

IDAHO
STARS

2022

Quality Child Care Matters

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION
WORKFORCE

REPORT



Early Childhood Care & Education in Idaho: An Introduction

The state of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Idaho has been in crisis since before 2020. Pandemic support funds have helped a struggling industry remain afloat, but as economic pressures increase and COVID-relief funding ends, the ECCE businesses in our state are preparing to make drastic changes. Parents and professional care givers will feel the squeeze, and it's important to remember that 62% of children under 6 in Idaho have both parents in the labor force and 49% of people in Idaho live in a child care desert.¹

This report shares an up-to-date and accurate picture of the state of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) field and its workforce across the state of Idaho in 2022. The IdahoSTARS project is the leading expert on child care within the state and our RISE database serves as Idaho's registry for early childhood care and education professionals. Data included in this report, unless otherwise noted, was pulled from RISE in November of 2022. Additional data and quotes have been provided from statewide surveys of the experts themselves, our early care and education professionals and program directors/owners.



Early Care & Education Professionals



Child Care Programs

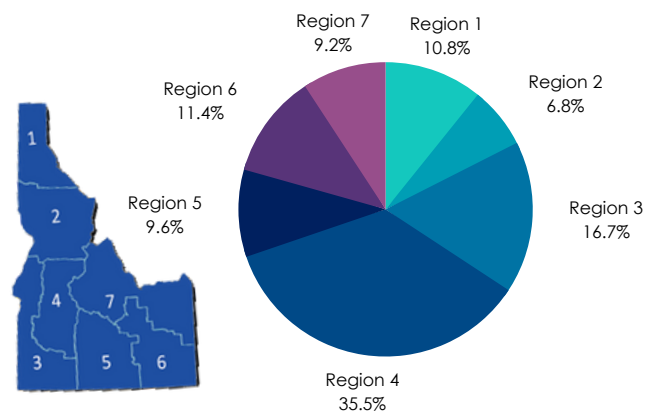


Children (0-6) needing care²

Survey of Early Care and Education Professionals

Nearly 1,100 professionals in Idaho took the Early Care and Education Professional Statewide Survey providing feedback regarding wages, staff turnover, years in the field, struggles they face in their work, and the impending funding losses. Their voices and lived experiences highlight the challenges ahead and demonstrate the state of early education in Idaho.

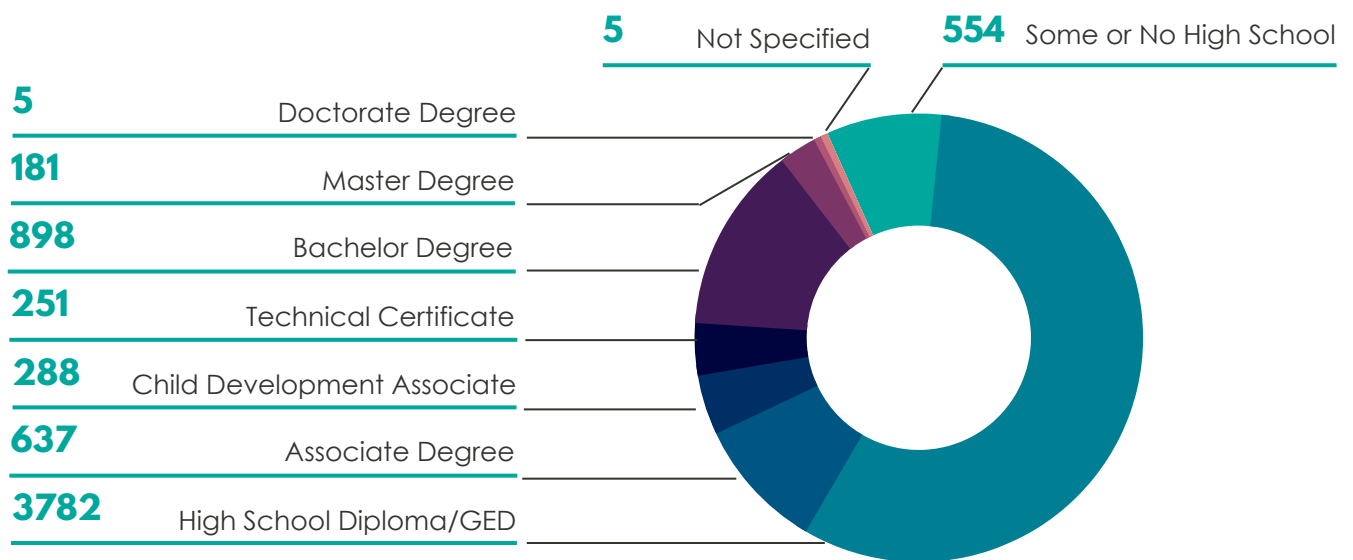
Respondents by Region



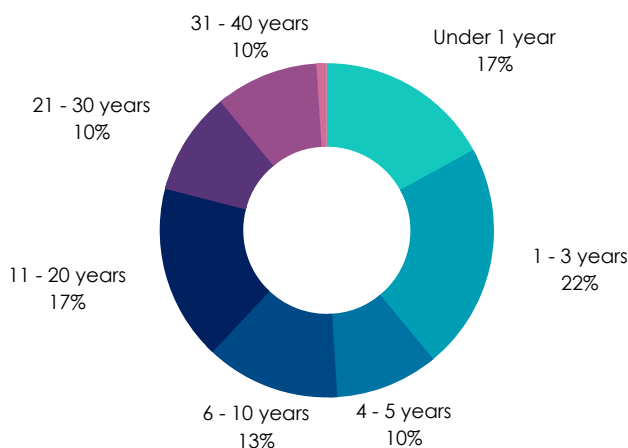
Education & Experience

Caring for young children is demanding work; providing quality early experiences for children requires in-depth knowledge, concrete skills, and professional practices. IdahoSTARS offers pathways to increase education, wages, and incentivize early educators to remain in the field and gain higher levels of experience, but without support and investment, Idaho's child care system is in trouble. In general, demographics data shows that the majority of Idaho's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Professionals have low levels of education and experience.

Education Level of Early Educators



Years Served in Child Care Field by Survey Respondents



49% of Early Care and Education Professionals in Idaho have less than 5 years of experience.

Idaho's Average Early Educator

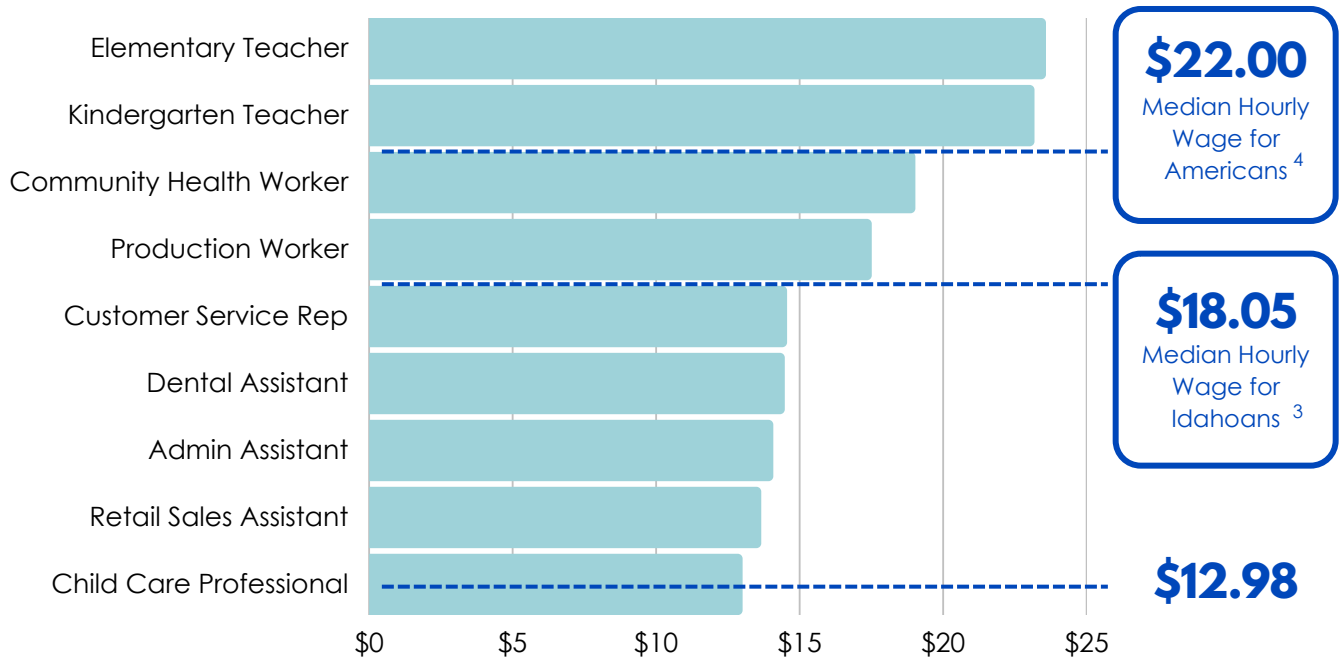
- Works in a center with 25+ children
- 35 years old
- Female
- Makes \$12/hour
- High School Diploma



Wages, Benefits, and Assistance

Wages for Early Care and Education Professionals in Idaho are some of the lowest in any occupation. While wages increased over the last year, the increase was subsidized through relief dollars. These funds helped retain staff who could earn higher wages in other sectors. For most programs this wage increase is unsustainable for their business without supportive outside funding. Business owners face difficult, if not impossible, choices when grants end.

Median Hourly Wage by Occupation in Idaho³



34% of survey respondents qualify for government assistance.

“Educating our young children should be one of the highest paying jobs, as the role we play directly affects brain development by the experiences, and environment we provide for our kids.

“This field is highly stressful, and only those with a passion for children will do well. However, due to high stress, little support, and low wages, it has become too stressful for even some of the most committed and passionate educators.

“I’m getting a bachelors in Child Development, but feel like I won’t be able to make a living wage even with my education and experience.

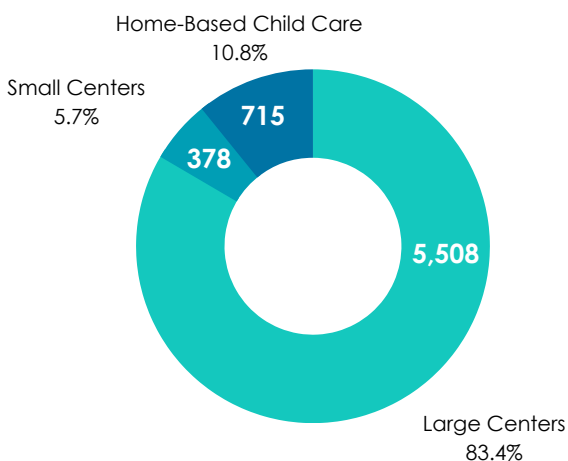
“I do not qualify for any government assistance because “I make too much money” but don't make enough money to even cover my own rent. Also, most child care centers I've worked for do not offer any work benefits like PTO, medical insurance, etc. Childcare workers, in my opinion, are severely abused and taken advantage of by an industry that is essential to our society.

“I love working in early education, but with cost-of-living increase, I don't make enough to do more than barely scrape by.

“I cannot afford rent even though I love what I do. I'm living with my parents to be able to continue my job in early education.



Early Care & Education Professionals by Program Type



48%

OF RESPONDENTS
QUESTION IF THEY WILL
REMAIN IN CHILD CARE
AFTER WAGE
ENHANCEMENTS END.

What Are Child Care Program Directors and Owners Saying ?

Nearly 500 owners and directors of child care programs from across Idaho took part in a November 2022 survey through IdahoSTARS. Some of the programs have been open for nearly 60 years while others opened this past year. The average was 13.6 years. 62% of those surveyed had center-based programs while 38% were home-based programs.

What is your greatest challenge?

“It's getting very stressful to find good help that stay in this field... I don't believe our market can sustain the tuition increases that are necessary to make it work ... families will be left with less and less options for quality care and will be forced to pay whatever the fees are, quit their jobs, or take on a second job.

“Not being able to take everyone. The shortage of good daycares locally puts strain on existing providers who have a good reputation.

“The biggest challenge we are facing right now is how to manage our business when the Phase 4 grant ends and the Wage Enhancement grant ends. Those grants have kept our business open, and I worry about what will happen when they end. Wages are becoming unrealistic, and it causes us to raise tuition which hurts our families and hurts our business (because we lose families).

“There is no money in child care. I can't afford to pay decent wages especially for the area that I'm in. I had the opportunity to keep a certified teacher in my preschool but she was offered a higher paying position at the school. Staff are expected to give the highest quality care, but we can't afford pay them well.

“The biggest challenge I have is making any money running a child care facility. I spend all of my money on wages, rent, taxes, and operating costs. There is nothing left for me as the owner once everyone is paid. I am working 100 hours a week.

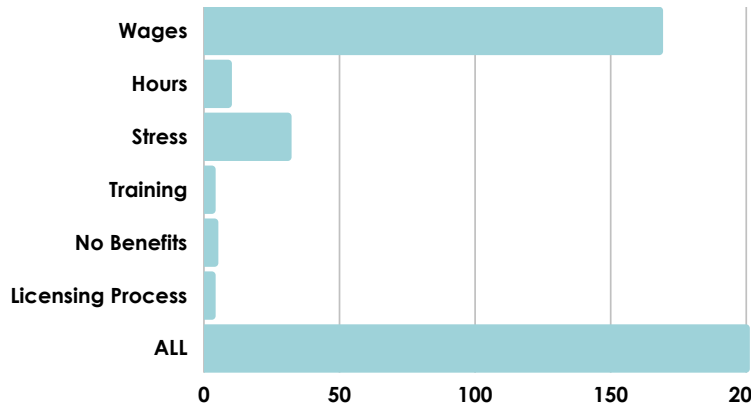
“Paying competitive wages without charging too much for tuition. This is such a tough balance. Our wages have gone through the roof this year and thank goodness we had the grants to help balance things out. There's no way we won't have to increase tuition in 2023.



Staffing is a struggle:

Programs struggle to find and retain quality staff who are willing to work a demanding job for low wages and no benefits.

What factors lead to staff turnover?



81%

of programs with multiple staff, experience retention issues.

56%

of programs need more staff right now.

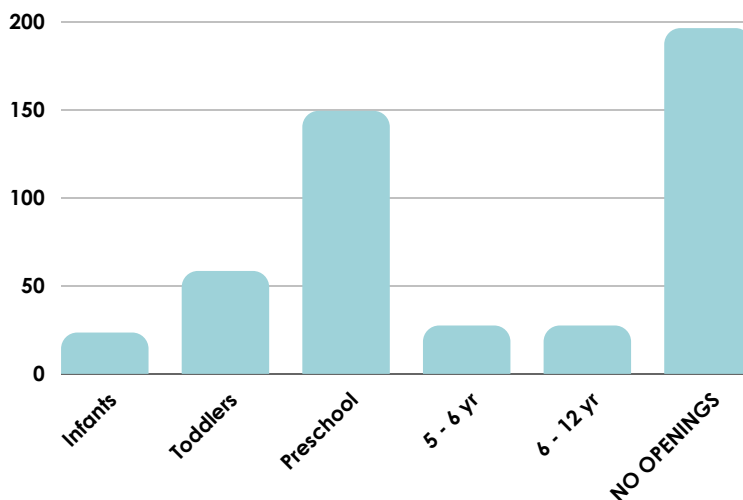
"The cost of payroll is more than we bring in."



Families can't find care:

Programs do not have enough available space or staffing to serve all children and families needing care.

Which ages do you have openings for?



95%

of programs have NO available space for infants.

41%

have NO openings in any age range



Raising Rates

The rising costs of utilities, food, insurance, materials, and payroll put early education programs in a position where they must charge families higher rates, when parents are already struggling to pay.

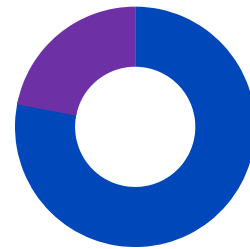
57% of ECCE director/owner respondents say they expect to raise rates in 2023.

\$809/month market rate for Idaho center-based infant care in 2021.⁵



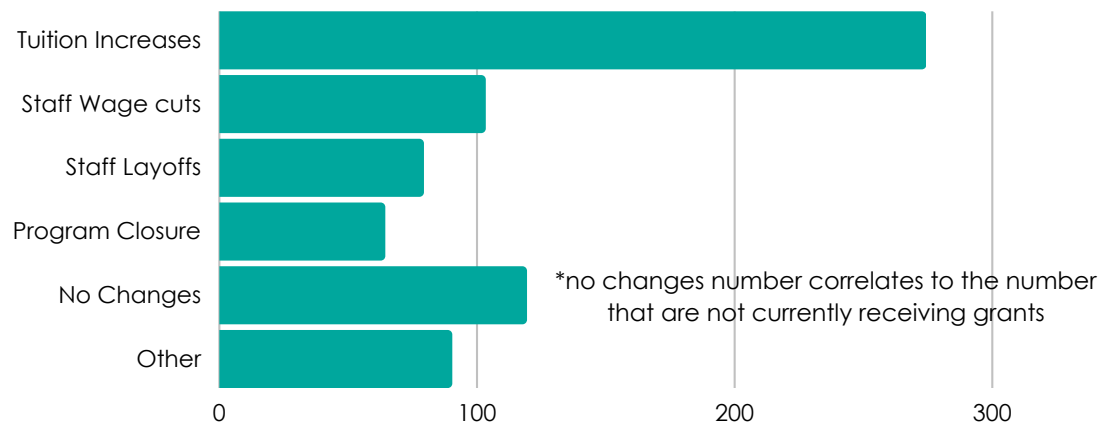
Grant Funding Loss Looms

COVID-relief dollars received through grants will end in June of 2023, and many programs wonder how they will keep their doors open when covering expenses has been so hard. 78% of respondents are currently receiving grants through the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare that were funded with federal Covid-relief dollars.



78%
receiving grants

What will your program do when grant funding ends?



Direct responses from child care program directors/owners in Idaho:

“Without the grants, most child care centers may close including ours.

“I fear not being able to keep my business open after the grant runs out. Because the cost of everything has gone up. Also I have to pay more to keep employees happy because other businesses can pay \$15 an hour.

“I am operating at a loss right now.

“Some of my staff have said if I can't increase wages once the wage enhancement is done they will look for other work.

“Depending on what happens in the market, we may consider cutting out meals from our program if we have to increase wages again.

“When the grant runs out, I am scared we might have to close our doors and that will leave 60 parents without a daycare and that is not something I want to do.

“There is a very good chance that we would consider closure. For years, we've barely been able to cover expenses even with maxing out enrollment. Families will be left with less options for quality care and be forced to pay whatever the fees are.

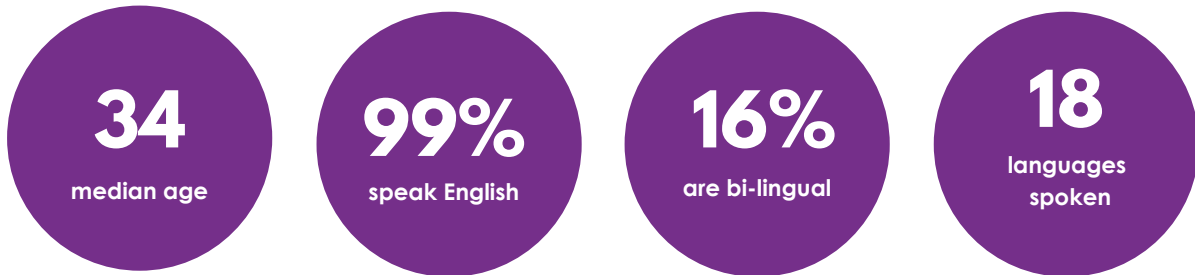
“I will need to raise tuition between 7-9% in order to replace the \$300 per month that our staff members have come to rely on, give cost of living raises, and pay for rising costs. I'm worried that only the wealthiest parents can afford the care we offer.

“Once the grants end we are uncertain of what's going to happen as staff members have expressed concern about having to get other jobs.

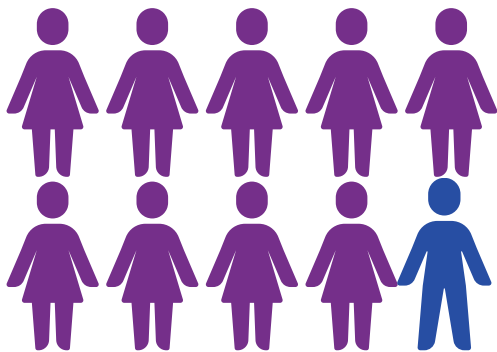
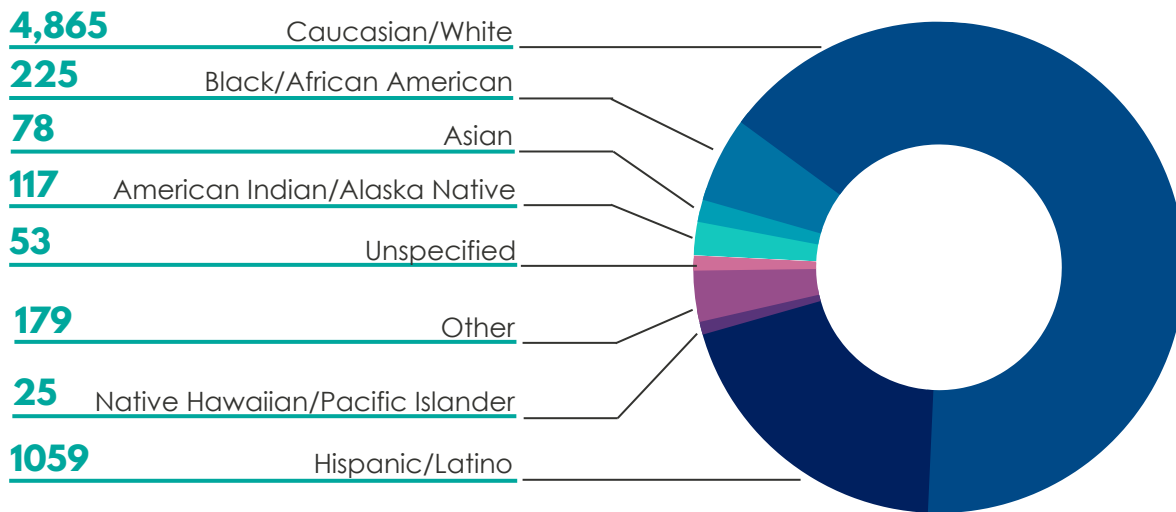
“I will need to increase charges to supplement the loss to cover the rest of the monthly bills to remain providing care. Yet that will put the parents in a bind because their income is limited as well.

Workforce Demographics

The data within this report represents professionals categorized in the RISE database as child care providers, currently employed in legally operating Idaho child care facilities within Idaho as of November 2022.



Race / Ethnicity of ECCE Professionals



94%

OF IDAHO EARLY CARE & EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS ARE WOMEN

Conclusion:

What is at risk for Early Childhood Care and Education in 2023?



Programs will close.



Tuition will increase.



Learning materials, meals, and activities will be cut.



Staff will leave.



Families will be without care .



Idaho Businesses will be negatively impacted.

Main Sources:

- Early Care & Education Professional Survey - <https://idahostars.org/About-Us>
- Child Care Program Director & Owner Survey - <https://idahostars.org/About-Us>
- RISE Database - <https://rise.idahostars.org/>

Additional Sources:

- 1) Federal Reserve Idaho Child Care Snapshot - <https://www.frbsf.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/idaho-child-care-snapshot.pdf>
- 2) Child Care Aware 2020 Idaho Fact Sheet - <https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/research/ccdc/state/id/>
- 3) Idaho Dep of Labor Employment and Wage Survey - <https://lmi.idaho.gov/oes>
- 4) National Equity Atlas Indicators - https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Wages_Median#/
- 5) Idaho Department of Health and Welfare: Child Care Local Market Rates - <https://publicdocuments.dhw.idaho.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=19508&dbid=0&repo=PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS>



IdahoSTARS is a joint project between the University of Idaho - Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development and the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. The project is funded by the Child Care Development Block Grant through Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.



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