

# Professional Characteristics of the Center-based Child Care and Early Education Workforce in 2012 and 2019: Descriptions by Race and Ethnicity, Languages Spoken, and Nativity Status

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## Introduction

Racial and ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity in child care and early education (CCEE) settings are emerging as critically important aspects of provider quality. Tracking trends in the demographic characteristics of the CCEE workforce (in particular, professional characteristics such as education level and professional development) is important for [identifying and ameliorating gaps](#) in equitable opportunities within the CCEE field.

[Previous analyses](#) of the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) found that compared to CCEE teachers who identified as White, CCEE teachers who identified as a person of color had lower rates of bachelor's degree attainment and were more likely to access continuing education and professional development. Trends were similar when comparing those who spoke only English to those who spoke a language other than English, and those born in the United States to those born outside the United States.

This snapshot provides an updated look at the demographic characteristics (race and ethnicity, languages spoken, and nativity status) of the center-based CCEE workforce and their professional characteristics by each demographic group using the 2019 NSECE. Additionally, this snapshot compares those estimates with the 2012 findings to see if trends in professional characteristics changed with time.

## Glossary

**CCEE:** Child care and early education programs and workforce providing services to children birth to age 13, including most home-based providers caring for children birth to age 5, school-age children, as well as many child care centers that serve both age groups.

**Center-based CCEE teacher:** A teacher or caregiver in a center-based CCEE organization who served at least one child ages 0 to 5, not yet in kindergarten. This could be a lead teacher, assistant, or aide.

**Race and ethnicity:** Self-reported race and ethnicity grouped into four categories: Non-Hispanic White only; Non-Hispanic Black or African American only; Non-Hispanic Other; and Hispanic. Non-Hispanic Other included racial groups too small to analyze on their own: Asian only; American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) only; Pacific Islander (NHPI) only; and Multi-Race. Given the diversity of this group, we do not draw conclusions related to any changes over time.

**Languages spoken:** Self-reported languages spoken when working with children, categorized as speaking only English or not speaking only English with children.

**Nativity status:** Self-reported country of birth as either U.S.-born or not U.S.-born.

**Educational attainment:** Self-reported highest level of education and, if applicable, postsecondary major in ECE or ECE-related field. In addition, holding a credential or state certificate to teach young children.

**Professional development:** Participated in the past year in workshops, coaching, a college course, or as a member of a professional organization.

**Credential:** Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or state certificate for early care and education.

**Motivation:** Primary motivation for working with children developed into three categories: a calling or career; to help children or parents; convenience or paycheck.

## Key Findings

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- The national demographics of the center-based CCEE workforce in 2019 were similar to those in 2012.
- There was a statistically significant decline from 2012 to 2019 in the percentages of center-based teachers with a bachelor's degree related to CCEE among those who were non-Hispanic White, spoke only English, or were U.S.-born.
- There were many statistically significant declines in participation in professional development from 2012 to 2019, most notable of which were declines in attending a workshop among Hispanic teachers, and declines in college course attendance among non-Hispanic White, English speaking only, or U.S.-born teachers.
- There was a significant increase in the percentage of teachers born outside the United States who reported working with a coach.

## Data and Methods

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This snapshot draws upon [published findings](#) from the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), and new analyses of the 2019 NSECE (Center-based) Workforce Survey. The sample size in 2012 was 4,832 members of the CCEE workforce representing 999,608 teachers (including assistant and lead teachers), and in 2019 was 4,142 members of the CCEE workforce, representing 1,227,889 teachers.<sup>1</sup> Descriptive analyses of professional development experiences were conducted within race and ethnicity, languages spoken, and nativity status groups, and t-tests were conducted to detect significant differences within each group across time (2012 and 2019).

## What were the Demographic Characteristics of the CCEE Workforce in 2012 and 2019?

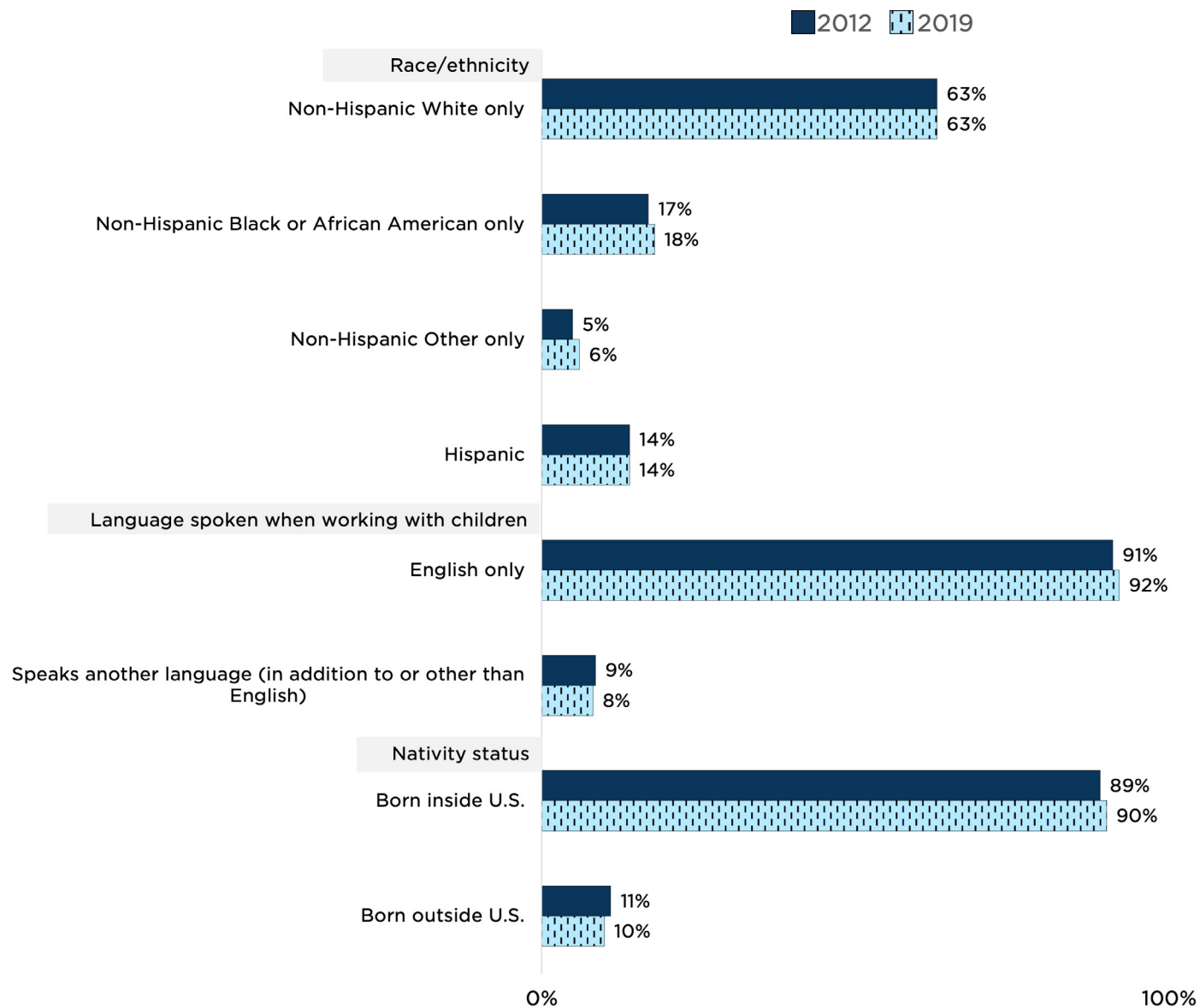
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The demographic characteristics of the center-based CCEE workforce were similar between 2012 and 2019 (see Figure 1). In 2019, the majority of the center-based workforce identified as non-Hispanic White (63%) followed by non-Hispanic Black or African American (18%), Hispanic, any race (14%), and non-Hispanic Other race (6%; see Race and ethnicity in the glossary for description of each category). Over 90 percent spoke only English when working with children, and 90 percent were U.S.-born.

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<sup>1</sup> The results in this snapshot exclude 483 teachers working at center-based providers associated with public school districts for whom workforce data was not collected. Challenges related to data collection in public school settings resulted in workforce survey data being collected for only 429 of the 912 public school-based workforce members in the NSECE workforce survey sample. This snapshot also excludes 538 workforce members who were missing information race and ethnicity, languages spoken, or nativity status information and those who were not serving at least one child aged 0-5 in their classroom.

**Figure 1. Center-based ECE workforce demographics in 2012 and 2019**

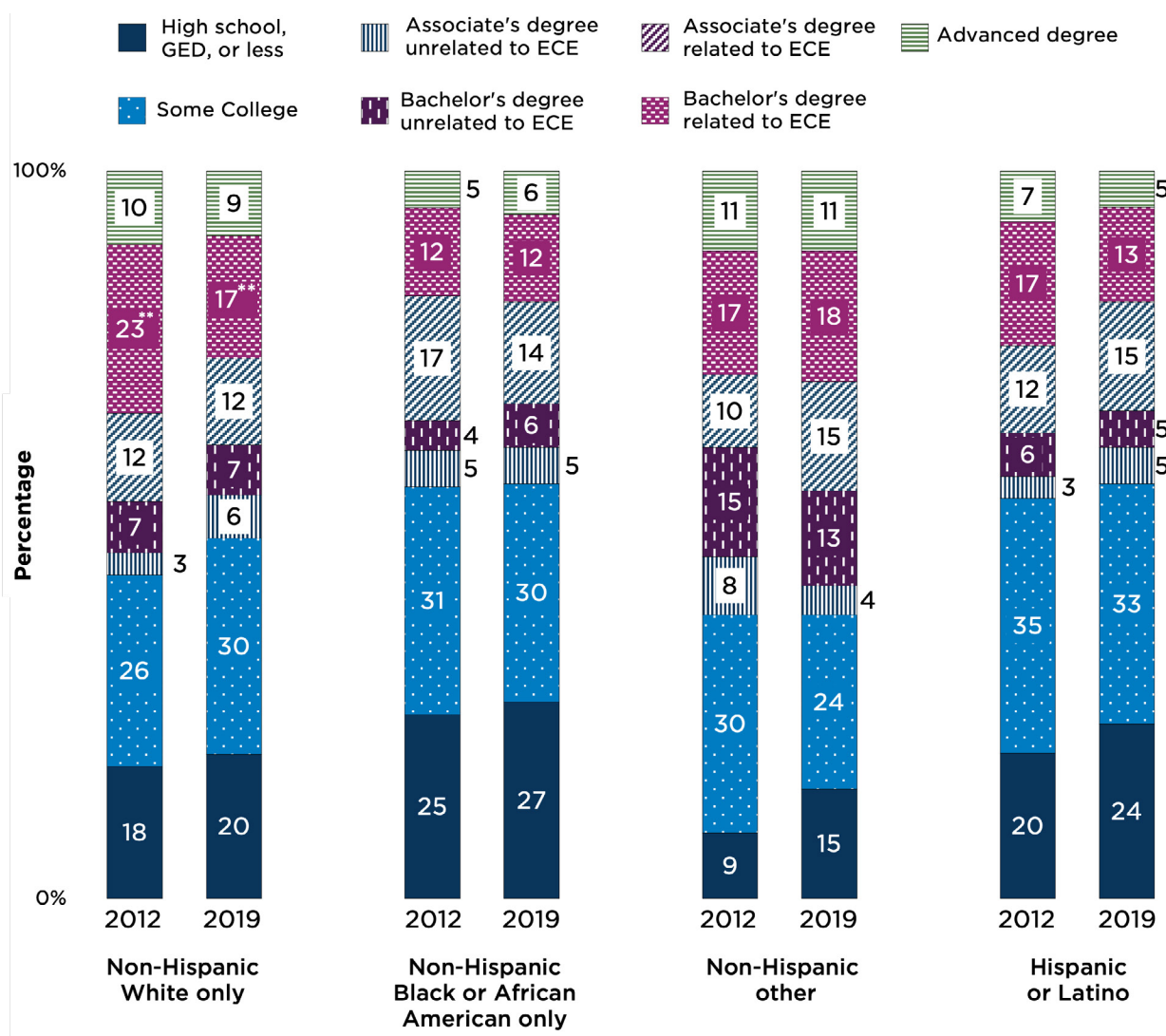


**Source:** Authors' analysis of 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.

# What were the Educational Characteristics of the CCEE Workforce by Demographic Characteristics in 2012 and 2019?

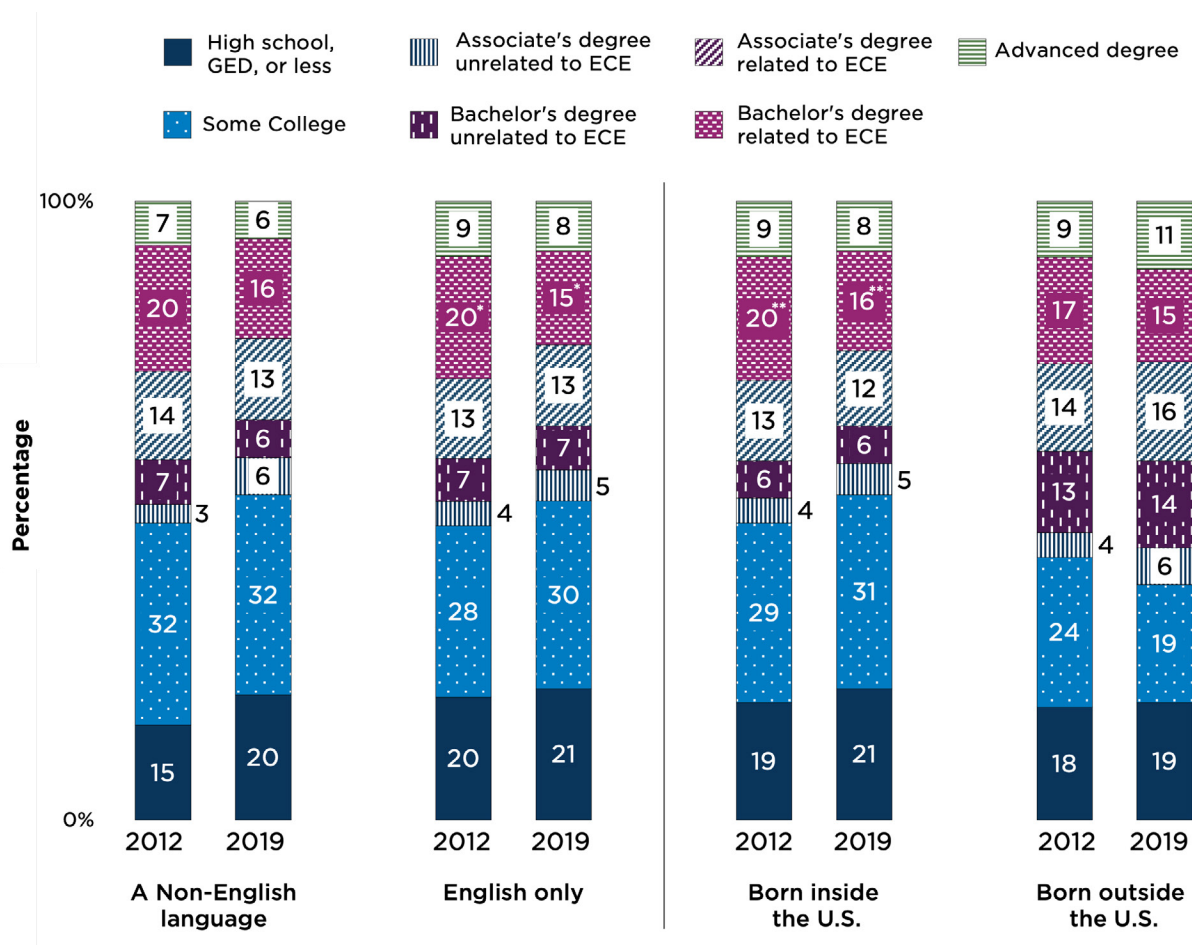
There were few changes in the educational attainment of center-based teachers by demographic group over time (see Figures 2 and 3). Changes included declines from 2012 to 2019 in the rates of center-based teachers with bachelor's degrees in a CCEE-related field among: non-Hispanic White teachers, teachers who spoke only English, and U.S.-born teachers. Findings did not indicate any significant changes between the rates of credentialing in 2019 versus 2012 for any demographic group (see Figure 4).

**Figure 2.** Center-based ECE workforce educational attainment within racial and ethnic group by year



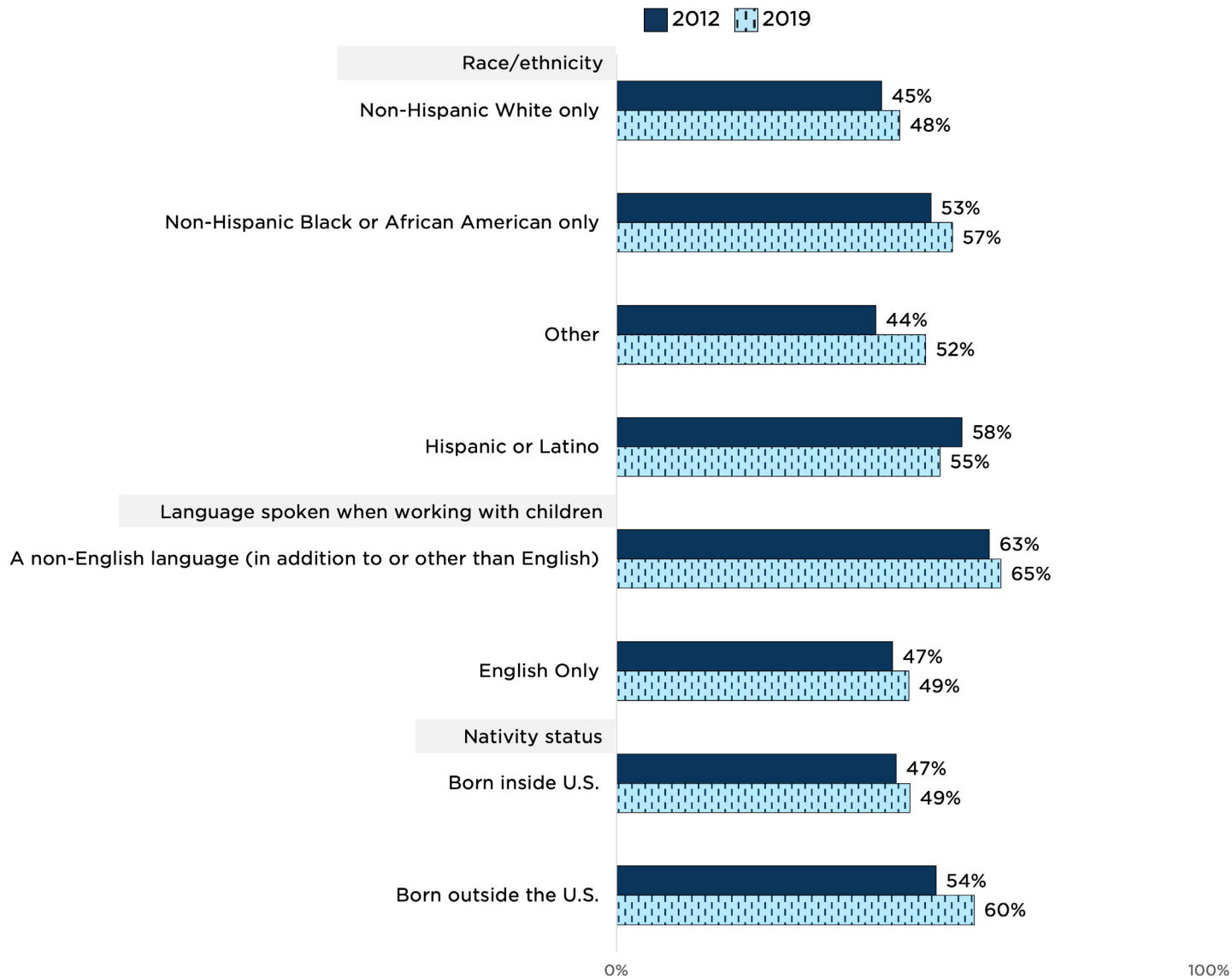
**Source:** Authors' analysis of 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.  
**Note.** \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01. Pairs of asterisks denote significant differences between 2012 and 2019 within racial and ethnic group.

**Figure 3.** Center-based ECE workforce educational attainment within language and nativity status group by year



**Source:** Authors' analysis of 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.  
**Note.** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Pairs of asterisks denote significant differences between 2012 and 2019 within each language and nativity status group.

**Figure 4.** Center-based ECE workforce rates of credentialing within each demographic group, in 2012 and 2019



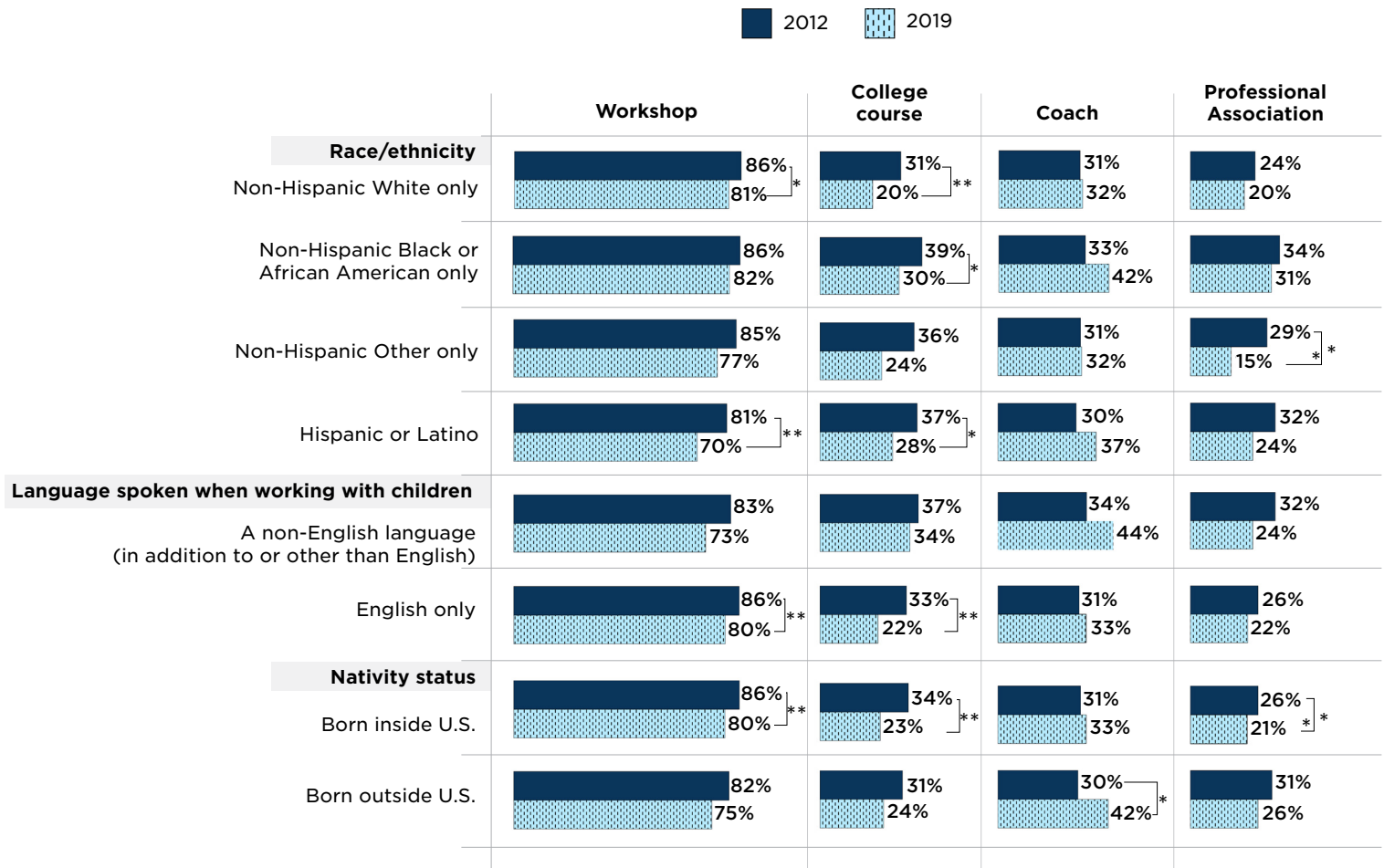
**Source:** Authors' analysis of 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.



# What were the Professional Development Experiences of the CCEE Workforce by Demographic Characteristics in 2012 and 2019?

Among the center-based workforce, there were declines in rates of professional development participation between 2012 and 2019 (see Figure 5). Specifically, there were significant declines in the proportions of teachers from certain subgroups who reported taking a workshop in the past year (non-Hispanic White, Hispanic, English-only speaking, U.S.-born), taking a college course (non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, English-only speaking, U.S.-born), and being a part of a professional association (non-Hispanic Other race, U.S.-born). There were increases in the percentages of the non-U.S.-born center-based teachers who reported working with a coach.

**Figure 5.** Center-based ECE workforce participation in professional development within demographic group by year



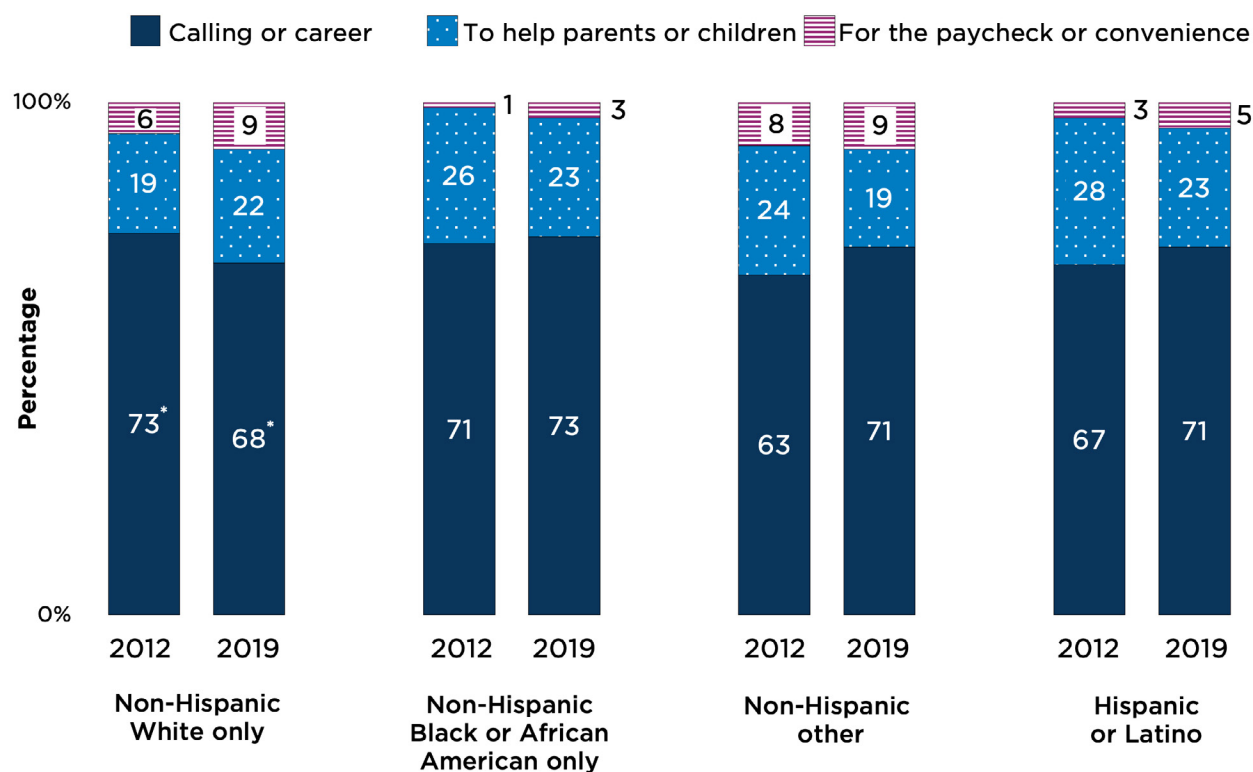
**Source:** Authors' analysis of 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.

**Note.** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Pairs of asterisks denote significant differences between 2012 and 2019 within demographic group.

# What were the Professional Motivations of the CCEE Workforce by Demographic Characteristics in 2012 and 2019?

There was a significant decline between 2012 and 2019 in the proportion of non-Hispanic White teachers who reported their primary motivation as a calling or career (see Figures 6 and 7). Among teachers who spoke a non-English language, the proportion who reported their motivation as their “calling or career” significantly increased, while the percentage reporting their motivation was to “help parents or children” declined from 36 percent to 16 percent. There was also a statistically significant increase over time in the proportion of U.S.-born teachers who reported they were motivated “for the paycheck or convenience.” It’s worth noting, however, that the proportion of the CCEE workforce endorsing this reason in both 2012 and 2019 was generally small (<10%).

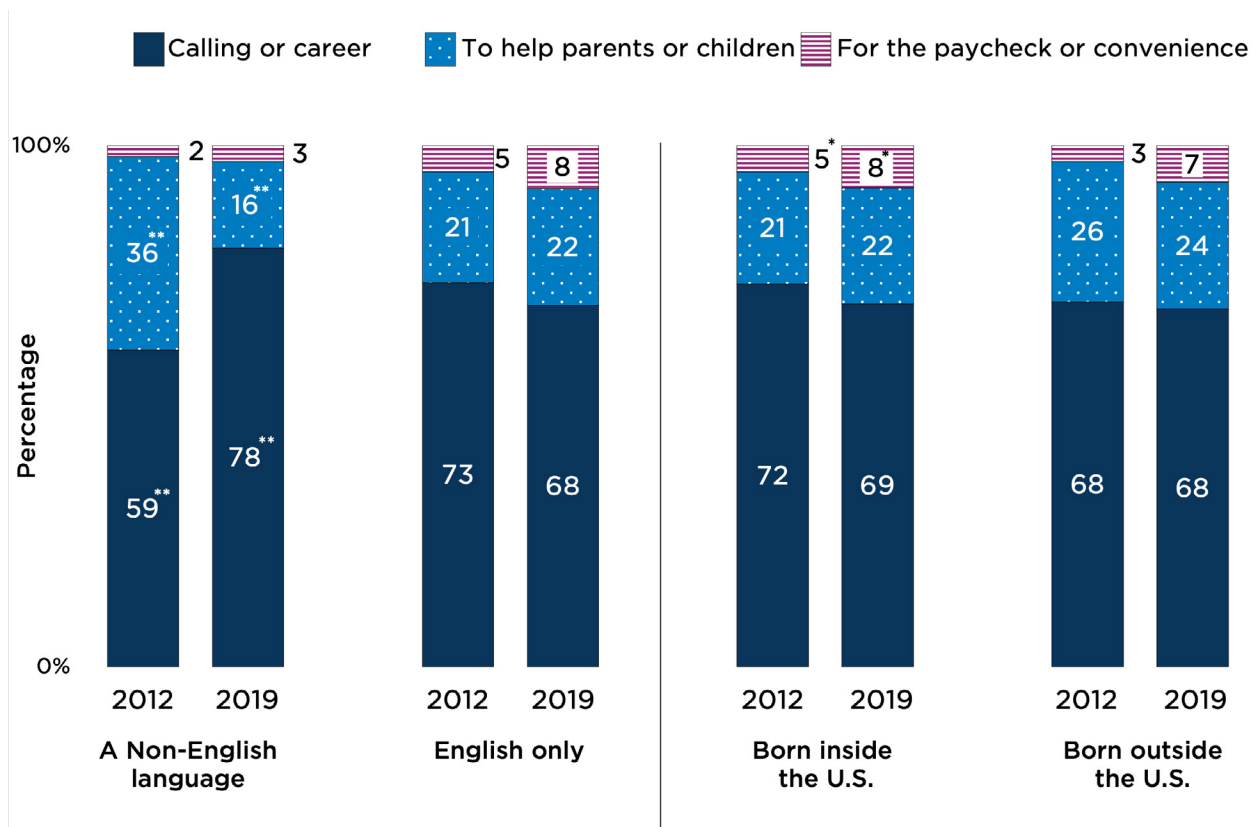
**Figure 6.** Center-based ECE workforce motivation within racial and ethnic group by year



**Source:** Authors’ analysis of 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.  
**Note:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Pairs of asterisks denote significant differences between 2012 and 2019 within demographic group.



**Figure 7.** Center-based ECE workforce motivation within language and nativity status group by year



**Source:** Authors’ analysis of 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education Workforce Survey.  
**Note.** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Pairs of asterisks denote significant differences between 2012 and 2019 within each language and nativity status group.

## Conclusion

The overall demographic composition of the center-based workforce—meaning the proportion of individuals in each racial and ethnic, language, and nativity status group—did not shift between 2012 and 2019.

We observed declines in the percentages of center-based teachers with a bachelor’s degree related to CCEE among those who were non-Hispanic White, among those who spoke only English, and among those who were U.S.-born. Motivations for the workforce who spoke a language other than English seemed to shift away from “helping children and parents” (a decline of 20 percentage points) to more career-driven reasons (an increase of 19 points). Overall, there were many declines in participation in professional development from 2012 to 2019, particularly among non-Hispanic White, Hispanic, English-only speaking, and U.S.-born teachers. There was, however, an increase in the percentage of center-based teachers born outside the U.S. who reported working with a coach (12 points).

Findings did not signal new or growing gaps in educational or professional development (PD) opportunities by demographic group. Future research could examine the intersection of demographics by CCEE setting sponsor and funding with the role of availability of and barriers to education and PD, including relationship-based PD, to continue to support the advancement of the diverse workforce. Findings from this snapshot provide a foundation for understanding trends in the composition of the workforce, their educational attainment, and professional development over time. Findings highlight areas for continued growth of equitable opportunities and can act as baselines for setting targets to improve workforce qualifications equitably.

## Suggested Citation

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