

# Determinants of the early childcare enrolment gap: a mixed-methods randomized controlled trial

## Principal investigator

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Currently a second-year Ph.D. student at Sciences Po (CRIS - LIEPP), Laudine is interested in the structural and cognitive determinants of inequalities in access to early childhood health and care facilities.

After graduating from the ENS Master's program in cognitive science, she is doing her doctoral research under the supervision of Carlo Barone, sociologist (Sciences Po), and Coralie Chevallier, cognitive psychologist (ENS - PSL).

## Associate members

- Carlo BARONE sociologist (OSC – LIEPP)
- Coralie CHEVALLIER cognitive psychologist (ENS – PSL et LIEPP)
- Arthur HEIM Ph.D. student in economics (PSE)

## Related publications

- Laudine Carbuccia, Carlo Barone, Coralie Chevallier, Valentin Thouzeau (2023) Unequal access to early childcare : What role do demand-side factors play ? A PRISMA systematic review LIEPP Working Paper n° 138, 2023
- Carbuccia & Barone (2022) *Les politiques d'accompagnement au développement des capacités des jeunes enfants*, 206, Caisse nationale des allocations familiales.
- Carbuccia, Barone, Borst, Angela Greulich, Panico, et Tô. (2020) *Revue de littérature sur les politiques d'accompagnement au développement des capacités des jeunes enfants*, LIEPP, pp.195.

Access to **early childcare structures (ECS)** during early childhood is a **good lever for reducing inequalities**: it promotes both the **cognitive development of children** from low-socioeconomic status (low-SES) backgrounds and the **employment of their mothers**. However, there is a **socioeconomic gap in ECS enrolment**: low-SES households access ECS the least. **France** is one of the most **unequal countries**, and the causes of **these inequalities are understudied**. Some studies document **supply-side mechanisms**, but very few studies address **demand-side factors**.

## Theoretical framework: the multiple causes of the enrolment gap

Our theoretical framework hypothesizes a plurality of factors underlying inequalities in access to early childcare structures.

Demand-side factors	Supply-side factors
<b>Drivers of parental preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of information → Perceived accessibility, affordability, quality, &amp; application tricks</li> <li>• Beliefs and social norms</li> <li>• Motivations to use childcare (ex. mother work)</li> <li>• Level of trust</li> <li>• Decision heuristics</li> </ul>	<b>Affordability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fees</li> <li>• Subsidies</li> <li>• Opportunity costs</li> </ul>
<b>Factors hindering action in case of favorable preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive, social and temporal resources available</li> <li>• Administrative and linguistic proficiency</li> <li>• Sludges and friction costs</li> </ul>	<b>Accessibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity</li> <li>• Shortages (lack of places)</li> <li>• Admission criteria</li> <li>• Functioning (e.g., opening hours)</li> <li>• Bureaucratic requirements</li> </ul>

## Main objectives of the project

### Objective 1

To identify the **determinants of demand and access to early childcare structures** (e.g., daycare centers) according to the socioeconomic background and migratory origin of parents of young children and quantify their **relative weight**.

### Objective 2

To design and test a **low-cost, easily scalable intervention** to reduce the SES gap in early childcare enrolment.

## Step 1: Qualitative fieldwork

### Methodology (fall 2021 – spring 2022)

- 61 semi-directed interviews with key observers (e.g., elected officials, daycare directors, maternal and child protection centers) in Paris, Seine Saint Denis and the Val de Marne
- 71 interviews with parents and future parents from various socio-economic backgrounds

### Main results

- **Informational barriers**: low-SES populations apply less and later because they are less aware of the system.
- These differences in application behavior are often not caused by a lack of trust in institutions but rather by an **excess of confidence** in the fact that institutions will provide a place, and by a **cognitive overload**.
- A significant **digital divide** in an increasingly dematerialized system often prevents low-SES parents from applying

## Step 2: the Randomized Controlled Trial

