

Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements, 2022

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Just over half (52%) of Canadian children younger than 6 years were in licensed or unlicensed child care in early 2022. This percentage was unchanged from late 2020 when the Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA) was last collected, but was down from 60% in 2019, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the early days of the pandemic, many provinces and territories mandated the closure of most licensed child care centres. However, in early 2022, many daycare centres were operational, albeit with additional safety measures in place, including enhanced health and safety practices and, in some cases, reduced capacity. Data from the 2022 SELCCA released today was collected during the height of the highly-contagious Omicron variant, at a time when the child care sector was adapting to evolving isolation requirements and safety practices.

The findings from the SELCCA are for young children (younger than 6 years old) in any form of care, either licensed or unlicensed, provided by someone other than a parent or guardian. Examples include centre-based facilities, in-home care by a relative or non-relative, as well as before or after school programs. Occasional babysitting and kindergarten were not considered child care for purposes of this survey.

The proportion of infants under a year old in child care decreases

While the overall proportion of young Canadian children in child care in early 2022 was unchanged from 2020, there were differences by age-group. In early 2022, 14% of infants younger than one year were in some type of child care, compared with 20% in 2020. The main reasons cited by parents or guardians for not having their infants in child care were the same as reported in 2020: they were on maternity or parental leave (57%) or they preferred to have a parent stay at home with their child (17%).

Just over three-fifths (62%) of 1- to 3- year olds were in some form of child care in early 2022, a rate unchanged from 2020. Among 4- and 5- year olds, a higher proportion of those not attending school in early 2022 (72%) were in child care compared with late 2020 (63%). On the other hand, a lower proportion of those who were attending school in early 2022 were in some form of child care (47%) compared with late 2020 (54%). Statistics Canada is currently conducting an in-depth survey to further explore the use of before and after school child care arrangements among children 12 and under attending school.

The use of daycare centres, preschools and centres de la petite enfance returned to pre-pandemic rates while the use of family child care homes decreased

The 8 percentage point decrease in child care participation held steady during the pandemic (from 60% in 2019 to 52% in both 2020 and early 2022). However, there was a shift in the types of child care arrangements used. By early 2022, participation in child care centres was back to pre-pandemic rates, while use of family child care homes (home-based child care) decreased.

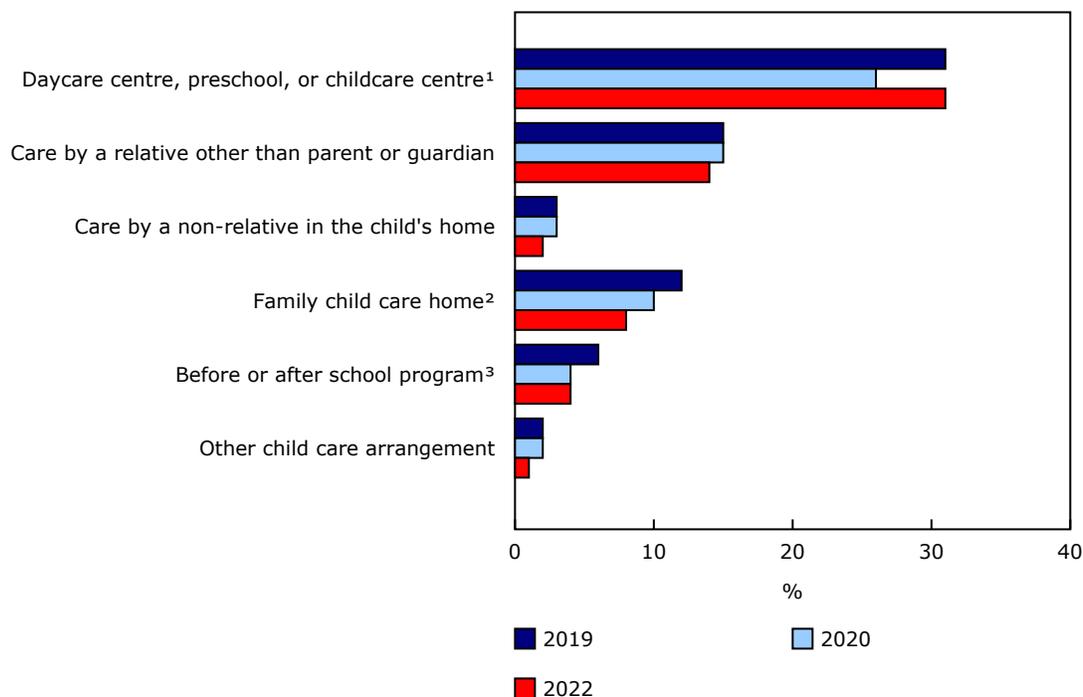
The proportion of Canadian children younger than 6 who were in daycare centres, preschools and centres de la petite enfance (CPEs) increased from 26% in late 2020 to 31% in early 2022, the same as the pre-pandemic rate (31%) in 2019.

On the other hand, the proportion of children in family child care home arrangements decreased to 8% in early 2022 from 10% in 2020 and 12% in 2019. According to the Labour Force Survey, there was a decrease in the number of employed home-based child care providers from 34,400 in January 2019 to 20,500 in January 2022.

There are many complexities related to the use of child care and the type of arrangements in place during the pandemic. Parents may be working at home or have different options available to them because of pandemic-related closures, re-openings, and differences in regulations across the provinces.



Chart 1
Proportion of children younger than 6 in child care, by type of child care arrangement, 2019, 2020, 2022



1. 2022 value significantly different compared with 2020 only.
 2. 2022 value significantly different compared with 2020 and 2019.
 3. 2022 value significantly different compared with 2019 only.
 Source(s): Table 42-10-0031-01.

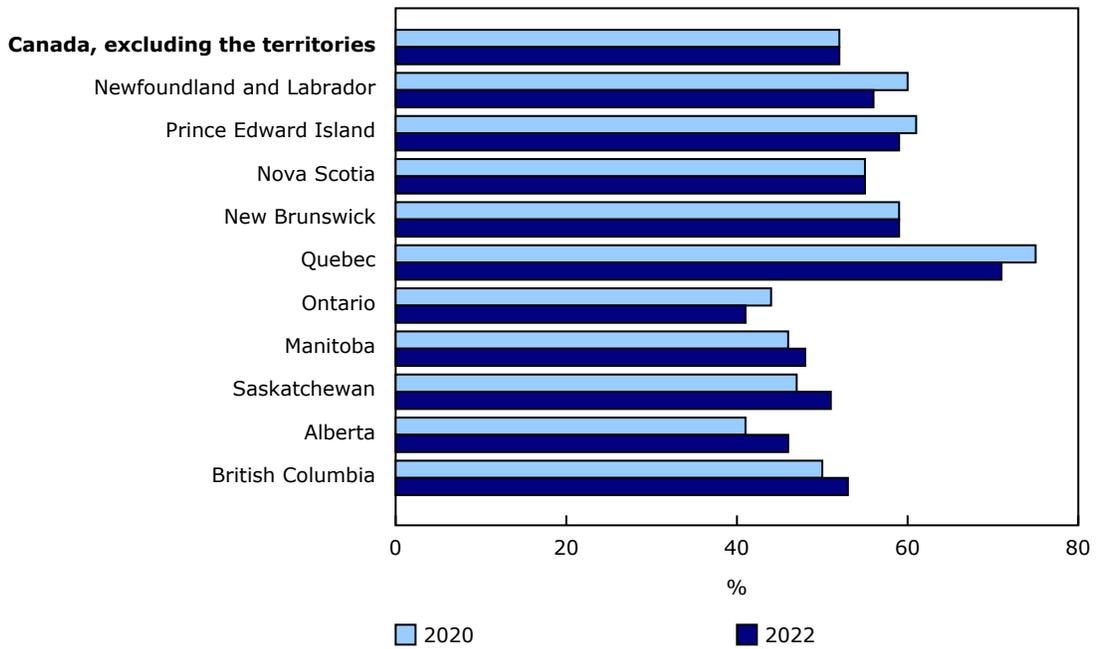
Child age also played a key role in the type of child care arrangement used in early 2022. Among infants under a year old in child care, over half were cared for by a relative. By comparison, almost two-thirds of one-to-three year olds in child care were in a daycare centre, preschool or CPE.

Among 4- or 5- year olds in child care, 81% of those who were not in school were attending a daycare centre, preschool or CPE. Among those in school and also in child care, 37% were in a daycare centre, preschool or CPE, and 37% were in a before or after school program.

Children living in Quebec are the most likely to be in child care

As was the case in 2019 and 2020, there were provincial differences in child care participation rates. Among children under the age of 6, those living in Quebec (71%) were most likely to be in child care and those living in Prince Edward Island (59%) and New Brunswick (59%) were more likely to be in child care compared with the Canadian average. Children in Ontario (41%) and Alberta (46%) were the least likely to be in child care compared with the Canadian average. Within each province, the proportion of children in child care was unchanged from late 2020.

Chart 2
Proportion of children younger than 6 participating in any form of child care, by province, 2020 and 2022



Source(s): Table 42-10-0004-01.

Table 1
Type of child care arrangement by age group, children aged 0 to 5 years, Canada, 2022

	Number of children in child care	Percentage of children in child care	Lower confidence limit at 95%	Upper confidence limit at 95%
	number		%	
Overall				
Daycare centre, preschool, or centre de la petite enfance (CPE)	688,500	30.5	29.6	31.5
Care by a relative other than parent or guardian	305,400	13.5	12.8	14.3
Care by non-relative in the child's home	51,600	2.3	2.0	2.7
Family child care home	182,900	8.1	7.5	8.8
Before or after school program	92,100	4.1	3.7	4.6
Other child care arrangement	30,500	1.4	1.1	1.7
Children less than 1 year of age				
Daycare centre, preschool, or centre de la petite enfance (CPE)	F	4.2	3.0	5.8
Care by a relative other than parent or guardian	29,200	7.8	6.3	9.6
Care by non-relative in the child's home	F	1.0	0.5	1.9
Family child care home	F	1.7	1.0	2.7
Before or after school program	x	x	x	x
Other child care arrangement	x	x	x	x
Children aged 1 to 3 years				
Daycare centre, preschool, or centre de la petite enfance (CPE)	421,900	39.1	37.5	40.8
Care by a relative other than parent or guardian	177,000	16.4	15.2	17.7
Care by non-relative in the child's home	28,100	2.6	2.1	3.2
Family child care home	132,400	12.3	11.2	13.4
Before or after school program	F	0.2	0.1	0.4
Other child care arrangement	13,100 ^E	1.2	0.9	1.7
Children aged 4 to 5 years and not attending school				
Daycare centre, preschool, or centre de la petite enfance (CPE)	155,500	58.0	54.8	61.1
Care by a relative other than parent or guardian	31,900	11.9	10.2	13.9
Care by non-relative in the child's home	F	2.2	1.5	3.3
Family child care home	21,800	8.1	6.6	10.0
Before or after school program	x	x	x	x
Other child care arrangement	F	1.7	1.0	2.8
Children aged 4 to 5 years and attending school				
Daycare centre, preschool, or centre de la petite enfance (CPE)	90,500	17.6	15.8	19.5
Care by a relative other than parent or guardian	66,500	12.9	11.4	14.7
Care by non-relative in the child's home	13,800 ^E	2.7	2.0	3.6
Family child care home	21,700	4.2	3.4	5.3
Before or after school program	89,300	17.4	15.5	19.3
Other child care arrangement	11,800 ^E	2.3	1.7	3.1

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

^E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

Note(s): In 2022, the Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements was not collected in the territories.

Source(s): Table 42-10-0031-01.

Location is the most commonly cited reason for choosing main type of care arrangement

Reasons for choosing the main type of child care arrangement were similar before and during the pandemic, with the most common being the location (cited by 52% of children's parents), followed by caregiving characteristics of the person providing the care (49%), affordable cost (37%) and hours of operation (35%).

In early 2022, over one-third (36%) of children's parents and guardians also reported that they chose their child care arrangement because it was licensed by a government or agency and 35% cited the qualifications of the provider as a reason for choosing their arrangement.

The pandemic continued to impact some parents' and guardians' choice of child care arrangement. In early 2022, 10% of children's parents or guardians had selected their current main arrangements because of limited availability during the pandemic, down from 14% in 2020. The survey did not ask whether parents or guardians needed to, or chose to, change their arrangements during this time.

Table 2
Parent and guardian reasons for selecting main child care arrangement, children aged 0 to 5 years, Canada, 2022

	Number of children	Percentage of children	Lower confidence limit at 95%	Upper confidence limit at 95%
	number		%	
Location	606,900	52.2	50.6	53.9
Hours of operation	406,700	35.0	33.5	36.6
Affordable cost	430,300	37.0	35.4	38.7
Program characteristics	331,300	28.5	27.1	30.0
Only option available	331,400	28.5	27.1	30.0
Ability to meet child's special needs	44,300	3.8	3.2	4.5
Limited availability due to the COVID-19 pandemic	111,200	9.6	8.7	10.6
Qualifications of the child care provider	408,300	35.1	33.6	36.7
Care provider is trustworthy, warm, nurturing	566,000	48.7	47.1	50.4
Licensed or accredited child care	418,200	36.0	34.5	37.6
Offers culturally-relevant or minority language programming	55,400	4.8	4.1	5.5
My other children go there or have gone there	233,100	20.1	18.7	21.5
Other reasons	186,300	16.0	14.9	17.2
No specific reason	13,000 ^E	1.1	0.8	1.6

^E use with caution

Note(s):

Reasons add up to more than 100% because parents could select multiple options.

In 2022, the Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements was not collected in the territories.

Source(s): Table 42-10-0006-01.

Approximately 4 in 10 parents using child care during the pandemic report difficulties finding child care

Approximately 4 in 10 parents who were using child care in early 2022 reported having had difficulty finding child care, a proportion similar to late 2020. Parents of children younger than 1 year were the most likely to report difficulties finding child care (47%), while those with children aged 4 or 5 attending school were the least likely to do so (35%). There are a number of factors that could influence difficulties in finding care by child age. For example, parents of infants may face barriers because the child care ratio of staff to children is lower and costs are higher, limiting access to affordable spaces. On the other hand, school-aged children may be more likely to have already been in an established child care arrangement, or to have access to before and after school child care arrangements located in their school environment and where the costs are lower.

Among parents using child care who reported having difficulties finding it, 57% reported difficulty finding care in their community, while 46% had difficulty finding affordable care. Almost one-quarter of parents said they had difficulty finding care specifically due to the pandemic, a similar proportion to that in late 2020.

Among parents of children who were not using child care, the majority (63%) reported that they had not looked for it. However, of those who had looked for child care and were not using it, more than half reported difficulties finding care.

For parents who were not using child care and who reported having difficulty finding it, 61% said the difficulty was finding affordable care—while 35% had difficulty finding care specifically due to the pandemic, a decrease from 43% in late 2020.

Table 3
Difficulties for parents and guardians in finding a child care arrangement, children aged 0 to 5 years, Canada, 2022

	Among children using child care				Among children not using child care			
	Number of children	Percentage of children	Lower confidence limit at 95%	Upper confidence limit at 95%	Number of children	Percentage of children	Lower confidence limit at 95%	Upper confidence limit at 95%
	number	%			number	%		
Did you have difficulty finding child care?								
No	611,600	52.6	51.1	54.2	190,500	17.5	16.0	19.0
Yes	471,300	40.5	39.0	42.1	214,500	19.7	18.2	21.1
Did not look for child care	79,600	6.8	6.1	7.7	686,300	62.9	61.0	64.7
What difficulties did you have?¹								
Care available in your community	268,800	57.2	54.7	59.6	115,000	53.9	49.9	58.0
Affordable child care	215,000	45.7	43.3	48.2	129,900	60.9	56.9	64.8
Care that fits your work or study schedule	141,000	30.0	27.7	32.4	61,900	29.0	25.3	33.0
Finding the quality of care that you desire	135,200	28.8	26.5	31.1	53,500	25.1	21.7	28.8
Finding licensed care	136,500	29.0	26.8	31.4	59,200	27.8	24.3	31.5
Qualified care provider	105,800	22.5	20.5	24.7	47,100	22.1	18.9	25.7
Care that could accommodate more than one child in your family	56,800	12.1	10.4	13.9	30,000	14.1	11.1	17.6
Care that meets your child's special needs	17,000 ^E	3.6	2.7	4.8	F	4.8	3.3	6.9
Finding care during the COVID-19 pandemic	110,900	23.6	21.5	25.8	74,100	34.8	30.7	39.0
Subsidized child care spaces or spaces eligible for child care fee subsidy	144,200	30.7	28.4	33.1	68,200	32.0	28.3	36.0
Child care that offers culturally-relevant or minority language programming	22,800 ^E	4.8	3.8	6.1	13,500 ^E	6.4	4.7	8.5
Other	52,600	11.2	9.7	12.8	18,400 ^E	8.6	6.5	11.3
Did the difficulty result in any of the following?¹								
Using multiple care arrangements or a temporary arrangement	134,500	28.9	26.6	31.3	37,900	17.7	14.8	21.1
Working fewer hours	170,500	36.6	34.2	39.1	73,300	34.3	30.4	38.4
Postponing your return to work	132,900	28.6	26.3	30.9	89,700	42.0	37.9	46.2
Postponing or discontinuing school or training	37,100	8.0	6.7	9.5	28,500	13.3	10.7	16.6
Deciding to work at home	76,200	16.4	14.5	18.4	40,600	19.0	16.0	22.5
Changing your work or study schedules	175,900	37.8	35.4	40.3	79,700	37.3	33.2	41.6
Changing jobs, quitting job or closing business	66,000	14.2	12.5	16.0	40,800	19.1	15.9	22.7
Deciding to have a parent stay home with the child	78,900	17.0	15.1	19.0	82,400	38.5	34.3	42.9
Paying more for child care than you wanted to pay	151,000	32.5	30.2	34.8	38,700	18.1	15.0	21.7
Other impacts	54,200	11.6	10.2	13.3	26,500	12.4	9.7	15.6
No specific impact	62,900	13.5	12.0	15.2	12,500 ^E	5.8	4.3	7.8

^E use with caution

^F too unreliable to be published

1. Proportion is among those who reported having difficulty.

Note(s):

Reasons add up to more than 100% because parents can select multiple options.

In 2022, the Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements was not collected in the territories.

Source(s): Tables [42-10-0001-01](#), [42-10-0008-01](#) and [42-10-0009-01](#).

Difficulties finding child care impact parents' ability to work

Difficulty finding child care can result in negative consequences for parents, including their ability to work.

For parents using child care who reported having difficulties finding it, the most common consequences included changing their work or study schedule (38%), working fewer hours (37%) or paying more than they wanted to (33%). Among parents who had difficulties finding child care and whose children were not using it at the time the survey was conducted, 42% had postponed their return to work.

One-fifth of parents not using child care feel that it is not safe during the pandemic

There were many reasons why parents chose not to use child care arrangements during the pandemic, yet these reasons largely mirrored those reported in previous cycles of the survey. The most common reasons for not using child care were that a parent or guardian preferred to stay at home (38%), and that a parent was on maternity or parental leave (27%). Furthermore, 1 in 4 parents (25%) indicated that the cost was too high.

In early 2022, one-fifth (20%) of parents who were not using any child care said they did not feel it was safe during the pandemic. This was down from 28% of parents in late 2020 who said they did not feel it was safe to use child care during the pandemic.

There were differences in perceptions of the safety of child care by province. Just over 1 in 10 parents or guardians in Quebec who were not using child care felt it was unsafe to do so during the pandemic, compared with just over 2 in 10 parents in each of Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

Table 4
Parent and guardian reasons for not using any child care arrangement, children aged 0 to 5 years not in child care, Canada, 2022

	Number of children	Percentage of children	Lower confidence limit at 95%	Upper confidence limit at 95%
	number	%		
Prefer to have parent stay at home with the child	414,600	38.1	36.2	40.0
Maternity, paternity or parental leave	291,900	26.8	25.2	28.4
The cost of child care is too high	274,300	25.2	23.6	26.8
I feel it is unsafe during the COVID-19 pandemic	216,500	19.9	18.4	21.5
Child is in school	168,000	15.4	14.3	16.6
Shortage of places or waiting list	131,100	12.0	10.9	13.3
Prefer to adjust work or study schedules to accommodate care needs	120,300	11.0	10.0	12.2
Prefer to care for the child while working	90,500	8.3	7.3	9.4
Unemployed or seasonal worker or unable to work due to disability or chronic illness	76,100	7.0	6.0	8.1
Available child care arrangements are not suitable	60,600	5.6	4.8	6.4
Services not adapted to the child's special needs	11,700 ^E	1.1	0.8	1.5
Other reasons	112,500	10.3	9.1	11.6
No specific reason	F	1.3	1.0	1.9

^E use with caution

^F too unreliable to be published

Note(s):

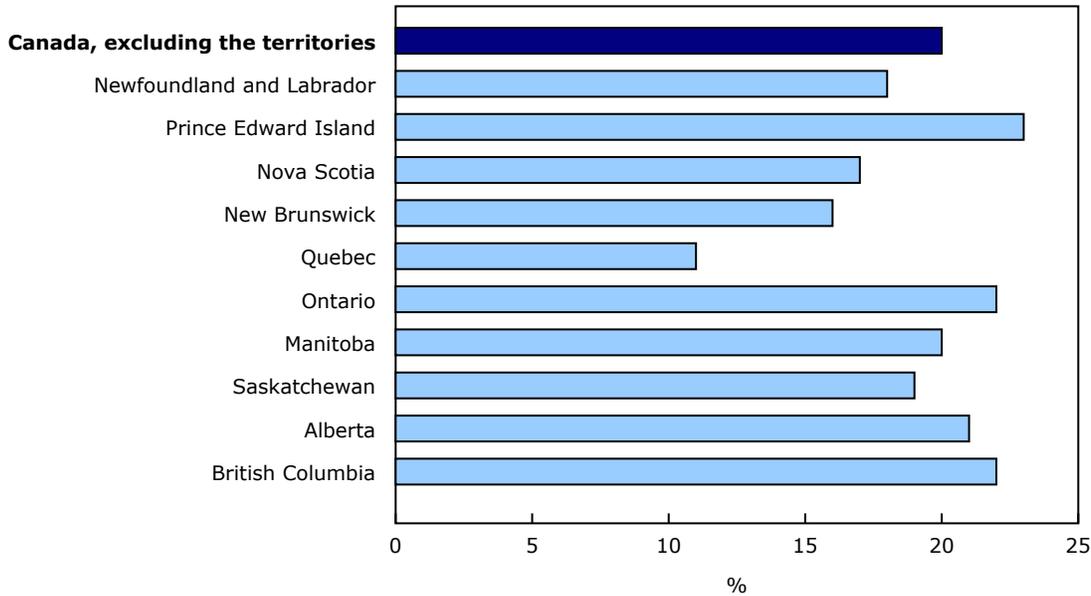
Reasons add up to more than 100% because parents can select multiple options.

In 2022, the Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements was not collected in the territories.

Source(s): Table 42-10-0010-01.

Chart 3

Proportion of parents of children younger than 6 who were not using child care in 2022 and felt it was unsafe during the pandemic, by province



Source(s): Table 42-10-0010-01.

Almost one-quarter (23%) of parents who were not using child care in early 2022 said that they had used it previously, although precisely when they had used child care, as well as the type of care used, was not asked.

Looking Ahead

Results from the SELCCA, which is conducted annually, will provide insights to inform the [Federal Government's Canadian-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan](#). This plan aims to build a Canada-wide community-based early learning and child care system to improve access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care.

Note to readers

The Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA) provides a current snapshot of early child care use in Canada, and it can be used to better understand the reasons why families choose to use or not use different types of child care arrangements.

The data were collected in the provinces from January 24 to February 19, 2022. Unlike the 2019 and 2020 versions, SELCCA 2022 did not include the territories. The response rate was 58%, yielding a sample size of 11,590 children, which represents about 2.3 million children in Canada.

The target population was children aged 0 to 5 years, although the information was obtained from a parent, guardian or person who was knowledgeable about the child's care arrangements (or lack thereof). The majority of respondents were women (85%). Children living in institutions or on reserve were excluded from the target population.

Survey sampling weights were applied to render the analyses representative of Canadian children aged 0 to 5 living in the provinces. Bootstrap weights were also applied when testing for significant differences ($p < 0.05$) to account for the complex survey design.

All information and products released to date can be found on the [Early Learning and Child Care Information Hub](#).

The number of employed home child care providers in January 2019 and January 2022 is based on a custom tabulation from the Labour Force Survey.

Available tables: [42-10-0001-01](#), [42-10-0004-01](#), [42-10-0006-01](#), [42-10-0008-01](#) to [42-10-0010-01](#) and [42-10-0029-01](#) to [42-10-0031-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: [survey number 5287](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).