

## Differences in Child Care Participation Between Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Families

Mila Kingsbury, Leanne Findlay, Rubab Arim, and Lan Wei

Mila Kingsbury holds a PhD in developmental psychology. Her research interests include healthy child development, adolescent mental health, and parenting. She is currently an analyst in the Child Health Section, Health Analysis Division, at Statistics Canada. Email: [mila.kingsbury@canada.ca](mailto:mila.kingsbury@canada.ca)

Leanne Findlay is a principal researcher with Statistics Canada. Her areas of expertise are population health data and healthy child development, with a specific interest in the health of vulnerable children and youth. She is also interested in mental health and correlates of positive mental health. Recently, Leanne has been involved in an extensive program of research on early learning and child care, with an emphasis on new data sources to address research gaps and inform ELCC policy initiatives. Email: [Leanne.findlay@canada.ca](mailto:Leanne.findlay@canada.ca)

Rubab Arim holds a PhD in human development, learning, and culture from the University of British Columbia. Her research expertise includes the use of population-based survey and administrative data to study policy-relevant issues for vulnerable populations, including children and youth and those with disabilities, with a particular focus on social determinants of health. She is currently a chief in the Social Analysis and Modelling Division at Statistics Canada. Email: [Rubab.Arim@canada.ca](mailto:Rubab.Arim@canada.ca)

Lan Wei holds a PhD in economics. His research interests include child well-being, child care, and household expenditure. He is currently an analyst in the Centre for Income and Socioeconomic Well-Being Statistics, Statistics Canada. Email: [lan.wei@canada.ca](mailto:lan.wei@canada.ca)

*This study used data from the Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA) and the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) to examine patterns of child care use among Canadian immigrant and nonimmigrant families. Overall, children from immigrant backgrounds were less likely to be in child care. When considering only those in child care, children from immigrant families were more likely to be in licensed care than those from nonimmigrant families. Parents of children with immigrant backgrounds indicated various reasons for not enrolling their child in child care. Ensuring access to child care may have a positive impact on immigrant families.*

**Key words:** *child care; families; immigration; data linkage*

As participation in the labour force among mothers of young children has increased, Canada has seen a corresponding increase in demand for child care (Moyser, 2017). According to prepandemic national estimates, 60% of Canadian children under the age of 6 participate in some form of nonparental child care (Findlay, 2019). The choice of child care arrangements is influenced by several factors, including maternal employment, parental education, income, values around education and child development, parental work schedules, and the presence of extended family members in or close to the home (Leseman, 2002). Child care needs, preferences, and barriers to care may differ for immigrant families in Canada as compared to their nonimmigrant counterparts (Charters et al., 2020; Cleveland & Forer, 2010). However, little is known about child care usage among this important Canadian subpopulation.

Immigrant families, defined here as those in which either parent immigrated to Canada within the past 10 years, represent a sizeable and growing portion of the Canadian population. It has been estimated that by 2036, between 38 and 50 percent of children under the age of 6 will have an immigrant background (Statistics Canada, 2019a). Data from the Canadian census suggest that immigrant parents are less likely than nonimmigrant parents to pay for child care in order to work (Charters et al., 2020). However, after adjusting for sociodemographic variables, including low income and maternal education, the gap between immigrant and nonimmigrant families was much

attenuated. Other research from the US also suggests that socioeconomic drivers of participation in child care may be particularly salient among immigrant families (Miller et al., 2014). Overall, these findings suggest that socioeconomic factors, particularly income, may drive the association between immigrant status and use of paid child care, as participation in child care may be influenced by accessibility features such as affordability (Leseman, 2002).

Immigration to Canada occurs via three main channels: economic application (based on possession of skills and experience deemed valuable for Canada's labour market), family reunification, and refugee resettlement. Although a high proportion of immigrants enter as economic applicants (i.e., they are highly educated, skilled, and healthy), children of immigrant families are more likely to live in poverty than their receiving-country counterparts (Beiser et al., 2002). The resettlement process is often a tumultuous period marked by challenges adapting to the language and culture of the host country, difficulty finding employment, lack of social support, and material deprivation (Beiser, 2005). Although Canada has an international reputation of multiculturalism and diversity, immigrants to Canada, especially racialized people, nonetheless report experiencing discrimination (Wilkes & Wu, 2019) which could negatively impact economic prospects. For example, women with immigrant backgrounds are particularly likely to be underemployed relative to their level of education (Khan & Watson, 2005; Man, 2004). However, some research suggests that after a decade of residence in Canada, the average income of immigrants to Canada surpasses the national average (Beiser et al., 2002). Nonetheless, even transient poverty and underemployment are likely to impact the child care needs and options of immigrant families.

Furthermore, immigrant families may be more likely to rely on unpaid care in order for parents to work. For example, immigrant families are more likely to have additional adult relatives living in the household, and may rely on these relatives for informal care (Charters et al., 2020; Cleveland & Forer, 2010; Goodbrand et al., 2017). In addition, cultural values surrounding childrearing and a desire to expose children to their native languages or culture may impact immigrant families' child care preferences (Obeng, 2007). However, little empirical work has examined both participation and barriers to participation in different forms of paid and unpaid child care among children of immigrant families in Canada.

The purpose of the present study was therefore to assess participation in various forms of child care among children from immigrant backgrounds in Canada compared to nonimmigrant families. This assessment includes an examination of families' use of various types of care, hours in care, and perceived barriers to use among those who were not using child care. Some consideration is given to regional differences in child care participation given that child care policy and use of child care varies across provinces and territories. In particular, Quebec's publicly funded universal child care program, initiated in 1997, is associated with higher participation in child care in Quebec (Findlay, 2019). Understanding the experiences of recent immigrants to Canada (that is, those who arrived in the past 10 years) with respect to child care is important for developing policies and curricula that adequately address the needs of this important Canadian subpopulation. For instance, awareness of any differences in types of care used or barriers to care for this subpopulation could highlight particular needs that should be considered in the ongoing development of a national system of child care (Department of Finance Canada, 2021).

## Method

### *Data source*

This study used data from the 2019 Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA), a nationally representative survey on child care for children under the age of 6 in Canada's ten provinces and three territories. Sampling was done in two stages. First, a random sample of parents/guardians was selected from an administrative

file of recipients of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). Next, one child younger than 6 years of age was selected at random as the target child for each of these CCB recipients, hereafter called the parent. It is estimated that this frame represents 96% of the population of children of all ages. Response rate was 52.7% in the provinces and 41.1% in the territories, resulting in an overall response rate of 50.3% (Statistics Canada, 2019c). Data was collected directly from survey respondents using either an electronic questionnaire or computer-assisted telephone interviewing.

To obtain family demographic information, SELCCA data was linked to the 2016 Census of Population, tax information from the 2017 T1 Family File (the most recent available at the time of the linkage), and the 1980–2017 Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB; Statistics Canada, 2021). The IMDB includes information on all immigrants who have landed in Canada since 1980 and have filed taxes with Canada Revenue Agency. Linkages were carried out for each SELCCA target child, the recipient of the CCB for the child, and the recipient's spouse. IMDB records were found for 20% of CCB recipients, 22% of spouses, and 0.001% of SELCCA children.<sup>1</sup> Linkage rates to the census were 55%, 87%, and 88% for the child, CCB recipient, and spouse, respectively.<sup>2</sup> Linkage to the tax file was completed for 95% of CCB recipients and spouses. Data for a total of  $N = 7,070$  SELCCA respondents was included in the analyses for the present study. Further details on the survey are available elsewhere (Statistics Canada, 2019c).

### Measures

**Outcomes.** The main outcome considered was use of any *regular nonparental child care* arrangement. Respondents were asked to indicate which of the following arrangements they usually used for the target child in the past three months: daycare centre, preschool, or centre de la petite enfance (CPE); care by a relative other than a parent; care by a nonrelative in the child's home (e.g., a nanny); family child care home (e.g., home-based daycare); before or after school program; other child care arrangement; no child care. Those who selected more than one form of child care were asked which they would consider the main arrangement. As secondary outcomes, we considered whether the main child care arrangement was *licensed* or *unlicensed* and *hours spent in child care* per week as reported by the parent.

Parents' *barriers to care* were measured by asking respondents who were using child care whether they had difficulty finding a child care arrangement. If "yes," respondents indicated which of the following difficulties they had encountered: affordable child care; finding licensed care; care available in your community; qualified care provider; care that meets your child's special needs due to disability or chronic illness; care that fits your work or study schedule; care that could accommodate more than one child in your family; other. Respondents who did *not* use child care were asked to indicate their reasons from the following list: unemployed; maternity, paternity, or parental leave; one of the parents decided to stay home with the child; shortage of places or waitlist; could not find licensed child care; adjusted work or study schedule to accommodate care needs; work or school schedules are unpredictable or variable; the cost of child care is too high; child care is located too far away; lack of transportation; lack of flexibility of hours of operations; services not adapted to child's special needs due to disability or chronic illness; child is in kindergarten; other.

**Immigrant status.** Family *immigrant status* was obtained from the IMDB; in line with previous research (Charters et al., 2020) we considered immigrant families as those in which the CCB recipient landed in Canada after 2009 (i.e., in the 10 years before SELCCA data was collected),

**Covariates.** Several sociodemographic variables were collected on the SELCCA: child *age* (<1 year; 1–3 years; 4–5 years), parent's *education* (high school; more than high school but less than bachelor's degree; bachelor's degree or higher), parent's *employment status* (working or looking for work vs. on leave or at home), child *Indigenous identity*

(yes vs. no), and *province*.

Information about family composition (single parent vs. dual parent) and family income was obtained from the tax file. Family *low income* status was determined using the census family after-tax low-income measure, which is based on family size and median family income for the year; more information is available elsewhere (Statistics Canada, 2019b). Information on residence in an urban centre (population of 1,000 or more) versus rural area was obtained from the census.

### Analysis

Using contingency tables, we compared the percentage of children from immigrant and nonimmigrant families using child care. Binary logistic regression analyses were conducted to predict use of child care from immigrant status, adjusting for all covariates. Among children in child care, binary logistic regression was used to predict type of child care (licensed v. unlicensed) and linear regression was used to predict hours spent in child care from immigrant status, adjusting for all covariates. Among children not in child care, reasons for not using child care were compared between immigrant and nonimmigrant families, using contingency tables. To account for the complex survey design, all analyses were conducted using bootstrap weights (Statistics Canada, 2019c).

## Results

Demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1. Notably, a higher proportion of immigrant families reported low income as compared to nonimmigrant families. Overall, participation in child care was lower among children of immigrant families than nonimmigrant families (52% vs. 61%; Table 2). When considering children who did participate in child care, children with an immigrant background were more likely to be enrolled in a daycare centre, preschool, or CPE as their main child care arrangement and less likely to use home daycare or relative care as the main arrangement than were children from nonimmigrant families (Table 3). For children in any child care, 81.8% of parents in immigrant families reported that their main child care arrangement was licensed (95% CI: 77.0, 85.8) compared to 70.7 % of parents from nonimmigrant families (95% CI: 68.5, 72.2). Sensitivity analysis suggested that this was the case in both Quebec (95.4% vs 90.1%) and the rest of Canada (75.9% vs. 62.8%). Children from immigrant families were in care for an average 33.3 hours per week (95% CI: 31.0, 35.6), which was greater than children from nonimmigrant families (29.9 hours/week; 95% CI: 29.2, 30.7).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (Weighted %), by Family Immigrant Background

Full Sample	Immigrant (unweighted n = 976)	Nonimmigrant (unweighted n = 6572)	Chi-sq	p (Chi-sq)
Child age			11.00*	0.0041
< 1 year	15.57	10.42		
1–3 years	50.53	54.23		
4–5 years	33.90	35.35		
Parent education			34.63*	<.0001
High school	21.46	17.79		
< Bachelor's	34.43	26.90		
Bachelor's	44.11	55.31		

Parent at work	51.80	49.57	52.23	1.37	0.2411
Child Indigenous identity	5.18	x	6.00	23.96*	<.0001
Low income	15.19	20.16	14.17	10.75*	0.001
Rural residence	2.35	F	2.80	47.81*	<.0001
Single-parent family	17.23	8.37	19.05	35.58*	<.0001

\* Significant chi-square (p < .05)

x Suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

F Too unreliable to be published (coefficient of variation >33.3)

Note: Nonimmigrant category includes those who landed in Canada prior to 2009

Table 2. Use of Any Child Care Arrangement, by Province

	Nonimmigrant (reference)			Immigrant			
	95% Confidence Limits			95% Confidence Limits			
	Weighted %	lower	upper	Weighted %	lower	upper	
Canada (pooled)	61.3	59.5	60.3	52.4	*	48.2	56.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	58.2	54.0	62.3	x			
Prince Edward Island	66.8	62.1	71.1	54.0		37.4	69.8
Nova Scotia	61.4	56.8	65.7	54.6	E	34.1	73.6
New Brunswick	62.2	57.0	67.2	43.0	E	23.2	65.4
Quebec	77.9	74.9	80.6	80.2		72.3	86.3
Ontario	55.0	51.4	58.4	47.0		39.5	54.6
Manitoba	55.5	50.0	60.9	26.2	E*	18	36.6
Saskatchewan	56.0	50.4	61.4	37.4	*	26.9	49.3
Alberta	56.1	51.5	60.6	47.6		38.8	56.5
British Columbia	59.5	55.2	63.7	47.4	*	37.3	57.6
Yukon	60.5	55.5	65.4	49.7		35.7	63.7
Northwest Territories	56.3	50.8	61.7	55.1	E	35.3	73.4
Nunavut	35.6	30.5	40.9	x			

\* Significantly different from the reference category (p < .05)

x Suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

E Estimate unreliable; to be interpreted with caution

Table 3. Main Type of Child Care Arrangement (Among Those in Any Type of Care), by Child Immigrant Background

	Nonimmigrant (reference category)			Immigrant			
	Weighted %	95% Confidence Limits		Weighted %	95% Confidence Limits		
		lower	upper		lower	upper	
Day care centre, preschool, or centre de la petite enfance (CPE)	47.3	45.1	49.4	58.7	*	53.1	63.9
Care by a relative other than a parent	18.6	16.9	20.4	14.1	*	10.7	18.2
Care by a nonrelative in the child's home	3.1	2.4	4.1	3.6	E	1.9	6.7
Family child care home	20.1	18.5	21.9	14.0	*	10.5	18.5
Before or after school program	8.6	7.4	9.9	7.9	E	5.3	11.7
Other	2.3	1.7	3.1	-	F	-	-

E Estimate unreliable; to be interpreted with caution

F Estimate too unreliable to publish (sampling error > .33)

\* Significantly different from reference category,  $p < .05$

Results of regression analyses suggested that after adjusting for all demographic factors, children from immigrant backgrounds were less likely to be in nonparental child care (OR = 0.47; 95% CI: 0.37, 0.61). However, sensitivity analysis suggested that while this was the case for the rest of Canada (OR = 0.47, 95% CI: 0.35, 0.62), the association was not significant for children living in Quebec (OR = 0.65 95% CI: 0.35, 1.22).

When considering only those in child care, children from immigrant backgrounds were more likely to be in licensed care than were children from nonimmigrant families (OR = 1.88; 95% CI: 1.35, 2.60) although immigrant status was not a significant predictor of number of hours in child care ( $B = 2.13, p = .054$ ).

Among children in child care, no significant differences were noted between immigrant and nonimmigrant families with respect to difficulty obtaining child care, and types of difficulties reported were mostly similar (Table 4). Among children not in child care, respondents from immigrant families were more likely to indicate that this was due to a decision to stay home with the child (20.2% vs. 16.5%), high cost of child care (15.1% vs. 9.2%), unemployment (11.5% vs. 5.3%; Table 5), the child being enrolled in kindergarten (8.8% vs. 5.7%), or a decision to adjust work or study schedules around child care needs (5.3% vs. 3.5%).

Table 4. Types of Difficulty Finding Child Care Among Parents of Children Enrolled in Care, by Immigrant Background

	Nonimmigrant (reference category)			Immigrant			
	Weighted %	95% Confidence Limits		Weighted %	95% Confidence Limits		
		lower	upper		lower	upper	
Affordable child care	48.0	44.3	51.7	49.7		40.9	58.4
Finding licensed care	28.4	25.2	31.7	23.4		16.2	30.7
Care available in their community	54.8	51.1	58.5	42.2	*	33.8	50.6

Qualified care provider	27.1	23.8	30.4	28.7	20.5	37.0
Finding the quality of care desired	36.0	32.5	39.4	44.8	36.2	53.3
Care meeting the child's special needs	3.5	E 2.3	4.8	x		
Care fitting work or study schedule	38.9	35.3	42.5	35.4	27.4	43.4
Care accommodating more than one child in family	17.5	14.5	20.4	10.4	E 4.2	16.7
Other	20.8	17.8	23.9	16.9	E 10.2	23.6

E Estimate unreliable; to be interpreted with caution

\* Significantly different from reference category,  $p < .05$

x Suppressed because the number of observations is too small ( $n < 10$ )

Table 5. Parent Reasons for Not Using Child Care, by Child Immigrant Background

	Nonimmigrant (reference category)			Immigrant		
	Weighted %	95% Confidence Limits lower upper		Weighted %	95% Confidence Limits lower upper	
Unemployed	5.3	4.4	6.2	11.5	* 8.6	14.4
Maternity/paternity/ parental leave	12.1	11.0	13.2	6.2	E* 4.1	8.4
Parent decided to stay home with child	16.5	15.0	17.9	20.2	* 16.8	23.6
Shortage of places or waiting list	2.4	1.8	3.8	3.9	E* 2.3	5.5
Parent(s) adjusted work or study schedule	3.5	2.8	4.1	5.3	E* 3.6	7.1
Cost of child care is too high	9.2	8.1	10.3	15.1	* 12.0	18.1
Child is in kindergarten	5.7	4.9	6.5	8.8	* 6.4	11.2
Other	7.3	6.3	8.4	9.0	6.6	11.4

E Estimate unreliable; to be interpreted with caution

\* Significantly different from reference category,  $p < .05$

## Discussion

In this nationally representative study of Canadian preschool-aged children, we found evidence for differences in child care use among families from immigrant and nonimmigrant backgrounds. Children from immigrant backgrounds were less likely to be in child care overall. When considering only children who were in child care, children from immigrant families were more likely to be in licensed care than those from nonimmigrant families. Among those not in child care, parents of children with an immigrant background indicated different reasons for not enrolling their child compared to non-immigrant parents. These findings coincide with other studies from Canada and the US which have also found that children in immigrant families are less likely to participate in nonparental child care than children from nonimmigrant families (Cleveland & Forer, 2010; Miller et al., 2014).

There are several reasons why the use of child care may differ between immigrant and nonimmigrant families. For

some, the cost of child care may be greater than they can afford. In our study, immigrant families were more likely to have a low income (one in five families had an income below the low-income threshold). Among those whose children were not in child care, a larger proportion of immigrant than nonimmigrant parents reported that they did not use child care because the cost of child care was too high, that they decided to stay home with the child or had rearranged their work/study schedule to accommodate child care, or that they did not use child care because they were unemployed. These findings are consistent with previous literature indicating that the cost of child care is a significant barrier faced by immigrant parents (Leseman, 2002; Morantz et al., 2012). Moreover, qualitative research suggests that in their countries of origin, many Canadian immigrant families had depended on child care by extended family members, which may have little or no cost. This option may not be available to recent immigrants after migration (Phan et al., 2015; Stewart et al., 2015).

Furthermore, many immigrants, and women in particular, face significant challenges obtaining work due to the fact that foreign qualifications are often devalued (Khan & Watson, 2005; Man, 2004). Faced with a choice between low-paying work for which they are overqualified and staying home with children, many immigrant mothers may choose to stay home and save on child care costs. Evidence from the Canadian census suggests that gaps in paid child care usage between immigrant and nonimmigrant families narrow over time after arrival in Canada (Charters et al., 2020), perhaps corresponding to parents finding employment more commensurate with their qualifications (Picot et al., 2016). Our sample, however, considered relatively recent immigrants to Canada (i.e., landed in the past 10 years).

Taken together, these findings suggest that improving access to affordable child care for immigrant families may have a positive impact on labour force participation (Connelly, 1992; Powell, 1997). Indeed, comparative research suggests that the gap in labour force participation and earnings for women is largest in countries with the weakest child care policies (Harkness & Waldfogel, 2003). In the present study, results of a sensitivity analysis suggested that the difference in child care usage between immigrant and nonimmigrant families was not statistically significant in Quebec, which introduced a universal child care policy for children under 12 in 2001 (Kohen et al., 2008). This finding suggests that when affordable child care is readily available, immigrant families use child care at similar rates to nonimmigrant families. Recently, the Canadian federal government announced the creation of a national child care strategy with investments of \$30 billion over the next five years, aimed at reducing the cost of child care to an average of \$10 per day for all regulated child care spaces in Canada (Department of Finance Canada, 2021). The findings of the present study may provide insight in the development of child care programs that are accessible and affordable for all Canadian families, with a focus on those who have historically faced barriers to care.

Of note, some research from Quebec (Guay et al., 2018) suggests that first-generation immigrant children (i.e., those born outside of Canada) are less likely to attend early childhood education compared to second-generation immigrant children (i.e., those born in Canada but whose parents were born elsewhere). Due to the difference of two years between immigration (IMDB) records and SELCCA collection, first-generation immigrant children may have been underrepresented in our sample. The experience of families who immigrate with children may differ meaningfully from those whose children are born in Canada, and may be reflected in their child care arrangements. In the abovementioned study, Guay and colleagues reported that parents of first-generation immigrant children were disproportionately likely to report that they were not able to find available childcare spaces for their children (Guay et al., 2018). Lack of established social networks, lack of ties to the host community, and language barriers may present significant barriers to accessing childcare (Brandon, 2004) and may disproportionately affect more recent immigrants to Canada, including parents of first-generation immigrant children.

In the present study, participation in licensed care, including daycare centres, preschools, and centres de la petite



enfranchise, was higher among children from immigrant families, even after adjusting for important selection factors that might influence child care participation. One possible explanation may be the use of subsidized child care among low-income families. In almost all provinces, only regulated child care centres and licensed child care homes are eligible for subsidy (Kozicka, 2016), thus greater use of these child care centres among immigrant families may reflect greater use of subsidized child care. However, information on use of subsidized child care was not captured by the SELCCA. Of note, the association between immigrant background and licensed child care was significant even after adjustment for covariates including low-income status. This finding may indicate that need for affordable child care exists even above the low-income threshold. Alternately, parents in immigrant families may select licensed care for other reasons related to educational values or concern for child care quality.

The cultural context of child care offers another explanation for differences in child care use by nonimmigrant and recently immigrated parents. When selecting child care, many immigrant parents prioritize language instruction—either instruction in their native language or exposure to official languages—as well as cultural sensitivity (Obeng, 2007; Rose & Chicoine, 1991). Early childhood education in Canada is largely framed by European-American philosophies of development (Massing et al., 2013), which may alienate immigrant parents. Lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of educators can lead to conflict and dissatisfaction for parents (Bernhard et al., 1998). The experience of discrimination on the part of immigrants to Canada, especially racialized people, has been shown to negatively impact trust in Canada's institutions and authorities (Wilkes & Wu, 2019). These experiences of conflict and discrimination and ensuing lack of trust may represent significant barriers to child care for immigrant families, and may be one reason many immigrant parents opt to keep their child home rather than enrol them in child care.

In aiming to make child care inclusive of all Canadian children, a move away from centering the European-American experience has been recommended (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018). Typical frameworks of multiculturalism remain rooted in Eurocentric norms, preaching tolerance and inclusivity of different cultures while still treating them as “other.” In contrast, a move toward the decolonization or unsettling of child care calls for reexamining and questioning normative practices and evaluation standards in early childhood education (Kinard et al., 2021; Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018). When culture is fully integrated into pedagogy, children are encouraged to enact and enrich their own cultural knowledge while simultaneously gaining competencies within the dominant culture (Massing et al., 2013). In practice, this may involve, for example, integrating non-European cultural objects into child care spaces to allow children to incorporate home knowledge into play-based learning, or the introduction of language facilitators to include instruction in home languages (Massing et al., 2013).

### **Strengths, limitations, and future directions**

Strengths of the present study include the use of a large, representative sample of Canadian preschool-aged children and the value of using linked administrative data sets to explore the socioeconomic correlates of child care use for immigrant and nonimmigrant families. However, the results should be interpreted in the context of certain limitations. First, though we examined broad differences between immigrant and nonimmigrant families, the immigrant experience is certainly not universal, and factors such as culture, language, and country of origin may impact child care decisions (Cleveland & Forer, 2010). Unfortunately, sample sizes do not allow for disaggregation by country of origin using the SELCCA data. Second, although we considered several sociodemographic correlates, including low income, maternal work status, and maternal education, many of these factors were assessed at different time points from the child care information collected by the SELCCA. It is therefore possible that the sociodemographic data drawn from the census (e.g., urban/rural residence) and tax file (e.g., family composition,

family low-income status) may have changed between the time of census collection and SELCCA data collection.

Third, although the SELCCA is considered a nationally representative sample of children aged 0 to 5, it is possible that individuals who responded to the survey differ from those who do not. Survey sample weights were generated to account for nonresponse based on province/territory, number of children, household income and child age (estimated from the CCB file and the Labour Force Survey demographic counts). However, other differences that are particularly relevant to this domain of research or this subpopulation, such as primary language spoken in the home or child care preferences, may influence child care use but cannot be examined through attrition-type analyses. These results should thus be interpreted as a first step in exploring child care among immigrant and nonimmigrant families.

Fourth, parents reported on their use of licensed versus unlicensed care, an aspect of child care which may not be accurately reported by parents. However, a recent study that examined and validated parent-reported licensed child care use found that the majority of parents were accurate in their knowledge of whether the care was licensed or unlicensed (Hill & Findlay, under review). Finally, although we found differences between immigrant and nonimmigrant families with respect to use of licenced versus unlicensed care, we were unable to assess differences in the *quality* of child care arrangements in the present study. Child care quality is an important predictor of child outcomes (Mashburn et al., 2008), particularly among disadvantaged children (Geoffroy et al., 2012; McCartney et al., 2007). Future studies should examine this important aspect of child care.

## Conclusions

The present study provides a descriptive analysis of the use of child care by Canadian families. Results suggest that patterns of child care use (and nonuse) are different for immigrant and nonimmigrant families in Canada. These results are descriptive in nature but highlight the need for future research in this area to understand the barriers to care that immigrants to Canada may face. Taken together, the differences found in types of care used and the reasons for not using child care suggest that socioeconomic considerations such as employment and income may drive this association. However, families who had recently immigrated to Canada were less likely to use child care even after adjustment for low-income status and parental employment. Access to child care for families who have settled in Canada in the past 10 years, with particular attention to providing culturally sensitive care, may facilitate child care usage and labour force participation for these Canadian families.

---

1 Immigrants arriving after 2017 would not have been identified by this linkage.

2 Children born after the census collection date could not be identified via record linkage. In these cases, we relied on linkages for CCB recipients and their spouses.

## References

- Beiser, M. (2005). The health of immigrants and refugees in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96, S30-S44. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03403701>
- Beiser, M., Hou, F., Hyman, I., & Tousignant, M. (2002). Poverty, family process, and the mental health of immigrant children in Canada. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92, 220–227. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.92.2.220>
- Bernhard, J. K., Lefebvre, M. L., Kilbride, K. M., Chud, G., & Lange, R. (1998). Troubled relationships in early childhood education; Parent-teacher interactions in ethnoculturally diverse child care settings. *Early Education and Development*, 9, 5–28. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed0901\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed0901_1)
- Brandon, P. D. (2004). The child care arrangements of preschool-age children in immigrant families in the United States. *International Migration*, 42(1), 65–87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0020-7985.2004.00274.x>
- Charters, T., Ng, E., & Guèvremont, A. (2020). *Participation in paid child care among immigrant and non-immigrant families*. Working paper. Statistics Canada.
- Cleveland, G., & Forer, B. (2010). *Child care use and child development in immigrant, lone mother, rural, and official language minority families in Canada*. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. <http://www.childcarepolicy.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Child-Care-Use-and-Child-Development.pdf>
- Connelly, R. (1992). The effect of child care costs on married women's labor force participation. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 74(1), 83–90. <https://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:tpr:restat:v:74:y:1992:i:1:p:83-90>
- Department of Finance Canada. (2021). *Budget 2021: A Canada-wide early learning and child care plan*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2021/04/budget-2021-a-canada-wide-early-learning-and-child-care-plan.html>
- Findlay, L. (2019). Early learning and child care for children aged 0 to 5 years: A provincial/territorial portrait. *Economic Insights*, Catalogue no. 11-626-X No. 099. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2019013-eng.htm>
- Geoffroy, M. C., Séguin, J. R., Lacourse, É., Boivin, M., Tremblay, R. E., & Côté, S. M. (2012). Parental characteristics associated with childcare use during the first 4 years of life: Results from a representative cohort of Québec families. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 103, 76–80. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03404073>
- Goodbrand, P., Humphrey, T., & Gondek, J. (2017). Relatives or rentals? Secondary suites through a multigenerational family lens. *The Canadian Geographer*, 61, 525–539. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12399>
- Guay, D., Laurin, I., Léonard, M., Fournier, M., & Bigras, N. (2018). L'Effet du parcours éducatif préscolaire des enfants issus de l'immigration sur leur développement à la maternelle: Résultats de l'Enquête Montréalaise sur l'Expérience Préscolaire des enfants de maternelle (EMEP, 2012). *Centre intégré Universitaire de Santé et de Services Sociaux du Centre-Sud-de-L'Île-de-Montréal*, 3, 1–13. <https://archipel.uqam.ca/12022/1/fascicule%203%20juillet%202018.pdf>
- Harkness, S., & Waldfogel, J. (2003). The family gap in pay: Evidence from seven industrialized countries. *Research in Labor Economics*, 22, 369–413. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-9121\(03\)22012-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-9121(03)22012-4)
- Hill, S., & Findlay, L. (under review). Comparing parents' reported use of licensed care to confirmed licensed child care locations across Canada.
- Khan, S., & Watson, J. C. (2005). The Canadian immigration experiences of Pakistani women: Dreams confront reality. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 18(4), 307–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070500386026>
- Kinard, T., Gainer, J., Valdez-Gainer, N., Volk, D., & Long, S. (2021). Interrogating the “gold standard”: Play-based early childhood education and perpetuating white supremacy. *Theory Into Practice*, 60, 322–332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2021.1911587>
- Kohen, D., Dahinten, V. S., Khan, S., & Hertzman, C. (2008). Child care in Quebec: Access to a universal program. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 99, 451–455. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF03403774>

- Kozicka, P. (2016, October 6). Child-care subsidies: What parents in every province need to know. *Global News*. <https://globalnews.ca/news/2985338/child-care-subsidies-what-parents-in-every-province-need-to-know/>
- Leseman, P. (2002). Early childhood education and care for children from low-income or minority backgrounds. OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/1960663.pdf>
- Man, G. (2004). Gender, work and migration: Deskillling Chinese immigrant women in Canada. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 27(2), 135–148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2004.06.004>
- Mashburn, A. J., Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T., Barbarin, O., Bryant, D., Burchinal, M., Early, D. M., Howes, C. (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children's development of academic, language, and social skills. *Child Development*, 79, 732–749. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01154.x>
- Massing, C., Kirova, A., & Hennig, K. (2013). The role of first language facilitators in redefining parent involvement: newcomer families' funds of knowledge in an intercultural preschool program. *Canadian Children*, 38(2), 4–13. <https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs.v38i2.15445>
- McCartney, K., Dearing, E., Taylor, B., & Bub, K. (2007). Quality child care supports the achievement of low-income children: Direct and indirect pathways through caregiving and the home environment. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 28, 411–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01154.x>
- Miller, P., Votruba-Drzal, E., Coley, R. L., & Koury, A. S. (2014). Immigrant families' use of early childcare: Predictors of care type. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 484–498. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.05.011>
- Morantz, G., Rousseau, C., Banerji, A., Martin, C., & Heymann, J. (2012). Resettlement challenges faced by refugee claimant families in Montreal: Lack of access to child care. *Child & Family Social Work*, 18, 318–328. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2012.00848.x>
- Moyser, M. (2017). Women and paid work. *Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report*. Catalogue no. 89-503-X. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14694-eng.pdf>
- Obeng, C. S. (2007). Immigrants families and childcare preferences: Do immigrants' cultures influence their childcare decisions? *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34, 259–264. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-006-0132-9>
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., & Taylor, A. (Eds.) (2015). *Unsettling the colonial places and spaces of early childhood education*. Routledge.
- Phan, M. B., Banerjee, R., Deacon, L., & Taraky, H. (2015). Family dynamics and the integration of professional immigrants in Canada. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(13), 2061–2080. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1045461>
- Picot, G., Hou, F., & Qiu, H. (2016). The human capital model of selection and immigrant economic outcomes. *International Migration*, 54, 73–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12235>
- Powell, L. M. (1997). The impact of child care costs on the labour supply of married mothers: Evidence from Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Economics*, 30(3), 577–594. <https://doi.org/10.2307/136234>
- Rose, D., & Chicoine, N. (1991). Access to school daycare services: Class, family, ethnicity, and space in Montreal's old and new inner city. *Geoforum*, 22, 185–201. [https://www.academia.edu/26611587/Access\\_to\\_school\\_daycare\\_services\\_Class\\_family\\_ethnicity\\_and\\_space\\_in\\_Montreal\\_s\\_old\\_and\\_new\\_inner\\_city](https://www.academia.edu/26611587/Access_to_school_daycare_services_Class_family_ethnicity_and_space_in_Montreal_s_old_and_new_inner_city)
- Souto-Manning, M., & Rabadi-Raol, A. (2018). (Re)Centering quality in early childhood education: Toward intersectional justice for minoritized children. *Review of Research in Education*, 42, 203–225. <https://doi.org/10.31020091732X18759550>
- Statistics Canada. (2019a). Children with an immigrant background: Bridging cultures. Census in brief [Internal document], Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016015. Ministry of Industry. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016015/98-200-x2016015-eng.cfm>
- Statistics Canada. (2019b). Technical reference guide for the annual income estimates for census families, individuals and seniors: T1 family file, final estimates, 2017. Catalogue no. 72-212-X. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/72-212-X>

- Statistics Canada. (2019c). Surveys and statistical programs: Survey on early learning and child care arrangements. <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5287>
- Statistics Canada. (2021). Longitudinal immigration database (IMDB). <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5057>
- Stewart, M., Dennis, C. L., Kariwo, M., Kushner, K. E., Letourneau, N., Makumbe, K., Makwarimba, E., & Shizha, E. (2015). Challenges faced by refugee new parents from Africa in Canada. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 17*(4), 1146–1156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-014-0062-3>
- Wilkes, R., & Wu, C. (2019). Immigration, discrimination, and trust: A simply complex relationship. *Frontiers in Sociology, 4*, article 32. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2019.00032/full>