

# Waiting times for early childhood education

**The proportion of licensed early childhood education services with waiting times of more than 6 months has dropped in the last two consecutive years**

## Indicator Description

The proportion of licensed early childhood education services with waiting times of more than 6 months.

## Why This Is Important

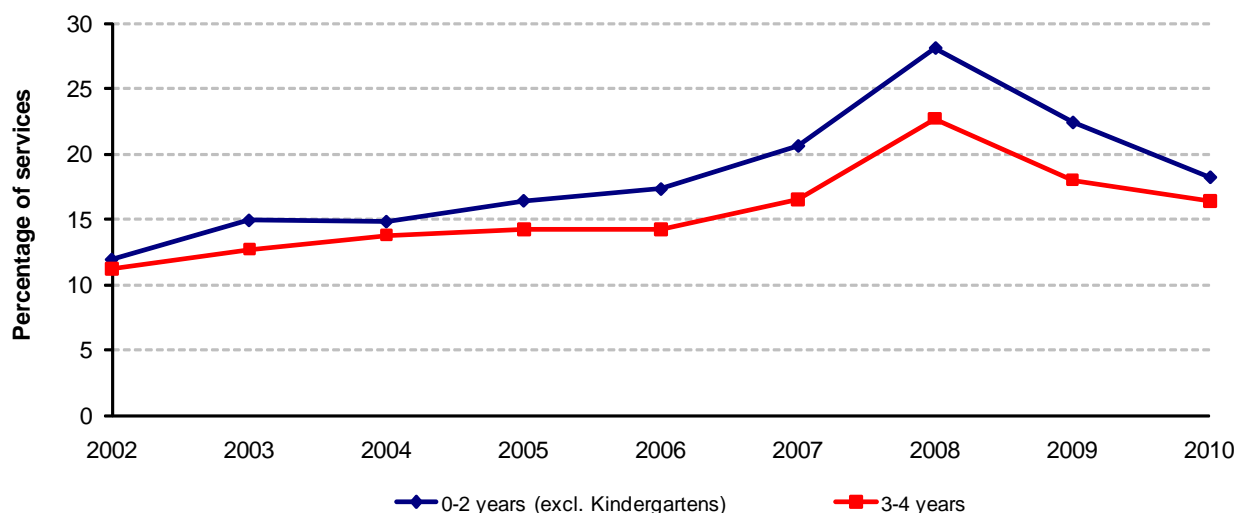
Children who attend a quality early childhood education (ECE) service gain benefits that last through to their early years in school and beyond (Wylie, C. *et al.*, 2006). If children are to participate in early childhood education, they must be able to enrol in a service. Some services may be operating at full capacity and not have any places immediately available for additional

children. These services would need to have short waiting times if children are to have easy access to early childhood education. Long waiting times are a barrier to participation in early childhood education.

## How We Are Going

The proportion of services with long waiting times has been increasing over time, however there has been a significant drop from 2008 to 2009 and a continued drop to 2010, from their high 2008 levels. Nevertheless, the overall proportion increased from 11.9% in 2002 to 18.2% in 2010 for children aged 0-2 years-old; and from

## Percentage of licensed ECE services<sup>1</sup> with waiting times over 6 months, by age group (2002 to 2010)



1. Services in each age group are restricted to licensed ECE services that normally cater for children of that specific age.

11.2% to 16.4% for children aged 3-4 years-old over the same period.

There has been an increasing demand for early childhood education services as indicated by rising participation rates. In recent years this growth has predominantly been absorbed by Education and Care Services.

In 2010, enrolments in Education and Care Services made up 57.8% of all licensed enrolments. The growth in these enrolments may be explained by the labour market changes, as these services offer a great deal of flexibility and require little parental involvement.

From 2009 to 2010, the number of Education and Care Services grew by 8.2%. Enrolments at these services grew at a lower rate. As a result, waiting times in these services have decreased in the most recent year. This contrasts with the period between 2002 and 2008, when the growth in the number of Education and Care services was not meeting the same demand for them as seen by enrolments.

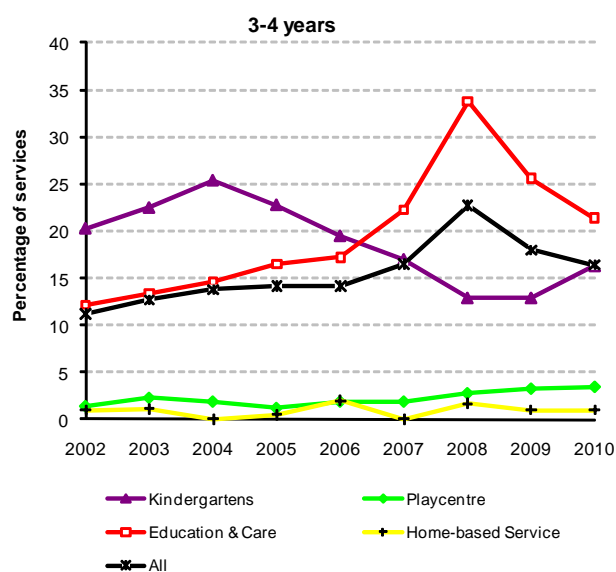
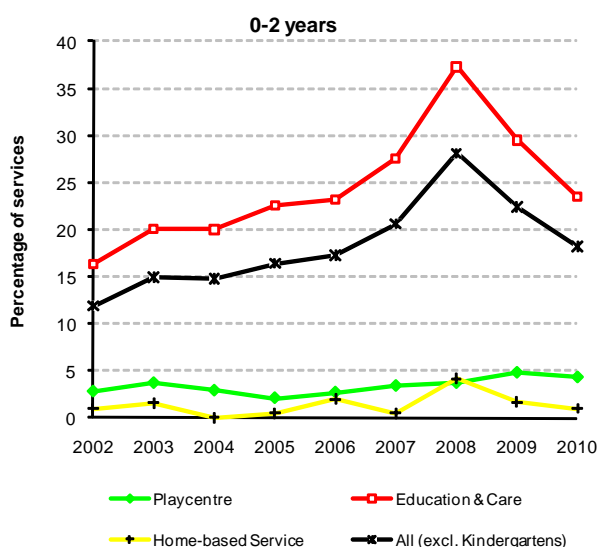
Education and Care Services have the greatest portion of services with long waiting times. Because of their share of the market, the changes in the proportion of Education and Care Services with long waiting times since 2006 have driven the changes for all New Zealand.

The proportion of Kindergartens with long waiting times for 3 to 4 year-olds rose in 2003 and 2004 but has fallen since, from 2008 to 2009 has remained at a constant level, but rose again in 2010. On the whole, Kindergarten enrolments accounted for 20% of all licensed enrolments in 2010. This percentage has fallen since 2002, where Kindergarten enrolments made up 29% of all enrolments across licensed services.

Between 2004 and 2010, the number of Kindergartens grew by 3% whereas the number of enrolments dropped by 17%, putting less pressure on the waiting times in Kindergartens.

Kindergartens tend to give priority to older children in their allocation of places, with very few having 4 year-olds required to wait more than 6 months (less than 1% of Kindergartens).

## Percentage of services with waiting times over 6 months, by age group and service type (2002 to 2010)



Waiting times tend to be relatively short for Playcentres and Home-based Services. In the case of Home-based Services, waiting times refer to the wait for families to obtain a place with one of the caregivers in the network, but families may need to wait longer for a caregiver that exactly matches their specific needs.

### Where To Find Out More

To obtain more information about participation in early childhood education, consider indicators:

- Participation in early childhood education
- Hours of participation in early childhood education
- Prior participation in early childhood education: new entrants

For other early childhood indicators, consider the following:

- Affordability of early childhood education
- Registered early childhood teachers

Statistics on Early Childhood Education are available here:

- ECE (Early Childhood Education) Statistics on Education Counts

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.
- Wylie, C., Hodgen, E., Ferral, H., and Thompson, J. (2006). *Contributions of early childhood education to age - 14 performance: Evidence from the competent children, competent learners project*. Wellington: Ministry of Education and New Zealand Centre for Education Research.