

Childcare Ecosystem in Kenya: Factsheet

Child-level Trends

Number of infants born every year in Kenya (2024)

1.5 million

World Population Prospects (UN, 2024)



Number of children under 5 years (2023)

7 million (13% of total population)

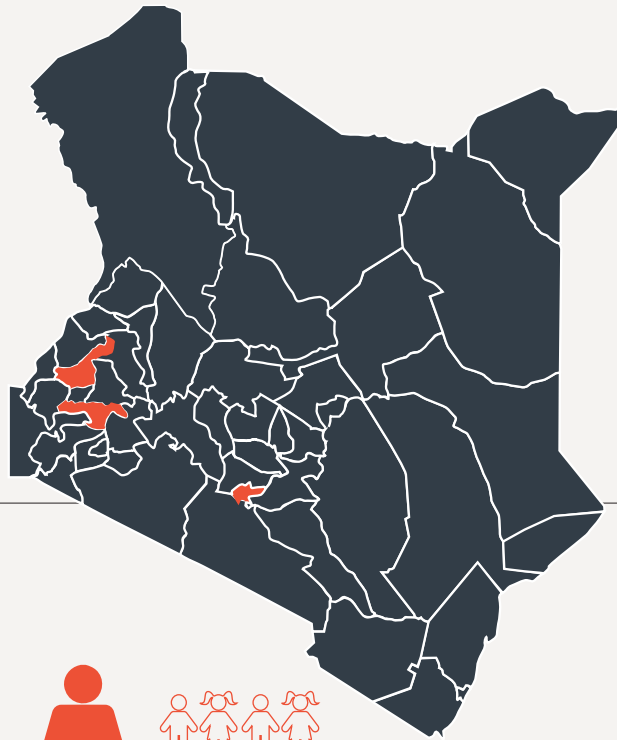
United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024).



Children aged 0–3 years

4.7 million

Dina, Q et.al (2024)



Children ages 0–3 needing center-(home-) based care

2.82 million

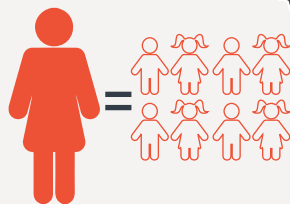
Dina, Q et.al (2024)



Child-to-caregiver ratio in ECD centers

8-32 children per caregiver

GoK & UN Women (2022).



Percentage of caregivers receiving formal training

20%

GoK & UN Women (2022).



Kenyan children considered “multidimensionally” poor (i.e., simultaneously deprived in health, nutrition and education)

55%

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, UN Women & UNICEF (2025)



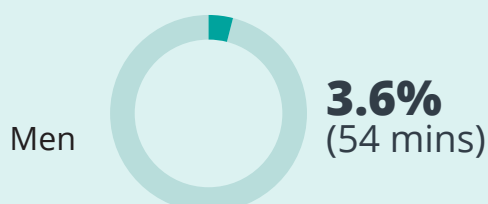
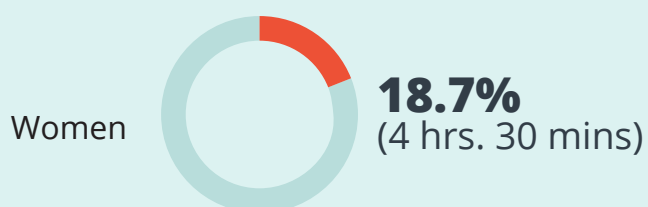
Rural Kenyan children considered “multidimensionally” poor

66%

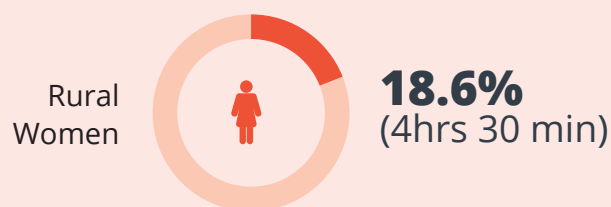
Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, UN Women, Women Count & UNICEF (2025)

Average daily unpaid care and domestic work time expenditure (2021)

National



KNBS (2023).



KNBS (2023).



Number of hours spent by Kenyan women on unpaid domestic and care work

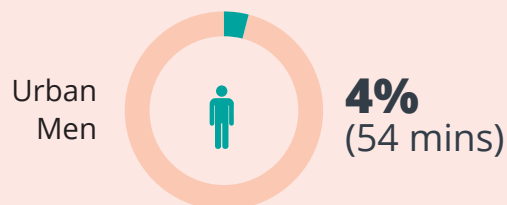
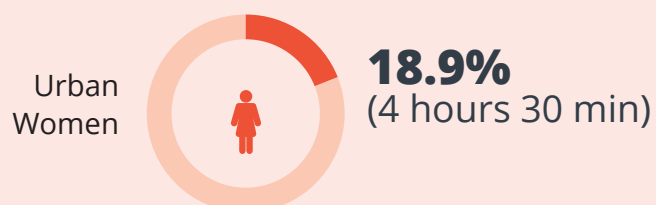
25.8 billion hours



Number of hours spent by Kenyan men on unpaid domestic and care work

4.8 billion hours

KNBS (2023).



KNBS (2025).

Estimated national Gross Value Added (GVA) of unpaid domestic and care work, **KNBS (2025).**

KES 2,544.6 million



Labor Force Outcomes



National economic loss due to childcare burden (2022)

**\$0.2 billion
(0.21% of GDP)**



Anticipated % increase in national labor force participation from addressing primary caregivers' childcare needs

10 %



Return on investment for every \$1 invested in accessible childcare services for an unemployed caregiver:

\$7 (additional amount 1 unemployed primary caregiver would generate)



Number of employable mothers in Kenya not participating in the workforce due to lack of affordable childcare access:

36,670



Estimated % increase in Kenya's GDP between 2023 and 2027 with 100% childcare services enrollment rate

0.75 %



Additional number of mothers that will join the workforce by 2030 if childcare burdens were addressed

200,000

The Childcare Dividend Initiative (2020)

Childcare Landscape Indicators



National funding for childcare services in 2024/2025 fiscal year

KShs. 7.39 billion

~ (KShs. 1,563 per child aged 0-3) across all 47 counties
Decentralization Network (2025)



Daily childcare costs

KES 50-200/day

KES 1000 - 4,000/month — often unaffordable for low income families and informal workers
ECD Network, Kenya (2024)

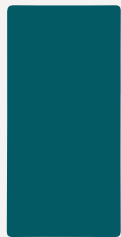


Percentage of parents able to pay childcare fees 81-100% of the time (based on a sample of counties)



43%

Decentralization Network (2024)



Percentage of childcare providers that are home-based, mostly in informal settings (based on a sample of counties).



60%

Nurture First (2025)

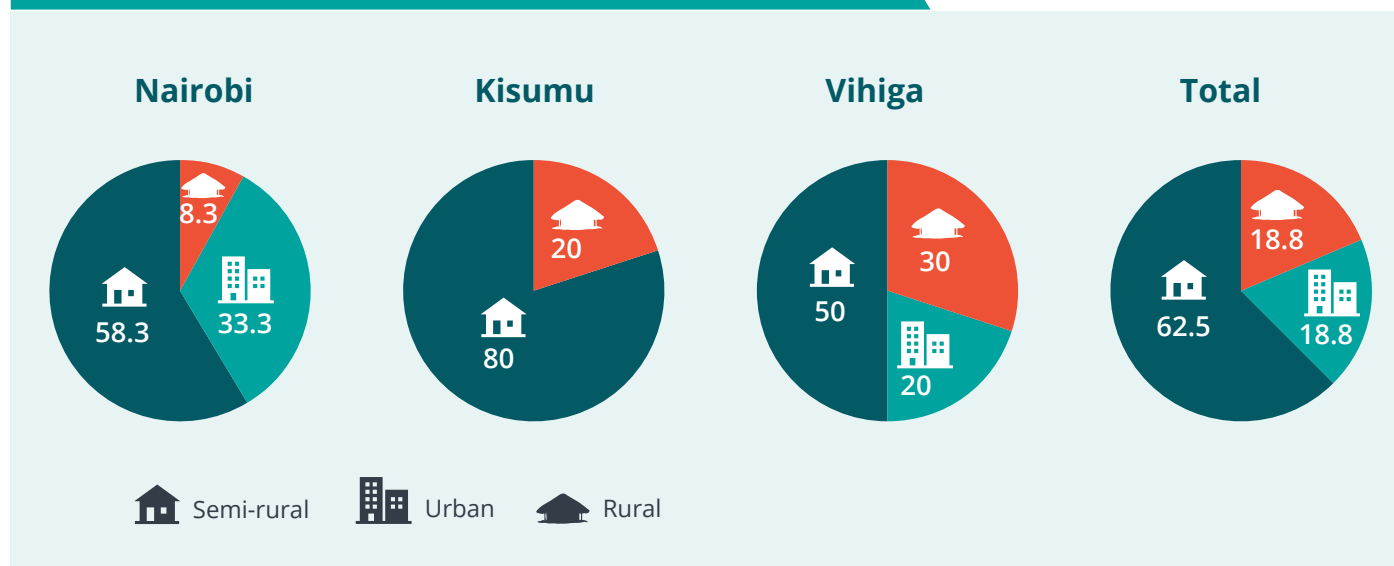


Dominant childcare providers

Informal sector (often unregulated and without formal training, registration, or quality assurance)
ECD Network, Kenya (2024)

ICRW 2025 Mapping of Women-Owned Informal Childcare Centers in Nairobi, Kisumu & Vihiga (all figures in %s)

Location of the childcare centers



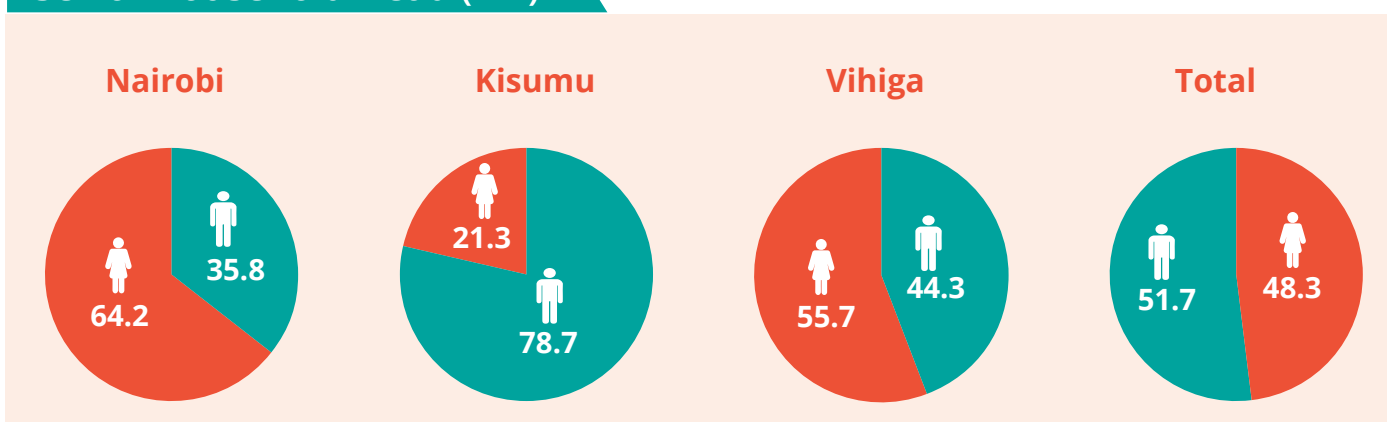
Characteristics	Nairobi	Kisumu	Vihiga	Total
Years of Operation				
Less than 1 year	50	50	0	33.3
1 to < 3 years	20	60	20	33.3
3 to < 5 years	50	50	0	33.3
5 years and above	33.3	16.7	50	33.3
Ownership				
Sole proprietorship	75	90	90	84.3
Community-owned	25	10	0	12.5
Partnership	0	0	10	3.1
Enterprise Registration				
Yes	27.3	20	10	48.4
No	72.7	80	0	51.6
Registration Category (among registered enterprises)				
Business/Company	0	0	40	26.7
Community Based Organization	100	0	0	20
Early Childhood Development Centers	0	0	60	40
School	0	100	0	13.3
Sources of Funding				
Fees charged to parents/guardians	83.3	100	100	93.8
Personal savings	33.3	10	100	46.9
Loans	16.7	0	70	28.1

Number of Children Currently Enrolled				
0–4	8.3	40	10	18.8
5–10	33.3	40	90	53.1
11–15	33.3	20	0	18.8
16+	25	0	0	9.4
Number of Staff				
1	25	0	0	6.7
2–4	75	100	80	80
5–6	0	0	20	13.3
Services Provided				
Full-day care	91.8	100	100	96.9
Half-day care	58.3	0	60	40.6
Feeding program	16.7	30	100	46.9
Early childhood education	33.3	30	60	40.6
After-school care	33.3	50	0	28.1
Special needs care	8.3	0	40	15.6
Night care	0	30	0	9.4
Care for children with disabilities	8.3	0	10	6.3
Daily Charge per Child				
Ksh 100 or less	54.6	25	0	27.6
100–200	27.3	62.5	0	27.6
Above 200	18.2	12.5	100	44.8
Operation Site				
Rented space	75	10	30	40.6
Own building	8.3	70	70	46.9
Shared space	16.7	20	0	12.6
Challenges Identified by Operators				
Inadequate funding	75	50	80	68.8
Inability of parents to pay	100	30	70	68.8
High operational costs	83.3	10	100	65.6
Low enrolment	50	30	70	50
Inadequate space	50	0	0	18.8
Lack of adequate staff	33.3	0	0	12.5
Safety concerns	25	0	0	9.4
Lack of skilled staff	16.7	0	0	6.3
Harassment by government officials	8.3	0	0	3.1
Regulatory challenges	8.3	0	0	3.1
Lack of government subsidies or incentives	60	0	14.3	30.3
Lack of or delays in receiving government funds	30	0	85.7	39.1

Operating Hours				
5am–9pm (16hrs)	8.3	0	0	3.1
6am–5pm (11hrs)	0	30	0	9.4
6am–6pm (12hrs)	33.3	20	10	21.9
6am–7pm (13hrs)	16.7	0	0	6.3
6am–8pm (14hrs)	8.3	0	0	3.1
6am–9pm (15hrs)	0	10	0	3.1
7am–3pm (8hrs)	0	0	40	12.5
7am–5pm (10hrs)	8.3	30	0	12.5
7am–6pm (11hrs)	8.3	10	0	6.3
8am–3pm (7hrs)	8.3	0	30	12.5
8am–4pm (8hrs)	8.3	0	10	6.3
8am–5pm (9hrs)	0	0	10	3.1

ICRW 2025 Mapping of Childcare Needs of Low-Income Households in Nairobi, Kisumu & Vihiga (all figures in %s)

Sex of Household Head (HH)



Characteristics	Nairobi	Kisumu	Vihiga	Total
Age of HH				
10–19	2.4	0	2.8	1.8
20–29	35.2	25	30	30.4
30–39	37.1	45.5	41.7	41.1
40–49	16.9	22.2	13.9	17.6
50–59	5.6	6.8	8.9	7
60–69	2.4	0	2.2	1.6
70–79	0.5	0	0.56	0.4
80–89	0	0.6	0	0.2

HH Marital Status				
Divorced/Separated	11.6	4.5	9.8	8.8
Married	49.3	82.6	68.5	65.7
Single	33	9	14.7	19.8
Widowed	6.1	3.9	7.1	5.7
HH Educational Attainment				
No formal education	1.4	0	4.4	1.9
Primary	46.5	25	38.8	37.5
Secondary	42.3	47.2	48.6	45.8
Tertiary	7.9	20.5	7.1	11.5
Others	1.9	7.4	1.1	3.3
HH Employment				
Formal employment	6.1	11.2	1.6	6.3
Informal employment	76.2	39.9	35.5	52
No income	6.5	0	30.1	12
Self-employment	11.2	48.3	29	28.4
Others	0	0.6	3.4	1.4
HH Monthly Income				
≤ Kshs. 5,000	51.6	27	66.5	49
Kshs. 5,001–10,000	32.4	37.1	23.5	30.6
Kshs. 10,001–20,000	16	36.9	10.1	20.4
Under-5 Children Composition of Household				
1	76.2	67.1	72.1	72.1
2	21	26.7	23.5	23.6
3	2.3	3.4	3.8	3.1
4	0.4	1.7	0.6	0.9
6	0	0.6	0	0.2
7	0	0.6	0	0.2
Household Composition of Under-5 Children with Disability				
Yes	3.6	4.8	2.9	3.7
No	97.4	95.2	97.1	96.3
Access to Childcare Support				
Yes	52.8	16.3	19.6	30.9
No	47.2	83.7	80.4	69.1

Forms of Childcare Support				
Family Members				
Spouse/partner	22.3	55.7	38.5	37.9
Older siblings	15.7	41.9	38.5	31.3
Grandparents	14.7	35.3	59.9	36.1
Extended family members (aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.)	17.8	36.5	24.7	25.8
House help / Nanny / Live-in caregiver	1.5	5.9	4.5	3.6
Daycare/childcare center	84.5	22.8	14.1	44.9
Community and Institutional Support				
Neighbors/friends	61.7	68.6	33	54.2
Church/faith-based childcare services	3.6	12.6	5.1	6.8
Workplace provided childcare services	3.1	2.5	10.8	5.5
Community-based childcare groups	9.8	3.8	5.1	6.4
Average Monthly Household Expenditure on Childcare				
Below Kshs. 1,000	57.5	66.7	60.3	60.7
Kshs. 1,001–3,000	38.3	23	26.6	30.5
Kshs. 3,001–5,000	3.7	7.9	7.6	6.1
More than Kshs. 5,000	0.4	2.4	5.4	2.7
Main Challenges Preventing Households from Using Hired Caregivers or Childcare Centers				
High cost of childcare	89.3	68.9	55	71.9
Lack of affordable childcare options	40.3	49.1	37.9	42.2
Preference of family-based care for the child	23.2	60.9	52.3	44.8
Child's emotional wellbeing concerns	44.2	35.4	31.4	37.2
Lack of childcare facilities available in the area	6.7	29.8	44.3	26.7
Limited spaces in existing childcare centers	28.7	29.1	14.2	23.6
Childcare centers not operating during needed hours	17.4	24.1	25	22
Lack of well-trained or qualified caregivers	36.4	42.2	26.2	34.7
Poor safety and hygienic standards in childcare centers	56.5	37	36	43.7
Inconsistent service quality or unreliable caregivers	27.2	34.4	36.6	32.6

Key Messages

1. **Kenya faces a structurally high demand for childcare**, driven by the large population of young children(0-3) and the widespread need for both home-based and centre-based care.
2. **Women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work**, restricting their labour-force participation and underscoring the economic benefits of expanding childcare support.
3. **Women-owned childcare centres serve as essential community-based providers**, offering accessible care where formal systems fall short for low-income households.
4. **The childcare sector remains financially fragile**, as most childcare centres rely heavily on irregular parent fee payments with limited public or external support.
5. Childcare **providers operate long and flexible hours** to accommodate the unpredictable work patterns that characterize informal and low-wage employment schedules.
6. **Service quality is hindered by systemic resource constraints**, including insufficient space, inadequate staffing, limited training, and minimal operational funding.
7. **Families face persistent access constraints**, navigating a mix of childcare arrangements shaped by affordability, safety, trust, proximity, and limited availability of reliable services.
8. **Childcare is closely linked to broader poverty dynamics**, as many children experience multiple deprivations that heighten the need for safe, development-sensitive care environments.
9. **Effective childcare solutions require stronger public investment and tailored support**, particularly for home-based and women-owned centres that currently struggle to meet community demand

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