Economic and Social Reports

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Release date: January 26, 2022

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Gender differences in sociodemographic and economic characteristics of early learning child care workers

by Youjin Choi

Early learning child care (ELCC) occupations are primarily dominated by women. To understand the differences in sociodemographic and economic characteristics between men and women employed in these ELCC occupations, this Spotlight article uses the 25% microdata sample of the 2016 Census (long form).[1] Census data provide a range of sociodemographic and employment information on the Canadian population, and the large sample size allows researchers to analyze information on specific occupation groups. Findings from this article can contribute to a better understanding of gender differences in the workforce and of work conditions within ELCC occupations.

ELCC occupations are defined as 2016 National Occupational Classification groups 4214, early childhood educators or assistants (ECEAs), and 4411, home child care providers (CCP). Generally, early childhood educators organize and implement educational programs for young children, while early childhood assistants care for young children under the guidance of early childhood educators (Statistics Canada, 2018). CCPs are workers who care for children on an ongoing or short-term basis, performing tasks such as supervising, bathing and dressing infants and children; planning and preparing meals; and overseeing children's activities. They often work in private households, nurseries or playschools, or for programs that provide non-residential social assistance services for children.

Broadly, this study focuses on people aged 15 years and older who reported occupation information in the 2016 Census data. The sample analyzed for sociodemographic characteristics included those who worked in an ELCC occupation in 2015 or 2016. The sample analyzed for economic characteristics was limited to those who worked in an ELCC occupation in 2016. Among workers in ELCC occupations, women were significantly overrepresented, with men accounting for only 4% of all ELCC workers.

Gender differences in sociodemographic characteristics of early learning child care workers

Table 1 addresses whether there were differences in sociodemographic characteristics between men and women who worked in ELCC occupations.

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1. The 2016 Census collected information on sex only. Therefore, it was not possible to analyze different gender identities.

Table 1
Gender differences in sociodemographic characteristics of early learning child care workers and non-early learning child care workers, 2016

| | ELCC workers | | | | | | Non-ELCC workers | |
| | Total | | ECEA workers | | CCP workers | | | |
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total (people)	297,000	12,800	198,100	7,800	99,100	5,000	8,898,300	9,913,500
				percent				
Age								
15 to 24	13.5	30.4	12.9	30.1	14.8	30.8	15.1	14.4
25 to 39	37.4	26.8	39.3	30.4	33.5	21.1	30.5	30.0
40 to 54	32.8	20.9	34.3	24.5	29.8	15.3	32.5	31.2
55 or older	16.3	22.0	13.5	14.9	22.0	32.8	22.0	24.4
Education level								
High school or less	30.9	45.3	21.4	36.7	49.9	58.5	34.1	39.7
Trade, apprenticeship, college or CEGEP diploma or certificate, or university certificate below bachelor's degree	49.8	33.2	59.1	41.3	31.4	20.8	34.6	35.0
University degree	19.3	21.5	19.5	22.0	18.7	20.8	31.3	25.3
Immigrant status								
Immigrants	30.4	28.2	28.3	23.3	34.5	36.0	24.3	24.4
Non permanent resident	3.8	4.0	1.1	1.2	9.3	8.3	1.4	1.6
Non-immigrants	65.8	67.8	70.6	75.6	56.1	55.8	74.4	74.0
Visible minority groups								
South Asian	5.5	6.1	5.5	4.5	5.4	8.6	5.1	6.0
Chinese	2.9	6.3	2.6	4.0	3.4	9.8	4.7	4.2
Black	4.6	5.1	5.1	5.9	3.4	3.9	3.4	3.2
Filipino	7.8	6.5	2.2	2.2	19.1	13.1	3.0	2.2
Latin American	2.5	2.0	2.6	2.3	2.1	1.5	1.5	1.5
Arab	3.0	3.1	3.9	4.2	1.3	1.5	1.0	1.5
Southeast Asian	0.7	1.7	0.4	1.0	1.3	2.8	1.0	0.9
Other visible minority groups	2.7	3.2	2.9	3.4	2.4	2.8	2.6	2.5
Not a visible minority	70.4	66.0	74.8	72.5	61.6	56.0	77.7	78.2
Knowledge of official langauges								
English only	60.7	56.6	50.9	49.5	80.1	67.6	67.9	69.7
French only	20.2	14.0	27.6	19.1	5.4	6.2	9.7	8.9
English and French	17.9	24.5	21.2	30.7	11.2	14.8	21.6	20.6
Neither English nor French	1.3	4.9	0.2	0.7	3.3	11.3	0.8	0.8
Mother tongue								
English or French	69.3	69.4	73.2	77.5	61.6	57.0	76.9	76.9
Other languages	30.7	30.6	26.8	22.5	38.4	43.0	23.1	23.2

Note: All results weighted with census sample weights.
ELCC stands for "early learning child care."
ECEA stands for "early childhood educators or assistants."
CCP stands for "home child care providers."
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

Men and women in the ELCC workforce had different profiles in many characteristics, including age and educational attainment. Male ELCC workers were less likely than female ELCC workers to be in prime working age, with a higher share of younger workers under the age of 25 (30.4% for men, 13.5% for women) and older workers above the age of 54 (22% for men, 16.3% for women). Male ELCC workers were less likely than female ELCC workers to have postsecondary education (57.7% for men, 69.1% for women), but were slightly more likely to hold a university degree (21.5% for men, 19.3% for women).

Some gender differences also existed in immigrant status among ELCC workers. Female ECEAs were more likely to be an immigrant than male ECEAs. For CCPs, the gender difference was small; however, immigrants and temporary foreign workers were more overrepresented in CCP occupations compared with ECEA and non-ELCC occupations.

Men and women in ELCC occupations also had some differences in terms of visible minority groups and knowledge of official languages. As a point of reference, men and women in non-ELCC occupations did not show noticeable differences in diversity characteristics (last two columns of Table 1). Among ELCC workers, men were more likely to be part of a visible minority group (34.0%) than women (29.6%). Among female ELCC workers, Filipino (7.8%), South Asian (5.5%) and Black (4.6%) were the three largest visible minority groups. Compared with women not in ELCC occupations, Black, Filipino, Latin American and

Arab women were overrepresented in ELCC occupations. Among male ELCC workers, Filipino (6.5%), Chinese (6.3%) and South Asian (6.1%) were the three largest visible minority groups. Compared with men not in ELCC occupations, Filipino, Chinese, Black and Arab men were overrepresented in ELCC occupations.

Male ELCC workers were more likely to have no knowledge of official languages than their female counterparts in the ELCC occupation group. This difference in knowledge between male and female ELCC workers was particularly pronounced for CCP occupations, where 11.3% of men had no knowledge of English or French, compared with 3.3% of women. Male ELCC workers were less likely to have knowledge of English than their female counterparts in both CCP and ECEA occupations. In ECEA occupations, almost all male and female workers were able to speak an official language, with about 50% speaking French. Female ECEA workers were more likely to have knowledge of only French than male ECEA workers, and male ECEA workers were more likely to have knowledge of both English and French.

Gender differences in the economic characteristics of early learning child care workers

Table 2 shows economic characteristics of ELCC workers by sex. The economic characteristics of interest were class of worker, full-time work status and employment income. The class of worker indicates whether a person was a paid employee or self-employed (with or without paid help) during the census reference week.[2] Full-time work status identifies whether a person worked mostly full time (30 hours or more per week) or part time (less than 30 hours per week) during the reference week. Employment income includes wages and salaries for paid employees as well as net income from unincorporated self-employment in 2015. Lastly, the poverty rate among ELCC workers was determined based on whether or not an ELCC worker was a member of a low-income family according to the Market Basket Measure .

Table 2
Economic characteristics of early learning child care workers by sex

	ELCC						Non-ELCC workers	
	Total		ECEA		CCP			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	percent							
Class of worker								
Paid employee	78.1	81.3	84.7	87.7	63.3	68.4	91.0	85.1
Self-employed	21.9	18.7	15.3	12.3	36.7	31.8	9.0	14.9
Hours worked during reference week								
Full-time hours (30 hours or more)	73.8	61.1	74.7	63.2	71.9	56.9	71.9	84.4
Part-time hours (less than 30 hours)	26.2	38.9	25.4	36.9	28.1	43.1	28.1	15.6
Employment income in 2015								
Less than $20,000	47.6	53.6	38.0	43.4	69.0	74.6	32.1	25.5
$20,000 to $39,999	39.7	28.0	45.4	32.4	27.0	18.8	25.5	19.3
$40,000 or more	12.8	18.4	16.7	24.2	4.1	6.7	42.4	55.2
$40,000 to $59,999	10.8	12.6	14.3	17.0	3.1	3.4	19.5	18.4
$60,000 or more	1.9	5.9	2.4	7.1	1.0	3.3	22.9	36.9
Measure of low income families (based on the Market Basket Measure)	12.1	15.0	7.7	9.5	21.8	26.1	7.8	8.0

Note: All results weighted with census sample weights.
ELCC stands for "early learning child care."
ECEA stands for "early childhood educators or assistants."
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Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

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2. The census reference week is defined as the week from Sunday to Saturday preceding Census Day in May.

Compared with non-ELCC workers, ELCC workers were generally more likely to be a paid employee, have lower income and be a member of a low-income family.

In ELCC occupations, women were more likely than men to be self-employed and work full time. Male ELCC workers were more likely to work part time, compared with male non-ELCC workers and female ELCC workers.

Meanwhile, female ELCC workers were less likely than their male counterparts to earn $40,000 or more. In particular, 2% of female ELCC workers earned $60,000 or more, compared with 6% of male ELCC workers. However, male ELCC workers were more likely than their female counterparts to earn less than $20,000 (53.6% for men, 47.6% for women) and live in poverty. Differences in economic characteristics between men and women were upheld for both ECEAs and CCP.

Concluding remarks

Findings demonstrated that male and female ELCC workers in Canada had different sociodemographic and economic characteristics. Among ELCC workers, men were more likely than women to be under the age of 25, paid employees, part-time workers and overrepresented in the bottom income group. Female workers in the ELCC occupational group may be more likely to have intention to stay in the sector, working full time. Meanwhile, male workers may be more likely to have an ELCC occupation as a temporary job, working part time when they are young. In addition, men were more likely than women in ELCC occupations to be older (above 54), university-educated and have an employment income of $40,000 or more. Relative to female ELCC workers, a larger share of male ELCC workers may hold an advanced position in the ELCC occupational group. Understanding the factors that may explain these differences remains for future research.

Authors

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References

Statistics Canada. (2018). *National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016.*