

Child Care Teachers' Compensation and Wellbeing from 2019 to 2022: Evidence from 100 Child Care Centers

Anna J Markowitz

Daphna Bassok

Isabelle Fares

CCEEPRC 2023

Background

- Early educators are the core ingredient in high quality early education, but their ability to do their job hinges on their wellbeing.
- COVID underscored the importance of these educators, for children, families, and the economy – as well as the longstanding under-investment in ECE and in particular early educators.
- Lack of systematic, longitudinal data about early educators—hard to know whether investments during the pandemic translated into higher wages and/or better working conditions.

Research Questions

- How did child care teachers' wages change from pre-pandemic to 2022 and how were wages impacted by inflation?
- What benefits were available to child care teachers throughout this time period?
- How did levels of child care teachers' financial insecurity, food insecurity, and depression change from 2019 to 2022?

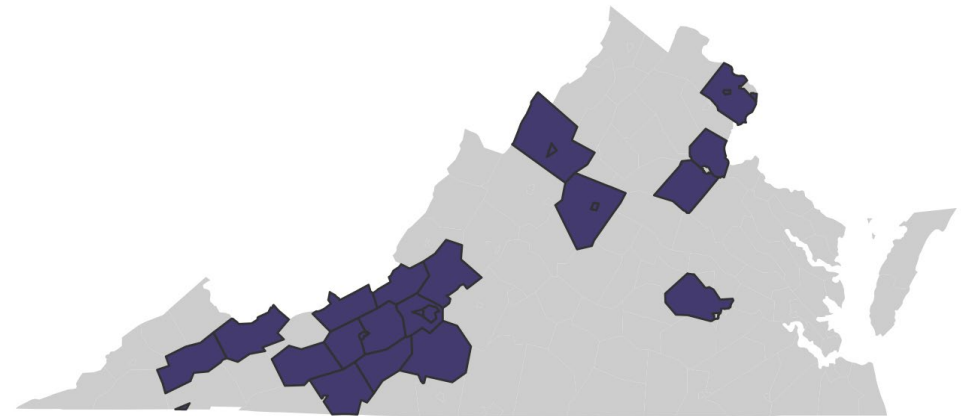
Partnership Context

- Ongoing Research-Practice Partnership with VDOE and Virginia Early Childhood Foundation allows us to answer these questions.
- Since 2019, partnership has focused on collecting data about ECE in Virginia and using these data to answer core questions about ECE quality and the ECE workforce.



Partnership Context

- In 2019, Virginia received a federal Preschool Development B-5 Grant (PDG) to improve ECE quality in the state.
- All publicly-funded ECE programs in 26 Virginia communities were invited to participate.
- 90% of school-based, 40% of publicly-funded centers chose to participate in pilot year.
- Over time, PDG expanded.



Data & Measures

- Teachers at sites participating in the PDG were invited to take surveys in May 2019, May 2020, September 2020, July 2021, and May 2022.
- Response rates were relatively high (58%-77%).
- Teacher report of wages, benefits, financial worries, food insecurity, depressive symptoms (CESD-SF).

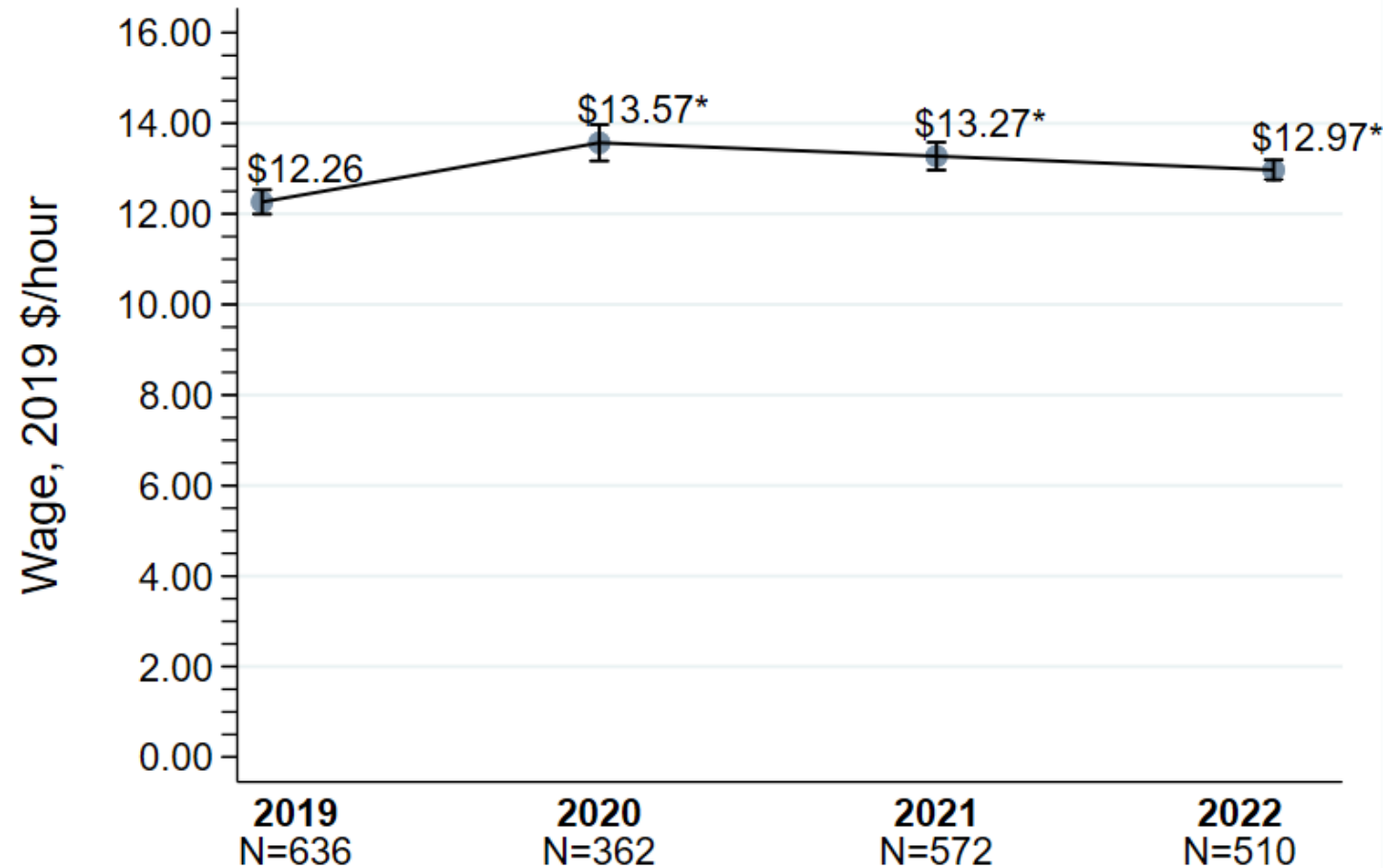
Method

- Analysis included PDG survey responses from over 700 teachers employed at **100 centers** at any of four time points: May 2019, May 2020, July 2021, and May 2022.
- Teacher composition at these centers was stable over time.
- Results reflect similar trends when limited to a sample of 137 individual teachers who participated in every survey wave.
- For each outcome of interest, we tested the difference of the mean or proportion in 2020, 2021, and 2022 from the 2019 baseline level using OLS regression.

Sample Characteristics, 2019

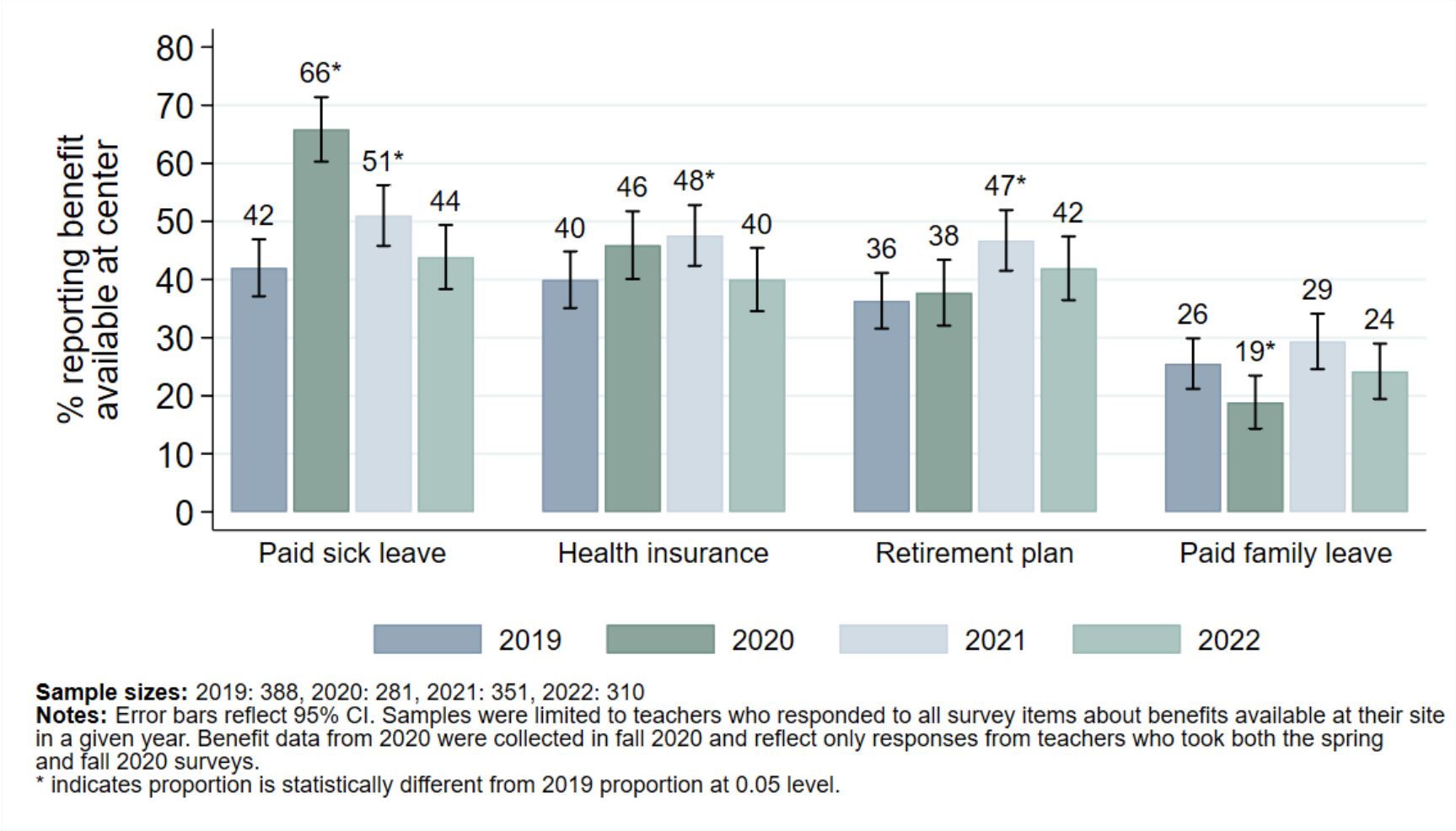
Response rate	71%
Role	71% Lead 24% Assistant 5% Floater <1% Other
Race/ethnicity	20% Black 16% Hispanic 54% White 10% Other/multiracial
Average age	37 years
Gender	97% Female
Bachelor's degree or higher	25%
Average time in ECE	9 years
Less than 1 year of teaching experience	12%
<i>Note: Based on 718 responses.</i>	

When adjusted for inflation, average wages increased somewhat in 2020, then stagnated.

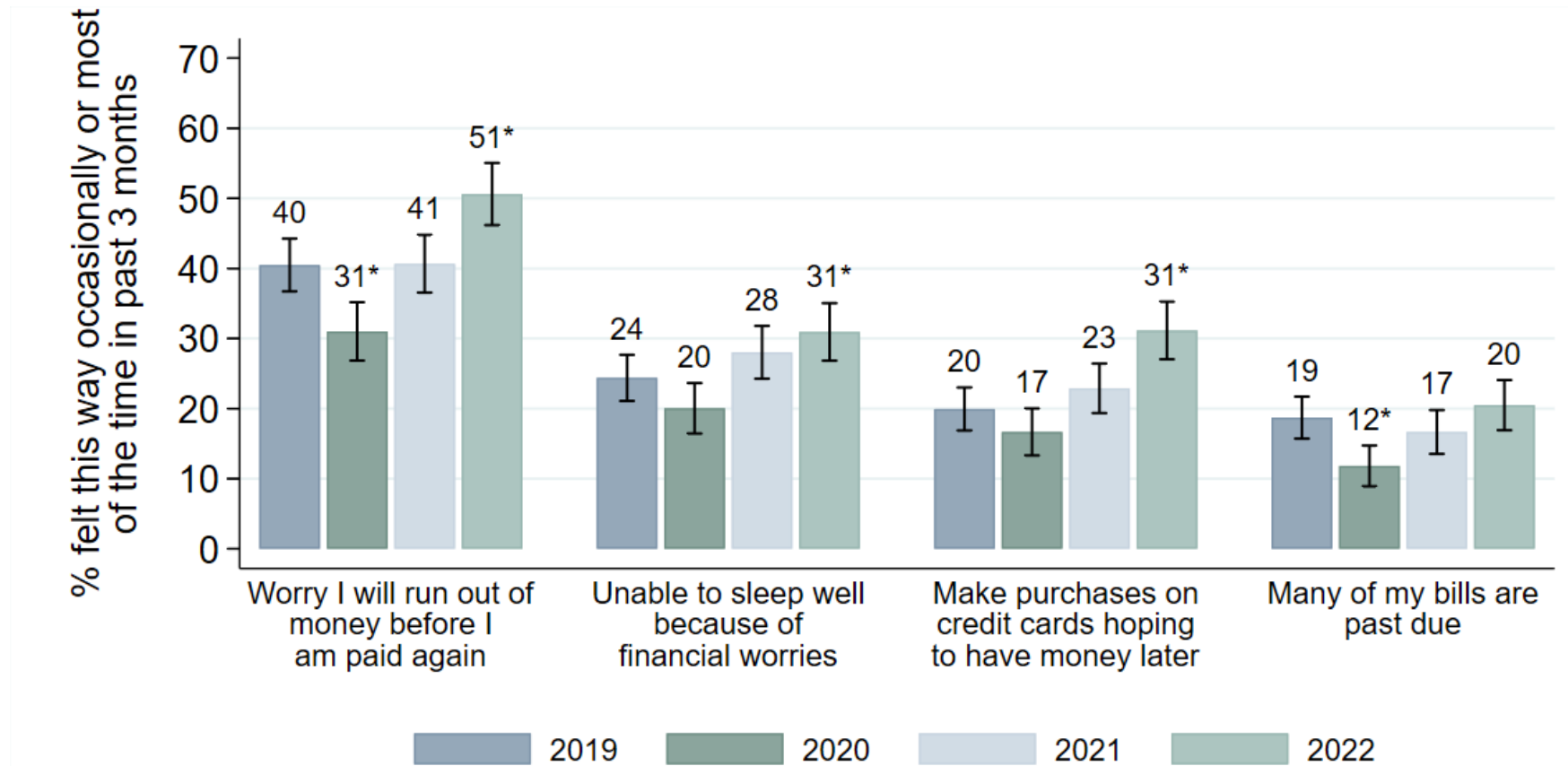


Notes: Error bars reflect 95% CI. Values were indexed to their 2019 real-dollar value based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Wages from 2020 were collected in fall 2020 and only reflect responses from teachers who took both the spring and fall 2020 surveys. * indicates that mean is statistically different from 2019 mean at the 0.05 level.

Benefits were not available to most teachers at any point.



Financial concerns declined from 2019-2020, but now exceed pre-pandemic levels.

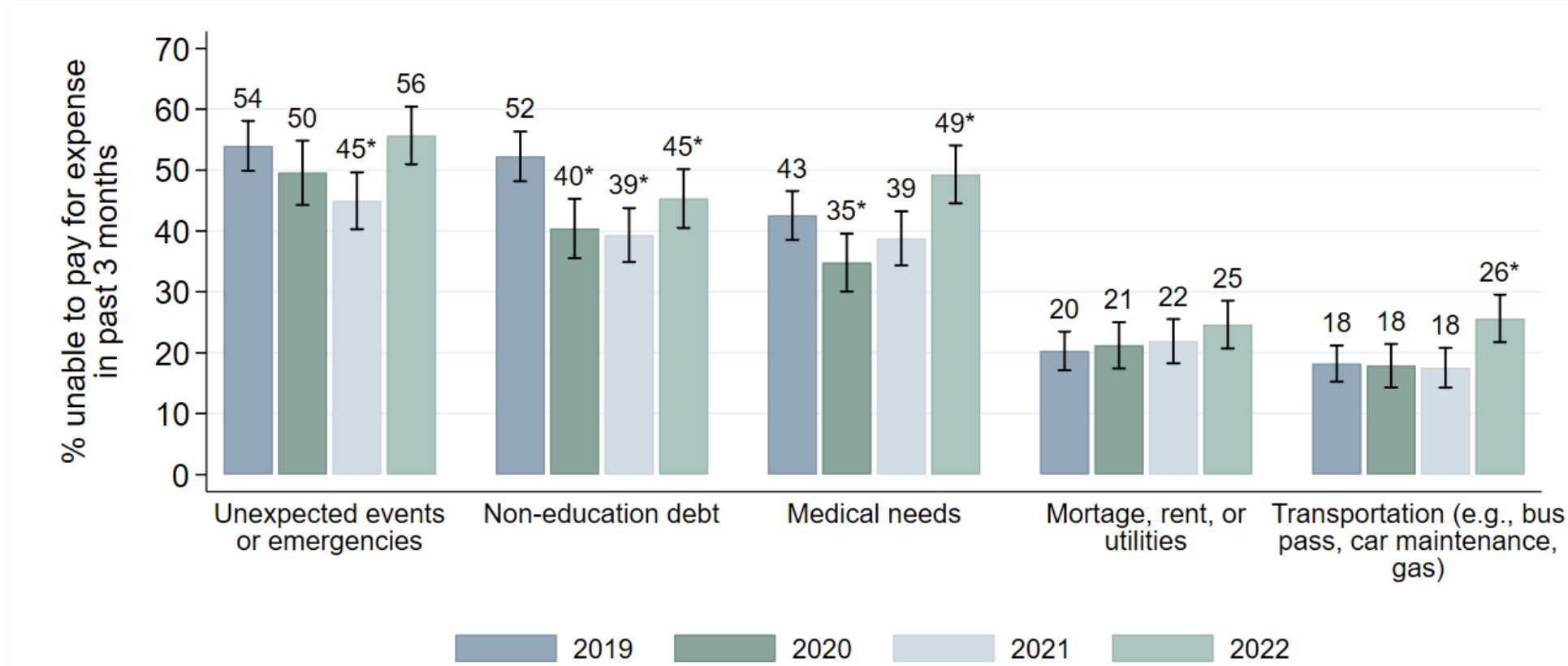


Sample sizes: 2019: 652, 2020: 474, 2021: 546, 2022: 488

Notes: Error bars reflect 95% CI. Samples were limited to teachers who answered all financial worry survey items in a given year.

* indicates that proportion is statistically different from 2019 proportion at 0.05 level.

Difficulty affording essentials has either increased or stayed the same since 2019.

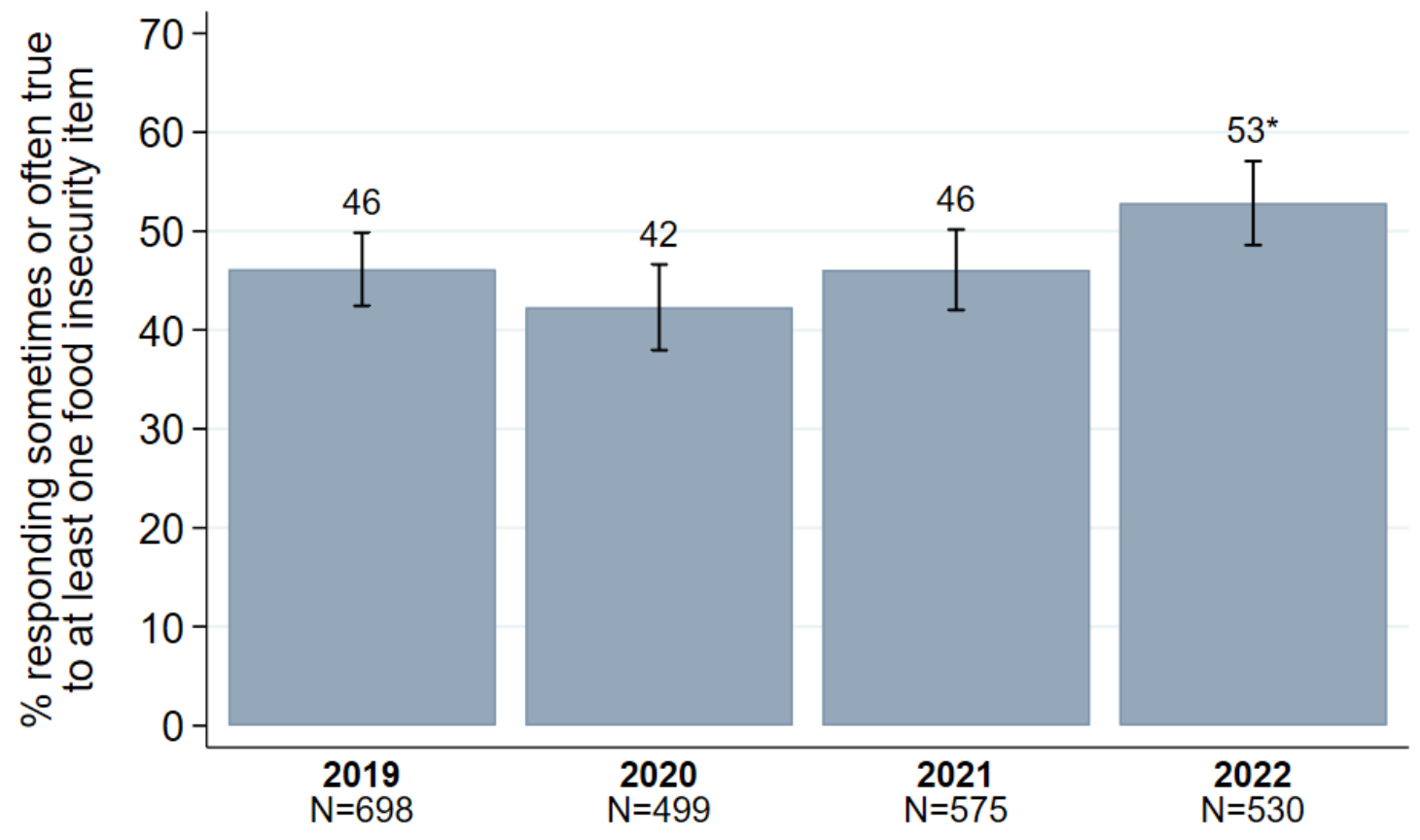


Sample sizes: 2019: 567 to 648, 2020: 345 to 443, 2021: 436 to 519, 2022: 406 to 484

Note: Error bars reflect 95% CI. Item sample sizes exclude teachers who reported that an expense was not applicable to them.

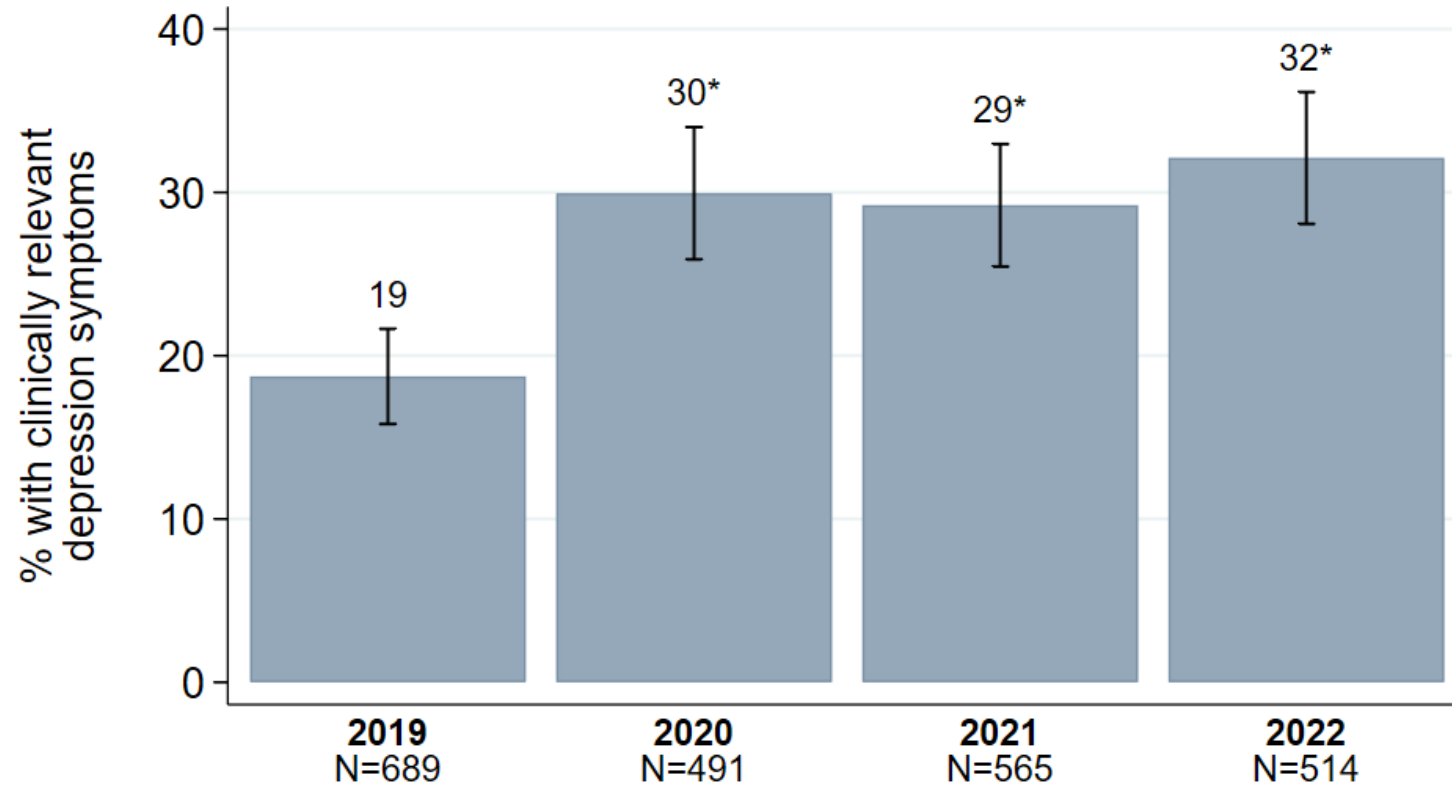
* indicates that proportion is statistically different from 2019 proportion at 0.05 level.

About half of teachers reported food insecurity across all years.



Note: Error bars reflect 95% CI.
* indicates that proportion is statistically different from 2019 proportion at 0.05 level.

Prevalence of depression increased sharply from pre-pandemic levels.



Notes: Error bars reflect 95% CI. Clinically relevant is defined as a score of 8 or above across the 7 Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CESD) scale items asked on the survey. Scores are adjusted based on the number of scale items answered.

* indicates that proportion is statistically different from 2019 proportion at 0.05 level.

Discussion

- Financial insecurity, food insecurity, and symptoms of depression were the same or higher in 2022 than they were both prior to COVID and in 2020.
- Increases in financial hardship align with trends in wages, which declined 4% in real value from 2020 to 2022 amid high inflation.
- Patterns are troubling for teachers and children/families they serve—teachers' emotional wellbeing is connected to both retention and quality of care (Grant, Jeon, & Buettner, 2019; Kwon et al., 2019).
- Findings could underestimate the problem given center characteristics.

Discussion

- Virginia has made significant investments in financial support for child care teachers—RecognizeB5 and increased subsidy reimbursement rates are notable examples.
- It will be important to continue to track how teachers' compensation and wellbeing change as these initiatives take root and expand.
- Should not expect large changes in wellbeing with small changes in wages.
- Beyond increased compensation, teachers may benefit from mental health screenings and other mental health resources, as well as increased access to other professional supports to help them to cope with job stressors.

Thank you!

www.see-partnerships.com



Sample characteristics in each survey period

	2019 <i>N=718</i>	2020 <i>N=506</i>	2021 <i>N=591</i>	2022 <i>N=558</i>
Response rate	71%	68%	62%	59%
Role	71% Lead 24% Assistant 5% Floater <1% Other	75% Lead 17% Assistant 4% Floater 4% Other	76% Lead 16% Assistant 3% Floater 5% Other	77% Lead 18% Assistant 4% Floater 1% Other
Race/ethnicity	20% Black 16% Hispanic 54% White 10% Other/multiracial	19% Black 18% Hispanic 51% White 12% Other/multiracial	19% Black 16% Hispanic 50% White 15% Other/multiracial	19% Black 18% Hispanic 50% White 13% Other/multiracial
Average age (years)	37	41	42	42
Gender	97% Female	97% Female	98% Female	97% Female
Bachelor's degree or higher	25%	26%	28%	26%
Average time in ECE (years)	9	11	11	11
Less than 1 year of teaching experience	12%	0%	5%	6%