



Doing better for children: The first OECD report on child well-being

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Overview

1. The OECD Child Well-Being (CWB) framework
2. Examples of outcomes, drivers and policy levers
3. Policy recommendations

1.1. The OECD framework (and how it differs from that of UNICEF)

Main features

- Selects only policy amenable indicators
- Includes housing and environment data
- Does not lead to a single ranking of countries
- Compares all OECD countries and is more up-to-date

Limits

- Still too adolescent-focussed
- Misses indicators on several key dimensions (child abuse and neglect, mental health)

1.2. Dimensions of CWB:

no country does well across all dimensions

	Material well-being	Housing and environment	Educational well-being	Health and safety	Risky behaviours	Quality of school life
Belgium	11	11	20	25	13	19
Finland	4	7	1	7	26	18
France	10	10	23	20	12	22
Greece	26	19	27	22	7	24
Ireland	17	5	5	24	19	10
Italy	19	23	28	16	11	20
Korea	13	n.a.	2	10	2	n.a.
Luxembourg	3	8	17	5	14	23
New Zealand	21	14	13	29	24	n.a.
Norway	1	1	16	17	4	2
Poland	28	22	8	15	20	15
Sweden	6	3	9	3	1	5
United States	23	12	25	26	15	14

1.3. Selection criteria for indicators within each dimension

Five main selection criteria for indicators:

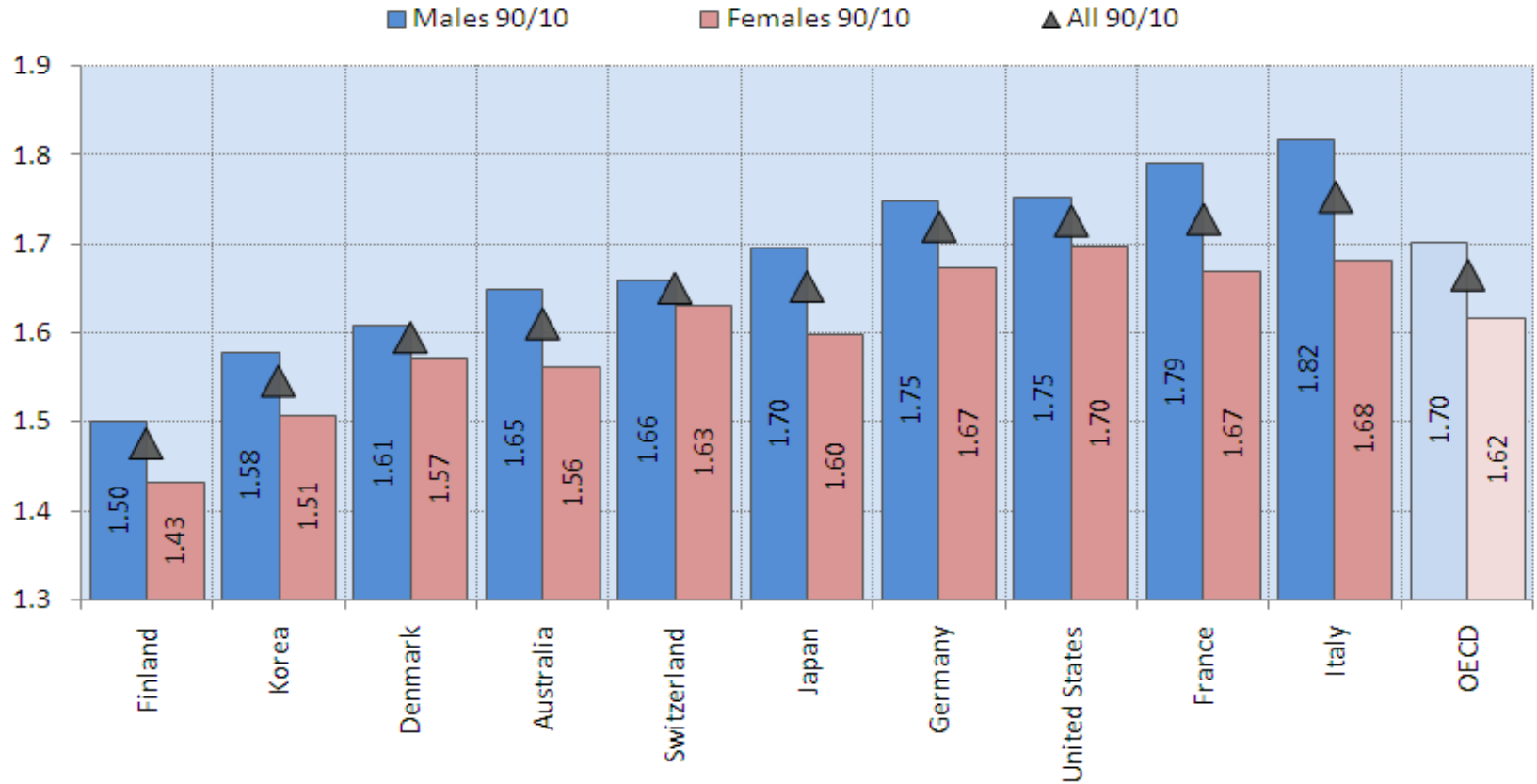
- Child = unit of analysis, not family (age ≤ 17)
- Dimensions relate to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Policy amenable
- Country coverage and up-to-date
- Complementary with different conceptual approaches e.g; equity (spread) and efficiency (average)

2.1. Examples of selected outcomes, drivers and policy levers

Outcomes: educational well-being

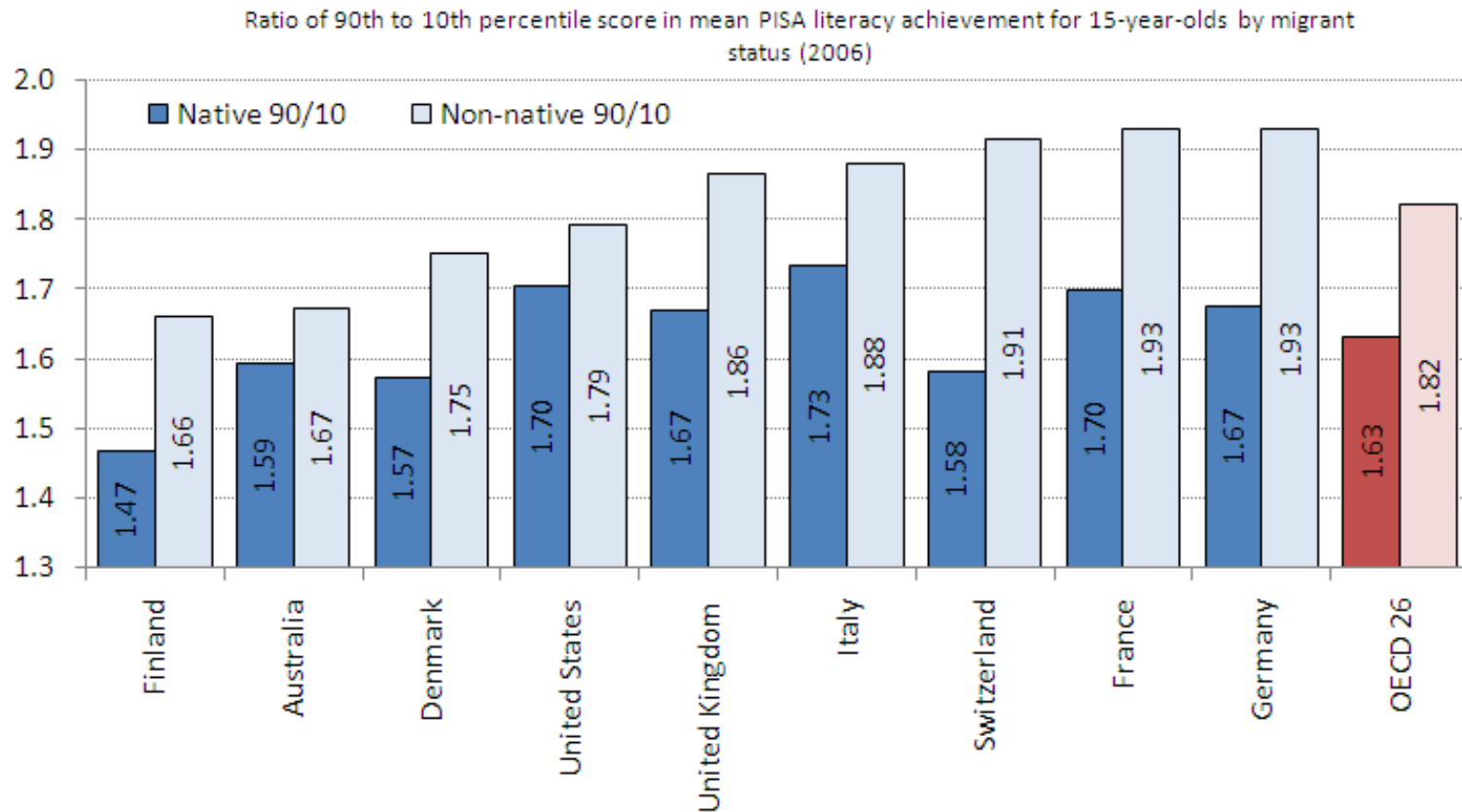
- 3 components:
 - average mean literacy scores (PISA),
 - inequality in these scores (ratio 90/10 percentile)
 - Youth inactivity (% of 15-19 year-olds not in education, employment or training; source LFS)
- Policy levers: school environments, teaching practices, ALMP, family benefits, educational supplements
- Possible issue: adolescent-focused

2.2. What do indicators show? Lower educational inequality for girls than boys in all countries



Data source: Data for educational achievement is mathematics, reading and science literacy as measured in the PISA surveys for 2006 (OECD/PISA, 2008). Mean literacy performance, is the average of the three literacy scores. The second is a measure of country inequality in scores, again averaged across the three dimensions. The measure of inequality used is the ratio of the 90th to the 10th percentile. Data is for the 15 year old school population. Reading literacy data was not available for the United States in 2006 results are therefore averages for mathematics and science literacy only.

2.2. Lower educational inequality for native than for migrants students in most countries



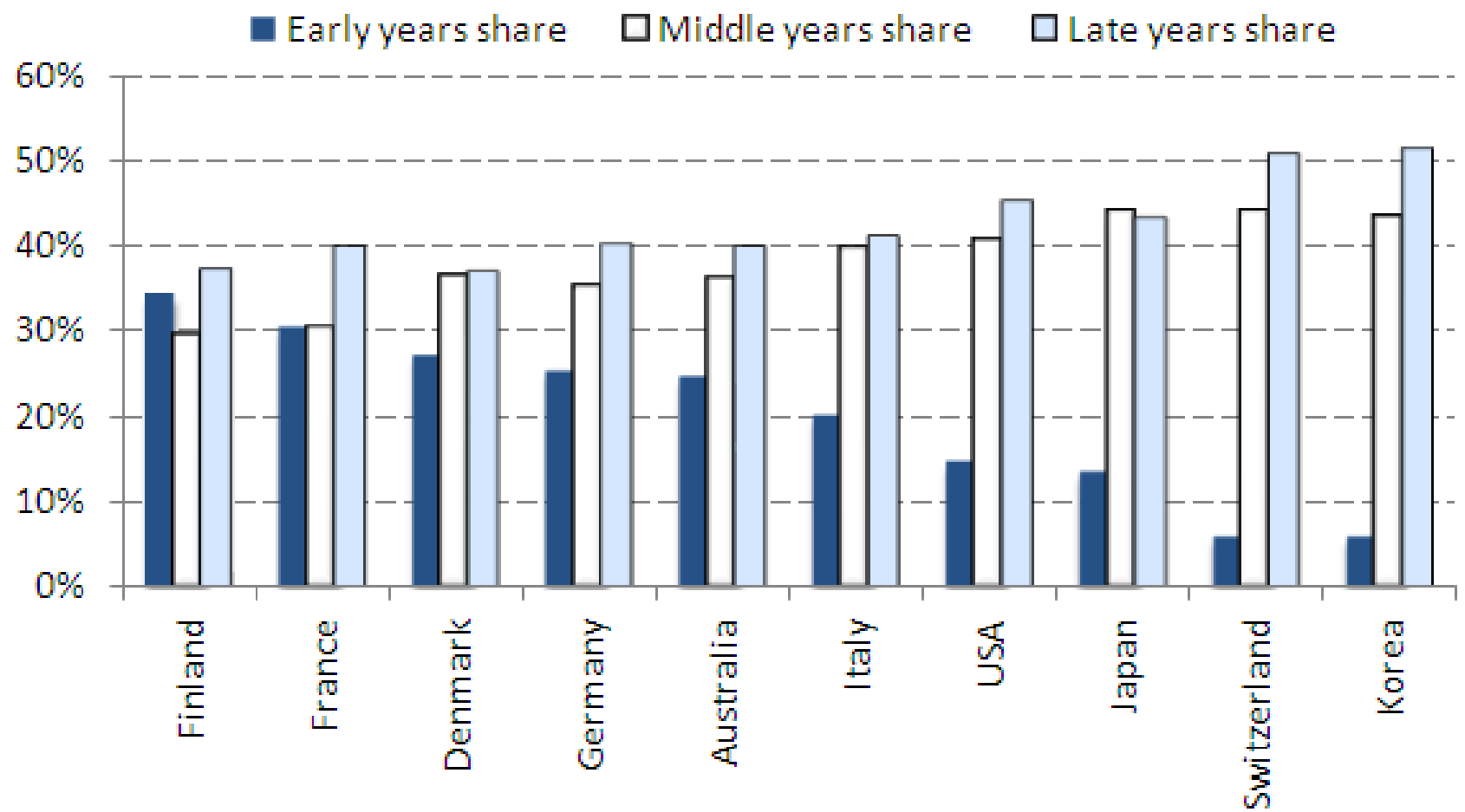
Source: OECD / PISA, 2006

Note: The measure is of country inequality in scores, averaged across the three literacy dimensions. The measure of inequality used is the ratio of the score at the 90th percentile to that at the 10th percentile. Data is for 15-year-old students. Reading literacy data was not available for the United States in 2006 results. United States results are therefore averages for mathematics and science literacy only.

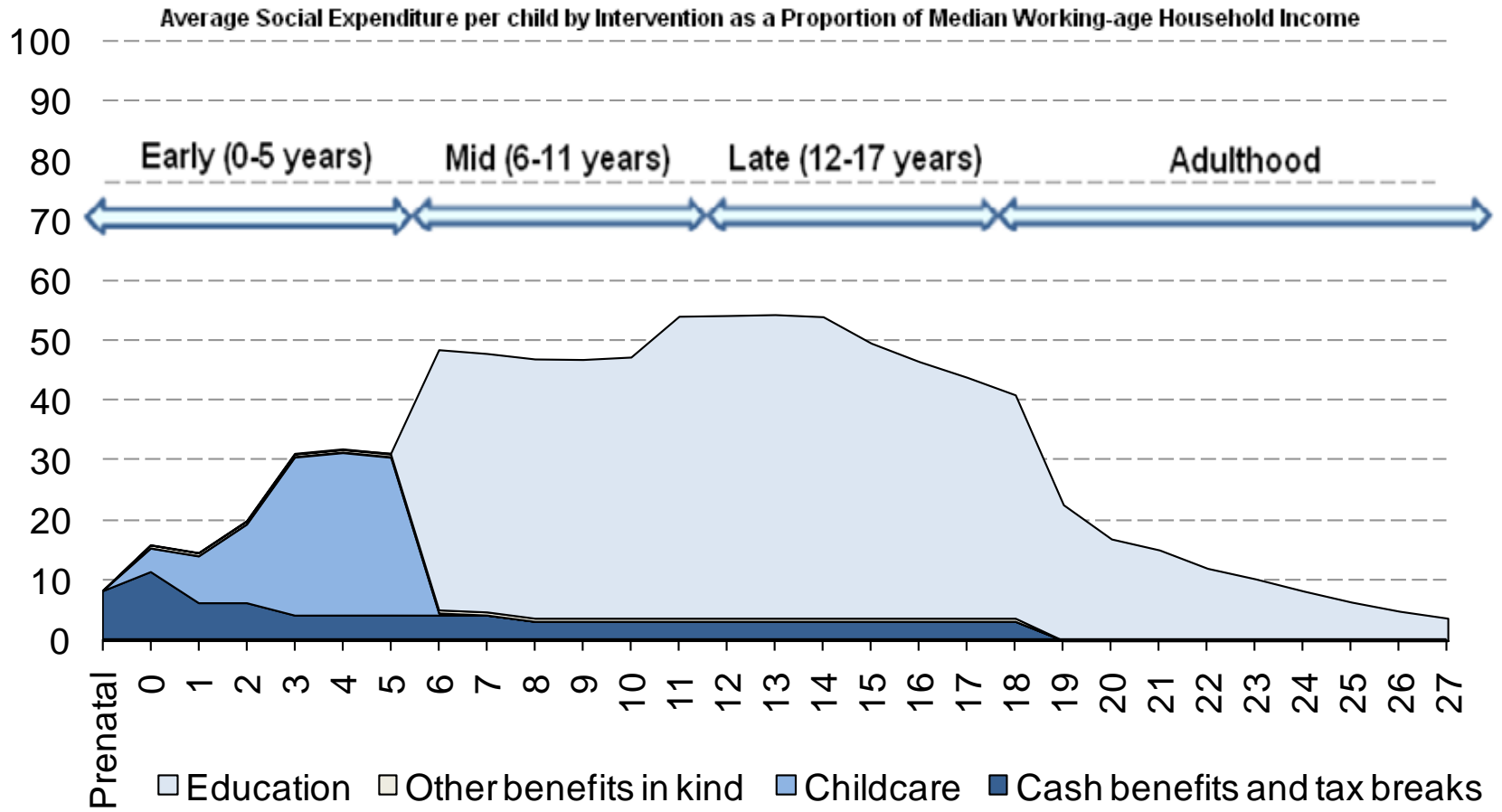
2.3. Policy levers bearing on CWB: public expenditure on children

- How much is spent on children
- Timing matters for child well-being
- Social expenditure data and education data
- Allotted by types from prenatal to age 27 using existing benefit rules
- Four programmes: i) cash and taxes; ii) in kind services; iii) child care; iv) education

2.4. The evidence: OECD countries concentrate spending on older children



2.5. Age profiles: inverted U shape dominated by education spending



Example of Italian spending in 2003.
 Source: OECD (2009) *Doing Better for Children*

2.6. Beyond the average - cash transfers by family types

- Impact of government programmes on family income vary by family types and ages of children
- Analysis to compare national approaches in eight OECD countries
- OECD TAXBEN models modified to include specific child policies (e.g. maternity and paternity benefits; parental leave; birth grants)
- Children are born into model families

2.7. Contextual analyses: example single parenthood

- Is single parenthood a cause for poorer well-being outcomes?
- Meta analysis of studies
- Result:
 - Effects are negative but small
 - Direction of causality unclear

3. Policy Recommendations

1. Early investment in children is vital
2. Fairness and effective investment needs to concentrate on vulnerable children
3. Interventions reinforce development across the life cycle and break dependence on parental outcomes
4. Establish targets for child well-being
5. Countries need to regularly collect more high-quality information on children's well-being
6. Governments should experiment and rigorously evaluate programmes for children

Some relevant links

- www.oecd.org/els/social/childwellbeing
- www.oecd.org/els/social/expenditure
- www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database
- www.oecd.org/els/social/inequality

For all questions on the OECD Child Well-being Project : [**Dominic.Richardson@OECD.org**](mailto:Dominic.Richardson@OECD.org)

THANK YOU!