

Education at a Glance 2016^[1]

OECD Indicators

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AVAILABILITY

Full report available to read or download online^[2]

Overview

Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators offers a rich, comparable and up-to-date array of indicators that reflects a consensus among professionals on how to measure the current state of education internationally. The indicators provide information on the human and financial resources invested in education, how education and learning systems operate and evolve, and the returns to investments in education. The indicators are organised thematically, and each is accompanied by information on the policy context and an interpretation of the data. The education indicators are presented within an organising framework that:

- distinguishes between the actors in education systems: individual learners and teachers, instructional settings and learning environments, education service providers, and the education system as a whole
- groups the indicators according to whether they address learning outcomes for individuals or countries, policy levers or circumstances that shape these outcomes, or to antecedents or constraints that put policy choices into context
- identifies the policy issues to which the indicators relate, with three major categories distinguishing between the quality of education outcomes and education opportunities, issues of equity in education outcomes and opportunities, and the adequacy and effectiveness of resource management.

Indicator C2 on page 298 considers how early childhood education systems differ around the world.

Context

As parents are more likely to be in the workforce today, there is a growing need for early childhood education. In addition, there is increasing awareness of the key role that early childhood education plays for children's well-being and cognitive and social-emotional development. As a result, ensuring the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) has become a policy priority in many countries.

Enrolling children in early childhood education can also mitigate social inequalities and promote better student outcomes overall. Many of the inequalities found in education systems are already evident when children enter formal schooling and persist (or increase) as they progress through the school system. In addition, pre-primary education helps to prepare children to enter and succeed in formal schooling.

There are many different ECEC systems and structures within OECD countries. Consequently, there is also a range of different approaches to identifying the boundary between early childhood education and childcare (see the Definitions section at the end of this indicator). These differences should be taken into account when drawing conclusions from international comparisons.

Other findings

- Almost nine out of ten 4-year-olds (86%) are enrolled in pre-primary (or primary education for few of them) across OECD countries.
- Some 77% of pre-primary children in European OECD countries are enrolled in public institutions, compared to 68% on average across all OECD countries.
- Expenditure on pre-primary education accounts for an average of 0.6% of GDP, while expenditure on early childhood education development accounts for an average of 0.2% of GDP.
- In most countries, the proportion of children enrolled in private early childhood education is considerably larger than the proportion enrolled in private primary and secondary educational institutions. Thus, more than 50% of children enrolled in early childhood development programmes and one-third of those enrolled in pre-primary education attend private institutions, on average.
- The ratio of children to teaching staff is an indicator of the resources devoted to early childhood education. The child-teacher ratio at the pre-primary level, excluding teachers' aides, ranges from more than 20 children per teacher in Chile, China, France and Mexico to fewer

than 10 in Australia, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden.

- Some countries make extensive use of teachers' aides in pre-primary education, which is shown by smaller ratios of children to contact staff than of children to teaching staff. In Chile, France and the United Kingdom, there is one teachers' aide per each fourteen pupils or less in pre-primary education.

Trends

Over the past decade, many countries have expanded early childhood education. This increased focus has resulted in the extension of compulsory education to lower ages in some countries, free early childhood education, universal provision of early childhood education and the creation of programmes that integrate care with formal pre-primary education.

On average across OECD countries with 2005 and 2014 data, enrolments in pre-primary education rose from 54% of 3-year-olds in 2005 to 69% in 2014, and from 73% of 4-year-olds in 2005 to 85% in 2014. The enrolment rates of 4-year-olds in pre-primary education increased by 30 percentage points or more in Australia, Chile, Korea, Poland and the Russian Federation between 2005 and 2014.

Region: International ^[3]

Tags: physical environment ^[4]

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