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Unpaid and Unprotected

Personal Assistants Carry the Weight
of Care for People with Disabilities



Kosovo Women's Network

Serving, Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls



This policy brief was researched and written by Edita Bllaca, Saneaa Abboud and Mirjeta Ademi for the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), as part of the Action "Improving Civil Society Capacities to Enhance Access to Quality Social Protection for Diverse Women and Men", funded by the European Union and implemented by KWN, the Organisation of Persons with Muscular Dystrophy of Kosovo (OPDMK) and Ruka Ruci. Its contents are the sole responsibility of KWN, OPDMK and Ruka Ruci and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Introduction

Personal assistance is an essential service that facilitates autonomous living and full participation of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in society, a human right guaranteed under the United Nations (UN) [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD). This paper examines the provision of personal assistance and care for PwDs. Kosovo legislation uses several terms for the person assisting a PwD, including “personal guardian”, “carer” and “companion”. To facilitate reading, this paper uses the term “personal assistant” to refer to all these roles as an all-encompassing term aligned with the CRPD Convention. First, this paper analyses the relevant legal framework to identify key legal, financial and structural gaps. Second, it presents findings derived from existing research, interviews with 332 diverse personal assistants and key informant interviews with ten representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) working with PwDs.

Legal Framework

This section examines the legal framework relevant to the provision of personal assistance.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Ratified by the UN in 2008, the CRPD is an international human rights treaty that affirms the basic rights of persons with all types of disabilities. The goal is to “promote, protect and ensure the complete and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”¹ While the CRPD does not explicitly define disability, it is recognised as “an evolving concept [...] that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”² This provision emphasises that disability is not a fixed condition, but one that can vary depending on the surrounding environment, including negative attitudinal barriers that need to be dismantled. It also provides that PwDs include “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments”.³ Thus, disability is not restricted to a medical condition or to particular persons as beneficiaries.⁴ In fact, the CRPD “provides a “floor” and not a “ceiling” for determining who is included” and “parties could also ensure protection to others, for example persons with short-term disabilities or who are perceived to be part of such groups.”⁵

The right to independent living for PwDs is enshrined in the CRPD, which includes “access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community”.⁶ It stipulates the responsibility of state institutions to take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate PwDs’ full enjoyment of their right to live, be included and participate in the community with choices equal to others.⁷

¹ [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), Article I, p. 3.

² UN, [Introducing the UNCRPD](#), 2022, p. 11.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, p. 12.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ CRPD, [Article 19](#).

⁷ Ibid.

The CRPD's Committee on the Rights of PwDs has stated in [UN General Comment No. 5 on living independently and being included in the community](#) that independent living involves the freedom to choose and control their lives with dignity, self-determination and individual autonomy, which includes their personal lifestyle, daily activities and personal assistance. It includes personal choice in living arrangements including outside of residential institutions, "regardless of their level of intellectual capacity, self-functioning or support requirements" and regardless of cost.⁸ Further, it stipulates that disability support services should be available, accessible, affordable and flexible for all PwDs, considering diverse living conditions (e.g., income) and personal characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. Under this human rights model, no one can be excluded based on the type or level of support they need.

Personal assistance is a support service for PwDs, which is critical for their independent living.⁹ Under the CRPD, four elements distinguish personal assistance (i) funding is individualised, rights-based and controlled by the PwD; (ii) the PwD directs and chooses how assistance is provided and by whom; (iii) assistance is one-to-one and the assistant should not be "shared" without consent; and (iv) the person retains decision-making and personal control over their assistance, based on their individual preferences.¹⁰

Regarding children, the CRPD obliges States to support children with disabilities to live in their homes and communities with equal rights, providing early services and family support to prevent neglect or segregation.¹¹ Children must have access to inclusive education and training, with individualized support, reasonable accommodations, and accessible communication, enabling them to develop life skills, independence, and full participation in society.¹²

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Adopted by the United Nations in 1989, the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC) is a landmark international treaty that sets out the fundamental rights of all children and young people and the obligations and responsibilities of State Parties to ensure those rights are fully realised and protected. Regarding children with disabilities, it includes the right of children with mental or physical disabilities to "a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community."¹³

While the CRC does not explicitly refer to "personal assistance", it establishes an important framework for support that underpins independent living for children with disabilities. Article 18 obliges States to provide appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in fulfilling their child-rearing responsibilities and to ensure the development of services and facilities for the care of children.¹⁴ Complementing this, Article 23 recognises the right of a child with disabilities to special care and to assistance tailored to the child's condition and family circumstances, including, where possible, free provision of services.¹⁵ Such assistance must facilitate effective access to education, rehabilitation, health care, and social participation, with the aim of promoting the child's fullest possible social integration and individual development.

⁸ UN, [CRPD General Comment No.5 on living independently and being included in the community](#), 2017.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ UN, [CRPD, Article 23](#)

¹² UN, [CRPD Article 24](#)

¹³ UN, [CRC Article 23](#)

¹⁴ UN, [CRC Article 18](#)

¹⁵ UN, [CRC Article 23](#)

UN CRC [General Comment No. 9](#) emphasises the high prioritisation of State-sponsored provisions of special care and support, including personal assistance, to ensure their inclusion, with a focus on removing social and physical barriers. It remarks “the barrier is not the disability itself but rather a combination of social, cultural, attitudinal and physical obstacles which children with disabilities encounter in their daily lives.”¹⁶ Broader, more detailed standards on personal assistance, including for children are more directly addressed in UN CRPD [General Comment No. 5](#) on independent living, as described above.

European Union Legislation

The European Union (EU) and its Member States are party to the CRC and CRPD. The EU acquis on PwDs seeks to ensure their full participation in society, safeguard their fundamental rights and improve their social and economic conditions.¹⁷ It encompasses various legal instruments, strategies and initiatives guided by the CRPD. The [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) includes the right of PwDs to benefit from their incorporation in society, including “through measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community.” The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), proclaimed in 2017, affirms through Principle 17, that PwDs have the right to income support ensuring a dignified life, services enabling their participation in the labour market and society and a work environment adapted to their needs.

The [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#), replacing the [European Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#), aims to improve the accessibility and rights of PwDs, including alleviating barriers in access to healthcare, education, recreational activities and participation in politics. A key focus is on PwDs’ independent living, which requires “quality, accessible, person-centred and affordable, community- and family-based services”.¹⁸ These include affordable access to personal assistance, medical care, technical aids, family support and social workers’ interventions to facilitate everyday activities and provide choices for PwDs and their families. In 2024, the EU issued a [guidance document](#) to Member States regarding improvements on independent living and inclusion in the community, including personal assistance schemes.¹⁹ The guidance recommends that funds be used to support workers such as personal assistants and personal assistance programs as an essential person-centred community-based service for PwDs, including those with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities. It describes personal assistance as “a fundamental enabler of independent living and inclusion” for PwDs and recommends person-centred funding models to tailor funds to their individual needs.²⁰ They also encourage building a skilled, well-trained and sufficiently large workforce of personal assistants with fair working conditions, better pay and proper professional development. They suggest strengthening the profession through clear legal frameworks, training, social protection and adequate public budget allocation for the provision of personal assistance.

¹⁶ UN, [CRC General Comment No. 9 \(2006\): The rights of children with disabilities](#), 2007, p. 2.

¹⁷ EC, [Kosovo 2024 Report](#), 2024, p. 36.

¹⁸ EU, [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#), p. 8.

¹⁹ EU, [Guidance document on independent living and inclusion in the community of persons with disabilities in the context of EU funding](#), 2024.

²⁰ EU, [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#), p. 9.

National Legislation

Kosovo's legal framework generally incorporates core international human rights instruments, such as the CRC, but it is not party to the CRPD.²¹ While some CRPD principles are reflected in the [Constitution](#), the CRPD is not explicitly mentioned nor fully incorporated. In 2022 the Government signed a decision to amend the Constitution to include the CRPD.²² However, despite Constitutional Court review, later attempts to adopt it failed in the Assembly due to parliamentary voting issues.²³ Currently, the Constitution includes legal protection, non-discrimination and equality before the law for PwDs and guarantees their basic social insurance.²⁴ Arguably, this has not been achieved.²⁵

The legal protection of PwDs in Kosovo is currently grounded in [Law No. 05/L-021 on Protection from Discrimination](#), which provides a general framework prohibiting discrimination, including on the grounds of disability. [Law No. 06/L0084 on Child Protection](#) establishes broad protections for children with disabilities, affirming their right to dignity, non-discrimination, rehabilitation, inclusion, and access to health, social, and educational services.²⁶

Despite this framework, the specific regulation of disability-related social rights of PwDs, including personal assistance, are addressed through a “fragmented patchwork” of various laws (described further below) and corresponding administrative instructions, rather than a unified and comprehensive legal framework.²⁷

Most legislation in Kosovo continues to rely on narrow or inconsistent definitions of disability unaligned with the CRPD, with ²⁸“multiple definitions of disability in use by multiple institutions and stakeholders”, which leaves some disability groups legally unrecognised, such as persons with mental, intellectual or sensory impairments; this has contributed to inequitable access to financial compensation and personal assistance support.²⁹

For example, the [2024 Law No. 08/L-255 on Social and Family Services](#) defines a PwD as “a person who has long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers can prevent his full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”³⁰ Despite adopting language partially aligned with international standards, it focuses on specific disabilities, limiting recognition to explicitly named categories of disability, thereby excluding others by neither naming them nor using inclusive language such as “including”, which could point to the existence of other types of disability. Thus, it is not harmonised with the CRPD. Thus, Kosovo does not have a “cohesive and unified system, criteria, or methods for identifying disability.”³¹

Disability Assessment Framework

Acquisition of inclusive services, such as disability support, rely on disability assessments managed by the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfer (MFLT) primarily to determine

²¹ EC, [Kosovo 2024 Report](#), 2024.

²² UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025, p. 17.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁴ [Kosovo Constitution](#), articles 24 and 51.

²⁵ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025, p. 17.

²⁶ Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, [Law No. 06/L0084 on Child Protection](#) (Article 46), 2019.

²⁷ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025, p. 18.

²⁸ World Bank, [Disability Inclusion Kosovo Country Profile](#), 2023, p. 1.

²⁹ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025.

³⁰ Republic of Kosovo, [Law on Social and Family Services](#), 2024, Article 3, p. 6.

³¹ World Bank, [Disability Inclusion Kosovo Country Profile](#), 2023, p. 1.

eligibility for disability pension schemes in the case of adults and social schemes for families of children with disabilities.³² Public social services such as personal assistance, are largely reduced to social assistance in the form of cash transfers, that beneficiaries may theoretically use to purchase services.

MFLT largely relies on a medical model to assess general permanent disabilities, in both adults and children, rather than adopting a bio-psychosocial approach aligned with international standards.³³ The biopsychosocial approach is based on the World Health Organisation's (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health which recognises functioning and disability as the result of interactions between health conditions and environmental and personal factors, thereby integrating medical and social models of disability and offering "a coherent view of different perspectives of health: biological, individual and social."³⁴

In contrast, two groups, blind persons and individuals with paraplegia/tetraplegia (PPTP), are covered under dedicated legislation: [Law No. 04/L-092 for Blind Persons \(2012\)](#) and [Law No. 05/L-067 on the Status and Rights of Persons with Paraplegia and Tetraplegia \(2016\)](#). These laws define the rights, assessment procedures and entitlements for these groups, setting them apart from those with permanent or work-related disabilities who lack comparable legal protections. While the Law for Blind Persons is comparatively more comprehensive, both laws provide significantly more robust entitlements than those available to other disability groups, contributing to uneven legal protection among PwDs.

[Law No. 05/L-025 on Mental Health](#), enacted in 2015, offers limited protections for persons with mental health disabilities. While the Law recognises the role of family care and refers to "personal or family assistance services", obliging state institutions to provide psychological, family assistance and financial support to persons with mental disorders and their families, it does not define or regulate personal assistance as a distinct, rights-based service. However, other groups, such as persons who are deaf and those with intellectual disabilities, continue to face incomparable legal recognition and protection.³⁵

Disability-specific Income Support

Public social services for adult PwDs in Kosovo remain largely limited to disability-specific income support delivered through various pension schemes, with an annual budget of about €23 million alongside several smaller-scale programs, managed by the MFLT.³⁶ The core legal instrument regulating financial support for adults is [Law No. 04/L-131 on Pension Schemes Financed by the State](#), which regulates the provision of financial support to PwDs in the form of a monthly pension, provided within the country's broader social protection system.

Pension schemes serve as the Government's only mechanism for financing personal assistance, but only for certain disability groups. Disability pension schemes are unevenly regulated through multiple group-specific legal acts (detailed below), resulting in unequal access to disability benefits, including personal assistance. As stated by the European Commission (EC), this fragmented and unequal system reflects power imbalances, in which better-organised or

³² UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025; UNICEF, [Review of Administrative Data System on Children with Disabilities and Child Protection-Related Issues in Kosovo](#), 2023.

³³ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025.

³⁴ WHO, [Towards a Common Language for Functioning, Disability and Health: ICF](#), 2002

³⁵ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

more visible disability groups secure stronger entitlements, as well as a policy approach driven by cost-containment.³⁷

Regarding children with disabilities, the core legal instrument regulating the provision of financial support to families is [Law No. 03/L-22 on Material Support for Families of Children with Permanent Disability](#).³⁸ “Material support” is defined in the Law as the “financial benefit, monthly amount or other form of paying with money that is administered [...] for families of children with permanent disability.”

1) Permanent and Work Disability Pension Gaps

Most PwDs fall under the general permanent disability or work-related disability pension schemes. To qualify, applicants must demonstrate complete and permanent incapacity to work.³⁹ Assessments for adults are undertaken by physicians on the medical committee within the Department of Pensions of the MFLT. The established eligibility criteria for these general disability support schemes use vague language and stringent requirements, leaving many PwDs, particularly those with mental health conditions, hearing impairments or intellectual disabilities, at high risk of exclusion.

Institutions continue applying an outdated definition for permanent disability from the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) era, contained in [Law No. 2003/23 on Disability Pensions](#) (promulgated as [UNMIK Regulation No. 2003/40](#)), which describes a person as “totally and permanently disabled and incapable of any form of occupational activity.” This narrow standard contributes to the exclusion of individuals with mental health conditions, intellectual disabilities or hearing impairments from pension schemes and broader social support.⁴⁰ These groups, who lack a regulated assessment procedure, are often perceived as capable of working, and, under existing legal definitions, are therefore typically deemed ineligible for financial support from public institutions, including access to personal assistance.⁴¹

As a result, numerous individuals with disabilities may not qualify for a disability pension despite having legitimate support needs. Benefits are flat-rate (€120/month) and benchmarked to the extreme poverty line, with payments reduced or withdrawn against employment income.⁴² These schemes do **not** include compensation for personal assistance.

2) Blind Persons and Persons with Tetraplegia and Paraplegia Assistance Programs

Disability-specific cash assistance programs for blind persons and individuals with PPTP are regulated by the dedicated laws: [Law No. 04/L-092](#) (2012) and [Law No. 05/L-067](#) (2016). The Law for Blind Persons is relatively more comprehensive, in that it not only guarantees the rights of blind persons to education and healthcare but also details the assessment of visual impairment/blindness, funding for rehabilitation, tax exemptions, among many other topics. Neither of these laws fully addresses PwDs’ rights and needs in accordance with international conventions. Further, by attempting to regulate only a few disability groups through specific legislation, Kosovo legislation has left other persons with disabilities subject to more restrictive and fragmented support schemes.

³⁷ EC, [Social Protection for people with disabilities - Kosovo](#), 2022.

³⁸ Assembly of Republic of Kosovo, [Law on Material Support for Families of Children with Permanent Disability](#), 2008, p. I.

³⁹ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² EC, [Social Protection for people with disabilities - Kosovo](#), 2022.

Both laws divide beneficiaries into two categories based on impairment severity. Blind persons include the following: Category I (visual acuity of 0 to 0.02 who cannot distinguish light from dark) and Category II (partial vision loss and visual acuity of 0.02 - 0.05), based on a medical report.⁴³ Persons with PPTP include Category I (full permanent incontinence and loss of sensitivity of extremities) and Category II (those with partial, permanent incontinence and loss of sensitivity of extremities).

Category I beneficiaries, which denotes the most severe level of disability, are entitled to personal assistance compensation while Category II beneficiaries are not. In 2025, monthly benefit levels were: blind persons: €300 for Category I (including personal care assistance); and €150 for Category II. PPTP persons: €435 for Category I (including personal assistance and incontinence products); and €180 for Category II.

3) Children with Disabilities

[Law No. 03/L-22 on Material Support for Families of Children with Permanent Disability](#) applies to ⁴⁴ “Permanent[ly] disabled children of physical, mental and sensory forms” from their birth up to 18 years old. The Law defined permanent disability as the child’s health resulting in complete and permanent ⁴⁵“inability to move or carry out daily life activities without the other person’s help.” It identifies three categories of disability, including 1) children with mobility restrictions requiring assistive devices, 2) blind children and 3) those requiring assistance with feeding, dressing, toileting, personal care and hygiene.⁴⁶

By conditioning eligibility on *complete inability* to perform daily life activities, the Law excludes many children with significant but partial disabilities, including deaf children and those with intellectual, psychosocial, or other functional impairments who may require substantial support but are not totally dependent.⁴⁷ The legislation therefore creates unequal treatment by excluding children with disabilities who are assessed as having a “lower severity level” leading to the exclusion of children with significant functional needs who may not meet the threshold for full assistance, and denying them access to financial benefits and related services.⁴⁸

Pursuant to [Article 3](#), MFLT, through its Department of Social Schemes, administers financial support to families of children with permanent disabilities, through bank wire transfers, as permitted by State budget allocations.⁴⁹ The Law provides a monthly financial benefit (e.g. €100) to eligible families, with the amount of assistance determined by a sub-legal act issued by the MFLT.⁵⁰ The Law defines “care” narrowly as a monetary benefit that ⁵¹ “serves for offering financial support to the persons that offer this support and care.” However, the Law does not link this support to access to services, personal assistance or community-based- care. As such,

⁴³ Ibid, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Assembly of Republic of Kosovo, [Law on Material Support for Families of Children with Permanent Disability](#), 2008, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

⁴⁷ UNICEF, [The Legal Framework for Child Rights in Kosovo: A study of the compatibility of existing legislation with the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), 2014.

⁴⁸ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis: Children with Disabilities in Kosovo](#), 2017.

⁴⁹ UNICEF, [Review of Administrative Data System on Children with Disabilities and Child Protection-Related Issues in Kosovo](#), 2023.

⁵⁰ Assembly of Republic of Kosovo, [Law on Material Support for Families of Children with Permanent Disability](#), 2008, p. 1. ; UNICEF, [Situation Analysis: Children with Disabilities in Kosovo](#), 2017.

⁵¹ Assembly of Republic of Kosovo, [Law on Material Support for Families of Children with Permanent Disability](#), 2008, p. 1.

it does not create a broader service framework to enable participation or independent living. According to a UNICEF report, “the resulting 100 Euro cash benefit is very modest and often used as a poverty-alleviation benefit rather than to purchase necessary services (that often do not exist).”⁵²

Regulation of Personal Assistance in Kosovo

The laws in Kosovo use varying terms for “personal assistants”. [Law No. 05/L-067 on the Status and the Rights of Persons with Paraplegia and Tetraplegia](#) uses the term “personal guardian”, the [Law No. 04/L-092 for Blind Persons](#) refers to them as “companions” or “custodians”, while the [Law No. 05/L-025 on Mental Health](#) refers to them as “legal guardians”.

Currently, personal assistance is structured as an arrangement managed directly between the qualifying PwD and the assistant, with minimal state involvement. Personal assistance compensation is provided directly to the eligible PwD rather than to the assistant. PwDs are responsible for selecting their own assistant, formalising the arrangement through a notarised contract and managing all financial compensation. Assistants may be family members, or any other individual chosen by the PwD.

The legal relationship between the PwD and the personal assistant falls outside standard employment regulation as they tend not to have clear employment contracts. MFLT is not involved in the recruitment, assignment or employment of personal assistants. No public authority is directly responsible for overseeing contractual arrangements, working conditions or service quality.

The legal framework does not require personal assistants to possess any specific qualifications or training to perform this work. [Law No. 08/L-255 on Social and Family Services](#) defines “direct social care” as ⁵³ “the provision of assistance to individuals in social need, in relation to household chores, personal care, mobility, communication and supervision, care which can be provided in the person’s own home, in another family, in a specialized day care centre, or in a residential institution.” While the Law formally recognises home-based and community social care, including personal assistance for PwD, it does not regulate personal assistance as a distinct rights-based service.⁵⁴ As a result, no minimum standards, funding streams or qualifications for personal assistants are formally outlined. Without minimum standards, dedicated funding or implementation of guidelines, access to personal assistance in Kosovo has relied heavily on inconsistently donor-funded non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the discretion of municipalities.⁵⁵

[Law No. 03/L-212 on Labour](#) guarantees fair remuneration, pension contributions and formal employment contracts. However, the current legal framework does not recognise the specific nature of personal assistance or regulate it as a form of labour. There are no legal provisions establishing employment protections for personal assistants, nor mechanisms to ensure compliance with labour standards.

[Kosovo’s National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disability \(NSRDP\) \(2013-2023\)](#) and corresponding three-year [National Action Plan \(2021-2023\)](#), which expired in 2023, did not specifically address personal care needs or mention personal assistance as a right or

⁵² UNICEF, [Situation Analysis: Children with Disabilities in Kosovo](#), 2017, p. 44.

⁵³ Republic of Kosovo, [Law on Social and Family Services](#), 2024, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 7.

⁵⁵ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025.

service.⁵⁶ Nor does the new [NSRDP for 2025-2030](#) or its action plan (2025-2027) introduce any new provisions for financial assistance or personal care needs.

Taken together, these legislative gaps leave the employment relationship between PwDs and personal assistants largely unregulated, contributing to inconsistent protections and standards with weak oversight and no clear labour safeguards for personal assistants.

Forthcoming Law on Evaluation, Status Recognition, Benefits and Services for Persons with Disabilities

In 2019, a working group was established to draft a new Law on Evaluation, Status Recognition, Benefits and Services for Persons with Disabilities. Although a final draft was readied in 2022, it has yet to be approved. This is partially due to the working group being replaced three times and unclear fiscal implications related to the lack of reliable data on the number of PwDs, which has hindered accurate cost estimations.⁵⁷

The new Law, popularly known as the “Inclusive Law”, seeks to introduce a more inclusive, comprehensive and uniform framework for disability assessment and benefits.⁵⁸ The Law will apply to all types of disabilities, with evaluation procedures conducted using a ⁵⁹“bio-psycho-social evaluation model based on the international classification of functioning, disability and health,” instead of the current predominant medical model, to determine disability status and eligibility of PwDs for relevant benefits and services. According to the EC, the draft law is comprehensive and aims to establish a uniform approach to disability, helping to reduce fragmentation and prevent inequalities between different disability groups.⁶⁰

The draft establishes a multi-disciplinary assessment commission and introduces graded disability categories with compensation linked to the minimum wage. Individuals will be assessed and placed into one of four disability categories, ranging from minor impairments (Category 1) to total disability (Category 4).⁶¹ Individuals in Category 4 will receive the full minimum wage, while those in Category 1 will receive 50%. Eligible beneficiaries also will receive an additional allowance for incontinence and decubitus products, amounting to 50% of their compensation. PwDs who require 24-hour assistance will be entitled to more than one personal assistant. The assistant, chosen either by the beneficiaries themselves or a Centre for Social Work (CSW), will be required to complete accredited training before signing a contract.⁶² The EC has recommended adoption of this Law as part of Kosovo’s Chapter 23 obligations under the EU accession process.⁶³

Key Findings

According to 2024 census data, an estimated 8% to 10% of Kosovo’s population (337,859 citizens) lives with some functional limitation related to vision, hearing, mobility or communication.⁶⁴ According to the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, there are 4,759

⁵⁶ EC, [Kosovo 2024 Report](#), 2024; UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025.

⁵⁷ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ EC, [Social Protection for people with disabilities - Kosovo](#), 2022, p.18

⁶⁰ EC, [Social Protection for people with disabilities - Kosovo](#), 2022

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ EC, [Kosovo 2024 Report](#), 2024.

⁶⁴ KAS, [Census Population](#), 2024

registered PwD⁶⁵ benefit from state support; According to data obtained from MFLT, there are 1,520 blind individuals who have a personal assistant. Among PPTP individuals, 2,413 have a personal assistant, and all of them belong to Category 1. In Category 2, there are 102 PPTP individuals who have a permanent personal assistant and 361 who have a temporary personal assistant. The absence of a public registry of PwDs and assistants made random sampling impossible. Therefore, survey participants were selected using snowball sampling combined with purposive variation sampling based on the gender of the personal assistant, type and degree of disability, geographic location, ethnicity and relationship to the personal assistant (e.g., family member vs. external caregiver).

This section presents findings from the survey of personal assistants, key informant interviews and the literature regarding the working and living conditions of personal assistants. Field observations also were collected, and all data were triangulated towards furthering validity. The analysis begins by identifying the demographic profile of personal assistants and the socioeconomic conditions of their work, with specific focus on how gender norms and current compensation levels compare to national wage standards and the cost of living. To inform future policy, the section includes budgetary estimations for adjusting government financial support in line with the national minimum and average wages for the 2025–2027 period. Further, it examines the health and social consequences of this labour, addressing the lack of formal training, the physical impact of caregiving, and the absence of social protections. Finally, the paper identifies the priorities and challenges reported by personal assistants, ranging from the need for professional recognition and institutional support in education to the necessity of addressing environmental barriers in public infrastructure.

Who Provides Care and Under What Conditions

Women are significantly more likely than men to work as personal assistants. Of 332 personal assistants identified and interviewed by KWN, 72% were women, and their average age was 50. This reflects entrenched gender norms, according to which women tend to be socially assigned unpaid caregiving roles. In most cases personal assistants were family members of PwDs (83%); others were recommended by someone they know (8%), were friends or neighbours (4%) or were employed by the family (3%).

“Mothers cannot be employed, because some children do not let them sleep all night, and they need constant supervision.”

- Personal assistant

According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS), the latest available data show that the average gross salary in Kosovo was €639 in 2024 and the net salary was €552.⁶⁶ Social workers who perform similar work albeit with more educational attainment requirements and case management responsibilities seem to earn an average of €750 gross per month.⁶⁷ Personal assistants’ compensation falls significantly below these levels. Half of personal assistants interviewed reported not receiving any compensation, while those who were paid reported

⁶⁵ Of 332 survey participants, 42% are Albanian (n=138), 39% are Serb (n=130), 9% Roma (n=31), 6% Ashkali (n=19), 2% Egyptian (n=7), 2% Bosnian (n=6), and 0.3% Turkish (n=1). The types of disabilities that PwDs of surveyed assistants had included paraplegia (49%), tetraplegia (25%), mental health disorders (13%), intellectual or developmental disabilities (11%), chronic physical illnesses (9%), blindness (9%) and deafness (4%).

⁶⁶ KAS, [Level of wages in Kosovo](#), 2024.

⁶⁷ KWN calculation: based on the 2026 Budget, the Department of Social Services across all municipalities (460 staff members) has a total annual allocation of €4,140,819, which equals approximately €9,002 per staff member per year and €750 per month.

receiving €120, €150 or €180 monthly depending on the disability category of the PwD for whom they cared, defined by legislation. Thus, state-funded compensation to personal assistants is well below the minimum wage of €425 and does not cover basic living expenses let alone workload, knowledge, experience or time required. All research participants emphasised that this amount is insufficient for meeting their basic needs. It would be impossible to find anyone willing to work for such low pay, so family members, often mothers, tend to provide this support. To ensure dignified and sustainable care, participants recommended increasing financial support to a minimum of €600 per month, which they identified as a fair level of compensation. This would be in line with the average gross salary.

Meanwhile, 80% of personal assistants surveyed work without formal contracts that clearly define their rights, exposing them to risks such as unpaid overtime and other labour rights violations. Two-thirds of these personal assistants provided care for 13 to 24 hours per day, and more than 80% worked seven days per week. This round-the-clock care, without rest or replacement, constitutes significant overtime work in violation of their labour rights, which foresee overtime pay. Yet compensation levels do not match the intensity of care required. The absence of legal provisions addressing the unique employment relationship between personal assistants and the PwDs who hire them creates significant challenges in ensuring adequate labour and social protection, particularly in cases where PwDs require 24-hour care.

Generally, women in Kosovo spend 7.1 hours per day on unpaid care and housework, more than three times as much time as men, which is considered the main reason for their inactivity in the formal labour market.⁶⁸ The failure to recognise personal assistants' labour as formal employment likely contributes to Kosovo's alarmingly low female employment rate (the employment to population rate (employment rate) is 39%, while only 21% of women are).⁶⁹ This reinforces gender inequalities, as women remain in weaker economic positions.

Estimated Costs for Appropriately Compensating Personal Assistants

This section estimates the government budget allocations required to pay personal assistants of blind persons and individuals with PPTP more appropriately and with respect for basic labour rights. Table # compares current monthly payments for personal assistants in Kosovo with proposed salaries based on the 2026 minimum monthly wage of €425 gross and the average wage of €639 gross. Currently, assistants for individuals with PPTP receive only €180 per month, amounting to €2,160 per year. Assistants for blind individuals receive €150 per month, totalling €1,800 per year.⁷⁰ If personal assistants would receive minimum wage of €425 per month, the total expenditure for the PPTP category would be €17,416,500 annually. For blind individuals, it would cost €9,343,200 annually. This model would significantly close the gap between current support levels and the actual cost of living. By aligning these payments at least with the national minimum wage, the state would provide much-needed financial stability and formal recognition for all personal assistants.

Based on research participants' proposal to increase compensation to €600 as a fair amount for a dignified life, the salary could be tied to the average gross salary in Kosovo, increasing the compensation to €639 in 2025. This would recognise their working conditions which go beyond minimum wage; it would also enable families to hire other persons to provide personal assistance as needed. The total expenditure for the PPTP category if the minimum gross wage is adopted, the budget increase would be €6 million more per year compared to

⁶⁸ KWN, *In the Shadows - A Gender Analysis of Informal Work in Kosovo*, 2024.

⁶⁹ KAS, *Labour Force Survey*, 2024.

⁷⁰ OPM, *Decisions of the 273rd Government Meeting*, 2025.

current spending. If the average gross salary is adopted instead, this yearly difference rises to €22 million. For the Blind category, the state's budget difference compared to current spending would be €6 million per year for the minimum wage and €9 million for the average gross salary.

Table I. Estimated Costs for Government Financing of Personal Assistants								
	Actual Cost in Total		Estimated Cost in Total		Total one year	Budget Forecast for MTEF 2025-2027 for PTPP & Blind		
	PTTP	Blind	PTTP	Blind	PTTP & Blind	2025	2026	2027
	Per year	Per year	Per year	Per year	Per year	3 years	3 years	3 years
Current pay	€ 2,160	€ 1,800	€ 6,267,600	€ 2,815,500	€ 10,899,720	€ 18,802,800	€ 8,446,500	€ 27,249,300
Minimum wage (gross)	€ 5,100	€ 4,200	€ 17,758,200	€ 7,883,400	€ 25,641,600	€ 53,274,600	€ 23,650,200	€ 76,924,800
Average wage (gross)	€ 7,668	€ 6,252	€ 26,699,976	€ 11,735,004	€ 38,434,980	€ 80,099,928	€ 35,205,012	€ 115,304,940

Table I further estimates the budget for 2026 and 2027 to inform the Medium-term Expenditure Framework for financing of personal assistants of blind persons and individuals with PTPP. In annual terms, compensation for both categories, calculated based on the gross minimum wage, would have cost the state around €53 million, or €80 million if calculated based on the gross average wage. For 2027, covering both categories, as per the gross minimum wage, would have cost €77 million and €115 million based on the gross average wage.

Notably, following planned legal reforms, additional categories of PwDs may have the right to personal assistance soon,⁷¹ which would require revised budget estimates based on the anticipated beneficiaries. The number of beneficiaries according to the new law might increase based on the level of difficulty. As the table below details this might cause the state budget an additional total of €35 million based on the gross minimum wage and €52 million if calculated based on the gross average wage. This considers inflation, predicted at 3%.⁷²

Table 2 : Compensation Calculation for Personal Assistants			
	2026	2027	2028
	Current compensation for Blind+PTTP	Estimated compensation after the new law based on the level of difficulty	Estimated compensation after the new law based on the level of difficulty
Current pay	€ 9,083,100	/	/
Minimum wage (gross)	€ 25,641,600	€ 34,945,698	€ 34,945,698
Average wage (gross)	€ 38,434,980	€ 52,539,606	€ 52,539,606

⁷¹ The new draft Law was to enter into force by 2025.

⁷² [World Bank, Kosovo MPO, 2025](#)

Health and Social Consequences

The legal framework currently does not require personal assistants to have any specific qualifications. Approximately 70% of personal assistants have never received formal training and rely solely on personal experience. While the remaining have received some sort of trainings from organizations like Hendifer, it is noticed that personal assistants from the Serbian community rarely received such training. They highlighted that their needs to support their PwDs are very specific and that they need to start from the basics such

“We are not professionally trained to act as personal assistants for PwDs, which leaves us with deep emotional and physical strain.”

- Personal assistant

as providing first aid. This lack of professional preparation limits the quality of care, as assistants often are ill-equipped to manage complex needs such as behavioural challenges, communication barriers or medical emergencies. It also exposes both assistants and PwDs to risks of injury. When asked about their needs, respondents mentioned specialised training on autism, stress management, communication skills (including sign language) and psychological support.

In some situations, personal assistants' insufficient qualifications have led to physical injury for them or PwDs, burnout and other challenges.⁷³ There is no oversight of their working conditions, leaving both quality of care for PwDs and personal assistants' wellbeing unmonitored and unsupported.

The impact on personal assistants' health is considerable. Almost half of the assistants surveyed reported back pain, mainly due to carrying PwD on their own without any technical or human support. As one said, “It is difficult for me to turn the person in bed on my own. I am without sleep.” Others mentioned headaches, fatigue and emotional distress. One participant explained, “I always have to be by the patient's side, there is no time for myself.” This erodes personal assistants' private life and opportunities for employment. Key informants observed that mothers serving as personal assistants are often socially isolated, chronically exhausted and at risk of depression. Table 3 summarises the working conditions reported by personal assistants.

Key Findings	Albanian		Serb		Roma		Ashkali		Egyptian		Overall Total (Kosovo Level)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
No formal contract	83%	17%	65%	35%	38%	62%	76%	24%	67%	33%	66%	34%
Provide 13-24-hour care daily	92%	8%	66%	34%	73%	27%	86%	14%	100%	/	83%	21%
Work 7 days per week	91%	9%	64%	36%	35%	65%	83%	17%	83%	17%	71%	29%
No payment	84%	16%	65%	36%	50%	50%	60%	40%	67%	33%	65%	35%
Back pain	87%	13%	63%	37%	22%	78%	100%	/	67%	33%	68%	40%

⁷³ KWN focus group with CSOs working with people with disabilities, April 2022.

No training	83%	17 %	66%	34 %	63%	37 %	79%	21 %	71%	29 %	72%	28 %
Total by Ethnicity	87%	14 %	65%	35 %	47%	53 %	81%	23 %	76%	29 %		

Priorities and Challenges Identified by Personal Assistants

When asked to identify what would improve their situation, research participants prioritised higher, stable compensation, recognition of labour rights and greater institutional support. Personal assistants emphasised the importance of consistent state-supported day-care and respite services

“The income is insufficient; we need better payment, benefits, health insurance and more training for personal assistants and parents.”

- Personal Assistant

to reduce their work burden. One of the concerns they mentioned is the limited number of daily centres, or in some areas, their complete absence. Moreover, there is no officially published total number of daily centres at the national level. Although several daily centres are reported to exist, the lack of accessible and updated information makes it difficult to determine how many are currently operational. Available references indicate the presence of daily centres in the municipalities of Prizren, Peja, Ferizaj, Gjiilan, Mitrovica, Gjakova and Prishtina.

Personal assistants also requested professional training to reduce both the physical and emotional burden of care. They called for better access to essential services such as school-based assistants, clinical psychologists, speech therapists, and residential care centres. Even though the Constitution and the legal framework guarantee the right to attend pre-school education, no state fund seems to finance pay personal assistance in pre-school institutions. Research participants reported that families must pay personal assistants in nurseries and, in some cases, schools. Families face high, often unaffordable expenses, considering that personal assistance is only one of several costs associated with supporting their children with disabilities.⁷⁴ This could undermine disabled children’s access to education, educational outcomes and autonomy later in life in violation of the CPCD and their basic rights to education. While assessing the costs of personal assistants in all levels of education was beyond the scope of this research, the government needs to better cost these expenses to safeguard the rights of children with disabilities to education.

Environmental barriers such as poorly designed and inaccessible sidewalks, public spaces and transportation further complicate personal assistants’ role.⁷⁵ Wheelchair users and persons with visual impairments often lack safe mobility options. A respondent said: “With €150, you cannot find anyone to accompany a blind person all day... sometimes they can only afford to go out once a month by taxi.” Improving the accessibility of infrastructure and transportation would improve their lives. PwDs within rural communities experience heightened marginalisation, as

⁷⁴ The right to education for children with special needs is guaranteed by Article 47 of the, which guarantees free education and mandates specialized regulation for persons with specific needs. This is further operationalised by [Administrative Instruction \(MESTI\) No. 03/2022](#), Article 4, which explicitly exempts children from vulnerable groups from preschool registration payments. Further, [Law No. 04/L-032 on Pre-University Education](#) mandates inclusive education as a priority. While these legal frameworks establish the right to access, the forthcoming Voucher Program (2028) represents a planned fiscal mechanism to bridge the gap between statutory rights and the practical inclusion of children with disabilities in preschool settings.

⁷⁵ [KWN, Gender Analysis of Land Transportation in Kosovo, 2025.](#)

essential services are typically concentrated in urban centres and accessible transportation options are often limited or unavailable in these areas.⁷⁶ Further, the lack of transportation can be a major barrier to children with disabilities attending school.⁷⁷

Conclusion

In Kosovo, the legal and financial frameworks protecting the rights of PwDs and regulating personal assistance remain fragmented, insufficient and inconsistently applied. National legislation and policies have not been harmonised with international frameworks such as the CRPD and EU acquis on the rights of PwDs.⁷⁸ Laws and strategies have largely overlooked personal assistance, leaving caregivers and PwDs reliant on insufficient benefits, inconsistent donor funding and family members. State financial support varies across disability groups, with only some groups eligible to receive financial assistance specifically for personal assistants. Compensation falls well below minimum wage. Low pay, work without contracts and an absence of pension contributions all constitute labour violations. Few individuals are willing to sacrifice their time, physical wellbeing and financial security for this work, leaving family members, primarily women, to perform this unpaid or underpaid work. Most personal assistants work under precarious conditions with negative consequences for their health and that of PwDs. The fact that women tend to perform this work reinforces gender inequalities and contributes to the feminisation of poverty, particularly later in life.

Recommendations

To the Ministry of Finance⁷⁹

- Increase financial support for personal assistance in the forthcoming Medium-term Expenditures Framework, setting the salary to align (at least) with minimum wage of €425 per month, totalling €53 million in 2026, €23 million in 2027 and €77 million in 2028.
- Include this expenditure in annual budget cycles, using gender-responsive budgeting annually to accurately calculate costs, considering population growth and additional PwDs that qualify for services based on any legal reforms. Consider and cost for required hours of care, level of dependency and need for 24-hour support, increasing the budget based on whether PwDs need multiple personal assistants, in accordance with the proposed new law.
- Ensure annual indexation of disability-related compensation based on cost of living and inflation.
- Allocate a dedicated and sustainable budget line for personal assistance independent of general pension schemes to facilitate accurate, transparent budgeting.
- Establish a national accredited training and certification program for all personal assistants, providing free training on disability-specific care, mobility support, safe transfer techniques to reduce physical strain and psychological support to address stress and burnout. This could result in qualifications. Include annual budget allocations for training delivery, certification and instructor costs.
- Require completion of accredited training prior to approval of personal assistant contracts with a grace period that allows time for personal assistants to receive qualifications.

⁷⁶ UN Kosovo, [Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 2025.

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ EC, [Kosovo 2024 Report](#), 2024, p.34

⁷⁹ Previously named as Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers

- Establish a national registry of PwDs and personal assistants, to track service provision, coverage gaps and workforce needs, with costs included in the ministry's IT and administrative budgets.
- Introduce a monitoring and quality assurance by Labour Inspectors to oversee contractual arrangements, labour standards compliance and service quality of personal assistants, with sufficient budget for inspection, data collection and reporting, planned using gender-responsive budgeting and analysis of needs. Train inspectors on the labour rights of personal assistants, focusing on gender-sensitive evaluation techniques, quality standards, rights enforcement and ethics.
- Allocate funding to conduct a gender impact assessment according to Agency for Gender Equality [Gender Impact Assessment Manual](#), to inform the Inclusive Law to ensure personal assistance provisions do not reinforce gender inequalities. Ensure diverse PwDs, CSOs supporting them and personal assistants are consulted to inform the analysis.
- Establish day-care and respite centres to ease the 24-hour burden faced by most caregivers with capital and operating costs included in multi-year budget planning.
- Develop and allocate sufficient budget for public awareness campaigns and educational programs to promote the value of personal assistance and disability rights, reduce stigma and recognise caregiving as professional work.

For the Ministry of Justice

- Conduct a comprehensive legal harmonisation review to ensure national disability legislation is fully aligned with CRPD principles and EU acquis requirements, particularly regarding independent living and personal assistance.
- Require that any amendments or new legislation (e.g., Inclusive Law) include a clear financial implementation plan, including cost estimates, funding sources, and timelines, to ensure enforceability, developed using best principles in gender-responsive budgeting.
- Ensure regular consultations with NGOs supporting PwDs and caregiver associations in drafting and monitoring disability-related legislation to ensure policies address real needs with modest funding for stakeholder meetings, workshops and reporting.
- Ensure that the draft Inclusive Law is made publicly available for review and consultation by NGOs, disability advocacy groups, and other stakeholders, allowing for feedback to inform final legislation and ensure it meets the needs of PwDs.

For the Ministry of Labour, Family and Values of the Liberation War

- Ensure that the forthcoming Inclusive Law explicitly recognises personal assistants as formal employees requiring mandatory written contracts, pension contributions, health insurance, regulated working hours and overtime protections.
- Ensure that the forthcoming Inclusive Law establishes a distinct legal category for personal assistance support and provides that disability-related compensation for this service can be administered within a formal employment framework, including state-funded social insurance contributions for personal assistants without reducing the benefits received by PwDs. Provide detailed fiscal projections for these contributions.
- Within the forthcoming Inclusive Law, establish a unified, rights-based system of financial compensation for personal assistance that applies to all PwDs, determined through the bio-psycho-social assessment model aligned with CRPD principles, rather than category-based entitlements, eliminating disparities between disability groups. Include a detailed budget plan covering nationwide implementation, staff training, monitoring and allowances for all PwDs.

- Within the next NSRDP Action Plan, explicitly recognise personal assistance as a rights-based independent living service, in line with Article 19 of the CRPD. Include a dedicated strategic objective with measurable targets for nationwide availability of personal assistance, needs-based eligibility criteria (not category-based), formalisation and professionalization of personal assistants, and sustainable state funding mechanisms independent of pension schemes. Include a multi-year funding plan aligned with the forthcoming Inclusive Law to ensure nationwide implementation without budget shortfalls.
- Require that the new Law on Evaluation, Status Recognition, Benefits and Services for Persons with Disabilities contains a dedicated chapter regulating personal assistance as a distinct, rights-based service, including minimum standards, monitoring mechanisms and municipal obligations as well as formal recognition of both family and non-family personal assistants within a regulated framework. Ensure that municipalities and the state have allocated budgets for implementation, monitoring and compliance enforcement.

For the Ministry of Health

- Introduce regulations ensuring access to free or subsidised psychological support services for personal assistants, recognising the mental health burden associated with long-term care work, with budget lines for staffing, training and service delivery costs.
- Ensure medical professionals receive specialised training to participate effectively in interdisciplinary disability assessment commissions required under the Inclusive Law, aligned with the bio-psycho-social model. Include training and participation costs in the ministry's annual budget.
- Ensure that implementation of the Inclusive Law fully recognises physical, psychosocial, intellectual and sensory disabilities within eligibility criteria for personal assistance determined through interdisciplinary assessments aligned with the bio-psycho-social model.

For the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

- Develop accredited vocational and continuing education programmes for personal assistants, creating recognised certification pathways and opportunities for career progression with funding earmarked for certification, professional development and ongoing training delivery.
- Establish a dedicated funding mechanism to cover the costs of personal assistants in pre-school, primary and secondary education to safeguard the right to education.

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Annex 1.

Table below breaks down the number of people living with at least one long-lasting disability, categorized by their age group and gender. It shows that basic physical disabilities (31,567 cases) and "other long-standing illnesses" (28,611 cases) are the most common challenges, followed by deafness or severe hearing impairment (9,935 cases), psychological or emotional difficulties (8,133 cases), and learning or intellectual disabilities (5,607 cases). Together, the physical and illness-related categories account for over 64% of all reported conditions.

A clear trend in the data is that as the population ages, the prevalence of physical and sensory difficulties increases significantly; for example, basic physical disabilities increase from 1,050 in the 0–14 age group to 3,757 in the 70–74 bracket. Additionally, while men report higher rates of certain disabilities in younger age groups such as having 377 cases of learning disabilities, 366 psychological difficulties, and 188 cases of deafness compared to 307, 250, and 167 for females respectively in the 0–14 range. Women represent a much larger portion of the population living with difficulties in the 60+ categories. This shift contributes to a female grand total of 49,910 reported difficulties compared to 43,378 for males.

In conclusion, the census data highlights that physical and chronic health issues are the primary drivers of disability in Kosovo, with sensory and psychological challenges also playing a major role as the burden shifts heavily toward the female and elderly populations.

Population with at least one long-lasting difficulty by sex, age and long-lasting disability				
Age	Long – lasting difficulty	Total	Male	Female
0-14	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	355	188	167
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	431	235	196
	Basic physical disability	1050	569	481
	A learning or intellectual disability	684	377	307
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	616	366	250
	Other, including any long-standing illness	865	479	386
15-19	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	123	72	51
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	155	94	61
	Basic physical disability	513	311	202
	A learning or intellectual disability	348	200	148
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	351	217	134
	Other, including any long-standing illness	418	275	143
20-24	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	200	117	83
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	127	73	54
	Basic physical disability	562	318	244
	A learning or intellectual disability	315	173	142
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	385	219	166
	Other, including any long-standing illness	398	222	176
25-29	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	191	114	77
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	135	72	63
	Basic physical disability	608	377	231
	A learning or intellectual disability	318	179	139
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	456	251	205
	Other, including any long-standing illness	522	281	241
30-34	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	212	147	65

	Blindness or severe visual impairment	146	84	62
	Basic physical disability	926	588	338
	A learning or intellectual disability	334	197	137
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	536	300	236
	Other, including any long-standing illness	708	377	331
35-39	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	245	154	91
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	220	137	83
	Basic physical disability	1312	794	518
	A learning or intellectual disability	366	189	177
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	738	412	326
	Other, including any long-standing illness	1178	578	600
40-44	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	321	187	134
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	299	163	136
	Basic physical disability	1644	873	771
	A learning or intellectual disability	351	188	163
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	780	442	338
	Other, including any long-standing illness	1497	654	843
45-49	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	401	239	162
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	488	268	220
	Basic physical disability	2181	1125	1056
	A learning or intellectual disability	294	139	155
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	725	384	341
	Other, including any long-standing illness	2068	905	1163
50-54	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	564	319	245
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	732	404	328
	Basic physical disability	2587	1243	1344
	A learning or intellectual disability	312	138	174
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	693	364	329
	Other, including any long-standing illness	2915	1167	1748
55-59	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	687	381	306
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	946	468	478
	Basic physical disability	3211	1459	1752
	A learning or intellectual disability	284	109	175
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	667	345	322
	Other, including any long-standing illness	3430	1347	2083
60-64	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	928	471	457
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	1073	481	592
	Basic physical disability	3515	1485	2030
	A learning or intellectual disability	340	150	190
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	595	284	311
	Other, including any long-standing illness	3817	1487	2330
65-69	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	1197	626	571
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	1170	567	603
	Basic physical disability	3745	1566	2179
	A learning or intellectual disability	368	144	224
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	464	199	265
	Other, including any long-standing illness	3764	1454	2310
70-74	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	1434	777	657

	Blindness or severe visual impairment	1189	573	616
	Basic physical disability	3757	1584	2173
	A learning or intellectual disability	451	189	262
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	456	196	260
	Other, including any long-standing illness	3172	1351	1821
75-79	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	1365	679	686
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	1091	514	577
	Basic physical disability	3054	1244	1810
	A learning or intellectual disability	403	130	273
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	313	118	195
	Other, including any long-standing illness	2177	818	1359
80+	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	1712	781	931
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	1233	514	719
	Basic physical disability	2902	1041	1861
	A learning or intellectual disability	439	139	300
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	358	120	238
	Other, including any long-standing illness	1682	649	1033
Total	Deafness or severe hearing impairment	9935	5252	4683
	Blindness or severe visual impairment	9435	4647	4788
	Basic physical disability	31567	14577	16990
	A learning or intellectual disability	5607	2641	2966
	A long-standing psychological or emotional difficulty	8133	4217	3916
	Other, including any long-standing illness	28611	12044	16567

Table below shows findings according to 2024 census breaks down types of disability by age when the difficulty began and severity ("Some" vs. "A lot"). It reveals a grand total of 316,930 reported instances of difficulty, with 238,953 cases of "Some" difficulty and 77,977 cases categorized as "A lot." The data show that vision and mobility are the most prevalent challenges, with 117,150 total cases for seeing and 75,301 total cases for walking or climbing, which together account for over 60% of all reported functional limitations.

The main findings indicate a sharp increase in the prevalence and severity of difficulties in older age groups, particularly for those aged 50 to 69, where severe mobility issues reach 11,918 cases. However, a significant portion of difficulties is identified as starting at birth, with 14,126 total instances reported, including a high concentration of severe challenges in communication (1,643 cases) and self-care (1,283 cases). In conclusion, while vision and physical mobility are the primary types of disability in the aging population, the high rates of communication and self-care challenges identified as beginning at birth highlight a critical need for early intervention and support services.

Functional Difficulties by Age and Severity														
	In seeing (w/ glasses)		In hearing (w/ aid)		In walking/ climbing		In learning/ remembering		In self-care		In communication		Total	
	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot
Total	98264	18886	39423	11742	49991	25310	26525	8879	14435	7747	10315	5413	238953	77977
%	6.20	1.19	2.49	0.74	3.15	1.60	1.67	0.56	0.91	0.49	0.65	0.34	15.07	4.92
At birth	2006	1116	728	652	1105	1138	1145	1317	1092	1283	1512	1643	7,588	7149
Under 5	2119	627	298	238	475	407	469	442	481	420	685	590	4,527	2724

5 to 14	5260	961	310	162	362	281	242	204	233	175	302	182	6,709	1965
15 to 29	7698	1210	848	354	1238	809	718	394	492	320	394	248	11,388	3335
30 to 49	20541	3680	4722	1390	8357	4461	3773	1136	1611	843	931	474	39,908	11984
50 to 69	46850	7949	20241	5023	26049	11918	12207	2784	5292	2271	3035	1029	113,674	30974
70+	12509	3173	11807	3836	11808	6101	7611	2488	5048	2374	3231	1176	52,014	19148
Don't know	1281	170	469	87	597	195	360	114	186	61	225	71	3,118	698