


Who Is Providing Lactation Care? The USLCA Demographic Survey Preliminary Findings

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Currently, little data to describe the demographics within the lactation profession in the United States. In May 2019, the U.S. Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) launched an open survey to begin collecting these data to set a baseline and track changes over time. The survey collected information about participants' demographics, work setting, pay, and credentials. As a service to the profession, the initial data have been evaluated and published on the USLCA website and are available for use.

Keywords: lactation care providers; demographics

To better understand the current state, track change, and identify ways to encourage increased diversity of the lactation profession within the United States, the U.S. Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) launched an open survey of the entire profession.

The survey began in May 2019 and included questions pertaining to the demographics of the individual completing the survey, their workplace, and pay.

Survey Design and Goals

The survey was created using an online portal and disseminated widely using social media, emails, and word of mouth. The goal was to begin analyzing the data once there were enough responses to display some trends. At the conclusion of 2019, 346 responses had been collected, so an initial analysis of all 2019 responses began. As a service to the profession, USLCA has published the preliminary results of these data as summaries of common work settings and by lactation credential. A summary of the results is included here, with the entire report available on the USLCA website.

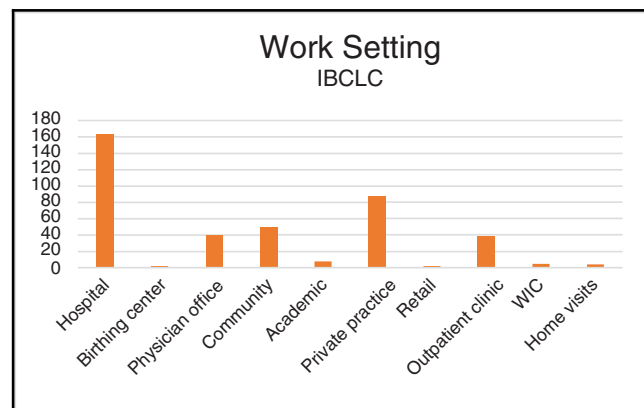
To ensure that all participant information and identities are protected, each field within the survey is optional, allowing participants to submit only the information they are comfortable sharing.

Additionally, no identifying data are requested. Finally, most questions were multiple-choice to avoid identifying

participants by their linguistic style. Some of the questions are sensitive in nature, so it is of utmost importance to ensure respondents feel comfortable participating.

Results

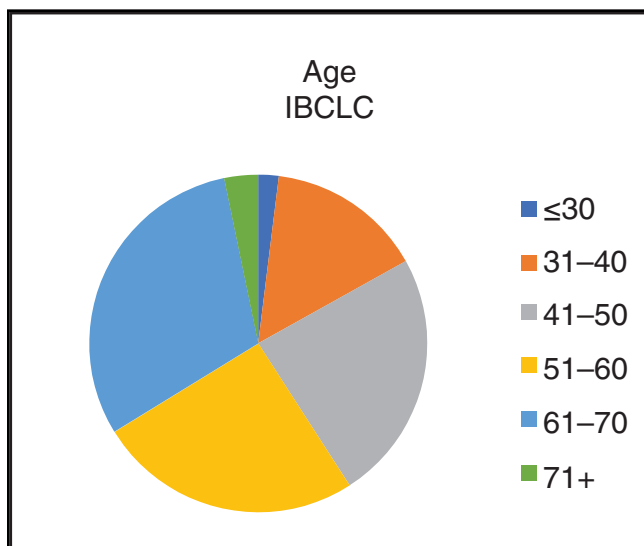
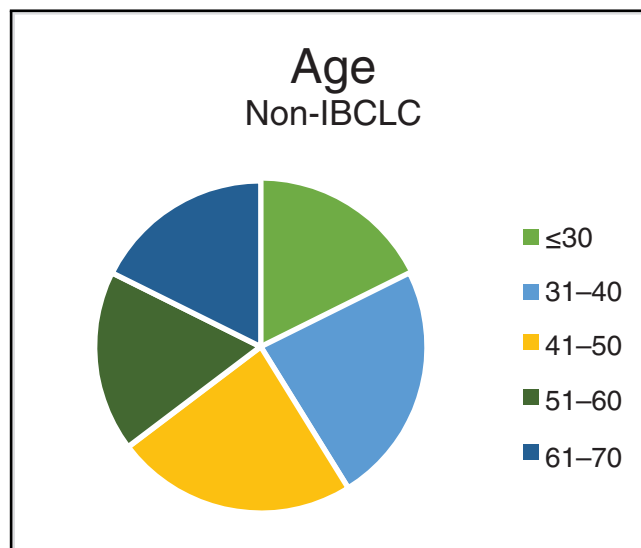
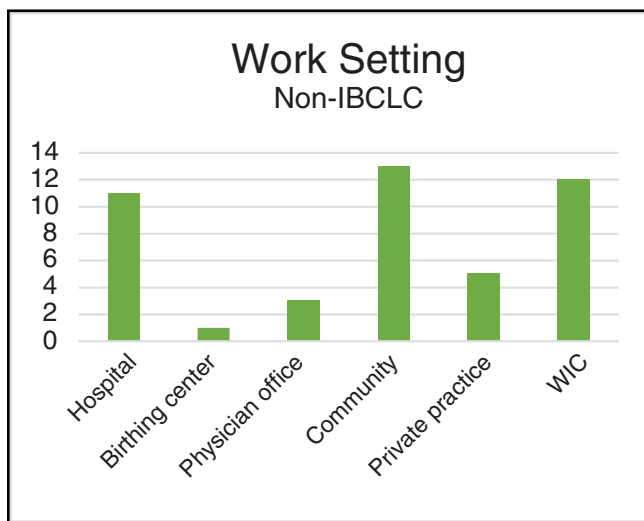
The 346 responses that were analyzed in this first round of data collection consisted of 308 IBCLCs, 34 non-IBCLC lactation care providers (LCP), and four who did not provide their credentials. The IBCLC responses were further grouped into the 163 who work in a hospital setting and 87 who work in private practice. These groupings were chosen as they reflected most of the respondents. Each of these subsets returned trends in education, credentials, gender, race/ethnicity, languages spoken, state where LCPs work, work setting, compensation style, and associated pay, which can be viewed in the charts of the larger report.



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The non-IBCLC LCP category is made up of many counselor, educator, and peer supporter credentials offered by a wide variety of organizations. The IBCLC category reflects those who currently hold the IBCLC credential from the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners. Each of these categories was also evaluated for whether they held supplemental healthcare credentials such as registered nurse.

Provider Race/Ethnicity

One area that has been at the forefront of discussion in recent years is the tremendous racial disparities in the lactation profession. It is crucial to demonstrate the current state in order to track progress being made through diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Based on the current data, the largest percentage of both IBCLCs and non-IBCLC LCPs is made up of those who identify as White. However, the percentage of non-White providers is higher in the non-IBCLC subset. These numbers reflect the need to increase diversity within all areas of the profession.

Provider Salaries

Salaries and pay is another area that needs to be better understood, tracked, and made available. As LCPs of all types advocate for themselves in their workplace, the data related to salary, work setting, and workload all play an important role. Salaries will naturally vary greatly across the country, so the data have been reported as trends across the country for both IBCLC and non-IBCLC LCPs, and by state for IBCLCs.

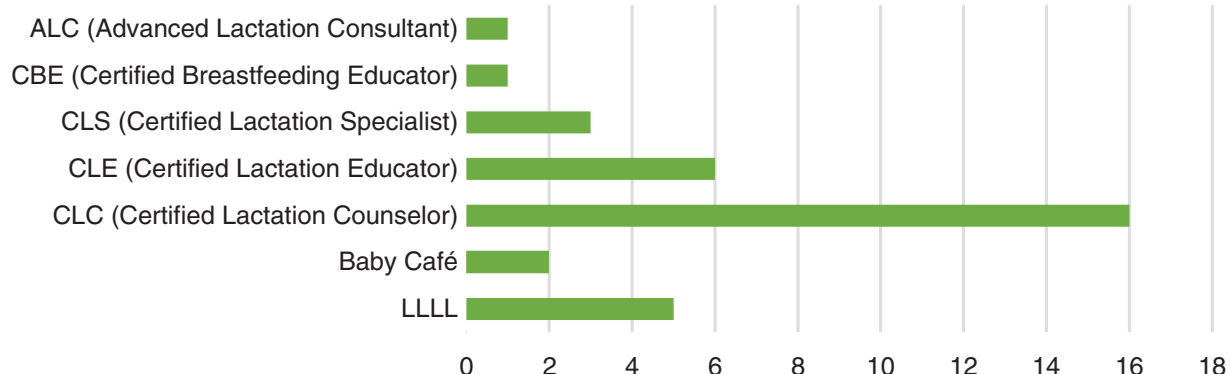
Demographic Differences for IBCLCs and Non-IBCLCs

Provider Age and Credential

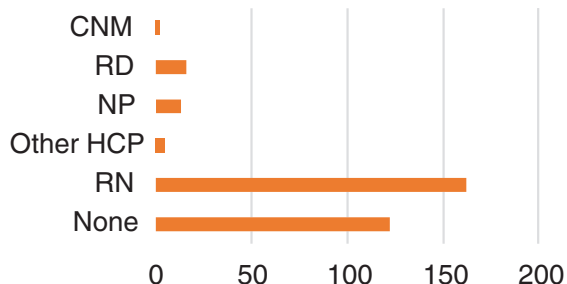
As an overall summary of the findings, included here are results based solely on IBCLC or non-IBCLC LCP credential, highlighting some of the larger visual concepts. As many IBCLC candidates utilize other LCP credentials as a steppingstone to obtain their credential, it is interesting to evaluate the differences between these two subgroups.

Age for the IBCLC group reflects a large proportion between 41 and 70 years of age while the non-IBCLC subset demonstrates a much larger proportion of the under-40 population.

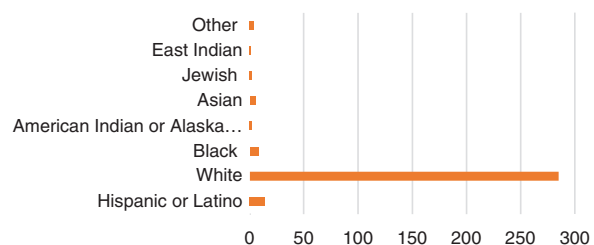
Lactation Education Credentials Non-IBCLC



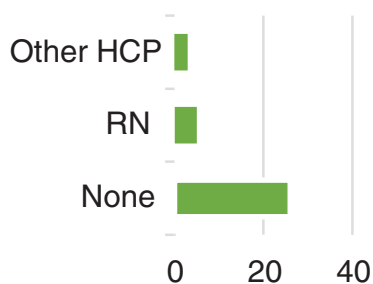
Supplemental Credentials IBCLC



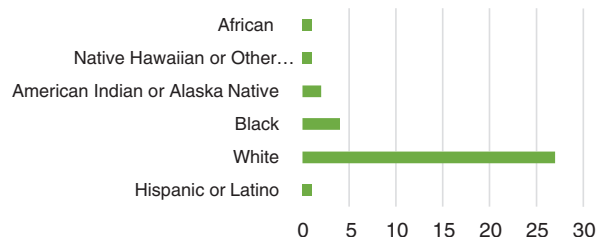
Race/Ethnicity IBCLC



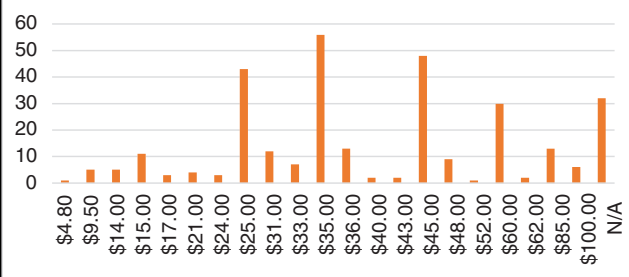
Supplemental Credentials Non-IBCLC

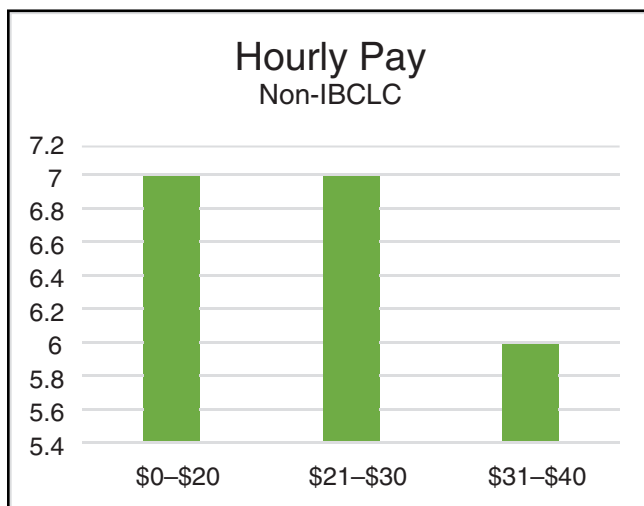


Race/Ethnicity Non-IBCLC



Hourly Pay IBCLC





These type of data are highly sought after in the field of lactation given the lack of information that currently exists. While we understand the need for these data, we also recognize the limitations associated with this small of a sample size. USLCA commits to the continuation of obtaining these data and making them available to those needing them for grant applications, research studies, and other purposes that advance the lactation profession. The survey remains open and available for participation at bit.ly/lcp-demographics.

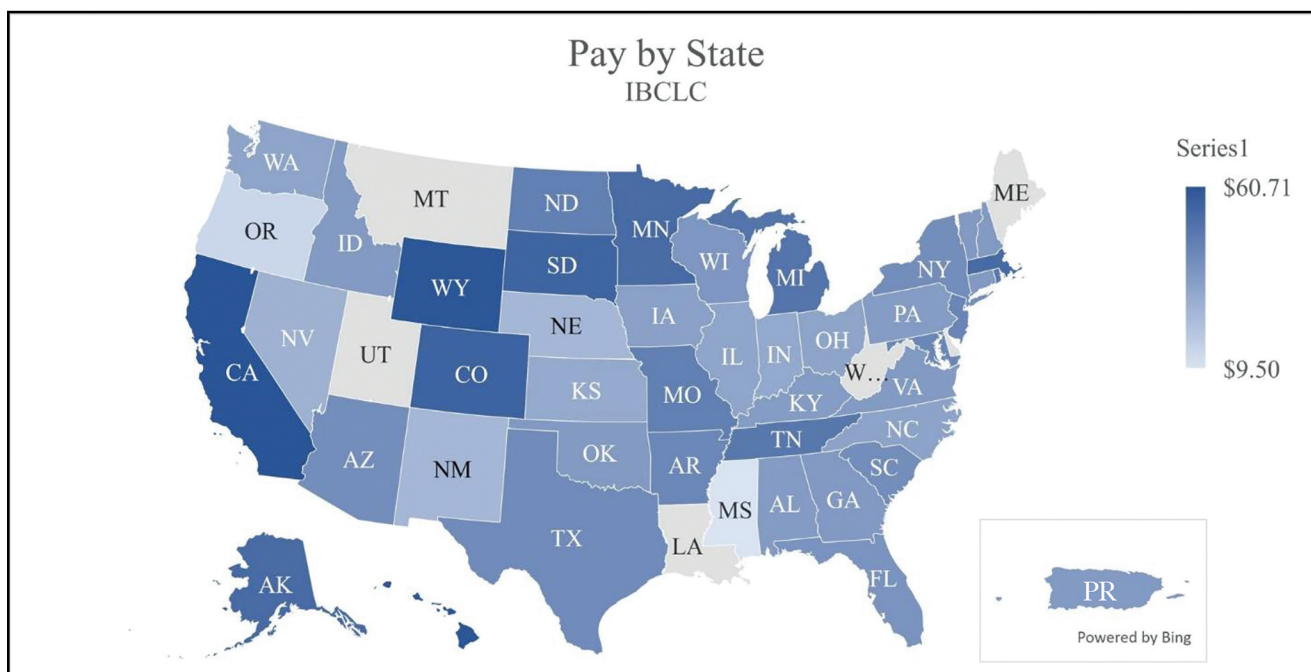
Discussion and Conclusion

Understanding the current state is important when trying to determine how to improve. Most people in the lactation profession are acutely aware of the lack of diversity among their colleagues, but there is little data to support this or track change.

In conclusion, the data demonstrate a number of disparities within the field but also build a foundation to create objective goals for improvement. Increasing diversity within the field of lactation will help increase access for those seeking lactation services. While there is a tremendous need for these data, there are also limitations associated with a small sample size. USLCA commits to the continuation of obtaining these data and making them available to those needing them for grant applications, research studies, and other purposes that advance the lactation profession. The survey remains open and available for participation at bit.ly/lcp-demographics.

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Danielle has served as USLCA's Executive Director since 2014 after leading a continuity-of-care breastfeeding project at a nonprofit in her hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska. Following her bachelor's degree in Nutritional Science and Dietetics, Danielle earned her Master of Public Health. As a focus of her graduate work, Danielle developed a standard of care for telehealth in lactation and fostered an even stronger passion for breastfeeding and the important role of the skilled lactation care. Danielle resides in the Chicago suburbs with her husband and their two young daughters.

Guidelines on Anesthesia and Breastfeeding, Summarized From *Anaesthesia*

The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland published "Guideline on Anaesthesia and Sedation in Breastfeeding Women 2020": <https://associationofanaesthetists-publications.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/anae.15179?eId=0f37ec71-8e06-4318-b9d4-d4da4c453cd0&eType=EmailBlastContent> Published in the journal *Anaesthesia*, the guidelines state that breastfeeding is acceptable to continue after anesthesia and should be supported as soon as the woman is alert and able to feed, without the need to discard breast milk. In addition, the publication provides evidence-based information on drugs commonly used during anesthesia so that professionals can undertake a risk-benefit discussion with breastfeeding patients.

Podcast on Partnership and Trust, Summarized From Collective Impact Forum

The Collective Impact Forum released a podcast episode titled "Building Trust among Partners and Sharing Credit." The podcast includes a roundtable discussion with Collective Impact Forum staff and partners on supporting and assessing partnerships and sharing credit among multiple partners in a collaborative: <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/resources/building-trust-among-partners-and-sharing-credit?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=0f37ec71-8e06-4318-b9d4-d4da4c453cd0>