

Program Participation in QRISs in 2017

The numbers and types of programs participating in a QRIS are key indicators of system functioning. However, participation rates, as well as the density of participation (the percentage of eligible programs participating), vary depending on factors such as the length of time the system has been operational, whether QRIS participation is voluntary or mandatory, which types of programs are eligible to participate, and incentives for participation.

This fact sheet summarizes information from the Quality Compendium.² It summarizes QRIS program participation in 2017 by program type and quality level; this document also summarizes the types of data QRISs collect on child demographics.

This fact sheet is one of a series about the state of QRISs in the United States. As of 2017, there are 44 fully operational QRISs in the United States.¹ Data are from the [Quality Compendium](#), a catalog of the QRISs operating in the United States as of December 31, 2017.

Total Participation

There were 86,199 rated programs across all 44 QRISs in the U.S. in 2017. The median number of rated programs per QRIS is 1,214, and the range of rated programs is 58 (New Jersey) to 11,801 (Illinois). Program participation in a QRIS may vary by program type and is either voluntary or required by law, regulation, or funding stream. The range of participating programs in 2017 includes QRISs that have voluntary participation, such as Arizona and California, as well as QRISs that mandate participation for some providers, such as Illinois, Colorado, and Arkansas. QRISs that mandate participation in some way have the most numbers and highest percentages of programs at the first level of quality: Illinois has 8,948 programs (76 percent), Colorado has 2,122 programs (51 percent), and Arkansas has 713 programs (48 percent) at the first level of quality.

Density of Participation

Density of participation measures the percentage of eligible programs participating in a QRIS. Density is calculated by dividing the number of rated programs by the total number of licensed center-based and family child care programs within the state or locality. Of the 38 QRISs reporting density in the Quality Compendium, licensed center-based programs range from 1 percent (New Jersey) to 100 percent (Colorado, Illinois, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Tennessee). Center-based programs have a median density of 60 percent and an average of 57 percent. Similarly, the density of family child care programs ranges from 0.4 percent (New Jersey) to 100 percent (Colorado, Illinois, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Tennessee), with a median density of 25 percent and an average of 44 percent. Density indicates the rate of

¹ States with a QRIS: AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, DC, DE, FL (three localities), GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, and WI. While most QRISs operate at the state level, three represent separate counties in Florida (Duval, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach). The California QRIS, while represented in the Quality Compendium as one system, is implemented at the county level and does not include all counties in the state.

² The Quality Compendium was previously named the QRIS Compendium.

participation within a state or locality, but it is also affected by whether participation is mandatory or voluntary. QRISs that are reported to have 100 percent density designate all licensed programs at the first level.

Participation by Program Type

Licensed center-based programs are eligible to participate in all 44 QRISs (100 percent), while licensed family child care programs are eligible to participate in 43 (98 percent). In addition, Head Start and Early Head Start are eligible to participate in 31 QRISs (70 percent). For details about the eligibility of other program types, see table 1.

Table 1. Percent of Program Types Participating in QRISs, 2017

Program Type	Number of QRISs in Which Program Type Is Eligible	Percent of QRISs
Licensed centers	44	100%
Licensed family child care homes	43	95%
Head Start and Early Head Start	31	70%
School-based early childhood programs	27	59%
School-age programs	17	41%
Legally license-exempt centers	8	16%
Legally license-exempt homes	2	5%

Source: Analysis of data retrieved from BUILD Initiative. (2017). Quality compendium [Online tool]. Retrieved from <https://qualitycompendium.org>

Note: *N* = 44 QRISs

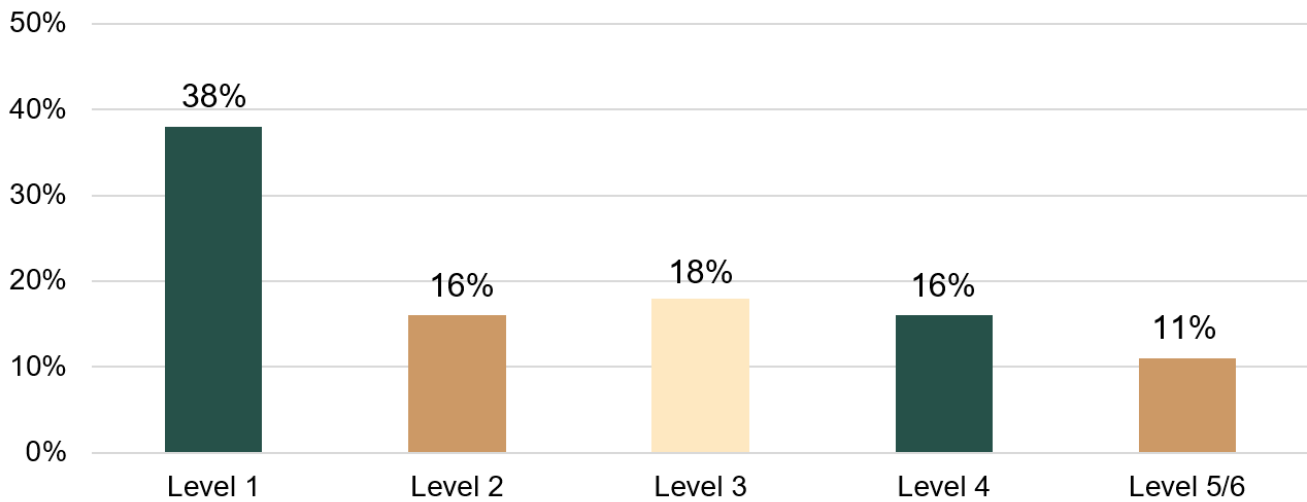
Participation by Quality Level

In addition to differences in participation across program types, participation differs across quality levels. QRISs have different numbers of quality levels, ranging from three to six. Of all 44 QRISs, 27 (61 percent) have 5 or 6 levels of quality, 11 (25 percent) have 4 levels of quality³, and 6 (14 percent) have 3 levels of quality. For the purposes of this report, data from QRISs with six levels are combined with data from QRISs with five levels.

Across the 27 QRISs with 5 and 6 quality levels, there are a total of 52,367 programs. Among these, most programs are at the first level of quality (38 percent), and nearly equal percentages of programs are at the second, third, and fourth levels (16 percent, 18 percent, and 16 percent, respectively). The smallest proportion of programs (see figure 1) are rated at levels 5 or 6 (11 percent).

³ One of the QRISs with four quality levels did not report participation data.

Figure 1. Percentage of Programs at Each Quality Level in All Five- and Six-Level QRISs, 2017

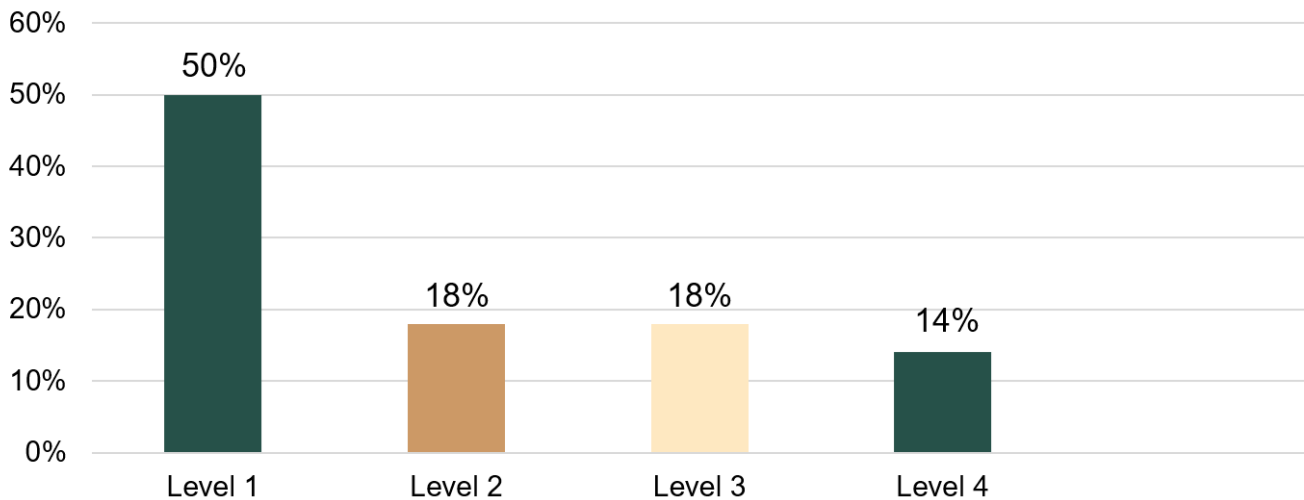


Source: Analysis of data retrieved from BUILD Initiative. (2017). Quality compendium [Online tool]. Retrieved from <https://qualitycompendium.org>

Note: N = 25 QRISs with 5 levels and 2 QRISs with 6 levels.

Across the 10 QRISs with 4 levels of quality that report their participation data, there are a total of 26,674 programs. The percentage of programs at each quality level follows a similar pattern to that of five- and six-level QRISs: most programs are at the first level of quality (50 percent); equal percentages of programs are at the second and third levels of quality (18 percent), and the lowest percentage of programs (see figure 2) is at the fourth level of quality (14 percent).

Figure 2. Percentage of Programs at Each Quality Level in All Four-Level QRISs, 2017



Source: Analysis of data retrieved from BUILD Initiative. (2017). Quality compendium [Online tool]. Retrieved from <https://qualitycompendium.org>

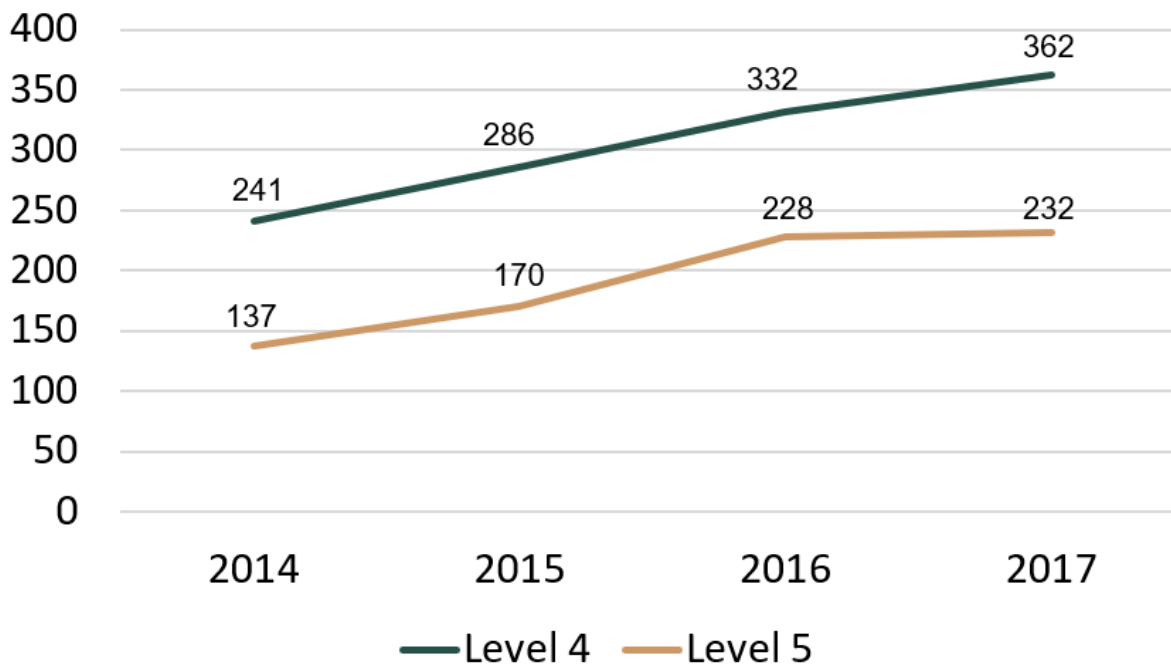
Note: N = ten QRISs with four levels

While participation at the highest levels of quality is relatively low compared to lower quality levels, average program participation at the highest levels has increased over the past 4 years. The average number of programs at levels 4 and 5 (combined) increased by 21 percent from 2014 to 2015, 23 percent from 2015 to 2016, and 6

percent from 2016 to 2017. Specifically, the number of programs at level 4 steadily increased from 241 programs in 2014 to 362 programs in 2017. The number of programs at level 5 also increased from 137 in 2014 to 232 in 2017 (see figure 3).

One question raised about QRIS structures is whether research has demonstrated meaningful differences in quality between each level of the system. A recent synthesis of QRIS evaluations reported that most QRIS studies were unable to answer this question because the numbers of participating programs were insufficient at each level when the studies were launched (between 2012 and 2014).⁴ Answering whether programs at one rating level are meaningfully different from programs at the next rating level requires an adequate number of programs (usually 50) at each level. Some of the QRISs included in the evaluations did not have enough programs at each level, and sometimes researchers were unable to recruit enough programs at each level. Instead, most of the studies combined programs across levels designated as “low” (typically, the first two levels) and “high” (typically the last two levels) and compared observed quality. The synthesis of QRIS evaluations found differences in center-based quality across low and high ratings (findings were mixed for family child care programs). The authors of the synthesis concluded that QRISs appear to be helpful tools for state early childhood systems to differentiate programs at lower and higher levels of quality.

Figure 3. Average Number of Programs at Levels 4 and 5, From 2014 to 2017



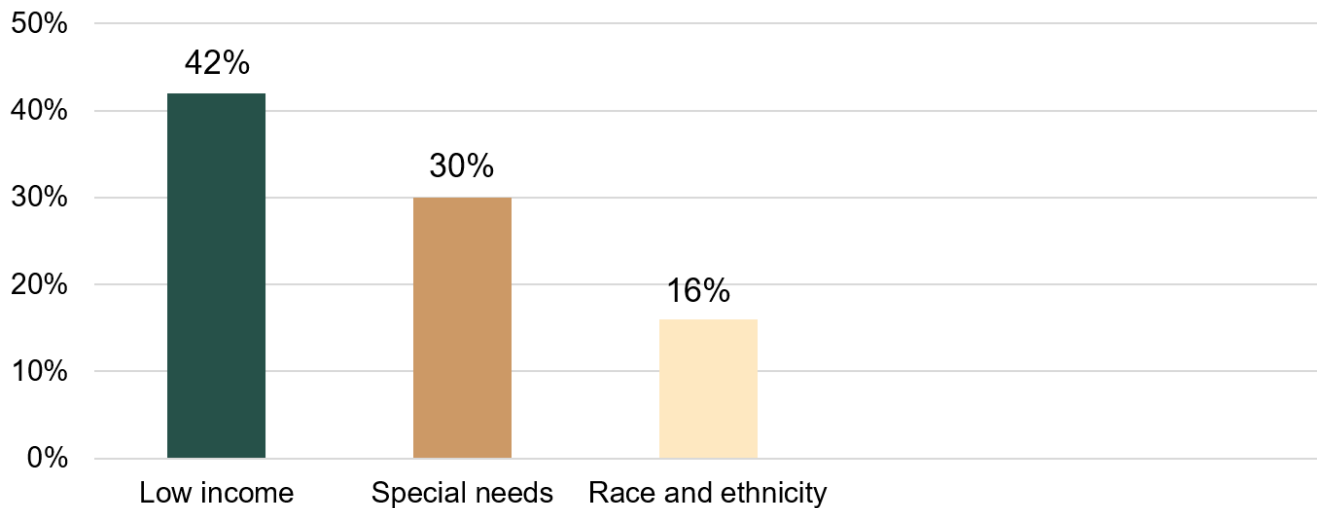
Source: Analysis of data retrieved from BUILD Initiative. (2017). Quality compendium [Online tool]. Retrieved from <https://qualitycompendium.org>

⁴ Tout, K., Magnuson, K. Lipscomb, S., Karolyn, L., Starr, R., Quick H., ... & Wenner, J. (2017). *Validation of the quality ratings used in quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS): A synthesis of state studies* (Report No. 2017-92). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/validation-quality-ratings-used-quality-rating-improvement-systems-qr-is-a-synthesis-of-state-studies>

Participation Data Collected on Child Demographics

While program-level data provide an overview of QRIS participation across the country, some QRISs collect participation data on the children being served in QRIS-rated programs. Of the 43 QRISs reporting, 28 (65 percent) collect child-level participation data. As shown in figure 4, more than 40 percent collect data on the number of children from low-income families, and 30 percent gather data on the number of children who have special needs (30 percent). Additionally, a small percentage of QRISs—16 percent—collect participation data by children’s race and ethnicity. Of the 43 QRISs that collect participation data on children, 10 QRISs (23 percent) collect at least once per year, 9 QRISs (21 percent) collect 3–4 times per year, and 3 QRISs (7 percent) collect these data every month.

Figure 4. Types of Child-Level Demographic Data Collected by QRISs, 2017



Source: Analysis of data retrieved from BUILD Initiative. (2017). Quality compendium [Online tool]. Retrieved from <https://qualitycompendium.org>

Note: N = 28 QRISs collect data on specific groups of children.

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