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

- Here are only 18 percent of children aged 24-59 months in Montenegro Roma Settlements with whom mothers, fathers or any adult household members have engaged in four or more activities. While mothers have engaged in four or more activities with 36 percent of children.
- There are 51 percent of children aged 24-59 months with whom any adult household member has engaged in four or more activities.
- 15 percent of children aged 36-59 months in Roma Settlements are attending an early childhood education programme.
- A higher proportion of girls (23 percent) than boys (9 percent) attend an early childhood education programme.
- Positive correlations are noticed with the age of children. 21 percent of children aged 4 years attended ECE compared to 10 percent of children aged 3 years.
- 58 percent of children in Roma settlements who have access to two or more types of playthings.
- 6 percent of children under five have three or more children's books at home.
- 8 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 Roma Settlements, 77 percent of children aged 3-4 years are developmentally on track.
Inadequate supervision of children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Left in inadequate supervision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>6.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of children aged under-five in Roma Settlements 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, by region.

Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI): Roma Settlements

The Montenegro Roma Settlements Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) was carried out in 2018 by the Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT) as a part of the global MICS programme. Technical support was provided by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). UNICEF, the Government of Montenegro, and UNHCR provided financial support.

The objective of this snapshot is to disseminate selected findings from the 2018 Montenegro Roma Settlements MICS related to Early Childhood Development. Data from this snapshot can be found in tables TC10.1R, LN1.1R, TC10.2R, TC10.3R and TC11.1R.

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