

The Care Economy Data Room: *Early Learning & Childcare*



The Care Economy* accounted for [12.5% of GDP](#), and [20.7% of all jobs](#) in November 2022. That's up from 12.3% of GDP and

20.4% of all jobs in February 2020, before the pandemic hit. This edition of the Care Economy Data Room focuses on 10 of the issues shaping the future of early learning and childcare – a necessity in our lives, and a key economic driver.

1. [In 2006, Canada was dead last](#) among 14 peer nations' public spending on early learning and childcare, at 0.25% of GDP. In [2008 it tied for last place with Ireland](#) among 25 affluent nations. By 2021, Canada was the [eighth most expensive place for childcare](#) among 39 OECD nations, averaging 18% of net earnings for a two-earner couple both working full-time.
2. The federal Budget 2021 announced a historic \$30 billion over the next five years to improve the quantity and quality of regulated early learning and childcare while reducing costs for parents to an average \$10 a day. By April 2022, all provinces and territories had signed [bilateral agreements](#).
3. Among all children aged 0-5, half ([52% in 2020](#)) received some care by someone other than a parent (in Quebec it was 75%). [Only a quarter](#) were cared for in a regulated setting.
4. At last count [96% of early childhood educators \(ECE\) and paid home childcare providers were women](#) (Census 2016.) Half of such workers were paid [less than \\$20 per hour](#). One-third of licensed child care workers have [no health benefits](#).
5. While many of the new agreements mention the need to recruit and retain qualified workers, and most specify the need to improve pay with a higher wage floor or grid, Ontario's new ["floor" of \\$19](#) means a certified early childhood educator can be paid the same or even less than a [pet groomer](#). Other provinces have [improved wages](#) significantly.
6. Ontario Ministry data on full-time workers in licensed care facilities, shows a significant share of childcare workers [made less than \\$17.50 an hour](#) in 2022. Ontario's minimum wage is [\\$15.50](#).
7. The relationship between the earnings of early childhood educators and poverty has been [charted by the Atkinson Centre](#). Only in Quebec and Alberta are you able to do this work without risking poverty.
8. The new federal-provincial-territorial agreements aim to add [250,000 new regulated child care spaces](#) across the country by March 2026. This will require roughly [40,000 more early child education workers](#). But in recent years we've actually had periods of falling ECE numbers and [many of these workers leave after 3 years](#). It's critical that these jobs become an attractive career option with better training, pay and working conditions.
9. Job vacancies for early childhood educators and assistants are the fourth biggest labour shortage (after nurses, retail workers and truck drivers). Openings soared by 49% from [third quarter 2021 to third quarter 2022](#).
10. The federal plan seeks to use new money to expand non-profit care. However, a lobbying push is underway to use public funds to [increase the private for-profit share](#) of the market. Private equity capital is now [purchasing individual owner-operators](#) and expanding brand-name big-box chains. This mirrors a trend throughout the Care Economy, in long-term care, home care, acute care, and primary care. [Profitization](#) could undo the intent of these agreements.

* Measured as a combination of people employed in the health and social assistance plus education industry sectors.