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Report | February 2025

The Early Care and Education Workforce

A National Snapshot From NSECE Data

By Yoonjeon Kim and Lea J.E. Austin

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The Early Care and Education Workforce

A National Snapshot From NSECE Data

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Editor: Deborah Meacham

About CSCCE

Founded in 1999, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) is the national leader in early care and education workforce research and policy. We act on the premise that educators should be valued, respected, and guaranteed economic dignity and that the provision of early care and education is a public responsibility.

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Building on the 2024 Index

This report extends the analysis and themes from the About the Early Childhood Workforce section in the most recent edition of CSCCE's *Early Childhood Workforce Index* (McLean et al., 2024). Given the substantial overlap in content, some data points and language from the chapter appear verbatim in this report, with additional analysis and interpretation to further examine the shifts in workforce size and disparities within the early care and education workforce.

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Introduction

The early care and education (ECE) workforce plays a crucial role in supporting young children's development during a formative period in their lives. Despite the essential nature of this work, the ECE field is marked by low wages, limited support, and persistent disparities, leaving many educators without adequate resources to thrive professionally (McLean et al., 2024; Whitebook et al., 2014).

This report offers an overview of the ECE workforce in the United States based on nationally representative data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE).[1] We begin by examining changes in workforce size between 2012 and 2019, offering insight into the shifts occurring at both program and field levels. We then present key demographic characteristics of the workforce across settings and job roles using 2019 data to provide a snapshot of the ECE workforce. Throughout the report, disparities across racial and ethnic groups are highlighted, showing how educators of color face multiple systemic barriers, including overrepresentation in under-resourced settings, limited access to educational opportunities, and inconsistent rewards for credentials.[2]

Reliable, comprehensive, and up-to-date data are essential for informing policies and practices that can provide timely support for the ECE workforce and address systemic inequities (Whitebook et al., 2018a). This report uses data collected prior to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a drastic decline in the ECE workforce. While recent data suggest that workforce numbers are now rebounding to pre-pandemic levels, nationally representative datasets will be critical for tracking these trends. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) will continue to examine these developments and provide insights into the evolving ECE workforce as the NSECE 2024 data become available.

[1] NSECE data includes information from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

[2] This report reflects findings at a national level. Collecting and examining workforce data at the state and local levels remains crucial for obtaining a more detailed and context-specific understanding, which is essential for informed policymaking and planning at those levels.

National Survey of Early Care and Education Data

A nationally representative survey, the 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) provides the most up-to-date information on the early care and education workforce in the United States that can be broken down by setting and job role. The NSECE represents teaching staff employed in center-based programs, including programs sponsored by public school districts or funded through Head Start.

The NSECE also covers providers in home-based settings serving children under age 13, distinguishing between "listed" and "unlisted" home-based providers. "Listed" providers are defined as individuals appearing on state or national lists of early care and education services, such as licensed, regulated, license-exempt, or registered home-based providers. "Unlisted" providers, who do not appear on local, state, or national lists of early care and education services, are individuals who regularly care for one or more children who are not their own for five or more hours per week in a home-based setting. While the NSECE also collects data from unlisted providers who are unpaid, we dropped this segment of the workforce in our analysis, focusing only on those who are paid to care for and educate young children. We recognize, however, that unpaid individuals fulfill an important role in the lives of children and families and provide an essential service to our nation (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2022).

Drawing from this data, we present information on the more than 1.3 million center-based teaching staff and close to 900,000 paid home-based providers (listed and unlisted) who regularly serve children birth to age five (providers serving school-age children *only* are dropped from our analysis). We provide comparisons between NSECE data from 2012 and 2019 to examine shifts in workforce size during this time. Sample sizes in 2012 data are approximately 4,800 center-based teaching staff, 3,800 listed home-based providers, and 430 unlisted home-based providers. In 2019 data, there are about 4,700 center-based teaching staff, 4,000 listed home-based providers, and 300 unlisted home-based providers. For details on the measures used in our study, see **Appendix 1**.

Shifts in the ECE Workforce: 2012 and 2019

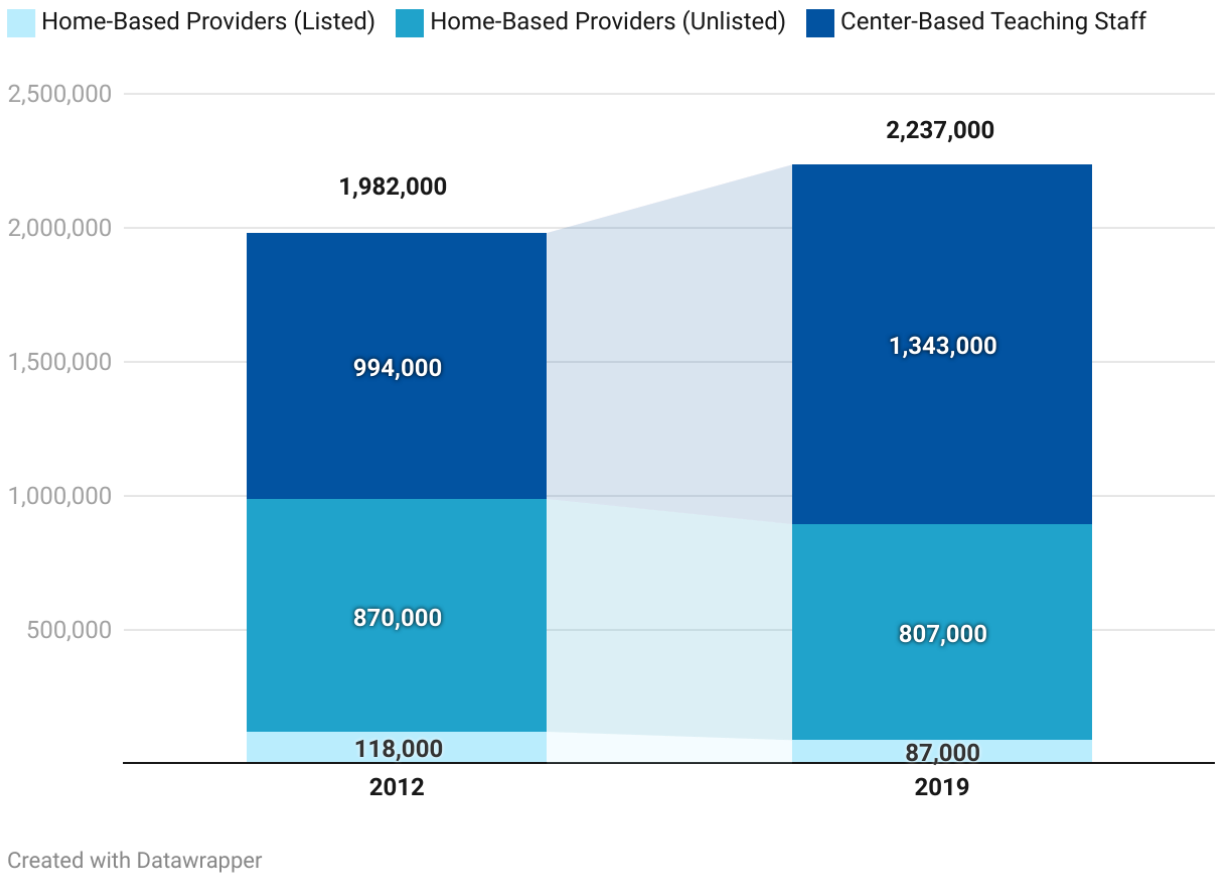
Changes in Workforce Size Across Settings and Job Roles

The overall size of the early care and education workforce increased about 13 percent, from about 2 million in 2012 to more than 2.2 million in 2019 (**Figure 1**). However, the

changes in workforce size varied across the different settings. Center-based settings experienced an increase of about 349,000 teaching staff, representing a 35-percent increase. In contrast, the number of family child care (FCC) providers working in home-based settings declined during this period. In 2019, there were approximately 31,000 fewer listed home-based providers and about 63,000 fewer unlisted home-based providers compared to 2012, representing a 26-percent decline among listed providers and a 7-percent decline among paid unlisted providers.[3] This finding follows and extends the decline of FCC programs over the past 20 years (National Association for Regulatory Administration, 2017; National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2020).

Figure 1. Estimated Size of the Early Care and Education Workforce, By Setting

United States, 2012 and 2019



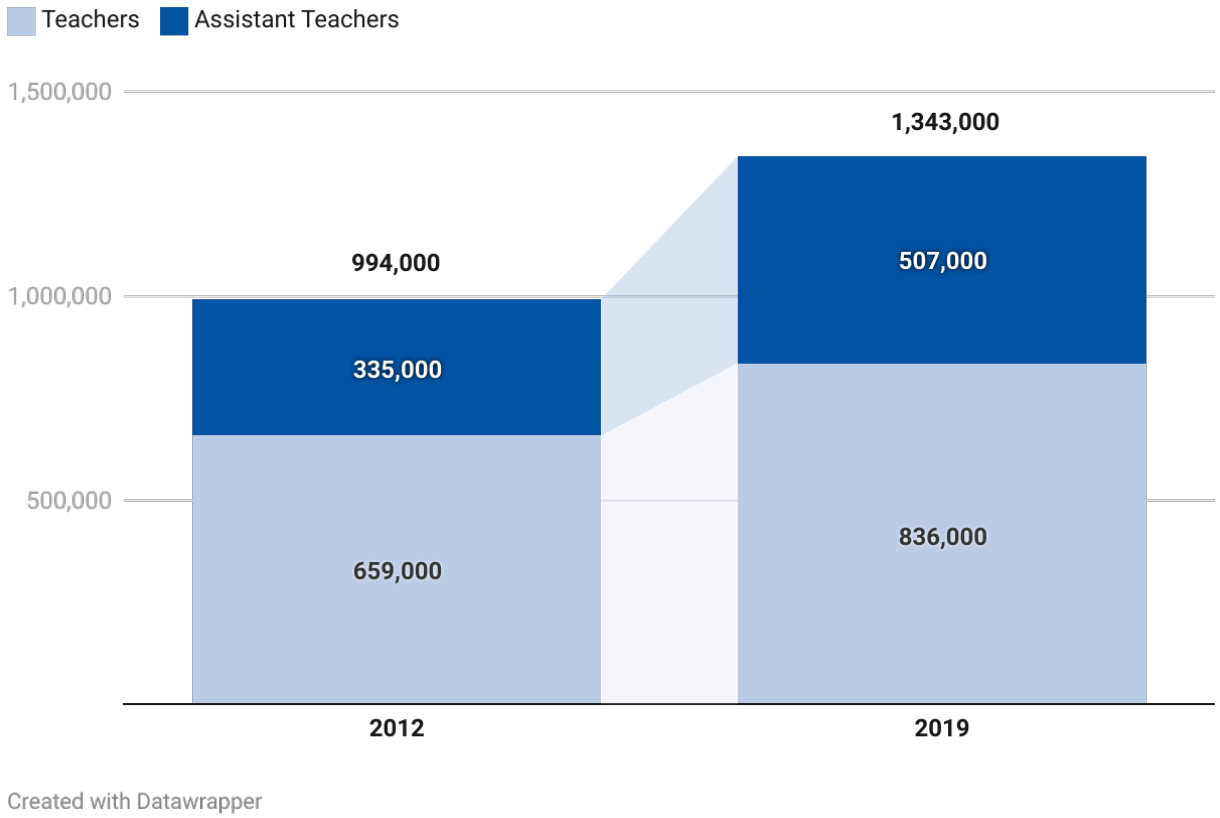
Center-based teaching staff N=4,791 in 2012 and N=4,661 in 2019
Listed home-based providers N=3,806 in 2012 and N=4,024 in 2019
Unlisted home-based providers N=429 in 2012 and N=305 in 2019
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2012 and 2019 data.

[3] See **Appendix 1** for more details on the measures used for this study.

When examined by job roles within center-based settings, between 2012 and 2019 approximately 172,000 assistant teachers were added, along with about 177,000 teachers. Proportionally, the number of assistant teachers increased by 51 percent, compared to a 27-percent increase in the number of teachers during this period (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2. Estimated Size of Center-Based Teaching Staff, By Job Role

United States, 2012 and 2019



Center-based teaching staff N=4,791 in 2012 and N=4,661 in 2019
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2012 and 2019 data.

Changes in Workforce Size and Age of Children Served in Center-Based Settings

Depending on the center or classroom setup, teaching staff may work exclusively with children birth to age three, exclusively with children age three to five, or with mixed-age groups. Between 2012 and 2019, there was a more than threefold increase in the number of teaching staff—both assistant teachers and teachers—working with mixed-age groups: from 87,000 to 318,000 (see **Table 1**).

Teaching staff working with other age groups also increased in number, amounting to an increase of about 14 percent in those working exclusively with children under age three (from 342,000 in 2012 to 391,000 in 2019) and an increase of about 10 percent in early educators working exclusively with children age three to five (from 565,000 in 2012 to 621,000 in 2019). When examined across job roles, increases for the two age groups were much more pronounced among assistant teachers than teachers.

Table 1. Estimated Size of Center-Based Teaching Staff Serving Different Age Groups, By Job Role

United States, 2012 and 2019

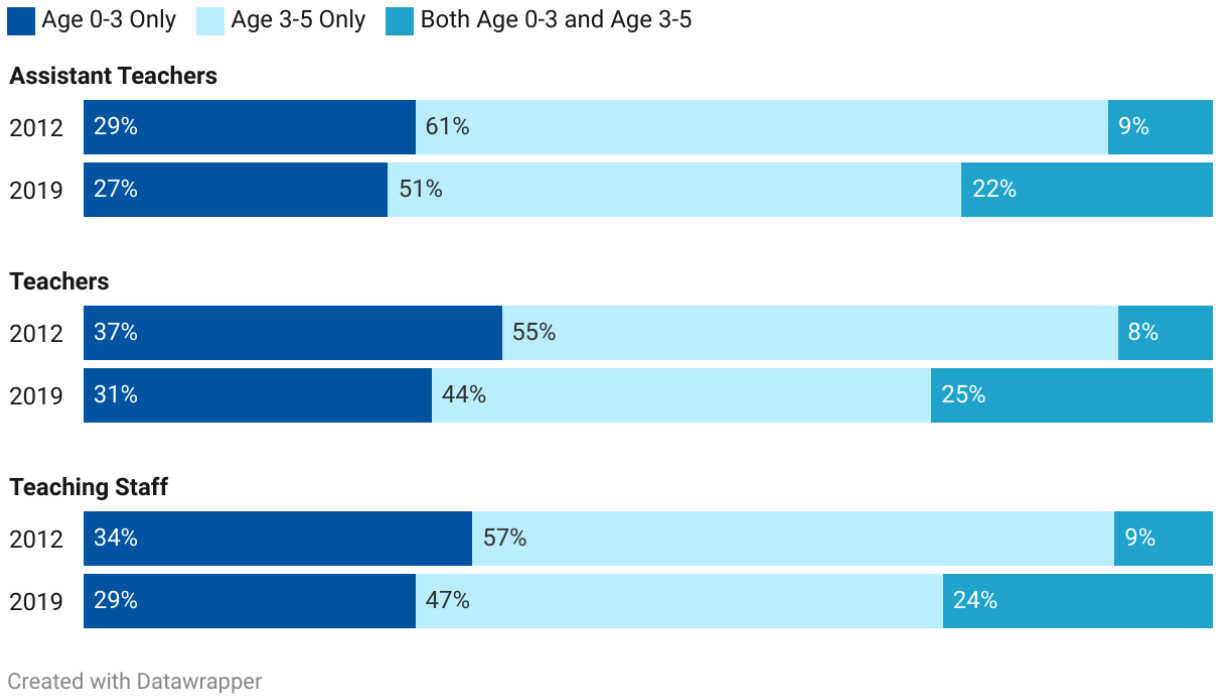
	N	Age 0-3 Only	Age 3-5 Only	Both Age 0-3 and Age 3-5	Total
Assistant Teachers					
2012	1,631	98,000	206,000	31,000	335,000
2019	1,605	135,000	254,000	111,000	500,000
Teachers					
2012	3,160	244,000	360,000	56,000	659,000
2019	3,056	256,000	367,000	207,000	830,000
All Teaching Staff					
2012	4,791	342,000	565,000	87,000	994,000
2019	4,661	391,000	621,000	318,000	1,330,000

Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2012 and 2019 data.

The actual number of teaching staff working with each age group increased, as did the proportion of teaching staff working with mixed ages; however, the proportion of teaching staff working exclusively with one age group decreased (see **Figure 3**).

Figure 3. Proportions of Center-Based Teaching Staff Serving Different Age Groups, By Job Role

United States, 2012 and 2019



Center-based assistant teachers N=1,631 in 2012 and N=1,605 in 2019
Center-based teachers N=3,160 in 2012 and N=3,056 in 2019
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2012 and 2019 data.

Changes in Workforce Size Across Program Sponsorship and Funding in Center-Based Settings

Program sponsorship and funding are key drivers of the resources available for compensation and other workplace supports for early educators. Between 2012 and 2019, the center-based workforce in Head Start programs saw the largest increase, both in terms of total number of teaching staff added (155,000) and growth rate (108 percent), as shown in **Table 2**.

School-sponsored programs experienced the lowest rate of growth (5 percent). Notably, while 7,000 aide/assistant teaching jobs in these settings were added between 2012 and 2019, teacher positions *decreased* by 3,000 during the same period. Public pre-kindergarten

(pre-K) and other centers experienced substantial growth across teaching roles and in their overall growth rate (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Estimated Size of Center-Based Teaching Staff Across Program Sponsorship and Funding, By Job Role

United States, 2012 and 2019

	Assistant Teachers	Teachers	All Teaching Staff
# of Teaching Staff, 2012	N=1,631	N=3,160	N=4,791
School-sponsored	29,000	32,000	61,000
Head Start	60,000	83,000	143,000
Public pre-K	70,000	138,000	208,000
Other	176,000	406,000	582,000
All centers	**335,000**	**659,000**	**994,000**
# of Teaching Staff, 2019	N=1,605	N=3,056	N=4,661
School-sponsored	36,000	28,000	64,000
Head Start	112,000	186,000	298,000
Public pre-K	92,000	155,000	247,000
Other	260,000	461,000	721,000
All centers	**500,000**	**830,000**	**1,330,000**
Changes in # of teaching staff between 2012 and 2019			
School-sponsored	+7,000	-4,000	+3,000
Head Start	+53,000	+103,000	+155,000
Public pre-K	+21,000	+17,000	+39,000
Other	+84,000	+55,000	+139,000
All centers	**+165,000**	**+171,000**	**+336,000**
Changes in % of teaching staff between 2012 and 2019			
School-sponsored	+24%	-13%	+5%
Head Start	+88%	+124%	+108%
Public pre-K	+30%	+12%	+19%
Other	+48%	+14%	+24%
All centers	**+49%**	**+26%**	**+34%**

Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2012 and 2019 data.

ECE Workforce Demographics

In the following section, we examine demographic backgrounds of early educators across different settings and job roles using data from the 2019 NSECE. Understanding where educators work within the ECE field is important, as program settings and job roles significantly influence both compensation and work environments.

Gender

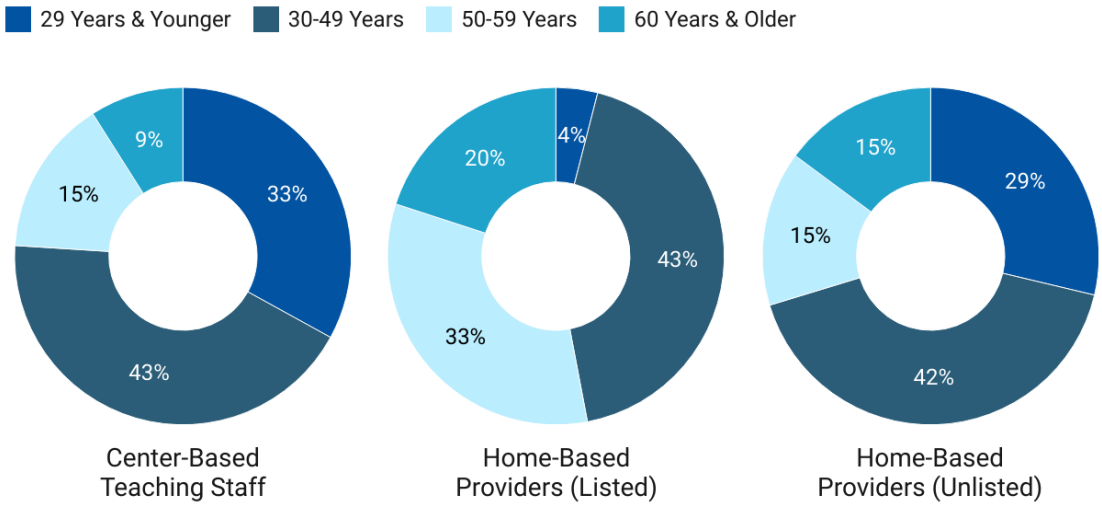
The ECE workforce continues to be predominantly female, as documented in previous reports (Whitebook et al., 2018b). About 98 percent of center-based teaching staff are women. The NSECE home-based provider surveys did not include questions about providers' gender.

Age

Early educators age 30 to 49 make up about 40 percent of the workforce across all settings (**Figure 4**). Listed home-based providers tend to be older than those in center-based and unlisted home-based settings.

Figure 4. Age of the Early Care and Education Workforce, By Setting

United States, 2019



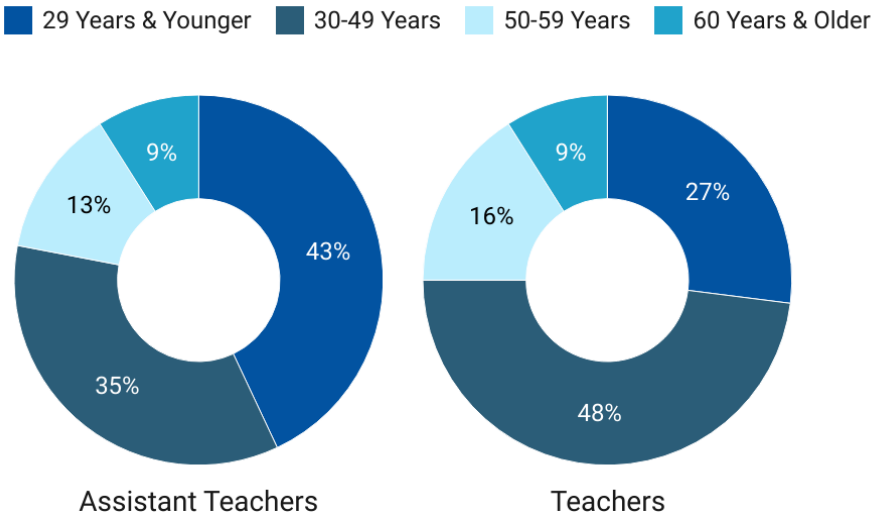
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Center-based teaching staff N=4,455
Listed home-based providers N=3,639
Unlisted home-based providers N=290
Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

Among center-based providers, educators in assistant teacher roles tend to be younger than those holding a teacher position (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5. Age of Center-Based Teaching Staff, By Job Role

United States, 2019



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Center-based assistant teachers N=1,526
Center-based teachers N=2,929
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

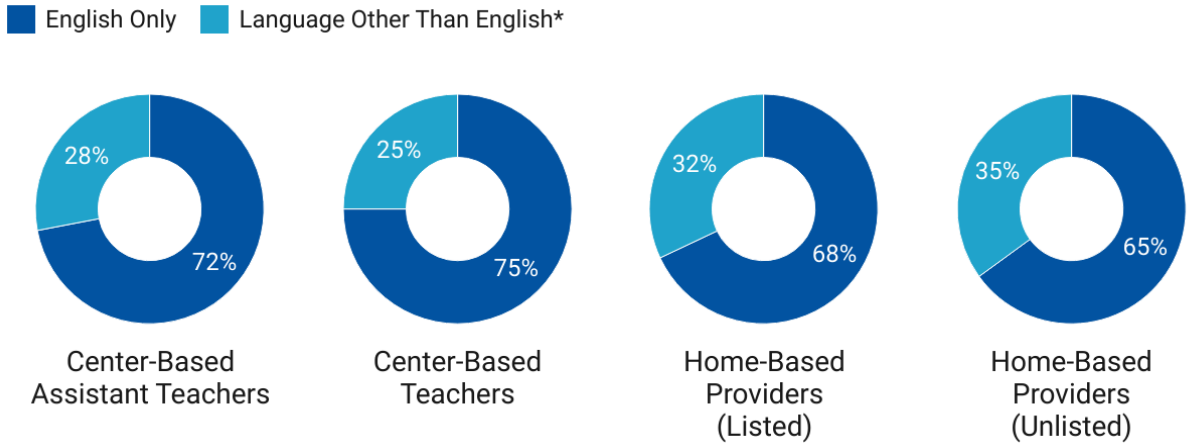
Languages Spoken

The ECE workforce is linguistically diverse, largely reflecting the children they serve as a whole (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.).[4] Early educators in home-based settings are more likely than those in center-based programs to speak another language in addition to English (**Figure 6**). Among center-based teaching staff, assistant teachers are slightly more likely than teachers to speak a language other than English.

[4] About 33 percent of children birth to age five have at least one parent who speaks a language other than English at home, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's pooled 2015-2019 American Community Survey (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.).

Figure 6. Languages Spoken by the Early Care and Education Workforce, By Setting and Job Role

United States, 2019



Center-based assistant teachers N=1,569
Center-based teachers N=3,013
Listed home-based providers N=3.856
Unlisted home-based providers N=298
** The NSECE asked educators whether they speak any language other than English, offering a yes-or-no response option. The data does not allow for distinguishing among bilingual, multilingual, or non-English-speaking educators.*
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

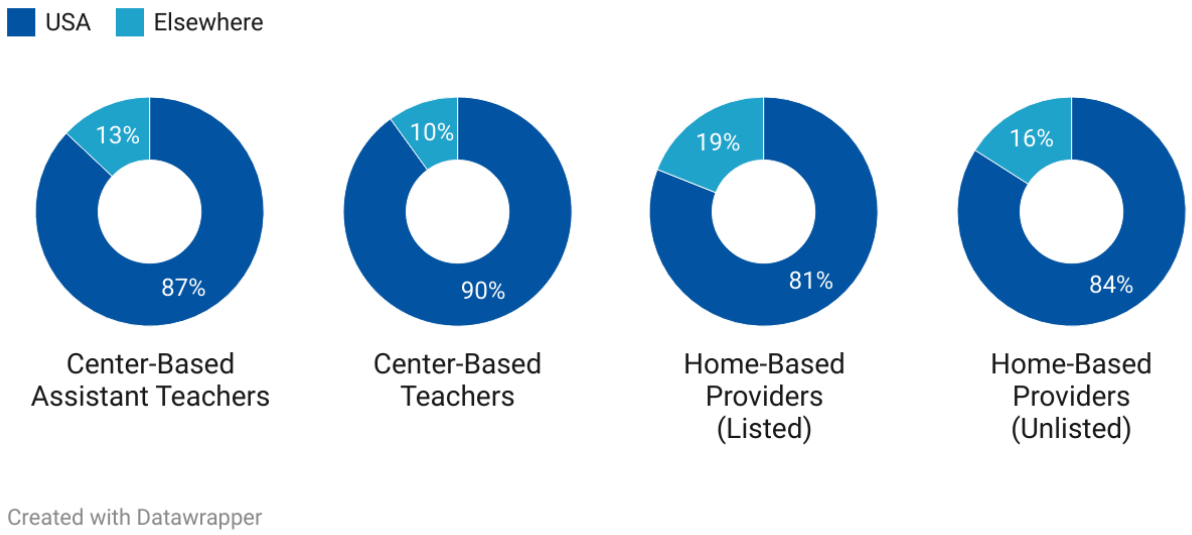
Although the NSECE data does not allow for state-level breakdowns, linguistic diversity within the ECE workforce is known to vary widely by state. The 2024 *Index* used the American Community Survey to paint a more nuanced picture of primary home languages of early educators across all 50 states and Washington, D.C. (see Appendix Table 2.2 in the 2024 *Index* [McLean et al., 2024]).

Country of Birth

The ECE workforce includes a higher proportion of immigrants compared to their K-12 counterparts, closely mirroring the demographics of the children they serve. Compared to center-based teaching staff, providers in home-based settings are more likely to be immigrants (**Figure 7**). Within center-based settings, assistant teachers are slightly more likely to be immigrants than teachers.

Figure 7. Country of Birth of the Early Care and Education Workforce, By Setting and Job Role

United States, 2019



Center-based assistant teachers N=1,548
Center-based teachers N=2,993
Listed home-based providers N=3.854
Unlisted home-based providers N=298
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

Race and Ethnicity

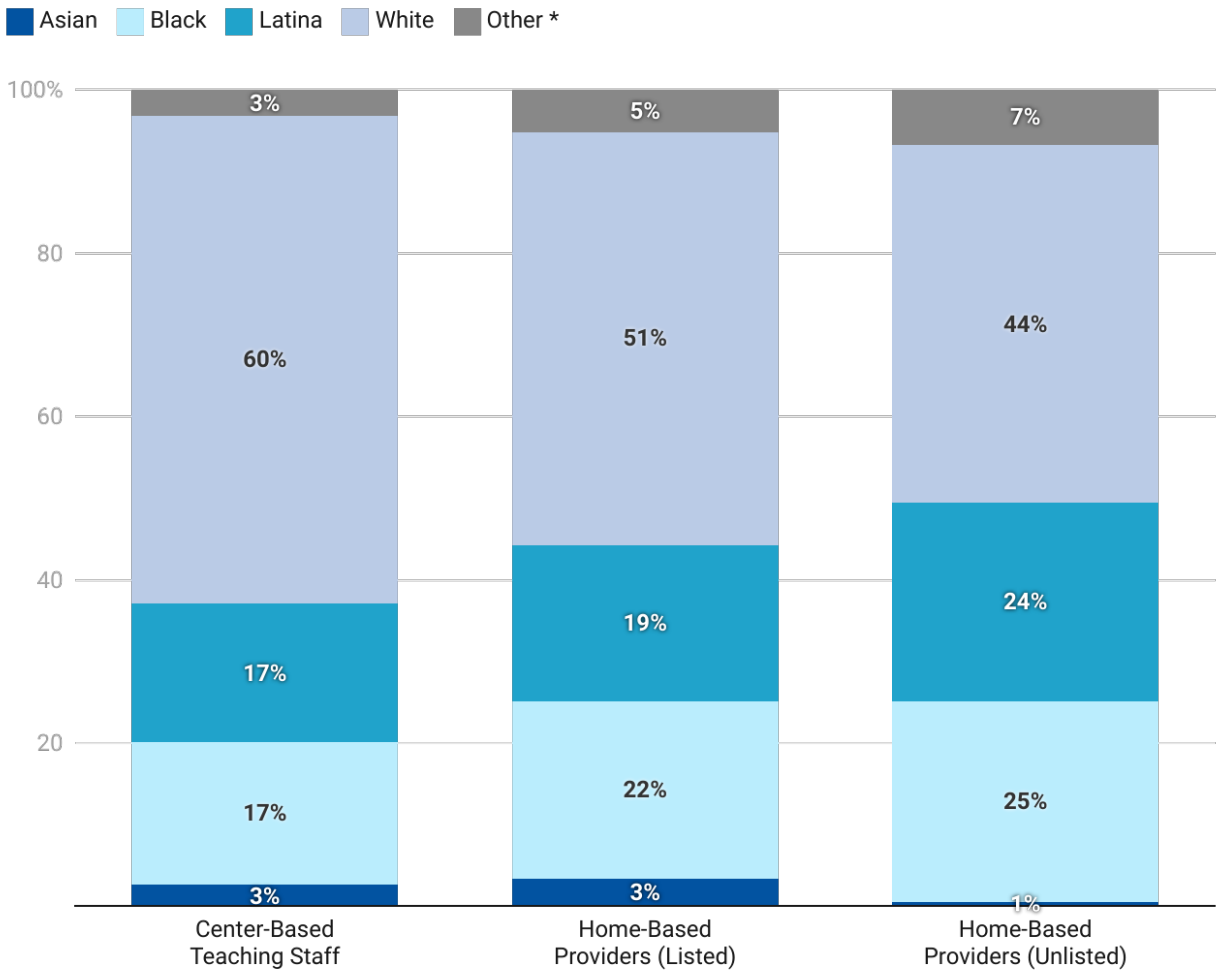
Overall, the racial and ethnic background of the ECE workforce is very similar to that of the children they serve (Paschall et al., 2020), unlike the K-12 teaching workforce, which is majority White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). As shown in **Figure 8**, about 40 percent of center-based teaching staff, about 49 percent of listed home-based providers, and 56 percent of unlisted home-based providers are women of color.

However, educators of various racial and ethnic backgrounds are not represented equitably across settings and job roles. Studies have shown that educators of color are often overrepresented in settings and positions with lower compensation and resource shortages, while White educators are more frequently represented in higher-paying settings and leadership positions (Austin et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2024). Similar patterns are evident in the 2019 NSECE data, which show a higher proportion of White educators in center-based settings compared to home-based settings and a larger proportion of Black and Latina[5] educators in home-based settings than in center-based programs (**Figure 8**).

[5] Because the ECE workforce is overwhelmingly composed of individuals who identify as women, we use the gender-specific term "Latina" to describe members of the workforce who identify as part of the Latin American diaspora. However, we know that data collection has not always accounted for gender diversity beyond a male/female binary. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of early educators who identify as men, nonbinary, or another gender identity and recognize that the gendered oppression of women in the ECE workforce is related to the gender-based oppression of nonbinary, trans, and genderqueer educators.

Figure 8. Race and Ethnicity of the Early Care and Education Workforce, By Setting

United States, 2019



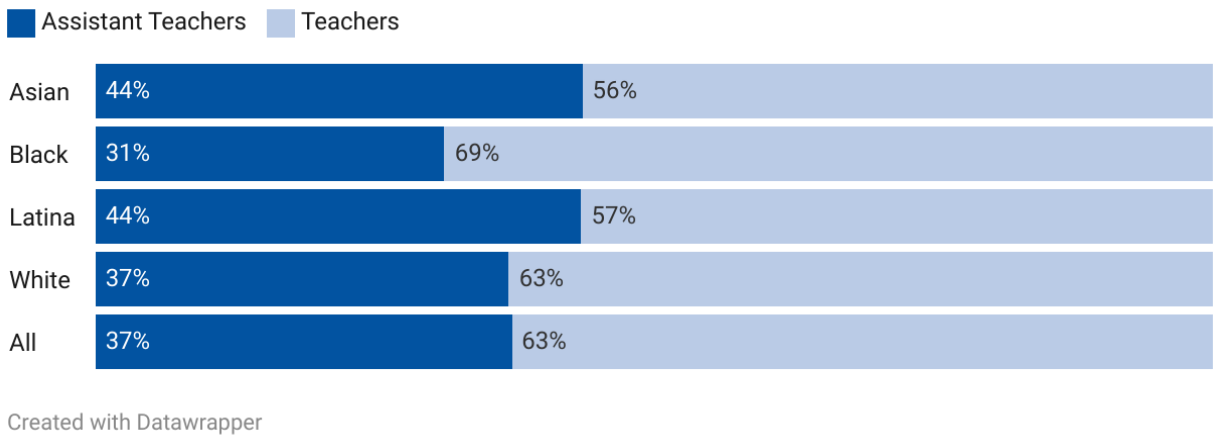
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Center-based teaching staff N=4,518
Listed home-based providers N=3,822
Unlisted home-based providers N=294
**Educators who selected only American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more of the response categories and chose "Not Hispanic or Latino" were categorized as "Other." Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.*
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

There is also a disparate representation of racial and ethnic groups in job roles among the center-based workforce. As shown in **Figure 9**, Asian and Latina educators are more likely than their Black and White peers to serve in assistant teacher roles.

Figure 9. Job Role of Center-Based Teaching Staff, By Race and Ethnicity

United States, 2019



Center-based assistant teachers N=1,498 (76 Asian, 296 Black, 429 Latina, and 697 White)
Center-based teachers N=2,876 (127 Asian, 651 Black, 679 Latina, and 1,419 White)
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

While the NSECE does not provide state-level breakdowns, the American Community Survey data allows for this level of analysis. For detailed information on the race and ethnicity of the ECE workforce by state, see Appendix Table 2.3 in the 2024 *Index* (McLean et al., 2024).

Age of Children Served, By Race and Ethnicity

Early educators face a pay penalty for working with younger children (see the Early Educator Pay & Economic Insecurity section in the 2024 *Index* [McLean et al., 2024]).

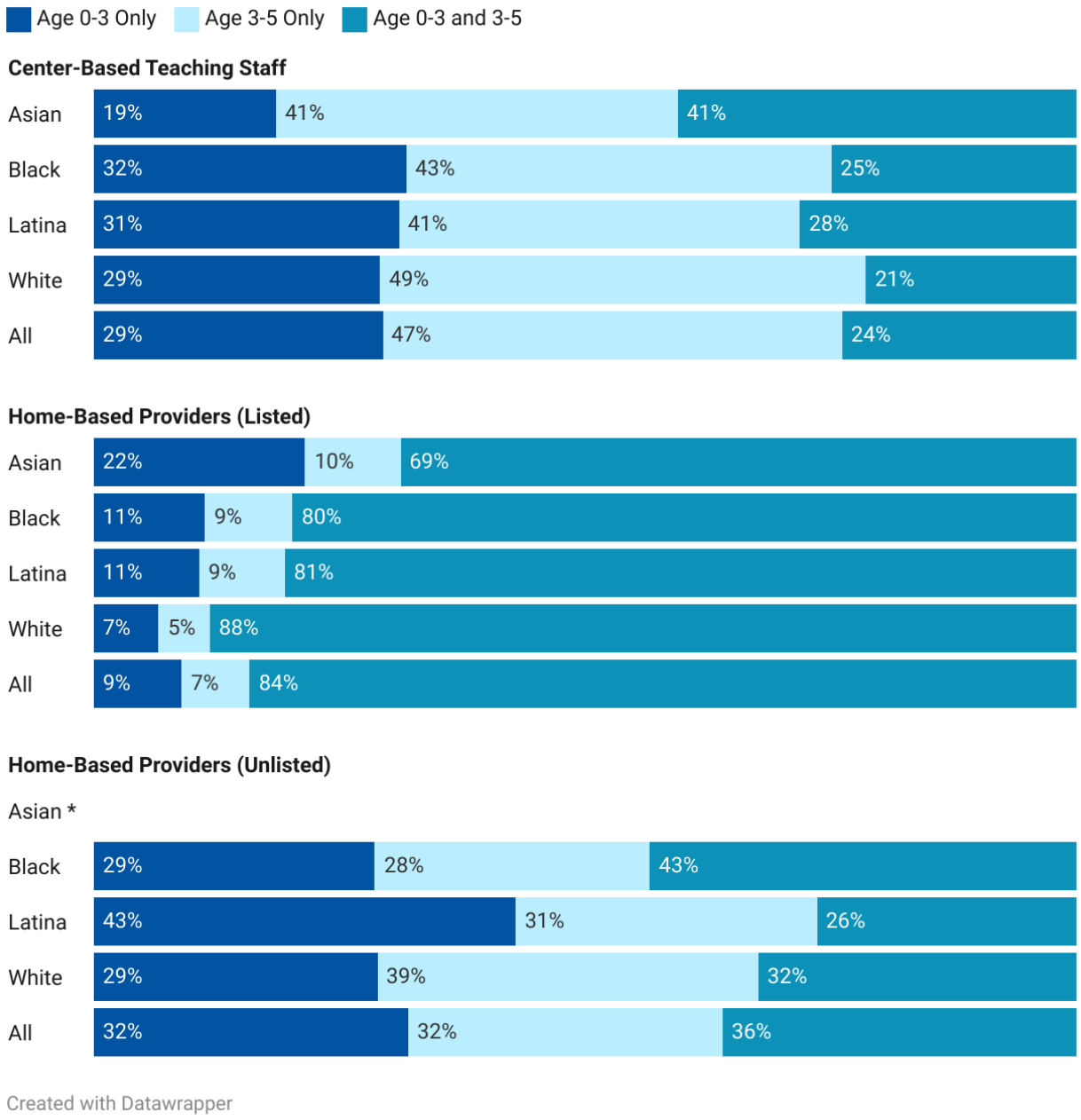
As shown in **Figure 10**, the age of the children early educators work with varies based on the race and ethnicity of the workforce and across settings and contributes to racial wage gaps (Austin et al., 2019). Among center-based teaching staff, Black and Latina educators are somewhat more likely than White educators to work exclusively with infants and toddlers (birth to age three). Asian educators are substantially less likely than all populations to work with this age group and more likely to work with mixed-age groups. White educators are more likely than their colleagues to work exclusively with preschool-age children, a job that typically pays higher wages than working with infants and toddlers.

Unlike in other settings, most listed home-based providers work with mixed-age groups. Among listed home-based providers, Asian educators are the most likely to work

exclusively with children birth to age three, and White educators are the most likely to work with mixed-age groups. Among unlisted home-based providers, Latina educators are the most likely to work with children birth to age three, and Black educators are the most likely to work with mixed-age groups.

Figure 10. Age of Children Served, By Setting and Race and Ethnicity

United States, 2019



Center-based teaching staff N=4,374 (203 Asian, 947 Black, 1,108 Latina, and 2,116 White)
Listed home-based providers N=3,510 (119 Asian, 892 Black, 979 Latina, 1,520 White)
Unlisted home-based providers N=266 (66 Black, 91 Latina, 106 White)
** Information not reported due to small sample size (N<10).*
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

Race and Ethnicity, By Region

The racial and ethnic composition of early educators varies widely across the different regions of the United States, largely reflecting the demographics of the general populations in those areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). **Table 3** shows that while Black educators make up about 17 percent of center teaching staff across the country, they are about 27 percent of center-based teachers and assistant teachers in the South and just 5 percent in the West. Similarly, while Latina educators are about 19 percent of the listed home-based workforce nationwide, they make up about 32 percent of these early educators in the Northeast, 29 percent in the West, and just 5 percent in the Midwest.

While these regional breakdowns offer valuable insights beyond the national data, examining state and local levels remains crucial to fully understand the dynamics and diversity within the early education workforce.

Table 3. Race and Ethnicity of the ECE Workforce, By Setting and Region

United States, 2019

	N	Asian	Black	Latina	White	Other	Total
Center-Based Teaching Staff							
Northeast	763	2%	11%	14%	71%	2%	100%
Midwest	860	1%	14%	7%	74%	4%	100%
South	1,663	1%	27%	19%	51%	2%	100%
West	1,232	9%	5%	28%	54%	5%	100%
National	**4,518**	**3%**	**17%**	**17%**	**60%**	**3%**	**100%**
Home-Based Providers (Listed)							
Northeast	640	1%	17%	32%	46%	4%	100%
Midwest	1,005	1%	20%	5%	71%	4%	100%
South	1,008	6%	38%	17%	35%	4%	100%
West	1,169	6%	16%	29%	41%	8%	100%
National	**3,822**	**3%**	**22%**	**19%**	**51%**	**5%**	**100%**

Note: Information for unlisted home-based providers is not reported due to small sample size.

Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

Race and Ethnicity, By Program Sponsorship and Funding

Understanding the racial and ethnic makeup of educators across various program sponsorships and funding sources is essential as these program types often differ in workforce stability and compensation. For example, center-based programs with contract-

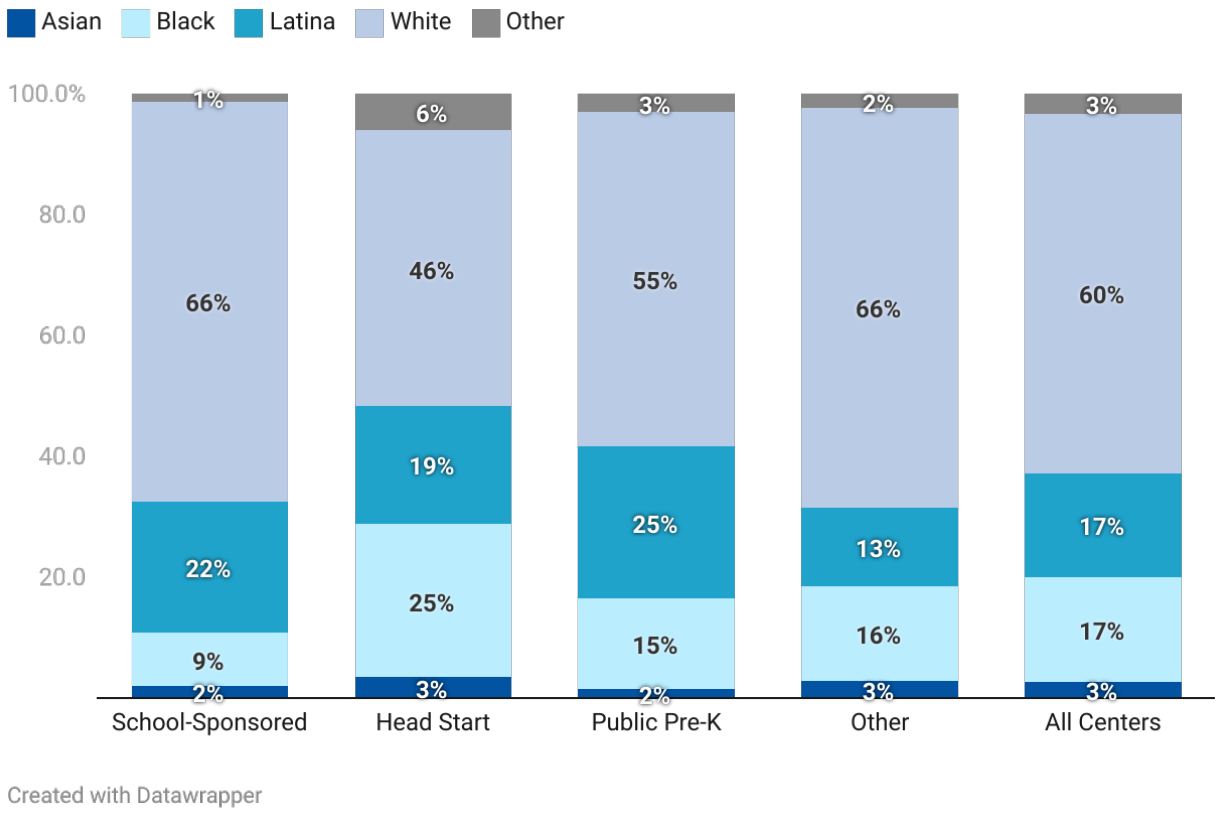
based funding—like Head Start or school-sponsored public pre-K centers—are more likely to have stable, predictable, and timely funding compared to programs operating with portable vouchers or without public funding (Giapponi Schneider et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2022). This stability generally allows for better pay and benefits in contract-funded programs. Thus, the racial and ethnic composition of educators across various types of program sponsorship and funding may have significant implications for equity in compensation and the work environment (Kim et al., 2022; Montoya et al., 2022).

In school-sponsored programs, which on average pay the highest wages among ECE program types, White educators tend to be overrepresented and Black educators under-represented compared to their overall representation in center-based programs (**Figure 11**). White educators make up about 60 percent of staff across all center-based programs but account for 66 percent in school-sponsored centers. In contrast, Black educators represent 17 percent across all programs but only 9 percent in school-sponsored centers.

Black educators tend to be overrepresented in Head Start programs rather than in center-based programs overall (25 percent and 17 percent, respectively), and Latina educators have a higher representation in public pre-K centers compared to their overall representation in center-based programs (25 percent and 17 percent, respectively).

Figure 11. Race and Ethnicity of Center-Based Teaching Staff, By Program Sponsorship and Funding

United States, 2019



Teaching staff in school-sponsored centers N=225
Teaching staff in Head Start N=1,104
Teaching staff in public pre-K N=879
Teaching staff in other centers N=2,310
All center-based teaching staff N=4,518
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

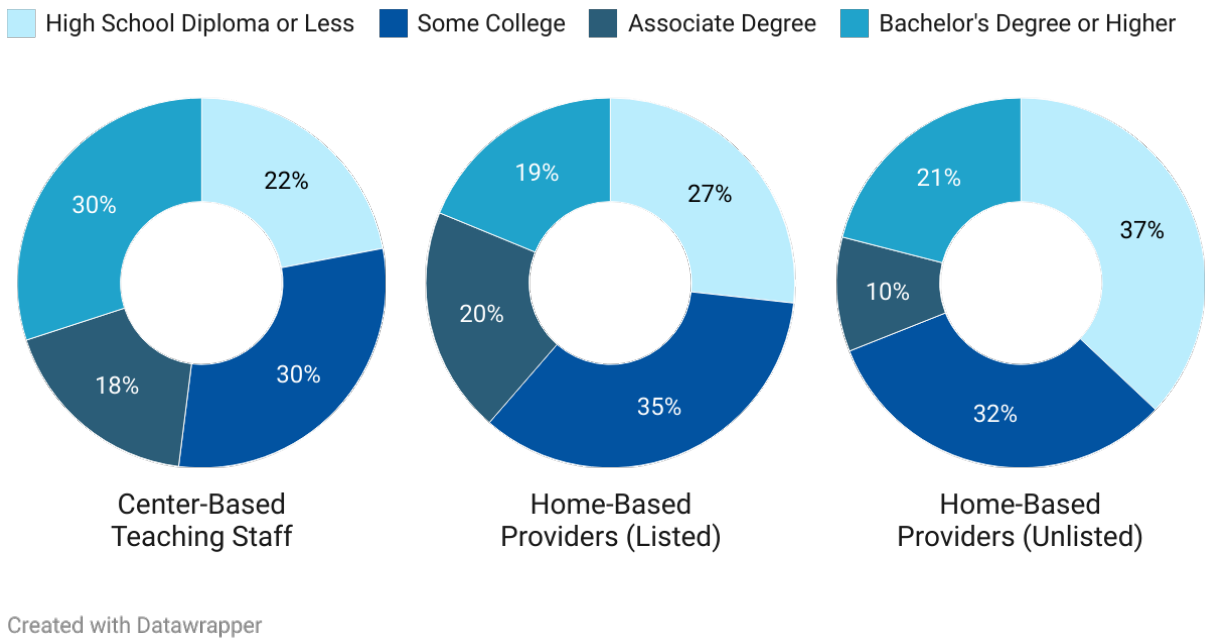
Educational Background

Contrary to the common misconception that members of the ECE workforce lack education or training, the majority of early childhood educators have attended college, and many have college degrees. Nationwide, close to one third (30 percent) of center-based teaching staff and one fifth (20 percent) of home-based providers hold a bachelor's degree or higher (**Figure 12**). Another 18 percent of the ECE workforce in center-based settings, 20 percent in listed home-based settings, and about 10 percent of unlisted home-based providers hold an associate degree.

When compared across settings, center-based teaching staff are more likely than home-based providers to have higher levels of education. This finding may be due to the fact that home-based providers tend to have fewer requirements for degree attainment (see Qualifications & Educational Supports section in the 2024 *Index* [McLean et al., 2024]). Home-based providers in listed settings are more likely than those in unlisted settings to have attended college or earned an associate degree.

Figure 12. Education of the Early Care and Education Workforce, By Setting

United States, 2019

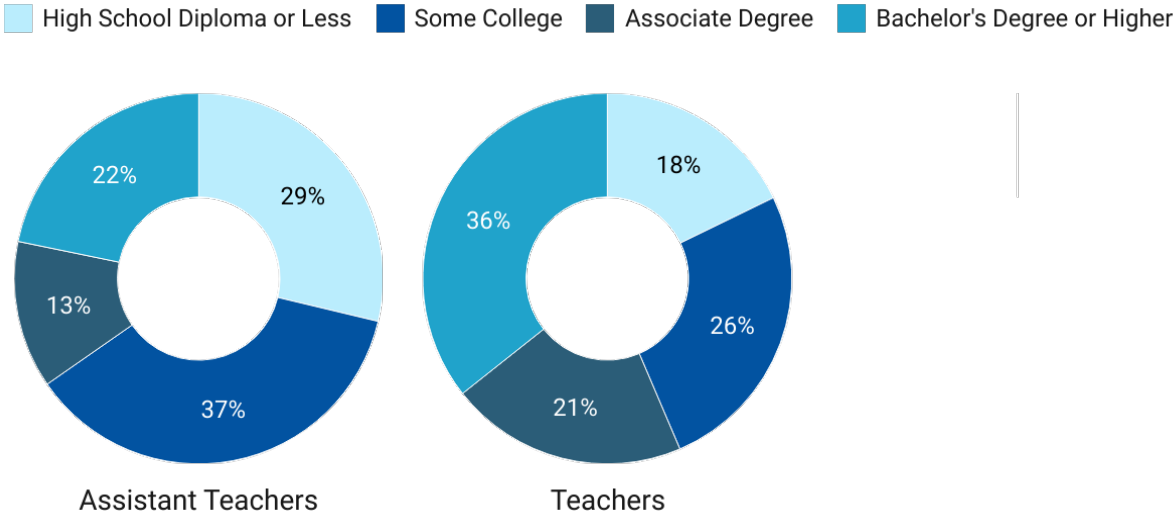


Center-based teaching staff N=4,638
Listed home-based providers N=3,842
Unlisted home-based providers N=299
Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

Among the center-based workforce, teachers are more likely than assistant teachers to hold a bachelor's degree or higher (**Figure 13**). This finding may be attributed to education requirements being higher for teachers than assistant teachers, especially within publicly funded pre-K programs. Compared to teachers, a higher proportion of assistant teachers hold an associate degree or have a high school diploma or less.

Figure 13. Education of Center-Based Teaching Staff, By Job Role

United States, 2019



Center-based assistant teachers N=1,600

Center-based teachers N=3,038

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

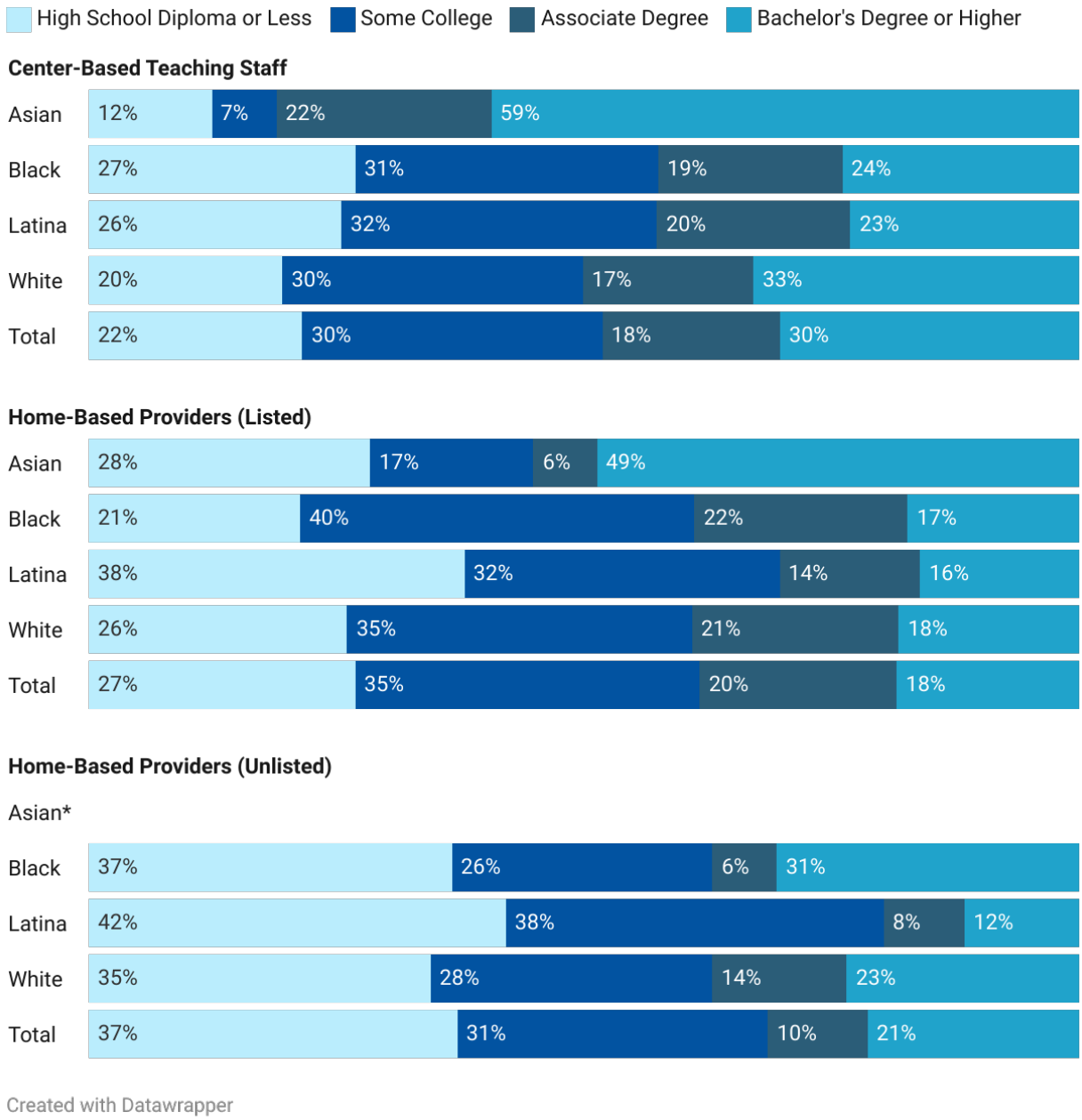
Education, By Setting and Race and Ethnicity

The educational background of early educators varies across race, ethnicity, and setting (**Figure 14**). In center-based and listed home-based settings, Asian educators are the most likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher compared to educators of other races or ethnicities. Among unlisted home-based providers, Black educators are more likely than educators of other races or ethnicities to hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Across all settings, Latina educators are the least likely to hold a college degree.

Differences in educational attainment within early care and education reflect wider disparities in access to higher education, as well as differences in access to scholarships and other supports, which are unevenly available to the ECE workforce (National Association for the Education of Young Children & The Education Trust, 2019; Stechuk et al., 2019; see also the Qualifications & Educational Supports section in the 2024 *Index* [McLean et al., 2024]).

Figure 14. Education of the Early Care and Education Workforce, By Setting and Race and Ethnicity

United States, 2019



Center-based teaching staff N=4,382 (204 Asian, 943 Black, 1,111 Latina, and 2,124 White)
Listed home-based providers N=3,599 (132 Asian, 907 Black, 1,006 Latina, and 1,554 White)
Unlisted home-based providers N=268 (66 Black, 90 Latina, and 109 White)
** Information not reported due to small sample size (N<10).*
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

An examination at the regional-level offers additional insights (**Table 4**). Overall, the proportion of White educators with a bachelor's degree or higher remains relatively consistent across regions. In contrast, educational attainment among educators of color varies notably by region. For example, among center-based teaching staff, while the rate of White educators with a bachelor's degree or higher was consistent across all regions (about one third, ranging from 31 percent in the South to 36 percent in the Northeast), there was substantial regional variation among Black educators (from a high of 41 percent in the Northeast to the low of 11 percent in the Midwest).

Similarly, regional differences in educational attainment were more evident among listed home-based providers of color compared to their White counterparts. For example, about 72 percent of Asian providers in the Northeast held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to just 17 percent in the Midwest.

Table 4. Educators With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher Across Settings, By Region and Race and Ethnicity

United States, 2019

	Asian	Black	Latina	White	Total
Center-Based Teaching Staff	N=204	N=943	N=1,111	N=2,124	N=4,382
Northeast	76%	41%	20%	36%	35%
Midwest	84%	11%	14%	34%	30%
South	48%	24%	27%	31%	28%
West	56%	36%	21%	32%	31%
National	**59%**	**24%**	**23%**	**33%**	**30%**
Home-Based (Listed)	N=132	N=907	N=1,006	N=1,554	N=3,599
Northeast	72%	21%	23%	19%	21%
Midwest	17%	12%	11%	17%	16%
South	33%	13%	18%	22%	19%
West	62%	30%	12%	18%	21%
National	**49%**	**17%**	**16%**	**18%**	**19%**
Home-Based (Unlisted)	*	N=66	N=90	N=109	N=265
Northeast	*	*	*	23%	21%
Midwest	*	26%	*	34%	29%
South	*	34%	23%	23%	27%
West	*	23%	7%	15%	12%
National	*	**31%**	**12%**	**23%**	**22%**

** Information not reported due to small sample size (N<10).*

Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

These regional variations suggest that educational attainment for educators of color may be influenced by regional and local factors. Policies, access to resources, and other contextual factors may unevenly affect pathways to higher education for educators of color. Further examination at the state and local levels would provide a deeper understanding of these patterns.

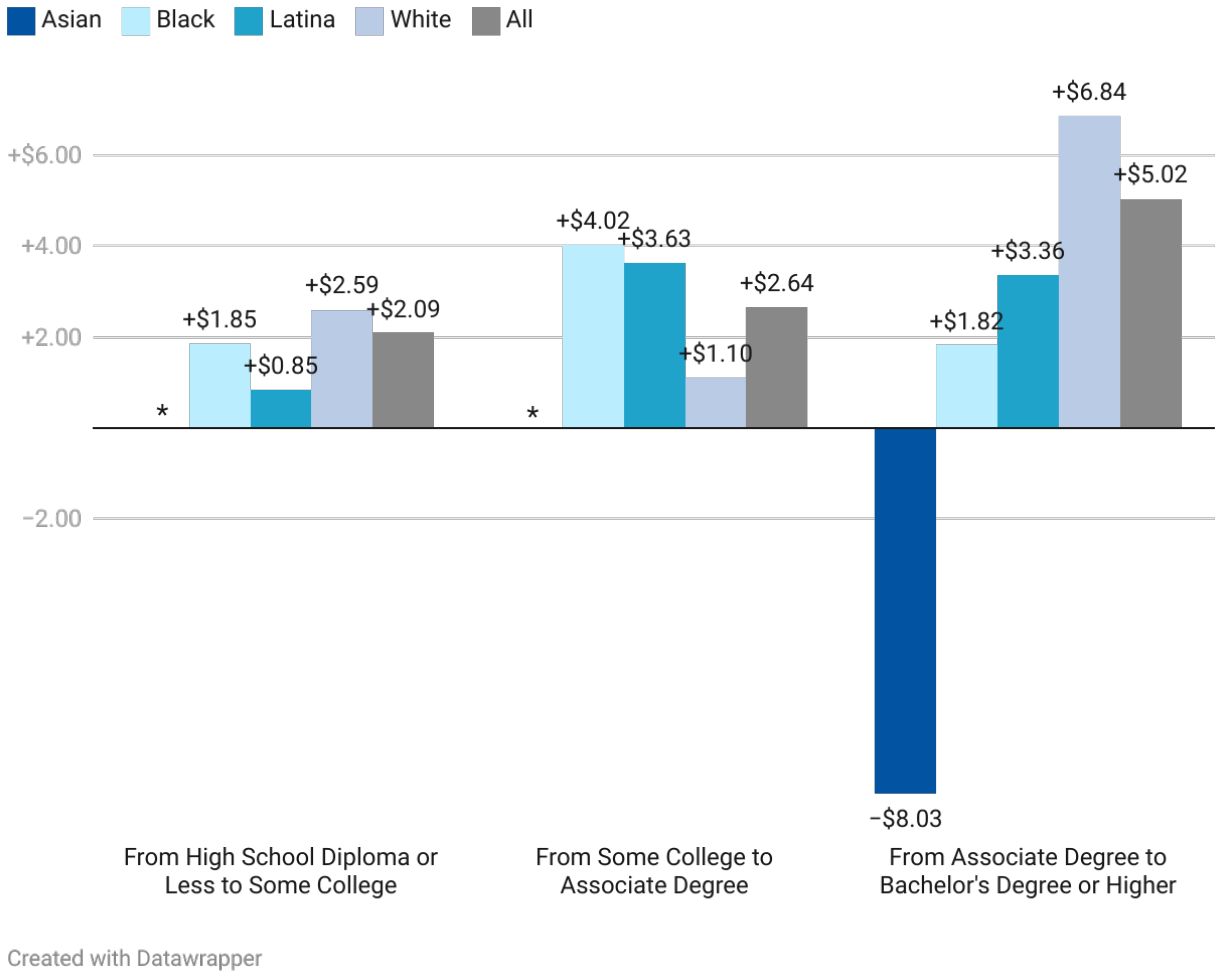
Education Pay Premiums and Wage Progression

While further education is generally linked to higher pay (Hout, 2012; Montoya et al., 2022; Whitebook et al., 2018b), education pay bumps are not applied equitably across racial and

ethnic groups within the ECE workforce (Kim et al., 2024). For example, among center-based teachers, the hourly wage bump for having a bachelor's degree compared to an associate degree is substantially higher for White educators than for Black or Latina educators ($6.80, $1.82, and $3.36, respectively; see **Figure 15**). Notably, Asian center-based teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher are paid *less* per hour (-$8.03) compared to their peers holding an associate degree.

Figure 15. Education Pay Premiums Among Teachers, By Race and Ethnicity

United States, 2019



Center-based teachers N=2,619 (115 Asian, 573 Black, 619 Latina, and 1,312 White)
** Information not reported due to small sample size (N<10).*
Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

This pattern indicates that educational credentials do not lead to equivalent financial rewards across racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, studies consistently show that racial

wage gaps persist, with White educators being paid higher wages than educators of color with comparable education, job roles, and experience (Austin et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2024). These inequities, along with unequal access to educational opportunities, contribute to the systemic barriers that hinder educators of color from advancing in the field.

Conclusion

This report offers a national snapshot of the early care and education workforce, drawing on data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education to examine workforce size, demographics, and racial and ethnic disparities. While these national insights are valuable, building robust longitudinal data systems at state and local levels is essential for informing targeted policies that address workforce shortages, inequities, and support needs. As new data from the NSECE 2024 become available, CSCCE will continue to analyze these developments and provide insights into the evolving ECE workforce.

For additional strategies and state-level data, the 2024 Early Childhood Workforce Index serves as a key resource.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Methodology

Measures

Job role: We used constructed variables from the NSECE Workforce surveys, WF_WORK_ROLE from 2012 and WF9_WORK_ROLE from 2019, to identify educators' roles in the classroom. Respondents who selected "Aide" or "Assistant teacher" were categorized as assistant teachers, while those who selected "Teacher or instructor" or "Lead teacher" were categorized as teachers. Those who selected "Other/undetermined" were excluded from the analysis.

Age of children served: For age of children served, we used constructed variables from the NSECE Workforce surveys, WF_SERVE_3YRS and WF_SERVE_3TO5YRS from 2012 and WF9_CLASSRM_UNDER3 and WF9_CLASSRM_3TO5 from 2019. These variables indicate whether the respondent primarily works with children birth to age three or age three to five. Based on these two items, we created a categorical variable with three groups: those who work exclusively with children birth to age three, those working exclusively with children age three to five, and those who work with both age groups (mixed-age groups).

Program sponsorship and funding: We used constructed variables CB_HSPK_PUBSCRUN and CB9_PRGM_SCHSPONS from the 2012 and 2019 surveys, respectively, to define program sponsorship and funding categories. The NSECE developed these categorical variables using a sequential process based on a list of items that asked about program sponsorship and funding. First, center-based programs that were sponsored by public schools were identified. These could include programs receiving Head Start or public pre-K funding. Among the remaining programs, those reporting Head Start funding were categorized next, followed by those reporting public pre-K funding (but not Head Start funding). Programs that were not sponsored by school systems and did not report Head Start or public pre-K funding (though they might receive other government funding) were categorized as "Other." The resulting center-based program categories are: school-sponsored, Head Start, public pre-K, and other.

Age: Using the variable WF9_CHAR_YEAR_BORN from the 2019 NSECE Workforce survey, we created a categorical variable for age. Respondents were grouped into four age categories: 29 and younger, 30 to 49, 50 to 59, and 60 and older.

Language: For language, we used WF9_CHAR_LANG from the 2019 NSECE Workforce survey. Respondents were asked if they spoke a language other than English. Based on their responses, we created a two-level variable: “English only” and “language other than English.” The data does not allow for distinguishing among bilingual, multilingual, or non-English-speaking educators.

Country of birth: For country of birth, we used WF9_CHAR_COUNTRY_BORN from the 2019 NSECE Workforce survey. Respondents were asked to indicate their country of birth from three options: the United States (including U.S. territories), Mexico, and other. Based on these responses, we created a two-level variable distinguishing between United States and other.

Race and ethnicity: The five categories of race and ethnicity are derived from two separate items in the 2019 NSECE. One item inquires about racial identity (e.g., Asian, Black, White), and another item asks about Hispanic or Latino identity. Educators who only selected Asian, Black, or White and chose “Not Hispanic or Latino” were categorized as Asian, Black, and White, respectively. Educators who reported being Hispanic or Latino and selected any racial categories were categorized as “Latina.” Because the ECE workforce is overwhelmingly composed of individuals who identify as women, we use the gender-specific term “Latina” to describe members of the workforce who identify as part of the Latin American diaspora. Educators who selected only American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more of the response categories and chose “Not Hispanic or Latino,” were categorized as “Other.” It should be noted that these categorizations may not fully reflect how people identify themselves.

Education: For education, we used WF9_CHAR_EDUC from the 2019 NSECE Workforce survey, which includes eight response options ranging from “less than high school” to “graduate or professional degree.” To simplify the analysis, we combined these categories to create a four-level variable: high school diploma or less; some college; associate degree; and bachelor’s degree or higher.

Wage: To analyze wages, we used WF9_WORK_WAGE from the 2019 NSECE Workforce survey. This variable captures respondents' hourly wages in their current roles. Hourly

wages were bottom-coded at $7.25, and values exceeding $100 were coded as missing to account for outliers and maintain data integrity.

Region: The four Census regions are groups of states that subdivide the United States. The Northeast includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Midwest comprises Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The South encompasses Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Finally, the West includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Appendix 2

Appendix Table 2.1. Educational Attainment of Center-Based Teaching Staff, By Region and Race and Ethnicity

United States, 2019

	Asian (N=204)	Black (N=943)	Latina (N=1,111)	White (N=2,124)	Total (N=4,382)
Northeast					
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	76%	41%	20%	36%	35%
Associate Degree	*	12%	25%	21%	20%
Some College	*	27%	38%	26%	28%
High School Diploma or Less	*	20%	16%	17%	17%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Midwest					
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	84%	11%	14%	34%	30%
Associate Degree	*	21%	25%	21%	21%
Some College	*	36%	22%	33%	33%
High School Diploma or Less	*	32%	38%	12%	17%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
South					
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	48%	24%	27%	31%	28%
Associate Degree	*	19%	12%	14%	15%
Some College	*	29%	28%	28%	28%
High School Diploma or Less	*	27%	33%	27%	28%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
West					
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	56%	36%	21%	32%	31%
Associate Degree	31%	12%	28%	15%	20%
Some College	*	37%	38%	33%	33%
High School Diploma or Less	*	15%	14%	19%	16%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Chart: © 2025 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Source: Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

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