

Birth Registration for  
Every Child by 2030:  
**Are we on track?**

unicef   
for every child



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Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring,  
December 2019

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UNICEF  
Data and Analytics Section  
Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring  
3 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017, USA  
Email: [data@unicef.org](mailto:data@unicef.org)  
Website: [data.unicef.org](http://data.unicef.org)

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Valuable insights were received from Cornelius Williams, Kirsten Di Martino and Erin Elzo.

Editing: Lois Jensen

Original design concept: Erika Porth

Final design and layout: Cecilia Silva Venturini

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REPUBLIQUE BURUNDI  
LE MINISTRE DE L'INTERIEUR  
DE LA FORMATION PATRIOTIQUE ET  
DU DEVELOPPEMENT LOCAL  
PROVINCE DE *Kigali*  
COMMUNE *Kigali*  
ACTE N° *58*  
VOLUME N° *208* /2009  
EXTRAIT D'ACTE DE NAISSANCE  
*du village de Buta, le 18 Sept 2009*  
*à 18 Septembre 2009 Kigali-Burundi*  
*MIRIAM KIRAZA KAZIMIRI*  
*28 ans, Burundaise*  
*Chrétienne*  
*MIRIAM CHRISTIANE*  
*26 ans, Burundaise*  
*Cultivatrice*  
*Kigali-Burundi*  
*Burundaise*  
MARIAGE CERTIFIÉ CONFORMÉ  
DATE *Kigali-Burundi 18/09/2009*  
SIGNATURE *[Signature]*  
N. *KIRAZA-GYAKO*





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# 1

## Birth registration and sustainable development

Society first acknowledges a child's existence and identity through birth registration. The right to be recognized as a person before the law is a critical step in ensuring lifelong protection and is a prerequisite for exercising all other rights.

A birth certificate is proof of that legal identity, and is the basis upon which children can establish a nationality, avoid the risk of statelessness and seek protection from violence and exploitation. For example, proof of age is needed to help prevent child labour, child marriage and underage recruitment into the armed forces. A birth certificate may also be required to access social service systems, including health, education and justice.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015<sup>1</sup> placed birth registration firmly on the international development agenda. It included a dedicated target (16.9) under Goal 16: provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030. Complementing this is target 17.9, which calls for support in building the statistical capacity needed for strong national civil registration systems. Such systems produce vital statistics, including those on birth registration, which are foundational for achieving sustained human and economic development.

In accordance with the SDGs, UNICEF seeks to fulfil the promise of universal birth registration, and a legal identity for every child, by 2030.

One in four children under age 5 (166 million), on average, are not registered. And even when they are, they may not have proof of registration. An estimated 237 million children under age 5 worldwide are currently without a birth certificate. The reasons are all too common: a lack of resources and investment in accurate and comprehensive civil registration systems, coupled with barriers in accessing birth registration services, along with policy, regulatory and institutional obstacles.

The last two decades have seen a rise in birth registration levels globally, with about 3 in 4 children under age 5 registered today compared to 6 in 10 around 2000. However, progress has been uneven and additional investments will be needed to achieve universal birth

registration. The rate of progress in one in three countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa, will need to accelerate if they are to meet the SDG target by 2030.

That said, simply raising birth registration levels is not enough. Improvements are also needed to enhance the quality of civil registration systems to achieve universal coverage along with continuity, confidentiality and regular dissemination of data.<sup>2</sup> Civil registration records must be continuously maintained so they can be easily retrieved by individuals. Lapses in registration often mean that certificates, including birth certificates, are not issued by civil registration authorities. This, in turn, can deprive children of the opportunity to exercise their rights. At the same time, the registration process itself must be easily available and accessible to all.

UNICEF recommends five specific actions to fulfil the promise of birth registration for every child (see page 35).

### The scope of this report

This publication presents the latest available country data and global and regional estimates of the number of unregistered children. It also assesses progress over time and presents evidence for the amount of effort that will be needed – at both global and regional levels – to achieve universal birth registration by 2030.

Since birth registration ideally takes place immediately after birth, estimates of the number of unregistered children are provided for both those under 5 years of age and under 1 year of age. Estimates are also provided for the number of children and infants without birth certificates.

The publication draws from some 400 data sources spanning a period of nearly 20 years. Its findings are intended to inform the development of related policies and programmes. The publication also seeks to raise awareness of the need to strengthen civil registration systems as the most effective strategy to achieve universal birth registration and to ensure that every child is given a legal identity from birth.





## Legal identity

is operationally defined as the basic characteristics that comprise an individual's identity, including name, sex and date of birth.<sup>3</sup>

The primary vehicle for obtaining a legal identity is through the birth registration process.



## Birth registration

is the official recording of the occurrence and characteristics of a birth by the civil registrar within the civil registry, in accordance with the legal requirements of a country.

This establishes the existence of a person under the law and provides legal proof of his or her identity.<sup>4</sup>



## Birth certificate

is a vital record, issued by the civil registrar, that documents the birth of a child.

Because it is a certified extract from the birth registration record, it proves that registration has occurred – making this document the first, and often only, proof of legal identity, particularly for children.<sup>5</sup>



Birth certificates are often required to access health care, education and other social services. In Viet Nam, for instance, birth certificates are required for enrolment in both preschool and primary school.<sup>6</sup> Having legal identification is also critical in protecting children from violence and exploitation. Proof of age can be used to prevent child labour (through the enforcement of minimum age of employment laws), recruitment into the armed forces, prosecution as an adult in criminal proceedings and child marriage. Moreover, birth certification is legal proof of one's place of birth and family ties. Thus, it is necessary for establishing a nationality and preventing the risk of statelessness. Later in life, birth certificates may be required to obtain social assistance or a job in the formal sector, to buy or inherit property, and to vote.

## Civil registrars

are the officials authorized by law to carry out the registration of vital events, including births, within a well-defined area (such as a country, district or municipality) and for recording and reporting information on those vital events for legal and statistical purposes.<sup>7</sup>





## The process of birth registration



# Milestones in advancing universal birth registration

1948

The right to be recognized as a person before the law and to be registered at birth is acknowledged in nearly every major human rights instrument.

2006

**December 1948**

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>9</sup>**

**Article 6.** Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

**December 1966**

**International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>10</sup>**

**Article 24.**  
2. Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name.  
3. Every child has the right to acquire a nationality.

**May 2002**

**General Assembly resolution 'A World Fit for Children'**

Reaffirms governments' commitment to ensure the registration of all children at birth.<sup>13</sup>

**September 2006**

The Committee on the Rights of the Child addresses the issue of birth registration and formulates standards in its General Comment No. 7 on implementing child rights in early childhood.<sup>15</sup>

**November 1959**

**Declaration of the Rights of the Child<sup>9</sup>**

**Principle 3.** The child shall be entitled from his birth to a name and a nationality.

**December 1990**

**International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families<sup>12</sup>**

**Article 29.** Each child of a migrant worker shall have the right to a name, to registration of birth and to a nationality.

**December 2006**

**The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol<sup>16</sup>**

**Article 18.**  
2. Children with disabilities shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by their parents.

**November 1989**

**Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>11</sup>**

**Article 7.**  
1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

**Article 8.**  
1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name, and family relations, as recognized by law, without unlawful interference.  
2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to speedily re-establishing his or her identity.

**September 2004**

**UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement<sup>14</sup>**

**Principle 20.**  
1. Every human being has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.  
2. To give effect to this right for internally displaced persons, the authorities concerned shall issue to them all documents necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of their legal rights, such as passports, personal identification documents, birth certificates and marriage certificates. In particular, the authorities shall facilitate the issuance of new documents or the replacement of documents lost in the course of displacement, without imposing unreasonable conditions, such as requiring the return to one's area of habitual residence in order to obtain these or other required documents.



### August 2007

First Latin American Regional Conference on Birth Registration and the Right to Identity was held in Asuncion, Paraguay, inspiring work to improve civil registration in other regions.

### January 2013

The regional strategic plan was endorsed by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics at its third session<sup>18</sup> and subsequently supported in ESCAP resolution 69/15 adopted in March 2013, urging that actions by countries and development partners are aligned with the plan's eight outcomes.<sup>19</sup>

### September 2015

The Sustainable Development Goals are adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, placing birth registration on the international development agenda with the inclusion of a dedicated target under Goal 16: "the aim of providing legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030."<sup>22</sup>

### June 2019

Representatives of the LIEG Secretariat presented the UN Legal Identity Agenda to an audience of more than 600 participants – made up of representatives from African governments, development agencies and industry – at the Fifth Annual ID4Africa Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.

### August 2010

First Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was attended by over 40 ministers from the continent and resulted in a declaration and plan of action.

### 2014

Launch of the World Bank's Identification for Development (ID4D) platform and initiative that seek to enable all people to access services and rights through digital identification systems.

### July 2018

United Nations Member States finalized the text of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration that includes as one of its objectives to "ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation" and commits to "...ensure, through appropriate measures, that migrants are issued adequate documentation and civil registry documents, such as birth, marriage and death certificates..."<sup>23</sup>

### December 2012

In response to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) resolution 67/12,<sup>17</sup> a regional strategic plan was drafted and a consensus reached at the Make Every Life Count High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, hosted by ESCAP and the World Health Organization.

### November 2014

The Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade (2015-2024) was proclaimed at the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific held in Bangkok, Thailand and subsequently declared by ESCAP in resolution 71/14 in 2015.<sup>20</sup> The ministerial meeting also culminated in the adoption of a ministerial declaration to 'Get Every One in the Picture', committing governments in the region to focus efforts on improving civil registration and vital statistics systems.<sup>21</sup>

### September 2018

Establishment of the time-bound inter-agency UN Legal Identity Expert Group (LIEG) in support of the UN Legal Identity Agenda 2020-2030. The agenda was formulated in response to a request by the United Nations Secretary-General to UN agencies to develop a common approach – in collaboration with the World Bank Group – to the broader issue of civil registration and legal identity in support of the SDG promise to leave no one behind. The expert group is taking a unified approach to legal identity, starting from birth, across the UN system. It is also providing support to UN Member States to strengthen national civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems based on international standards and good practices.



# 2

## Progress and challenges in data availability and quality



The SDG target of a legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030 is measured by indicator 16.9.1: the proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority. The primary sources for such data are vital statistics drawn from civil registration systems, national censuses and household surveys, including those implemented as part of international survey programmes such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

Functioning civil registration systems are the main vehicles through which a legal identity for all – and SDG target 16.9 – can be achieved. Civil registration systems that are operating effectively compile vital statistics that are used to compare the estimated total number of births in a country with the absolute number of registered births during a given period. However, the systematic recording of births in many countries remains a serious challenge, highlighting the urgent need to improve and strengthen civil registration and vital statistics.

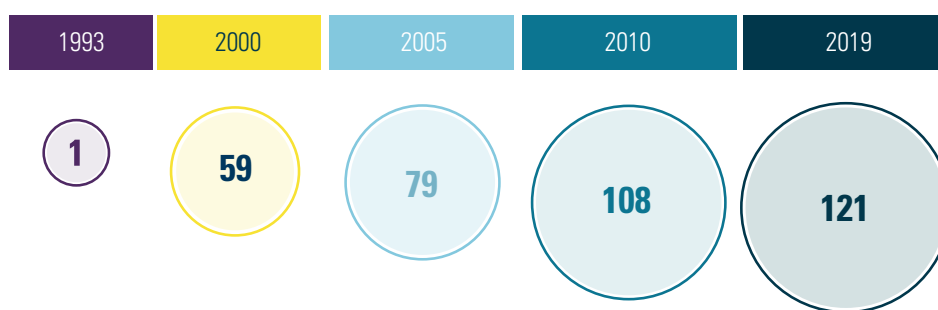
A recent UNICEF review of 14 countries found a wide range of progress in this area.<sup>24</sup> While most countries had strategic plans to improve civil registration systems, persistent gaps and challenges remained. They included: insufficient legal frameworks to support the production of vital statistics, prohibitive fees for registration, complex and cumbersome processes for late registration, limited resources (both financial and human), underdeveloped quality assurance mechanisms, persistent barriers to access, and lack of completeness of records, limiting the accuracy and reliability of vital statistics.

While data coverage has improved over time, this has largely been the result of investment in collecting data on birth registration in low- and middle-income countries through household surveys. In fact, in the absence of reliable administrative records, household surveys have become a key source of data to monitor levels and trends in birth registration.



Over the last two and a half decades, the number of countries with household survey data on birth registration has risen dramatically – to over 120

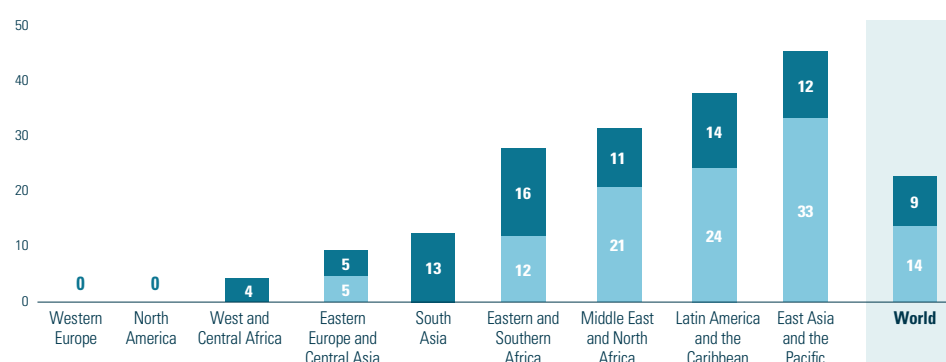
FIGURE 1. Cumulative number of countries with household survey data on birth registration



Close to 1 in 4 countries lack sufficient data to monitor SDG target 16.9

FIGURE 2. Proportion of countries with no or insufficient trend data on birth registration, by region

■ No data  
■ Insufficient trend data



The timeliness of birth registration data varies dramatically. In some instances, the latest source of globally comparable data for a country dates back to 2006, while in others, it is as recent as 2018. Available data indicate the level of birth registration at the time of collection and do not necessarily reflect the current situation. This is particularly relevant in countries affected by recent crises or conflicts. In addition, the results of any recent initiatives, campaigns or investments to improve levels of birth registration may not be reflected in available figures.

It is also important to note that figures obtained through surveys and censuses are highly sensitive to the way in which questions are formulated. This is especially true of questions regarding the civil authorities in charge of recording births. Respondents may not always be clear on who these authorities are and may misinterpret notifying a church or village chief of a birth as formal registration. Household surveys generally customize questionnaires by naming the specific national authority responsible for registration. But even then, confusion about the birth registration process may remain.

Similarly, questions regarding the possession of a birth certificate may also be the source of erroneous data,

since respondents may confuse a birth certificate with a health or vaccination card or some other document. To minimize the risk of misreporting, in some household surveys, interviewers who administer the questionnaire ask respondents to show the birth certificate. For these reasons, the data on registration and possession of birth certificates obtained via caregiver reports need to be interpreted with a degree of caution.

Finally, national statistics can mask gaps in levels of birth registration among children who are highly vulnerable. They can include children living outside of households, undocumented nationals, refugees and migrants or other groups who are at particular risk of statelessness and of being left behind in the birth registration process. This is often the case in countries plagued by ongoing and protracted crises and neighbouring countries that are dealing with refugees and migrants fleeing conflict and instability. Algeria, for instance, has achieved nearly universal birth registration among children under 5 at the national level, according to the latest available data. But this does not reflect the situation of roughly 21,000 Sahrawi refugee children under age 5 living in camps in the province of Tindouf.<sup>25</sup>







# 3

## Where we stand today

# Under-5 Registration

Globally, the births of 166 million children under age 5 have never been recorded



One in four children under age 5 do not officially exist

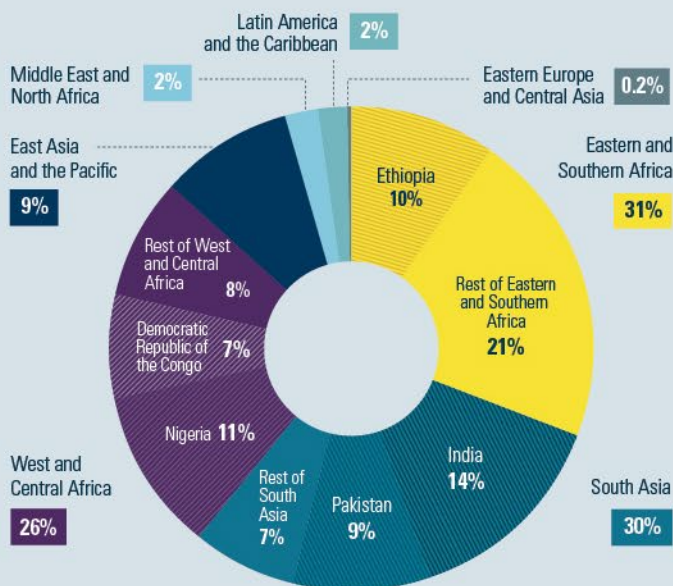
**FIGURE 3.** Number of children under age 5 whose births are not registered, by region



Note: Figures have been rounded. Refer to the technical annex for footnotes.

Of these 166 million children, half live in just five countries: India, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

**FIGURE 4.** Percentage distribution of children under age 5 whose births are not registered



Notes: Figures have been rounded. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.

## Regional averages

North America

100%



Latin America and the Caribbean

94%

High levels of birth registration are found even in some of the world's poorest countries

**FIGURE 6.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered and 2018 gross national income (GNI) per capita in US\$ based on the Atlas method, in countries with available data

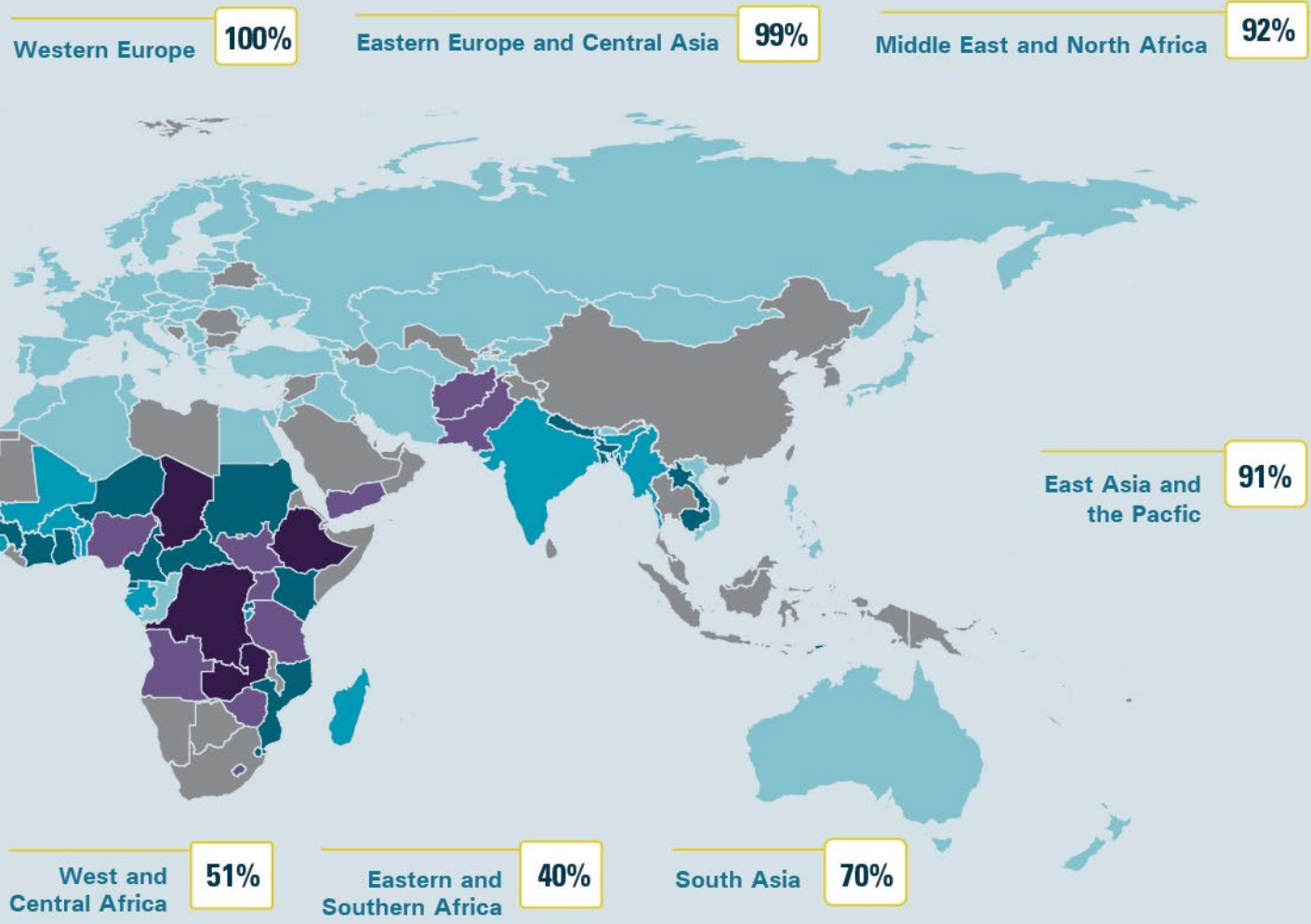




**FIGURE 5.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered



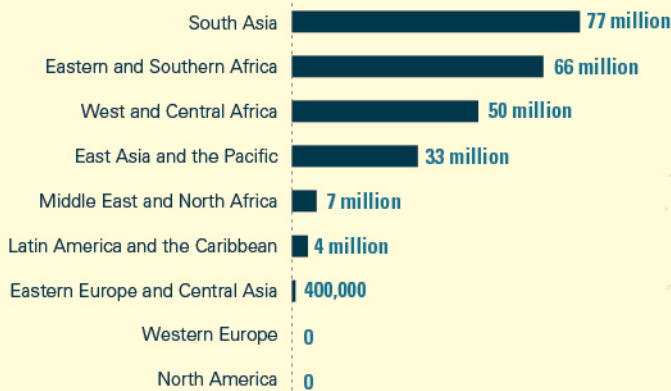
Note: Refer to the technical annex for map disclaimer and footnotes on country data.



Notes: Each dot represents a country. Data on gross national income are from World Bank National Accounts data and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) National Accounts data files, available at <data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD>.

Even if children are registered, many lack proof: 237 million children under age 5 (or slightly more than 1 in 3) do not have a birth certificate

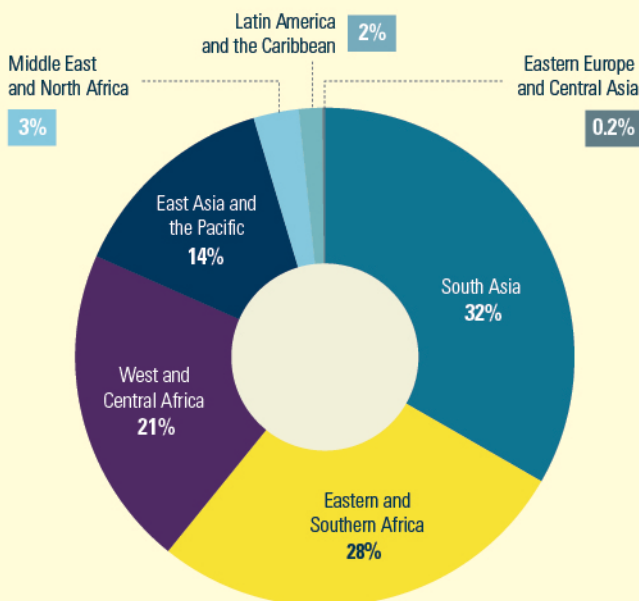
**FIGURE 7.** Number of children under age 5 without a birth certificate, by region



Note: Figures have been rounded. Refer to the technical annex for footnotes.

South Asia is home to the largest share of children under age 5 without a birth certificate

**FIGURE 8.** Percentage distribution of children under age 5 without a birth certificate



Notes: Figures have been rounded. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population except in East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, where population coverage is below 50 per cent.

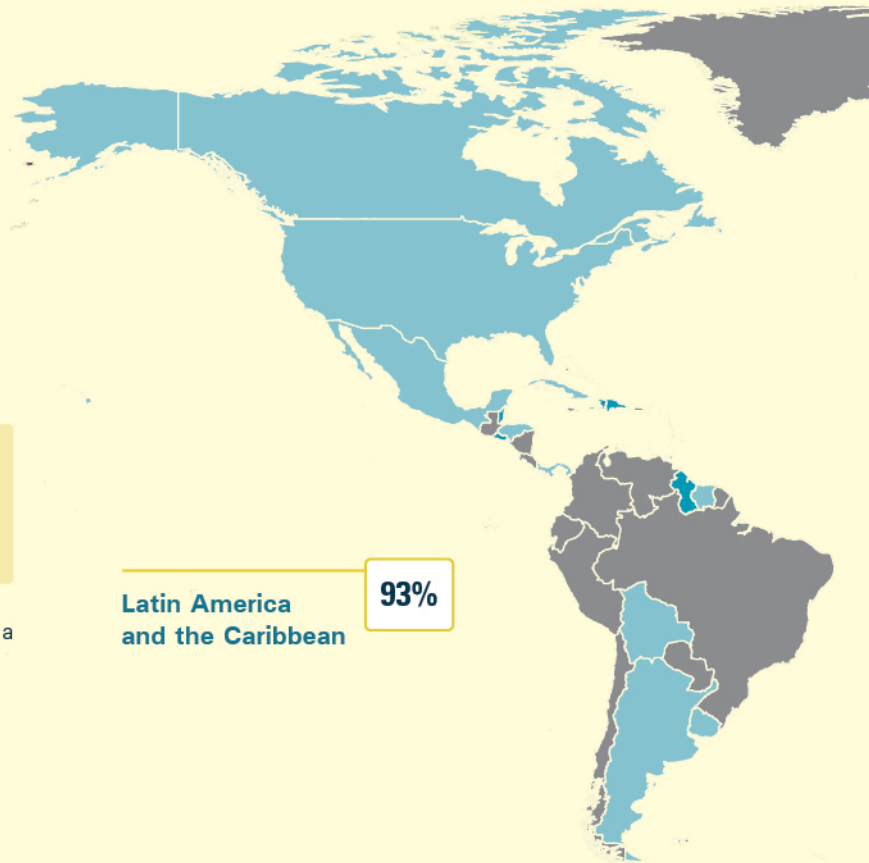


Obtaining a birth certificate is especially challenging in parts of Africa and Asia

## Regional averages

North America

100%



Latin America and the Caribbean

93%

## A critical link: Making the connection between birth registration and certification

A birth certificate, obtained once a birth has been registered, provides children with proof of legal identity. It is considered a 'breeder document' necessary for applying for other documents, including a passport. Providing children with a birth certificate immediately after birth, rather than later in life, is essential to ensuring that they can claim their rights and access services.

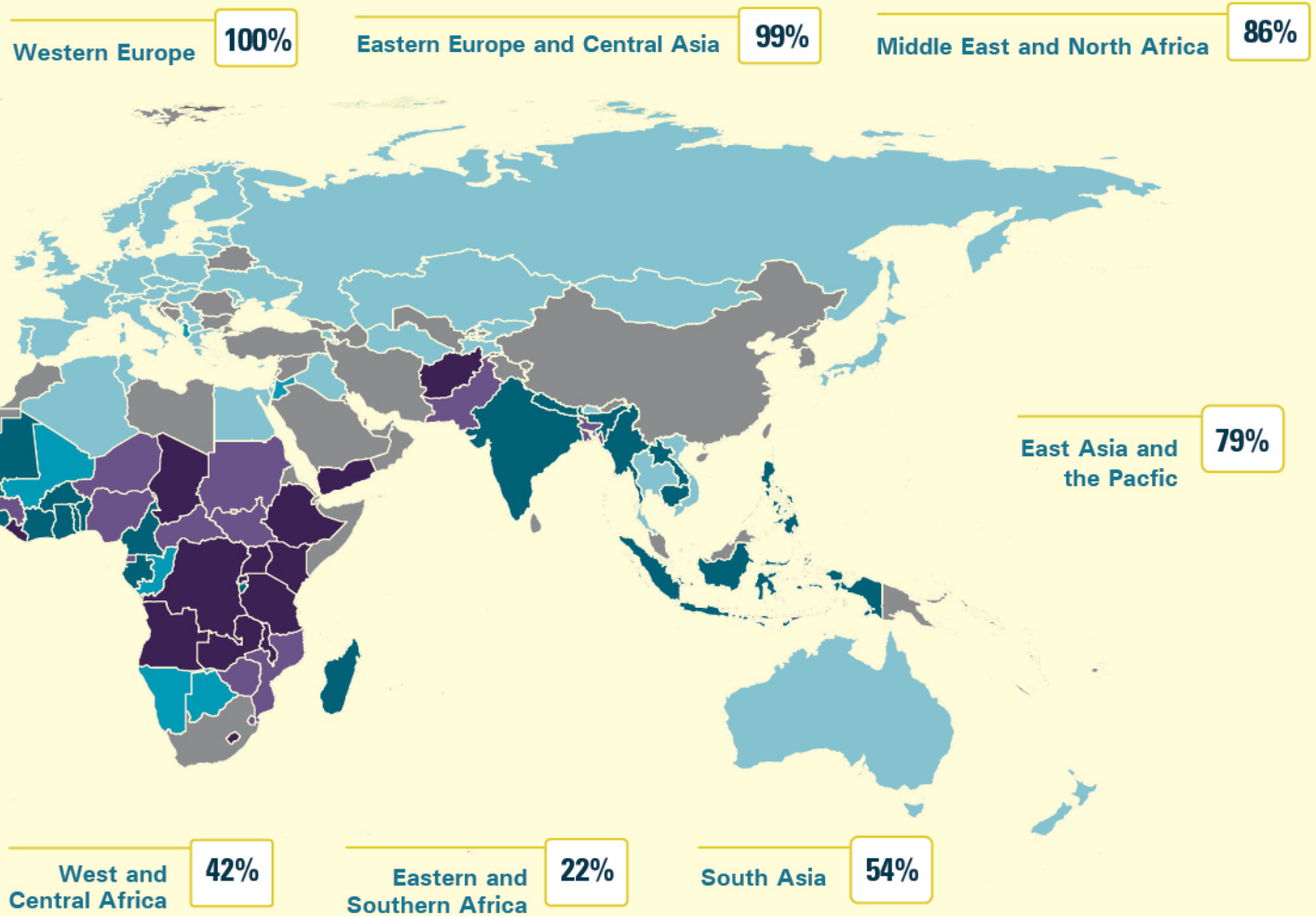
Nevertheless, the data show a large gap between the number of children whose births are reported as registered and those who actually have a birth certificate. Of the roughly 508 million children under age 5 who are registered worldwide, about 70 million lack proof of registration in the form of a birth certificate. Large disparities are found across regions. For instance, in Eastern and Southern Africa, only about half of registered children have a birth certificate.



**FIGURE 9.** Percentage of children under age 5 with a birth certificate

Less than 25%
  25% – 50%
  51% – 75%
  76% – 90%
  Above 90%
  Comparable data on birth registration not available in UNICEF global database

Note: Refer to the technical annex for map disclaimer and footnotes on country data.

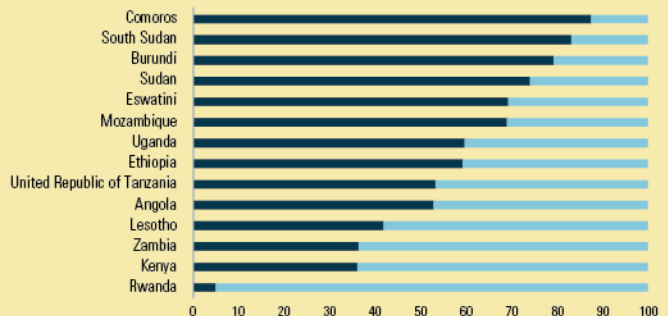


The reasons behind this are easily surmised, since the fees required to obtain a copy of a birth certificate are prohibitive in some countries. In other cases, birth certificates are not issued and no proof of registration is available to families. Finally, in some contexts, birth certificates are issued weeks or even months after registration, but are never collected by or distributed to families.

**In most countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, more than a quarter of registered children lack a birth certificate**

**FIGURE 10.** Percentage distribution of children under age 5 whose births are registered, by whether or not they have a birth certificate, for countries in Eastern and Southern Africa

Have a birth certificate
  Registered, no certificate



# Under-1 Registration

Of all infants worldwide, roughly 30 per cent (some 40 million) have not been registered

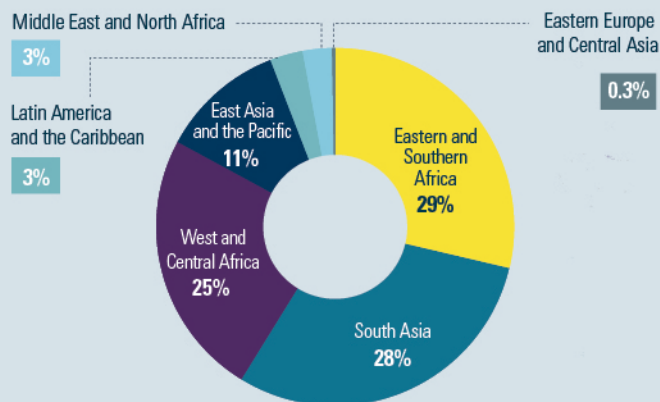
FIGURE 11. Number of children under age 1 whose births are not registered, by region



Note: Figures have been rounded. Refer to the technical annex for footnotes.

Almost 6 in 7 unregistered infants live in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia

FIGURE 12. Percentage distribution of children under age 1 whose births are not registered



Notes: Figures have been rounded. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.



The lowest levels of birth registration among infants are found in sub-Saharan Africa

## Regional averages

North America

100%

Latin America and the Caribbean

88%

## Time is of the essence: Birth registration levels among infants and older children

Most countries have legislation in place that specifies the time period allowed between the occurrence of a vital event (such as a birth) and the obligatory registration of that event. Registration should take place as soon as possible after a birth has occurred. Registering a birth within a reasonable time (and no later than 30 days after the event) minimizes the risk of misreporting details or failing to report the birth altogether.

In many countries, parents and caregivers may delay registration until it becomes necessary for children to access services or enrol in school. In contexts where this pattern is observed, it is critical to advocate for the importance of timely registration. On the other hand, where birth registration levels are higher among the youngest children, targeted investments or initiatives aimed at encouraging early and timely registration may have proven successful. Regardless of age, it is imperative to invest in efforts to ensure that all children have their births registered.

## More effort is needed to ensure timely birth registration

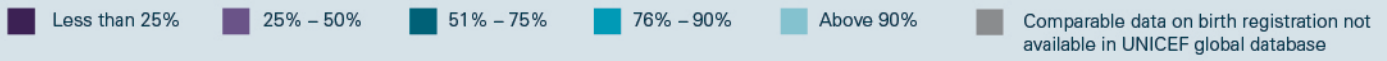
FIGURE 14. Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, by age in months

Age 0–11 months    Age 48–59 months

Notes: This chart includes only those countries where the difference in birth registration levels between children aged 0 to 11 months and 48 to 59 months is statistically significant out of the 107 countries with available data from 2010 or later that could be disaggregated by child age. For country footnotes, refer to the technical annex.



**FIGURE 13.** Percentage of children under age 1 whose births are registered

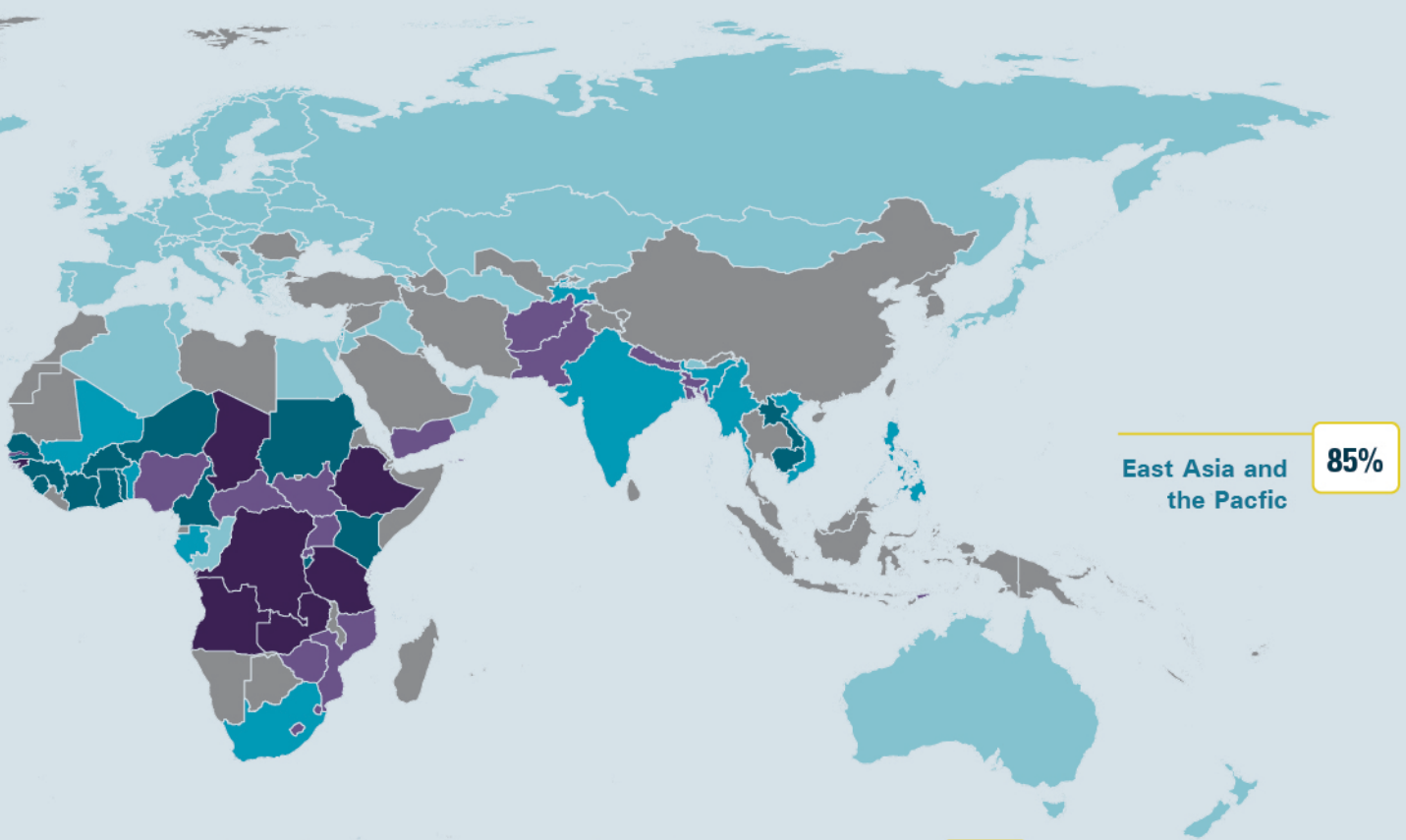


Note: Refer to the technical annex for map disclaimer and footnotes on country data.

**Western Europe 100%**

**Eastern Europe and Central Asia 98%**

**Middle East and North Africa 89%**



**East Asia and the Pacific 85%**

**West and Central Africa 45%**

**Eastern and Southern Africa 33%**

**South Asia 67%**



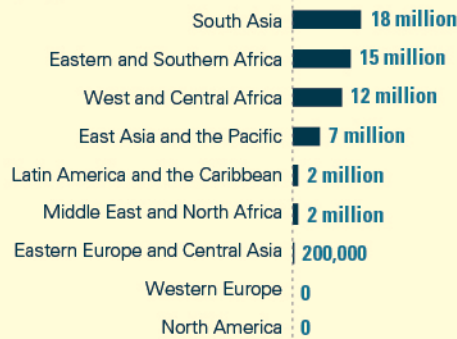
# Under-1

# Certificate

About 56 million infants do not possess a birth certificate

Four in 10 infants worldwide lack a birth certificate

FIGURE 15. Number of children under age 1 without a birth certificate, by region



Note: Figures have been rounded. Refer to the technical annex for footnotes.

## Regional averages

North America

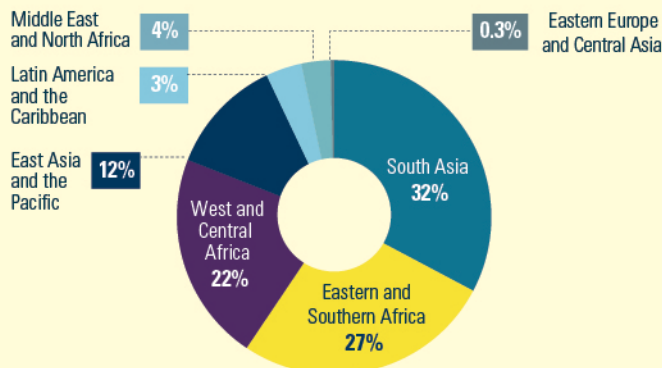
100%

Latin America and the Caribbean

80%

Practically all infants without a birth certificate live in either Asia or sub-Saharan Africa

FIGURE 16. Percentage distribution of children under age 1 without a birth certificate



Notes: Figures have been rounded. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population, except in the case of East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, where population coverage is below 50 per cent.

## The age disadvantage: Birth certification levels among infants and older children

In many countries, possession of a birth certificate is required to access health care, education and other social services. This means that parents and caregivers may delay the process of obtaining this important document until they enrol their child in school, for example, or apply for child benefits. Fees imposed for birth certification are also likely to stall the process. The available evidence supports this: Gaps in certification between infants and older children in many sub-Saharan African and Asian countries are more pronounced than those observed in overall levels of registration.

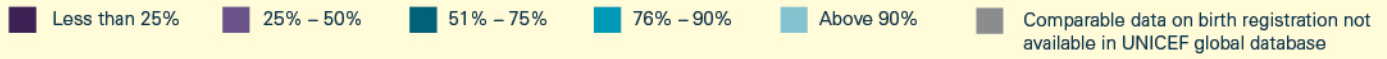
## Pronounced gaps in certification are found in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia

FIGURE 18. Percentage of children under age 5 with a birth certificate, by age in months

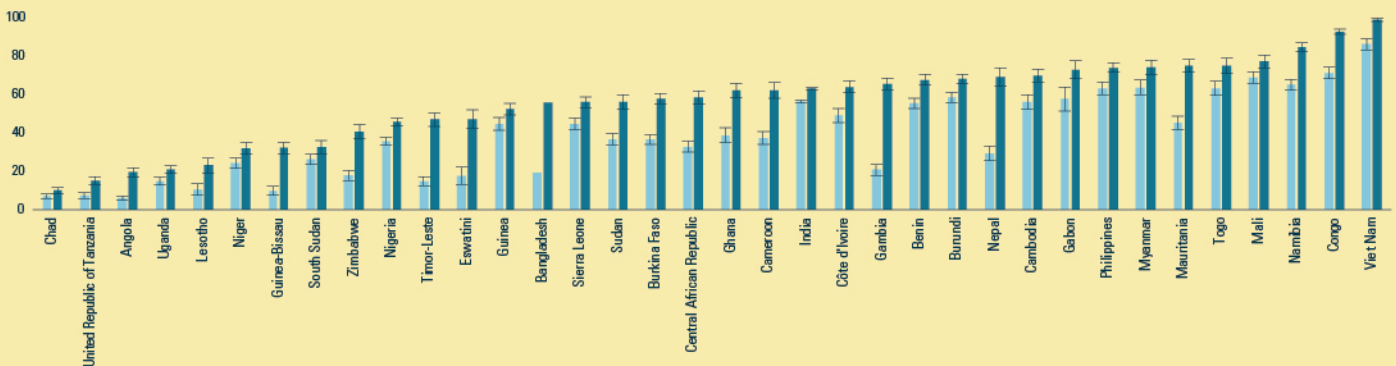
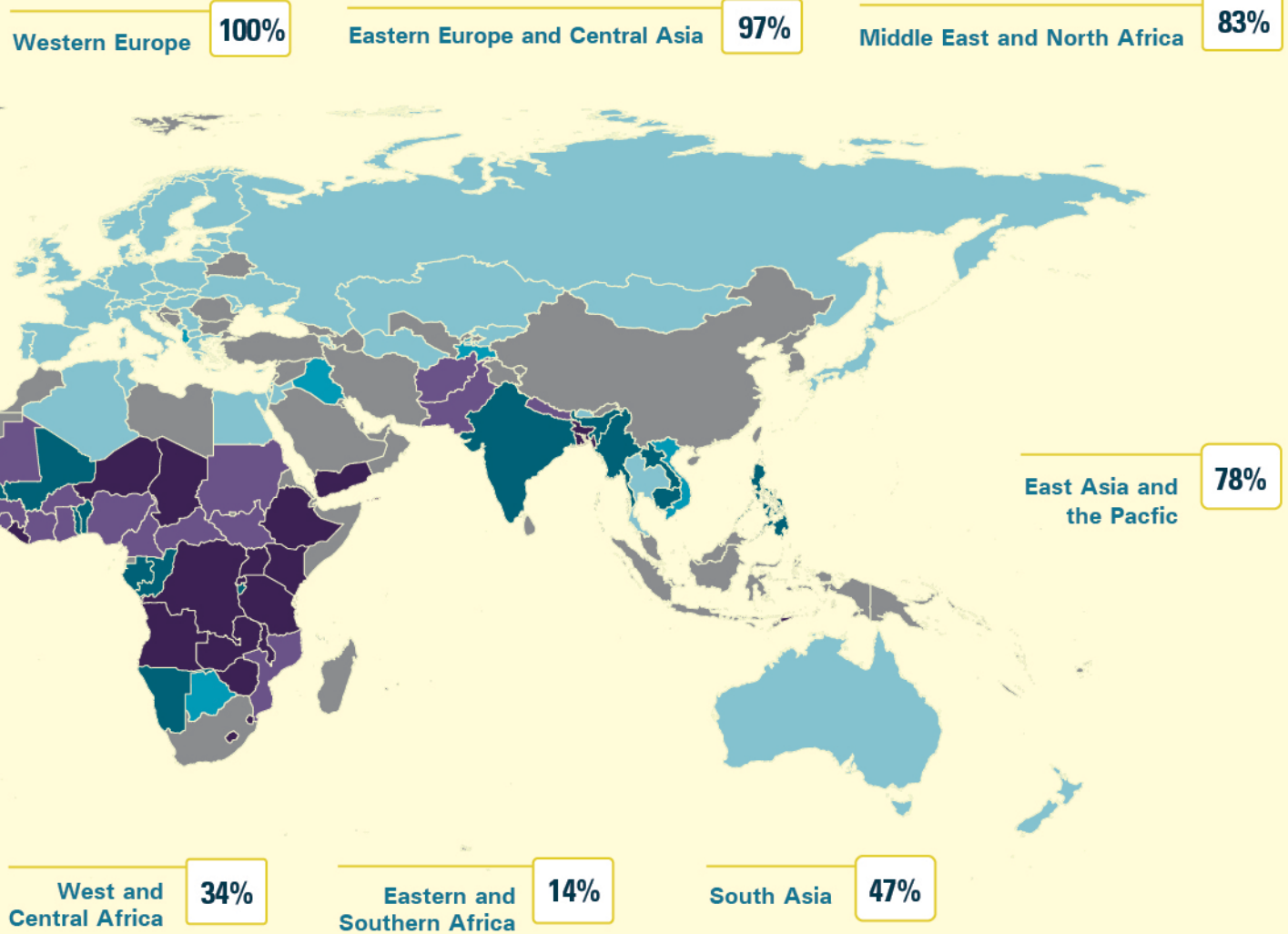
Age 0–11 months      Age 48–59 months

Notes: This chart includes only those countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia where the difference in birth certification between children aged 0 to 11 months and 48 to 59 months is statistically significant out of the 58 countries in these regions with available data from 2010 or later that could be disaggregated by child age. For country footnotes, refer to the technical annex.

**FIGURE 17.** Percentage of children under age 1 with a birth certificate



Note: Refer to the technical annex for map disclaimer and footnotes on country data.





# 4

## Barriers and disparities

Families often face steep barriers to birth registration, including long distances to the nearest registration facility, lack of knowledge about how to register a child, and high fees required for registering a birth or obtaining a birth certificate. Moreover, traditional customs and practices may not encourage or emphasize formal birth registration processes. And institutional procedures sometimes treat

children from certain ethnic or religious groups differently, or impose restrictions – whether formally by law or informally in practice – on a mother’s ability to register her child without the father’s involvement. Such barriers result in disparities in birth registration levels among children of different social, economic and cultural backgrounds.



- **Lack of knowledge about the registration process continues to be an obstacle in many places.** In half of 45 countries with available data, a majority of mothers/caregivers of unregistered children lack knowledge of how to register a child's birth. In the other half of countries, most mothers/caregivers seem aware of the birth registration process, suggesting other barriers to registration.
- **Disparities in birth registration based on a mother's education are evident.** Globally, about 80 per cent of children under age 5 whose mothers have at least a secondary education have their births registered compared to just 60 per cent of children whose mothers have no education.
- **In some countries, children from marginalized groups may face higher barriers to registration.** These barriers can result from living in remote areas or among communities that frequently move, making access to birth registration services more difficult. Children of parents who migrate or are refugees can be particularly vulnerable to statelessness since, without birth registration, they cannot prove their nationality or legal identity. In addition, traditional customs or practices may discourage formal birth registration processes. In Montenegro and Serbia, for example, birth registration levels among Roma infants under age 1 are lower than national averages (90 per cent versus 98 per cent in both countries).
- **In no region are significant differences found in the prevalence of birth registration between boys and girls.** Gender parity in birth registration has been achieved in practically all countries with available data. However, gender inequality might still impact registration. For example, in some countries, single mothers, mothers who have not registered their marriage, or mothers without a marriage certificate (as in cases where children are born of religious, customary or polygamous marriages), may not be allowed to register the birth of their children.
- **Some countries impose fees to register a child and/or obtain a birth certificate.** Around 65 million unregistered children under age 5 live in sub-Saharan African countries where there are fees associated with birth registration. Birth registration is free by law in all South Asian countries, except the Maldives. However, every country in the region, with the exception of Afghanistan, has fees associated with birth registration, which typically reflect fines for late registration.
- **Children from the poorest households are less likely than their richest counterparts to have their births registered.** Even in countries where birth registration is free by law, there are often opportunity costs, including those related to travel, that are difficult to measure but can directly affect registration levels. Globally, children from the poorest 20 per cent of households are one-quarter less likely to have their births registered than their richest counterparts. This gap is especially pronounced in some regions. In sub-Saharan Africa, children in the poorest quintile are less than half as likely to have their births registered than those in the richest quintile. In South Asia, 86 per cent of children under age 5 from the richest quintile have their births registered compared to 53 per cent of those from the poorest quintile.
- **Globally, children living in urban areas are around 30 per cent more likely to be registered than their rural counterparts.** An analysis of 70 countries (about one third of which are low-income countries) shows that urban populations of children fare better in terms of birth registration in about 80 per cent of countries.<sup>26</sup> Targeted campaigns in rural areas aimed at boosting levels of birth registration may partly explain why a clear urban advantage is not systematically seen across all countries.
- **However, not all urban children benefit equally, since the advantage for urban children is strongly associated with household wealth.** In nearly half of the 70 countries analysed, children from households in the richest urban quintile are more likely to have their births registered than those from households in the poorest urban quintile.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that the indirect costs of registration must also be addressed by bringing service points closer to communities and using innovative solutions such as technology and mobile services to reduce travel costs and time away from employment to register children. This is especially pertinent in countries where the civil registry is centralized, and district offices are some distance from communities.

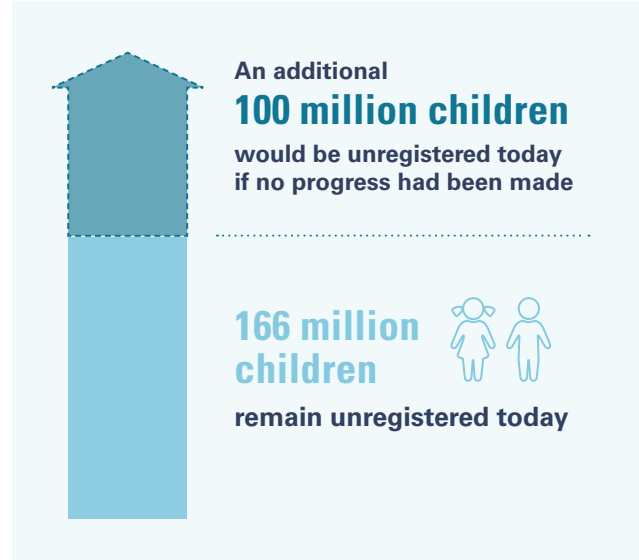
# 5

## Assessing progress and looking to 2030

Today, about 3 in 4 children under age 5 are registered compared to 6 in 10 around 2000. This progress has been achieved mostly in the last 10 years. However, even with accelerated progress, the world is not on track to reach SDG target 16.9 by 2030. Additional investments will be required to ensure universal birth registration by 2030, particularly among the most vulnerable children.

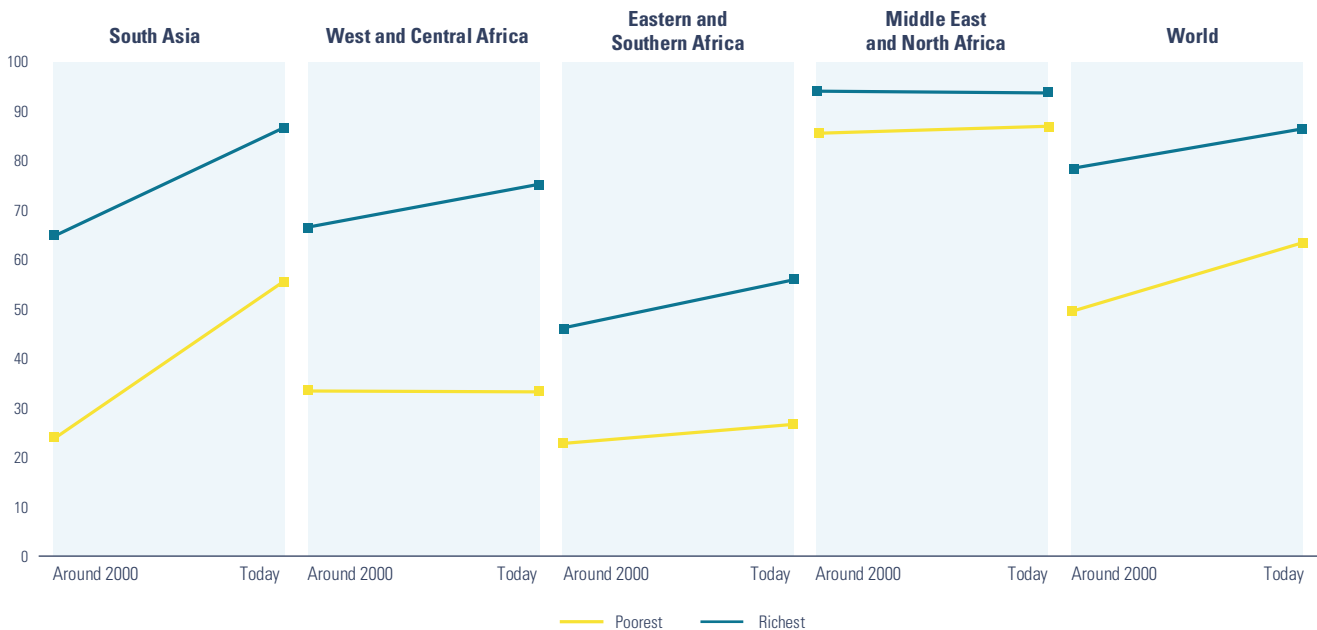
To date, global progress in birth registration has benefited the poorest and richest children alike, with some exceptions. This is the case in sub-Saharan Africa, where levels of birth registration have increased only among children from the richest households. Equity gaps between the rich and poor have started to close in parts of South Asia. In India, for example, birth registration levels have risen for both the richest and poorest segments of the population, and the gap between the two has narrowed. On the other hand, Pakistan has recorded rising levels of birth registration since 2006-2007, but only among children from the richest households.

Without the progress of the last two decades, the number of unregistered children today would have reached 266 million



### Advances in birth registration have reached the poorest children in most regions

FIGURE 19. Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, by household wealth quintile and by region

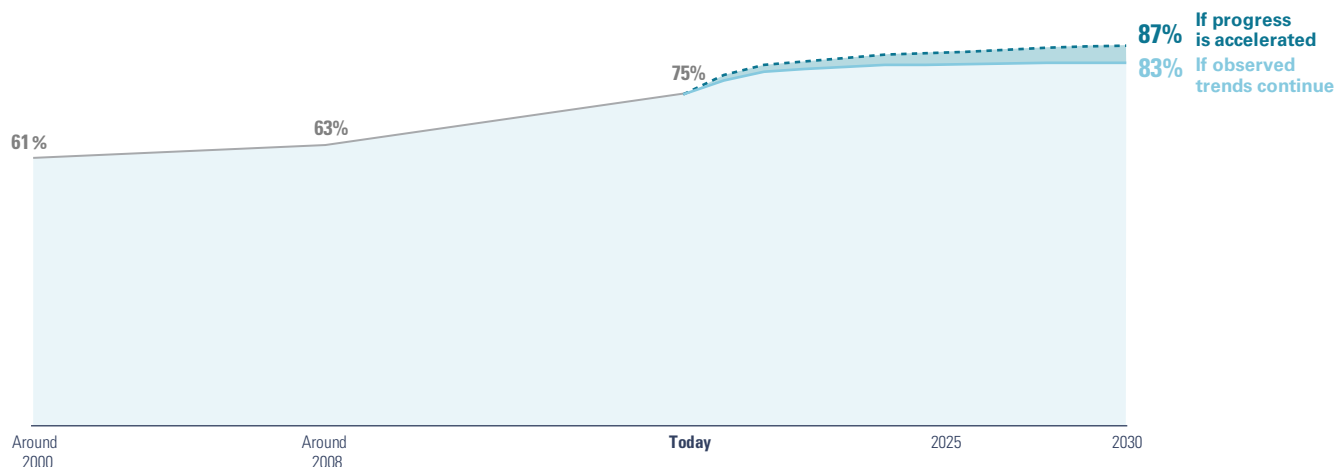


Note: Population coverage was insufficient to calculate regional aggregates for East Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.



## More needs to be done to fulfil the promise of universal birth registration by 2030

FIGURE 20. Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, observed and projected



### How to read the projections

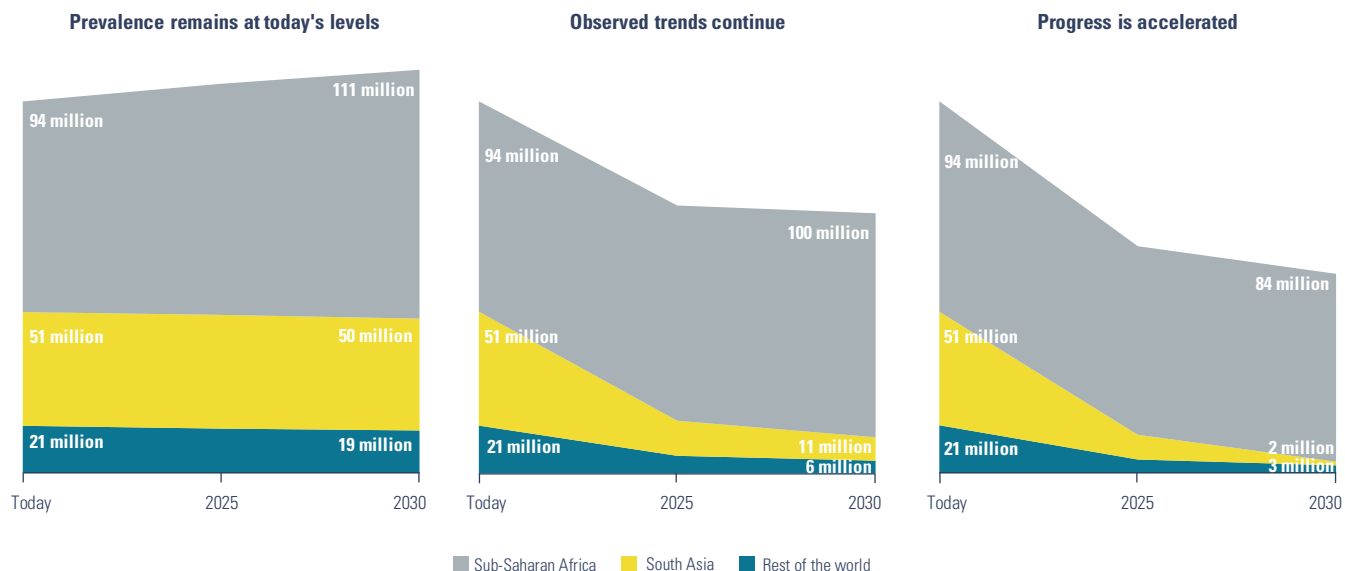
The figures on this page and the following regional pages show how the prevalence of birth registration has changed over time, in addition to two scenarios that could occur in the future.

The projection scenarios build on existing trends. The scenario depicting 'observed trends continue' shows expected values if each country were to continue on its observed (or assumed) path of progress. The 'progress is accelerated' scenario shows expected values if: (1) those countries that are projected to be on track to achieve universal birth registration by 2030 continue on their observed path of progress, (2) those countries that have a positive average annual rate of change catch up to countries in the region that are on track, and (3) those countries that have either a negative average annual rate of change or have not made any progress catch up to countries in the region that have made at least some progress but are not on track. At the global and regional level, this represents the more ambitious of the two scenarios. Both scenarios account for slowing effects that are to be expected as birth registration levels approach 100 per cent.

More detailed notes on the methods of calculation can be found in the technical annex.

## Unless progress is accelerated, the total number of unregistered children in sub-Saharan Africa will continue to increase and will exceed 100 million by 2030

FIGURE 21. Number of children under age 5 whose births are not registered, observed and projected, by region

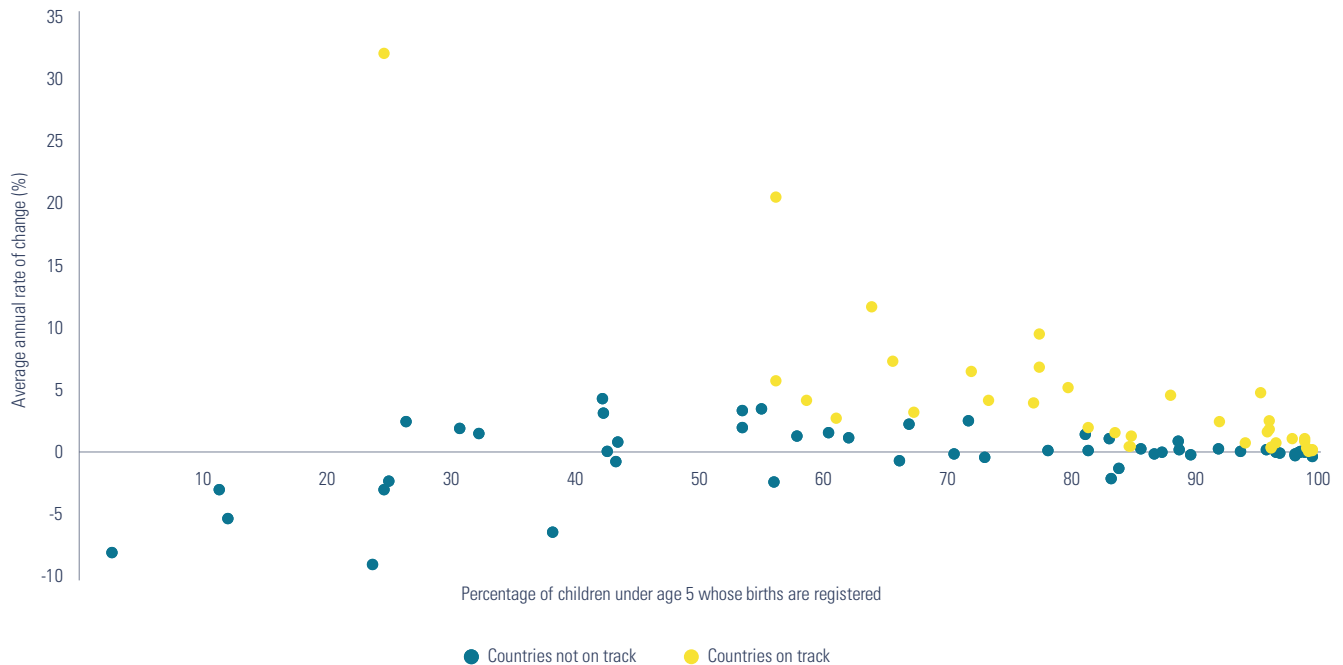


Note: Figures have been rounded.



**Among countries with available data, progress in 1 in 3 (the majority in sub-Saharan Africa) will need to accelerate to achieve universal birth registration by 2030**

**FIGURE 22.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered and average annual rate of change, in countries on track and not on track towards the SDG target



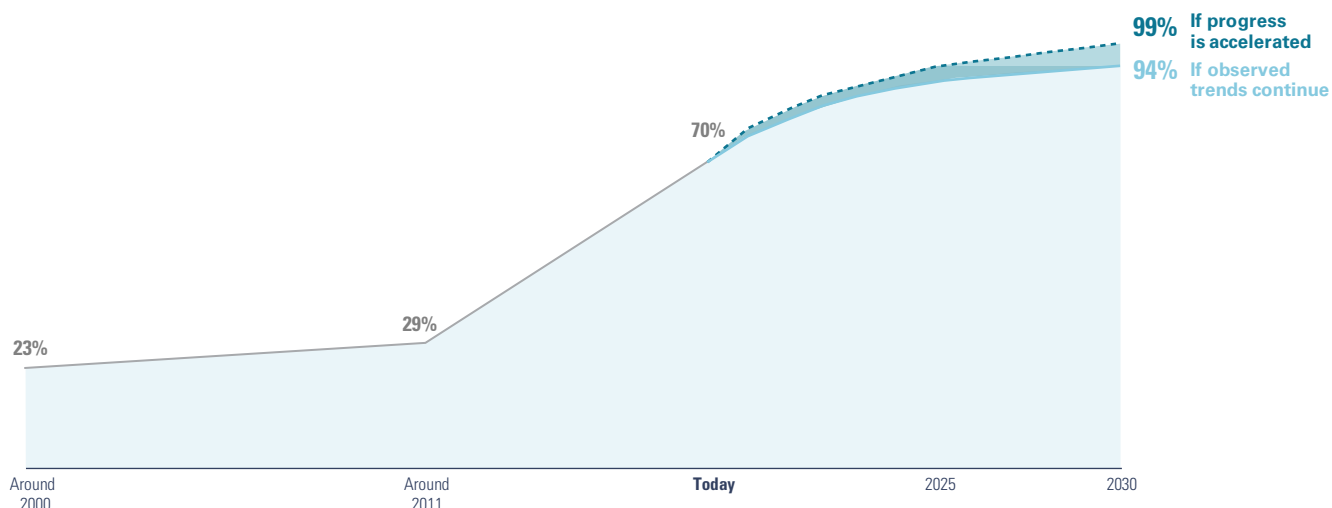
**Note:** This chart does not include those countries that have already met the target of universal birth registration and those for which there were insufficient data to assess trends.

## South Asia

South Asia has made notable progress in birth registration, largely driven by improvements in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Birth registration levels in the region as a whole have tripled, from around 23 per cent nearly two decades ago to 70 per cent today. Nevertheless, achievement of universal birth registration by 2030 is likely to fall short for the region. Efforts will need to accelerate dramatically in Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular.

### Birth registration levels have tripled over the last 20 years

**FIGURE 23.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, observed and projected, in South Asia

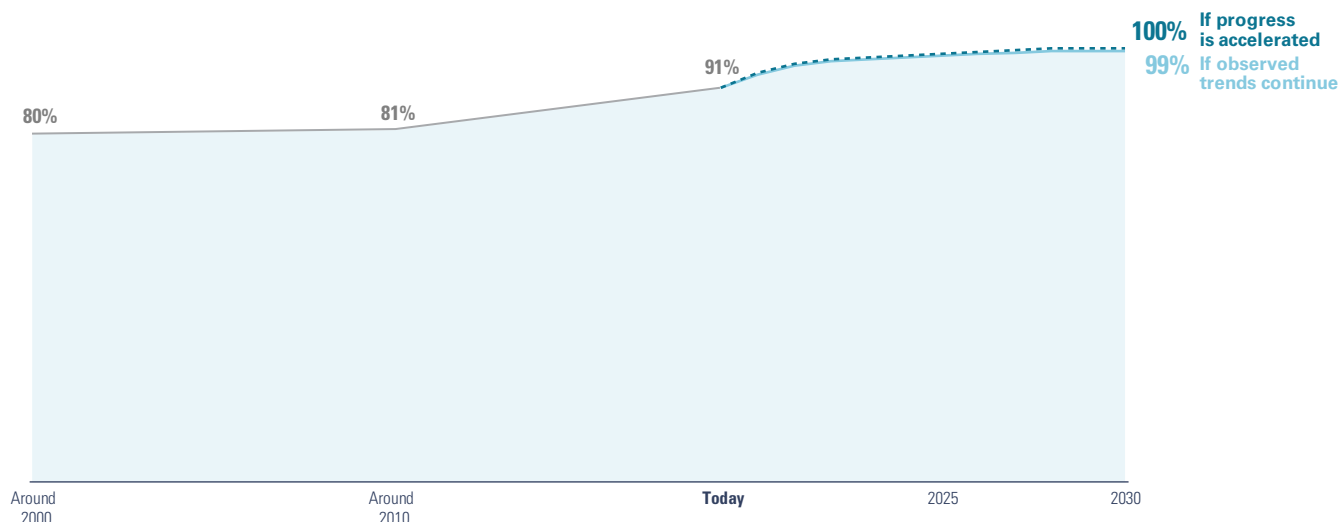


## East Asia and the Pacific

Historically, birth registration levels have been relatively high in East Asia and the Pacific, with a period of about 10 years in which no progress was observed. Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed an increased rate of change. The region as a whole could see the achievement of universal birth registration by 2030, but only if certain conditions are met: Countries that are on track towards the 2030 target, such as Cambodia and Indonesia, must sustain their rate of progress; countries with slow progress, such as the Philippines, must match the average rate of change seen in countries that are on track; and countries where progress has stalled or declined, such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, must be able to correct their course.

### Universal birth registration could be achieved under certain conditions

**FIGURE 24.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, observed and projected, in East Asia and the Pacific



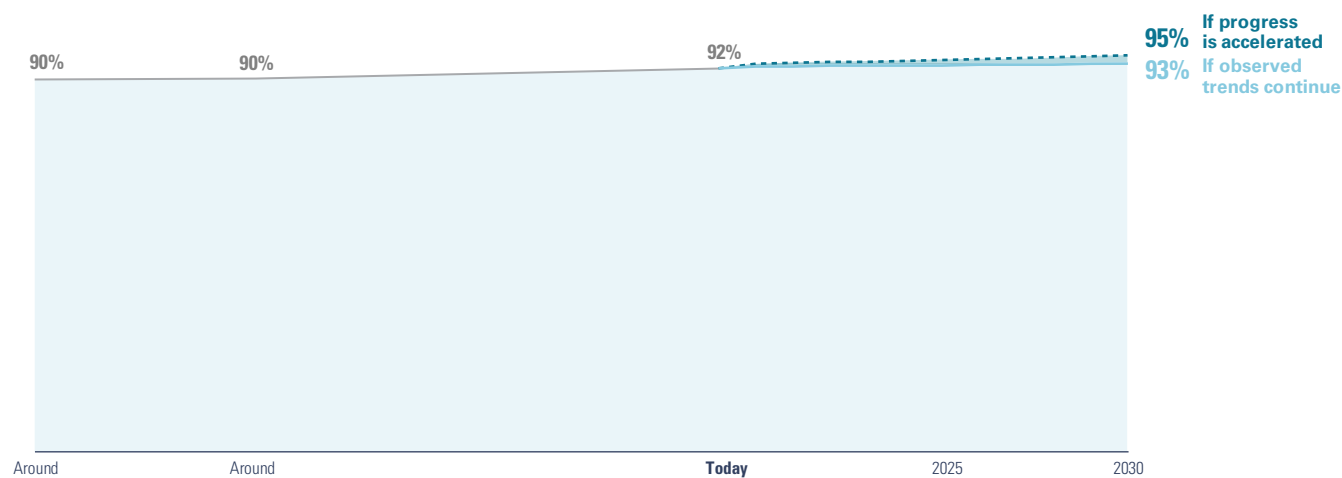


## Middle East and North Africa

While the Middle East and North Africa has had generally high levels of birth registration, no evidence of progress has been seen over time. Prevalence has remained more or less stagnant since 2000, possibly reflecting the lingering impact of conflict and instability in parts of the region. In fact, because of this slow pace of change, the region is not projected to meet the target of universal birth registration by 2030 under either scenario. All countries with available data in the Middle East and North Africa have levels of birth registration above 90 per cent and are anticipated to reach the target if acceleration is achieved. The exception is Yemen, which is projected to remain off track even if the rate of observed progress were to double.

### Progress has stagnated since around 2000

**FIGURE 25.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, observed and projected, in the Middle East and North Africa

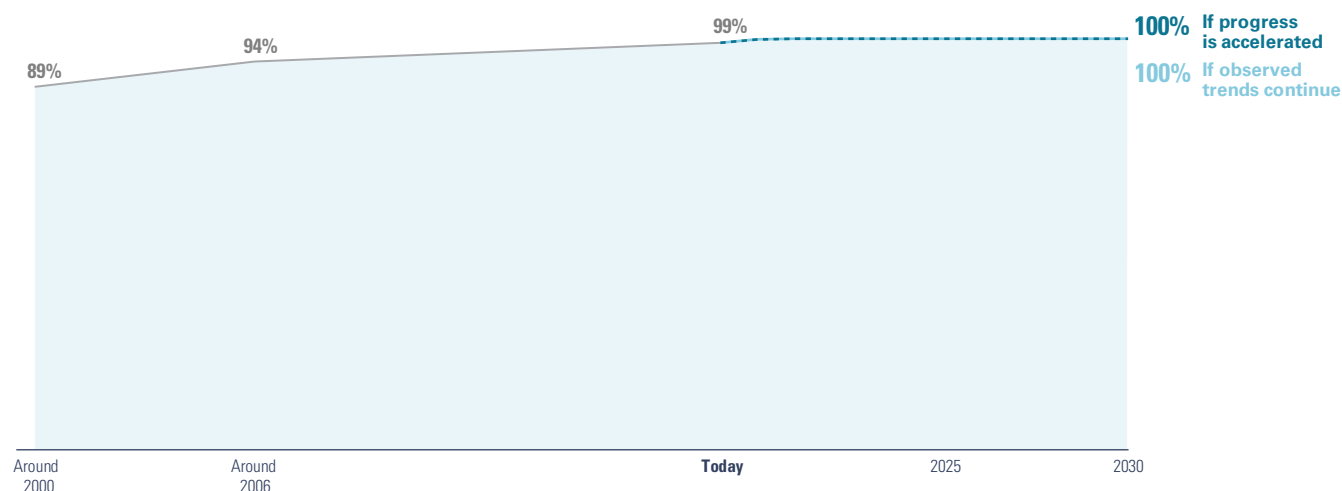


## Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Eastern Europe and Central Asia has traditionally had very high levels of birth registration, with almost all countries having levels above 95 per cent. All countries with trend data in the region are on track to achieve the target of universal birth registration by 2030. Efforts in the region have focused on reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and closing remaining gaps.

### The region is on track and focused on closing remaining gaps

**FIGURE 26.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, observed and projected, in Eastern Europe and Central Asia



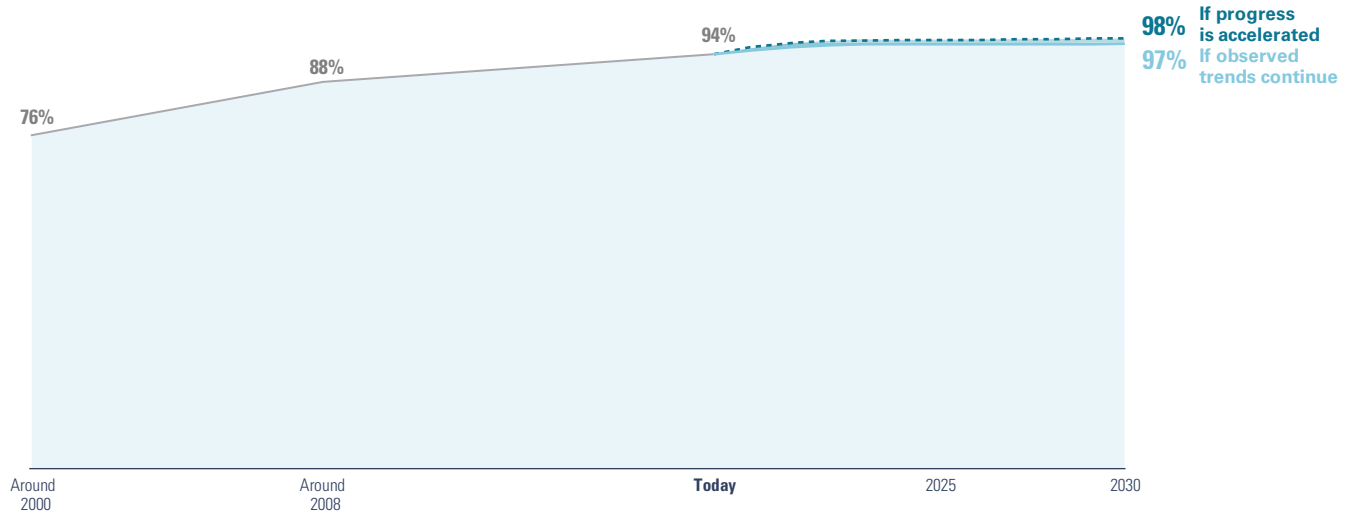


## Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America and the Caribbean, levels of birth registration have been steadily rising since the early 2000s, although progress has slowed slightly in recent years. National data show a mixed picture: Roughly half of countries in the region with trend data are not projected to meet the SDG target. Even accelerated efforts to bring these countries, such as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, up to speed will not be enough to achieve universal birth registration by the 2030 deadline. Reaching the last 2 to 3 per cent of children who are expected to remain unregistered by 2030 requires a concerted focus on vulnerable groups – indigenous populations in particular.

### Progress has been made but not enough to meet the 2030 target

**FIGURE 27.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, observed and projected, in Latin America and the Caribbean



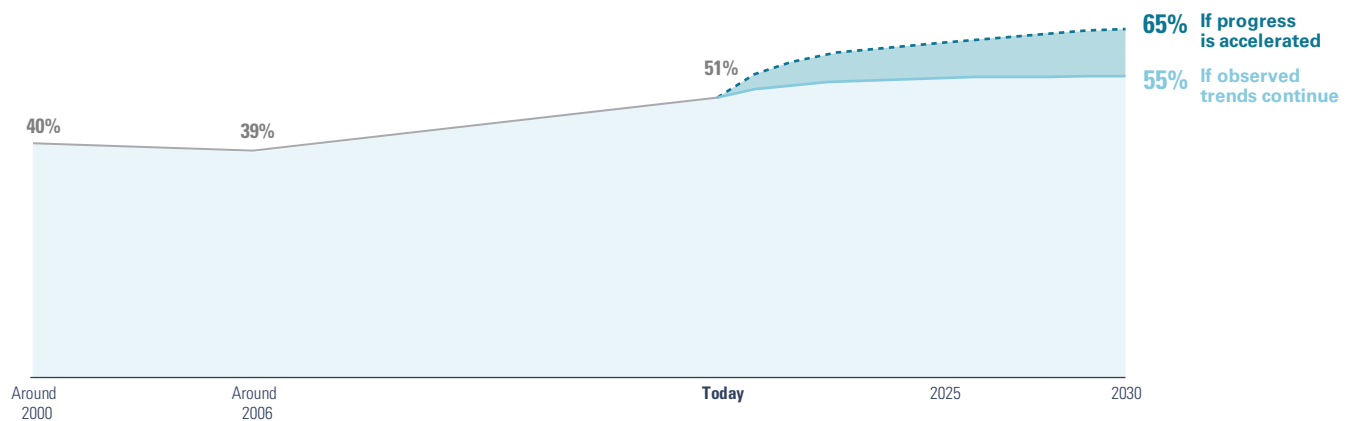


## West and Central Africa

Recent years have seen advances in birth registration in West and Central Africa, which has its share of success stories. Liberia, for example, increased the level of birth certification from 4 per cent to 25 per cent between 2007 and 2013. However, birth registration levels have fluctuated in other countries, with some showing stagnation or even a decline. This slow progress, coupled with inconsistent trends, threatens to derail the region’s chances of meeting the 2030 target. However, if the region is able to accelerate progress in the coming years, then there could be far fewer unregistered children by the end of the SDG era than if observed trends continue.

### Recent advances will not be enough to put the SDG target within reach for the region

**FIGURE 28.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, observed and projected, in West and Central Africa

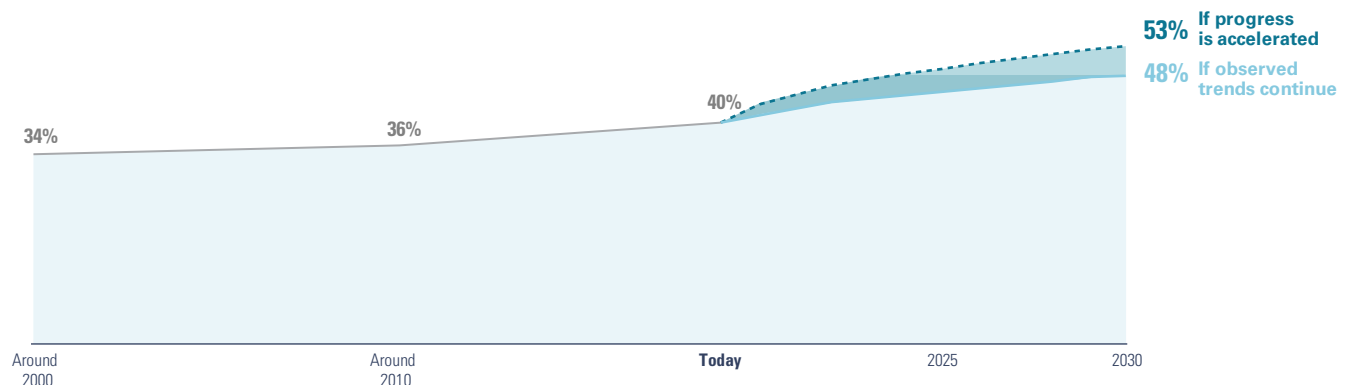


## Eastern and Southern Africa

Over the last two decades, Eastern and Southern Africa has seen no significant progress in birth registration. And because the rate of change has been so slow, even an acceleration among those countries that lag behind would only result in a marginal increase in the regional prevalence by 2030. Without substantial efforts and investment, the region will not be able to achieve birth registration for every child. The good news is that some countries, including Mozambique and Namibia, have demonstrated that progress is possible, and lessons on what worked should be explored and possibly replicated in other parts of the region.

### The target is out of reach, but some countries have exemplified progress

**FIGURE 29.** Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, observed and projected, in Eastern and Southern Africa



# 6

## Realizing every child's right to be registered at birth

Every birth should be recorded, and every child should be recognized before the law. Only then can societies worldwide be truly inclusive and equitable. By providing all children with proof of legal identity from day one, their rights can be protected and universal access to social services can be enabled. If we are to fulfil our promise to leave no one behind, we must ensure that every child is registered at birth and receives a passport to lifelong protection – a birth certificate.

Numerous barriers, including financial ones, can hinder a child's right to be registered at birth. However, when governments make birth registration and certification free, the process becomes more accessible to the poorest segments of the population. This, in turn, helps break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

The evidence presented in this report suggests that investments to increase birth registration levels have begun to yield results. But it also shows that much more effort is needed to reach the goal of universal birth registration and to improve civil registries to the point where such gains are irreversible. If commitment is sustained and programmes strengthened, ongoing progress will gain momentum, and the promise of fulfilling every child's birth right will be achieved.

The statistical analyses on the preceding pages show that unregistered children come from the poorest households, live in rural areas and have mothers with no or little formal education. In some countries, certain ethnic or religious groups have lower birth registration levels than the national average. The data also show that many children are registered later in life. But even then, many fail to obtain a birth certificate. All of these findings suggest that interventions to accelerate progress in birth registration should be given priority, especially in rural areas within a country and among socially disadvantaged groups, and targeted action must be taken to ensure that all population groups are covered.

Progress in birth registration and certification can be accelerated and coverage expanded through investment in safe and innovative technologies, such as telecommunication networks and digital databases, which bring services closer to families. That said, any technological solutions need to be thoroughly vetted to



protect data and information collected about children and their caregivers. Linked and interoperable systems – both digitized and traditional – must be carefully regulated through monitoring and accountability to ensure their security and confidentiality.

Achieving such progress will require engagement and buy-in at all levels, from governments to local communities. Governments need to understand that birth registration is a smart investment from both a social and economic point of view, and communities must understand why and how it benefits them. Without community demand for services, there is much less incentive for governments to act and for communities to change their current way of doing things.

## UNICEF calls for five actions to protect all children, starting from birth

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### 1. Provide every child with a certificate upon birth

All children should be registered at birth – regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion and/or status – through universal, accessible systems. Laws and policies must be reviewed and revised to ensure that every child subsequently receives and can use his or her birth certificate.

UNICEF calls for every child to receive a birth certificate – proof of his or her legal identity – following birth registration. And for governments to cover the costs of civil registration systems and ensure those services are accessible and confidential. Parents should not be prevented from registering their children due to financial barriers, such as late fees or other additional costs.

### 2. Empower all parents, regardless of gender, to register their children at birth

All mothers should be empowered to pass on their nationality to their children on an equal basis as men, regardless of marital status. By eliminating gender discrimination in nationality laws and policies, we can combat further marginalization of the most vulnerable.

UNICEF calls for every child to be legally registered by either parent to protect his or her right to acquire a nationality at birth. This will help to avoid the risk of statelessness, preserve family unity and guarantee access to education, health care and other social services throughout life.

### 3. Link birth registration to social services

Linking civil registration to other systems – including identity, health, social protection and education – increases the chances that unregistered children will be identified and thus serves as an entry point for registration. Increases in birth registration coverage can, in turn, facilitate children's access to social services throughout their lives. It also provides governments with a more accurate count of the population, which is essential for planning and implementing development policies and programmes, particularly in health, education, housing, water and sanitation, employment, agriculture and industrial production.

UNICEF calls for a coordinated, cost-effective and cohesive approach to connect all systems to ensure that no child is left unregistered and deprived of the opportunity to access social services.

### 4. Invest in safe and innovative technological solutions to facilitate birth registration

Technology can be used to obtain timely, accurate and permanent records. For example, the use of mobile communications technologies, including cell phones, can help reach unregistered children by minimizing the distance and related travel costs for remote populations. It is essential, however, that all data and information collected through identity and registration systems – both digitized and traditional – must be kept confidential to protect children and their families.

UNICEF calls for more innovative solutions, including technology and mobile services, to increase access to, and quality of, birth registration services.

### 5. Engage communities to demand birth registration for every child

Demand from local communities is a critical catalyst for governments to take action. To create effective, sustainable change, community members – particularly parents and community leaders – must understand how and why birth registration benefits their families. Only then will behaviours and social norms begin to change.

UNICEF calls for increased community engagement to build that buy-in and, in turn, increase incentives to establish and expand birth registration systems.



## Technical annex

### Data sources

UNICEF global databases include birth registration estimates for 174 countries, primarily drawn from nationally representative household surveys such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). Other data sources in the global database include other national surveys, censuses and vital statistics from civil registration systems. Of the 174 countries with data, 163 have estimates that are recent enough (2010 to 2018) to be included in the calculation of current global and regional levels. (For a summary of data availability by region and by indicator, see table below). Maps only include the latest available data point for each country between 2010 and 2018.

For countries without an available data source, information on the estimated coverage of birth registration within national civil registration systems was obtained from the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). This was the case for 30 countries in Western Europe and 2 in North America as well as an additional 24 countries in other regions. Several sources are used by UNSD to obtain coverage of birth and death registration for more than 230 countries and areas. The primary source is the 'Quality of vital statistics obtained from civil registration' page on the United Nations Demographic Yearbook Vital Statistics Questionnaire completed by national statistical offices. Other sources include UNSD workshops that have been conducted in the past, when coverage information was obtained from country representative(s) either from the national statistical office or the civil registration authority. For more information, visit [unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/crvs/#coverage](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/crvs/#coverage).

For China, internationally comparable and nationally representative data on birth registration prevalence have not been available historically. However, data are available for a related indicator on registration of children's permanent residence, known as 'hukou', by the household registration department. Hukou registration is the only indication that birth registration has been carried out and completed, and hukou registration is one of the most important components of the household management system in China. The latest available data on children's hukou registration were obtained from the National Population Sample Survey (also referred to as a 'mini-census') conducted in 2015 by the National Bureau of Statistics of China.

Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, Online edition, Revision 1.

### Calculation of current global figures

Global estimates of birth registration for children under age 5 and under age 1 are calculated based on the following: (1) latest available data for each country, within the period 2010 to 2018, (2) estimated coverage of birth registration for 30 countries in Western Europe, 2 in North America and an additional 24 countries with no comparable data in the UNICEF global database made on the basis of the information obtained from UNSD on estimated coverage of birth registration within national civil registration systems, and (3) proxy indicator of hukou registration for China.

Global estimates of possession of a birth certificate for children under age 5 and under age 1 are calculated based on the following: (1) latest available data for each country, within the period 2010 to 2018, and (2) for the 30 countries in Western Europe and 2 in North America, an assumption was made that all children have birth certificates on the basis of the information obtained from UNSD on estimated coverage of birth registration within national civil registration systems. For this set of estimates, no additional assumptions are made for other countries on possession of a birth certificate.

Global figures are calculated as a population-weighted average of the prevalence of birth registration in each of the regions used for UNICEF global reporting (see page 40). The prevalence of birth registration (or certification) is subtracted from 100 to obtain the prevalence of children without birth registration (or without a birth certificate). Absolute numbers of unregistered children are calculated by applying the resulting prevalence of children without birth registration (or without a birth certificate) to the respective child population (either those under age 5 or under age 1).

### Calculation of current regional figures

Each regional prevalence is calculated as a population-weighted average of the national values. In using this method, the prevalence in countries without data is implicitly assumed to be the same as the population-weighted average of other countries in the same region. Regional estimates are presented according to the regional classification used for UNICEF global reporting. Regional estimates are presented even when the population coverage falls below the standard threshold of 50 per cent, but are noted accordingly throughout the report.

The same set of methods and assumptions as those outlined above for calculation of global figures of overall birth registration and possession of a birth certificate applies to the calculation of regional figures.

In the case of East Asia and the Pacific, the data for China on hukou registration are not directly comparable with other sources of birth registration in the UNICEF global database. However, the available evidence seems to suggest that the level of birth registration (as measured by hukou registration) in China is at least as high as most other countries in the region. For this reason, there is practically no change in the regional figures of overall birth registration prevalence among children under age 5 and under age 1 if China were to be excluded due to lack of comparability of the data. However, since there are no comparable data for China on possession of a birth certificate (both for children under age 5 and under age 1), population coverage for this indicator for East Asia and the Pacific is below 50 per cent.

### Country-level assessment of progress

For statistical purposes, complete birth registration coverage is defined as 99.5 per cent or higher. An assessment of progress was conducted for each country that had at least two comparable data sources, provided that the most recent data source was from 2010 or later. There were 156 countries for which an assessment of progress was possible. Of these 156 countries, 67 were considered to have already met the target of complete birth registration coverage.

For each country, the average annual rate of change (AARC) was calculated using the two most recent data points. Given that evidence suggests that progress slows as levels of birth registration approach 100 per cent, a country's observed AARC may no longer be plausible when its projected levels get higher. To adjust for this, the projected birth registration prevalence for each country followed the country's trajectory, starting from the latest data point until the prevalence of birth registration reached a level at which its observed AARC has never been recorded (at least among the countries with available trend data). At this point, the projection scenario continues forward at the highest AARC observed by any country within that tier. The following tiers were established (based on starting levels of birth registration): 0-24 per cent, 25-74 per cent, 75-84 per cent, 85-94 per cent and above 95 per cent.

On the basis of the projections, countries were assigned to one of the following two categories, which represent their progress towards the target of universal birth registration by 2030:

- **On track** – the projected prevalence of birth registration after applying the method described above is expected to reach a level of 99.5 per cent or above by 2030.

- **Not on track** – the projected prevalence of birth registration after applying the method described above is not expected to reach a level of 99.5 per cent or above by 2030.

These analyses need to be interpreted with some degree of caution since the changes observed that were used to determine a country's progress may be within confidence intervals.

### Global trend analysis

For the global-level trend analysis, countries that had at least two comparable data sources were included if they met the following criteria: the earliest data point corresponds to a range between 1999 and 2005, a mid-point corresponds to a range between 2006 and 2010, and/or the most recent data point corresponds to a range between 2011 and 2018. An exception to this rule was made for 29 countries that had an available data point that was one or two years outside of these ranges. For China, trend data for the years 2000, 2010 and 2015 on children's hukou registration were also available and therefore included in the calculation of the global AARC figures.

For countries that had only two available data points to use for the trend analysis, the missing data point (either the earliest or a mid-point) was imputed by applying the country's observed AARC between the two available data points, based on the assumption of a straight-line trajectory. This methodology was applied to roughly one third of the countries with trend data. This was done in order to maximize the available country trend data.

### Regional trend analysis

For the regional trend analysis, the same set of countries included in the global analysis was utilized. Each region was assessed separately in terms of the availability of country trend data within the region. For example, if the majority of the available country trend data in a region corresponded to the years 2000, 2011 and 2016, then the regional AARC figures were calculated as a 11-year trend (to capture the change that occurred between 2000 and 2011) and a 5-year trend (to capture the more recent change that occurred between 2011 and 2016). In this sense, each region's AARC figures have been tailored to reflect progress observed in that region over a specific period of time.

As was done in the case of the global trend estimates, the value for 'today' (calculated on the basis of all countries with available data in the region between 2010 and 2018 and not just those with trend data) was used as the starting point.

Using the example above, the 5-year AARC was projected backwards to approximate the prevalence of birth registration at the regional level in 2011; the 11-year AARC applied to the resulting 2011 value was projected backwards to approximate the prevalence of birth registration at the regional level in 2000. This was done to align with the current estimates and to avoid having disparate figures within a region due to more limited data availability for the trend analysis.

### Projection analysis

A set of projection scenarios were developed on the basis of existing trends. The first step for the 'observed trends continue' scenario was to calculate a population-weighted average of country projected values (for those countries with trend data) in each region at each year from 2020 until 2030. For countries with a current (2010 or later) estimate but no available trend data, values were projected assuming the average progress of the region. This scenario shows the expected values at global and regional levels if each country were to continue on its observed (or assumed) path of progress. Global-level projected values were calculated as population-weighted averages of the projected prevalence of birth registration in each of the regions.

The 'progress is accelerated' scenario shows expected values if: (1) those countries that are projected to be on track to achieve universal birth registration by 2030 continue on their observed path of progress, (2) those countries that have a positive AARC (indicating some level of progress) speed up and assume the weighted AARC of those countries in the region that are on track, and (3) those countries that have either a negative average annual rate of change (indicating a decline in the level of birth registration) or have not made any progress (indicating stagnation) catch up and assume the weighted AARC of those countries in the region that have made at least some progress but are not on track. This represents the more ambitious of the two scenarios.

Both scenarios account for slowing effects that are to be expected as birth registration levels approach 100 per cent.

### Map disclaimer

Maps are stylized and not to scale. They do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country, territory or area or the delimitation of any frontiers. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined, and the final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

### Footnotes on country data included in maps and figures

Figures 3, 7, 11 and 15: Zeroes appearing in these figures do not necessarily mean that there are no unregistered children in these regions but rather that the estimates came to 0 after rounding.

Figure 5: Only those countries with comparable data on the level of birth registration among children under age 5 are included in the map. Available data for Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana, Indonesia, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Namibia, Thailand and Vanuatu were only collected for the subset of children under age 5 with a birth certificate; therefore, data for these countries are presented in figure 9. Available data for Belarus, Bulgaria, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Montserrat, Oman, Qatar, South Africa, United Arab Emirates and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela refer to the percentage of births registered; therefore, data for these countries are presented in figure 13. Data for Chile refer to children aged 0 to 7 years whose births are registered. Data for the Islamic Republic of Iran refer only to the subset of children under age 5 with an Iranian parent who has a national ID card. Data for the Lao People's Democratic Republic include children registered in the family book. Data for Morocco refer to the percentage of live births that occurred in the five years preceding the survey that were registered. Data for Pakistan do not include Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Data for Turkey refer to children registered with the population registry. Data for South Sudan are from an older source (Sudan Household Health Survey 2010) that was implemented in the country prior to the country's cession from the Sudan; however, data refer to the prevalence of birth registration in the 10 southern states that became South Sudan. Data for Togo include non-usual residents.

Figure 9: Only those countries with comparable data on the possession of a birth certificate among children under age 5 are included in the map. Data for Pakistan do not include Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Data for South Sudan are from an older source (Sudan Household Health Survey 2010) that was implemented in the country prior to the country's cession from the Sudan; however, data refer to the prevalence of birth registration in the 10 southern states that became South Sudan. Data for Togo include non-usual residents.

Figure 13: Only those countries with comparable data on the level of birth registration among children under age 1 are included in the map. Available data for Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Namibia and Thailand were only collected for the subset of children under age 1 with a birth certificate; therefore, data for these countries are presented in figure 17.



Data for the Lao People’s Democratic Republic include children registered in the family book. Data for Pakistan do not include Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Data for Peru refer to children aged 6 to 11 months and are from an older source since age-disaggregated data are not available for the latest source. Data for South Sudan are from an older source (Sudan Household Health Survey 2010) that was implemented in the country prior to the country’s cession from the Sudan; however, data refer to the prevalence of birth registration in the 10 southern states that became South Sudan. Data for Togo include non-usual residents.

Figure 14: Data for the Lao People’s Democratic Republic include children registered in the family book. Data for Pakistan do not include Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Data for Paraguay are from MICS 2016. Data for Zimbabwe are from DHS 2015. The confidence interval for

Bangladesh could not be calculated because the MICS 2019 dataset has not yet been published.

Figure 17: Only those countries with comparable data on the possession of a birth certificate among children under age 1 are included in the map. Data for Pakistan do not include Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Data for South Sudan are from an older source (Sudan Household Health Survey 2010) that was implemented in the country prior to the country’s cession from the Sudan; however, data refer to the prevalence of birth registration in the 10 southern states that became South Sudan. Data for Togo include non-usual residents.

Figure 18: Data for Togo include non-usual residents. The confidence interval for Bangladesh could not be calculated because the MICS 2019 dataset has not yet been published.

## Summary of data availability and population coverage

UNICEF Region	Birth registration among children under age 5		Birth certificate among children under age 5		Birth registration among children under age 1		Birth certificate among children under age 1	
	Number of countries with data in UNICEF global database	Percentage of population represented	Number of countries with data in UNICEF global database	Percentage of population represented	Number of countries with data in UNICEF global database	Percentage of population represented	Number of countries with data in UNICEF global database	Percentage of population represented
Eastern and Southern Africa	22 of 25	99%	21 of 25	92%	21 of 25	95%	20 of 25	88%
West and Central Africa	24 of 24	100%	23 of 24	100%	22 of 24	100%	22 of 24	100%
Middle East and North Africa	15 of 19	92%	9 of 19	66%	13 of 19	70%	9 of 19	66%
South Asia	8 of 8	100%	8 of 8	100%	7 of 8	99%	7 of 8	99%
East Asia and the Pacific	22 of 33	41%	21 of 33	41%	15 of 33	25%	14 of 33	25%
Latin America and the Caribbean	28 of 37	100%	18 of 37	43%	26 of 37	96%	18 of 37	43%
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	20 of 21	97%	15 of 21	71%	19 of 21	75%	15 of 21	71%
Western Europe	33 of 33	100%	33 of 33	100%	33 of 33	100%	33 of 33	100%
North America	2 of 2	100%	2 of 2	100%	2 of 2	100%	2 of 2	100%
<b>World</b>	174 of 202	86%	150 of 202	77%	158 of 202	79%	140 of 202	73%

**Note:** Figures in this table represent every country or area with data in the UNICEF global database, even if the data fall outside the year range used for calculation of current global and regional figures.

## Regional classifications

### Eastern and Southern Africa

Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

### West and Central Africa

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

### Middle East and North Africa

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

### South Asia

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

### East Asia and the Pacific

Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Viet Nam

### Latin America and the Caribbean

Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

### Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, North Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

### Western Europe

Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

### North America

Canada, United States of America

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## Endnotes

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## Birth registration at a glance: Key Facts

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- Globally, the births of 166 million children under age 5 (about 1 in 4) have never been recorded.
- South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are home to 87 per cent of all unregistered children under age 5 worldwide.
- Possession of a birth certificate is less common than registration: 237 million children under age 5 lack official proof of registration in the form of a birth certificate.
- Of all children under age 1 worldwide, roughly 3 in 10 (about 40 million) have not had their births registered.
- Around 4 in 10 infants globally (about 56 million) lack a birth certificate.
- Today, about 3 in 4 children under age 5 are registered compared to 6 in 10 around 2000.
- Progress has been achieved primarily in the last 10 years and has reached the poorest children in most regions.
- Without the progress of the last two decades, the number of unregistered children today would have reached 266 million.
- The world is not on track to reach SDG target 16.9 by 2030. 1 in 3 countries (accounting for about one third of the global population of children under 5) will need to speed up progress in order to achieve universal birth registration by 2030.
- A rapidly growing child population, coupled with slow rates of change, means that, unless progress is accelerated, the total number of unregistered children in sub-Saharan Africa will continue to increase and will exceed 100 million by 2030.