

EMPLOYED MOTHERS CHOICE OF ECEC DEPENDS ON MULTIPLICITY OF SOCIETAL FACTORS

Depending on the country, for some people the primary concern is with the well-being of children, socializing children into the society's values, and school-readiness. For others, the primary issue may be that of facilitating or increasing female labor force participation rates (with varying degrees of concern for the consequences for their children) . In many countries, there is interest in the effects of different types of child care arrangements on such diverse domains as child development, school performance, fertility, marriage, female labor force participation, and public expenditures.

The changing roles of women at home and the substantial growth in female labor force participation rates have clearly had an impact on the supply of child care services in different countries. Despite this, as can be seen in Table 1.21, although the countries with the most generous ECEC policies and the most extensive coverage tend to have high rates of female labor force participation, some countries have comparable policies and equally high or higher rates of coverage, yet have lower proportions of women in the work force while others have far less generous policies and higher proportions of women working. Clearly, their policies are responding to other concerns; and contextual factors play a role as well.

Table 1.21: Percent of married/cohabiting mothers and lone mothers, employed in selected OECD countries (most recent available data), and percentage of young children in out of home ECEC (selected countries).

Country	Married/ Cohabiting Mothers (%)	Lone Mothers (%)	Percentage (%) of Children by Age in ECEC (Full Day & Part Day)		Compulsory School Age (years)
			0-3	3-6	
Australia	56	43	--	80	--
Austria	46	58	3	80	6
Belgium	61	68	30	97	6
Denmark	84	69	58*	83	7
Finland	70	65	48*	73	7
France	68	82	29	99	6
Germany	41	40	5	85	6
Ireland	32	23	2	55	6
Italy	41	69	6	95	6
Japan	54	87	21	52	6
Luxembourg	45	73	N/A	N/A	6
Netherlands	52	40	8	71	5
New Zealand	58	27	25	85	6
Norway	77	61	N/A	N/A	7
Portugal	55	50	12	48	6
Spain	38	68	5	84	6
Sweden	80	70	48*	79	7
U.K.	62	41	2	60**	5
U.S.	68	66	26	71	5-7 (varies by state)

Source: Sheila B. Kamerman (2000). *Early childhood education and care: an overview of developments in the OECD countries*, International Journal of Educational Research, 33, pp 7-29. New York: Elsevier Science Ltd

* From age 1, when basic paid leave ends; but all three have supplementary paid and job protected parental or child rearing leaves.

** 3 and 4 year olds, because compulsory school begins at age 5.