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## World Children's Day

They are an unfailing source of joy and happiness. They are often a true inspiration and their smile is the best medicine. We watch over them, we guide them, and the care does not stop even when they step into life on their own. We are talking about children, the youngest members of the society, who need to be given maximum love, attention and care from day to day. However, one day in a year is particularly dedicated to the little ones around the world, 20 November, when World Children's Day is celebrated. It was on that day in 1989 that 196 countries signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, committing themselves to guarantee equal rights to all children, to protect them from discrimination and ensure their right to learning and development. Although 31 years have passed since then, the topic of child protection is still very popular. It inspired us to check out the latest data on that youngest age group.

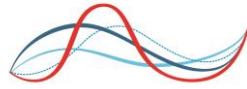
### ***Demographic plus the largest in the Adriatic and northern Croatia***

The birth of a child is a special event for every family, but it also directly affects the wider community. In 2019, a total of 36 135 children were born alive in Croatia, of which 51.1% were boys and 48.9% girls. These small members of our society bring a dose of positivity and hope for the preservation of the entire community through their presence. They were numerous in those urban areas that recorded a positive natural increase in 2019. Among them, Solin (53) and Metković (49) stand out, followed by Kaštela (28), Čakovec (24) and Zaprrešić (19).

Smaller areas also recorded positive demographic trends. It is interesting that, just like in case of towns, the largest natural increase was recorded in municipalities in the Adriatic and northern Croatia. The municipality of Podstrana (50) stands out in the first place, followed by Župa Dubrovačka and Viškovo, which had the same natural increase (49), and two municipalities in the County of Međimurje – Nedelišće (42) and Mala Subotica (27).

### ***Luka and Mia the most popular***

There have always been trends in children's names. Shorter names have been in vogue for a while, and in 2019, the largest number of children were named Luka and Mia. In a few years, school classes will be full of boys named David, Jakov, Ivan and Petar, as they are among the five most common



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## INTERESTING FACTS

Zagreb, 20 November 2020

male names in 2019, while the largest number of girls will respond to the names Ema, Lucija, Sara and Nika.

### ***Three quarters of children spend eight or more hours a day in kindergarten***

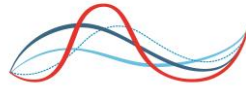
Most children start being separated from parents for a longer time when enrolling in a kindergarten. At the beginning of the 2019/2020 pedagogic year, 139 682 children attended some form of preschool education, of which 89.7% were included in the regular programme. The preschool programme was attended by 9 861 children, while 4 527 children were included in the shorter programme. Playing, dancing, mastering new skills, gaining new friends and experiences – these are the most common activities in kindergartens, where 76% of children spend eight or more hours a day under the watchful eye of a total of 13 617 kindergarten teachers. On average, there were ten children per one kindergarten teacher and teacher in the 2019/2020 pedagogic year.

### ***As many as 460 thousand pupils and students in education***

Some children cannot wait for school days. Others, probably under the influence of older siblings or friends, do not look forward to school days. Adults will say that there are no better days the school ones. Regardless of what we think about it, the fact is that we spend the greatest stage of our life before adulthood in the role of a pupil/student. At the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year, a total of 314 148 pupils attended basic school. It was an exciting period for 38 518 first-graders, who were just starting their long educational journey, full of challenges. In addition to plenty of new children's faces, they met their teachers for the first time, persons who will transfer them their knowledge in the coming years, not only the formal one, but also the one about life. In regular basic education, the ratio of the number of teachers and pupils was 1 : 9.1 in the 2019/2020 school year, while in education of children and youth with developmental difficulties, this ratio was 1: 1.9. Although basic school is full of challenges, a major turning point in the life of every teenager is certainly the beginning of secondary school education.

New environment, focus on specialised knowledge, as well as increased scope of obligations are not a small bite for 40 315 students who started attending the first grade of secondary school in 2019/2020 school year. Thus, they were included in the total of 146 277 secondary school students, who were recorded in the previous, in many ways special, school year.

### ***And what about free time after school?***



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From adults' perspective, what determines children is the use of a lot of free time. Although most of the hours after kindergarten or school will be dedicated to play, there are activities that can entertain them, but also enrich their knowledge at the same time. One of them is going to the theatre. In the 2018/2019 season, a total of 6 793 children's and puppet shows were performed in Croatian theatres, which were attended by a total of 916 893 thousand visitors.

Perhaps contrary to popular belief, children and young people have a tendency to read and visit libraries. Each pupil and student is a mandatory member of a library in the basic school (total of 883) or secondary school (total of 401) they attend, which leads to the fact that members of libraries in basic and secondary schools accounted for 40% of the membership of all libraries in 2019. However, apart from the mandatory membership in schools, children and young people also like to visit public libraries. In 2019, the share of members under the age of 18 in the total number of public library members was 42.2%. At the same time, as much as 70% of the total number of visitors who attended library events and workshops were under the age of 18.

Writer Paulo Coelho once said: „A child can teach an adult three things: to be happy for no reason, to always be busy with something, and to know how to demand with all his might that which he desires.“ Therefore, let us copy the children's *modus operandi* and guide them daily to grow into healthy, free and happy beings! Because, investment in children is the best investment in future!

