



AZERBAIJAN

Fact sheet

Total population (2008)	8 629 900¹
Child population, 0-18 (2008)	3 011 800
Children as proportion of total population	35%
Children in residential care, absolute number (2008)	14 389
Children in residential care, rates per 100,000 children (2007)	655
Children in residential care, percentage of total child population	0.5%
Proportion of infants below 3 in residential care (2007)	0.8%
Children in guardianship families, absolute number (2007)	6,700
Adoption, absolute number (2007)	972

Trends in residential care

Azerbaijan has a low and stable number of children officially entering formal care² each year. The number of children in institutions seems to be rather high (655 per 100,000 of child population in 2007), although there is a visible declining trend since 2007 when the government started a child care reform.

According to the assessment, out of 14,389 children in institutions in total, only 4,055 (28%) are residing there (children's homes, orphanages, for juvenile delinquents, infant homes, and for children with severe mental disability), the rest are only getting education, spending either every night or every weekend at home (general boarding schools, institutions for children with mental and physical disabilities, with speech problems, and sanatoriums). The following data refers to those permanently residing. 60% of children do have both biological parents, and only 2% are orphans. Main reasons for institutional placement are poverty, a need for special education and single parenthood. Majority of children belong to the medium age group between 7 and 16 years of age. There is a significant disparity between boys and girls: 73%:27%. 6.4% (256) of children are abandoned by parents without official rejection document; such status violates their right to live in family environment and deprives of a chance to be adopted. In such cases the

¹ All data are from the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan.

² *Children in formal care* are those living outside their biological families or adoptive families (including institutions, guardianship and foster families). *Institutional (residential) care* refers to children residing in institutions (e.g. orphanages, children's homes, boarding schools, etc).

guardianship bodies have to initiate a judicial procedure on deprivation of parental rights in a timely manner in order to make children eligible for adoption. 32% of children are living in institutions in the area of Baku.

Alternative care

The proportion of children placed in family based care amounts to 28% and remains stable. The main forms of family based care of children without parental care are guardianship and adoption. There are also 2 SOS Children's Villages.

Family support services

There are 3 Family and Children Support Centres which are funded by the public budget. There is also 1 Day Care Centre for children from low-income families and children who deprived from parental care and live with extended families. There are 7 Rehabilitation Centres for children with disabilities which are operated by the NGO's.

The profession of social workers have been introduced as part of child protection mechanism. There are Retraining Courses at the Teachers Institute and Social Work Bachelor's and Master's Degree level education at the Baku State University.

Main reform news

Azerbaijan adopted a Master Plan on Transformation of Child Care Institution as a guideline for the implementation of the State Programme on Deinstitutionalisation and Alternative Care (2006-2015), adopted by the President of the Republic. Tasks stemming from this document will be introduced in each institution's annual plans and will be regularly followed up. The MP is based on in-depth assessment of all residential institutions carried out in 2008, conducted under the leadership of the Ministry of Education. A database of all children in institutions was created. Based on the data assessment of the situation and established criteria, all the institutions are to be transformed within short-term, medium-term or long-term period. The institutions with children with severe disabilities and the ones where significant number of children, which can not be reintegrated to families will have to maintain smaller residential care units and add other services such as day care, rehabilitation and outreach services, small group homes (for youth leaving care and children with severe disabilities). There will be a freeze on new entrants, new posts and capital investments in institutions scheduled for the first wave of reform, which is ongoing. Within 1 year it is expected to ban opening of new residential institutions, except small group homes; to transform residential institutions without permanently living children into regular schools having day care service; and to introduce day care as a specific service within or outside residential institutions. In 2009, the Government with UNICEF's support began piloting implementation of the plan in 7 institutions and surroundings communities.