

Supplemental Appendix B

Research Methodology for Georgia's Early Care and Education Economic Impact Survey

A collaborative effort between the University of Georgia (UGA) and Georgia State University (GSU), this study uses an economic model that estimates the dollar amount of economic activity generated by the early care and education industry for a 12-month period through the employment of teachers and support staff, purchase of special services, and the like. Many types of data are needed to conduct an analysis of this type. Furthermore, many of the data needed to estimate the industry's economic impact such as gross receipts, number and types of children served, and characteristics of the industry's workforce were not available from any existing source. Thus, DECAL convened a research team composed of faculty and staff from UGA's Carl Vinson Institute of Government and the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at GSU to work together with DECAL to develop and implement a survey of all licensed and all regulated early care and education establishments in the state of Georgia.

Great effort was taken to provide autonomy to the research team during the data collection and analysis processes. Although DECAL contributed technical expertise to the project, it had no access to survey data at any time. The UGA-GSU team maintained respondents' privacy during the process and continue to ensure the confidentiality of the data the respondents provided.

Researchers from the Institute of Government distributed surveys to all licensed and all regulated early care and education programs in the fall of 2014 and encouraged them to respond. They gathered the data from the programs and combined them all into a collective dataset, removing any information that could identify individual early education programs, staff members, teachers, or children. This collective dataset was then given to GSU economists for analysis. Together, the two universities produced this report. The survey data provided critical information about the industry not available elsewhere.

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

With the assistance of DECAL, the research team developed a set of surveys, collectively called Georgia's Early Care and Education Economic Impact Survey, to gather the information needed to estimate the annual economic impact of the early care and education industry in Georgia. Due to differences in the various types of early care and education settings as well as distinct client bases, three similar but slightly different surveys were necessary: one for child care learning centers, one for family child care homes, and one for Georgia's Pre-K programs based in public schools.

A similar study conducted by the same organizations in 2007 used only two surveys: one for family child care homes and one for all other types of early care and education programs. After reviewing the previous study and conferring with researchers, child care providers, DECAL staff, and researchers involved in the 2007 study, the research team determined that a third version of the survey was necessary. The new questionnaire was developed specifically for public schools housing the Georgia's Pre-K Program. In the previous study, the questionnaire developed for centers was sent to each public school with Georgia's Pre-K classrooms. School-level supervisors had difficulty responding because they often lacked access to the needed information. Therefore, in 2014, the questionnaire was redesigned to obtain information from each school system offering Georgia's Pre-K classrooms.

Questions were tailored to address the circumstances of each program type. For example, family child care homes tend to have fewer revenue sources than do child care learning centers, and schools have revenue streams that differ from those of centers or family child care homes.

To meet the needs of Spanish-speaking family child care homes, the family child care home questionnaire was translated into Spanish, which was offered in a web-based version only.

DECAL's Quality Rated program was launched in January 2012. The survey mailing list was compiled in August 2014, when approximately 8% of the state's child care learning centers and 5% of the family child care homes had completed the application and review process and been awarded a Quality Rated level. Five specific questions were asked only to center directors and family child care home owners/operators who, at the time, had received a rating in Quality Rated. To gauge the opinions of all programs about Quality Rated, three general questions about the program were added to every child care learning center and family child care home questionnaire.

Because the Great Recession had such a profound impact on Georgia prior to the study period, the researchers added two questions about how the recession had affected the early care and education programs and a third question to obtain insight into the business challenges they face. Because family child care homes are so dependent upon sole owners/operators, an additional question asked about personal challenges that influence their ability to stay in business. Finally, the questionnaires included three questions designed to provide an understanding of the emerging relationships between early care and education programs, public school systems, and the business community. Appendix C contains copies of the three questionnaires, including the specific questions about Quality Rated.

POPULATION

Surveys were mailed to all early care and education programs that were licensed or regulated by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning in Georgia as of August 2014. The industry comprises child care learning centers, including those offering Georgia's Pre-K classrooms and those operated at universities and technical schools; family child care homes; school systems offering Georgia's Pre-K; Department of Defense child care learning centers; Early Head Start and Head

Start programs; and group child care homes. The survey team surveyed a census of Georgia's licensed programs rather than a sample of programs so that every licensed or regulated early care and education program had a chance to share information that would contribute to an accurate description of the early care and education industry in Georgia. Another advantage of surveying a census is that it eliminates sampling error. Other sources of error, such as nonresponse bias, may influence the results and are discussed later in this appendix.

The early care and education programs' contact information was compiled from archived databases provided by DECAL. Although most of the programs included in the population of this study were licensed, the population also included some providers such as military facilities and schools that are regulated but not licensed. The center survey was sent to 2,888 child care learning centers, 226 group child care homes, at least 14 Early Head Start and 115 Head Start sites, and 11 military care and education centers. The family child care home questionnaire was sent to 2,308 family child care homes. The questionnaire designed for school systems was distributed to 170 public schools systems offering Georgia's Pre-K programs in 771 of their local schools. The total number of early care and education programs contacted was 5,732.

Dissemination of Surveys

A week prior to the mailing of the survey, a letter from the Commissioner of DECAL was sent to each child care learning center director and family child care home owner to inform him or her that the agency had contracted with the University of Georgia and Georgia State University to conduct the statewide survey. The letter explained the purpose and importance of the study, alerted programs to the survey, addressed confidentiality concerns, and provided contact information for questions about the study.

On October 24, 2014, 5,562 surveys were mailed first class (US Postal Service) to 3,254 centers (263 rated in Quality Rated and 2,991 not rated) and 2,308 family child care homes (118 rated in Quality Rated and 2,190 not rated). The first survey mailing included a letter detailing the importance of the study, the importance of accuracy, an assurance of confidentiality, a toll-free contact number for questions or concerns, the questionnaire, a postage-paid return envelope, and a \$10 Walmart gift card as a small pre-incentive for responding. Monetary incentives can increase mail survey response. Research shows that prepaid incentives are more effective at stimulating response than are incentives promised upon survey completion (Church 1993; Edwards et al. 2002, 2009; Singer and Ye 2012).

Programs were also given the option of responding to the survey via the Internet rather than by mail. The first and each subsequent letter contained log-on and password information.

Five days after mailing the first survey, the survey team emailed each provider a letter similar to the first mailed invitation letter. Emailed invitations were addressed to the center directors and family child care home owners. Each email included log-on information and a unique password. Log-on information could be copied and pasted, rather than typed, into the respondent's preferred browser. The unique password allowed only one response per program and helped to ensure that the

respondent was the intended one. These precautions increased the likelihood that the data obtained through the surveys accurately represented the population.

DECAL provided the research team with email addresses for all programs. Regardless of how quickly DECAL updates the lists, the possibility remains for email coverage to be incomplete because email addresses are often linked to individuals, and individuals sometimes have full email boxes or change email accounts. Organizational email addresses are subject to similar constraints. If individuals or organizations had not notified DECAL of a change before the list of programs used in the study was prepared, these email addresses would not work. By the end of the study, however, email was undeliverable to only 2.3% of child care learning centers and family child care homes and less than 1% of school system Pre-K directors.

On November 5, 2014, approximately two weeks after the first questionnaire mailing, the survey team mailed a postcard to 5,533 providers. The postcard thanked respondents and reminded nonrespondents to respond. Two weeks later, on November 19, the survey team emailed each nonrespondent another survey invitation that included log-on information and a password.

On December 2, 2014, the survey team mailed a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope to the child care learning centers and family child care homes that had not responded by November 15. The team mailed 4,170 questionnaires to nonrespondents, which included 190 centers and 58 family child care homes that were rated in Quality Rated, and 2,385 centers and 1,537 family child care homes not yet rated in Quality Rated. The mailed questionnaire was followed on December 10, 2014, by a third emailed invitation to participate.

On or about December 3, 2014, DECAL's Commissioner wrote to both the superintendents and Georgia's Pre-K directors of the 170 public school systems offering Georgia's Pre-K. This message alerted the superintendents and directors to expect the survey and conveyed the study's importance. The survey team mailed the first set of questionnaires on December 5, 2014, to the 170 Georgia's Pre-K directors in public school systems. These districts account for 771 schools, each with at least one Georgia's Pre-K classroom. The initial packet was the equivalent of the first packet sent to directors or owners of child care learning centers and family child care homes in October. It also included one \$10 Walmart gift card per school system as an incentive for response. On December 10, the team also emailed a survey invitation to all school-based Georgia's Pre-K directors.

After the holiday break, the survey team mailed a second questionnaire to the public school Georgia's Pre-K directors. On January 9, 2015, the questionnaire was mailed to the 147 nonresponding directors. An email invitation followed on January 16, 2015.

On January 12, 2015, the team mailed a third questionnaire to child care learning centers and family child care homes that had not responded as of December 15, 2014. The team mailed 2,679 questionnaires, which included 144 to centers and 47 to family child care homes that were rated in Quality Rated, and 1,062 to centers and 1,279 to family child care homes not yet rated in Quality Rated. A fourth emailed invitation followed on January 16 and 21, 2015.

On February 6 and 9, the survey team mailed the fourth and final questionnaire via certified mail to the 3,318 nonresponding child care learning centers and family child care homes. This mailing included the 125 nonresponding centers and 37 nonresponding family child care homes that were rated in Quality Rated as well as the 1,976 nonresponding centers and 1,180 nonresponding family child care homes not yet rated in Quality Rated. Likewise, on February 6, the team mailed a third questionnaire packet first class to Georgia's Pre-K directors in the 89 nonresponding school systems.

As a follow-up, on February 12, the team emailed an invitation to the nonresponding directors of all three types of programs. The survey team emailed final invitations to centers and family child care homes on February 27 and to school-based Georgia's Pre-K directors on March 2, 2015.

Other Efforts to Encourage Response

Professional Support

Throughout the survey period, the research team actively sought the support and help of various professional groups within the industry. Leaders of professional groups wrote their constituents in support of the survey. They conveyed such support at conferences and through emails and newsletters, among other methods. The survey team also attended meetings of the Georgia Child Care Association and the Georgia Association of Young Children, the Georgia affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to inform providers about the impending survey and to address concerns about the study.

Technical Assistance

Throughout the six-month survey period, the survey team provided a toll-free telephone number that programs could call if they had questions or otherwise needed assistance in completing the questionnaire. In addition, the team offered providers telephone numbers of other members of the survey team. Furthermore, each email sent to providers included survey team contact information, specifically phone numbers and email addresses.

Between October 27, 2014, and February 25, 2015, at least 135 providers called with questions or requests. Conversation topics included the following:

- Survey mailing—Providers:
 - Had not received the survey in the mail
 - Needed a replacement questionnaire or return envelope
 - Had received more than one survey
 - Informed the team that the survey had reached an unintended address

- Reassurance—Providers:
 - Wanted to make sure the team had received the completed survey
 - Gift card questions
 - Survey close date/letting the team know they would complete the survey by the closing date
 - Wanted to be added to the sample
- Requested a copy of the final report
- Web-based survey issues—Providers:
 - Needed the link to the web-based survey
 - Needed the team to reset their access code
 - Were experiencing website issues
- Response concerns included:
 - Refusals
 - Information about center closings
 - Privacy concerns, especially about financial questions
 - Financial questions and concerns
 - Employee/salary questions
 - Multisite issues
 - Preschool questions
 - Head Start questions

Telephone Reminders to Directors of School-based Programs

During the two to six weeks following the final questionnaire mailing, the survey team telephoned nonresponding directors of school-based Georgia’s Pre-K programs to remind them to respond and to determine whether they had questions or needed other technical assistance in completing the survey. Some, for example, had requested assistance from their school system’s accountant in completing the financial parts of the survey. Therefore, some of these calls stimulated action.

Encouraging Multisite Program Response

Although most child care learning centers and nearly all family child care homes in Georgia are owned by individuals or families who own and operate a single site, some organizations own and operate several child care learning centers, each located at a different site. A few family child care homes are also centrally owned. Multisite programs accounted for approximately 23% of the initial 3,254 early care and education programs that received the child care learning center questionnaire. Therefore, survey responses from multisite programs were essential in collecting accurate data about the early care and education industry in Georgia.

Multisite programs offer the potential to collect the critical financial data efficiently, although they vary in the degree of permission they give directors to respond to surveys and in how much information, especially key financial information, directors possess. In addition, administrators with multiple sites can encourage site directors to complete the questionnaires, increasing the overall response rate to the survey. Because of all of these factors, the survey research team made several efforts to encourage the response of multisite programs.

The survey team used a two-pronged approach to encourage response from multisite programs. First, because administrators of multisite programs tend to have discretionary decision-making power and the information needed to complete the financial survey questions, the survey team asked administrators to complete the four or five most crucial questions on the questionnaire: the financial questions.

Second, site directors possess the information needed to complete the remaining questions on the questionnaire. Therefore, the survey team sent the surveys to the individual site directors. The two-pronged approach, therefore, reduced the burden of responding to the questionnaire for both central administrators and multisite directors.

To implement this approach, the survey director first contacted a small set of multisite programs to determine their interest. The response was positive. Therefore, the survey team devoted significant time to contacting all of the other multisite programs with more than five sites. These efforts garnered the support of 30% of the responding multisite programs. Their programs represented 36% of all multisite providers' sites.

The survey team sent a spreadsheet to multisite administrators that made it easier for them to respond to the four key financial questions. The spreadsheet asked questions 17 through 20 on the child care learning center questionnaire. Question 17 requests a breakdown of revenues by category, and Question 18 requests the total revenues received in the preceding year. Questions 19 and 20 are analogous with respect to annual costs. The spreadsheet was expanded for some programs that also provided the needed information about the number of employees per site and position and hourly wages paid to each (Question 16).

In addition to providing key financial data needed for the analysis of the early care and education industry's short-term economic impact, the fact that these programs participated at such a high level administratively had unexpected consequences. First, high-level administrative support tended to garner response from directors: When multisite program administrators encouraged directors to complete the survey, response seemed to increase. The directors of the subset of multisite programs whose administrators provided financial data for their organizations had a response rate of 90.8% compared with a response rate of 52.5% for the sites of all the multisite programs and 36.5% for the sites of multisite programs that did not provide financial information.

A bias is built into these response rates, however, because the survey team applied extra effort to garnering response from the directors of sites whose administrators had already completed the

financial data or were in the process of doing so. The directors tended to be open to this encouragement, but a dynamic developed. Top administrators had already committed to completing parts of the survey and thus seemed more likely to encourage directors to complete the other sections of the questionnaire. The survey team subsequently contacted the directors, when possible via telephone, and set up appointments to work on the questionnaire. These appointments often became coaching sessions during which questionnaires were completed. Many directors had questions about completing the questionnaires, and being coached through the questions helped them complete the survey. Many directors have recall of the needed facts or data at hand to provide them, but the questionnaire may have looked intimidating to some, delaying response. Working as a team made it easier for some directors to complete the questionnaire. It may be helpful in future studies of this type to allocate some resources to such coaching.

Completed Surveys

Surveys that arrived by April 30, 2015, were included for consideration in the final dataset. Some received surveys contained so little information that they were classified as incomplete and removed from the dataset. In addition, many programs started the survey online but then completed the survey using the mail version. In most cases, the data from the two sources needed to be brought together into a single response. Such duplicates had to be studied and carefully removed from the dataset.

Of the original 5,732 questionnaires mailed, the 170 that were sent to school systems represent 771 schools. The 124 school systems that responded offer Georgia's Pre-K in 599 schools. Therefore, converting school systems to schools, the questionnaires that were originally sent covered 6,333 sites. Of these, 3,268 responded and 3,065 did not respond. The overall response rate across all provider types is 52%. Of these, approximately 37% were completed by web and 63% by mail.

Of the original 3,254 child care learning center surveys mailed, 1,758 of programs did not respond and 1,496 did. The response rate for centers is 46%. Of the original 2,308 surveys mailed to family child care homes, 1,135 were not returned, and 1,173 responded. The response rate for family child care homes is 51%. Of the original 170 (representing 771 schools) surveys sent to school systems, 124 (representing 599 schools) were completed and 46 (representing 172 schools) were not returned. The response rate for schools is 78%. The estimated sampling error for each group is +/- 1 percentage point.

Figure B.1 shows the locations in 25 square mile grids of the child care learning centers, family child care homes, and schools to which questionnaires were sent. These constitute the population of early care and education programs. Figure B.2 shows the percentage of surveys received from programs in each 25 square mile grid.

Figure B.1 shows that early care and education programs are dispersed across the state, but are concentrated in population centers. Thus, early care and education programs in Georgia are fairly ubiquitous across northern Georgia as far south as the Macon and Columbus areas. Programs are

most concentrated in Cobb, DeKalb, Gwinnett, Fulton, Douglas, and Clayton counties in and around Atlanta. Programs are also concentrated in Bibb, Houston, and Peach counties around Macon; Muscogee County (Columbus); Richmond and Columbia counties around Augusta; and Chatham County (Savannah). Only Quitman County does not have at least one such program. Programs are very sparse in Echols, Clinch, Charlton, Morgan, and Wilkes counties. The Okefenokee Swamp, located in most of Charlton and part of Clinch, may account for the paucity of programs in these two counties.

Figure B.2 indicates that programs from nearly every area highlighted in northern Georgia in Figure B.1 responded to the survey. The highest concentrations of responses came from programs located in areas peripheral to the Atlanta metropolitan area. Figure B.2 also shows that 50% to 75% of programs in many areas of Rockdale, Fulton, and DeKalb, among other metro and northern Georgia counties, responded (denoted with darker blue). Between 25% and 50% of the programs in much of the metro area responded (denoted with medium blue).

Early care and education providers in the other concentrated program areas also responded with rates of 25% to 100%. Furthermore, programs in areas with few early care and education programs had response rates that tend to range from less than 25% to 100%. Overall, these maps indicate that survey respondents represent the early care and education programs of the state well.

Figure B.1. Location of Early Care and Education Programs in Georgia that Received the Early Care and Education Economic Impact Survey, in 25 Square Mile Grids

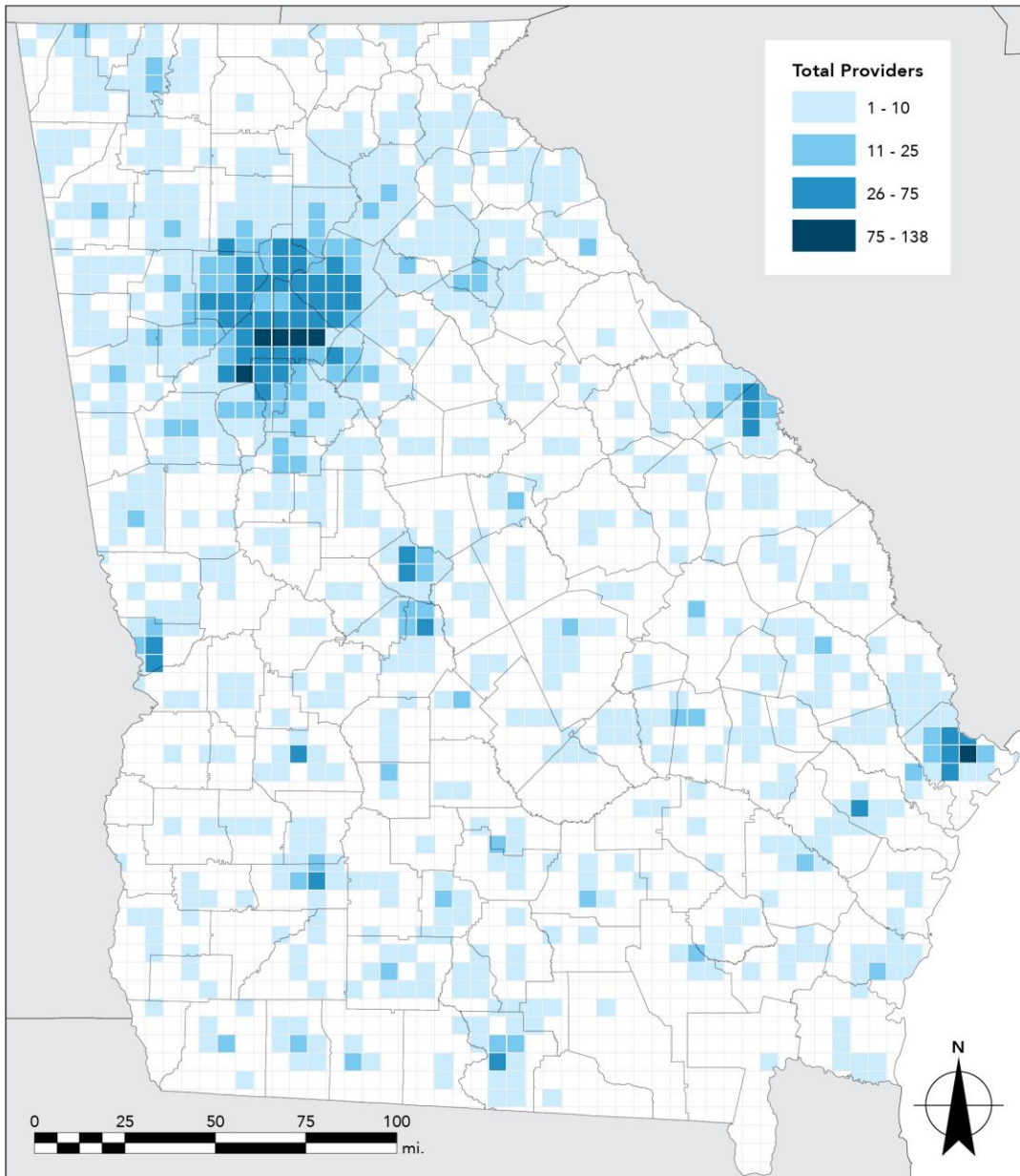
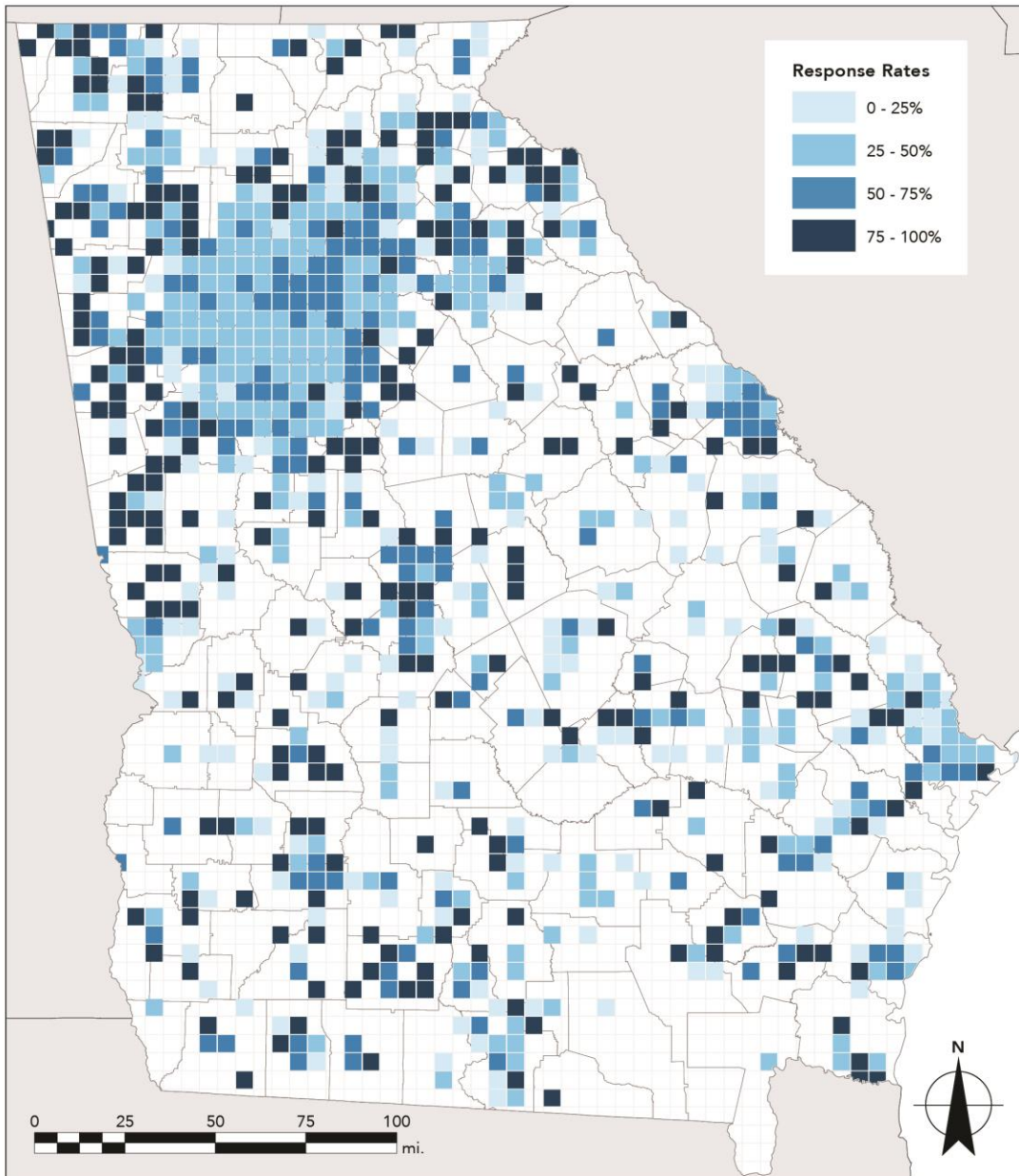


Figure B.2. Location of Early Care and Education Programs in Georgia that Responded to the Early Care and Education Economic Impact Survey, Response Rates in 25 Square Mile Grids



Item Nonresponse Rates

When survey respondents returned a completed survey, many did not answer every question on the survey. Table B.1 provides the item nonresponse rates for several selected questions for family child care homes and child care learning centers.

For questions about early care and education programs such as enrollments and the number and type of employees, the item nonresponse rates were relatively low. For questions about income, the item nonresponse rates were much higher: 51.1% for family child care homes, 48.8% for child care learning centers, and 30.9% for schools (Table B.1). These rates are not out of line with the literature in survey research. Atrostic and Kalenkoski (2002) found that the item nonresponse rate on the March Current Population Survey in 2000 for questions about total business revenues was 41.2%. Similarly, Bruun and Moore (2005) reported that for the Survey of Income and Program Participation (a national survey), the asset income item nonresponse rate was 40%. In addition, it is known that self-employed people are less likely to report their revenues than are other individuals (Lillard, Smith, and Welch 1986). Thus, the research team views the item nonresponse rate on revenues as reasonable.

Table B.1. Percentage of Respondents Who Did Not Answer Selected Survey Questions

	Item Nonresponse Rate		
	Child Care Learning Centers (N=1,496)	Family Child Care Homes (N=1,173)	Public Schools (N=599)
What is the total current enrollment?	3.1%	1.9%	1.5%
What were the annual revenues in 2013?	48.8%	51.1%	30.9%
Does this home have the following costs? OR What were the annual operating costs in 2013?	53.5%	60.9% to 98.1%*	13.4%
Are there paid assistants? OR number of permanent employees?	10.2%	28.9%	0.5%

* Note: The child care learning center and public school surveys asked program operators to specify their total annual operating costs. The family child care home survey asked owners to separately list their annual costs for 13 categories of spending. Thus, the range of item nonresponse reported for family child care homes is over the 13 relevant items.

In contrast, the item nonresponse rate for costs, particularly among family child care homes, was very high. The sensitivity of the questions and the high respondent burden required to collect the information needed to answer the questions likely explain this high level of nonresponse. Organizations with accountants that provide financial data directly and systematically to directors or other administrators seemed to reduce the respondent burden in this study and increased the likelihood of response to financial questions. The statistics on the operating costs are not reported due to the high item nonresponse rate and because typically only a gross receipts estimate is used to measure the economic impact of the industry.

Summary

For the Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Georgia study, the UGA-GSU research team crafted questionnaires, based upon ones developed for this study in 2007, to elicit information about the economic impact of early care and education programs in Georgia. Three versions of the questionnaire were created that correspond with the circumstances of each of three types of programs: child care learning centers, family child care homes, and public school systems offering Georgia's Pre-K. The questionnaires were further tailored to garner relevant information from early participants in Georgia's Quality Rated program. The questionnaires were also available in Spanish online.

The questionnaire was mailed to all licensed and all regulated child care learning centers, family child care homes, and public school systems offering Georgia's Pre-K in Georgia. As many as four questionnaires were mailed to nonresponding child care learning centers and family child care homes and as many as three to nonresponding school systems. Each mailed questionnaire was followed by an email inviting programs to respond online. Telephone reminders were made to school systems. Responses received through April 30, 2015, were considered for use in the final dataset.

Technical assistance was offered via telephone and email throughout the data collection period. Extra efforts were made to encourage response from multisite programs. Financial information was requested of owners, and answers to the rest of the questionnaire were requested from individual program directors. This increased response rates among multisite programs.

The response rate across all three types of programs was 52%. School systems had the highest rate of response, and child care learning systems had the lowest. Patterns of response are congruent with the geographic distribution of programs throughout the state. Furthermore, the estimated sampling error for each group is low.

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