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International Day of Families

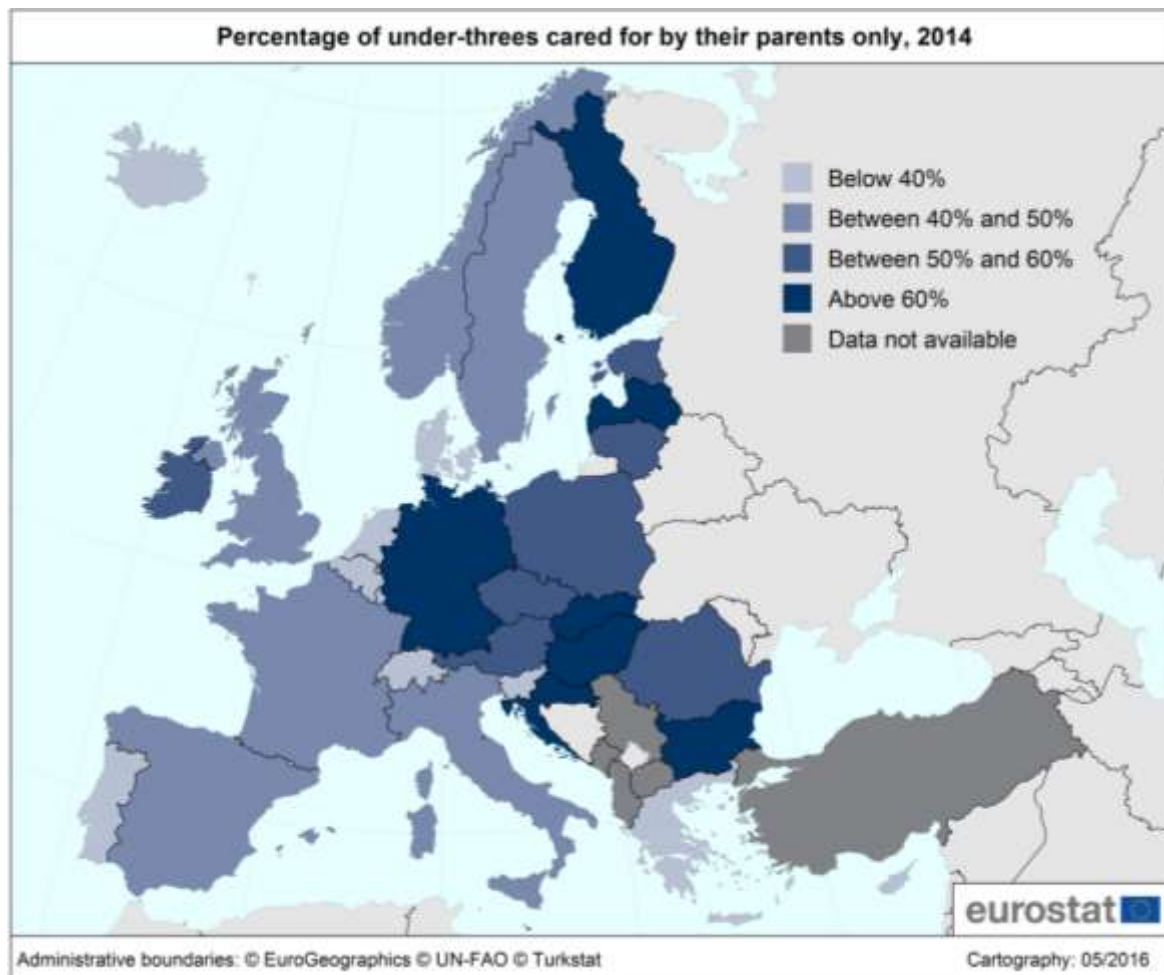
## Half of under-threes cared for by their parents only in the EU in 2014

Out of a total of 15.5 million children aged less than 3

Families make use of different arrangements to care for their children under the age of three (under-threes). Some parents care for their children themselves. Other parents make use of day-care centres (formal childcare), child-minders, grand-parents, other household members, relatives, friends or neighbours (informal childcare) or a combination of formal and informal childcare.

In 2014, the **European Union (EU)** totalled almost 15.5 million children aged under three. Half (50%) of them were cared for by their parents only, while 28% attended at least partially formal care, meaning that the Barcelona target of 33% of under-threes in formal childcare was still not reached. There were however major differences between Member States.

These data are issued by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**, on the occasion of the International Day of Families celebrated each 15 May. Further data on childcare arrangements for children aged up to 12 are available on the Eurostat website.



## Highest share of under-threes cared for only by their parents in Bulgaria, lowest in the Netherlands

Care by the parents only was the main childcare arrangement for under-threes in a majority of EU Member States. There were however big differences between the Member States. The highest proportions were registered in **Bulgaria** (73%), **Latvia** (70%), **Hungary** and **Slovakia** (68% each), while the lowest were recorded in the **Netherlands** (23%), **Portugal** (27%), **Denmark** (30%) and **Cyprus** (32%). At **EU** level, one in every two children aged under 3 was cared for by his/her parents only.

## Barcelona target of 33% of formal childcare reached in 10 Member States

In 2002 at the Barcelona summit it was decided that Member States should remove disincentives to female labour force participation and strive to provide childcare to at least 33% of under-threes. In 2014 this target of 33% of formal childcare, whether exclusively or partially, was reached in 10 Member States: **Denmark** (70%), **Sweden** (56%), **Belgium** and **Luxembourg** (both 49%), the **Netherlands** and **Portugal** (both 45%), **France** (40%), **Slovenia** and **Spain** (both 37%) and **Finland** (34%). Overall in the **EU**, fewer than a third (28%) of under-threes attended formal childcare.

**Childcare arrangements for under-threes, 2014**  
(% of under-threes)

	Parents only	Formal childcare*
<b>EU</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	39	49
<b>Bulgaria</b>	73	11
<b>Czech Republic</b>	60	5
<b>Denmark</b>	30	70
<b>Germany</b>	62	27
<b>Estonia</b>	59	20
<b>Ireland</b>	51	28
<b>Greece</b>	37	13
<b>Spain</b>	49	37
<b>France</b>	41	40
<b>Croatia</b>	65	18
<b>Italy</b>	50	23
<b>Cyprus</b>	32	26
<b>Latvia</b>	70	22
<b>Lithuania</b>	59	23
<b>Luxembourg</b>	35	49
<b>Hungary</b>	68	15
<b>Malta</b>	61	18
<b>Netherlands</b>	23	45
<b>Austria</b>	57	16
<b>Poland</b>	60	5
<b>Portugal</b>	27	45
<b>Romania</b>	55	3
<b>Slovenia</b>	39	37
<b>Slovakia</b>	68	7
<b>Finland</b>	63	34
<b>Sweden</b>	42	56
<b>United Kingdom</b>	47	29
<b>Iceland</b>	32	43
<b>Norway</b>	41	55
<b>Switzerland</b>	31	34

\* Formal childcare, whether exclusively or partly.

The source datasets can be found [here](#) for parents only care and [here](#) for formal childcare.

## Highest rise in the number of under-threes in Ireland, largest fall in Romania and Portugal

Between 2000 and 2014, the number of children aged under three living in the EU remained almost stable, though masking discrepancies across Member States. A majority recorded more under-threes in 2014 than in 2000, with the highest increase in **Ireland** (+34.5%), ahead of **Sweden** (+27.6%), **Spain** (+21.6%), **Slovenia** (+21.4%) and the **Czech Republic** (+20.7%). In contrast, the most remarkable falls were recorded in **Romania** (-21.5%) and **Portugal** (-20.3%), followed by **Lithuania** (-17.4%), **Germany** (-14.1%), **Denmark** (-13.0%) and the **Netherlands** (-11.8%).

It should however be noted that the national trends observed during this time-period were not linear, except in **Sweden** (where the number of under-threes constantly went up), and in **Denmark**, **Germany**, **Portugal** and **Romania** (where a constant fall was observed).

### Under-threes in the EU Member States

	Number of under-threes				Change 2014/2000
	2000	2005	2010	2014	
<b>EU</b>	<b>15 182 311*</b>	<b>15 224 301</b>	<b>16 073 603</b>	<b>15 481 981</b>	<b>1.2%*</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	344 017	342 340	380 762	384 977	11.9%
<b>Bulgaria</b>	198 622	192 955	210 971	200 534	1.0%
<b>Czech Republic</b>	269 558	283 965	358 676	325 254	20.7%
<b>Denmark</b>	201 060	194 434	194 360	174 928	-13.0%
<b>Germany</b>	2 374 553	2 139 164	2 042 457	2 039 731	-14.1%
<b>Estonia</b>	36 690	40 130	47 460	42 299	15.3%
<b>Ireland</b>	161 166	180 940	220 865	216 787	34.5%
<b>Greece</b>	300 453	317 471	336 366	299 734	-0.2%
<b>Spain</b>	1 110 538	1 334 567	1 514 563	1 350 549	21.6%
<b>France</b>	2 253 948	2 326 945	2 394 548	2 362 987	4.8%
<b>Croatia</b>	:	118 955	128 598	122 474	:
<b>Italy</b>	1 577 951	1 641 542	1 685 024	1 592 153	0.9%
<b>Cyprus</b>	27 519	24 538	28 170	28 794	4.6%
<b>Latvia</b>	55 693	61 080	68 512	59 200	6.3%
<b>Lithuania</b>	109 690	87 652	91 375	90 554	-17.4%
<b>Luxembourg</b>	16 644	16 360	17 087	18 597	11.7%
<b>Hungary</b>	287 516	283 590	291 200	268 122	-6.7%
<b>Malta</b>	13 586	11 837	11 903	12 606	-7.2%
<b>Netherlands</b>	597 312	597 919	551 907	527 107	-11.8%
<b>Austria</b>	245 672	238 065	232 689	239 154	-2.7%
<b>Poland</b>	1 181 021	1 055 578	1 245 120	1 137 510	-3.7%
<b>Portugal</b>	336 053	332 619	302 589	267 991	-20.3%
<b>Romania</b>	692 037	649 051	622 623	542 955	-21.5%
<b>Slovenia</b>	53 860	53 099	64 398	65 378	21.4%
<b>Slovakia</b>	171 469	155 565	172 002	172 806	0.8%
<b>Finland</b>	173 574	170 243	179 865	179 244	3.3%
<b>Sweden</b>	269 265	298 996	333 152	343 491	27.6%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	2 122 844	2 074 701	2 346 361	2 416 065	13.8%
<b>Iceland</b>	12 655	12 570	14 382	13 390	5.8%
<b>Norway</b>	178 950	171 115	183 774	182 902	2.2%
<b>Switzerland</b>	236 813	217 687	231 173	246 496	4.1%

Data shown in red represent the lowest value over these years, while those in blue show the peak value.

\* EU aggregate excluding Croatia for 2000. The change between 2000 and 2014 is calculated without Croatia for both years.

: Data not available

The source dataset can be found [here](#).

## Geographical information

The **European Union** (EU) includes Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

## Methods and definitions

**Formal childcare** for under-threes generally refers to childcare at day-care centres. It includes all kind of care organised/controlled by a structure (public, private). This means that the parents and the carer are not the only persons involved in the care, that there are no direct arrangements between the carer and the parents in the sense that there is an organised structure between them (which is often the carer's employers). For example organised family day care, a crèche, ... The place of the care can be a centre or the carer's home (e.g. organised family care). This also includes those qualified child-minders organised and controlled by a structure, even if they are directly paid by the parents, like the 'assistante maternelle' in France.

## For more information

Eurostat [website section](#) dedicated to income and living conditions.

Eurostat [database](#) on income and living conditions: childcare arrangement data are under the folder "Living conditions".

Eurostat [metadata](#) on childcare arrangements.

Eurostat [Statistics explained article](#) on childcare arrangements.

[Barcelona targets 2002](#) on childcare (page 12).

[Eurydice network](#) providing information on education systems and policies in Europe.

Eurostat [website section](#) dedicated to population statistics.

Eurostat [database](#) on population.

[UN website](#) dedicated to the International Day of Families.

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