

Early Childhood Education and Care Policy and its role in Economic Recovery

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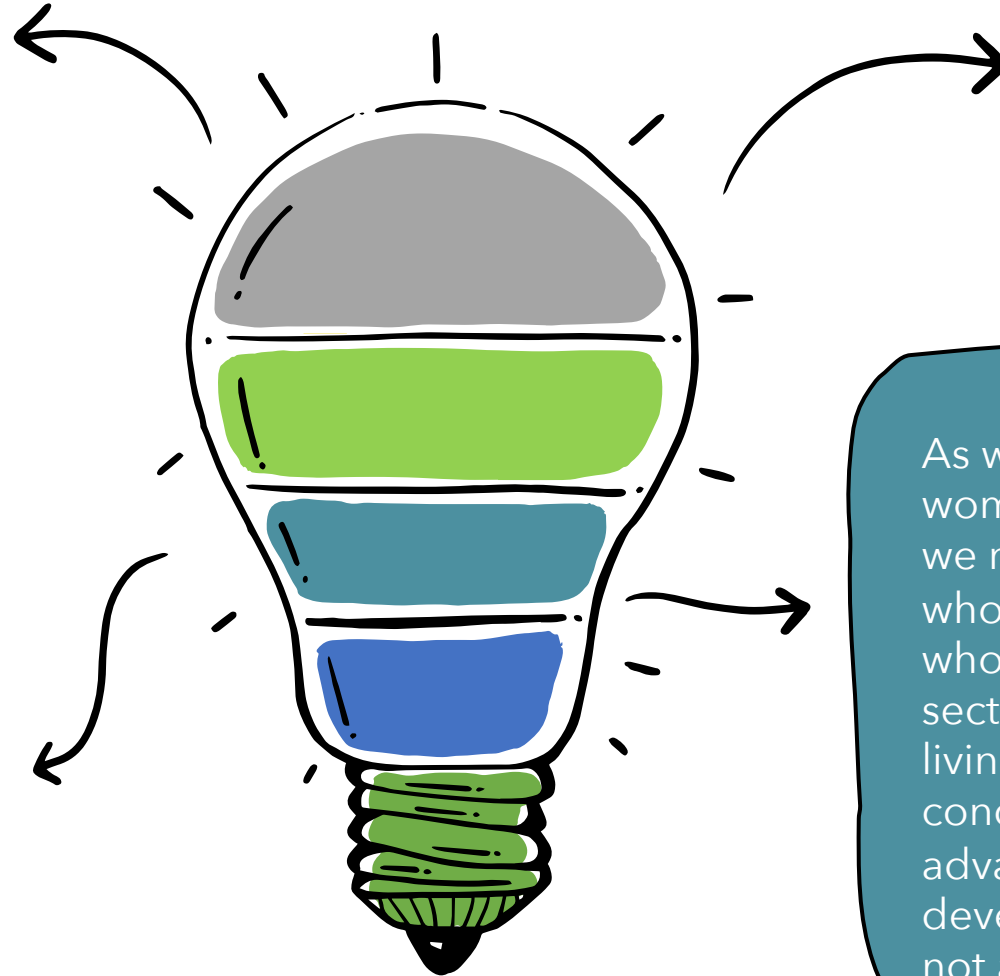
Care or Education?

1

Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada emerged from the woman's movement. A model of care versus education.

2

Although children have moved to the heart of social policy, there is some concern regarding the way they are being positioned in the world of social investment.



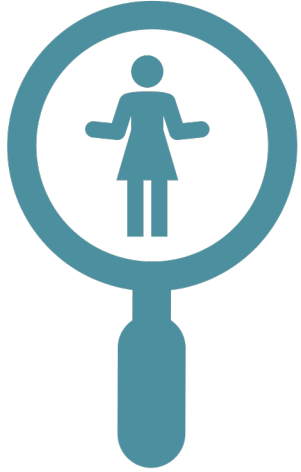
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How can social investment approaches be reformed to be both child-centred *and* with reference to gendered social justice principles.

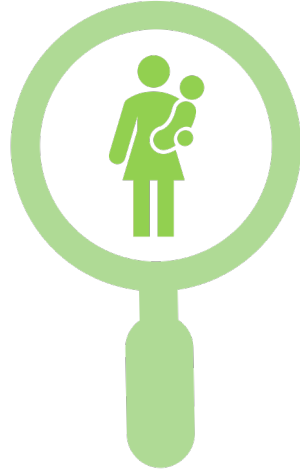
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As we discuss supporting women's labour force participation, we must remember the women who make that possible. Women who often themselves leave the sector because they don't make a living wage, have decent working conditions, opportunities for career advancement and professional development, or are themselves not able to find child care.

Labour Market Versus Child-Centred Approaches



Primary focus on the child welfare of social policy investment still occurs within a gendered framework



One consequence of child driven policy is that children are de-coupled from their mothers.



There are consequences of an approach that divorces children's well-being from that of their parents - critically, given the continued gendered division of household labour, that of mothers.



By pairing children with women in recognition of the latter's care responsibilities, we risk reinforcing the very gender partitions that some of our arguments challenge.



This tension between 'practical' and 'strategic' gender concerns is one that analysts, policy makers, and activists frequently must navigate



Canada has made a historic \$30 billion investment in child care



Goal of reducing parent fees to an average of \$10/day and reaching 59% access for children 0-5 years of age



We are currently in a workforce recruitment and retention crisis

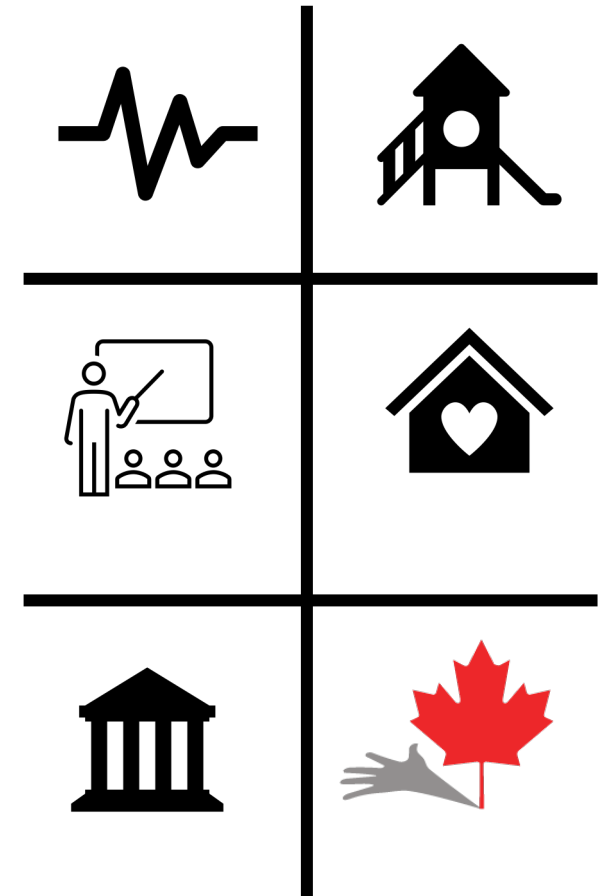
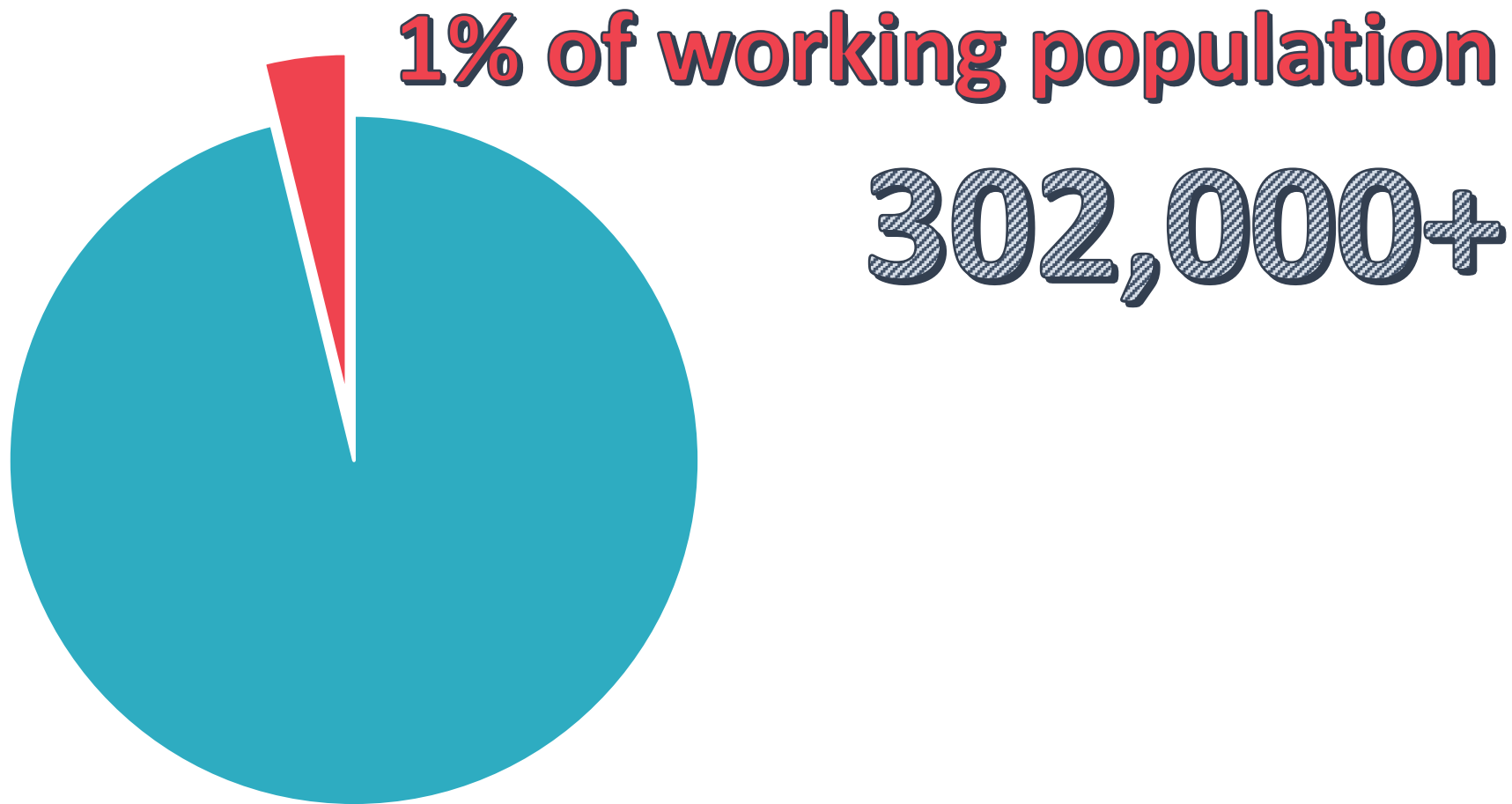


Educators, their knowledge, training, rich and warm interactions are one of the biggest predictors of child outcome

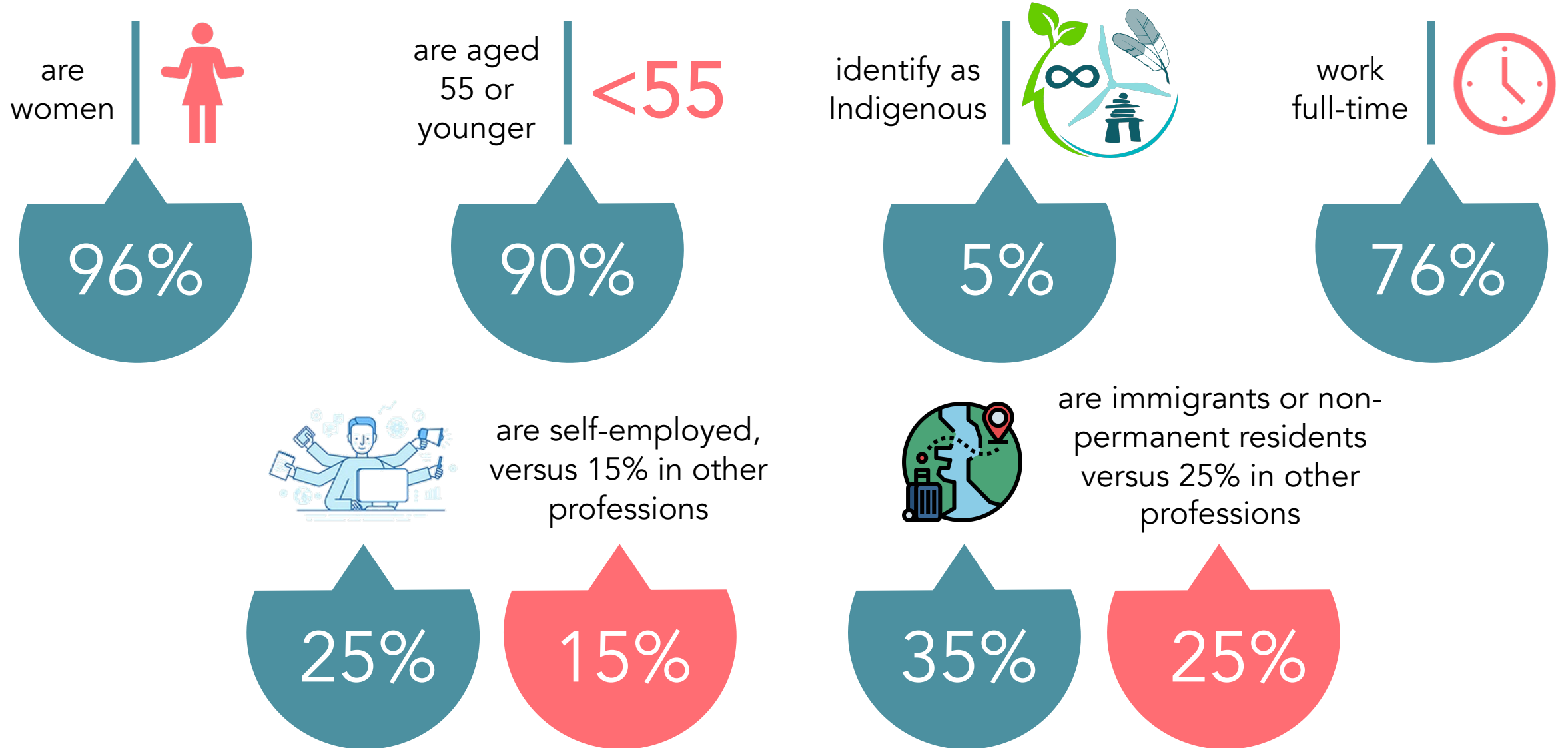


As we discuss economic recovery, women's labour participation, and the 'she' session, we must ensure that we address the workforce crisis and not take short cuts on quality early learning

The Early Childhood Workforce in Canada



What Does the Workforce Look Like?



Density and Retention



50%

Of the regulated child care workforce, only 50% have post-secondary qualifications



62%

Of child care operators surveyed, 62% had to recruit staff in the last two years



30%

An Ontario study found that 30% of positions in regulated child care requiring an ECE credential were filled by staff without the necessary qualifications



82%

82% had difficulty hiring staff with the necessary qualifications with 6% reporting unfilled staff vacancies lasting over four months

Compensation



33%

Of the regulated child care workforce, 33% receive no health benefits



17.7%

Only 17.7% have access to RRSPs or pensions through their workplace



41%

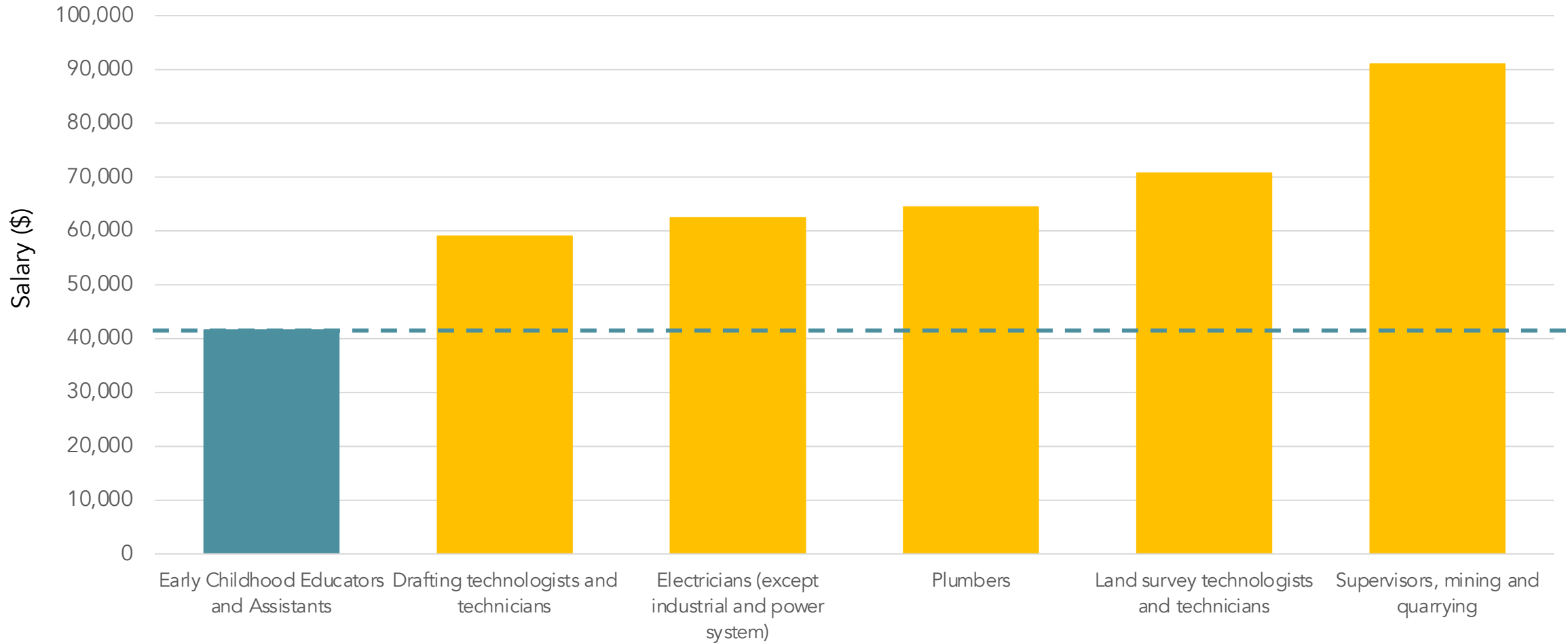
Receive no paid personal leave



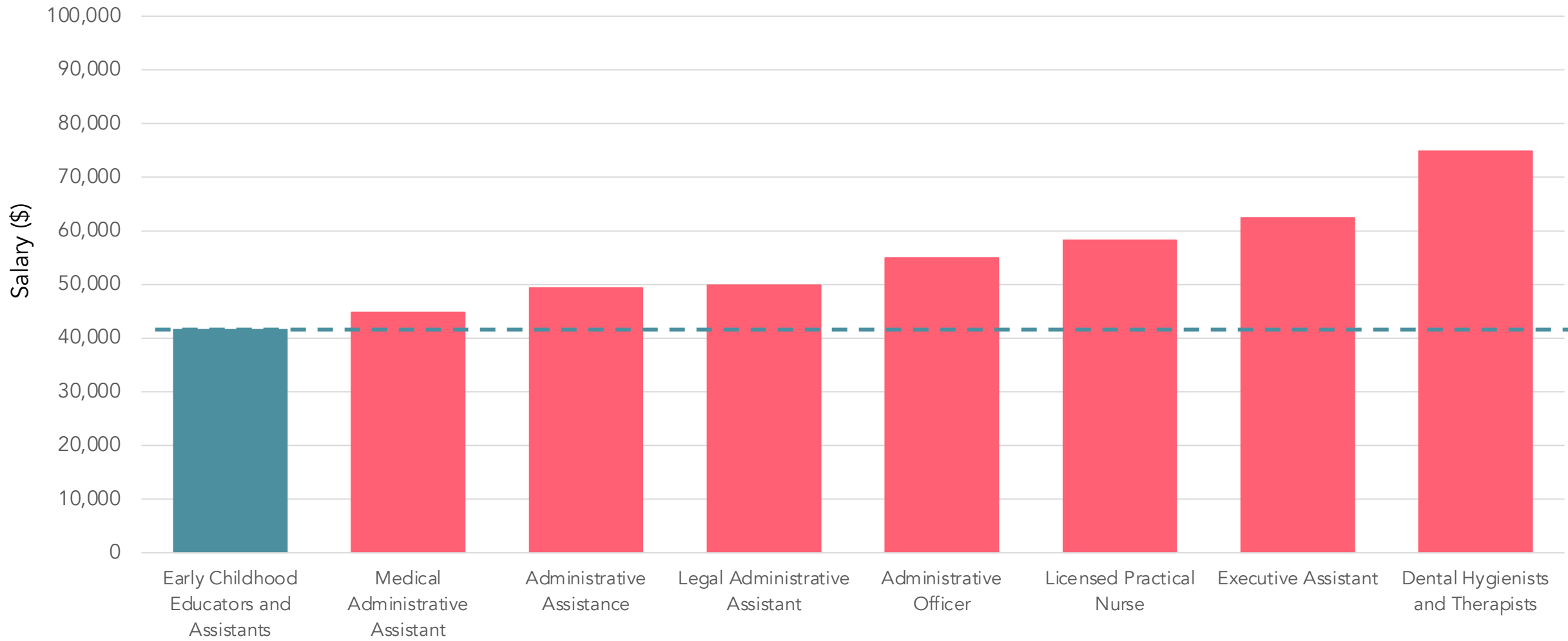
Median Hourly Wage

2021

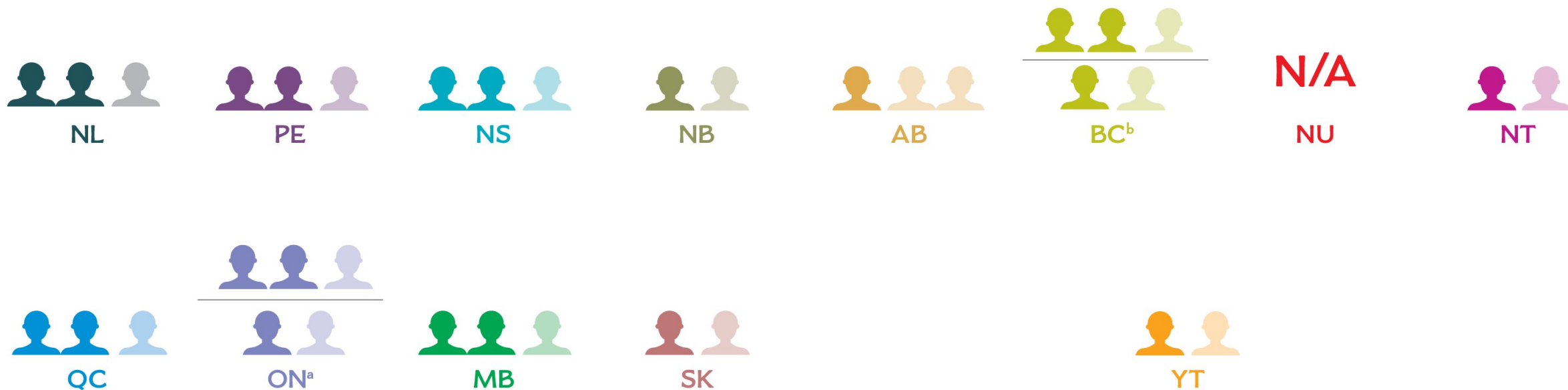
ECE salaries compared to *male* dominated professions



ECE salaries compared to other *female* dominated professions



RATIO OF QUALIFIED ECES TO UNQUALIFIED STAFF IN PRESCHOOL AGE GROUPS IN REGULATED CHILD CARE



a Two of three staff must hold qualifications for groups of 24; one of two must hold qualifications for groups of 16.

b Two of three staff must hold qualifications for groups of 9-12 children in centres serving children from 0 to <36 months; one of two staff must hold qualifications in centres serving children from 36 months to age 5.



Workforce Shortages in Regulated Child Care

1

Of the 57,594 ECEs registered with the Ontario CECE, 45% do not work in licensed child care.

2

Employment in licensed child care dropped 21% during the pandemic compared to 3% among all other workers.

3

32,000 additional educators are needed to meet the goal of serving a minimum of 59% of children 0-5 within the next 5 years.

Tale of Two Opportunities

1

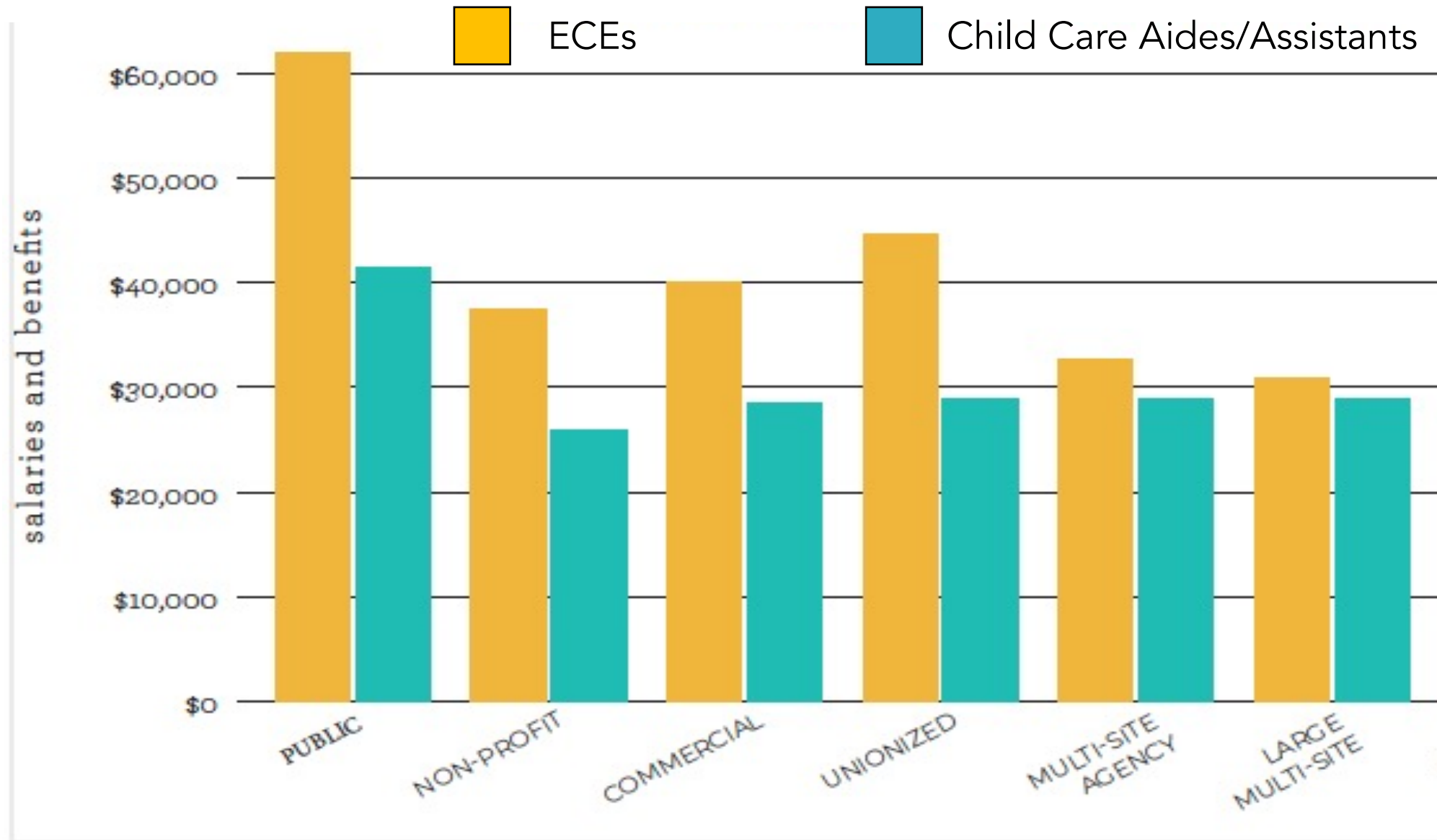
Almost half of the 57,000 educators registered with Ontario's College of ECEs do not work in licensed child care.

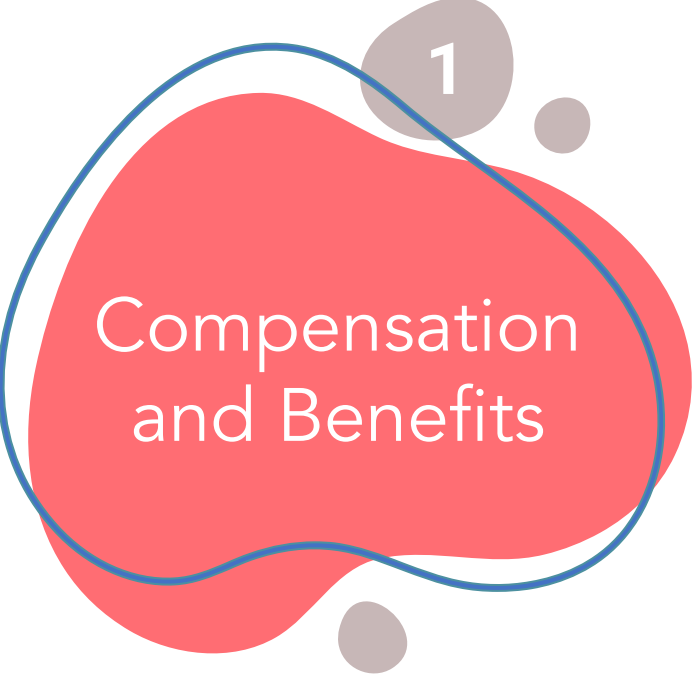
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Nova Scotia's universal pre-primary school program, recruited 1/3 of its workforce from certified ECEs who returned to the profession. Many moved back to N.S. to work in the program.



Average Annual Earnings by Centre Type (2018)





Compensation and Benefits

- Most jurisdictions have addressed gendered wage differentials through pay equity processes within their *public sector* workforce.
- Setting wages in regulated child care to mirror those of comparable positions in the public sector would validate the work and bring an immediate increase in earnings.
- In jurisdictions where the public sector comparators are regional governments or school authorities, pay equity would also address differences in the regional cost of living and extend incentives for those working in remote or underserved communities.
- Legislative change to address challenges of benefits/pension. ECEs and other child care employees could be brought into public sector pension and benefit plans. Alternatively, governments could take responsibility for establishing sector-wide plans, similar to what is available to teachers



2

Working Conditions

Financial incentives alone are insufficient enticements to attracting and retaining staff. Staff want decent pay and decent work, but they also want the support required to do their jobs well.

These include sufficient staffing, including staff to cover paid non-child contact time for the completion of professional responsibilities, reflection with colleagues, professional learning, and opportunities to provide input into decisions that affect classroom practices.



- Skilled supervision, leadership, and ongoing professional learning are the levers that promote quality child care.
- Supervisors also require opportunities to keep pace with the demands of their position. Their work is complex with more children living in difficult environments. Professional development in the areas of mental health, health and safety, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, Indigenous ways of learning and knowing, and anti-racism are required.

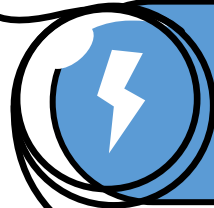
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Career Advancement

- Minimum requirements should be established that reflect foundational knowledge (credentialing) for all educator staff.

- A bachelor's degree with an early childhood education speciality with certification for lead teachers and centre directors should be required. Centre directors have challenging jobs from management, to financial literacy and viability

Final Thoughts



When high quality affordable child care is available, we see both increased maternal labour force participation (P. Fortin), and increased maternal work hours (E. Dhuey)



Without it, we see many women dropping out of the workforce, while others reduce working hours, losing ground on equity in the workplace



For children we see increased high school graduation rates, translating into higher lifelong earning, decreasing the pressure on the public purse, and maximizing future markets. We are approaching the smallest working age-cohort in over 50 years. Quality early learning matters to children, families, and our economic future. We must invest now in a qualified and valued workforce.

THANK YOU



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