Report summary

Structural characteristics of quality child care services

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Official title of the full report: Structural characteristics of quality in the provision of child care services

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Why this study

A high quality child care setting may enhance the development of children. Many factors determine the quality of a child care setting, so understanding these factors is important for:

- parents

- caregivers, and

- policy makers

To help identify them, this study examines:
- the characteristics of a quality child care setting

- the distribution of these characteristics within different types of child care settings (for example, centre-based, licensed home-based, and unlicensed home-based childcare facilities), and

- the distribution of child care quality in Canada

The study uses data from the 2021 version of the Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child care in Canada (CSPCCS).

What we did

This study used data from the CSPCCS. This is a pilot survey conducted by Statistics Canada, in partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada. It collected information from:

- centre-based child care providers as well as licensed, and

unlicensed home-based child care providers in January 2021

What we found

The key findings of the study are:

Table 1. Characteristics of child care facilities

Child care setting	Sample	Mean child to staff ratio	Hourly rate of pay with early childhood education training	Hourly rates of pay with no early childhood education training
Centre-based	9,502	5.1:1	$20.10	$16.80

	12,326	5.8:1	$14.80*	$16.00*
Licensed home-based	12,326	5.8:1	$14.80*	$16.00*
Unlicensed home based	21,252	4.6:1	$13.90*	$13.50*

* these are rates of pay for providers/owners.

Table 2. Members of staff ECE training

Average Child care setting	No ECE training	<1 year training	1 – 3 years diploma
Centre-based	23%	15%	53%
Licensed home-based (Owners)	13%	48%	45%
Unlicensed home based (Owners)	41%	36%	24%

Key findings

Characteristics of non profit centers:

- give higher rates of pay to directors and to ECE trained and untrained staff

- enrolled more children

- hired more staff

- charged lower daily fees

- more likely to enroll children with special needs

- more likely to be run from schools

- derive more funds from operating grants

Some other key findings:

- centres and homes with lower child-to-staff ratios (i.e., higher structural quality) enrolled fewer children, charged higher fees and hired more full- and part-time employees

- centres with more than 50% staff with ECE training had higher child-to-staff ratios and charged lower daily fees

- licensed and unlicensed home-based settings with an ECE trained member enroll more children than others without any ECE training

- centres paying higher rates to ECE trained staff were more likely to be non-profit

- unlicensed home-based settings with higher salaries to providers had higher child-to-staff ratios

centres and home-based settings offering staff higher payments enrolled more children

What it means

This study contributes to knowledge about the characteristics of high quality child care. It examines:

- educational qualifications of workers

- staff-to-child ratios

- staff wages, and

- auspice (for example, for-profit/not-for-profit)

Quality child care involves having positive interactions between children and child care providers. It also requires meeting the developmental needs of children. Structural features of child care, such as staff qualifications, child-to-staff ratios, pay, and tenure are associated with quality child care.

This study contributes to knowledge about factors associated with high quality child care. Quality is an important feature of child care often associated with positive child development. Having analytical data at a national level will help monitor aspects of structural quality in the child care service sector.

Contact us

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