

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD

CareerPathway

Kansas Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Comprehensive Workforce Study

Overview of Results

August 2024



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In partnership with **Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation (OEIE)**



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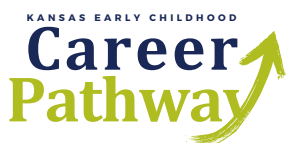


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KEY FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Key Finding #1 Recruitment

ECCE professionals enter the field because they are **passionate** about working with children (overall rated 4.5 on scale of 1 to 5).



Opportunity #1

- Start recruitment in middle and high school through Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.
- Expand apprenticeship programs and mentorship opportunities.
- Recruit Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) ECCE professionals to ensure the workforce reflects the diversity of the children they serve.

Key Finding #2 Compensation & Benefits

Low wages create severe hardships for the ECCE workforce and impacts recruitment and retention.

- 40 – 50% of ECCE professionals have a salary under \$25,000.
- FCC professionals are: older (over 50% are over 40); work longer in the field; 6% have health benefits through work; 5% have 401K



Opportunity #2

Prioritize a locally assessed living wage as an essential component for building and sustaining our ECCE system. Offer retirement preparation, specifically to the unique challenges of FCC professionals.

Key Finding #3 Higher Education and Professional Development

Highest level of education varies across the mixed-delivery system. Nearly 2/3 of FCC professionals have some college experience, 2-year, 4-year, or advanced degrees. Overall, nearly 2/3 show a moderate to extreme interest in advancing their degree. However, focus groups were divided citing lack of return on investment.



Opportunity #3

- Institutions of higher education and professional development entities must tailor courses and education to meet the unique demands of the mixed-delivery system.
- Provide more scholarships to support training, certifications, and advancing their degrees.

Key Finding #4 Supports for ECCE Workforce

ECCE professionals in Kansas provide care and education to young children and families within a complex, mixed-delivery system and need supports across agencies/departments.



Opportunity #4

Intentionally build a more cohesive and collaborative cross-sector system of supports for professional preparation and advancement of the ECCE workforce.



Kansas Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Comprehensive Workforce Study

INTRODUCTION

Kansas is home to over 175,000 children birth to age 4 and 275,000 ages 5 to 11. According to the 2023 Kansas Kids Count Databook, Kansas children today have more diverse backgrounds than previous generations¹ Most of their parents are employed; 70% of children under 6 in the state are living in households where all parents in the family are in the labor force². Kansas parents choose from a variety of settings—referred to as a mixed-delivery system—for the education and care of their children before the age of public-school entry. In the mixed-delivery system, ECCE professionals educate and care for Kansas children in homes, centers, preschools, and public schools every day. These professionals are central in the children’s and families’ lives, yet we know little about the Kansas workforce. This project was initiated to provide a better understanding of these crucial adults.

Since 1986, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc. (KCCTO) has been offering training and technical assistance to early childhood care and education (ECCE) professionals in Kansas. We believe that every child deserves exceptional care and that every ECCE professional in our state should have the resources to make that possible. Our mission is *to ensure high-quality early education and care through professional development and support for those who work with and on behalf of young children.*

Funding from the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) allowed KCCTO to address goal six of the 2020 All in for Kansas Kids strategic plan and the following three strategies: Strategy 6.1: Expand the number of professionals entering and remaining in the workforce. Strategy 6.2: Implement a high-quality, competency-based professional development system. Strategy 6.3: Support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the ECCE workforce.

As part of the implementation of the Kansas Career Pathway for Early Childhood Care and Education workforce, KCCTO undertook the Kansas Early Childhood Care and Education Comprehensive Workforce Survey to establish a baseline understanding of Kansas’s ECCE workforce. We were particularly interested in learning from both the professionals who make up the current workforce and those who left the field. To that end, data were collected from both current and former professionals in the Kansas ECCE workforce. The 2024 Kansas ECCE Comprehensive Workforce Study represents the voices of nearly 6,000 early childhood care and education professionals from all 105 counties in Kansas. Members of the ECCE workforce shared their lived experiences by completing an online survey and participating in focus groups. A series of in-depth reports will be forthcoming.

Understanding why professionals leave the field is crucial for recruitment and retention. Therefore, efforts were made to survey professionals who left the field. Later summaries will focus on the 800+ professionals who have left ECCE and the implications for the current workforce.

METHODOLOGY

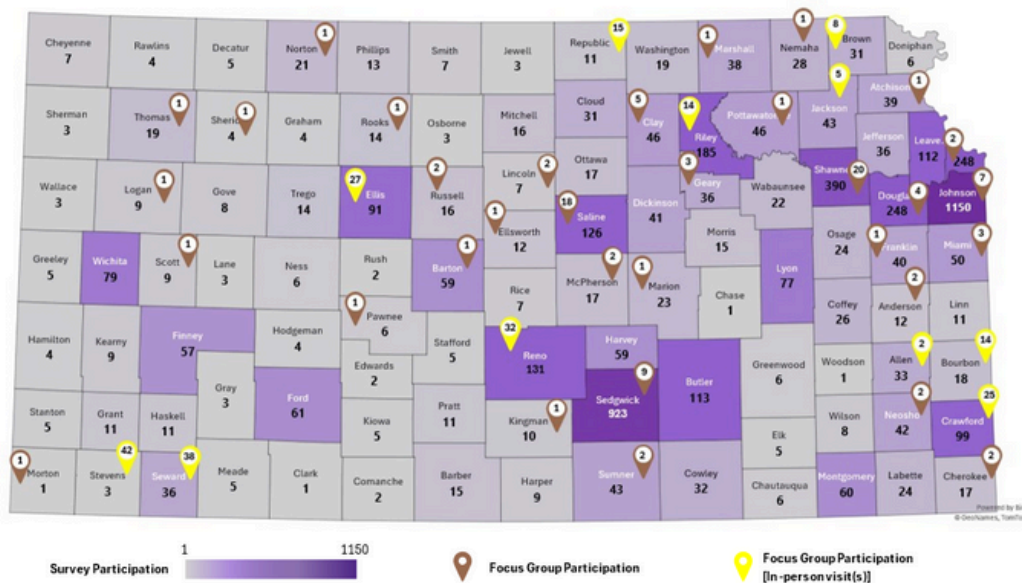
KCCTO partnered with the Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation (OEIE) at Kansas State University to conduct this study.³ Through the survey and focus groups, ECCE professionals were asked a variety of questions about their ECCE setting and role; compensation and benefits; educational attainment; length of service in the ECCE field; views of community and state support; factors that caused them to join and/or leave the field; and professional development.

For the first part of the study, KCCTO conducted an online survey and distributed it through email in both English and Spanish; no participants requested a paper copy. Using contact lists prepared by KCCTO and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), the OEIE study team recruited participants through emails, social media posts, word-of-mouth, and cold-calling private center-based settings directors to ask their staff to take the survey. KCCTO provided a \$100 incentive for completing the survey in its entirety. **This first report is primarily focused on the ECCE professionals currently working in direct service with young children in Kansas.** Later reports will summarize information from those who have left the field and subgroups from those currently in the ECCE field.

In addition to survey data, OEIE facilitated 39 focus groups (20 in person and 19 by Zoom). OEIE curated the topics and questions of the focus group sessions to add nuanced information to the survey data—addressing work environment, professional development, recruitment and retention, and professionalization of the ECCE workforce. Recruitment of focus group participants was designed to maximize the reach of the study by soliciting information from groups underrepresented in initial survey. While some quotes from participants in the focus groups are included here, additional findings from the focus groups will be addressed in later reports.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of survey and focus group participants across Kansas. This map includes all respondents to the survey and all focus group participants, not only the respondents included in this report. ⁴

Figure 1. Kansas ECCE Workforce Study Participation by County



PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This first report of the Kansas ECCE Workforce Study introduces the early childhood professionals currently working as an ECCE professional in Kansas (4696). Specifically, this analysis of the data is designed to:

- describe the Kansas ECCE mixed-delivery system and the settings where workforce professionals provide care and education to young children,
- describe the demographic similarities and differences of the professionals practicing across the Kansas ECCE mixed-delivery system,
- describe the compensation paid to ECCE professionals across the mixed-delivery system, and
- explore factors contributing to the recruitment and retention of ECCE professionals.

MIXED DELIVERY SYSTEM

Because there is no single setting designated as the only environment where early childhood care and education takes place, members of the Kansas ECCE workforce reported the various settings where their work occurs. To guide the process for identifying these settings, participants reviewed a list of options and were asked to identify all the settings where they work. Derived from the survey response options or participants' open-ended responses to the option "another setting not listed here (Please describe)", five categories of settings were created to capture the mixed-delivery system: (1) Early Intervention (EI) (n=260); (2) Family Child Care (n=1364); (3) Private center-based settings (n=2545), which include private centers, private preschool, and drop-in care; (4) Other ECCE settings where direct service occurs (n=488); and (5) Other ECCE Professionals in settings where no direct interaction with children or families occurs (n=39). Table 1 provides an overview of the categories and the possible response options in each category.

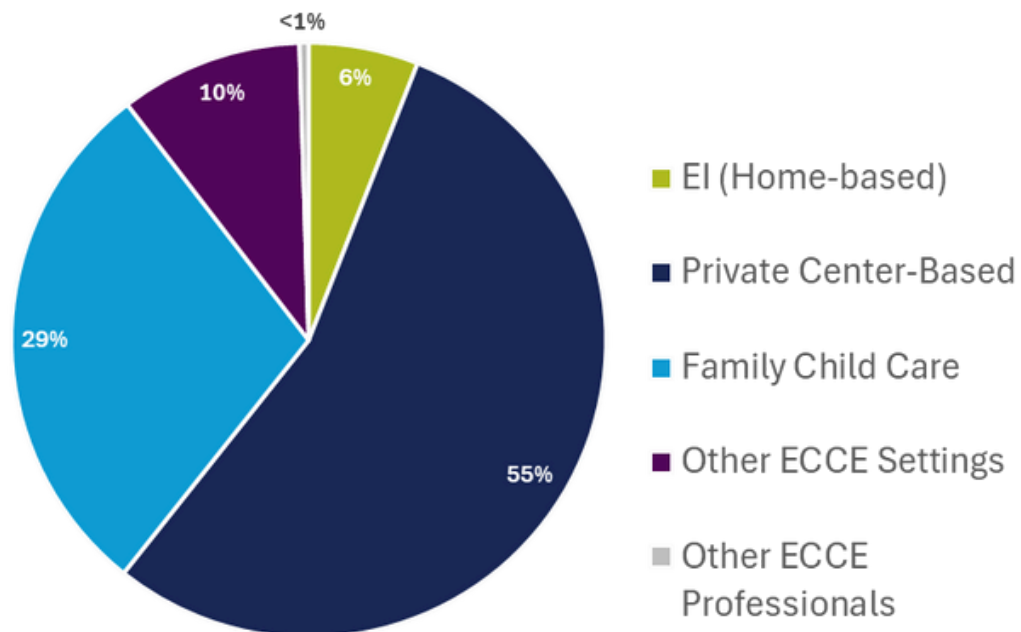
Table 1: Kansas Mixed Delivery System Workforce (N=4696)

Categories used for this report	Participants' potential responses*			
Early Intervention (Home-based and community settings) n=260 (5.5%)	An Early Intervention program for children birth to 3 in or various ECCE settings	Home Visiting program (i.e., PAT)		
Family Child Care n=1364 (29%)	A family child care setting			
Private center-based settings n=2545 (54.2%)	Child care center (the facility services children across multiple ages)	A private preschool program	A drop-in program	Summer camps
Other ECCE settings n=488 (10.4%)	A public or school-based preschool setting	EC Program for school-age children	A Head Start or Early Head Start program	Another school district-related setting not listed here
Other ECCE professionals (No direct services/interaction with children or families) n=39 (0.8%)	Child Care Resource & Referral	Surveyor/licensing	Trainer	Institution of Higher Education

*Note: Potential responses include survey response options and participant open-ended responses to survey response option "Another setting not listed here"

Given that study participants were instructed to select all settings that apply to them, we utilized a nested approach using the order provided above to assign participants to these categories so that each participant was placed in only one category. Participants who selected EI were placed in that category even if they selected other settings. Family child care professionals were placed in that category even if they also indicated they worked at a drop-in program, for example. The distribution of the sample across these categories shows that the majority of the current ECCE workforce in Kansas is working in settings with direct interaction with children and families and most are either in family child care or private center-based settings. The individuals in the “Other ECCE Professionals” category are a unique subsample (e.g., trainers, higher education faculty, licensing specialists); they are part of the ECCE workforce in Kansas but do not have day-to-day contact with children and families. We include the “Other ECCE Professionals” in this report with the goal of describing the overall ECCE workforce in Kansas. In future reports where we may provide more detailed statistical analyses comparing ECCE settings, we will exclude this small sub-sample. Figure 2 depicts the percentages of respondents in each of the groupings per setting.

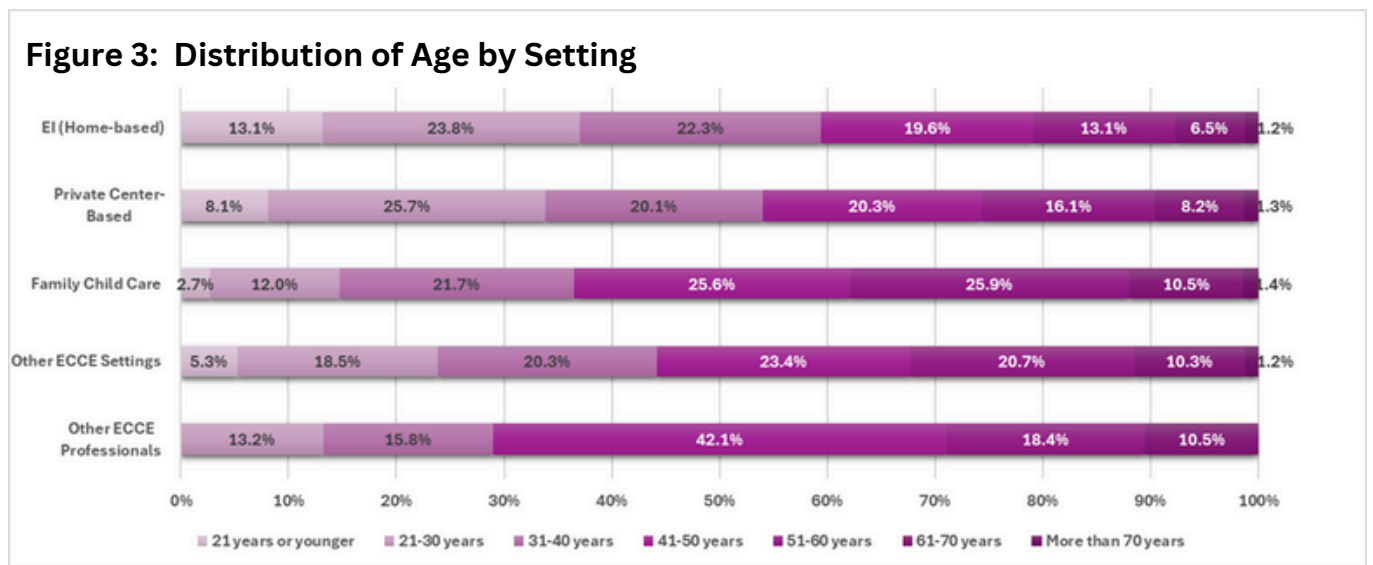
Figure 2: Percentage of Respondents in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings



DEMOGRAPHICS

The data presented for this report represent surveys from 4,696 current members of the Kansas ECCE workforce. Most professionals in the current workforce are female (96%), White (87.4%), and non-Hispanic (87.5%). Ten percent (n=488) of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latina/o.

Among Early Intervention (EI) and professionals working in private center-based settings, over half are between 21 and 40 years of age. Family child care professionals and other ECCE setting professionals are older; over half of them are over the age of 40 (see Figure 3).



HIGHER EDUCATION

Highest level of education varied across the mixed-delivery system (see figure 4). Nearly 1/3 of family child care professionals have a high school diploma or GED and 1/3 have some college experience, indicating slightly lower levels of formal education than other settings. Early intervention and other ECCE settings each have over 15% of professionals with advanced degrees, perhaps indicating higher educational requirements in those settings. Private center-based settings professionals had educational levels similar to early intervention professionals with the exception of advanced degrees. Figure 5 depicts the overall educational attainment of participants by categories.

Nine percent of participants reported achieving a Child Development Associate (CDA) certification, 13% reported having an Early Childhood Certificate (e.g., EC certificate program from a community college), and 8% of participants reported holding a Kansas teaching license.

Figure 4: Highest Education Level by Setting

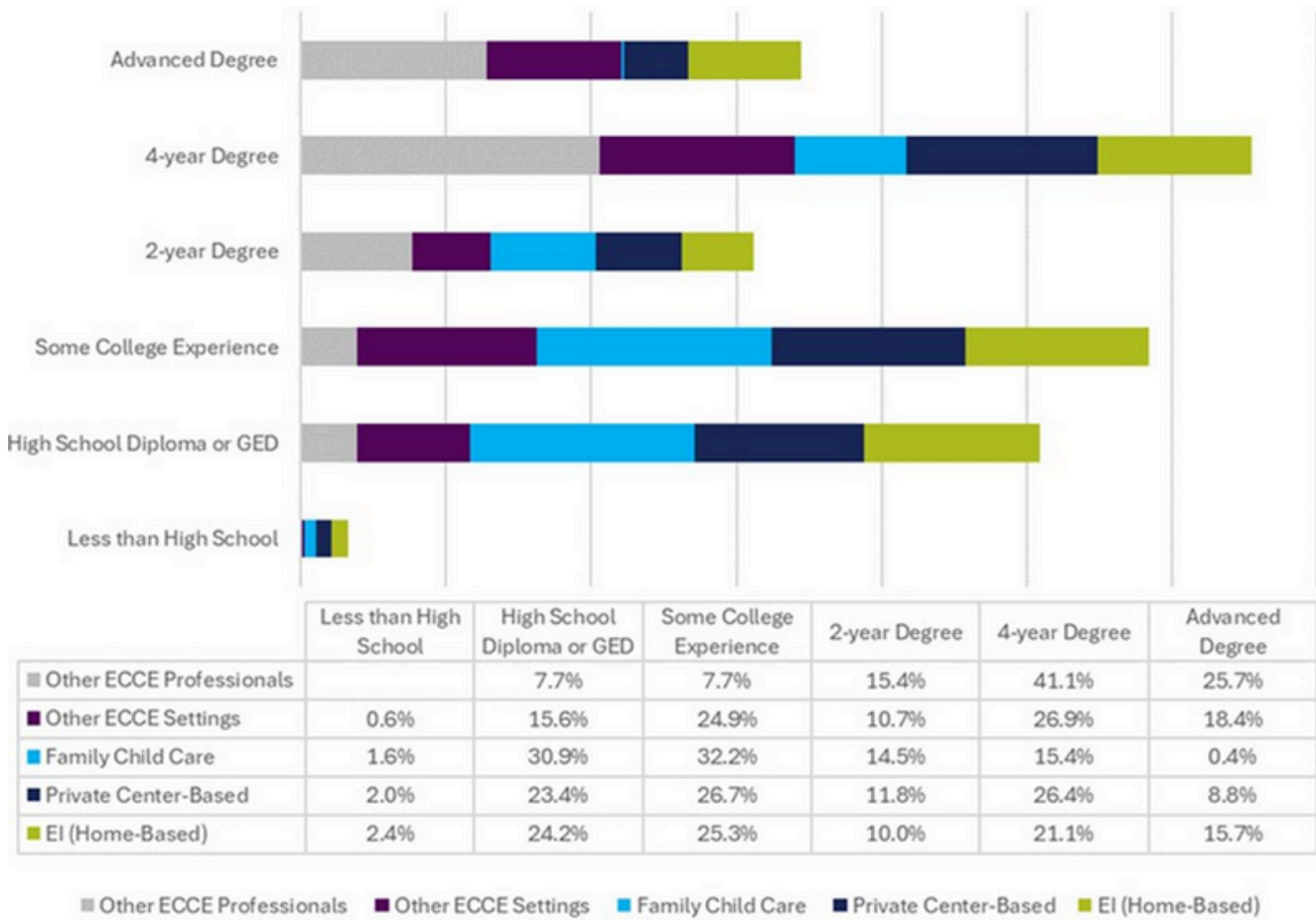


Figure 5: Overall Educational Attainment by Categories

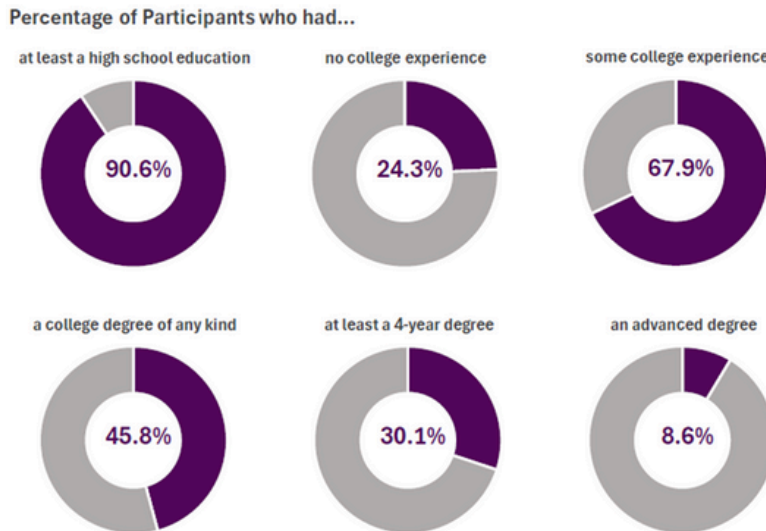
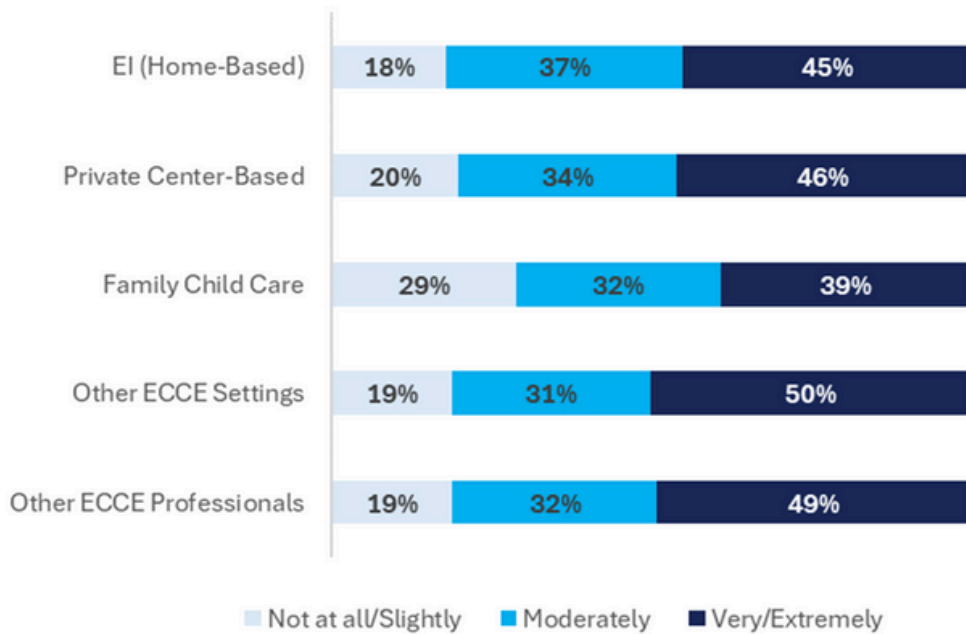


Figure 6 shows the extent of interest that survey respondents expressed in advancing their degree per setting. While close to 2/3 of survey respondents indicated moderate to extreme interest in advancing their degree, participants in the focus groups were sharply divided. While for some ECCE professionals, earning an advanced degree yields a pay increase and other job opportunities, most participants in focus groups agreed that the return on investment is a consideration when deciding to advance their degree. Focus group participants also identified community colleges and other postsecondary institutions as assets to their communities and suggested increasing the efforts to promote higher education programs in recruitment efforts.

Figure 6. Interest in Advancing their Degree by Setting



“I get emails, I feel like, every other day about a KCCTO class or a free training here, or my surveyor sending me this, or ...It’s pretty easy to find training, but as far as advancing my degree, I’ve only probably had one course that’s been like, “Here you can take this course and advance your degree.”

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Low wages and lack of benefits for ECCE professionals have been of national concern for decades and this remains true for Kansas. Figure 7 displays salary ranges by setting. Across all settings, nearly 40%-50% of ECCE professionals make under \$25,000 (Early Intervention = 43.4%; Private center-based settings = 50.1%; Family Child Care = 37.9%; Other ECCE settings = 37.2%). Other ECCE professionals (non-direct service) are the exception: only 18% reported earning less than \$25,000. According to the Kansas Department of Labor, the median wage for all occupations is \$45,250⁵. Among the ECCE workforce survey respondents, only 10.4% reported earning a salary of \$50,000 or more.



We can't really charge [parents enough] to be able to pay living wages or offer insurance or any of that [without risking pricing parents out of child care]. So as much as I hate [recruitment and retention of staff] coming down to money, I really think that's what it comes down to.



Figure 7: Annual ECCE Salary by Setting

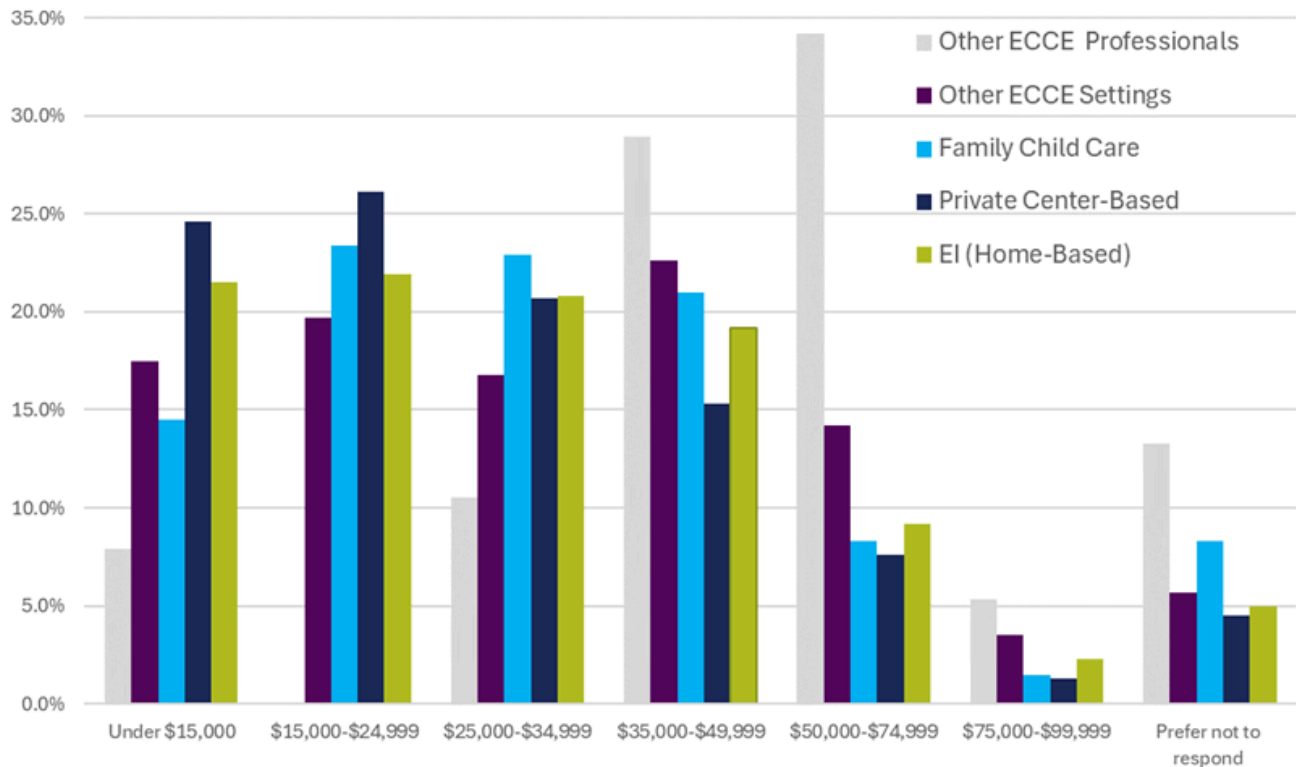


Table 2: Benefits by Setting

	EI (Home-Based)	Family Child Care	Private Center-Based	Other ECCE Settings	Other ECCE Professionals
401K or other retirement plan	46.5%	4.6%	32.4%	66.3%	76.3%
Discounted or covered child care	16.9%	4.9%	23.4%	5.5%	2.6%
Dental insurance	38.5%	4.3%	27.3%	58.3%	73.7%
Disability (long-term or short-term) insurance	23.8%	1.8%	13.5%	30.0%	28.9%
Health Insurance	45.8%	5.7%	29.9%	65.1%	76.3%
Vision insurance	36.9%	3.2%	23.6%	52.6%	68.4%
Paid time off	51.9%	28.7%	51.9%	59.3%	65.8%
Paid vacation leave	45%	32%	39.1%	43.7%	63.2%
Paid sick leave	48.8%	24.5%	39.7%	67.8%	78.9%
Parental leave	7.7%	1.6%	6.7%	11.7%	15.8%
None	21.9%	52.2%	23.4%	13.1%	10.5%
Other	3.8%	2.3%	3.0%	3.9%	2.6%

Note: Participants were instructed to select all that apply.

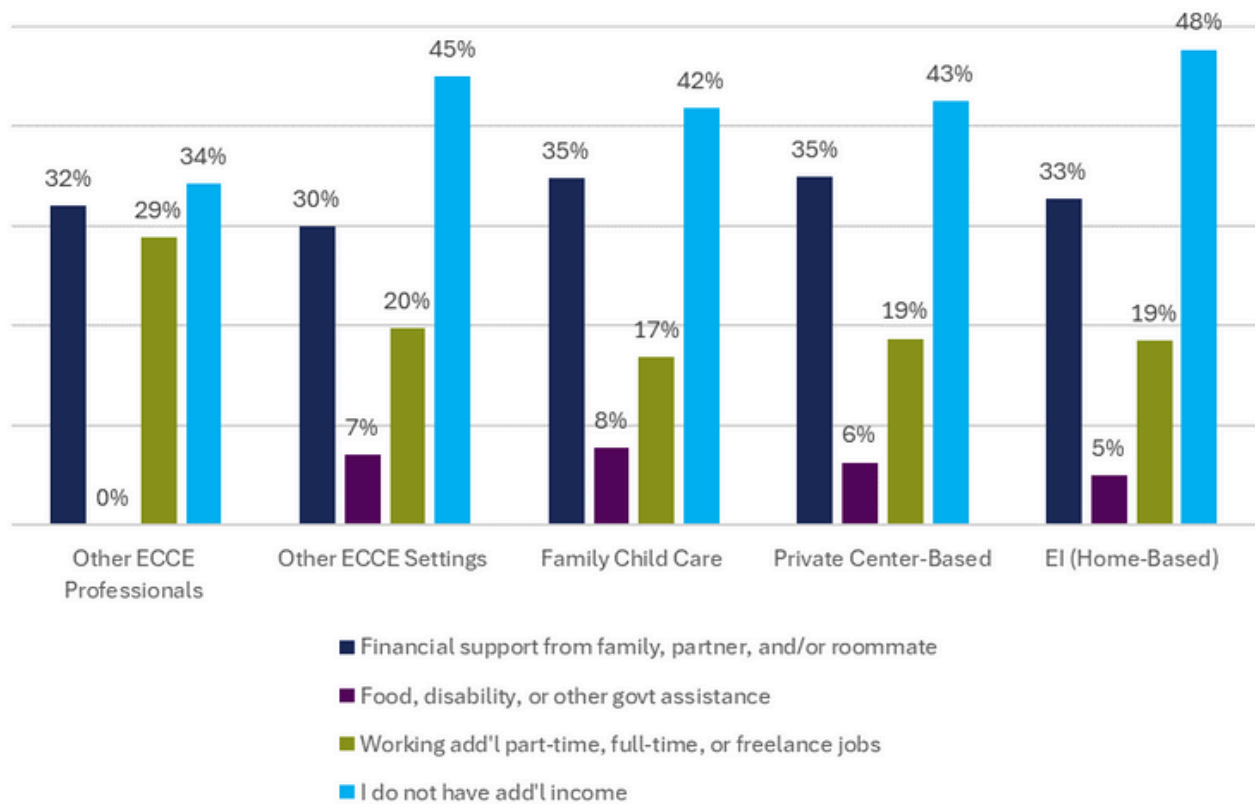
Table 2 lists benefits that are typically available in work settings and the percentage of ECCE professionals by setting who have access to those benefits. Family child care professionals have less access to all benefits overall. The differences are stark when looking at 401K or other retirement plans; only 4.6% have access to retirement plans. Other ECCE professionals have the highest access to health insurance (76.3%), followed by professionals in other ECCE settings (66.3%). Less than 5% of family child care professionals access health insurance through their employment setting.

The most common benefit for family child care professionals is paid vacation leave (32.0%). Since these professionals are often self-employed, they are giving themselves paid vacations and some paid time off (28.7%). Professionals in private center-based settings have slightly higher access to paid vacation leave (39.1%) and just over half have paid time off (51.9%).



Across all settings, approximately 1/3 of ECCE professionals report financial support from a partner, family member, or roommate (see Figure 8). Just under 20% appear to bridge the gap by working an additional job while under 10% in each setting are accessing government supports such as disability or food assistance. Nearly 40% of ECCE professionals do not have access to other income sources.

Figure 8: Income From Other Sources By Setting

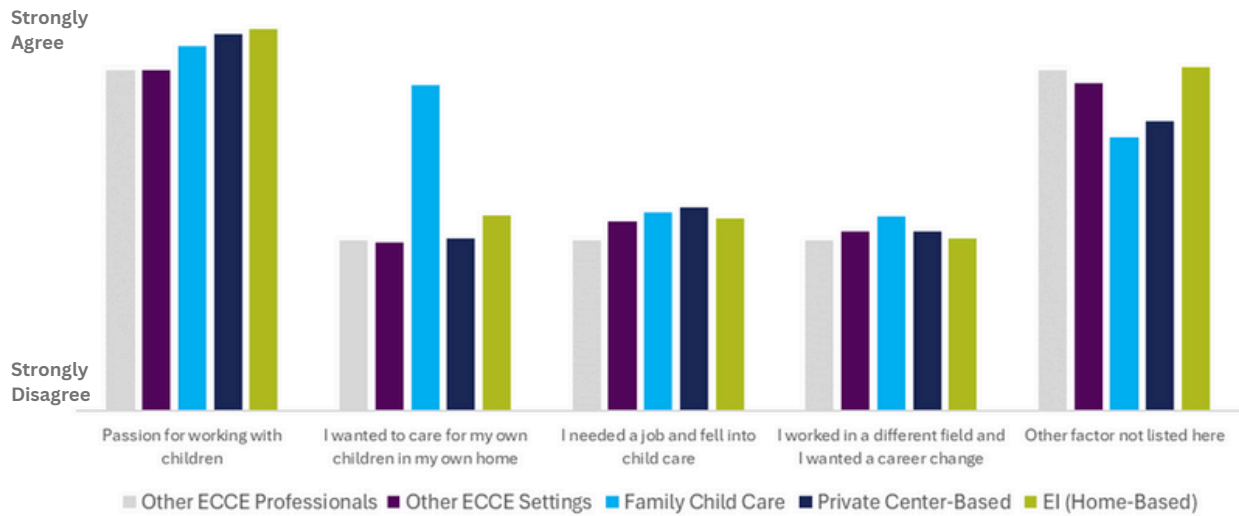


RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

When asked about their reasons for entering the field, across all settings, ECCE professionals rate their passion for working with children the highest reason. Family child care professionals often enter the field to care for their own children in their home, but this reason was rated much lower for professionals in other settings (See Figure 9).

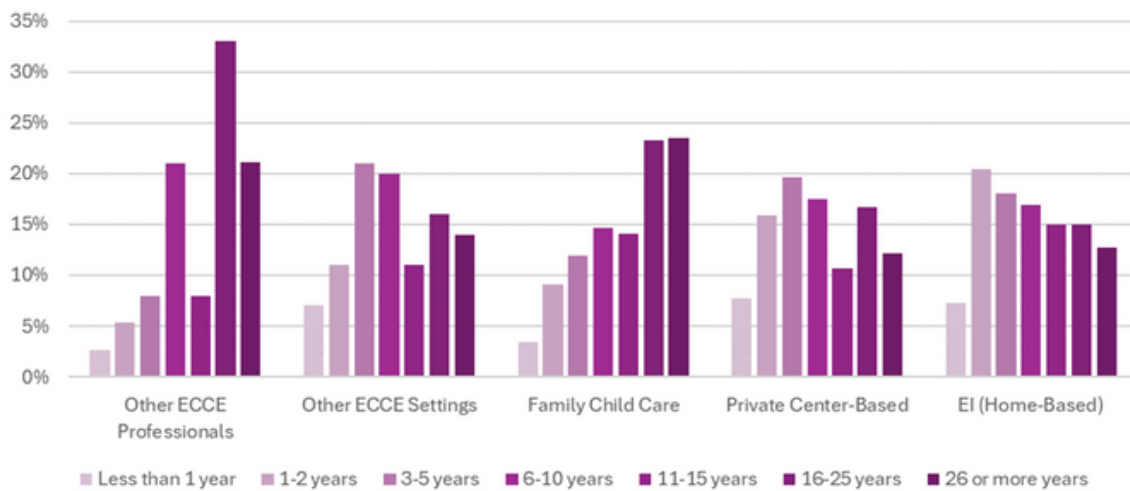
“[An EC Pathway course in high school is] actually how I got into it. Yeah, I worked for a preschool in town, and that’s where I found out that I loved being with children.”

Figure 9. Reasons for Entering the Field



Other than family child care professionals, 40-50% of professionals have 5 years or less in the field (See Figure 10). For Early Intervention settings, 48.0% of professionals have been in the field 5 years or less, 42.9% for private center-based settings, and 39.3% for other ECCE settings. For Family Child Care professionals, however, 24.4% have under 5 years of experience and 23.5% have over 25 years of experience.

Figure 10: Years in the Field by Setting



ECCE professionals were asked how often they thought of leaving the field. Responses indicate workforce dedication to the field (see Figure 11). Across settings, 53% answered never/rarely to the question “How often do you think about leaving the ECCE profession?” Among family child care professionals, 15.6% think about leaving the field often/always. When asked about leaving their current workplace, ECCE professionals show a higher intention to stay (Figure 15). Over 70% of family child care professionals said they never/rarely think about leaving their workplace. This is the highest of any setting.

Figure 11: Consider Leaving the Profession by Setting

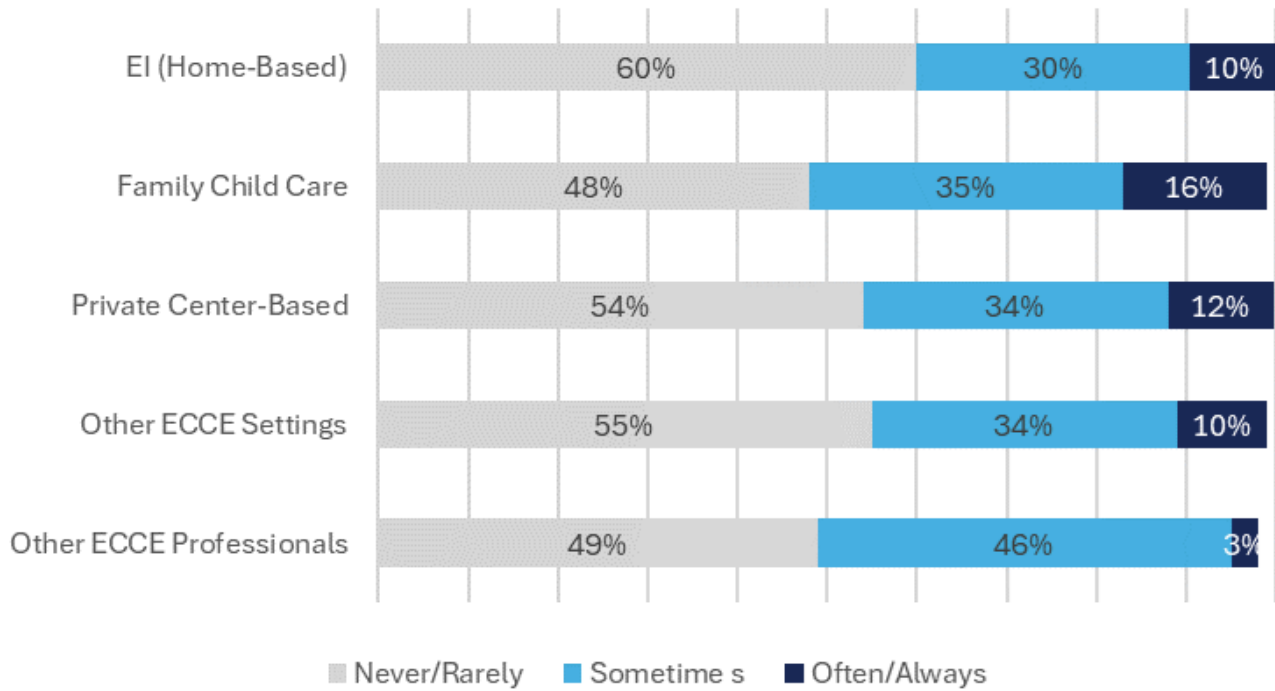
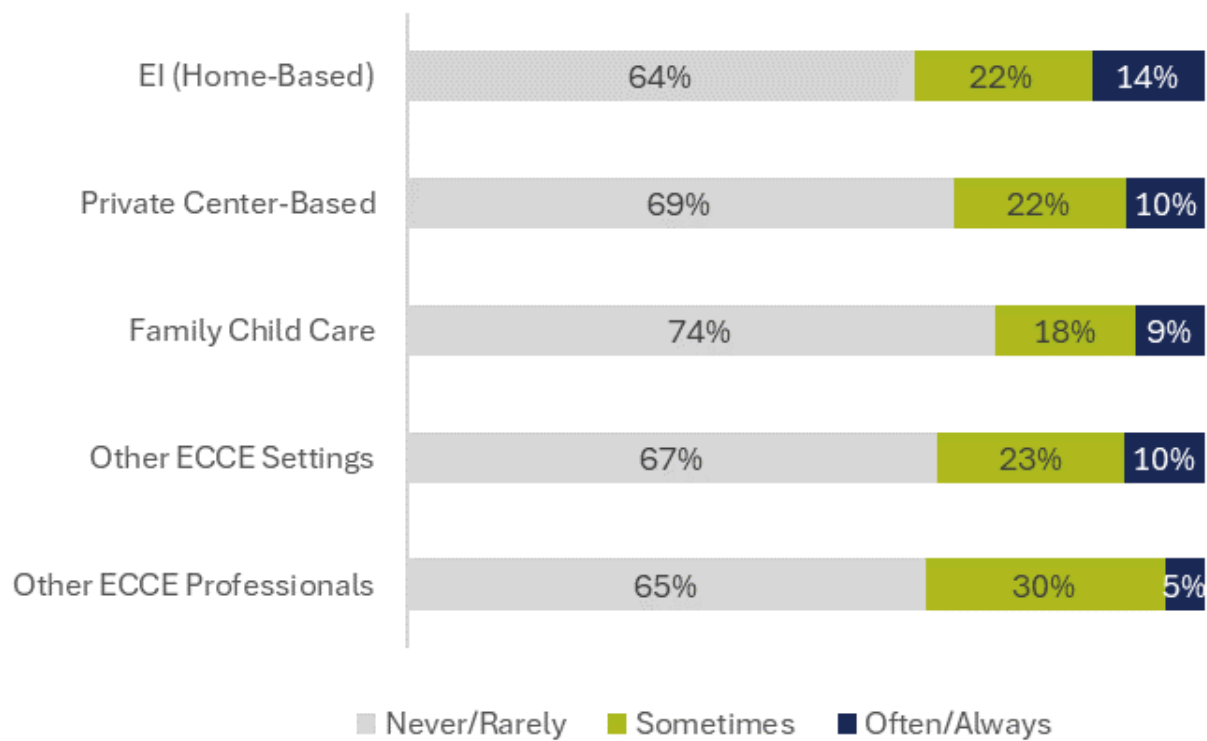


Figure 12: Consider Leaving Current Workplace by Setting



SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This initial data summary from the Kansas ECCE Comprehensive Workforce Study demonstrates the complexity of the mixed-delivery system and the lives of the professionals who care for and educate Kansas children. These professionals share a passion for working with children and a commitment to their workplace and staying in the field. However, the differences among professionals emphasize the unique needs across settings, especially for family child care professionals.

- Currently, Kansas children have more diverse backgrounds than previous generations, especially among younger ages. Data from Kansas, Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center (see Table 3) show that children aged 0 to 4 are 63% White, 21% Hispanic, 7% Black, 1% American Indian/Alaskan native, 3% Asian, and 6% two or more races. The ECCE workforce remains primarily female and White/non-Hispanic. Recruitment efforts must focus on BIPOC professionals to diversify the ECCE workforce, so they resemble the children in their care. Later analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data will assist in understanding how race/ethnicity interacts with the choices that professionals make in choosing their workplace setting.

Table 3: Kansas Child Age Group Breakdown by Race/Ethnicity

Location	Race	Age group	Data Type	2023
Kansas	Hispanic Or Latino	0 To 4	Percent	21%
	Non-Hispanic American Indian Or Alaska Native Alone	0 To 4	Percent	1%
	Non-Hispanic Asian Alone	0 To 4	Percent	3%
	Non-Hispanic Black Alone	0 To 4	Percent	7%
	Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian And Other Pacific Islander Alone	0 To 4	Percent	<.5%
	Non-Hispanic Two Or More Race Groups	0 To 4	Percent	6%
	Non-Hispanic White Alone	0 To 4	Percent	63%
	Total	0 To 4	Percent	100%

Data taken from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, 2023

- ECCE professionals in Kansas are making less than the Kansas median salary and are often doing this alone without public assistance. The lack of benefits, especially retirement accounts and health insurance, have long term consequences for this population and Kansas as a whole. Family child care professionals in particular who are nearing retirement age are impacted by this lack of retirement and insurance. Infrastructure supports must be put in place to help these professionals as they transition out of the field.
- Recruitment into the field will also be more effective if benefits and salaries are increased across all settings. Given the unique needs in each early childhood setting, recruitment efforts must build on the passion for working with children in this population and help new members of the workforce understand the needs within each setting. Professional development organizations and higher education institutions may need to specialize their offerings and delivery to meet the unique needs of the workforce.
- Across all settings, approximately 50% of the professionals have limited formal education. Institutions of Higher Education have a unique opportunity to recruit and work with these passionate individuals. Monetary support for tuition and professional development would assist the field as they pursue further education. Additionally, recognizing the many years of experience in the field among professionals will aid in recruitment into higher education.
- ECCE professionals in Kansas provide care and education to young children and families within a complex, mixed-delivery system. State-level leadership, higher education and professional development organizations should work to intentionally build a more cohesive and collaborative cross-sector system of supports for the professional preparation and advancement of the ECCE workforce.

¹Kansas Kid Counts; https://www.kac.org/kansas_kids_count

²Child Care Aware, <https://stage.worklivesystems.com/Kansas?county=all>

³For detailed description of the methodology employed by OEIE, see Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation (OEIE) (2024). Kansas Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce Study: Executive Summary. [Unpublished manuscript]. Kansas State University.

⁴Note about map: It is possible that Wichita County (79 responses) received more responses than the number of ECCE workers who work in the county. Wichita county has a population of 2,152 as of the 2020 census. For comparison, Finney County to the Southeast of Wichita county had 57 respondents and has a population of 38,470 as of the 2020 census. This discrepancy may be due to respondents confusing Wichita county for the city of Wichita.

⁵<https://klic.dol.ks.gov/vosnet/gsipub/documentView.aspx?enc=Lu+tigjOCxAftHRgnfsSGg==>