

# Creating a Montessori Global Census

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## INTRODUCTION

Lack of a current and credible estimate of the number of Montessori schools globally hinders researchers, policymakers, and Montessori advocates because the method's scope is unclear.

Recent AMI efforts:

- 22,000 Montessori schools estimated worldwide in 2006 (AMI, 2021)
- 154 countries identified as having Montessori schools in 2020 (AMI, 2020)

NCMPS reports:

- 2,935 Montessori schools in the USA Montessori Census (NCMPS, 2023)
- 585 publicly funded programs (NCMPS, 2023)

Key challenge is diverging views on defining Montessori in practice.

- Generally accepted definition is lacking
- Any school can use name regardless of practices
- Problem has deep roots in Montessori history

## OBJECTIVES

The research questions behind this study are:

1. What is the most reasonable current estimate of the global count of Montessori schools based on a broad definition of what constitutes the method?
2. Where is there agreement about what constitutes authentic practices among national Montessori organizations around the world?
3. To what extent is Montessori education available through publicly funded schools globally?

## METHODS

Data triangulated from multiple sources to obtain a best estimate for each country:

- Survey of national Montessori organizations
- Knowledgeable leaders in countries where national organization estimates were unavailable
- Other historic and documented sources to triangulate the counts for each country

Multiple organizational standards analyzed to identify consistent definitions of authentic practices.

## RESULTS

Map below illustrates school counts per country showing how Montessori education has spread worldwide with concentrations in large countries on almost all continents.

Countries with largest number of Montessori schools are:

- **United States**
- **Tanzania**
- **Germany**
- **Thailand**

The countries with the highest proportion of Montessori schools per person, for countries with more than 5 million people, are

- **New Zealand**
- **Norway**
- **Canada**

## RESULTS (continued)

The largest number of government funded or public Montessori programs are in:

- **United States**
- **Thailand**
- **the Netherlands**
- **India**

We found consistency across country definitions on these six ideas and practices as central pillars of Montessori implementation:

- *Supporting Montessori philosophy*
- *Mixed-age groupings*
- *Montessori-trained teachers*
- *Montessori materials*
- *Freedom of choice*
- *Uninterrupted work block*

## CONCLUSIONS

This study arrived at a reasonable estimate of the number of Montessori schools worldwide using a methodical approach including survey data and a range of additional data sources. Even so, this approach may have undercounted the number of schools in some regions and inflated the numbers in others because the study:

1. Relied on the broadest definition of what constitutes a Montessori school.
2. Data collection was conducted in English which may have restricted potential participants or contributed to non-response.

Ideally, future iterations of this project will include lists of schools rather than just school counts. Further, a better assessment of access and equity through data on public funding and the demographics of students served will be necessary to truly understand the degree to which Montessori educators are broadening access to Montessori education.

## REFERENCES

- AMI. (2020). Montessori countries in 2020. Annual General Meeting [remote].
- AMI. (2021). *2021 Annual Report*. <https://montessori-ami.org/news/2021-annual-report>
- NCMPS. (2023). *Montessori census*. <https://www.montessoricensus.org/>

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## MORE INFORMATION

Further details about this study are available here:  
Debs, M., de Brouwer, J., Murray, A. K., Lawrence, L., Tyne, M., & von der Wehl, C. (2022). Global Diffusion of Montessori Schools: A Report From the 2022 Global Montessori Census. *Journal of Montessori Research*, 8(2), 1–15.  
<https://doi.org/10.17161/jomr.v8i2.18675>

Organization Representatives Responding	81
Countries Represented	62
Total Number of Schools Worldwide	15,763
Proportion Fully Government Funded	9%

