

# Explaining patterns of inequality in childcare service use across 31 developed economies : A welfare state perspective <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Van Lancker, Wim & Ghysels, Joris

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## ABSTRACT

Childcare services are increasingly regarded a major policy lever to combat social inequalities in early life. Yet, it was shown that inequality in the use of childcare services is the norm rather than the exception in European and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. As a result, social inequalities between disadvantaged and advantaged children are likely to be reinforced instead of being narrowed. The aim of this article is to conduct a macro-level analysis exploring which welfare state characteristics are associated with inequality in childcare use. We find that government involvement in the availability, affordability and quality of service provision is related to lower levels of inequality in childcare use. The results also suggest an impact of labour market opportunities and parental leave schemes. The findings contribute to a proper understanding of the institutional mechanisms underlying inequality in childcare service use.

**Region:** International <sup>[3]</sup>

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