

NEW MEXICO EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE SURVEY REPORT

AN EXPANDED ANALYSIS OF INCOME LEVELS IN NEW MEXICO

JUNE 2020



Latino  Decisions



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Survey Methodology and Demographics of Participants

The Early Childhood Workforce Survey aims to capture the views of early childhood professionals from across the state of New Mexico. This web-based survey has 1,290 completed interviews and was administered through the web in formats that would allow participation across tablets, smart-phones, and computers. Although most participants took the survey in English, it was also available in Spanish for those who preferred to take the survey in that language. Recruitment of participants for this survey came from a large database of educators and other professionals within the state. This database includes contact information provided to our team by the state and by other organizations and partners. We also allowed respondents to provide contact information for other professionals within their professional network, which allowed the survey to expand while in the field.

Individuals in the database were sent a specific web link in an emailed invitation to participate in the survey, which allowed the research team to track participation and to follow up with potential respondents who had not completed the survey. Furthermore, the invitation included a brief memo from Mariana Padilla, director of the New Mexico Children's Cabinet, inviting members of the state's workforce to participate in the study and stressing the value of their input in the state's strategic planning process. Individuals who completed the survey received a \$10 incentive.

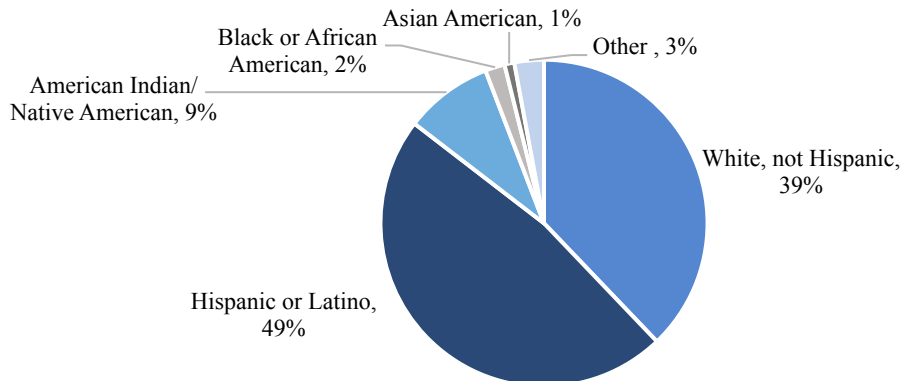
With the large sample size we achieved for the survey, we can explore meaningful differences in the survey across key demographic factors. Among the group of early childhood professionals who completed our survey, we found that the majority of participants were teachers who comprised roughly one-third of the overall sample of early childhood professionals¹. Teaching assistants or teaching aids were also highly represented in the sample (22%). The sample also has a large number of administrators, with nearly 200 completed surveys from directors or managers and 33 completed interviews from principals.

The survey collected demographic information from all respondents to compare responses based on these factors. In regard to race and ethnicity, the majority of early childhood professionals across the state are either Non-Hispanic White (39%), or Hispanic/Latino (49%). We were successful in ensuring that we had a large enough sample of Native American/American Indian members of the early childhood workforce (we had 118 completed surveys of NA professionals) to allow for comparisons between members of the workforce and those from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Consistent with other studies surveying the education workforce in New Mexico, the data is heavily skewed toward female respondents. Our sample had 94% female respondents compared to only 6% of men, which is consistent with past studies of the education workforce in New Mexico. For example, a study conducted in 2010 on the education workforce in New Mexico found that 97% of this workforce was female.²

¹ Given that many early childhood professionals have complex and often overlapping roles in their organizations, the survey was designed to allow respondents to answer questions from the perspective of more than one

² https://www.newmexicokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/CYFD_Child_Care_Workforce_in_NM.pdf

Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents



New Mexico is a large state with a mixture of large urban school districts and many smaller rural districts. It was therefore important to be able to capture this diversity in the survey's sample by having variation in regional participation to the survey across the state. While 43% of the full sample reported that they work primarily in the Albuquerque metro area, 10% work in counties in the northwest quadrant of the state, 13% in the northeast quadrant, 23% in the southwest, and 11% in the southeast quadrant. We included in our cross-tabulation analysis rural and urban variables to allow the team to make comparisons on this important dimension in New Mexico.

This brief builds on a full report created by the Native American Budget and Policy Institute and New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP). The full report included interpretation of the main findings of the workforce survey and can be found at the following link: <https://nabpi.unm.edu/assets/nabpi-early-childhood-needs-assessment-report---final-full-format.pdf>

The primary goal of this follow up brief is to expand the discussion of income/salary across the workforce at a time when potential salary increases for the state's education workforce is being considered by state leadership. It is also important to note that our research team is planning to conduct a second survey of the state's workforce in the early summer of 2020 to acquire information from early childhood professionals on what resources they need to be more successful in their important roles in the state's developing early childhood infrastructure. The survey will include some content specific to the impact that the Coronavirus and the movement of education to on-line platforms will have on education outcomes in both the short and long run.

The Socio-Political Context Influencing Early Childhood Workforce Compensation

New Mexico has recently invested significantly in care and education for its youngest children. For more than a decade, the state has provided high-quality PreK services across public schools and community-based settings. The state has also ramped up quality requirements and funding for child care, alongside increased appropriations for home visiting and other services that

support young children and their families. During the 2020 Legislative session the New Mexico Senate confirmed the first-ever state secretary of the Early Childhood Education and Care Department. This department was tasked with aligning services for young children that were previously spread across departments and divisions (AP 2020). In addition, the New Mexico Legislature has approved a bill to develop an Early Childhood Trust Fund that would generate millions of dollars for prekindergarten and other early childhood programs (Gould 2020). New Mexico is also in the midst of a needs assessment and strategic planning process for early childhood education, funded by a \$5.4 million federal Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five. This process seeks to establish a plan for early childhood expansion in New Mexico, under the direction of the new department and with the benefit of increased investment.

As the state looks toward how to expand provide care and education services to all families who need them, it is clear that this major expansion of early childhood services will require an expanded workforce that is trained, qualified, and supported to provide the services that families need. As the full report published in partnership with NMECDP made clear, an expansion of a high-quality workforce is inextricably linked to compensation of the early childhood workforce. This is not a challenge specific to New Mexico, as more than 30 years of national research has shown that compensation levels are consistently inadequate given the demanding and vital nature of early childhood education and care (Whitebook, Howes & Phillips 1990; Whitebook, Phillips & Howes, 2014). New Mexico does not systematically track the wages or working conditions of its early childhood educators, and so has relied on national estimates, surveys like this one, or anecdotes for early childhood workforce data.

While only based on a sample of the larger workforce across New Mexico, the survey provides the best data at this time, and is a valuable resource at a critical juncture in the state's efforts to provide salary increases to education professionals. New Mexico's Governor signed a massive 7-billion-dollar budget into law, with nearly half of the total budget going to public education. This equates to nearly \$450 million in new funding, including a 6 percent raise for teachers and school employees while increasing the minimum pay for teachers. It also includes additional funding for extended learning time and prekindergarten. While not as robust an increase in public education as some in the legislature would have liked to see, this is a significant investment in the state's educational system.

However, this significant influx of new funding is in major jeopardy as a result of the financial implications associated with the Coronavirus. Largely due to a significant drop in the cost and production of oil and gas across the state, we anticipate a major revision to the state's budget during a special session of the legislature the Governor is convening in June. Given the anticipation of budget reductions ahead, it is our hope that this report will be useful to the state in their effort to prioritize a growing list of needs across the state with fewer resources than were projected just a few short weeks ago.

Income Levels Across the Workforce – Income Levels Have Remained Flat Over Time

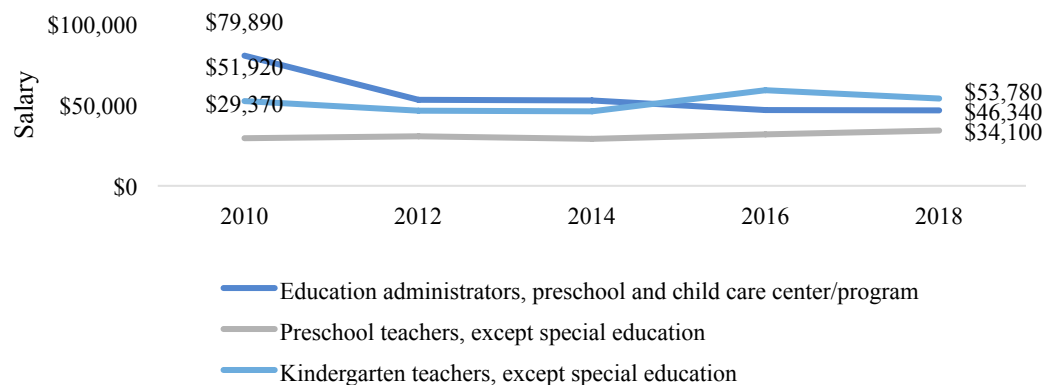
Drawing on the workforce survey, the discussion that follows sheds light on the current salaries, working conditions, and access to benefits among the early childhood workforce of New Mexico. This report focuses largely on the variation in salary within the early childhood workforce, including a series of figures that have been created to compare salary levels by the

role survey participants had in the early childhood workforce, their education level, the length of time in practice, and more.

Discussions of salary and overall compensation levels for any sector of the labor market often look to determine whether salary levels have increased over time to keep up with inflation, or the growing cost of living in a particular state or jurisdiction. We therefore begin our discussion with an assessment of whether income levels have moved over the past decade based on relevant estimates from surveys like ours conducted from 2010 to 2018.

Salaries in the early childhood workforce have decreased or stayed constant over time (see Figure 2). According to the Occupational Employment Statistics produced by the U.S. Department of Labor³, salaries have decreased by 17% between 2010 and 2018. This drop is attributed to the decrease in salary among education administrators of preschool and childcare centers/programs who have seen a 42% decrease in their salary. Salaries for preschool and kindergarten teachers have increased over time but marginally. Preschool teachers have seen a 16% increase in their salary between 2010-2018 whereas kindergarten teachers have seen a 4% increase in salary.

Figure 2. Salary for New Mexican Childcare Workers over Time



Source: 2010-2018 Occupational Employment Statistics sourced from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

This is especially concerning when inflation is taken into account. Between 2010-2018, inflation increased by 15.2%⁴. This means that salaries for education administrators or preschools and childcare centers/programs and kindergarten teachers failed to increase with inflation. Preschool teachers' salaries were the only ones to remain on par with inflation. These data demonstrate the need to address the salaries of New Mexico's early childhood workforce.

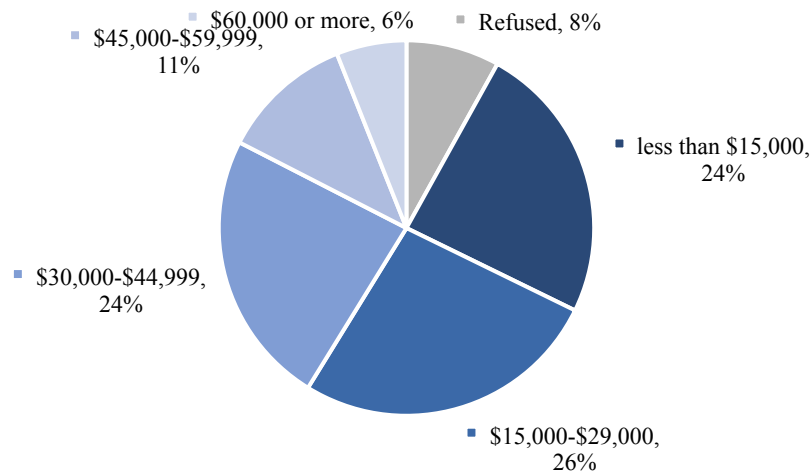
³ The Occupational Employment Statistics produced by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics defines early childhood workforce as the following positions: Education administrators, preschool and child care center/program, Preschool teachers (except special education), and Kindergarten teachers (except special education)

⁴ Inflation rate found using the Inflation calculator generated from the U.S. Department Bureau of Labor Statistic's Consumer Price Index: <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>

Salaries in the New Mexican Early Childhood Workforce

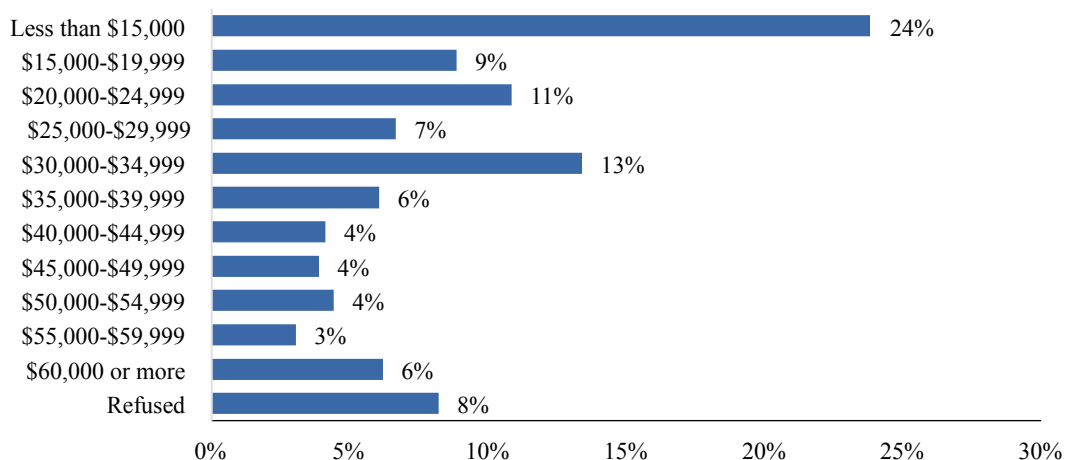
This brief explores the state and variation of salaries in the early childhood workforce across New Mexico. The Early Childhood Workforce Survey asked respondents to provide their individual salary, and for administrative personnel to provide the average salaries of their employees by their role. Earnings are not evenly distributed across the early childhood workforce (see Figure 3). Half of the workforce makes less than \$30,000 a year. Almost another quarter of the early childhood workforce earns between \$30,000-\$44,999. In the top two brackets, a slim number of respondents make between \$45,000-\$59,999 and even fewer make over \$60,000.

Figure 3. Annual Earnings of the Early Childhood Workforce



When we look at these data in \$5,000 increments between \$15,000 and \$60,000, we find that almost a quarter of the early childhood workforce makes less than \$15,000 a year (see Figure 4). This is especially concerning given that the minimum wage in New Mexico is \$9.00 per hour which equates to an annual salary of about \$18,600 (NM DWS 2020).

Figure 4. Annual Earnings of the Early Childhood Workforce

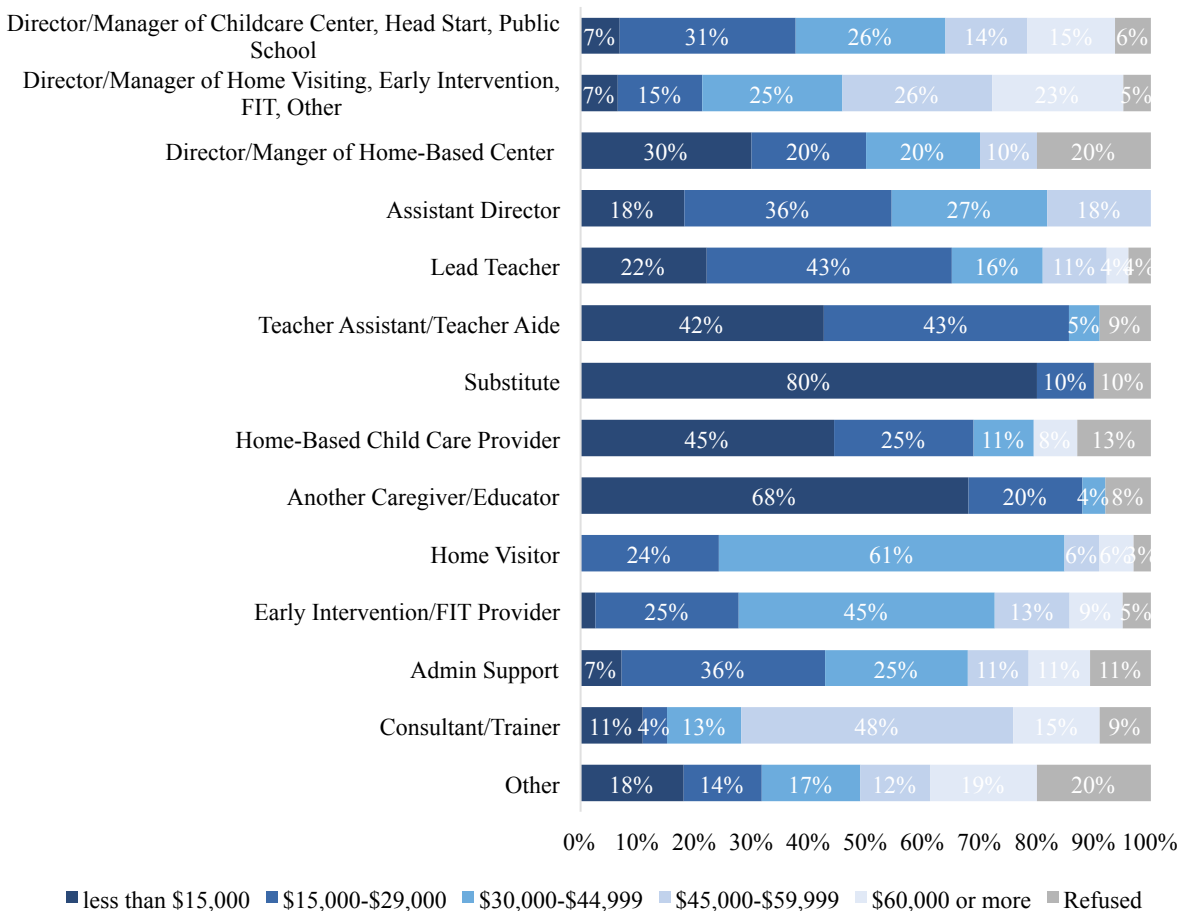


Salary by Role Within the Early Childhood Workforce

When we look at these data by the role respondents have in the early childhood workforce, it is clear there is significant variation by roles within the sector (see Figure 5). The lowest-paid occupations in early childhood are Substitutes, 80% of whom make less than \$15,000. The substitute teaching ranks are important in New Mexico, particularly in the largest school district in the state, as Albuquerque Public Schools requires nearly 700 substitutes each school day. However, this district has suffered from shortages in this area of late, with the low wages reflected here being one of the obstacles with recruitment. There is also low pay for respondents who self-identified as “another caregiver/educator,” 68% of whom make less than \$15,000.

Almost half of Home-Based Child Care Providers (45%) and Teacher Assistant/Teacher Aides (42%) make less than \$15,000 a year. Lead teachers seem to fare better than their teaching counterparts, 22% make less than \$15,000 and 43% make between \$15,000-\$29,000.

Figure 5. Salary by Role in Early Childhood Workforce



Directors make some of the highest salaries in the early childhood workforce, but there is variation in pay based on the type of center or program they direct. The highest paid directors and managers work in home visiting, early intervention, FIT and other early childhood care

settings. Almost half of directors and managers (49%) in home visiting, early intervention, FIT and other early childhood care settings make over \$45,000. Almost a third of directors and managers of Childcare Centers, Head Start and Public Schools (29%) make over \$45,000. The narrative is significantly different for directors and managers of home-based centers. Only 10% of directors and managers of home-based centers make between \$45,000-\$59,000 and none make over \$60,000. In fact, a higher percentage of assistant directors (18%) make between \$45,000-\$59,000 than directors and managers of home-based centers. This variation in salary highlights the impact of the type of program or school individuals work in and its impact on their potential earnings.

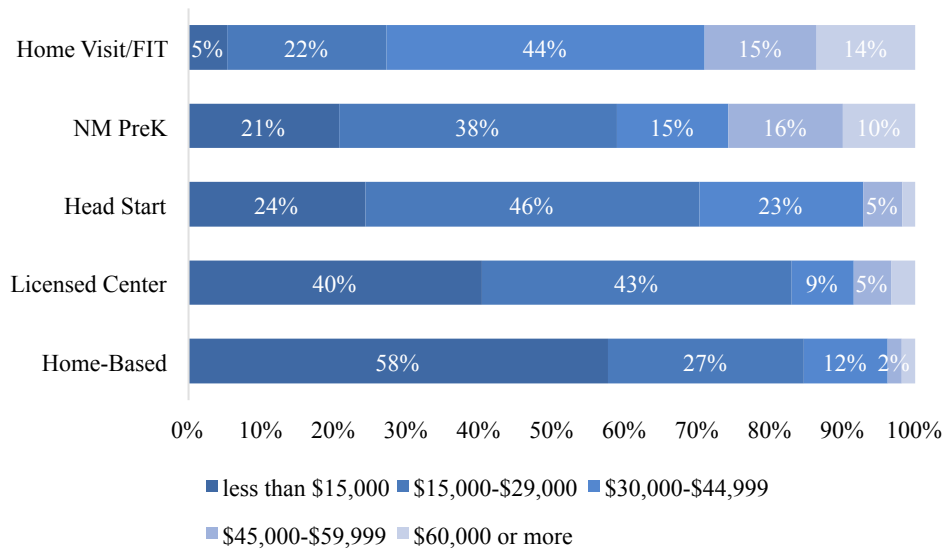
Salary by Type of Practice

Respondents were asked to identify the type of program or school they work in. The caregivers with the lowest incomes tended to work in home-based settings, including both registered and licensed homes. We find that over half (58%) of respondents who work in registered or licensed home programs make less than \$15,000. Only 4% of employees in home-based programs make over \$45,000 (see Figure 6).

Employees in licensed centers (for-profit, nonprofit or faith-based) share a similar distribution to employees in home-based programs but earn slightly more. The majority of employees make under \$30,000 (40% make less than \$15,000 and 43% make between \$15,000-\$30,000). The percentage of employees who make over \$45,000 is 8%.

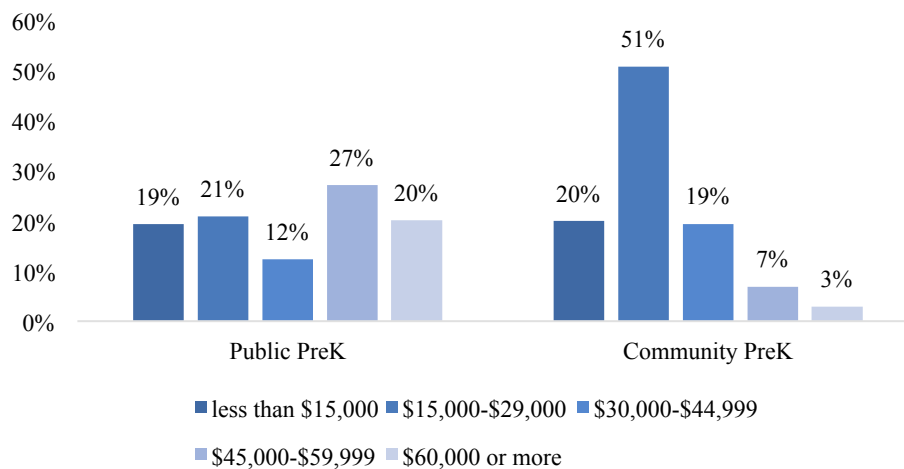
| In New Mexico Pre-Kindergarten programs, both community-based and public school-based, over half of employees make less than \$30,000. On the other end of the spectrum a little over a fourth (26%) of the workforce in the Pre-Kindergarten programs make over \$45,000. There is a more even distribution of salaries in Home Visiting and Early Intervention (FIT) workplaces; Almost one-third of respondents receive salaries over \$45,000 and about one third make less than \$30,000.

Figure 6. Salary by Program/Center



There is significant variation between public and community pre-kindergarten programs (see Figure 7). The highest salaries are found in public pre-kindergarten programs, almost half of employees (47%) make over \$45,000. In community pre-kindergarten programs, almost three-fourths of employees make below \$30,000.

Figure 7. Salary by type of Pre-Kindergarten Program



Salary by Educational Attainment

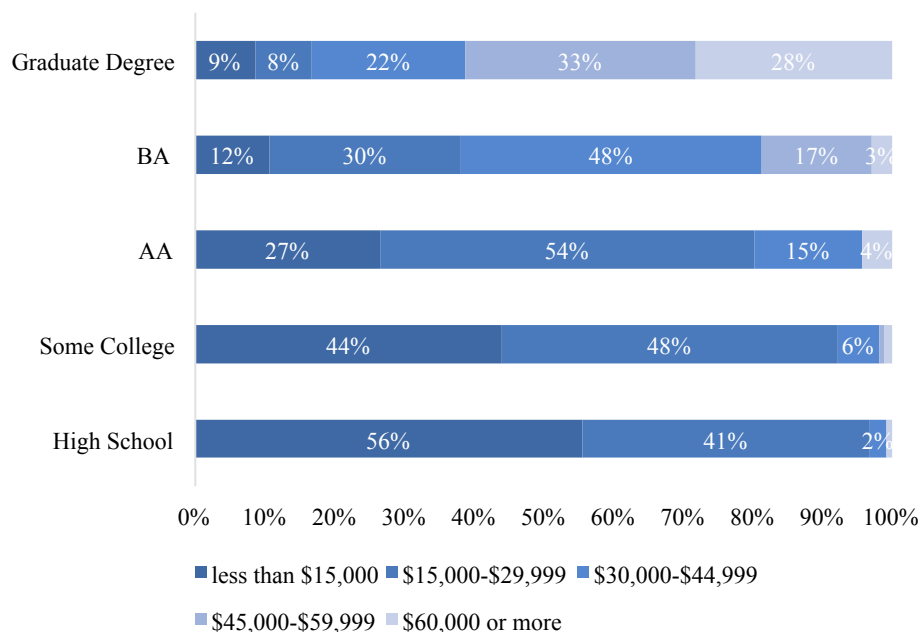
Educational attainment is positively correlated with a higher salary, meaning individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to have a higher salary. Respondents were asked to

identify their highest level of education. We find the vast majority of respondents who have a high school degree (97%) or have completed some college (92%) make less than \$30,000 a year (see Figure 8). Furthermore, more than half of respondents with High School degrees (56%) make less than \$15,000.

There is a substantial difference between the type of college degree respondents have and its correlation to salary. The majority of respondents with an associate degree (81%) make less than \$30,000 and 15% make between \$30,000-\$44,999. Only 4% of respondents with an associate degree make over \$60,000. Salaries are generally higher for individuals with a bachelor's degree, as 42% of respondents with a bachelor's degree make less than \$30,000. It is important to highlight these lower salaries to challenge the rhetoric that low salaries plague the early childhood workforce because of low education attainment across the workforce. As a point of reference, in New Mexico the average salary for a worker with a bachelor's degree is \$43,200. According to the survey however, only 20% of respondents with a bachelor's degree make over \$45,000.

The strongest salary distribution is among respondents who have a graduate degree. More than half of respondents (61%) who have graduate degrees make over \$45,000. The percentage of individuals who make less than \$30,000 drops to 17%, and 22% earn between \$30,000-\$44,999.

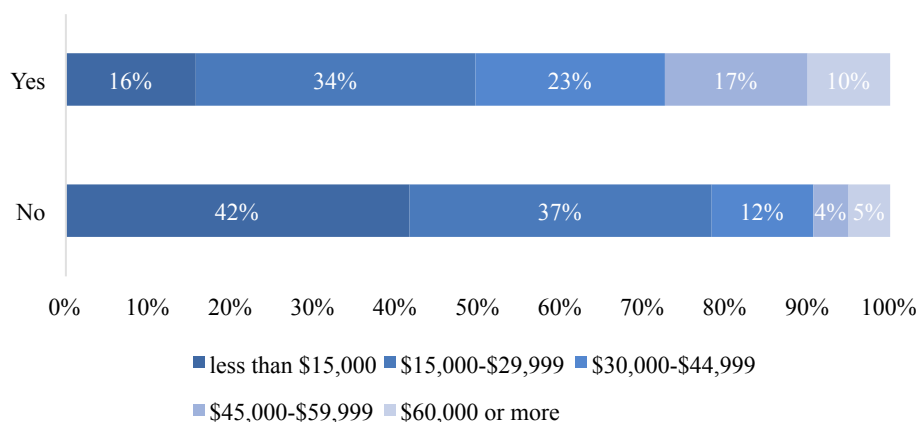
Figure 8. Salary by Educational Attainment



In addition to educational attainment, we asked respondents if they have a college degree or concentration in early childhood or a related field (see Figure 9). Over half of respondents have a concentration in early childhood or a related field (53%). The implications for salary are reflected in the figure below. Respondents who have a college degree or concentration in early

childhood or related field are more likely to have a higher income than individuals without a college degree or concentration in early childhood.

Figure 9. Do you have a college degree or concentration in early childhood or a related field?



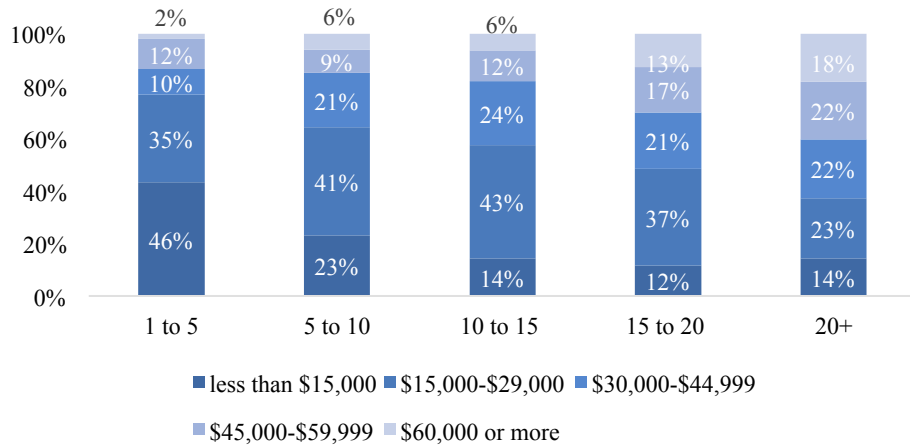
Salary by Years in Early Childhood Workforce

We asked respondents how many years they have worked in early childhood. Almost half of the workforce (40%) has been employed between 1 and 5 years. This not only has implications for retention in the early childhood workforce but also is reflected in lower wages. For individuals who have 1 to 5 years of experience in the early childhood workforce, the majority have salaries below \$30,000 (81%). Several other national studies highlight the role that wages and benefits have on retention of the early childhood workforce⁵.

Individuals who have worked in early childhood for longer have higher incomes. The biggest jump occurs after individuals have spent over 15 years in early childhood. For individuals who have between 15 and 20 years of experience in early childhood, 13% make over \$60,000. For individuals with over 20 years of experience in early childhood, 18% make more than \$60,000.

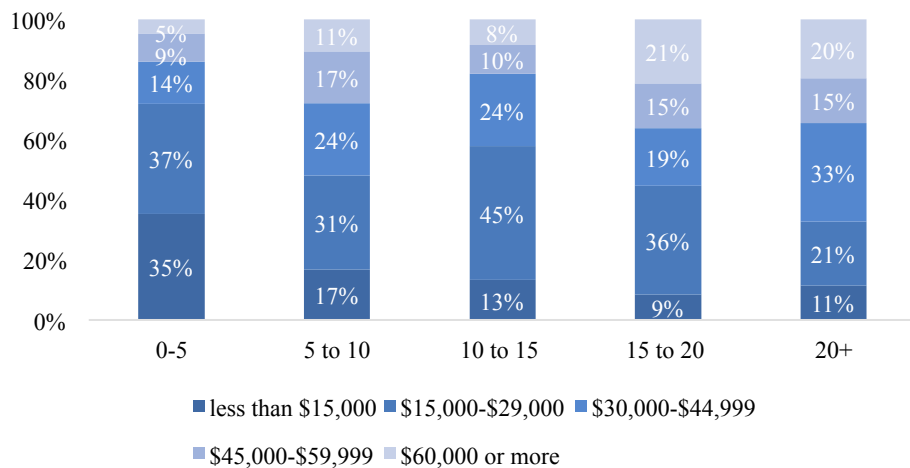
⁵ Totenhagen et al. 2015. "Retaining Early Childhood Education Workers: A Review of the Empirical Literature" *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 30(4): 585-599

Figure 10. Salary by Years in Early Childhood Workforce



Beyond experience in early childhood, respondents were asked how many years they have been in their current program, center or school. A similar trend appears between years in their current program and their salary (see Figure 11). The longer individuals stay in their program, the higher the chance is that they will make a higher salary.

Figure 11. Salary by Years in Program

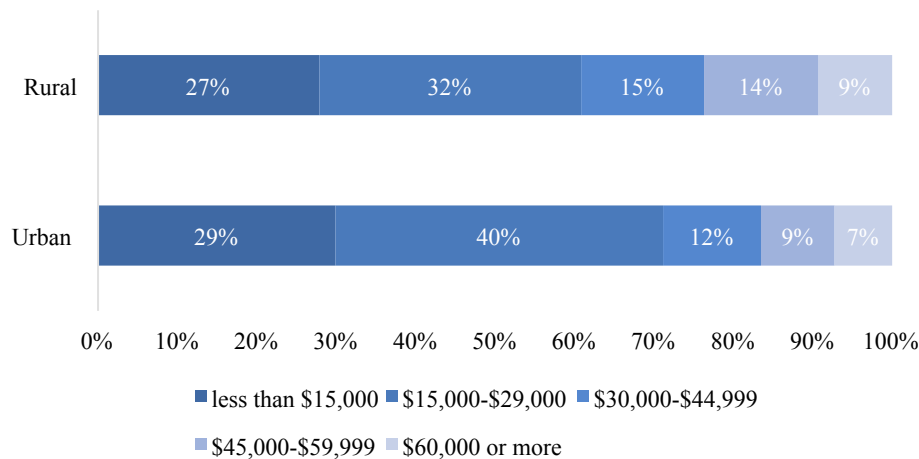


Salary by Region

There is variance in salary by region as well. Salaries were generally higher in rural settings than in urban settings. Urban settings include the following counties: Bernalillo, Dona Ana, Sandoval,

San Juan, Santa Fe, Torrance, and Valencia according to the Office of Management and Budget⁶. All other counties are considered rural for the purposes of these analyses.

Figure 12. Salary by Urban and Rural



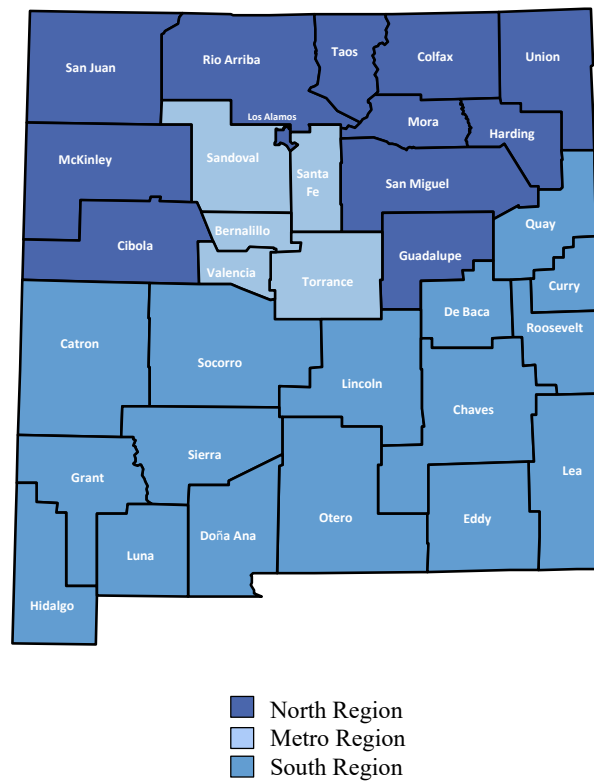
Over half of the early childhood workforce (59%) in rural areas make less than \$30,000 a year. In urban areas, 69% of the early childhood workforce makes less than \$30,000 a year. There is little difference between urban and rural settings when we look at the higher incomes. About the same amount of the early childhood workforce make between \$30,000-44,999 in urban (12%) and rural (15%) areas. In the higher end of the salary spectrum, individuals in rural areas are more likely to have higher salaries than in urban areas.

We disaggregate the data further by looking at salary in the metro regions, southern regions, and northern regions on New Mexico. Regions were modeled after the New Mexico Indicator-Based Information System⁷, see Figure 13. Due to small sample sizes, these analyses were limited to Metro, South, and North. In this study, 36% of respondents were located in metro areas of New Mexico, 30% were located in Northern New Mexico and 34% were located in Southern New Mexico.

Figure 13. New Mexico Regions Map

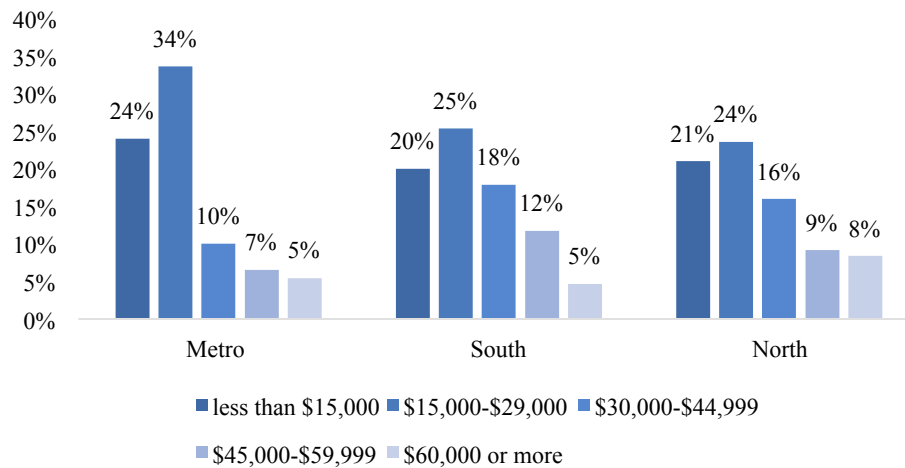
⁶ Urban settings according to the Office of Management and Budget:
https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/DataFiles/53180/25586_NM.pdf?v=39329

⁷ https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/ibisph-view/resource/CHA_Resources.html



The trends found previously in the urban and rural divide are confirmed in this graph as well. The early childhood workforce in metro areas (58%) of the state are more likely to make less than \$30,000 than in Southern (45%) and Northern (45%) regions (see Figure 14). However, it is important to recognize that all salaries, regardless of region, skew to the lower end of the salary spectrum. When we look at the higher end of salaries Southern and Northern regions 17% make more than \$45,000 a year whereas only 12% of the early childhood workforce make over \$45,000 in metro areas.

Figure 14. Salary by Metro, South and North

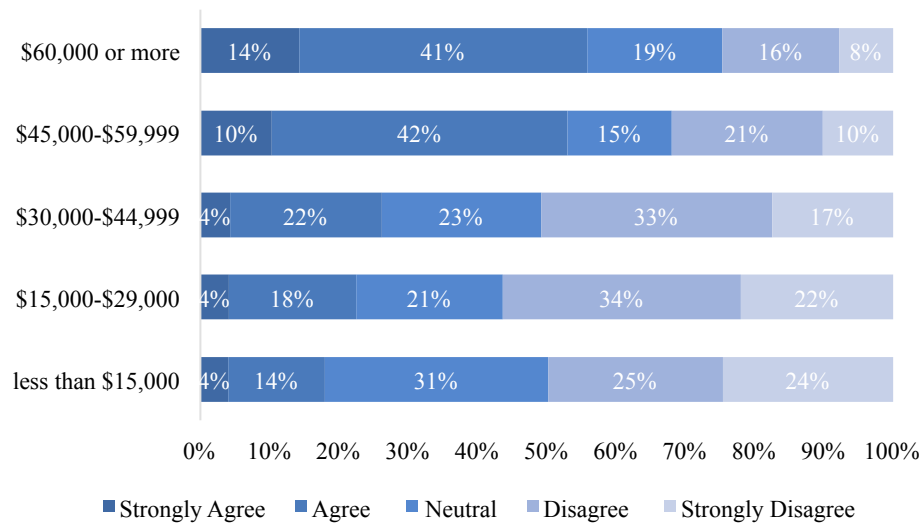


Satisfaction with Salary by Salary Level

Finally, we asked respondents about their satisfaction with their salary. We find that almost a third (28%) of the workforce are satisfied with their salary and a third (28%) of the workforce are neutral in their views toward their salary. A little over a third of the workforce is not satisfied with their salary, 17% strongly disagree and 27% disagree that they are satisfied with their salary.

When we break this down further by current salary, it is clear that individuals in the early childhood workforce who make higher salaries are more likely to be satisfied with their salary than individuals with lower salaries (see Figure 15). Over half of respondents who make over \$45,000 are satisfied with their salary, 55% who make \$60,000 or more and 52% who make between \$45,000-\$59,999. Whereas 26% of individuals who make \$30,00-\$44,999 are satisfied and 22% of individuals who make \$15,000-\$29,999 are satisfied. The lowest satisfaction is felt among the early childhood workforce who make the least, only 18% of the workforce who make less than \$15,000 are satisfied with their salary.

Figure 15. Satisfaction with Salary by Salary Level



Conclusion

New Mexico is committed to the care and education of its youngest children yet salaries within the early childhood workforce show low salaries across the board. Half of the early childhood workforce makes \$30,000 or less a year. This report shows the variation of salaries across early childhood by their role, type of practice, level of educational attainment, years in practice, region, and satisfaction with salary.