

## INTRODUCTION

This policy brief outlines and discusses the situation regarding the service preferences and utilization profile of diabetes patients in Kosovo. The brief provides some key facts concerning the current state of affairs and some ideas for how to deal with such issues in the future.

In a survey performed by Solidar Suisse in 2012, it was confirmed that only 6.9% of households rely exclusively on public health care services.

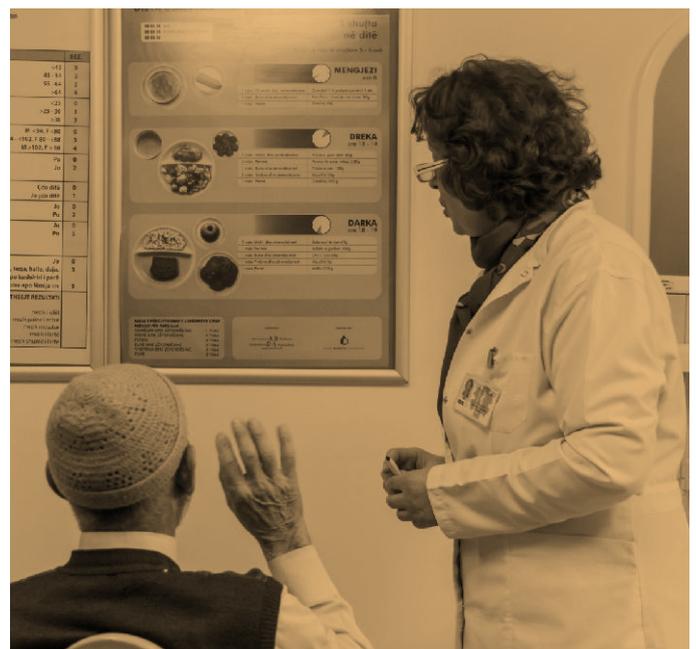
Twenty-six percent use public services to a certain degree, whereas 50% do not rely on public health services at all. These findings were an indication that people are depending more and more on the private sector for health care.

This policy brief seeks to examine the utilization and service preference profiles of patients with diabetes in Kosovo.

In particular, we tried to understand the level of satisfaction of patients with public and private health care services, issues related to access to services, trust and utilization of services from public and private providers, the degree of utilization of services outside of country, and preferences for future health system priorities, as well as information on diabetes association activities.

The main aim of the KOSANA Project is improvement of the health and social security of the population of Kosovo through support of active participation by civil society in the development and implementation of a health insurance system in the country.

The KOSANA Project empowers the CSO-s representing citizens and patients to create advocacy positions based on facts, information, and the needs of the people. This process requires a long-term effort and commitment by organizations that represent citizens' interests.



## KEY FINDINGS

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Several interesting facts were revealed by a survey performed in 2013 with the support of the KOSANA Project and are listed below.

**1.** Almost half (47.8%) of patients with diabetes were quite satisfied with the public health services, while 30.4% of patients were very satisfied. The rest of the patients (21.5%) were not satisfied with the public health services. On the other hand, diabetic patients seemed to be generally less satisfied with the health services provided in the private sector.

Only 9.1% of patients were very satisfied with the private health services, and only 35.9% were somewhat satisfied with these services. The remaining patients (54.9%) were either not satisfied with the services in the private sector or did not know about them.

**2.** 80% of respondents (patients) thought that they and their families had easy access to public health services, while only 19.7% percent thought the opposite. Also, the proportion of

patients who trusted the public health services more than the private health services was surprisingly high (71.4%).

This trust in the public health system seems to be further supported by the fact that approximately 31.9% of diabetic patients and their families used only the public health system, and another 50% had at least some usage of public health services among themselves and their families. On the other hand, the usage of private health services among diabetic patients was much lower; only 2% used private services exclusively.

**3.** 4.3% of the respondents and their families went abroad for health services because they believe there are no good services in Kosovo. 11.9% said that this statement was somewhat true, 10.9% said that it was somewhat false, and 71% said that it was false.

**4.** Around 20% of patients used only free public health services due to the inability to



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pay. This was somewhat the case for an additional 34%. The rest of the diabetic patients (44.3%) reported that it was not true that they used only free public services due to the inability to pay.

**5.** Regarding health insurance, only 4.6% of the patients confirmed without a doubt that they were insured and that the costs of their health services were covered by their health insurance. This was somewhat the case for an additional 4.6%, while a striking 89.4% of diabetic patients were not insured.

**6.** Most of the diabetic patients (57%) declared that they were not informed about the activities of the diabetes association in Kosovo, and 65.3% of them said that they have definitely not benefited from the services of the association, such as getting information and education, receiving services or free therapy, etc.

**7.** 36.5% of patients reported that they possessed sufficient knowledge about diabetes and diet received from health professionals,

while 36.2% of them said that this was somewhat the case, 13.4% said that it was somewhat false, and 12.2% said that it was false.

On the other hand, 25.6% of patients reported having sufficient information about diabetes received from other sources: 34.7% of them said that this was somewhat true, 13.7% said that it was somewhat false, and 23% said that it was false.

**8.** 97% of patients who did not take tablets had heard about them, and 95% of diabetics who had not taken insulin had heard about it. The areas where diabetics might need more education are the topics of diet and physical exercise. Only about 70% to 75% of patients who did not practice diets and physical exercise (as prescribed for diabetics) had heard about these therapies.



## COMPARISON WITH THE GENERAL POPULATION

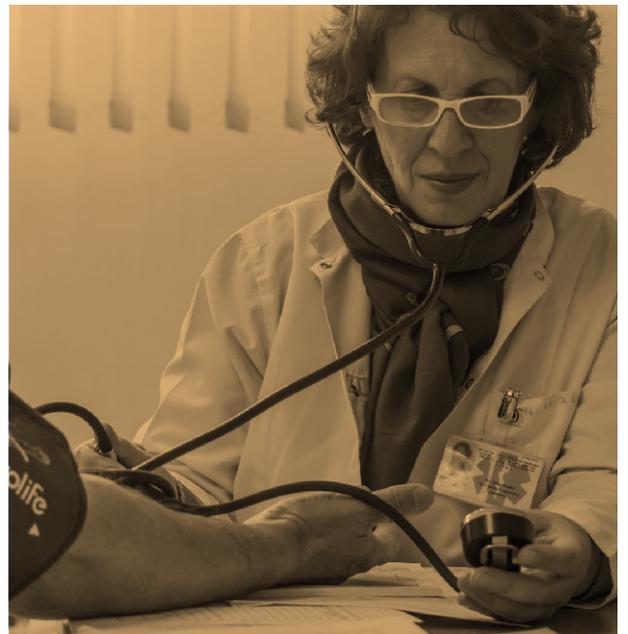
A comparison between diabetic patients and the general population is necessary to determine where there are differences and similarities between the two groups. Here are some of the key findings:

1. In general, patients with diabetes seemed to be significantly more satisfied with the public health services compared to the general population.
2. When it comes to private health services, there was no significant difference between the satisfaction of patients with diabetes and the general population.
3. More patients with diabetes seemed to think that access to the public health services was easy when compared to the general population, but this is barely significant.
4. Diabetic patients tended to trust the public health system more than the general population did.
5. There tended to be more diabetic patients who used public health services exclusively, compared to the general population.
6. Private hospitals and private clinics tended to be used more by the general population than by diabetic patients.
7. Diabetic patients were slightly more likely to go abroad for health services due to a perception of insufficient high-quality services in Kosovo than the general population.
8. Health insurance coverage among diabetic patients and the general population was largely the same.

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, satisfaction with services among diabetic patients is high when compared to the overall population, but there are still strong indications that the availability of services for this patient group is a concern.

The government should address this in multiple ways, and introduction of health insurance will not be enough. The deficiencies in the delivery of services indicate that this is the main issue that will need to be addressed to provide comprehensive care for patients with diabetes. This involves the training of more specialists, greater sub-specialization among specialists, the advancement of service provision, and building up the infrastructure necessary to provide support for advanced service provision.



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