

Florida: Quick Stats on Young Children and Workers Providing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Young Children under 6 in Florida

Among the 1,233,000 young children in Florida overall, 48 percent are white, 29 percent are Hispanic, 20 percent are black, and 3 percent are Asian. The top languages spoken in young children's homes are English only (61 percent), followed by Spanish (29 percent), Creole (4 percent), Portuguese (1 percent), and French (1 percent). Young children of immigrants constitute 32 percent of all children ages 5 and under in the state. The young child population's ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity calls attention to the need for increased cultural and linguistic competence in the early childhood workforce in order to effectively serve these children and their families.

ECEC Workforce

The early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce in Florida grew by 72 percent between 1990 and 2011-13. Today, immigrants make up 26 percent of the overall ECEC workforce, and the foreign-born ECEC workforce alone has grown by 258 percent in the past two decades. The average age of ECEC workers is 39, and an overwhelming majority (96 percent) is female.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The ECEC workforce in Florida is very diverse, with approximately 48 percent identifying as white, 31 percent as Hispanic, 20 percent as black, and 1 percent as Asian. The languages spoken by ECEC workers reasonably reflect the languages represented in the young child population. Sixty-eight percent speak only English, 28 percent speak Spanish, 2 percent Creole, and less than 1 percent Portuguese or Tagalog (each).

Immigrants provide much of the ethnic and language diversity present in the workforce and are therefore an important contributor of cultural and linguistic competence and skills in Florida.

Education, English Proficiency, and Professional Standing

Only 36 percent of Florida's ECEC workers overall have an associate's or higher degree. Seven percent are low educated, with less than a high school diploma. Immigrant ECEC workers are more likely than their native counterparts to be low educated: 14 percent have attained less than a high school diploma, compared with only 4 percent of natives. On the other hand, a significant proportion of immigrant ECEC workers (37 percent) hold an associate's or higher degree.

Immigrants tend to be concentrated in lower-paying sectors of the workforce, with 17 percent of all immigrant workers employed as family-based care workers and 19 percent as private home-based child-care workers (versus 9 percent and 8 percent of natives, respectively). Conversely, only 29 percent of immigrant workers are employed as preschool teachers (compared with 38 percent of natives) and 3 percent as program directors (compared with 8 percent of natives). These data raise concerns about potential barriers to advancement for immigrant workers.

One such barrier to advancement may be the issue of limited English proficiency: 17 percent of the ECEC workforce overall, and 59 percent of immigrant ECEC workers, are classified as LEP.

Wages and Income

The average annual income for ECEC workers in Florida overall is \$23,000, which is equal to the federal poverty level for a family of four. Overall, 15 percent of ECEC workers live in poverty in Florida. Immigrant ECEC workers are more likely to live in poverty than their native counterparts, at 19 percent compared with 14 percent of natives.

Number, Race and Ethnicity, and Top 5 Languages Spoken for All Children and Children of Immigrants under Age 6

Florida		
Children under 6	Total	Children of Immigrants
Size	1,233,000	390,000
Immigrant share (%)		31.6
Top 5 Languages Spoken at Home		
Language 1	English only	Spanish
Share language 1 (%)	60.9	57.6
Language 2	Spanish	English only
Share language 2 (%)	28.7	13.8
Language 3	Creole*	Creole*
Share language 3 (%)	3.9	10.4
Language 4	Portuguese	Portuguese
Share language 4 (%)	0.7	2.1
Language 5	French*	Arabic
Share language 5 (%)	0.7	1.8
Race/Ethnicity* (%)		
Non-Hispanic whites	48.4	19.1
Non-Hispanic blacks	19.6	18.8
Non-Hispanic Asians	2.8	7.1
Hispanics	28.9	54.9

Size, Growth, and Key Characteristics of the Total, Immigrant, and Native ECEC Workforce

Florida			
ECEC Workforce	Total	Immigrants	Natives
Size and Growth			
1990			
ECEC workforce (estimate)	50,000	6,000	44,000
Immigrant share (%)		12.3	
2011-13			
ECEC workforce (estimate)	87,000	22,000	64,000
Immigrant share (%)		25.6	
Percent change: 1990 to 2011-13	72	258.4	45.9
Characteristics in 2011-13			
Average age	39.2	44.4	37.4
Share female (%)	95.7	98	94.9
Top 5 Languages Spoken			
Language 1	English only	Spanish	English only
Share language 1 (%)	68.3	74.6	87.2
Language 2	Spanish	English only	Spanish
Share language 2 (%)	27.7	13.1	11.5
Language 3	Creole*	Creole*	Creole*
Share language 3 (%)	1.5	4.3	0.5
Language 4	Portuguese	Portuguese	Arabic
Share language 4 (%)	0.5	2.1	0.2
Language 5	Tagalog	Tagalog	Russian*
Share language 5 (%)	0.3	1.1	0.1
English Proficiency			
Share limited English proficient (LEP)	17	59.2	2.5
Race/Ethnicity* (%)			
Non-Hispanic whites	47.8	81.9	61.4
Non-Hispanic blacks	20.1	10	23.5
Non-Hispanic Asians	1.3	4.4	0.2
Hispanics	30.8	77.4	14.8
Educational Attainment (%)			
Population ages 25 and older	68,000	20,000	48,000
Less than high school	7.1	13.7	4.4
High school/GED/Some college	56.8	49.2	60.1
Associate's or higher	36.1	37.2	35.6

Occupational Groups (%)			
Population ages 16 and older	87,000	22,000	64,000
Family-based child-care worker	10.9	16.6	8.9
Private home-based child-care worker	10.9	18.8	8.2
Teacher assistant	5.9	6.3	5.8
Preschool teacher	35.5	29.3	37.6
Center-based child-care worker	30.4	26.1	31.9
Director of programs	6.4	3	7.6
Average Annual Earned Income (\$) **			
All workers	23,000	20,000	24,000
Poverty (%)			
Under 100 percent poverty	15.4	18.6	14.3
100-199 percent poverty	26	31.6	24.1
200 percent or higher	58.6	49.8	61.6

Notes: *French includes French and Patois; Russian includes Russian and Ukrainian; Creole includes French or Haitian Creole.

* Other race is not included due to small numbers

** Workers who worked full time year around and earned at least 1 dollar in previous year

This fact sheet is based on analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011-13 (pooled) American Community Survey (ACS). For definitions and national-level trends, see *Immigrant and Refugee Workers in the Early Childhood Field: Taking a Closer Look*, www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-and-refugee-workers-early-childhood-field-taking-closer-look.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) status applies to persons who reported speaking English less than "very well" in the ACS.

The 2012 federal poverty threshold for a family of four with two children under age 18 was \$23,283 and for an unrelated individual, \$11,720. See U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty Thresholds for 2012 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children under 18 Years," accessed April 3, 2015, www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/.

This state fact sheet is a project of the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. For more on the Center, visit: www.migrationpolicy.org/integration.

© 2015 Migration Policy Institute
All Rights Reserved