



**STATISTICS CANADA'S DAYCARE DATA  
REVEAL PERSISTENT LOW ENROLMENT & HIGH VACANCY RATES:  
*FAT STATS AND FUZZY NUMBERS***

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[www.kidsfirstcanada.org](http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org)  
[info@kidsfirstcanada.org](mailto:info@kidsfirstcanada.org)  
4819 Albert Street  
Burnaby, BC V5C 2H2  
604-291-0088

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**Highlights**

- \* In 2022, 40.8% of licensed daycare providers had vacant full-time spots averaging 15 “open spots available” according a Statistics Canada survey of daycare providers (see page 9).
- \* In 2021 during COVID-19 restrictions, nearly 70% (67.9%) of spaces in licensed child care centres were vacant, “available spots” (see page 12).
- \* In 2021, there were 2.29 licensed centre spaces per enrolled child, calculated using space and enrollment data from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit’s (CRRU) report *ECEC in Canada 2021*. (see page 14).
- \* In January 2020, prior to COVID-19 restrictions, 47.4% of licensed child care centre spaces were vacant, calculated using 2020 enrollment data from Statistics Canada and 2021 licensed space data from *ECEC in Canada 2021*. (see page 16).
- \* Statistics Canada data shows the proportion of children age 0 to 5 enrolled in licensed centre care – which covers licensed preschool and daycare centres – was 16% in 2022, 11.8% in 2021, 14.2% in 2020, 18.6% in 2019 (see page 17). For age 0 to 4 excluding preschool, enrolment was 14.8% in 2011 (see page 30). Enrolment in daycare centres excluding preschool for age 6 months to 5 years was 14.9% in 2003. (see page 29).
- \* From 2003 to 2022, enrolment in licensed daycare centres of children age 0 to 5 remained under 15% despite system subsidies increasing by over 750% (\$762,000,000 in 1992 to \$6,534,400,000 in 2021). (see page 7).

**Executive Summary**

This report provides rarely mentioned data from Statistics Canada and other federally funded sources that demonstrate persistent and unreported high vacancy rates and low enrolment in licensed daycare from 1988 to 2022 despite massive funding increases.

Vacancy rates are rarely reported but not un-reported. I wrote a [paper](#) focused on Toronto daycare vacancy data in April 2015 which apparently influenced the Liberal’s election-winning, unexpected decision to increase the Child Tax Benefit rather than fund daycare. Well known policy commentator Tasha Kheiriddin [wrote](#) , “all our elected officials — should read this report.” In 2017 I co-authored a [paper](#) for Cardus on BC government daycare vacancy data in 2017 which was covered in the [National Post](#) and [Vancouver Sun](#) .

For over two decades, the media has disseminated claims of a daycare crisis. These claims originate in non-peer reviewed reports written by proponents of preferential treatment for licenced, non-parental child care. The reports are typically accompanied by highly emotive anecdotal accounts of desperate parents of chubby cheeked little ones.

It is therefore unsurprising that many Canadians, including policy makers and elected officials, have come to believe in child care ‘deserts’ and in daycare demand far exceeding supply. These claims were cited by federal politicians as a primary reason for their support of Bill C-35, the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act, which passed third reading in the House of Commons in June 2023. Not one politician cast an opposing vote. Entrenching more funding - not for children’s care but for licensed, non-

parental child care spaces with their massive system overhead and also for daycare advocates - is the prime goal of the Bill.

Because this report provides data in sharp contrast to this long-standing narrative and will surprise many readers, links and screen shots of sources are provided in the text for ease of access to the data.

The discussion section addresses routinely cited, false proxy measures of demand for licensed daycare, and responds to the emerging claim that low enrolment and high vacancies in licensed daycare are the result of low wages.

Finally, policy recommendations for inclusion and equity for diverse families and child care workers are provided.

### **How did this report come to be?**

Over twenty years ago, I lived with my first child in a basement suite under a small, private, regulated, license-not-required, in-home daycare. It was run by a low-income mother who chose that form of paid work so that she could provide child care for her own children while doing paid work. I enjoyed helping with the daycare children when we all went to the park together.

I did paid work part-time outside so-called 'standard hours' of 9-5 Monday – Friday. Renting out the second bedroom to students lowered our housing costs. I never used nor wanted to use government-regulated child care and besides, the hours would never accommodate us.

Finding and trusting someone else to care for our precious, vulnerable little children is predictably difficult and stressful for any parent. It was often a nightmare finding someone to do child care while I did my paid work. Sometimes I had to cancel paid work, and I often 'multi-tasked' as mothers have always done, doing paid work while also doing unpaid parental child care work.

It seemed grossly unfair that, because I prioritized parental child care, public funding for child care excluded me and my child.

I began researching daycare. I read that there was a crisis, a daycare shortage. My first research question was, I thought, very rudimentary: "How many children are enrolled in daycare centres?" But it took me a year to dig up the answer to this simple question – I found a pie chart at the back of a Vanier Institute report.

I often ask people to estimate the percentage of children age 0-5 in daycare centres. They typically start at 50% and when I say 'guess again', they guess higher.

What was the correct answer twenty years ago? I was shocked to learn that, contrary to the widespread perception that most little children were in daycare centres, under 10% of children age 0-5 were in daycare centres. In recent years it peaked at about 14%.

Then I found the *You Bet I Care!* 2000 study. This was an in-depth, Canada-wide project funded by the federal government and conducted by leading daycare proponents. It surveyed hundreds of daycare providers. It received a lot of media coverage at the time.

I was again shocked when I stumbled on an unreported section on "vacancies" that detailed ubiquitous, high vacancy rates and stated that, "***Vacancy rates of this magnitude make it extremely difficult to sustain financial viability***" (see page 28).

This report is a much-needed presentation of basic data needed to inform evidence-based policy.

## **List of Data Sources**

All data reports referred to were published and/or funded by the federal government.

### **Statistics Canada data**

**Note:** Some CANSIM tables provided in this report have been customized using the CANSIM website tools.

2023 - *Research to Insights: Early Learning and Child Care*

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2023005-eng.htm>

2020, 2021, 2022- *Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services*

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getMainChange&Id=1287695>

2019, 2020, 2022 - *Survey of Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements*

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getInstanceList&Id=1378547>

2014 - *Child Care in Canada*

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2014005-eng.htm>

2006 - *Child Care in Canada*

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-599-m/89-599-m2006003-eng.pdf?st=xIH48yp>

1988 - Canadian National Child Care Study: *Where are the Children?*

[https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2016/statcan/CS89-527-1993-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/statcan/CS89-527-1993-eng.pdf)

### **Other federal government sponsored data**

2021 - *ECEC in Canada 2021* published by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, a federally-funded, leading lobby group for preferential funding for non-parental, licensed group child care.

<https://childcarecanada.org/publications/ecec-canada/23/04/early-childhood-education-and-care-canada-2021>

“Early childhood education and care in Canada: Background information” describes the CRRU’s long history of federal funding from 1992 to the present.

[https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-Canada-Backgrounder-REV-04-24-23\\_0.pdf](https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-Canada-Backgrounder-REV-04-24-23_0.pdf)

2000 - *You bet I Care!: A Canada-wide study on wages, working conditions, and practices in child care centres, study funded by Human Resources Development Canada.*

<https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/RH34-10-1-2000E.pdf>

1992 - *Caring for a Living: A Study on Wages and Working Conditions in Canadian Child Care* published by the Canadian Child Day Care Federation (renamed the Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association and later rebranded Childcare Now/*Un Enfant Une Place*), an advocacy group established and funded by the federal government.

## **Population Age 0-12**

According to data from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) based on Statistics Canada data, in 2021 there were 2,210,000 children age 0-5 and 2,891,000 age 6-12, adding up to 5,101,000 age 0 to 12. Although child care is defined by Canada Revenue Agency to include children 0-15, age 12 is used as the upper age in this report because the CRRU uses this age range. This age is used because school age daycare includes grade 7 students most of whom are age 12.

This 2021 population is used as the denominator for enrolment calculations for 2019 to 2022 as there is no data for other recent years available.

[https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-2021-ComparativeTables-LongView\\_0.pdf](https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-2021-ComparativeTables-LongView_0.pdf)

**TABLE 26** Number of children (rounded estimates in 1000s). Provinces/territories/Canada (1992 – 2021).

Number of children 0 – 5 years													
P/T	1992	1995	1998	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2012	2014	2016	2019	2021
NL	45	41	34	30	31	29	28	28	30	28	26	25	24
PE	12	11	10	10	8.4	8.0	8.5	8.5	8.6	8.9	8.1	8.6	8.8
NS	74	70	64	61	55	51	49	53	54	50	49	51	48
NB	57	56	51	49	46	44	40	44	44	41	42	40	40
QC	502	565	527	460	443	435	468	455	513	516	504	509	501
ON	848	899	875	844	832	822	812	828	846	868	834	838	849
MB	98	92	87	79	76	77	78	77	89	87	88	91	94
SK	94	85	77	76	69	67	64	71	77	77	81	78	77
AB	250	242	231	233	218	228	246	260	291	308	317	314	308
BC	266	286	289	248	255	233	244	257	268	262	253	252	251
YT	2	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.5	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.2
NT	9	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.4
NU <sup>1</sup>	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not available	Not available	2.9	3.1	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.9	4.5	4.2
CA <sup>2</sup>	2,257	2,347	2,245	2,090	2,033	2,003	2,047	2,092	2,232	2,257	2,213	2,217	2,210

1 Nunavut was officially created in 1999. Figures were not available until 2005.

2 Canada total figures did not include NT or YT from 1995 – 2004. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

**TABLE 26 continued.** Number of children (rounded estimates in 1000s). Provinces/territories/Canada (1992 – 2021).

Number of children 6 – 12 years													
P/T	1992	1995	1998	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2012	2014	2016	2019	2021
NL	63	57	52	46	41	39	37	36	34	37	37	37	34
PE	14	14	14	13	13	12	12	11	11	11	12	12	12
NS	86	86	89	80	77	75	69	65	61	61	64	62	68
NB	72	70	68	63	63	58	56	52	51	50	50	54	55
QC	655	627	646	656	634	604	554	560	560	579	618	647	650
ON	964	1,024	1,098	1,100	1,097	1,097	1,071	1,032	1,047	1,011	1,072	1,108	1,090
MB	111	106	108	107	104	102	97	98	98	98	104	110	116
SK	112	107	106	93	91	81	81	80	84	86	92	99	106
AB	279	289	301	289	298	284	295	299	307	329	364	384	389
BC	312	338	351	353	329	341	324	314	302	309	322	332	358
YT	3	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.7	3.2	3.6
NT	8	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	4.5	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.0
NU <sup>1</sup>	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not available	Not available	3.0	2.8	4.1	4.4	4.9	4.9	5.5	6.0
CA <sup>2</sup>	2,679	2,718	2,833	2,800	2,747	2,703	2,605	2,557	2,566	2,582	2,747	2,858	2,891

1 Nunavut was officially created in 1999. Figures were not available until 2005.

2 Canada total figures did not include NT or YT from 1995 – 2004. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

## FUNDING FOR GOVERNMENT-REGULATED NON-PARENTAL CHILD CARE 1992 – 2021

Preferential government treatment of and funding for government-regulated, non-parental child care comes from all three levels of government. The table here includes most but not all funding and also excludes the considerable value of tax deductions available to parents under the Child Care Expense Deduction.

Table 31 from *ECEC in Canada 2021* shows a funding from \$762,000,000 to \$6,534,400,000, an increase of 760% from 1992 to 2021.

[https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-2021-ComparativeTables-LongView\\_0.pdf](https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-2021-ComparativeTables-LongView_0.pdf) p.332

LongView\_0.pdf 13 / 17 110%

**TABLE 31** Total funding for regulated child care (unadjusted dollars, rounded in millions). Provinces/territories/Canada (1992 – 2021).

P/T	1992 (\$)	1995 (\$)	1998 (\$)	2001 (\$)	2003 – 2004 (\$)	2005 – 2006 (\$)	2007 – 2008 (\$)	2009 – 2010 (\$)	2011 – 2012 (\$)	2013 – 2014 (\$)	2015 – 2016 (\$)	2018 – 2019 (\$)	2020 – 2021 (\$)
NL	1.7	3.0	3.3	7.8	9.6	12.3	19.8	20.5	21.2	21.2 <sup>1</sup>	39.3	47.7	60.9
PE <sup>2</sup>	2.8	1.7	2.6	4.2	4.7	4.7	6.2	6.4	12.5	12.1	11.8	19.1	32.1
NS	11.4	11.8	15.7	12.9	19.8	23.7	37.2	39.0	43.2	46.2	42.9	64.7	76.2
NB	3.7	3.2	5.5	11.8	13.9	22.5	26.2	28.9	35.0	38.7	42.2	71.7	90.8
QC	140.7	203.7	299.9	1,092.4	1,560.0	1,678.9	1,730.6	1,998.7 <sup>3</sup>	1,998.7	2,485.4	2,559.1	2,653.8	3,066.6
ON	420.1	541.8	470.5	451.5	497.4	534.1	780.4	801.8	865.1	960.1	1,169.8	1,894.3	1,839.3
MB	42.2	45.2	45.2	62.9	73.0	86.3	106.0	116.6	134.4	139.4	156.6	174.0	175.4
SK	12.3	12.7	15.8	16.4	19.6	22.8	47.1	53.7	62.7	64.8	64.5	84.5	90.4
AB	66.6	67.6	54.3	57.5	53.6	72.5	105.7	190.6	257.6	263.1	263.8	351.1	281.3
BC	55.8	98.7	128.9	164.6	140.7	176.1	216.7	227.5	227.2	227.4	231.4	498.0	791.1
YT	2.4	4.2	4.8	4.4	5.2	5.4	6.4	7.4	7.7	7.7	6.3	9.5	12.3
NT	2.3	1.7	2.3	1.6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5 <sup>4</sup>	4.5	4.5	6.9	10.0
NU <sup>5</sup>	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	1.9	1.8	2.3	2.5	2.8	3.0	2.6	3.7	5.2	8.0
CA	762.0	995.3	1,048.6	1,889.8	2,401.9	2,940.1	3,087.4	3,496.5	3,670.7	4,273.4	4,595.9	5,880.5	6,534.4

### RECENT DATA ON VACANCIES IN LICENSED DAYCARE 2022, 2021, 2020

#### Tables: Summary of Enrolment Data

#### Vacancies in licensed child care spaces for ages 0-12 Canada-wide 2020-2022

	January 2020	January 2021	April 2022
Licensed preschool and daycare centres	47.4%	67.9 %	40.8% of operators report vacancies averaging 15 full-time spots
Licensed home daycare	?	39.8%	24.1% of operators report vacancies averaging 2.4 full-time spots

## 2022 Vacancies

in 2020-2021, COVID-19 led to higher than usual daycare vacancies because of restrictions on daycare attendance. But these restrictions were lifted in Ontario by June 2021 according to [Operational Guidance for Child Care During COVID-19 Outbreak Version 6](#) .

In April 2022, nearly a year after the end of COVID-19 enrolment and attendance restrictions, Statistics Canada’s conducted its third *Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services* of 20,000 child care operators – a very large survey.

Statistics Canada - *Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services*

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/surveys/5338?sourcecode=5338&p=15-All#all>

The table of “open spots available” (the current term for “vacancies”) shows that 40.8% of licensed centres had “open spots” for full time enrollment with an average of 15 available spots.

24.1% of licensed home daycares had open spots with an average of 2.4 open spots.

TABLE “Child care businesses with open spots available and average number of open spots by child care business type”, Canada 2022 Table: 42-10-0041-06

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=4210004106>

Child care businesses with open spots available and average number of open spots by child care business type, Canada 2022<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>

Frequency: Occasional Help

Table: 42-10-0041-06 Save my customizations

Release date: 2023-03-30

Geography: Canada Add/Remove data | Download options

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Showing 2 records  Filter Reset

Geography	Canada <a href="#">(map)</a>		
Reference period	2022		
Type of child care business	Centre-based child care	Licensed home-based child care	Unlicensed home-based child care
<b>Child care business statistics</b>			
<b>Percent</b>			
Proportion of child care businesses with open spots for full time enrollment	40.8 <sup>A</sup>	24.1 <sup>A</sup>	19.0 <sup>A</sup>
<b>Average number</b>			
Average number of open spots available for full time enrollment <sup>5</sup>	15.0 <sup>A</sup>	2.4 <sup>B</sup>	2.1 <sup>B</sup>

Symbol legend:

## QUEBEC

Separate charts for each province show that in Quebec 23.7 % of daycare centre operators had vacancies with an average of 14.4 open spots. 10.1 % of licensed home daycare had open spots averaging 2.2.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=4210004606>

[Home](#) > [Data](#)

### Child care businesses with open spots available and average number of open spots by child care business type, Quebec, 2022<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>

Frequency: Occasional

[Help](#)

Table: 42-10-0046-06

[Save my customizations](#)

Release date: 2023-03-30

Geography: Province or territory

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Geography	Quebec ( <a href="#">map</a> )		
Type of child care business	Centre-based child care	Licensed home-based child care	Unlicensed home-based child care
Child care business statistics	2022	2022	2022
<b>Percent</b>			
Proportion of child care businesses with open spots for full time enrollment	23.7 <sup>A</sup>	10.1 <sup>A</sup>	9.8 <sup>A</sup>
<b>Average number</b>			
Average number of open spots available for full time enrollment <sup>5</sup>	14.4 <sup>B</sup>	2.2 <sup>C</sup>	2.0 <sup>D</sup>

## ONTARIO

In Ontario, 55.3% of daycare centres had vacancies averaging 16.2 open spots. 44.4% of licensed home daycares had open spots averaging 3.2 spots.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=4210004706>

Table: 42-10-0047-06

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Release date: 2023-03-30

Geography: Province or territory

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Geography	Ontario ( <a href="#">map</a> )		
Reference period	2022		
Type of child care business	Centre-based child care	Licensed home-based child care	Unlicensed home-based child care
<b>Percent</b>			
Proportion of child care businesses with open spots for full time enrollment	55.3 <sup>B</sup>	44.4 <sup>C</sup>	20.9 <sup>B</sup>
<b>Average number</b>			
Average number of open spots available for full time enrollment <sup>5</sup>	16.2 <sup>B</sup>	3.2 <sup>D</sup>	2.1 <sup>C</sup>

## BC

In BC, 29.4% of daycare centres had vacancies averaging 8.7 open spots. 29.2% of licensed home daycares had open spots with an average of 2.2 open spots.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=4210005106>

Home > Data

### Child care businesses with open spots available and average number of open spots by child care business type, British Columbia, 2022<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>

Frequency: Occasional [Help](#)

Table: 42-10-0051-06 [Save my customizations](#)

Release date: 2023-03-30

Geography: Province or territory [Add/Remove data](#) [Download options](#)

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Geography	British Columbia ( <a href="#">map</a> )		
Reference period	2022		
Type of child care business	Centre-based child care	Licensed home-based child care	Unlicensed home-based child care
<b>Child care business statistics</b>			
	Percent		
Proportion of child care businesses with open spots for full time enrollment	29.4 <sup>A</sup>	29.2 <sup>A</sup>	6.8 <sup>B</sup>
	Average number		
Average number of open spots available for full time enrollment <sup>5</sup>	8.7 <sup>C</sup>	2.2 <sup>B</sup>	2.4 <sup>C</sup>

Symbol legend:

## 2021 Vacancies

2021 data comes from two sources: Statistics Canada and from the CRRU's *ECEC in Canada 2021*.

### Statistics Canada 2021 data

2022 vacancies were high but not as high as vacancies under 2021 COVID restrictions.

When many COVID restrictions were still in place in January 2021, the same Statistics Canada survey was done with 4,000 daycare operators participating.

67.9% of full-time licensed spaces in licensed centres (daycares and preschools) were vacant, counted as “available spots” and “open spots”.

Quebec had the lowest number of vacancies with 36.8% of spots open.

Ontario had the most with 90.1% of spots open.

For home-based daycare operators, 39.8% of spots were open, ranging from 22.8% in Quebec to 100% in Nova Scotia.

Statistics Canada - “Available spots by child care business type, January 2021” Table: 42-10-0003-01

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=4210000301>

Geography	Canada (map)	Newfoundland and Labrador (map)	Prince Edward Island <sup>5</sup> (map)	Nova Scotia (map)	New Brunswick (map)	Quebec (map)	Ontario (map)	Manitoba (map)	Saskatchewan (map)	Alberta (map)	British Columbia (map)	Territories (map)
Open spots by child care businesses type	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
Percentage												
Centre- based child care businesses	67.9 <sup>B</sup>	64.3 <sup>B</sup>	63.9 <sup>B</sup>	84.6 <sup>B</sup>	70.8 <sup>B</sup>	36.8 <sup>C</sup>	90.9 <sup>B</sup>	73.0 <sup>B</sup>	90.6 <sup>B</sup>	90.0 <sup>B</sup>	61.1 <sup>C</sup>	70.7 <sup>B</sup>
Licensed home- based child care businesses	39.8 <sup>B</sup>	37.7 <sup>D</sup>	..	100.0 <sup>A</sup>	36.7 <sup>D</sup>	22.8 <sup>B</sup>	84.4 <sup>E</sup>	47.9 <sup>D</sup>	65.4 <sup>D</sup>	66.3 <sup>E</sup>	54.5 <sup>C</sup>	42.7 <sup>C</sup>
Unlicensed home- based child care businesses	41.7 <sup>B</sup>	32.1 <sup>C</sup>	32.1 <sup>B</sup>	41.4 <sup>C</sup>	32.9 <sup>C</sup>	22.1 <sup>C</sup>	50.6 <sup>D</sup>	31.8 <sup>C</sup>	47.1 <sup>C</sup>	60.2 <sup>C</sup>	42.2 <sup>D</sup>	F

Statistics Canada’s 2021 enrolment data and 2021 CRRU capacity data gives similar results. The CRRU data Table 2 shows there were 1,490,046 licensed spaces available. Statistics Canada data shows there were 499,679 enrolled in licensed centres (preschool and daycare) and 74,810 in licenced home care adding up to 574,489 children 0 to 12 enrolled in the licensed spaces. This means 38.6% of the spaces were filled or 61.4% were vacant.

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=4210001801 80% Search

Geography	Canada (map)	
Age of children enrolled in child care businesses	Total children enrolled, number <sup>5</sup>	
Child care businesses by type	2020	2021
	Number	
All types of child care businesses <sup>4</sup>	..	..
Centre-based child care businesses	636,983.0 <sup>B</sup>	499,679.0 <sup>B</sup>
Licensed home-based child care businesses	89,697.0 <sup>B</sup>	74,810.0 <sup>B</sup>
Unlicensed home-based child care businesses	136,079.0 <sup>B</sup>	98,206.0 <sup>B</sup>

**Symbol legend:**

.. not available for a specific reference period

<sup>B</sup> data quality: very good

**How to cite:** Statistics Canada. [Table 42-10-0018-01 Enrolled children by age group and child care business type, January 2020 and January 2021](#)

### **CRRU 2021 data**

The 2021 Statistics Canada vacancy data is corroborated by data from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU).

The CRRU's report *ECEC in Canada 2021* provides enrolment data for 2021 thus creating the potential to calculate vacancies the first time since the first version of that report in 1992. Table 6 provides numbers for "capacity" versus "enrollment" for each province and territory in 2021. These numbers can be used to calculate the vacancy rate.

### **Capacity vs. enrolment vs. attendance data**

"Capacity" means the maximum number of spaces a daycare is licensed for.

"Enrolment" means the number of children enrolled in the available spaces. A child may be enrolled full-time or part-time so enrollment could exceed capacity due to part-time enrollment. In BC, full time is defined as 4 hours per day.

"Attendance" data is not publicly available. Attendance means the number of children attending for any time during the day. Enrolment typically exceeds attendance because children may be enrolled but not attending due to illness, parental or other care arrangement, or family holiday. In BC, attendance data must be collected but providers are not required to submit it.

Table 2 states there were a total of 1,381,271 licensed preschool and daycare centres spaces. Including regulated home daycare gives a total of 1,490,046 regulated spaces of all types.

Table 6 provides total enrolment in preschool and daycare centres (but not for regulated home daycares) for each province but does not add them up. Adding up the numbers gives 603,952 age 0 to 12 (grade 7) enrolled in licensed centre spaces.

Excluding regulated home daycare spaces and counting only licensed preschools and daycare centres there were 1,381,271 spaces for 603,952 children: 43.72% of spaces used and 56.3% vacant.

1,381,271 spaces for 603,952 enrolled children means 2.29 licensed centre spaces per enrolled child.

The CRRU report shows Quebec had 214,168 licenced centre spaces for children age 0 to before kindergarten with 191,867 children in them. This means a vacancy rate of 11.2% for that age group.

Quebec data shows the lowest 2021 vacancy rate because the lack of data for school age children's enrollment creates a lower vacancy rate (school age vacancies are typically higher). Also, there may be fewer vacancies because Quebec is the most heavily subsidized system, with [fees of only \\$8.85/day or less](#) according to January 2023 version of Quebec 'Daily Childcare Cost'.

Ontario has 464,538 licensed spaces (including preschool) for all ages with only 202,878 children in them. This means a vacancy rate of nearly 66%.

BC had 114,633 licensed spaces for all ages with 88,800 in them. This means a vacancy rate of 22%.

**TABLE 2** Number of regulated spaces (child care centres, before- and after-school child care and family child care) and percent of children 0 – 12 for whom a regulated space was available. Province/territories (2021).

P/T	Number of regulated full- and part-day child care centre spaces for children 0 – 5 years	Number of regulated before- and after-school child care spaces	Number of regulated family child care spaces 0 – 12 years	Total number of regulated child care spaces 0 – 12 years	Percent of children 0 – 12 years for whom a part- or full -day regulated space was available (%)
NL	4,702	2,717	623	8,042	14
PE	3,925	2,439	29	6,393	31
NS	11,959	3,589 <sup>1</sup>	1,190	16,738	14
NB	15,222	16,214	980	32,416	34
QC	214,168	340,683	65,281	620,132	54
ON	180,758	283,780	12,734	477,272	25
MB	22,949	12,136	3,312	38,397	18
SK	13,735	1,625	2,306	17,666	10
AB	80,816	50,985	8,708	140,509	20
BC	76,214	38,419	12,729	127,362	21
YT <sup>2</sup>	1,070	388	210	1,869	32
NT	763	808	432	2,003	27
NU	1,052	155	40	1,247	12
CA	627,333	753,938	108,574	1,490,046	29

**TABLE 6** Licensed capacity and enrolment in child care centres by age grouping. Provinces/territories (2021).

P/T	Licensed capacity			Enrolment		
	Infant, toddler & preschool-age	Kindergarten- and school-age	Total	Infant, toddler & preschool-age	Kindergarten- and school-age	Total
NL	4,702	2,717	7,419	3,890	1,609	5,499
PE	3,925	2,439	6,364	3,194	1,321	4,515
NS	11,959	3,589 <sup>1</sup>	15,548	9,205	3,072 <sup>2</sup>	12,277
NB	15,222	16,214	31,436	10,640	10,372	21,012
QC	214,168	340,683	554,851	191,867	Not applicable	Not applicable
ON	180,758	283,780	464,538	112,361	90,517	202,878
MB	22,949	12,136	35,085	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
SK	13,735	1,625	15,360	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
AB	80,816	50,985	131,801	51,762	23,796	75,558
BC	76,214	38,419	114,633	64,326	20,743	88,880
YT	Not applicable	Not applicable	1,659	1,070	388	1,466
NT	763	808	1,571	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

## **2020 Vacancies**

Statistics Canada data for January 2020 shows 636,983 children 0-12 enrolled in a licensed child preschool or daycare centre full- or part-time. Data on the number of spaces available in 2020 is not available. Using 1,381,271 - the number of licensed centre spaces (excludes regulated home daycare) available in 2021 (CRRU Table 2) - we calculate 52.6% of spaces enrolled. This means a baseline of 47.4% vacancy rate before the beginning of COVID restrictions.

## **DATA ON ENROLMENT IN LICENSED DAYCARE 2019 - 2022**

### **Daycare denominators – doing the math**

Policy makers depend on comprehensive, accurate data to form “evidence-base policy”. In addition to not publicizing vacancy data, federal government-sponsored researchers, including Statistics Canada, report daycare enrolment in a way that misrepresents basic data and creates a false perception of high enrolment in daycare centres.

Enrolment data requires ‘doing the math’ to get the needed number - the percentage of **all** children in different forms of child care - that Statistics Canada does not provide and which the media therefore cannot disseminate.

Enrolment must be calculated using a 3-step process:  $A \times B = C$

Step A - find Statistics Canada tables and reports that state X% of children are in any type and any amount of non-parental child care.

Step B - find the separate tables, paragraphs, or info-graphics that provide data about use of different types of non-parental child care, including daycare centres. These tables always use as a denominator the number of those in non-parental child care rather than number of **all** children in the age group.

Step C – Multiply  $A \times B$ . This is the percentage of **all** children in daycare centres.

Not one of the reports provides this basic number.

### **Lumping together preschool and daycare centre enrolment**

Preschool or nursery school typically offer a 2-3 hour activity program once or twice a week for children age 2-4. Parents often participate. Regulations for maximum staff:child ratios allow far more children per staff. This is in sharp contrast to daycare licensing regulations which allow up to 13 hours per day, seven days a week (in B.C.)

In various surveys since 1988, parents were asked about enrolment in licensed daycare centres and preschool as separate categories and these categories were reported separately. But after asking parents about separate categories in 2011, beginning in 2014, Statistics Canada reported them as one category – as licensed group or centre-based care. Kids First Parent Association of Canada has accessed the underlying data files to disaggregate these numbers.

Now, since 2019, surveyed parents are asked about enrolment in preschool or daycare centres as one category, making it impossible disaggregate the data to find accurate licensed daycare centre enrolment. This lumping tactic further inflates and obscures numbers that make part of the evidence base for policy.

### **Daycare definitions**

Statistics Canada’s definitions of “child care” have varied over the years. The term “daycare” has been largely shelved, but many assume that “child care” means “daycare centre”. In the first report, in 1988, child care meant the care of a child and included all types of parental child care. “Supplemental child

care” meant any form of child care including maternal child care done while doing paid work, and all paternal child care. Only children looked after exclusively by mothers who were not simultaneously performing paid work were counted as “no supplemental child care”. Later, “child care” meant non-parental care while parents “work or study”, and later “child care arrangements” meant “regular” non-parental care arrangements.

Age ranges have also varied in the studies making comparison somewhat difficult but not impossible. The 1988 study counted ages 0-11; 2002-03 counted ages 6 months – 5 years; 2011 counted 0-4 and 0-14; 2019 counted 0 – grade 7. Selecting ages to exclude children less likely to be enrolled due to changes in 2001 in maternity leave under Employment Insurance, and the expansion of all-day kindergarten may increase enrolment percentages.

**Calculated total enrolment age 0-5 in licensed preschool & daycare centres 2019 – 2022**

Multiplying (A) the percentage of children in any non-parental care by (B) percentage of those children in preschool and daycare centres provided in Statistics Canada SELCCA data provides (C) the percentage of **all** children enrolled 2019, 2020, 2022. 2021 data is from *Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services* and the CRRU’s *ECEC in Canada 2021*. \*See calculations below.

**TABLE: Calculated total enrolment age 0-5 in licensed preschool & daycare centres 2019 – 2022**

Year	Step A (% of all children in any amount and type of non-parental child care)	Step B (% of A in daycare centres)	Step C (% of all children enrolled in daycare centres)
2019	59.9	31	18.6
2020	52.2	26	13.6 (or 14.2*)
2021	n/a	n/a	11.3 or 11.8*
2022	51.6	31	16

## Step A Data

### Survey of Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=4210000401>

## Use of early learning and child care arrangements, children aged 0 to 5 years <sup>1</sup>

Frequency: Occasional

[Help](#)

Table: 42-10-0004-01

[Save my customizations](#)

Release date: 2022-06-01

Geography: Canada, Province or territory

[Customize table \(Add/Remove data\)](#)

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Statistics	Percentage of children in child care		
	2019	2020	2022
	Percent		
Canada ( <a href="#">map</a> )	59.9	52.2	..
Canada, excluding the territories <sup>2</sup>	59.9	52.3	51.6
Newfoundland and Labrador ( <a href="#">map</a> )	57.8	60.1	55.9
Prince Edward Island ( <a href="#">map</a> )	65.6	60.7	58.5
Nova Scotia ( <a href="#">map</a> )	61.0	54.9	54.5
New Brunswick ( <a href="#">map</a> )	60.9	59.1	58.9
Quebec ( <a href="#">map</a> )	78.2	75.2	71.3
Ontario ( <a href="#">map</a> )	53.6	44.2	41.4
Manitoba ( <a href="#">map</a> )	50.5	46.2	47.5
Saskatchewan ( <a href="#">map</a> )	53.0	46.7	50.9
Alberta ( <a href="#">map</a> )	54.1	41.4	46.0
British Columbia ( <a href="#">map</a> )	57.6	49.9	53.2
Yukon ( <a href="#">map</a> )	59.0	54.0	..
Northwest Territories ( <a href="#">map</a> )	56.2	49.6	..
Nunavut ( <a href="#">map</a> )	36.7	34.7	..

#### Symbol legend:

.. not available for a specific reference period

## Step B Data

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

	2019	2020	2022
Daycare centre, preschool, or childcare centre <sup>1</sup>	31	26	31
Care by a relative other than parent or guardian	15	15	14
Care by a non-relative in the child's home	3	3	2
Family child care home <sup>2</sup>	12	10	8
Before or after school program <sup>3</sup>	6	4	4
Other child care arrangement	2	2	1

TABLE 42-10-0031-01

### Unexplained revision of 2019-2022 enrolment data in July 2023

NOTE: **21-28 percentage points were added to the above (Step B) table** in a new July 26, 2023 Statistics Canada report, "Research to Insights: Early Learning and Child Care", which provides the same Table. It no longer mentions that the 'daycare' enrollment includes preschool. No explanations for the discrepancy have been reported.

Specifically: enrolment in...

2019 went from 31% to 51.9% - up almost 21 percentage points

2020 went from 26% to 49.2% - up over 23 percentage points

2022 went from 31% to 59.2% - up over 28 percentage points.

After the House of Commons voted unanimously to pass Bill C-35 in June 2023, the Bill went to the Senate (current – November 2023).

*Research to Insights: Early Learning and Child Care*

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2023005-eng.htm>

### July 2023 report

▼ Data table for chart 5

	2019	2020	2022
	percent		
Daycare centre	51.9	49.2	59.2
Relative other than a parent	25.6	28.0	26.3
Family child care home	20.4	19.0	15.7
Before- or after-school program	9.3	7.4	7.9
Non-relative in the child's home	5.0	5.0	4.4
Other	3.1	3.3	2.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements, 2019, 2020 and 2022.

### April 2022 report

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

	2019	2020	2022
Daycare centre, preschool, or childcare centre <sup>1</sup>	31	26	31
Care by a relative other than parent or guardian	15	15	14
Care by a non-relative in the child's home	3	3	2
Family child care home <sup>2</sup>	12	10	8
Before or after school program <sup>3</sup>	6	4	4
Other child care arrangement	2	2	1

## 2020 enrolment calculation

In January 2020, prior to any COVID restrictions, there were 636,983 children 0-12 enrolled in licensed preschool or daycare centres and 89,697 in licensed home daycares for a total of 726,680 enrolled in licensed settings.

726,680 enrolled of 5,101,000 children means only about 14.2% of children age 0 to 12 were enrolled in any kind of licensed care in 2020 prior to COVID restrictions.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=4210001801>

## Enrolled children by age group and child care business type, January 2020 and January 2021 <sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>

Frequency: Occasional

[Help](#)

Table: 42-10-0018-01

[Save my customizations](#)

Release date: 2022-03-30

Geography: Canada, Geographical region of Canada, Province or territory

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Geography	Canada ( <a href="#">map</a> )	
Age of children enrolled in child care businesses	Total children enrolled, number <sup>5</sup>	
Child care businesses by type	2020	2021
	Number	
All types of child care businesses <sup>4</sup>	..	..
Centre-based child care businesses	636,983.0 <sup>B</sup>	499,679.0 <sup>B</sup>
Licensed home-based child care businesses	89,697.0 <sup>B</sup>	74,810.0 <sup>B</sup>
Unlicensed home-based child care businesses	136,079.0 <sup>B</sup>	98,206.0 <sup>B</sup>

## 2021 enrolment calculation

### CRRU 2021 data

The above Table 6 from *ECEC in Canada 2021* provides total enrolment numbers for each province but does not add them up. Adding up the numbers gives 603,952 enrolled in licensed preschools or daycare centres or licensed home daycare of the 5,101,000 children 0 – 12. This is 11.8% of all age 0-12.

**Spaces per child** - The CRRU Table 2 shows there were licensed spaces for 29% of all children 0 to 12. Calculating the ratio of percentage children enrolled to the percentage of children for whom there is a regulated space: 11.8%:29% = 2.46 spaces per enrolled child in 2021. This is similar to the 2.29 spaces per enrolled child calculated above.

### Statistics Canada 2021 data

The 2021 data from the *Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services* says total enrolment in licensed centres (preschool and daycare) for age 0 to age 12 was 499,679, and licensed home daycare enrolment for was 74,810.

This means total enrolment of 574,489 out of 5,101,000 age 0-12. This gives 11.3% age 0 to grade 7 enrolled in licensed daycare or preschool.

Statistics Canada - [Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services](#) - “Enrolled children by age group and child care business type, January 2020 and January 2021” Table: 42-10-0018-01 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=4210001801>

Geography	Canada (map)	Newfoundland and Labrador (map)	Prince Edward Island <sup>§</sup> (map)	Nova Scotia (map)	New Brunswick (map)	Quebec (map)	Ontario (map)	Manitoba (map)	Saskatchewan (map)	Alberta (map)	British Columbia (map)	Territories (map)
Age of children enrolled in child care businesses	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>	Total children enrolled, number <sup>§</sup>
Child care businesses by type	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
Number												
Centre- based child care businesses	499,679.0 <sup>B</sup>	6,642.0 <sup>C</sup>	4,089.0 <sup>E</sup>	10,360.0 <sup>B</sup>	15,345.0 <sup>C</sup>	192,026.0 <sup>B</sup>	150,062.0 <sup>D</sup>	24,016.0 <sup>B</sup>	10,162.0 <sup>C</sup>	39,853.0 <sup>C</sup>	46,016.0 <sup>D</sup>	1,107.0 <sup>C</sup>
Licensed home- based child care businesses	74,810.0 <sup>B</sup>	510.0 <sup>D</sup>	..	F	769.0 <sup>D</sup>	44,808.0 <sup>C</sup>	5,598.0 <sup>E</sup>	1,800.0 <sup>D</sup>	1,786.0 <sup>D</sup>	7,877.0 <sup>D</sup>	10,959.0 <sup>D</sup>	386.0 <sup>C</sup>

## NON-TRANSPARENT REPORTING OF DAYCARE DATA

### 2019, 2020, & 2022 SELCCA data

#### 2019

In 2019, Statistics Canada conducted the first *Survey of Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements* with about 7,500 families - a very large survey. This survey of parents was widely publicized in the media, unlike the survey of daycare operators asked about “empty spots available”, that is, vacancies.

Report author Leanne Findlay writes, “About 60% of children under the age of 6 participated in some form of formal or informal child care...” Several paragraphs later it states: “Daycare centres, preschools, or centres de petite enfance (CPE) were the most commonly used types of arrangements (52% of children in child care)...children older than one year of age 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).”

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2019013-eng.htm>

This means not that 60% or 52% or 58% age 0 to 5 were in daycare centres but only 52% of 60% - which is 31% - were in a category that combined enrolment in preschool and daycare centre.

The report lumps enrolment in preschool - usually 2 hours two or three times per week - and in daycare centre - up to 60 or more hours per week. This clearly inflates numbers and distorts perception of daycare centre use and demand.

## Archived - Type of child care arrangement, household population aged 0 to 5 years, inactive<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

Frequency: Occasional

[Help](#)

Table: 42-10-0005-01

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Release date: 2021-07-22

Geography: Canada, Province or territory

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Geography		Canada <a href="#">(map)</a>			
Reference period		2019			
Statistics		Number of children	Percentage of children in child care	95% confidence interval (lower limit) <sup>2</sup>	95% confidence interval (upper limit) <sup>2</sup>
Type of child care arrangement	Age group	Number	Percent		
Daycare centre, preschool, or childcare centre (CPE) <sup>2</sup>	Overall	717,317	51.9	49.9	53.8
Care by a relative other than parent	Overall	353,730	25.6	23.8	27.4
Care by a non-relative in the child's home	Overall	69,437	5.0	4.2	6.1
Family child care home	Overall	281,569	20.4	18.8	22.0
Before or after school program	Overall	128,911	9.3	8.3	10.5
Other child care arrangement	Overall	43,372	3.1	2.5	3.9

### An exception to the denominator problem

Only the 2019 version of the SELCCA report provides limited inclusion of the differences between the higher percentages - which use as a denominator the percentage of children in any amount and type of non-parental care - and the relevant percentage using the number of "all children" as the denominator.

Finlay provides statements with numbers which can then be selectively quoted and used to prove that parents cannot find affordable, accessible child care. In discussing parental difficulties finding non-parental child care, the math is even more complicated than enrolment math. To get the percentage of **all** parents having various difficulties requires multiplying  $A \times B \times C = D$

A - percentage of children in any form and any amount of non-parental child care = 60%

B - percentage of parents of A reporting any difficulties = 36%

C - percentage of B reporting a specific difficulty = (various)

D - multiply  $A \times B \times C$  = percentage of all parents reporting a specific difficulty

For example, in discussing parental difficulty finding non-parental child care, Findlay inconsistently gives the relevant percentages - in parentheses. First, the summary states, "Approximately four in ten parents

of children in child care had difficulty finding a child care arrangement.” While the information is technically correct, the data is provided in a manner that is not transparent. “More than half (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, although 36% did report difficulties....However, many parents/guardians of children aged 0 to 5 years did report challenges, which may be related to availability, cost, flexibility, or quality. Among parents of children aged 0 to 5 who experienced difficulty finding child care, 53% had difficulty finding child care in their community (12% of all parents of children aged 0 to 5 years). Almost half had difficulty finding affordable care (48%, or one in ten of all parents of children aged 0 to 5), more than one third had difficulty finding care that fit their work schedule (38%, or 8% of all parents of children aged 0 to 5), and 37% had difficulty finding the quality of care that they desire (8% of all parents of children aged 0 to 5).” [emphasis added].

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2019013-eng.htm>

Clearly 53% is higher than 12%, 48% is higher than 10%, 38% is higher than 8%, and 37% is higher than 8%.

Media outlets predictably use the higher number – 53% - disseminating a false impression. This is a form of misinformation. For example: *The Tyee*, reporting on parental difficulties in this survey, gave the highest number provided and ignored all the rest: “53 per cent of parents in Canada struggle to find child care.”

(*The Tyee* May 25, 2021 “For Sharon Gregson, the Long Battle for Better Child Care Continues: Advocates were bitterly disappointed by the NDP government’s broken promises. But they aren’t giving up”

<https://thetyee.ca/News/2021/05/25/Sharon-Gregson-Long-Battle-Better-Child-Care-Continues/> )

## 2022

The 2022 SELCCA report included parents of 11,590 children. It states “Just over half (52%) of Canadian children younger than 6 years were in licensed or unlicensed child care in early 2022....The proportion of Canadian children younger than 6 who were in daycare centres, preschools and centres de la petite enfance increased from 26% in late 2020 to 31% in early 2022, the same as the pre-pandemic rate (31%) in 2019.”

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220601/dq220601a-eng.htm>

31% of 52% means 16% of children 0 to 5 were in preschool or daycare centres, not 52% or even 31%.

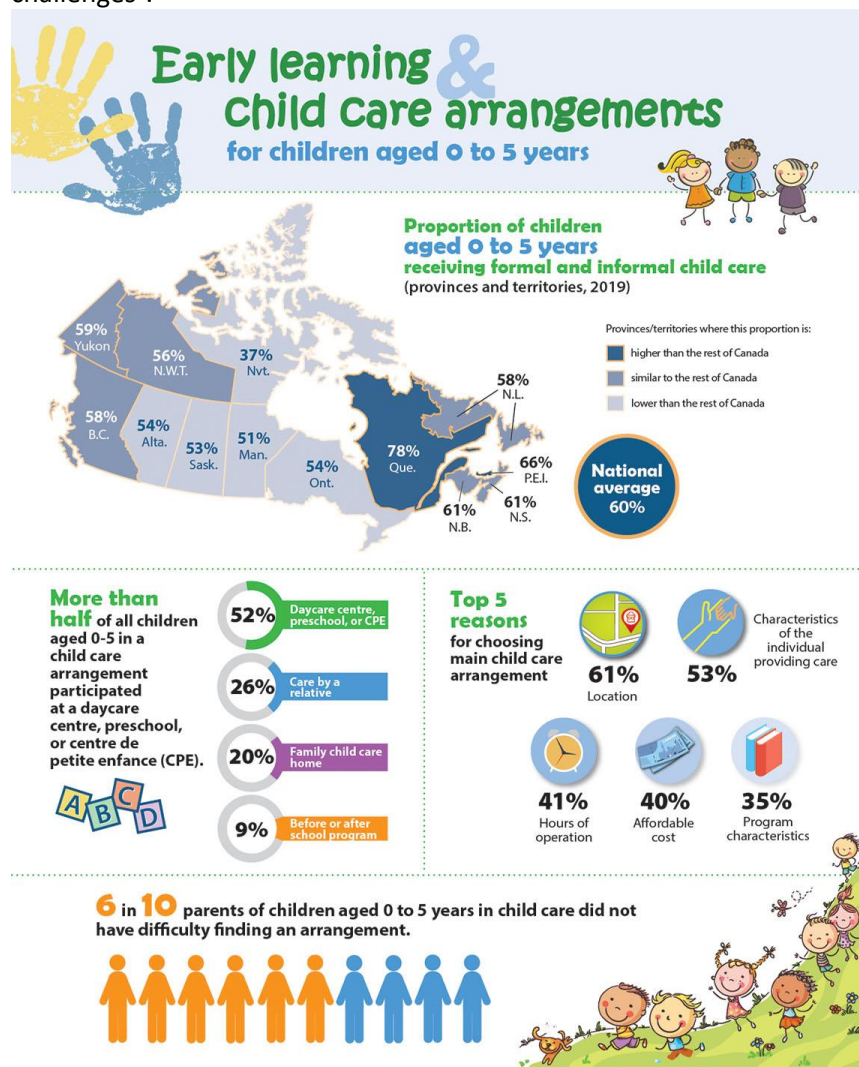
But the 16% figure is not provided anywhere in any form; all headlines, graphs and graphics show 31% or 52%.

## INFO-GRAPHICS THAT DISINFORM

Below are examples of Statistics Canada’s misleading ‘infographics’ and graphs.

### 2019 Info-graphic

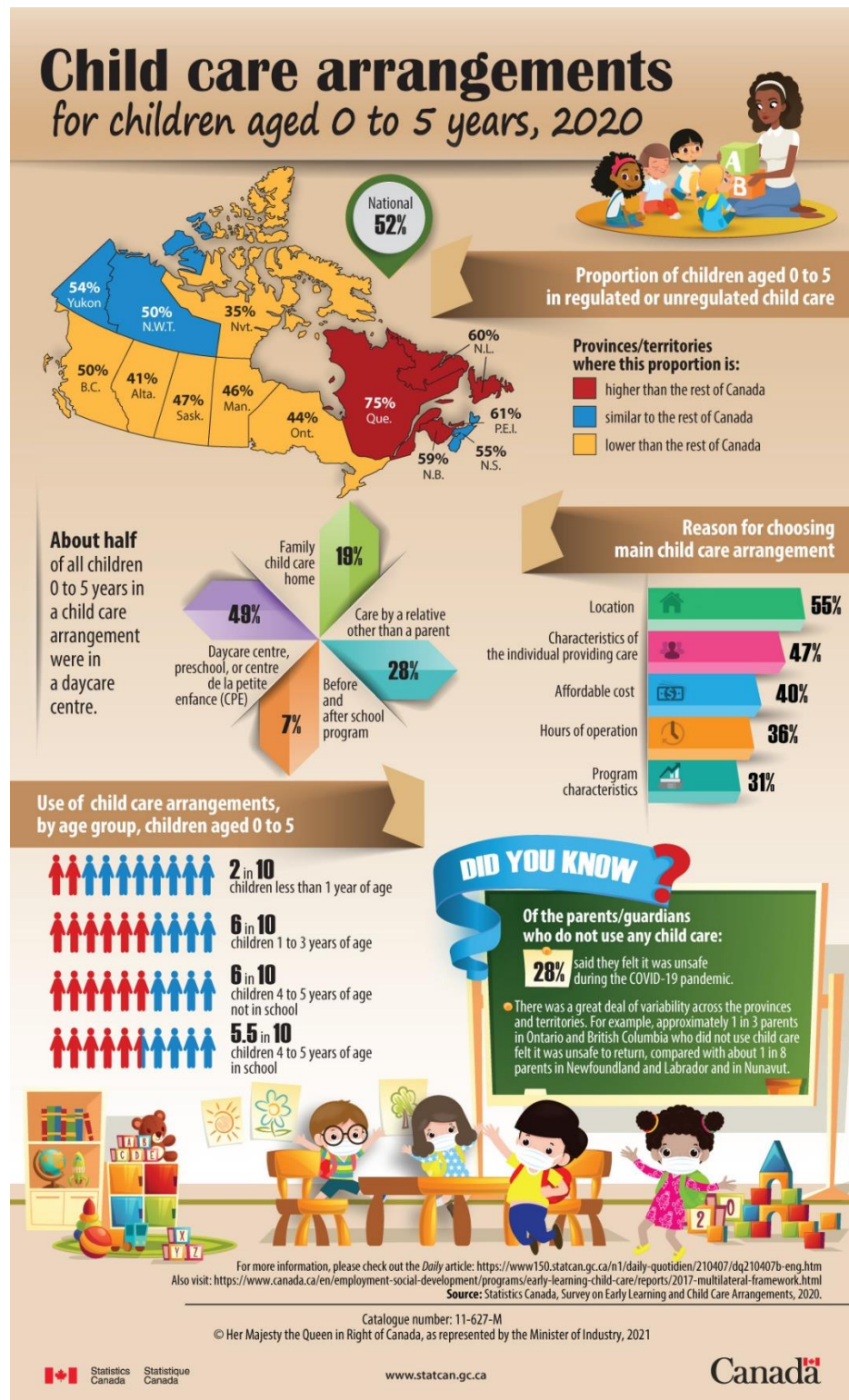
The poster does not explain that “child care arrangement” means any type and amount of non-parental child care. It does not depict exclusive parental child care - the most popular form with 40% of children - at all. The ‘take away’ points are: 60% in child care, 52% in daycare centres, and 6 out of 10 parents did not have difficulty finding child care. But the reality is that 100% are in child care, 18.6% were enrolled in preschool and/or a daycare centre, and only 8 – 12% of all parents surveyed reported these “top challenges”.



For more information, please check out [The Daily](#).  
Source: Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements, 2019.

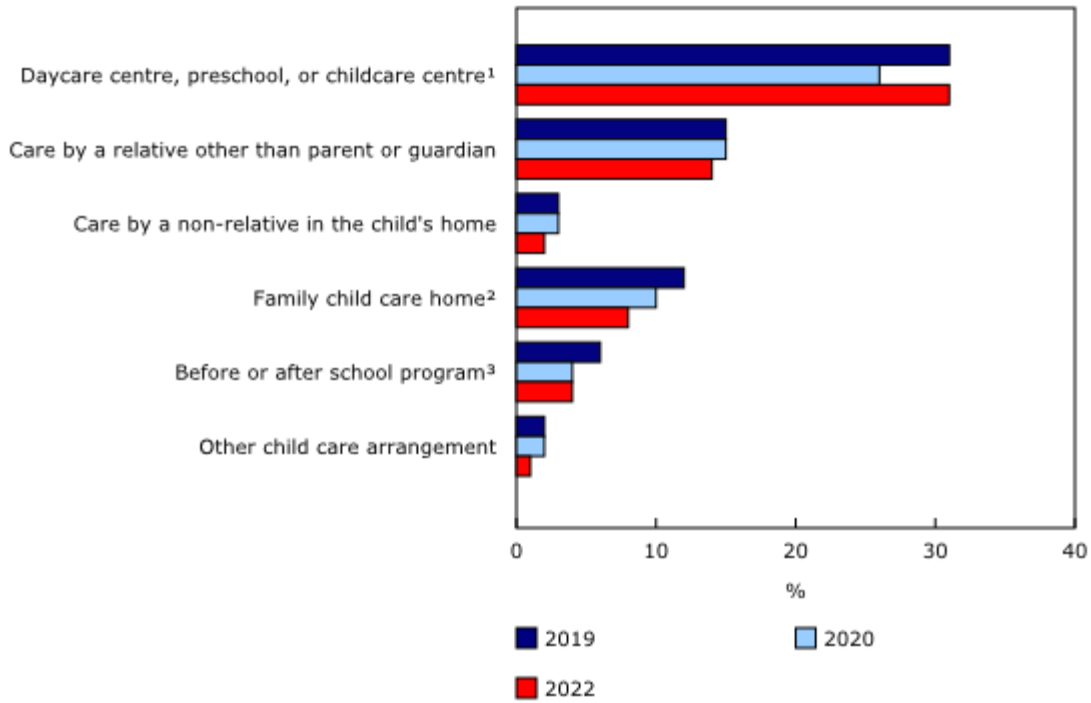
## 2020 Info-graphic

The poster does not explain that “child care arrangement” means any type or amount of non-parental child care. It does not depict exclusive parental child care, the most popular form with 48% of children. We read “about half” are in a daycare centre when this is only 14%.



### 2022 Graph

The graph is from the 2022 SELCCA report showing over 30% in daycare centres or preschool when the actual unreported percentage was 16%. The graph also takes the liberty of combining non-parental child care types to appear as though licensed group care is in higher demand than all other forms. Children in exclusive parental child care – the single most used form of child care - are not even on the graph.



**DATA ON LICENSED DAYCARE ENROLMENT AND VACANCIES 1988 – 2014**

**1988 Canadian National Child Care Study**

The creation of a distorted perception of enrolment in daycare centres began with the first daycare study by Statistics Canada, the 1988 *Where are the Children?* report on the Canadian National Child Care Study. It was conducted by researchers who were leading proponents of preferential funding for non-parental child care in daycare centres.

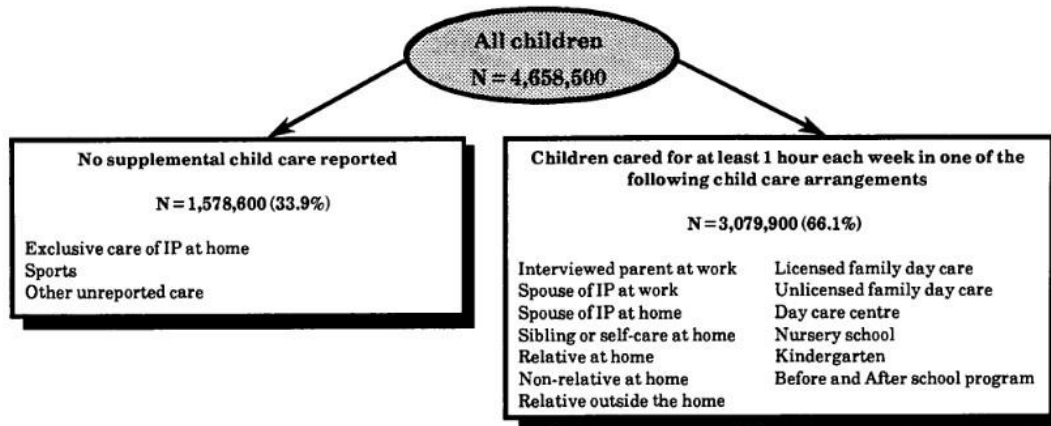
It reported that a solid majority, 66.1%, of children age 0 to 11 were in “supplemental care”.

This catch-all term included as little as one hour per week in “supplemental care”. This even included *parental child care*: care by the interviewed parent (almost always the mother) while she was doing paid work, and any care by the spouse (almost always the father), as well as “self care”, “sibling care”, and kindergarten.

[https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2016/statcan/CS89-527-1993-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/statcan/CS89-527-1993-eng.pdf)  
p. 32

**Canadian National Child Care Study  
Where Are The Children? An Overview of Child Care Arrangements in Canada**

**Figure 1 CNCCS Child Care Arrangements**



### 1991 *Caring for a Living* and 1998 *You Bet I Care!*

The *You Bet I Care!* reports published in 2000 were authored by leading proponents of preferential funding for daycare centres and funded by the federal Child Care Visions Program of the Human Resources Development Canada. It was a “replication” (p xiii) of the *Caring for a Living* report published in 1992.

The report contained much detailed data about vacancies which went unreported in the media.

For example: “Nationally, 7.5% of centres had vacancy rates above 30.0%. Alberta, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia had average provincial vacancy rates above 10.0% and close to a third or more of the centres in these three provinces had vacancy rates over 20.0%. **Vacancy rates of this magnitude make it extremely difficult to sustain financial viability.**” (p. 165)[emphasis added]

*You bet I Care! A Canada-wide study on wages, working conditions, and practices in child care centres* p. 163

<https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/RH34-10-1-2000E.pdf>

Jurisdiction	1991	1998
British Columbia	57.4%	41.7%
Alberta	32.7	24.7
Saskatchewan	39.0	40.3
Manitoba	57.3	62.5
Ontario	32.9	47.5
Québec	36.7	60.0
New Brunswick	26.1	42.6
Nova Scotia	33.3	30.8
Prince Edward Island	32.0	41.3
Newfoundland/Labrador	33.1	25.0
<b>CANADA</b>	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>46.3%</b>

Notes: 1991 data from CCDCF/CDCAA 1992, Table A35, p. 113.  
Data for the Northwest Territories and the Yukon are not reportable due to small sample sizes.

194 of 282      - + 120%

you bet **I CARE!**

Jurisdiction[a]	Average vacancy rate	Categories of centre vacancy rates			
		No vacancies	1-10% of capacity	11-20% of capacity	Over 20% of capacity
British Columbia	10.8%	45.3%	11.3%	25.5%	17.9%
Alberta	19.5	27.8	11.1	19.7	41.5
Saskatchewan	10.2	43.6	19.1	15.4	21.8
Manitoba	3.7	72.5	14.5	7.2	5.8
Ontario	7.3	50.2	22.6	16.4	10.8
Québec	2.8	67.5	22.2	7.7	2.6
New Brunswick	14.2	44.7	12.8	11.3	31.2
Nova Scotia	13.8	35.2	18.0	14.8	32.0
Prince Edward Island	9.7	51.2	7.0	18.6	23.2
Newfoundland/Labrador	11.8	41.8	0	41.8	16.4
<b>CANADA</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>51.2%</b>	<b>18.3%</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>14.7%</b>

Notes: The average vacancy rate was calculated by averaging all within-centre vacancy rates in a jurisdiction. Rates reflect all centres, including those with all

## 2006 *Child Care in Canada*

Tracy Bushnik authored a Statistics Canada child care report on enrolment data from 2002-2003 called *Child Care in Canada* published in 2006 shortly after the policy promise of universal daycare was defeated in a federal election.

The fact that only 14.9% of all children age 6 months to 5 years were in daycare centres was hidden near the bottom of a chart on page 97 of a 99-page report with 56 pages of unindexed charts.

Media frontpage headlines used the easy-to-find 54% in “child care” (on p.6). The report said 28% were in daycare centres (on p. 13) but left the math (54% of 28% = 15%) to the highly motivated few.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-599-m/89-599-m2006003-eng.pdf?st=xIH48yp>

97 / 99 | — 67% + | [ ] [ ]

**Table 27. Distribution of children aged six months to five years by type of main child care arrangement, including parental care**

	Lower 95% Confidence Limit	%	Upper 95% Confidence Limit
<b>1994-1995</b>			
Parental care	56.6	58.3	59.9
Outside the home with non-relative	16.7	17.9	19.2
Outside the home with relative	5.2	5.8	6.6
In own home with non-relative	5.0	5.8	6.8
In own home with relative	2.7	3.3	4.1
Daycare centre	7.2	8.1	9.2
Other	0.4	0.7	1.1
<b>1996-1997</b>			
Parental care	54.1	55.9	57.6
Outside the home with non-relative	16.7	17.9	19.3
Outside the home with relative	5.6	6.3	7.2
In own home with non-relative	4.7	5.5	6.4
In own home with relative	4.8	5.5	6.4
Daycare centre	7.0	7.9	8.9
Other	0.6	1.0	1.4
<b>1998-1999</b>			
Parental care	48.0	49.2	50.3
Outside the home with non-relative	16.6	17.5	18.5
Outside the home with relative	7.7	8.4	9.2
In own home with non-relative	5.2	5.8	6.4
In own home with relative	6.7	7.3	8.0
Daycare centre	8.6	9.3	10.1
Other	2.1	2.5	2.9
<b>2000-2001</b>			
Parental care	46.1	47.3	48.5
Outside the home with non-relative	16.5	17.3	18.2
Outside the home with relative	8.0	8.7	9.4
In own home with non-relative	4.4	4.9	5.5
In own home with relative	6.8	7.5	8.2
Daycare centre	11.6	12.4	13.3
Other	1.6	1.9	2.3
<b>2002-2003</b>			
Parental care	45.3	46.5	47.6
Outside the home with non-relative	15.4	16.2	17.0
Outside the home with relative	7.8	8.4	9.1
In own home with non-relative	3.7	4.1	4.6
In own home with relative	6.7	7.4	8.0
Daycare centre	14.1	14.9	15.8
Other	2.3	2.6	2.9

Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 89-599-MIE 97

## 2014 Child Care in Canada

A 2014 *Child care in Canada* report on daycare for children age 0-4 by Maire Sinha stated for the year 2011, “More than half (54%) of parents with children aged 4 and under used child care” and “daycare centres (33%)”.

But 33% of 54% is 18% and this included preschool. Again, no where was 18% printed.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2014005-eng.htm>

Kids First Parent Association of Canada was able to access Statistics Canada’s raw Public Use Microfiche Data (PUMF) data. It shows that 14.8% not 18% were in daycare centres when preschool was not included.

<https://kidsfirstcanada.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/childcare-type-chart-ontario-bc-quebec-and-canada-2011.pdf>

RESPONDENTS' TYPE OF CHILD CARE FOR AGES 0 - 4 DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS - NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES

	ONTARIO	BC	QUEBEC	CANADA
PARENTAL CARE	331 <b>48.2%</b>	138 <b>51.7%</b>	158 <b>33%</b>	1216 <b>47%</b>
NON-PARENTAL CARE OTHER THAN A REGULAR ARRANGEMENT (LICENSED) HOME	43 <b>6.3%</b>	23 <b>8.6%</b>	14 <b>2.9%</b>	142 <b>5.5%</b>
DAYCARE CENTRE	58 <b>8.4%</b>	26 <b>9.7%</b>	146 <b>30.5%</b>	347 <b>13.5%</b>
PRESCHOOL/NURSERY SCHOOL	108 <b>15.7%</b>	21 <b>7.9%</b>	114 <b>23.9%</b>	381 <b>14.8%</b>
PRIVATE ARRANGEMENT (NANNY, RELATIVE)	49 <b>7.1%</b>	13 <b>4.9%</b>	12 <b>2.5%</b>	102 <b>4%</b>
OTHER TYPE OF ARRANGEMENT	98 <b>14.3%</b>	42 <b>15.7%</b>	32 <b>6.7%</b>	380 <b>14.8%</b>
TOTAL	0 <b>0%</b>	1 <b>0.4%</b>	1 <b>0.2%</b>	5 <b>0.2%</b>
	687 100%	267 100%	478 100%	2575 100%

## ERRONEOUS PROXY MEASURES OF DEMAND FOR NON-PARENTAL, LICENSED CHILD CARE

There are three false proxy measure of demand for licensed daycare:

1 – ratio of spaces to total child population: “child care deserts”

2 - ‘waitlists’

3 - mothers’ labour force participation or employment

### Ratio of licensed spaces to total child population: “child care deserts”

So-called “child care deserts” are not a measure of demand for licensed daycare. “Deserts” are calculated by dividing the total population in an age group by the number of licensed care spaces for that age group and claiming that children live in deserts.

The melodramatic term, “child care deserts”, “originates with U.S. researchers... in 2017” according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives which unleashed the term to Canada in 2018. The daycare advocacy group’s latest non-peer reviewed “desert” [publication](#), “Not Done Yet: \$10-a-day child care requires addressing Canada’s child care deserts” was co-authored by leading daycare advocate, CRRU head Martha Friendly. It was released in May 16, 2023 coinciding with the House of Commons committee discussion of Bill C-35. The deserts received immediate massive media coverage and politicians discussing Bill C-35 cited the media coverage. For example, the Globe and Mail [article](#) stated, “48 per cent of younger children...live in a child-care desert, defined as a postal code in which there are at least three children competing for every one licensed space.” Children live in homes and are not “competing” to get into daycare.

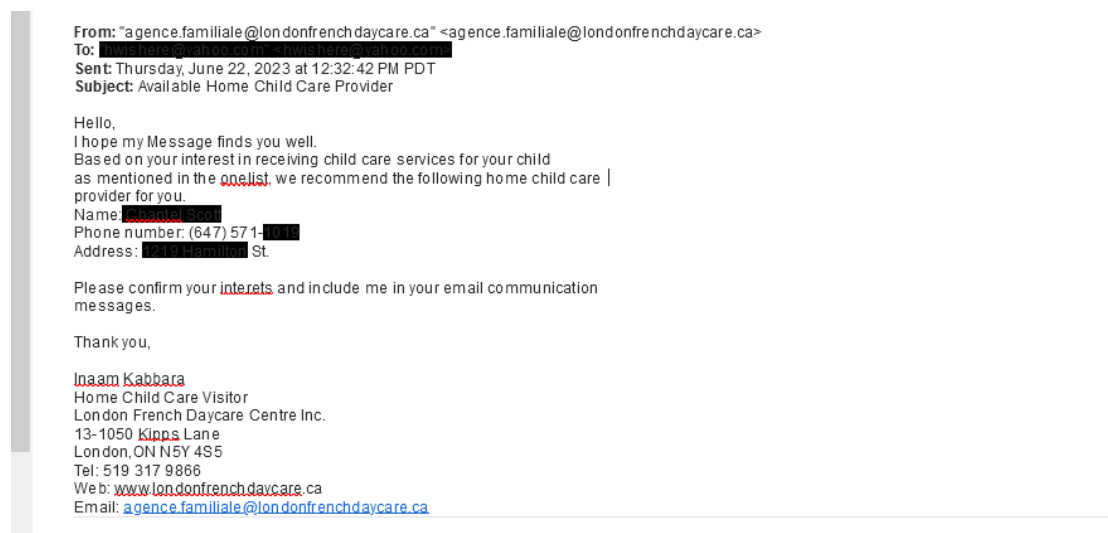
Child care is the care of a child, 24/7/365, wherever it takes place and whomever does it. All children in Canada are in child care. It is a crime to desert a child.

The untenable assumptions embedded in the desert calculations are:

- all children should not be anywhere except licensed 'spaces' from birth to the end of grade seven
- there must be a licensed, full-time daycare space for every child from birth to grade seven
- government must (almost) fully subsidize capital, administration, monitoring, and operation costs of these spaces and the massive related bureaucracy
- that parents' true, unconstrained preferences (regardless of current policy) must not be considered
- that parents' actual behaviour (given current policy) must not be considered
- that parents' barriers to accessing and affording parental child care must not be noticed, discussed, measured, reported, or remedied.

### "Waitlists"

I was assured by an Ontario MP on June 20, 2023 while discussing Bill C-35 that there was not a single licensed daycare space available in her riding. That day I registered on the centralized wait-list - which advised parents to contact the daycares individually despite the waitlist – seeking a place for a toddler for July 1. Within 48 hours, on June 22, I received an email and then a call offering me a place in a bilingual licensed home.



So-called "waitlists" have no empirical validity. They unfairly distress parents and burden operators. Daycare operators cannot actually assure parents of a space until one month before the space is wanted: as in rental housing, typically parents vacating a spot do not need to give the operator notice that they will vacate a spot until one month prior to vacating the space.

Waitlists are a tool for pressuring policy makers: the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Childcare Resource and Research Unit created a website project called *Finding Quality Child Care a Guide for Parents in Canada*. It advises parents with waitlist-distorting "dos and don'ts":

<https://findingqualitychildcare.ca/about-this-website>

*"Act as soon as possible. As **soon as possible** after finding out you are pregnant (or move, or decide to*

return to work or school): Check out the options in your area for regulated child care and put your name on **multiple waiting lists.**" [emphasis added]

Lists are not centralized, and have names of children who are not born, who are on multiple lists, whose parents don't want daycare for months or years in the future, who are already in daycare.

### **Mothers in the labour force**

Every mother is a working mother. Labour force participation is a catch-all statistic that covers "employed and unemployed". It does not measure demand for licensed daycare. The statistics includes many who are not currently doing full-time waged work. "Unemployed" means looking for a job. "Employed" includes:

- doing any amount of paid work at all
- doing unpaid work in a family farm or business
- being on paid or unpaid leave from a job
- doing paid work while caring for one's children
- doing paid work but not using licensed daycare
- doing paid work outside of licensed daycare hours

see Statistics Canada *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/98-500/012/98-500-x2021012-eng.cfm>

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/definition-eng.cfm?ID=pop028>

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/definition-eng.cfm?ID=pop124>

## **DISCUSSION OF RECENT ADMISSIONS OF LOW ENROLMENT AND HIGH VACANCY RATES**

Suddenly, daycare proponents are pivoting, back-peddling on their long-standing daycare shortage crisis claim by explaining that high vacancies and low enrolment result from staffing shortages which result from low wages. ***Nowhere is there any acknowledgement that this is the long-standing reality or admit that this information has systematically been hidden from the media, the public, and policy makers.***

For example, in March 2023, CBC stated that the biggest daycare operator in the Toronto region, the YMCA, "currently has just 16,000 kids enrolled in its 35,000 licensed spaces".

CBC March 13, 2023 "Why a shortage of workers threatens \$10/day child care"

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/child-care-worker-shortage-early-childhood-educators-1.6774940>

And, according to a [November update](#) from the "\$10aday" campaign of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, "Existing programs struggle to operate at capacity, and there are examples of new facilities sitting empty – despite the dire need – because of a shortage of qualified educators." The group insists that the solution is higher wages: "to be competitive, [wage grid] wages would need to be at least \$30 - \$40/hour".

But even with higher hourly wages, daycare staff are only paid for the hours they work. Staff are only needed when children's attendance requires them. Very few enrolled children attend full-time spaces (full-time is 4hrs/day) for the maximum number of hours (13 hrs/day in BC) or even for all of the hours a centre is open (typically 8am to 6pm).

Also, many children are absent due to sickness or other reasons on any given day. So even if there were no vacancies in full-time enrolment, there may be no need for full-time staff. Fewer children attending mean fewer staff needed, therefore fewer hours for staff, and therefore smaller paycheques.

Jobs that can guarantee adequate hours are more desirable.

What happens to the public's money that is budgeted and paid to daycare operators for staff needed for full enrollment in full-day, full-week child care spaces when the children are not in those spaces? What happened to the billions spent on daycare when COVID-19 restrictions dramatically reduced children's enrolment and attendance?

### **Inclusion and diversity in child care mean there is no shortage of child care workers**

The reality is that high quality, culturally appropriate child care is abundant and far more inclusive and diverse than proponents of preferential treatment of licensed non-parental care approve of. With the large supply outside of licensed child care, demand for licensed care and certified staff will inevitably be low. Low demand means low wages unless the wages are artificially raised through public subsidies.

Defining of child care as only licensed non-parental child care is exclusive and discriminatory. It is intended to monopolize funding and to prevent diversity and equity in distribution of funding. This definition thus prevents realization of equity goals, including 'gender equity', formerly known as women's liberation. Goals of inclusion, diversity, and equity require an inclusive, diverse, equitable, non-discriminatory definition of child care and distribution of child care funding. This can only be done by funding parents directly (demand-side funding) as it is parents alone who must provide and/or delegate all child care.

### **Sustainability: shortage of waged care workers**

There is a real growing shortage of waged care workers for the sick, disabled, elders, substance addicts, people with disabilities, and the dying.

Most child care – even most non-parental child care - is done legally, accessibly, flexibly, and well by a wide range of child care workers outside of licensed daycare settings. This means there is a large supply of child care workers. For example, there are now more parents and grandparents per child than ever before in human history; most are child care workers but are not defined or counted as such.

On the other hand, there is a long-standing waged care-worker shortage. Building, running, monitoring, and reporting on a vast new universal daycare system for Canada's 5,101,000 children 0 to 12+ would require hundreds of thousands of waged workers – close to one million for a high quality system. This is not possible, let alone sustainable.

Where will the staff come from?

High quality child care requires a relationship of attachment and attunement between child and care provider. Child care can be done legally, accessibly, affordably, flexibly, and with high quality by a wide range and age of people, some with decades of child care experience but without credentialed training.

However, other forms of care work - like nursing – require considerable specialized training and do not require an attachment relationship.

### **Misallocation of resources means inefficiency and competition for waged care workers**

Excluding child care funding from all but waged workers in licensed systems is a massive misallocation of financial resources that produces unsustainable inefficiency. This discriminatory definition excludes the vast majority of actual child care workers from child care financing, thus artificially reducing supply. It pits waged child care work against other types of waged care work, exacerbating waged care worker supply shortages.

It means that child care funding goes to many who do not do or even want to do child care, but who get higher wages for daycare system work in three or more levels of government in bureaucracy, research, monitoring, inspection, advocacy, administration, policy, construction, procurement, accounting, training, landscaping, cooking, janitorial services, etc.

### **Financed vs waged child care work**

Publicly *financed* child care work does not have to be equated with *waged* child care work. Child care work needs to be done 24/7/365 for all children: even paying minimum wages would be fiscally impossible. Inclusive, diverse child care work can be *financed* equitably by funding families directly, perhaps via refundable tax credits and/or an enhanced Child Tax Benefit. Parents may then use this financing to hire waged child care and early learning workers as needed.

## **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Evidence-based policy in child and family policy has not happened due to decades of non-collection, non-circulation, and misrepresentation of basic evidence regarding enrollment and vacancy rates. This has resulted in the failure to respect and finance Canada's diverse child care work force inclusively and equitably.

Policy will reflect Canadian *parents'* child care visions and become sustainable, diverse, inclusive, equitable, and evidence-based as reality breaks through.

### **Recommendations**

- 1 - Child care (early learning and child care) to be defined as the care of a child regardless of who does it.
- 2 - Demand side financing to be enacted and so child care funding to follow the child in order to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in child care: all child care funding delivered directly and equitably to parents based on age of child via an increased Child Tax Benefit and/or refundable tax credit or like means.
- 3 - Public audits to be done to find out and report on how billions in public money for licensed daycare has been spent.
- 4 - Advocates to be required to explain their insistence on increasing the number of licensed daycare spaces given the persistent facts of low enrolment and high vacancy rates
- 5 - Data on vacancies, enrolment, and attendance in licensed daycare to be provided transparently.
- 6 – Eliminate all public funding to advocates for preferential treatment of non-parental child care.