Minnesota's Early Childhood Educators

2023 Statewide Study of the Demographics, Workforce Supports, and Professional Development Needs of the Early Care and Education Workforce

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Executive summary

In 2023, Wilder Research in St. Paul contracted with the Minnesota departments of Education (MDE) and Human Services (DHS) in partnership with the Minnesota Children's Cabinet to conduct an Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Survey. The purpose of the study is to describe characteristics of the ECE workforce, assess educators' economic well-being, and describe their motivations for participating in training and professional development opportunities.

The study included a survey of and focus groups with early childhood educators. For the purposes of this study, we defined "early childhood educator" as those who care for children professionally, regardless of their title. This study includes early childhood care and education professionals in the following types of programs:

- Licensed family child care providers
- Licensed child care centers
- School-based early childhood programs, including public preschool/prekindergarten programs, Early Childhood Family Education, and Early Childhood Special Education
- Head Start and Early Head Start programs
- License-exempt child care programs, both certified and uncertified, that serve preschool age

Size of the early care and education workforce in Minnesota

Wilder identified over 9,000 programs serving children in a child care capacity through licensed child care centers, licensed family child care providers, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and license-exempt (both certified or uncertified) child care programs that serve children prior to kindergarten entry. In addition, there are 327 public school districts and 46 charter schools in Minnesota that offer early learning programs that may employ early childhood educators in a variety of roles through school-based programs, including voluntary prekindergarten, Early Childhood Special Education, and Early Childhood Family Education.

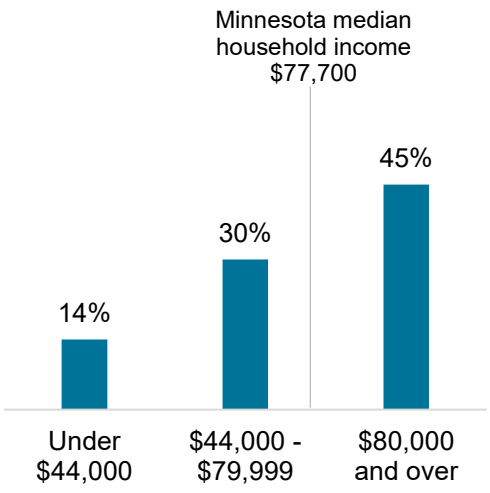
- In total, Wilder estimates there are over 40,000 early childhood educators in Minnesota.
- On average, child care centers had 14 staff employed at the time of the survey, whereas school-based programs had about 17.
- Annually, turnover is about 30% overall, and highest among aides (38%).
- A majority of early childhood educators (63%) are working full time, between 31-50 hours a week, with family child care providers and directors averaging more hours per week than teachers, aides, and paraprofessionals.

Characteristics of the early care and education workforce

Survey respondents largely identified as white women with an average age of 44. Despite this, men, people identifying with many racial and ethnic groups, and a wide array of ages did participate in the survey. We know from census data that the workforce is likely more ethnically diverse than is reflected in this survey, and additional work is needed to ensure future studies better connect with the diverse workforce.[1]

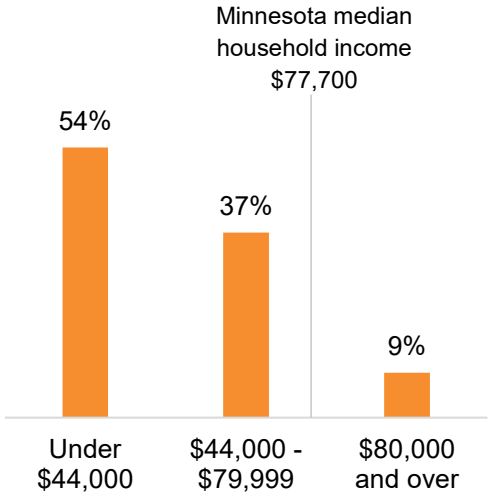
- While the distribution of early childhood educators' total household income is similar to other Minnesota households, most households are likely relying on income from other members of their households, as over half of early educators made less than $44,000 in 2022 from their early care and education job.

A. Early childhood educators' total household income



Refer to figure 6 in report for complete data set.

B. Early childhood educators' income from their early childhood education job

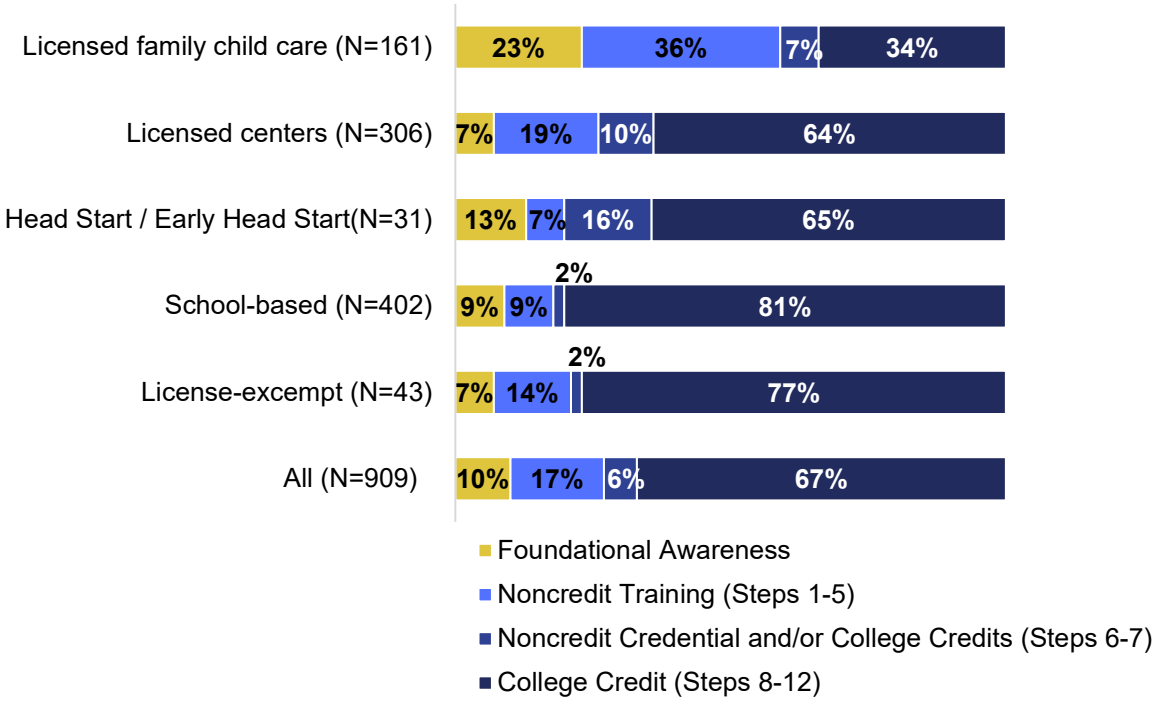


Refer to figure 7 in report for complete data set.

[1] Census data indicate that about 70% of those working in privately owned businesses within the Child Care Services industry (NAICS 6244) identify as white, non-Hispanic (this does not include self-employed providers or staff at school-based programs).

- Despite being employed, 16% of the workforce is living below 200% of the federal poverty level (21% of those living in greater Minnesota) and 15% rely on public benefits, primarily Medical Assistance.
- The majority of licensed child care centers and school-based programs offer paid time off and training (either paid training or reimbursement).
- 75% of early childhood educators used at least some of their PTO last year: a quarter used all their vacation time and about half used some.
- 49% of early childhood educators report being covered by a health insurance or medical plan through their own employer. Other educators are primarily covered through a family member (36%), individual insurance (11%), public insurance (10%), or do not have medical insurance (14%).
- Early childhood educators, especially family child care providers, are very experienced. On average, they have a decade or more of experience in early care and education programs.
- 10% have a National Child Development Associate credential; in focus groups, educators expressed that these credentials do not necessarily make them better at their job or increase their job security.
- When mapped onto the Minnesota Career Lattice,[2] 67% of early childhood educators are in the highest steps (College Credit, Steps 8-12), whereas 10% are at the Foundational Awareness level.

C. Early childhood educators on the Minnesota Career Lattice



Note. May not equal 100% due to rounding. Refer to figure 12 in report for complete data set.

[2] Minnesota's Career Lattice is maintained by Achieve—Minnesota Center for Professional Development.

Professional development needs and opportunities

Existing professional development and supports

- 96% of the workforce have "at least one other professional caregiver you can talk to for support or get advice from."
- 44% of early childhood educators report participating in relationship-based professional development in the past year, for 17 hours on average.
- Develop, Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool, is the mostly widely used professional development resource and 92% are satisfied with it.
- 92% of early childhood educators report the training they have received over the last two years has been very helpful (32%) or somewhat helpful (60%) towards improving their ability to do their job effectively.

Training motivations and needs

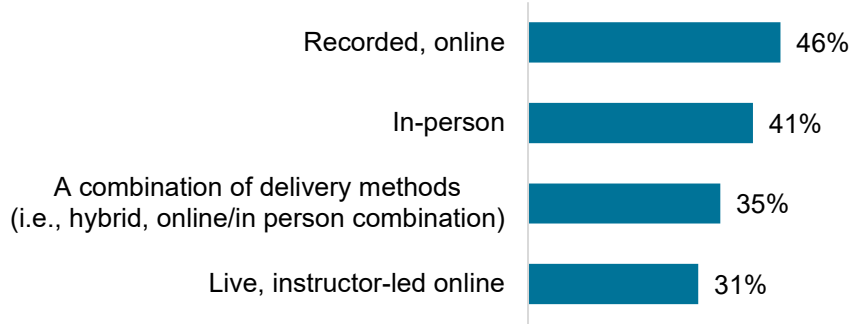
Professional growth was the most frequently selected motivator for getting involved in professional development or training (76%), though the top reasons vary by type of educator. Family child care providers are more commonly motivated by licensing requirements or annual training hour requirements (81-84%), staff in license-exempt child care programs were more likely to say improving quality was a main motivator (85-90%), and Head Start/Early Head Start staff most frequently want to stay up to date on best practices (84%).

In terms of what types of support and training they need, the most common response was support or training around behavior management (48%), followed by developmentally appropriate learning experiences (33%) and trauma-informed care and practice (33%).

In terms of what would help early childhood educators participate in professional development, paid time off was the most frequent response (48%), followed by online, virtual trainings (44%), and funding or scholarships (44%).

When early childhood educators were asked which training formats they have taken or prefer to take, responses were mixed, with some educators preferring live online trainings, some preferring recorded videos, and some preferring in-person or hybrid options.

D. Preferred format for trainings



Refer to figure 22 in report for complete data set.

Introduction

In 2023, Wilder Research in St. Paul contracted with the Minnesota departments of Education (MDE) and Human Services (DHS) in partnership with Minnesota Children's Cabinet to conduct an Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Survey. The purpose of the study is to describe characteristics of the ECE workforce, assess educators' economic well-being, and describe their motivations for participating in training and professional development opportunities. The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the characteristics of programs that employ the early childhood workforce?
- What are the characteristics of the early childhood workforce itself (family child care providers and staff at programs that serve children prior to kindergarten entry)?
- What is the education, experience, and expertise of the current early childhood workforce?
- What professional development training and experience is needed to support the early childhood workforce (at the individual and program level)?
- How has the licensed child care workforce changed since the previous study in 2011?

The study included a review of secondary data and recent studies related to the early childhood workforce, and a survey of and focus groups with early childhood educators. In total, 1,050 educators responded to the survey, and 39 participated in a focus group. A detailed description of the survey and focus group methods are in the Appendix. Early childhood educators, directors, and program leaders were asked to participate in the study. For the purposes of this study, we defined "early childhood educator" as those who care for children professionally, regardless of their title. This study includes early childhood care and education professionals who were involved in the day-to-day lives of children enrolled in child care and education programs. These types of early childhood educators were included in the study:

- Licensed family child care providers
- Licensed child care centers
- School-based early childhood programs, including public preschool/prekindergarten programs, Early Childhood Family Education, and Early Childhood Special Education
- Head Start and Early Head Start programs
- License-exempt child care programs, both certified and uncertified, that serve preschool age

Other studies

Below is a summary of the recent studies related to Minnesota's early childhood care and education industry that Wilder reviewed in preparing for this study. This review served to both inform the development of survey questions and determine the extent the research questions were answered by existing studies. Of particular note, First Children's Finance was also embarking on a survey of licensed child care providers and programs around the same time. The Minnesota Cost of Care Study focused on the program level; thus, this study focused primarily on the people working with young children. In addition to these Minnesota studies, the National Head Start Association conducts regular surveys of federally-funded Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and NORC at the University of Chicago conducts a National Survey of Early Care and Education every five years.

Minnesota Cost Modeling Report (https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-7180A-ENG). In 2021, Minnesota DHS contracted with First Children's Finance in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to conduct research to better understand the true cost of providing child care in Minnesota. The purpose of the study was to meet federal requirements and support child care accessibility by estimating the cost of meeting health and safety requirements. The cost of care was estimated across quality levels, salary levels, program types, age groups served, and geographic location. The study concluded that infant care, higher quality programs (Four-Star Parent Aware programs, as a proxy), and programs in greater Minnesota are least financially sustainable and these program are not being adequately reimbursed for their cost of care.

The report suggests that increasing reimbursement is necessary to increase availability of infant and toddler care, and to adequately support wages across the child care industry. Child care businesses also need to be able to earn a profit to pay debt, invest, and expand their businesses.

Survey of child care businesses and organizations. In March 2023, the Minneapolis Federal Reserve and First Children's Finance conducted a survey of child care providers in Minnesota to examine the current status and financial stability of child care providers. Over 1,000 owners of child care businesses (13% of licensed programs) responded to the survey. Overall, the number of child care providers is declining, despite reported improvements to financial stress in the past year. The survey also found that:

- The number of active child care licenses and capacity (number of children they can care for) has decreased compared to a decade ago. The decrease has largely been among licensed family child care providers, while the number of licensed child care centers has increased slightly. But the increase in child care centers has not been sufficient to replace the loss among licensed family child care providers. Many providers are not enrolling their maximum occupancy due to lack of staff. For providers in the Twin Cities 7-county metro area, in particular, 71% of child care centers and 6% of licensed family child care providers indicated they would increase enrollment if more staff were available.
- Although a decrease from over a year ago, 61% of child care center respondents reported they are having trouble hiring despite offering higher pay and incentives. Child care providers are finding themselves competing with retailers who can offer a comparable or higher starting wage and don't require a college degree. Many providers, 19% of child care center owners and 25% of licensed family child care owners, reported they are not always able to pay themselves.

Descriptive analysis of child care stabilization base grants. This study, conducted by Minnesota Management and Budget and published in 2023, utilized data from Minnesota DHS to examine the impact of child care stabilization base grants on compensation of staff, closure rates, and changes in providers' enrollment and capacity in Minnesota. Findings suggest that:

- Compensation for staff at programs receiving grants increased 5.5% compared to programs that did not.
- Licensed family child care providers who received stabilization grants were found to have a lower risk of closure compared with those that did not receive grants (5% versus 26%, respectively).
- Overall, the base grants were not found to be associated with increases in enrollment or capacity among child care providers.

Early Care and Education: Profile of an Industry in Crisis. This 2020 article by experts for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development outlined the problem of child care shortages in Minnesota, calling it a "quiet crisis."

- With "critically low" wages and no incentive to obtain credentials to climb a career ladder, positions in child care can't compete with positions in other industries that require comparable or fewer credentials and offer higher pay. Most child care occupations do not pay enough to meet basic needs, especially for individuals with families to support.
- Wages are highest in the Twin Cities metro area, but are still very low compared to other industries with similar requirements.
- The turnover rate is higher for child care workers than other industries.
- Wages in child care occupations are not sufficient to pay for the education they require, creating a gap in the workforce pipeline. The cost of education is not worth the return and, as a result, it is difficult for providers to find and hire qualified job candidates.

- The recent loss in the total number of child care licenses has largely been the result of family child care providers leaving the profession.
- A survey from Minnesota Management and Budget found that the top reasons for leaving the profession were the lack of benefits (e.g., health insurance), long hours, and challenges finding substitute providers.
- The early care and education industry was in crisis before the pandemic, and problems such as an undercompensated workforce have only become more pronounced and contribute to a scarcity of high-quality and affordable care, particularly for the families who need it most.

Parent Aware evaluation (in process). Minnesota DHS is currently contracting with Child Trends to carry out an evaluation of Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System for early childhood programs, to better understand the degree to which Parent Aware supports positive outcomes for Minnesota's children, families, and early childhood workforce. A component of the evaluation explores child care providers' experience with Parent Aware and the extent they feel they are able to serve racially and ethnically diverse families.

Family, Friend and Neighbor Child Care in Minnesota 2023 Environmental Scan (https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-8497A-ENG) (2023). DHS engaged The Improve Group to conduct an environmental scan of family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers and families who use FFN care. Using a convenience sample, over 800 surveys were completed. The results indicated FFN providers are ethnically and racially diverse, and provide care in a variety of types of arrangements to grandchildren, friends, neighbors, siblings, and nieces/nephews ranging from full-time to occasional capacities. They tend to be paid little or no compensation. Families seek FFN care because they like their children being with someone they know, who shares their language, culture, and parenting philosophy, and because it is more affordable. FFN caregivers want to help their friends and relatives and enjoy spending time with the child(ren) in their care.

National Survey of Early Care and Education – Minnesota Supplement. The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) is a nationally representative study, funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It aims to better understand the use and availability of child care and early education in the United States. For the 2019 NSECE, Minnesota DHS funded supplementary data collection to enable researchers to answer questions about the Minnesota ECE workforce at the state level. Key findings related to the ECE workforce in Minnesota include that the number of listed home-based providers (licensed family child care providers or license-exempt child care providers) decreased by 20% between 2012 and 2019, while the workforce in center-based settings grew by 120% in the same time period. The reports also provide estimates of the number of children served by setting and age group, and information about educators' education, experience, and age.

Size of the early care and education workforce in Minnesota

Child Care Aware of Minnesota, DHS, and MDE provided Wilder Research a list of licensed family child care providers and early childhood programs in February 2023. These data indicated that there were over 9,000 programs that serve children in a child care capacity through licensed child care, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and license-exempt child care programs that serve children prior to kindergarten entry (Figure 1). Licensed family child care providers and Head Start/Early Head Start programs are concentrated in greater Minnesota, while child care centers are concentrated in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area.

In addition, according to MDE staff, there are 327 public school districts and 46 charter schools in Minnesota that offer early learning programs,[3] in over 1,000 elementary buildings that may employ early childhood educators in a variety of roles through school-based programs, including voluntary prekindergarten, Early Childhood Special Education, and Early Childhood Family Education. Services may also be provided in children's homes. Based on data from MDE's STAR (STaff Automated Reporting), which is used by school districts to report employment information, there are at least 2,600 people working in school-based early childhood programs, though the STAR is not used consistently by all schools and districts, so this is likely an undercount.

In total, Wilder estimates there are over 40,000 people working as early childhood educators in Minnesota.

1. Number of early care and education programs, by program type

Program type	Number	7-county metro area	Greater Minnesota	Tribally licensed	Number of staff (mean)	Total in workforce
Licensed family child care providers	6,291	33%	67%	<1%	12% have assistants or aides	7,073
Licensed child care centers	1,817	61%	39%	<1%	14	25,362
Head Start and Early Head Start programs	305	17%	83%	6%	15	At least 3,800
License-exempt child care programs	249	51%	49%	N/A	20	At least 2,900
School-based programs	327 public school districts 46 charter schools					At least 2,600

Sources. Program information was calculated based on the files received from Child Care Aware of Minnesota. Workforce numbers for public programs are from the STAR database and The Office of Head Start (OHS) Program Information Report (PIR). The size of the workforce was calculated based on the survey responses. An insufficient number of responses were received from directors of Head Start / Early Head Start and license-exempt child care programs to calculate an exact number.

[3] Minnesota Department of Education. (2023, September), *Officially recognized charter school early learning programs*. PDF file will download: https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=MDE070453&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary

Staffing stability and turnover

To examine staffing stability and turnover for a full year, this study asked center-based program directors to provide staffing information for the 12 months prior to when they took the survey (Figures 2 and 3). On average, child care centers had 14 staff employed at the time of the survey, whereas school-based programs had about 17. Annual turnover is 30% across all positions, highest among aides (38%).

2. Number of early childhood care and education staff, by program type

Number of staff	Licensed centers (N=169)	School-based programs (N=81)	Total (N=297)
Mean (arithmetic average) of total staff size	14.0	16.8	15.2
Median (middle value) of total staff size	12.0	13.0	13.0
Number of staff members; and percentage of programs			
1-4	12%	13%	12%
5-8	23%	20%	22%
9-13	24%	18%	22%
14-18	14%	10%	13%
19-24	15%	19%	17%
25 or more	12%	20%	15%

Note. Includes only one response per program. Other program types are not included because the number of responses was too low. Does not include teachers in licensed centers or schools that only work with school-age children. May not total 100% due to rounding.

3. Mean (average) number of staff employed, hired, and leaving in last 12 months, by role

N=188-189	Employed as of today	Hired in the last 12 months	Left in the last 12 months	Mean turnover rate (left by employed)[a]
Directors	1.2	0.4	0.3	29%
Infant teachers	1.2	0.3	0.3	24%
Toddler teachers	1.3	0.5	0.4	**31%**
Preschool teachers	3.9	1.0	0.9	25%
Assistant teachers	2.2	0.8	0.6	24%
Paraprofessionals	2.1	0.6	0.5	21%
Aides	3.4	1.9	1.4	**38%**

Note. Does not include licensed family child care providers that responded to these questions. Includes only one response per program. Respondents were asked to "Please include part-time and full-time positions combined, and mark "0" for any positions where no one was employed, hired, or left. For staff members who serve multiple roles, please count them only ONCE, in the position they are in most often."

[a] Turnover rate is typically calculated by the number of employees who left in the last year by the number of employees at the beginning of the year. This calculation is based on the number employed at the time of the survey rather than the beginning of the year.

A majority of early childhood educators (63%) are working full time, between 31-50 hours a week (Figure 4). However, the number of hours per week that educators usually work varies by role. Most licensed family child care providers reported working many more hours (51 or more) per week. In comparison, teaching aides and paraprofessionals were more likely to report usually working under 30 hours a week.

4. Length of work week, by role

Hours per week	Less than 10	10-20 hours	21-30 hours	31-40 hours	41-50 hours	51-60 hours	61 hours or more
Licensed family child care (N=185)	0%	2%	0%	2%	29%	53%*	14%
Directors (N=270)	7%	5%	9%	19%	42%*	14%	4%
Assistant director (N=24)	0%	0%	8%	33%	54%*	4%	0%
Teachers (N=274)	2%	5%	10%	58%*	25%	2%	<1%
Assistant teachers (N=27)	0%	19%	11%	59%*	11%	0%	0%
Aides (N=24)	17%	25%	25%	33%*	0%	0%	0%
Para (N=34)	0%	15%	50%*	27%	9%	0%	0%
ECSE teacher (N=57)	5%	5%	4%	53%*	33%	0%	0%
Related service providers[a] (N=40)	5%	10%	10%	65%*	10%	0%	0%
Total (N=987)	4%	6%	9%	33%*	30%	14%	4%

Note. Does not include school-age teachers. May not total 100% due to rounding.

* Top category for each role (row).

[a] Related service providers are professionals who provide developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as part of early childhood special education.

Characteristics of the early care and education workforce

Demographics

Survey respondents primarily identified as white women, with an average age of 44 (Figure 5), however, educators from many racial groups, genders, and ages responded. The demographic characteristics are similar across all program types, though licensed family child care providers tend to be slightly older, and staff at Head Start/Early Head Start and license-exempt child care programs tend to be a bit younger. Census data indicate that about 70% of those working in privately owned businesses within the Child Care Services industry (NAICS 6244) identify as white, non-Hispanic (this does not include self-employed providers or staff at school-based programs).[4] This indicates the survey may not have adequately reached programs employing racially diverse staff. Minnesota is home to families and educators who are racially and ethnically diverse, and, in future surveys, additional efforts will be taken to increase the diversity of respondents. Because of the underrepresentation of early childhood educators of color among survey respondents, we suggest including context from additional data sources such as census data and the other studies described above when considering the findings of this study.

Data from MDE's STAR (STaff Automated Reporting), which is used by school districts to report employment information for licensed school staff, indicate that 94% of licensed school-based early childhood educators are white and 98% are women. Given that STAR primarily captures licensed staff, these data are not adequately capturing the full breadth of the early care and education workforce employed by school districts.

[4] QWI Explorer application, U.S. Census Bureau, qwiexplorer.ces.census.gov/exp-r/12e36f.html

5. Age and race/ethnicity of the workforce

Demographics	Percentage
Gender	**N=898**
Female	98%
Male	2%
Non-binary	<1%
Age	**N=863**
Mean (arithmetic average)	44
Median (middle value)	43
Range	16-82
Racial/ethnic identity (respondents could select all that apply)	**N=892**
White	96%
White alone, not in combination with any other race/ethnicity)	92%
Hispanic/Latino	3%
American Indian	2%
Asian	2%
Black/African American (African-American)	1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%
Another race or ethnicity	<1%
Language spoken at home[a]	**N=902**
English	99%
Spanish	1%

Note. May not total 100% due to rounding.

[a] Other languages with 1-2 respondents each include: American Sign Language, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, Ojibwe, Oromo, Visyasn (spoken in the Philippines), and Yoruba (spoken in Nigeria).

Economic characteristics

The range of early childhood educators' total household income is similar to other Minnesota households. Over half had an annual household income in 2022 of over $80,000 (Figure 6). However, a quarter reported a 2022 household income of less than $53,000. In addition, over half report the income from their early care and education job is less than $44,000 per year (Figure 7), indicating the majority of early childhood educators likely live in households in which multiple people work.

Despite being employed, 16% of the workforce is living below 200% of the federal poverty level (21% of those living in greater Minnesota) and 15% rely on public benefits, primarily Medical Assistance. Notably, there was some variation by program type:

- A larger proportion of licensed family child care providers and staff at license-exempt child care programs than in school-based programs are living below 200% of the federal poverty level (19-24%), and 25% of licensed family child care providers access public benefits.
- Staff in school-based programs are more economically stable than staff in licensed programs, with a smaller proportion living below 200% of poverty (10%) or using any type of public benefits (2%). Staff employed by school districts are more likely to be part of unions and paid on a step-and-ladder system where they continue to get increased wages as their years of experience and formal education increase.

6. Household income in 2022 and economic status of the workforce

Income and Economic Status	Metro N=260	Greater MN N=430	Total N=755
Total gross household income (income from ECE included)[a]			
Under $26,000	2%	3%	3%
$26,000-34,999	3%	6%	5%
$35,000-43,999	4%	8%	7%
$44,000-52,999	7%	9%	8%
$53,000-61,999	7%	8%	8%
$62,000-70,999	9%	8%	8%
$71,000-79,999[b]	5%	7%	6%
$80,000-89,999	10%	10%	10%
$90,000 and over	52%	42%	46%
Living in households at or above 200% of federal poverty level	92%	79%	84%
Has other employment, in addition to ECE (N=888)	**15%**	**17%**	**17%**
Number of hours per week, on average, spent on non-ECE job(s)			
Mean (arithmetic average)	13	16	15
Median (middle value)	10	11	10
Range	2-40	1–55	1–55

Income and Economic Status	Metro N=260	Greater MN N=430	Total N=755
Receipt of public benefits	**N=296**	**N=470**	**N=851**
None	89%	81%	85%
Medical assistance	11%	17%	13%
Food assistance	4%	5%	4%
Energy assistance	<1%	2%	2%
Housing assistance	<1%	<1%	<1%
Cash assistance	<1%	<1%	<1%

Note. May not total 100% due to rounding.

[a] 28% did not respond to the question on household income.

[b] Median household income in Minnesota is in this range ($77,700).

7. Income from early care and education job in 2022

Amount of 2022 household income from early care and education job	N=753
Under $26,000	25%
$26,000-34,999	13%
$35,000-43,999	16%
$44,000-52,999	14%
$53,000-61,999	10%
$62,000-70,999	9%
$71,000-79,999	5%
$80,000-89,999	4%
$90,000 and over	5%

Directors were asked about which benefits their center-based child care or early education program offers. The majority offer paid time off and training (either paid training or reimbursement) (Figure 8). About half offer retirement plans, discounted or free child care, and medical or dental insurance. Fewer programs offer paid parental/caregiving leave. (Paid Family and Medical Leave benefits will start for Minnesotans in January 2026.) There were some variations by program type, notably:

- Among licensed family child care providers who employ assistants or aides, some offer paid time off and training, though none who responded to the survey offer health and medical benefits.
- Licensed child care centers are more likely to offer discounted or free child care (likely at their own center), reimbursement for training expenses, and scholarships.
- School-based programs (primarily school districts) are more likely to offer medical and dental insurance, health savings accounts, retirement plans, and caregiving leave.

8. Benefits offered, according to directors and family child care providers, by program type

Benefits offered	Licensed family child care with employees (N=21)	Licensed centers (N=188)	School-based programs (N=81)	All (N=298)
Paid time off (PTO, vacation time, and/or sick time)	43%	88%	93%	86%
Employer-provided training with no cost to the participant	48%	74%	84%	76%
Reimbursement for training expenses	38%	70%	35%	56%
Retirement plans/401K	0%	52%	67%	52%
Discounted or free child care for employees' children	19%	72%	11%	51%
Medical insurance	0%	44%	79%	51%
Dental insurance	0%	43%	70%	48%
Health savings accounts	0%	28%	62%	36%
Paid parental/caregiving leave	10%	15%	28%	19%
Scholarships to pursue education	0%	27%	7%	19%
Another benefit (unidentified)	10%	13%	6%	10%
None	38%	3%	5%	6%

Three-quarters of early childhood educators used at least some PTO last year: a quarter used all their vacation time and about half used some (Figure 9). Compared to other types of educators, licensed family child care providers were more likely to use all their vacation, which may be because they can set their own schedule and close their business during their prescheduled vacations. However, 19% of licensed family child care providers also indicated they do not have access to vacation/PTO, as they are less likely to be paid when their child care business is closed.

In comparing vacation use with hours educators work each week, those who work fewer hours are less likely to have PTO available to them or use their PTO; whereas those who are working more hours per week are more likely to use all or some of their PTO.

9. Vacation or paid time off use, by program type

Vacation/PTO use	Licensed family child care (N=178)	Licensed centers (N=337)	Head Start (N=35)	School-based (N=404)	License-exempt (N=43)	All (N=958)
Total who used vacation/PTO last year	**74%**	**73%**	**69%**	**76%**	**81%**	**75%**
Used all vacation/PTO days	43%	25%	49%	21%	37%	27%
Used some vacation/PTO days	31%	48%	20%	55%	44%	48%
Did not use my vacation/PTO days	6%	11%	9%	14%	7%	11%
Not applicable, vacation/PTO days were not available	19%	13%	17%	7%	7%	11%
Not applicable, started working at this early care and education program in 2023	<1%	4%	6%	3%	5%	3%

Across all types of early childhood educators, 86% report being covered by a health insurance or medical plan (Figure 10). In comparison, statewide about 95% of residents under age 65 have health insurance.[5] Of those with health insurance, 85% are covered by private insurance through their or a family member's employer. There were some variations by program type, notably:

- Licensed family child care providers are more likely to be covered by their family member's employer, bought directly, or through public insurance programs.
- Staff at school-based programs are most likely to be covered by their employer (typically a public school district).
- Head Start/Early Head Start staff are more likely to buy insurance directly.

10. Health care coverage, by program type

Health insurance coverage	Licensed family child care (N=179)	Licensed centers (N=331)	Head Start (N=37)	School-based (N=413)	License-exempt (N=43)	All (N=963)
Covered by health insurance or medical plan	86%	80%	78%	91%	91%	86%
Type of coverage	**N=153**	**N=264**	**N=29**	**N=376**	**N=39**	**N=830**
Employer-sponsored (group) insurance						
Coverage through this employer	<1%	33%	55%	76%	69%	49%
Coverage through a family member's employer	54%	45%	21%	24%	23%	36%
Coverage through another job	0%	<1%	0%	2%	3%	1%
Individual (non-group) insurance						
Insurance through MNSure	20%	11%	17%	1%	8%	8%
Coverage bought directly (other than MNSure)	6%	5%	10%	<1%	0%	3%
Public insurance						
Medicaid/Medical Assistance	12%	6%	3%	2%	3%	5%
Medicare	9%	3%	7%	1%	0%	3%
TRICARE (for active duty military)	<1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<1%
Indian or Tribal Health Service	0%	0%	0%	<1%	0%	<1%
Other insurance (unidentified)	2%	2%	0%	<1%	3%	1%

Note. May not total 100% due to rounding.

[5] Minnesota Department of Health. (2021). *Health insurance*. https://data.web.health.state.mn.us/insurance_basic#byage

Education and experience

Years of experience

Licensed family child care providers have the most experience compared to staff in other types of early childhood program settings (Figure 11). On average, they have been working in the field over 20 years. These types of providers report they plan to stay in the field for less than 10 more years, which is lower than the average for other types of providers. Higher paid positions (directors, teachers, and related service providers) also report over a decade of experience, whereas assistants, aides, and paraprofessionals are newer to the field.

11. Early childhood educators' years of experience, by role

Mean (average) years and range	Experience working in early care and education programs	Experience at current early care and education program	Plan to stay in the field
Licensed family child care (N=157-176)	22.6 (1-48)	18.4 (0-48)	9.7 (0-40)
Directors (N=226-266)	19.4 (0-50)	11.2 (0-50)	11.1 (0-32)
Assistant directors (N=22-24)	16.5 (0-45)	12.4 (0-34)	12.2 (0-40)
Teachers (N=268-269)	15.0 (0-41)	7.4 (0-37)	14.1 (0-50)
Assistant teachers (N=19-25)	8.5 (0-31)	5.1 (0-31)	14.4 (0-40)
Aides (N=14-20)	5.5 (0-33)	3.8 (0-33)	10.1 (0-30)
Paraprofessional (N=27-34)	8.9 (0-25)	5.2 (0-24)	8.0 (0-30)
ECSE teacher (N=46-57)	17.9 (2-45)	9.0 (0-39)	14.9 (0-30)
Related service providers[a] (N=37-39)	12.3 (0-33)	7.5 (0-33)	14.0 (0-30)

[a] Related service providers are professionals who provide developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as part of early childhood special education.

Education

Education requirements and guidelines vary by role and type of program in which early childhood educators work. As early childhood educators participate in education and training, the Minnesota Career Lattice is a tool used to recognize their professional development as practitioners move forward in their careers.[6] When mapped onto Achieve's Minnesota Career Lattice, 67% of early childhood educators are in the highest steps (College Credit, Steps 8-12), whereas 10% are at the Foundational Awareness level (Figure 12).

- Licensed family child care providers are more likely to be in the Foundational Awareness or early steps in the lattice, as college credits or degrees are not required to obtain a family child care license.
- Educators in school-based programs are most likely to be in the highest steps on the lattice, as some of these educators are in roles that require advanced degrees, such as special education, speech language pathology, or occupational therapy degrees.

12. Early childhood educators on the Minnesota Career Lattice

Lattice Step	Licensed family child care (N=161)	Licensed centers (N=306)	Head Start (N=31)	School-based (N=402)	License exempt (N=43)	All (N=909)
Foundational Awareness	23%	7%	13%	9%	7%	10%
Noncredit Training (Steps 1-5)	36%	19%	7%	9%	14%	17%
Noncredit Credential and/or College Credits (Steps 6-7)	7%	10%	16%	2%	2%	6%
College Credit (Steps 8-12)	34%	64%	65%	81%	77%	67%

Note. Educators with college degrees may be in lower lattice steps if their degree is not in early childhood or a closely related field.

School-based program staff are most likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher (91%) compared with staff in other types of programs, likely because of the required specialized training for many positions in these public programs (Figure 13). In comparison, about two-thirds of staff in licensed and license-exempt child care centers have a bachelor's degree or higher. A smaller proportion of licensed family child care providers have formal degrees, though all reported having a high school diploma or equivalent, and a large majority (82%) have at least some postsecondary education. Licensed family child care providers were also least likely to express interest in increasing their level of education. If their family child care business is operating successfully or they are closer to retirement, licensed family child care providers may see less benefit to incurring the expense of additional education. Across all types of programs, those interested in increasing their level of education are 8.5 years younger, on average, than those who are not.

6 The Career Lattice is maintained by Achieve—Minnesota Center for Professional Development: https://www.mncpd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/MN-Career-Lattice.pdf

13. Degrees and certificates completed, by program type

Highest level of education completed	Licensed family child care (N=183)	Licensed centers (N=340)	Head Start (N=37)	School-based (N=415)	License exempt (N=43)	All (N=979)
Some high school	0%	1%	5%	0%	5%	<1%
High school graduate or General Educational Development (GED)	18%	7%	19%	2%	4%	7%
Some college	28%	16%	11%	3%	7%	12%
Associate degree	20%	14%	22%	3%	12%	10%
Degree from a vocational, technical, or business school	14%	2%	3%	1%	7%	4%
Bachelor's degree	16%	45%	27%	33%	51%	35%
Master's degree or higher	5%	16%	14%	58%	14%	32%
Have interest in increasing level of education	**28%**	**38%**	**59%**	**42%**	**51%**	**39%**
Has a CDA, degree, or credits in early childhood or closely related field	**47%**	**74%**	**70%**	**81%**	**81%**	**72%**
National Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)	**N=172**	**N=312**	**N=30**	**N=380**	**N=42**	**N=903**
Has a CDA	13%	13%	23%	7%	12%	10%
Interested in pursuing a CDA	14%	11%	7%	14%	17%	13%
Does not have and is not interested in pursuing a CDA	73%	76%	70%	80%	69%	77%

When asked about the potential benefits or drawbacks associated with pursuing degrees or certificates specific to early childhood education, participants in four of the early childhood educator focus groups expressed that completing such programs does not necessarily mean that an educator is better at their job. These participants placed equal or greater importance on experience or innate skill related to working with young children. Some further specified that parents do not know or care if early childhood educators have a certain degree or certificate.

> *No one knew or cared about what [the degree] was. They cared that their child was safe and happy.*
>
> *– Staff at family child care in the Twin Cities metro*

Conversely, participants in three focus groups found value in completing a degree or certificate in the field, and pointed to the opportunity for better pay or job placement as key benefits. Some noted that the coursework involved provided helpful learnings and that they enjoyed the program overall.

Professional development needs and opportunities

Professional peer support

Ninety-six percent of the workforce said they have "at least one other professional caregiver you can talk to for support or get advice from." Forty-four percent of the early childhood educators report participating in relationship-based professional development[7] in the past year, for 17 hours on average (Figure 14). Of note, there was no difference based on where educators are located. The three most common topics discussed with mentors, coaches, or consultants were: child development, relationships with families, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. There were some variations by program type, notably:

- Licensed family child care providers were less likely to work with mentors or coaches in the past year (24%), though they more frequently discussed Parent Aware with their mentors or coaches (79%). This indicates they may be primarily accessing coaching through the Parent Aware program.
- Staff in school-based programs are more likely to have worked with mentors or coaches in the past year (55%), most commonly discussing assessment, evaluation, and individualization (63%).

[7] Relationship-based professional development includes mentoring, coaching, consultation, and technical assistance.

14. Professional mentoring, coaching, and peer support among early childhood educators

Childhood educators support	N=932
Has had a professional mentor, coach, or consultant in the last year	
Yes, as part of a training or class	25%
Yes, in another capacity	19%
No, but interested	22%
No, and not interested	34%
Hours interacted with coach	**N=343**
Mean (arithmetic average)	17
Median (middle value)	10
Range	0-200
Content or topics discussed (topics with 20% or more)	**N=382**
Child development and learning	62%
Relationships with families	62%
Developmentally appropriate learning experiences	58%
Assessment, evaluation, and individualization[a]	53%
Behavior guidance	45%
Professionalism	38%
Trauma-informed care and practice	31%
Parent Aware	31%
Infants and toddlers	30%
Children's mental health	29%
Health, safety, and nutrition	28%
Working with multilingual children and families	20%

[a] Sec. 5. Minnesota Statutes 2019 Supplement, section 245A.149 defines this as "training in observing, recording, and assessing development; assessing and using information to plan; and assessing and using information to enhance and maintain program quality."

Use and satisfaction with existing training and resources

Respondents were asked about their awareness and use of various professional development resources (Figure 15). Develop Minnesota was the mostly widely used resource, particularly among licensed family child care providers and staff at licensed child care centers and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. In 2018, Child Trends similarly found that large proportions of the child care workforce used Develop.[8] Achieve – MN Center for Professional Development was also highly used among all three groups. A few notable differences by program type include:

- With the exception of staff at school-based programs, early childhood educators are less aware of professional development through school district-community child care partnerships, for example, in mixed-delivery partnerships.
- Staff at school-based programs were less likely to report using the listed resources than staff at other program types, perhaps because they are engaging in professional development through their school districts or professional associations specific to their degree or licensure.

15. Awareness and use of professional development resources, by program type

Program type	Percentage aware	Percentage used
Licensed family child care providers (N=173)		
Develop: Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool[a]	97%	90%
Achieve – MN Center for Professional Development	80%	43%
Child Care Aware system training	87%	42%
Customized on-site training through Child Care Aware district offices	68%	25%
Individualized Training Needs Assessment Tool	66%	38%
TEACH Scholarships/REETAIN bonuses[b]	64%	23%
Coaching through Center for Inclusive Child Care	51%	13%
Minnesota CDA or Infant/Toddler CDA training series and supports	48%	12%
Professional development as part of a school district-community child care partnership	36%	8%
Staff at licensed child care centers (N=318)		
Develop Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool[a]	94%	82%
Achieve – MN Center for Professional Development	83%	52%
Child Care Aware system training	73%	27%
Individualized Training Needs Assessment Tool	57%	25%
Coaching through Center for Inclusive Child Care	57%	24%
Professional development as part of a school district-community child care partnership	51%	19%

[8] Paschall, K., Kane, M. C., Hilty, R., Silamongkol, T., & Tout, K. (2018). *Professional Development for Minnesota's Child Care and Early Education Workforce: A Study of the Supply of and Demand for Training* (DHS-7758A). Child Trends. https://www.childtrends.org/publications/professional-development-for-minnesotas-child-care-and-early-education-workforce-a-study-of-the-supply-of-and-demand-for-training

Program type	Percentage aware	Percentage used
Customized on-site training through Child Care Aware district offices	59%	18%
TEACH Scholarships/REETAIN bonuses[b]	63%	18%
Minnesota CDA or Infant/Toddler CDA training series and supports	57%	14%
Staff at school-based programs (N=391)		
Professional development as part of a school district-community child care partnership	68%	44%
Develop Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool[a]	41%	20%
Child Care Aware system training	44%	11%
Achieve – MN Center for Professional Development	37%	9%
Customized on-site training through Child Care Aware district offices	32%	4%
Individualized Training Needs Assessment Tool	20%	4%
Minnesota CDA or Infant/Toddler CDA training series and supports	26%	2%
Head Start and Early Head Start staff (N=33-34)		
Develop Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool[a]	88%	73%
Achieve – MN Center for Professional Development	74%	47%
Child Care Aware system training	82%	36%
Individualized Training Needs Assessment Tool	58%	28%
Customized on-site training through Child Care Aware district offices	55%	27%
Professional development as part of a school district-community child care partnership	70%	26%
Minnesota CDA or Infant/Toddler CDA training series and supports	58%	24%
Staff at license-exempt child care programs (N=39-40)		
Develop Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool [a]	76%	59%
Professional development as part of a school district-community child care partnership	61%	26%
Child Care Aware system training	70%	23%
Achieve -- MN Center for Professional Development	56%	20%
Individualized Training Needs Assessment Tool	44%	17%
Customized on-site training through Child Care Aware district offices	50%	13%
Minnesota CDA or Infant/Toddler CDA training series and supports	54%	10%

[a] On the survey, this item was phrased as: "DEVELOP Minnesota: website to search and find available training and professional development advising and track training on a learning record."

[b] The acronyms REETAIN and TEACH were used on the survey without the full program names, and REETAIN was referenced as a "grant."

Early childhood educators are generally satisfied with the professional development resources they have used, with 90-96% indicating satisfaction with each resource (Figure 16). Satisfaction is particularly high for TEACH Scholarships/REETAIN Bonuses and coaching through the Center for Inclusive Child Care, though use is lower among these resources since they are geared to licensed family child care providers and staff in licensed programs.

16. Satisfaction with professional development resources

Resources	N	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
TEACH Scholarships/REETAIN bonuses[a]	112	44%	48%	5%	3%
Coaching through Center for Inclusive Child Care	106	40%	56%	3%	2%
Develop Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool[b]	508	31%	60%	6%	3%
Minnesota CDA or Infant/Toddler CDA training series and supports	67	28%	66%	2%	5%
Individualized Training Needs Assessment Tool	155	28%	62%	6%	5%
Child Care Aware system training	187	26%	68%	2%	4%
Achieve -- MN Center for Professional Development	277	25%	68%	3%	4%
Customized on-site training through Child Care Aware district offices	113	24%	71%	<1%	4%
Professional development as part of a school district-community child care partnership	240	24%	68%	6%	2%

[a] The acronyms REETAIN and TEACH were used on the survey without the full program names, and REETAIN was referenced as a "grant."

[b] On the survey, this item was phrased as: "DEVELOP Minnesota: website to search and find available training and professional development advising and track training on a learning record."

Overall, 92% of early childhood educators report the training they received over the last two years was very helpful (32%) or somewhat helpful (60%) towards improving their ability to do their job effectively (Figure 17).

17. Helpfulness of recent trainings

Helpfulness of early childhood training, coaching and/or education received in the last two years	Licensed family child care (N=175)	Licensed centers (N=321)	Head Start (N=32)	School-based (N=374)	License-exempt (N=43)	All (N=911)
Very helpful	34%	34%	47%	29%	40%	32%
Somewhat helpful	54%	58%	47%	64%	56%	60%
Not very helpful	11%	8%	3%	6%	5%	8%
Not at all helpful	1%	<1%	3%	1%	0%	<1%

Participants in each of the six focus groups were able to recall at least one positive professional development experience. The common theme of these experiences was relevance to their role. For example, participants described opportunities to learn about early childhood development; helpful tips and ideas for games, activities, and crafts; and creative learning approaches for young children. One participant talked about a particular situation in which they helped to identify the cause of an issue with an infant in their care and the pride they felt at being equipped with that knowledge.

Participants in 4 of the 6 focus groups said they had recently had negative professional development experiences. In each case, those participants described education that was focused on school-aged children, making the topics feel irrelevant to their role. Some participants noted that they can tell when a trainer does not have actual child care experience, and that the resulting educational material is not useful or not presented well. A few participants also called out the mandatory Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SUIDS) training as a negative experience, citing the lack of changes to the curriculum over several years.

> *Some of the trainings are kind of redundant and [we] do them year after year. The information doesn't change, but we have to do them because they're required.* – *Staff at center in the Twin Cities metro*
>
> *[At one training] the whole hour was on how to teach multiplication different ways. We just all sat there looking, like, this is great, but we're never going to use it.* – *Staff at public pre-k*

Training motivations and needs

When asked to select from a list of what motivates them to get involved in professional development or training, early childhood educators reported varied motivations (Figure 18). Professional growth was the most frequently selected motivator. Meeting licensing requirements or training hours, improving quality, and staying updated on best practices were also top motivators. Fewer educators expressed that career advancement was a main motivation. There were some variations by program type, notably:

- Meeting annual training or licensure requirements is the top motivation for licensed family child care providers (over 80% selected each), whereas professional growth and career advancement was less frequently selected (55%) compared with their counterparts at other types of programs.
- Staff at licensed child care centers are also highly motivated to meet annual required trainings hours (81%).
- Improving the quality of their curriculum was the most frequently selected motivation (90%) among staff at license-exempt child care programs.

18. Professional development and training motivations

What motivates respondents to get involved in professional development or training	Licensed family child care (N=176)	Licensed centers (N=320)	Head Start (N=32)	School-based (N=389)	License-exempt (N=41)	All (N=924)
Professional growth	55%	78%*	81%*	84%*	76%*	76%*
Licensure/regulatory requirements	81%*	71%*	81%*	65%	56%	70%*
Improve the quality of your early care and education program	64%	74%*	81%*	69%	85%*	70%*
Meet annual required training hours	84%*	81%*	69%	47%	54%	66%

What motivates respondents to get involved in professional development or training	Licensed family child care (N=176)	Licensed centers (N=320)	Head Start (N=32)	School-based (N=389)	License-exempt (N=41)	All (N=924)
Staying updated on best practices	60%	64%	84%*	72%*	71%*	66%
Improve the quality of your early care and education curriculum	54%	70%*	75%*	65%	90%*	65%
Learning more about a new topic of interest	53%	60%	66%	57%	66%	58%
Networking with other providers	32%	34%	50%	42%	24%	37%
Career advancement	16%	26%	44%	28%	34%	26%
Other: grants, pay increase	2%	3%	3%	<1%	0%	2%

* Top two to three items for each program type that are over 70%.

Early childhood educators were also asked about the types of support, training, or education they could use, would really like to get, or are especially interested in (Figure 19). While responses varied, the most common response was support or training around behavior management (48%), followed by developmentally appropriate learning experiences (33%) and trauma-informed care and practice (33%). There were some variations by program type, notably:

- Child development and learning was the most frequently selected type of support among licensed family child care providers (50% selected). Health and safety was also more frequently mentioned by licensed family child care providers (24% selected).
- A larger proportion of staff at school-based programs expressed interest in training around trauma-informed care (49%) and working with multilingual families (33%).
- Fewer staff at license-exempt child care programs expressed interest in trainings on relationships with families (10%) than staff at other program types.

Referencing the increase in challenging behavior among children, focus group participants in nearly all groups desired more training and education related to sensory disorders, working with kids who have a disability, and guidance on supporting children's mental health. Many participants expressed a preference for in-person opportunities. These educators noted the positive impact of connecting and networking at conferences, workshops, or other similar venues, and talked about the ability to build relationships and authentically engage with others.

> *This next year, just looking at my roster, I have a child who has a vision impairment, [one who has] a hearing impairment. I have somebody who has autism, somebody who has [a learning disability]. – Staff at public pre-k*
>
> *I wish I had more mental health support for the kids in my classroom. I'm in a pre-k through 12 school, and you know there's the high school guidance counselor. The elementary school has a social worker. And there is also a mental health therapist for the school as well, but none of them ever work with the early childhood end. So when I have these behaviors or kids that I have concerns about their home life, or whatever it is, I don't have anybody to go to, or to pull in, or anything like that. I'm kind of on my own. COVID has impacted these kids so much socially and emotionally, and they don't know how to play with each other. They don't know how to share, how to sit nice, how to not watch TV all day. And I really wish I had somebody that I could bring in just for some extra support in that social, emotional side of things. – Staff at public pre-k*

19. Professional development topics of interest to early childhood educators

Types of support, training, or education around early care and education that respondents said they could really use, would really like, or are especially interested in	Licensed family child care (N=176)	Licensed centers (N=315)	Head Start (N=33)	School-based (N=380)	License-exempt (N=40)	All (N=907)
Behavior management/Proper discipline practices	42%*	53%*	70%*	45%*	50%*	48%
Developmentally appropriate learning experiences	43%*	33%	21%	28%	40%*	33%
Trauma-informed care and practice	8%	25%	33%	49%*	23%	33%
Child development and learning	50%*	36%*	30%	20%	40%*	32%
Relationships with families	35%	27%	36%*	30%	10%	29%
Working with children who have special health care needs (including mental health care needs)	20%	31%	24%	33%	33%	29%
Assessment, evaluation, and individualization	10%	20%	18%	26%	23%	21%
Working with multilingual children and families	1%	9%	3%	33%	18%	18%
Business practices in early care and education	17%	20%	18%	5%	8%	13%
Health, safety, and nutrition	24%	12%	12%	2%	5%	10%
Professionalism	8%	11%	18%	3%	15%	8%
Working with gifted and talented children	6%	6%	3%	6%	15%	6%
Historical and contemporary development of early childhood education	4%	2%	0%	<1%	0%	2%
Application through clinical experiences	3%	1%	0%	3%	0%	2%
Other	4%	1%	3%	3%	8%	3%

* Top two to three items for each program type that are over 35%.

In terms of what would help early childhood educators participate in professional development, paid time off was the most frequent response (48%), followed by online, virtual trainings (44%), and funding or scholarships (44%) (Figure 20). There was some variation by program type, notably:

- Larger percentages of licensed family child care providers want online or virtual opportunities (58%) and trainings on evenings and weekends (38%) compared to smaller proportions of their counterparts at other program types.
- 58% of staff at school-based programs reported needing PTO and 35% would need a substitute to participate in professional development.
- Early childhood educators in greater Minnesota have a higher need than Twin Cities metro educators for in-person opportunities closer to their home (26% vs. 15%).

Internet and computer hardware does not appear to be a high need (or barrier) to participating in professional development; just 2% of respondents (fewer than 20 people) said they needed either. Licensed family child care providers are most in need of these technical supports; as self-employed business owners, they would need to invest in those technical resources themselves.

20. Supports needed to participate in professional development

What would help you participate in early childhood professional development?	Licensed family child care (N=175)	Licensed centers (N=315)	Head Start (N=33)	School-based (N=380)	License-exempt (N=40)	All (N=909)
Paid time off so I can participate	38%*	39%*	36%*	58%*	50%*	48%
Online or virtual opportunities	58%*	42%*	24%	40%*	48%*	44%
Funding or scholarships to cover the costs	39%	49%*	39%*	42%*	48%*	44%
A substitute to cover for me while I am participating	11%	29%	42%*	35%*	25%	28%
A wide variety of training topics of interest	30%	25%	24%	25%	13%	26%
In-person opportunities closer to where I live	16%	22%	27%	26%	30%	23%
Trainings on evenings and weekends	38%*	20%	18%	6%	18%	17%
High speed internet so I can participate virtually	4%	1%	0%	1%	5%	2%
Computer hardware so I can participate virtually	5%	2%	3%	<1%	3%	2%
Training in my preferred language	0%	<1%	0%	<1%	0%	<1%
Coaching in my preferred language	0%	<1%	3%	<1%	0%	<1%

* Top three to four items for each program type that are over 35%.

As noted in Figure 20 above, less than 1% of respondents indicated they needed coaching or trainings in their preferred language in order to participate in professional development, though the survey likely did not adequately reach educators who primarily speak non-English languages. Though over 99% of respondents said they prefer trainings in English, 1% also requested trainings in Spanish. Additionally, one or two people each requested trainings in: American Sign Language, Indonesian, Ojibwe, Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Somali. In fiscal year 2023, 390 trainings were offered in Develop in languages other than English, reaching over 4,000 people (duplicated) (Figure 21).

21. Trainings offered in Develop in fiscal year 2023, by language

Language	Number of events	Number of attendees
Spanish	149	2,158
Somali	215	1,711
Hmong	20	191
Other	6	89
Total	**390**	**4,149**

Source: Develop MN website data.

When early childhood educators were asked which training formats they have taken or prefer to take, responses were mixed, with no differences by region (Figure 22). These data support the need to offer trainings in as many ways as possible to support the different learning styles of early childhood educators.

22. Training formats used and preferred, by region

	7-county metro	N=308-311	Greater Minnesota	N=497-498	Total
Format of trainings taken and preferred	Taken	Preferred	Taken	Preferred	Preferred
Recorded, online	62%	41%	66%	48%	46%
In-person	53%	39%	50%	44%	41%
Live, instructor-led online	47%	32%	46%	31%	31%
A combination of delivery methods (i.e., hybrid, online/in person combination)	46%	39%	46%	34%	35%

Just three respondents (<1% of the workforce) reported needing a physical accommodation for low hearing, low mobility, or low vision to participate in professional development. Considering the physical nature of working with young children, it is not unexpected that physical accommodation needs are rare.

Support and burnout

Focus group participants were asked about their sources of support, challenges, and burnout. Results are described in this section.

Challenges and burnout

Burnout was a common experience among focus group participants, with participants in 4 of 6 groups saying they have felt burnout in the past two years. However, some specified that it was minimal and felt manageable to them (noted in three of the groups). Participants who worked in family child care were less likely to express feelings of burnout and it was mentioned in only the metro family provider group. Family child care providers from greater Minnesota said that they have not felt burnout. Participants across groups mentioned that the pandemic really exacerbated the burnout, and this feeling was especially notable among public pre-k teachers.

Participants in all but one group emphasized the challenges of staffing in early childhood education. They described the issue as both a lack of support staff and a general shortage of staff overall. Public pre-k teachers in particular expressed the challenge of finding substitutes for their classes, saying that very few were willing to pick up substitute jobs and those who did were poorly qualified.

In conjunction with staffing issues, participants in four groups mentioned the overall stressful environment of working with young children; this is certainly compounded by a lack of adequate staff. Those working in centers seemed particularly affected by the stressful environment, and a small number of participants pointed to the child-to-teacher ratio as problematic. Several participants described having to "wear many hats" as part of their job.

> *Physical and mental stamina is becoming a factor for me at the end of my career. I am almost certain I will not be able to stay here to 65.* – *Staff at a center in Greater Minnesota*

Without support staff to fill in, center staff are unable to take breaks throughout the day and may become overwhelmed or burned out as a result (this was mentioned in three groups – two of which were with center staff). These participants also talked about the difficulty of taking time off when substitutes or support staff are not available. For participants who did have the option of breaks or time off, several expressed hesitation about actually taking time away from the classroom when they noticed that it negatively impacted the children when a primary teacher was absent.

> *[Educators] are committed individuals. They want to be in their classroom, and they want to be there for the kids. Some of them don't dare to leave because they have so many behavioral children. They're like, "It's me or nothing. I can't take time off," and that leads to burnout when you feel like you can't take time off.*
> – *Staff at a center in greater Minnesota*
>
> *It does boil down to budget and staffing. If we could over-staff our centers and have those sub lists so people could feel like they can stay home when sick or take a vacation.* – *Staff at a center in greater Minnesota*
>
> *Quality care is something that nobody can find right now and that's what we strive to offer. But it's really hard to maintain that quality when you don't have qualified staff. And I can't do everything even though I try.*
> – *Staff at a center in greater Minnesota*

Participants observed an increase in the number of children with behavioral issues or special needs related to sensory processing. This appears to be linked to the stress felt by some of the educators who work in centers or in public pre-k (3 of 6 groups). These participants described challenges with providing the care and attention needed for these children, especially amid staffing shortages.

> *[Sometimes] the burnout has happened because of the dynamics of my class. … Sometimes I feel like I'm just going around the room putting out fires, so to speak, and that just can get really wearing on you. … When it happens day after day after day, your mind starts to play games with you [and you wonder if kids are] getting what they need when they come into the classroom. – Staff in public pre-k*

Another common grievance was the financial stress of working in early care and education. Participants in three focus groups noted the low pay, especially at centers. Some participants also said that they either had no health insurance provided through their center or that the insurance offered was inadequate or overpriced. This additional financial burden contributed to overall feelings of stress and burnout.

> *The only reason I could keep my director's position for the last 17 years is because I worked another full time job. If I didn't have that other full time job, I could never afford to just have my director's position with the lack of benefits and pay. – Staff at a center in greater Minnesota*

Lastly, participants in four groups commented on the lack of respect they felt as an early childhood educator. The nuanced conversations around this topic touched on interactions with administration and parents as well as the perceived lack of importance of their work by society more broadly. In particular, public pre-k teachers emphasized this lack of respect relative to how k-12 teachers are perceived; family child care providers also felt disregard compared to those working in centers or public pre-k. Some participants talked about society seeing their role diminutively because of the young age they work with or that all they do is "play." Particularly in the context of emphasizing the importance of birth-to-3 education, these participants wanted others to acknowledge the crucial role of supporting the learning among this age group.

Supports and positives

When asked about the supports they rely on to avoid or reduce burnout, participants in all groups cited connections with colleagues. Often, they noted the informal nature of checking in with each other, or reaching out for advice on challenges they were experiencing. Some participants with friends or family in the field noted these connections as a helpful support as well. This informal colleague support described by participants occasionally included seeking out information or support from social media groups specific to their role (e.g., looking to a Facebook group for pre-k teachers for tips on activity ideas or tips on dealing with challenging behaviors). Participants in four focus groups noted more formal connections with colleagues as a support, such as a professional learning community, where they could talk through issues or share learnings.

> *I have a good network of other providers I can call when I am having one of those days. My neighbor across the street used to do in-home care. It helps to talk to someone going through the same thing we are. – Staff at a center in the Twin Cities metro*

Despite the many challenges expressed by participants across the groups, nearly all talked about staying in the field because they love teaching and being able to see young children learn and grow. Participants in three groups said they love working with kids. Participants working in family child care also appreciated being able to stay home with their own children while running their business.

> *I see how they bloom, how they grow, what a difference it makes to have good care.*
>
> *– Staff at a center in greater Minnesota*
>
> *I just love those moments when you get to sit by a kid, and you can watch their wheels turning.*
>
> *– Staff at public pre-k*

Participants in all but one group also mentioned staying in the field because of the families. For some this was expressed as a sense of responsibility and wanting to "be there" for the families of the children under their care; similarly, others took the perspective of staying in the field because they did not want to "let down" the families they see. A few participants described occasions when parents showed their appreciation – this made the educators feel positively about their work and that their work mattered to those families and children. Some pre-k teacher participants noted that they strive for positive relationships with parents of the children they teach, and that they appreciate when parents are good partners in their child's learning.

> *I know a lot of the families. We probably know a lot more about what's going on in their households than elementary teachers and it's just nice to have that connection piece to know. [Parents can tell you], "This is probably why they're acting up today." I feel like the more you get into the academics with elementary, you lose that piece.*
>
> *– Staff at public pre-k*

Changes in the licensed child care workforce since 2011

A similar study was done of the licensed child care workforce in 2011. The Wilder Research child care workforce study included phone interviews with licensed family child care providers, and paper and pencil surveys of directors and staff at licensed child care centers, preschools (broadly defined), and school-age care programs. The 2023 study focused instead on early childhood educators working in a wider variety of settings. This section highlights changes to the licensed child care workforce, which was included as part of both studies.

The number of licensed family child care providers continues to decrease

Licensed family child care providers continue to be concentrated in greater Minnesota, while child care centers are concentrated in the 7-county metro area (Figure 23). Though the number of centers has nearly doubled, the number of licensed family child care providers has significantly decreased. This trend has been similarly verified by surveys done by First Children's Finance and the Minneapolis Federal Reserve, The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), and a 2016 DHS policy brief, "Understanding Licensed Child Care in Minnesota."[9] Both the number of active child care licenses and capacity (number of children they can care for) has decreased compared to a decade ago. Similarly, this survey and the NSECE indicate that the average age of licensed family child care providers is increasing, indicating this trend is likely to continue as licensed family child care providers retire without the influx of new providers entering the workforce.

23. Trend in number of licensed programs

	2011		2023	
Program type	Number	Percentage in metro area	Number	Percentage in metro area
Licensed family child care providers	10,778	39%	6,291	33%
Licensed child care centers	961	67%	1,817	61%

Licensed family child care providers face more economic hardship than in 2011

In order to compare the extent household income has changed across the last 12 years for early childhood educators working in licensed programs, we approximated the percentage reporting household incomes below the median household income at the time of the survey (Figure 24). In 2011, a third of licensed family child care providers reported having a household income below the median, whereas in 2023 that has increased to almost a half. This may be in part due to the fact that fewer licensed family child care providers reported working in other jobs (8% in 2023 compared to 13% in 2011).

[9] Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2016). *Understanding licensed child care in Minnesota*. https://www.leg.mn.gov/docs/2018/other/180746.pdf

24. Trend in household income relative to the median, 2011 compared with 2023

Household income below median household income at the time	2011	2023
Licensed family child care providers	36%	48%
Teachers at licensed child care centers	68%	58%
Directors at licensed child care centers	38%	38%

Note. This is a conservative estimate based on the income categories asked in the survey each year.

Early childhood educators in licensed programs have more use of and interest in relationship-based professional development

Use of and interest in relationship-based professional development has increased among licensed family child care providers in the past decade (Figure 25). In 2023, a quarter of licensed family child care providers reported participating in relationship-based professional development in the past year, for 19 hours on average. This is an increase from 2011 when 15% of licensed family child care providers reported having a mentor or coach. This increase is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that coaching and mentoring is both more accessible and tracked more closely. Since 2011, Parent Aware has begun providing Quality and CLASS Coaches, and DHS has changed how it recognizes relationship-based professional development specialists.

While child development continues to be a common topic discussed with mentors and coaches, common topics in 2023 are relationships with families and Parent Aware. Similarly, both teachers and directors at licensed child care centers expressed more of an interest in working with a mentor, coach, or consultant.

25. Trend in relationship-based professional development, 2011 compared with 2023

Had a professional mentor, coach, or consultant in the last year	2011	2023
Licensed family child care providers	15%	24%
Teachers at licensed child care centers	19%	37%
Directors at licensed child care centers	32%	47%
Interest in working with a mentor, coach, or consultant for little to no cost	**2011**	**2023**
Licensed family child care providers	11%	16%
Teachers at licensed child care centers	19%	39%
Directors at licensed child care centers	20%	49%

Licensed early childhood educators find training slightly less helpful

Respondents were asked both in 2011 and 2023 if the training they received over the last two years has been helpful towards improving their ability to do their job effectively (Figure 26). While the vast majority still perceive their professional development to be helpful, the percentage indicating it was very helpful went down while the percentage indicating it was not helpful went up slightly. This may be less due to the fact that trainings are lower quality, but rather that, as early childhood educators work with families from increasingly diverse backgrounds and with increasingly complex needs, the match between training educators want or need and training being offered in their preferred and accessible format becomes harder to pinpoint.

26. Trend in helpfulness of early childhood professional development, 2011 compared with 2023

Helpfulness of early childhood professional development received in the last two years	Licensed family child care, 2011 (N=352)	Licensed family child care, 2023 (N=175)	Licensed centers, 2011 (N=542)	Licensed centers, 2023 (N=321)
Very helpful	45%	34%	46%	34%
Somewhat helpful	49%	54%	48%	58%
Not helpful	6%	12%	6%	8%

Implications and recommendations

Early childhood educators serve in many roles in public and private settings, in universal and targeted programs. They are dedicated and hardworking, often working well over 40 hours a week despite many earning low wages and relying on a partner's income or a second job. It's unsurprising that turnover can be high. Despite that, many educators have been in the field for decades and are dedicated to the children they serve, continuing to take both required annual trainings and engaging in professional development opportunities to grow their skills.

Based on survey findings and discussions with the advisory committee, the following recommendations are offered to support the early care and education workforce:

- **Continue to offer a broad array of professional development opportunities**. While some educators want more online training opportunities and educators largely have access to the necessary technology, many also still want in-person trainings. Educators are seeking professional development in a variety of topics, as well. Training related to behavioral guidance was a particularly high need and may be in part due to the limited social interactions some young children had during COVID-19 shutdowns. Given the diverse roles early child educators play, many types of professional development need to be available to meet their needs.
- **Explore the need for trainings in other languages**. While few in the survey expressed the desire for training in other languages, English-speaking respondents are likely overrepresented in the survey. Respondents reported speaking 12 different languages at home. Further research may be needed to better understand educators' language needs.
- **Determine ways to pay early childhood educators a living wage**. Data from both this survey and other studies continue to illuminate the fact that early childhood educators are dedicated to the families and children they serve, and work long hours despite low wages. This study found that some educators are working other jobs, living under 200% of the federal poverty line, and relying on public benefits. For most, the income from their early childhood job is much less than their total household income. Significant new investments are being made in early educator compensation: Minnesota has recently launched the Great Start Compensation Support Payment Program to provide direct payments to child care providers to improve compensation, and work is underway to develop an early care and education wage scale that will outline compensation expectations across all settings in the early care and education field. As this work comes to full implementation, practitioners should continue paying close attention to data on wages and benefits for early educators to ensure that these efforts lead to equitable and meaningful improvements to compensation.
- **Continue to grow and support Child Care Wayfinder and Empower to Educate**. These two new programs, funded by DHS and implemented by Child Care Aware of Minnesota, both seek to grow the number of early childhood educators. Given the declining number of licensed family child care providers, and the lack of sufficient child care programs statewide, growing the number of all types of early childhood educators is critically important. This is especially important in greater Minnesota, which lacks the density to sustain larger programs and where licensed family child care providers make up the bulk of the child care industry.

- **Streamline how data about the ECE workforce is collected**. This workforce study, along with other surveys of the child care industry, serve an important role in understanding the strengths and challenges of the programs and people serving our youngest children. Surveys such as this, the Cost of Care Study, and Market Rate Study should continue; increased coordination across vendors would reduce respondent burden and likely yield better data and information for policy and planning purposes. Administrative data systems could also benefit from improved data quality. For example, encouraging educators using Develop to complete voluntary data fields would yield to a more comprehensive understanding of the demographics of early childhood educators. STAR could also be improved by increasing the types of data submitted for non-licensed educators. Finally, future workforce studies should explore additional methods for broadening the diversity of respondents.

Appendix

A: Study methods

Advisory group

The main contact within the Minnesota Department of Human Services – Child Care Services Division convened an internal study advisory group that included State of Minnesota employees from this division, the Children's Cabinet, Minnesota Department of Education – Early Learning Services, and Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. This group convened eight times to identify secondary data sources, review survey and focus group instruments and sampling plans, connect researchers to key partners, review preliminary data for key findings, determine topics for briefs, and help inform implications and recommendations.

In addition, Wilder was invited to the Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce leadership team to seek their input at critical points in the study. Members of that group provided input on the research questions and the content of the briefs.

Survey

Wilder used a mail-push-to-web survey method. Wilder collaborated with the Minnesota departments of Education and Human Services to develop a survey instrument based upon surveys developed by Wilder Research for the 2011 Child Care Workforce Study. In addition, previous or concurrent studies were examined to ensure providers and program staff were not asked similar questions repeatedly for different surveys. One survey was developed with various skip patterns based on both the type of program and role of the respondent. Once a final word version of the survey and text were approved (see Appendix B), the survey was programmed online into Acuity.

Wilder also designed and mailed a postcard inviting program directors and licensed family child care providers to participate in a survey with a web link and PINs to complete the survey. The postcard also asked them to share the survey with their staff or any assistants working with children in their program.

As an incentive to participate, the first 100 respondents received a $25 VISA gift card as a thank you. All respondents were also entered into a drawing with a chance to win 1 of 8 $250 VISA gift cards.

In total, Wilder received 1,050 responses from 602 programs, as indicated in Figure 29.

29. Sampling and response rates

Respondents	Type of sampling	Number of programs sampled	Number of programs responding	Number of staff responding by program type
Licensed child care centers	Mail	1,070	210 (20%)	373 (36%)
Licensed family child care provider	Mail	985	170 (17%)	189 (18%)
School-based programs (public pre-K, ECSE and ECFE)	Mail (Public Pre-K directors and ECFE coordinators)	709	121 (17%)	202 (19%)
School-based programs (public pre-K, ECSE and ECFE)	Email (ECSE coordinators)	264	73 (27%)	241 (23%)
License-exempt child care programs (certified and uncertified)	Mail	202	25 (12%)	48 (5%)
Head Start/Early Head Start programs	Mail	164	21 (13%)	38 (4%)

Strengths and limitations of the survey data

Random sampling eliminates bias by giving each licensed family child care provider and early childhood program an equal possibility of being selected and responding. To ensure the sample represents the geographic regions, researchers stratified the lists by 7-county metro area and greater Minnesota before randomizing. Randomization gives strength to the study results. Actual responses were more heavily weighted from greater Minnesota compared to Minnesotans in general (62% vs. 55%).

Among the four types of child care programs surveyed, data best represent licensed programs and providers. Data fairly well represent school-based programs (as a combined group). Fewer responses were received from license-exempt child care and Head Start/Early Head Start programs, though the overall number of these programs is also lower. Due to the fact that school-based programs can have a single director overseeing prekindergarten, ECFE, and ECSE, we were unable to analyze the data by type of school-based program. In addition, though we got over 1,000 completed responses, in some categories we did not get a sufficient response to analyze by those categories. For example, we did not get a sufficient number of Head Start/Early Head Start directors responding to be able to analyze the number of staff for only Head Start/Early Head Start programs.

Finally, the respondents were predominately white. While this aligns with data from the MDE system, census data indicate the early childhood education workforce is more diverse. Thus, results may not adequately represent the needs of racially and ethnically diverse early childhood educators.

Focus groups

Wilder conducted six focus groups, which were supplemented by two interviews to achieve representation from additional demographics. The groups were comprised of educators from different types of early care and education programs:

- Child care centers in the Twin Cities (n=7)
- Child care centers in greater Minnesota (n=9)[10]
- Family child care in the Twin Cities (n=5)
- Family child care in greater Minnesota (n=4)
- Public pre-k (n=7)
- ECSE and ECFE (n=5)
- Tribally licensed child care (n=2; interviews)

All groups were held remotely via Webex and participants received a $50 e-gift card via email after the session. The initial sampling plan was to conduct eight focus groups; however, recruitment proved challenging and Wilder was unable to complete focus groups with Spanish-speaking family child care providers or Tribally licensed child care providers.

[10] Participants were exclusively directors of child care centers, but all had significant classroom experience and spent time working in classrooms on a regular basis as part of their current role.

B: Survey instrument

MDE and DHS Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Survey

INTRODUCTION

Wilder Research in St. Paul is working with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and Department of Human Services (DHS) to conduct an Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Survey. Early childhood educators, directors, and program leaders are being asked to participate in this survey so we can accurately describe characteristics of the ECE workforce and assess educators' economic wellbeing needs as well as motivations for participating in training and professional development opportunities. The results of the survey will help to inform future initiatives and workforce supports.

The first 100 respondents will receive a $25 VISA gift card as a thank you! All respondents will be entered into a drawing with a chance to win 1 of 8 $250 VISA gift cards. All of your information is confidential. Your name will not be associated with any information you provide, and your decision to participate will not affect any services or funding you or your employer may be receiving from MDE or DHS. Only the researchers at Wilder will have access to your individual data, though a de-identified file will be provided to MDE and DHS. Once you complete the survey, your responses will be combined with the responses of other early childhood educators to produce a report.

The survey should take 10-15 minutes. We appreciate your time today! Your efforts will help the state of Minnesota and its partners better serve early childhood educators, like yourself!

If you are having technical difficulties, please contact Dan Swanson at Wilder Research: dan.swanson@wilder.org or call 651-280-2800.

To start the survey, enter the code on the postcard:_____

According to our records you work for or are associated with [PROGRAM NAME].

If this is correct, continue with survey. If this is not correct go back and re-renter the access code from your postcard.

-Correct, continue with survey
-Incorrect, go back and re-enter number

About the early care and education program you run or where you work

If you run or work at more than one program, answer this survey just for this program: [PROGRAMNAME]1.
Please share what role you serve at the child care or early childhood program you run or work at:

Family child care provider/owner →Go to 1a.
Lead teacher or co-lead teacher→SKIP to Q2.
Assistant teacher→SKIP to Q2.
Aide→SKIP to Q2.
Paraprofessional→SKIP to Q2.
Director or administrator—>Go to D1.
Assistant director—>Go to D1.
Parent educator→SKIP to Q2.
Another role, please specify: →SKIP to Q2.
Prefer not to answer→SKIP to Q2.

1a. Do you have any assistants or aides working with you?

Yes → GO TO D1
No → SKIP TO Q2
Prefer not to answer

1b. (if Q1A=1) Please share the link and access code from the postcard with any assistants or aides that work with you. They are also eligible to complete this survey.

These next few questions are about how many people work in your program, including yourself. Please complete the following matrixes.

How many people in each of the following roles currently work in your program?

Please **include part-time and full-time positions combined**, and **mark "0**" for any positions where no one was employed, hired, or left.

For staff members who serve multiple roles, please count them only ONCE, in the position they are in most often. **Next please indicate the number of new people your program hired in each position during the last 12 months.**

Then indicate the number people in each type of role who left your program altogether during the last 12 months or are no longer in a director, teacher or aide position.

Please include part-time and full-time positions combined, and **mark "0"** for any positions where no one was employed, hired, or left.

For staff members who serve multiple roles, please count them only ONCE, in the position they are in most often.

Role	D1. Number of people employed as of today	D2. Number of people hired the last 12 months	D3. Number of people who left the last 12 months
a. Directors			
b. Infant teachers			
c. Toddler teachers			
d. Preschool teachers			
e. School age teachers			
f. Assistant teachers			
g. Paraprofessionals			
h. Aides			

D4. Which of the following benefits does your child care or early childhood program offer? (Check all that apply)

a. Medical insurance
b. Dental insurance
c. Health savings accounts
d. Retirement plans/401K
e. Paid time off (PTO, vacation time, and/or sick time)
f. Paid parental/caregiving leave
g. Discounted or free child care for employees' children
h. Reimbursement for training expenses
i. Employer-provided training with no cost to the participant
j. Scholarships to pursue education
k. Another benefit
l. Prefer not to answer

For everyone

*2. How many hours per week do you usually work at the child care or early childhood program you run or work for? (Reminder: If you run or work at more than one program, answer this question just for the program that asked you to complete this survey.)

a. Less than 10
b. 10-20
c. 21-30
d. 31-40
e. 41-50
f. 51-60
g. 61 or more
h. Prefer not to answer

3. Did you use your vacation / paid time off (PTO) days last year (in 2022)?

a. Not applicable, vacation / PTO days are not available to me
b. Not applicable, I started working at this early care and education program in 2023.
c. Yes, I used all of my vacation / PTO days last year.
d. Yes, I used some of my vacation / PTO days last year.
e. No, I did not use my vacation / PTO days.
f. Prefer not to answer

*4. Are you personally covered by any type of health insurance or medical plan?

a. Yes→ Go to 5.
b. No → SKIP to 6a.
c. Prefer not to answer → SKIP to 6a.

5. How are you covered? (Check all that apply)

   a. Health insurance or coverage through this employer
   b. Health insurance or coverage through another job you have
   c. Health insurance coverage through your spouse/partner, parent, or someone else's employer
   d. Insurance through MNSure
   e. Health insurance or coverage bought directly by yourself or your family (other than MNSure)
   f. Medicare
   g. Medicaid/Medical Assistance
   h. Indian or Tribal Health Service
   i. TRICARE
   j. Another insurance

Education, Experience, and Expertise of the ECE workforce

Now, we would like to ask about your early childhood experience, education, training, and the support you receive as a professional child care provider or early care and education teacher.

*6a. Do you have the National Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)?

   a. Yes → SKIP to 7
   b. No → GO TO 6b
   c. Prefer not to answer→ GO TO 6b

*6b. Are you interested in pursuing the National Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)?

   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Prefer not to answer

7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

   a. Some high school →Go to 8d.
   b. High school graduate or GED→Go to 8d.
   c. Some college→Go to 8a.
   d. Associate's degree→Go to 8c.
   e. Degree from a vocational, technical, or business school →Go to 8c.
   f. Bachelor's degree→Go to 8c.
   g. Master's degree or higher→Go to 8c.
   h. Prefer not to answer→Go to 8d.

8a. Are any of your college credits related to early care and education?

   a. Yes→GO to 8b.
   b. No→SKIP to 8d.

*8b. In the last 5 years, how many Early Childhood or Child Development college credits have you earned?

_____ credits→SKIP to 8d

Prefer not to answer→SKIP to 8d

None→SKIP to 8d

8c. Is your degree in early childhood education or a closely related field?

a. Yes
b. No

8d. Are you interested in increasing your level of education?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Prefer not to answer

*9a. How many years of experience do you have working in early care and education programs? (enter 0 if you have less than a year of experience)

_____ years

Prefer not to answer

9b. How many years have you been at the current child care or early childhood education program you run or work for? (enter 0 if less than a year)

_____ years

Prefer not to answer

9c. From now, how many more years do you plan to stay in the early care and education field? (enter 0 if you plan to leave the field in the next year)

_____ years

Prefer not to answer

10. In the last 12 months, how many hours of non-credit training in child development or early childhood did you complete?

_____ Hours

Prefer not to answer

*11. If you have a problem in your work caring for children, do you have at least one other professional caregiver you can talk to for support or get advice from?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Prefer not to answer

*12a. In the past year, have you participated in any relationship-based professional development, such as having a professional early childhood mentor, coach, or consultant?

a. Yes →Go to 12b.
b. No →SKIP to 13.
c. Prefer not to answer → SKIP to 13.

12b. Was it part of a class or training?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Prefer not to answer

12c. In the past year, how many hours did you interact with your mentor, coach, or consultant? (This could be one-on-one or with a group)

_____ hours

Prefer not to answer

12d. What content or topics did you discuss with your mentor, coach, or consultant? (Check all that apply)

a. Child Development and Learning
b. Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences
c. Relationships with Families
d. Assessment, Evaluation, and Individualization
e. Historical and Contemporary Development of Early Childhood Education
f. Professionalism
g. Health, Safety, and Nutrition
h. Application through Clinical Experiences
i. Trauma-informed Care and Practice
j. Working with Multilingual Children and Families
k. Infants and Toddlers
l. Inclusion Coaching
m. Parent Aware
n. Children's Mental Health
o. Business Consultation
p. Behavior Guidance
q. Another topic, please specify: _____

Programming note: After respondent answers Q12d, SKIP to 14.

*13. Would you be interested in working with a mentor, coach, or consultant if little to no cost was associated with it?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Prefer not to answer

14. In the past 2 years (since 2021), in what ways have you attended early care and education professional development training, coaching, and/or higher education? (Check all that apply)

    a. Recorded, online
    b. Live, instructor-led online
    c. In-person
    d. A combination of delivery methods (i.e., hybrid, online/in person combination)
    e. I have not attended training in the past 2 years → SKIP to Q16.

*15. How helpful has the early childhood training, coaching and/or education you've received in the past two years been towards improving your ability to do your job effectively? Would you say…

    a. Very helpful
    b. Somewhat helpful
    c. Not very helpful
    d. Not at all helpful
    e. Prefer not to answer

16. In what ways would you prefer to attend early care and education professional development training? (Check all that apply)

    a. Recorded, online
    b. Live, instructor-led online
    c. In-person
    d. Hybrid (online and in-person combination)

Professional development, training, and experience needed to support ECE staff

This section is about your professional development needs and interests as a member of the early care and education workforce. (Note: Items with an asterisk * are only available to licensed child care programs.)

*17a. Please rate your level of awareness of the following professional development supports.

Development supports	Not aware of this support	Aware of this support, but haven't used it	I have used this support
a. Achieve, The MN Center for Professional Development			
b. DEVELOP Minnesota: website to search and find available training and professional development advising and track training on a learning record			
c. Individualized Training Needs Assessment Tool (ITNA; housed in DEVELOP)			
d. TEACH Scholarships/REETAIN Grants*			
e. Customized on-site training through Child Care Aware district offices			
f. Child Care Aware system training			
g. Coaching through Center for Inclusive Child Care*			

Development supports	Not aware of this support	Aware of this support, but haven't used it	I have used this support
i. Minnesota Child Development Associate or Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate training series and supports			
j. Professional development as part of a school district-community child care partnership (e.g. transition to kindergarten initiative or prenatal to third grade initiative)			

*17b. [PROGRAM NOTE: From Q17a, PROGRAM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS WHERE R SELECTED "I HAVE USED THIS SUPPORT")

How satisfied were you with this professional development support?

Development support	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
a. Achieve, The MN Center for Professional Development				
b. DEVELOP Minnesota: website to search and find available training and professional development advising and track training on a learning record				
c. Individualized Training Needs Assessment Tool (ITNA; housed in DEVELOP)				
d. TEACH Scholarships/ REETAIN Grants*				
e. Customized on-site training through Child Care Aware district offices				
f. Child Care Aware system training				
g. Coaching through Center for Inclusive Child Care*				
h. Minnesota Child Development Associate or Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate training series and supports				
i. Professional development as part of a school district-community child care partnership (e.g. transition to kindergarten initiative or prenatal to third grade initiative)				

*18. What are the things that motivate you to get involved in professional development or training as an early childhood educator? (Check all that apply)

a. Improve the quality of your early care and education curriculum
b. Improve the quality of your early care and education program
c. Licensure/regulatory requirements
d. Meet annual required training hours
e. Professional growth
f. Career advancement
g. Learning more about a new topic of interest
h. Staying updated on best practices
i. Networking with other providers
j. Another motivation, please specify: _____

*19. What types of support, training or education around early care and education could you really use, would you really like, or are you especially interested in? (SELECT UP TO THREE)

a. Child Development and Learning
b. Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences
c. Relationships with Families
d. Assessment, Evaluation, and Individualization
e. Historical and Contemporary Development of Early Childhood Education
f. Professionalism
g. Health, Safety, and Nutrition
h. Application through Clinical Experiences
i. Trauma-informed Care and Practice
j. Working with Multilingual Children and Families
k. Behavior Management/Proper Discipline practices
l. Working with Children who have Special Health Care Needs (including mental health care needs)
m. Working with Gifted and Talented Children
n. Business Practices in Early Care and Education
o. Another type of support or training

21. What would help you participate in early childhood professional development (including trainings or coaching)? SELECT UP TO THREE.

a. Paid time off so I can participate
b. Trainings on evenings and weekends
c. Funding or scholarships to cover the costs
d. A substitute to cover for me while I am participating
e. Online or virtual opportunities
f. High speed internet so I can participate virtually
g. Computer hardware so I can participate virtually
h. In-person opportunities closer to where I live
i. A wide variety of training topics of interest
j. Training in my preferred language
k. Coaching in my preferred language
l. I need something else, please specify: _____
m. Nothing. I am able to participate in all the professional development opportunities I need or want.

*22. When you participate in early care and education training, in what language would you prefer trainings to be conducted? (Check all that apply)

a. English
b. Spanish
c. Somali
d. Hmong
e. Karen
f. Vietnamese
g. Arabic
h. Mandarin Chinese
i. Russian
j. Oromo
k. Another language, please specify:
l. Prefer not to answer

23. Do you need any accommodations to participate in professional development training?

a. Yes, please specify: _____
b. No
c. Prefer not to answer

About you

The following information will give us an accurate picture of educators in Minnesota. Remember, your answers are confidential.

24. What is your age? _____ Years

Prefer not to answer

25. What is your gender?

a. Female
b. Male
c. Non-binary
d. Prefer to self-describe: _____
e. Prefer not to answer

26. Are you? (select all that apply)

White

Hispanic / Latino

You previously selected "Hispanic / Latino". Are you ... (Check all that apply)

Mexican

Another Hispanic / Latino identity

Prefer not to answer

American Indian / Alaska Native

You previously selected "American Indian / Alaska Native". Are you ... (Check all that apply)

Anishinaabe / Ojibwe

Dakota / Lakota

Another Tribal Affiliation

Prefer not to answer

Asian

You previously selected "Asian". Are you ... (Check all that apply)

Hmong

Karen

Asian Indian

Another Asian identity

Prefer not to answer

Black or African American

You previously selected "Black or African American". Are you ... (Check all that apply)

African-American

Somali

Another Black of African American identity

Prefer not to answer

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Another race or ethnicity

Prefer not to answer

27. What language do you primarily speak at home? (Check all that apply)

a. English
b. Spanish
c. Somali
d. Hmong
e. Karen
f. Vietnamese
g. Arabic
h. Mandarin Chinese
i. Russian
j. Oromo
k. Another language, please specify:
l. Prefer not to answer

28. What is your home ZIP code? _____

Prefer not to answer

29. INCLUDING YOURSELF, how many adults and children live in your household?

_____ Number of adults age 18 or older

_____ Number of children under age 18

Programming notes: need translations for "Select an answer", "10 or more", and "Prefer not to answer"

30. It would be helpful to know the range of household income of all the early childhood educators we survey. Thinking about your household's total income before taxes from all sources and all members of your household in 2022, including your income from early care and education, what range of income did your household have? Would you say…?

a. $0-25,999
b. $26,000-34,999
c. $35,000-43,999
d. $44,000-52,999
e. $53,000-61,999
f. $62,000-70,999
g. $71,000-79,999
h. $80,000-89,999
i. $90,000 and over
j. Prefer not to answer

31a. Do you have any other paid jobs, in addition to the early care and education role for which you were asked to complete this survey?

a. Yes →Go to 31b
b. No →SKIP to 31c
c. Prefer not to answer →SKIP to 31c

31b. How many hours per week, on average, do you spend in that other job(s)?

_____ hours per week

Prefer not to answer

31c. Approximately what amount of your 2022 household income came from the early care and education role for which you were asked to complete this survey?

a. $0-25,999
b. $26,000-34,999
c. $35,000-43,999
d. $44,000-52,999
e. $53,000-61,999
f. $62,000-70,999
g. $71,000-79,999
h. $80,000-89,999
i. $90,000 and over
j. Prefer not to answer

32. In 2022, did you or anyone in your household received the following public benefits? (Check all that apply)

a. None
b. Housing assistance (e.g. Emergency Rental Assistance, Hotel Shelter)
c. Food assistance (e.g., the food shelf, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or food stamps), or Emergency Food Delivery)
d. Cash assistance (e.g. Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) or General Assistance (GA))
e. Medical Assistance (MA)
f. Energy assistance (e.g., Energy Assistance Program (EAP), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP))
g. Prefer not to answer

Thank you very much for your time and the valuable information.

33. Would you like to be eligible for the VISA gift card incentives? (The first 100 respondents will receive a $25 VISA gift card as a thank you! All respondents will be entered into a drawing with a chance to win 1 of 8 $250 VISA gift cards.)

    a. Yes →Please provide your contact information.

    b. No.

34. Finally, we will also be recruiting providers to participate in a focus group in late spring/summer 2023. Are you interested in participating in a focus group?

    a. Yes → IF YES, please provide an email or phone number where we can reach you to participate if you are chosen: _____

    b. No

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