

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

Young Children under 6 in Washington

Among the 508,000 young children in Washington State overall, 68 percent are white, 18 percent are Hispanic, 8 percent are Asian, and 4 percent are black. The top languages spoken in young children's homes are English only (68 percent), followed by Spanish (18 percent), Russian (2 percent), Chinese (1 percent), and Tagalog (1 percent). Young children of immigrants constitute 29 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 Washington State grew by 48 percent between 1990 and 2011-13. Today, immigrants make up 20 percent of the overall ECEC workforce, and the foreign-born ECEC workforce alone has grown by an overwhelming 439 percent in the past two decades. The average age of ECEC workers is 37, and an overwhelming majority (96 percent) is female.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The ECEC workforce in Washington is diverse, with approximately 72 percent identifying as white, 14 percent as Hispanic, 8 percent as Asian, and 5 percent as black. The languages spoken by ECEC workers reasonably reflect the languages represented in the young child population. Nearly 75 percent speak only English, 11 percent speak Spanish, 3 percent Russian, and 1 percent Tagalog or Chinese (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 Washington.

Education, English Proficiency, and Professional Standing

Only 38 percent of Washington's ECEC workers overall have an associate's or higher degree. Nine 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: 19 percent have attained less than a high school diploma, compared with only 6 percent of natives. On the other hand, a significant proportion of immigrant ECEC workers (31 percent) hold an associate's or higher degree.

Immigrants tend to be concentrated in lower-paying sectors of the workforce, with 36 percent of all immigrant workers employed as family-based care workers and 19 percent as private home-based child-care workers (versus 19 percent and 13 percent of natives, respectively). Conversely, only 14 percent of immigrant workers are employed as preschool teachers (compared with 24 percent of natives) and 1 percent as program directors (compared with almost 5 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: 10 percent of the ECEC workforce overall, and 45 percent of immigrant ECEC workers, are classified as LEP.

Wages and Income

The average annual income for ECEC workers in Washington overall is \$26,000, which is only \$3,000 higher than the \$23,000 federal poverty level for a family of four. Overall, 16 percent of ECEC workers live in poverty in Washington. Immigrant ECEC workers are more likely to live in poverty than their native counterparts, at 23 percent compared with 15 percent of natives.

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

Washington		
Children under 6	Total	Children of Immigrants
Size	508,000	145,000
Immigrant share (%)		28.5
Top 5 Languages Spoken at Home		
Language 1	English only	Spanish
Share language 1 (%)	67.5	44.1
Language 2	Spanish	English only
Share language 2 (%)	17.8	11
Language 3	Russian*	Russian*
Share language 3 (%)	2.3	8
Language 4	Chinese*	Chinese*
Share language 4 (%)	1.4	4.4
Language 5	Tagalog	Vietnamese
Share language 5 (%)	1.1	3.4
Race/Ethnicity* (%)		
Non-Hispanic whites	68.3	28.5
Non-Hispanic blacks	3.8	4.9
Non-Hispanic Asians	8.4	25.6
Hispanics	18	40.6

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

Washington			
ECEC Workforce	Total	Immigrants	Natives
Size and Growth			
1990			
ECEC workforce (estimate)	28,000	2,000	26,000
Immigrant share (%)		5.5	
2011-13			
ECEC workforce (estimate)	41,000	8,000	33,000
Immigrant share (%)		20.1	
Percent change: 1990 to 2011-13	47.7	438.6	24.8
Characteristics in 2011-13			
Average age	37	39.2	36.4
Share female (%)	95.6	98.4	94.9
Top 5 Languages Spoken			
Language 1	English only	Spanish	English only
Share language 1 (%)	74.9	26.9	91
Language 2	Spanish	Russian*	Spanish
Share language 2 (%)	10.8	14.1	6.8
Language 3	Russian*	English only	German*
Share language 3 (%)	3.1	10.9	0.6
Language 4	Tagalog	Tagalog	Russian*
Share language 4 (%)	1.4	6	0.4
Language 5	Chinese*	Chinese*	Tagalog
Share language 5 (%)	1.1	5.4	0.3
English Proficiency			
Share limited English proficient (LEP)	9.7	44.5	0.9
Race/Ethnicity* (%)			
Non-Hispanic whites	72.2	34	81.8
Non-Hispanic blacks	5.1	7.8	4.4
Non-Hispanic Asians	7.8	30.5	2.1
Hispanics	13.5	27.6	9.9
Educational Attainment (%)			
Population ages 25 and older	30,000	7,000	23,000
Less than high school	8.6	18.8	5.8
High school/GED/Some college	53.9	50.4	54.9
Associate's or higher	37.5	30.8	39.4

Occupational Groups (%)			
Population ages 16 and older	41,000	8,000	33,000
Family-based child-care worker	18.7	18.6	18.7
Private home-based child-care worker	19.6	16.9	20.3
Teacher assistant	3.2	5.6	2.6
Preschool teacher	21.6	19.8	22.1
Center-based child-care worker	32.6	38	31.2
Director of programs	4.3	1.1	5.1
Average Annual Earned Income (\$)***			
All workers	26,000	24,000	27,000
Poverty (%)			
Under 100 percent poverty	16.4	23	14.7
100-199 percent poverty	21.5	23.7	21
200 percent or higher	62.1	53.4	64.4

Notes: *Chinese includes Chinese, Mandarin and Cantonese; Russian includes Russian and Ukrainian; German refers to German and Pennsylvania Dutch..

* 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.

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