

Early Care and Education Workforce for Infants and Toddlers

Demographic, Credential, and Wage Shifts between 2019 and 2024

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

The share of infant-toddler educators with **some college or an associate degree decreased**, while the share with a **bachelor's degree or CDA increased**.

The infant-toddler ECE workforce **wages increased across education levels**, and having a CDA became more closely tied to pay.

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

The share of women in the infant and toddler ECE workforce modestly **decreased by 3 percent**.

Educators who care for infants and toddlers play a crucial role in shaping children's early development, as the first three years are a [period of rapid brain growth](#) and heightened sensitivity to the quality of their environments. In recent years, however, the infant-toddler early care and education (ECE) workforce has faced substantial challenges. Since 2020, programs serving young children have experienced [disruptions and elevated turnover](#) driven by persistent low wages, rising operating costs, staffing shortages, and burnout. At the same time, many states have strengthened [credential requirements](#) for educators. Understanding how these shifts affect the composition of the workforce is critical for policymakers and ECE leaders working to strengthen quality and ensure families can access reliable care.

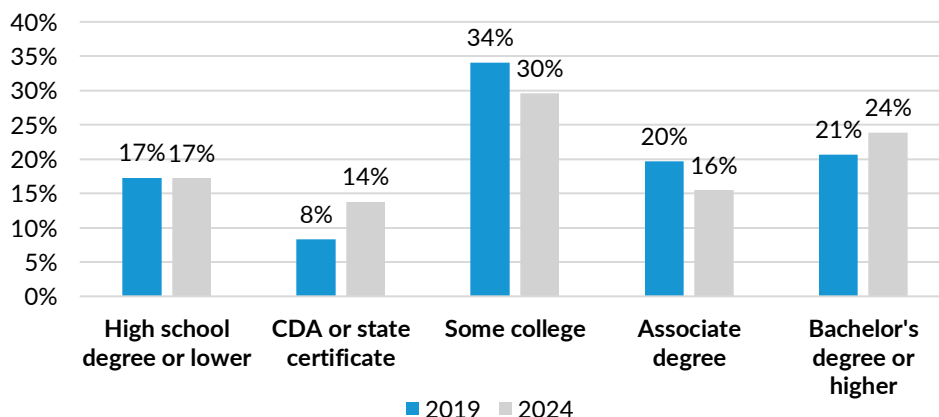
For this study, we draw on two nationally representative datasets: the [2019](#) and [2024](#) National Survey of Early Care and Education. Our sample includes center-based ECE teachers and assistant teachers serving children ages 3 and younger, representing nearly 700,000 educators in both 2019 and 2024.

Increasingly, ECE educators hold a child development associate (CDA) or a bachelor's degree, reflecting states' changes in minimum educational requirements (figure 1). From 2019 to 2024, the share of ECE educators with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 21 to 24 percent, while the share with a CDA or a state certificate nearly doubled, rising from 8 to 14 percent.

FIGURE 1

More Educators Had a Bachelor's Degree in 2024 than 2019

Highest level of education among the infant-toddler ECE workforce, 2019 and 2024

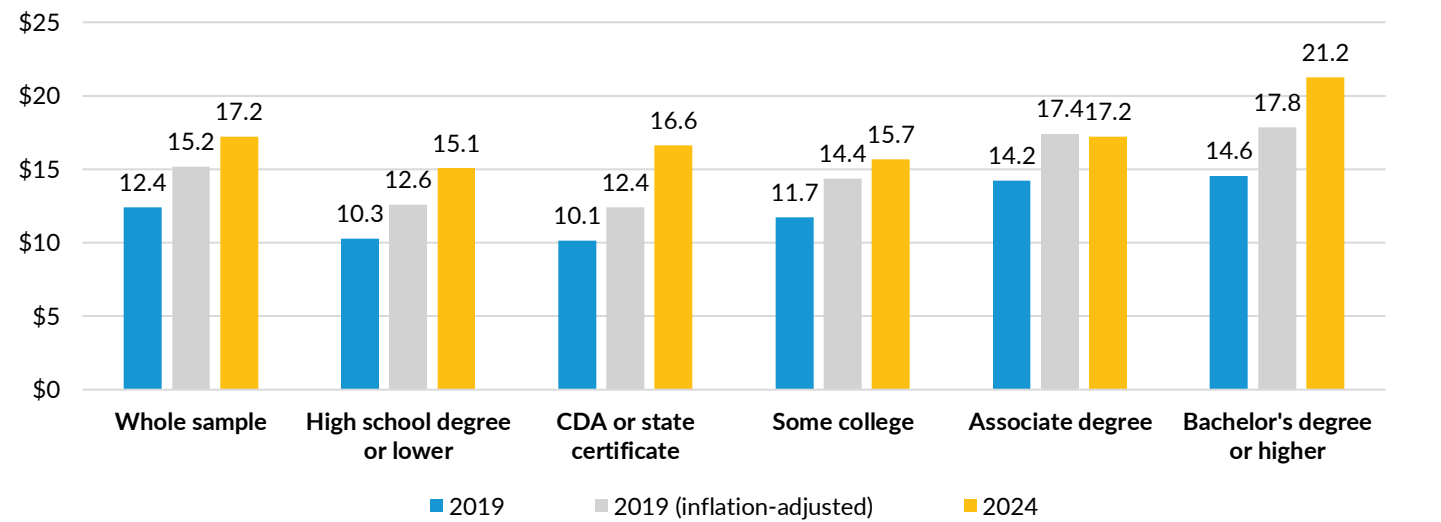


Source: Authors, based on the 2019 and 2024 National Survey of Early Care and Education datasets.

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

Average wages for infant-toddler ECE workforce rose from \$15 to \$17 per hour, even after adjusting for inflation (figure 2). This trend was seen for all educators, except for those with associate degrees, whose wages remained essentially flat. Pay was more strongly linked to credentials. In 2024, educators with a CDA earned about \$1.50 more than those with a high school diploma or lower; this difference was minimal in 2019. The same year, educators with a bachelor’s degree earned about \$4 more than those with an associate degree; this difference was negligible in 2019.

FIGURE 2
Wages for the Infant-Toddler ECE Workforce Increased
Hourly wages for the infant-toddler 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 infant-toddler ECE workforce shifted (table 1). While White educators still made up the largest share of the workforce, from 2019 to 2024, their share declined from 73 to 63 percent; the share of Black educators grew from 20 to 28 percent. **The share of women modestly declined from 99 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
Infant-toddler ECE workforce by race, ethnicity, age, and sex, 2019 and 2024

Educator Characteristics	2019	2024
Race		
Another race	4%	6%
Asian	3%	3%
Black	20%	28%
White	73%	63%
Hispanic	19%	20%
Age		
Under 25	23%	24%
25–54	63%	63%
55 and over	14%	13%
Women	99%	96%

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