teachers helps prospective and current members of the workforce see ECL as a viable, sustainable, and valued career that is worth the educational investment.** This could stem the flow of current and prospective ECL professionals who are opting to leave child care for a more stable career in K-12 education, and could attract from new sources into the workforce.

- For example, the public opinion survey showed that the presence of working conditions such as extended health benefits increased interest in a career in child care by up to 24 percentage points.
- The public opinion survey also showed that men's interest in working in child care, while lower than women's, has increased substantially in recent years; yet they are largely absent from the workforce. Qualitative data suggests that the low pay and social status often associated with ECL presents an additional challenge for recruiting and retaining men, despite their increased interest. Thus, uplifting ECL professionals to the status of K-12 teachers could open new pockets of the workforce.

This recommendation incorporates the following recommendations from earlier reports:

- 1.1 Renew efforts to attract and retain potential workers from diverse and new sources to the sector.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 Take a sector-level approach to improving compensation packages to ensure no one is left out.
- 1.4 Apply minimum education standards to ensure that ECL professionals – and their colleagues – are well-prepared to meet the needs of children and families (new recommendation).

Recommendation 2: Improve consultation and outreach to affirm to the sector and public that government values the skilled work of ECEs

Both recruitment of new individuals to the field and retention of the current workforce depends on perceptions of ECL as a viable and sustainable career that is valued amongst society and particularly by the provincial government. **Prospective and current professionals need to see and hear that the government appreciates their skilled work, recognizes that it is vital to children's learning and development, and compensates it accordingly.**

ECL professionals have navigated an extremely tumultuous environment since 2019; while many remain cautiously optimistic, future changes (even positive ones) are likely to continue to land awkwardly on an already strained workforce given its members often feel "left in the dark" regarding future goals and directions.

- One way to help with future transitions is to improve outreach so that ECL professionals have clarity on the vision of child care. Early consultation and advice has improved the acceptability of the

approaches and efficiency of take up of tactics to date; the **government needs a more permanent means for feedback and input from the sector to reach decision-makers** as the evaluation comes to an end.

- An additional route to assist with change management is through the formalization and expansion of mentoring and pedagogical supports for those who may want an alternate career path to moving into management. Local mentors or coaches can support in-service training for centres in a specified geographic area, with the purview of helping newer members of the workforce to thrive in their new professional role.

ECL professional engagement can further improve awareness and uptake of tactics. While many of the benefits of a clear career pathway noted in recommendation #1 are structural and do not rely on individual awareness, others may still depend on ECL professionals understanding the resources available. Improving communication with the sector will remain an important area for government.

- The province could fund a “one stop shop” dashboard to support access to key information on tactics and indicators of progress (such as trends in the issuing 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.

Among the general public, **perceptions of the sector being well-trained, fairly compensated, and valued by the government are associated with increased interest in child care as a career**. Thus, a well-supported and engaged sector could also serve as an additional recruitment strategy since parents of young children are among the most interested in careers in child care.

- Given their daily interaction with families, ECL professional buy-in can also help garner public support while the kinks in the new ECL system continue to be ironed out.
- Further, raising public support may be a more structural way of achieving outcomes than individual tactics; that ECL is undercompensated is often attributed to be at least partially due to it being undervalued (or perceived to be) in society.

Publicizing the role of ECL professionals could take many forms, such as advertisements, further celebration of Child Care Month and Provider Appreciation Day, support for documentaries, even high-profile dramas like the 2024 Canadian Stage production “Universal Child Care”.

This recommendation incorporates the following recommendations from earlier reports:

- 2.1 Policy-makers should continue and enhance engagement and consultation with ECL professionals in the process of policy development and in operationalizing the implementation of tactics.
- 2.2 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 social and economic wellbeing.
- 2.3 Formalize and expand mentoring and pedagogical support through local or regional coaching positions.

Recommendation 3: Systematize, streamline, and join-up ECL under a trauma-informed, strengths-based, anti-oppressive, intersectional feminist lens

Across all parties, 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 still 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, as noted in recommendation #2.

Tactics often focus on individual outcomes (e.g., bursaries) when they are intended to be realized at a sectoral level; those that are implemented at a sector-level are often held back by the perception that they are not structural (e.g., the wage enhancement). **Thus, tactics targeted at the individual level are unlikely to have desired outcomes on the sector.**

- In addition to standardizing the career pathway via recommendation #1, **bursaries, credentialization, professional development, and upskilling can all benefit from adopting a streamlined and standardized approach** to applications and disbursements.
- For example, more consistency in government provision of financial support could help ECL professionals see ECE tuition and related costs as affordable on an ongoing basis, while new regulation could protect time off for study.
- Systematizing tactics such as incentives for needed certifications like Infant/Toddler and Special Needs through a permanent wage grid rather than one-time bonuses will give ECL professionals the reassurance they need to invest the time and resources such credentials require.

There is also considerable evidence for coordinating across tactics at the systems-level. For example, even the most celebrated of the current tactics, the wage enhancement, has resulted in dramatic negative consequences for some due to unhelpful interactions with other elements of the ECL system (such as some professionals not receiving the \$2 top-up they are entitled to because of their workplace). **Tactics need to be joined up to have the desired outcomes.** The ECL R&R Strategy itself has fragmented the sector in problematic ways. Certain aspects of the strategy are only accessible to subsets of ECL professionals or for those working at specific types of early care and learning workplaces.

Thus, a streamlined and coordinated approach in which tactics work together in synchrony is warranted. Joining up tactics under **a trauma-informed, strengths-based, anti-oppressive and intersectional feminist lens will ensure more equitable outcomes for all** (current and prospective workforce).

- The ECL sector revealed through evaluation data the significant trauma experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, acting as front-line essential workers with minimal protections (e.g., PPE, paid sick leave, etc.), an experience leaving lasting negative effects. Additionally, such a highly-racialized and woman-dominated workforce is at increased risk of experiencing trauma in their personal and professional lives due to systemic racism, colonialism, and sexism. Trauma-informed policy can benefit all and will help avoid further re-traumatization of the workforce.

- Additionally, evidence is growing that children in BC face increasing rates of trauma (e.g., due to COVID-19, influx of war and climate refugees, intergenerational trauma due to the history and legacy of colonization) – a situation calling for a trauma-informed workforce.
- Strengths-based policies affirm the assets and needs of the community – in this case, mainly women and children. Such policies do not assert that issues or barriers are inherent to the target population but rather are the result of interacting historical, environmental, sociocultural, and individual factors.
- Systematizing professional development under a strengths-based and trauma-informed approach, for example, recognizes the value of ongoing professional learning for the workforce through paid time off for PD and ensures topics such as demonstrating cultural sensitivity are prioritized.

Finally, like most aspects of Canadian society, the care and education institutions have deep colonial and patriarchal roots. Unless and until these structures can be adequately restructured, any expansion of the ECL system risks perpetuating current issues of systemic discrimination. In this context, **new developments need to be implemented with an anti-oppressive lens.**

- For example, the current wage enhancement inevitably perpetuates existing inequities such as gender and racial wage gaps. A systemic approach, such as a wage grid, provides an opportunity to fundamentally re-think compensation in a transparent and structural way.
- How tactics are experienced by different demographics of the workforce should be better explored and understood to promote equitable outcomes. For example, tactics would be specifically designed for women and people from historically marginalized groups.

This recommendation incorporates the following recommendations from earlier reports:

- 3.1 Raise the profile and sustainability of existing professionals obtaining ECE credentials as well as the incentive to upskill and acquire new credentials.
- 3.2 Provide ongoing support to incentivize specialty certifications.
- 3.3 Systematize professional development incentives to ensure needed training is prioritized.
- 3.4 Consider financial and regulatory instruments, competency frameworks, and other measures to help improve education program outcomes.
- 3.5 Consider new means to assess skills and competencies based on prior learning and experience.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 Address issues of systemic racism within the sector to ensure new tactics do not exacerbate existing marginalization (new recommendation).

Recommendations for Evaluation

Ensure evaluation is intersectional feminist, anti-oppressive, trauma-informed, and strengths-based

- That ECL is a highly-racialized, gendered profession is often taken as a given. When accepted without question, the risk is perpetuation of existing patriarchal and colonial systems of oppression that directly and indirectly devalue ECL work and those who perform it. Adopting an **intersectional feminist and anti-oppressive lens** in evaluation helps to identify the social norms that create and reinforce power imbalances making it easier to address how these structures might be dismantled to work towards a more equitable system.
- As noted above, the ECL sector underwent significant trauma during COVID-19 and are at increased risk of trauma due to systemic discrimination. Especially in the absence of structural supports like mental health benefits for ECL professionals, taking a **trauma-informed** approach to data collection is essential in future evaluation with this population to uphold the ethical obligation to do no harm.
- Applying a **strengths-based** approach to evaluation highlights the interacting individual, contextual, and historical factors that lead to outcomes. It helps avoid social desirability effects during data collection, in which there is a pressure to mask issues (such as burnout due to systemic racism) that may be perceived as individual deficits rather than evidence of systemic issues.
 - Similarly, taking a strengths-based approach during reporting helps ensure that evaluation materials uplift the sector by focusing on relevant strengths and needs of the community.
- The dominance of particular worldviews in decisions around definitions, methods, analysis, and reporting should not be ignored. Adopting an intersectional feminist, anti-oppressive, trauma-informed, and strengths-based approach in future evaluations supports the wellbeing of participants, increases transparency and ultimately leads to more accurate and useful information.

Continue to empower the sector with more decision-making authority and autonomy by investing in fully sector-led evaluations

- A straightforward way to embed anti-oppressive practice into future evaluation is to continue to partner with representatives from across the sector to ensure that diverse worldviews and perspectives are considered. Following the principle of “**nothing about us without us**”, sector-led evaluations have enormous practical and social value.

- In the current evaluation, the SSC greatly improved the external validity of instruments and measures, the representation of the diversity of the sector during data collection, and our overall reach. It fostered collaboration and shared understanding.
- Nonetheless, the initial structure of evaluation reports constrained their utility to the SSC. The reports themselves were constrained by terms in the contract. In future sector-led evaluations, empowering the sector, rather than the funder, with more autonomy and decision-making authority would allow for the evaluation to be more responsive and thus ultimately more useful to the sector.
 - One tangible example would be to include a budget to reimburse sector-representing organizations for their time spent on the project. Overall, SSC participation in lengthy reviews and attendance at meetings has been high. But given pressures on the sector to attend to many competing priorities, this should not be taken for granted.

Budget sufficient time at the beginning of the evaluation to prioritize outcomes before data collection must begin

- Acknowledging that transformative change of an entire sector involves many moving pieces and overlapping elements, being comprehensive is necessary to a certain degree. Yet the sheer number of KPIs and amount of data requested (i.e., disaggregated in various ways) can prove too extensive for even the most engaged parties, such as the SSC, to absorb. While this invited SRDC to experiment with more visually appealing and digestible communication materials, it also represented a challenge to produce outputs and receive reviews and approvals in a timely manner.
- Having so many KPIs runs the risk of being unable to “see the forest for the trees”. It can be tempting to focus on small (or large) shifts from one year to the next within measures or demographic groups that ultimately do not hold much significance. While incorporating many perspectives is important, being able to **identify which indicators are truly “key”** from the outset may make it easier to assess the overall trajectory of the Strategy at an earlier stage.
 - For example, there are two KPIs related to professional development, both of which have objectively and dramatically improved; yet concerns about PD quality are arguably higher now than 2019. Further, it’s unlikely that either or both of these KPIs together are as central to the goals as something like the overall stability of the workforce. Thus, not all KPIs are equal / “key”.
 - Additionally, the adopted approach did not allow for attribution of outcomes to specific tactics or consideration of unintended outcomes. Future evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy would benefit from this level of specificity.
- Evaluations benefit from budgeting in more time upfront for all parties to discuss, ideate, build trust, and develop shared understanding. Establishing relationships and exploring different perspectives before having to agree on outcomes that will be used to track progress for the entire evaluation helps ensure the agreed measures reflect meaningful outcomes for the sector.



Appendices

APPENDIX A: Overview of Deliverables

Table 8 Selected Deliverables from Evaluation 2019-2023

No.	Title	Description and Source	Date
6	Final Evaluation Report Year 1: Benchmarking	Detailed information on methods and tools, benchmarks from 2019 against which future evaluation data is compared to assess change in KPIs. https://srdc.org/project/evaluation-of-early-care-and-learning-recruitment-and-retention-strategy-final-evaluation-benchmarking-report/	Aug 2020
11	Final Evaluation Report Year 2	First year of data collection showing change in KPIs from 2019 – 2020. Includes adjustments made related to COVID-19 pandemic. https://srdc.org/project/evaluation-of-early-care-and-learning-recruitment-and-retention-strategy-evaluation-report-2020/	May 2021
19	Final Evaluation Report (2021) + Communication Material	Updated methodology, change in KPIs from 2019-2021. Includes details related to new regression analyses and plans for project extension to 2024. First year of project infographics. https://srdc.org/project/evaluation-of-early-care-and-learning-recruitment-and-retention-strategy-evaluation-report-2021/	Nov 2022
24	Final Evaluation Report (2022) + Communication Material	Updated methodology, change in KPIs from 2019-2022. Includes new report structure (full technical report and condensed findings report) with employer data disaggregated by workplace type and new section related to labour mobility, and updated infographics. https://srdc.org/project/evaluation-of-early-care-and-learning-recruitment-and-retention-strategy-evaluation-report-2022/	July 2023
28	Final Evaluation Report (2023) + Communication Material	Updated methodology, change in KPIs from 2019-2023. Includes full technical report and condensed findings report, updated infographics, and new sections related to Indigenous wage enhancement programs and Statistic Canada data on child care arrangements.	TBD

APPENDIX B: New Data Full Analyses

Census and Labour Force Survey (LFS): Size and Characteristics of the BC ECL Workforce

Through a variety of tactics, the ECL R&R Strategy is intended to increase the size of the ECL workforce working in BC and in doing so it may change its composition depending on the characteristics of the people who are additionally attracted to join the workforce or encouraged to remain working in ECL. By examining multiple years of the Canadian Census, it is possible to compare the “profile” of people working in the ECL sector in BC to benchmarks set before the ECL R&R Strategy began. Comparing the most current Census data available to previous waves generates evidence on sector changes and trends, both those occurring before and during the initial implementation of the ECL R&R Strategy. A time-based comparison sets the context against which the project can monitor system-wide change.

SRDC’s analysis uses microdata from the Canadian Census from 2000 to 2021, although the main analysis focuses on workforce change between 2016 and 2021. We also use some more recent waves of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In the section that follows, SRDC describes BC’s ECL sector in terms of its overall size and workforce demographic, education, and socioeconomic characteristics. It also includes relevant regional and national comparisons when possible.

Since the Census takes place only once every five years, it cannot shed light on changes in the sector workforce since 2021. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic was an unusual and strong influence on labour market behaviours in B.C. and worldwide at the time of the most recent Census data collection (May 2021) and during the tax year (2020) that the Census also draws data from. Therefore, SRDC also completed supplementary analysis using the LFS to update workforce estimates from the Census to more recent years, 2022 and 2023 somewhat less affected by the pandemic.¹²

Data sources

SRDC first analyzed Census data in 2019, to yield a picture of the workforce for the 2001 to 2016 period that was included in the Evaluation Benchmarking Report published in June 2020. Last year, data from the 2021 Census was made available to researchers so SRDC analysts applied to Statistics Canada’s Virtual Data Lab to analyze the confidential individual microdata records of the B.C. workforce in 2021, as

¹² The Census results include people who were outside the workforce (who recently worked in the ECL sector). However, the LFS only captures people who were actively working (employed or self-employed) at the time of being surveyed. There are other differences that may also account for variation (such as the higher response rate to the Census and some exclusions from the LFS sample). Estimates thus differ between the two data sources.

well as 2016 for comparison. Each analytical output was subject to vetting by an assigned Statistics Canada analyst to ensure it contained no personally identifiable information.

To locate members of the ECL workforce, SRDC considered industry, education, and occupation information from the Census microdata, including information from the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) and National Occupational Classification (NOC) systematic taxonomies. This process was described in more detail in the earlier Evaluation Methods and Tools 2019 deliverable.

A multi-step process led SRDC to identify two subgroups within the ECL workforce, which unfortunately do not align perfectly with definitions applied with the other datasets in this report:

- **Early Childhood Educator/Assistant+ (ECE/A+)**
 - “Core ECE/A” professionals whose occupations are categorized as Early Childhood Educator or Assistant (i.e., 2021 National Occupational Classification code 42202).
 - “Additional Core ECE/A” professionals, who work in a relevant ECE industry and/or have a relevant ECE education, and whose occupation is categorized as either manager in social, community, or correctional services; social and community service worker; or elementary and secondary school teacher assistant.
- **Home Child Care Providers (HCP+)**
 - Home child care providers (i.e., 2021 National Occupational Classification code 44100) care for the well-being and physical and social development of children, 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. Illustrative example(s) include: babysitter; child care provider (private home); foster parent; live-in caregiver; and nanny and parent’s helper.

The evaluation project’s definition of the ECL workforce does not include a small number of workers who had relevant ECE education but were working as: 1) a college, vocational, or university instructor; or 2) a social policy researcher, consultant, or program officer. Statistics Canada’s restrictions on releasing microdata meant that it was only possible to subdivide the workforce into the two main categories defined above (ECE/A+ and HCP+), which capture a broad range of professionals with a wide range of duties. The SRDC cross-sectional workforce survey has more finely tuned categories but only includes those who felt a survey of the province’s child care workforce applied to them and chose to respond. One consequence is that the Census ECE/A+ category includes people working in centres and agencies as daycare helpers such as responsible adults, many of whom do not hold a post-secondary credential.

ECL sector categories can be compared to the non-ECL sector, which represents adults in BC who are neither ECE/A+ or HCP+ and worked 1 week or more in 2015 (and were not unpaid family members).

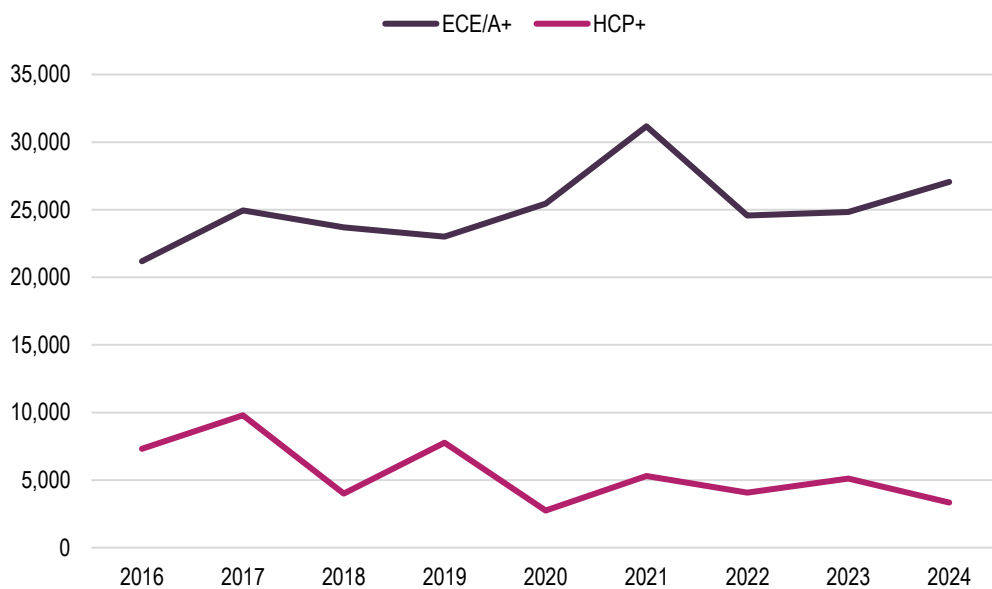
Trends over time

The key finding comparing results from the 2016 and 2021 Censuses is that **the net size of the ECL workforce in BC decreased between 2016 and 2021. The BC Early Childhood**

Educators/Assistants+ (ECE/A+) workforce grew from 20,530 to 25,225 people¹³—growth that outpaced growth in the number of BC workers in non-ECL sectors. However, in common with many other Canadian regions, **the number of Home Child Care Providers (HCP+) in BC decreased 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+ declined, it is possible that they either joined the ECE/A+ workforce or exited the ECL sector completely.

While not directly comparable, the LFS data in Figure 3 suggest the Census year of 2021 may have been a “peak” year for the number of ECE/A+ professionals. In general, the LFS finds more people working as ECE/A+ and fewer as HCP+. Trends of relative growth in the former and decline in the latter have persisted into 2024.

Figure 3 Estimates of BC ECL workforce size from the Labour Force Survey



Demographic characteristics

Compared to the workforce in the 2016 Census, there was a decrease in the percentage of ECL professionals born in Canada in 2021 (from 61.1 to 57.0 per cent) and an increase of those who were

¹³ In both the 2016 and 2021 Censuses, the majority (i.e., > 85 per cent) of professionals classified within the ECE/A+ group represented “Core ECE/A” early childhood educators and assistants (defined in the Data Sources section above), while the remaining represent “Additional Core ECE/A” professionals distributed across relevant occupations and industries with an ECE credential.

established immigrants (in Canada for more than five years), newcomers (in Canada for fewer than five years), or non-residents (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

There was more stability from 2016 to 2021 in other respects but we note below where there were changes:

- The percentage of Indigenous ECL professionals was stable between the two most recent waves of the Census—7.0 per cent in 2021. This was a higher share than for workers in non-ECL sectors, among whom 5.0 per cent identified as Indigenous in 2021.
- Both ECE/A+ and HCP+ were predominantly women in both the 2016 and 2021 Censuses (95 per cent), although there was a small increase in the percentage of male HCP+ in 2021 (6.3 percent) compared to 2016 (5.2 percent).
- The age profile of the ECL workforce was also largely stable between 2016 and 2021. In both time periods the ECL sector had a larger share of younger workers compared to non-ECL sectors. For example, 38.3 per cent of the ECL sector was aged 15-34 in 2021 compared to 33.9 per cent of those working in any other sector in BC.
- As noted above, compared to the 2016 Census, there was a decrease in the percentage of ECL professionals born in Canada in 2021 (from 61.1 to 57.0 per cent) and an increase of those who were established immigrants (in Canada for more than five years), newcomers (in Canada for fewer than five years), or non-residents. In both 2016 and 2021, HCP+ were more likely to be newcomers or non-residents compared to ECE/A+. The increased number of newcomers who were part of the BC workforce in 2021 mirrors change in non-ECL sectors, where the share of people who were born outside of Canada in 2021 also grew compared to 2016.
- In both the ECL and non-ECL sectors, there was a slight increase in the percentage of people reporting an activity limitation between 2016 and 2021¹⁴. In 2021, 38.0 per cent of workers in the ECL sector reported an activity limitation, slightly higher than among non-ECL sectors at 35.4 per cent.
- In terms of the family composition of workers, the share of ECL professionals who were single remained stable between 2016 and 2021. In 2021, 41.8 per cent of the ECL workforce was single, compared to 39.2 per cent of the non-ECL workforce.
- ECL professionals were more likely to have children compared to non-ECL workers in both 2016 and 2021. In 2021, 43.7 per cent of ECL professionals had children compared to 38.1 per cent of workers in the non-ECL sector.

¹⁴ According to Statistics Canada, an activity limitation refers to “difficulties a person may have doing certain activities as a result of physical, mental, or other health-related conditions or problems”.

Table 9 Demographic characteristics – ECL and non-ECL sectors in BC

	ECL Sector						Non-ECL Sector	
	Early Childhood Educators/A+		Home Child Care Providers+		Weighted Average (ECL sector)		2016	2021
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021		
Sector Total	20,530	25,225	15,180	8,715	n/a	n/a	2,544,275	2,602,655
By Sex								
Women	95.0	95.4	94.8	93.7	94.9	95.0	47.6	47.7
Men	5.0	4.6	5.2	6.3	5.1	5.0	52.4	52.3
By Age Group								
15-24	12.6	13.1	17.6	18.3	14.7	14.5	13.7	12.2
25-34	25.2	25.5	20.5	19.1	23.2	23.8	20.4	21.7
35-44	24.3	23.4	21.5	19.6	23.1	22.5	19.4	21.1
45-54	19.7	20.2	17.0	17.3	18.5	19.4	21.9	19.7
55 and older	18.3	17.8	23.4	25.6	20.4	19.8	24.6	25.2
By Marital Status								
Married or common law	63.5	61.3	51.1	49.3	58.2	58.2	61.0	60.8
Single	36.5	38.7	48.9	50.7	41.8	41.8	39.0	39.2
By Indigenous Identity								
Indigenous	8.2	7.6	5.6	5.1	7.1	7.0	5.1	5.0
Not Indigenous	91.8	92.4	94.4	94.9	92.9	93.0	94.9	95.0
By Immigrant Status								
Non-immigrants	66.1	59.5	54.3	49.7	61.1	57.0	68.5	65.0
Established immigrants (>5 years)	27.0	28.8	22.7	25.1	25.2	27.8	24.8	25.4
Newcomers (0-5 years)	4.9	7.2	12.3	11.1	8.0	8.2	4.8	5.6

	ECL Sector						Non-ECL Sector	
	Early Childhood Educators/A+		Home Child Care Providers+		Weighted Average (ECL sector)		2016	2021
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021		
Non-residents	2.0	4.5	10.7	14.1	5.7	6.9	1.9	4.0
By Activity Limitation								
Without any activity limitation	66.3	62.1	64.4	61.8	65.5	62.0	68.4	64.6
With activity limitation	33.7	37.9	35.6	38.2	34.5	38.0	31.6	35.4
By number of children								
None	50.4	52.5	62.3	67.1	55.5	56.3	61.2	61.9
1	19.6	18.8	15.4	13.1	17.8	17.3	16.3	15.8
2	21.1	20.6	14.1	13.7	18.1	18.8	16.8	16.7
3 or more	8.9	8.1	8.2	6.1	8.6	7.6	5.7	5.6

Source: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census.

Socioeconomic characteristics (Table 10)

- In both 2016 and 2021, people in the ECL sector were more likely to work part-time hours compared to those in non-ECL sectors (Table 2). However, between 2016 and 2021, there was a decrease in the percentage of part-time ECL professionals from 37.4 to 33.8 per cent—a decrease that was largely driven by change among ECE/A+ rather than those working as HCP+.
- ECL professionals continued to earn lower wages compared to workers in non-ECL sectors. In 2021, 77.0 per cent of ECL professionals earned less than \$1,045.40 weekly, compared to 46.2 per cent of non-ECL workers. Nevertheless, the share of the ECL sector earning more than \$784.05 per week grew from 30.5 to 41.9 per cent between 2016 and 2021.
- There was a large increase in the percentage HCP+ who were self-employed, increasing from 29.5 per cent in 2016 to 45.4 per cent in 2021. The majority of people who were self-employed had unincorporated businesses without paid help. In both 2016 and 2021, the self-employment rate of ECL professionals was higher than those in the non-ECL sector.
- People in the ECL workforce were more likely to attend school compared to the non-ECL workforce in both 2016 and 2021. In 2021, 20.8 per cent of ECL professionals attended school in the Census year—a higher rate than non-ECL workers during that same period (12.6 per cent).
- Compared to 2016 (3.8 per cent), there was an increase in the percentage of those in the ECL sector who were unemployed at the time of responding to the 2021 Census (6.1 per cent). In 2016, ECL professionals were slightly less likely to be unemployed compared to non-ECL workers, while the reverse was true by 2021—a possible legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 10 Socioeconomic characteristics – ECL and non-ECL sectors in BC

	ECL Sector						Non-ECL Sector	
	Early Childhood Educators/ Assistant+		Home Child Care Providers+		Weighted Average (ECL sector)		2016	2021
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021		
Sector Total	20,530	25,225	15,180	8,715	n/a	n/a	2,544,275	2,602,655
By full-time status								
Mostly full-time	67.2	69.7	56.4	56.1	62.6	66.2	74.2	76.0
Mostly part-time	32.8	30.3	43.6	43.9	37.4	33.8	25.8	24.0
By average weekly employment income (2023 dollars)								
Less than \$261.35	15.4	15.6	45.7	41.1	28.3	22.1	14.8	14.2
\$261.35 to \$522.70	18.4	16.1	21.8	17.8	19.8	16.5	11.8	9.8
\$522.70 to \$784.05	23.1	19.3	19.2	20.2	21.5	19.5	12.2	10.6
\$784.05 to \$1,045.40	23.5	21.8	6.5	10.3	16.3	18.9	11.9	11.6
\$1,045.40 and more	19.6	27.2	6.9	10.6	14.2	23.0	49.3	53.8
By class of workers								
Employees	88.4	86.6	70.5	54.6	80.8	78.4	86.0	83.1
Self-employed	11.6	13.4	29.5	45.4	19.2	21.6	14.0	16.9
By attendance of education program								
Not attending school	78.8	78.2	81.6	82.2	80.0	79.2	84.1	87.4
Attending school	21.2	21.8	18.4	17.8	20.0	20.8	15.9	12.6
By labour force status @ survey								
Employed	89.4	86.9	77.4	73.9	84.3	83.6	86.7	86.4
Unemployed	3.4	5.5	4.3	7.9	3.8	6.1	4.5	5.7
Not in the labour force	7.2	7.6	18.3	18.2	11.9	10.3	8.7	7.9

Source: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census.

Educational characteristics (Table 11)

For this analysis, SRDC generated a credential level indicator that included six distinct categories for ECL-related education. The next set of results explores ECL sector characteristics across the following education categories:

1. No high school certificate or diploma;
2. High school diploma;
3. Post-secondary education below the Bachelor’s (BA) level in a non-ECL related field;
4. Post-secondary education below the BA level in an ECL-related field;
5. Post-secondary education at the BA level or above in a non-ECL related field; or
6. Post-secondary education at the BA level or above in an ECL-related field.¹⁵

Table 11 Level of educational attainment – ECL and non-ECL sectors in BC

	ECL Sector						Non-ECL Sector	
	Early Childhood Educators/A+		Home Child Care Providers+		Weighted Average (ECL sector)			
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	20,530	25,225	15,180	8,715	n/a	n/a	2,544,275	2,602,655
By highest level of educational attainment								
No certificate / diploma	2.7	2.9	16.8	13.6	8.7	5.6	9.7	7.8
High school certificate / diploma	13.5	16.7	35.0	37.1	22.6	22.0	29.2	27.9
Non-ECL PSE below BA	13.3	12.8	25.1	23.8	18.3	15.6	32.2	29.9
ECL PSE below BA	49.9	42.3	4.7	3.7	30.7	32.4	0.2	0.2
Non-ECL PSE – BA or above	18.3	22.3	18.1	21.6	18.2	22.2	28.6	34.2
ECL PSE – BA or above	2.4	2.9	0.3	0.3	1.5	2.2	0.0	0.0

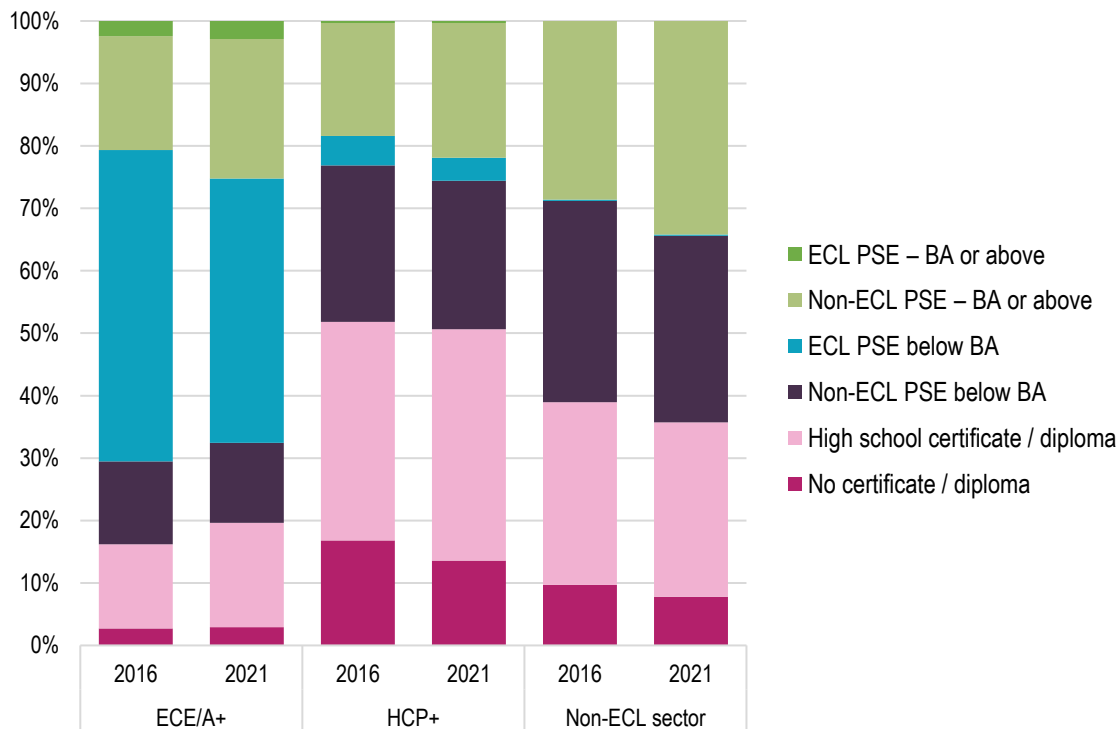
Source: SRDC’s calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census.

¹⁵ Because the subgroup of HCP+ with a post-secondary education at the BA level or above is very small, categories 5 and 6 have been combined for HCP+ cross tabulations.

As visualized in Figure 4, a larger share of the non-ECL workforce had a high school certificate or less as their highest credential compared to ECE/A+, although the percentage of ECE/A+ with a high school diploma or less increased slightly between 2016 and 2021. Remaining stable between 2016 and 2021, a higher percentage of HCP+ had a high school diploma or less compared to the non-ECL workforce.

For ECE/A+ in both 2016 and 2021, the most common education level was an ECL-related credential below the BA level. In contrast, few HCP+ had an ECL-related credential, a rate that decreased from 4.7 per cent in 2016 to 3.7 per cent in 2021. In 2016, 49.9 per cent of ECE/A+ had an ECL-related credential below the BA level, a share that decreased to 42.3 per cent in 2021. Between 2016 and 2021, the share of ECE/A+ with an ECL or non-ECL related credential at the BA level or above increased from 20.7 per cent in 2016 to 25.2 per cent in 2021.

Figure 4 Education level of ECL and non ECL sector in BC, 2016 and 2021



Source: SRDC regressions using Census 2016 and 2021 microdata.

Table 12 and Table 13 provide cross tabulations examining how demographic characteristics of ECE/A+ and HCP+ vary by their highest education level. Table 14 and Table 15 do the same for socioeconomic characteristics. In terms of the key findings, the results show that:

- Among ECE/A+, there was a slight decrease in the youngest age group reporting ECL credentials under the BA level between 2016 and 2021; however, an increased share reported having an ECL-related credential at the BA level or above. For example, among those aged 25 to 34 in the sector,

28.3 per cent had an ECL-related BA or above in 2016, a rate that increased to 37.8 per cent in 2021.

- Among ECE/A+ with an ECL-related credential below the BA level, the percentage who were Indigenous remained stable between 2016 and 2021. However, among those with an ECL-related credential at the BA level or above, the percentage who were Indigenous decreased from 4.7 to 2.7 per cent between the two time periods.
- Compared to 2016, a greater share of ECE/A+ with an ECL-related credential at the BA level or above were newcomers who had lived in Canada for less than five years (23.0 compared to 12.3 per cent in 2016).

Table 12 Demographic characteristics of ECE/A+s in BC, by levels of educational attainment

	No certificate / diploma		High school certificate / diploma		Non-ECL PSE below BA		ECL PSE below BA		Non-ECL PSE – BA or above		ECL PSE – BA or above	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	545	730	2,770	4,225	2,730	3,220	10,245	10,680	3,755	5,635	485	740
By Sex ***												
Women	87.3	91.0	87.4	91.0	94.7	94.1	98.4	98.3	92.7	94.1	96.2	98.0
Men	12.7	9.0	12.6	9.0	5.3	5.9	1.6	1.6	7.3	5.9	3.8	2.0
By Age Group ***												
15-24	33.6	23.3	30.2	33.0	11.5	13.2	9.1	8.1	7.7	7.5	2.8	6.1
25-34	11.8	17.1	21.9	21.4	23.3	25.6	26.7	27.6	25.8	24.0	28.3	37.8
35-44	12.7	14.4	16.4	16.3	24.7	21.9	25.6	24.0	28.1	29.5	24.5	25.0
45-54	17.3	16.4	15.5	13.5	17.8	18.9	20.4	22.1	20.9	23.0	32.1	16.9
55 and older	24.5	28.8	16.0	15.7	22.7	20.3	18.2	18.2	17.4	16.1	12.3	13.5
By Marital Status ***												
Married or common law	46.8	52.1	49.8	48.5	67.2	61.0	65.4	62.4	67.9	69.8	66.0	64.9
Single	53.2	47.3	50.2	51.5	32.8	39.0	34.6	37.6	32.1	30.2	34.0	35.1
By Indigenous Identity ***												
Indigenous	24.5	17.8	8.3	9.3	8.2	7.3	9.9	9.6	1.9	2.2	4.7	2.7
Not Indigenous	75.5	81.5	91.7	90.7	91.8	92.7	90.1	90.4	98.1	97.8	95.3	96.6
By Immigrant Status ***												
Non-immigrants	82.0	76.7	78.8	72.9	62.9	61.3	73.1	69.1	40.0	31.3	48.1	34.5
Established immigrants (>5 years)	18.0	18.5	16.9	20.2	32.0	29.3	22.9	24.1	42.6	44.7	34.0	31.8

	No certificate / diploma		High school certificate / diploma		Non-ECL PSE below BA		ECL PSE below BA		Non-ECL PSE – BA or above		ECL PSE – BA or above	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Newcomers (0-5 years)		4.8	2.5	3.7	3.8	6.1	2.9	3.9	12.5	14.7	12.3	23.0
Non-residents	0.0	0.0	1.8	3.2	1.3	3.1	1.1	2.8	4.9	9.3	5.7	10.1
By Activity Limitation ***												
Without any activity limitation	61.8	53.4	68.6	59.9	60.9	58.1	64.4	59.8	73.7	70.5	68.6	68.2
With activity limitation	38.2	46.6	31.4	40.0	39.1	41.9	35.6	40.2	26.3	29.5	31.4	31.1
By number of children ***												
None	66.1	58.9	60.0	63.6	49.1	52.3	48.7	50.2	47.7	47.2	46.7	58.1
1	18.3	15.8	15.9	14.0	18.2	18.5	20.0	19.4	21.6	21.4	25.2	21.6
2	11.0	16.4	15.9	16.0	23.4	19.4	22.4	21.7	21.8	24.1	15.9	13.5
3 or more	4.6	8.9	8.3	6.5	9.3	9.8	8.9	8.7	8.9	7.3	12.1	6.1

Notes: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census. Percentages are rounded to the nearly decimal place or integer depending on the effect of Statistics Canada's rounding rules. Correlations of characteristics to the education level were tested by Chi-Squared tests. Level of statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * = 10%, ** = 5%, *** = 1%.

Table 13 Demographic characteristics of home child care providers in BC, by levels of educational attainment

	No certificate / diploma		High school certificate / diploma		Non-ECL PSE below BA		ECL PSE below BA		BA or above	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	2,555	1,185	5,310	3,230	3,815	2,075	715	320	2,785	1,910
By Sex ***										
Women	91.8	86.1	95.9	93.7	94.6	95.9	100.0 ¹⁶	100.0	94.1	95.3
Men	8.2	13.9	4.1	6.3	5.4	4.1			5.9	4.7
By Age Group ***										
15-24	39.9	35.0	22.3	27.4	5.5	4.8	9.9	2.2	7.2	9.7
25-34	9.4	11.0	18.9	17.3	22.3	18.8	26.1	24.5	29.9	26.7
35-44	9.4	6.3	18.8	16.1	28.5	26.5	29.6	29.6	26.3	24.6
45-54	10.2	9.7	16.0	15.6	20.2	24.6	16.9	20.0	20.3	16.5
55 and older	31.0	38.0	24.0	23.5	23.5	25.3	17.6	23.9	16.4	22.3
By Marital Status ***										
Married or common law	35.6	39.7	49.5	46.3	57.3	57.3	62.9	59.4	56.7	49.7
Single	64.4	60.3	50.5	53.7	42.7	42.7	37.1	40.6	43.3	50.0
By Indigenous Identity ***										
Indigenous	9.2	9.3	5.3	6.0	5.4	5.1	10.5	7.8	2.0	1.0
Not Indigenous	90.8	90.7	94.7	94.0	94.6	94.9	89.5	92.2	98.0	99.0
By Immigrant Status ***										
Non-immigrants	70.9	60.8	62.9	64.2	49.9	43.4	62.9	46.0	26.6	25.9
Established immigrants (>5 years)	19.7	30.0	21.5	19.3	23.4	26.7	28.0	39.7	25.5	27.5
Newcomers (0-5 years)	8.2	8.4	7.7	7.4	14.0	12.8	4.2	4.8	24.5	18.3

¹⁶ Disaggregated results are not available due to low cell sizes; totals for this educational attainment category are combined across sex.

	No certificate / diploma		High school certificate / diploma		Non-ECL PSE below BA		ECL PSE below BA		BA or above	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Non-residents	1.2	0.8	7.8	9.0	12.7	17.1	4.9	9.5	23.4	28.3
By Activity Limitation ***										
Without any activity limitation	54.8	52.3	62.7	58.8	64.0	63.6	66.7	62.5	76.5	70.7
With activity limitation	45.2	47.7	37.3	41.2	36.0	36.4	33.3	37.5	23.5	29.3
By number of children ***										
None	72.0	73.8	63.8	67.6	54.1	60.5	49.0	56.3	65.4	70.7
1	12.5	11.0	14.4	13.0	18.0	16.1	22.4	18.8	14.5	10.7
2	8.2	10.5	13.6	13.8	17.3	14.9	19.6	15.6	14.5	13.4
3 or more	7.3	4.6	8.2	5.4	10.5	8.2	9.1	9.4	5.7	5.2

Notes: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census. Percentages are rounded to the nearly decimal place or integer depending on the effect of Statistics Canada's rounding rules. Correlations of characteristics to the education level were tested by Chi-Squared tests. Level of statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * = 10%, ** = 5%, *** = 1%. Columns total 100%.

Earnings by education level

As reported in Table 14 and Table 15, inflation adjusted average earnings (reported in 2023 dollars) increased for all ECL-sector workers between 2016 and 2021. Among ECE/A+ in both years, the increase in earnings between the two time periods was largest among people who had a high school diploma (23 per cent), ECL-related credential below the BA level (19 per cent), and non-ECL credential at or above the BA level (29 per cent). Average earnings also increased for HCP+.

In both 2016 and 2021, average weekly earnings varied considerably by education level for people working in both ECL and non-ECL sectors. For ECE/A+ in 2021, average weekly earnings were lowest (\$700) for those with no certificate or diploma (i.e., education below a high school credential) and highest (\$1158) for those with an ECL-related credential below the BA level. In 2021, average earnings for ECE/A+ with an ECL-related credential below the BA level were slightly higher than for ECE/A+ with higher levels of education (e.g., a BA or above), evidence of diminishing returns to higher levels of education among ECE/A+. In the non-ECL sector, those with a BA or above earned more than those below the BA level.

For HCP+, average weekly earnings were lower than their ECE/A+ counterparts across all levels of education, although they were unusually large (\$973) for HCP+ with no certificate or diploma. Nevertheless, our analysis suggests there was a high level of variance and/or outliers in this lower education group.

Table 14 Socioeconomic characteristics of ECE/A+s in BC, by levels of educational attainment

	No certificate / diploma		High school certificate / diploma		Non-ECL PSE below BA		ECL PSE below BA		Non-ECL PSE – BA or above		ECL PSE – BA or above	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	545	730	2,770	4,225	2,730	3,220	10,245	10,680	3,755	5,635	485	740
By full-time status ***												
Mostly full-time	49.5	53.4	54.4	54.4	62.5	66.8	74.1	77.7	63.1	68.7	70.8	79.1
Mostly part-time	50.5	46.6	45.6	45.4	37.5	33.2	25.9	22.3	36.9	31.3	29.2	20.9
By average weekly employment income (2023 dollars) ***												
Less than \$261.35	44.5	37.7	26.0	26.4	22.1	20.8	9.9	9.3	14.6	14.1	4.7	10.1
\$261.35 to \$522.70	20.9	21.9	26.5	24.5	19.9	16.9	14.8	12.3	20.4	16.3	17.8	10.8
\$522.70 to \$784.05	17.3	15.8	22.2	19.6	19.5	19.7	24.7	19.1	22.7	19.7	20.6	18.9
\$784.05 to \$1,045.40	9.1	12.3	15.2	13.3	18.8	21.6	27.5	26.2	22.7	20.9	29.0	25.0
\$1,045.40 and more	8.2	11.6	10.1	16.2	19.7	20.8	23.0	33.1	19.6	29.0	28.0	34.5
Weekly employment income (2023 dollars)												
Mean (\$)	584	700	643	840	883	973	939	1158	803	1125	908	1021
Standard error (\$)	(142)	(117)	(62)	(69)	(81)	(85)	(50)	(46)	(32)	(71)	(62)	(87)
By attendance of education program ***												
Not attending school	60.0	78.1	67.4	69.5	75.3	75.0	85.1	84.1	75.9	74.9	75.2	81.8
Attending school	40.0	21.9	32.6	30.5	24.7	25.0	14.9	15.9	24.1	25.1	24.8	18.2
By class of workers ***												
Employee or Unpaid family worker	85.5	69.9	87.7	81.7	85.0	82.3	88.9	89.3	89.5	88.9	96.2	91.9
Self-employed	14.5	29.5	12.3	18.3	15.0	17.7	11.1	10.7	10.5	11.2	3.8	8.1
By labour force status @ survey ***												
Employed	70.0	76.0	88.1	81.4	84.8	83.9	91.9	91.5	90.2	85.4	88.7	87.8
Unemployed	5.5	7.5	3.2	8.0	4.9	7.0	2.7	3.5	3.2	6.1	5.7	5.4
Not in the labour force	24.5	16.4	8.7	10.4	10.3	9.2	5.4	5.1	6.6	8.4	5.7	6.1

Notes: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census. Percentages are rounded to the nearly decimal place or integer depending on the effect of Statistics Canada's rounding rules. Correlations of characteristics to the education level were tested by Chi-Squared tests. Level of statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * = 10%, ** = 5%, *** = 1%.

Table 15 Socioeconomic characteristics of home child care providers in BC, by levels of educational attainment

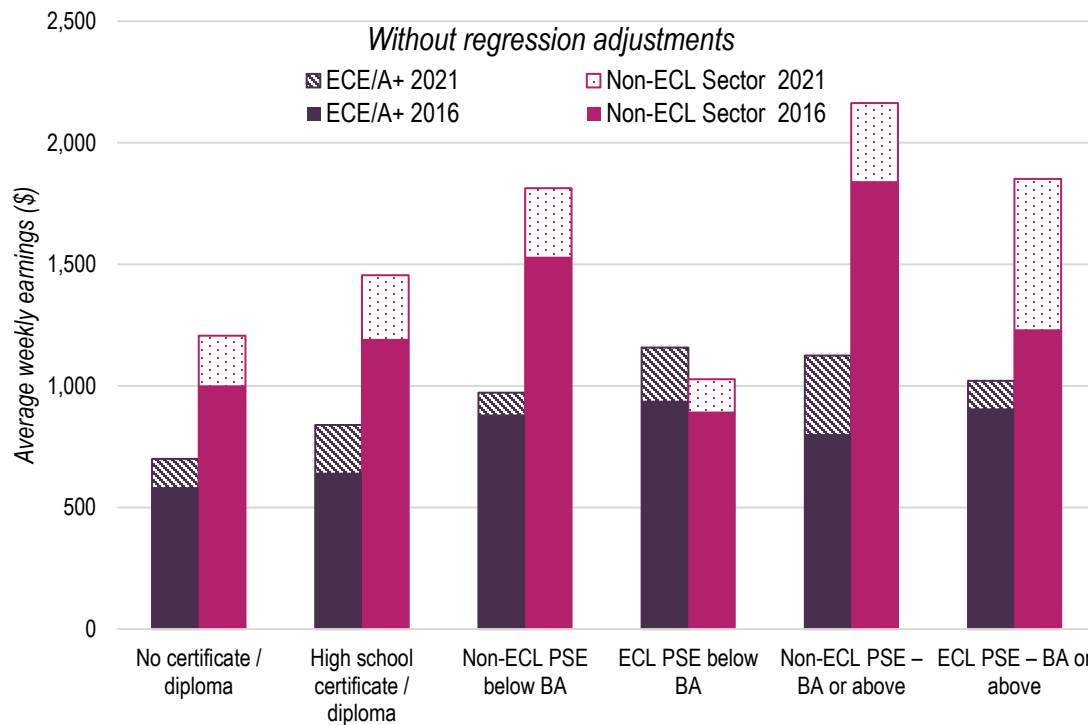
	No certificate / diploma		High school certificate / diploma		Non-ECL PSE below BA		ECL PSE below BA		BA or above	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	2,555	1,185	5,310	3,230	3,815	2,075	715	320	2,785	1,910
By full-time status ***										
Mostly full-time	30.9	34.6	52.5	50.8	65.2	62.2	72.7	78.1	70.9	68.1
Mostly part-time	69.1	65.4	47.5	49.2	34.8	37.8	27.3	21.9	29.1	31.7
By average weekly employment income (2023 dollars) ***										
Less than \$261.35	75.7	67.5	46.6	44.6	41.5	37.1	33.3	20.3	25.5	26.7
\$261.35 to \$522.70	13.9	10.5	23.2	21.2	22.0	18.1	26.4	21.9	24.8	16.0
\$522.70 to \$784.05	5.7	6.3	16.6	17.0	22.2	23.9	20.1	26.6	31.8	29.1
\$784.05 to \$1,045.40	2.0	6.3	7.1	8.8	6.8	10.4	8.3	10.9	9.0	15.2
\$1,045.40 and more	2.7	9.7	6.6	8.5	7.5	10.4	11.8	21.9	8.8	13.1
Weekly employment income (2023 dollars)										
Mean (\$)	189	973	565	660	520	688	513	807	673	765
Standard error (\$)	(15)	(453)	(58)	(75)	(44)	(70)	(40)	(139)	(69)	(131)
By attendance of education program ***										
Not attending school	64.2	69.2	81.5	80.7	89.6	88.2	86.7	90.6	85.5	85.1
Attending school	35.8	30.8	18.5	19.3	10.4	11.8	13.3	9.4	14.5	14.9
By class of workers ***										
Employee or Unpaid family worker	70.6	38.4	68.9	52.2	67.8	55.7	61.5	48.4	79.7	68.6
Self-employed	29.4	61.2	31.1	47.8	32.2	44.3	38.5	51.6	20.3	31.2
By labour force status @ survey ***										
Employed	57.9	52.3	78.4	75.2	81.9	79.3	87.4	81.3	84.6	78.0
Unemployed	6.3	8.4	4.7	7.3	3.0	8.9	4.2	7.8	3.4	7.3
Not in the labour force	35.8	39.2	16.9	17.6	15.1	11.8	8.4	10.9	12.0	14.7

Notes: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census. Correlations of characteristics to the education level were tested by Chi-Squared tests. Level of statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * = 10%, ** = 5%, *** = 1%.

Interpreting the regression-adjusted weekly earning results

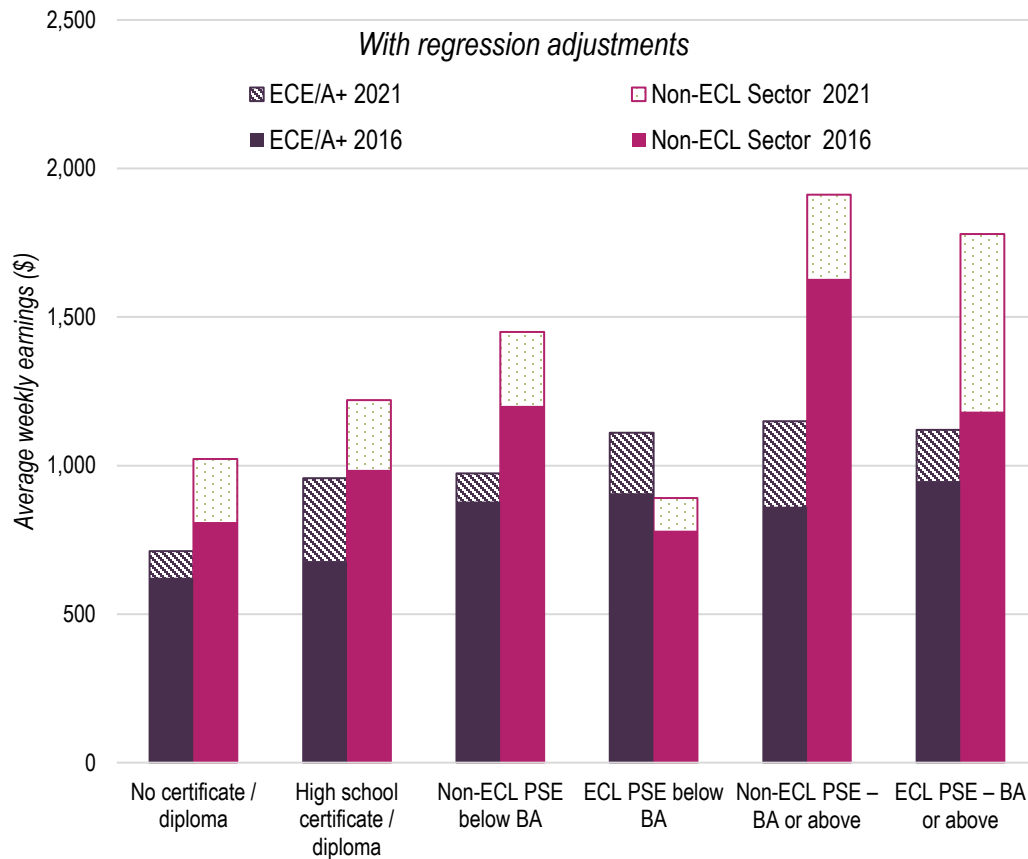
Along with reporting unadjusted average weekly earnings, SRDC also produced regression adjusted weekly earning values to understand how other compositional factors that are associated with higher or lower earnings (e.g., age, sex, number of children) may influence the results. **This analysis essentially asks: if a regression model accounts for other observed factors, are earnings predicted to be higher or lower?** If the regression amount is higher than the unadjusted average weekly earnings amount, this means that ECL professionals are making less than other BC workers with similar characteristics. If it is lower, the reverse is true.

Figure 5 Average weekly earnings among ECE/A+ professionals and non-ECL sector workers in 2021 and 2016, without regression adjustments



Source: SRDC regressions using Census 2016 and 2021 microdata.

Figure 6 Average weekly earnings among ECE/A+ and non-ECL sector workers in 2021 and 2016, with regression adjustments



Source: SRDC regressions using Census 2016 and 2021 microdata.

Figure 5 and Figure 6 compare the average weekly earnings of ECE/A+ professionals and non-ECL sector workers in 2016 and 2021, both before and after controlling for other observed characteristics. The results show that:

- Both with and without controlling for other factors, workers in non-ECL sectors earned more in 2016 and 2021 compared to ECE/A+ with all other levels of education, except those with an ECL PSE credential below the BA level.
- The difference in earnings between ECE/A+ professionals and non-ECL sector workers was similar between 2016 and 2021, other than for people with an ECL-related PSE credential above the BA level where the earnings gap increased in the later period.
- The regression adjusted results show that accounting for sector composition factors reduces the earnings gap between ECE/A+ professionals and non-ECL sector workers. This suggests that ECE/A+ have characteristics that are associated with lower earnings in the BC labour market.

Nevertheless, these factors do not completely explain why ECE/A+ earn less, especially at higher credential levels where a sizable gap remains.

Regional and provincial variations

Regional variation in BC

Across all five BC regions SRDC analysed, the number of ECE/A+ increased and the number of HCP+ decreased between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses (Table 16 and Table 17). ECE/A+ workforce growth was highest in the Vancouver Island/Coast and Thompson/Okanagan regions, two regions that also lost close to 50 per cent of their HCP+ workforce. In both the 2016 and 2021 results, just over 70 per cent of ECL professionals were in the Vancouver Island/Coast and Greater Vancouver regions.

Overall, change in the education qualifications of the ECL workforce by BC region was similar to provincial-level change between 2016 and 2021. In all regions, there was a decrease in the share of ECE/A+ with an ECL-related credential below the BA level and an increase in the share with higher and lower levels of education. In terms of educational qualifications in 2021, the share of ECE/A+ with an ECL-related credential below the BA level was highest in the Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast region (50.9 per cent) and lowest in Greater Vancouver (38.5 per cent). However, a larger share of ECE/A+ in Greater Vancouver had a BA or above (33.0 per cent), suggesting education levels were high overall in this region.

Across all BC regions, the average weekly earnings of both ECE/A+ and HCP+ increased between 2016 and 2021. In 2016, average weekly earnings of ECE/A+ were highest in the Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast region (\$928). By 2021, ECE/A+ in the Greater Vancouver (\$1106) and Vancouver Island/Coast (\$1073) regions had the highest weekly earnings—the two regions where HCP+ also had the highest weekly earnings.

Across all BC regions, the percentage of self-employed ECE/A+ and HCP+ increased between 2016 and 2021. While the rate increased only a few percentage points for ECE/A+, there was a larger increase for HCP+, especially in specific regions. For example, the rate of self-employment grew from 38.1 to 62.0 per cent between 2016 and 2021 for workers in the Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast region.

Table 16 Socioeconomic characteristics of ECE/A+s in British Columbia, by region in BC

	Vancouver Island / Coast		Greater Vancouver		Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast and Squamish-Lillooet		Thompson/Okanagan		Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	3,350	4,420	11,335	13,570	1,565	1,925	2,155	2,760	2,130	2,555
By professional education ***										
No certificate / diploma	3.3	3.1	2.0	2.7	2.6	3.4	2.1	2.5	6.1	3.9
High school certificate / diploma	14.6	21.9	12.3	13.4	12.5	19.7	13.9	19.4	18.3	20.4
Non-ECL PSE below BA	14.2	12.3	12.5	12.4	12.8	12.7	17.4	15.2	12.2	12.9
ECL PSE below BA	51.3	43.2	46.2	38.5	58.1	48.1	55.2	47.8	55.6	50.9
Non-ECL PSE – BA or above	14.6	17.5	24.2	29.0	10.2	14.0	10.0	13.9	6.6	10.6
ECL PSE – BA or above	1.9	1.9	2.7	4.0	3.8	2.3	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.4
By attendance of education program										
Not attending school	80.1	77.5	77.9	78.2	79.2	80.8	80.7	77.5	79.6	78.1
Attending school	19.9	22.4	22.1	21.8	20.8	19.0	19.3	22.5	20.4	21.9
Weekly employment income (2023 dollars)										
Mean (\$)	851	1073	885	1106	701	878	757	945	928	1010
Standard error (\$)	(81)	(85)	(32)	(39)	(51)	(80)	(34)	(106)	(135)	(91)
By class of workers ***										
Employee or Unpaid family worker	86.5	85.6	89.1	87.9	88.5	86.8	87.7	84.2	88.0	83.6
Self-employed	13.5	14.3	10.9	12.1	11.5	13.2	12.3	15.8	12.0	16.4

Notes: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census. Correlations of characteristics to the education level were tested by Chi-Squared tests. Level of statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * = 10%, ** = 5%, *** = 1%.

Table 17 Socioeconomic characteristics of home child care providers, by region in BC

	Vancouver Island / Coast		Greater Vancouver		Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast and Squamish-Lillooet		Thompson/ Okanagan		Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	2,480	1,330	8,860	5,145	1,065	770	1,565	780	1,215	685
By professional education ***										
No certificate / diploma	16.9	13.5	14.9	12.8	20.3	14.3	19.7	9.0	23.5	23.5
High school certificate / diploma	38.2	39.5	32.8	32.6	39.2	48.1	36.8	48.7	38.3	40.9
Non-ECL PSE below BA	24.9	25.2	25.3	23.3	23.6	19.5	27.0	26.9	23.9	27.0
ECL PSE below BA	3.2	6.0	4.6	3.4	4.2	2.6	5.4	3.8	8.2	1.1
BA or above	16.7	15.8	22.4	27.9	12.7	15.6	11.1	11.5	6.2	7.6
By attendance of education program **										
Not attending school	80.1	81.6	83.1	82.2	75.5	81.8	79.2	84.6	81.9	81.8
Attending school	19.9	18.4	16.9	17.8	24.5	18.2	20.8	15.4	18.1	19.0
Weekly employment income (2023 dollars)										
Mean (\$)	386	1044	564	733	510	581	463	510	408	593
Standard error (\$)	(36)	(402)	(39)	(95)	(139)	(76)	(47)	(101)	(46)	(129)
By class of workers ***										
Employee or Unpaid family worker	65.5	45.9	74.2	60.7	65.1	51.9	67.9	46.2	61.9	38.0
Self-employed	34.5	54.1	25.8	39.2	34.9	48.1	32.1	53.8	38.1	62.0

Notes: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census. Correlations of characteristics to the education level were tested by Chi-Squared tests. Level of statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * = 10%, ** = 5%, *** = 1%.

Variation across Canada

Between 2016 and 2021, the number of ECE/A+ increased and the number of HCP+ decreased in all Canadian regions (Table 18 and Table 19). In terms of variation across Canada, growth in the BC ECE/A+ workforce was comparably larger than increases seen in Quebec, Ontario, and other western provinces.¹⁷ Only Atlantic Canada had a larger increase in the number of ECE/A+ between 2016 and 2021 (from 11,385 to 15,065 workers)—a region that also had the largest decline in HCP+ workers between the two time periods (from 6,955 to 3,505 workers).

As in BC, other Canadian regions also had an increase in the share of ECE/A+ with a BA between 2016 and 2021. Compared to other regions, there was a larger increase between 2016 and 2021 in the share of ECE/A+ in BC with a high school diploma as their highest credential. The percentage of ECE/A+ in BC with a high school diploma (16.7 per cent) in 2021 was comparably smaller than Atlantic Canada (20.5 per cent) and other western provinces (21.4 per cent) but comparably larger than Quebec (15.7 per cent) and Ontario (13.7 per cent).

In both the 2016 and 2021 results, BC and other Western Canadian provinces have higher proportions of ECE/A+ who identified as Indigenous (approximately 8 per cent and 12-13 per cent respectively across both years, compared to an average of 4 per cent of ECE/A+ in other provinces). Other than in Ontario, there was a slight decrease in the share of Indigenous ECE/A+ in 2021 compared to 2016.

Across all Canadian regions, migrants made up a larger share of the ECE/A+ workforce in 2021 compared to 2016. By 2021, BC experienced relatively large increases in the proportion of the ECE/A+ workforce who were non-residents, newcomers, and established immigrants compared to other jurisdictions, though the proportion doubled in Atlantic Canada off a low 2016 base.

The results also showed that all regions in Canada had an increase in the share of ECE/A+ who were unemployed in 2021 compared to 2016. By 2021, the rate was highest for Ontario (11.3 per cent) and lowest in Quebec (2.6 per cent), with BC's rate in the mid-range (5.5 per cent). Among HCP+, all regions experienced an increase in the percentage who were self-employed in 2021 compared to 2016. By 2021, the rate of self-employment for HCP+ was highest in Atlantic Canada (57.2 per cent) and lowest in BC (45.4 per cent).

¹⁷ The Western provinces excluding British Columbia (i.e. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta).

Table 18 Selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of ECE/A+s in BC and across Canada

	Atlantic Canada		Quebec		Ontario		Other Western Canada		British Columbia	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	11,385	15,065	92,780	97,010	73,525	79,345	31,395	37,450	20,530	25,225
By professional education ***										
No certificate / diploma	4.3	3.9	8.1	6.8	3.3	2.7	5.6	4.9	2.7	2.9
High school certificate / diploma	19.0	20.5	15.7	15.4	12.9	13.7	20.2	21.4	13.5	16.7
Non-ECL PSE below BA	14.8	13.7	26.6	25.1	11.5	12.6	12.9	12.3	13.3	12.8
ECL PSE below BA	44.6	42.8	35.9	34.0	50.6	46.4	35.6	32.6	49.9	42.3
Non-ECL PSE – BA or above	13.9	14.7	12.9	17.7	17.4	19.7	23.9	26.5	18.3	22.3
ECL PSE – BA or above	3.4	4.4	0.9	1.1	4.2	4.8	1.8	2.3	2.4	2.9
By attendance of education program ***										
Not attending school	82.7	82.5	84.3	83.9	82.3	85.6	79.4	80.9	78.8	78.2
Attending school	17.3	17.5	15.7	16.1	17.7	14.4	20.6	19.1	21.2	21.8
By Sex ***										
Women	93.8	96.2	96.0	95.9	96.6	96.7	95.9	95.7	95.0	95.4
Men	6.2	3.8	4.0	4.1	3.4	3.3	4.1	4.3	5.0	4.6
By Indigenous Identity ***										
Indigenous	6.9	5.8	2.9	2.7	3.2	3.6	12.9	11.9	8.2	7.6
Not Indigenous	93.1	94.2	97.1	97.3	96.8	96.4	87.1	88.1	91.8	92.3
By Immigrant Status ***										
Non-immigrants	93.8	89.1	77.2	73.8	68.3	65.3	70.3	63.4	66.1	59.5
Established immigrants (>5 years)	4.1	4.2	18.0	21.8	27.1	28.6	16.7	24.5	27.0	28.8
Newcomers (0-5 years)	1.6	3.6	4.3	2.8	3.7	4.1	11.4	9.7	4.9	7.2
Non-residents	0.5	3.2	0.5	1.6	0.8	1.9	1.6	2.4	2.0	4.5

	Atlantic Canada		Quebec		Ontario		Other Western Canada		British Columbia	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
By full-time status ***										
Mostly full-time	76.3	80.2	76.9	76.1	71.9	76.0	73.7	75.1	67.2	69.7
Mostly part-time	23.7	19.8	23.1	23.9	28.1	24.0	26.3	24.9	32.8	30.3
By class of workers ***										
Employee or Unpaid family worker	90.0	90.0	78.4	83.2	94.4	90.5	92.1	88.0	88.4	86.6
Self-employed	10.0	10.0	21.6	16.8	5.6	9.5	7.9	12.0	11.6	13.4
By labour force status @ survey ***										
Employed	85.2	84.8	91.3	90.4	90.0	80.1	87.8	83.9	89.5	86.9
Unemployed	6.4	7.3	2.4	2.6	3.6	11.3	4.5	7.9	3.3	5.5
Not in the labour force	8.4	7.9	6.3	6.9	6.4	8.6	7.7	8.2	7.2	7.6
Weekly employment income (2023 dollars)										
Mean (\$)	689	980	788	1026	918	1177	876	1021	857	1056
Standard error (\$)	(13)	(38)	(8)	(13)	(11)	(19)	(18)	(23)	(28)	(31)

Notes: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census. Correlations of characteristics to the education level were tested by Chi-Squared tests. Level of statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * = 10%, ** = 5%, *** = 1%.

Table 19 Selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of home child care providers in BC and across Canada

	Atlantic Canada		Quebec		Ontario		Other Western Canada		British Columbia	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Sector Total	6,955	3,505	11,490	6,810	43,465	25,375	25,785	15,885	15,175	8,715
By professional education ***										
No certificate / diploma	20.0	20.5	21.0	19.8	17.3	15.5	15.6	15.1	16.8	13.6
High school certificate / diploma	38.1	40.1	25.8	28.0	31.3	32.8	36.3	38.2	35.0	37.1
Non-ECL PSE below BA	25.4	25.1	31.7	32.0	26.2	25.0	24.8	20.9	25.1	23.8
ECL PSE below BA	5.5	4.4	6.8	6.7	4.3	4.7	5.1	5.3	4.7	3.7
BA or above	11.0	9.7	14.6	13.4	20.9	22.0	18.2	20.5	18.4	21.9
By attendance of education program **										
Not attending school	84.6	79.0	83.4	85.1	83.7	84.4	84.2	83.4	81.6	82.2
Attending school	15.4	21.0	16.6	14.9	16.3	15.6	15.8	16.6	18.4	17.8
By Sex ***										
Women	96.8	95.2	93.6	92.7	95.3	94.1	95.8	94.7	94.8	93.7
Men	3.2	4.8	6.4	7.3	4.7	5.9	4.2	5.3	5.2	6.3
By Indigenous Identity ***										
Indigenous	4.7	5.0	2.5	2.5	2.1	2.1	7.4	7.8	5.6	5.1
Not Indigenous	95.3	95.0	97.5	97.5	97.9	97.9	92.6	92.2	94.4	94.9
By Immigrant Status ***										
Non-immigrants	93.4	94.3	64.2	65.7	47.9	45.8	63.2	63.1	54.4	49.7
Established immigrants (>5 years)	3.7	2.6	19.4	22.6	27.1	34.6	15.8	21.8	22.7	25.1
Newcomers (0-5 years)	1.6	2.0	9.9	6.4	15.2	11.6	11.7	10.1	12.3	11.1
Non-residents	1.4	1.1	6.4	5.2	9.8	8.0	9.3	5.0	10.6	14.1
By full-time status ***										
Mostly full-time	64.8	63.1	69.1	66.9	64.1	59.7	72.1	65.8	56.4	56.1
Mostly part-time	35.2	36.9	30.9	33.1	35.9	40.3	27.9	34.2	43.6	43.9
By class of workers ***										
Employee or Unpaid family worker	57.5	42.8	60.1	49.6	65.0	45.2	62.5	44.0	70.5	54.6
Self-employed	42.5	57.2	39.9	50.4	35.0	54.8	37.5	56.0	29.5	45.4
Weekly employment income (2023 dollars)										

	Atlantic Canada		Quebec		Ontario		Other Western Canada		British Columbia	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
Mean (\$)	358	525	497	559	492	646	508	614	508	737
Standard error (\$)	(20)	(62)	(20)	(33)	(13)	(28)	(17)	(34)	(26)	(76)

Notes: SRDC's calculations using the 2016 and 2021 Canadian Census. Correlations of characteristics to the education level were tested by Chi-Squared tests. Level of statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * = 10%, ** = 5%, *** = 1%.

Longer-term changes in the sector

Early Childhood Educators/Assistants+

Comparison to previous Census waves in Table 20 and Table 21 reveals that the number of ECE/A+ in BC increased steadily from the 2001 to 2011 survey periods (from 21,195 to 22,785 workers), decreased in 2016 (20,530), and then increased substantially in 2021 (25,225).

There was also a shift in many of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of ECE/A+, although many of these reflect general trends also seen in non-ECL sectors. Nonetheless, certain characteristics, such as an aging workforce, may signal a need for new approaches to grow the sector:

- Over time, the share of professionals aged 55 and older increased from 9.8 per cent in the 2001 Census to 17.8 per cent in the 2021 Census.
- While 24.4 per cent of ECE/A+ were established immigrants, newcomers, or non-residents in the first observed wave, this increased to 40.5 per cent in the 2021 results.
- There was also an increase in the share of professionals reporting an activity limitation, growing from 14.1 to 37.9 per cent between the first and last Census waves.
- More ECE/A+ were established immigrants in 2016 (27 per cent of ECE/A+ were established immigrants in 2016, compared to 19 per cent in 2001).
- A higher percentage of ECE/A+ did not have children at home in 2021 (52.5 per cent) compared to (17.6 per cent).
- ECE/A+ have become more highly educated over time. In the 2021 Census, 80.4 per cent of ECE/A+ workers had some level of post-secondary education, compared to 64.9 per cent in 2001.¹⁸ The biggest gains were seen among ECE/A+ workers with a post-secondary education in an ECL-related field below the BA level and those with a non-ECL related BA.
- The proportion of full time ECE/A+ has steadily increased over time (69.7 per cent in 2021, compared to 59.5 per cent in 2001).
- The proportion of ECE/A+ who were self-employed has decreased (13.4 per cent in 2021, compared to 30.1 per cent in 2001).

¹⁸ As mentioned in the Data Sources section, the definition of ECE/A+ for the Census analysis is based on Statistics Canada's National Occupational Classification. These are national data but there is no national definition of certified ECEs and ECEAs. Although the classification system takes into account the typical skills level required to do the work, it does not take into account the requirement for certification. This means that some individuals receive this occupational classification even in the absence of reporting participation in post-secondary education, such as Responsible Adults.

Table 20 Demographic characteristics of ECE/A+s in BC between 2001 and 2021

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Sector Total	21,195	21,945	22,785	20,530	25,225
By Sex					
Women	94.0	94.8	95.9	95.0	95.4
Men	6.0	5.2	4.1	5.0	4.6
By Age Group					
15-24	14.3	13.7	11.9	12.6	13.1
25-34	27.8	26.3	25.7	25.2	25.5
35-44	29.9	24.8	25.7	24.3	23.4
45-54	18.3	21.4	21.7	19.7	20.2
55 and older	9.8	13.7	15.0	18.3	17.8
By Marital Status					
Married or common law	66.8	65.0	63.9	63.5	61.3
Single	33.2	35.0	36.1	36.5	38.7
By Indigenous Identity					
Indigenous	5.9	7.1	7.7	8.2	7.6
Not Indigenous	94.1	92.9	92.3	91.8	92.4
By Immigrant Status					
Non-immigrants	75.6	72.9	71.5	66.1	59.5
Established immigrants (>5 years)	19.3	21.3	22.4	27.0	28.8
Newcomers (0-5 years)	4.6	5.2	4.5	4.9	7.2
Non-residents	0.6	0.6	1.6	2.0	4.5
By Activity Limitation					
Without any activity limitation	85.9	84.3	83.4	66.3	62.1
With activity limitation	14.1	15.7	16.6	33.7	37.9
By number of children					
None	17.6	18.1	47.8	50.4	52.5
1	21.6	23.0	19.6	19.6	18.8
2	30.2	29.0	21.8	21.1	20.6
3 or more	30.6	30.0	10.8	8.9	8.1

Source: SRDC's calculations using 2021, 2016, 2006, and 2001 Canadian Census as well as 2011 National Household Survey.

Table 21 Socioeconomic characteristics of ECE/A+s in BC between 2001 and 2021

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Sector Total	21,195	21,945	22,785	20,530	25,225
By professional education					
No certificate / diploma	16.0	11.0	5.8	2.7	2.9
High school certificate / diploma	19.1	21.8	18.6	13.5	16.7
Non-ECL PSE below BA	21.9	20.5	18.1	13.3	12.8
ECL PSE below BA	31.5	34.9	39.8	49.9	42.3
Non-ECL PSE – BA or above	9.1	10.3	15.3	18.3	22.3
ECL PSE – BA or above	2.4	1.5	2.5	2.4	2.9
By full-time status					
Mostly full-time	59.5	61.5	63.6	67.2	69.7
Mostly part-time	40.5	38.5	36.4	32.8	30.3
By average weekly employment income (2023 dollars)					
Less than \$261.35	31.4	37.7	27.6	15.4	15.6
\$261.35 to \$522.70	23.1	21.5	20.1	18.4	16.1
\$522.70 to \$784.05	17.7	18.5	20.4	23.1	19.3
\$784.05 to \$1,045.40	14.8	12.6	17.0	23.5	21.8
\$1,045.40 and more	13.0	9.7	14.9	19.6	27.2
By class of workers					
Employees	69.9	75.3	76.6	88.4	86.6
Self-employed	30.1	24.7	23.4	11.6	13.4
By regional labour market @ survey					
Vancouver Island / Coast	20.0	18.1	19.5	16.3	17.5
Greater Vancouver	47.1	49.1	49.4	55.2	53.8
Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast and Squamish-Lillooet	8.4	8.7	7.8	7.6	7.6
Thompson/Okanagan	11.0	11.8	12.6	10.5	10.9
Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast	13.5	12.4	10.8	10.4	10.1
By attendance of education program					
Not attending school	78.8	78.3	79.2	78.8	78.2
Attending school	21.2	21.7	20.8	21.2	21.8
By labour force status @ survey					
Employed	85.8	85.9	86.6	89.4	86.9
Unemployed	3.8	3.3	4.0	3.4	5.5
Not in the labour force	10.4	10.8	9.5	7.2	7.6

Source: SRDC's calculations using 2021, 2016, 2006 and 2001 Canadian Census as well as 2011 National Household Survey.

Home Child Care Providers

As described in the Data Sources section, the home child care providers (HCP+) category contains a broader cross-section of people caring for the well-being and physical and social development of children than SRDC's cross-sectional workforce survey. 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. As documented in Table 22 and Table 23, the number of HCP+ meeting this definition in BC was highest in the 2001 (16,445 workers) and 2016 Censuses (15,180), before dropping significantly in 2021 (to 8,715).¹⁹

Like ECE/A+ and workers in non-ECL sectors, there was also a shift in many of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of HCP+:

- Since the 2011 Census, the sector has included proportionately fewer young adults. Approximately 18 per cent of HCP+ were aged 15-24 in the 2016 and 2021 Census, compared to 35-33 per cent in 2006 and 2001.
- Like ECE/A+, more older adults worked as HCP+ in 2021 (25.6 per cent) compared to 2001 (14.8 per cent).
- While the percentage of newcomers has remained stable, a higher proportion of HCP+ were established immigrants or non-residents in 2021 compared to all other Census waves.
- Like ECE/A+, a higher percentage of HCP+ had an activity limitation in 2021 compared to earlier Census waves.
- There was also a large increase in the percentage of HCP+ who did not have children at home in 2021 (67.1 per cent) compared to 2001 (14.2 per cent).
- HCP+ have also become more highly educated (though only a small proportion are educated in ECL-related fields). In the 2001 Census, 41.4 per cent of HCP+ had no diploma or certificate, while by 2021 this number had fallen to 13.6 per cent. In turn, more HCP+ had either a high school diploma or a post-secondary credential.
- As of the 2011 Census, there were more HCP+ employed full time (62.8 per cent of HCP+) compared to earlier waves, although the rate has declined slightly in recent years to approximately 56 per cent.
- In both the 2016 and 2021 Census, more HCP+ were self-employed than in previous years, growing from 20.8 per cent in 2001 to 45.4 per cent in 2021.

¹⁹ As licensing is not considered in Statistics Canada's occupational coding for this sector, it is unclear whether changes in numbers relate to any licensing change. Readers should be cautioned about comparisons between periods where Statistics Canada varied their coding of occupations and industries. Statistics Canada first adopted the National Occupational Classification in 2000 but the coding scheme has been under regular revision since then.

- While levels of employment rose between the 2001 and 2016 Census (up to 77.4 per cent in 2016), they decreased slightly to 73.9 per cent in the most recent wave.
- Also similar to ECE/A+, the proportion of HCP+ located in the Greater Vancouver area has increased since the 2001 Census (from 51.0 per cent in 2001 to 59.1 per cent in 2021).

Table 22 Demographic characteristics of home child care providers in BC between 2001 and 2021

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Sector Total	16,445	12,775	13,000	15,180	8,715
By Sex					
Women	94.0	92.1	92.0	94.8	93.7
Men	6.0	7.9	8.0	5.2	6.3
By Age Group					
15-24	34.5	32.5	21.1	17.6	18.3
25-34	21.9	21.8	26.2	20.5	19.1
35-44	18.1	16.9	20.2	21.5	19.6
45-54	10.7	12.1	15.9	17.0	17.3
55 and older	14.8	16.7	16.7	23.4	25.6
By Marital Status					
Married or common law	43.5	38.8	44.4	51.1	49.3
Single	56.5	61.2	55.6	48.9	50.7
By Indigenous Identity					
Indigenous	4.6	5.4	4.7	5.6	5.1
Not Indigenous	95.4	94.6	95.3	94.4	94.9
By Immigrant Status					
Non-immigrants	63.6	53.8	45.7	54.3	49.7
Established immigrants (>5 years)	17.7	19.8	18.4	22.7	25.1
Newcomers (0-5 years)	12.6	11.6	13.2	12.3	11.1
Non-residents	6.2	14.8	22.6	10.7	14.1
By Activity Limitation					
Without any activity limitation	84.2	82.4	84.2	64.4	61.8
With activity limitation	15.8	17.6	15.8	35.6	38.2
By number of children					
None	14.2	14.3	75.3	62.3	67.1
1	18.6	16.9	11.3	15.4	13.1
2	28.2	21.1	8.3	14.1	13.7
3 or more	39.1	47.8	5.1	8.2	6.1

Source: SRDC's calculations using 2021, 2016, 2006, and 2001 Canadian Census as well as 2011 National Household Survey.

Table 23 Socioeconomic characteristics of home child care providers in BC between 2001 and 2021

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Sector Total	16,445	12,775	13,000	15,180	8,715
By professional education					
No certificate / diploma	41.4	31.0	19.3	16.8	13.6
High school certificate / diploma	25.0	27.6	26.1	35.0	37.1
Non-ECL PSE below BA	20.0	22.7	30.8	25.1	23.8
ECL PSE below BA	3.4	3.5	4.6	4.7	3.7
Non-ECL PSE – BA or above	9.8	15.3	19.0	18.1	21.6
ECL PSE – BA or above	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.3
By full-time status					
Mostly full-time	44.7	47.2	62.8	56.4	56.1
Mostly part-time	55.3	52.8	37.2	43.6	43.9
By average weekly employment income (2023 dollars)					
Less than \$261.35	51.0	50.7	36.4	45.7	41.1
\$261.35 to \$522.70	24.3	27.4	34.6	21.8	17.8
\$522.70 to \$784.05	11.9	11.7	13.8	19.2	20.2
\$784.05 to \$1,045.40	4.5	4.7	5.7	6.5	10.3
\$1,045.40 and more	8.3	5.4	9.5	6.9	10.6
By class of workers					
Employees	79.2	81.5	84.0	70.5	54.6
Self-employed	20.8	18.5	16.0	29.5	45.4
By regional labour market @ survey					
Vancouver Island / Coast	18.0	15.2	11.7	16.3	15.3
Greater Vancouver	51.0	59.1	65.3	58.4	59.1
Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast and Squamish-Lillooet	7.4	6.7	5.3	7.0	8.8
Thompson/Okanagan	10.2	8.8	9.4	10.3	9.0
Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast	13.4	10.3	8.3	8.0	7.9
By attendance of education program					
Not attending school	70.9	71.7	78.3	81.6	82.2
Attending school	29.1	28.3	21.7	18.4	17.8
By labour force status @ survey					
Employed	70.0	72.3	76.0	77.4	73.9
Unemployed	7.4	5.6	6.0	4.3	7.9
Not in the labour force	22.6	22.1	18.1	18.3	18.2

Source: SRDC's calculations using 2021, 2016, 2006 and 2001 Canadian Census as well as 2011 National Household Survey.

Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform (ELMLP): ECE Public Education Pathways

The ECL R&R Strategy is intended to increase the number of qualified ECEs working in BC partly by increasing the flow of students into public ECE education and training programs and also by raising the numbers graduating and certified as ECEs. By examining linked educational and labour market administrative data, it is possible to evaluate the changing composition of students *entering* and *exiting* public post-secondary ECE programs in BC. Observing trends occurring *before* and *during* the initial implementation of the ECL R&R Strategy sets the context against which the project can monitor system-wide change in the pursuit of early childhood education as a career. The following is an analysis of trends in the composition of BC public ECE students annually in the lead up to, and following, the launch of the ECL R&R Strategy. Note that private training institutions are not included in the ELMLP database; thus education pathways at private institutions are not included in this analysis (see 2023 Evaluation Report for available data from private institutions).

Data sources

Longitudinal educational and tax data make it possible to construct the education and labour market pathways people follow into and out of post-secondary ECE programs. SRDC began by applying to use restricted access Statistics Canada's Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform (ELMLP) administrative data that links annual information from enrollment data from public post-secondary education (PSE) institutions with BC K-12 student data and CRA income tax return records. SRDC first began to analyze the ELMLP in 2021, producing initial results in the Evaluation Report 2021 published in November 2022.

The data, once linked longitudinally, include information on:

- the personal characteristics of students from their records in the BC K-12 school system including school characteristics, students' Grade 7 Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) scores, and any special instruction received;
- PSE program, institution, field of study, whether they graduated; and
- demographic, employment, and income information.

The educational programs identified as related to earning an ECE credential and career were those categorized with the following codes in Statistics Canada's Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP):

- 13.1015: "Education/Teaching of Individuals in Early Childhood Special Education Programs";
- 13.1207: "Montessori teacher education";
- 13.1208: "Waldorf/Steiner teacher education";

- 13.1209: “Kindergarten/preschool education and teaching”;
- 13.1210: “Early Childhood Education and Teaching”;
- 19.0706: “Child development”;
- 19.0708: “Child Care and Support Services Management”; and
- 19.0709: “Child care”.

The following analysis is separated into three time points: at entry, at exit, and at first year in the labour market. The entry analysis considers students who enrolled in a BC ECE program between 2013 and 2021; because it is possible that the same student enrolls in multiple ECE programs over several years, we retain only their first record to indicate the earliest point in which a student first enters ECE education. The exit analysis considers students in the last observed year of their ECE program. It is important to note that the definition of “exit” can include both graduation and non-graduation; it is also possible that some students may not have graduated from their last ECE program but did graduate from an earlier one (i.e., continuing education or certification). The labour market analysis captures ECE students observed as entering the labour market one year after leaving ECE programs, as indicated through the presence of a tax record.

There are time lags in the compilation of the ELMLP. SRDC has thus waited to the last possible moment in the evaluation to undertake this analysis. Even so, the final year of data available for the entry analysis was 2021, the final year of data available for the exit analysis is 2020, and the final year of data available for the labour market analysis is 2019.

Successes and Challenges

The ELMLP provides rich and detailed annual post-secondary enrollment data that can be linked to BC high school student data as well as CRA income tax records. This makes it possible not only to analyze the enrollment numbers in public BC ECE programs, but also to analyze the compositional patterns and labour market outcomes of students before and after enrolling in ECE programs. This longitudinal perspective is important given the long-term changes the ECL R&R Strategy is trying to bring about.

However, because these datasets are often derived from raw administrative records, there can be inconsistencies in data linkage and classification. These issues affect analysis in two main ways. First, not all educational records can be linked (such as private training institutions) and as a result, the sample sizes are lower whenever data are linked. Thus, the sample sizes within a table may differ depending on which data source the variable comes from. Second, the credential type can be miscoded by institutions. A proportion of the programs listed as “other” are likely diploma and certificate programs, but some institutions do not code them as such.

Importantly, limitations in income tax data make it impossible to determine whether individuals are indeed working in ECL and how much ECL accounts for their source(s) of income (i.e., working multiple jobs, of

which one may be in childcare). The only general indicator is of industry rather than occupation, i.e. whether someone works in “education” or “social services.”

Characteristics of Public BC ECE Students

Characteristics at Program Entry

Table 24 presents the characteristics of students entering their *first* BC ECE public post-secondary program. In line with expectations of the ECL R&R Strategy, there has been an increase in the number of people entering BC ECE post-secondary programs since 2013. Between 2013 and 2019, the number of students entering ECE programs ranged between 870 and 1,090 with the lowest level of 790 recorded in 2017. By 2020, the ECE entry cohort size increased to almost 1,200. In 2021, the cohort size increased again to over 1,400. The enrollment numbers in Table 24 are higher than the ECE program enrollment reported to SRDC by the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (Figure 28 in the Evaluation 2023 Technical Report). The higher number presented here is likely due to the inclusion of Bachelor’s Degree and Graduate programs as an ECE program in the Statistics Canada data.

In general, the characteristics of students entering ECE programs appear relatively stable between 2013 and 2019. Over 95 per cent of students are female²⁰ and over 80 per cent of programs are Certificate or Diploma programs.²¹ There are several notable changes in entry characteristics since 2018. First, there is consistent *increase* in the proportion of international students, from 11 per cent in 2018 to 20 per cent in 2021. This increase in international students is coupled with an increase in ELL students in 2021. Second, there is a consistent *decrease* in students with previous post-secondary experience, from 58 per cent in 2018 to 47 per cent in 2021. Finally, there is a consistent *decrease* in the proportion of students who are low-income, from 28 per cent in 2018 to 16 per cent in 2021.²²

While the increase in international students corresponds with an overall increase of international students in Canada in the past five years, the decrease in proportion of students with prior post-secondary

²⁰ In the 2016 Census, males and females were identified by Statistics Canada’s “sex of a person” variable, although gender diverse respondents could report the sex they most identified with or leave the question blank. In 2021, Statistics Canada updated the census to include separate measures representing the “gender of person” and “sex at birth.” Our 2021 analysis used the former “gender of person” indicator. More specifically, we used the “gender_binary” indicator, which was created by Statistics Canada for analysis that examines a small population of people, and it is necessary to protect the confidentiality of non-binary respondents. In this indicator, the category “non-binary persons” are included in either binary gender category—allocation that is done by Statistics Canada.

²¹ As mentioned above, it is likely that many of the “other” programs are also Certificate or Diploma.

²² Statistics Canada’s low-income measure is a relative measure of low income, calculated as a fixed percentage (50 per cent) of adjusted median family income where adjusted indicates a consideration of needs due to family size.

experience and low-income students in ECE programs suggest that enrollment in ECE education has expanded to some groups who may not have chosen these types of programs in the past.

Table 24 Characteristics of students entering public BC ECE programs, 2013 - 2021

ECE program entry cohort		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
PSE characteristics	Observations =	1,090	940	940	870	790	1,090	1,060	1,180	1,440
Previous PSE experience	Yes (%)	44.0	51.1	55.3	56.3	55.7	57.8	53.8	58.5	47.2
Program of entry	Other (%)	6.4	3.2	2.1	4.6	7.6	11.0	9.4	7.6	6.3
	Certificate (%)	32.1	28.7	34.0	31.0	32.9	34.9	32.1	33.9	27.1
	Diploma (%)	52.3	58.5	53.2	56.3	49.4	45.0	49.1	50.0	59.7
	BA (%)	5.5	6.4	5.3	6.9	6.3	6.4	6.6	5.1	4.9
	Graduate (%)	3.7	2.1	4.3	1.1	3.8	2.8	3.8	3.4	2.1
Enrolled in college or university	College (%)	74.3	70.2	69.1	66.7	72.2	72.5	60.4	66.9	69.4
	University (%)	26.6	29.8	30.9	33.3	27.8	27.5	39.6	33.1	31.3
Male/Female	Female (%)	97.2	96.8	96.8	97.7	97.5	96.3	95.3	95.8	95.8
Age group	<19 (%)	13.8	16.0	13.8	16.1	16.5	14.7	15.1	13.6	18.8
	20-24 (%)	22.9	27.7	25.5	27.6	27.8	26.6	22.6	26.3	22.2
	25-29 (%)	17.4	16.0	17.0	18.4	15.2	18.3	17.0	16.1	17.4
	30-39 (%)	23.9	21.3	24.5	21.8	21.5	22.9	26.4	24.6	25.0
	40+ (%)	22.9	19.1	19.1	17.2	19.0	18.3	18.9	19.5	17.4
Immigration status	Canadian citizen	89.9	87.2	81.9	80.5	78.5	78.9	73.6	78.0	68.1
	PR or other visa	7.3	5.3	10.6	9.2	10.1	10.1	12.3	9.3	12.5
	International student	2.8	8.5	7.4	10.3	11.4	11.0	14.2	12.7	20.1
Labour market characteristics (in year prior to entry)	Observations =	950	790	770	690	620	820	760	880	630
Marital status	Married/ Common law (%)	38.9	34.2	39.0	37.7	35.5	35.4	39.5	38.6	38.1
Low income	Yes (%)	24.2	24.1	27.3	27.5	21.0	28.0	21.1	21.6	15.9

ECE program entry cohort		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Has children aged 17 or under	Yes (%)	46.3	41.8	48.1	43.5	48.4	45.1	43.4	43.2	39.7
Employed in education/social services	Yes (%)	30.5	29.1	31.2	24.6	25.8	24.4	31.6	30.7	27.0
BC K-12 characteristics	Observations =	750	660	610	590	520	680	620	700	810
Ever identified as Indigenous	Yes (%)	18.7	16.7	13.1	16.9	21.2	26.5	16.1	21.4	17.3
French Immersion ever	Yes (%)	6.7	7.6	6.6	8.5	7.7	8.8	8.1	10.0	9.9
ELL ever	Yes (%)	17.3	18.2	18.0	20.3	21.2	22.1	22.6	18.6	27.2
IEP ever	Yes (%)	12.0	10.6	9.8	13.6	11.5	16.2	12.9	14.3	16.0
Grade 7 FSA results	Not present in Grade 7 (%)	49.3	43.9	44.3	37.3	36.5	36.8	38.7	34.3	30.9
	Did not write (%)	2.7	4.5	4.9	6.8	7.7	8.8	6.5	8.6	13.6
	Not yet meeting expectations in one or both (%)	8.0	9.1	8.2	10.2	11.5	13.2	11.3	11.4	12.3
	Meeting expectations in one (%)	13.3	13.6	14.8	15.3	15.4	16.2	14.5	15.7	14.8
	Meeting expectations in both	21.3	24.2	24.6	25.4	25.0	20.6	21.0	27.1	22.2
	Exceeding expectations in one or both (%)	4.0	4.5	6.6	5.1	5.8	4.4	6.5	5.7	7.4

Notes: Results from the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform and exclude 10 people who are missing age/gender information. Descriptive results rounded to the nearest 10. “Ever identified as Indigenous” refers to if a person ever identified as Indigenous when enrolled in the education system at any point. “ELL Ever” refers to a person was ever enrolled in a program at school intended for English language learners. School records go back many decades and over most of the period the programming term used was ESL but we have used ELL in this report. “IEP ever” refers to if a student ever had an Individualized Education Plan throughout their K-12 enrollment records.

Characteristics at Exit

Table 25 presents the characteristics of students when they exit their last BC ECE post-secondary program. Corresponding to the increase in students entering ECE programs, there is an increase in the number of students exiting ECE programs, from 980 in 2018 when the ECL R&R Strategy began to 1,350 in 2020. The “leave with an ECE credential” variable captures whether the student graduated from any ECE program at any point in their educational tenure. This variable shows that roughly 50 per cent of those who attended an ECE post-secondary program become graduates. However, records of graduation in these data are likely to underestimate considerably the percentage of students who have completed an ECE program because there are inconsistencies in the way practicums are recorded by PSE institutions in the post-secondary administrative data. For example, some students may have completed all credential requirements but not applied for graduation, and therefore would appear in the data as not having completed. Further, certificates are issued for those who have completed recognized ECE programs by the ECE Registry upon application to the Registry and Statistics Canada records will not record those certifications.

Overall, the exit characteristics of students appear to be relatively consistent over time. Over 95 per cent of students exiting programs are women and over 80 per cent of students exit from Certificate and Diploma programs. Notably, there is an *increase* in the proportion of Indigenous students leaving ECE programs, from 14 per cent in 2016 to consistently above 20 per cent since 2017.

Table 25 Characteristics of students leaving public ECE programs, 2013 - 2020

ECE program exit cohort		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
PSE characteristics	Observations =	1,150	1,000	960	860	850	980	1,050	1,350
Leave with an ECE credential	Yes (%)	37.4	44.0	47.9	50.0	48.2	49.0	50.5	50.4
Grad program or last program of enrollment	Other (%)	10.4	4.0	2.1	3.5	7.1	10.2	7.6	6.7
	Certificate (%)	39.1	34.0	35.4	30.2	29.4	29.6	31.4	35.6
	Diploma (%)	46.1	56.0	53.1	55.8	56.5	51.0	51.4	45.2
	BA (%)	2.6	4.0	4.2	4.7	5.9 ²³	6.1	7.6	7.4
	Graduate (%)	2.6	3.0	5.2	4.7		3.1	1.9	5.2
Enrolled in college or university	College (%)	73.0	72.0	68.8	68.6	70.6	70.4	66.7	65.2
	University (%)	27.0	29.0	31.3	30.2	29.4	28.6	33.3	34.8
Male/Female	Female (%)	96.5	98.0	96.9	96.5	96.5	96.9	97.1	95.6
Age group at exit	<19 (%)	6.1	5.0	6.3	4.7	5.9	5.1	4.8	5.2
	20-24 (%)	21.7	24.0	25.0	23.3	29.4	25.5	25.7	22.2
	25-29 (%)	20.0	19.0	17.7	23.3	22.4	22.4	21.0	20.0
	30-39 (%)	27.8	25.0	26.0	26.7	23.5	24.5	25.7	28.9
	40+ (%)	25.2	28.0	24.0	22.1	18.8	21.4	21.9	23.7
Immigration status at exit	Canadian citizen	88.7	92.0	86.5	86.0	82.4	79.6	83.8	79.3
	PR or other visa	8.7	5.0	9.4	8.1	8.2	11.2	8.6	8.9
	International student	2.6	4.0	5.2	5.8	10.6	8.2	8.6	11.1
Labour market characteristics (in year of exit)	Observations =	1,070	920	900	790	760	870	920	1,140
Marital status	Married/ Common law (%)	46.7	44.6	43.3	44.3	40.8	41.4	42.4	41.2
Low income	Yes (%)	25.2	19.6	18.9	19.0	19.7	24.1	19.6	12.3

²³ Disaggregated results are not available due to low cell sizes; totals for this year are combined across BA and Graduate.

ECE program exit cohort		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Has children aged 17 or under	Yes (%)	42.1	41.3	41.1	38.0	35.5	39.1	40.2	38.6
Employed in education/social services	Yes (%)	53.3	58.7	58.9	60.8	61.8	59.8	62.0	57.9
BC K-12 characteristics	Observations =	780	660	620	590	590	620	690	830
Ever identified as Indigenous	Yes (%)	17.9	18.2	16.1	13.6	20.3	22.6	20.3	20.5
French Immersion ever	Yes (%)	7.7	7.6	6.5	6.8	8.5	8.1	7.2	8.4
ELL ever	Yes (%)	16.7	15.2	17.7	15.3	18.6	22.6	20.3	20.5
IEP ever	Yes (%)	11.5	10.6	9.7	11.9	10.2	12.9	14.5	14.5
Grade 7 FSA results	Not present in Grade 7 (%)	60.3	54.5	50.0	47.5	40.7	40.3	36.2	39.8
	Did not write (%)	3.8	3.0	1.6	3.4	6.8	6.5	7.2	7.2
	Not yet meeting expectations in one or both (%)	7.7	7.6	8.1	6.8	10.2	11.3	11.6	10.8
	Meeting expectations in one (%)	10.3	10.6	11.3	13.6	15.3	17.7	14.5	14.5
	Meeting expectations in both	15.4	21.2	24.2	22.0	23.7	21.0	24.6	25.3
	Exceeding expectations in one or both (%)	2.6	4.5	4.8	5.1	3.4	3.2	5.8	3.6

Notes: These results use data from the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform. Descriptive results rounded to the nearest 10. “Ever identified as Indigenous” refers to if a person ever identified as Indigenous when enrolled in the education system at any point. “ELL Ever” refers to a person was ever enrolled in a program at school intended for English language learners. School records go back many decades and over most of the period the programming term used was ESL but we have used ELL in this report. “IEP ever” refers to if a student ever had an Individualized Education Plan throughout their K-12 enrollment records.

Characteristics during First Year in the Labour Market

Table 26 illustrates the PSE and labour market characteristics of students observed as entering the labour market one year after leaving ECE programs. In general, the PSE and labour market characteristics of ECE students observed to be working in the labour force appear relatively stable over time. Over 80 per cent of ECE labour market participants exited from a Certificate or Diploma program and over 95 per cent are women. Average inflation-adjusted earnings consistently fall between \$31,000 to \$35,000. A noteworthy change is the *decrease* in the proportion of individuals identified at this time as low income. Between 2013-2019, the proportion of ECE PSE students in the labour force who meet the low income definition has decreased gradually from about 20 per cent to 10 per cent.

Table 26 Descriptive characteristics of students observed as entering the labour market one year after leaving public ECE programs, 2013 - 2019

ECE program entry cohort		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
PSE characteristics	Observations =	1,060	930	900	780	770	880	930
Leave with an ECE credential	Yes (%)	38.7	45.2	48.9	51.3	48.1	51.1	52.7
Declared FT or PT PSE enrollment in tax return one year after leaving	Yes (%)	20.8	20.4	22.2	21.8	18.2	25.0	24.7
Grad program or last program of enrollment	Other (%)	10.4	4.3	2.2	3.8	7.8	10.2	7.5
	Certificate (%)	38.7	33.3	35.6	32.1	29.9	30.7	31.2
	Diploma (%)	46.2	54.8	53.3	55.1	57.1	50.0	51.6
	BA (%)	2.8	4.3	4.4	3.8	6.5 ²⁴	6.8	7.5
	Graduate (%)	2.8	3.2	5.6	5.1		2.3	2.2
Institution type at exit	College (%)	72.6	71.0	68.9	70.5	70.1	70.5	66.7
	University (%)	27.4	29.0	31.1	29.5	29.9	29.5	33.3
Male/Female	Female (%)	97.2	97.8	97.8	97.4	97.4	96.6	96.8
Age group at exit	<19 (%)	5.7	4.3	6.7	3.8	6.5	4.5	4.3
	20-24 (%)	20.8	24.7	24.4	21.8	29.9	26.1	24.7
	25-29 (%)	20.8	19.4	17.8	23.1	20.8	22.7	22.6
	30-39 (%)	27.4	24.7	26.7	28.2	23.4	25.0	26.9
	40+ (%)	25.5	28.0	25.6	23.1	19.5	21.6	22.6

²⁴ Disaggregated results are not available due to low cell sizes; totals for this year are combined across BA and Graduate.

ECE program entry cohort		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Immigration status at exit	Canadian citizen	89.6	92.5	87.8	88.5	81.8	79.5	84.9
	PR or other visa	8.5	4.3	8.9	7.7	7.8	12.5	8.6
	International student	1.9	3.2	4.4	3.8	9.1	8.0	6.5
Labour market characteristics (in year after exiting PSE)								
Declared employment income	Yes (%)	89.6	94.6	94.4	92.3	93.5	92.0	93.5
Employed in education/social services	Yes (%)	55.7	60.2	62.2	62.8	64.9	61.4	60.2
Marital status	Married/ Common law (%)	50.9	48.4	45.6	48.7	41.6	43.2	43.0
Low income	Yes (%)	20.8	16.1	14.4	15.4	13.0	15.9	9.7
Has children aged 17 or under	Yes (%)	44.3	43.0	40.0	39.7	36.4	39.8	40.9
First year earnings	Observations =	950	880	850	720	720	810	870
Average inflation-adjusted earnings	Mean	31,100	33,800	33,200	36,000	31,300	35,000	33,600
	SE	684	756	732	883	678	765	792

Notes: Results from the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform. Descriptive results rounded to the nearest 10.

Key Informant Interviews

In early 2024, 11 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with post-secondary education providers, those involved in delivering education, certification, and training supports, and with a large employer at a \$10-a-Day Prototype site. The main themes emerging from the KIIs are discussed below.

Pathways to ECE

Those interviewed agreed that a variety of education pathways is necessary to meet the needs of aspiring ECL professionals. Currently, there are approximately 170 ECE programs available at 34 post-secondary education (PSE) institutions in BC, which include public and private institutions that offer:

- In-person/on-campus;
- Hybrid; and
- Online/distance learning consisting of synchronous and asynchronous courses.

To encourage students to register for programs and to ensure a steady stream of ECE graduates for the sector, PSE institutions offer rolling intakes, including monthly for some in-person and online programs. In addition, those that offer asynchronous programs allow students to register on an ongoing basis.

KIIs suggested the variety of program formats meet the needs of a greater number of students. They suggested that younger and international students tend to opt for programs that offer an in-person/on-campus experience compared with slightly older individuals already employed (often in the ECL sector), who frequently chose online/distance learning programs. Although the rationale for choosing particular program formats was related to the learning preferences of students, with some not wanting to be in a traditional classroom, the key determining factor was reported to be cost.

KIIs differentiated between the costs for full-time and part-time students. Most full-time students attended PSE institutions in person for at least some of their courses. A particular challenge for FT students is covering the cost of tuition in addition to having sufficient funds to meet living expenses as they are unable to work full-time while completing their course. KIIs acknowledged that higher wages in the sector help students repay student loans, but the rising cost of living means it remains financially challenging for FT ECE students.

Part-time students tend to register for online courses and complete them one-at-a-time. KIIs suggested most part-time students are working full-time in the sector.

“So you know, those students are either working evenings and weekends to make ends meet, whereas with our online components, all of our synchronous classes are run in the evenings on it so they can work full-time and take a course and succeed that way.”

KII, PSE

Some PSE institutions also offer asynchronous programs, which students can complete at their own pace and when convenient. This format provides the greatest flexibility for students. However, the challenge for PT students in online programs is the time it takes to become fully certified ECL professionals.

Regardless of the format of the ECL program, all ECE students are required to complete practicum placements in licensed child care settings. There are specific learning outcomes for each practicum and students are supervised by Practicum Supervisors at PSE institutions who conduct in-person and virtual visits to the ECL centres. PSE KIIs stressed the importance of practicum placements, which provide students with the opportunity to observe other ECEs and to gain experience incorporating what they have learned into their practice. In discussing practicums, two issues emerged: whether students should be paid by the employers during these placements and some employers trying to persuade students to switch courses and work at their centres.

KIIs were split on the issue of whether practicums should be paid. Some were concerned if students were paid by employers then they would be counted in ratio and not have the opportunity to observe and to learn. Others highlighted the financial hardships PT students experience as they are unable to work while completing their practicum at another ECL centre. PT students already working in a child care setting must complete their practicums at a different workplace to ensure equity and objectivity in the assessment of whether students had met the learning outcomes. This requires PT students to take leave and complete their practicum in another setting. KIIs reported there is some confusion amongst students and providers about whether students can be paid, with those from private institutions being ineligible for pay.²⁵

“We’re taking some downtrodden marginalized people, and you can’t get paid. But if you were in a public institution, you can.”

KII, PSE

Some KIIs believed this practice was inequitable and resulted in financial hardship for students and their families who relied on their income. Specifically, practicums were identified as a primary barrier for those working in the sector and upskilling, because they need to take time off from work:

“A lot of people... just don’t go any further because they know they’ve got the practicum to do. And sometimes I feel like if that person has been working in a day care for [many] years and has worked in all the various departments, you know, like the baby room, the toddler, special needs, if they’ve had that whole gamut, why wouldn’t that count?”

KII, Education Supports

²⁵ The Private Training Institutions Branch of the Ministry of Post Secondary and Future Skills has a regulation that stipulates that private training institute students cannot engage in paid practicums. For public post-secondary institutions, payment for a practicum may be provided to students, at the discretion of individual institutions.

In addition, KIIs from PSE institutions all highlighted examples of students being offered employment while completing their practicums. While employers frequently offered students employment on completion of their ECE program, there were a growing number of instances in which employers asked students to switch courses to a PT program, work as an ECEA, and, in return, employers would pay their tuition fees. KIIs suggested this practice was a symptom of the acute shortage of ECL workers in the sector. Employers are desperate to acquire (in their terms) a ‘warm body’, but the practice can have a detrimental effect on continuity in PSE programs.

“... we send our students out in semester one and some of our community partners will convince the students to leave [name of PSE]. And they will pay them through a different pathway to complete their education with a different institution, where they can access online.”

KII, PSE

Bursaries for ECL Students

The administration of student bursaries to attend PSE is reportedly running smoothly and supporting students, despite issues that arose in previous iterations. PSE Key Informants appreciated increased levels of financial support for ECE students.

“More people are taking the rest of the program than they used to because of all these [employment] grants and bursaries and [wage enhancement] incentives, which I think from our data seems to be an effective incentivization to get students the training and not just exit at ECE Assistant.”

KII, PSE

However, most bursary applications come from new students in the sector. Only about 13 per cent of the latest intake were for current employees or owner/operators upskilling to ECE or ECE+.

KIIs report that funding for ECE courses remains challenging for many students. For all types of ECE courses, fees are required before starting the course, but ECE student and workforce bursaries are administered as a reimbursement. In the past, bursaries were provided upfront but that could result in unfair disbursement to students who didn’t complete their courses when later applicants could not receive bursaries because the pool of available funding had already been exhausted.

Although uptake has improved, the bursary is still not reaching all students, which creates a challenge for the students and for bursary administrators who are unable to assist after intake is closed. Nonetheless, better uptake of bursaries was observed after adopting a simpler and streamlined online system.

Quality and Consistency of ECE Education Programs

In BC, ECE programs have to be approved by the ECE Registry to issue certifications, and PSE programs are required to adhere to the BC Child Care Sector Occupational Competencies (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/early-learning/teach/ece/bc_occupational_competencies.pdf). Each PSE program is reviewed annually by Registry staff. Reportedly, the proportions of new certificate applications that are successful or denied has not changed in recent years.

However, some KIIs expressed concerns about the quality and consistency of some ECE programs. Despite the safeguards noted above, KIIs considered that ECE programs are not equivalent ('apples to apples'), making it difficult for those in the sector, including employers, to trust levels of knowledge and competencies of incoming newly graduated ECEs. While those interviewed were confident in the quality of education provided to their ECE students, they were concerned that other programs may not be delivering consistently high-quality graduates.

"You take a look at the course names and outcomes, you know, yes, you have competencies but you can diversify them in so many different ways. You have 12 hours of this and this course and 12 hours in this course. You know ... you can see why there's a systemic problem, because you can't just say, "well, let's take a look at graduates from [names of institutions], you know, they got all the same courses. They all covered the same outlines. We know what we're getting." But because we don't have that standardized system – which doesn't quite make sense to me [because] we've got the Registry, we should be able to have standardized courses per se, maybe a few electives to specialize, but we should be able to have standardized courses where the outcomes are kind of the same, but we don't. We've got a dog's breakfast."

KII, PSE

The immediate concern highlighted by KIIs from PSE institutions was that ECE graduates did not have the necessary skills and knowledge required to deliver high quality ECL. They were also worried about longer-term implications. Securing recognition for the professionalism of those working the sector – was largely based on the quality of care and education provided by ECEs. If some ECE graduates appeared to lack necessary skills these 'hard fought' gains might be 'eroded'.

"People need to have educators that can support children who are dealing with life. You know, when a little person has decided they're not a boy and their parents have decided they are... When you have 25 children in a room, you know, most families have moments."

KII, Education Supports

The lack of consistency across ECE PSE programs was also noted to be a challenge for prospective students. Some PSE programs cost more than others, take longer to complete, have different practicum lengths and, as noted above, may have paid or unpaid practicum placements. While variety is noted as an important feature to meet the needs of individual learners, inconsistencies can make it difficult for

prospective students to assess whether programs are of sufficient quality and what pursuing different programs of education might ultimately mean for their own future.

Career Pathways

Many of those interviewed felt that career pathways for those in the sector were limited. The current main pathway identified is for ECEs to complete additional Infant Toddler or Special Needs training to enable them to have more responsibility and increase their salary. ECEs with these additional qualifications often acquire some program responsibilities. However, progressing beyond this point typically involves ECEs moving into a management role.

KIIs signalled that, unlike professionals in the education sector, ECEs are not financially rewarded when they have a degree versus a diploma. Those interviewed suggested the only reason individuals complete post-graduate training is in order to lecture or conduct research at a university. Even so, some of those interviewed stated that a degree was not always a requirement to teach in an ECE diploma program.

“.. other than if you're instructing at a post secondary level and there is really not a lot of career ladder that you can do or incentive to get your degree at this point.”

KII, Education Supports

Those interviewed suggested that having a clear career pathway was important for sustainability and increasing the professionalism of the sector. They reported that prospective students and parents of students were increasingly inquisitive about opportunities to develop careers in the future.

“ ... basically, if we invest in our child into ECE, what's their career pathway, what does it look like, and what could they bridge into or ladder into?”

KII, PSE

KIIs noted that ECL students were aware of the economic climate and which organizations offered the best benefits and working conditions to their staff. They were also aware that the lack of minimum education standards in ECL meant that prospective colleagues or even employers may not have the same expectations or standards that they held to, which could contribute to friction and even burnout.

“Students are ... asking for certain things and the owner is usually just like, “well, you're just here to do this and you don't need to worry about anything else” kind of thing. But well-trained people know that there are certain things that they need to do. So, there's some frustration there.”

KII, Education Supports

Similarly, KIIs from PSE institutions reported examples of students returning from practicums as well as newly qualified ECEs experiencing education practices did not align with their ECE program. One KII suggested that this disillusionment contributed to up to half of the students in one ECE PSE program planning to go directly into K-12 education programs after completing their ECE rather than into the ECL

field. They called for a career pathway in the ECL sector that would make investing time and money in ECE education worthwhile.

KIIs were additionally concerned that currently there were only limited opportunities for ECEs to attend another PSE institution and receive full credit for their completed courses. Individual PSE institutions held agreements with other institutions to enable transfer into a degree program but this process varied, reportedly leaving some students 'having to start again' should they want to complete a degree. Many KIIs were frustrated because this lack of articulation risked portraying the ECL sector as a 'dead end' that did not encourage individuals to be ambitious and to pursue personal development to enter the sector. Some suggested that the lack of career pathway perpetuated stereotypes surrounding the sector as predominately female, offering a job not a profession.

Despite identifying challenges, many KIIs remained hopeful. They pointed to the move of government responsibility for child care into the Ministry of Education and Child Care as a positive sign. KIIs in education and training suggested that elements of K-12 career pathways, such as compensation packages and pedagogical supports, could be implemented for those who teach 0–5-year-olds as well.

"I support a hundred percent fully universal [ECL] system. I think it should be exactly the same as public school."

KII, Education Supports

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) opportunities in BC include online and in-person offerings that can be accessed by individuals and organizations. Many are tailored to the BC context and can sometimes be customized to specific workplaces. One professional development provider noted that while the government prefers wide-reaching, online professional development offerings, educators typically prefer tailored in-person supports.

KIIs stressed the importance of continuing PD for the advancement of the sector and for individual ECL professionals. While there was recognition that the sector had made significant progress, there was agreement that there was 'more work to do' to ensure the sector received the recognition it deserved and that it provided high quality early care and education across the province.

Key informants involved in providing PD programs reported a shift in the format and content of the programming: most now was provided online. There was also a shift in the content of PD programming post-COVID with more focus now on the social and emotional well-being of children, well-being strategies for those in the sector and sessions to improve practice. A key motivation for attending PD training was to meet licensing requirements as ECEs have to participate in 40 hours of accredited training over five years to renew their license.

Mentoring was identified as an important part of PD for ECEs, especially those who had recently completed their programs. KIIs felt it provided an opportunity for ECEs to learn and reflect on their

practice and explore issues they were concerned about. Those interviewed stated the first year working as an ECE could be very stressful and could lead to qualified staff leaving the profession. Mentoring was a way of providing supports and strategies to manage and reduce stress while supporting PD.

The Need for Joined-Up Tactics

Many KIIs welcomed recent increased support for the ECL sector, such as the ECL R&R Strategy, and described the ‘last few years’ as ‘dynamic’ and filled with ‘fast-paced changes’. They agreed there was a need for innovation and forward thinking. However, those interviewed were concerned about the pace of change and stressed the need for joined-up tactics. Those from PSE institutions felt they ‘were running to keep up’ with some of the changes and were calling for a more ‘mindful’ and systems-level approach to ensure policies were achieving their intended outcomes. Key informants discussed some seed and short-term funding received to create additional seats and programming. While this funding enabled institutions to recruit more ECE students, it had relatively short timelines within which to recruit additional teaching staff and advertise programs. KIIs from PSE institutions reported disappointment after the first year when funding was not renewed, which meant students again had to pay program fees. Demand for the program declined and staff had to be let go. Key informants suggested that while pilot funding allowed them to develop programming, starting and stopping programs with little lead-time was not an effective way to meet the needs of the sector or communities.

In reflecting upon the pace of change, KIIs commented that complex social issues in the ECL sector will not be solved by quick fixes, which is how they viewed many of the existing tactics. For example, prioritizing ECEs/ECEAs through the BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) to boost the number of qualified individuals in the province required other parts of the sector to be able to respond positively and recognize credentials.

Key informants wanted the government to adopt more sustainable strategies and were concerned that:

“We’re actively recruiting people who are short term.”

KII, Education Supports

Key informants were concerned that while individual tactics had some immediate and short-term success, they were unsure whether they were making a sustained and meaningful difference to the sector:

“So it’s really hard to gauge if it’s had the big enough impact that we hoped it would I feel like if the sector is still in crisis, if this is still a problem, then somewhere along the line, even after five years of funding there’s kind of a mismatch with the [amount in millions] in funding and still, the sector is not better than it was when we first started.”

KII, Education Supports

Key informants suggested that more oversight would be needed to maintain standards. They highlighted the fact that licensing officers inspect programs with a primary focus to ensure they are meeting health

and safety standards, which they acknowledged was critical. However, accountability, monitoring, or reporting on the early learning components of programs was lacking. Some key informants suggested that in the rush to create additional spaces, not enough attention was being paid to the content of ECL programs. Some of those interviewed hoped the move of government responsibility for child care to the Ministry of Education and Child Care would address this, leading to those in early care and learning programs receiving both early care and learning.

Another challenge in the implementation of financial tactics has arisen whereby some large employers whose broader workplace is part of a public sector association appear unable to access the extra \$2/hr wage enhancement top-up for their ECL professionals. Because the wage enhancement policy is implemented at the workplace level, ECEs with non-provincially funded collective agreements at provincially-funded organizations are not eligible for the addition top-up.

“The government’s policy on this is penalizing ... a group of early childhood educators. Nobody will tell me how to fix this.”

KII, Employer

One KII noted that a group of employers across the province has been affected by the issue, which was exacerbated by the lack of clarity over the location of responsibility within government for such policies. Such employers report they are struggling to retain staff as a result, citing raising fees as no longer a viable solution due to the fee cap imposed on \$10aDay ChildCareBC Centres and the burden higher fees impose on families:

“So I have staff now, as you can imagine, the trajectory of this: Not being paid the same to begin with in terms of what they’re entitled to, but then also now I am competing against other providers out there that are getting the wage enhancement and being able to pay above the grid. So you can imagine the jeopardy this place is in.”

KII, Employer

This KII noted that the fragmented tactic has prevented them from further expanding their centre and may even force the closure of the workplace.

“...and that’s heart-breaking...It’s been hard, trying to over the years, to make it work and create a warm culture within the agency where they’ve had a massive discrepancy in wages and benefits, you know, in a sector that is highly racialized, mostly women. [Dealing with] a clear inequity within our own organization.”

KII, Employer

Case Study Supplementary Analyses – Departed Staff

Over the five years of the project, SRDC followed up with 12 participants who left the case study child care centres either via interview or survey. Since the sample is small, we report on overall trends rather than a year-to-year analysis.

Reasons for Leaving

Slightly over half of former case study participants still worked in a child care role. The majority of participants who stayed in child care but changed centres cited reasons for leaving related to their work environment including being short-staffed, not having a consistent work schedule, or not feeling comfortable, supported, or appreciated at work. Other participants who still worked in child care moved to a different city and had to find a new job.

Participants who no longer provided care directly to children had experienced a workplace injury, transitioned to a child care adjacent role, or decided to pursue further education. They cited reasons for leaving ECL that included lack of accommodation of their injury, burnout, limited career growth, low wages, and the demanding nature of their employment.

Job Satisfaction

When asked about factors that contributed to their job satisfaction, almost all participants listed reasons that were related to their management team, colleagues, and work environment. Factors included management who were understanding, professional, supportive, and trusted that their staff had the required skills to promote early learning and development; adequate, sufficient, and well-trained staff to mitigate burnout, prevent injuries, and ensure that people could have adequate time off, good teamwork and relationships with colleagues, and feeling acknowledged and appreciated at work. Participants also mentioned feeling satisfaction related to watching children learn, grow, and succeed, as well as adequate pay. Similarly, many of the suggestions for improving an aspect of their previous job were related to their management team and work environment.

“I think what the team prioritizes, and how they treat each other. There was a lot of talk about each other behind people’s backs, and less focus on the kids and their education. I wanted a team more focused on the kids, rather than gossip.”

Case Study Leaver

Participants wanted more respectful, supportive, and competent management, better communication among colleagues and with parents, a lower child to educator ratio, and more support for taking sick days. They also mentioned that more competent and qualified staff would improve working conditions for everyone.

“Having to pick up the slack of other staff who aren't as qualified is another really big cause of burnout because as a supervisor especially, I'm the one who takes on the slack.... So I think if more people were higher qualified, I think that would take a lot of burnout away. And it would make the day...less stressful, less hectic.”

Case Study Leaver

One participant described how the staff shortage made it difficult for workers to take time off even when policies were in place for them to do so:

“The burnout is high and there is often not enough staff. The sickness rate is high and there often is not enough staff to cover sick staff staying home. I would love to see the Covid sickness/wellness policies stay in place as wellness policies for childcare and early learning centres. These policies should be not only for the children but for the staff and management too. Somehow, I believe, there should be a monthly submitting required showing that the wellness policies are followed. I don't know what that would look like but it just doesn't [seem] the policies are being reinforced.”

Case Study Leaver

Of the seven participants who were still working in a child care role, all of them had plans to continue their work or training in the sector, except for two participants who would like to work in a role related to children but outside of child care.

ECL Recruitment and Retention Tactics

All but one participant were aware of the wage enhancement and two thirds of participants were receiving the wage enhancement at their previous employment. Two thirds of participants were aware of bursaries available through ECEBC. Several had applied for a bursary or were planning to apply for it to further their training. One participant mentioned applying and not being eligible, and one participant mentioned that the process was long and difficult. Other participants mentioned receiving bursaries but were unclear about which bursaries they received.

The most common answer participants gave for ways to encourage others to join the ECL sector was to improve wages. Nine of the twelve participants mentioned better pay. Other answers included support on the floor, qualified and professional workers, funding for schooling, better benefits, and more respect. One participant added that recruitment should focus on *“people who actually care about early childhood education and bettering the field.”*

Public Opinion Survey – Public Perceptions of Child Care

New data on opinions of ECL professionals' work among public opinion survey respondents aged 18+ show overall positive views of child care professionals, with 87 per cent of adults in BC valuing the work done by child care professionals and 10 per cent being unsure. Similarly, 85 per cent of teens aged 13-17 reported valuing the work of child care professionals.

Overall, there were few differences between female and male respondents in ratings of value of child care work. However, female respondents were more likely to “strongly” value the work done by child care professionals compared to male respondents. Similarly, value for child care work was roughly equivalent among parents of children aged 0-17 living with them and respondents without children aged 0-17 at home; but parents were more likely to “strongly” value child care work than those without children.

There is general agreement that child care professionals are vital to children's learning and development as well as the economy. The public remains generally unsure as to whether child care professionals in BC are well-trained, however, fewer are unsure in 2024 compared to 2019 (with proportionally more in agreement that they are well-trained). More of the public also report that working in child care doesn't require many skills. Compared to previous years, more among the general public felt that child care professionals are compensated fairly, with equal proportions agreeing and disagreeing (and the most common response being “unsure”). Thus, public perceptions of child care work have changed in nuanced (positive and negative) ways since 2019.

For the first time in 2024, perceptions of child care work among teens aged 13-17 was also analyzed. In general, teens' perceptions are similar to adults. The item associated with the biggest difference in perceptions between teens and adults is “Working in child care is equivalent to being a babysitter”, agreed to by only 23 per cent of adults and 37 per cent of teens. Teens were also more likely than adults to feel that child care professionals are less important to children's development than teachers, and that working in child care in BC does not require many skills. Notably, these three items are the only three in which agreement does **not** reflect a positive view of child care professionals; they were essentially presented as ‘double negative’ statements, which may have been misunderstood by respondents. Thus, it is possible that the ratings were more confusing for teens than adults (though responses of ‘not sure’ were available for each question; teens selected this option more than adults in 8 of 13 items though generally only by a small margin); it is also possible that teens were simply more likely to select ‘agree’ than adults. As SRDC is not confident in the reliability of the teen perceptions, these ratings are not presented in further detail below.

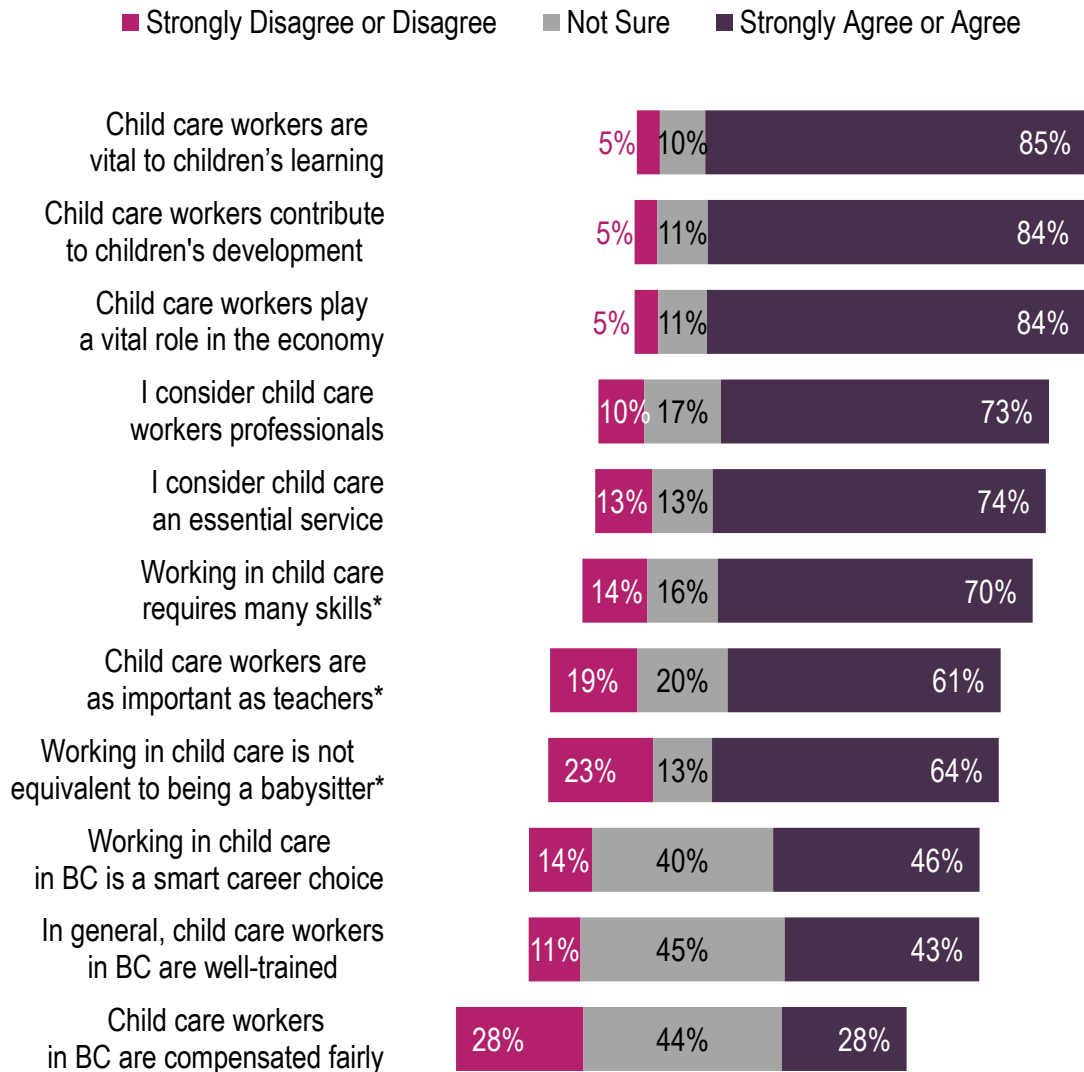
New in 2024, respondents were asked about the *public* sentiment of child care professionals. While 87 per cent of the general public personally value the work done by child care professionals, only 63 per cent think that “the public” values the work done by child care professionals. Thus, the impression that child care work is undervalued may be more perceptual than real. Even fewer (46 per cent) agree that child care work is valued by the BC government, with an additional 36 per cent unsure, which could be further contributing to the perception that the profession is undervalued.

Table 27 Respondent characteristics of public opinion survey, 2019 and 2024

	2019 (n=2105)	2024 (n=2107)
Female/male		
<i>Female</i>	51%	51%
<i>Male</i>	49%	49%
Age		
<i>13-17 years</i>	10%	10%
<i>18-34 years</i>	25%	25%
<i>35-54 years</i>	30%	29%
<i>55+ years</i>	35%	36%
Parents of children aged 17 and under living with them²⁶		
<i>Yes</i>	21%	20%
<i>No</i>	78%	79%
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	1%	1%
Indigenous Identity		
<i>Yes</i>	6%	5%
<i>No</i>	93%	94%
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	2%	1%
Rural Community		
<i>Yes</i>	22%	18%
<i>No</i>	74%	78%
<i>Not sure</i>	4%	4%
Born in Canada		
<i>Yes</i>	80%	74%
<i>No</i>	20%	26%

²⁶ Previously simply reported as “parents”; despite this oversight, the full description of age and living situation applies to all years of data collection. This question was not asked to those under age 18.

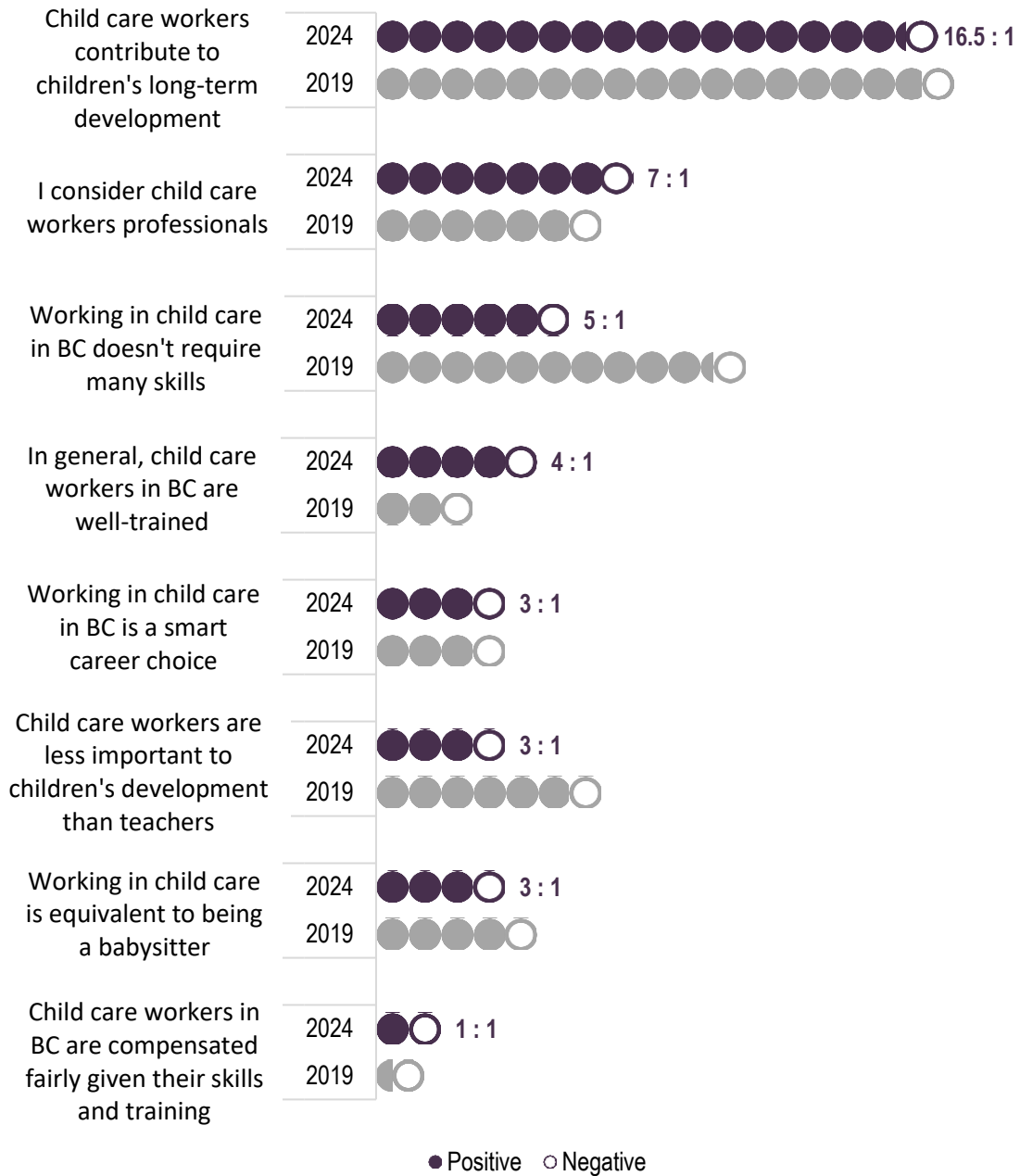
Figure 7 Public sentiment with respect to child care professionals, 2024



Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey

Note: *For this figure only, these items were reverse-coded to aid in interpretation. This means the direction of the items was flipped and the per cent agreeing and disagreeing with each statement was reversed to display consistent sentiment. Original items were: "Working in child care in BC **doesn't** require many skills", "Child care workers are **less** important than teachers", and "Working in child care **is equivalent** to being a babysitter".

Figure 8 Ratio of positive to negative opinions among general public, 2019 and 2024



Source: Public opinion surveys, 2019 and 2024.

Note: Unlike Figure 7, this figure shows *sentiment* rather than *agreement* to directly compare positive and negative opinions. Ratings of “unsure” are not included in this analysis; items with no 2019 data are also excluded.

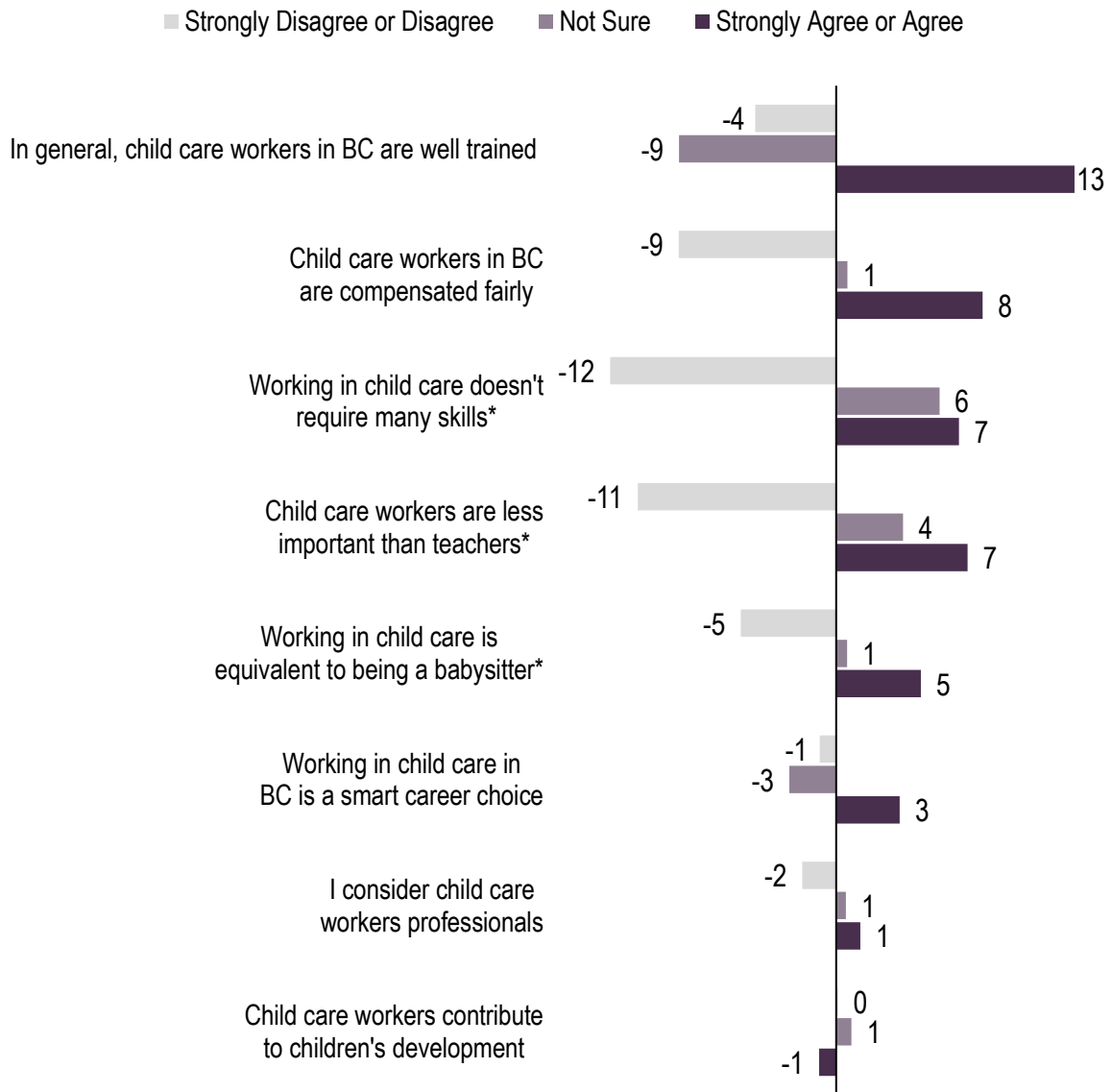
Table 28 Public perceptions of ECL professionals, 2024, and percentage point change since 2019

	2019 (n=1,904)			2024 (n=1,906)			Change since 2019		
	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
In general, child care workers in BC are well trained	16%	54%	30%	11%	45%	43%	-4	-9	13
Child care workers in BC are compensated fairly given the skills and training they have	37%	43%	20%	28%	44%	28%	-9	1	8
I consider child care workers professionals	12%	17%	71%	10%	17%	73%	-2	1	1
Child care workers contribute to the long-term development of children in BC	5%	10%	85%	5%	11%	84%	0	1	-1
Working in child care is equivalent to being a babysitter*	69%	12%	19%	64%	13%	23%	-5	1	5
Working in child care in BC is a smart career choice	15%	43%	42%	14%	40%	46%	-1	-3	3
Working in child care in BC doesn't require many skills*	82%	10%	8%	70%	16%	14%	-12	6	7
Child care workers are less important to children's development than elementary school teachers*	71%	16%	12%	61%	20%	19%	-11	4	7
I consider child care an essential service	N/A	N/A	N/A	13%	13%	74%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Child care workers in BC play a vital role in the economy because they support others to work	N/A	N/A	N/A	5%	11%	84%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Child care workers play a vital role in children's learning and development	N/A	N/A	N/A	5%	10%	85%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Child care work is valued by the public	N/A	N/A	N/A	16%	20%	63%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Child care work is valued by the BC government	N/A	N/A	N/A	18%	36%	46%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: 2019 and 2024 Public Opinion Surveys

Note: Strongly Disagree and Disagree were collapsed into a single category for reporting, as were Strongly Agree and Agree. Statements denoted with * represent reverse-coded statements, in which agreement reflects a negative view of child care.

Figure 9 Percentage point change in public perceptions of ECL professionals since 2019



Source: 2019 and 2024 Public Opinion Surveys

Note: *Because of the way these items are worded, a decrease in disagreement reflects a negative view (unlike the other items). If sentiments are generally increasing, these items should show the opposite pattern compared to the other statements (i.e., increase in disagreement). The contradiction suggests a complex view of child care work.

Table 29 Ratings of personal value for the work done by child care professionals among general population of BC and specific subgroups, 2024

I value the work done by child care workers:	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
Female/Male			
Female	3%	8%	90%
Male	5%	14%	83%
Parental Status			
Parent of Child Aged 0-17	2%	8%	90%
Not Parent of Child Aged 0-17	3%	10%	86%
Overall	3%	10%	87%

Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey

Note: Strongly Disagree and Disagree were collapsed into a single category for reporting, as were Strongly Agree and Agree. Totals don't always add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 30 Self-reported change in ratings of current value of child care professionals compared to personal opinion in 2019

Compared to my opinion in 2019, I currently value child care workers...	Less	The Same	More
Female/Male			
Female	5%	56%	39%
Male	6%	59%	36%
Parental Status			
Parent of Child Aged 0-17	7%	48%	45%
Not Parent of Child Aged 0-17	5%	60%	36%
Overall	6%	57%	37%

Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey

Note: A lot less and A bit less were collapsed into a single category for reporting, as were A bit more and A lot more. Totals don't always add to 100% due to rounding.

Public Opinion Survey – Interest in Child Care Work

The career interest module of the public opinion survey was completed by young adults aged 13-24 (n=591) as well as by adults age 25+ who are considering making a career change (n=382). Overall, 36 per cent of those under 18 years would be 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+ considering a career change. Across all age groups, female respondents were more likely than male respondents to be interested in a career in child care (45 per cent compared to 36 per cent), and respondents with children aged 0-17 at home were more likely to be interested compared to those without children aged 0-17 at home (50 compared to 38 per cent).

Although we observed increased interest across all age groups compared to 2019, the 25+ year old age group remains the most amenable to careers in child care and represents the biggest increase since 2019 (increasing from 22 to 42 per cent). For the first time in 2024, all age groups are more likely to agree than disagree that they would be interested in working in child care. See below for a thorough analysis of self-described reasons for interest, lack of interest, and change in interest in child care work.

The presence of particular working conditions increases the attractiveness of ECL careers. Among those 18 years and older, extended health benefits and flexible work hours/days were the most important conditions; 72 per cent of parents stated they would be interested in working in child care if it offered flexibility. Additionally, the offer of a pension plan was an attractive factor for those 25 and up.

When asked how their personal interest in child care work had changed since 2019, the majority of respondents in each age group indicated that their personal interest had not changed. However, among those whose interest had greatly increased compared to their interest five years ago, the biggest influences were gaining more experience working with children and recognizing the importance of child development to children and society.

When asked the minimum wage required to consider a career in child care, the most common response was \$23-\$25 per hour. Approximately 13 per cent of respondents indicated that they would never consider a career in child care.

Predicting Interest in Careers in Child Care

New regression analyses were run to explore how demographic characteristics and perceptions of child care predict interest in working in child care in BC. As explained in previous reports, regression analyses tell us to what extent various factors are associated with particular outcomes.

Methodology

Demographic characteristics are likely to inform perceptions of child care, which in turn affect interest in working in child care (i.e., demographics → perception → interest). To understand if it is the actual

demographic characteristic or the perception that drives the interest in working in child care, two regression models were performed:

- Model 1: demographics → interest
- Model 2: demographics + perception → interest

Model 1 first evaluates the effects of demographics on interest. Model 2 adds perception into the model, so changes in the estimates in Model 1 and Model 2 allow us to infer how demographics and perception affect interest in working in child care and how they are related.

The regression included the adult respondents aged 25 and up who were part of the career interest module; that is, they indicated they were looking for a new job or considering a career change. This age group was noted as most interested in child care careers compared to those 24 and younger.

The outcome variable was derived from the item “*I would be interested in working in child care as a career*”, in which responses of ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ were assigned a value of 1 and all other responses assigned a value of 0.

Similarly, demographic and perception independent variables (IVs) were recorded as binary 0/1 variables. Demographic IVs included gender (female = 1), rural/remote setting, born in Canada, and parent to child aged 0-17 who lives at home. Perceptions of child care included the following items:

- In general, child care workers in BC are well-trained
- Child care workers in BC are compensated fairly given the skills and training they have
- Child care work is valued by the BC government
- Child care work is valued by the public

These items were selected as IVs over others because they best represent perceptions primarily driven by extrinsic factors, as opposed to personal or intrinsic opinions. The rationale is that these perceptions are amenable to change and thus more relevant to the ECL R&R Strategy, compared to personal values or beliefs such as “*I consider child care an essential service*”.

Results

The demographics-only model (Model 1) shows that being born in Canada is associated with a decrease in interest in working in child care by over 20 per cent. Even after accounting for perceptions, the effect of being born in Canada remains. Model 1 also shows that being a parent is associated with an increased interest in working in child care by almost 10 per cent.

However, this latter effect is no longer observed when perception is controlled for in Model 2 (demographics + perception). This suggests that the effect of being a parent on interest in working in child care is mediated by the relationship between being a parent and public perception. That is, being a parent does not in and of itself increase one’s interest in child care work; rather perceptions of child care

are largely driving interest, and perceptions are influenced by having a child aged 0-17 at home. Perhaps as parents are more likely to come into contact with child care professionals, their positive beliefs come from interaction with those in the sector, which in turn drives interest in child care as a career.

Model 2 also shows that perceptions of child care professionals as well-trained, fairly compensated, and valued by government are predictors of interest in working in child care, but there is no relationship for perceptions of value by the general public. Overall, the results suggest that experiences and perceptions drive interest in child care work, rather than traits of an individual (other than not being born in Canada). In the context of the ECL R&R Strategy, demonstrating that child care professionals are well-trained, fairly compensated, and valued by government could increase individuals' interest in working in child care by 10-15 per cent.

Figure 10 Opinions on child care as a career by age group and percentage point change since 2019

Source: 2019 and 2024 Public Opinion Surveys

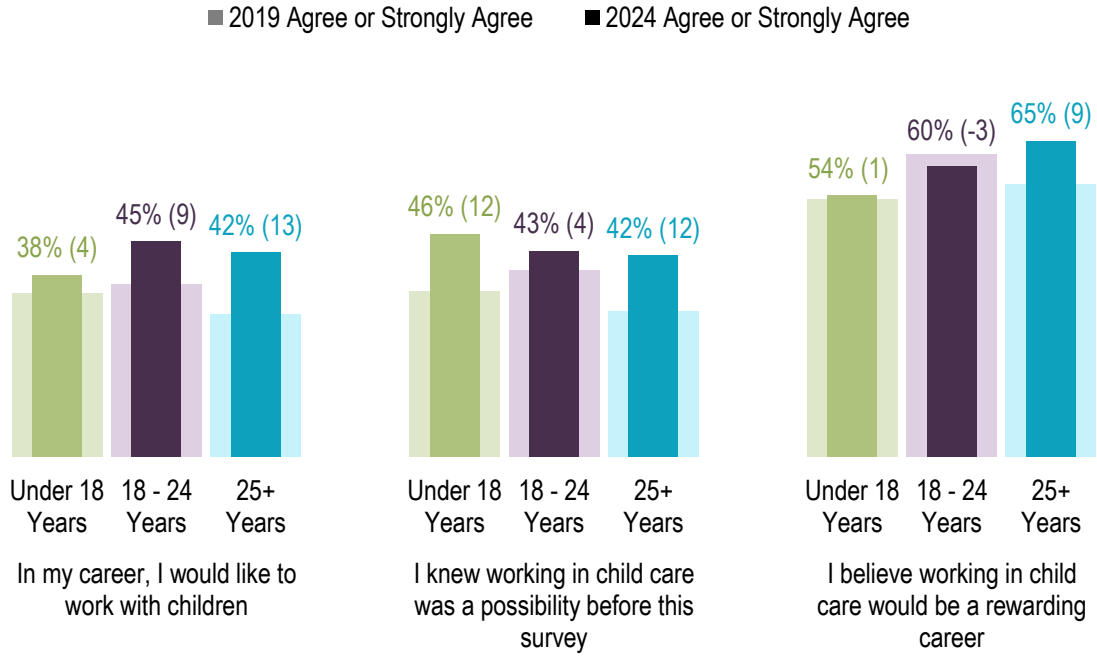


Table 31 Career opinion responses by age group and change in percentage points since 2019

		2019			2024			Change Since 2019		
	Age Group	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
In my career, I would like to work with children	Under 18	33%	34%	34%	32%	31%	38%	-0.7	-3.2	3.8
	18 - 24	36%	28%	36%	28%	27%	45%	-7.7	-0.9	8.8
	25+	41%	29%	30%	31%	27%	42%	-10.8	-2.0	12.8
	Total	37%	30%	33%	30%	28%	42%	-6.6	-1.9	8.5
I knew working in child care was a possibility before this survey	Under 18	46%	20%	34%	31%	23%	46%	-14.4	2.6	11.7
	18 - 24	44%	18%	39%	34%	23%	43%	-9.4	5.5	3.9
	25+	54%	16%	30%	38%	21%	42%	-16.8	5.3	11.5
	Total	48%	18%	35%	35%	22%	43%	-12.5	4.4	8.1
I believe working in child care would be a rewarding career	Under 18	23%	24%	53%	16%	30%	54%	-7.4	6.7	0.7
	18 - 24	15%	22%	63%	14%	26%	60%	-1.1	3.8	-2.5
	25+	22%	22%	56%	15%	19%	65%	-6.6	-2.5	9.0
	Total	19%	22%	59%	15%	24%	61%	-4.2	1.8	2.3

Source: 2019 and 2024 Public Opinion Surveys

Note: Strongly Disagree and Disagree were collapsed into a single category for reporting, as were Strongly Agree and Agree.

Figure 11 Interest in working in child care by age group and percentage point change since 2019 [Source: 2019 and 2024 Public Opinion Surveys]

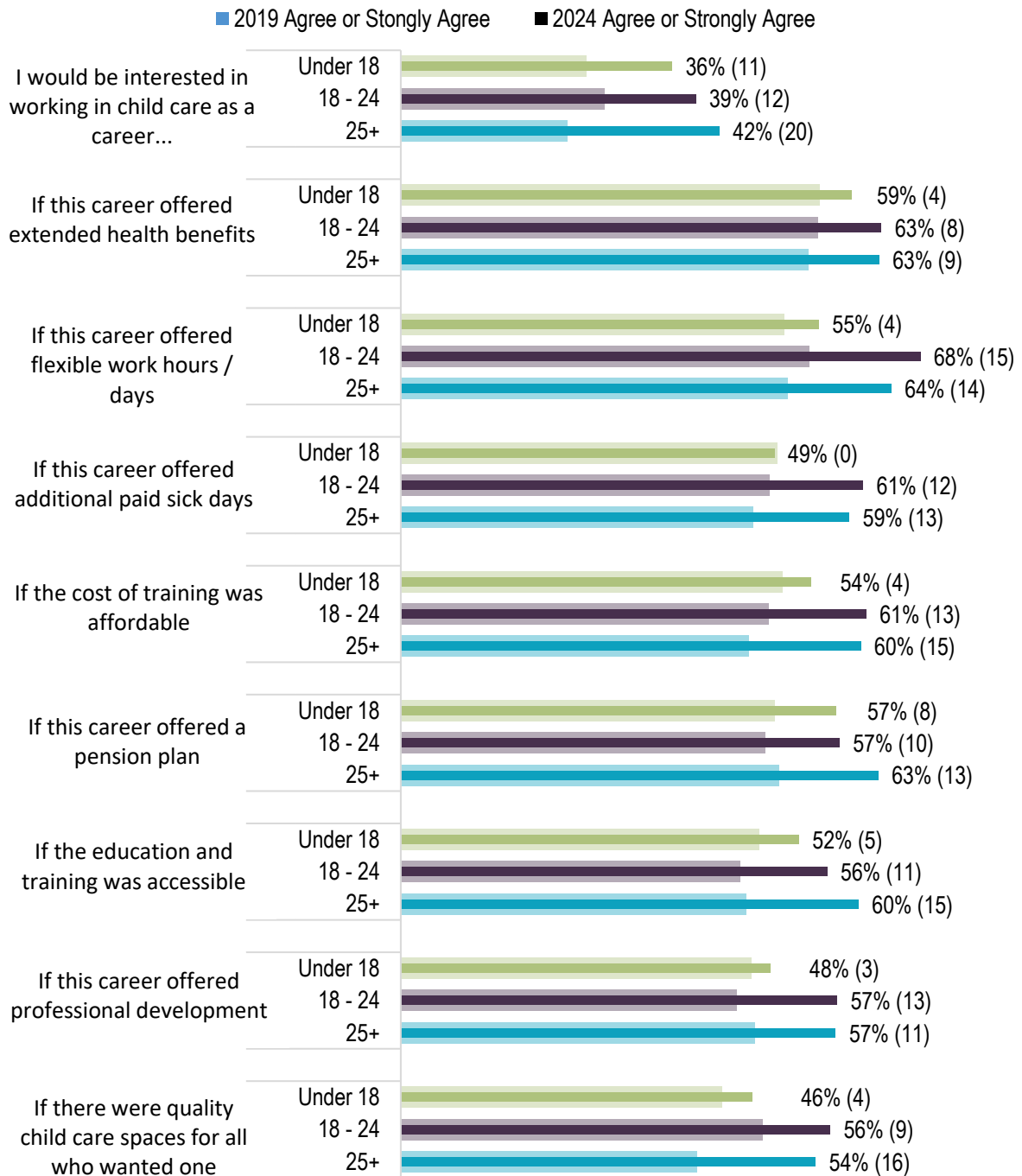


Table 32 Career interest module by age group and change in percentage points since 2019

	Age Group	2019			2024			Change Since 2019		
		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
I would be interested in working in child care as a career...	Under 18	49%	27%	24%	41%	24%	36%	-8.3	-2.9	11.2
	18 - 24	47%	27%	27%	35%	27%	39%	-11.8	-0.1	12.0
	25+	54%	24%	22%	32%	27%	42%	-22.2	2.3	19.9
	Total	49%	26%	25%	35%	26%	39%	-14.5	-0.1	14.7
... if the education and training was accessible	Under 18	36%	18%	47%	29%	19%	52%	-6.7	1.6	5.2
	18 - 24	31%	24%	44%	20%	24%	56%	-11.3	-0.1	11.4
	25+	38%	17%	45%	21%	20%	60%	-17.3	2.6	14.7
	Total	34%	20%	45%	22%	21%	57%	-11.8	0.5	11.3
... if this career offered flexible work hours/days	Under 18	32%	18%	50%	22%	24%	55%	-9.9	5.3	4.5
	18 - 24	26%	21%	54%	14%	19%	68%	-12.3	-2.1	14.5
	25+	34%	16%	51%	20%	16%	64%	-13.4	0.0	13.6
	Total	30%	19%	52%	19%	19%	63%	-11.1	0.1	11.2

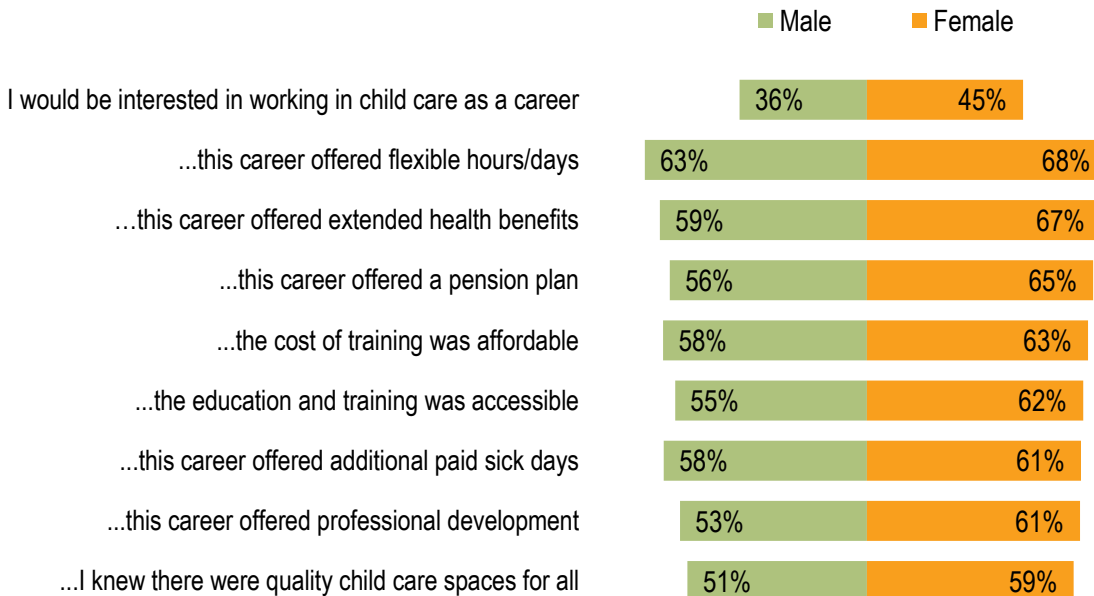
		2019			2024			Change Since 2019		
	Age Group	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
... if this career offered a pension plan	Under 18	33%	18%	49%	23%	20%	57%	-10.0	1.9	8.1
	18 - 24	27%	25%	48%	17%	25%	57%	-9.8	0.2	9.7
	25+	35%	15%	50%	21%	17%	63%	-14.2	1.2	13.0
	Total	31%	20%	49%	20%	20%	60%	-10.8	-0.2	10.9
... if this career offered extended health benefits	Under 18	30%	15%	55%	25%	16%	59%	-5.8	1.6	4.2
	18 - 24	26%	20%	55%	18%	19%	63%	-8.4	-0.1	8.3
	25+	34%	13%	53%	22%	15%	63%	-11.7	2.5	9.2
	Total	29%	16%	54%	21%	17%	62%	-8.1	0.6	7.6
... if this career offered sick pay	Under 18	35%	16%	49%	24%	27%	49%	-10.9	11.2	-0.4
	18 - 24	28%	24%	48%	17%	23%	61%	-11.6	-0.7	12.3
	25+	34%	19%	46%	25%	17%	59%	-9.7	-2.8	12.6
	Total	32%	20%	48%	22%	21%	57%	-9.8	0.9	9.0
... if this career offered professional development	Under 18	32%	22%	46%	30%	22%	48%	-2.3	-0.2	2.5
	18 - 24	27%	29%	44%	18%	25%	57%	-9.0	-4.2	13.1
	25+	34%	20%	46%	23%	20%	57%	-11.2	0.8	10.6
	Total	30%	24%	45%	23%	22%	55%	-7.3	-2.3	9.6

		2019			2024			Change Since 2019		
	Age Group	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
... if the cost of training was affordable	Under 18	37%	13%	50%	27%	19%	54%	-9.4	5.7	3.7
	18 - 24	29%	23%	48%	18%	21%	61%	-11.1	-1.8	12.8
	25+	37%	17%	46%	23%	17%	60%	-14.1	-0.6	14.7
	Total	34%	19%	48%	23%	19%	59%	-10.9	-0.2	11.1
... if there were quality child care spaces for all who wanted one	Under 18	34%	24%	42%	28%	26%	46%	-6.6	2.6	4.0
	18 - 24	26%	26%	47%	17%	26%	56%	-9.0	0.1	8.9
	25+	39%	22%	39%	25%	21%	54%	-13.8	-1.5	15.6
	Total	32%	24%	43%	23%	24%	53%	-8.9	-0.5	9.4

Source: 2019 and 2024 Public Opinion Surveys

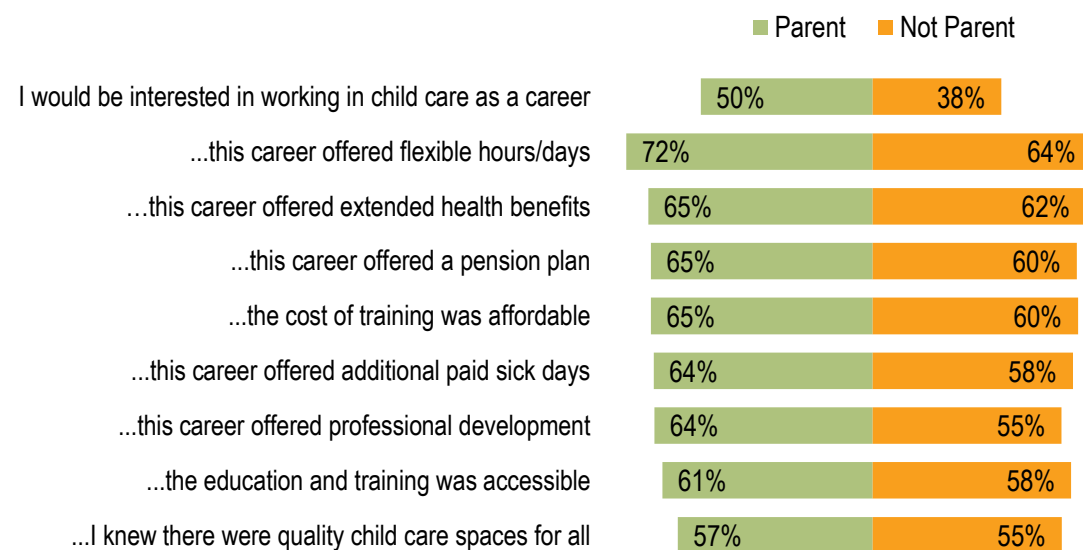
Note: Strongly Disagree and Disagree were collapsed into a single category for reporting, as were Strongly Agree and Agree.

Figure 12 Influence of working conditions among male and female respondents, 2024



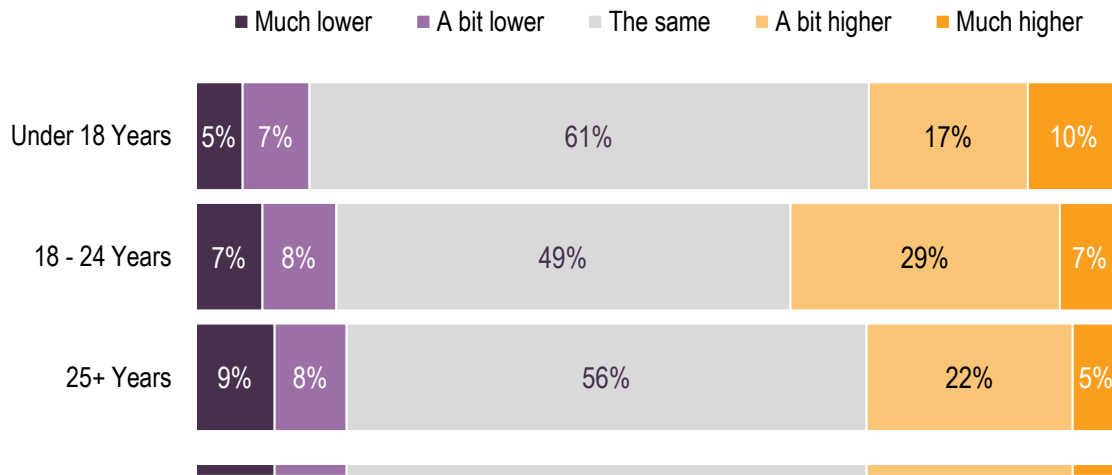
Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey. **Note:** Ratings represent agreement to each statement.

Figure 13 Influence of working conditions among respondents with and without a child aged 0-17 at home, 2024



Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey. **Note:** Ratings represent agreement to each statement.

Figure 14 Ratings of personal interest in working in child care in 2024 compared to interest five years ago, among career interest module sample



Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey

Note: This data represents retrospective, rather than cross-sectional, comparison. That is, respondents are rating how their interest has changed since 2019 rather than comparing interest in 2024 to separate ratings collected by SRDC in 2019.

Table 33 Minimum wage required to consider a career in child care among career interest module sample, 2024

	n	%
Minimum wage	25	3%
\$17-\$19	41	4%
\$20-\$22	114	12%
\$23-\$25	202	21%
\$26-\$28	161	17%
\$29-\$31	114	12%
\$32-\$34	69	7%
\$35+	124	13%
I would never consider a career in child care	123	13%

Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey

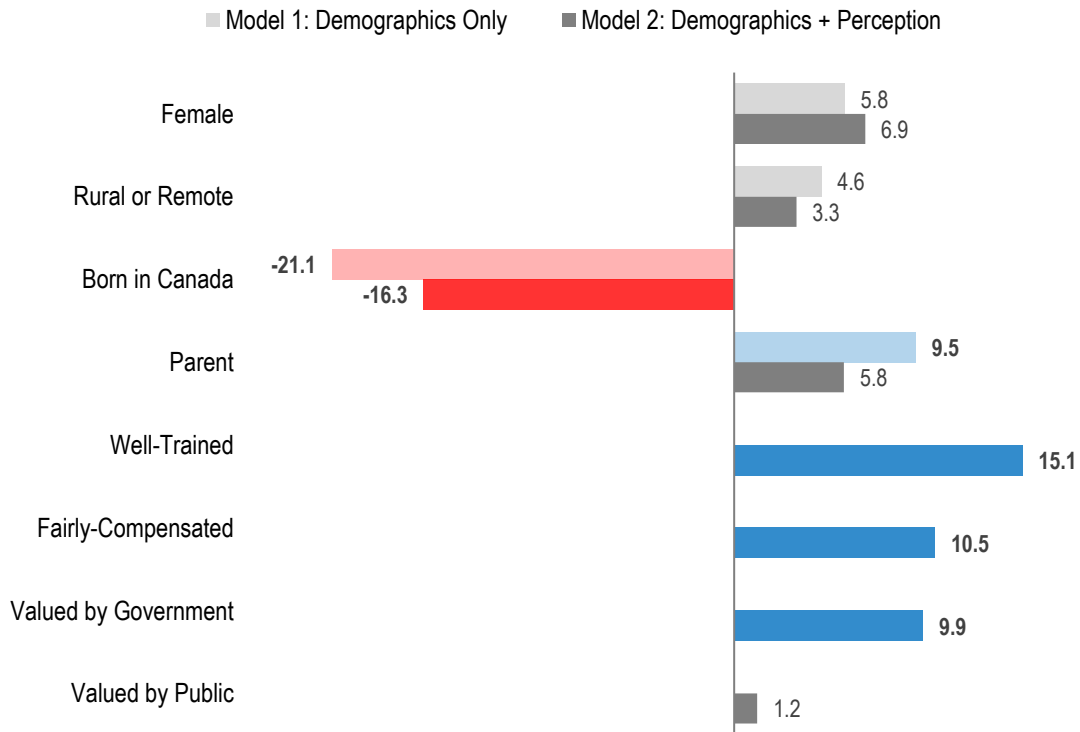
Table 34 Linear regression results for predictors of interest in working in child care, 2024

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coeff.	Sig.	Coeff.	Sig.
Demographics				
Female	0.05	0.110	0.06	0.051
Rural	0.04	0.283	0.03	0.428
Born in Canada	-0.21	0.000	-0.16	0.000
Parent	0.09	0.020	0.05	0.148
Perceptions				
Well-Trained			0.15	0.000
Fairly Compensated			0.10	0.011
Valued by Gov			0.09	0.013
Valued by Public			0.01	0.754

Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey

Note: The significance of the coefficient is indicated by the columns Sig. (i.e., p-value). An independent variable whose regression coefficient has a p-value of less than 5% ($p < 0.05$) is considered to have an effect on the outcome that is significantly different from 0. Significant effects are bolded in the table. A negative coefficient means that, after controlling for all other factors, the independent variable is associated with a decrease in the outcome variable. A positive coefficient means that, after controlling for all other factors, the independent variable is associated with an increase in the outcome variable.

Figure 15 Linear regression results for predictors of interest in working in child care, 2024



Source: 2024 Public Opinion Survey.

Note: Bars indicate the size of the coefficients (β) for each independent variable included in the model. A significantly negative effect is indicated by a red bar; a significantly positive effect is indicated by a blue bar; a non-significant effect is indicated by a grey bar.

Thematic Analysis of Interest in Child Care Work

SRDC conducted thematic analysis of open-ended responses from the public opinion survey on three questions related to interest in child care work: why respondents would not be interested (n=336), why they would be interested (n=389), and for those who experienced a large positive or negative change in interest in child care work since 2019, what caused this change (n=63 and n=70, respectively)²⁷.

The themes for this analysis were generated in previous years and approximately corresponded to intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are largely seen as having a personal or internal locus of control. An example of someone who identified intrinsic motivations for being interested in a career in child care is someone who feels they are good with children and would enjoy the work. An example of an extrinsic motivation for being interested in a career in child care is someone who feels the job offers good working conditions like being low-stress and well-paid.

Respondents who identify stable, internal motivations for not being interested in a career in child care are unlikely to be swayed by strategies and tactics designed to increase recruitment to child care. Those who identify extrinsic factors, on the other hand, are more likely to be interested in working in child care if working conditions are improved. Thus, extrinsic factors are most relevant to the ECL R&R Strategy.

Reasons for lack of interest in child care work

Respondents to the career interest module of the public opinion survey were asked why, in their own words, they would not be interested in a career in child care. Responses overwhelmingly clustered in intrinsic, or personal, factors, which highlight the lack of alignment with the respondents' personality or interests. The most common reasons were simply a preference for another type of work, such as already being in another career or pursuing training for another field, or a lack of interest in working with children. Many of the respondents in this theme claimed to not like children, while others identified that they did not have the skills, such as patience and energy, that are required for working with children:

²⁷ Previous iterations of the survey asked this open-ended follow-up to anyone whose interest had changed *at all* since 2019. Only those who identified as having a *much* higher or lower interest were asked why in 2024, acknowledging the cognitive burden required and limited validity of asking respondents to explain only a slight change in opinion from five years ago.

“That’s not where my interests or talents lie when considering a new career. Better left to those interested.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

Extrinsic factors highlighted the negative working conditions, which, compared to intrinsic factors, focused on the demands of the job rather than a personal misalignment. The work being demanding, offering low pay or benefits, and being undervalued were common responses.

“It’s a high stress job with not a lot of gratitude or high pay.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

Somewhat more common this year compared to previous years was the inclusion of the opinion that child care work is undervalued – some respondents clearly did not value the work and/or felt that the concept of child care was misaligned with their personal ideals.

“Social status. I often associate child care with people running it from their homes.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

These situations reflect the fact that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors are often at play in peoples’ decisions and opinions. In the case of not being interested in a career in child care, intrinsic reasons outnumbered extrinsic reasons by a ratio of 4:1.

Reasons for interest in child care work

A new question in last year’s public opinion survey, respondents of the career interest module who indicated an interest in working in child care were asked to explain their reasons in their own words. Again, intrinsic factors dominated the responses, though to a much lesser extent than reasons for *not* being interested at a ratio of about 3:2; this suggests that interest in child care work is more amenable to Strategy tactics than *lack* of interest in child care work.

The majority of intrinsic comments related to the perceived enjoyment of a career in child care, such as loving children or working with children and finding the field rewarding to work in. Perceived enjoyment from child care work described a variety of experiences, including building meaningful connections with children and positively contributing to society.

“I love the connection I have with children, and I am passionate about helping the community.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

The theme of child care being important to society was the strongest extrinsic factor associated with interest in a career in child care. Respondents who cited this reason described making a difference in the lives of children and investing in the future, as well as supporting others to work:

“Because child care is necessary to the development of children. Parents are busy and they need help.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

Other extrinsic factors included the nature of the work, for example being an interesting, fun, or rewarding job. A minority of respondents noted that child care work is perceived as being well compensated, and is a sustainable career that will always be in demand. It was also perceived as being an essential service and important to the development of children and communities, as well as personally meaningful. The desire to having a meaningful career was a prevalent notion that highlights both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and appears to be more common in recent years.

“Working with children seems more rewarding than other career options.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

Change in interest in child care work

Repeated public opinion surveys in 2019, 2022, 2023, and 2024 help us assess change over time at the population level, but do not allow us to track *individuals* over time. By asking about personal changes in interest since 2019, we can better understand the factors that contribute to increased or decreased interest in a career in child care within an individual.

As shown in Figure 14 above, most respondents' interest in child care work has not changed since 2019; however, of those who have experienced a change, more have experienced an increase compared to a decrease in interest. Overall, the change in perception of child care as a career choice was most likely to be attributed to an intrinsic (personal) reason, regardless of whether interest increased or decreased.

However, perceptions of child care as both a positive and negative career choice were commonly cited reasons for change. Specifically, the importance of child care to society was a common extrinsic reason for increased interest in a career in child care. Respondents identified this as a motivating factor both because of the desire to contribute/help others and because of a sense of responsibility.

“I love kids but it's difficult at times and I know not everyone may have the same passion as I do so I guess it's what I should do.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

“I know that there is a need for quality care.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

These ‘realizations’ stemmed from respondents maturing, gaining more information, thinking more about their careers, and from their own personal experiences or the experiences of others. Other extrinsic factors include increasing wages and benefits as well as ample job opportunities.

Additionally, the increased perceived respect and recognition of the importance of child care professionals contributed to some respondents being more interested in a career now compared to five years ago. Respondents also described an increasing desire for meaningful and fulfilling careers:

“Because I need something more internally validating in my work [compared to my current job].”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

On the other hand, those whose interest in child care work decreased over the past five years highlighted negative aspects of the job that have changed or become more well-known. The demands of the job and low pay/benefits were common extrinsic factors, as well as implications of the workforce shortage:

“It seems like the ratio of child care workers to children is worse off now. Too many kids, not enough workers.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

Responses this year implied that a full-time career in child care seemed unsustainable or undesirable from a personal perspective, but that it might be a good option as a part-time job. For example, many respondents indicated that they enjoy children but that working with them full-time might be “too much” and could actually hinder their relationship with children.

“I like children but don't think I like them enough to do it as a career.”

Public opinion survey open-ended response

In general, the notion that child care is skilled work was present in both reasons for and against interest in child care work. Personal experience with children was a common theme; thus, increasing people's opportunities to interact with and/or work with children may help individuals gain clarity on whether it is a good career option for them.

APPENDIX C: 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 Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.
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> Child Care and Early Education Glossary
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> Child Care and Early Education Glossary ; BC Government Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C. (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 Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.
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> Child Care and Early Education Glossary
Licence-not-Required Child Care (see also: Registered Licence-Not-Required Child	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 Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.

Term	Definition	Source
Care; Unlicensed Child Care)		
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 Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.
Occasional Child Care	A program that provides care on an occasional or short-term basis	BC Child Care Licensing Regulation
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> Child Care and Early Education Glossary ; BC Child Care Licensing Regulation
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 of 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 Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.
Registered Licence-Not-Required Child Care	Providers do not require a license 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 Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.
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 license as well as a program that illegally operates without a license.	Child Care & Early Education <i>Research Connections</i> Child Care and Early Education Glossary

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.)	Parent Guide
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 Understand the Different Types of Child Care in B.C.
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> Child Care and Early Education Glossary
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.	University of BC Early Childhood Education Program
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).	University of BC Early Childhood Education Program
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

Term	Definition	Source
Licensee	A licensee is a person, an organization, a company, or a partnership that has applied for and been granted a license to operate a community care facility in BC. A license 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.	BC Government Child Care Licensing Regulation Fact Sheet
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.	Interior Health Hiring a Manager in a Licensed Facility
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.	BC Government Child Care Licensing Regulation Fact Sheet

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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