naeyc® National Association for the Education of Young Children

An Unsustainable Status Quo

We All Bear the Burdens of an Underfunded System

March 2025

MISSOURI

The problems are clear: The structural challenges that have always plagued the child care sector are growing. Program costs are rising, staff burnout and turnover is increasing, and absent sufficient public support, families are having to pay more than they can afford for the child care they need. As a result, the supply of high-quality child care everyone in our society needs to be successful cannot match the demand for it.

The solutions remain clear: Public investments in child care and early learning are needed to build a system that works, and that ensures early childhood educators are supported in joining and remaining part of the early childhood education (ECE) profession, and that parents are able to access and afford high-quality care that meets their needs and the needs of their children.

In January 2025, more than 10,000 early childhood educators from all states and settings - including centers, family child care homes, faith-based programs, Head Start, and public preschool programs - responded to a new ECE field survey from NAEYC. The survey results and accompanying stories illustrate the ongoing challenges facing the field, the ways those challenges impact both families and providers, and the need for additional and ongoing public investment in this sector.

Here are some reflections from survey respondents in Missouri:

“This is not about over-regulation. We need better salaries and protection for public education, we need early child care so families can WORK without worrying about their children, and child care teachers deserve respect.” - Early Childhood Educator

“The high level of stress as a director is really tough. Staffing is the biggest issue.” - Director/Administrator

“We had to raise tuition 6% last year just to keep up with the rising cost of providing care. We will likely be increasing another 6% this year. That is just to cover increased food costs and a 2% coat of living raise to teachers. But inflation was at 6% and our benefits have been cut and we have increased fees for staff parking. So really we are actually making less money this year than last . . . We are entirely funded by the tuition our families pay to us.” - Director/Administrator

Here's a brief summary of the survey data from Missouri:

	STATE	NATIONAL
Total sample size	108	9,883
Total employed in family child care homes	11	1,087
Total employed in child care centers	53	5,336
Total sample of center directors and family child care owner/operator respondents working in child care centers and family child care homes	54	4,550
AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS:		
Compared to this time last year . . .		
% indicating they are more burned out now	48%	47%
% indicating their economic situation has worsened	37%	34%
% indicating their economic situation has improved	15%	16%
Over the last year . . .		
Supply		
% reporting at least one child care program in their community OPENING over the last year	41%	40%
% reporting at least one child care program in their community CLOSING over the last year	64%	56%
Benefits		
% reporting they do not have health insurance	13%	16%
% reporting they do not have access to paid vacation time	27%	35%
% reporting they do not have retirement savings	29%	42%
% reporting they do not have access to paid family or medical leave	49%	57%
AMONG CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTORS AND FAMILY CHILD CARE OWNER/OPERATORS:		
Over the last year . . .		
Program Enrollment		
% indicating their program was under-enrolled relative to capacity (nationally the top reasons for underenrollment were related to affordability and staffing challenges, not a lack of demand)	52%	55%
% indicating that they raised tuition	60%	55%
Staffing		
% indicating that they raised wages	81%	60%
Costs		
% indicating their rent costs went up	29%	32%
% indicating their liability insurance costs went up	56%	46%
% indicating their property insurance costs went up	54%	45%

Methodology This online survey, created and conducted by NAEYC using SurveyMonkey, represents the responses of a non-randomized sample of 10,066 individuals working in early childhood education settings who completed the survey in English or Spanish between January 6-27, 2025. To generate a more representative national sample from the pool of responses, a probability proportional to size (PPS) methodology was used to pull samples by state that are benchmarked to the share of the total early childhood workforce by state. The authors relied upon the methodology employed by the CSCCE's Early Childhood Workforce Index estimates of the size of each state's ECE workforce using U.S. Census Bureau ACS data (**https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Appendix-Table-2.1_2024-Index.pdf**). The final sample size for analysis is 9,883. In contrast, for the state-level analysis, the entire sample of responses from each state were used. We are unable to supply detailed analysis in states for which there are very small sample sizes across sub-groups.

The survey links were shared widely through email newsletters, listservs, social media, and via partnerships, and 10 randomly selected respondents were provided with a $100 gift card for participation in a sweepstakes. Given the constantly changing and widely varying nature of the crisis, the broad analysis from this survey is intended to present the experiences of the respondents, as captured in the moment that they take the survey, with extrapolations for the experiences of the field and industry at large. Additional information available at **www.naeyc.org/pandemic-surveys**.