



Programa Crecer Jugando

Impact Evaluation – Executive Summary

May 2025



The Project

- *Description and Objective:* *Crecer Jugando* is a preventive and promotional program aimed at strengthening the bond and quality of interactions between caregivers and children aged 0 to 48 months. Through the development of parenting skills and the promotion of everyday interactions (such as playing, reading, or singing), the program supports early childhood development.
- *Intervention Strategy:* The program consists of 10 weekly group sessions with practical content, complemented by a digital support forum. It is delivered in both in-person and online formats, with both in-person and online formats retained after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *Target Population:* Caregiver-child dyads engaged with public services and living in contexts of high social vulnerability.
- *Implementation:* The program is delivered by pairs of professional facilitators and community monitors, under the coordination of local institutions. *Fundación Infancia Primero* provides training, supervision, and technical support.

Impact Evaluation

- *Methodological Design:* The program's effectiveness was assessed under real-world conditions through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with 600 caregiver-child dyads. Impacts were estimated on primary outcomes (bond and child development), intermediate outcomes (parenting skills and frequency of interaction), and secondary outcomes (parental stress and social support). Out of the 600 assigned dyads, 324 completed the follow-up assessments. Attrition analyses were conducted to verify the absence of systematic differences between groups.
- *Estimation Methods:* The analysis included Intent-to-Treat (ITT) and Local Average Treatment Effect (LATE) estimates, marginal effects, and cost-effectiveness ratios. Balance and robustness checks were applied to validate results and control for potential biases.
- *Data Collection and Instrument Application:* Fieldwork took place between March 2024 and January 2025. Instruments were administered to both treatment and control groups at the end of each group's intervention cycle, approximately 1 to 2 weeks post-intervention.

Key Contributions of the Evaluation

- The study provides causal evidence on the program's effectiveness as predicted by its theory of change, capturing outcomes across multiple domains (primary, intermediate, and secondary). It provides insights into how program effectiveness varies by child age, delivery modality, and participation intensity, including the identification of minimum attendance required to achieve measurable effects.
- Cost-effectiveness analyses were included to inform decisions around potential scale-up.

Impact Results

- *Parenting Skills:* Statistically significant improvements were observed in parenting skills (E2P), particularly in the reflective and formative dimensions.
- *Caregiver-Child Interactions:* The frequency of interactions (e.g., reading, singing, playing) increased among dyads attending at least four sessions.
- *Parental Stress:* A reduction of more than 0.4 standard deviations was observed in parental stress levels (PSI-4-SF), consistent across all dimensions.

- *Child Development:* Positive effects were found in the social-individual domain of child development (ASQ-3), with no significant effects in other domains—potentially due to the short time between intervention and measurement.
- *Caregiver-Child Bond:* Improvements were observed in the ‘teaching’ dimension of the PICCOLO instrument. However, these results may be influenced by potential self-selection bias.

Interpretation of Effects (ITT and LATE)

- ITT estimates reflect the average program impact under real-world implementation conditions, showing consistent positive effects across several indicators.
- LATE estimates, which isolate the effect among compliers—those who would participate if assigned to treatment—reveal stronger effects, offering a more precise view of the program’s efficacy under conditions of full adherence.
- Together, these estimators provide complementary perspectives on program performance.

Effects by Participation Intensity

- On average, program effects become statistically significant from the third session onward. This evidence can guide the development of retention strategies targeting dyads approaching the minimum effective dose.

Differential Effects

- The Exploradores group (13–24 months) showed the greatest gains in parenting skills, particularly in reflective and protective dimensions, as well as in caregiver-child bond and child communication. This indicates that the program is better suited to the developmental stage of this age group
- Parental stress reduction was also greater in the Exploradores and Creadores groups, likely due to higher demands and challenges compared to the Acurrados group (0–12 months).
- No significant differences were observed between in-person and online modalities, except for perceived social support, which was higher in the in-person format. Lower statistical power in the online group limits more specific conclusions.

Cost-Effectiveness

- The average implementation cost per dyad was approximately CLP \$137,000 (USD ~\$150).
- Cost-effectiveness ratios ranged between CLP \$498,000 and \$600,000 (USD ~\$540–\$650) per standard deviation increase. These figures are competitive compared to international benchmarks from parenting interventions such as PCIT or Triple P, which often exceed USD \$1,000 per SD.
- These results position *Creer Jugando* as a cost-effective model with favorable implications for economic sustainability and future scale-up.

Future Outlook and Challenges

It is recommended to follow up over time to assess longer-term outcomes, particularly in child development, and to refine strategies based on lessons learned.

