Early childhood, which spans the period up to 8 years of age, is critical for cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. During these years, a child's newly developing brain is highly plastic and responsive to change. Optimal early childhood development requires a stimulating and nurturing environment, access to books and learning materials, interactions with responsive and attentive caregivers, adequate nutrients, access to good quality early childhood education, and safety and protection. All these aspects of the environment contribute to developmental outcomes for children.

Children facing a broad range of risk factors including poverty, poor health; high levels of family and environmental stress and exposure to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation; and inadequate care and learning opportunities face inequalities and may fail to reach their developmental potential. Investing in the early years is one of the most critical and cost-effective ways countries can reduce gaps that often place children with low social and economic status at a disadvantage.

**Key Messages**

- Fathers have engaged in four or more activities, with 44 percent of children aged 24-59 months while mothers have engaged in four or more activities with 84 percent of children.
- There are 91 percent of children aged 24-59 months with whom any adult household members have engaged in four or more activities.
- 53 percent of children aged 36-59 months are attending an early childhood education programme.
- A slightly higher percentage of girls (56 percent) than boys (51 percent) attend an early childhood education programme.
- Positive correlations are noticed with the age of children. 63 percent of children aged 4 years attended ECE compared to 42 percent of children aged 3 years.
- 64 percent of children who have access to two or more types of playthings.
- 58 percent of children under five have three or more children's books at home.
- 5 percent of children aged under-five were left alone or under the supervision of another child younger than 10 years of age for more than one hour at least once in the last week.
- In Montenegro, 90 percent of children aged 3-4 years are developmentally on track.

*Note: Activities include: reading books to the child; telling stories to the child; singing songs to the child; taking the child outside the home; playing with the child; and naming, counting or drawing things with the child.*
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The objective of this snapshot is to disseminate selected findings from the 2018 Montenegro MICS related to Early Childhood Development. Data from this snapshot can be found in tables TC.10.1, LN.1.1, TC.10.2, TC.10.3 and TC.11.1.

Further statistical snapshots and the Survey Findings Report for this and other MICS surveys are available on mics.unicef.org/surveys.