



ONTARIO'S ECE WORKFORCE IN CONTEXT: CHALLENGES, GAPS, AND LESSONS FROM ACROSS CANADA

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A photograph of two young children playing on a tire obstacle course in a park. In the foreground, a child in a purple shirt and yellow shorts walks barefoot on a green tire. In the background, another child in a purple shirt and dark shorts stands on a stack of tires. The scene is bathed in warm sunlight, with lens flare visible.

Data Walk

Ontario's CWELCC Targets

Child Care Fees

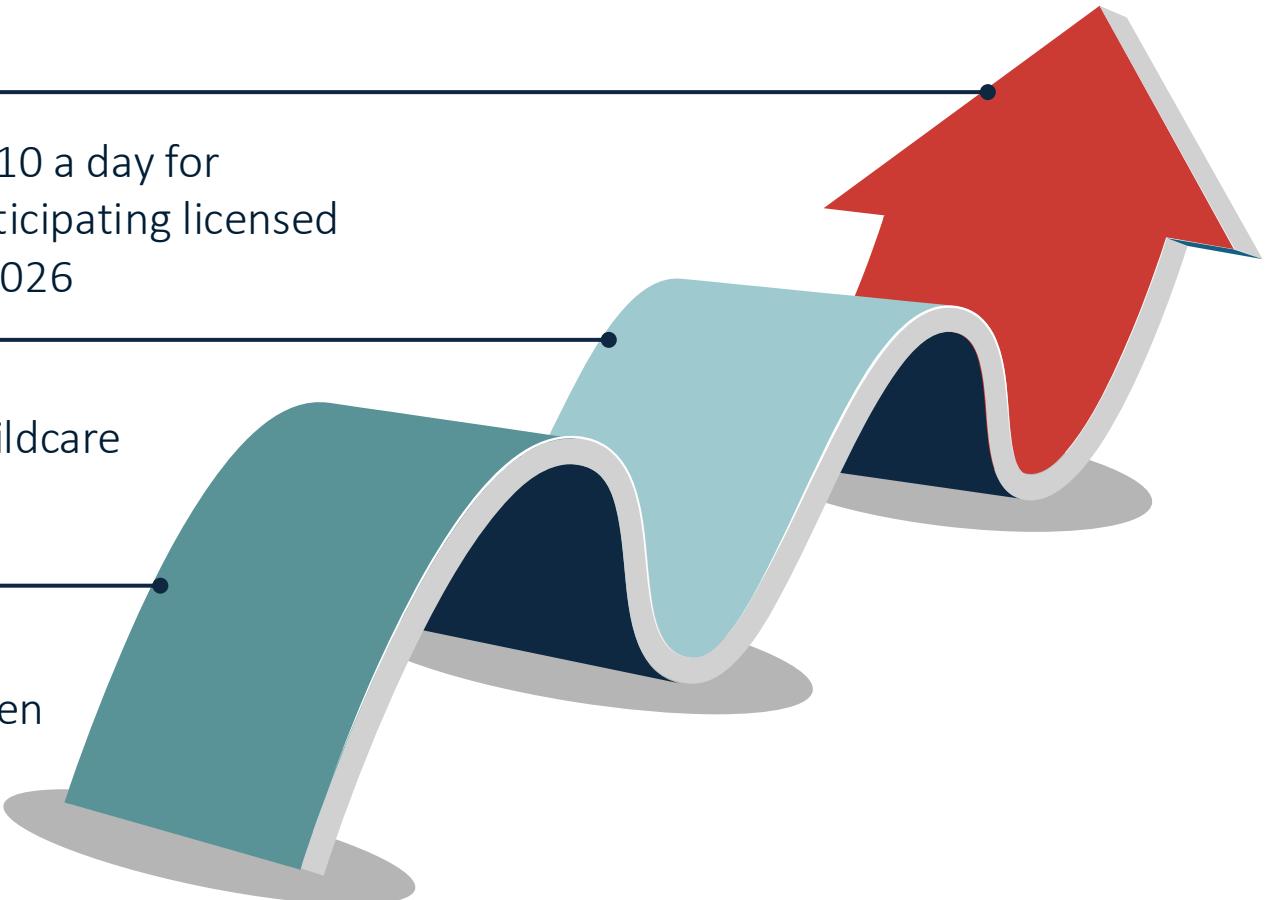
Reduce fees to an average of \$10 a day for eligible children under 6 in participating licensed childcare programs by March 2026

New Spaces

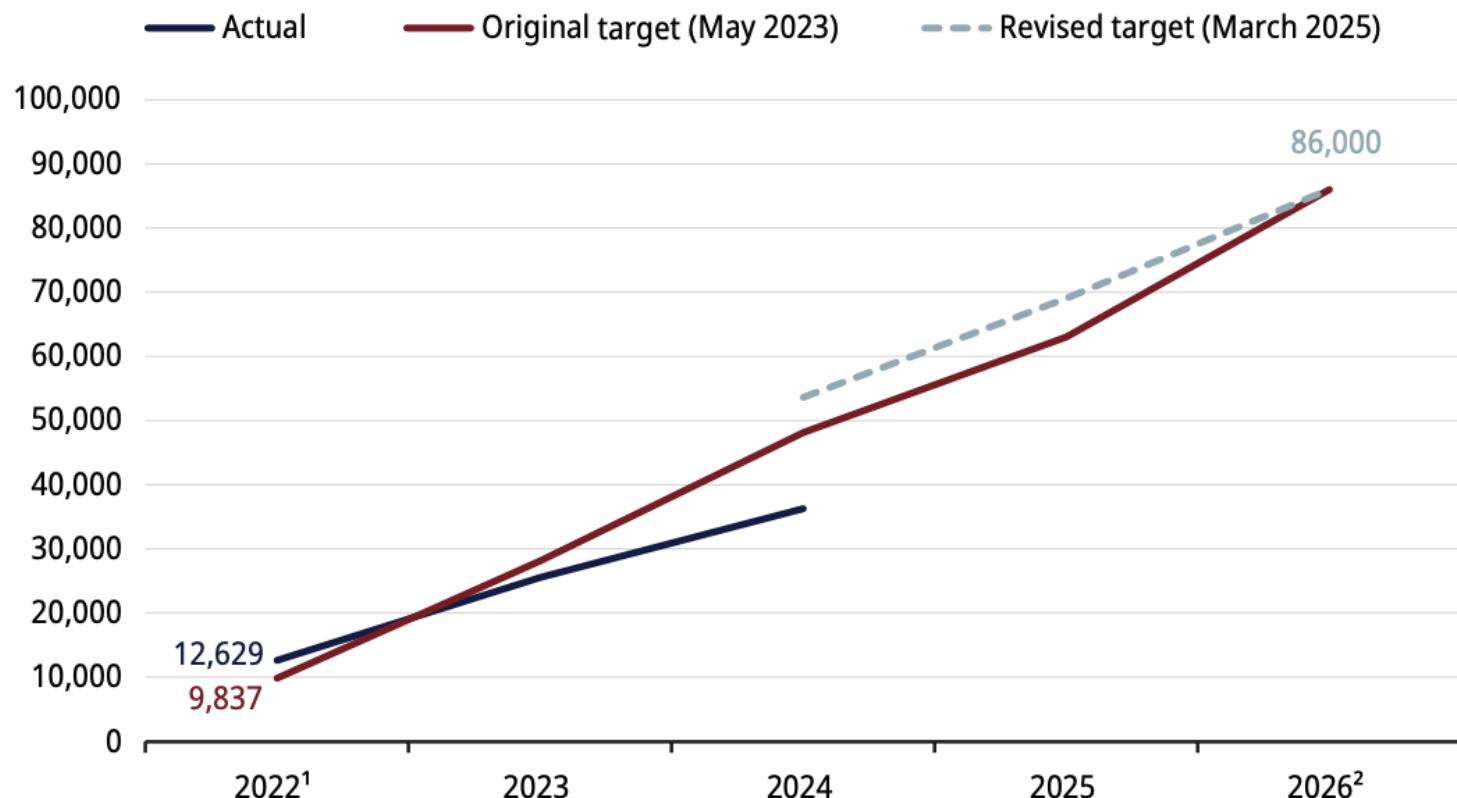
Create 86,000 new licensed childcare spaces by the end of 2026

Workforce

Increase the percentage of qualified staff to 60% for children aged 0 to 5 by March 2026

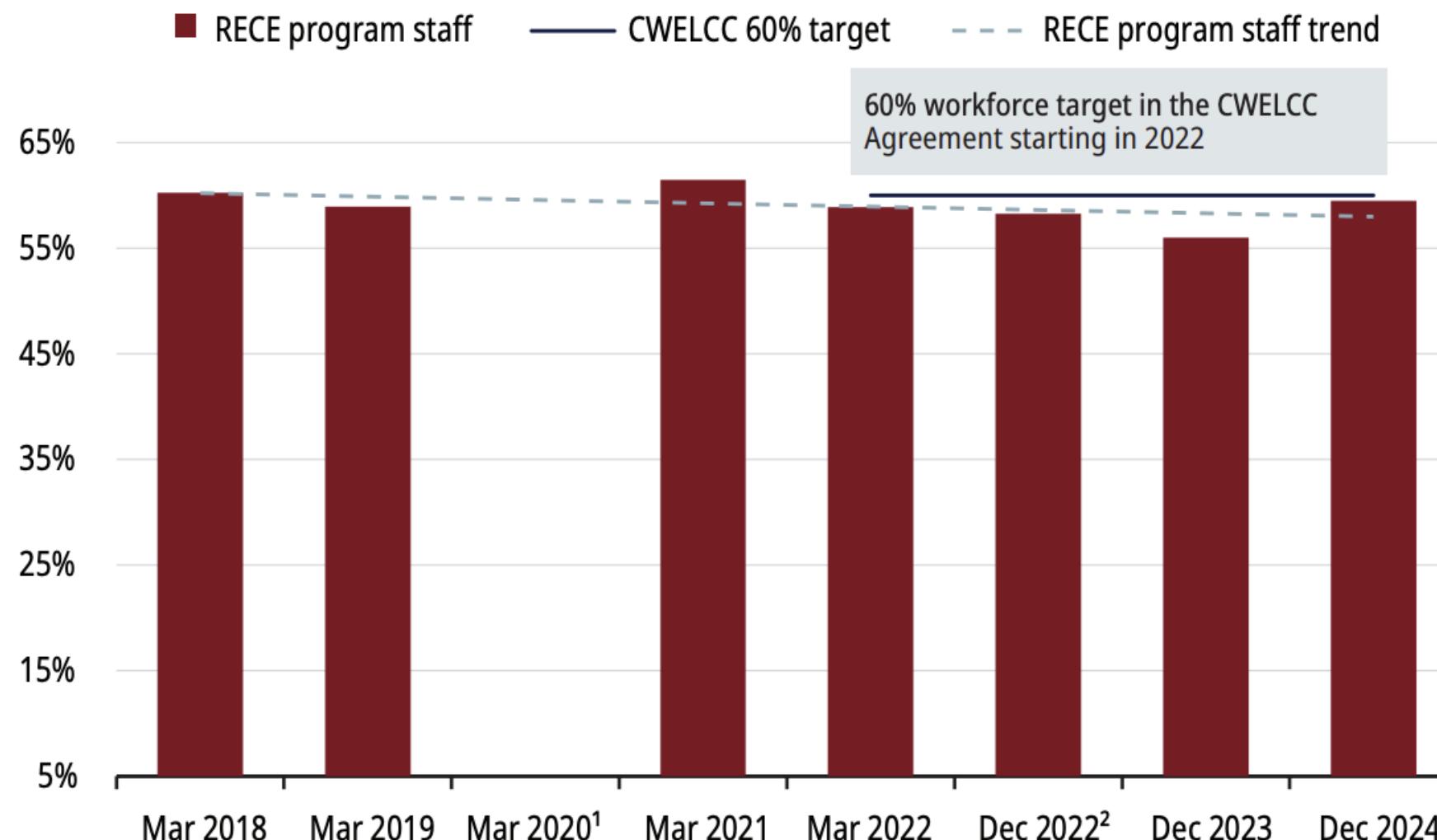


New CWELCC Spaces Added and Targets



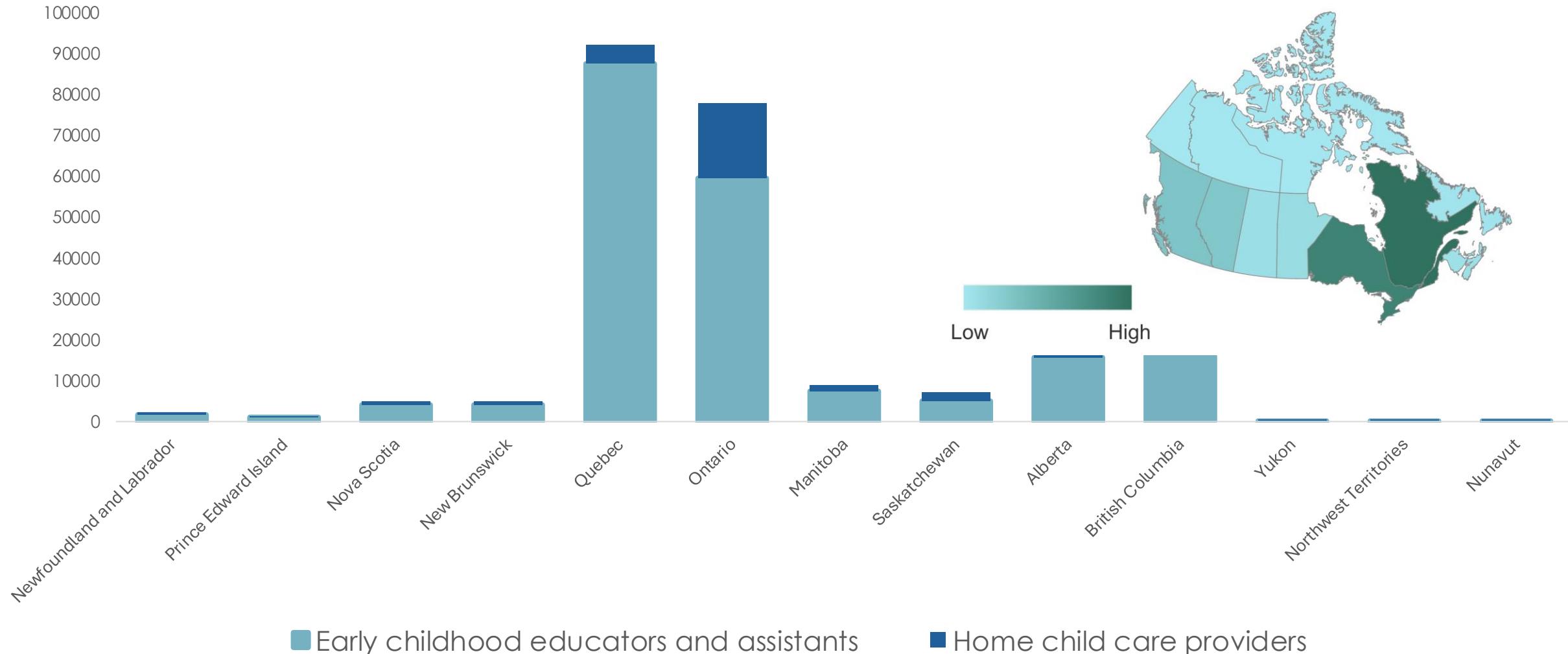
1. The CWECC Agreement uses March 2019 as the baseline for space creation (289,111 spaces), but the CWECC program started in April 2022. The number of spaces shown for 2022 includes those created between March 2019 and December 2022.
2. The Ministry held back 8,500 new spaces when communicating the original targets to SSMs. These spaces are reflected in the 2026 total as Ontario committed to creating 86,000 net new spaces by December 2026.

Percentage of Full-time ECE Program Staff (2018-2024)



1. March 2020 data is not available as the operator survey was not conducted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The Ministry switched to begin collecting data from operators as of December.

Number of People Employed in the Child Care Sector in Canada



Ontario By the Numbers

>75,000

are employed in the early education workforce in Ontario, including home providers



Early childhood educators



All occupations

Full-time workers

77%

81%

Part-time workers

23%

19%

Work all year

36%

63%

Work part of year

64%

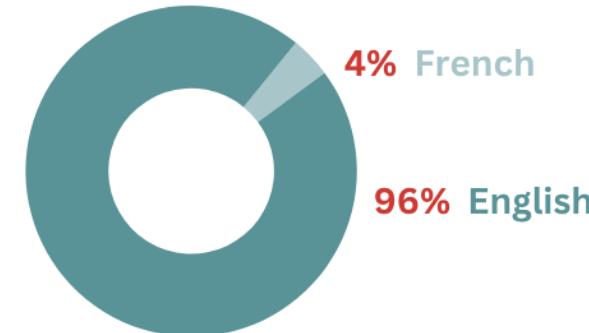
37%

Average weeks worked by those working part of the year

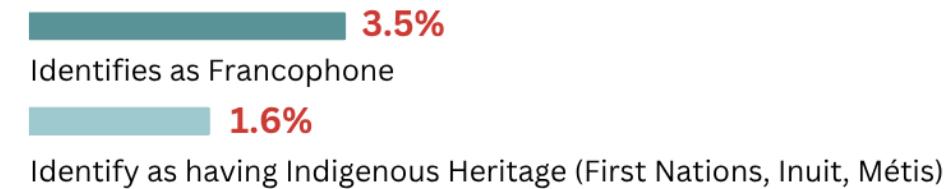
37

43

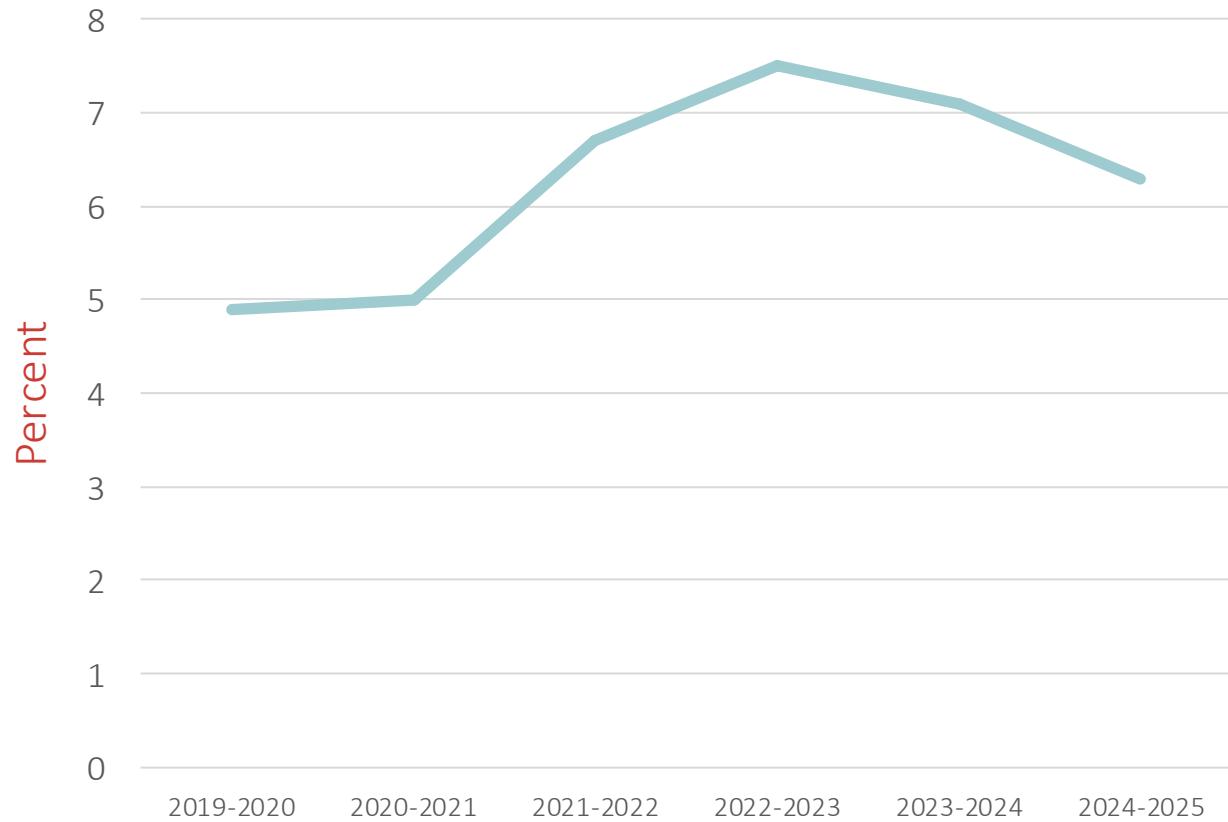
Membership by Language Preference



Membership by Self-Identification



Percent of CECE Members Working in LCC That Left the Sector by Year (Ontario)

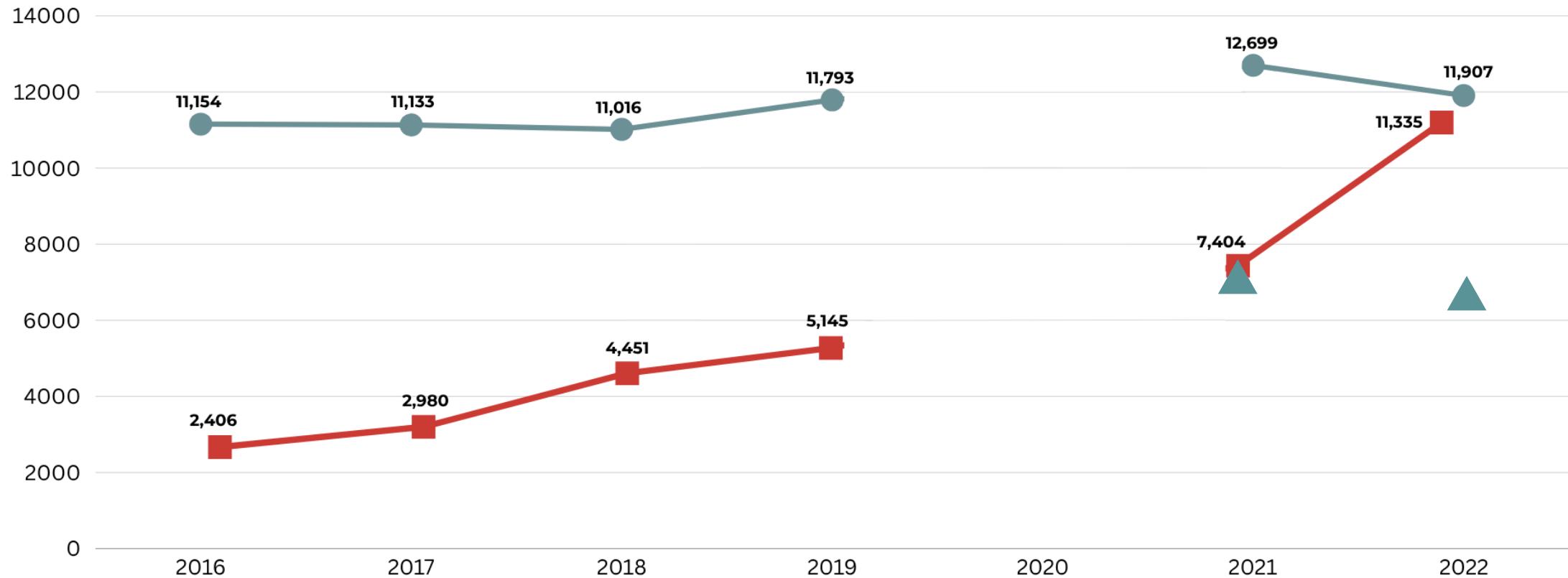


Source: The College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario



Mind the Gap: ELCC Graduates vs. Job Vacancies

● Number of graduations and certifications from ELCC programs, Canada, 2016-2022 ■ Average number of job vacancies for ECEAs, Canada, 2016-2023



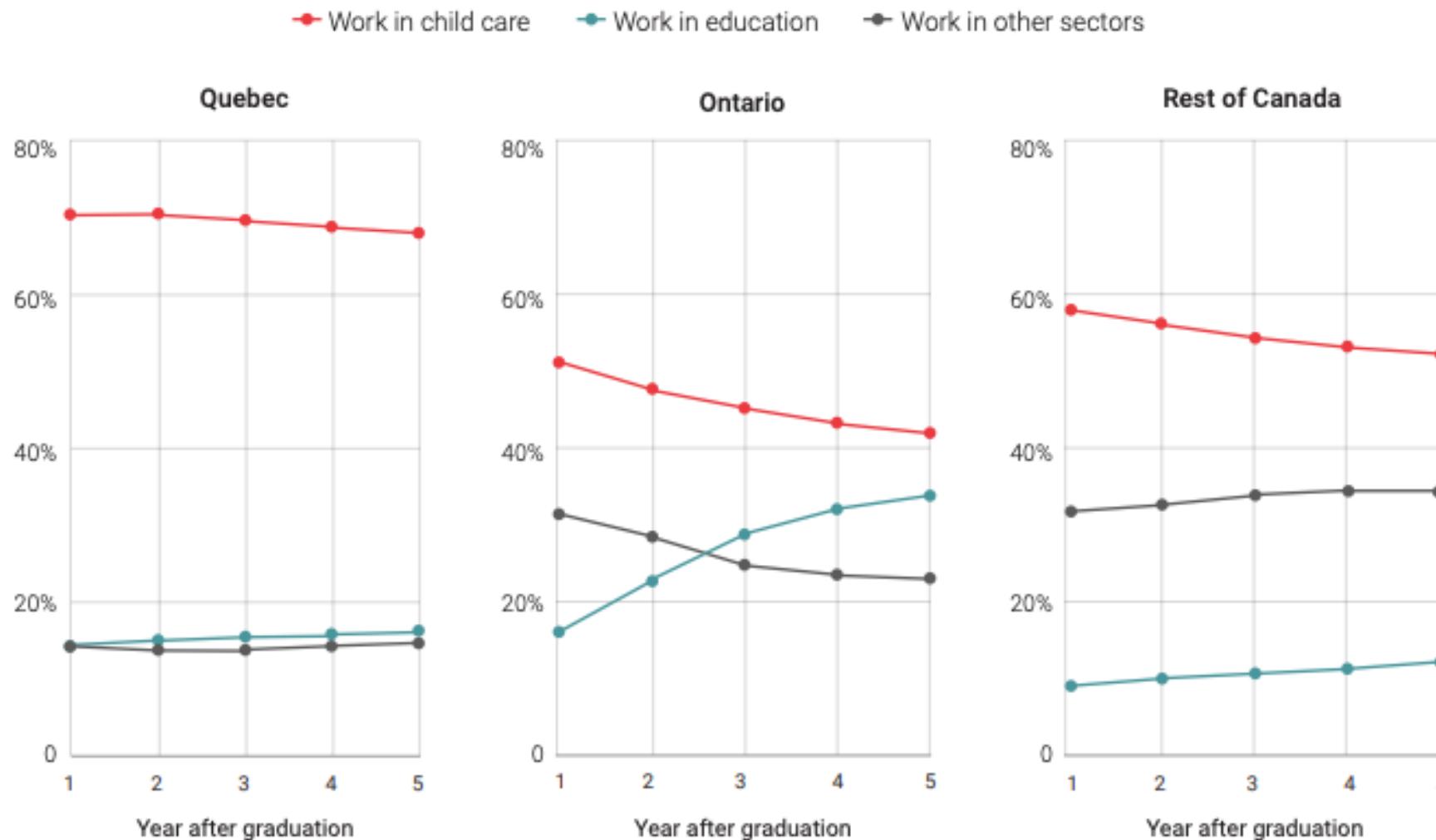
Sources: JVWS, 2016-2023; PSIS and RAIS, 2016-2022

Note: Data for 2020 unavailable due to the COVID-19 pandemic

▲ Estimate based on Dhuey et al., 2023

Adapted from Statistics Canada

Career Trajectories of College ECE Graduates by Years Following Graduation



Are certain sociodemographic, employment characteristics more or less likely to remain in ELCC occupations than their counterparts?



More likely to stay

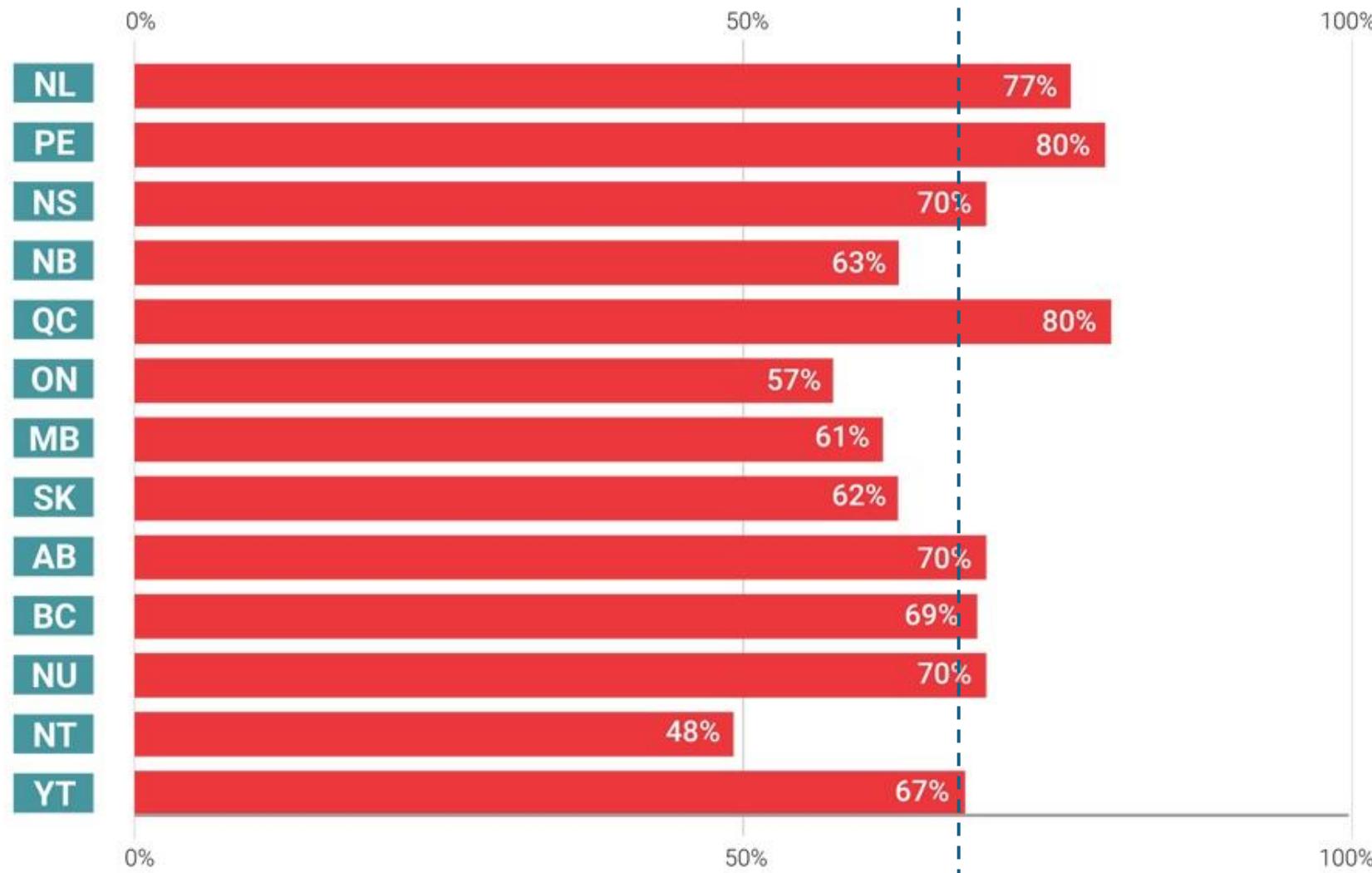
- Older age
- Resident of Quebec (vs. Ontario)
- South Asian or Filipino (vs. non-visible minority)
- Employment income (2010) \$20,000-\$39,999 (vs. <\$20,000)



More likely to leave

- Men (vs. women)
- Non-permanent resident (vs. non-immigrant)
- Resident of Alberta (vs. Ontario)
- University degree (vs. high school or less)
- Part-time staff (vs. full-time)

Annual ECE Wages as Percent of Teacher Wages



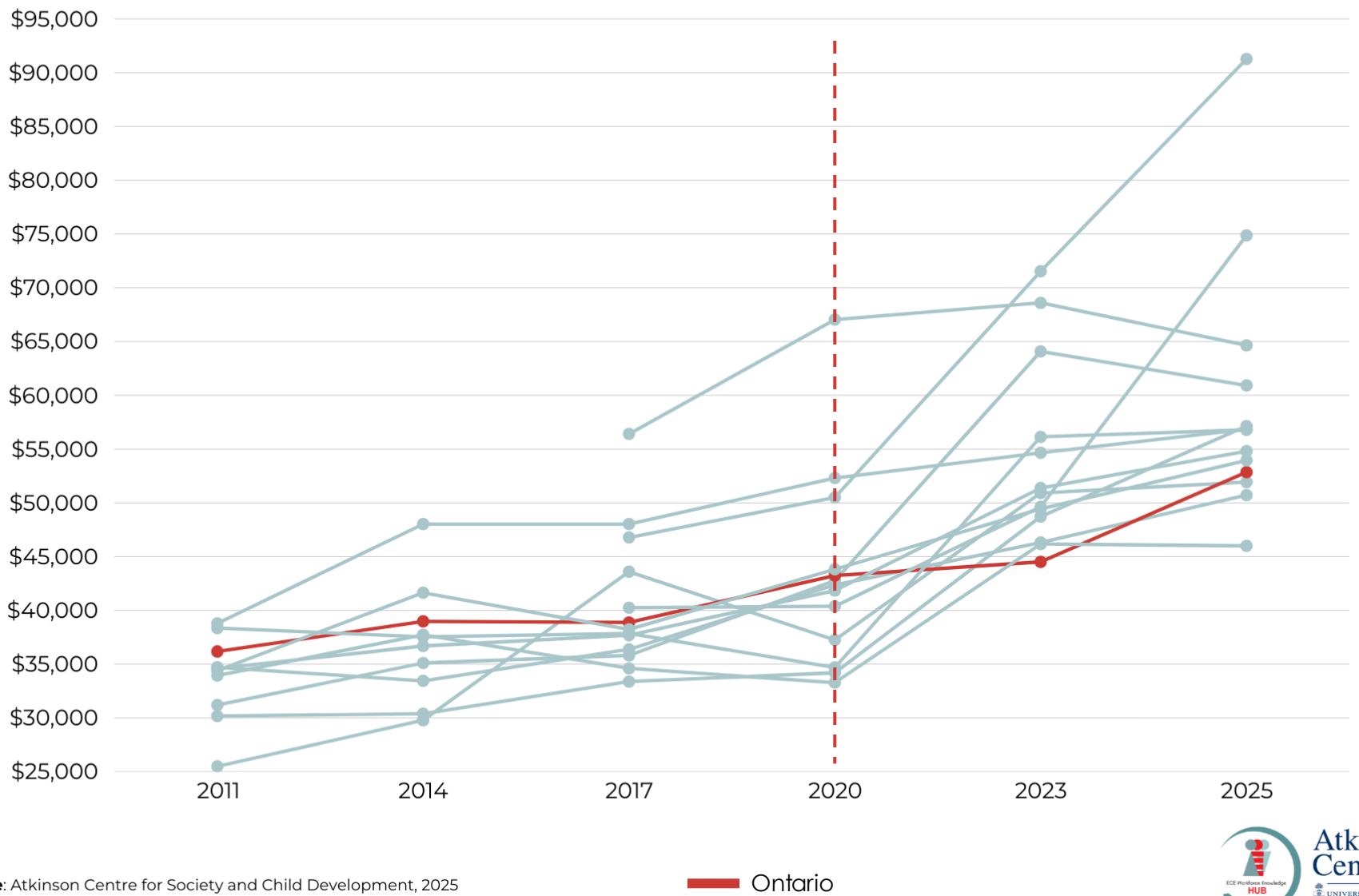
^a ECE wages based on government-supported compensation for an FTE staff with legislated credentials and five years of experience.

^b Teacher wages are based on the latest collective agreement for staff at Level 5, with 5 years of experience.

Source: Akbari, E., McCuaig, K., & Mehta, S. (2024). *The Early Childhood Education Report 2023*. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto.

ECE Wages Over Time

2011 - 2025

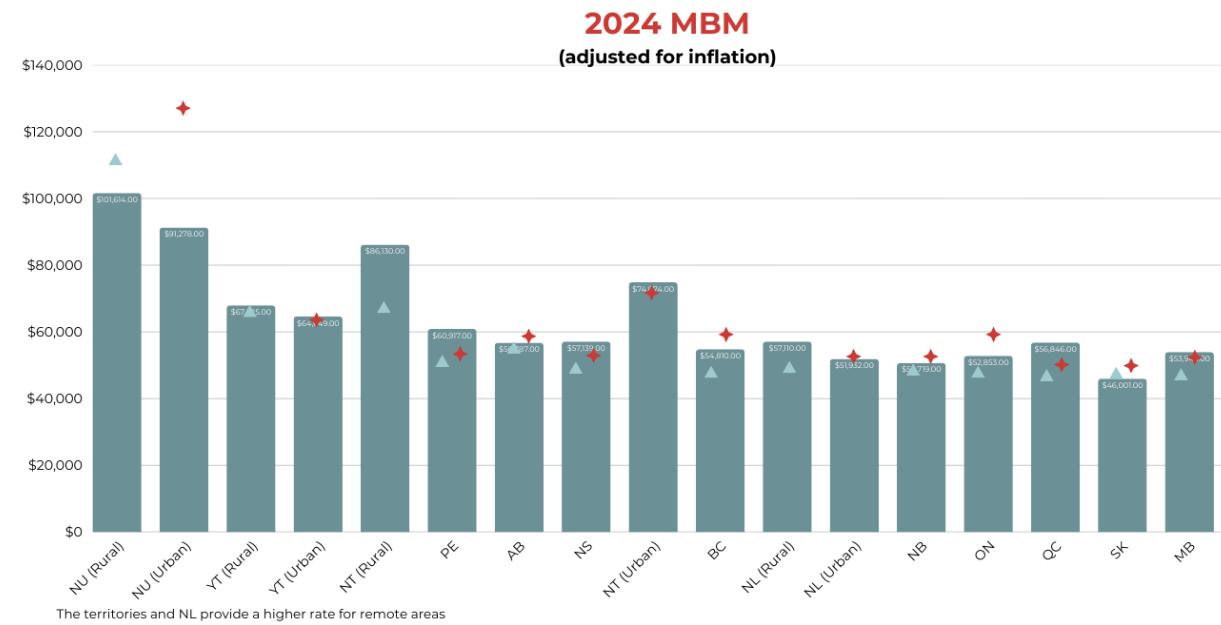
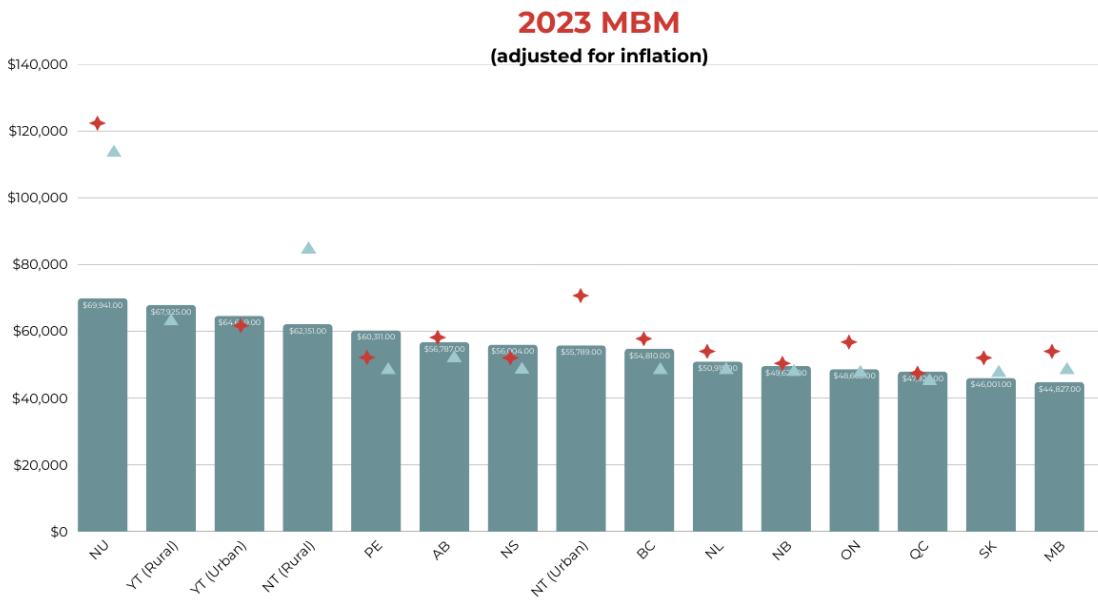


Source: Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development, 2025

— Ontario

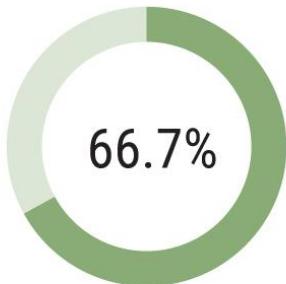


Earnings (■) of ECEs across Canada compared to poverty thresholds in urban (♦) and rural (▲) regions

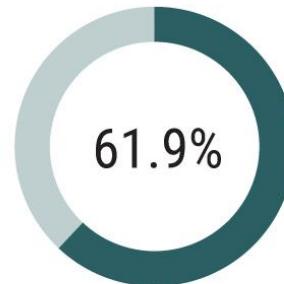




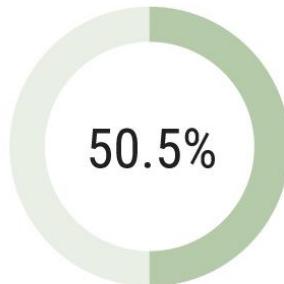
RECEs



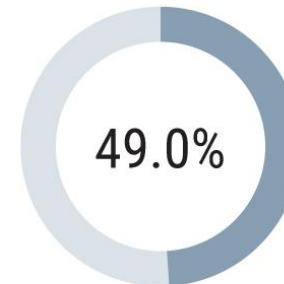
Central East



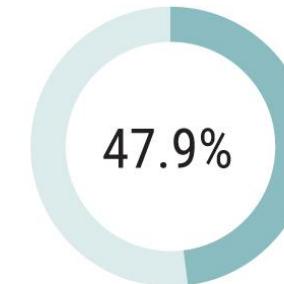
Central West



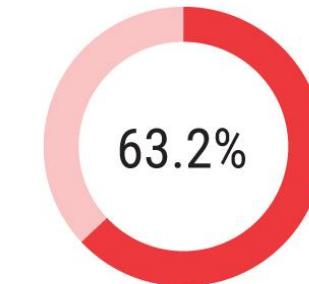
East



North



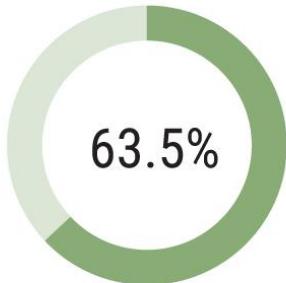
West



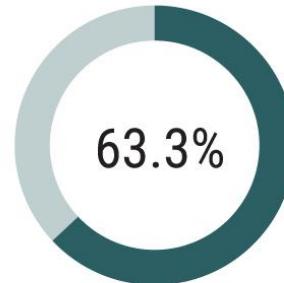
Lakeshore West



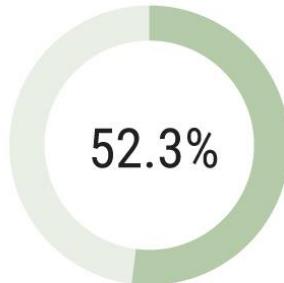
Non-RECEs



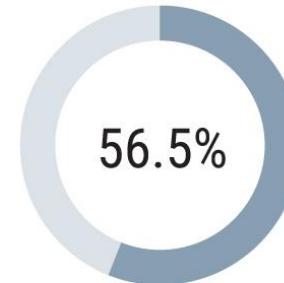
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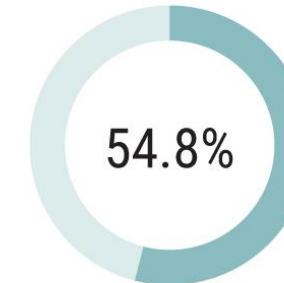
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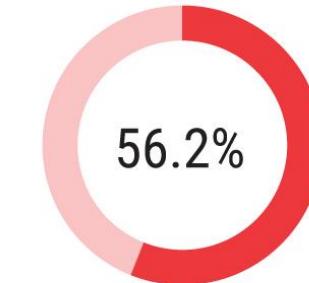
East



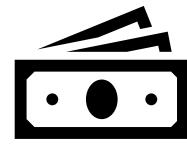
North



West



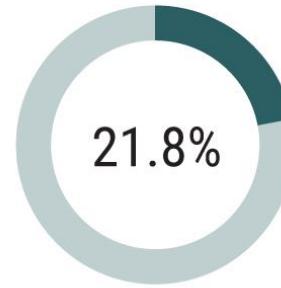
Lakeshore West



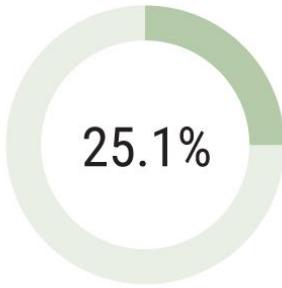
RECEs



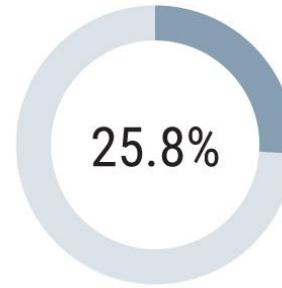
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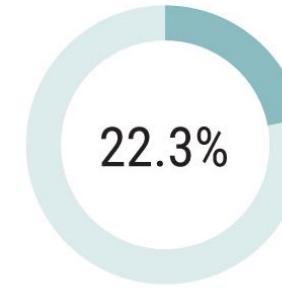
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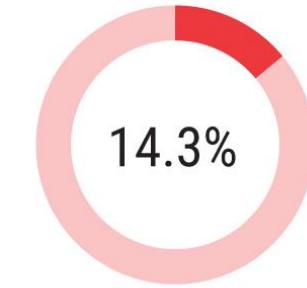
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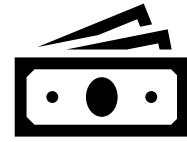
North



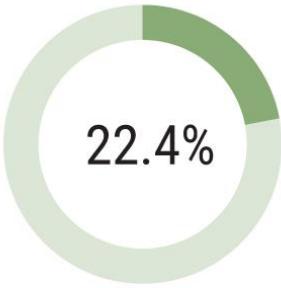
West



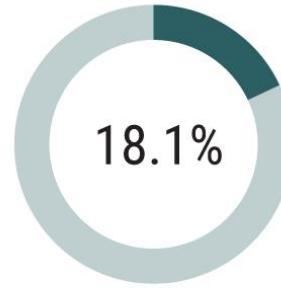
Lakeshore West



Non-RECEs



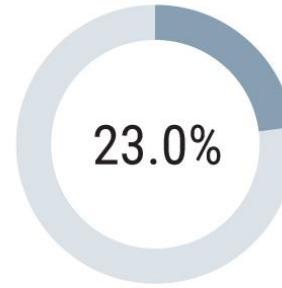
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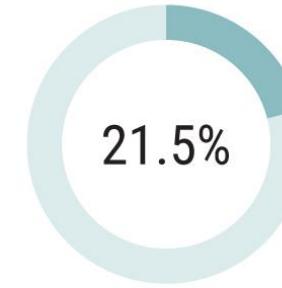
Central West



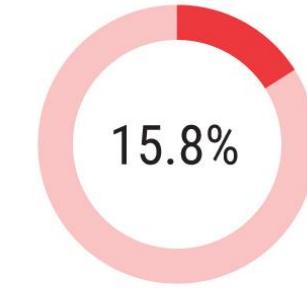
East



North



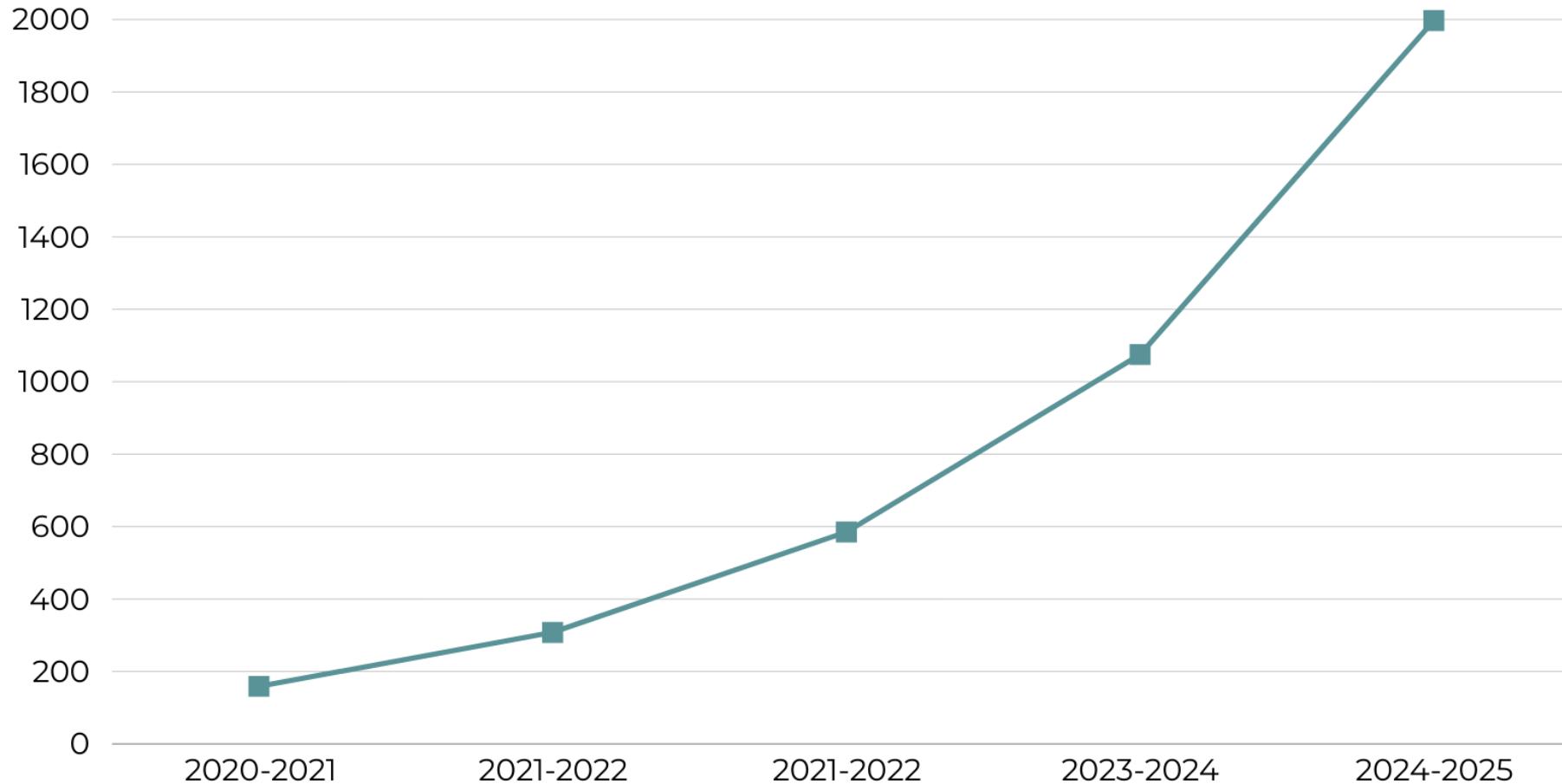
West



Lakeshore West

Director's Approval Granted Annually from 2020-2024

building blocks
for
child care



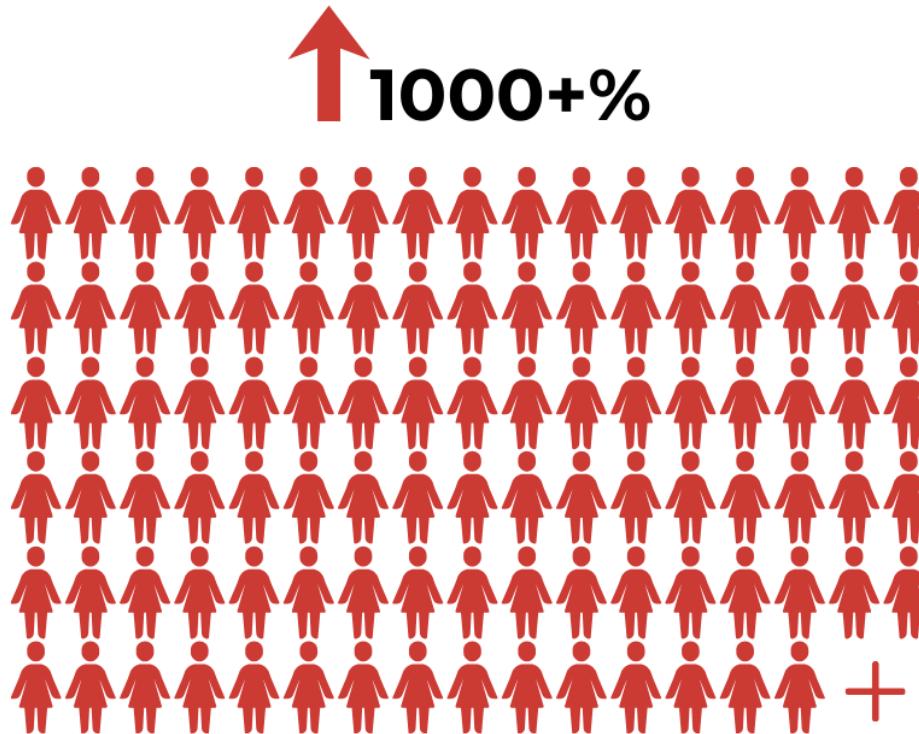
Source: Lee, M., Uthayakumaran, A., & Varmuza, P. (draft). Draft Report: Analysis of Director Approvals in Ontario's Licensed Child Care System (2020-21 to 2024-25) Based on FOI Data from the Ministry of Education. Building Blocks for Child Care.

Data obtained through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Ministry of Education on the use of Director Approvals (DAs) under O. Reg. 137/15, s. 54(1), item 2 of Ontario's Child Care and Early Years Act between 2020 and 2025 (as of May 30).



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RECE Membership Growth vs Director's Approval Explosion



Source: Lee, M., Uthayakumaran, A., & Varmuza, P. (draft). Draft Report: Analysis of Director Approvals in Ontario's Licensed Child Care System (2020-21 to 2024-25) Based on FOI Data from the Ministry of Education. Building Blocks for Child Care.

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The Shift from RECEs to Director's Approvals



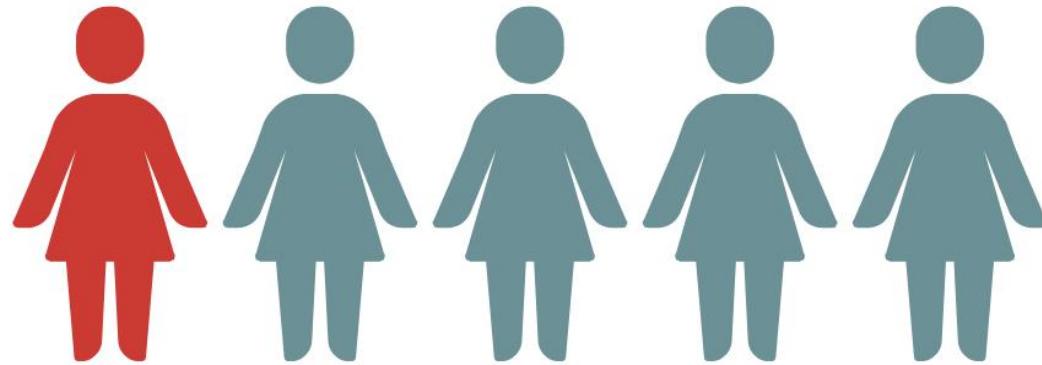
**By 2024-25, there was 1 DA for every 11 RECEs (8.83%),
up from 3.06% in 2022-23.**

Source: Lee, M., Uthayakumaran, A., & Varmuza, P. (draft). Draft Report: Analysis of Director Approvals in Ontario's Licensed Child Care System (2020-21 to 2024-25) Based on FOI Data from the Ministry of Education. Building Blocks for Child Care.



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The Shift from RECEs to Director's Approvals

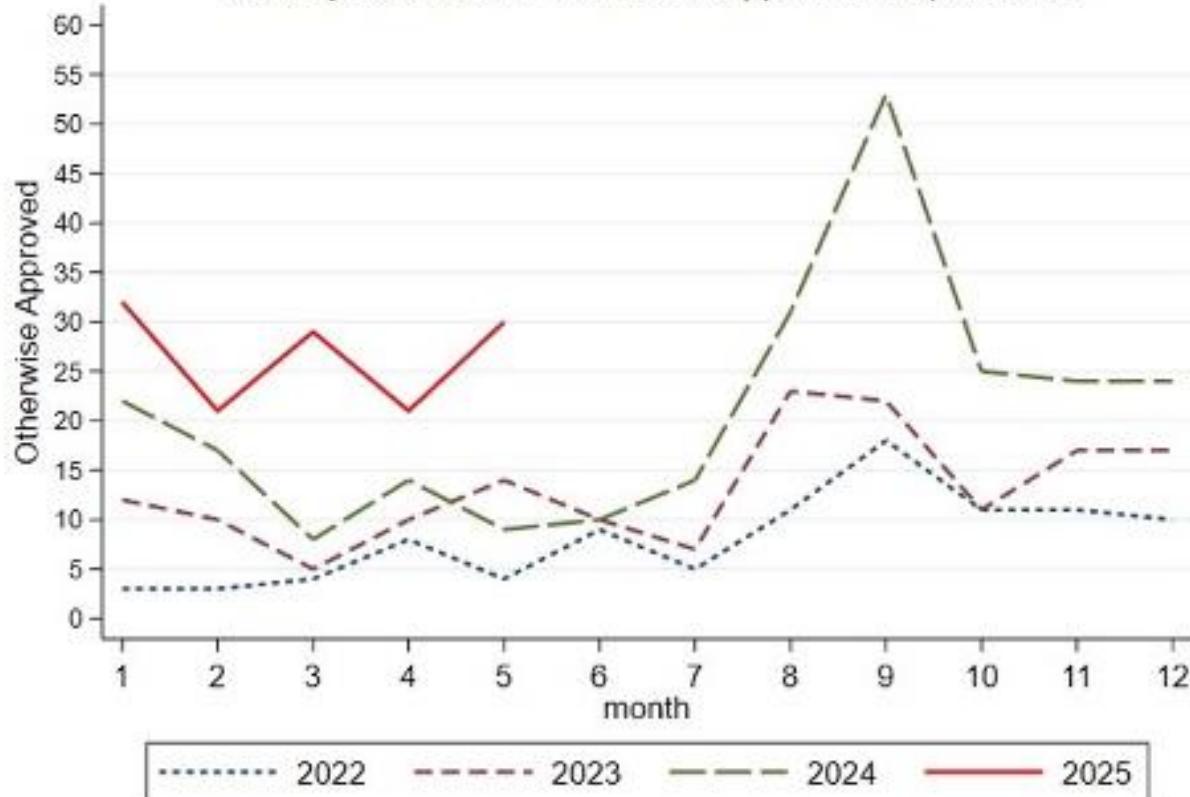


**By 2024-25, nearly 1 in 5 supervisors (21.1%)
held a DA rather than an RECE qualification**

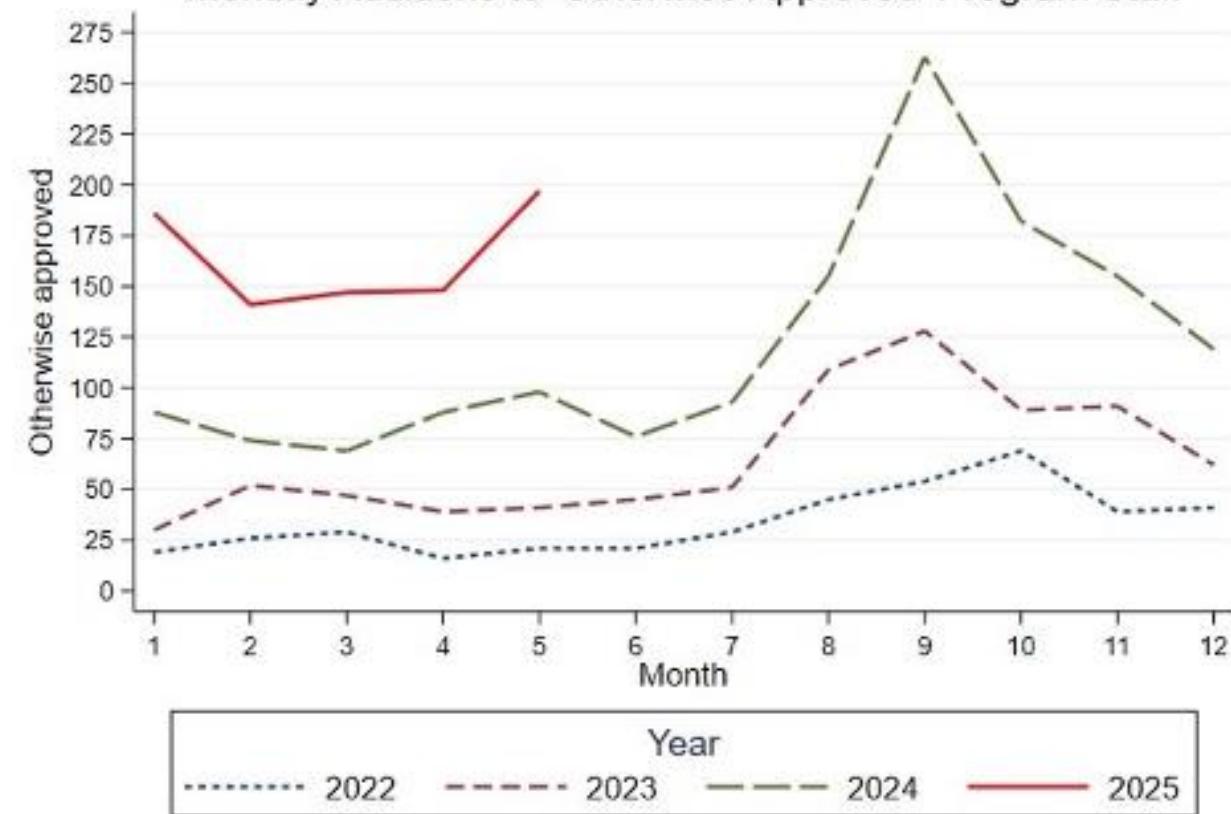
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Monthly Additions to 'Otherwise Approved' Supervisors



Monthly Additions to 'Otherwise Approved' Program Staff



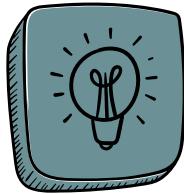
AUSPICE

Across Ontario, the majority of DAs are issued for not-for-profit child care centres (63%). For-profit child care centres account for 36% and First Nations child care centres less than 1%. However, this pattern varies sharply by region.



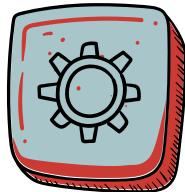
**Central
East**

For-profits received nearly twice as many DAs (328) as not-for-profit (175)



**Central
North**

For-profits had over a 100 more DAs than not-for-profit (448 vs 330)



**Central
West**

For-profits have 69 more DAs than not-for-profits (169 vs 100)



**East, North,
Southwest,
West**

The East (931 vs 166), North (503 vs 163), Southwest (449 vs 94), and West (401 vs 257) regions all show the expected trend, where not-for-profits account for the majority of DAs

The data demonstrate two distinct but related dynamics: large urban regions account for most DAs, while smaller and northern regions appear more dependent on DAs relative to their size. This suggests that Ontario's child care workforce crisis is both widespread and unevenly experienced

North and North-East Region represents only 6% of RECEs but have DA totals comparable to much larger regions, suggesting acute recruitment challenges in smaller labour markets.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Those working under DAs are not regulated under the CECE and therefore not held to professional standards.



The absence of regulatory oversight presents system-level risks to:

- Child safety
- Program quality
- Professional accountability and public trust

DAs are eroding the integrity of Ontario's professional early learning and child care framework.

TRANSPARENCY

Need for regulatory reform and strengthened accountability mechanisms to protect children, families, and the profession.

Misconduct may occur without effective mechanisms for investigation or enforcement



Montessori programs have also dramatically increased since 2020. Montessori educator training does not meet CECE standards

Individuals trained in Montessori education may work in early learning settings through DAs. However, the growing reliance on DAs has created a parallel workforce system with limited oversight and no formal mechanisms for accountability or mobility across settings.



The report highlights the need for policy reform and regulatory standards for those in positions that legislatively require an RECE, even if they are under DA

The report can also support SSMs for targeted professional learning in programs with high DAs. As wage investments continued to be largely ignored by the province, local planning can support capacity building during such time of acute shortages



Lessons from PEI

Before and After Implementation of Wage Grid and Compensation Package

Key Highlights from their recent survey and findings



Job Satisfaction: Director satisfaction increased by 19%, while staff satisfaction increased by 44%.



Benefits from Wage Increases: In 2019, 50% of individuals left the sector seeking better wages. In 2024, that number dropped to just 2%.



Recruitment Improvements: 88% of directors believe that recruitment and retention in the sector has improved since 2019.



By the Numbers



75



330



150



4,200

NOTE: All positions are full time 35 hrs a week 10 months a year

Leeds
Grenville
175 YEARS



T H A N K Y O U



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