

Early education participation: Getting New Zealand children ready for school

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THE FOCUS

The transition to school is an important milestone for young children with impacts on later developmental outcomes. Transition is more likely to be successful if a preschooler participates in high quality early childhood education (ECE). This includes the amount of time spent reading books at home with parents before starting formal education.

The *Now We Are Four* report from the Growing Up in New Zealand (GUiNZ) study presents initial findings about participation in early education more broadly. To help understand this information, this *At a Glance* provides a snapshot about participation in all early education settings, the home learning environment, completion of the Before School Check and make-up of the children in the study at age four.

We can use the information from the main report as a benchmark to assess which aspects of the early learning environment might be linked to later academic and social outcomes.

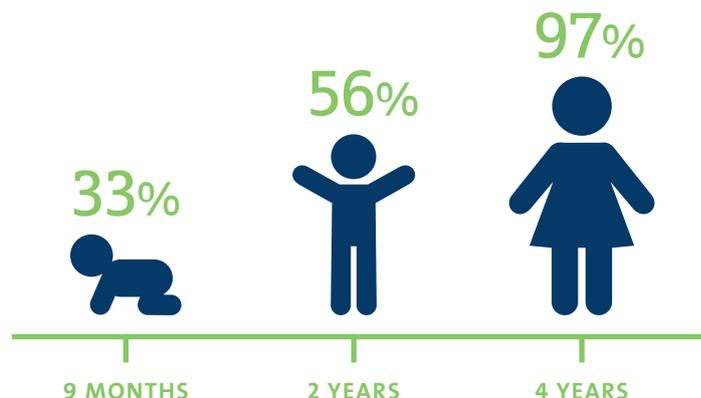
About *At a Glance*

Superu's *At a Glance* series uses infographics to illustrate research findings or key information about a priority topic.



MOST FOUR-YEAR-OLDS HAVE ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

According to GUiNZ data participation in early childhood education increases as children grow older. Almost all (97%) four-year-olds are in non-parental care – an increase from one in three children at nine months.



All data in this publication has been retrieved from the Growing Up in NZ *Now We Are Four* report unless otherwise cited. Some data in this publication vary across different sources.



By age 4

almost all (94%) children in the GUiNZ study receiving non-parental care are

attending an ECE centre or organised home-based care.

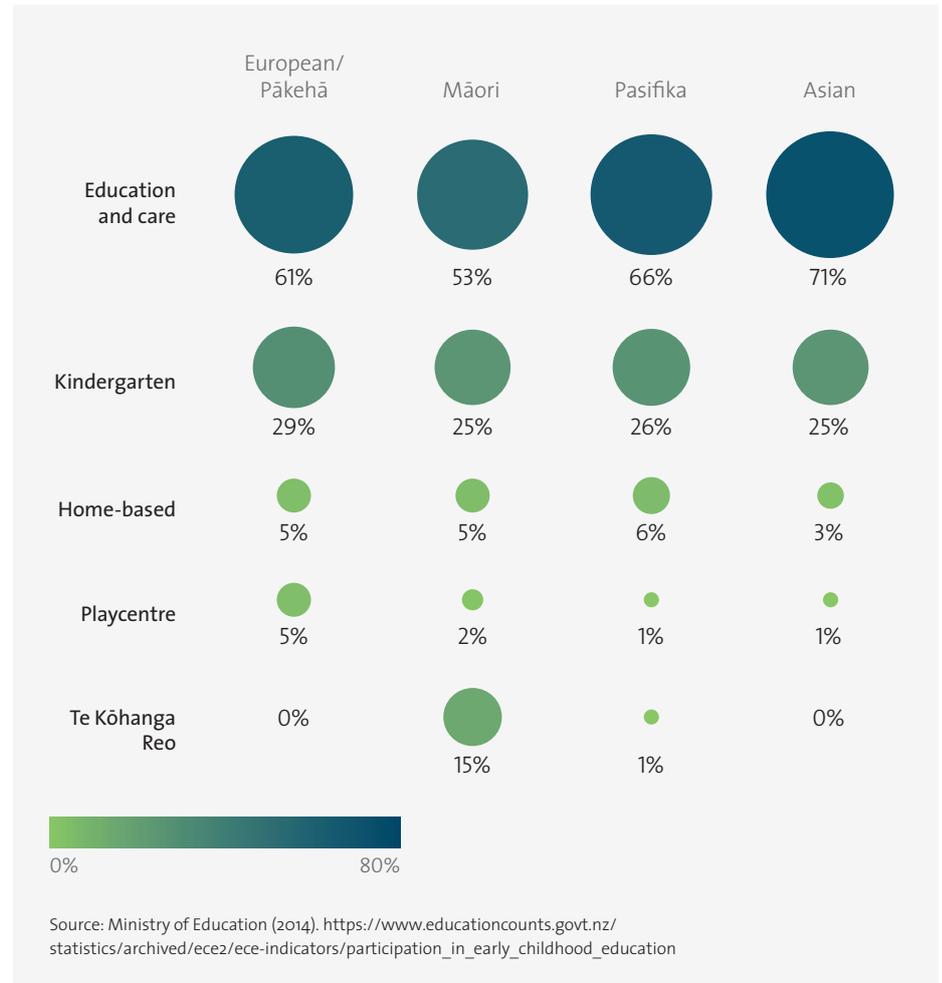


Where ECE is of high quality it has been shown to improve developmental outcomes.



New Zealand four-year-olds attend a wide range of ECE services

- Most four-year-olds across ethnic groups are attending 'education and care' ECE, followed by kindergarten ECE
- 15% of Māori four-year-olds attend Te Kōhanga Reo
- The largest proportion of four-year-olds who attend 'education and care' services identify as Asian
- Four-year-olds are less likely to be in home-based care or in a Playcentre

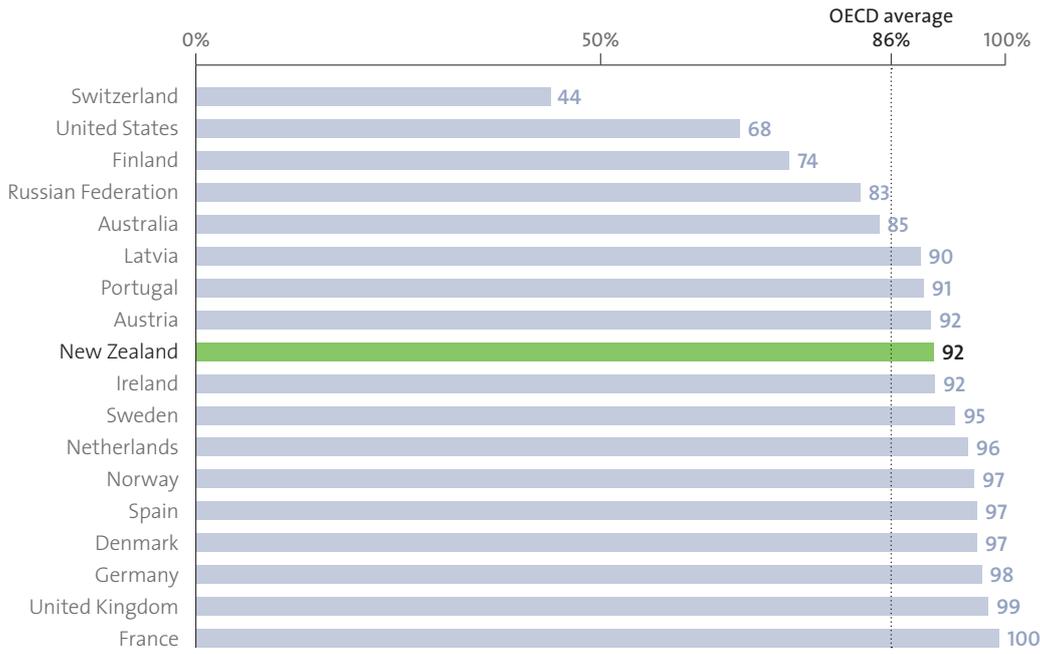


ECE service type categories

- **Education and care services** – These centres run all-day sessions, or flexible-hour programmes for children from birth to primary school age. Some have a particular language and cultural focus, others have a specific set of beliefs about teaching and learning, for example, Rudolph Steiner and Montessori
- **Kindergartens** – Most accept children between 2 and 5 years and can have set morning and afternoon sessions for different age groups. They have 100% qualified and certificated ECE teachers and they work closely with children's families and whānau
- **Home-based education and care** – Home-based education and care is provided for groups of up to 4 children aged birth to 5 years in either the educator's home or the child's home. Each educator must belong to a home-based service, which provides support through a coordinator who is a qualified and certificated ECE teacher
- **Playcentre** – Playcentres cater for children from birth to school age, and are run cooperatively by parents and member families
- **Te Kōhanga Reo** – Offer a Māori immersion environment for tamariki and their whānau, and caters to tamariki from birth to school age.

Source: Ministry of Education (2017). <https://parents.education.govt.nz/early-learning/early-childhood-education/different-kinds-of-early-childhood-education/>

ECE enrolment (age 4) in New Zealand is above the OECD average

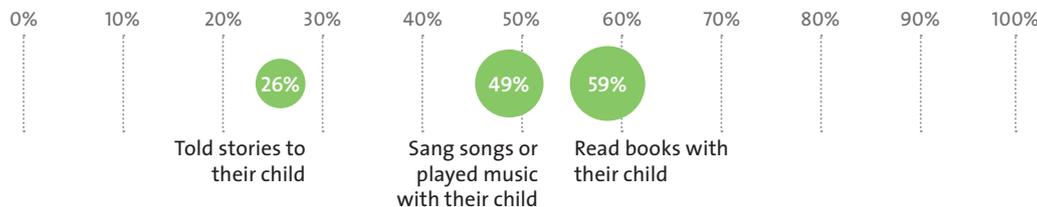


Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016) *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*. OECD

LEARNING AT HOME

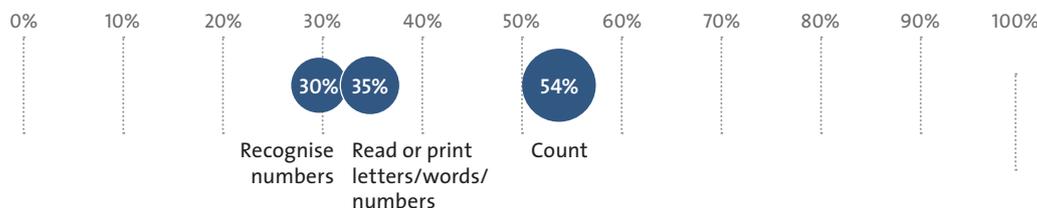
In addition to early childhood learning in a formal setting, the home learning environment is important for preparing children for transition to formal learning at school.

We found that at least once a day mothers from the GUINZ study...



Early numeracy and literacy skills were also developed in the home environment.

At least once a day mothers encouraged their child to...



What is important to parents

when choosing ECE services for their children?

56% n=2902
Convenient location



45% n=2303
Reputation of centre/carers



42% n=2168
Quality of facilities



41% n=2122
Fit with child's learning needs



41% n=2093
Fit with parental expectations



Mothers in the GUiNZ study generally perceived their children as having the necessary social skills to start school



PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS WHO WERE...

...confident that their child would be ready to engage socially with other children at school



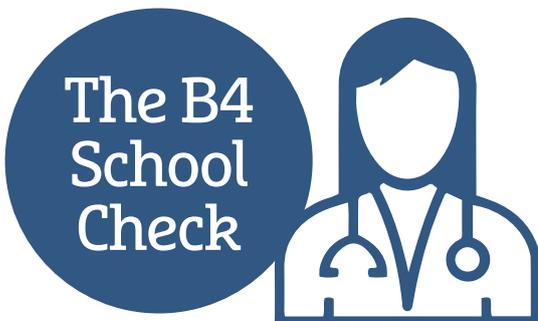
...confident that their child had the pre-reading and writing skills necessary to start school



...concerned that their child would find it extremely difficult to be apart from them while attending school

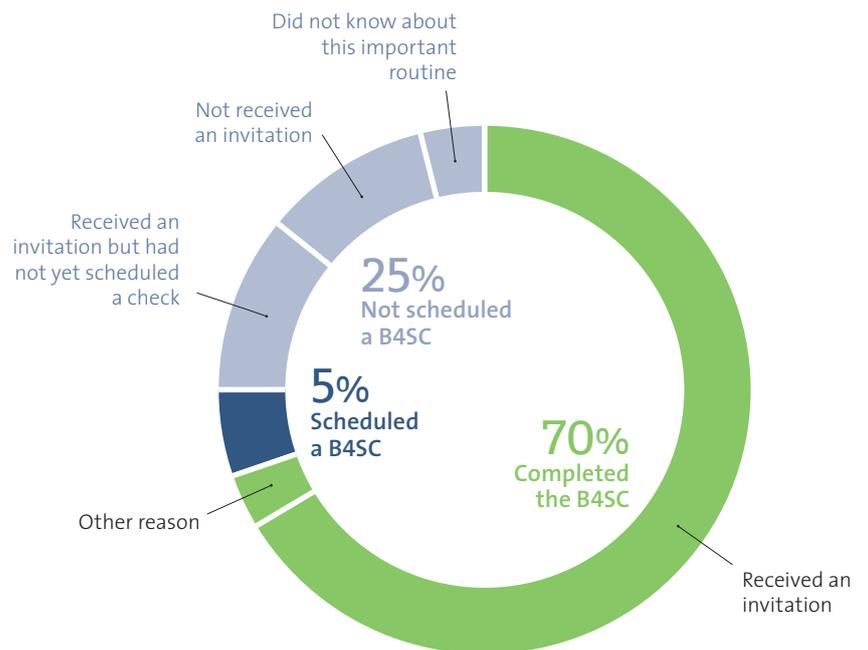


KEEPING FOUR-YEAR-OLDS HEALTHY AS THEY TRANSITION TO SCHOOL



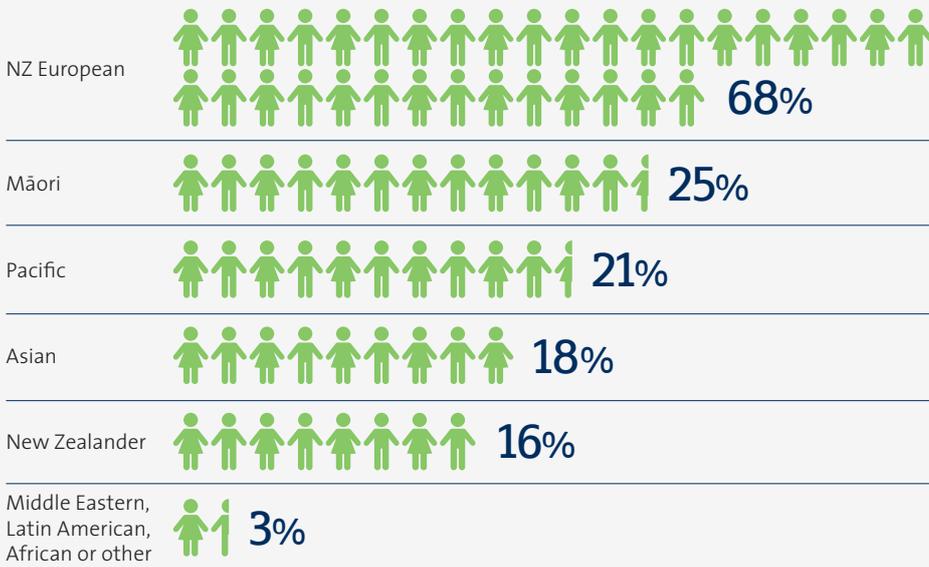
- The B4 School Check (B4SC) is a free health and development check for four-year-olds
- The aim of the B4SC is to screen for any health, behavioural, social or developmental concerns that could affect a child's ability to get the most out of school
- The B4SC includes:
 - Child health questionnaire
 - Hearing and vision screening
 - Height, weight and body mass index assessment
 - Behavioural and development questions using the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) and Parental Evaluation of Development Status (PEDs) tools
 - Oral health screening.

How many children in the GUiNZ study completed the B4 School Check?



CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN IN THE GUINZ STUDY AT AGE FOUR

Ethnicity at four years of age (percentages)

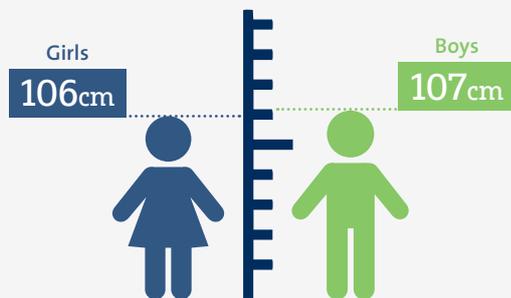


Note that children can fall into multiple categories.

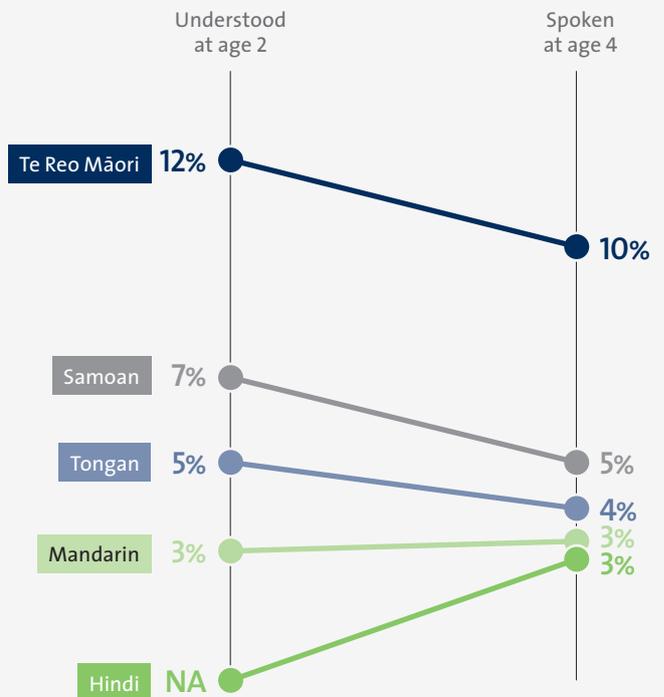
AVERAGE WEIGHT



AVERAGE HEIGHT



Children understand and speak different languages





About Superu

Superu is a government agency that focuses on what works to improve the lives of families, children and whānau.

What we do:

- We generate evidence that helps decision-makers understand complex social issues and what works to address them.
- We share evidence about what works with the people who make decisions on social services.
- We support decision-makers to use evidence to make better decisions to improve social outcomes.

We also provide independent assurance by:

- developing standards of evidence and good practice guidelines
- supporting the use of evidence and good evaluation by others in the social sector.

Related Superu publications:



Growing Up in New Zealand. Now We Are Four: Describing the preschool years.

Source reports:



Morton et al. (2017) *Growing Up in New Zealand. Now We Are Four: Describing the preschool years.* Auckland: Growing Up in New Zealand



Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016) *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators.* OECD



Ministry of Education (2014). https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/archived/ece2/ece-indicators/participation_in_early_childhood_education

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