

International childcare report: Mapping the deserts ^[1]

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Excerpt

Executive summary

We know that reliable access to childcare is critical to families around the world. It helps support parents to participate in the workforce, which results in enormous economic and social advantages.

Global research confirms that children build invaluable skills in the first five years of life. From language, to social, emotional and cognitive development, this crucial period of intense growth informs later outcomes.

Right now, nations around the world are embarking on new policies designed to increase the supply and accessibility of childcare. Despite the intense policy focus, there are lots of gaps in our understanding.

For instance, what is the best way to expand provision and improve accessibility when many nations are yet to have a clear understanding about how much, or how little, childcare is currently available?

International childcare: Mapping the deserts, the world-first study by Australia's Victoria University (VU), pinpoints access to childcare in nine developed nations with different approaches to childcare. The study determines relative accessibility to childcare for more than 10 million children, analysing data from England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Netherlands, France, Norway, Sweden, and Australia.

Led by VU's Mitchell Institute, the findings reveal that when it comes to accessing childcare, where you live matters. This report clearly shows – down to a street level - neighbourhoods that have the best access and those with the worst.

From a policy perspective, International childcare: Mapping the deserts will help shape important decisions as countries expand and improve current service levels.

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