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One in Eight Child Care Jobs Have Been Lost Since the Start of the Pandemic, and Women Are Paying the Price

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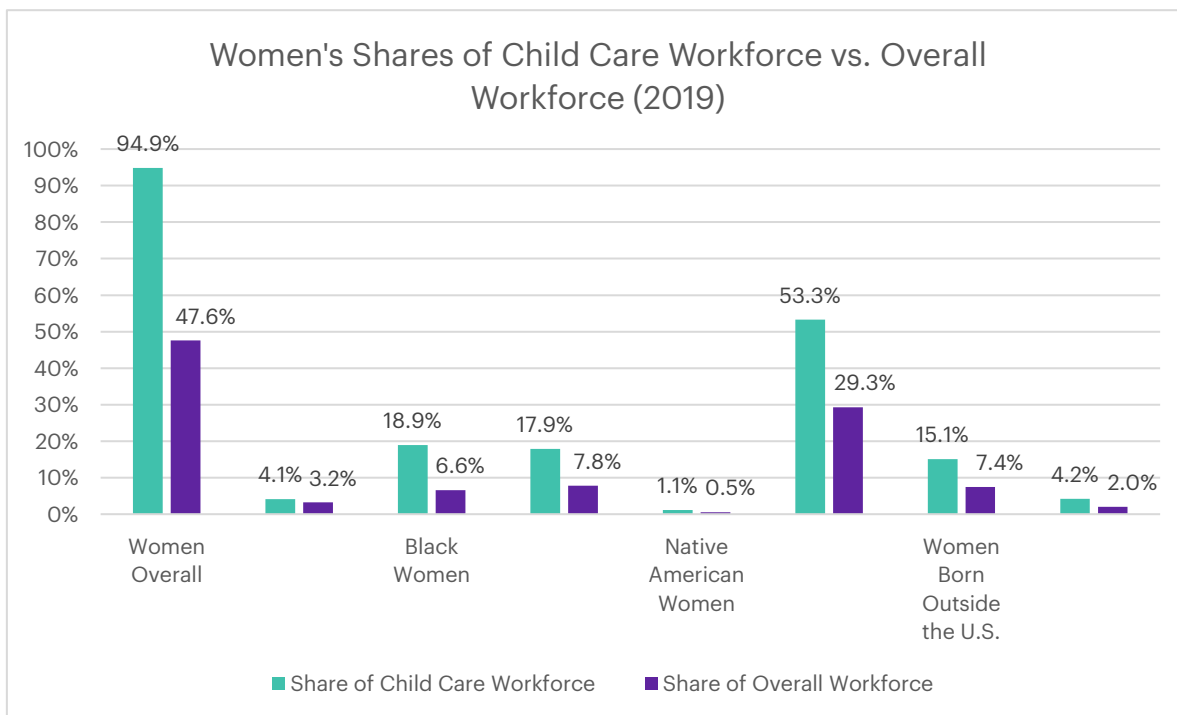
Child care workers are the backbone of our economy. High-quality child care allows parents to enter, remain, and advance in the workforce, and is particularly important for mothers, over a million of whom were pushed out of work during 2020.¹ Child care workers also play an essential role in supporting children's learning and healthy development—more critical than ever for children experiencing the disruption of the public health crisis. Yet even before the pandemic began, child care workers—nearly all of whom are women, disproportionately Black women and Latinas—were underpaid and undervalued.

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the child care industry has suffered massive job losses. Between February 2020 and April 2020, the industry lost 373,300 jobs, over a third of its workforce, with women accounting for 94.8% of those losses. As of May 2021, the child care workforce is only 87.1% as large as it was in February 2020, meaning more than 1 in 8 (12.9%) child care jobs are still lost over a year into the pandemic.²

Because children under 12 are not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations, child care providers that are open or attempting to re-open must do so with continued restrictions in mind. They must bear the additional costs associated with cleaning, personal protective equipment (PPE), and equipment and facilities modifications to meet public health guidelines. In order to safely maintain social distancing, providers are still likely to be caring for fewer children, even as more parents return to work and demand for child care surges. Many providers are also facing staffing shortages but do not have the resources to expand their facilities or attract new employees with higher wages.³ While recent federal funding is helping to stabilize the sector in the short term,⁴ much greater investments will be needed to affirm what working families already know: that child care is essential.

Nearly All Child Care Workers Are Women

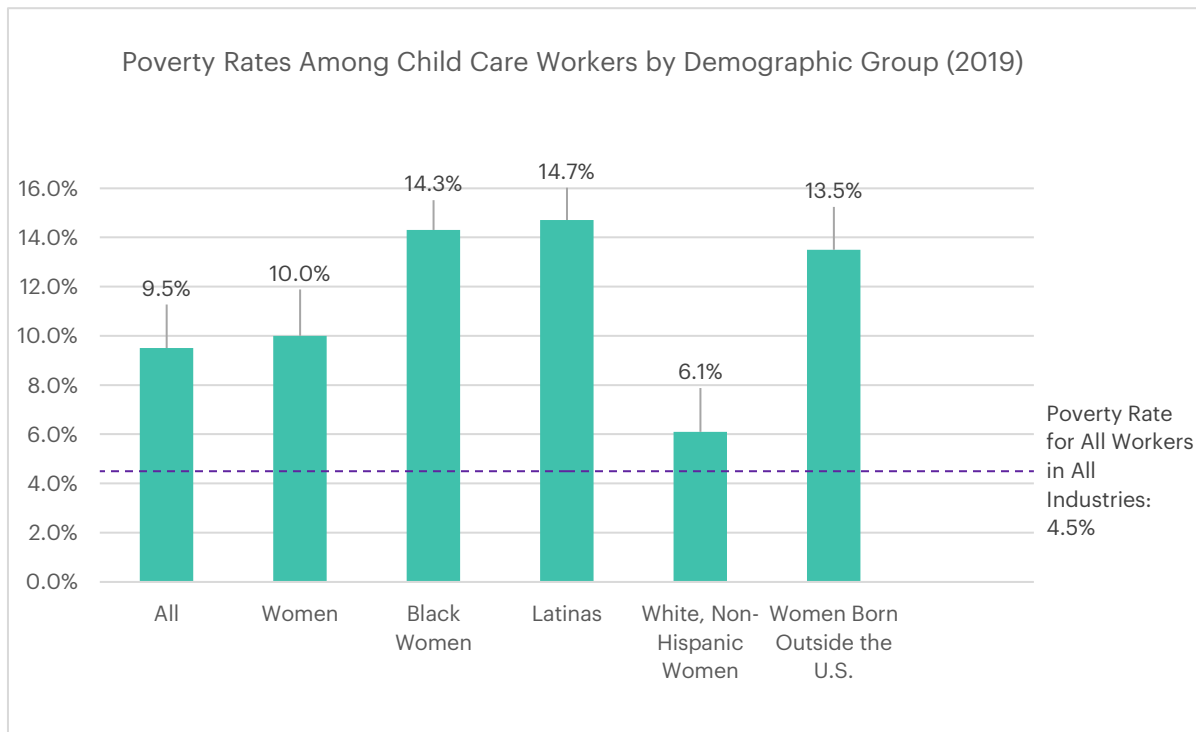
- In 2019, women made up nearly half (47.6%) of the overall workforce but were 94.9% of the child care workforce.⁵
- Black women and Latinas are overrepresented in the child care workforce. In 2019, nearly one in five (18.9%) child care workers were Black women, and an additional 17.9% were Latinas. By comparison, Black women and Latinas made up just 6.6% and 7.8% of the overall workforce, respectively.⁶
- Women born outside the U.S. were 15.1% of the child care workforce in 2019, compared to 7.4% of the overall workforce.⁷
- Women with disabilities were 4.2% of the child care workforce in 2019 and accounted for 2.0% of the overall workforce.⁸



Source: NWLC calculations based on 2020 CPS ASEC, using IPUMS. In the CPS, respondents self-identify their sex, race, disability status, whether they are Latinx, and whether they were born outside the U.S.

Many Child Care Workers Were Struggling to Make Ends Meet Before the Pandemic

- Child care workers are underpaid and undervalued. In 2019, typical annual wages for a woman working full time, year round in the child care industry were \$26,000, or approximately \$12.50 per hour. Black women and Latinas working full time, year round in child care were typically paid even less. (Each were paid \$25,000 annually, or \$12.02 per hour.)⁹
- In 2019, nearly one in ten child care workers (9.5%) had incomes below the federal poverty line, compared to 4.5% of workers overall. Poverty rates among Black women, Latinas, and women born outside the U.S. working in child care were even higher.¹⁰ Moreover, the federal poverty line, which was just \$20,598 for a parent with two children in 2019,¹¹ barely begins to capture what families need to make ends meet.¹²



Source: NWLC calculations based on 2020 CPS ASEC, using IPUMS. In the CPS, respondents self-identify their sex, race, disability status, whether they are Latinx, and whether they were born outside the U.S.

- Many child care workers struggle to afford child care for their own children. The typical annual cost of full-time, center-based care for an infant was \$11,094 in 2019,¹³ which was 42.7% of the typical annual salary for a woman working full time, year round in child care that year, and 44.4% of the typical annual salaries for Black women and Latinas working full time, year round in child care.¹⁴
- Many child care workers lack the benefits they need to keep themselves and their families healthy. Fewer than one in four (24.2%) child care workers were policyholders for employer-sponsored health insurance in 2019, compared to approximately half (50.4%) of workers overall.¹⁵ Low-paid jobs typically provide little, if any, paid sick time or paid family and medical leave.¹⁶

Child Care Workers Need a Transformative Recovery—Not a Return to the Status Quo

The American Rescue Plan enacted in March 2021 and earlier COVID-19 relief legislation in 2020 included a total of more than \$50 billion in critically needed relief funds to help stabilize an otherwise collapsing child care sector, support parents and other caregivers' ability to work and care for children, and raise wages for the essential workers who care for and educate children every day.¹⁷ But this relief legislation was not designed to address the long-term structural flaws in our child care system; a far more substantial investment will be needed to support child care workers and providers and the families they serve, and to finally and fully value caregiving work.

Approximately \$700 billion over 10 years in direct spending will be required to build an equitable, comprehensive child care system that ensures families have access to high-quality, affordable child care that is available when and where they need it, supports their children's healthy development, and invests

in the education and compensation of a diverse workforce through the model offered by the Child Care for Working Families Act.¹⁸ Among other critical reforms, this level of investment would provide caregivers and early childhood educators with living wages, benefits, and pay parity with elementary school teachers; support professional development and career ladders to higher-paying early care and education jobs; improve working conditions, with adequate staffing for breaks and time off; guarantee a voice in the system, including the choice to join a union and bargain collectively; and ensure other fundamental work-related rights and protections.¹⁹

To fully and equitably recover from this crisis and strengthen our economy, we need structural changes to our child care system to ensure that all families have access to high-quality, affordable child care provided by educators who are supported and paid what they deserve.

- 1 Misty L. Heggeness et al., “Moms, Work and the Pandemic: Tracking Job Losses for Mothers of School-Age Children During a Health Crisis,” The United States Census Bureau, March 3, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/moms-work-and-the-pandemic.html>. In January 2021, there were 1.4 million fewer mothers living with their own school-age children actively working than there were in January 2020.
- 2 NWLC calculations using Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), “Employment of Women on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector, Seasonally Adjusted,” Table B-5a in April 2021 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: May 7, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cese5a.htm> and BLS, “Employees on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector and Selected Industry Detail,” Table B-1 in April 2021 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: May 7, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm>. Historical data for child care industry available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/CES6562440010> and at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/CES6562440001>.
- 3 Elliot Haspel, “There’s a Massive Child-Care Worker Shortage and the Market Can’t Fix It,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/05/26/child-care-center-worker-shortage/>.
- 4 Alyssa Fortner, “States’ Plans to Use the CRRSA’s \$10B in Child Care Relief Funds” (CLASP, March 2021), <https://www.clasp.org/publications/fact-sheet/states-plans-use-crrsa-s-10b-child-care-relief-funds>; Christine Johnson Staub, “State Implementation of the Historic COVID Child Care Relief and Stabilization Funds” (CLASP, March 2021), <https://www.clasp.org/publications/fact-sheet/state-implementation-historic-covid-child-care-relief-and-stabilization>.
- 5 NWLC calculations using 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS), accessed through Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles and J. Robert Warren, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series Current Population Survey (IPUMS CPS): Version 9.0* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V8.0>. respondents self-identify their sex as either male or female. Throughout this factsheet, “child care workers” or “the child care workforce” refers to workers who indicated they worked in the “child day care services” industry on the CPS, rather than those who identified their occupation as “child care worker” on the CPS. Among workers in the child day care services industry, over half (52.2%) identified their occupation as “child care worker” on the 2020CPS. An additional 25.5% identified their occupation as “preschool and kindergarten teacher.” The remaining 22.3% of the workforce includes those working as administrators, teaching assistants, and various other occupations.
- 6 *Id.* Black women are those who self-identified their race as Black or African American. Latinas are those who self-identified as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. Latinas may be of any race. Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women are those who self-identified as Asian or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Native American women are those who self-identified as American Indian or Alaska Native. For more information, see the CPS ASEC demographic questionnaire <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/questionnaires/Demographics.pdf>.
- 7 *Id.* “Women born outside the U.S.” includes those who are not citizens and those who are naturalized citizens, but does not include those who were born abroad to U.S. citizen parents.
- 8 *Id.* In the CPS, persons with disabilities are those who have self-identified as having any physical or cognitive difficulty.
- 9 *Id.* Figures are median annual wages for full-time, year-round child care workers in each demographic group. Hourly wages are derived by dividing median annual wages by 2,080 hours. Median annual wages for white, non-Hispanic women working full time, year round in child care were \$29,000 in 2019. Due to sample size constraints, median annual wages for AAPI women and Native American women working in the child care industry are unavailable.
- 10 *Id.* Due to sample size constraints, poverty rates for AAPI women, Native American women, and women with disabilities working in the child care industry are not available.
- 11 U.S. Census Bureau, “Poverty Thresholds,” The United States Census Bureau, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html>.
- 12 For example, the Economic Policy Institute estimates that a family of that size living in Columbus, Ohio would \$67,180 in 2017 dollars to pay for a year’s worth of basics like rent, groceries, child care, and health insurance. “Family Budget Calculator,” *Economic Policy Institute*, accessed May 27, 2021, <https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>.
- 13 NWLC calculations based on Child Care Aware of America, “Picking Up the Pieces: Building a Better Child Care System Post COVID-19,” (Fall 2020), <https://www.childcareaware.org/picking-up-the-pieces/>. This calculation uses average annual costs of full-time, center-based child care for an infant in 49 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia (listed in Appendix I of “Picking Up the Pieces”). The median of these averages is \$11,094.
- 14 NWLC calculations using 2020 CPS, accessed through Flood et al., *IPUMS CPS*.
- 15 *Id.*
- 16 “Paid Family & Medical Leave Will Support an Equitable Economy Recovery” (National Women’s Law Center & National Partnership for Women & Families, May 2021), <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PaidLeaveFS.pdf>; “Paid Sick Days Will Support an Equitable Economy Recovery” (National Women’s Law Center & National Partnership for Women & Families, May 2021), <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PaidSickFS.pdf>.
- 17 Fortner, “States’ Plans”; Staub, “State Implementation.”
- 18 “Building a Comprehensive Child Care and Early Learning System: The Case for a \$700 Billion Investment in Child Care Over the Next 10 Years” (National Women’s Law Center, April 2021), <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/700B-Justification-fact-sheet.pdf>.
- 19 *Id.* A \$700 billion investment over 10 years would also substantially expand the supply of high-quality, affordable child care for families by, for example, supporting the development of new child care facilities and expanding access to Head Start, Early Head Start, and universal preschool.