

The College of Early Childhood Educators and Bill C-35: An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada

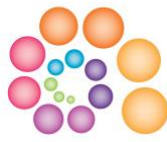
About the College

The College of Early Childhood Educators (“the College”) is the regulatory body for the profession of early childhood education in Ontario. Our mandate is to regulate the profession in the interests of children, families and the public, and we do so by establishing and enforcing registration requirements, setting ethical and professional standards for registered early childhood educators (RECEs) and requirements for continuous professional learning, and managing a complaints and discipline process for professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity. We also maintain a public register of all our members which is accessible to members of the public wishing to learn about the people to whom they entrust their children.

Our role and activities are unique in Canada. In other provinces, early childhood educators are not recognized as a profession with legislated authority to regulate itself in the public interest. Rather, those who meet education standards are licensed by the provincial government. The scope and transparency of our regulatory activity is not replicated in other Canadian jurisdictions.

The College continues to raise the standards of the profession in Ontario and in recent years, our work has included the development and implementation of a mandatory sexual abuse prevention program, practice guidance for members on inclusion of children with disabilities, and the explicit recognition of that acts of racism and discrimination constitute professional misconduct in our regulation, consistent with the College’s Statement of Commitment to Anti-Racism.

Currently, there are over 61,000 RECEs in Ontario. The College produces an annual [Membership Data Report](#) that provides details on our membership, including demographics and data on recruitment and retention in the profession.



The College and Bill C-35

The College was pleased to welcome the historic agreement between the federal and provincial governments under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Program, with its commitment to increase affordability and access to high-quality child care, and subsequently, Bill C-35, *The Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act*. The College believes that when fully implemented, this program will make a significant difference in the lives of children and their families. We recognize the important role of the federal government in helping to ensure the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Program is implemented in a way that puts the emphasis on the well-being of children, and better outcomes for children and families across the country.

We acknowledge and embrace the importance of the core principles included in Bill C-35 – affordability, accessibility, inclusivity and high quality – but wish to emphasize that measures to support affordability or expand early learning and child care spaces should not come at the expense of quality.

While there is no universally-accepted definition of quality, research has demonstrated that qualified, accountable and well-supported professionals are key to the delivery of early years programs that result in better outcomes for children and families. Qualified educators bring expert knowledge and experience in early childhood development and learning.

Ontario, like other provinces, is facing a critical workforce shortage. While we are seeing high numbers of new professionals entering the field each year, those numbers are matched by those leaving the profession. We are concerned that the push to address the workforce crisis may lead to pressure to reduce professional standards rather than addressing the systemic issues (including working conditions, compensation and opportunities for professional development and growth) in the sector that are causing attrition. We believe it is vital to safeguard against potentially short-sighted policy solutions focused on increasing numbers in the sector in the short term, while exacerbating longer-term systemic problems.

This workforce crisis is perhaps the most significant barrier to the successful implementation of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Program across the country. It means that governments must not only address the creation of new child care spaces in their implementation plans, but more critically, ensure that those spaces can be realized by ensuring there are sufficient qualified professionals in the workforce to staff them. With that in mind, we believe the legislation must include consideration of the systemic issues underlying the workforce crisis, and solutions to address retention in the profession. This is contemplated in our recommendations specific to the National Advisory Council, below.



The National Advisory Council

As Ontario is currently the only province to recognize early childhood education as a distinct profession with legislated authority to regulate itself, the College is uniquely positioned to offer insights about the requirements for a robust early learning and child care system that emphasizes quality, especially in terms of protecting and serving the interests of children and families and the importance of qualified, professional educators. The College is the only organization that possesses data regarding the qualified early childhood education workforce in Ontario.

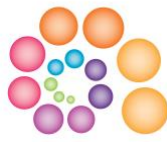
However, the current composition of the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care does not allow for that participation. The inclusion of the College – as well as any other independent regulators which may be formed in other provinces – on the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care would be one strong step the federal government can take to ensure that decisions are informed by data, qualification standards for professional educators are maintained, the public interest is at the center of decision-making and quality remains a pillar of the program when it is implemented across all jurisdictions.

Additionally, we believe the mandate of the National Advisory Council should be amended to include the responsibility to explore the workforce crisis in the early learning and care sector, and recommend solutions to address the systemic issues impacting the retention of qualified educators. Without solutions to the crisis, new child care spaces cannot be realized and the program cannot be implemented successfully.

Thank you for engaging the College in this process. We would be pleased to contribute any further insights, as well as any relevant, supporting data we have available.

For additional context on the early childhood education workforce, we have included in the pages that follow:

- Professional Educator Workforce Planning – a brief summary of the College’s initial recommendations for addressing the workforce crisis in the sector
- 2022-23 Membership Data Report: Relevant Excerpts – key highlights of the data presented in the College’s [annual summary of member data](#)
- Licensed Child Care in Ontario – an infographic summarizing data around members working in licensed child care, the predominant employment setting for ECEs, in 2020



Professional Educator Workforce Planning

As a modern regulator, we continue to evolve the focus of regulation to emphasize proactive intervention, using data to identify areas of risk and prevent harm. As part of our duty to serve the public interest, we will work to **help ensure that all families have access to qualified early childhood educators.**

To support this goal, the College is active in:

- **Applying evidence-based innovation in regulation and governance**
Continuous evolution and improvement in the way we execute our mandate, informed by data and evidence.
- **Equipping and supporting practice excellence**
Ensure that members enter the profession prepared and are supported throughout their careers to practice at the highest standards.
- **Building a resilient and sustainable profession**
Support recruitment, retention and development in the profession to ensure all families have access to qualified professional educators.

Addressing the Workforce Challenge

The College is aligned with the government's goals of creating affordable, accessible, high quality child care and we understand the biggest risk to delivering on this commitment is the scale of workforce required.

Engagement as a collaborative stakeholder to help address systemic challenges in the early learning sector is a pillar of the College's strategic plan for 2022-2027.

Addressing a systemic problem will require a multi-pronged approach which includes:

- Development of a staffing model based around the central role of qualified, professional educators, while also recognizing other staff qualifications, and incentivizing upgrading
- Reducing the number of RECEs leaving the sector and incentivizing former RECEs to return
- Reducing barriers to entering the profession and attracting new educators

Part A: Enhanced Model of Childcare Staffing

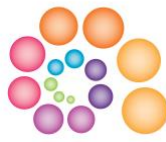
Objective:

A flexible staffing model in child care that will protect the public and support informed decision-making by parents:

- Ensure that RECEs are in roles where their skills are most valuable
- Match staff training and qualifications with program goals
- Provide a framework for the recognition and appropriate regulation of individuals who are not (yet) qualified as RECEs and support upgrading.

Strategies:

- Amend legislated requirements for qualified staffing in school age programs to allow other appropriate credentials in school age programs (7+)



- Create a new category of membership in the College to capture staff with some / alternate qualifications. Amend staffing requirements to include appropriate representation of this group as a type of qualified staff to align staffing requirements to program goals. Incentivize upgrading.

Part B: Retention of Professional Educators

Objective:

Retaining current RECEs and incentivizing return of former RECEs will create a virtuous cycle by improving the stability and quality of practice environments which will help to attract and maintain new educators.

- Reduce attrition. Currently, the attrition rate of RECEs working in licensed childcare is the highest at the 3-year mark. If attrition was reduced by 25%, it could result in approximately 4000 additional RECEs in the workforce over 5 years without any increase in recruitment. This is equivalent to an entire annual cohort of graduates from across all Ontario ECE College programs.
- Incentivize return. There are currently more than 28,000 individuals who were at one time fully qualified members of the College. More than 23,000 are under 55 years of age and could register and return to practice with minimal additional requirements.

Strategies:

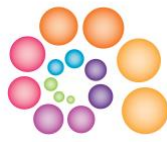
- Creation of career lattice to support professional growth and career development by creating classes of membership to recognize advance practice with specializations
- Provide mentorship and professional development opportunities to support educators
- Enhance the work environment: Close the gap in working conditions across employers / workplace environments to attract educators and stem attrition. Leverage initiatives underway at local levels.
- Engage former members to understand reasons for exiting the profession and encourage / incentivize return

Part C: Recruitment of New Educators

While we recognize the need for recruitment of new educators, and the College continues to process registrations in a timely manner, recruitment is the slowest route with the lowest rate of return to meet the targets required under the Federal-Provincial agreement. As such, the College strongly recommends prioritizing Parts A & B before focusing on recruitment initiatives.

Strategies:

- Raise awareness and profile of RECE profession.
- Support development of alternate pathways to reduce barriers to qualification / upgrading
- Support local workforce planning through data-sharing.



2022-23 Membership Data Report: Relevant Excerpts

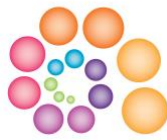
The Annual Membership Data Report provides a comprehensive review of the registration and membership trends throughout the College's fiscal year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023). The report examines incoming applications, membership trends and insights into the profession, and highlights membership demographics and geographic distribution that make up the early childhood education profession in Ontario. This data not only allows the College to make better data-driven decisions about policies and processes but also allows stakeholders and community leaders to make evidence-based decisions about workforce planning and community needs for early learning and care.

This report was developed using the data that is collected by the College during the initial application process as well as the annual membership renewal process. The following notes should be used to help understand the definitions and limitations of the data and statistics presented:

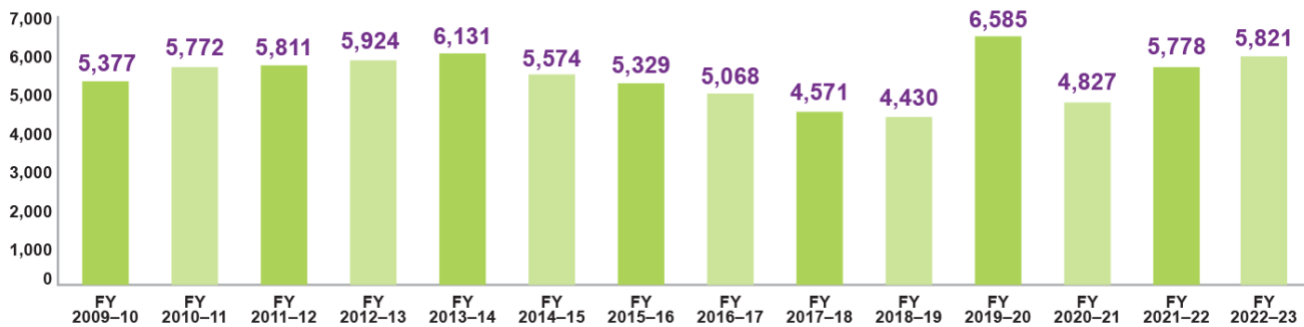
- New members are defined as individuals who registered with the College for the first time or former members who have reapplied to the College following administrative revocation.
- Currently, the College only collects limited self-reported demographic information, including gender, age and language preference (English or French). If they so choose, applicants and members may also indicate if they are of Indigenous heritage or are Francophone.

Key Highlights

- 5,821 applications received (compared to a 5-year average of 5,238)
 - More than 10% with alternative educational qualifications
- 5,192 new members (compared to a 5-year average of 4,612)
- 61,171 members in good standing as at June 30, 2023
 - 2.72% net growth over previous year
- Demographics
 - 98% Female
 - Largest cohort is aged 25-34 years
- Employment
 - 79% full-time employment
 - 56% working in licensed child care
 - 10% in management-type role

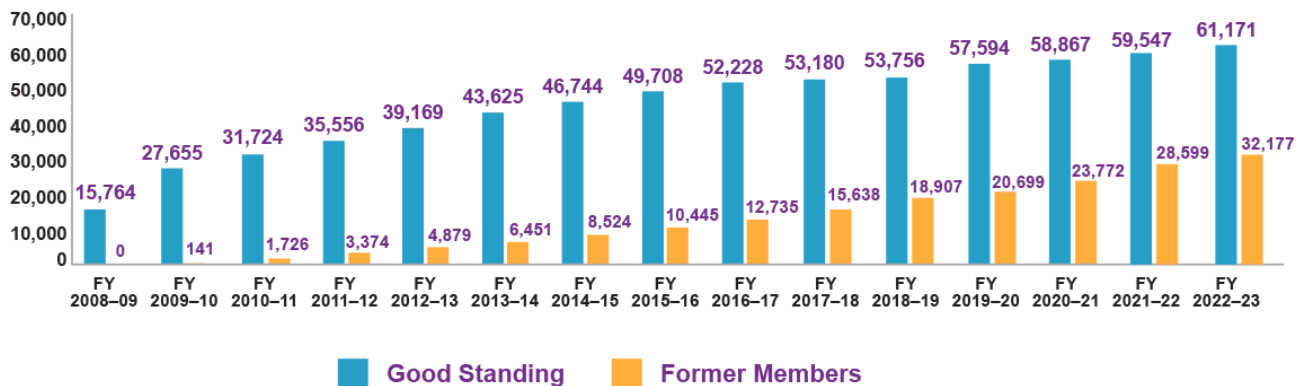


Total New Applications per Fiscal Year



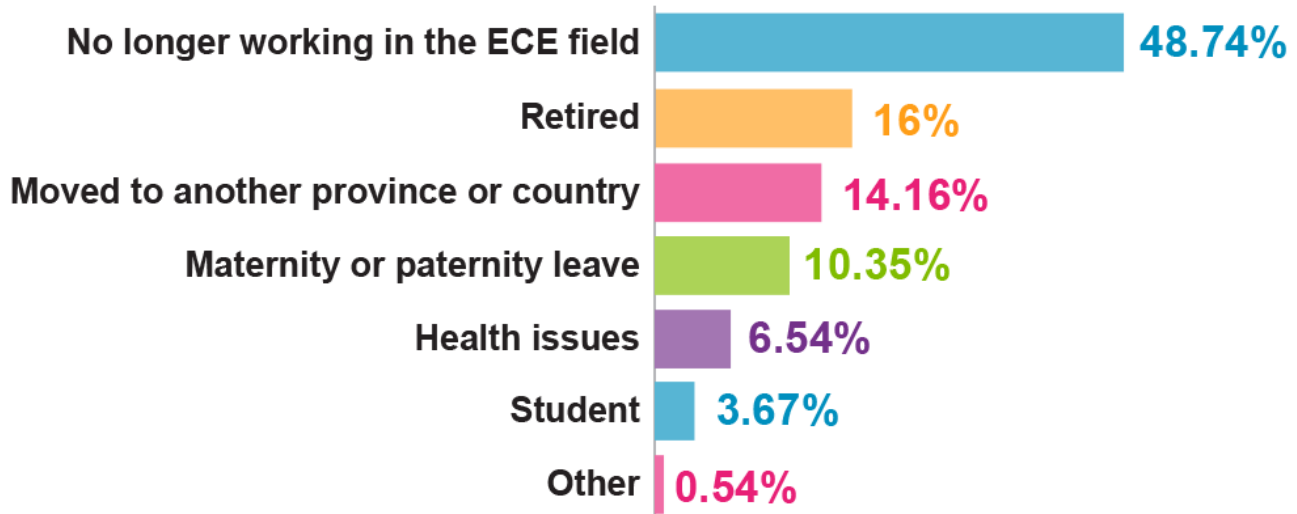
The College continues to receive most applications (86 per cent) from graduates of an ECE diploma program delivered by an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT).

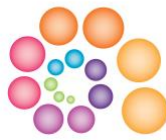
Membership in Good Standing vs. Former Members



■ Good Standing ■ Former Members

Resignation Reasons





Membership Demographics

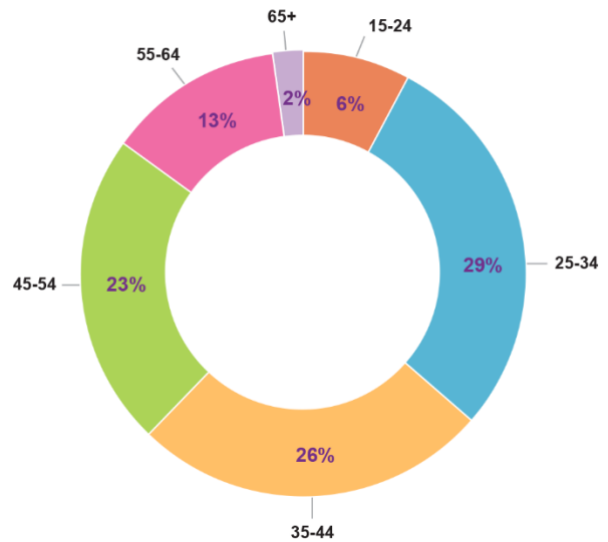
Membership by Gender



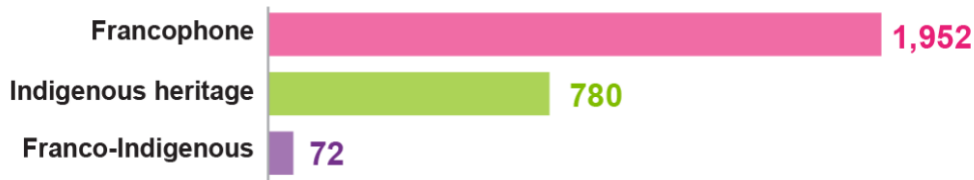
Sectoral Demographics by Gender



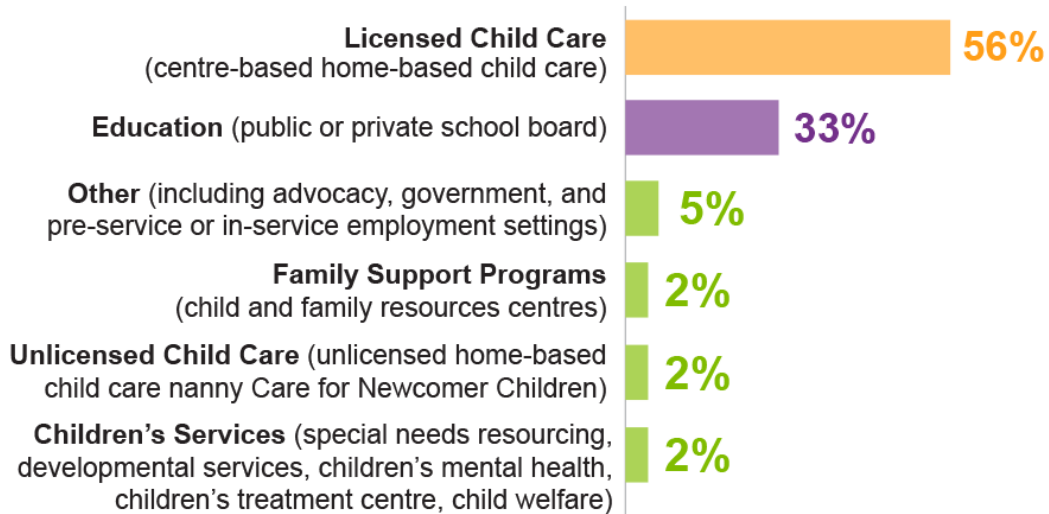
College Membership by Age Group



Self-Identification of Members



Membership Employment by Setting





Licensed Child Care in Ontario



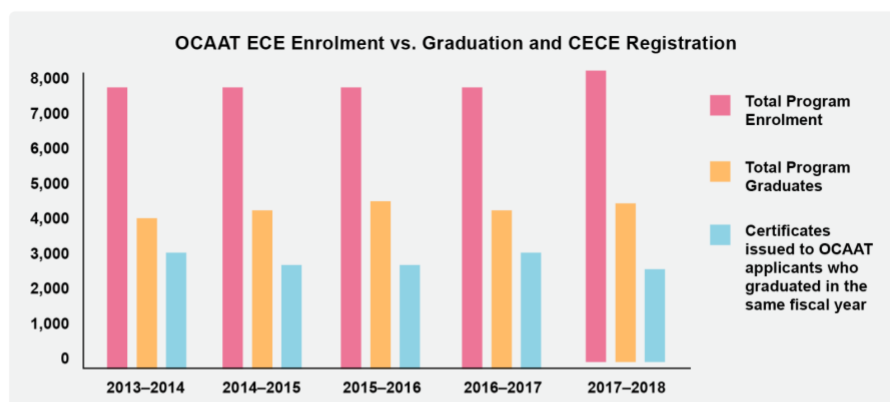
At the end of the 2019–2020 fiscal year, the College had 57,594 members in good standing.

- 29,523 members indicated that they are employed in licensed child care, representing 55% of the employed members.
- Over 90% of members who work in licensed child care are *graduates of Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT) diploma programs*.
 - Less than 5% of members working in licensed child care met the education requirement with a Bachelor's degree or higher.



While the volume of OCAAT graduates has been growing since 2014, the proportionate number of OCAAT graduates registering with the College has been steadily declining by an average of 7.2% each year during the same time period.

- Recent graduates consistently comprise the majority of the OCAAT applications received by the College within a fiscal year, averaging 80%; however, the volume of recent graduates have been declining annually when compared to graduation rates.



Although CECE registration rose significantly in the 2019–2020 fiscal year, information regarding enrolment and graduation rates are not available for the same period.



New members are increasingly indicating their employment settings as outside of licensed child care.

- 73% of RECEs who became a member in 2018–19 indicated that they are employed in licensed child care. This is almost a 3% decline over the past 2 reported fiscal years.



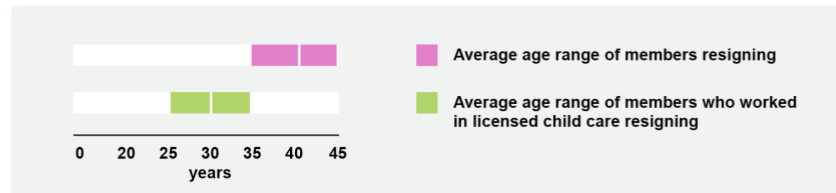
Members who met the education requirement with a Bachelor's degree or higher are 4.5 times more likely to indicate they work in an employment setting outside of licensed child care.

- They are also 13.5 times more likely to indicate that they work in a government employment setting than members who met the education requirement with a diploma.



Retention is an issue in licensed child care, with an increasing number of members indicating alternative employment settings.

- The average length of membership of former members who choose to resign from the College is 7 years for all employment settings.
- Members who work in licensed child care are twice as likely to resign their membership after just 3 years of membership compared to those working in education or another employment setting.
 - While the overall average age range of members resigning was 35–44 years old with a median age of 41, the average age range of members who worked in licensed child care at the time of resignation was 25–34 years old with a median age of 30.



- Overall, almost 15% of members reinstate from a resigned status.
 - Members who work in licensed child care are almost 30% less likely to reinstate their membership after having resigned.
- In the 2019–2020 fiscal year, less than 1% of former members who were administratively revoked re-applied to the College.
 - Less than 5% of former members who worked in licensed child care re-apply after having their membership administratively revoked*.



Over the past 2 fiscal years, members working in licensed child care are almost twice as likely to resign from a management role than any other employment type and almost 4 times more likely than those who identified as management level in education.

* Certificates of Registration are revoked after a member's status has remained suspended for more than 3 consecutive years for administrative reasons, including failure to provide information and/or nonpayment of fees.