

Coverage of childcare in the European Union

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Up to now the best source of comparative data on the proportion of preschool children participating in childcare has been published by the OECD. This Flash Report summarises an analysis of the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), which provides a better and more up-to-date source of data. It enables comparison to be made between countries, taking account of full-time equivalent and head count enrolment. There are big differences between these in some EU countries.

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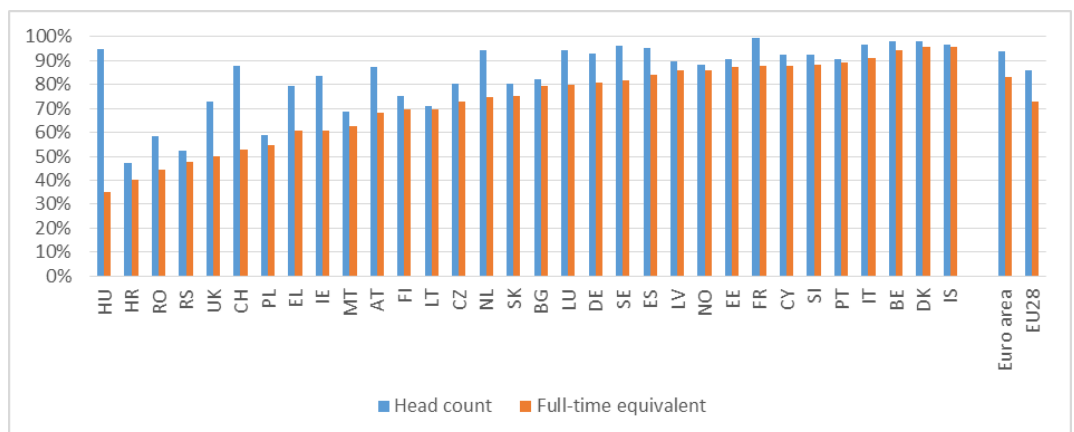
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Description

According to the OECD Family Database, formal early-education provision is on the increase across EU countries, with the majority of children enrolling in some form of education before age 5. The EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) is an alternative source of comparative data. Figure 1 shows the proportion of children aged 3-5 in day care, pre-school or school both in full-time equivalent and head count terms (2013 figures). The UK is towards the bottom of this distribution with 73% in care/education or 50% in full-time equivalent. This indicates that care for this age group is much more commonly part-time than in most other EU countries.

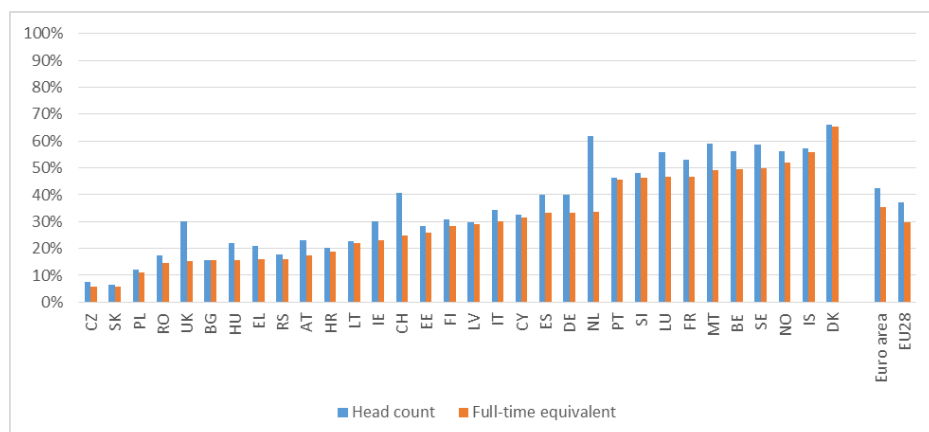
In comparison, formal childcare usage in the EU for children up to the age of two (not necessarily targeted interventions aimed at the disadvantaged) shows wide variations in 2013. Figure 2 shows that nearly 70% of children have used some kind of formal childcare and/or early education provision in Denmark, and less than 10 per cent were doing the same in the Czech Republic. Again, the UK is towards the bottom of this distribution with 30% in care/education or 15% in full-time equivalent. For early childcare services as well, care is much more commonly part-time than in other EU countries.

Figure 1: Proportion of children aged 3-5 in day care or pre-school or school, 2013



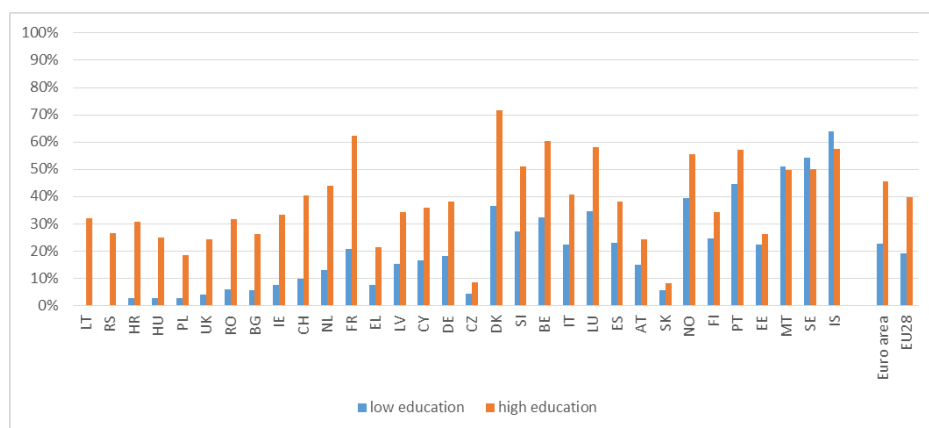
Own analysis of EU SILC (countries ranked by FT equivalent results)

Figure 2: Proportion of children aged 0-2 years in formal childcare, 2013



Own analysis of EU SILC (countries ranked by FT equivalent results)

Figure 3: Proportion of children aged 0-2 years in formal childcare in full-time equivalents, by maternal education, 2013



Own analysis of EU SILC (countries ranked by value of ratio of proportion "high education" to proportion of "low education")

A major advantage of EU-SILC is that it allows computing childcare usage rates by socio-economic position of the household. Figure 3 shows the full-time equivalent formal care use of young children by educational level of the mother.

There is not only wide variation in childcare usage between countries, but also within countries between socio-economic groups. In almost all

countries, children born to highly educated mothers are much more likely to use formal childcare than children born to lower educated mothers. The inequality in formal childcare use is striking in the UK, where children from highly educated mothers are 6 times more likely to be enrolled than children from lowly educated mothers.

Outlook & Commentary

When analysing childcare participation rates, it is important to consider both full-time equivalent and head count rates. It is also essential to look at childcare usage by socio-economic position of the household. These analyses are possible using EU SILC.

Further reading

OECD Family database PF3
<http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>

Skinner, C. (2016). "Early education and childcare", in Bradshaw J. (ed.), *The well-being of children in the UK*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

Van Lancker, W. (2013). Putting the child-centred investment strategy to the test: Evidence for EU27, *European Journal of Social Security*, 15, 1: 4-27.

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