

# Immigrant and refugee workers in the early childhood field: Taking a closer look <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Full report in PDF <sup>[2]</sup>

## Description:

The face of the young child population in the United States is rapidly changing. Today, children of immigrants account for one in four of all those under age 6, and represent all the net growth in this population since 1990. With research consistently showing the importance of early learning experiences in setting the stage for children's healthy development and academic success, it is increasingly clear that these demographic changes point to the need for a diverse, well-qualified early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce to deliver linguistically and culturally competent care.

At the same time, just as the number and share of children of immigrants have grown substantially, the foreign-born share of ECEC workers has also risen: immigrants now account for nearly one-fifth of the overall ECEC workforce. However, these immigrant workers—and the linguistic and cultural diversity that they bring to the field—are highly over-represented in lower-skilled and lower-paying sectors of the profession such as family-based child-care workers; few hold leadership positions as center directors or work as prekindergarten (pre-K) teachers. Despite the increasing demand for culturally and linguistically sensitive ECEC services, these competencies are often not recognized as important for ECEC workers; less than one-quarter of the workforce speaks a language other than English, and there is a mismatch between the growing diversity of languages spoken by immigrant children and families and the languages typically spoken by the ECEC workforce.

This report aims to fill gaps in knowledge about ECEC workforce trends and, in particular, the growing share of immigrants in this field. The primary objective is to gain a better understanding of the unique characteristics of immigrant workers in order to ensure that their needs are reflected in policy efforts that seek to expand and improve ECEC services for young children. The report examines demographic and socioeconomic trends in both the immigrant-origin child population (ages 5 and under) eligible to enroll in ECEC programs as well as the ECEC workforce in the United States, and goes on to discuss policy implications and opportunities to support the advancement of immigrant ECEC workers as part of an overall effort to improve the quality of the early childhood workforce.

**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** staff <sup>[4]</sup>

diversity <sup>[5]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/15/04/immigrant-and-refugee-workers-early-childhood-field-taking>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/15/04/immigrant-and-refugee-workers-early-childhood-field-taking> [2]

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-and-refugee-workers-early-childhood-field-taking-closer-look> [3]

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