

## FURTHER RESULTS FROM TALIS STARTING STRONG 2018

The OECD Starting Strong Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS Starting Strong) is an international large-scale survey of early childhood education and care (ECEC) staff and centre leaders conducted in nine OECD countries. This note presents the findings from the second volume of results on TALIS Starting Strong 2018, *Building a High-quality Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce*.

### Japan

#### Key findings

ECEC staff in Japan have received a strong pre-service education, with almost all staff having an education above secondary level (99%), and very large percentages having completed an initial training programme specifically to work with children (94%). Among these staff, 92% received practical training.

The percentage of staff participating in recent professional development activities is high, especially for novice staff, and centre-embedded induction and mentoring training activities are well-developed.

Japan has the highest share of staff who covered contents related to working with a diversity of children in both their pre-service and recent in-service training at the pre-primary level (71%), but one of the lowest shares who covered contents related to pedagogy (24%).

Compared to other countries, ECEC staff in Japan are less satisfied with their job, feel less valued by society and are generally not satisfied with their salary.

Staff working hours are the highest among countries, with full-time staff working on average 50 hours per week. This is partly driven by the time that staff spend without direct contact with children on other job tasks at the ECEC centre. At the same time, administrative work is one of the main sources of stress in Japan.

A smaller percentage of centre leaders than in other countries (14%) are dissatisfied with the influence they have over choosing centre staff. In Japan, staff are less likely than in other countries to “agree” or “strongly agree” that their centre leader encourages all staff to have a say in important decisions.

Most centres in Japan include a relatively low share of children from a diverse background, but 82% of staff report a “high” level of need for further professional development for working with a diversity of children.

## Highlights and policy implications for Japan

### *Staff education, training and skills development*

Across countries participating in TALIS Starting Strong, neither pre-service education or training focused on working with children nor pre-service practical experience are universal among ECEC staff. This is, however, not the case in Japan, where almost all ECEC staff have received a strong pre-service education. Japan stands out as having a large percentage of staff with an education above secondary level (99%), having been trained specifically to work with children (94%) and, among these staff, having received practical training (92%). As in most other countries, staff in Japan with a “practicum” covered more areas in their pre-service training than staff without such experience.

The percentage of staff participating in recent professional development activities is high, similar to the share in other participating countries (85%). Across countries, smaller percentages of novice staff than of experienced ones participate in in-service professional development activities, but the opposite holds in Japan, with 92% of novice staff having participated in recent in-service training. Induction activities are available in all ECEC centres and a majority of staff participate in induction and mentoring activities. Compared to other participating countries, large percentages of staff in Japan report receiving on-site coaching and participating in observation visits to other ECEC centres while participation in online courses is particularly low.

Collaborative professional practices provide important opportunities for informal learning, and in all countries, ECEC staff who engage more in collaboration in their centres are also more likely to participate in training activities. Staff in Japan have relatively high levels of engagement in these practices, for instance with 63% of staff engaging in discussions about approaches to children’s development, well-being and learning on a weekly or daily basis; providing feedback to other staff about their practice is less common.

Staff in Japan report lower levels of self-efficacy for all aspects of their work than staff in other countries, which might reflect differences in the way staff interpret these questions. As in other countries, ECEC staff in Japan are most confident about their ability to promote children’s socio-emotional development, but less so about working with children from diverse backgrounds or about using digital technology to support children’s learning.

Staff in Japan covered a high number of thematic areas in their recent in-service training activities. In Japan as in other countries, staff who covered more areas in both their pre-service and recent in-service training tend to report a stronger sense of self-efficacy for supporting child development and to adapt their practices more to children’s needs and interests.

Across countries, cumulative training in a given area tends to be more strongly associated with indicators of quality interactions in ECEC settings than more sporadic training. Japan has the highest share of staff who covered contents related to working with a diversity of children in both their pre-service and recent in-service training at the pre-primary level (71%). This is associated with a greater use of adaptive practices with children. In contrast, the percentage of staff having covered contents related to pedagogy in both their pre-service and recent in-service training (24%) is lower than in other countries.

### *Staff working conditions and well-being*

Overall, staff in all of the countries participating in TALIS Starting Strong show a high level of satisfaction with the profession and their current job. The share of staff who “strongly agree” or “agree” that they are satisfied with their job in Japan (81%) is lower than in most other countries. Satisfaction with their salary is also relatively low (23%). Older staff and staff in private ECEC centres are more satisfied with their salary.

The way staff feel valued by others can be an important aspect of their well-being. Compared to other countries, this perception is the lowest in Japan, with 31% of staff feeling valued by society.

In Japan, attending to family responsibilities is the most likely reason to leave the role, followed by leaving the job for health-related issues and retirement, suggesting that most staff expect to spend their entire career in the ECEC profession as in other in other countries. The percentage of staff who envisage leaving the role to become an ECEC centre leader (2%) is the lowest among countries. Staff who envisage a change in their role consider working in a different job, not in the ECEC sector, especially for younger staff.

Staff working hours vary notably across countries and are the highest on average for staff working full time in Japan (50 hours per week). As for other countries with long working hours, this is partly driven by the time that staff spend without direct contact with children on other job tasks at the ECEC centre. Full-time pre-primary staff spend, on average, 17 working hours per week outside their time with children, with novice staff spending even more hours on these tasks (21 hours). Results from TALIS Starting Strong indicate that workload stress coming from work outside hours spent with children is an important source of stress in many countries. In Japan, 21% of staff report stress from administrative work, which appears as one of the main sources of stress.

Feelings of stress at work emerge from imbalances between job demands, resources to address these demands and rewards for effort. In Japan as in several other countries, staff who spend more time on administrative work are more likely to report stress from too much administrative work to do. Support from leaders and satisfaction with salary act as buffers of stress, but could be expanded. In Japan, 41% of staff “agree” or “strongly agree” that they need more support from their ECEC centre leader, a relatively high percentage compared to other countries.

Japan is the only country where “having too many children in their classroom/playgroup/group” is not one of the main sources of stress, despite relatively large groups of children on average. However, staff who work with a large group of children are more likely to report this as a source of stress.

Staff shortages create tensions for both staff and leaders in multiple areas. This is the case in Japan, but not more than in other countries. In Japan, 25% of staff report that “not enough staff to compensate for my absence” is a barrier for participating in professional development. A relatively large share of leaders report a lack of staff as a source of stress, but staff are less likely to report so.

### ***Leadership and management in ECEC centres***

In Japan, leaders’ time in ECEC centres is distributed across leadership functions in the same way as it is in most other countries participating in TALIS Starting Strong. Administrative leadership accounts, on average, for 33% of leaders’ time in ECEC centres and pedagogical leadership for 25% of their time. In Japan, the initial preparation of 83% of centre leaders included contents on pedagogical leadership.

In most countries, centre leaders’ pedagogical leadership is positively associated with staff attitudes and indicators of quality interactions in ECEC settings. In Japan, a positive association is observed between centre leaders’ engagement in pedagogical leadership tasks and staff’s actual reported practices with children at the centre level and engagement of parents or guardians, but not with staff sense of self-efficacy. Staff’s perceptions of centre leaders’ pedagogical leadership, such as the centre leader encourages co-operation among staff to develop new ideas in their practices, are slightly below those of other countries. Formal and informal communication with parents or guardians is more frequent than in most other participating countries.

While across countries ECEC centre leaders are highly satisfied with their jobs overall, they tend to report relatively low satisfaction with their salaries. In Japan, 95% of centre leaders report being satisfied with their jobs and 87% enjoying working in their ECEC centres, but only 34% being satisfied with their salary, which is the lowest percentage among countries at pre-primary level. A smaller percentage of leaders than in other countries (14%) are dissatisfied with the influence they have over choosing centre staff.

Both centre leaders’ and staff reports suggest that, across countries, ECEC centres generally provide opportunities for staff to participate in decision making. This is less the case in Japan, where 73% of staff “agree” or “strongly agree” that their centre leader encourages all staff to have a say in important decisions. In Japan as in other countries, staff who perceive more opportunities for participating in centre decisions report higher levels of job satisfaction.

### *Equity*

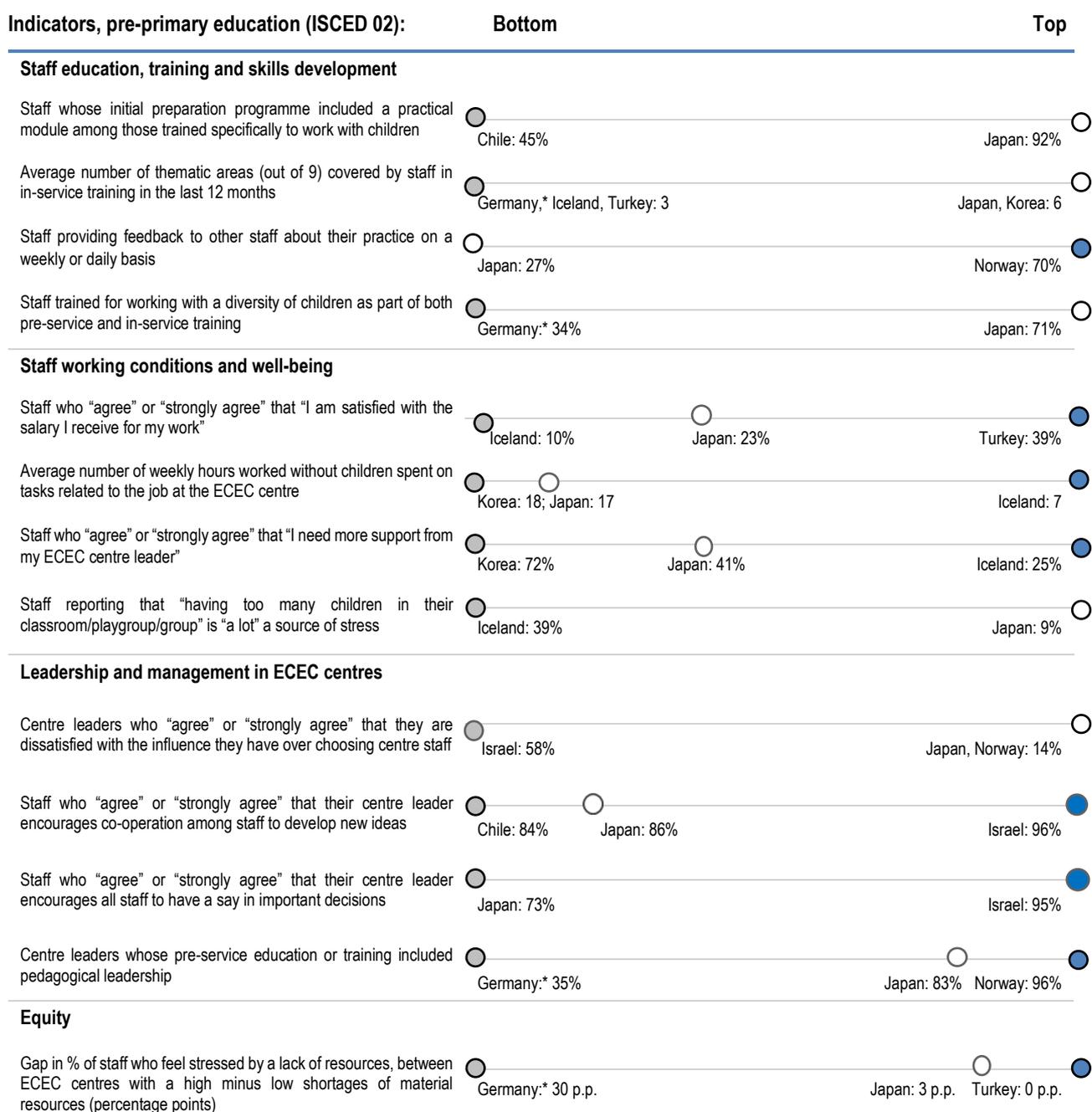
Most centres in Japan include a relatively low share of children from socio-economically disadvantaged homes or whose first language is different from the language(s) used in the centre. At the same time, 82% of staff report a “high” level of need for further professional development for working with a diversity of children.

Across countries, differences between centres in terms of the availability of resources are associated only to a limited extent with working conditions. This is the case in Japan, but staff working in centres with more limited material resources spend less time with children and more time without children on administrative tasks, which can be a source of stress.

### **Policy pointers for Japan**

- Raise the status and reward of the profession by ensuring that staff’s salaries are aligned with their responsibilities and by better defining pathways for career progression in the ECEC sector.
- Better design regulations around working time to ensure that staff have the time to perform the variety of tasks that are part of their responsibilities.
- Set the conditions for a supportive working environment in each ECEC centre.
- Support centre leaders in fulfilling their multiple functions by providing them with the necessary resources and quality working conditions, as well as support from staff.

## How does Japan compare?



\* Estimates for sub-groups and estimated differences between sub-groups in the TALIS Starting Strong 2018 data need to be interpreted with care.  
Source: OECD (2019), TALIS Starting Strong 2018 Database.

## What is TALIS Starting Strong and how does it apply in Japan?

TALIS Starting Strong is an international, large-scale survey of staff and centre leaders in early childhood education and care (ECEC). TALIS Starting Strong uses questionnaires administered to staff and centre leaders to gather data. Its main goal is to generate robust international information relevant to developing and implementing policies focused on ECEC staff and centre leaders and their pedagogical and professional practices, with an emphasis on those aspects that promote conditions for children’s learning, development and well-being. TALIS Starting Strong data are based exclusively on self-reports from ECEC staff and centre leaders and, therefore, represent their opinions, perceptions, beliefs and accounts of their activities.

TALIS Starting Strong 2018 includes nine countries: Chile, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Norway and Turkey. All of these countries collected data from staff and leaders in pre-primary education (ISCED Level 02) settings typically serving children aged 3-5. In addition, four of the nine countries (Denmark, Germany, Israel and Norway) collected data from staff and leaders in settings serving children under age 3. Only data on centre-based provision are reported in the first and second volumes of results and this country note.

The survey aims to obtain a representative sample in each participating country of staff and centre leaders for each level of ECEC in which the country participated. In Japan, 1 616 staff members and 216 leaders in pre-primary education (ISCED Level 02) settings completed the TALIS Starting Strong questionnaires.

TALIS Starting Strong data analysed in the first and second international reports covers the following ECEC settings in Japan: kindergartens (*youchien*) for children aged 3-5, and day-care centres (*hoikusho*) and centres for ECEC (*nintei kodomoen*), both for children aged 0-5.

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**Note regarding data from Israel:** The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

### References

OECD (2020), *Building a High-quality Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce: Further Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b90bba3d-en>.

OECD (2019), *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/301005d1-en>.

OECD (2019), *TALIS Starting Strong 2018 Database*, [www.oecd.org/education/school/oecdstartingstrongdata.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/school/oecdstartingstrongdata.htm)

**For more information on TALIS Starting Strong 2018** visit: [www.oecd.org/education/school/oecd-starting-strong-teaching-and-learning-international-survey.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/school/oecd-starting-strong-teaching-and-learning-international-survey.htm).

Data can be found also on line by following the **StatLinks**  under the tables and charts in the publication.

**Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using:** <http://gpseducation.oecd.org>.

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