



Participation in early childhood education

Participation in early childhood education remains high

Indicator Description

Proportion of children enrolled in early childhood education.

Why This Is Important

Time spent in early childhood education (ECE) enhances future learning. It has been found to have a significant relationship to achievement at age 8 and age 10 (associated with cognitive competence score including literacy, mathematics and logical problem-solving measures) for children in the Competent Children Study (Wylie, C. *et al*, 2001). Children's early childhood education experience's were still contributing to their mathematics and reading comprehension scores two

years later at age 12 (Wylie, C. *et al*, 2004). Aspects of early childhood education centre quality appear to have made some additional contribution to age-14 mathematics, reading comprehension, and attitudinal scores (Wylie, C. *et al*, 2006).

When linked to a number of other variables including socio-economic mix, maternal qualification and ECE centre teachers being responsive to children, duration of ECE makes up a component of the overall contribution to children's achievement. This is important because it confirms a range of international research that demonstrates the ongoing influence of early childhood education on children's learning.

How We Are Going

There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of enrolments in early childhood education at licensed services since 1990, with an increase of 49% to 2008. However, the increase in enrolment rates has levelled out over the last five years with only a 5.4% increase since 2004, and 1% growth since 2007. Most of this increase has been for children aged under three for whom enrolment rates have more than doubled since 1990.

The same period has also seen a strengthening of the labour market, which has impacted on enrolment numbers: in a strong labour market parents of young children are more likely to be in work. Early childhood centres that offer flexible hours and require little parental involvement in their sessions offer one solution for working parents looking for childcare.

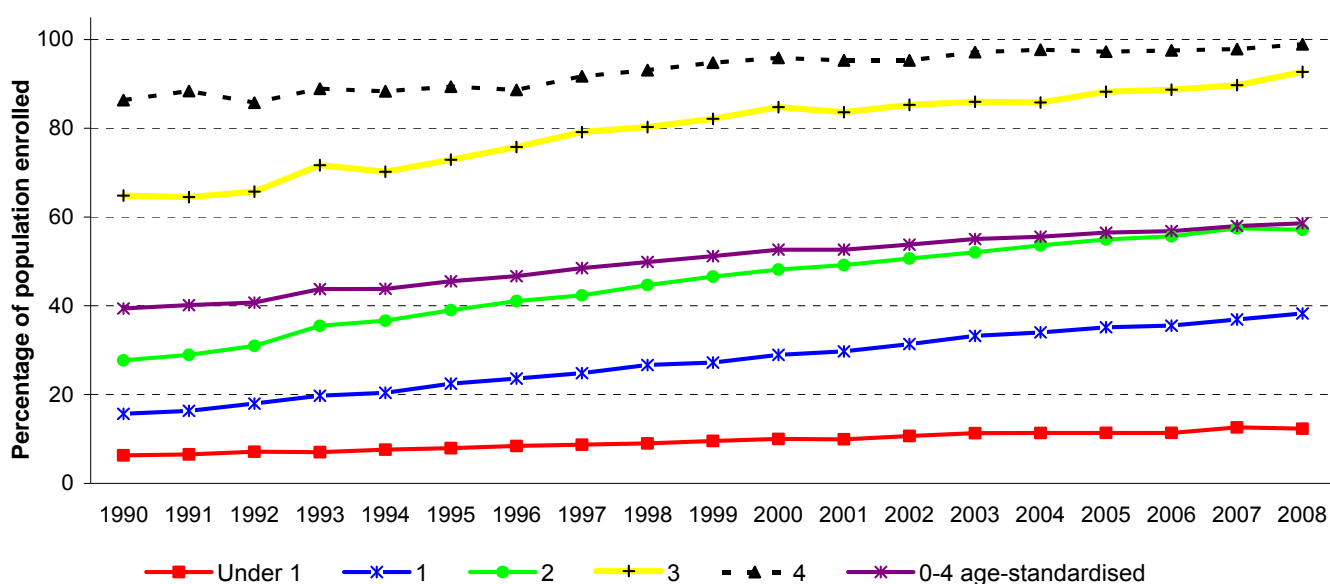
The increase in enrolments in early childhood has been absorbed mainly by Education and Care services, with almost 3 times as many enrolments in 2008 compared with 1990. In 2008 there were just fewer than 98,000 enrolments in these services comprising 55.2% of all enrolments at licensed services. The growth in enrolments in Education and Care services may be

explained by the labour market changes; as Education and Care services, with their diversity of format, offer a great deal of flexibility. There has also been an 8.1-fold increase in Homebased services' enrolments over the same period. In comparison, enrolments in both Kindergartens and Te Kohanga Reo have remained fairly static since 1990, though enrolments at both services have declined in each year since 2004.

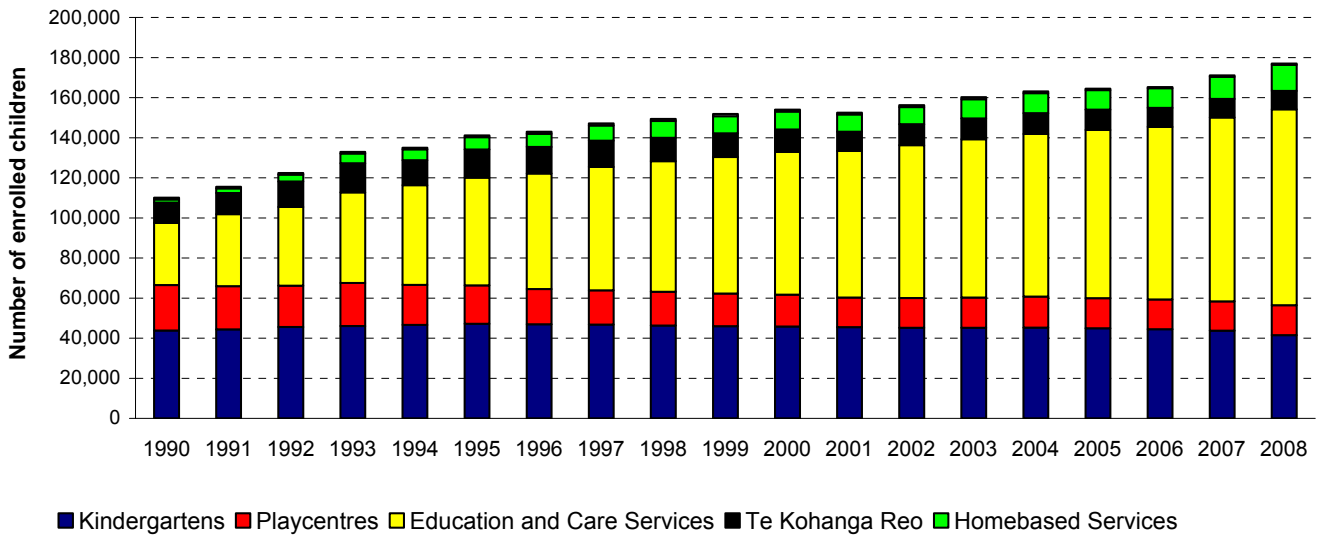
Enrolments in playcentres have decreased markedly over the same period, from approximately 22,700 in 1990 to just over 14,900 in 2008. One possible explanation is that the parental involvement required by playcentres, means that these services are less likely to meet the childcare needs of working parents.

Please note that in contrast to previous years, only analysis of licensed services has been provided in this indicator. This is due to data inconsistencies over time that have been apparent with licence-exempt figures. While licensed enrolments account for the majority of early childhood enrolments, (making up just under 90% of all enrolments in early childhood services in 2008), the enrolment rates in all cases are slightly lower as a result.

Apparent enrolment rates in early childhood education for licensed services, by age (1990 to 2008)



Enrolments in licensed early childhood education services, by service type (1990 to 2008)



Where To Find Out More

This indicator over-estimates enrolment rates in the population because it double- or triple- counts those children who attend more than one early childhood education service. To obtain better information about attendance or access at early childhood education services, consider indicator:

- Waiting times for early childhood education
- Prior participation in early childhood education: new entrants.

To obtain more information about the hours spent in early childhood education participation, consider indicator:

- Hours of participation in early childhood education.

The Ministry of Education has established an Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme to systematically identify, evaluate, analyse, synthesise and make accessible, relevant evidence linked to a range of learner outcomes. Evidence about what works for this indicator can be found in:

- Quality Teaching Early Foundations: Best Evidence Synthesis.

References

- Farquhar, S. (2003). *Quality Teaching Early Foundations: Best Evidence Synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Peisner-Feinberg, E. and Clifford, R. (2002). *The children of the cost, quality and outcomes study go to school*. North Carolina: National Centre for Early Development and Learning.
- Wylie, C., Thompson, J. and Lythe, C. (2001). *Competent Children at 10: Families, Early Education and Schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education and New Zealand Centre for Education Research.
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