

Participation in Early Childhood Education

What this is about...

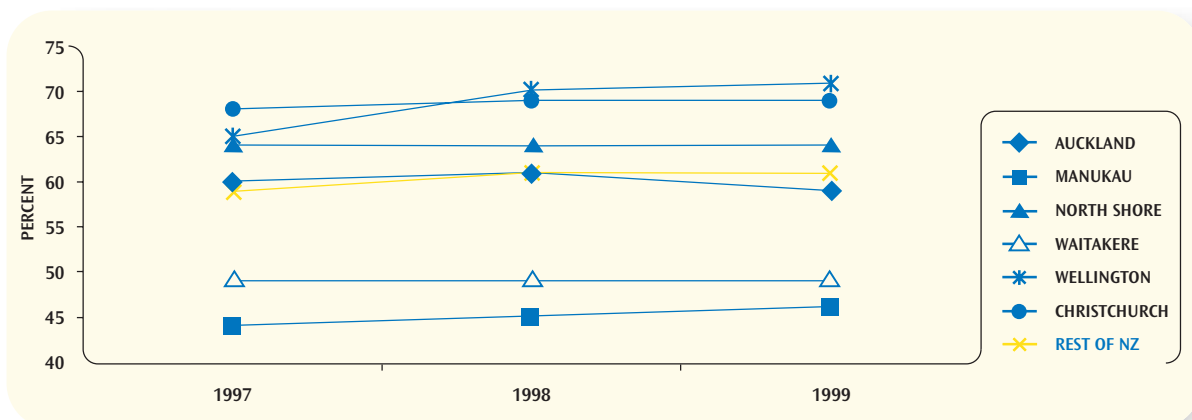
The stimulation of learning at an early age has an important bearing on future educational achievement. Social interaction with other children at pre-schools is healthy and is likely to make the transition to formal schooling easier.

This indicator measures participation rates in early childhood education at state funded pre-schools, as a percentage of the under 5 years population in each city and the rest of New Zealand. A small percentage of children attend private pre-schools that receive no government assistance, and it is difficult to collect statistics on these children as they are not yet legally required to attend school.¹⁰²

What did we find ?

- In most of the six cities, early childhood education levels are stable or increasing slightly. Over the period 1997 to 1999 these were generally around 60% to 70% of the population aged under 5 years, which is average for OECD countries.
- The level of participation for Auckland, North Shore, Wellington and Christchurch Cities was similar to the rate for the rest of New Zealand.
- Waitakere and Manukau Cities were significantly lower than other cities, but both recorded gains in participation rates over the period reviewed. Both of these cities had the highest proportion of under 5 year olds in the 1996 Census.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AGED UNDER 5 YEARS
WHO ATTENDED STATE FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL, BY CITY (1997 TO 1999)¹⁰³



Data Source: Ministry of Education. Includes all licensed services (eg creche, kohanga reo) and license exempt services (eg Barnados Family Care).

It is difficult to link this indicator to educational achievement in later life because of the mobility of students, who may achieve qualifications in other parts of the country. It is also difficult to demonstrate the effect of early childhood participation on educational achievement at primary and secondary school because many other factors come into play, including the quality of the education itself and support of parents and caregivers. However, it is accepted that in the formative stages of growth (up to 8 years old), education and socialisation has a significant effect later in life.

102 It is also possible that some children are enrolled at both a kindergarten and an early childhood centre, and this may lead to some double counting. Participation rates are generally for under five years (children are not legally required to attend school until their sixth birthday, but the vast majority commence on or soon after their fifth birthday) at registered early childhood education centres.

103 Total population figures for the 1997, 1998 and 1999 years are based on medium growth projections calculated by Statistics New Zealand for each year.