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State of the Early Care and Education Workforce — San Diego County, 2025

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CSCCE Center for the Study of Child Care Employment



State of the Early Care and Education Workforce

San Diego County

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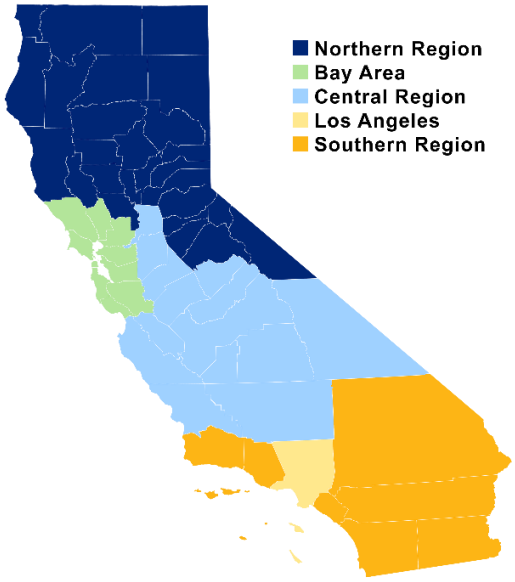
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About the Data



The data in these profiles were collected as part of the 2025 California Early Care and Education Workforce Study. The study was conducted by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) at the University of California, Berkeley. While most data were collected in spring 2025, a small number of sites were surveyed in early fall 2025. The surveys took place online in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese. CSCCE invited all available licensed early care and education (ECE) programs serving children from birth to five in California, using contact information from Community Care Licensing and California State Preschool.

The survey received outreach support from local resource and referral agencies, professional associations, and the California ECE Workforce Registry. Data are weighted using a post-stratification method by program type and region. These adjustments allow us to align the study sample with the full population of sites locally. Unfortunately, our request for a list of small family child care (FCC) providers from Community Care Licensing is still under review. As a result, small FCC data at the regional and state level are not yet available. These missing estimates are marked with a hashtag.

In this snapshot, we compare county findings to the surrounding region and California as a whole. We group counties into five regions:

Northern Region		Bay Area	Central Region	Los Angeles	Southern Region
Alpine	Mono	Alameda*	Fresno*	Los Angeles*, **	Imperial
Amador	Nevada	Contra Costa*, **	Inyo		Orange
Butte*	Placer	Marin	Kern		Riverside*
Calaveras	Plumas	Napa*	Kings*		San Bernardino
Colusa	Shasta	San Francisco*	Madera*		San Diego*
Del Norte	Sierra	San Mateo**	Mariposa		Santa Barbara*
El Dorado*	Siskiyou	Santa Clara	Merced		Ventura*, **
Glenn	Sutter*	Santa Cruz	Monterey*		
Humboldt*	Tehama	Solano	Sacramento*		
Lake	Trinity	Sonoma**	San Benito		
Lassen	Tuolumne		San Joaquin		
Mendocino	Yolo		San Luis Obispo*		
Modoc	Yuba*		Stanislaus**		
			Tulare		

* Our study website includes a 2025 profile for this county.
** We released a detailed report using 2023 or 2024 for this county.

Key Terms

Early care and education (ECE): By “early care and education,” we mean licensed programs that serve children under six years of age (less than 72 months). While some children age four and older attend transitional kindergarten, a grade level in elementary school, this profile focuses on the two primary settings serving the full ECE age range: child care centers and family child care homes.

Center type: Title 22 centers follow the fundamental rules of health and safety associated with licensure. A smaller portion of centers participate in stricter standards governed by Head Start and/or Title 5, in which teachers work with a smaller group size and must complete more units in early childhood education coursework. State Preschool programs are subject to Title 5 rules and fall under this category in our snapshot.

Center teaching staff: This term covers a combination of lead and assistant teachers who work directly with children. Assistants (sometimes called “teacher aides” or “associate teachers”) work under the supervision of a lead teacher (sometimes referred to as a “head teacher” or “master teacher").

Family child care (FCC) provider: FCC educators obtain a license to provide child care for a mixed-age group of children in their home. FCC homes may be owned or rented, but all sites must meet the strict requirements of state licensing.

FCC license type: An FCC provider can hold either a “small” or “large” license, a distinction that corresponds to the maximum group size (up to eight children for a small license and up to 14 for a large license). Most often, small FCC educators operate their child care program on their own, while large FCC educators work with at least one assistant.

Program Landscape

Early care and education operates in a mixed-delivery system, where families may enroll children at a child care center or family child care home. Many parents also rely on family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, both as their primary strategy and in combination with licensed care. By the 2025-2026 school year, all four-year-olds will also have the option to enroll in transitional kindergarten at a public school. In this profile, we focused on the licensed settings (center- and home-based) serving children from birth through age five.

Table 1. Early Care and Education Sites

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Child care centers	**819**	**2,756**	**10,254**
Title 22 centers	549	1,692	6,150
Head Start/Title 5 centers	270	1,064	4,104
Family child care homes	**3,661**	**8,689**	**28,659**
Small license	2,353	4,885	14,983
Large license	1,308	3,804	13,676
All sites	**4,480**	**11,445**	**38,913**

Note: **Table 1** refers to specific sites, not licenses, as child care centers may hold multiple licenses. Centers licensed to serve school-age children only are excluded from the study. To determine the number of sites, CSCCE analyzed the list of child care licenses by address and agency name. Where possible, we added State Preschool sites that are operated by school districts AND exempt from licensure to "Head Start/Title 5." However, there may be more district-run, exempt preschool programs we were not able to tally. Likewise, exempt programs operated by Tribes and military bases are not included in our study sample.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 2. Child Care Center Staffing

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Title 22 centers			
Lead teachers	**(n=108)**	**(n=318)**	**(n=865)**
Average per site	9.5	9.4	8.1
Annual turnover rate	26%	22%	24%
Estimated workforce size	4,740	15,900	49,800
Assistant teachers*	**(n=79)**	**(n=219)**	**(n=593)**
Average per site	4.4	4.4	4.2
Annual turnover rate	37%	33%	29%
Estimated workforce size	1,730	5,100	17,500
Head Start/Title 5 centers			
Lead teachers	**(n=29**)**	**(n=105)**	**(n=492)**
Average per site	7.3	6.1	5.8
Annual turnover rate	17%	27%	19%
Estimated workforce size	1,500	6,500	23,800
Assistant teachers*	**(n=24**)**	**(n=84)**	**(n=400)**
Average per site	8.1	6.7	5.8
Annual turnover rate	17%	26%	23%
Estimated workforce size	1,440	5,600	18,800
All centers			
Lead teachers	**(n=140)**	**(n=423)**	**(n=1,357)**
Average per site	8.7	8.2	7.2
Annual turnover rate	24%	24%	22%
Estimated workforce size	6,240	22,400	73,600
Assistant teachers*	**(n=105)**	**(n=303)**	**(n=993)**
Average per site	5.6	5.3	4.9
Annual turnover rate	30%	30%	26%
Estimated workforce size	3,170	10,700	36,300

* In some instances, sites only employ lead teachers. Estimates for assistant teachers reflect averages among sites with at least one assistant teacher position.

** Interpret with caution (n<50).

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 3. Paid Assistants in Family Child Care

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Small license	**(n=175)**	**#**	**#**
Any paid assistants	11%	#	#
Average per site*	1.3	#	#
Annual turnover rate	40%	#	#
Estimated asst. workforce size	270	#	#
Large license	**(n=113)**	**(n=505)**	**(n=1,658)**
Any paid assistants	60%	59%	63%
Average per site*	1.7	1.6	1.6
Annual turnover rate	42%	35%	30%
Estimated asst. workforce size	1,300	3,500	13,900
All FCC providers	**(n=291)**	**(n=903)**	**(n=2,635)**
Any paid assistants	29%	42%	52%
Average per site*	1.6	1.5	1.6
Annual turnover rate	42%	34%	30%
Estimated asst. workforce size	1,570	4,200	17,100

We are unable to survey a representative sample of small FCC providers until our request for their contact information is fulfilled by Community Care Licensing.

* Average calculated among providers with at least one paid assistant.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Demographics

Early educators in California are most often women of color, and many are also immigrants. Their backgrounds mirror the children in their care, supporting culturally relevant early learning instruction.

Our survey of early educators included questions about personal characteristics. All data are self-reported. Respondents were allowed to decline to answer any of the questions, and we exclude those responses unless at least 5 percent of individuals selected it.

Table 4. Race and Ethnicity

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=253)**	**(n=807)**	**(n=2,404)**
Asian	7%	6%	13%
Black	10%	12%	12%
Latina*	42%	49%	44%
White	17%	16%	18%
Multiracial/Other	24%	17%	13%
Center teaching staff	**(n=572)**	**(n=1,408)**	**(n=3,689)**
Asian	8%	7%	11%
Black	3%	2%	4%
Latina*	51%	47%	46%
White	22%	27%	25%
Multiracial/Other	16%	16%	14%

* Because the early care and education workforce is overwhelmingly composed of individuals who identify as women, we use the gender-specific term “Latina” to describe members of the ECE 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.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 5. Age

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=308)**	**(n=944)**	**(n=2,804)**
29 years or younger	9%	6%	5%
30 to 39 years	23%	20%	19%
40 to 49 years	25%	28%	27%
50 to 59 years	28%	29%	30%
60 years or older	14%	17%	20%
Center teaching staff	**(n=616)**	**(n=1521)**	**(n=4,156)**
29 years or younger	29%	28%	24%
30 to 39 years	28%	26%	29%
40 to 49 years	20%	22%	23%
50 to 59 years	15%	16%	16%
60 years or older	8%	8%	8%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 6. Language Fluency

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=263)**	**(n=842)**	**(n=2,501)**
English	83%	82%	81%
Arabic	15%	5%	2%
Chinese	0%	0%	6%
Farsi	5%	3%	3%
Spanish	42%	51%	45%
Other language	14%	11%	12%
Center teaching staff	**(n=580)**	**(n=1455)**	**(n=3,814)**
English	96%	98%	97%
Arabic	3%	1%	1%
Chinese	1%	1%	4%
Farsi	2%	1%	1%
Spanish	49%	44%	43%
Other language	11%	8%	9%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 7. Country of Birth

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=274)**	**(n=857)**	**(n=2,544)**
United States	43%	49%	48%
Another country	50%	43%	44%
Decline to state	8%	8%	7%
Center teaching staff	**(n=585)**	**(n=1,463)**	**(n=3,872)**
United States	69%	79%	74%
Another country	27%	18%	22%
Decline to state	4%	3%	4%

Note: In the survey, we included the following message to educators about why we ask for country of birth: "We ask this question to better understand the diversity of early educators and to ensure our research reflects the experiences of people from different backgrounds. Your response helps us inform policies that support all educators. All information will be kept as confidential as possible and will be used to calculate averages."

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 8. Additional Characteristics

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=254-269)**	**(n=804-849)**	**(n=2,396-2,522)**
Female	97%	98%	98%
Married or living with a partner	66%	69%	70%
Child under age 5 in household	27%	23%	22%
Child age 6 to 17 in household	46%	48%	46%
Center teaching staff	**(n=555-583)**	**(n=1,385-1,455)**	**(n=3,583-3,819)**
Female	99%	98%	97%
Married or living with a partner	55%	59%	58%
Child under age 5 in household	25%	23%	21%
Child age 6 to 17 in household	43%	42%	39%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Education and Experience

Early educators face difference requirements for degrees, permits, and credentials, depending on the type of program where they work. To advance in the field—and to access better pay—educators often need a degree or at least coursework related to child development or early childhood education. However, many educators hold degrees above and beyond requirements.

Table 9. Highest Level of Education

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=261)**	**(n=827)**	**(n=2,453)**
High school or less	25%	22%	18%
Some college	28%	30%	32%
Associate degree	22%	23%	22%
Bachelor's degree or higher	25%	25%	29%
Center teaching staff	**(n=581)**	**(n=1,449)**	**(n=3,785)**
High school or less	4%	2%	3%
Some college	29%	33%	28%
Associate degree	25%	23%	27%
Bachelor's degree or higher	42%	42%	42%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 10. Years of Experience in Early Childhood

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=241)**	**(n=752)**	**(n=2,287)**
Less than 5 years	12%	12%	9%
6 to 15 years	34%	30%	31%
16 to 25 years	32%	33%	32%
More than 25 years	22%	24%	28%
Center teaching staff	**(n=546)**	**(n=1,389)**	**(n=3,618)**
Less than 5 years	28%	20%	20%
6 to 15 years	39%	43%	41%
16 to 25 years	19%	23%	24%
More than 25 years	13%	14%	16%

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Pay and Well-Being

Caring for young children has a long history of being undervalued and underpaid. Lack of public funding to offset costs for parents also keeps compensation as low as possible: early care and education requires lower numbers of children per adult to support safe and quality care, and tuition-paying parents cannot afford the true cost of supporting living wages for early educators. Consequently, while federal and state investments in ECE remain inadequate, the prevailing wages for early educators are still stubbornly low.

Table 11. Center-Based Educator Hourly Wages

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Title 22 centers Director-reported pay ranges	**(n=90)**	**(n=264)**	**(n=745)**
Lead teacher	$20.00-$25.00	$19.50-$24.00	$20.00-$25.00
Assistant teacher	$18.00-$20.00	$18.00-$20.00	$18.00-$20.00
Title 22 centers Median self-reported wage	**(n=307)**	**(n=647)**	**(n=1,284)**
Lead teacher	$22.00	$21.50	$22.00
Assistant teacher	$19.00	$19.00	$19.25
Head Start/Title 5 centers Director-reported pay ranges	**(n=20*)**	**(n=89)**	**(n=369)**
Lead teacher	$23.00-$32.00	$23.00-$31.30	$23.00-$31.00
Assistant teacher	$18.00-$23.00	$18.79-$24.00	$18.20-$23.00
Head Start/Title 5 centers Median self-reported wage	**(n=258)**	**(n=556)**	**(n=1,827)**
Lead teacher	$27.00	$26.82	$27.00
Assistant teacher	$20.00	$20.00	$23.56

* Interpret with caution (n<50).

Note: The “director-reported range” reflects the median lowest and highest wages being paid across sites. In contrast, the “self-reported” wage comes from the teachers and assistants who took our survey and reported their earnings directly.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 12. Family Child Care Annual Earnings

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Small license providers	**(n=108)**	#	#
Estimated earnings range	$27,200-$39,000	#	#
Large license providers	**(n=67)**	**(n=309)**	**(n=1,044)**
Estimated earnings range	$46,800-$59,000	$59,000-$70,000	$52,000-$65,000
All FCC providers	**(n=175)**	**(n=532)**	**(n=1,651)**
Estimated earnings range	$35,000-$45,000	$45,000-$54,500	$45,000-$56,000

We are unable to survey a representative sample of small FCC providers until our request for their contact information is fulfilled by Community Care Licensing.

As a result, we estimate a range in which their earnings fall based on a series of questions about their total household income and the proportion gained through working with children. Read more about our methodology in the appendix of our 2022 report on ECE compensation.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 13. Economic Well-Being

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=211-239)**	**(n=690-769)**	**(n=2,049-2,289)**
Homeowner	56%	65%	64%
Enrolled in health insurance	88%	88%	90%
Any retirement savings	21%	24%	27%
Food sufficient*	60%	59%	60%
Enrolled in public assistance**	46%	44%	41%
Center teaching staff	**(n=507-535)**	**(n=1,282-1,337)**	**(n=3,256-3,552)**
Homeowner	23%	31%	30%
Enrolled in health insurance	93%	95%	94%
Any retirement savings	46%	44%	54%
Food sufficient*	58%	57%	57%
Enrolled in public assistance**	41%	35%	34%

* We use a question from the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement about the food eaten in the household in the past 12 months and whether respondents were able to afford the food they needed. Educators who indicated they "had enough of the kinds of food [they] wanted to eat" are considered food sufficient. Other options included "enough but not always the kinds of food we wanted to eat," "sometimes we did not have enough to eat," and "often there was not enough to eat."

** Public assistance programs include: Medi-Cal; CalFresh; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); subsidized housing; and food banks.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 14. Emotional Well-Being

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=220-235)**	**(n=713-765)**	**(n=2,129-2,328)**
High level of perceived stress*	49%	47%	53%
Significant depressive symptoms**	24%	21%	24%
Feel they make a difference***	86%	89%	88%
Center teaching staff	**(n=525-555)**	**(n=1,298-1,372)**	**(n=3,454-3,702)**
High level of perceived stress*	69%	65%	68%
Significant depressive symptoms**	40%	39%	40%
Feel they make a difference***	79%	82%	80%

* Reflects the proportion of respondents who scored six or more on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4), the threshold for high levels of perceived stress

** Reflects the proportion of respondents who scored 10 or more on the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D-10), the threshold for significant depressive symptoms.

*** Educators who replied they "very often" feel that their "work is making a difference with a child." This question included a four-point scale: 1) never; 2) rarely; 3) sometimes; and 4) very often.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Table 15. Job Plans in Three Years

California, 2025

	San Diego County	Southern Region	California
Family child care providers	**(n=229)**	**(n=749)**	**(n=2,194)**
Continuing in the same role	67%	70%	71%
Different job in ECE	4%	5%	5%
Job outside of ECE	3%	2%	2%
Retired	8%	10%	9%
Don't know	19%	13%	13%
Center teaching staff	**(n=516)**	**(n=1,295)**	**(n=3,326)**
Continuing in the same role	40%	44%	46%
Different job in ECE	33%	26%	28%
Job outside of ECE	5%	7%	6%
Retired	5%	5%	5%
Don't know	17%	17%	15%

Note: Working with children in kindergarten or older is considered "outside of ECE" for the purposes of this table, since we focus on children from birth through age five.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley