

Early Care and Education Workforce for Children from Birth to Age 5

Demographic, Credential, and Wage Shifts between 2019 and 2024

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The ECE workforce experienced **notable changes in its overall composition** in the past 5 years.

The share of ECE educators with **some college decreased**, while the share with a **CDA increased**.

The ECE workforce **wages increased the most for educators with less educational attainment**. CDA holders, in particular, now earn more than educators with a high school degree or lower.

The ECE workforce saw a decline in the share of White educators and an **increase in the share of Black and Hispanic educators**.

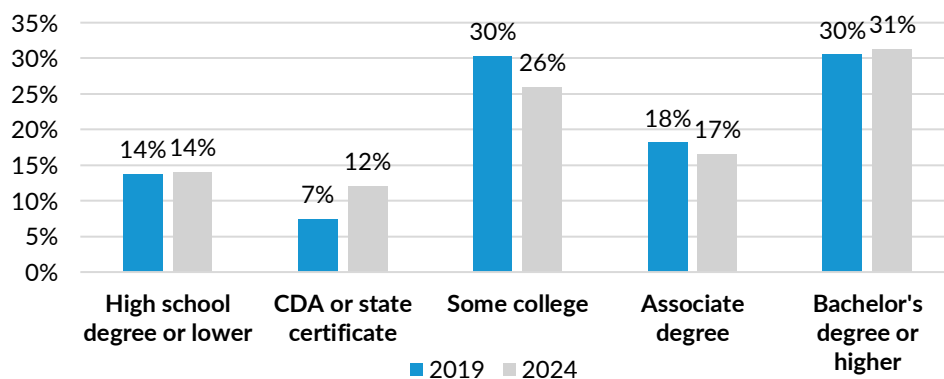
The share of women in the ECE workforce modelstly **decreased by 2 percent**.

The educators who care for children from birth to age 5 shape [their early learning experiences](#) and support families' ability to work and study. In recent years, however, the early care and education (ECE) workforce has faced substantial challenges. Since 2020, ECE operations have been [disrupted](#) and early educator [turnover has accelerated](#) due to persistent low wages, rising operating costs, staffing shortages, and burnout. At the same time, many states increased [degree and training requirements](#) for ECE educators. Understanding how these changes may be reflected in shifts in the workforce is important for policymakers and ECE leaders who are working to build and stabilize the supply of ECE, strengthen quality, and improve access for families.

For this study, we draw on two nationally representative datasets: the [2019](#) and [2024](#) National Survey of Early Care and Education. Our sample includes center-based ECE teachers and assistant teachers serving children ages 5 and younger, representing nearly 1.4 million educators in 2019 and nearly 1.5 million in 2024.

Increasingly, ECE educators hold a child development associate (CDA), reflecting states' changes in minimum educational requirements (figure 1). ECE educators with some college or a bachelor's degree remained the largest groups, while the share of educators with a bachelor's or an associate degree stayed mostly stable. From 2019 to 2024, the share of educators holding a CDA or a state certificate rose from 7 to 12 percent, and the share with some college declined from 30 to 26 percent.

FIGURE 1
More Educators Held a CDA or a State Certificate in 2024 than 2019
Highest level of education among the ECE workforce, 2019 and 2024



Source: Authors, based on the 2019 and 2024 National Survey of Early Care and Education datasets.

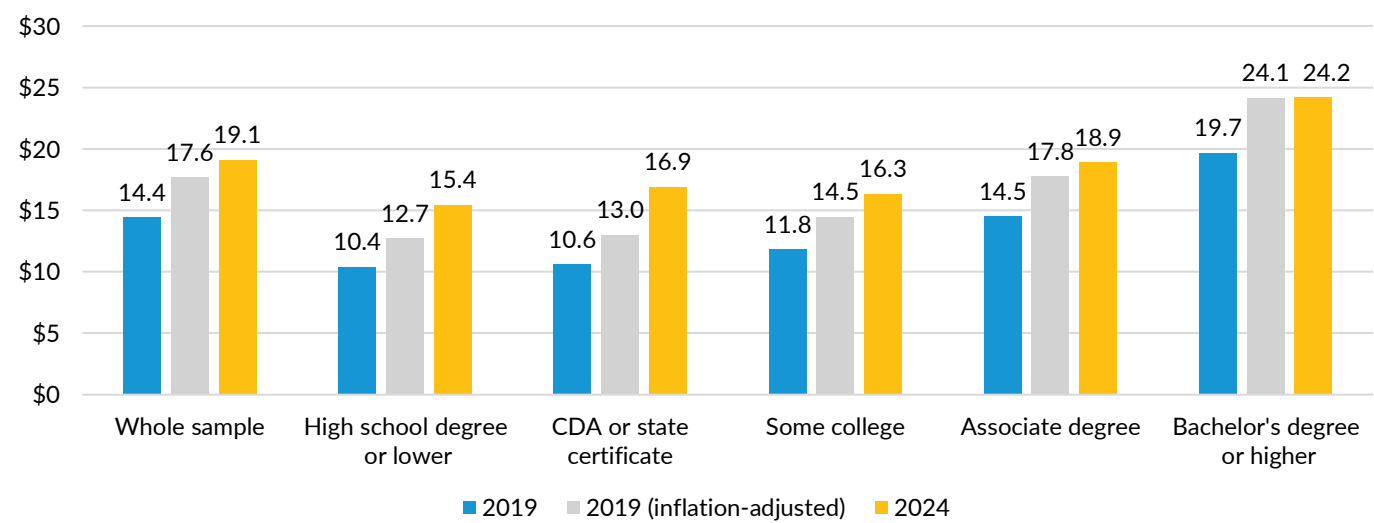
Notes: All estimates use sampling weights and are descriptive only, with no significance testing.

Average wages for the ECE workforce rose by \$1.5 per hour, after adjusting for inflation (figure 2). Wages rose regardless of level of education, except for those with bachelor's degrees, whose wages remained flat. The largest gains occurred among educators with lower levels of educational attainment. **CDA holders saw especially strong wage growth**: in 2019, their wages were similar to those with a high school diploma or lower; by 2024, they earned about \$1.50 more per hour.

FIGURE 2

Wages for the ECE Workforce Increased

Hourly wages for the ECE workforce overall and by education level, 2019 and 2024



Source: Authors, based on the 2019 and 2024 National Survey of Early Care and Education datasets.
Notes: Gray bars show 2019 wages in 2024 dollars to allow meaningful comparison over time. All estimates use workforce sampling weights and are descriptive only, with no significance testing.

The racial and ethnic composition of the ECE workforce shifted, but White educators still made up the largest share of the workforce (table 1). From 2019 to 2024, the share of White ECE educators declined from 74 to 69 percent, while the share of Black educators grew from 19 to 22 percent. Additionally, the share of Hispanic educators grew from 17 to 21 percent. **The share of women modestly declined** from 98 to 96 percent, but the workforce continued to be overwhelmingly female. The age distribution of the ECE workforce remained stable.

TABLE 1

Demographic Composition of ECE Workforce Shifted

ECE workforce by race, ethnicity, age, and sex, 2019 and 2024

Educator Characteristics	2019	2024
Race		
Another race	5%	6%
Asian	3%	3%
Black	19%	22%
White	74%	69%
Hispanic	17%	21%
Age		
Under 25	20%	20%
25–54	64%	63%
55 and over	16%	16%
Women	98%	96%

Source: Authors, based on the 2019 and 2024 National Survey of Early Care and Education datasets.
Notes: Race and Hispanic ethnicity are measured as separate constructs. All estimates use sampling weights and are descriptive only, with no significance testing.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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