



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

Dr. Emis Akbari

Professor & Program Coordinator
School of Early Childhood | George Brown College

Executive Director | Atkinson Centre
Adjunct Professor | Department of Applied Psychology and Human
Development

OISE | University of Toronto



Early childhood educators lay the foundation for all future learning—yet they remain among the most undervalued and underpaid professionals in our education system

Ontario's CWELCC Targets

Child Care Fees

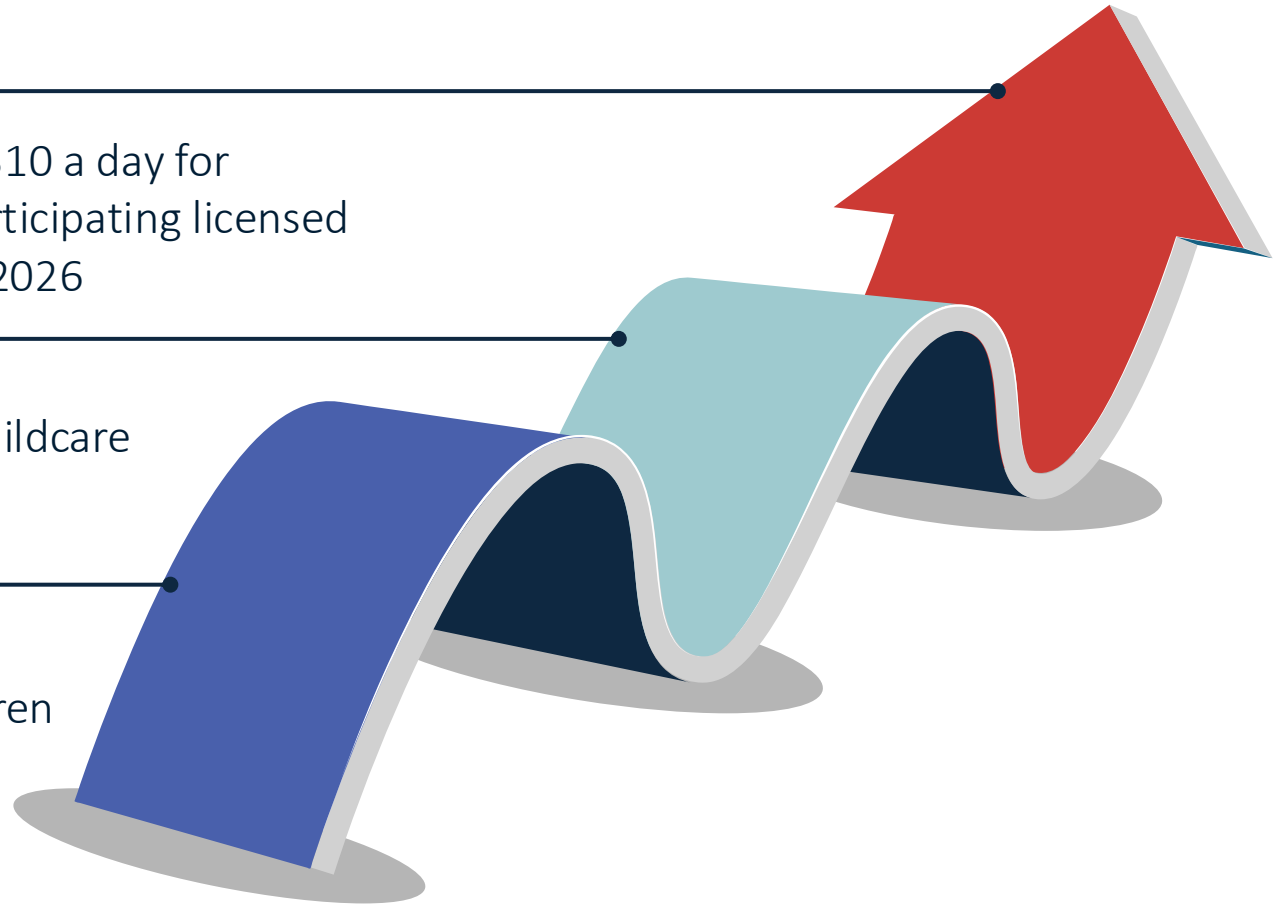
Reduce fees to an average of \$10 a day for eligible children under 6 in participating licensed childcare programs by March 2026

New Spaces

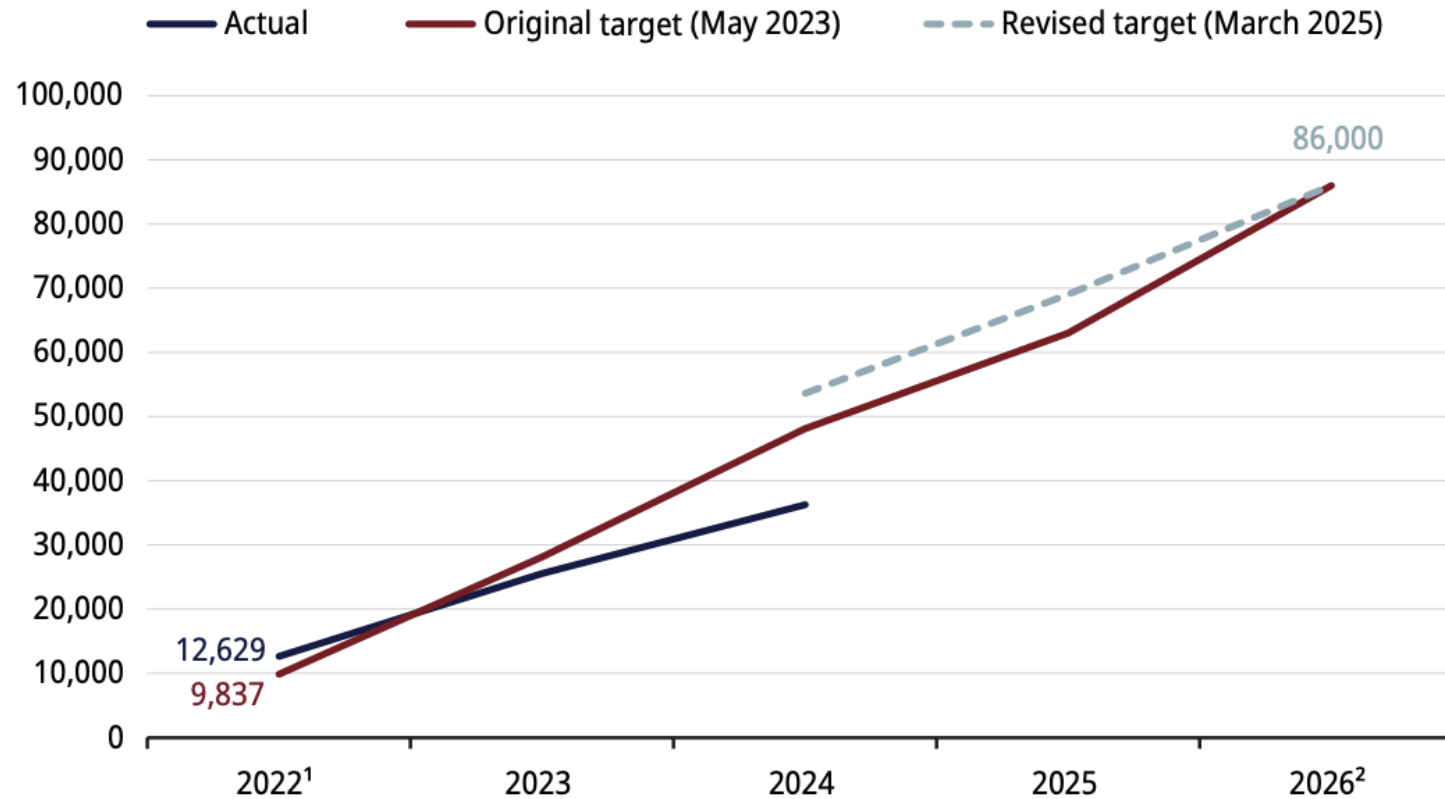
Create 86,000 new licensed childcare spaces by the end of 2026

Workforce

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

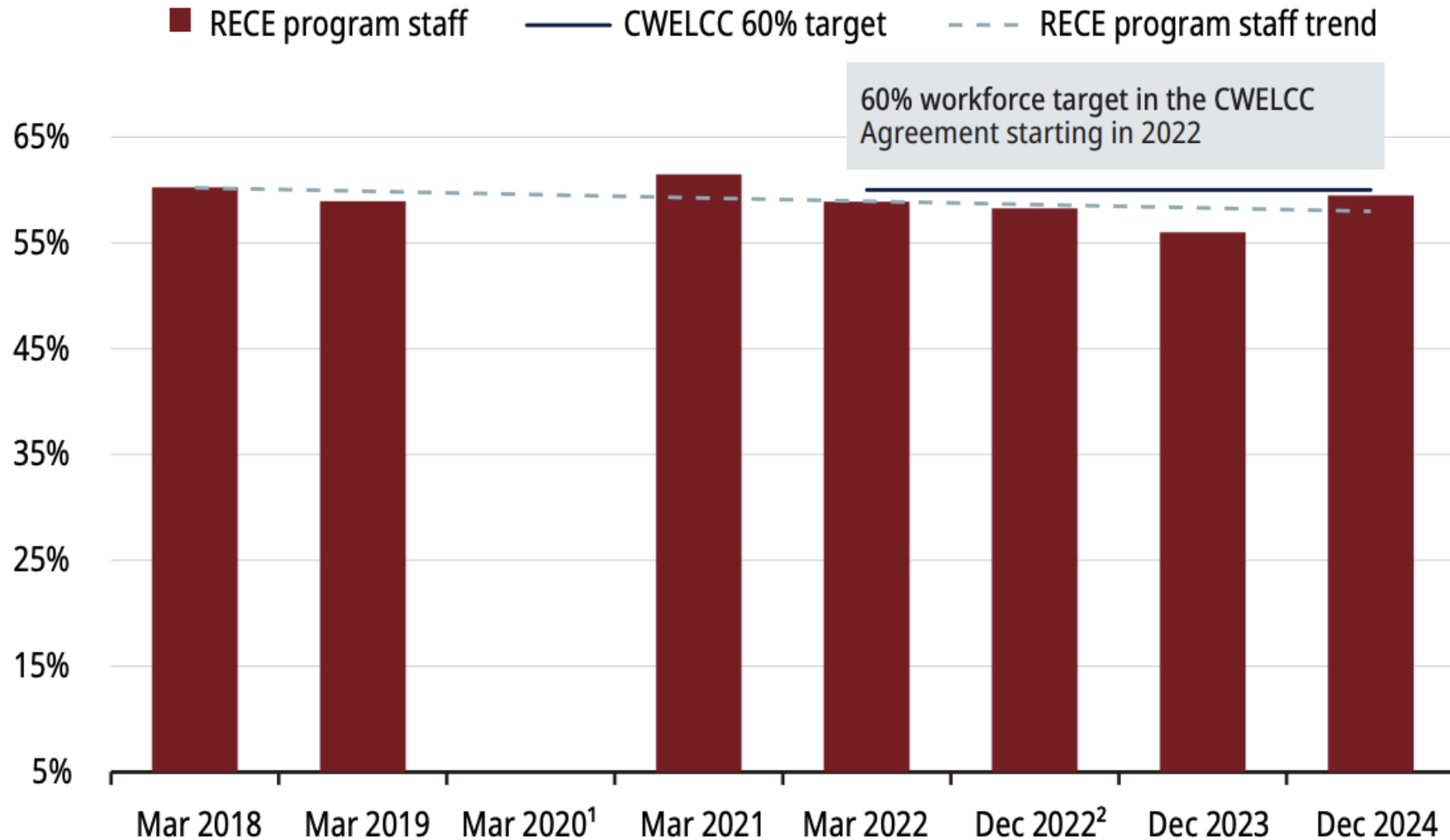


New CWELCC Spaces Added and Targets



1. The CWELCC Agreement uses March 2019 as the baseline for space creation (289,111 spaces), but the CWELCC 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.

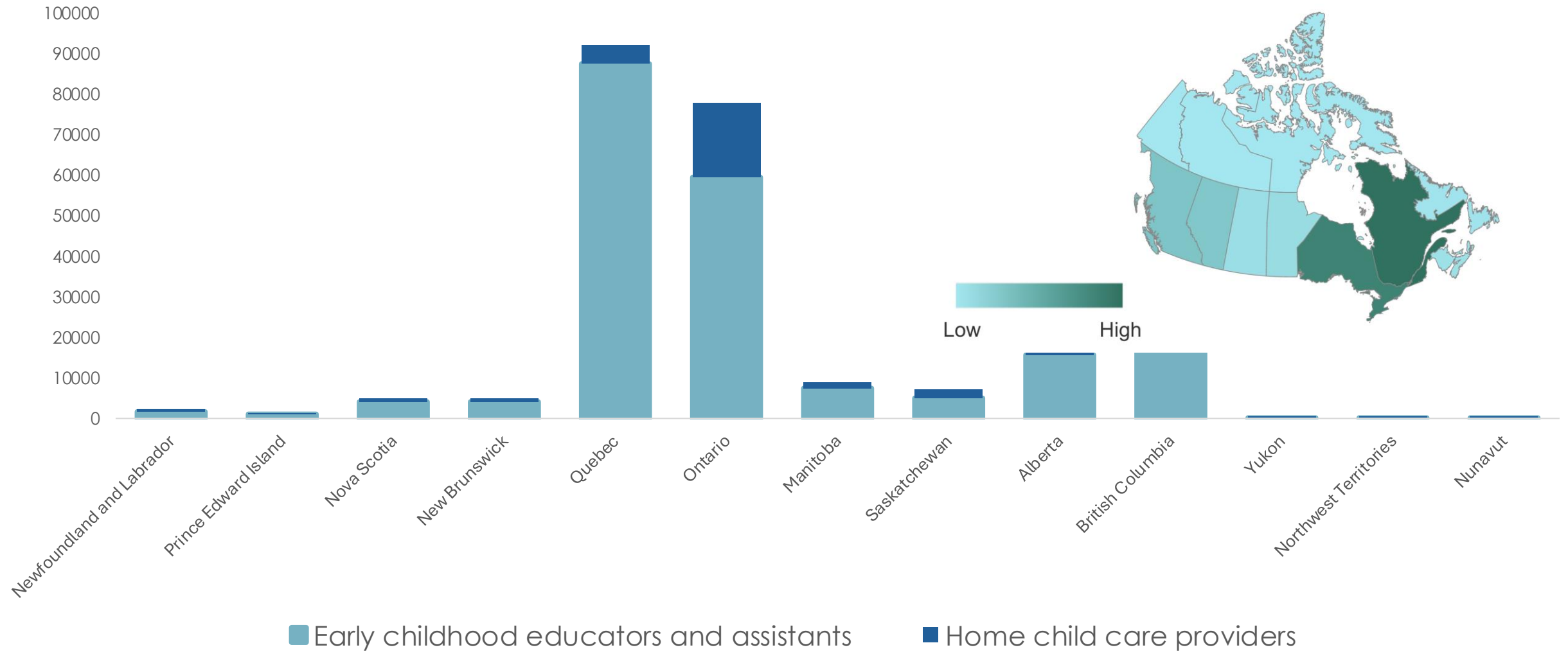
Percentage of Full-time ECE Program Staff (2018-2024)



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



>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



RECES IN GOOD STANDING



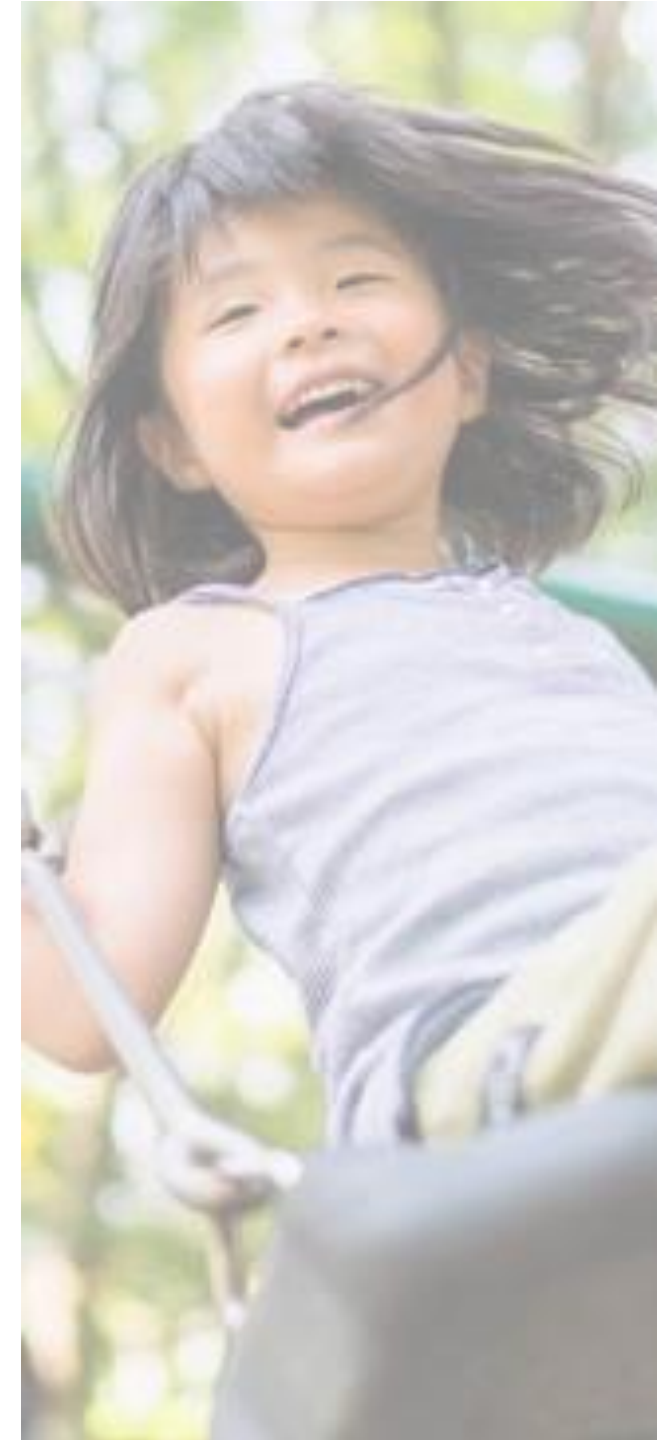
Fiscal Year*	# of employed CECE members^	# of CECE members working in LCC^	% of employed members working in LCC^	# of CECE members^	# of new members for the fiscal year	# of LCC members who left the sector that fiscal year**
2024-2025	55,375	32,181	58%	65,973	6,288	2,015
2023-2024	53,240	29,913	56%	63,148	5,702	2,130
2022-2023	51,594	28,446	55%	61,171	5,192	2,157
2021-2022	49,545	27,316	55%	59,547	5,468	1,831
2020-2021	49,775	27,267	55%	58,867	4,335	1,373
2019-2020	48,591	26,753	55%	57,594	5,599	1,322

*Fiscal Year is from July 1 - June 30

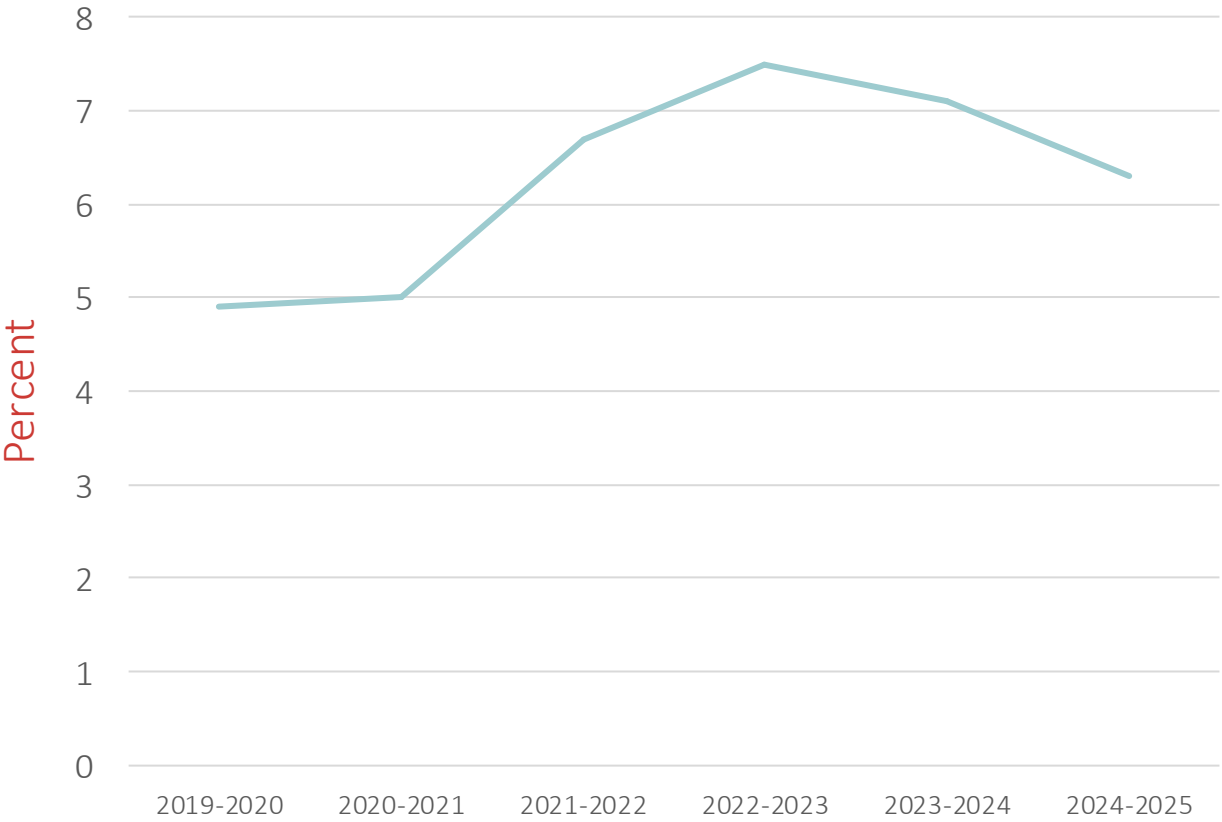
^As of June 30 each fiscal year

**Includes members whose employment type = Licensed Child Care and they resigned or had their certificate suspended in that fiscal year and therefore could not practice in the sector.

Source: Data provided by the College of Early Childhood Educators.



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



Source: The College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario





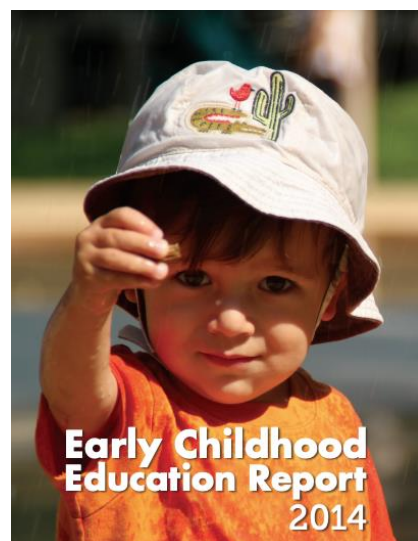
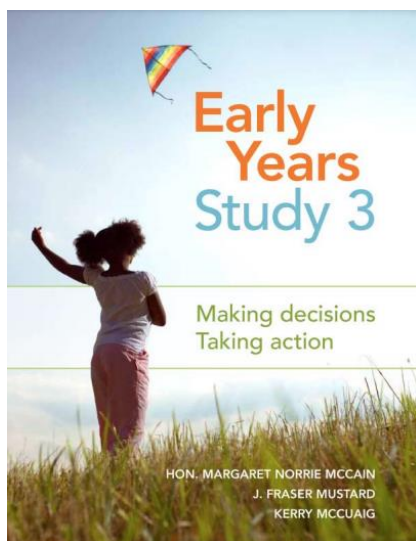
2023

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT



Established in 2011, the Early Childhood Education Report is released every three years to evaluate the quality of provincial/territorial early years services against a 15-point-scale.

Results are populated from detailed profiles of each jurisdiction. ECER 2023 is the 5th edition.



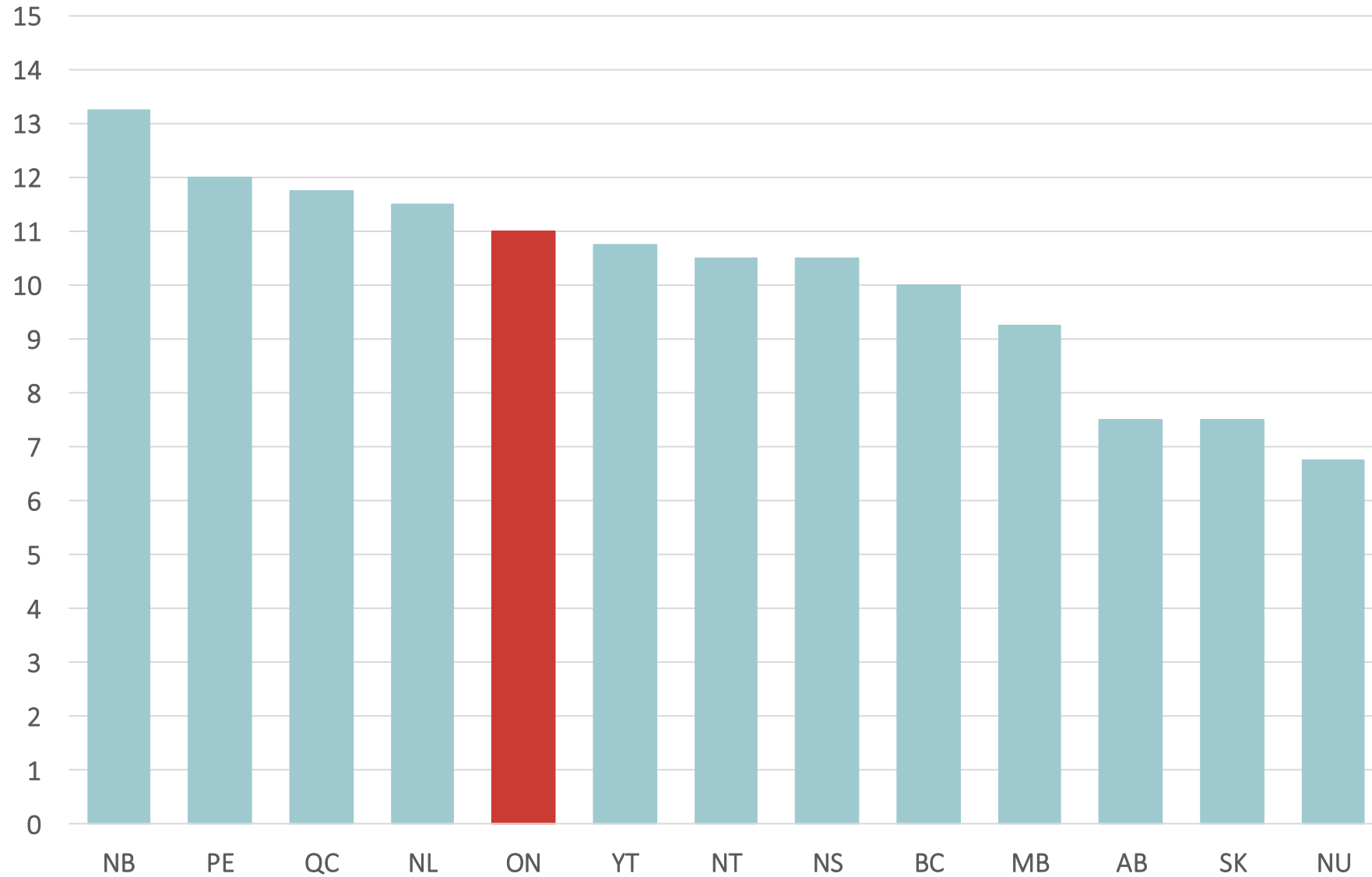
5 CATEGORIES

Governance	PTs	Funding	PTs	Access	PTs	Learning Environment	PTs	Accountability	PTs
------------	-----	---------	-----	--------	-----	----------------------	-----	----------------	-----

21 BENCHMARKS

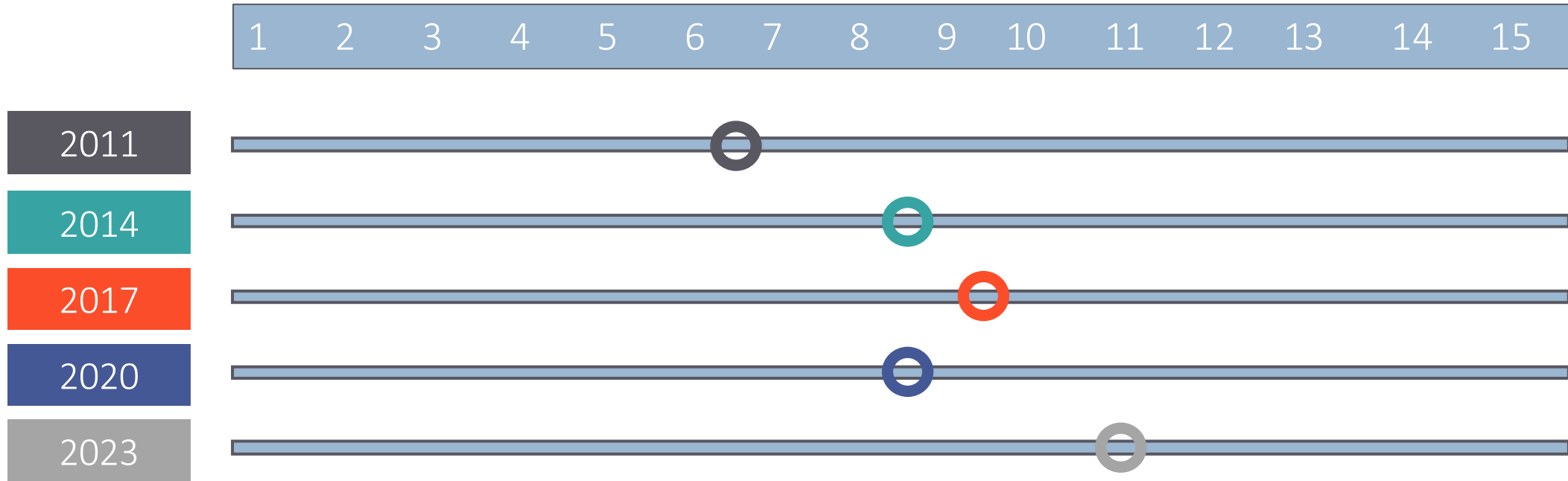
Common ministry	0.5	Min 2/3 CC finding to program operations	1	Full-day Kindergarten	1	ECEC curriculum framework	0.25	Current and posted annual progress report	1
Common ECEC supervisory unit	0.5	Managed salary/fee scale in licensed CC	1	Licensed capacity min 50% for 2-4 yr olds	1	ECEC curriculum framework mandatory	0.25	Facility standards that include Kindergarten	1
Common ECEC policy framework	1	Min 3% of overall budget to ECEC	1	Funding conditional on inclusion	1	Program alignment with Kindergarten	0.5	Population measures collected for preschool	1
Common local authority	1					Min 2/3 staff qualified for 2-4 yr olds	0.5		
						Kindergarten Educators require ECE qualifications	0.5		
						Wages of ECEs at least 2/3 of teachers	0.5		
						ECE professional recognition required	0.25		
						ECE professional development required	0.25		
15 POINTS	3		3		3		3		3

ECER 2023 Benchmark Results

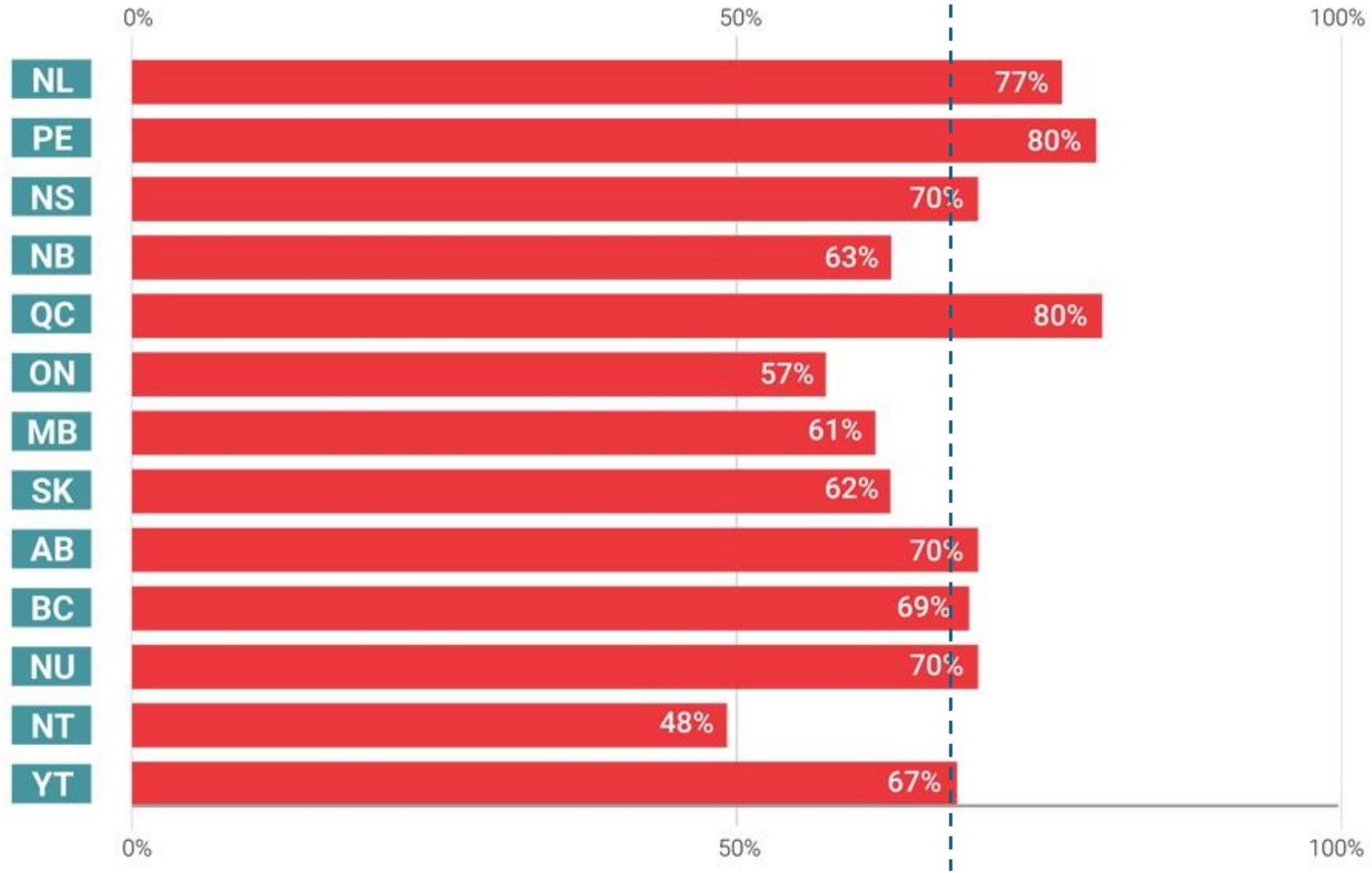


Ontario Over the Years

ECER Benchmarks



Annual ECE Wages as Percent of Teacher Wages

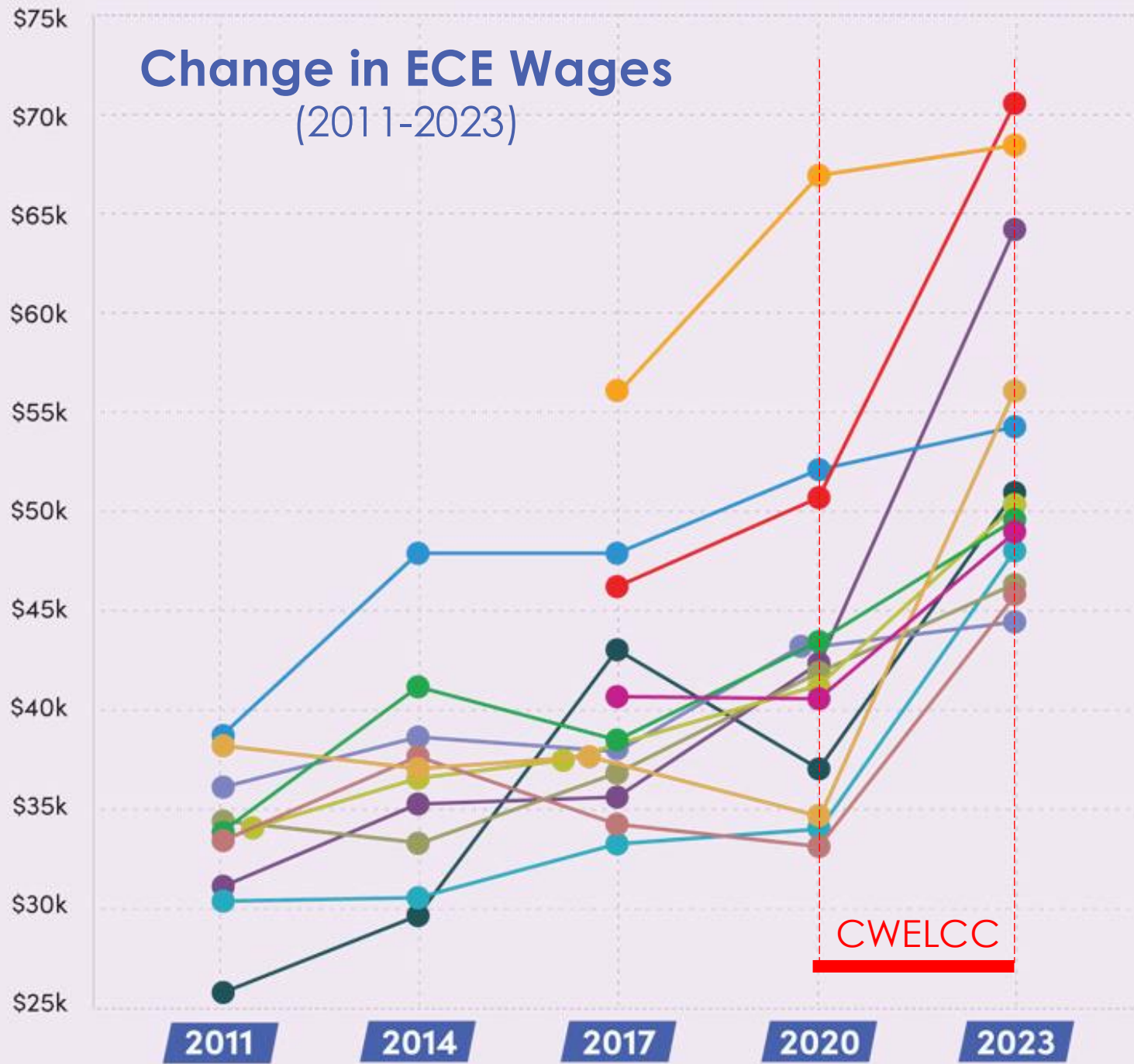


^a ECE wages based on government-supported compensation for an FTE staff with legislated credentials and five years of experience.

^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.

Change in ECE Wages (2011-2023)



\$ CHANGE FROM 2020

NL \$13,662

PE \$21,320

NS \$14,531

NB \$3,944

QC \$2,343

ON \$1,269

MB \$5,615

SK \$12,896

AB \$21,449

BC \$9,528

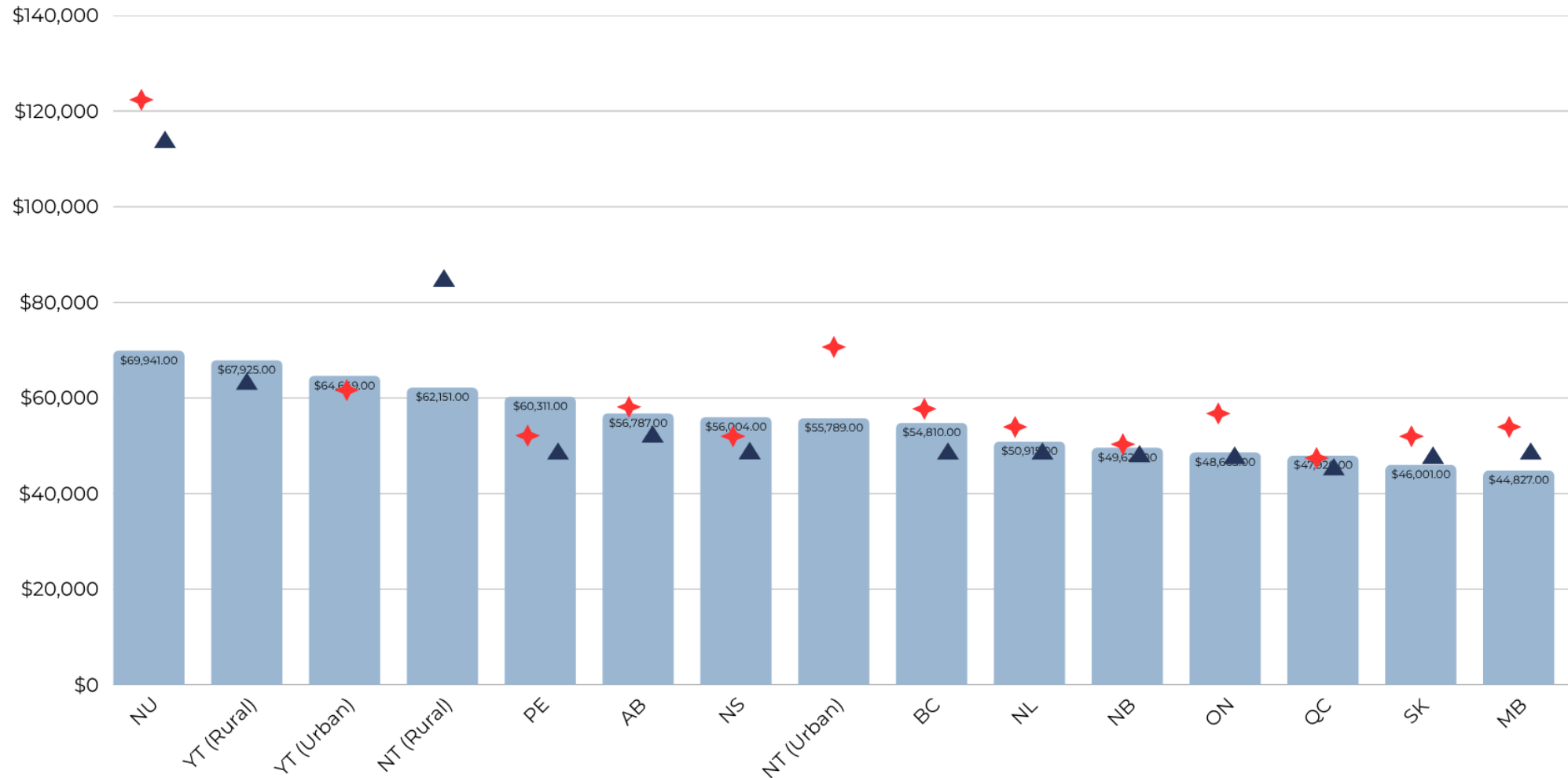
NU \$21,029

NT \$9,250

YT \$1,560



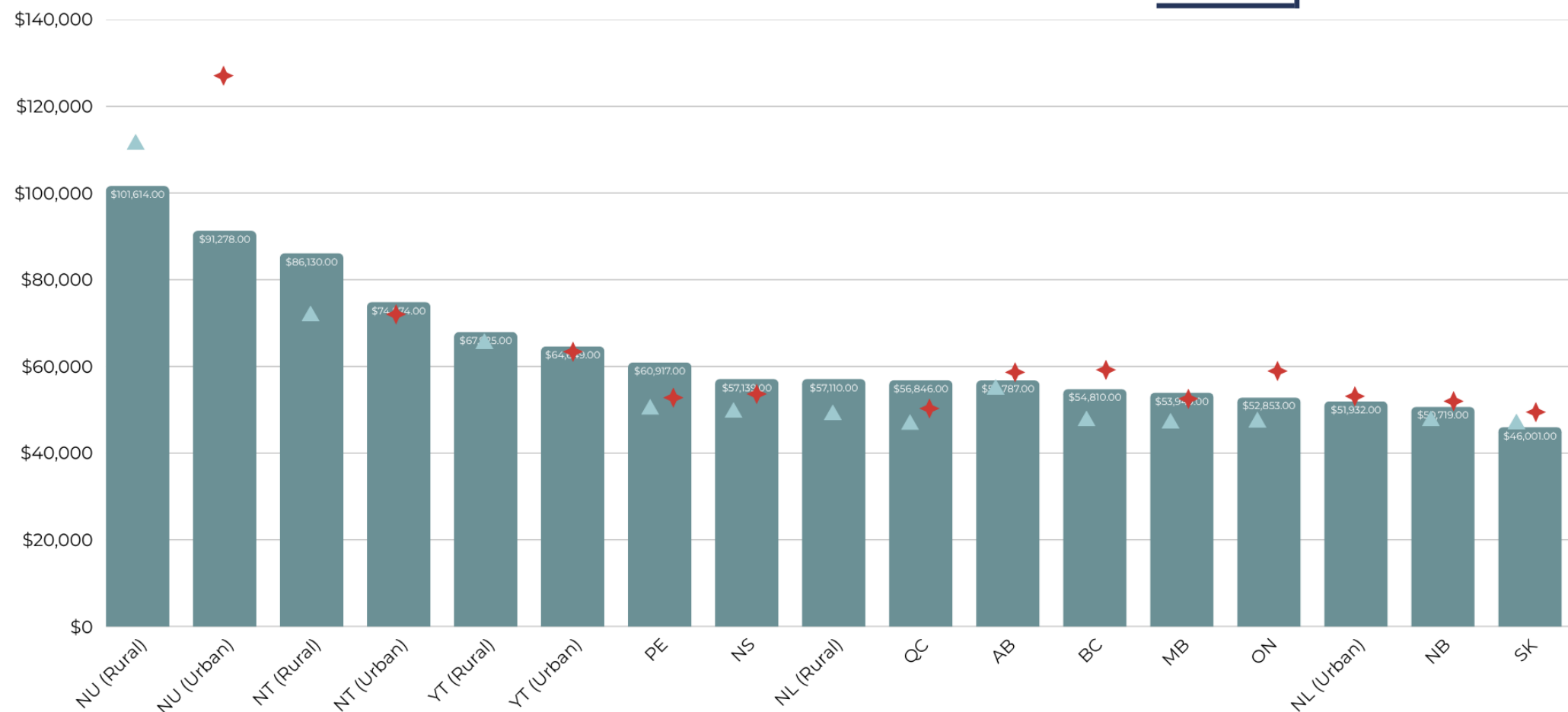
Earnings of ECEs across Canada compared to poverty thresholds in urban (♦) and rural (▲) regions



The territories and NL provide a higher rate for remote areas



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



The territories and NL provide a higher rate for remote areas



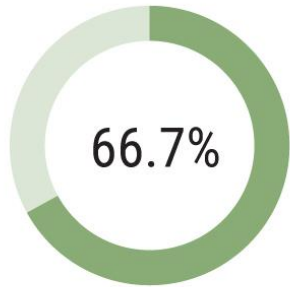
3-5 years

Average number of
years ECEs stay in the
field in Ontario

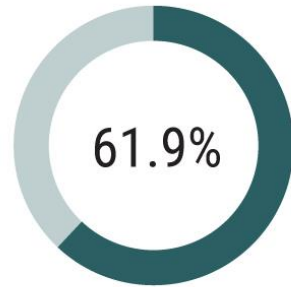


Percentage of RECEs and Non-RECEs Reporting Housing Security Concerns by Region

RECEs



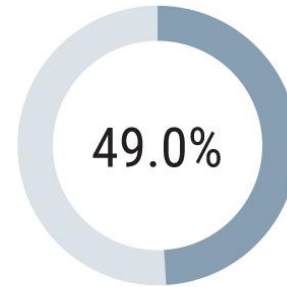
Central East



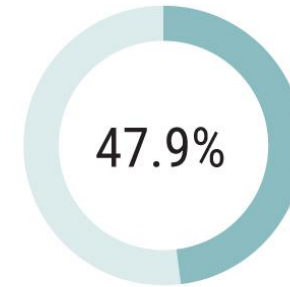
Central West



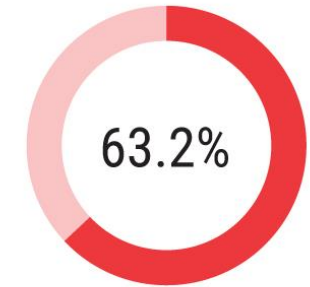
East



North

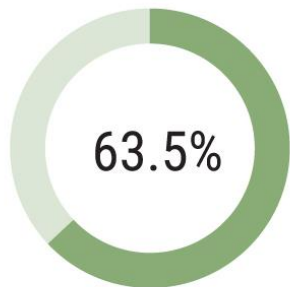


West

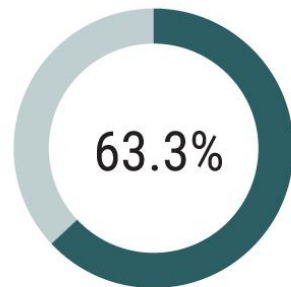


Lakeshore West

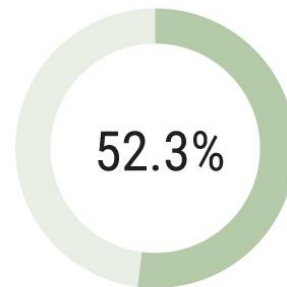
Non-RECEs



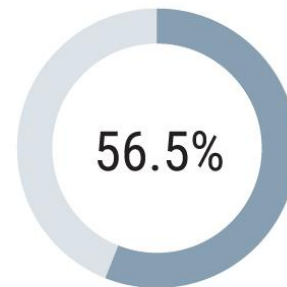
Central East



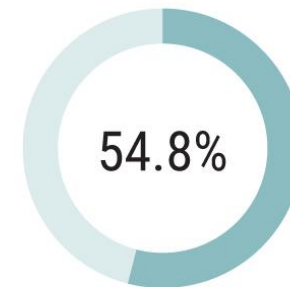
Central West



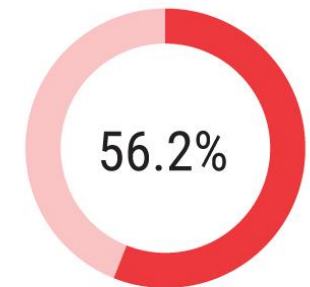
East



North



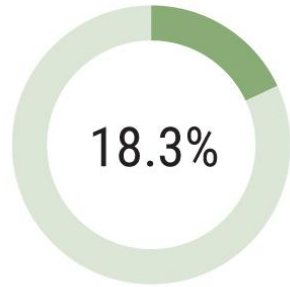
West



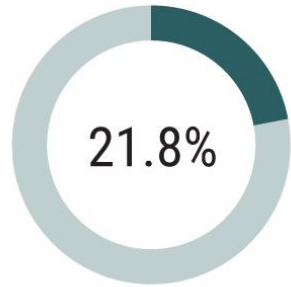
Lakeshore West

Percentage of RECEs and Non-RECEs Reporting Additional Employment by Region

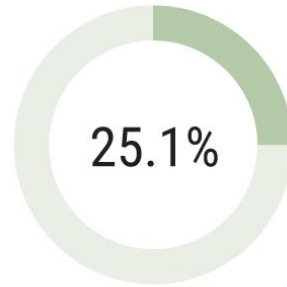
RECEs



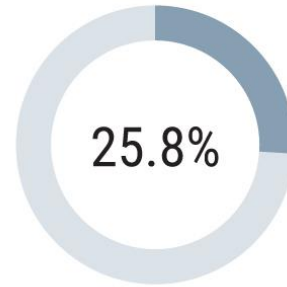
Central East



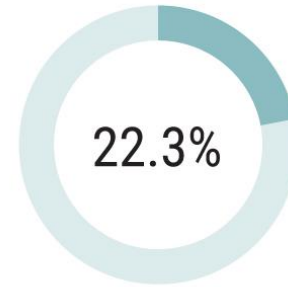
Central West



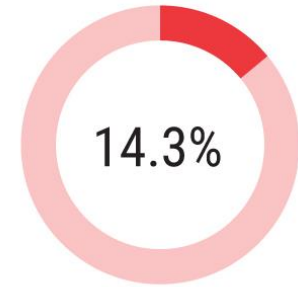
East



North

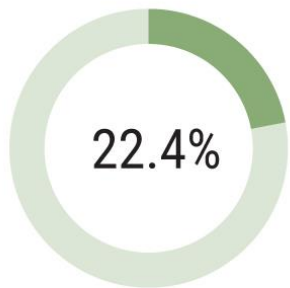


West

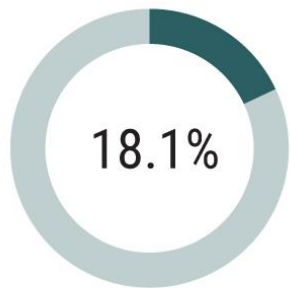


Lakeshore West

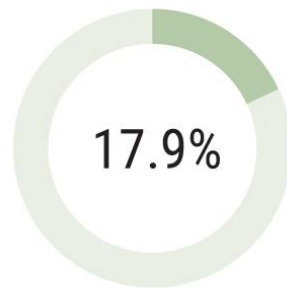
Non-RECEs



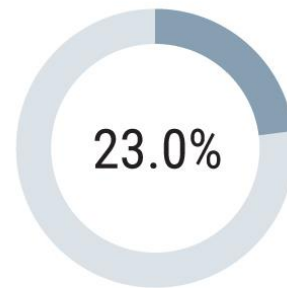
Central East



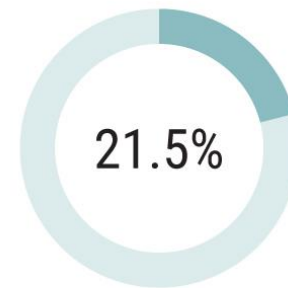
Central West



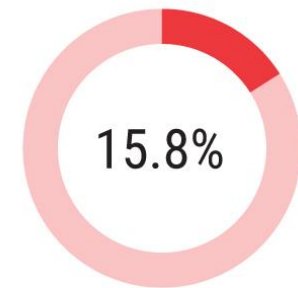
East



North

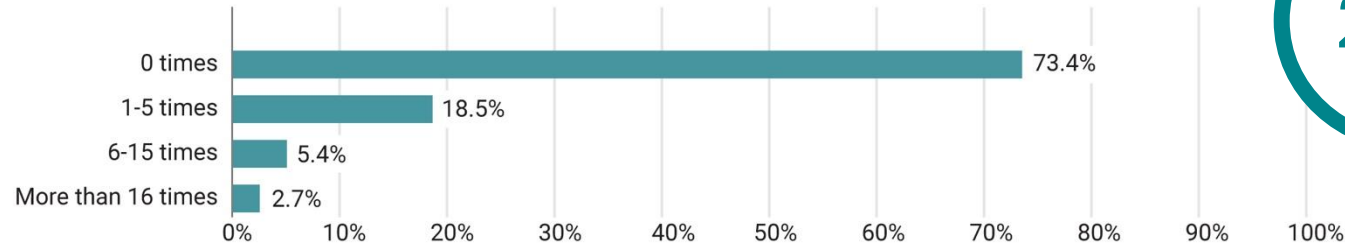


West



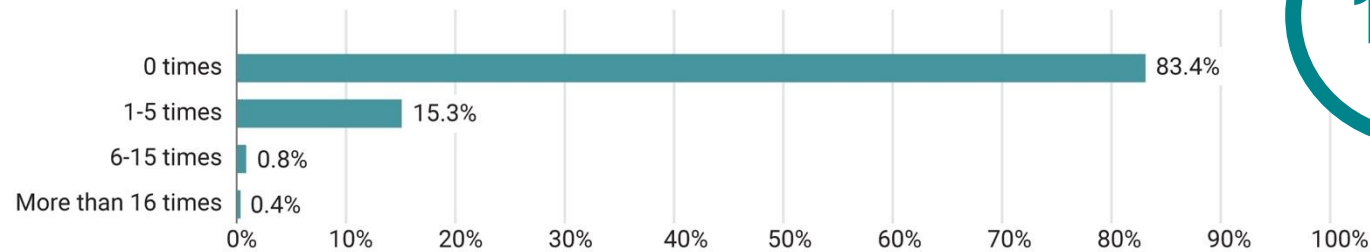
Lakeshore West

Percentage Reporting Frequency of Times in the Previous 12 Months Directors/Supervisors Sent Children with Disabilities Home Due to Staffing Shortages



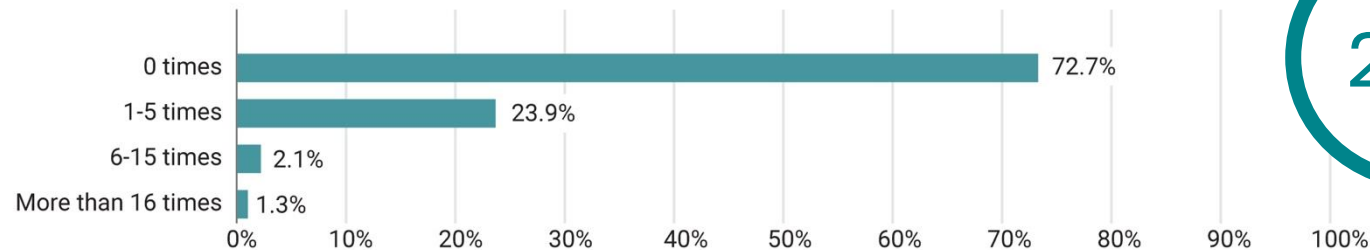
27%

Percentage Reporting Frequency of Times in the Previous 12 Months Directors/Supervisors De-enlisted Children with Disabilities Due to Staffing Shortages



17%

Percentage Reporting Frequency of Times in the Previous 12 Months Directors/Supervisors Denied Admission to Children with Disabilities Due to Staffing Shortages



27%



Average Hourly Wage by Auspice and Union Status for RECE Respondents in Licensed Child Care



Starting in January 2024, the wage floor for RECEs in Ontario working in programs participating in CWELCC readjusted to \$23.86 per hour.



By the Numbers



75



330



150



4,200

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

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%.



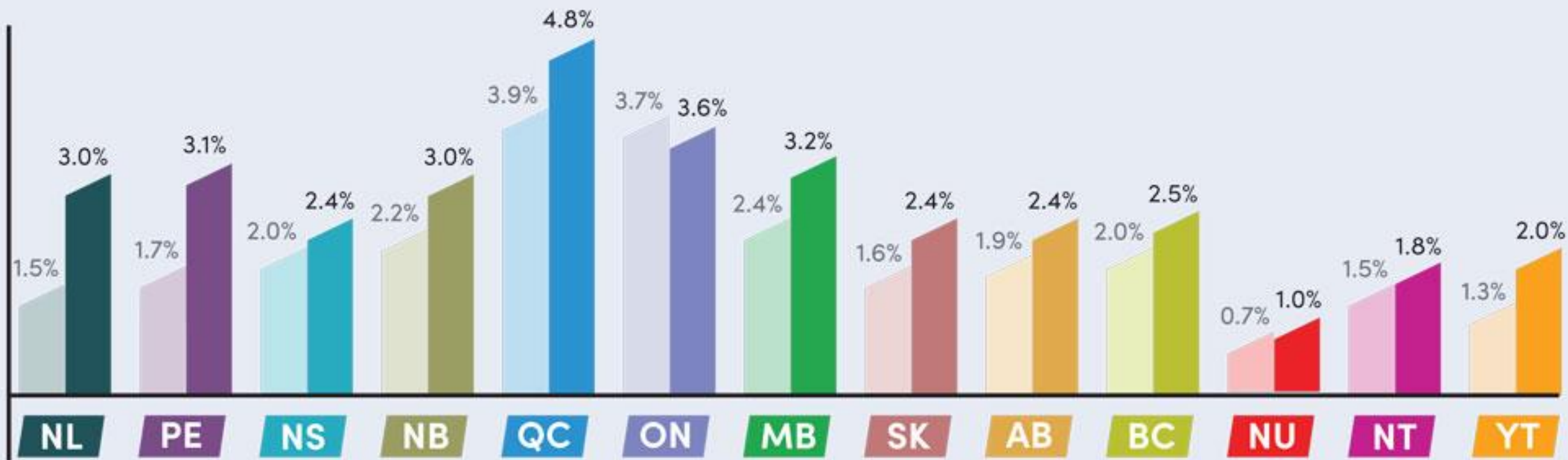
Benefits from Wage Increases: In 2019, 50% of individuals left the sector seeking better wages. In 2024, that number dropped to just 2%.



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

CHANGE IN ECEC SPENDING AS A PER CENT OF TOTAL PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL BUDGET

2020 • 2023



THANK

YOU

emis.abkari@utoronto.ca



Atkinson
Centre

 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION