

Glossary >

Proportion of children aged 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex

Definition

SDG Indicator 4.2.1: The proportion of children aged 24 to 59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being. The indicator derived from the ECDI2030 is the proportion of children aged 24 to 59 months who have achieved the minimum number of milestones expected for their age group.

In 2015, UNICEF initiated a process of methodological development that involved extensive consultations with experts, partner agencies and national statistical authorities. Over the following five years, both qualitative and quantitative methods led to the development of the ECDI2030.

The ECDI2030 captures the achievement of key developmental milestones by children between the ages of 24 and 59 months.

The ECDI2030 is meant to replace the Early Childhood Development Index (or ECDI) which collects data on the proxy indicator for SDG 4.2.1 that has been in use since 2015. The former ECDI and the new ECDI2030 target different age groups and measure slightly different development domains. Therefore, the indicators generated by both instruments may not be fully comparable and caution is needed when interpreting estimates produced by the two measures.

Data published is based on ECDI.

Data source

In 2015, UNICEF initiated a process of methodological development that involved extensive consultations with experts, partner agencies and national statistical authorities. Over the following five years, a sequence of carefully planned technical steps were executed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to identify the best items to measure indicator 4.2.1. This process led to the development of the early childhood development index (ECDI) 2030.

The ECDI 2030 addresses the need for nationally representative and internationally comparable data on early childhood development, collected in a standardized way. It captures the achievement of key developmental milestones by children between the ages of 24 and 59 months. Mothers or primary caregivers are asked 20 questions about the way their children behave in certain everyday situations, and the skills and knowledge they have acquired.

The ECDI2030 can be integrated into existing national data collection efforts, including international household survey programmes such as UNICEF-supported MICS and the Demographic and Health Surveys.

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Data published is based on ECDI.

Source definition

UNESCO Institute for Statistics
<http://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/08/Metadata-4....>

Calculation method

Number of children aged 24 to 59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being divided by the total number of children aged 24 to 59 months in the population multiplied by 100.

Data required

- Number of children aged 24 to 59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being;
- Total number of children aged 24 to 59 months.

Interpretation

The higher the combined score represented by the indicator is, the higher the percentage of kids ready to start primary education.

Limitations

SDG 4.2.1 was initially classified as Tier 3 and was upgraded to Tier 2 in 2019; additionally, changes to the indicator were made during the 2020 comprehensive review. In light of this and given that the ECDI 2030 was officially released in March 2020, it will take some time for country to uptake and implement the new measure and for data to become available from a sufficiently large number of countries. Therefore, in the meantime, a proxy indicator (children aged 36-59 months who are developmentally on-track in at least three of the following four domains: literacy-numeracy, physical, socio-emotional and learning) will be used to report on 4.2.1, when relevant. This proxy indicator has been used for global SDG reporting since 2015 but is not fully aligned with the definition and age group covered by the SDG indicator formulation. When the proxy indicator is used for SDG reporting on 4.2.1 for a country, it will be footnoted as such in the global SDG database.

Purpose

Early childhood development (ECD) sets the stage for life-long thriving. Investing in ECD is one of the most critical and cost-effective investments a country can make to improve adult health, education and productivity in order to build human capital and promote sustainable development. ECD is equity from the start and provides a good indication of national development. Efforts to improve ECD can bring about human, social and economic improvements for both individuals and societies.

Quality standards

UNICEF maintains the global database on early childhood development (ECD) that is used for SDG and other official reporting. The inclusion of data point in the database is based on a set of objective criteria to ensure that only the most recent and reliable information are included in the databases. These criteria include the following: data sources must include proper documentation; data values must be representative at the national population level; data are collected using an appropriate methodology (e.g., sampling); data values are based on a sufficiently large sample; data conform to the standard indicator definition including age group and concepts, to the extent possible; data are plausible based on trends and consistency with previously published/reported estimates for the indicator.

Types of disaggregation

Disaggregation by child's age is required for this indicator. Additional valuable disaggregation to consider include child's sex, place of residence, household wealth, geographic location and caregivers' education.