Expanding Choices through Family-Friendly Policies

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Care institutions in Kosovo: capacities and geographic distribution in the context of women's employment

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Disclaimer:

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Administrative Instruction
EC	European Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
LFS	Labor Force Survey
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PI	Preschool Institutions
WB	World Bank

Executive Summary

Labor market participation in Kosovo remains particularly low among women, with around 74% of working-age women economically inactive in 2024. Women's limited participation is influenced by several interrelated factors, including social and traditional norms that assign them primary responsibility for caring for children and the elderly, as well as limited access to affordable childcare and eldercare services. In this context, accessible care services are important not only for the well-being and development of children and the elderly, but also for reducing women's unpaid care responsibilities and enabling their participation in the labor market. This report assesses the availability and geographical distribution of preschool institutions for children aged 0–6 and care centers for people aged 65 and above, as well as how well they correspond to demographic needs. It also assesses the relationship between preschool availability and women's inactivity and unemployment at the municipal level.

The findings reveal significant inequalities in access to early childhood education. A total of 278 registered preschool institutions operate in Kosovo, but around 81% are concentrated in urban areas, limiting access for families in rural regions. Only around 26% of children aged 0–<6 are enrolled in preschool and pre-primary education, while enrollment among children aged 0–4 is particularly low, at around 13%. At the municipal level, overall enrollment ranges from 41% in Prishtina to 11% in Dragash and 15% in Obiliq. Most municipalities have fewer than two preschool institutions per 1,000 children, while ten municipalities have one or fewer. The geographical distribution is also uneven at the settlement level, with many rural settlements lacking preschool services despite having significant numbers of children. These gaps, combined with limited and costly transportation in rural areas, increase the difficulties women face in combining care responsibilities with paid employment.

The findings indicate a relationship between the availability of preschool institutions and women's labor-market outcomes. Across the 27 municipalities included in the analysis, there is a moderate negative correlation between preschool availability and women's inactivity, indicating that municipalities with more preschool institutions relative to the number of children tend to have lower women inactivity rates. The relationship is stronger for women's unemployment. For example, Prishtina has the highest preschool availability, with 5.2 institutions per 1,000 children, and the lowest women inactivity rate, at 46.1%. In contrast, Dragash has only 0.5 institutions per 1,000 children and a women inactivity rate of 85.2%. While preschool availability is not the only factor influencing women's participation and the results should not be interpreted as causal, they provide supporting evidence that greater availability of childcare is associated with more favorable labor-market outcomes for women.

Inequalities are also evident in eldercare services. Kosovo has around 178,000 people aged 65 and above, while only 15 public and community-based residential and day-care institutions operate in the municipalities covered by the analysis. Several municipalities with large elderly populations, including Peja, Gjakova, South Mitrovica, Podujeva, and Vushtrri, have no public eldercare centers. In the absence of formal care alternatives, these responsibilities are largely absorbed by families and disproportionately by women, further limiting their opportunities to enter or remain in employment.

Based on these findings, the evidence supports the need for targeted investments to expand accessible and affordable preschool institutions in municipalities and settlements with limited provision, based on demographic needs and accompanied by quality assurance. Municipalities should also expand eldercare

services, particularly day-care centers in areas with large elderly populations and no existing public provision. Criteria for enrollment in public preschool institutions should be reviewed to ensure that children whose parents are not currently employed are not disadvantaged, as this can itself create a barrier for women seeking to enter employment. These measures should be complemented by gender-responsive family policies, including subsidized childcare for women entering employment and improved and subsidized transportation in rural areas. Expanding and better distributing care services should therefore be viewed not only as a social policy measure, but also as an investment in reducing women's inactivity, increasing their participation in the labor market, and strengthening Kosovo's economic potential.

1. Introduction

The labor market in Kosovo is characterized by a low level of economic activity, with an inactivity rate of 57% in 2024, especially among women, who continue to be less engaged compared to men, and their labor force inactivity rate is 74%.[1] Several interrelated factors influence the low participation of women in the labor market, including social and traditional norms that assign women family responsibilities for children and the elderly, the lack of access to childcare services, limited access to or the high cost of transportation, and the absence of family-friendly employment policies.[2] As a result of these factors, women often remain outside the labor market or engage in part-time and informal work, limiting both their economic potential and that of the overall economy.

A key factor constraining women's participation in the labor market is the limited availability and accessibility of childcare services. In Kosovo, participation in early childhood education remains significantly below the regional average and far from European standards. The absence of preschool institutions (PIs), limited enrollment capacities, and their uneven geographical distribution create significant barriers for parents seeking to enter or remain in employment, with women disproportionately affected by these constraints. Reliable and accessible preschool services are therefore not only an investment in children's development, but also a critical component of the labor market infrastructure. By reducing unpaid care responsibilities, expanded childcare provision can enable women to take up employment, increase their working hours, pursue professional development, and remain economically active. Conversely, insufficient childcare provision can push women out of employment or discourage their entry into the labor market, resulting in a loss of skills, income, and productive capacity for both households and the wider economy. Likewise, the limited availability of daycare and residential care services for the elderly often leaves families to absorb these responsibilities through unpaid care work, a burden that disproportionately falls on women. Strengthening both childcare and eldercare systems should therefore be viewed as an essential measure for removing structural barriers to women's employment and mobilizing a larger share of Kosovo's women workforce. Expanding the care economy can simultaneously create jobs within care services and enable women currently engaged in unpaid care work to participate more fully in the formal labor market.

Taking these issues into consideration, this report examines the current availability of preschool institutions for children aged 0–6 and eldercare services for persons aged 65 and above, assessing both demand and supply at the municipal and settlement levels. The analysis provides a comprehensive mapping of Kosovo's care infrastructure, identifying geographical and demographic gaps in the provision of

1 Statistical Agency of Kosovo. Main labor market indicators 2012–2024.
2 Kosovo Women's Network. Who cares? Demand, Supply, and Options for Expanding Childcare Availability in Kosovo. 2016

childcare and eldercare services, as well as assessing how the lack or availability of these services relates to women's participation in the labor market. In this way, the report aims to inform targeted policies and investments that expand care services while removing structural barriers to women's employment and strengthening their participation in the labor market.

2. Methodology

The methodology of this report is based on the collection and analysis of official data on preschool institutions and eldercare centers by municipalities and settlements, as well as on the most recent population registration data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) in 2024 for children aged 0 to less than 6 years old (0-<6) and individuals over the age of 65. Data on preschool institutions include institutions that provide both preschool and pre-primary education, and were collected from official reports of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), and from the Education Directorates of the 27[3] municipalities included in this report, until the end of 2025. Data concerning residential homes and day-care centers for the elderly were gathered from the Social Welfare Directorates of the respective municipalities through formal data requests, for the same period, until the end of 2025.

Furthermore, two accessibility and coverage indicators were calculated for this report to assess the current level of preschool services provision and identify priority needs across municipalities. The first indicator includes the number of preschool institutions in each municipality per 1,000 children aged 0–<6.[4] This shows the extent to which each municipality is covered with preschool institutions relative to the number of children living there. Another indicator analyzes the situation at the settlement level. More specifically, this indicator calculates the percentage of settlements in each municipality which include preschool institutions. In this way, the indicator shows the geographical coverage of preschool services within each municipality and the extent to which preschool institutions are distributed across its settlements, highlighting differences in access and potential geographical gaps in childcare provision.

For further analysis, the report also calculates women inactivity and unemployment rates for each municipality. This enables an assessment of whether municipalities with greater availability and coverage of childcare services tend to have lower rates of women inactivity and unemployment, providing an indication of the potential relationship between the availability of care infrastructure and women's labor market participation. The municipal-level data on women's employment and labor market status are based on data collected by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) through the 2024 census data.

2.1. Limitations

While this study provides an assessment of the availability and geographical distribution of care services in Kosovo and their potential relationship with women's labor market participation, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the report focuses on childcare services for children aged 0–<6 and eldercare services for persons aged 65 and above and does not cover care services for persons with disabilities. Moreover, the childcare analysis measures the number and geographical presence of preschool

3 Only municipalities that responded to the requests for data were included in this analysis. Consequently, 11 municipalities out of a total of 38 were excluded.

4 For calculating this indicator, for methodological consistency, only children aged 0-<6 years were included.

institutions (PIs), but does not assess their capacity in terms of available places for children. Therefore, the presence of a PI does not necessarily mean that sufficient places are available to meet local demand. At the settlement level, the indicator measuring the percentage of settlements with PIs also treats settlements equally, regardless of their size or population. It therefore reflects the geographical spread of services rather than the share of the population with access to childcare.

Moreover, at the settlement level, it analyzes the number of children in the age group 0–4 years only, due to the age groups available in the data provided by KAS, which are divided into 0–4 and 5–9 years. Therefore, to ensure greater accuracy and relevance to the analysis, only the 0–4 age group has been included. Due to limitations in the availability of comparable municipal-level data on eldercare, the indicators examining the relationship between care service availability and women's labor market outcomes are calculated only for childcare services. Consequently, the study cannot assess the relationship between eldercare provision and women's labor market participation with the same level of detail. The assessment of care needs is based on 2024 population data rather than population projections. It therefore reflects the situation at a specific point in time and does not account for potential future changes resulting from demographic shifts, migration, or changes in the age structure. In addition, minority municipalities are not included in the analysis due to the lack of availability of data and responses to official requests.

Finally, the women inactivity and unemployment rates at the municipal level are calculated using 2024 population census data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) rather than the Labor Force Survey (LFS), which is the standard source for labor market indicators. While census data allow for the necessary municipal-level disaggregation, differences in methodology mean that these figures should be interpreted with caution and should not be treated as directly comparable to LFS-based estimates.

3. Care Services in Kosovo

In Kosovo, care services include a range of services and institutions that provide support to children, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups who require assistance for their development and well-being. These services are offered by various public institutions, private providers, or non-governmental organizations, and are regulated through specific legislation.[5] Care services are divided into three categories: childcare services, eldercare services, and services for persons with disabilities. Childcare services refer to supervision, care, and early education of children. Eldercare services include eldercare residential homes, day-care centers, and in-home care services. Services for persons with disabilities include day-care centers offering assistive services, specialized support, and rehabilitation/therapeutic services.[6]

In Kosovo, there are a total of 131,255 children under the age of six, making up around 10% of the population, while there are 177,915 individuals aged 65 and older, accounting for about 11% of the population. For the purpose of this report, childcare services include only early childhood education services for children from birth to the age of six, , which include preschool and pre-primary institutions. Eldercare services (ages 65+) in this report refer to eldercare residential homes and day-care centers.

5 Official Gazette. Law on Social and Family Services, Administrative Instruction (MESTI) No.03/2022 on the Inclusion of Children in Preschool Institutions in Kosovo.

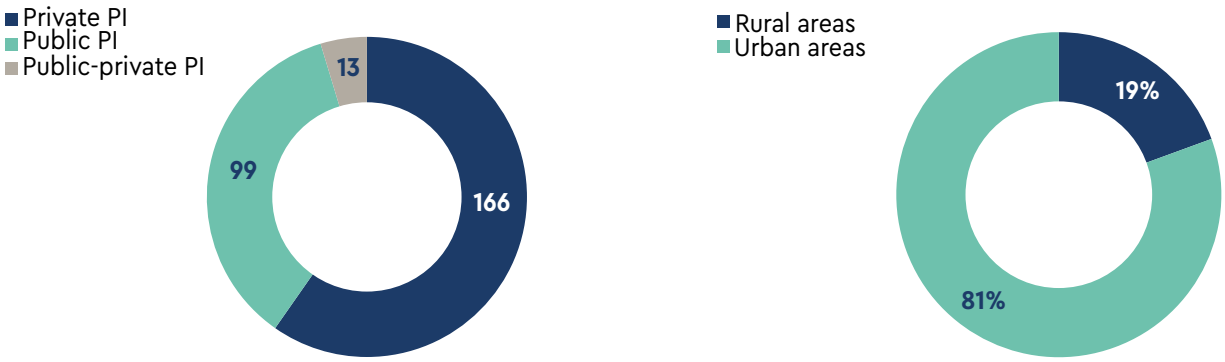
6 Ibid

3.1. Childcare services for children aged 0-6 years

Childcare services for children aged 0–6 years are provided through preschool and pre-primary institutions such as nurseries, kindergartens, and primary schools.[7] Early childhood education in Kosovo is regulated through the Law on Early Childhood Education[8] which aims to define the norms of organization for the care of children from birth to age six, as well as the standards for their operation and oversight. Since 2023, the enrollment of children in pre-primary education from age five until starting primary education has become mandatory according to this law. The law specifies several types of preschool institutions: public, private, public-private, community-based, and primary schools (which in some cases offer early childhood education starting from age three). Additionally, the Administrative Instruction (AI) on the inclusion of children in preschool institutions in Kosovo[9] defines two age-group divisions within preschool institutions: from 9 months to 3 years (nurseries) and from 3 to 6 years (kindergartens). According to this AI, in public institutions children may be enrolled from 9 months of age, while in private institutions enrollment can begin at 6 months. Furthermore, this instruction outlines the criteria for enrolling children in public preschool institutions and authorizes municipal assemblies to determine fees based on family income, as well as exemptions for certain groups.[10] The determination of enrollment criteria in public preschool institutions is made by the respective municipality, which lists them in the public call for available places. For example, in an open call issued by the Municipality of Prishtina, priority for admission was given to orphaned children, children with special needs, children of war invalids and veterans, children of divorced parents, and children from families where both parents work but have lower incomes.[11]

In Kosovo, there are a total of 278 registered preschool institutions[12]. Of these, 99 are public preschool institutions, 166 are private, and 13 are public-private or community-based. Geographically, these preschool institutions are concentrated primarily in urban areas, where around 81% are located, while approximately 19% are situated in rural areas.[13] At the local level, all 27 municipalities included in this analysis have functional preschool institutions for children. The municipality with the highest number of preschool institutions is Prishtina, with a total of 101. Other municipalities with a relatively high number of preschool institutions include Fushë Kosova, Gjakova, Peja, and Gjilan, with 22, 15, and 14 institutions respectively. Meanwhile, the municipalities with the lowest number of preschool institutions are Dragash, Hani i Elezit, Kaçanik, Kamenica, Klina, and Junik, each with only one preschool institution.

Figure 1. **Number of preschool institutions (PIs) in Kosovo by type and their geographical distribution (%) by area**

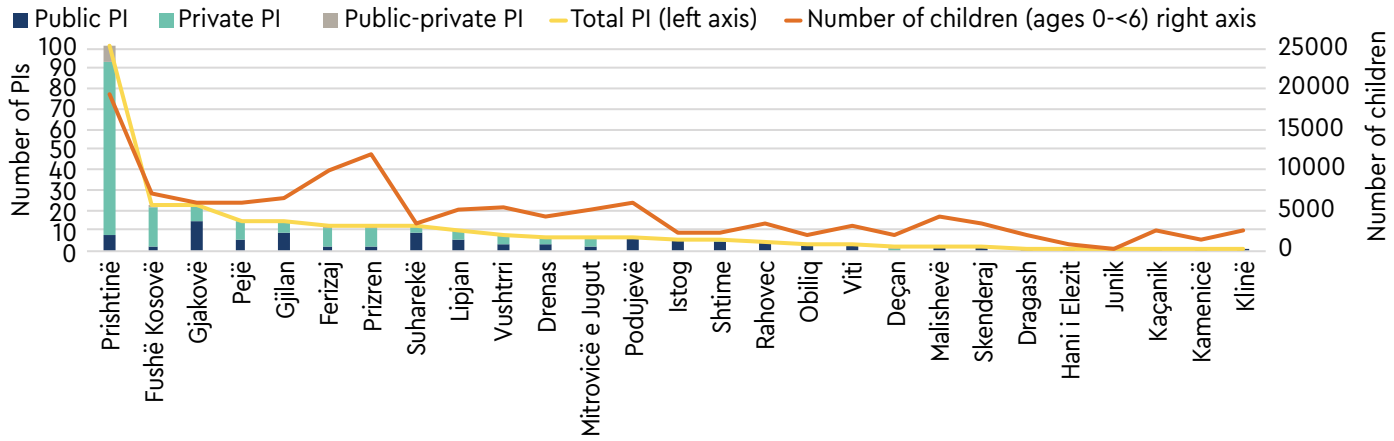


Source: Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and Education Directorates of municipalities

7 Offical Gazette. Law on Early Childhood Education. Accessed on December 3, 2025.
8 Ibid
9 Offical Gazette. Administrative Instruction (MESTI) No.03/2022 on the Inclusion of Children in Preschool Institutions in Kosovo. Accessed on December 3, 2025.
10 Ibid
11 Municipality of Pristina. Directorate of Education. Call for the enrollment and deregistration of children in preschool institutions of the Municipality of Pristina for the 2019–2020 academic year. Accessed on December 3, 2025.
12 Some registered preschool institutions also offer pre-primary education for children aged 5–6 years old.
13 Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and Municipal Education Directorates.

When analyzing the number of preschool institutions relative to the number of children aged 0–<6 years (Figure 2), a correlation can be observed in most municipalities: the more children in this age group, the higher the number of preschool institutions. However, this does not apply to all municipalities. Prizren and Ferizaj, which have the highest number of children after Prishtina, rank much lower in terms of the number of preschool institutions (eighth and sixth, respectively). Conversely, Suhareka, despite having significantly fewer children compared to some larger municipalities, ranks seventh in the number of preschool institutions.

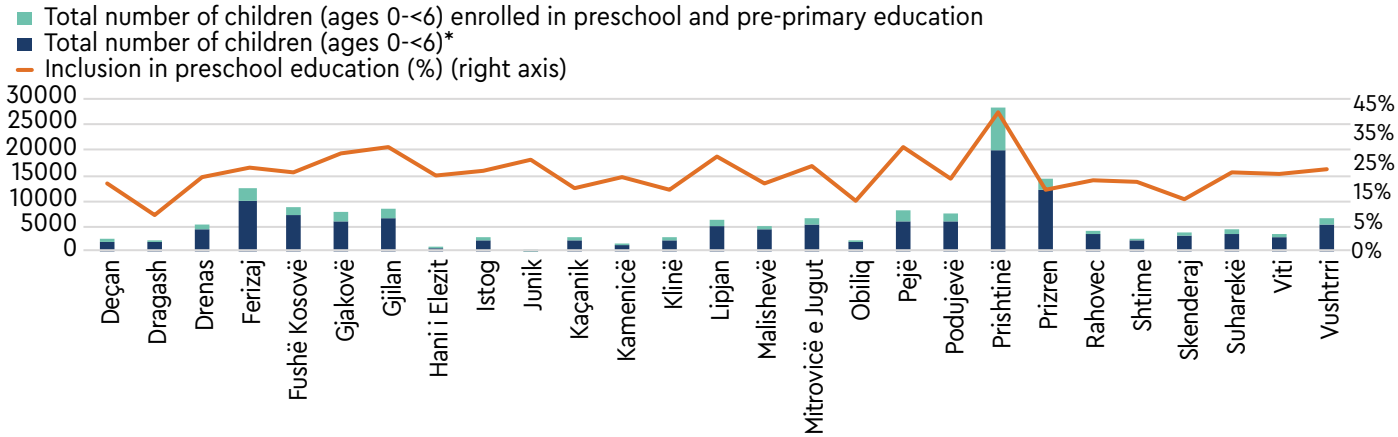
Figure 2. **Number of preschool institutions by type, municipality, and number of children (ages 0–<6)**



Source: Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation; Education Directorates of municipalities; and Kosovo Agency of Statistics

An important indicator that reflects the current situation of early childhood education, beyond the availability of preschool institutions, is the participation rate of children in the relevant age group (0–<6 years) in preschool and pre-primary education. According to data for the 2024/2025 school year, a total of 33,887 children were enrolled in preschool and pre-primary institutions in Kosovo. Out of these, around 70% were enrolled in public institutions, and 30% in private institutions. In addition, it is important to highlight that more than half of total enrolled children in preschool education (59%) were from the pre-primary age group (5-<6 years). Whereas, around 41% of total enrolled children were from the preschool age group (0–5 years).[14] When analyzed as a percentage of the total number of children in this age group, it appears that around 26% of children aged 0-<6 years in Kosovo are enrolled in preschool and pre-primary education.

Figure 3. **Enrollment of children aged 0–<6 in preschool and pre-primary education by municipality for the school year 2024/2025**

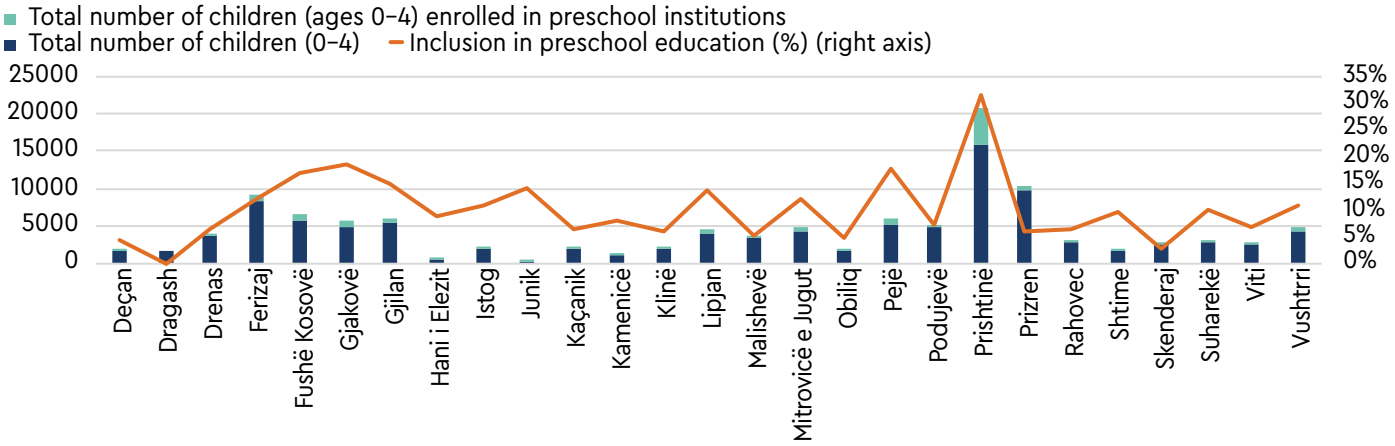


Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics

14 Kosovo Agency of Statistics. Education Statistics in Kosovo 2024–2025. Accessed on December 1, 2025.

At the municipal level, the highest participation rate is in the Municipality of Prishtina, with 41%, followed by the municipalities of Gjilan and Peja with 31%, and Gjakova with 29%. Meanwhile, the municipalities with the lowest enrollment rates, excluding those with a Serb-majority population, are Dragash and Obiliq, with only 11% and 15% of children enrolled in preschool institutions, respectively. When disaggregated in two age groups, children in preschool institutions (0–4) and pre-primary institutions (5-<6), enrollment rates show substantial differences. The data show that the average enrollment rate in preschool education for children aged 0–4 in Kosovo is 13%. Municipalities with the highest enrollment rate in this age group are: Prishtina (31.4%), Gjakova (18.4%), Peja (17.5%), and Fushë Kosova (16.8%). On the other hand, municipalities with the lowest enrollment rate in this age-group are: Dragash (0%), Skenderaj (2.9%), Obiliq (2.9%), and Deçan (4.2%).

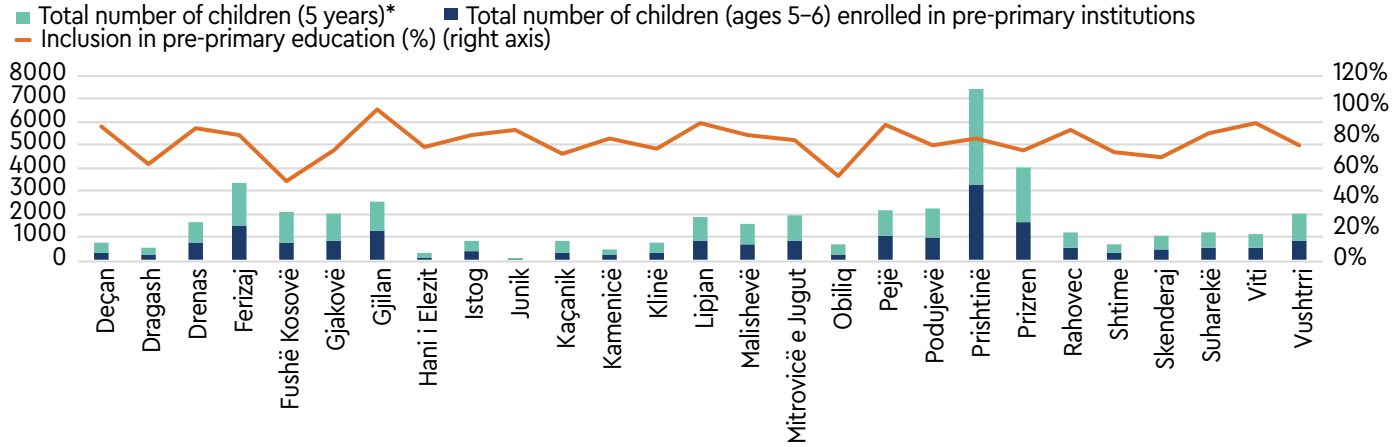
Figure 4. **Enrollment of children aged 0–4 in preschool education by municipality for the school year 2024/2025**



Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics

With regards to pre-primary education, the data show that the average enrollment rate for children aged 5-<6[15] in Kosovo is 77%, which is much higher than for the preschool age-group. When analyzed by municipality, the highest enrollment rate is in Gjilan with 98%, Lipjan and Viti with 89%, and Pejë with 88%. The lowest enrollment rate in this age-group is in the municipalities of Fushë Kosovë (52%), Obiliq (55%) and Dragash (62%).

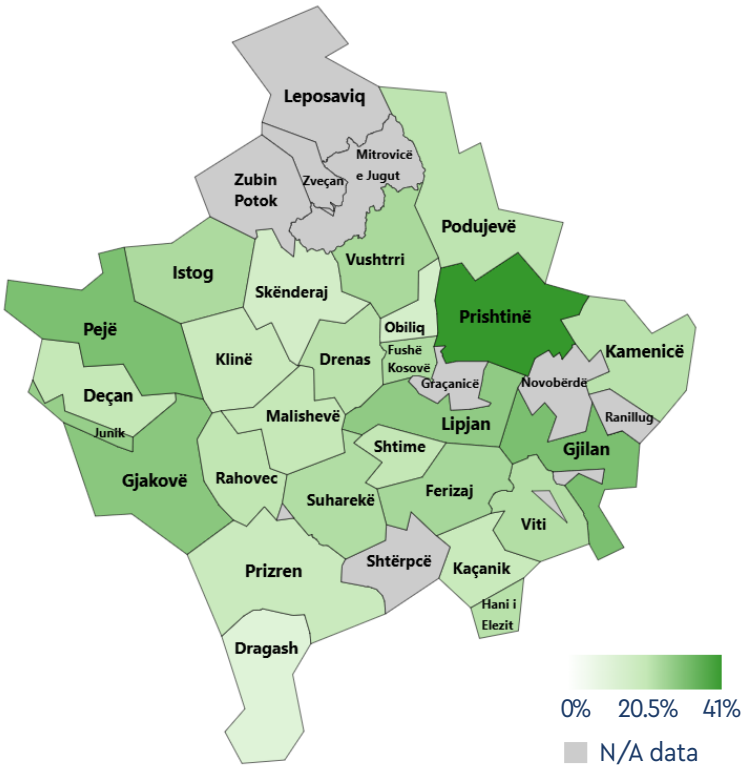
Figure 5. **Enrollment of children aged 5-<6 in pre-primary education by municipality for the school year 2024/2025**



Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics
*Total number of children aged 5 years also includes a few children aged 6–8 that are enrolled in pre-primary education according to census data

15 Enrolment rate for pre-primary education is calculated by dividing number of children enrolled in public and private pre-primary institutions with total number of children aged 5 in those municipalities (including a few children aged 6–8 years that are enrolled in pre-primary education according to census data).

Figure 6. Percentage of enrolled children aged 0–<6 years in preschool education

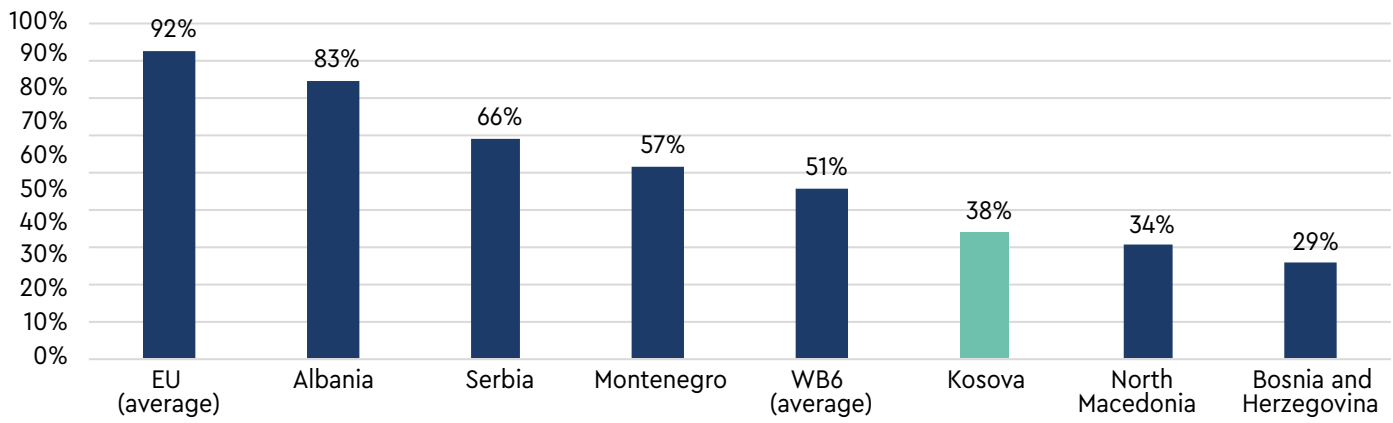


Municipality	Inclusion in preschool education
Deçan	20%
Dragash	11%
Drenas	22%
Ferizaj	25%
Fushë Kosovë	24%
Gjakovë	29%
Gjilan	31%
Hani i Elezit	22%
Istog	24%
Junik	27%
Kaçanik	19%
Kamenicë	22%
Klinë	18%
Lipjan	28%
Malishevë	20%
Mitrovicë e Jugut	25%
Obiliq	15%
Pejë	31%
Podujevë	21%
Prishtinë	41%
Prizren	19%
Rahovec	21%
Shtime	21%
Skenderaj	16%
Suharekë	23%
Viti	23%
Vushtrri	24%

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics

Compared to the EU average and the countries of the Western Balkans, Kosovo ranks third from the bottom in terms of the participation of children over 3 years old in early childhood education. The percentage of participation of children over 3 years old in the early childhood education in Kosovo in 2021 was 37.8%. On the other hand, among the countries of the region, Albania stands out the best, with a participation rate of 82.9%, followed by Serbia and Montenegro with 65.5% and 57.2%, respectively. The lowest percentage from the region is Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a participation of 28.5%, followed by North Macedonia with 33.8%. On the other hand, the average of the European Union countries is much higher, standing at 91.8% in 2022.[16]

Figure 7. Percentage of participation of children over 3 years old in preschool education in the countries of the region and the EU (2021)



Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2024

16 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Competitiveness and Private Sector Development. Western Balkans Competitiveness Outlook 2024: Regional Profile. Accessed on December 3, 2025.

The European Commission (EC) has set targets for the percentage of children enrolled in early childhood education since 2022 for 2030. According to the EC recommendations, at least 45% of children under 3 years of age should be enrolled in pre-school education, while for children aged 3–6 this percentage should be 96%. Furthermore, these recommendations propose in the long term that Member States take the necessary measures to provide more accessible, affordable and better quality care services. One of these measures is to close geographical gaps through more targeted measures, especially in rural and less populated areas, in order to create access in these areas as well.[17] Among other things, the European Care Strategy recommends taking into account the number of hours children spend in preschool institutions ('time intensity') in order to ensure sufficient time for parents for paid work.[18]

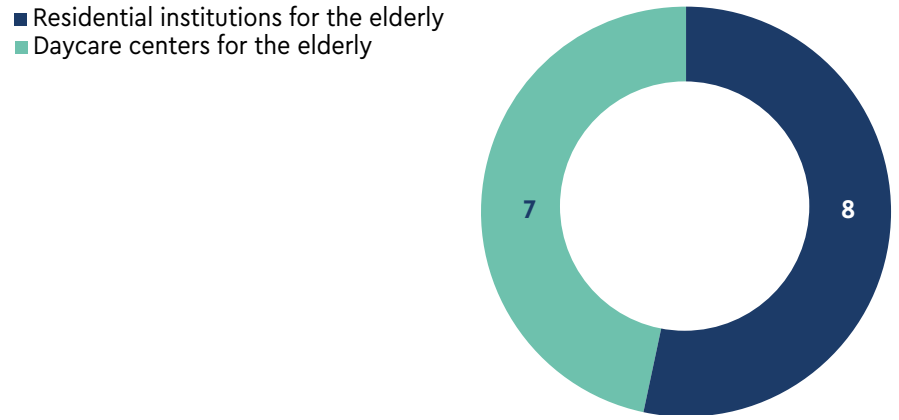
3.2. Care services for the elderly (65+)

Eldercare services are very important, as this category often needs support and assistance. The provision of these services enables the elderly to have a better well-being and life. In Kosovo, according to 2024 data, there are a total of 177,915 people over 65 years of age, constituting about 11% of the population. In terms of municipalities, the municipality with the largest number of elderly people is Prishtina with a total of 23,866 people, followed by Prizren with about 16,345 people, and Peja, Ferizaj and Gjakova with about 10,000 people.[19] The elderly, as a category in need, may have different needs for care services such as health care, care for daily activities, residential care for those who live alone or have no other family members, or other social services. Social services for the elderly are regulated under 2 main laws in Kosovo: The Law on Social and Family Services[20] and Family Law.[21] These laws, and accompanying legislation, set the duties and responsibilities of public institutions that draft social and family policies and provide such services, as well as the duties and responsibilities of private institutions that provide social and family services. Some of these institutions operate at the central level and are monitored by the Department for Social and Family Policies within the Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers, and some others at the local level and are monitored by the Directorates for Social Welfare within the municipalities.

In Kosovo, there are two types of elderly care institutions: residential institutions for the elderly (homes for the elderly) and community-based daycare centers. Residential care institutions treat elderly people who do not have family care, while daycare centers are open to all elderly people for various socialization activities.[22] The number of public institutions and community-based centers for the elderly in Kosovo for the 27 municipalities included in this report is 15.[23] Of these, 8 are residential institutions for the elderly without family care and 7 are centers that provide daycare for the elderly.[24]

17 The European Council. Press release. EU ministers adopt recommendations on early childhood and long term care. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
18 European Commission. Press release. A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
19 Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS). Population Census. Demographic Characteristics. Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, and Municipality, 2011 and 2024. Accessed on November 10, 2025.
20 Official Gazette. Law No. 08/L-255 on Social and Family Services. Accessed on November 10, 2025.
21 Official Gazette. Family Law. Accessed on November 18, 2025.
22 Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers (MFLT). Social Welfare 2021. Accessed on November 18, 2025.
23 Private institutions are not included due to lack of data.
24 For methodological consistency with the section for childcare services, municipalities with minorities have not been included (e.g. Novoberde in this

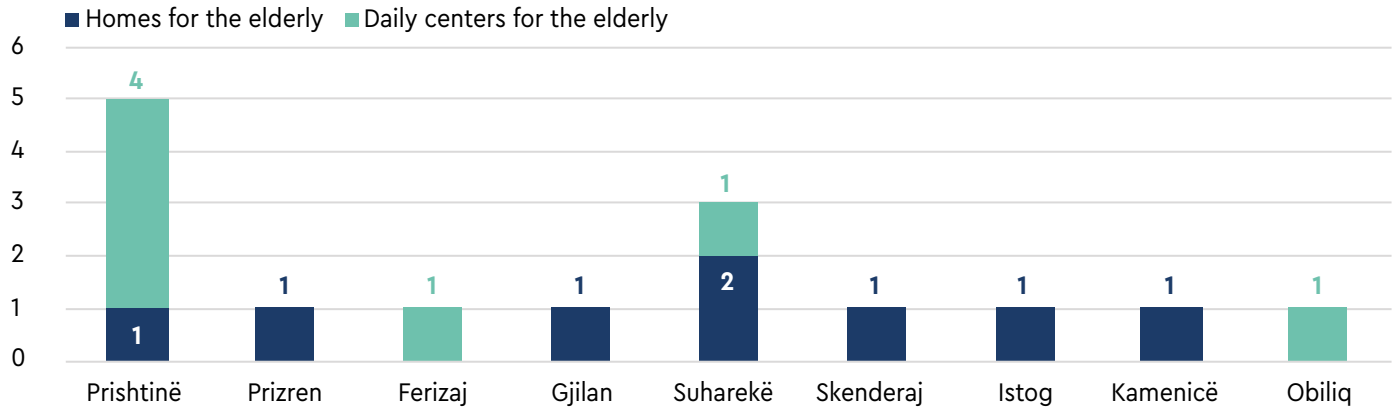
Figure 8. Number of homes and centers for the elderly in Kosovo



Source: Directorates for Social Welfare of municipalities

Geographically, a total of 13 municipalities have residential homes or day-care centers for the elderly, of which Prishtina has the largest number (5) while the other municipalities have one center each. The centers for the elderly are distributed in Prishtina, Prizren, Gjilan, Skenderaj, Istog, and Kamenicë. Meanwhile, the day centers for the elderly are in Prishtina (4), Ferizaj, Suhareka and Obiliq. The home for the elderly in Gjilan is also for daily stays.

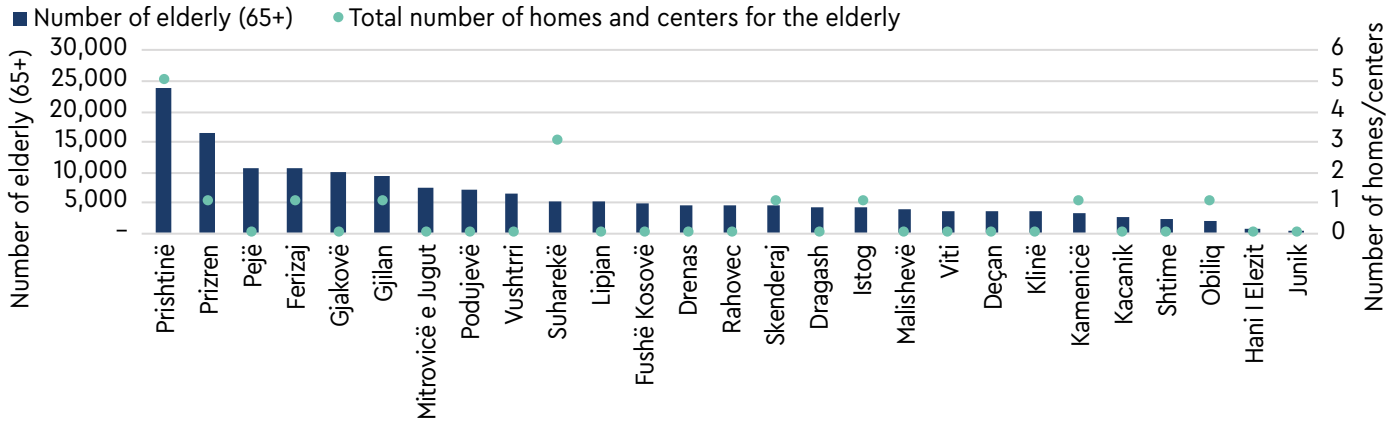
Figure 9. Number of homes and centers for the elderly by municipality



Source: Directorates for Social Welfare of municipalities

When the number of homes and centers for the elderly is analyzed based on the number of people aged 65+, a positive correlation is observed between the number of elderly people and centers for the elderly in some large municipalities such as Prishtina, Prizren, Ferizaj, Gjilan. However, there are municipalities with a larger number of elderly people that do not have any public centers such as: Peja, Gjakova, South Mitrovica, Podujeva and Vushtrri. On the other hand, municipalities with a smaller number of elderly people such as Obiliq and Kamenica each have one center. In terms of geographical location in settlements, the majority of centers are located in the main settlements of these municipalities (centers), with the exception of the center in Istog, which is located in Gurrakoc. For this reason, as well as due to the small number of centers, the distribution of centers by settlements and population has not been analyzed.

Figure 10. Number of residential institutions and centers for the elderly by municipality and number of people over 65 years old



Source: Directorates for Social Welfare of municipalities and Kosovo Agency of Statistics

3.3. Demographic needs in relation to the infrastructure of children's preschool institutions

To assess how accessible preschool institutions are and how well they match demographic needs, this report uses two indicators based on the current number of preschool institutions and the number of children in municipalities. Initially, it calculates how many preschool centers each municipality has for every 1,000 children aged 0–<6. This shows how well each municipality is covered by preschool institutions in relation to the number of children living there. The other indicator analyzes the situation at the settlement level. More specifically, it calculates the number of settlements with preschool institutions as a percentage of all settlements within a municipality. This helps to understand more clearly the distribution of preschool services within municipalities and how close they are to the children who need them most. In addition, it also presents number of preschool institutions based on settlements and number of children aged 0–4 years old.

3.3.1 Number of preschool institutions per 1,000 children by municipality

According to the results in Table 1, in general, the coverage of preschool institutions across municipalities is low. The municipality of Prishtina has the highest ratio of available preschools per 1,000 children, with a calculated ratio of 5.2. Municipality of Junik has also a high ratio of availability (4.7); however, it should be considered that it is a small municipality with one newly opened PI. Other municipalities that have a moderate ratio of 2–3 preschools per 1,000 children are Gjakova, Suhareka, Fushë Kosovë, Peja, and Shtime. While the municipalities that are positioned below the average with 1–2 preschools per 1,000 children are: Gjilan, Istog, Lipjan, Vushtrri, Obiliq, Drenas, Hani i Elezit, Ferizaj, Rahovec, and South Mitrovica. The municipalities with the lowest ratio of preschools where the ratio per 1,000 children is below one are: Viti, Podujeva, Prizren, Deçan, Kamenica, Skenderaj, Dragash, Malisheva, Kaçanik, and Klina.

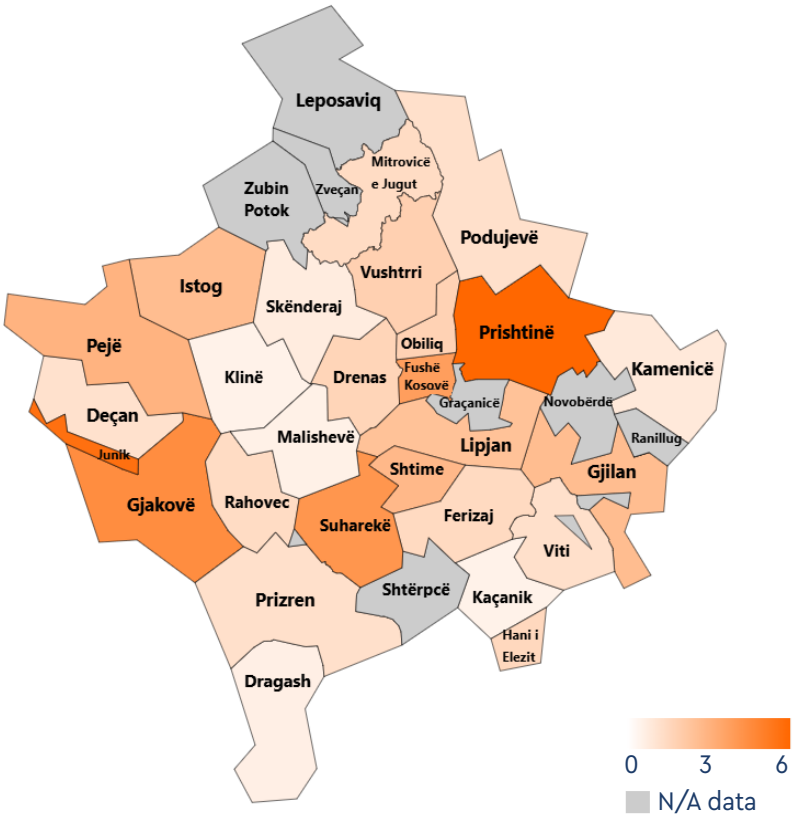
Table 1. Current preschool institutions by municipality and number of children 0-<6 years old

Municipality	Total preschool institutions	Total number of of children (0-<6) years old)	Preschool institutions/1000 children
Prishtinë	101	19268	5.2
Junik	1	213	4.7
Gjakovë	22	5870	3.7
Suharekë	12	3465	3.5
Fushë Kosovë	22	6926	3.2
Pejë	15	6021	2.5
Shtime	5	2154	2.3
Istog	14	2296	2.2
Gjilan	5	6431	2.2
Lipjan	10	4957	2.0
Vushtrri	8	5205	1.5
Obiliq	3	2048	1.5
Drenas	6	4332	1.4
Hani i Elezit	1	789	1.3
Ferizaj	12	9801	1.2
Mitrovicë e Jugut	4	5147	1.2
Rahovec	6	3442	1.2
Viti	3	2933	1.0
Prizren	12	11859	1.0
Podujevë	6	5941	1.0
Deçan	2	2026	1.0
Kamenicë	1	1389	0.7
Skenderaj	2	3209	0.6
Dragash	1	1953	0.5
Malishevë	2	4314	0.5
Kaçanik	1	2365	0.4
Klinë	1	2370	0.4

Source: Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Information, Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Education Directorates of municipalities and GAP calculations

These results show that there are geographical disparities between municipalities, based on differences in capacity from municipality to municipality.

Figure 11. Number of preschool institutions per 1,000 children 0-<6 years old, by municipality



Municipality	No. of children (0<6 y)	PIs/1000 children
Prishtinë	19268	5.2
Prizren	11859	1.0
Ferizaj	9801	1.2
Fushë Kosovë	6926	3.2
Gjilan	6431	2.2
Pejë	6021	2.5
Podujevë	5941	1.0
Gjakovë	5870	3.7
Vushtrri	5205	1.5
Mitrovicë	5147	1.2
Lipjan	4957	2.0
Drenas	4332	1.4
Malishevë	4314	0.5
Suharekë	3465	3.5
Rahovec	3442	1.2
Skenderaj	3209	0.6
Viti	2933	1.0
Klinë	2370	0.4
Kaçanik	2365	0.4
Istog	2296	2.2
Shtime	2154	2.3
Deçan	2026	1.0
Obiliq	2048	1.5
Dragash	1953	0.5
Kamenicë	1389	0.7
Hani i Elezit	789	1.3
Junik	213	4.7

In some large municipalities such as Prizren and Ferizaj, despite the high number of children, the ratio to the number of preschool institutions is quite low. Furthermore, it is noted that there are significant infrastructure needs since a large number of municipalities have less than 2 preschools per 1,000 children, which means that there are insufficient capacities. However, even for municipalities that have a higher ratio of total preschools per 1,000 children (for example Prishtina), over 200 children per preschool is still a considerable number and requires certain capacities that many small private preschools may not have.

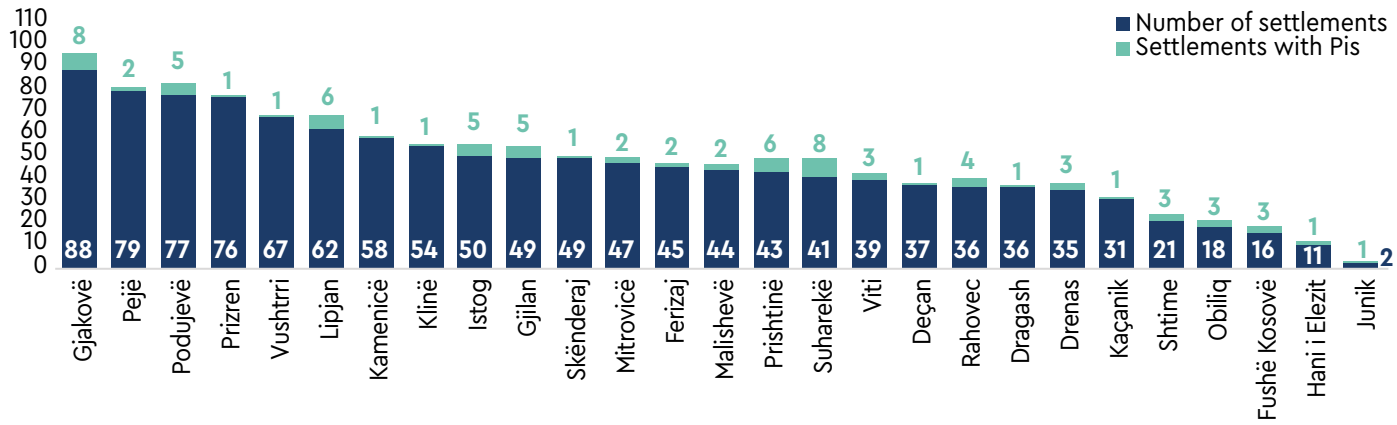
According to some calculations[25] based on the number of children enrolled in public and private preschools in Kosovo, the weighted average of children per preschool is 124. In public preschools, the average of children enrolled is 235 while in private preschools it is 63. Therefore, based on these and the ratio per 1,000 children, it can be concluded that there is a shortage of preschool institutions.

3.3.2 Availability of preschool institutions by settlements

To examine more closely the availability of preschool institutions across municipalities based on the number of children, this report also analyzes data at the settlement level within each municipality. In this way, municipalities were assessed based on the number of settlements they contain and how many of these have preschool institutions. According to these data, the municipalities of Gjakova and Suhareka have the highest number of preschool institutions across settlements, with eight each.

25 The calculations were carried out based on current data on the number of children enrolled in public and private preschool institutions, as well as the number of such institutions. For public institutions, the total number of enrolled children was divided by the number of institutions, whereas for private institutions, a simple average was calculated from the list of registered private preschool institutions. The weighted average for private and public institutions was calculated based on the respective weighting of the number of preschool institutions.

Figure 12. Distribution of preschool institutions by settlements in municipalities: number of settlements with preschool institutions



Source: Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation; Education Directorates of municipalities; and Kosovo Agency of Statistics

Additionally, to analyze the geographical spread of preschool institutions within municipalities, an indicator analyzing the number of settlements with preschool institutions as a percentage of all settlements within a municipality has been calculated. Based on the results, it appears that from the bigger municipalities, Suhareka has a better geographical distribution, with around 20% of its settlements covered with preschool institutions. Other municipalities with relatively better geographical distribution include Fushë Kosova with 19%, Obiliq with 17%, Prishtina and Shtime with 14%, and Rahovec with 11%. Junik has also a good geographical distribution even though it is a small municipality with 2 settlements in total, and 50% of them covered by preschool institutions (1 out of a total of 2 settlements).

To analyze the availability of PIs in more depth, a 'mapping' of existing PIs by settlement, and the number of children aged 0–4 years in those settlements, was carried out.[26] According to the results, there are large differences between urban and rural settlements in terms of accessibility to preschool institutions for children aged 0–4 years. Furthermore, there is inequality in the distribution of PIs between settlements in some municipalities, implying poor planning and not based on demand, or the real number of children. One municipality where this is evident is Gjakova, which has 7 PIs distributed in settlements smaller than the center, but 6 of them are in settlements with an average of 20 children aged 0–4 years. On the other hand, large settlements such as Damjani and Brekoci do not have any PIs.

Table 2. Current preschool institutions by settlements and number of children 0–4 years old

Municipality	Settlements	Children 0–4 years old	Number of preschool institutions
Gjakovë		**4849**	**22**
	Gjakovë	2491	15
	Rogovë	242	1
	Shishman	24	1
	Devë	19	1
	Novosellë e Ulët	19	1
	Korenicë	18	1

26 In the settlement level, data provided by Kosovo Agency of Statistics divide number of children by specific age groups such as: 0–4, 5–9. Consequently, for the analysis on the settlement level, children aged 5-<6 have not been included.

Municipality	Settlements	Children 0–4 years old	Number of preschool institutions
	Bishtazhin	14	1
	Rrezinë	2	1
Gjilan		**5319**	**14**
	Gjilan	3525	10
	Livoç i Ulët	202	1
	Livoç i Epërm	201	1
	Zhegër	166	1
	Dobërçan	100	1
Deçan		**1664**	**2**
	Deçan	164	2
Dragash		**1621**	**1**
	Dragash	89	1
Ferizaj		**8175**	**12**
	Ferizaj	3692	11
	Greme	272	1
Fushë Kosovë		**5741**	**22**
	Bresje	803	1
	Fushë Kosovë	3951	20
	Miradi e Poshtme	114	1
Drenas		**3580**	**6**
	Drenas	519	3
	Komoran	234	1
	Çikatovë e Re	137	2
Hani i Elezit		**638**	**1**
	Hani i Elezit	181	1
Istog		**1914**	**5**
	Istog	352	1
	Vrellë	128	1
	Gjurakoc	93	1
	Banjë	67	1
	Rakosh	30	1
Junik		**178**	**1**
	Junik	177	1
Kaçanik		**1937**	**1**
	Kaçanik	526	1
Kamenicë		**1143**	**1**
	Kamenicë	243	1
Klinë		**1960**	**1**
	Klinë	337	1
Lipjan		**4099**	**10**
	Lipjan	1021	4
	Gadime e Ulët	237	1
	Sllovi	191	1
	Shalë	138	1
	Konjuh	38	2
	Rufc i Ri	21	1
Malishevë		**3516**	**2**
	Kijevë	81	1
	Malishevë	314	1
Mitrovicë e Jugut		**4236**	**6**
	Mitrovicë e Jugut	2224	5
	Shipol	1	1
Obiliq		**1654**	**3**

Municipality	Settlements	Children 0–4 years old	Number of preschool institutions
	Obiliq	559	1
	Mazgit	215	1
	Miloshevë	151	1
Pejë		**4990**	**15**
	Pejë	2398	14
	Vitomiricë	320	1
Podujevë		**4882**	**6**
	Podujevë	1383	2
	Sfeçël	92	1
	Lluzhan	48	1
	Orllan	39	1
	Kërpimeh	26	1
Prishtinë		**15846**	**101**
	Prishtinë	9491	90
	Matiçan	3262	2
	Çagllavicë	541	5
	Hajvali	539	1
	Sofali	116	2
	Besi	43	1
Prizren		**9777**	**12**
	Prizren	4669	12
Rahovec		**2850**	**4**
	Rahovec	1034	1
	Xërxë	189	1
	Krushë e Madhe	184	1
	Ratkoc	155	1
Shtime		**1793**	**5**
	Shtime	576	3
	Godanc i Epërm	92	1
	Muzeqinë	59	1
Skenderaj		**2628**	**2**
	Skënderaj	612	2
Suharekë		**2886**	**12**
	Suharekë	652	5
	Sopië	165	1
	Studençan	160	1
	Mushtisht	150	1
	Gjinoc	111	1
	Samadrexhë	111	1
	Duhël	56	1
	Bukosh	51	1
Viti		**2403**	**3**
	Viti	407	1
	Drobesh	127	1
	Çifllak	5	1
Vushtrri		**4263**	**8**
	Vushtrri	1993	8

Source: Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Information, Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Education Directorates of municipalities and GAP calculations

Similarly, the distribution is uneven in South Mitrovica, where settlements such as Zijaqa, Suhadolli i Poshtëm, and Tërstena with over 200 children do not have any institution. Similarly, in Ferizaj only 1 settlement outside the center has a preschool institution, while other large settlements such as Pleshina, Talinoc,

Nekodima, and Komogllava, do not have any preschool institutions. Furthermore, Drenas also presents an uneven distribution where only 3 out of 35 settlements have preschool institutions, including 1 settlement with 2 preschool institutions for only 137 children, while other settlements such as Tërstenik, Llapushnik, and Nekoc with over 200 children are without any preschool institutions. In Podujeva, about 3 preschools are located in settlements with an average of 50 children such as Lluzhan, Orllan, and Kërpimeh, while 6 settlements with over 150 children are without any preschool. In some other municipalities, the distribution of preschool institutions is focused only on the main settlement (city), leaving many other children in the municipality without preschool institutions nearby. The municipalities with the largest number of children and all preschools focused only on the city (1 settlement) are: Prizren, Vushtrri, Malisheva, Skenderaj, Klina, Kaçanik, Deçan, Dragash, and Kamenica.

On the other hand, in some municipalities the distribution of preschools across settlements is more balanced. The municipality of Gjilan is one of them, as the 3 settlements with the most children, such as Livoç i Ulët and i Epërm, as well as Zhegra, also have preschools, reflecting a better match of the supply with demand. Similarly, in Suhareka the situation is better, where out of the 7 settlements that have preschool institutions, 5 of them, such as Sopia, Studençan, Mushtishti, Gjinoc and Samadrexha, have a higher number of children (over 100 children). Obiliq also presents a better distribution, as the 3 settlements with the most children also have preschool institutions. Prishtina presents a somewhat balanced situation, where out of the 11 preschools that are located in smaller settlements, 8 of them are located in areas with a higher number of children (more than 500 children). Meanwhile, there are some settlements with over 100 children such as Bardhosh, Kolovica, Barileva, Bërnica e Epërme and Prugoci that do not have access to preschool institutions at all.

Based on the results above, in many municipalities in Kosovo, there is an uneven distribution of preschool institutions in urban and rural areas. In many municipalities, there is a strong focus on urban areas, thus neglecting rural settlements with a large number of children. Furthermore, in some cases preschool institutions have been built without proper planning, in settlements where the number of children is low, and consequently there is low demand. This distribution leaves many children in rural areas outside the early childhood education system and place additional constraints on parents, particularly women, who may face difficulties combining employment with unpaid care responsibilities. These geographical disparities are also linked to weak coordination between the central and local levels of government and municipalities' limited capacity to plan and expand care infrastructure. Municipalities often face financial constraints, difficulties in securing suitable land for new facilities, and a degree of reliance on central-level funding and initiatives. In addition, where investment decisions are not sufficiently guided by demographic and needs-based planning, there is a risk that the location of new institutions may reflect short-term priorities or local political considerations rather than the areas with the greatest unmet demand. This can further reinforce disparities between urban and rural settlements. Given the distance of preschool institutions from settlements, many children and families face transportation challenges, as many villages do not have access to public transportation at all. Furthermore, schedules are often limited and do not suit them, and the cost of transportation creates a financial burden for the family.[27] These combined barriers not only restrict children's access to preschool services but can also limit women's ability to enter or remain in paid employment, particularly where alternative childcare arrangements are unavailable.

27 Democracy for Development Institute. Public Transport and Kindergartens as Prerequisites for the Country's Rapid Development. 2025. Accessed on November 23, 2025.

4. The impact of care institutions on the inclusion of women in the labor market

4.1. Women's participation in the labor market in Kosovo

Low participation of women in the labor market remains a challenge both in Kosovo and in other countries around the world. According to data from the International Labor Organization, women's participation at the global level is 49%, which is 25 percentage points lower than that of men.[28] In Kosovo, women's participation in the labor market is much lower than the global average, around 26% in 2024, and compared to men's participation, it is 35 percentage points lower. So, inactivity among women in Kosovo in 2024 was around 74%.[29] Compared to the Western Balkans and European Union countries where the women employment rate is 46% and 53% respectively, Kosovo ranks as the country with the lowest rate in Europe.[30]

Among the key factors that have influenced the low employment rate of women in Kosovo are personal or family reasons, as well as caring for children or adults with disabilities, accounting for about 32% of these factors. Another factor mentioned by women is the inability to find full-time work (31%) as well as the preference for part-time work.[31] These reasons for women's non-inclusion in the labor market are fully consistent with social and traditional norms for the gender division of care roles both in Kosovo and in other countries. According to this division, women are attributed with family obligations for caring for children, the elderly, preparing food and other daily household tasks.[32] Consequently, such situations contribute to the increase of women's economic dependence on men, low participation in the labor market and a slowdown in the overall economic and social development of the country. In terms of legislation, Kosovo has several laws[33] and strategic documents[34] that aim to protect and promote women's rights, as well as equal treatment with men. Based on these, Kosovo is rated with 85 points out of 100 in the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law index. However, this assessment highlights that there is a large gap in the implementation of legislation and the difference between the index scores for legislation and the implementation score (43.8 points) is quite large.[35] According to expert opinions regarding the implementation of legislation on women's empowerment in Kosovo, in terms of childcare, around 50% responded that only some women have access to quality and affordable childcare services, while 17% responded that almost no women have access to these services.

According to some calculations by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), if women's participation in the labor market in Kosovo reaches the average level of the Western Balkan countries (45%), the number of employed women will increase by around 180 thousand women. Consequently, through this increase

28 World Bank. Childcare regulation and women's participation in the labor force. 2023. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
29 Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS). Labour Force Survey. Economically Inactive Population and the Rate of the Economically Inactive Population as a Share of the Working-Age Population by Gender, Age Group 15–64, 2012–2024. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
30 International Labour Organization (ILO). The impact of care responsibilities on women's labour force participation. 2024. Accessed on November 23, 2025
31 Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS). Labour Force Survey. Reasons for Working Part-Time by Gender (Percentage), Age Group 15–64, 2012–2024. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
32 Riinvest Institute. Unlocking potential: the economic cost of women's untapped potential. 2025. Accessed on July 25, 2026.
33 Official Gazette of Kosovo. Law No. 05/L-020 on Gender Equality; Law No. 08/L-185 on the Prevention of and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, and Gender-Based Violence; Law No. 2004/32 on the Family of Kosovo. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
34 Agency for Gender Equality. Kosovo Program for Gender Equality. 2025. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
35 World Bank. Women, Business and the Law 2024. Kosovo. Accessed on November 23, 2025.

in employment, the IMF predicts a potential increase of around 23% in Gross Domestic Product (19% increase from closing the employment gap, 1.1% from closing the working hours gap, and 2.5% from reducing the wage gap).[36] Similarly, calculations of the full GEGI Index[37] by another study, find that there would be an increase by 21.1 percent in GDP per capita in the long term, if women worked at the same rate and in the same jobs as men.[38]

4.2. The linkage between access to care institutions and women's employment

One of the factors that has proven to influence the improvement of women's employment is addressing the issue of care through the provision of affordable institutions/services. According to a study[39] in higher-income countries, there is a positive correlation between spending on early education and improved labor market outcomes for women. Similarly, another study [40] that analyzed low- and middle-income countries concluded that increasing access to preschool institutions has had a positive impact on labor market outcomes for women. To achieve this and increase the likelihood of women's participation in the labor market, according to a World Bank report, countries need to make changes to the legislation on childcare services. Through these changes, access to and availability of these services should be regulated. The report highlights that there is a significant gap between the demand and supply sides of the childcare market. More specifically, the demand for these services is high, but about 40% of children who are of preschool age do not have access to them. Therefore, the results of this study show that legislative changes are needed to improve children's and women's access to preschool services.[41] A report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that there is a correlation between women's participation in the labor market and the participation of children under the age of 3 in preschool institutions. According to this report, countries with the highest participation of women in the labor market, such as Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Switzerland, also have a high percentage of children enrolled in preschool education. Furthermore, the findings of this report show that there is a correlation between the hours of children in preschool institutions and working hours of women. As a result, in countries where children spend fewer hours in preschool institutions, such as the Netherlands and New Zealand, more than 40% of women with children are employed part-time.[42]

Some of the main barriers to the demand-side childcare market are: cost, location and opening hours, quality and social and cultural norms. The high cost of these services is a barrier for many families, especially those with lower incomes. Inconvenient location and opening hours prevent many families from enrolling their children in these institutions. The quality of the services and trust in them are other influencing factors. Furthermore, social norms in many

36 International Monetary Fund. Labor Market and Gender. Republic of Kosovo. 2025. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
37 GEGI Index measures the difference between male employment to male working age population ratio (Lm) and female employment to female working-age population ratio (Lf) as a share of total employment to working age population ratio (Lm+Lf).
38 Riinvest Institute. Unlocking potential: the economic cost of women's untapped potential. 2025. Accessed on July 25, 2026.
39 Olivetti, C. and Petrongolo, B. The Economic Consequences of Family Policies: Lessons from a Century of Legislation in High-Income Countries. 2017. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
40 Halim, D. Perova, E. and Reynolds, S. Childcare and Mothers' Labor Market Outcomes in Lower- and Middle-Income Countries. 2023. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
41 World Bank. Filling the Gaps: Childcare Laws for Women's Economic Empowerment. 2023. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
42 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). How does access to early childhood services affect the participation of women in the labour market? 2018. Accessed on November 23, 2025.

cases discourage parents from using childcare services, directly influencing the non-engagement of women/mothers in those families.[43] In some countries in Europe and Central Asia, such as Turkey and Ukraine, employers are obliged to provide or support childcare services, under certain conditions. In Turkey, large companies employing at least 150 women must provide such services or vouchers for parents to receive these services in certified institutions. In Ukraine, employers employing more women must organize such services. Another factor affecting access to childcare services is the earliest age at which children are admitted. In some countries, such as Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, these services are provided from the age of newborns. On the other hand, in countries such as Turkey, these services are provided by public institutions from the age of 3. In cases where the age from which children are admitted is higher, women are mainly affected, since they are limited in returning to the labor market after childbirth. On the other hand, paid maternity leave for women for longer periods, although a financial relief for families, may discourage women from returning to the labor market more quickly after giving birth, increasing gender inequalities in the workplace.[44]

Another important factor influencing the demand for preschool services is affordability. Many countries practice financial or non-financial support policies for parents to reduce costs and facilitate access, especially for families in need. One supporting policy is preferential taxation, through which parents can receive tax benefits through a reduction in personal income tax.[45] Providing access to and affordable childcare services, in addition to increasing women's participation in the labor market, also increases women's productivity at work, allowing them more time to focus. Consequently, through participation in the labor market, their well-being and financial stability are also improved.[46]

In Kosovo, there are several factors that create barriers to women's participation in the labor market: cultural and social norms, family responsibilities, limited access to childcare and eldercare services, transportation, and the cost of maternity leave for employers. In addition to the limited access to preschool and eldercare institutions discussed above, an important factor that is very pronounced in Kosovo, and positions the care of children and the elderly as the responsibility of women are cultural norms. This creates gender inequality in the family, as women spend a lot of time engaged in 'unpaid work' without having the opportunity to become part of the labor market. According to calculations of a report,[47]women in Kosovo spend about 6 hours a day on unpaid work, while men spend 44% less, or about 3.5 hours. Meanwhile, the total value of unpaid work is estimated to be about 2.8 billion euros, or 33% of Kosovo's Gross Domestic Product.[48] Furthermore, in addition to the factors mentioned above, a challenge affecting women's employment in the Western Balkan countries is the lack of formal opportunities with flexible working hours. According to the World Bank, formal jobs that offer flexibility and part-time employment are rare among employers, further increasing the gender wage gap, and consequently women's interest in work. As a solution to this, the WB mentions expanding childcare and elderly care services, while simultaneously creating quality jobs in care services.

43 World Bank. Women, Business and the Law 2022. Toward available, affordable, and quality childcare in Europe and Central Asia. 2022. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
44 Ibid
45 World Bank. Women, Business and the Law 2022. Toward available, affordable, and quality childcare in Europe and Central Asia. 2022. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
46 World Bank. The Effects of Childcare on Women and Children. Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Burkina Faso. 2022. Accessed on November 23, 2025.
47 Musine Kokalari Institute. Who Cares? Unpaid Care Work in Kosovo. (2022). Accessed on November 23, 2025.
48 Ibid

Countries also need to address the affordability of these institutions.[49] Another important factor that creates barriers to women's employment, especially in rural areas, is access to and cost of transportation. In many villages, families do not have access to transportation, or transportation is expensive, creating obstacles for many women to enter the labor market or even vocational training. According to an analysis[50] in some villages in Kosovo, about 12% of respondents cited the cost of transportation as a reason for not looking for work. Furthermore, another factor that limits women's employment opportunities is the interruption of work after childbirth and the cost of maternity leave for employers. In this regard, legislation on maternity leave and parental leave should be reviewed, in order to create equal opportunities for both parents, and not leave the burden solely on the woman.[51]

4.2.1 Inactivity and unemployment of women in Kosovo by municipality and correlation with availability of preschool institutions

For further analysis, this report analyzes the relationship between the availability of preschool institutions (PIs) in municipalities and women's labor-market indicators by calculating the correlation between the PI availability indicator and municipal-level inactivity and unemployment rates. The analysis aims to examine whether municipalities with higher preschool availability tend to have lower rates of women's inactivity and unemployment. The data on women's unemployment and inactivity rates were obtained from the 2024 population census, rather than from the Labor Force Survey (LFS). Using census data allows for the analysis of these indicators at the municipal level.

The relationship between preschool availability and women's labor-market outcomes was assessed using the Pearson correlation coefficient[52], calculated across the 27 municipalities. The coefficient measures the direction and strength of the linear relationship between the number of PIs per 1,000 children and the respective labor-market indicator. The analysis finds a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.48$) between preschool availability and women's inactivity. This indicates that municipalities with more PIs relative to the number of children tend, on average, to have lower women inactivity rates. The relationship is stronger for unemployment, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.63$, suggesting that municipalities with greater preschool availability also tend to have lower women unemployment rates.

49 World Bank. Towards Better Jobs. Western Balkans Regular Economic Report. 2025. Accessed on November 23, 2025.

50 Democracy for Development Institute. Public Transport and Kindergartens as Prerequisites for the Country's Rapid Development. (2025). Accessed on November 23, 2025.

51 Unicef. Analysis of the situation of women and children in Kosovo. 2019. Accessed on November 23, 2025.

52 Pearson correlation coefficient (often written as r) is a number from -1 to 1 that measures the strength and direction of a straight-line relationship between two sets of numbers. It is calculated dividing the (**covariance**) of variables with their **standard deviations**. A positive correlation is when r>0<1 and a negative correlation is when r<0>-1

Table 3. Employment and inactivity rates for women aged 15-64, by municipality

Municipality	Unemployment rate for women	Inactivity rate for women	PIs/1000 children
Deçan	25.9%	76.1%	1.0
Dragash	52.3%	85.2%	0.5
Drenas	26.5%	68.9%	1.4
Ferizaj	15.1%	65.6%	1.2
Fushë Kosovë	10.6%	53.2%	3.2
Gjakovë	17.3%	63.8%	3.7
Gjilan	21.5%	58.5%	2.2
Hani i Elezit	8.3%	86.3%	1.3
Istog	17.0%	69.4%	2.2
Junik	10.9%	81.7%	4.7
Kaçanik	29.1%	71.4%	0.4
Kamenicë	25.5%	69.4%	0.7
Klinë	26.6%	74.5%	0.4
Lipjan	16.2%	68.7%	2.0
Malishevë	33.1%	79.8%	0.5
Mitrovicë	25.9%	62.3%	1.2
Obiliq	11.6%	67.6%	1.5
Pejë	14.1%	64.3%	2.5
Podujevë	22.5%	73.2%	1.0
Prishtinë	7.2%	46.1%	5.2
Prizren	16.2%	72.2%	1.0
Rahovec	21.7%	81.6%	1.2
Shtime	21.5%	72.2%	2.3
Skenderaj	32.3%	74.9%	0.6
Suharekë	19.2%	73.6%	3.5
Viti	26.2%	71.7%	1.0
Vushtrri	19.5%	69.3%	1.5

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2024) and GAP calculations

Prishtina stands out combining the highest preschool availability (5.2 PIs per 1,000 children) with the lowest women inactivity rate (46.1%) and lowest unemployment rate (7.2%). Fushë Kosova also performs better, with 3.2 PIs per 1,000 children, a women inactivity rate of 53.2%, and unemployment of 10.6%. Gjakova and Peja similarly combine relatively high preschool availability with comparatively low inactivity and unemployment rates. At the other end, Dragash is among the weakest performers, with only 0.5 PIs per 1,000 children, alongside a very high women inactivity rate of 85.2% and unemployment rate of 52.3%. Malisheva, Klina, Kaçanik, and Skenderaj also combine relatively low preschool availability with high inactivity and/or unemployment rates. However, there are some exceptions, which show as outliers. Junik, for example, has the

second-highest PI indicator (4.7) but a high women inactivity rate of 81.7%, while Hani i Elezit has relatively low preschool availability (1.3) but one of the lowest unemployment rates (8.3%). These cases demonstrate that preschool availability is not the only factor determining women's labor-market participation.

The findings should therefore be interpreted as an association rather than evidence of causation. The Pearson correlation captures a linear relationship between two municipal-level variables but does not control for other factors that may influence both preschool provision and labor-market outcomes, including local economic conditions, employment opportunities, household income, urbanization, education, or access to other forms of childcare. In addition, the PI indicator measures the relative availability of institutions but does not capture whether places are affordable, geographically accessible, available to all children, or actually utilized by families.

Overall, the analysis suggests that municipalities with greater preschool availability generally show more favorable outcomes for women's labor-market participation, particularly in terms of unemployment. While the relationship cannot be interpreted as causal, the results provide supporting evidence for considering the expansion and equitable distribution of preschool services as part of broader policies aimed at reducing barriers to women's economic participation.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this report show that the current infrastructure of preschool institutions and centers for the elderly does not match the demographic needs of the Kosovo population, thus creating even more barriers to women's participation in the labor market, given the cultural and social norms in Kosovo. Early childhood education remains underdeveloped, with only 26% of children aged 0–<6 enrolled in preschool institutions, a level much lower than the regional average and far from the European Union targets. The geographical distribution of preschool institutions is uneven, with low access in rural areas and with some municipalities having only one institution for the entire territory, despite the high number of children. This indicates that the current capacities in many municipalities are not only insufficient, but also inefficiently distributed. In terms of services for the elderly, there are only 15 functional public and community-based institutions throughout the country, excluding minority municipalities, concentrated mainly in the largest municipalities. Some municipalities with a large number of elderly people do not have any public services of this type. In the absence of formal care alternatives, families continue to absorb much of this responsibility through unpaid care work, disproportionately affecting women's time and labor-market opportunities. Strengthening eldercare provision is therefore equally important for reducing the unequal distribution of unpaid care and enabling women to remain economically active.

The findings also underline that investment in care services is an investment in Kosovo's labor force and economic potential. Expanding accessible and geographically balanced childcare and eldercare services can help release women's time from unpaid care, facilitate their entry into employment, support their retention and progression in the labor market, and enable households to make greater use of their productive potential. At the same time, expanding the care sector itself can generate employment opportunities and contribute to the development of the care economy. The benefits therefore extend beyond individual households to the wider economy through higher labor force participation, greater employment, increased household incomes, and a broader productive workforce.

Consequently, the report's findings support a shift from viewing childcare and eldercare primarily as welfare or social-policy issues towards recognizing

them as core investments in labor-market participation, gender equality, and sustainable economic growth. Based on the findings of this report, the following recommendations are proposed:

For the local level (municipalities):

- Expand the capacities of preschool and preprimary education through investment in the construction of new preschool institutions or adaptation of existing schools for preschool institutions in municipalities with a low ratio of preschools per 1,000 children, especially in those with less than 1 preschool per 1,000 children. Investments should be based on demographic needs and trends according to settlements, prioritizing rural areas and settlements with a high population of children, where infrastructure is completely lacking. More specifically, based on the capacities identified in this report, the following capacity expansions in the following municipalities and settlements/villages are provided, listed according to the level of need and priority for intervention:
    - In municipalities such as Vitia, Podujeva, Deçan, Kamenica, Skenderaj, Dragash, Malisheva, Kaçanik and Klina, where there is one or less than one preschool institution per 1,000 children, the opening of preschool institutions, or the adaptation of schools for preschool institutions, should be prioritized.
    - In Skenderaj, where the two functional preschool institutions are located in the center, around which the villages with the largest number of children are also located, one possibility would be to open/adopt preschool institutions in the villages of Rezallë, Klinë e Epërme and Burojë, enabling the surrounding villages to benefit as well.
    - In Prizren, where all preschool institutions are located in the city, and has the largest number of children 0–4 years old after Prishtina, the opening of at least 2 to 3 preschool institutions should be prioritized. To ensure a better geographical distribution, the PIs could be in the villages of Lubizhdë e Hasit, Zhur, Korishë and/or Lubinjë e Poshtme (villages with more than 100 children).
    - In South Mitrovica, the opening/adaptation of preschool institutions in the villages of Zijaqë, Suhadoll i Poshëm and Tërstë should be prioritized, considering that these all have more than 200 children.
    - In Ferizaj, where only 1 of the villages (Greme) has a preschool institution besides the center, the opening of preschool institutions in Koshare and Sojevë or Bibaj could be an option, and in this way the surrounding villages with more than 100 children such as: Slivova, Nerodime e Poshtme and e Epërme, Komogllavë and Fshat i Vjetër could be included.
    - In Drenas, preschool institutions could be built/adopted in the villages of Tërstenik and Nekoc, which have more than 200 children, and these could also include the surrounding villages such as Kishnarekë, Fushticë e Epërme and Fushticë e Ulët.
    - In Vushtrri, where all preschool institutions are located in the city center, 2 villages as options for the construction/adoption of preschool institutions are Stanoc i Poshtëm and Pantinë.
    - In Gjakova, the opening of preschool institutions in the villages of Damjan and Brekoc, as large villages without any PIs, should be prioritized. The opening of PIs in these 2 villages could also serve the surrounding villages, through the provision of transportation.
- Consider the possibility of using existing school buildings and adapting them for preschool institutions, especially in those settlements where there are schools with a very small number of students.

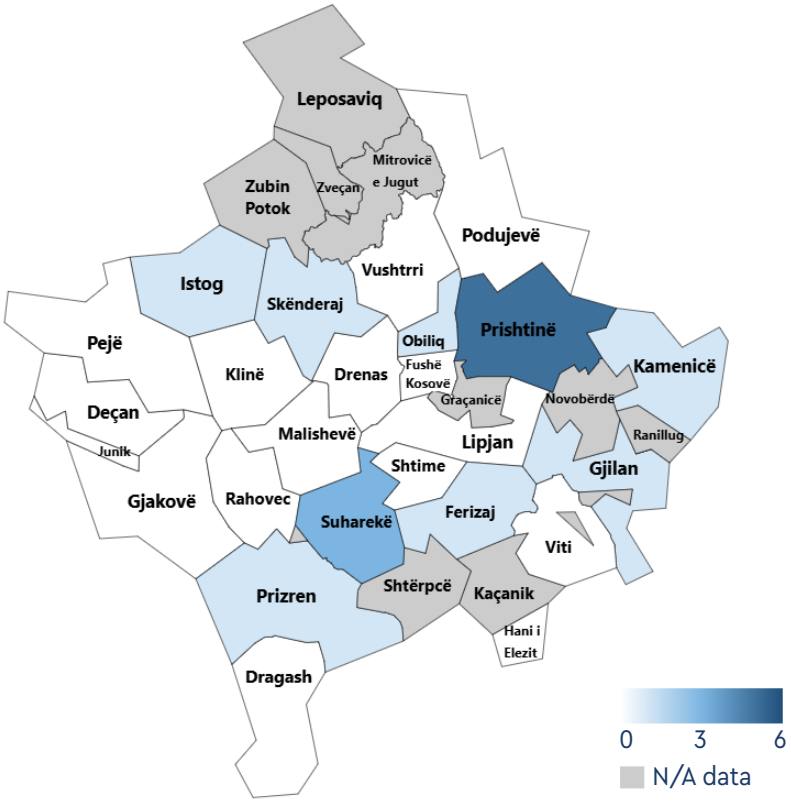
- Expand services for the elderly through the creation of new daycare centers as a socialization opportunity for them and in-home support to assist with daily chores. Municipalities with a large number of elderly people and without any public institutions (such as Peja, Gjakova, South Mitrovica, Podujevo, Vushtrri) should be prioritized for the opening of day care centers.
- Review the criteria for enrolling children in public preschool institutions by creating equal opportunities for assessment for children who have both parents working and those who have only one parent working. The current admission criteria assess children who have only one parent working with fewer points, reducing their chances of enrollment, and consequently affecting the employment of their parent, who in most cases is the mother. The review could consider introducing criteria that prioritize children whose mothers are entering employment for the first time, recognizing access to preschool as an important enabling condition for women's labor market entry. Such an approach could complement existing criteria based on household income and social vulnerability, while ensuring that preschool enrollment also supports women transitioning from unpaid care work into paid employment. Other measures could include allocating a defined share of available places to children from underserved rural settlements or other areas with limited access to preschool services.

For the central level:

Create gender-responsive family policies for women's employment through subsidizing preschool services for children for women who are employed for the first time. Also, create support policies for the expansion and subsidization of transportation services in villages, considering that they are presented as one of the challenges in women's access to the labor market.

Annex

Figure 1. Number of centers (residential homes and day-care centers) for the elderly by municipality



Municipality	Total number of homes and centers for the elderly
Prishtinë	5
Prizren	1
Pejë	0
Ferizaj	1
Gjakovë	0
Gjilan	1
Mitrovicë e Jugut	0
Podujevë	0
Vushtrri	0
Suharekë	3
Lipjan	0
Fushë Kosovë	0
Drenas	0
Rahovec	0
Skenderaj	1
Dragash	0
Istog	1
Malishevë	0
Viti	0
Deçan	0
Klinë	0
Kamenicë	1
Kacanik	0
Shtime	0
Obiliq	1
Hani I Elezit	0
Junik	0

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