

Child care arrangements, 2023

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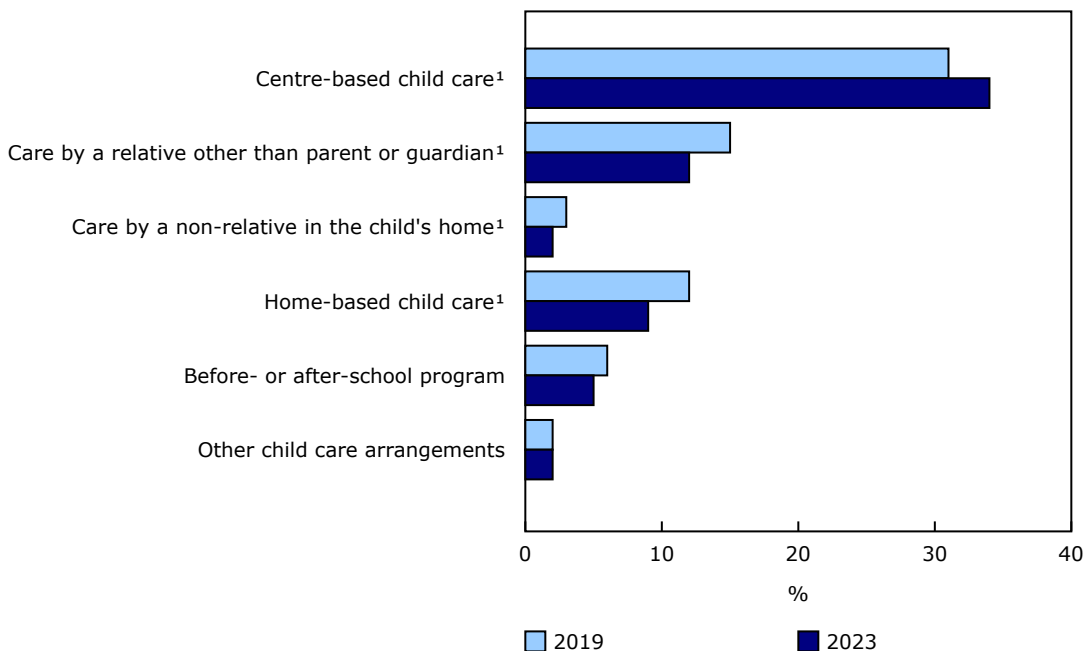
In 2023, just over half (56%) of children aged 0 to 5 years were in licensed or unlicensed child care in Canada. While this rate was higher than it was in both 2022 (52%) and 2020 (52%), it has not yet reached the 2019 pre-pandemic level, when 60% of children in this age group were in child care.

Many parents and guardians rely on child care for their young children, whether it is centre-based or licensed or unlicensed home-based child care. Other children are cared for by a relative, such as grandparents, or a non-relative, such as a nanny. While previous results have highlighted the [impact of the pandemic on the use of child care](#), today's release of the 2023 Canadian Survey on Early Learning and Child Care in Canada and the 2023 Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements provides insights on how child care use has evolved since 2019, before the onset of the pandemic. The results released today also reflect the implementation of the [Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System](#).

Participation in centre-based child care surpasses pre-pandemic level, but it remains lower for home-based child care

While the overall proportion of children aged 0 to 5 years in child care in 2023 remained lower than the pre-pandemic 2019 rate, there were differences by the type of child care arrangement used. In 2023, just over one-third (34%) of children in this age group attended centre-based care, a higher proportion than was recorded in 2019 (31%) for the first time.

Chart 1
Proportion of children aged 0 to 5 years in child care, by type of child care arrangement, Canada, 2019 and 2023



1. Results significantly different than 2019.

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

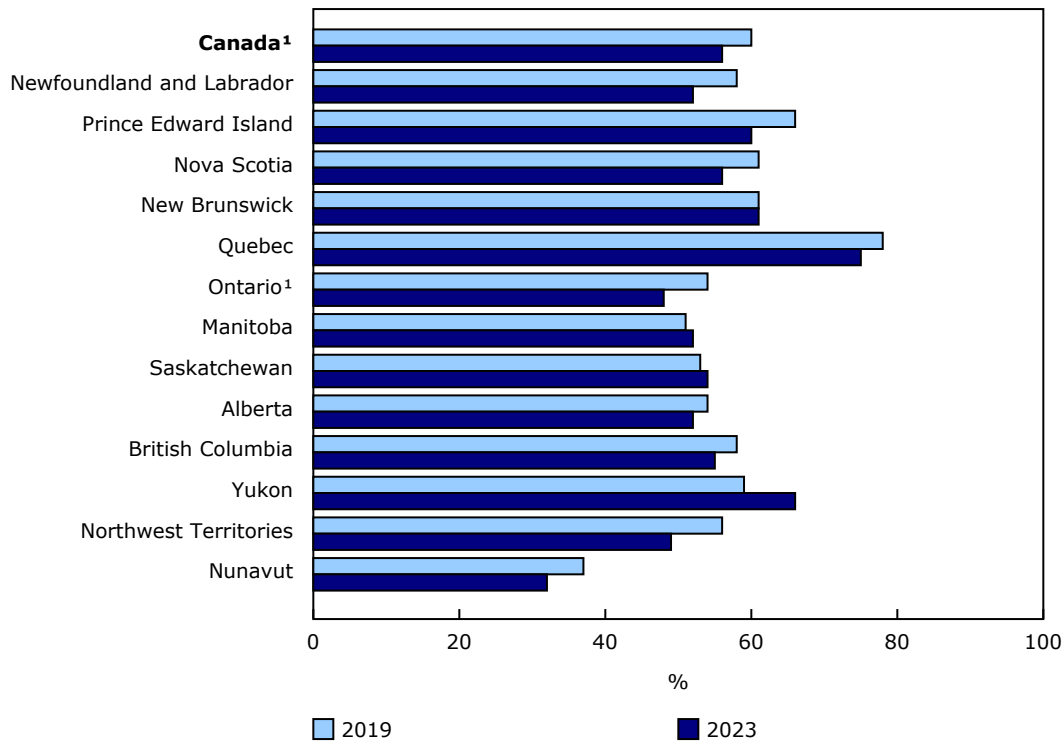
In contrast, the use of home-based child care in 2023 did not return to pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, 9% of children aged 0 to 5 years attended home-based child care, which is a lower rate than that from 2019 (12%) but similar to that from 2022 (8%). According to the Labour Force Survey, the number of people employed as home-based child care providers decreased from January 2019 to January 2023.

Many parents in Canada use a relative other than a parent to care for their child. The proportion of children in this kind of arrangement was also lower in 2023 (12%) than in 2019 (15%).

Child care participation returns to pre-pandemic levels in almost all provinces and territories

While the overall proportion of children in child care in Canada in 2023 was lower than in 2019, most provinces and territories reached child care participation rates similar to before the pandemic, as was the case in 2022. Ontario was the only province in which the proportion of children in child care was lower in 2023 (48%) than in 2019 (54%), but it was higher than in 2022 (41%).

Chart 2
Proportion of children aged 0 to 5 years participating in child care, by province or territory, 2019 and 2023



1. Results significantly different than 2019.
 Source(s): Table 42-10-0004-01.

A higher proportion of parents report difficulty finding child care in 2023

The proportion of parents who used child care and who reported having difficulty finding it increased from 36% in 2019 to 49% in 2023. Difficulty finding available care remained the top challenge for parents, and the proportion of those reporting this difficulty increased from 53% in 2019 to 62% in 2023. Finding affordable care also remained a common concern among parents, but the proportion of those reporting this declined from 48% in 2019 to 41% in 2023.

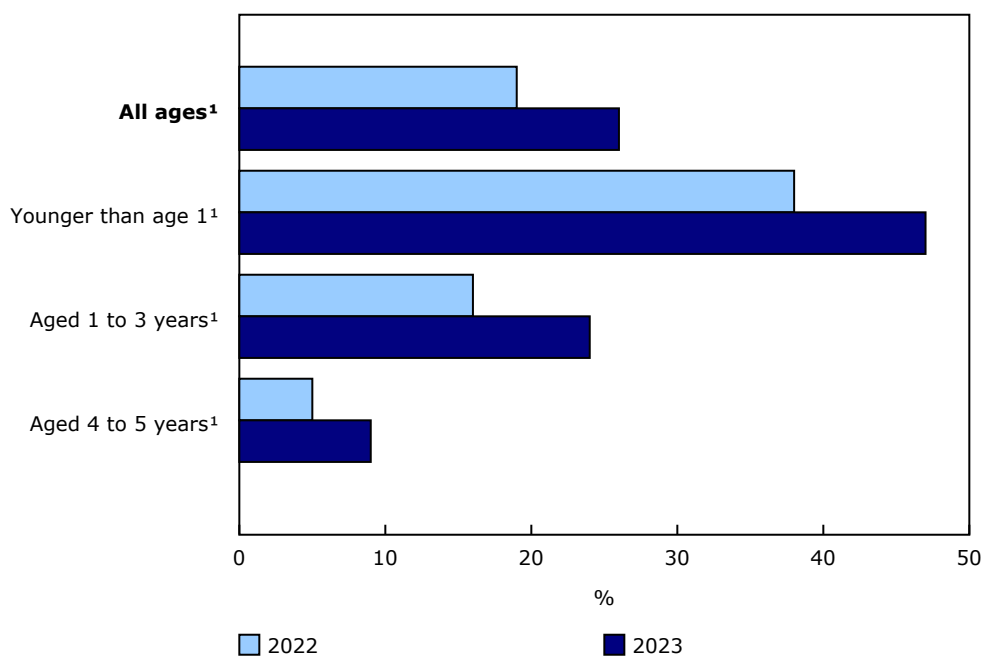
Difficulties in finding child care often resulted in negative impacts on the working life of families. For example, in 2023, similar to other years, the top impacts among these parents were having to change their work or study schedules (34%), having to work fewer hours (33%) or postponing a return to work (31%).

Over one-quarter of children who are not in child care are on a waitlist

In 2023, 26% of parents of children aged 0 to 5 years who were not using child care reported that their child was on a waitlist, up from 19% in 2022, the year this information was first collected. Difficulties finding child care are also reflected in the proportion of child care centres that have active waitlists. Results from the Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services found that [over three-quarters \(78%\) of centres maintained waitlists in 2022](#).

Chart 3

Proportion of children aged 0 to 5 years not in child care who are on a waitlist, by age group, Canada excluding the territories, 2022 and 2023



1. Results significantly different than 2022.

Source(s): Canadian Survey on Early Learning and Child Care (5371), 2023 and Survey of Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (5287), 2022.

In 2023, younger children were more likely to be on a waitlist for child care than older children. Almost half (47%) of infants younger than 1 year not in child care were on a waitlist, increasing from 38% in early 2022. In 2023, about one-quarter (24%) of children aged 1 to 3 years and 9% of children aged 4 to 5 years were on a waitlist. Among children aged 4 to 5 years, 12% of those not in school and 8% of those in school were on a waitlist.

About one-third of parents not using child care say they prefer to stay home

In 2023, the most common reason parents gave for not using child care continued to be that they preferred to have a parent stay at home (35%), with many (28%) parents not using child care because they said they were on parental leave. Finding the cost of child care to be too high (23%) and a shortage of spaces or being on a waitlist (18%) rounded out the top four reasons for not using child care. While the proportion of parents who cited cost as the reason for not using child care has remained stable over the last few years, the proportion who reported lack of availability increased from 7% in 2019 to 18% in 2023.

Parental expenses for child care decrease from 2022 to 2023

Statistics Canada's surveys on early learning and child care collect parental expenses for licensed and unlicensed arrangements used by children, not only child care that is part of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System, which is in various stages of implementation across provinces and territories.

In 2019, 2020 and 2022, parental child care expenses for children aged 0 to 5 years in full-time care were similar, averaging over \$600 per month in each year. In 2023, however, the average amount parents paid for their main full-time arrangement decreased to \$544 per month from \$649 in 2022. In 2023, nearly two-thirds (65%) of children in care attended full-time.

Child care expenses vary based on a number of factors, such as the child's age, the type of child care arrangement used and where they live. Younger children require more attention and higher staff ratios, potentially resulting in higher fees. For example, in 2023, parents paid an average of \$562 per month for their 0- to 3-year-old's main full-time child care arrangement, compared with an average of \$499 for that of 4- to 5-year-olds.

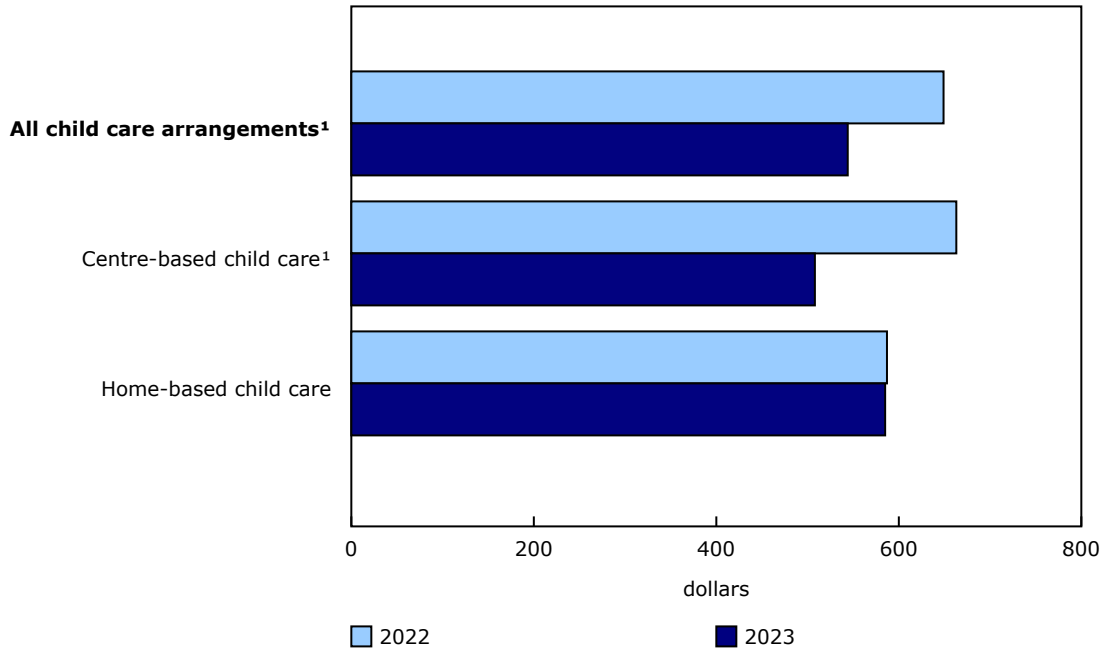
Expenses for children attending full-time centre-based child care decreased from an average of \$663 per month in 2022 to \$508 in 2023. This decrease occurred at the same time as many provinces and territories began implementing reductions in child care fees.

By comparison, the average monthly expense for full-time home-based child care was similar to the previous year, at \$585 in 2023 compared with \$587 in 2022. Expenses for home-based child care may have remained more stable as [53% of home-care providers are unlicensed](#) and thus excluded from the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System.

As a result of the decrease in average expenses for centre-based child care in 2023, average expenses for home-based child care were higher than those for centres. This contrasts with 2022, when the average expenses parents paid for centre-based care were higher than those for home-based child care.

Chart 4

Mean monthly parental child care expenses (in current dollars) for main full-time child care arrangement, children aged 0 to 5 years, Canada excluding the territories, 2022 and 2023



1. Results significantly different than 2022.
Source(s): Table 42-10-0053-01.

Similar to 2022, **parental child care expenses in 2023 were lowest among children using a relative full-time** (an average of \$238 per month), likely because the majority (67%) of these parents reported no expenses. In contrast, child care expenses were highest among those that used a non-relative full-time, such as a nanny, at an average of \$2,711 per month.

Child care expenses also varied by location. Parents in rural areas tended to pay less for full-time child care (an average of \$454 per month) compared with parents in large population centres (an average of \$587 per month).

Note to readers

The Canadian Survey on Early Learning and Child Care (CSELCC) and the Survey of Early Learning and Child Care (SELCCA) provide a snapshot of early child care use in Canada.

The CSELCC was collected in the provinces from January to June 2023, and the SELCCA 2023 was collected in the three territories from April to June 2023. The response rate for CSELCC was 49.5%, yielding a sample size of 30,303 children, which represents about 2.24 million children in the provinces. The response rate for SELCCA was 51.3%, yielding a sample size of 1,523 children, which represents about 10,800 children in the territories.

The target population was children aged 0 to 5 years and the information was obtained from a parent, guardian or person who was knowledgeable about the child's care arrangements, or lack thereof.

Any comparisons made between 2023 and 2019 and 2020 include data from the territories. Comparisons between 2023 and 2022 exclude the territories, as data were not collected in the territories that year.

The majority (9 in 10) of respondents were women. Children living in institutions or on reserve were excluded from the target population.

Notes on terminology and definitions:

- The term "parents," refers to the parent, guardian or person who was knowledgeable about the child's care arrangements.
- The term "centre-based care" or "centre" includes daycares, preschools and centres de la petite enfance.
- In 2019 and 2020, the questionnaire used the term "care by a relative other than a parent." Beginning in 2022, it used "care by a relative other than a parent or guardian."
- Parental expenses are reported for full-time care (30 hours or more per week) and in current dollars for the year the data were collected.

The number of employed home child care providers in January 2019 and January 2023 is based on a custom tabulation from the Labour Force Survey.

Survey sampling weights were applied to render the analyses representative of Canadian children aged 0 to 5 years living in the provinces and territories. 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](#).

Available tables: [42-10-0001-01](#), [42-10-0004-01](#), [42-10-0006-01](#), [42-10-0008-01](#) to [42-10-0010-01](#) , [42-10-0022-01](#) to [42-10-0031-01](#) and [42-10-0053-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [5287](#) and [5371](#).

The infographic "[Child care arrangements for children 0 to 5 years, 2023](#)," is now available as part of the series *Statistics Canada - Infographics (11-627-M)*.

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).