

Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements, 2019

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, April 10, 2019

About 60% of children under the age of 6 participated in some form of formal or informal child care in the previous three months. This represented almost 1.4 million young children. The type and quality of non-parental child care in the early years has been linked to healthy childhood development and school readiness.

Findings from the new Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements are now available. This survey, which was collected from mid-January to mid-February 2019, was designed to inform policies aimed at ensuring Canadians have affordable, accessible and quality child care options for their young children. The survey fills an important data gap on the use of various child care arrangements across Canada.

Early learning and child care arrangements include any form of care for children, formal or informal, by someone other than their parent or guardian. Examples include the use of daycare facilities, in-home care by a relative or non-relative, as well as before and after school programs. Occasional babysitting or kindergarten were excluded from the survey.

Participation in early learning and child care varies by province and territory and by child age

Early learning and child care, including formal child care and kindergarten, is organized and regulated at the provincial and territorial level. Therefore, participation rates may vary across the provinces and territories. Children living in Quebec and Prince Edward Island were more likely to be in a formal or informal child care arrangement than children in the other provinces or territories. By comparison, children living in Nunavut, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Alberta were less likely to participate in early learning and child care.

Table 1
Use of early learning and child care arrangements, by province and territory, household population aged 0 to 5

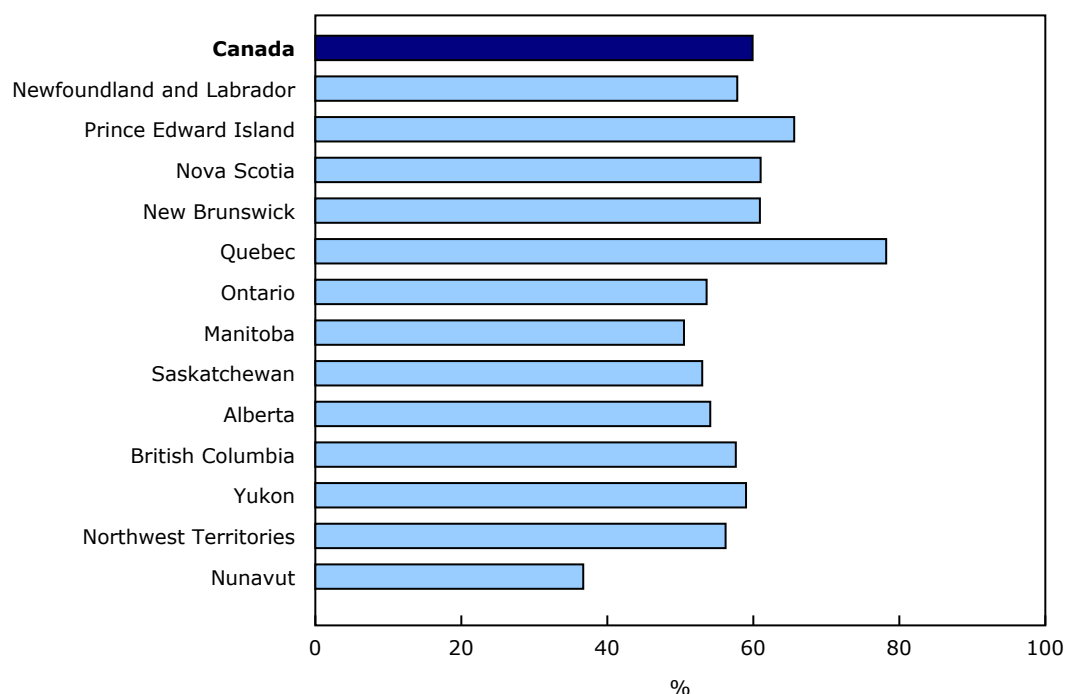
	Children		95% confidence interval ¹	
	number	%	lower limit (%)	upper limit (%)
Canada	1,383,204	59.9	58.3	61.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	15,240	57.8	53.7	61.9
Prince Edward Island	6,003	65.6 ²	61.1	69.8
Nova Scotia	31,198	61.0	56.6	65.2
New Brunswick	24,718	60.9	55.9	65.6
Quebec	403,739	78.2 ²	75.5	80.7
Ontario	474,639	53.6 ²	50.5	56.7
Manitoba	47,786	50.5 ²	45.4	55.5
Saskatchewan	43,386	53.0 ²	48.0	57.9
Alberta	178,070	54.1 ²	50.1	58.1
British Columbia	152,939	57.6	53.8	61.4
Yukon	1,560	59.0	54.3	63.6
Northwest Territories	2,015	56.2	51.1	61.2
Nunavut	1,911	36.7 ²	31.6	42.0

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

2. Significant difference between the provincial or territorial estimate and that of the other provinces and territories combined.

Source(s): Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (5287).

Chart 1
Proportion of children aged 0 to 5 participating in child care, provinces and territories



Source(s): Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (5287).

Participation in child care also differed based on the child's age. About two-thirds of 1 to 3 year olds (68%) and 4 and 5 year olds (65%) were in child care, compared with about one-quarter of children under the age of 1 (24%). The lower participation rate of infants reflects the fact that some parents have access to parental leave.

Type of child care arrangements varies by child age

Among children in any child care arrangement, parents/guardians were asked to report all of the different types of child care in which their child was participating. Daycare centres, preschools or centres de petite enfance (CPE) (52% of children in child care) were the most commonly used types of arrangements, followed by care by a relative other than a parent (26%) and a family child care home (20%). Some parents used multiple arrangements to meet all of their child care needs.

Differences in the type of care were also found based on the child's age. Children who were under the age of 1 were most likely to be cared for by a relative (46% of infants in child care), while children aged 1 and older were more likely to be in a daycare centre, preschool or CPE (58% of children aged 1 to 3 years, and 47% of children aged 4 and 5 years). About one-quarter (24%) of children aged 1 to 3 who were in child care were in a family child care home, compared with 14% of children aged 4 and 5 years. Finally, about 25% of 4- and 5-year-old children in child care participated in a before or after school program.

Table 2
Type of child care arrangement, by age group, household population aged 0 to 5, Canada

	Children		95% confidence interval ¹	
	number	%	lower limit (%)	upper limit (%)
Overall				
Daycare centre, preschool, or centre de la petite enfance (CPE)	717,317	51.9	49.9	53.8
Care by a relative other than parent	353,730	25.6	23.8	27.4
Care by a non-relative in the child's home	69,437	5.0	4.2	6.1
Family child care home	281,569	20.4	18.8	22.0
Before or after school program	128,911	9.3	8.3	10.5
Other child care arrangement	43,372	3.1	2.5	3.9
Children less than one year of age				
Daycare centre, preschool, or CPE	18,822	21.9 ^E	14.9	31.0
Care by a relative other than parent	39,013	45.5	35.6	55.7
Care by a non-relative in the child's home	13,054	15.2 ^E	8.6	25.5
Family child care home	20,911	24.4	16.7	34.1
Before or after school program	0.0	0.0
Other child care arrangement	x	x
Children aged 1 to 3				
Daycare centre, preschool, or CPE	454,047	58.2	55.5	60.8
Care by a relative other than parent	197,429	25.3	23.0	27.7
Care by a non-relative in the child's home	32,472	4.2	3.2	5.5
Family child care home	185,108	23.7	21.6	26.0
Before or after school program	F	F
Other child care arrangement	19,637	2.5 ^E	1.8	3.5
Children aged 4 and 5				
Daycare centre, preschool, or CPE	235,610	47.3	44.3	50.2
Care by a relative other than parent	111,255	22.3	19.8	25.1
Care by a non-relative in the child's home	22,747	4.6	3.3	6.3
Family child care home	70,915	14.2	12.2	16.5
Before or after school program	126,823	25.4	22.7	28.4
Other child care arrangement	19,753	4.0	2.9	5.4

... not applicable

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

E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

Note(s): Types of care do not add up to 100% because children could be in multiple types of care or in no care.

Source(s): Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (5287).

Parents have many reasons for choosing a specific type of care

The reasons that parents/guardians choose a particular child care arrangement are unique to their family needs. The survey provides insight into the overall reasons that parents/guardians choose certain child care arrangements.

Parents/guardians reported a variety of reasons for using the main type of child care, that is, the one used for the most hours per week. More than half of parents/guardians of children aged 0 to 5 years said that the choice was based on location (61%) and/or based on the characteristics of the individual providing care (53%). Many parents/guardians also chose their main arrangement because of the hours of operation (41%) or because it was affordable (40%).

Table 3
Parent/guardian reasons for using main child care arrangement, household population aged 0 to 5, Canada

	Children		95% confidence interval ¹	
	number	%	lower limit (%)	upper limit (%)
Location	837,313	60.7	58.7	62.6
Characteristics of the individual providing care	724,746	52.5	50.5	54.5
Hours of operation	570,321	41.3	39.4	43.3
Affordable cost	553,902	40.1	38.1	42.2
Program characteristics	479,013	34.7	32.9	36.6
Recommendation or own research	339,507	24.6	22.9	26.4
My other children have gone there	279,944	20.3	18.6	22.1
To keep all children in the same arrangement	268,555	19.5	17.8	21.2
Only option available	217,997	15.8	14.4	17.4
Other	161,593	11.7	10.4	13.2
Ability to meet child's special needs	52,782	3.8	3.1	4.8
None of the above	29,610	2.1	1.6	2.9

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

Note(s): Reasons do not add up to 100% because parents could select multiple reasons.

Source(s): Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (5287).

Almost two-thirds of parents do not have difficulty finding child care arrangements

Almost two-thirds (64%) of parents/guardians who had a child in child care reported that they had no difficulty finding an early learning and child care arrangement. However, some parents/guardians of children aged 0 to 5 years did report challenges, which may relate to availability, cost, flexibility or quality. Among all parents of children aged 0 to 5 years, 12% had difficulty finding child care in their community, 11% had difficulty finding affordable child care, 8% had difficulty finding care that fit their work or study schedule, and 8% had difficulty finding the quality of care that they desired.

These results reflect the challenges generally experienced by parents/guardians of children aged 0 to 5 and do not take into account any particular characteristics of the family situation, such as child characteristics or parent work schedule.

Table 4
Difficulties for parents/guardians in finding a child care arrangement, household population aged 0 to 5, Canada

	Children		95% confidence interval ¹	
	number	%	lower limit (%)	upper limit (%)
Did you have difficulty finding child care?				
No	879,639	63.6	61.6	65.6
Yes	502,746	36.4	34.4	38.4
What difficulties did you have?				
Care available in your community	266,020	11.5	10.6	12.5
Affordable child care	242,636	10.5	9.5	11.6
Care that fits your work or study schedule	192,816	8.3	7.5	9.2
Finding the quality of care you desire	187,487	8.1	7.3	9.0
Finding licensed care	139,098	6.0	5.4	6.8
Qualified care provider	137,519	6.0	5.2	6.8
Care that could accommodate more than one child in your family	82,476	3.6	3.0	4.3
Care that meets your child's special needs	18,396	0.8 ^E	0.6	1.1
Other	101,800	4.4	3.8	5.1
Did the difficulty result in any of the following?				
Changing your work schedule	200,423	8.7	7.8	9.6
Using multiple care arrangements or a temporary arrangement	177,378	7.7	6.9	8.5
Working fewer hours	165,751	7.2	6.4	8.0
Postponing your return to work	137,972	6.0	5.2	6.8
Deciding to split care with your spouse or partner	99,720	4.3	3.7	5.1
Postponing or discontinuing school or training	55,338	2.4	1.9	3.0
Deciding to work at home	52,515	2.3	1.8	2.8
Other	48,823	2.1	1.7	2.7
None of the above	97,282	4.2	3.6	4.9

^E use with caution

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

Source(s): Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (5287).

Having difficulties finding child care can affect parents' ability to work

The survey indicates that having difficulties finding child care can result in one or more negative consequences for the parent, including having an impact on their ability to work. In fact, almost 1 in 10 parents of children aged 0 to 5 years (9%) changed their work schedule because they had difficulty finding child care, 7% worked fewer hours and 6% postponed their return to work. Some parents/guardians who experienced difficulties also resorted to using multiple care arrangements or a temporary arrangement (8% of all parents of children aged 0 to 5 years).

The reasons parents/guardians report not using child care vary

Not all parents need or chose to use non-parental child care arrangements. Results from the survey suggested that almost 2 in 10 children aged 0 to 5 (17%) had a parent/guardian who had decided to stay at home, 11% had a parent at home on maternity or parental leave and 6% had a parent who was unemployed. Approximately 6% of children were not participating in child care because they were in kindergarten.

Other reasons for not using child care included that the cost was too high (10% of all parents of children aged 0 to 5) and/or that there was a shortage of spaces or a waiting list (3%).

Table 5
Reasons for not using any child care arrangement, household population aged 0 to 5, Canada

	Children		95% confidence interval ¹	
	number	%	lower limit (%)	upper limit (%)
One parent decided to stay home	394,513	17.1	15.8	18.5
Maternity or parental leave	257,409	11.2	10.2	12.2
The cost is too high	233,610	10.1	9.2	11.2
Unemployed	144,727	6.3	5.4	7.2
Child is in kindergarten	142,239	6.2	5.5	7.0
Prefer to adjust work or study schedules	86,562	3.7	3.2	4.4
Shortage of spaces or waiting list	61,243	2.7	2.2	3.2
Lack of flexibility of hours	31,036	1.3	1.0	1.8
Lack of transportation	28,705	1.2 ^E	0.9	1.7
Work or school schedules are unpredictable	25,859	1.1	0.8	1.5
Could not find licensed care	18,826	0.8 ^E	0.6	1.2
Child care is located too far	14,916	0.6 ^E	0.4	1.0
Services not adapted to special needs	6,479	0.3 ^E	0.2	0.5
Other reason	103,744	4.5	3.9	5.2

^E use with caution

1. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

Source(s): Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (5287).

The survey provides current child-level information on child care participation. Findings suggest an increase in child care participation over the past two decades, from 54% of children aged 6 months to 5 years who were reported to be in non-parental care in 2002/2003 (based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth) to 60% now.

The findings support an increase in child care participation in Canada over the past two decades. The top reasons for choosing child care arrangements were location and characteristics of the caregiver. Results also suggest that while the majority of parents are able to find child care arrangements, those that have difficulty may experience challenges related to work.

Note to readers

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

The SELCCA was conducted as part of the Rapid Stats program offered by Statistics Canada's Centre for Social Data Integration and Development to rapidly respond to pressing data needs.

The data were collected in the provinces and territories in January and February 2019. The response rate was 53% in the provinces and 41% in the territories, yielding a sample size of 7,548 children. This response rate is similar to other Rapid Stats surveys.

The target population was children aged 0 to 5 years of age, although the information was obtained from a parent, guardian or person that was knowledgeable about the child's child care arrangements (or lack thereof). The respondent was female in 91% of cases. 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 or territories. Bootstrap weights were also applied when testing for significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in order to account for the complex survey design.

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; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).