Prior Participation in ECE

Participation in ECE has increased steadily, with 96.7% of children starting school having attended ECE in the year ending December 2016, up from 96.4% in 2015.

Indicator Description

Percentage of children who had regularly attended ECE in the sixth months prior to starting school.

Why This Is Important

Early Childhood Education (ECE) Participation has been identified as a key factor in supporting vulnerable children, which led to its inclusion in the Better Public Services Programme, launched in 2012. This Programme aimed to increase participation in early childhood education to 98% of all new entrants by 2016.

Participation in high quality ECE has significant benefits for children and their future learning ability. Some studies have found that engagement in ECE helps to develop strong foundations for future learning success (Statistics NZ and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010). These effects apply to all children but may be particularly important for building academic achievement in children from poorer communities and socio-economic backgrounds (ibid, and Mitchell, et al, 2008).

ECE has been shown to positively impact literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills well into the teenage years, while other studies have shown that high quality ECE encourages the development of cognitive and attitudinal competencies, and leads to higher levels of achievement and better social outcomes (Mitchell, et al, 2008, OECD, 2013, Statistics NZ and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010, and Wylie et al, 2009).

International and longitudinal studies have also found that participation in high quality ECE can translate into improved longer-term outcomes. Several studies have identified links between participation in ECE and better social and economic outcomes for children when they reach older ages (Wylie et al, 2009). This link is, again, strong for disadvantaged children. Some studies have also identified positive relationships between ECE participation and the affect on wider societal outcomes; for example, ensuring participation in the labour force and in building labour force capability (Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2004).
How We Are Going

There is continuing growth in the percentage of children who had regularly attended ECE prior to starting school (the prior participation rate).

From the 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016, 96.7% of new-entrants attended ECE in the six months prior to starting school.

This was up 0.3 percentage points from 96.4% for the year ending 31 December 2015.

Figure 1: Percentage of children starting school with prior ECE attendance, December 2010-2016
Ethnic Group

For children starting school in the year ending 31 December 2016, prior participation rates ranged from 92.9% for Pasifika children to 98.1% for European/Pākehā children.

Māori and Pasifika children had the highest growth in prior participation rates over the past year. For the year ending December 2016, prior participation rates rose 0.7 percentage points for Māori children, 1.1 percentage points for Pasifika children, and 0.2 percentage points for Asian children. The prior participation rate remained at 98.1% for European/Pākehā children over the same time period.

Māori and Pasifika children also had the highest growth in prior participation rates since 2010; an increase of 6.2 percentage points for Pasifika children and 5.2 percentage points for Māori children.

Figure 2: Percentage of children starting school with prior ECE attendance, by ethnic group, December 2010-2016
Gender

The prior participation rate has increased steadily for both genders. The prior participation rate for the year ended 31 December 2016 was 96.8 for females and 96.6 for males. Since 2010, the rate has increased by 2 percentage points for females and by 2.2 percentage points for males.

*Figure 3: Percentage of children starting school with prior ECE attendance, by gender, December 2010-2016*
Decile

The percentage of new entrant children starting school with prior participation in ECE has increased for all school decile groups.

Prior participation rates for children starting low decile schools have seen significantly greater growth compared to the rates for medium and high decile schools. For low decile schools the prior participation rate rose from 87.3% in 2010 to 94.0% in 2016, an increase of 6.7 percentage points. Over the same time period the prior participation rate for medium decile schools increased by 1.3 percentage points and for high decile schools increased by 0.2 percentage points.

Figure 3 shows that the gap between the prior participation rates for high decile schools (deciles 8 to 10) and low decile schools (deciles 1 to 3) has decreased significantly, from 11.2 percentage points in 2010 to 4.7 percentage points in 2016. The gap between the prior participation rates for medium decile schools (deciles 4 to 7) and high decile schools has also decreased, from 2.3 percentage points in 2010 to 1.2 percentage points in 2016.

**Figure 4: Percentage of children starting school with prior ECE attendance, by decile group, December 2010-2016**
Figure 5 shows that prior participation rates increase as the school decile grouping moves from low to high for children of all ethnic groups. Differences in prior participation rates across school deciles were more evident for Māori and Pasifika children than for European/Pākehā and Asian children.

*Figure 5: Percentage of children starting school with prior ECE attendance, by decile group, December 2010-2016*
Where to Find Out More

For more early childhood information see the indicators:

- Public expenditure on early childhood education
- Affordability of early childhood education
- Provision of early childhood education.

- More information about participation in early childhood education visit the ECE Statistics Participation page on the Education Counts website.
- For a large range of other early childhood education statistics visit the Early Childhood Education statistics pages on Education Counts.

References


