# PF3.2: Enrolment in childcare and pre-school

## *Definitions and methodology*

This indicator presents information on the use of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services across OECD countries. Separate measures are used to capture participation by very young children (aged 0 to 2) and by slightly older children (aged 3 to 5). The child's third birthday used as the breakpoint because it is at this age that children are able to move into pre-primary education in most OECD countries (see indicator PF4.1). Four measures are used to capture the use of early childhood education and care:

1. *Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care services for 0- to 2-year-olds*, that is, the percentage of children aged 0-2 enrolled in or using early childhood education and care services. For most countries, data come from *OECD Education at a Glance 2025* and cover all children aged 0-2 enrolled in registered ECEC services. This generally includes children in ECEC services recognised under ISCED 2011 level 0 (ECEC services that take place in an institutionalised setting and that contain an intentional education component, among other criteria) and children in other *registered* ECEC services outside the scope of ISCED 2011 level 0 (i.e. registered services that do not meet the criteria for classification under ISCED 2011 level 0, such as having an intentional educational component). However, exact sources, coverage and definitions differ across countries. See the notes to Chart PF3.2.A and the *comparability and data issues* section later in this document for more details.

2. *Participation rates in early childhood education and care for 0- to 2-year-olds, by disposable income tertile and by mother's level of education.* For this indicator, data for all countries are OECD estimates based on information EU-SILC and cover children using centre-based services (e.g. nurseries or day care centres and pre-schools, both public and private), organised family day care, and care services provided by (paid) professional childminders. This is a broader definition than that used above, and includes children in all kinds of paid-for services regardless of whether or not they are registered or ISCED-recognised.
    - *Disposable income tertiles* are calculated using the post-tax and transfer income of the child's household in which the child lives, equivalised using the square root scale to account for the effect of family size on the household's standard of living. The tertiles are based on the distribution of equivalised disposable incomes of children aged less than or equal to 12.
    - *Mother's level of education* is measured using a two-part variable reflecting whether the reported mother of the child has attained tertiary education (highest level of education attained at ISCED 2011 levels 5-8).

3. *Average usual weekly hours in early childhood education and care services for 0- to 2-year-olds.* Again, data for all countries are OECD estimates based on information EU-SILC and cover children using centre-based services (e.g. nurseries or day care centres and pre-schools, both public and private), organised family day care, and care services provided by (paid) professional childminders, regardless of whether or not the service is registered or ISCED-recognised. 'Average usual weekly hours' refers to the average number of hours 0- to 2-year-old children spend in early childhood education and care during a "usual" or typical week, among those who spend at least one hour in early childhood education and care during a usual week.

**Other relevant indicators**: PF3.1: Public spending on childcare and early education; PF3.4: Childcare support; PF4.1: Typology of childcare and early education services; PF4.2: Quality of childcare and early education services; and, PF4.3: Out-of-school-hours care.

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

Note by Türkiye: The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Türkiye recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Türkiye shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue".

Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Türkiye. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

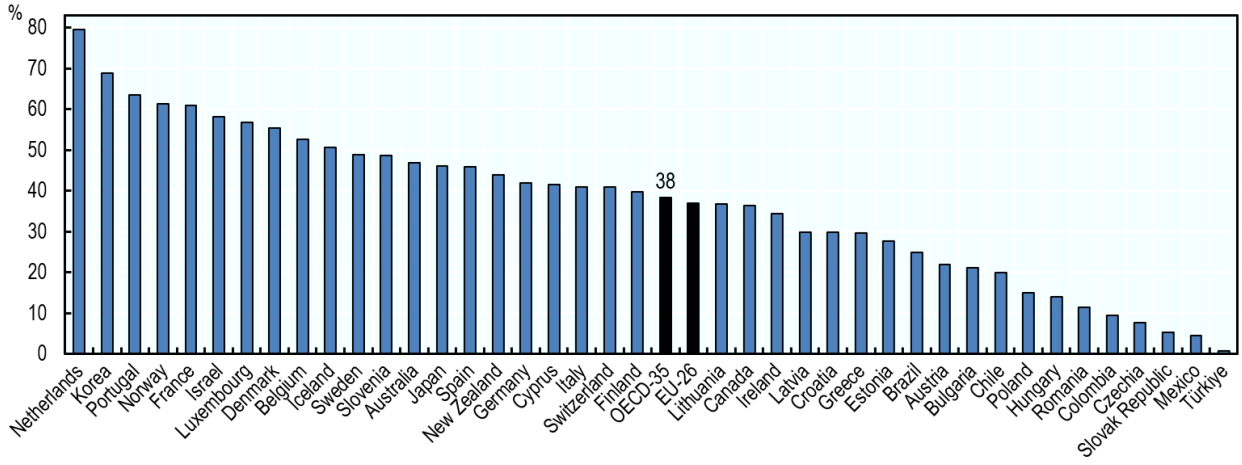
4. *Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care and primary education for 3- to 5-year-olds.* Data for most countries come from *OECD Education at a Glance 2025* and cover all children aged 3-5 enrolled in early childhood education services (ISCED 2011 level 0) or primary education (ISCED 2011 level 1). Data are presented both for the 3- to 5-year-old age group as a whole, and by individual year of age (i.e. for 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds, separately).

### *Key findings*

Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care for 0- to 2-year-olds differ enormously across the OECD (Chart PF3.2.A). On average across OECD countries, 38% of children aged 0-2 are enrolled in early childhood education and care, but this varies from lower than 1% in Türkiye to as high as 69% in Korea, and 80% in the Netherlands. Participation rates tend to be also high at 50% or more in many of the Nordic countries (e.g. Denmark, Iceland and Norway) and Belgium, France, Israel, Portugal and Luxembourg. Rates tend to be lowest in Eastern European OECD countries (e.g. Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic) and Central American countries (e.g. Colombia and Mexico).

## Chart PF3.2.A. Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care services, 0- to 2-year-olds

Percent of children enrolled in early childhood education and care services (ISCED 0 and other registered formal ECEC services), 0- to 2-year-olds, 2024 or latest available



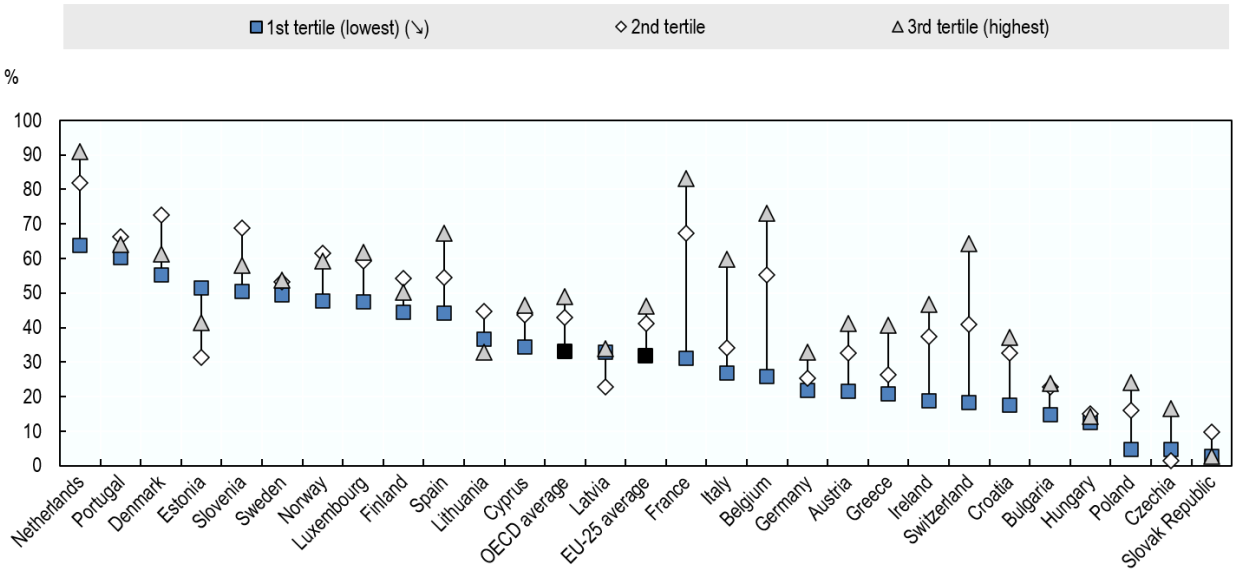

Note: Data generally include children enrolled in early childhood education services (ISCED 2011 level 0) and other registered ECEC services (ECEC services outside the scope of ISCED 0, because they are not in adherence with all ISCED-2011 criteria). Potential mismatches between the enrolment data and the coverage of the population data (in terms of geographic coverage and/or the reference dates used) may affect enrolment rates. For details on the ISCED 2011 level 0 criteria and how services are mapped and classified, see OECD Education at a Glance 2025 Indicator B2 (http://oe.cd/EAG).
Data for Belgium, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania are OECD estimates for 2024 based on information from EU-SILC. Data refer to children using centre-based services (e.g. nurseries or day care centres and pre-schools, both public and private), organised family day care, and care services provided by (paid) professional childminders, regardless of whether or not the service is registered or ISCED-recognised. Data for Hungary refer to 2022; for Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Türkiye to 2023; for Canada to 2025.
Sources: For Belgium, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania, OECD estimates based on EU-SILC. For Canada, Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements::For all other countries, OECD Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators.

In most OECD countries, very young children are more likely to use early childhood education and care services when they come from relatively advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Chart PF3.2.B shows that in many OECD countries, participation rates for children aged 0-2 increase with household income. In Belgium and France, participation rates for children from low-income backgrounds are around 25-30%, but are still less than half of those for children from the richest families (roughly 70-85%). Similarly, in 25 OECD countries, children are also more likely to use early childhood education and care when their mother is educated to degree-level (Chart PF3.2.C). In Switzerland for example, the participation rate for children with a mother that has attained tertiary education is about 25 percentage points higher than the rate for children with mothers that have not attained tertiary education.

Average hours in early childhood education and care also differ across countries (Chart PF3.2.D). In most OECD countries, children (0- to- 2-year-olds) in early childhood education and care use it for an average of somewhere between 25 and 35 hours during a usual week, with an OECD average of roughly 31 hours per week. However, in some countries (e.g. Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal) average hours approach 40 hours during a usual week. In others, such as Czechia, the Netherlands and Switzerland, 0- to 2-year-olds in ECEC are there for an average of less than 20 hours during a usual week.

## Chart PF3.2.B. Participation rates in early childhood education and care by income, 0- to 2-year-olds

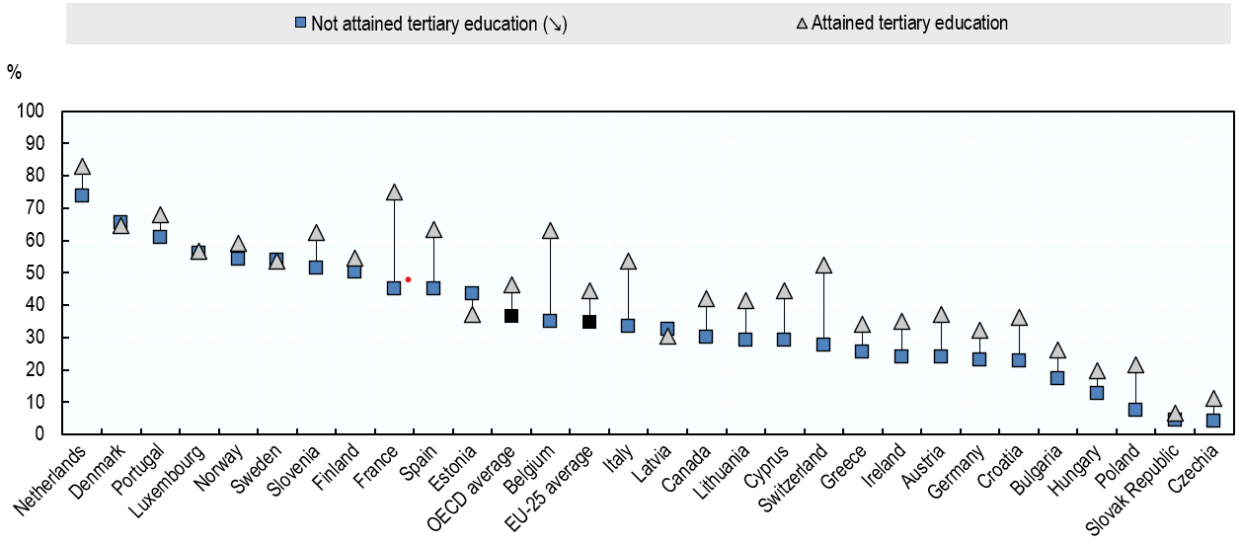
Participation rates in early childhood education and care, 0- to 2-year-olds, by equivalised disposable income tertile, 2024 or latest available




Note: Data for Germany and Hungary refer to 2022 and for Switzerland to 2023. Data are OECD estimates based on information from EU-SILC. Data refer to children using centre-based services (e.g. nurseries or day care centres and pre-schools, both public and private), organised family day care, and care services provided by (paid) professional childminders, regardless of whether or not the service is registered or ISCED-recognised. Please note that, for many countries, this is a different source and definition to that used in Chart PF3.2.A, and while in most cases the two sources produce comparable results, for some countries estimates of overall enrolment can differ. Equivalised disposable income tertiles are calculated using the disposable (post tax and transfer) income of the household in which the child lives – equivalised using the square root scale, to account for the effect of family size on the household's standard of living – and are based on the equivalised disposable incomes of children aged less than or equal to 12.
Sources : OECD estimates based on EU-SILC

## Chart PF3.2.C. Participation rates in early childhood education and care by mother's education, 0- to 2-year-olds

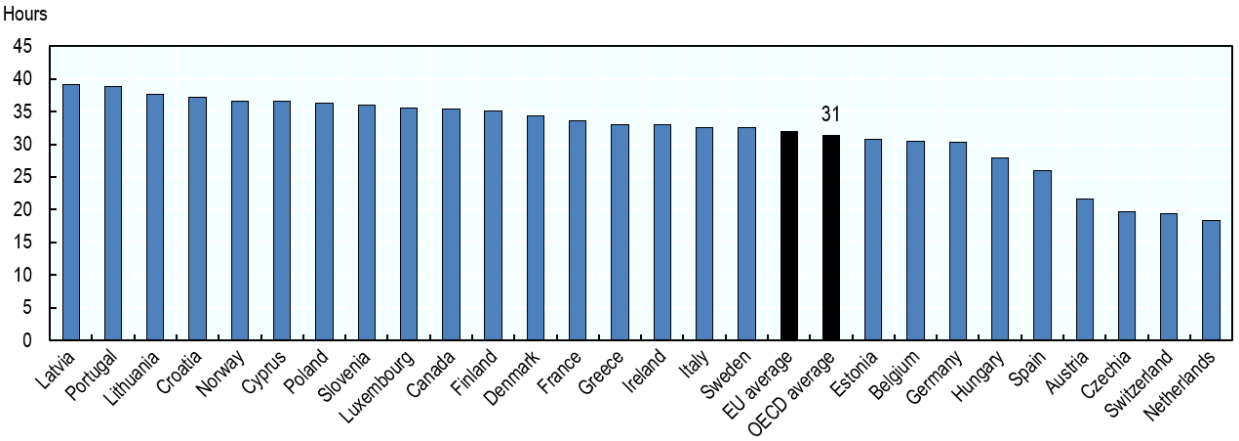
Participation rates in early childhood education and care, 0- to 2-year-olds, by mother's education level, 2024 or latest available




Note: Data for Germany and Hungary refer to 2022 and for Switzerland to 2023 and for Canada to 2025. Data are OECD estimates based on information from EU-SILC. Data refer to children using centre-based services (e.g. nurseries or day care centres and pre-schools, both public and private), organised family day care, and care services provided by (paid) professional childminders, regardless of whether or not the service is registered or ISCED-recognised. Please note that, for many countries, this is a different source and definition to that used in Chart PF3.2.A, and while in most cases the two sources produce comparable results, for some countries estimates of overall enrolment can differ. Mother's education level is based on whether or not the reported mother of the child has attained tertiary education (highest level of education attained at ISCED 2011 levels 5-8). The education level of the female household head is used if there is no mother in the household, and then of the father (or male household head) if there is no mother or female head in the household.
Sources : For Canada, Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements; For all other countries, OECD estimates based on EU-SILC

## Chart PF3.2.D. Average usual weekly hours in early childhood education and care services, 0- to 2-year-olds

Average usual weekly hours for children using early childhood education and care services, 0- to 2-year-olds, 2024 or latest available




Note: Data for Czechia, Germany and Hungary refer to 2022, for Switzerland to 2023 and for Canada to 2025. Data are OECD estimates based on information from EU-SILC. Data refer to children using centre-based services (e.g. nurseries or day care centres and pre-schools, both public and private), organised family day care, and care services provided by (paid) professional childminders, regardless of whether or not the service is registered or ISCED-recognised. Please note that, for many countries, this is a different source and definition to that used in Chart PF3.2.A. For some countries and in some years, sample sizes can be small. Estimates based on fewer than 50 cases have been removed.

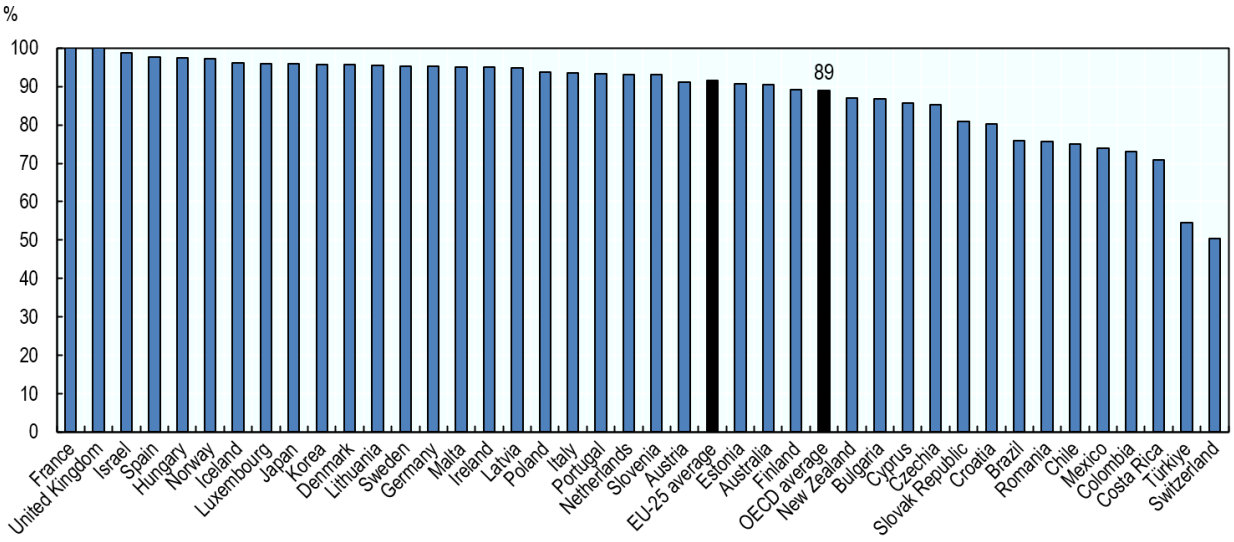
Sources : For Canada, Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements; For all other countries, OECD estimates based on EU-SILC

Enrolment rates for 3- to 5-year-olds are generally higher than those for younger children (Chart PF3.2.E). In the majority of OECD countries close to 90% or more of children aged 3-5 are enrolled in early childhood education and care or primary school, with the OECD average enrolment rate 89%. Again, though, there is variation across countries. In France, Israel and the United Kingdom, enrolment in ECEC (or primary education) is effectively universal among 3- to 5-year-olds – in all three countries, enrolment rates are above 98%. In contrast, in Switzerland and Türkiye, just over half of all 3- to 5-year-olds are enrolled in early childhood education and care or primary school services.

Participation in early childhood education and care or primary school often differ across individual years of age (Chart PF3.2.F). Enrolment rates for 5-year-olds are very high in all OECD countries, at least 90% of 5-year-olds are enrolled in ECEC or primary school. However, enrolment rates for 4- and particularly 3-year-olds vary more. In some OECD countries participation rates remain high across all ages. For example, in 18 OECD countries more than 90% of 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds are enrolled in ECEC or primary education. In others, rates for 3-year-olds in particular are much lower. In Switzerland, the rate for 3-year-olds is just 2%, compared to over 99% for 5-year-olds.

## Chart PF3.2.E. Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care services and primary education, 3- to 5-year-olds

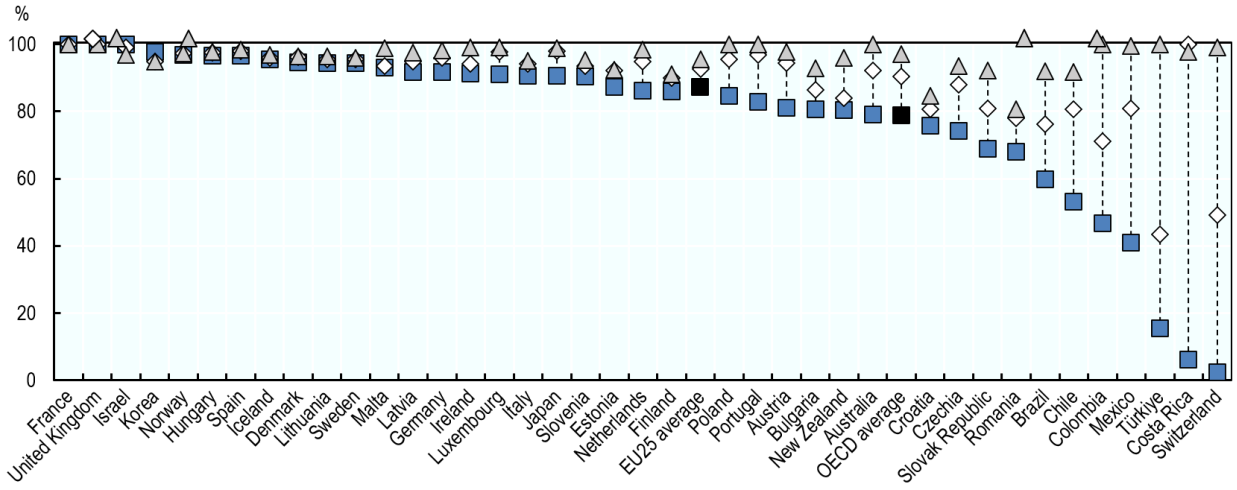
Percent of children enrolled in early childhood education and care (ISCED 2011 level 0) or primary education (ISCED 2011 level 1), 3- to 5-year-olds, 2023




Note. Data include children enrolled in early childhood education and care (ISCED 2011 level 0) and primary education (ISCED 2011 level 1). Potential mismatches between the enrolment data and the coverage of the population data (in terms of geographic coverage and/or the reference dates used) may affect enrolment rates. See OECD Education at a Glance 2025 Indicator B2 (http://oe.cd/EAG) for more details.
Sources: For Malta, Eurostat Education Statistics; For all other countries, OECD Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators

## Chart PF3.2.F. Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care services and primary education by year of age, 3- to 5-year-olds

Percent of children enrolled in early childhood education and care (ISCED 2011 level 0) or primary education (ISCED 2011 level 1), 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds, 2023




Note. Data include children enrolled in early childhood education and care (ISCED 2011 level 0) and primary education (ISCED 2011 level 1). Potential mismatches between the enrolment data and the coverage of the population data (in terms of geographic coverage and/or the reference dates used) may affect enrolment rates. See OECD Education at a Glance 2025 Indicator B2 (http://oe.cd/EAG) for more details.
Sources: OECD Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators

### *Comparability and data issues*

Data on the use of early childhood education and care services for very young children (0- to 2-year-olds) come from several sources. For most countries, the data on enrolment shown in Chart PF3.2.A come from OECD Education at a Glance 2025, which itself collects data from national authorities through the OECD INES Ad-hoc Survey on Early Childhood Education and Care. These data are based on administrative records or national surveys and cover children using registered ECEC services, including both services classified under ISCED 2011 level 0 and other registered services that are considered an integral part of countries' ECEC provision but do not comply with all the ISCED 0 criteria to be considered educational programmes (e.g. crèches in France or Amas in Portugal). To be classified in ISCED 0, ECEC services should:

1) Have adequate intentional educational properties;
2) Be institutionalised (usually centre-based or otherwise institutionalised for a group of children, including institutionalised community-based or home-based services but excluding informal family-based arrangements)
3) Have an intensity of at least two hours per day of educational activities and a duration of at least 100 days a year
4) Have a regulatory framework recognised by the relevant national authorities (e.g. curriculum)
5) Have trained or accredited staff (e.g. requirement of pedagogical qualifications for educators)

(see OECD Education at a Glance 2025 (http://oe.cd/EAG ) Indicator B2 for more details)

However, exact sources, coverage and definitions differ across countries. The exceptions are as follows:

- Data for Belgium, Czechia, France, Hungary, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania are OECD estimates based on information European Union's Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) survey. For France, EU-SILC is used in place of data from *OECD Education at a Glance 2025* because the data supplied by the French authorities cover the child's "primary care arrangement" only and therefore lead to a large under-estimation of enrolment. The estimates draw from EU-SILC cover all children using centre-based services (e.g. nurseries or day care centres and pre-schools, both public and private), organised family day care, and care services provided by (paid) professional childminders. This is a broader definition than that used in *OECD Education at a Glance 2025* and includes children in all kinds of paid-for services regardless of whether or not the services are registered or ISCED-recognised. For the other EU countries, as well as France, we use EU-SILC, since the data in *OECD Education at a Glance 2025* are missing or incomplete.
- Data for Canada come from the Statistics Canada and are based on information from the Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA). SELCCA is used as the source for Canada because the relevant information is missing in *OECD Education at a Glance 2025*Data cover children attending licensed centre-based early childhood education and care services at the ISCED required intensity above.
- Data for the United States come from the U.S. Census Bureau and are based on information from the U.S. Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). SIPP is used as the source for the United States because the relevant information is missing in *OECD Education at a Glance 2025.* Data cover children regularly using organised care (e.g. day care centres, nursery school and Head Start), family day care, and services provided by non-relatives (in or outside the child's home). This is a broader definition that that used in *OECD Education at a Glance 2025* and covers children enrolled in services regardless of whether they are paid, registered or ISCED-recognised.

The use of different sources and definitions may affect cross-national comparisons. In particular, the broader definitions used in the data come from EU-SILC and the U.S. Census Bureau may lead to higher estimations of enrolment vis-à-vis the data from *OECD Education at a Glance 2025*. This is especially likely to be the case in countries with large numbers of children using non-registered services. Where data are available from both sources, comparisons suggest rates are broadly comparable with differences usually ranging around ±5 percentage points.

Data on the use of early childhood education and care and primary education for 3- to 5-year-olds come in all cases from the joint UNESCO-OECD-EUROSTAT (UOE) data collection programme, either via *OECD Education at a Glance 2025* or the Eurostat database. Data are based on administrative data and head counts of the actual number of students participating in educational programmes. The UOE data collection manual gives detailed instructions to national correspondents on the mapping of educational programmes, although on occasion differences in classifications may still exist. However, potential mismatches between the data on enrolments and the underlying population data can lead to overestimated or underestimated figures (for instance, enrolment rates exceeding 100%). For more details and notes for specific countries, see the notes for Indicator B.2 provided in *OECD Education at a Glance 2025* ( http://oe.cd/EAG ).

**Sources and further reading**:

OECD (2024), Society at a Glance 2024: OECD Social Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/918d8db3-en.
OECD (2011), Doing Better for Families, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264098732-en.
OECD (2025), Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://oe.cd/EAG.
OECD (2017), Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276116-en.