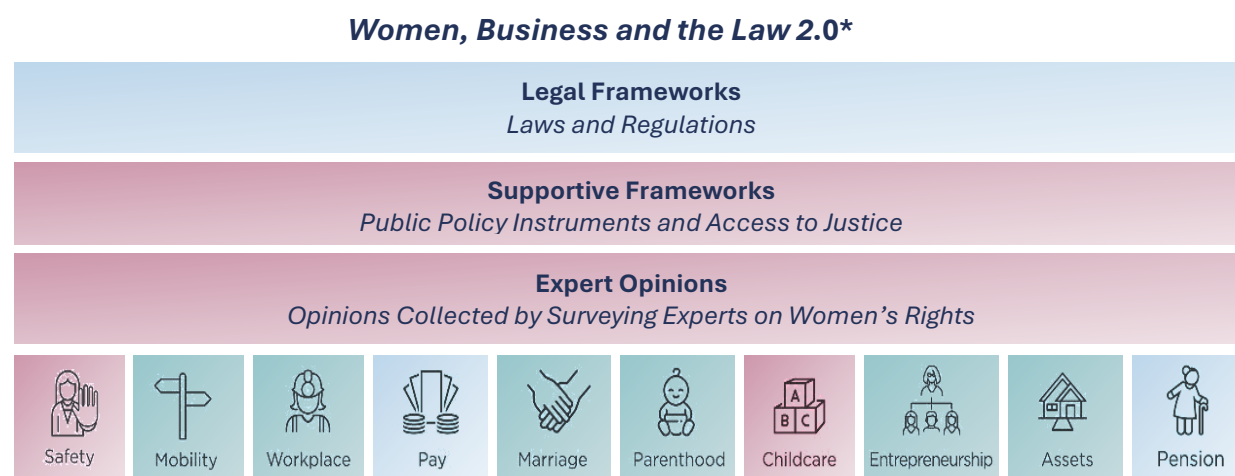


TOWARD AVAILABILITY, PUBLIC FINANCE, AND QUALITY OF CHILDCARE SERVICES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

A widely recognized priority for the achievement of women’s economic inclusion is access to affordable and quality childcare services. *Women, Business and the Law 2.0* presents a new indicator on Childcare that provides a comprehensive picture of laws governing the provision of childcare services in formally registered center-based settings for children below 3 years of age, policy instruments designed to support the implementation of these laws, and how these laws are realized in practice, according to experts’ perceptions. To this aim, three measures of progress are introduced: (1) legal frameworks, (2) supportive frameworks, and (3) expert opinions (figure 1).

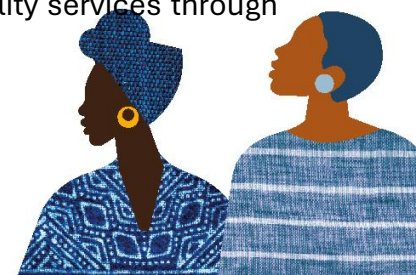
**FIGURE 1: WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW NEW MEASURES OF PROGRESS ACROSS
TEN INDICATORS, INCLUDING CHILDCARE, GO BEYOND LAWS**



Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: See the data notes for detailed methodology, including the construction of the three indexes per indicator at: <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/sites/wbl/documents/2024/WBL2024-Data-Notes.pdf>

The Childcare *legal frameworks* indicator analyzes laws that govern availability, support through public finance to parents and nonstate providers (private centers and employers), and quality of childcare services. The Childcare *supportive frameworks* indicator analyzes key instruments designed to support the implementation of these laws. These instruments include policies and practices that help parents make informed decisions about childcare, including access to publicly available registries or databases of childcare providers, financial support application procedures, and monitoring of high-quality services through



publicly available quality reports. The Childcare *expert opinions* indicator captures experts' responses to the question on the extent to which families (and women specifically as primary caregivers) have access to affordable and quality childcare services in practice in a particular economy.

The Childcare legal and supportive frameworks indicator scores are calculated as the simple average of the answers to four binary questions (see table 1) and scaling the result to the highest possible score of 100. The Childcare expert opinions indicator is obtained by calculating the individual responses to the question on the extent to which women have access to affordable and quality childcare services in practice. Response options fall along a five-point scale (0–4) in which 0 indicates an absence of access for almost all women in practice, and 4 indicates the existence of access for almost all women in practice. The experts' responses are aggregated into the question score at the economy level, taking the median value of all responses given. The Childcare expert opinions indicator is then equal to the question score and scaled to 100.

TABLE 1: COMPOSITION OF THE THREE CHILDCARE INDICATORS

Childcare legal frameworks	Childcare supportive frameworks	Childcare expert opinions
1. Does the law establish the provision of center-based childcare services?*	1. Is there a publicly available registry or database of childcare providers?	In practice, do women have access to affordable and quality childcare services?
2. Does the law establish any form of support for families for childcare services?	2. Is there a clearly outlined application procedure to request financial support from the government for childcare services by parents?	
3. Does the law establish any form of support for nonstate childcare providers?	3. Is there a clearly outlined application procedure to request financial support from the government for childcare services by nonstate childcare providers?	
4. Does the law establish quality standards for the provision of center-based childcare services?	4. Has the government published any reports on the quality of childcare services?	

Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.





Note: See the Annex for more detailed questions for which data are collected. Details on the scoring methodology are available at: <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/sites/wbl/documents/2024/WBL2024-Data-Notes.pdf>.

*Center-based childcare services are early childhood care and education services offered to children aged 0-2 years (including 2 years and 11 months) on a regular basis at formally registered nurseries, day cares, crèches, or preschools. Services provided in the child's own or caregiver's home, within family, foster care, voluntary organizations, private individuals (nannies, au pairs, babysitters), and other informal arrangements, including community-based services and services provided at religious or philanthropic schools, are not considered in the WBL Childcare indicators. This exclusion does not reflect the full diversity of childcare options in practice.



The new childcare data serve a steppingstone toward facilitating and informing policy dialogue around key demand- and supply- side avenues that limit or enable formal provision of childcare services, their affordability by means of public finance, and quality. Even when available, the provision of formal childcare services does not always guarantee their uptake because supply- and demand-side constraints, including high costs, low quality, and social and cultural norms, limit potential benefits (figure 2).

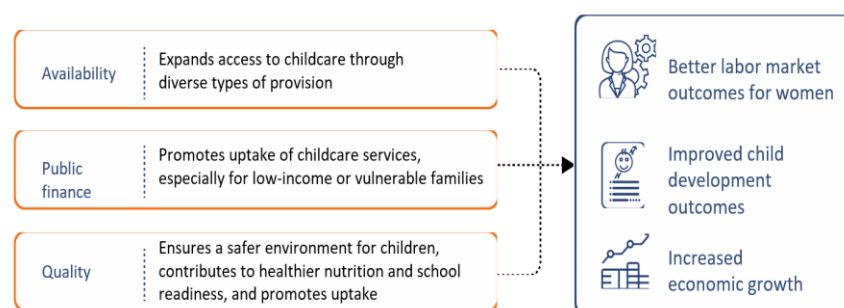
FIGURE 2: KEY CONSTRAINTS IN THE CHILDCARE MARKET

Key constraint	Costs 	Diverse options 	Quality 	Social and cultural norms 
Supply side (provider)	High operational costs and tight margins make providers financially vulnerable.	High property costs, safety concerns, and barriers to entry may limit ability to open centers in convenient locations.	Quality is often poor due to an undertrained and unsupported childcare and early learning workforce, a lack of guidance on quality standards, and a lack of financing.	Inattention among policy makers to women's unpaid caregiving labor discourages the prioritization of support for childcare services.
Demand side (consumer)	High costs are a barrier for many families, especially low-income families.	Inconvenient location of services and operating hours limit uptake.	Two factors limit uptake: (a) lack of parental trust that children will be in a safe environment that provides quality service and (b) lack of parental understanding of what good quality looks like.	Cultural and social norms that discourage having children cared for outside of the family limit uptake.

Source: Devercelli and Beaton-Day 2020; Muller and Jaen 2020.

The enactment of legal and policy frameworks to make childcare available, more affordable through public finance, and of decent quality is a priority because it has the potential to achieve better market outcomes for women, children, and the economy in general (figure 3).

FIGURE 3: THE KEY PILLARS OF CHILDCARE

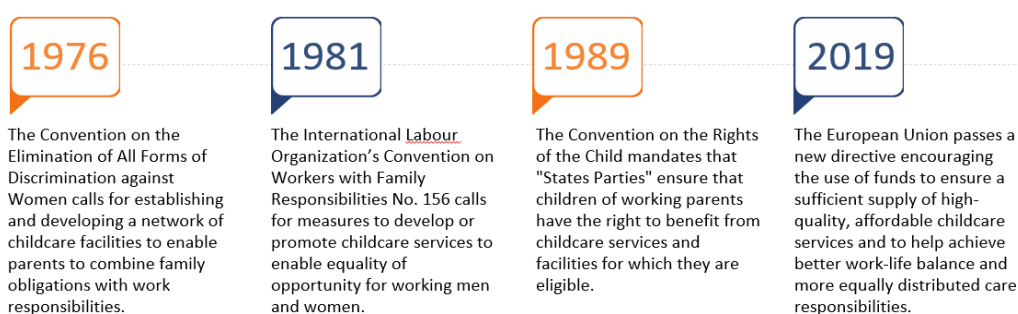


Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.



The new data presents a framework that shows a range of options that governments may support to meet the needs of working mothers and families. Although specific best practice frameworks have yet to be established, longstanding international frameworks advocate for the right of working parents to access childcare services, allowing partial outsourcing of their care responsibilities while enabling work-life balance (figure 4).

FIGURE 4: INTERNATIONAL LAW HAS LONG RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR ACCESS TO CHILDCARE AND CALLED FOR MAKING FACILITIES MORE READILY AVAILABLE



Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

CHILDCARE PROVISION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Women, Business and the Law measures the progress in childcare legal and policy achievements in 190 economies worldwide, including 48 economies in Sub-Saharan Africa (table 2). Sub-Saharan Africa is a diverse region, where the average Gross National Income (GNI) per capita varies from as low as US\$ 830 in Burundi and US\$ 1,370 in Mozambique to over US\$ 25,000 in Seychelles and Mauritius, while female labor force participation rate varies from as low as 21 percent in Somalia to 83 percent in Madagascar.¹

An economy's level of income may not always be reflective of the reality that women face when it comes to participation in formal and paid employment. However, an increase in access to childcare services stemming from the enactment of childcare laws and improving regulatory environment, as measured by *Women, Business and the Law*, results in an average 1.0 percentage point increase in women's labor force participation, and this effect grows over time, reaching as much as 2.2 percentage points within five years of implementation (Anukriti et al. 2023). Enabling the provision of childcare services could be

¹ World Development Indicators (2023), GNI per capita, PPP (constant 2021 international \$); labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)



a viable option for women seeking to maintain earnings during the first stage of their child's life and improve maternal labor market opportunities. This is particularly acute in economies where women receive fewer adequate care leave cash benefits, or the length of paid leave does not meet the International Labour Organization's (ILO) minimum standard of 14 weeks and ends earlier than when services become available.

TABLE 2: ECONOMY COVERAGE AND KEY INDICATORS

Economy Coverage	Income Group	Main Business City	Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	Paid Leave for Mothers (weeks)	Paid Leave for Fathers (calendar days)
Angola	LMI	Luanda	73.2	12.9	1
Benin	LMI	Cotonou	74.2	14	3
Botswana	UMI	Gaborone	63.4	12	0
Burkina Faso	LI	Ouagadougou	41.3	14	3
Burundi	LI	Bujumbura	80.1	12	4
Cabo Verde	LMI	Praia	50.4	8.6	2
Cameroon	LMI	Douala	57.1	14	3
Central African Republic	LI	Bangui	65.8	14	2
Chad	LI	N'Djamena	48.7	14	1
Comoros	LMI	Moroni	41.1	14	0
Congo, Dem. Rep.	LI	Kinshasa	62.3	14	2
Congo, Rep.	LMI	Brazzaville	66.3	15	0
Côte d'Ivoire	LMI	Abidjan	58.9	14	2
Equatorial Guinea	UMI	Malabo	53	12	9
Eritrea	LI	Asmara	72.4	8.6	0
Eswatini	LMI	Mbabane	44.9	2	0
Ethiopia	LI	Addis Ababa	57.4	17.1	3
Gabon	UMI	Libreville	41.9	14	3
Gambia, The	LI	Banjul	45.2	25.7	14
Ghana	LMI	Accra	61.8	12	0
Guinea	LMI	Conakry	42.1	14	0
Guinea-Bissau	LI	Bissau	56.5	12.9	15
Kenya	LMI	Nairobi	62.4	12.9	14



Lesotho	LMI	Maseru	49.1	12	0
Liberia	LI	Monrovia	72.1	14	0
Madagascar	LI	Antananarivo	82.6	14	0
Malawi	LI	Blantyre	63.5	8	14
Mali	LI	Bamako	58	14	3
Mauritania	LMI	Nouakchott	26.2	14	1
Mauritius	UMI	Port Louis	42.7	14	7
Mozambique	LI	Maputo	78.2	8.6	1
Namibia	UMI	Windhoek	55.4	12	0
Niger	LI	Niamey	60.4	14	1
Nigeria	LMI	Lagos	80.8	12	0
Rwanda	LI	Kigali	58	14	7
São Tomé and Príncipe	LMI	São Tomé	23.1	14	0
Senegal	LMI	Dakar	37.1	14	1
Seychelles	HI	Victoria	..	16	14
Sierra Leone	LI	Freetown	51.5	14	14
Somalia	LI	Mogadishu	20.9	14	0
South Africa	UMI	Johannesburg	52.9	17.1	10
South Sudan	LI	Juba	71.3	12.9	14
Sudan	LI	Khartoum	..	8	0
Tanzania	LMI	Dar es Salaam	80.2	12	3
Togo	LI	Lomé	56.1	14	2
Uganda	LI	Kampala	76.4	12	4
Zambia	LMI	Lusaka	53.9	14	0
Zimbabwe	LMI	Harare	59.7	14	0

Sources: Women, Business and the Law 2024 and World Development Indicators 2023.

Note: HI = High income, LMI = Lower-middle income, UMI= Upper-middle income.

CHILDCARE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

The Childcare legal frameworks indicator reflects on laws governing the four aspects of the childcare market: (1) the establishment of center-based childcare options available to parents, (2) the support through public finance for families, and (3) nonstate childcare providers, and (4) the quality of childcare services. Table 3 provides more details on each of the four scored questions underpinning the Childcare legal frameworks indicator.



TABLE 3. MEASURES OF PROGRESS ON LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Pillar	Scored question	Underlying questions
		A score of 1 is assigned if the law establishes...
Availability	1. Does the law establish the provision of center-based childcare services?	Childcare services by at least one of the following: -Government -Private centers -Employers (not conditional on the number of female employees)
Public Finance	2. Does the law establish any form of support for families for childcare services?	At least one of the following forms of support for families: -Financial support from the government -Direct tax benefits -Universal childcare services
	3. Does the law establish any form of support for nonstate childcare providers?	At least one of the following forms of support for private childcare centers or employers: -Financial support from the government -Direct tax benefits
Quality	4. Does the law establish quality standards for center-based childcare services?	Requirements on all three quality parameters: - <i>Structural</i> quality (caregiver-to-child ratio or maximum group size) - <i>Educator/caregiver</i> quality (a minimum level of specialized education or professional training) - <i>Quality assurance</i> (periodic inspections or reporting by childcare centers)

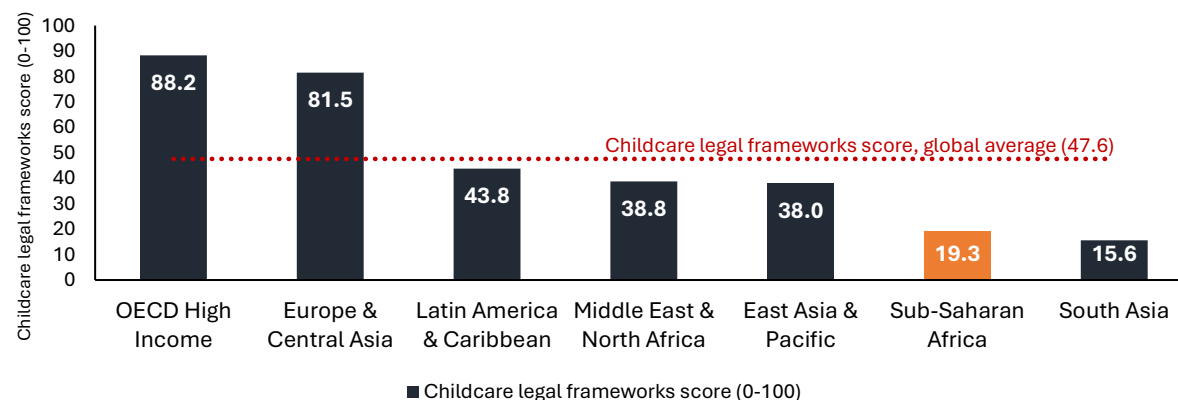
Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: see the Annex for more detailed results for each question. Details on the scoring methodology are available at: <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/sites/wbl/documents/2024/WBL2024-Data-Notes.pdf>

Globally, the Childcare legal frameworks indicator reveals large differences in scores among regions. OECD high-income economies lead, with an average score of 88.2 out of 100. They are followed by Europe and Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, with average scores of 81.5 and 43.8, respectively (figure 5). Sub-Saharan Africa falls behind the global average score of 47.6 by more than twice with the average regional score of 19.3 – only about 4 points higher than the lowest scoring region of South Asia. Significant gaps in the enabling regulatory environment needed to access affordable and quality childcare services persist.



FIGURE 5: CHILDCARE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SCORE (0-100), BY REGION

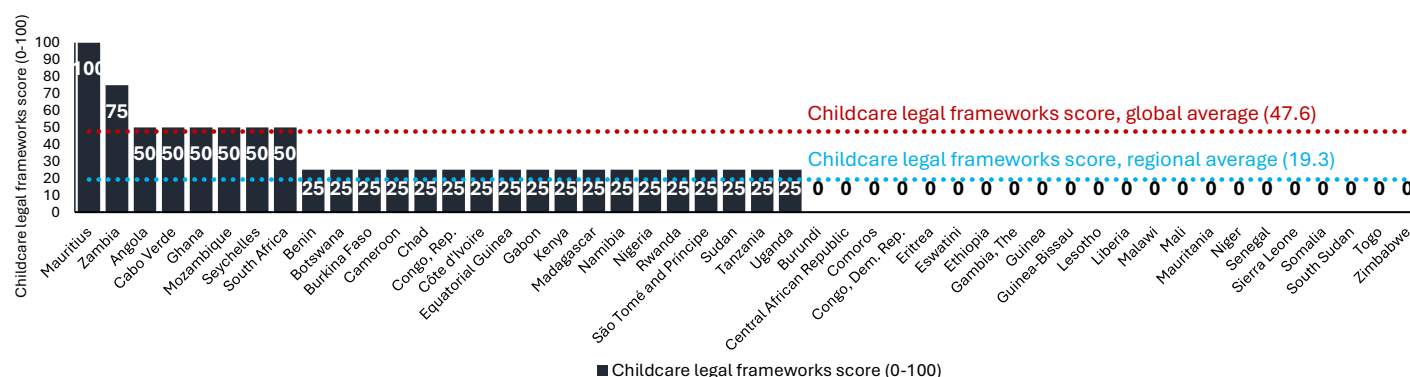


Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: The Childcare legal frameworks score is calculated as the simple average of the answers to the four binary questions in table 3 and scaling the result to 100.

Notably, the differences within the region of Sub-Saharan Africa are also considerable. Mauritius gets the highest score of 100, followed by Zambia with a score of 75 out of 100. Six economies in the region (Angola, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa) are only half-way there when it comes to the necessary minimum childcare legal frameworks. More than a third of the economies in the region score only 25 out of 100, while nearly half of the economies examined in the region remain short of any laws governing the provision of formal childcare for children below 3 years of age (figure 6).

FIGURE 6: CHILDCARE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SCORE (0-100) IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, BY ECONOMY



Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: The Childcare legal frameworks score is obtained by calculating the simple average of the answers to four binary questions within the indicator and scaling the result to 100.



Availability

In Sub-Saharan Africa, laws regulate the provision of formal center-based childcare services (public or nonstate) for children below 3 years of age in 26 out of 48 examined economies (table 4). In 16 of these economies, the services are available as early as at the birth of the child. In Benin and the Republic of Congo, services become available at the age of 2 months, while in Angola, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, and Mauritius - at the age of 3 months. In Equatorial Guinea, the earliest age of enrollment is when the child turns 1 year.

The law regulates both public and private center-based childcare services in nine economies within the region: Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritius, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. The law governs the provision of services by private providers only in 16 out of 48 examined economies. Sudan is the only economy in the region where employers by law are obligated to establish nurseries if they employ 100 or more workers (regardless of gender).

TABLE 4: LEGISLATION ON THE PROVISION OF CENTER-BASED CHILDCARE SERVICES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, BY THE TYPE OF PROVISION

Economy	Earliest age of entitlement to childcare services	Public Provision*	Private Provision*	Employer provided or supported
Angola	3 months	✓	✓	ND
Benin	2 months	ND	✓	ND
Botswana*	2.5 years	ND	✓	ND
Burkina Faso	3 months	✓	✓	ND
Burundi	ND	ND	ND	ND
Cabo Verde	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Cameroon	at birth	✓	✓	ND
Central African Republic	ND	ND	ND	ND
Chad	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Comoros	ND	ND	ND	ND
Congo, Dem. Rep.	ND	ND	ND	ND
Congo, Rep.	2 months	✓	✓	ND
Côte d'Ivoire	3 months	ND	✓	ND
Equatorial Guinea	1 year	✓	✓	ND
Eritrea	ND	ND	ND	ND



Eswatini	ND	ND	ND	ND
Ethiopia	ND	ND	ND	ND
Gabon	3 months	✓	✓	ND
Gambia, The	ND	ND	ND	ND
Ghana	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Guinea	ND	ND	ND	ND
Guinea-Bissau	ND	ND	ND	ND
Kenya*	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Lesotho	ND	ND	ND	ND
Liberia	ND	ND	ND	ND
Madagascar	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Malawi	ND	ND	ND	ND
Mali	ND	ND	ND	ND
Mauritania*	ND	ND	ND	ND
Mauritius	3 months	✓	✓	ND
Mozambique	at birth	✓	✓	ND
Namibia	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Niger	ND	ND	ND	ND
Nigeria	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Rwanda	at birth	ND	✓	ND
São Tomé and Príncipe	at birth	✓	✓	ND
Senegal	ND	ND	ND	ND
Seychelles	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Sierra Leone	ND	ND	ND	ND
Somalia	ND	ND	ND	ND
South Africa	at birth	ND	✓	ND
South Sudan	ND	ND	ND	ND
Sudan	at birth	ND	✓	✓
Tanzania	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Togo	ND	ND	ND	ND
Uganda	2 years	ND	✓	ND
Zambia	at birth	ND	✓	ND
Zimbabwe	ND	ND	ND	ND

Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: **ND** means that the law governing the provision of childcare services is not detected.



* Public provision denotes services offered at center-based facilities operated and funded by the government, including nurseries, day cares, crèches, or formal preschools. Private provision denotes privately-run childcare centers, including nurseries, day cares, crèches, or formal preschools, that can be non-profit or for-profit entities and are not operated and funded by the government. For Botswana and Kenya, the legislation applicable at the main business city of Gaborone and Nairobi is examined, respectively (Gaborone Council Daycare Center By-Laws; Nairobi City County Childcare Facilities Act 2017). In Mauritania, Child's Protection Law (Loi n°2018-024 portant Code Général de Protection de l'Enfant) only provides the definition of a nursery as a place receiving children from 0 to 36 months, but no provisions detected on types of providers and their operational or registration requirements.

No laws govern the provision of center-based childcare services of any form for children below 3 years of age in 22 economies in the region. This is further compounded by the fact that the length of paid maternity leave in some of these economies (Burundi, Eritrea, Eswatini, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Malawi, South Sudan, Zimbabwe) does not meet the ILO's standard of 14 weeks or 98 calendar days (refer to table 2 for details). In these circumstances, the early provision of childcare services becomes an urgent necessity for women striving to return or join the labor market after having children, including mothers who do not receive any paid maternity leave at all because of the prevalence of informal employment.

Public finance

Even when formal childcare is available, the high cost is a central concern that poses challenges for both parents and providers. To reduce the cost burden for families and childcare providers, governments can provide direct financial transfers (such as subsidies, allowances, one-time grants, reimbursements, fee reductions or exemptions, vouchers) or tax support (credits, deductions, or exemptions). The Childcare legal frameworks indicator examines whether the law establishes some form of financial or tax support for families and nonstate childcare providers (employers or private centers).

Three economies in the region provide some form of support for families for childcare services: Mauritius, Seychelles, and Zambia. Direct financial transfers to parents are established in Mauritius and Seychelles, while personal income tax deductions on childcare incurred expenses are administered in Zambia (table 5).

TABLE 5: EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC FINANCE COST SUPPORT FOR CHILDCARE SERVICES FOR FAMILIES

Measure	Economy	Policy Example
Allowances	Mauritius	Crèche allowance is available for families and payable directly to the registered provider where the child is admitted. This allowance encourages unemployed mothers to register their children in care facilities to take up employment or undergo



		training. A crèche allowance is only payable when a child's attendance is at least 75 percent (Social Integration and Empowerment (Crèche Scheme) Regulations 2019).
Subsidies	Seychelles	Financial Assistance for Registered Day Care and Childminding Services is a national initiative that involves paying SCR 750 (about US\$50) per child monthly for daycare and childminding services. The goal of the initiative is to support parents by reducing the costs of childcare services and encouraging them to enroll their children in registered facilities (The Institute of Early Childhood Development).
Tax benefits	Zambia	The Income Tax Act lists early childhood care services as 'public benefit activity', for which the incurred costs could be deducted from the personal income tax.

Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Lowering costs for nonstate childcare providers through operational start-up grants, subsidies, public-private partnerships, or tax incentives are among policy tools that governments can use to increase the supply of childcare services. Nonstate childcare providers (private centers or employers) in six out of 48 examined economies in Sub-Saharan Africa receive financial or tax support from their governments (table 6).

Private childcare centers in Cabo Verde, Mauritius, and South Africa receive direct financial transfers. In Angola, Mozambique, and Zambia, the government grants tax incentives to private centers. In Angola, Cabo Verde, Mauritius, and Mozambique, employers' expenses for providing or supporting childcare services for their employees are also tax deductible for purposes of corporate income taxation. However, in none of these economies, employers are obligated by law to provide childcare for their employees.

TABLE 6. EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC FINANCE SUPPORT FOR NONSTATE PROVIDERS

Economy	Type of support
Angola	The Industrial Tax Law exempts services provided by nurseries and kindergartens from industrial taxes. The law also indicates that employers offering or supporting childcare services for their employees are eligible for industrial tax deductions.
Cabo Verde	<i>Operational allowances</i> are available for entities operating daycare centers. To be eligible for the allowance, such entities must meet the following criteria: a) ensure the care of children with disabilities, children belonging to the same household family and area residents; b) guarantee the exemption from the monthly fee; c) publicize the free care services provided; d) submit the list of children and the respective budget quarterly to the central service competent on family matters; e) submit quarterly balance sheets on the use of the allowance awarded. The aim of operational allowance is to ensure the frequency of services for children from areas of priority interventions, such as the areas with a high index of female labor participation or a high index of births (The Department of Family and Social Inclusion). Corporate Income Tax Law considers tax expenses incurred to maintain crèches, nurseries, and kindergartens, as well as other socially useful achievements made in the national territory and for the benefit of the company's personnel and their dependents.



Mauritius	<p>The Income Tax Act establishes that a company that incurs capital expenditures on crèches for the benefit of its employees may allow a deduction from its gross income of twice the amount of such expenditure in that income year.</p> <p><i>One-Off Grant</i> is available through the National Children's Council to all childcare centers/crèches that need to upgrade their standard to be registered with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Institution for Welfare and Protection of Children).</p>
Mozambique	The Corporate Income Tax Code exempts crèches and similar services from specific tax duties. Additionally, the Code deems expenses incurred for the maintenance of daycare centers, nurseries, kindergartens, and other facilities for the benefit of company personnel and their families as deductible for the tax period.
South Africa	An <i>Early Childhood Development Grant</i> includes pre-registration support to early childhood development centers, nutrition support programs, and resource packages to enable early childhood development in childcare centers.
Zambia	The Income Tax Act exempts early childhood care establishments providing 'public benefit activities' from corporate income tax.
Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.	

Governments do not provide any form of financial or tax support to parents or nonstate childcare providers in 42 out of 48 examined economies. These legislative gaps contribute to limited childcare provision with the expectation that families, and mothers in particular, will bear the brunt of care.

Quality

Quality can serve as a determining factor in a parent's decision to use formal childcare services. Quality childcare improves children's development outcomes, including school readiness, healthy nutrition and educational achievements, in the short and mid-term (Devercelli and Beaton-Day, 2020). It leads to more promising employment prospects and higher earnings in the long term.

The Childcare legal frameworks indicator measures whether the law establishes quality standards for the provision of childcare services in center-based settings. These standards would, at minimum, include requirements on the structural quality (caregiver-to-child ratio or maximum group size), minimum educational or professional training requirements for caregivers or educators, and quality assurance mechanisms in the form of periodic inspections by specialized bodies or periodic reporting by childcare providers.² In only two

² *Women, Business and the Law* breaks down the concept of quality into three main categories following the approach outlined in Devercelli and Beaton-Day (2020): structural, process, and system quality. Under *structural* quality, standards on educator-to-child ratios and group sizes are examined. For *process* quality, requirements specifying a minimum level of specialized education or professional training for educators or main caregivers are examined. Lastly, *system* quality refers to the overall system in which childcare is delivered. For this purpose, the selected measures aimed at improving the system include quality assurance interventions: periodic inspections of childcare providers by authorized bodies or periodic reporting requirements by childcare providers.



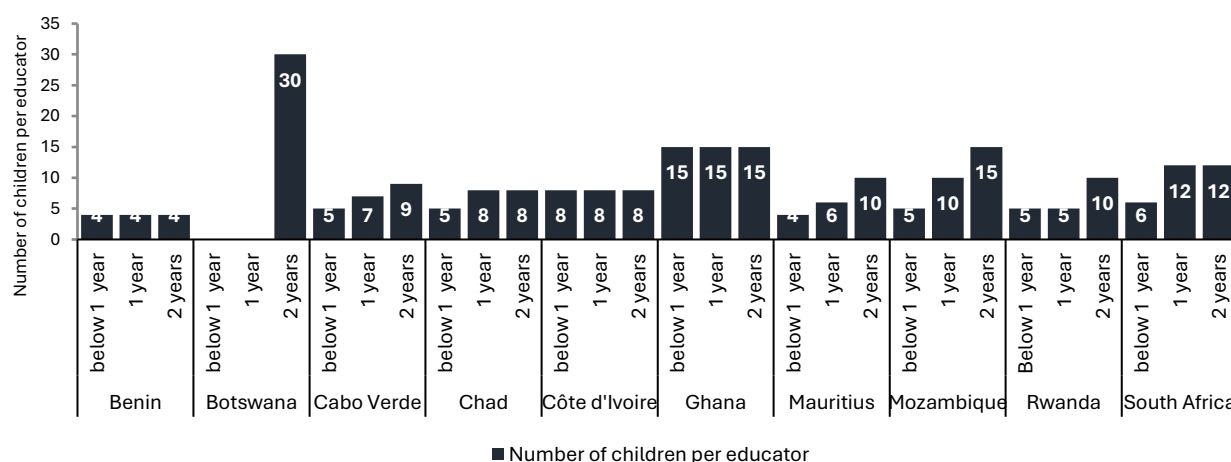
economies in the region (Ghana and Mauritius), all three minimum quality standards are provided by law, while in the remaining 46 economies, the gaps in quality are far from being tackled.

Caregiver-to-child ratios and group sizes are important structural quality aspects. With lower caregiver-to-child ratios (typically 1:10 or 1:15, as recommended by international institutions) and smaller group sizes, children can receive individual attention, and caregivers can more effectively cater to diverse learning needs (ILO 2014).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, ten economies establish standards for caregiver-to-child ratios: Benin, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, and South Africa (figure 7).

Benin and Mauritius have the lowest ratios for children below 1 year of age (1:4). In contrast, for children at 2 years, Botswana has the highest ratio of one qualified teacher per 30 children, followed by Ghana (1:15), Mozambique (1:15), South Africa (1:12), Mauritius (1:10), and Rwanda (1:10). For children at 2 years of age, the lowest ratio is established in Benin (1:4). There is no distinction based on age in terms of the number of children in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana, which makes it challenging to cater for diverse needs of children at different developmental levels.

FIGURE 7: NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER EDUCATOR IN CHILDCARE CENTERS, BY AGE AND ECONOMY



Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: in Botswana, the earliest age of enrollment according to the law is 2.5 years, which is why educator-to-child ratio is empty for children at 1 and below years.



Trained educators are key contributors to the physical and mental health, safety, and cognitive development of children in care facilities. In Sub-Saharan Africa, nine out of 48 examined economies require minimum specialized education or professional training for educators or caregivers: Angola, Cabo Verde, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Uganda. Levels of required education or training vary among these economies. For example, in Angola, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Uganda, the minimum qualification requirement is a training certification in Early Childhood Education and Care, officially recognized by the Government through the Ministry in charge of childcare services (table 7).

TABLE 7: MINIMUM QUALIFICATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATORS OR CAREGIVERS

Economy	Teacher degree	Certification in Early Childhood Care and Education
Angola		✓
Cabo Verde		✓
Congo, Rep.	✓	
Equatorial Guinea	✓	
Ghana		✓
Kenya		✓
Madagascar		✓
Mauritius		✓
Uganda		✓

Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Overall, Sub-Saharan Africa has a long way to go when it comes to setting the quality standards on childcare workforce. Globally, more than half of all economies worldwide set minimum qualification requirements for educators in registered childcare centers, while in Sub-Saharan Africa, below 20 percent of the examined economies do so.

Governments can monitor compliance with quality standards by establishing quality assurance mechanisms through mandatory periodic inspections of physical facilities or reporting of data and information by childcare providers. Quality assurance processes allow governments to generate registries or reports on the quality of services offered that (if made publicly available) can help parents make better informed decisions about their childcare choices.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, only five economies mandate periodic physical inspections of childcare facilities: Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, and Tanzania. In Ghana,



Seychelles, and Tanzania, inspections will occur every six months, while in Namibia and Nigeria, the regulations establish that inspections should occur annually. To decrease the risk of noncompliance among providers, regular reporting by childcare centers to competent authorities on early childhood care is also a requirement in the Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, and Uganda.

CHILDCARE SUPPORTIVE FRAMEWORKS

The Childcare supportive frameworks indicator examines the presence of policy mechanisms that help implement childcare laws, as measured by the Childcare legal frameworks indicator. The Childcare supportive frameworks indicator answers the four questions around the following aspects: (1) the availability of publicly available registries or databases of childcare providers; (2) clearly outlined application procedures for parents to request financial support; (3) clearly outlined application procedures for nonstate childcare providers (private centers or employers) to request financial support; (4) publicly available reports on the quality of childcare services (table 8). Each binary question is assigned a score of 1 in case of a positive answer. The Childcare supportive frameworks score is then obtained by calculating the simple average of the answers to the four binary questions from table 7 and scaling the result to 100.

TABLE 8: MEASURES OF PROGRESS ON SUPPORTIVE FRAMEWORKS

Pillar	Scored question
Availability	1. Is there a publicly available registry or database of childcare providers?
Public Finance	2. Is there a clearly outlined application procedure to request financial support from the government for childcare services by parents?
	3. Is there a clearly outlined application procedure to request financial support from the government for childcare services by nonstate childcare providers?
Quality	4. Has the government published any reports on the quality of childcare services?

Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

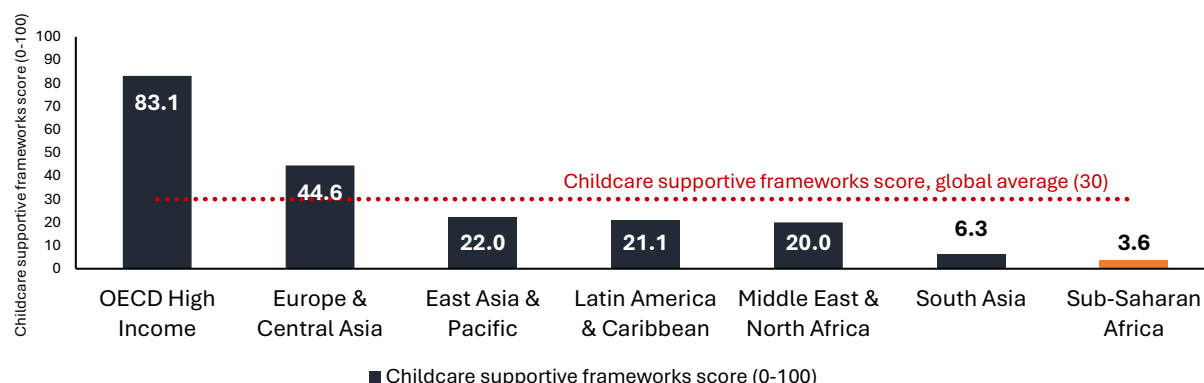
Note: See the Annex for more detailed results for each question. Details on the scoring methodology are available at: <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/sites/wbl/documents/2024/WBL2024-Data-Notes.pdf>

Globally, the Childcare supportive frameworks indicator reveals major differences in scores among regions. OECD high-income economies lead, with an average score of 83.1 out of 100. They are followed by Europe and Central Asia (44.6) and East Asia and Pacific (22.0). Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest average score of 3.6 out of 100 amongst all regions, which is more than 24 points lower than the global average of 30. This result is indicative of



a substantial gap in available policy instruments to support proper implementation of childcare laws – largely attributed to the absence of these laws in the first place (figure 8).

FIGURE 8: CHILDCARE SUPPORTIVE FRAMEWORKS SCORE (0-100), BY REGION

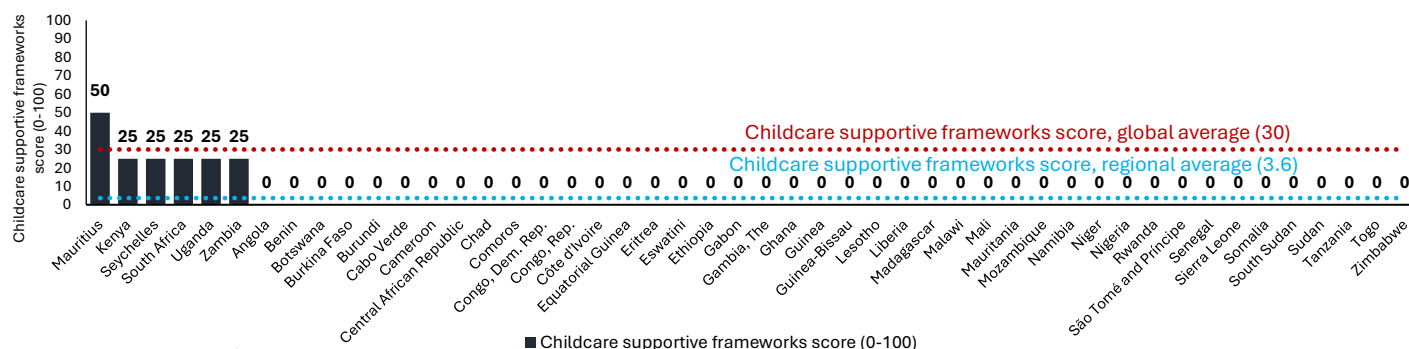


Source: Women, Business, and the Law 2024.

Note: The Childcare supportive frameworks score is calculated as the simple average of the answers to the four binary questions in table 8 and scaling the result to 100.

The Childcare supportive frameworks indicator reveals homogeneity among the economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a few exceptions. Mauritius gets the highest score in the region (50 out of 100), followed by Kenya, Seychelles, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia (with a score of 25 out of 100). The score of 0 in the rest of the region signifies the absence of the minimum policy instruments necessary to support proper implementation, as measured by *Women, Business and the Law* (figure 9).

FIGURE 9: CHILDCARE SUPPORTIVE FRAMEWORKS SCORE (0-100) IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, BY ECONOMY



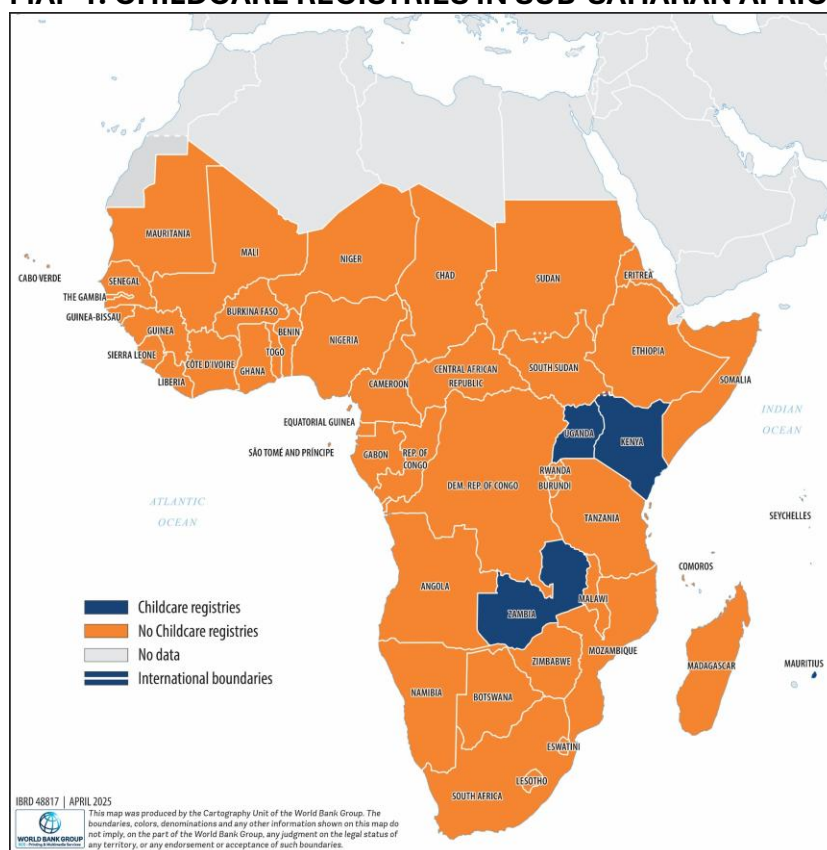
Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: The Childcare supportive frameworks score is calculated as the simple average of the answers to the four binary questions in table 8 and scaling the result to 100.



Accurate, accessible information is fundamental for parents assessing available childcare options. Publicly accessible registries of childcare providers can help parents make informed decisions about their childcare choices. Through registries, parents can retrieve details about available childcare providers, including their location, contact information, types of services provided, and other relevant records. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only four economies, including Kenya, Mauritius, Uganda, and Zambia, provide publicly available evidence of such registries on official government websites (map 1).

MAP 1: CHILDCARE REGISTRIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: The dark blue indicates the availability of registries (in Kenya, Mauritius, Uganda, and Zambia), while orange color indicates the absence of such registries.

In Kenya, the information on childcare providers is typically published at the county level. For example, the Nairobi City County publishes information on Nairobi's early childhood development centers (including nurseries) and public schools. The information provided



includes the name, the district zone and the exact location of each center. In Mauritius, the City Council of Port Louis publishes the list of municipal nurseries and infant schools, including the name, the street, the phone number, the admission dates and the documentation that must be submitted to admit a child. Besides this publicly available information, the Child Development Unit presents an annual report that indicates the number of children enrolled in day care centers by age and gender. In Zambia, a short list of the providers of early childhood services is published at the official website of the Lusaka City Council.

Clearly defined application procedures and guidelines are paramount for families and nonstate childcare providers seeking financial support. In the absence of streamlined procedures, parents face information asymmetries that are also typically more pronounced amongst low-income families who may drop out of the benefit enrollment process (Halim et al. 2021). The process of applying for childcare support shall also not be complicated, confusing, invasive, or frustrating for families (Child Care Technical Assistance Network 2023). In Seychelles, the government establishes a clearly outlined step-by-step application procedure for parents to seize financial support for childcare services, including the eligibility criteria and the list of documents that must be submitted to the processing body. Similarly, Mauritius sets clear guidelines for applicant childcare providers for the One-Off Grant Scheme for Upgrading of Child Day Care Centers and Crèches. The guidelines are outlined on the official website of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

Robust quality assurance mechanisms are also essential for creating safe, stimulating environments for children. Publicly available reports benchmarking the quality of childcare services based on information that governments collect by means of physical inspections or direct reporting by childcare providers demonstrate their commitment to proactive monitoring and high standards for childcare services. Quality reports relying on solid data collection and monitoring systems allow for benchmarking of the strengths and weaknesses of an individual service provider to inform actions for further improvement (OECD 2022).

In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education developed the first Early Childhood Development (ECD) Census in 2021. The ECD Census 2021 constitutes the first complete mapping of Early Learning Programs (ELP) in South Africa for age groups 0-3 and 3-6 years. Its purpose is to integrate ELPs into the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) Education Management Information System (EMIS), identify gaps in the access to and quality of ELPs in South Africa, support research on ECD, and gain insights into the current enabling



environment for Learning through Play (LtP). The report provides benchmarking of selected quality parameters at childcare centers, including the provision of water and sanitation, meals and cooking, and the availability of materials for learning and playing. In addition, the report identified the areas of growth and improvement around continued professionalization and training of the childcare workforce. The rest of Sub-Saharan Africa have yet to publish these assessment reports for better implementation and enforcement of quality standards.

CHILDCARE EXPERT OPINIONS

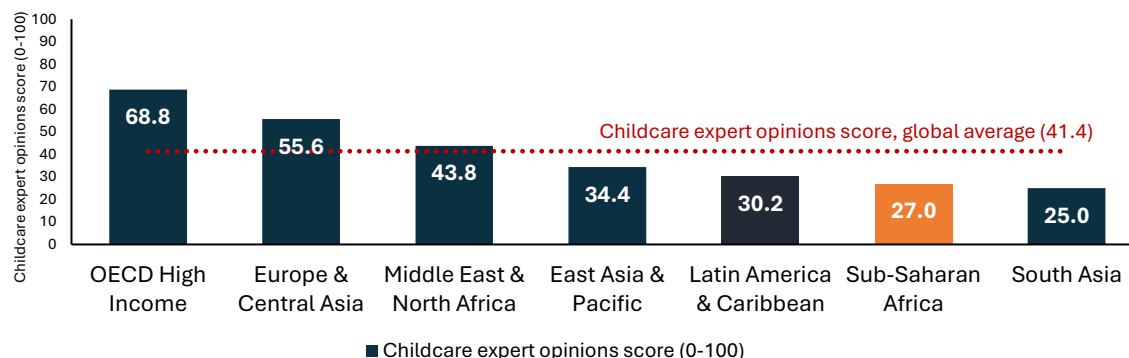
In practice, do women have access to affordable and quality childcare services?

An analysis of the actual state of legal implementation is critical to understanding gender gaps and deriving reform recommendations for which outcome indicators are an effective measuring tool. Experts' responses on how well existing laws, or a lack thereof, operate in practice can showcase the effectiveness of implementation of childcare laws and help unpack the underlying factors that may prevent parents to enroll children in care facilities, being it high costs or low quality among others.

In 38 economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, *Women, Business and the Law* surveyed 266 expert lawyers in the field of labor and employment on their perceptions of the outcome of the law for women when it comes to accessing affordable and quality childcare services in practice. The respondents are asked their opinion around the extent to which women have access to affordable and quality childcare services in practice. Response options fall along a five-point scale (0–4) in which 0 indicates the absence of access for almost all women in practice, and 4 indicates the existence of access for almost all women in practice. The Annex provides more details on the distribution of expert opinions by economy in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Globally, the Childcare expert opinions indicator reveals large differences in perceptions among regions. In OECD high-income economies and Europe and Central Asia, experts perceive that more than 50 percent of women have access to affordable and quality childcare services in practice. In Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, experts perceive that less than 30 percent of women have such access. These perceptions are more than 10 points lower than experts' perceptions globally (figure 10).



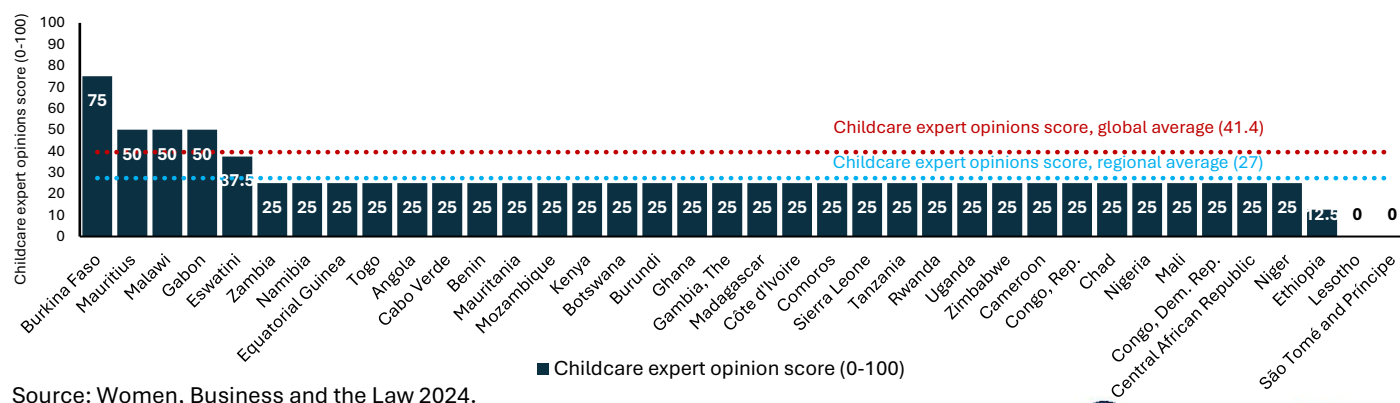
FIGURE 10: CHILDCARE EXPERT OPINIONS SCORE (0-100), BY REGION


Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

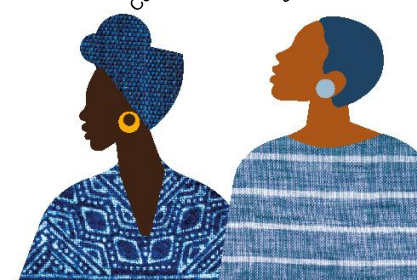
Note: The Childcare expert opinions score is obtained by calculating the individual responses to the question on the extent to which women have access to affordable and quality childcare services in practice. The experts' responses are aggregated into the question score at the economy level, taking the median value of all responses given to that question. The childcare expert opinions score is then equal to the question score and scaled to 100. More details on calculations and the scoring methodology are available at:

<https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/sites/wbl/documents/2024/WBL2024-Data-Notes.pdf>

Within Sub-Saharan Africa, experts diverge on their perceptions. For example, experts are more optimistic in Burkina Faso, where they perceive that 75 percent of women have access to affordable and quality childcare services (figure 11). In Gabon, Malawi, and Mauritius, experts believe that only half of all women have such access. In Lesotho and São Tomé and Príncipe, experts tend to be least optimistic and perceive that no women have access to services at all. This finding suggests that according to the collected perceptions, a critical need for childcare remains inadequately addressed in practice.

FIGURE 11: CHILDCARE EXPERT OPINIONS SCORE (0-100) IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, BY ECONOMY


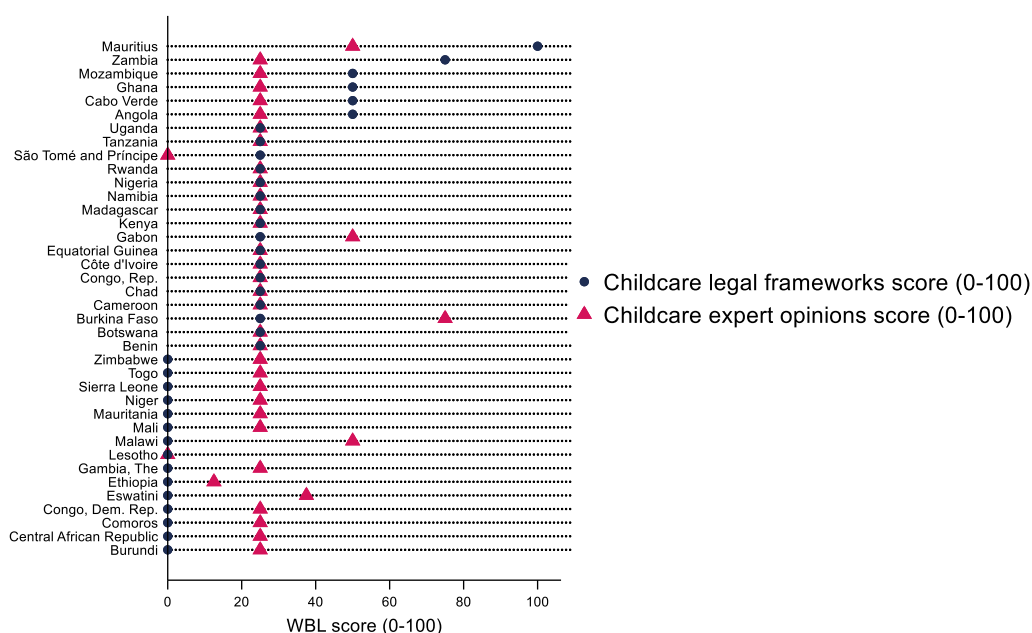
Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.



Childcare expert opinions and legal frameworks do not always align directly. The average scores for expert opinions are lower than the legal frameworks scores across seven economies, including Angola, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Mauritius, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Zambia (figure 12). This result suggests not only a less favorable view of women’s ability to access affordable and quality childcare in practice (than what the laws indicate) but also sheds some light on weak implementation of childcare laws.

In 16 economies, expert opinions scores are higher than the legal frameworks scores, indicating a more favorable view of women’s ability to access affordable and quality childcare in practice than what the laws suggest. In 14 economies, expert opinions align with the legal frameworks scores underscoring that the laws typically realize women’s rights in practice. This could indicate that as the laws improve and are properly implemented, the perceptions of experts may also improve. In Lesotho, both scores align and remain zero.

FIGURE 12: EXPERTS’ OPINIONS OF WOMEN’S ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE IN PRACTICE DO NOT ALWAYS ALIGN WITH WHAT THE LAWS SUGGEST



Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Note: The economies are sorted by the legal framework score average, from highest to lowest. The sample size is restricted to 38 economies for which expert opinions data is available. Eritrea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, and Sudan were excluded due to the missing data on expert opinion responses.

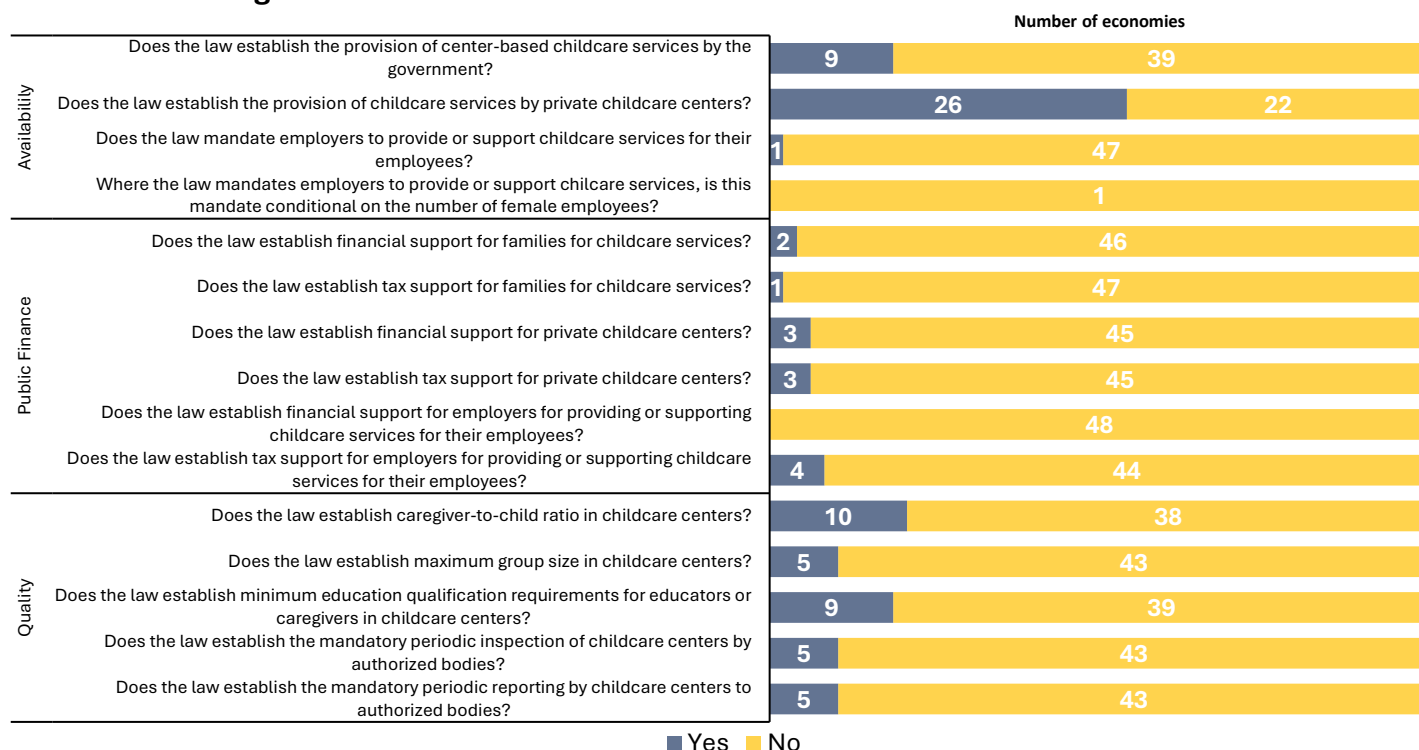


The data collected on opinions may reflect existing social norms as well as substantial differences in the institutional capacity of the states to address childcare provision (Bonoli and Reber, 2009). Further exploration of the reasons behind the differences between the expert opinions and the legal frameworks scores could consider unique regional dynamics, social and cultural norms, or economy-specific advancements contributing to this discrepancy. Future research will explore the link between laws and social norms.

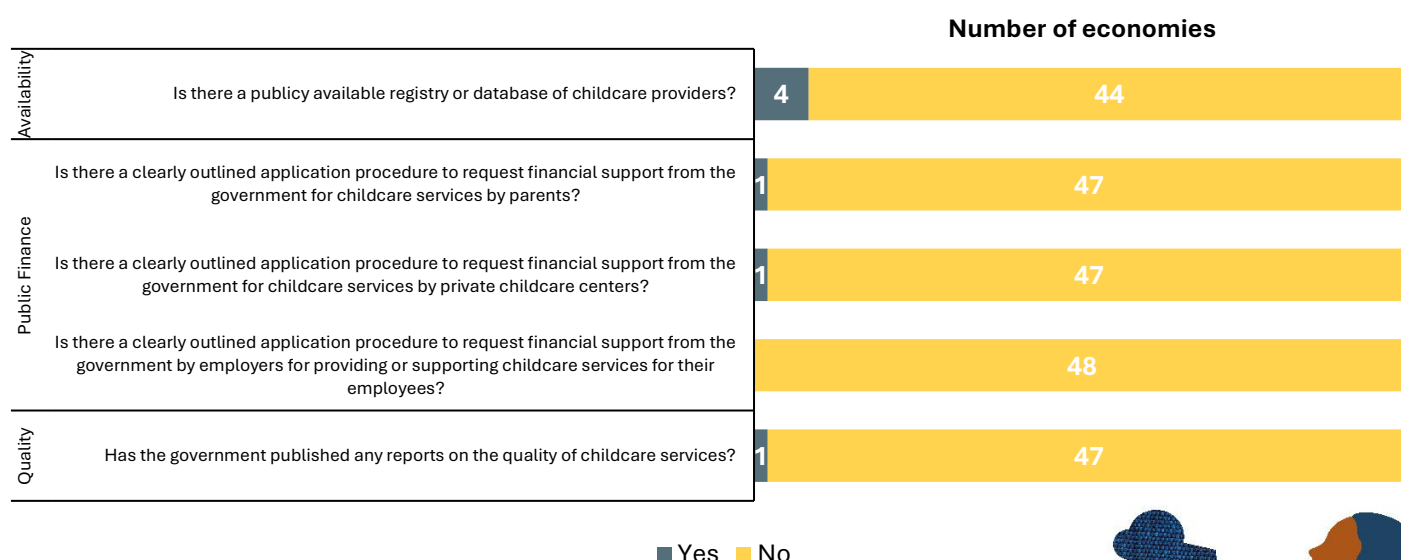


ANNEX: REGIONAL TRENDS BY DATA POINT

Childcare legal frameworks

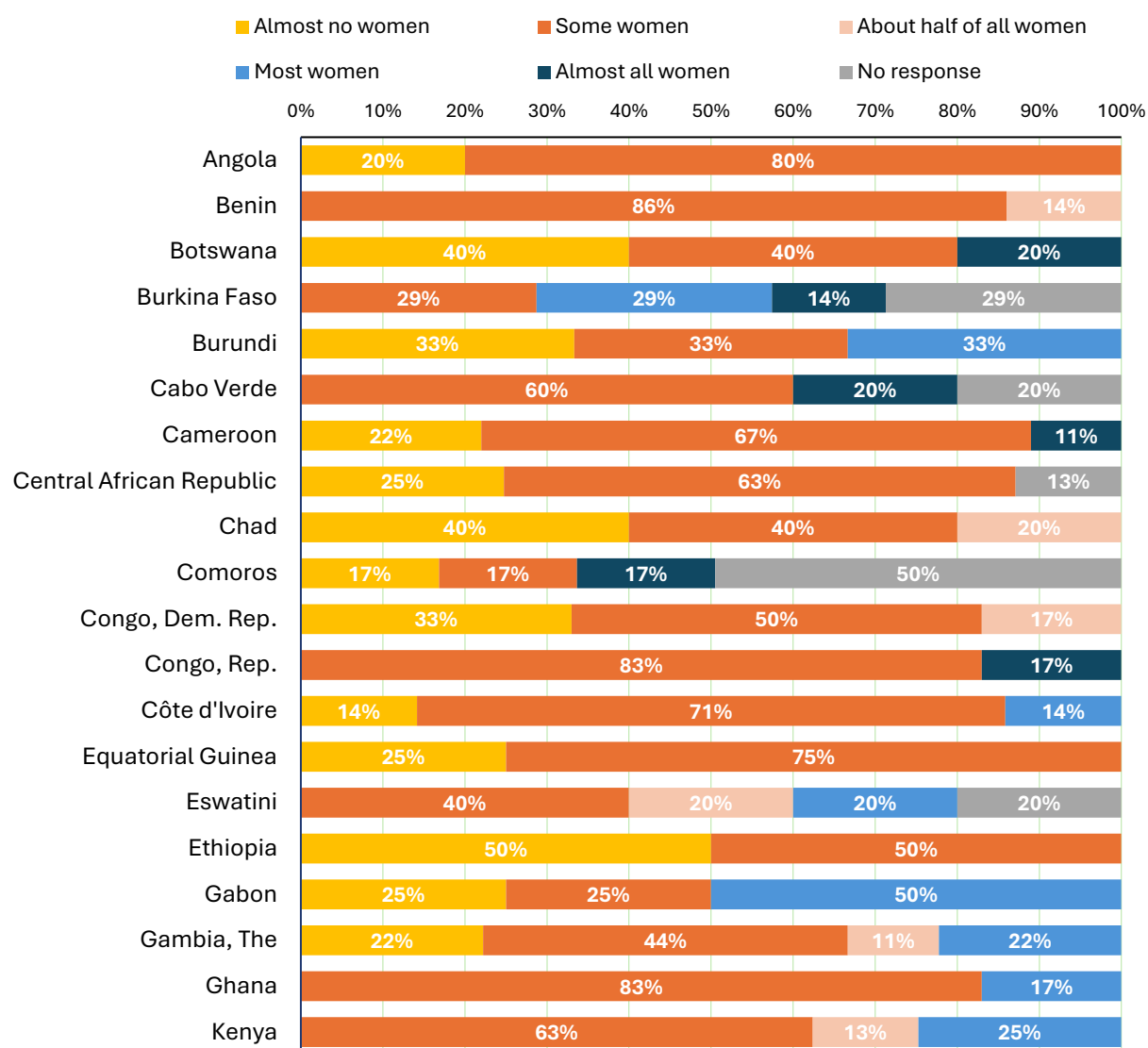


Childcare supportive frameworks



Distribution of expert opinion responses by economy

In practice, do women have access to affordable and quality childcare services?



Source: Women, Business and the Law 2024.



DATA COLLECTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Data were collected in 48 economies in Sub-Saharan Africa: Angola; Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cabo Verde; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Chad; Comoros; The Democratic Republic of Congo; The Republic of Congo; Côte d'Ivoire; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Eswatini; Ethiopia; Gabon; The Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Kenya; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mozambique; Namibia; Niger; Nigeria; Rwanda; São Tomé and Príncipe; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Somalia; South Africa; South Sudan; Sudan; Tanzania; Togo; Uganda; Zambia; Zimbabwe. The data is current as of October 1, 2023.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document aims to improve the understanding of the legal and supportive policy instruments around the availability, public finance, and quality of childcare services for children below 3 years of age in Sub-Saharan Africa. It also seeks to build law awareness and identify areas for reforms and other regulatory interventions. Support for the Women, Business and the Law childcare regional profiles series is provided by the World Bank's Invest in Childcare Initiative. The team is grateful for peer-review provided by Amanda Devercelli, Frances Mary Beaton-Day, Melissa Diane Kelly, Emma Ward Richardson Cameron, and Rana Yacoub.

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