

PF4.2. Quality of childcare and early education services

Definitions and methodology

The ‘quality’ of childcare and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services has many aspects, including safety and hygiene standards, the number of staff and the size of groups, the qualifications of staff, parent involvement and compliance with certain educational policies. Given this diversity, the ‘quality’ of ECEC services is difficult to measure, and there is no single indicator that adequately reflects the quality of the service environment and the quality of interaction between staff and children. However, two main types of information are used here to capture certain aspects of ‘quality’:

- **Child-to-staff ratios in early childhood educational development and in pre-primary education services**, that is, the (full-time equivalent) number of children using early childhood education services per (full-time equivalent) member of staff. Although imperfect and restricted to only one single aspect of quality, the child-to-staff ratio gives at least some quantitative indication of the frequency of contact between staff and children. Data cover both professional teaching staff and all contact staff (i.e. both teachers and teaching aides or assistants), with information for the two presented separately. Unfortunately internationally-comparable data are not available for all childcare and ECEC services. However, information is available for pre-primary education services (those classified under ISCED 2011 level 02, targeted primarily at children from age 3 to the start of primary education) and, in certain countries, also for early childhood educational development services (those classified under ISCED 2011 level 01 – services with an intentional education component targeted mainly at children aged zero-to-two). Data for these two levels of ECEC are presented separately.
- **Minimum qualifications required for ECEC staff**, with the required qualifications presented according to the corresponding level of education under the ISCED (2011) classification system in order to promote comparability across countries. Comparable data on the proportion of qualified staff is unfortunately not available across countries, but information on the minimum qualifications for staff gives at least some indication on ‘quality’, even if it remains affected by other factors such as personal aptitude and work-experience.

For further data and information on quality in early childhood education and care, see the OECD Starting Strong series and in particular [OECD \(2017\), Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care](#) and the [OECD Starting Strong Teaching and Learning International Survey](#).

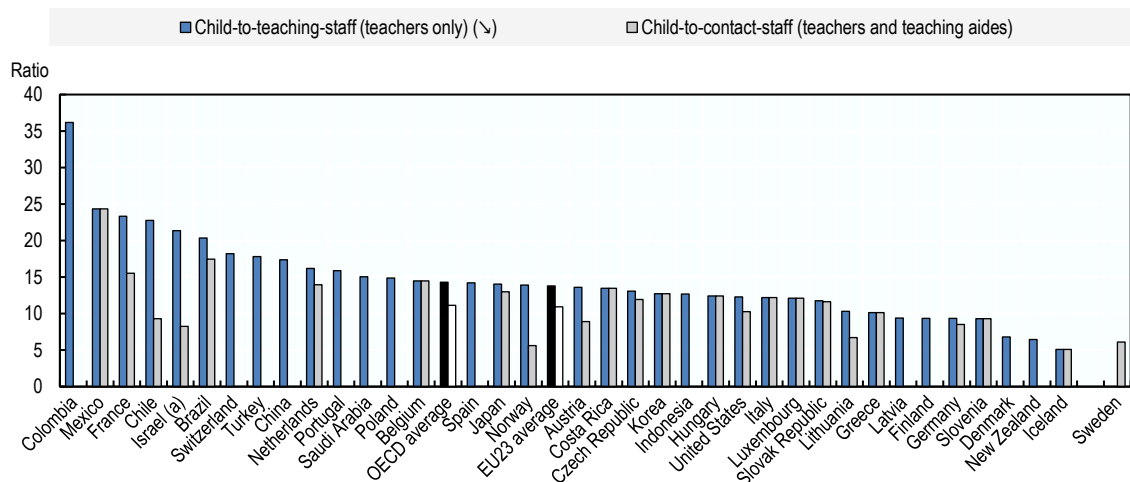
Key findings

Child-to-staff ratios in pre-primary education services differ considerably across OECD countries (Chart PF4.2.A). In 2018, the average child-to-teaching-staff ratio across OECD countries was 14.3 – meaning that there was approximately 14 children for every teacher in pre-primary education – but this varied from more than 20 children per teacher in Chile, Colombia, Israel, France, and Mexico to fewer than 10 in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, New Zealand and Slovenia. However, some OECD countries do make extensive use of teachers’ assistants at the pre-primary level, and in a number of countries the child-to-contact-staff ratio is lower than the child-to-teaching-staff ratio. In some cases the difference is substantial – in Chile, for example, the child-to-contact-staff ratio is less than half the child-to-teaching-staff ratio.

Other relevant indicators: PF3.1 Public spending on childcare and early education; PF3.2 Enrolment in childcare and pre-school; PF3.4 Childcare support; PF4.1 Typology of childcare and early education services

Chart PF4.2.A. Child-to-staff ratios in pre-primary education services, 2018

Average ratios of pupils to teaching staff and to all contact staff (teachers and teaching aides) in pre-primary education (ISCED 02) services (public and private), based on full-time equivalents



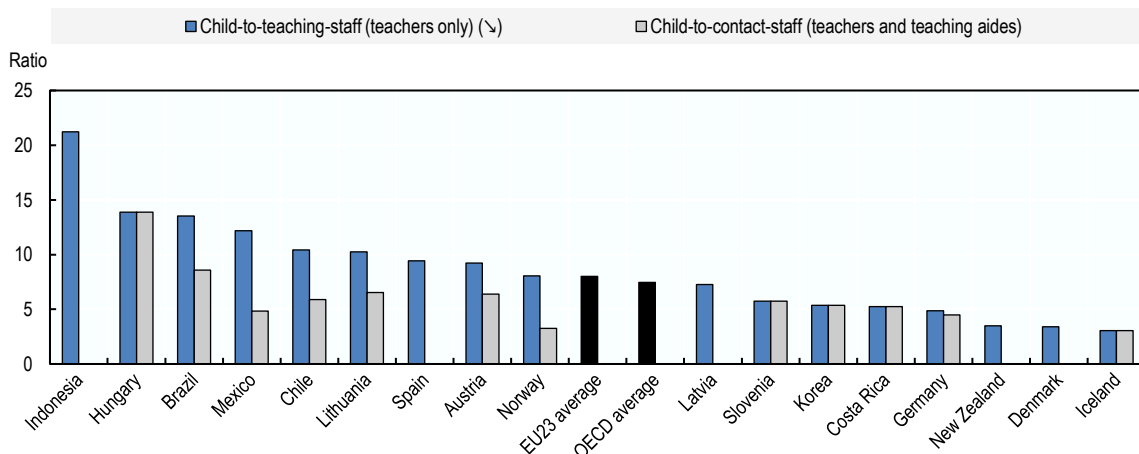
Note: The figures should be interpreted with some caution because the indicator compares the teacher/student ratios in countries with "education-only" and "integrated education and day care" programmes. In some countries, the staff requirements in these two types of provision are very different. Data for Japan not cover day care centres and integrated centres for early childhood education and care. See OECD Education at a Glance 2020 Annex 3 for notes (<http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm?refcode=20190209ig>).

a. The data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Source: OECD Education at a Glance, <https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>

Chart PF4.2.B. Child-to-staff ratios in early childhood educational development services, 2018

Average ratios of pupils to teaching staff and to all contact staff (teachers and teaching aides) in early childhood educational development (ISCED 01) services (public and private), based on full-time equivalents



Note: The figures should be interpreted with some caution because the indicator compares the teacher/student ratios in countries with "education-only" and "integrated education and day care" programmes. In some countries, the staff requirements in these two types of provision are very different. See OECD Education at a Glance 2020 Annex 3 for notes (<http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm?refcode=20190209ig>).

Source: OECD Education at a Glance, <https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>

Information on child-to-staff ratios for early childhood educational development services is available for only a few countries but, where available, data show similar levels of variation across countries (Chart

PF4.2.B). In Denmark, Iceland, and New Zealand, for example, the child-to-teaching staff ratio for early childhood educational development services is as low as 3-4, meaning there are approximately 3 or 4 children per member of teaching staff. In Hungary, the ratio is 13.9. Again, however, in at least some countries, the child-to-contact-staff ratio is considerably lower than the child-to-teaching-staff ratio, indicating extensive use of teachers' aides. In Mexico, for instance, the child-to-staff ratio falls by more than half once teachers' aides are taken into account.

The exact qualifications and levels of education required to work in ECEC differ across countries. Table PF4.2.A summarises typical qualification requirements for staff entering ECEC. In most OECD countries, staff looking to become an ECEC teacher are required to hold qualifications at ISCED 2011 level 6, that is, are required to have qualifications at Bachelors level or equivalent. There are exceptions, however. In Austria, Israel, Japan and Korea, ECEC teachers require ISCED 2011 level 5 qualifications, that is, short-cycle tertiary level qualifications. In the Slovak Republic, workers looking to become ECEC teachers require ISCED 2011 level 3 qualifications (upper secondary education). In France, Poland and Portugal, by contrast, teachers looking to enter the ECEC profession require Masters level qualifications at ISCED 2011 level 7.

Initial education requirements are typically lower for teachers' aides (or similar). In most OECD countries with available data, workers looking to enter ECEC as teachers' aides require upper secondary level qualifications at ISCED 2011 level 3. In some countries, such as Chile, France, Germany and Slovenia, this should be a vocational ISCED 2011 level 3 qualification. In Mexico, workers looking to enter ECEC as teachers' aides need to hold a lower secondary level qualification (ISCED 2011 level 2), but also need to go through additional training.

Sources and further reading:

OECD (2020), Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>.

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>.

Table PF4.2.A. Minimum qualifications for ECEC professionals

Most prevalent ISCED qualification required to enter ECEC profession, total ISCED 0 (early childhood education and care)

	Teachers	Teachers' aides
Australia	..	..
Austria	ISCED 5	ISCED 3
Belgium	ISCED 6	ISCED 3
Canada	..	..
Chile	ISCED 6	ISCED 3, vocational
Colombia	ISCED 6	..
Costa Rica	..	..
Czech Republic	..	..
Denmark	ISCED 6	..
Estonia	ISCED 6	..
Finland	ISCED 6 or 7	..
France	ISCED 7	ISCED 3, vocational
Germany	ISCED 6, professional	ISCED 3, vocational
Greece	..	..
Hungary	..	..
Iceland	..	..
Ireland	..	..
Israel	ISCED 5	ISCED 3
Italy	..	..
Japan	ISCED 5 or 6	..
Korea	ISCED 5	..
Latvia	..	..
Lithuania	ISCED 6	ISCED 3
Luxembourg	..	..
Mexico	ISCED 6	ISCED 2 and training
Netherlands	..	..
New Zealand	ISCED 6	..
Norway	ISCED 6	ISCED 3
Poland	ISCED 7	..
Portugal	ISCED 7	..
Slovak Republic	ISCED 3	..
Slovenia	ISCED 6	ISCED 3, vocational
Spain	ISCED 5 for ISCED 01; ISCED 6 for ISCED 02	..
Sweden	ISCED 6	..
Switzerland	ISCED 6	..
Turkey	..	..
United Kingdom	..	..
United States	..	..
Brazil	ISCED 6	ISCED 3

Note: Early childhood educational and care = ISCED 0; early childhood educational development programmes = ISCED 01; pre-primary education = ISCED 02; ISCED 2 = lower secondary education; ISCED 3 = upper secondary education; ISCED 5 = short-cycle tertiary; ISCED 6 = bachelor's degree or equivalent; ISCED 7 = master's degree or equivalent. See OECD Education at a Glance 2020 Annex 3 for notes (<http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm/?refcode=20190209ig>).

Source: OECD Education at a Glance, <https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>