



# EVERY CHILD'S BIRTH RIGHT

Inequities and trends in birth registration

Cover photo: Meluca Guimaraes holds Natan (her second child), his newly issued birth certificate and his health card, at Puzuzu Primary School in Maganja da Costa District in Zambézia Province, Mozambique. Community birth registration activities are being held at the school. UNICEF supports routine and accelerated birth registration activities, including mobile outreach services and community mobilization to raise awareness on the importance of registering children.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2007-2287/Roger LeMoynes

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Data and Analytics Section, Division of Policy and Strategy, December 2013.

Permission is required to reproduce any part of this publication. Permission will be freely granted to educational or non-profit organizations.

To request permission and for any other information on the publication, please contact:

UNICEF  
Data and Analytics Section  
Division of Policy and Strategy  
3 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017, USA  
Tel: +1 (212) 326-7000  
Email: [childinfo@unicef.org](mailto:childinfo@unicef.org)

All reasonable precautions have been taken by UNICEF to verify the information contained in this publication. For any data updates subsequent to printing, please visit [www.childinfo.org](http://www.childinfo.org).

Suggested citation: United Nations Children's Fund, *Every Child's Birth Right: Inequities and trends in birth registration*, UNICEF, New York, 2013.

# **EVERY CHILD'S BIRTH RIGHT**

## **Inequities and trends in birth registration**

# Acknowledgements

This report was produced at UNICEF headquarters by the Data and Analytics Section (formerly the Statistics and Monitoring Section), Division of Policy and Strategy. The report was prepared by Claudia Cappa, under the direction of Tessa Wardlaw. Ivana Bjelic and Yadigar Coskun provided support with data processing and tabulations. Colleen Murray and Nicole Petrowski facilitated the preparation of the statistical table and figures, participated in the review and helped fact-check the document. Nicole Petrowski also assisted in the report's production.

Valuable ideas and inputs were provided by Settasak Akanimart (UNICEF Bangladesh), Gbemisola Akinboyo (UNICEF Eritrea), Serge Akpaka (UNICEF Benin), Hanadi Alrajab (UNICEF Oman), Izdihar AISuleimany (UNICEF Oman), Sayo Aoki (UNICEF Dominican Republic), Elena Atanassova (UNICEF Bulgaria), Laetitia Bazzi-Veil (UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire), Hawi Bedasa (UNICEF Tanzania), Patrizia Benvenuti (UNICEF South Africa), Chris Braeuel (VSO Tanzania), Andrew Brooks (UNICEF Regional Office for West and Central Africa), Laurent Chapuis (UNICEF Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa), Tatjana Colin (UNICEF Liberia), Paula Monina G. Collado (National Statistics Office of the Philippines), Edina Culolo-Kozma (UNICEF Angola), Matthew Dalling (UNICEF Sierra Leone), Asefa Tolessa Dano (UNICEF Papua New Guinea), Christina de Bruin (UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire), Meryem Demirci (United Nations Statistics Division), Thakur Dhakal (UNICEF Nepal), Kirsten Di Martino (UNICEF Lao PDR), Astrid Gonzaga Dionisio (UNICEF Indonesia), Zodwa Dlamini-Mthethwa (UNICEF South Africa), Valentina Dogonova (UNICEF Belarus), Jose Ramon Espinoza (UNICEF Nicaragua), Pilar Gonzalez (UNICEF Uzbekistan), Aaron Greenberg (UNICEF Myanmar), Kendra Gregson (Child Protection Section, UNICEF headquarters), Attila Hancioğlu (Data and Analytics Section, UNICEF headquarters), Rachel Harvey (UNICEF Tanzania), Petra Hoelscher (UNICEF Namibia), Gordana Horvat (UNICEF Croatia), Lara Hussein (UNICEF Gulf Area), Salifu Jarsey (UNICEF Gambia), Charles-Martin Jjuuko (UNICEF Uganda), Catherine Jones (UNICEF Lebanon), Yves Olivier Kassoka (UNICEF Senegal), Khamhoung Keovilay

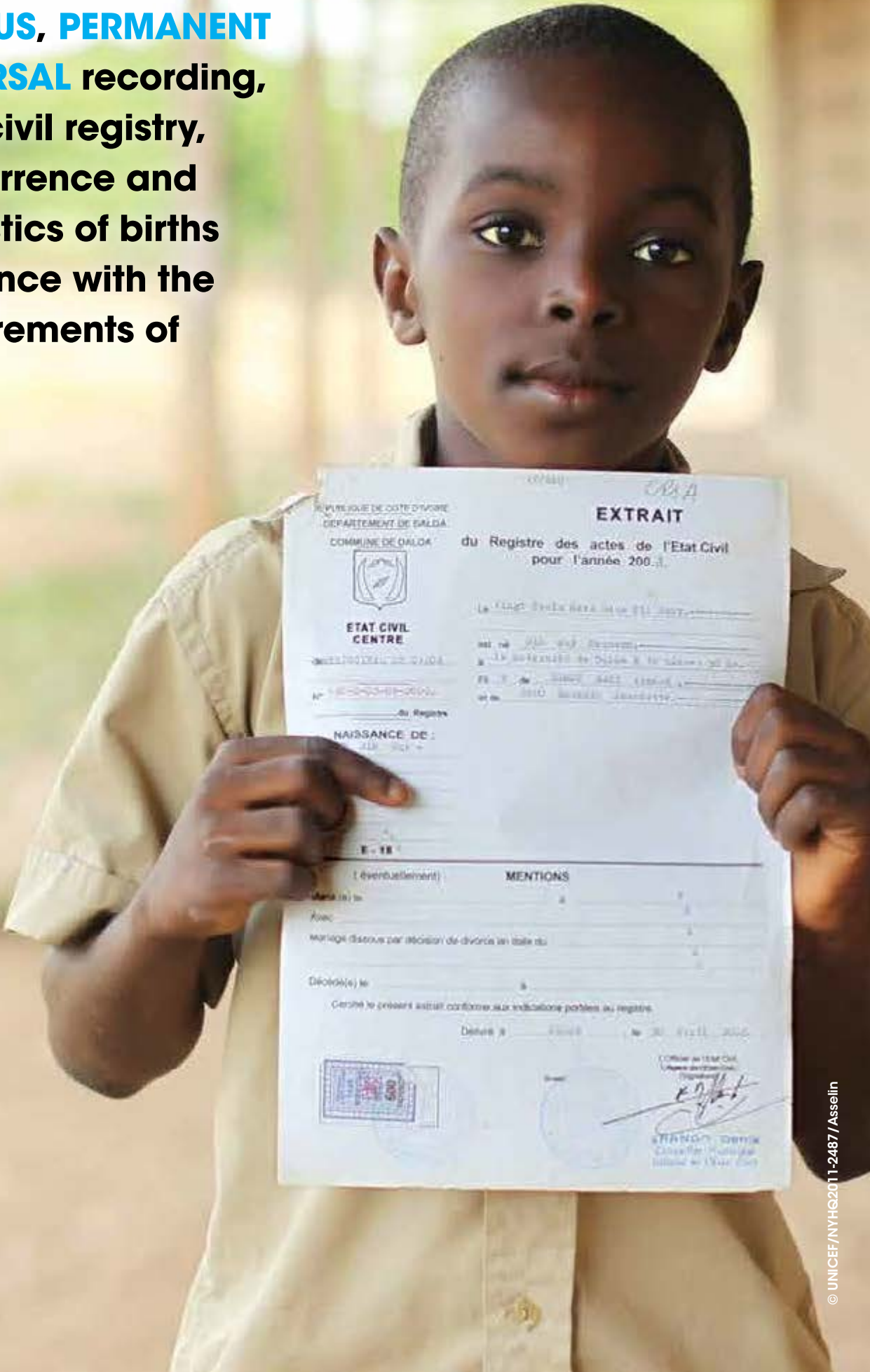
(UNICEF Lao PDR), Abir Abi Khalil (UNICEF Lebanon), Milen Kidane (UNICEF Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa), Rinko Kinoshita (UNICEF Nicaragua), Guillaume Kobehi-Toutou (UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire), George Laryea-Adjei (UNICEF South Africa), Jean Lieby (UNICEF Senegal), Daniela Luciani (UNICEF Senegal), Birgithe Lund-Henriksen (UNICEF Tanzania), Anthony MacDonald (UNICEF Lebanon), Amanda Martin (UNICEF Peru), Ana Cristina Matos (UNICEF Brazil), Mariia Matsepa (UNICEF Ukraine), Cecilie Modvar (UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean), Innocent Kasongo Mofya (UNICEF Zambia), Soraya Abu Monassar (UNICEF Yemen), Mwajuma Kitoi Msangi (UNICEF Tanzania), Sudha Murali (UNICEF Uganda), Kerry Neal (Child Protection Section, UNICEF headquarters), Christopher Ngwerume (UNICEF Liberia), Blandine Moundzengou Ondzaghe (UNICEF Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial Guinea), Andrés Osorio (UNICEF Paraguay), Rose Anne Papavero (UNICEF Bangladesh), Micaela Pasini (UNICEF Yemen), Silvia Pasti (UNICEF Uganda), Virginia Perez (UNICEF Nepal), Nadine Perrault (UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean), Silvia Placid (UNICEF Oman), Vijaya Ratnam Raman (UNICEF Viet Nam), Paula Ramirez-Espana (UNICEF Mexico), Ana Maria Restrepo (UNICEF Argentina), Jucilene Rocha (UNICEF Brazil), Marijana Salinovic (UNICEF Croatia), Ana Lucia Silva (UNICEF Nicaragua), Diane Swales (UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific), Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong (UNICEF Viet Nam), Cecilia Torres (UNICEF Venezuela), Fatma Uluc (UNICEF Turkey), Lucia Vernazza (UNICEF Uruguay), Sebastian Waisgrais (UNICEF Argentina), Brian Wall (UNICEF Yemen), Dorji Wangdi (UNICEF Bhutan), Augustine Wassago (UNICEF Uganda), Cornelius Williams (UNICEF Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa), Fang Yan (UNICEF China) and Danzhen You (Data and Analytics Section, UNICEF headquarters).

The report was edited by Lois Jensen, copy-edited by Pamela Knight, and designed by Big Yellow Taxi, Inc.

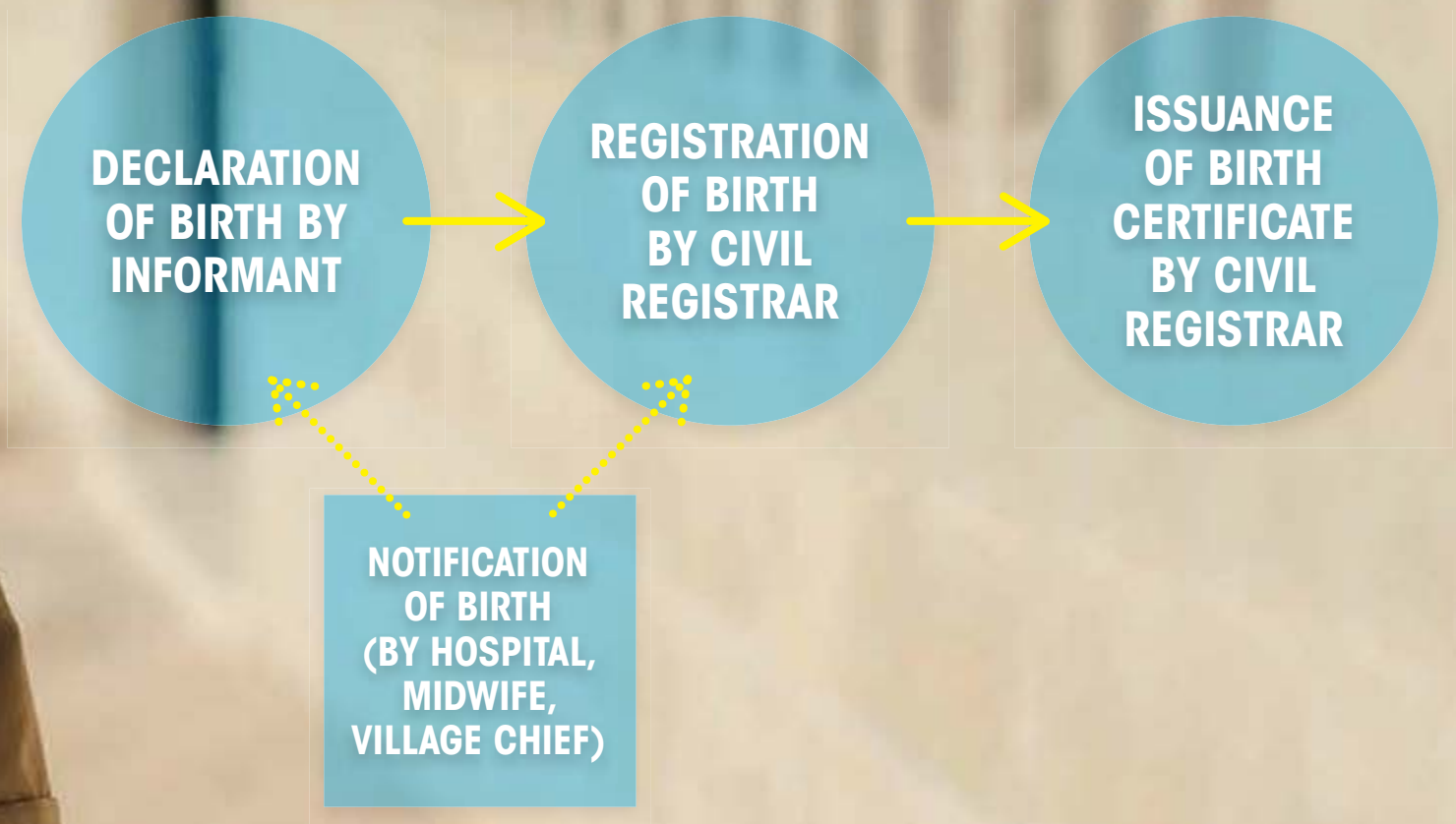
# Contents

01	A passport to protection	06
02	Counting every child	09
03	Where we stand today	14
04	The children left behind	22
05	Progress and prospects	30
06	Key findings and implications for programming	36
	References	39
	Statistical table	40

Birth registration is the **CONTINUOUS, PERMANENT** and **UNIVERSAL** recording, within the civil registry, of the occurrence and characteristics of births in accordance with the legal requirements of a country.



A **birth certificate** is a vital record that documents the birth of a child. In some cases, the issuance of a birth certificate automatically follows birth registration, although in others a separate application must be made.



The notification of a birth is made by an individual or institution to the registrar of vital events in a country. The notification role is usually played by health institutions and birth attendants, and in a limited number of cases by a local government official, such as a village chief. The notification report has no value other than as a control, and it cannot be turned into a legal registration record.



# 01. A passport to protection

© UNICEF/ZAMA2011-0045/Nesbitt

**A** name and nationality is every child's right, enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international treaties. Nevertheless, the births of nearly 230 million children under the age of five have never been registered. This lack of formal recognition by the State usually means that a child is unable to obtain a birth certificate. As a result, he or she may be denied health care or education. Later in life, the lack of official identification documents can mean that a child may enter into marriage or the labour market, or be conscripted into the armed forces, before the legal age. If accused of a crime, unregistered children may be prosecuted as adults, due to their inability to prove their age. In adulthood, birth certificates may be required to obtain social assistance or a job in the formal sector, to buy or prove the right to inherit property, to vote and to obtain a passport. Registering children at birth is the first step in securing

their recognition before the law, safeguarding their rights, and ensuring that any violation of these rights does not go unnoticed.<sup>1</sup>

Birth registration also serves a statistical purpose.<sup>2</sup> Universal birth registration is an essential part of a system of vital statistics, which tracks the major milestones in a person's life – from birth to marriage and death. Such data are essential for planning and implementing development policies and programmes, particularly in health, education, housing, water and sanitation, employment, agriculture and industrial production. In 2002, the General Assembly resolution 'A World Fit for Children' reaffirmed governments' commitment to ensure the registration of all children at birth and to invest in, care for, educate and protect them from harm and exploitation. To achieve these goals, governments must have accurate data from which they can plan. Birth registration is not only a



fundamental right in itself but also a key to ensuring the fulfilment of other rights.

Most countries have mechanisms in place for registering births. However, coverage, type of information obtained and the use of resulting data can differ, based on a country's infrastructure, administrative capacity, availability of funds, access to the population and technology for data management. Rates of registration vary substantially among countries, due to these and other factors. At the same time, international concern about identity and security issues is mounting, bringing new opportunities to address the situation.

Efforts by UNICEF and governmental and non-governmental partners to improve rates of birth registration seek to reinforce government resolve – within a particular legal framework – to register the birth of children in a timely fashion. However, sound national policies and the commitment of government agencies are often not enough. Whether parents register the birth of their child(ren) depends on their awareness of the process and its importance, their ability to access civil registrar services, and their willingness to interface with State authorities. In some countries, if the registry is not secure and confidential, registration may expose a child to unnecessary risks since personal information may be misused, including for discriminatory purposes.

Some countries impose late fees, fines or judicial procedures for late registration. While this may encourage some parents to register their children on time, it can also impose an unfair burden on families that find it difficult to register, such as those living in isolated areas poorly served by government services or who cannot afford the cost of registration. These penalties result in double discrimination against the family. Some families may not register their children until it is convenient to access a registration office or may wait until it is necessary for their children to have formal identification, for example, prior to attending school or receiving social services. In other cases, cultural factors may be at play, including among families whose custom dictates that children should not be named for a period of time after birth.

This publication presents the latest available data on the extent of unregistered children and assesses progress to date in increasing birth registration rates worldwide. It updates and expands on a 2005 UNICEF report called *The 'Rights' Start to Life: A statistical analysis of birth registration*, which used data from 64 countries to provide a global assessment of the issue.<sup>3</sup> The current publication spans 161 countries and presents the latest available country data and

estimates (at both the global and regional levels) on birth registration. The report draws information from more than 300 data sources over a 20-year period. It examines inequities in prevalence according to social, economic, demographic and other characteristics and also highlights trends over time, within and across countries. The findings are intended to inform the development of policies and programmes that advance birth registration worldwide, ensuring that the birth of every child is on record.

---

**“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 7 (1) of the  
Convention on the Rights of the Child**

---



© UNICEF/JGDA2009-00230/Lydia Sekandi

## BOX 1.1 UNICEF: WORKING TOWARDS FREE AND UNIVERSAL BIRTH REGISTRATION

In 2012, UNICEF supported the registration of almost 30 million children through programming in 75 country offices.<sup>4</sup> Activities that year included assistance in the following areas:

### **FORMULATING AND ENACTING LAWS, POLICIES AND STANDARDS**

UNICEF is providing technical support and advocacy for the enactment of laws, policies and standards for free and universal birth registration, in line with international norms. In Zambia, for example, high-level advocacy with the government resulted in a proposal to integrate birth registration into the national health system – a landmark achievement in a country where 14 per cent of children are registered. In Thailand, the prime minister has endorsed a UNICEF-backed early childhood development policy that focuses on equity and includes targets for universal birth registration.

### **IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY**

Services are being expedited through UNICEF support for the modernization and computerization of birth registration systems, and more direct methods, as needed. In Albania, for example, UNICEF mobilized non-governmental partners to provide birth registration paperwork and services to Roma communities and other marginalized groups whose rates of birth registration fall below the national average. In war-torn Democratic Republic of the Congo, a focus on delivering services to the most vulnerable resulted in the registration of more than 350,000 children.

### **IDENTIFYING BARRIERS AND BOTTLENECKS**

A strong base of evidence is essential to effective advocacy for increased public investment in civil registries, including in birth registration. In Togo, a UNICEF study of two northern districts found that the births of nearly a third of children in rural areas were not registered due to bottlenecks associated with the training of the civil registry and the availability of standardized registers. Action plans are now under way to improve service delivery and to create demand among the local population.

### **BUILDING CAPACITY AND PARTNERSHIPS**

UNICEF continues to support intersectoral initiatives to improve birth registration, often involving South-South cooperation. With support from UNICEF and UNFPA (the UN Population Fund), the Government

of Botswana shared its experiences in birth registration with African ministers at a conference in Durban, South Africa. Requests for assistance from Botswana soon followed, boosting government confidence to push towards universal birth registration.

### **FORGING COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES**

In Guinea-Bissau, UNICEF provided assistance to civil registration offices in eight regions. It also supported birth registration campaigns in areas of that country covered by the Tostan Community-led Empowerment programme, resulting in birth certificates for more than 4,200 children. This pilot exercise introduced mobile units into the birth registration system, which is now being expanded. Efforts in other countries are seeking to expand birth registration through greater involvement by local communities.

### **ENCOURAGING INNOVATION**

Many UNICEF country offices are exploring the use of mobile communications technologies, including cell phones, to increase birth registration coverage. As a result, access to reliable data in real time is being used for planning and decision-making. In Nigeria, Rapid SMS (text messaging) is being used to gather registration information from around the country on a biweekly basis, enabling the National Population Commission to introduce timely interventions in low-performing areas. In Albania, Kosovo, Pakistan and other countries, 'geo-mapping' technologies have facilitated the collection and visualization of birth registration data, allowing government officials to readily pinpoint problem areas.

### **MEETING CRITICAL CHALLENGES**

A persistent and growing problem for the international community is the registration of children who are stateless. One example is the Bidoon (meaning 'without nationality' in Arabic), who have been living in Kuwait for centuries. A UNICEF situation analysis of children in Kuwait has found that many Bidoon children are without health and education services, despite a government-administered fund for this purpose, and may also lack birth certificates.



## 02. Counting every child

© UNICEF/BANA2012-02020/Mawa

Data on birth registration are drawn from official registration figures, censuses, vital statistics and household surveys. 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 most countries remains a serious challenge. In the absence of reliable administrative data, household surveys have become a key source of data to monitor levels and trends in birth registration. In most low- and middle-income countries, such surveys represent the only source of this information.

The two main household survey programmes that collect data on birth registration are the UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS),

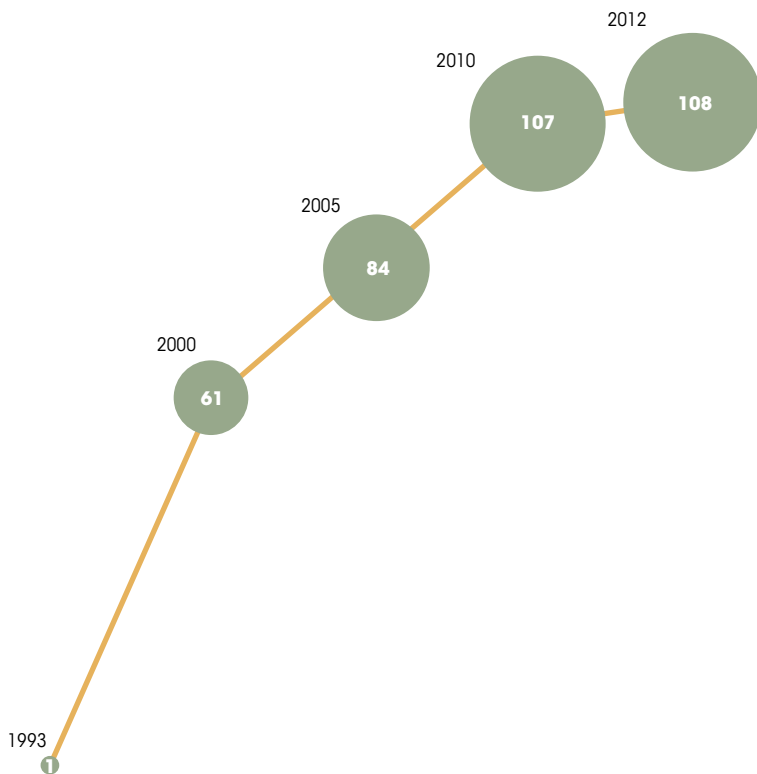
supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The MICS collect data to monitor and assess the situation of children and women in a wide range of areas, including nutrition, health, water and sanitation, education, protection and HIV/AIDS, and to compile important demographic indicators. Since the survey programme's inception in 1995, data have been collected over four rounds (in 1995, 2000, 2005-2006 and 2009-2011) in more than 100 countries. The fifth round of MICS is currently under way and is expected to be completed by 2015.

Data on birth registration have been collected through MICS since 1999 in almost 130 surveys conducted in about 50 low- and middle-income countries. The MICS questionnaire asks all mothers (or primary caregivers) of children under five years of

**Over the last 20 years, the number of countries with household survey data on birth registration has risen dramatically**

*Number of low- and middle-income countries with data on birth registration drawn from household surveys, 1993 to 2012*



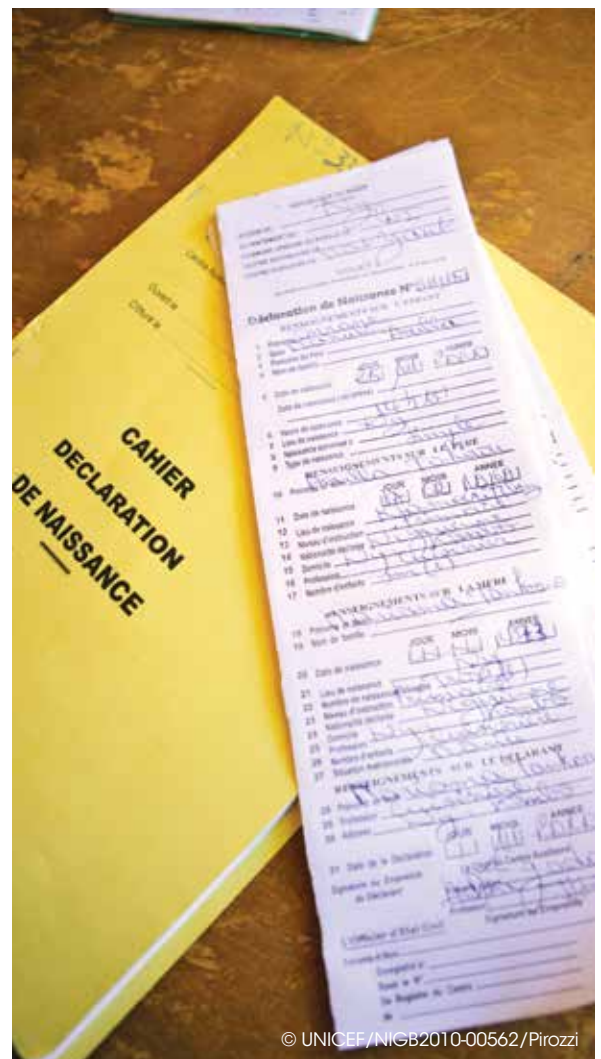
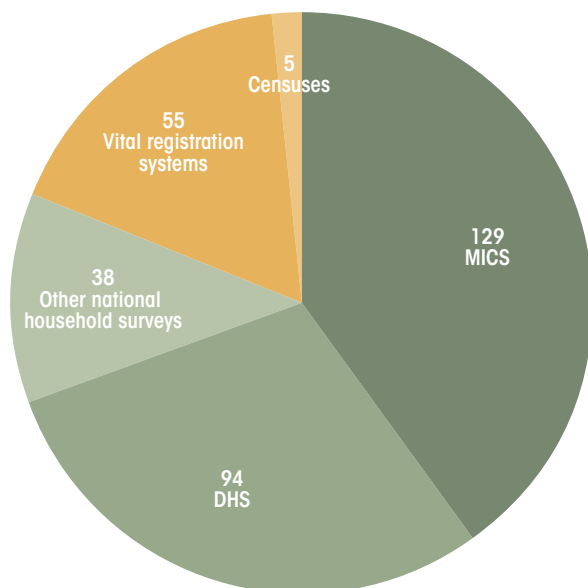
age to respond to questions regarding possession of a birth certificate or registration with civil authorities and knowledge of how to register a child.

The DHS also measure a wide range of demographic and health indicators on women and children in developing countries. The standard household questionnaire includes a question on whether all children under the age of five are registered. In previous rounds of DHS, questions on birth registration were asked as part of a section on reproductive health in the individual questionnaire addressed to girls and women of reproductive age. Information on whether births had been registered was recorded for all of a woman’s deliveries in the five years preceding the survey, regardless of whether the child(ren) survived.

The first DHS with data on birth registration was conducted in Turkey in 1993; since that time, data on the issue have been collected in more than 90 DHS around the world.

**Household surveys represent the largest source of data on birth registration in low- and middle-income countries**

*Number of data sources on birth registration from low- and middle-income countries, by type*



Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013.

© UNICEF/NIGB2010-00562/Pirozzi

## BOX 2.1 A NOTE ON THE DATA

The amount of data available on birth registration has increased dramatically over the years, enabling government officials to identify where the problem of low registration is most acute. That said, available data have certain limitations that need to be understood in order to accurately discern patterns and trends. The collection of information on birth registration can present challenges, which should be kept in mind when interpreting data.

### DEFINING THE INDICATOR

The standard indicator used in DHS and MICS to report on birth registration refers to the percentage of children under age five (0 to 59 months) with a birth certificate or whose birth was reported as registered with civil authorities at the time of the survey. Data derived from vital registration systems normally refer to the proportion of live births that were registered within a year or the legal time frame for registration applicable in the country. Most of the data presented in this report are consistent with the DHS and MICS indicator. Data that differ from the standard DHS and MICS definition are mentioned in notes at the bottom of the figures or indicated with a 'y' in the statistical table.

### CHALLENGES IN DATA COLLECTION

Prevalence rates 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 result. 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 card or other document.

### CURRENCY OF AVAILABLE DATA

The availability of data on birth registration is highly uneven across countries. In some cases, the latest source of comparable data dates back to 2000; in other cases, it is as recent as 2012. Data indicate birth registration status at the time of collection and do not necessarily reflect the current situation.

The analyses contained in the following chapters are based on data from the most recent source for each country. Year ranges provided in the sources for figures, maps and tables denote the period in which data collection took place. For each country, data refer to the most recent year available

during the specified range. The exact years of the most recent data source for each country are indicated in the statistical table.

### ANALYSING TRENDS

When examining trends in birth registration, several important factors should be considered:

- **Variations in the number of years between consecutive surveys or other data sources.** These range from one to more than 20, depending on the country. Data on South Africa, for instance, have been collected regularly since 1991, allowing for a long period of time in which to assess change.
- **The number of data points available for each country.** These can also vary and affect the way in which trends are analysed. Patterns of change are more evident when several data sources are available for a country.
- **The magnitude of change.** Change can be gauged in two ways: by looking at the absolute difference (change in percentage points) between estimates and by looking at the percentage change between estimates. Conclusions need to be drawn on the basis of both measures.
- **How questionnaire design and implementation can affect findings across consecutive data collection rounds.** This could include, for example, changes in sampling frames, questionnaire content or structure. The way in which data on birth registration have been collected has evolved substantially over the years, and is likely to have influenced responses. While data sources have been reviewed to verify the comparability of data over time, caution is still warranted when comparing findings from repeat surveys or other data sources.
- **Identifying differences in estimates that are larger than one would expect from sampling errors alone.** A sampling error is usually measured in terms of the standard error for a particular statistic. The standard error can be used to calculate confidence intervals within which the true value of an estimate can reasonably be assumed to fall. This means that for any given statistic calculated from a sample survey, the value of that statistic will fall within a range. That range, rather than the exact statistic, has to be considered when comparing estimates.

All of these factors need to be taken into account when analysing trends, since observed differences may be the result of differences in data collection methods, bias or standard errors rather than actual changes in birth registration.

A marriage certificate is usually needed in **INDONESIA** to register a child's birth

In **LEBANON**, most Palestinian children are registered as refugees, but those who do not have this official status cannot have their birth registered

In **UZBEKISTAN**, parents must pay a fee to register a child

In **LIBERIA**, the law stipulates a fine of \$50 if children are not registered within 14 days after birth, but it has not been actively enforced since the end of the war

In **MEXICO**, a birth certificate is usually required for non-emergency health services and for health insurance coverage

In **PAKISTAN**, children are registered using the 'bay form', which is necessary for obtaining official documents, such as a passport, and for admission into school

Legislation in **ANGOLA**, updated in 2007, ensures free birth registration for children under age five, and a 2013 presidential decree aims to decrease the backlog of undocumented citizens by providing free registration and identity cards for all citizens until the end of 2016

In **BELIZE**, parents may be summoned within one year and charged a fee for late registration if a child is not registered within 42 days of birth

In **ZAMBIA**, the only law governing birth registration was enacted in 1973; the processing and issuing of birth certificates is highly centralized and can take months

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA** has just one birth registration site serving a population of roughly seven million people spread across more than 460,000 square kilometres, including 600 islands

In **ERITREA**, issuance of birth certificates after 90 days requires a government-issued clearance paper to confirm parenthood and date of birth, and costs the equivalent of one week's average rent in rural areas of the country

Children in **BHUTAN** whose father is unknown cannot be registered in the civil registry

In the **GAMBIA**, a father is primarily responsible for registering a child and can face fines or imprisonment if he fails to do so

# BIRTH REGISTRATION AROUND THE WORLD

The 'birth notice form' in **NEPAL** requires the names of both the father and grandfather

Women in **NICARAGUA** living in consensual unions can only register their children temporarily if the father has not signed the birth record

In **URUGUAY**, all public and private institutions must keep birth registration records and are required to provide a birth certificate to the mother and send a copy to the Central Office of Civil Registration

Administrative processes adopted in **TURKEY** in 2008 require children to have their births registered in order to be recorded in the address registration system, which is a requirement for automatic enrolment in school

An incentive for timely birth registration in **UKRAINE** is the payment of lump-sum childbirth grants by the government

Birth registration forms in **OMAN** include the religion of both parents

**MYANMAR** currently has no electronic record of children registered at birth or registered through late registration procedures; records exist only as paper copies kept at the local Township Medical Office. At the national level, forms are discarded after two years

The image shows a woman with a baby, holding a 'SHORT BIRTH CERTIFICATE' form. The form is from Nepal and includes the following fields:

CHILD'S NAME	
NAME	
SURNAME	
DATE OF BIRTH	
PLACE OF BIRTH	
MOTHER'S NAME	
FATHER'S NAME	
GRANDFATHER'S NAME	
RELIGION	
SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR	
OFFICE	
DATE	



## 03. Where we stand today

© UNICEF/NYHQ2011-1774/Pirozzi

**G**lobally, the births of nearly 230 million children under age five have never been recorded. Asia is home to more than half of these children (59 per cent); another 37 per cent live in sub-Saharan Africa; the remaining 4 per cent are from other regions. Nearly one in three unregistered children live in India. In 2012 alone, 57 million infants – four out of every ten babies delivered worldwide that year – were not registered with civil authorities.

Approximately two thirds (65 per cent) of the global population of children under five have been registered, although significant regional differences can be found. The percentage of registered children is above 90 per cent in all industrialized countries and among some countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) and Latin America and the

Caribbean.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, fewer than one in five children have had their births recorded in some sub-Saharan African countries.

Among the regions analysed in this report, CEE/CIS has the highest level of birth registration, with 98 per cent of children under five registered. This is followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, at 92 per cent, and the Middle East and North Africa, at 87 per cent.

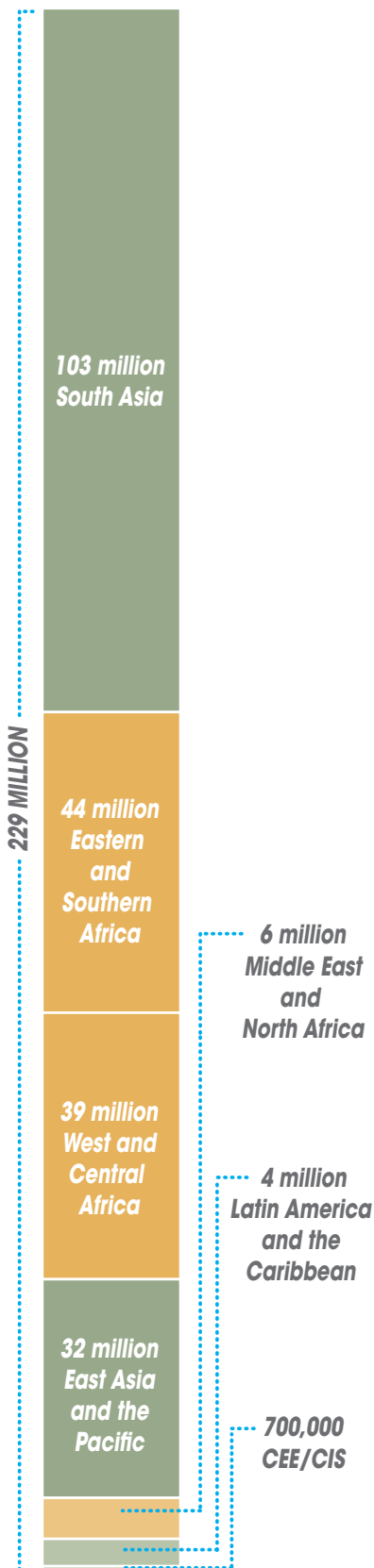
The lowest levels of birth registration are found in sub-Saharan Africa (44 per cent) and South Asia (39 per cent) – the region with the largest overall number of births and children under five. In Eastern and Southern Africa, only 38 per cent of children are registered by their fifth birthday, leaving about 44 million children under five unrecorded. The rate of birth registration in West and Central Africa is slightly higher, at 47 per cent.



# Globally, the births of nearly 230 million children under the age of five have never been recorded

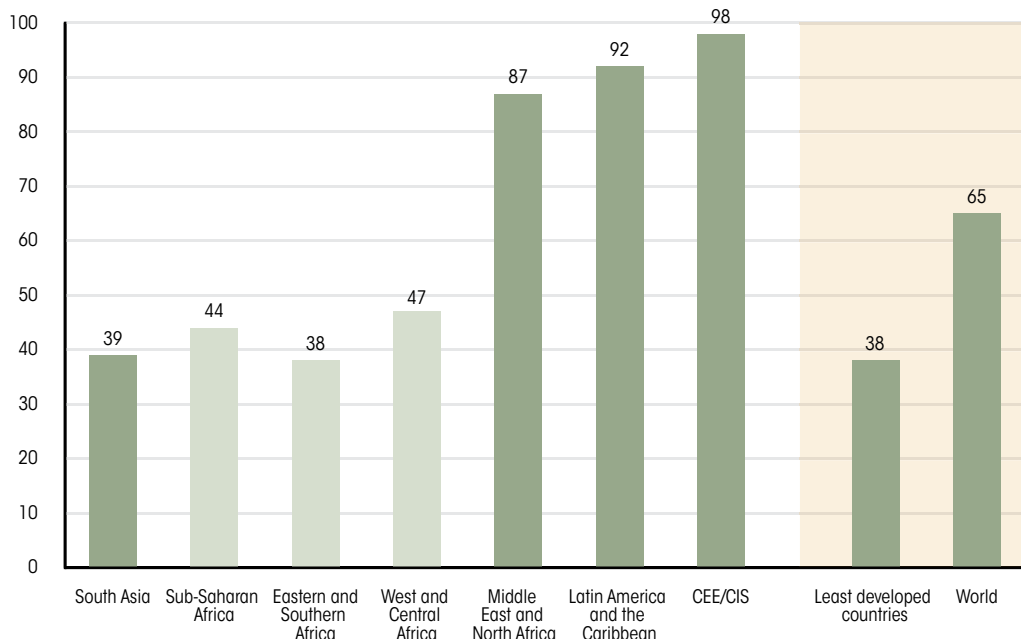
## More than half the children who have been denied their right to an identity live in Asia

Number of children under age five whose births are not registered, by region



## Birth registration prevalence varies significantly across regions

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by region



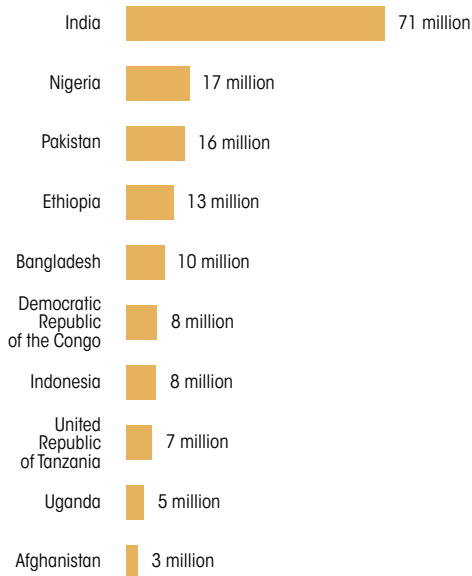
Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered and number of children under age five whose births are not registered, by region

	Percentage of children whose births are registered	Number of children whose births are not registered
CEE/CIS	98	700,000
Latin America and the Caribbean	92	4 million
Middle East and North Africa	87	6 million
East Asia and the Pacific	-	32 million
Sub-Saharan Africa	44	85 million
Eastern and Southern Africa	38	44 million
West and Central Africa	47	39 million
South Asia	39	103 million
Least developed countries	38	81 million
World	65	229 million

Notes: Estimates are based on a subset of 158 countries covering 83 per cent of the global population of children under age five. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least half of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate the percentage of children under age five whose births are registered in East Asia and the Pacific because comparable data on birth registration are not available for China. Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys, censuses and vital registration systems, 2005-2012. Data for industrialized countries and the Russian Federation are from: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Population and Vital Statistics Report*, Statistical Papers, Series A, Vol. LXV, Statistics Division, United Nations, New York, 2013.

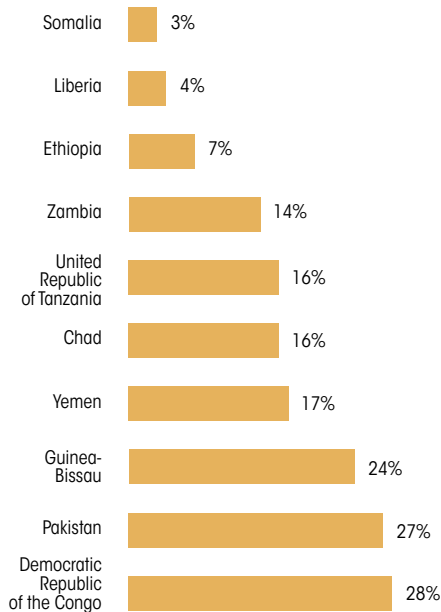
## Among the 10 countries with the largest numbers of unregistered children, India has the most, by a wide margin

Number of children under age five whose births are not registered in the 10 countries with the largest numbers of unregistered children



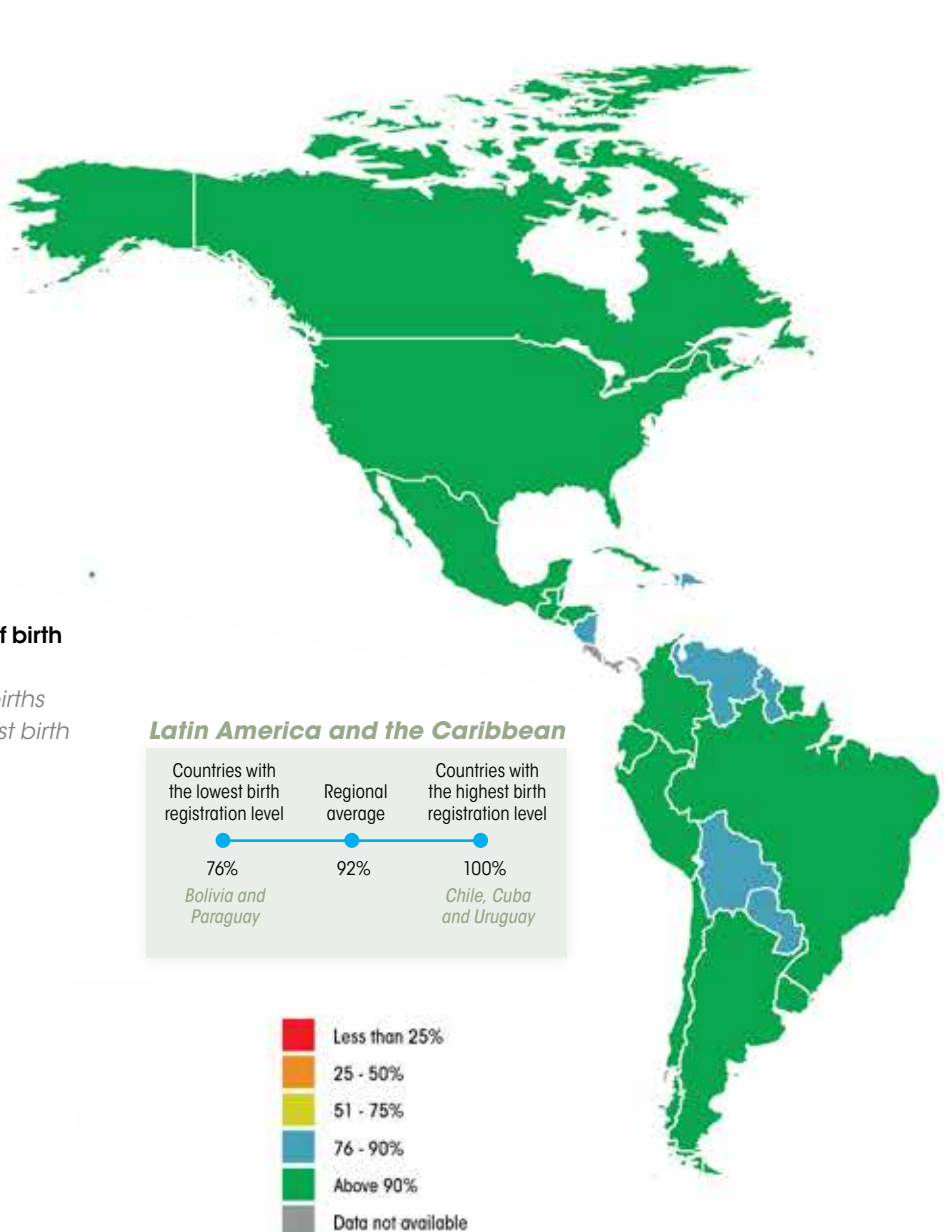
## Most of the 10 countries with the lowest levels of birth registration are found in sub-Saharan Africa

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, in the 10 countries with the lowest birth registration levels worldwide



## The lowest birth registration levels are found in sub-Saharan Africa

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by country

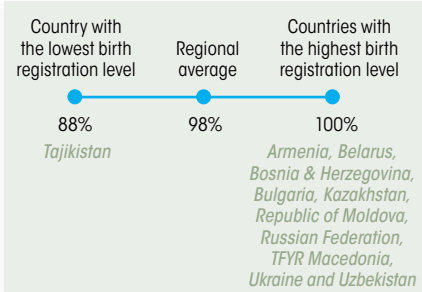


**Notes:** The map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The final boundary between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Data for Bolivia, Egypt, Liberia, Namibia and Yemen refer to the percentage of children under age five with a birth certificate. To identify the countries with data that differ from the standard definition, see the statistical table. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate a regional estimate for East Asia and the Pacific.

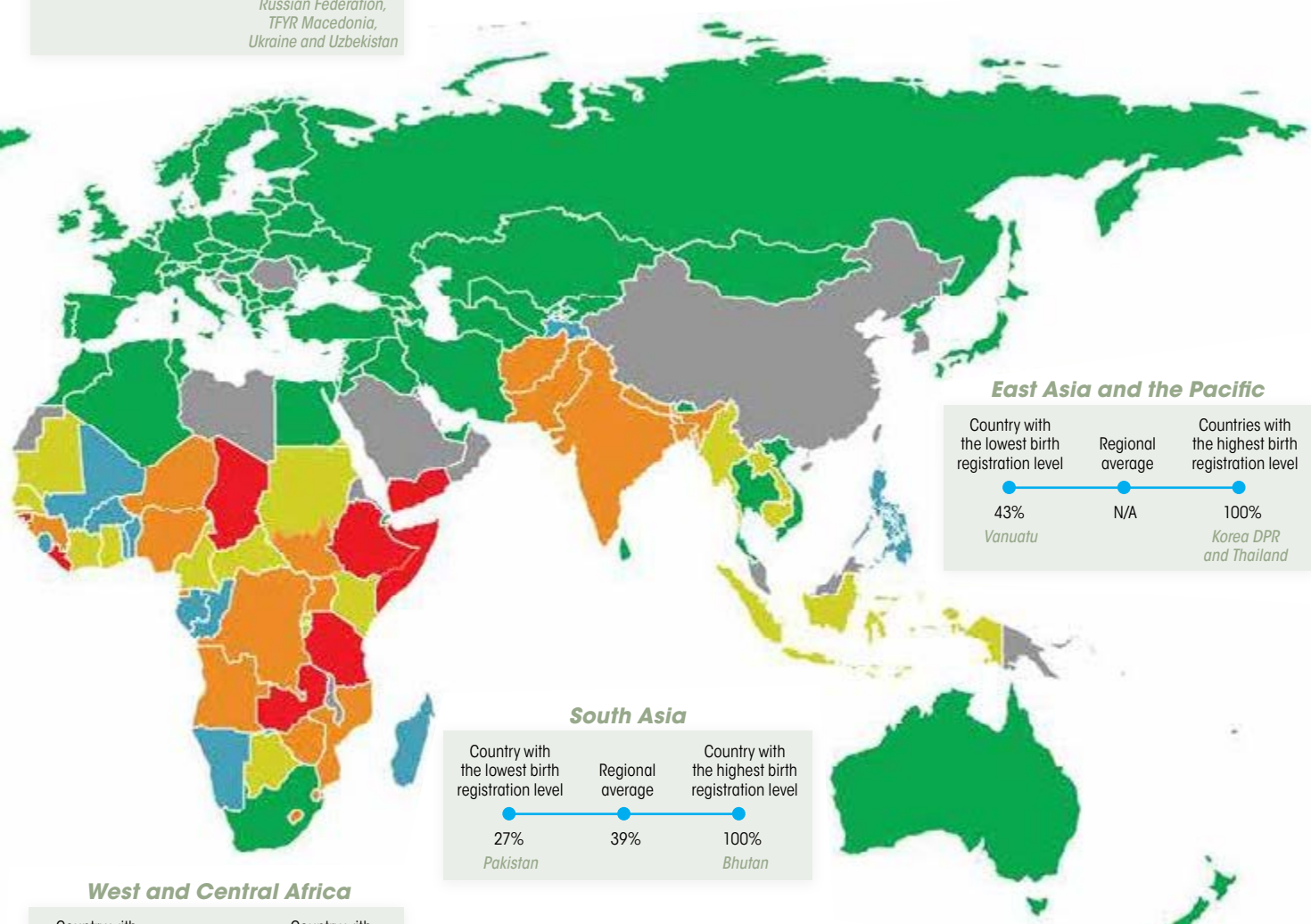
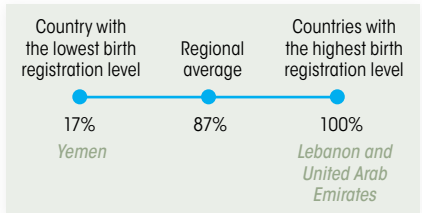
**Sources:** UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys, censuses and vital registration systems, 2000-2012. Data for industrialized countries and the Russian Federation are from: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Population and Vital Statistics Report*.

# a major challenge in many African and Asian countries

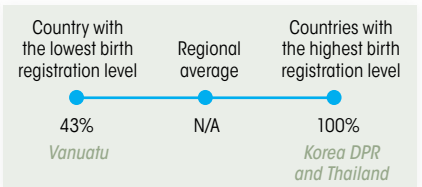
## CEE/CIS



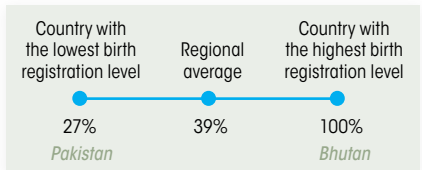
## Middle East and North Africa



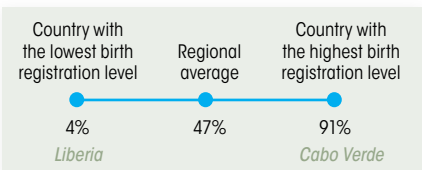
## East Asia and the Pacific



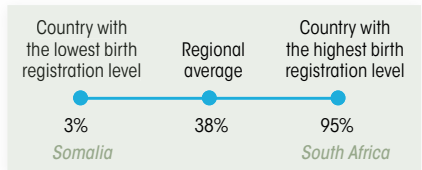
## South Asia



## West and Central Africa



## Eastern and Southern Africa

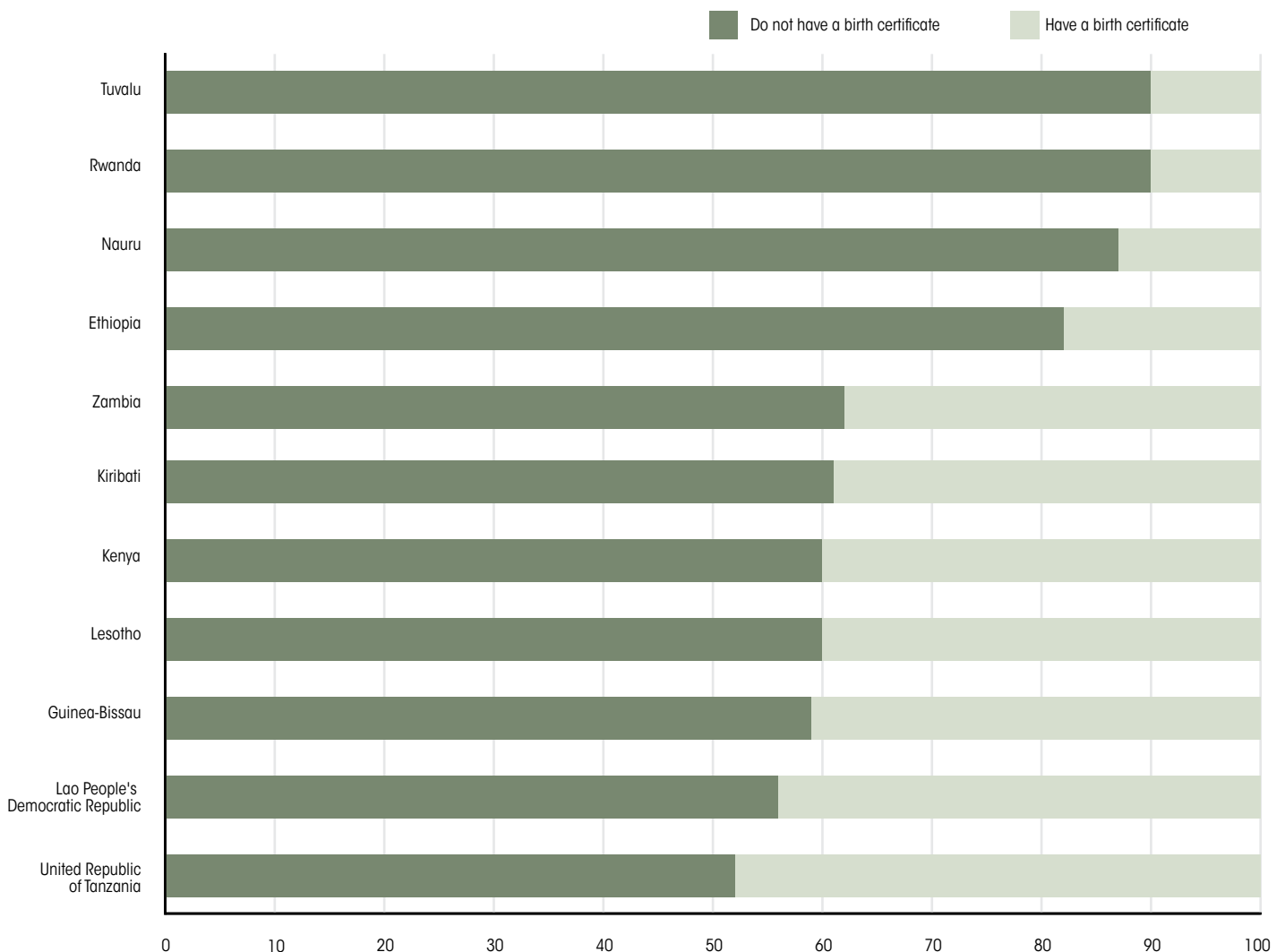


## Many children whose births are recorded lack proof of registration

A birth certificate is a certified document that can be issued once a child is registered. As such, it is proof of registration and can be used to access services such as education and health care or to document a child's age. Nevertheless, the data show significant differences between the proportion of children whose births are reported as registered and those who actually have a birth certificate. Overall, one in seven registered children do not possess a birth certificate, but this proportion differs significantly across regions and countries. For instance, in Eastern and Southern Africa, only about half of the registered children have a birth certificate, compared to 88 per cent of registered children in West and Central Africa.

In Rwanda, where 63 per cent of children under five are reportedly registered, only one in 10 have a document that can attest to their registration with civil authorities. 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. As a result, around 290 million children (or 45 per cent of all children under the age of five worldwide) do not possess a birth certificate.

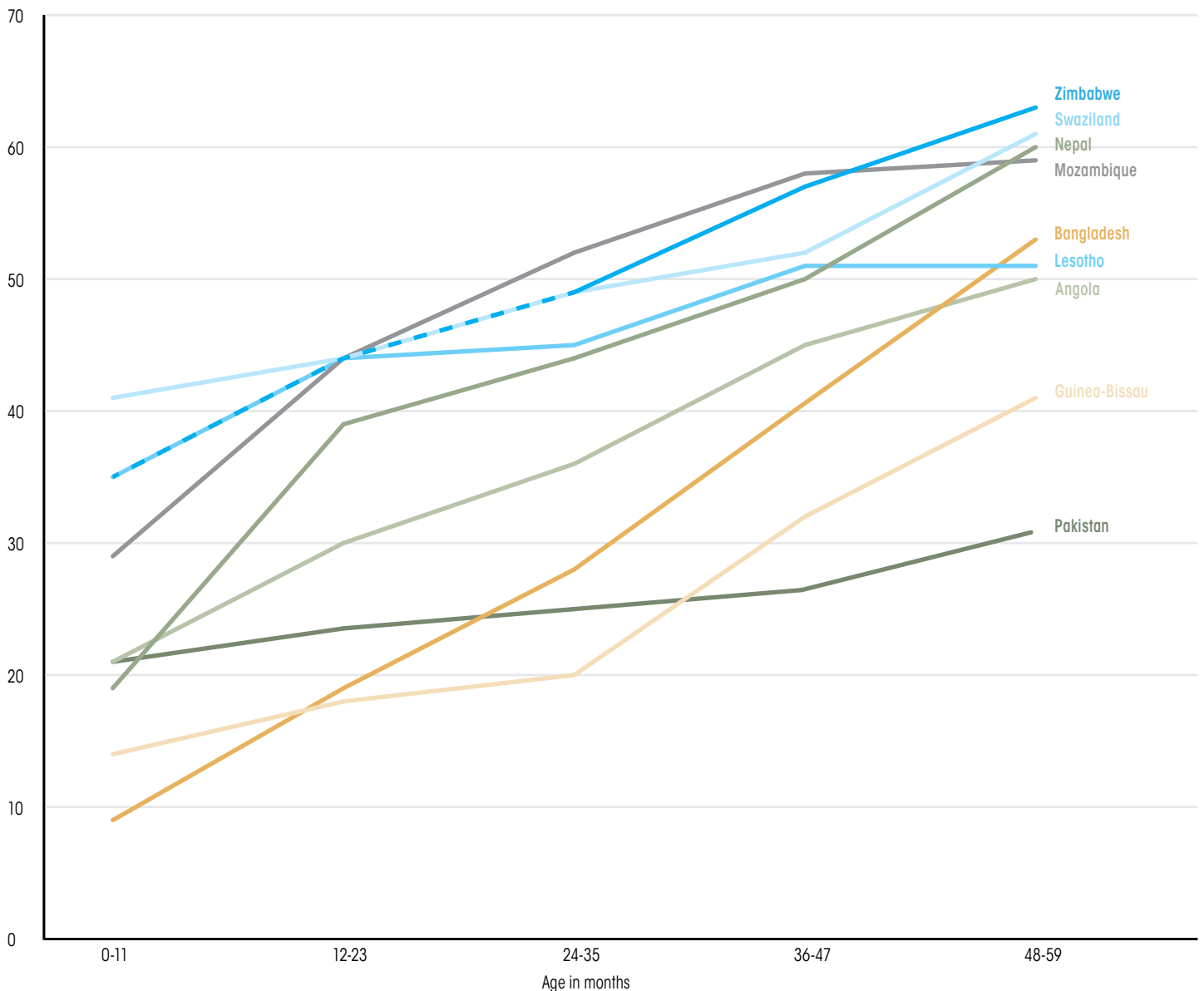
Percentage distribution of children under age five whose births are registered, by whether or not they have a birth certificate, in selected countries



Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS and MICS, 2005-2012.

## Children are more likely to be registered as they grow older

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by age (in months), in the nine countries with the largest differences in birth registration levels by age among countries with overall birth registration levels below 50 per cent



Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS and MICS, 2001-2011.

Registration of birth becomes more likely as a child grows older. Data show that in about half the countries where less than 50 per cent of children have been registered, birth registration levels are generally higher among older children. In the remaining countries, no significant differences are observed by age. Striking differences are found in countries including Angola, Bangladesh, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Nepal, where four-year-old children are more than twice as likely to have their births registered than

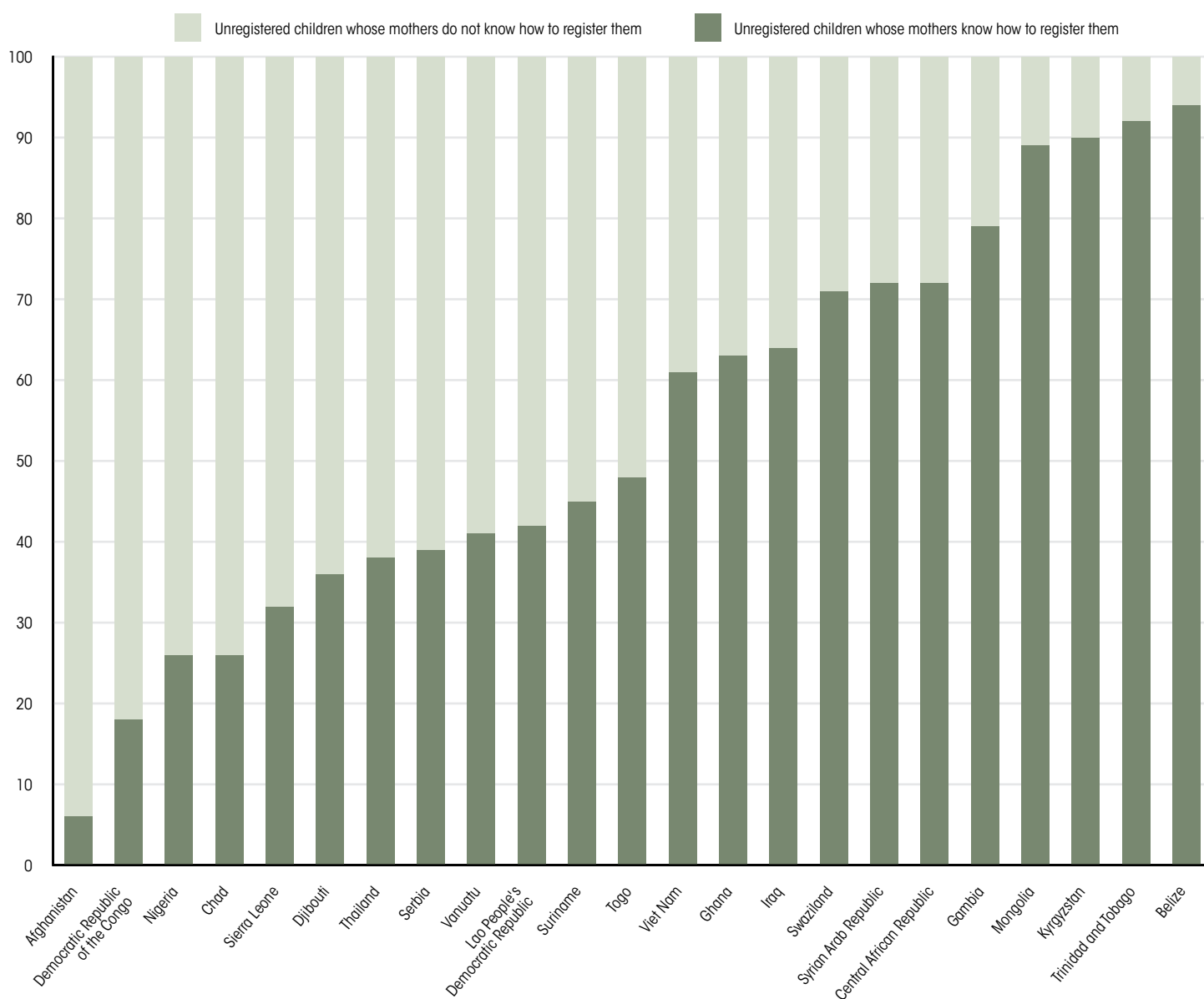
infants under a year old. This tendency towards higher levels of birth registration among older children may be due to the fact that, in certain contexts, the lack of a birth certificate prevents them from accessing education or health services, which may, in turn, increase demand for birth registration as children mature. Here it is important to remember that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and UN Statistics Division principles clearly advocate registration immediately after birth.

## Many mothers lack knowledge of how to register a child's birth

A variety of factors influence birth registration levels, including government commitment, a country's legislative framework and whether or not existing infrastructure can support the logistical aspects of birth registration, especially in remote areas. The value that individuals and families place on registering a child is equally important, along with the barriers they may face in doing so. These can include costs related to registration fees, travel to registration facilities and time. The lack of adequate

knowledge of how to register a child can present another major obstacle to the fulfilment of a child's right to identity. Data show that in about half the countries with available data, most mothers of unregistered children admit to not knowing how to register a child's birth. In other countries, the majority of mothers appear to be aware of the registration process, which points to other barriers to birth registration.

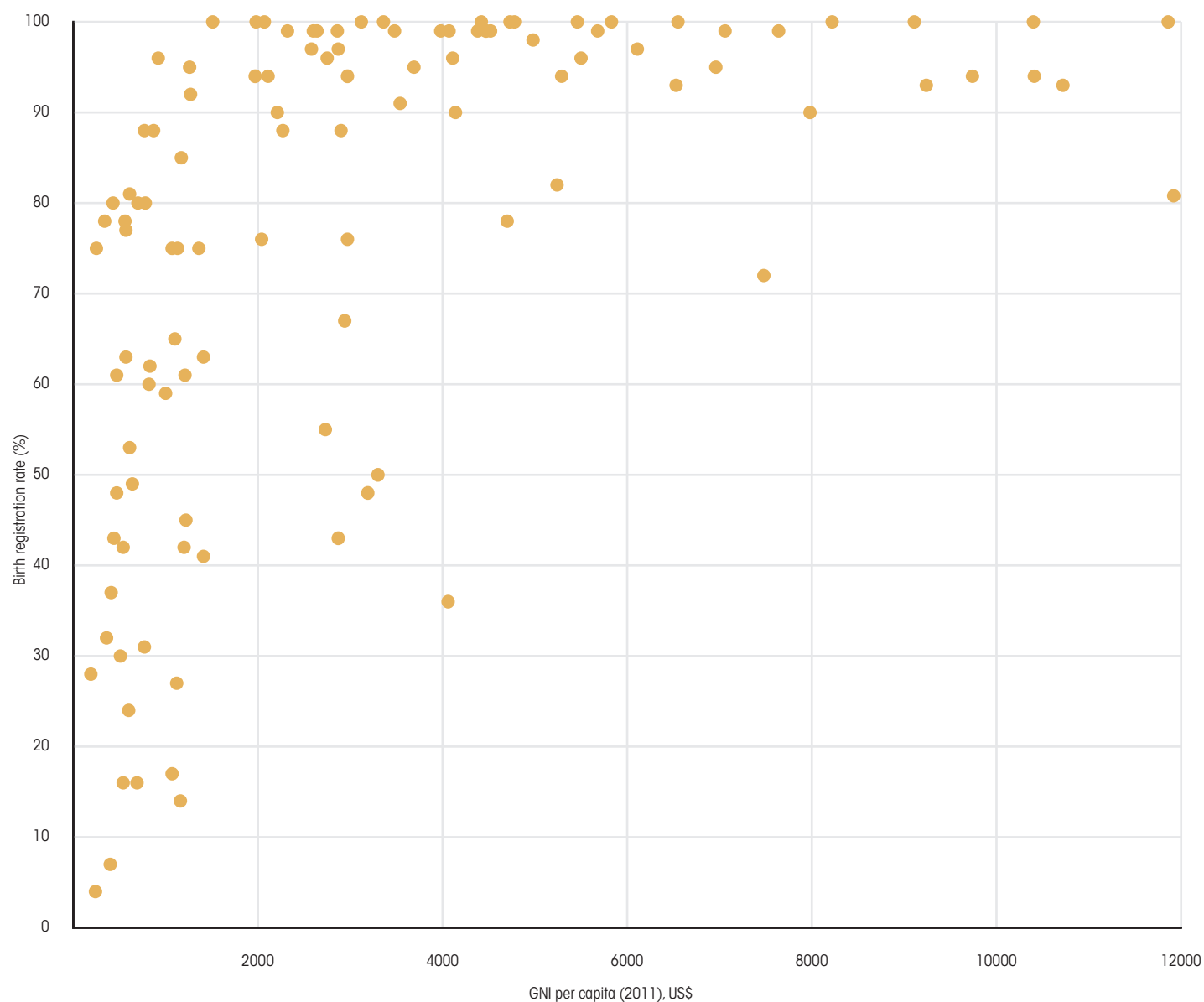
Percentage distribution of children under age five whose births are not registered, by a mother's (or caregiver's) knowledge of how to register a child, in selected countries



Note: Data for Mongolia, Serbia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago are based on 25-49 unweighted cases. Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on MICS, 2005-2012.

## A country can achieve a high birth registration rate even with low per capita income

Birth registration rates and gross national income (GNI) per capita in US\$, in selected low- and middle-income countries



Note: Each dot represents a country.

Sources: Data on GNI per capita are from the World Bank, 2011 (available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD>); data on birth registration rates are from UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys, censuses and vital registration systems, 2000-2012.

National income per capita is an important variable that can help explain the existence of a functioning civil registration system within a country. As a general rule, the timely and complete registration of vital events, including birth records, improves with economic development. Unusually high or low rates for a given level of national income suggest that other factors may be influencing the level of birth registration. For example, island countries tend to show relatively good registration rates because of the importance of communication with and travel to the outside world; hence, systems for the issuance of identity and travel documents tend to be regarded as priorities.

Available data indicate that when national income is above US\$6,000 per capita, a country is very likely to have a birth registration rate above 80 per cent. In a few exceptional cases, countries with an income above this level have low registration rates. However, in countries with a per capita income below \$6,000, the relationship between income and birth registration rates becomes murky: Some of these countries have very high registration rates and others very low rates. In other words, a country can realize a high birth registration rate even with low per capita income.



## 04. The children left behind

UNICEF/NYHQ2012-2269/Markisz

**V**arious background characteristics of a child and his or her family, including rural or urban residence, wealth and a mother's education, can affect the likelihood of birth registration. Regional estimates suggest that birth registration rates among girls and boys are very similar and that gender parity in birth registration is found in almost all countries with available data.<sup>6</sup> However, children of different social and economic backgrounds are associated with very different levels of birth registration. The children most affected by these inequities are described below.

### CHILDREN FROM CERTAIN ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Religion and ethnicity appear to have some influence over birth registration levels.<sup>7</sup> In certain cultures and population groups, more emphasis and value

may be placed on traditional customs or practices (such as naming ceremonies) than the formal process of birth registration. Ethnicity can affect birth registration levels in other ways since, in some countries, minority groups are more likely to live in remote areas where birth registration services are either lacking or difficult to access. Even in countries such as Viet Nam, where birth registration is almost universal, children from ethnic minorities have birth registration rates below the national average (85 per cent), compared to 97 per cent among Kinh/Hoa children. Disparities among ethnic groups are even more pronounced in other countries, such as the Central African Republic. There, birth registration stands at 77 per cent among the Zande/Nzakara, but falls to 49 per cent among the Sara.

Significant disparities in birth registration levels can also be observed among children of different religious



groups. In Chad, for example, birth registration rates among children from Muslim and Christian (Protestant or Catholic) families are similar to the national average (between 15 per cent and 17 per cent), while children from religious minorities are significantly less likely to be registered. The opposite can be observed in other countries. In India, for instance, the lowest levels of birth registration are found among children from the two largest population groups – Hindus and Muslims. Children from religious minorities, such as the Sikhs and Jains, are about twice as likely to be registered.

### CHILDREN LIVING IN RURAL AREAS

A significant barrier to birth registration is the distance to the nearest registration facility. Accessibility is influenced by location and terrain, existing infrastructure and the availability of transportation. The greater the distance to the registration centre, the higher the financial and opportunity costs for the family. Urban populations are less subject to such constraints, as confirmed by the differences in urban and rural registration rates for almost all regions. Globally, children living in urban areas are one and a half times more likely to be registered than their rural counterparts. However, as overall levels of birth registration increase, disparities due to place of residence diminish, as demonstrated in the region with the highest level of birth registration – CEE/CIS. Most countries in that region have similar birth registration rates in rural and urban areas, making it the only region in which no disparities in registration levels based on place of residence are found.

Countries in other regions present striking differences, with rural children at a distinct disadvantage. In Chad, for instance, where the national birth registration rate is 16 per cent, 42 per cent of urban children are registered compared to 9 per cent of rural children. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the proportion of urban children who are registered is more than four times higher than their rural peers.

### CHILDREN FROM PERIPHERAL OR REMOTE AREAS

Mapping birth registration levels by region or province can illustrate where birth registration disparities exist within a country. In most countries, higher levels of birth registration can be observed around the capital and other cities, with a clear decrease in registration further away from major population centres. However, in a few countries, areas far from the capital have very high registration rates as a result of targeted birth registration programmes, including those involving mobile registration units in particular provinces.

### CHILDREN FROM POOR HOUSEHOLDS

In most regions, birth registration rates tend to be highest among the richest 20 per cent (quintile) of the population.<sup>8</sup> In West and Central Africa, for example, 71 per cent of children in the richest quintile are registered, compared to only 27 per cent of children in the poorest quintile. In the Middle East and North Africa, 94 per cent of children in the richest quintile are registered compared to 76 per cent in the poorest quintile.

Again, as birth registration levels increase at the national level, disparities in registration according to wealth decrease. This pattern is again observed in CEE/CIS, where levels of registration are high regardless of household wealth.

In almost all the countries with data, richer children are more likely to be registered, confirming that poverty is associated with low levels of birth registration. In the United Republic of Tanzania, for instance, only 4 per cent of the poorest quintile of children are registered, compared to 56 per cent in the richest quintile. Disparities in registration rates according to economic status are visible even in countries with high levels of birth registration: In countries including Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Indonesia, Mali and Viet Nam, disparities associated with wealth are found, despite national birth registration rates exceeding 60 per cent.

### CHILDREN OF UNEDUCATED MOTHERS

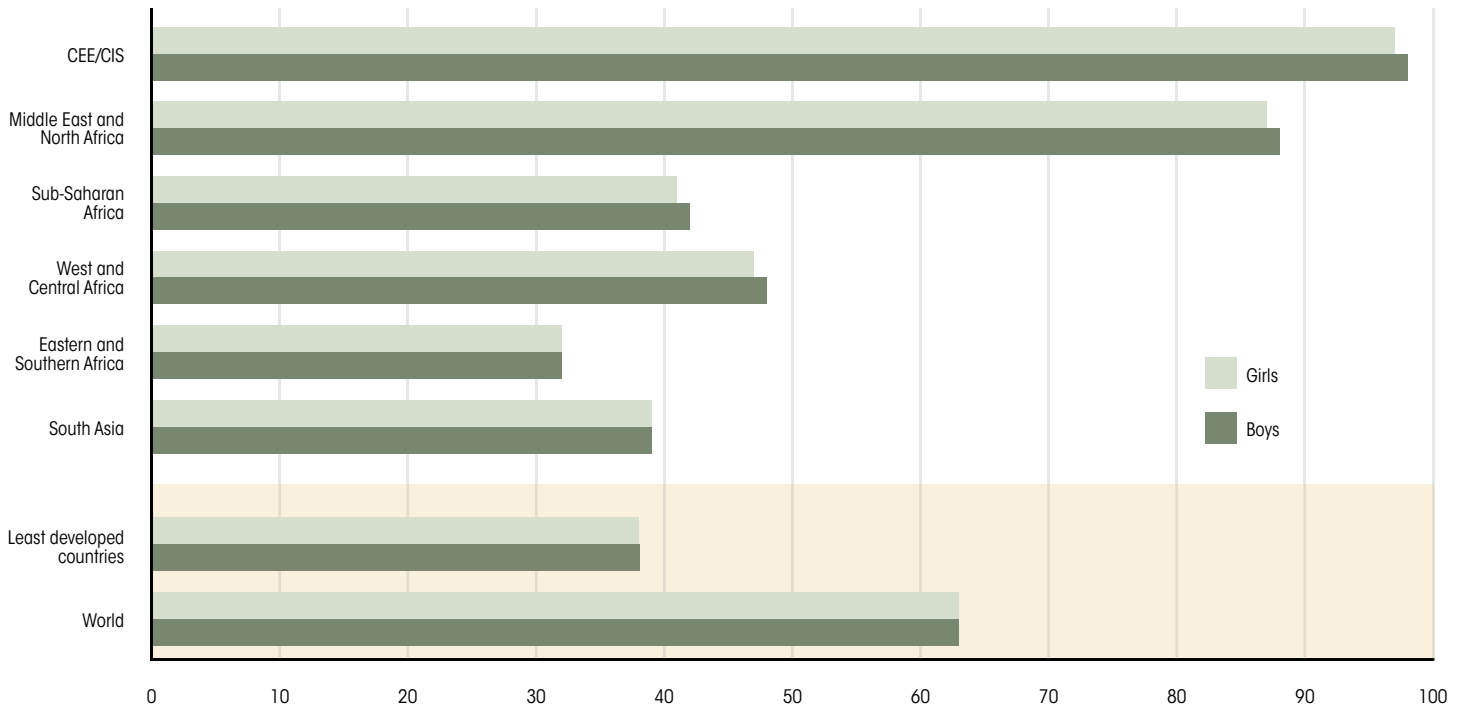
The education level of a mother has consistently been shown to influence the health and well-being of her family. This applies to birth registration as well. Mothers with some schooling are more likely to know how to register a child than their uneducated peers, and the proportion of registered children is highest among those whose mothers have a secondary education. In Nigeria, for example, data show that 21 per cent of children whose mothers have no education, 42 per cent of children whose mothers have a primary education, and 67 per cent of children whose mothers have a secondary education are registered. Likewise for India, birth registration levels increase with a mother's education, at 24 per cent, 47 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively. In Ethiopia, where national birth registration is only 7 per cent, birth registration levels increase substantially as a mother's education level rises – from no schooling (4 per cent of children registered) to primary education (7 per cent registered) to secondary education or higher (33 per cent registered). The disparities persist even as national levels of birth registration rise. In Cameroon, where 61 per cent of children under five are registered, children whose mothers have a primary education are more than twice as likely to be registered as those whose mothers are uneducated.

**A note on the data:** The following section explores the relationships between birth registration rates and the social, economic and demographic characteristics of a child and his or her family, such as urban or rural residence, economic status and mother's education. While associations may be found, care must be taken in interpreting them, since they may be due to the confounding influence of certain unknown or correlated variables. Children of more educated women, for example, are also more likely to be living in urban areas or in wealthier households. Children of certain religious groups can have different birth registration levels as a result of differences in wealth that are associated with different religious communities. Nevertheless, this analysis provides a useful starting point for understanding whether certain socio-demographic characteristics may be related to a higher demand for birth registration or greater access to registration facilities.

# Boys and girls are equally likely to be registered, but those from

## No significant differences are found in birth registration rates between boys and girls

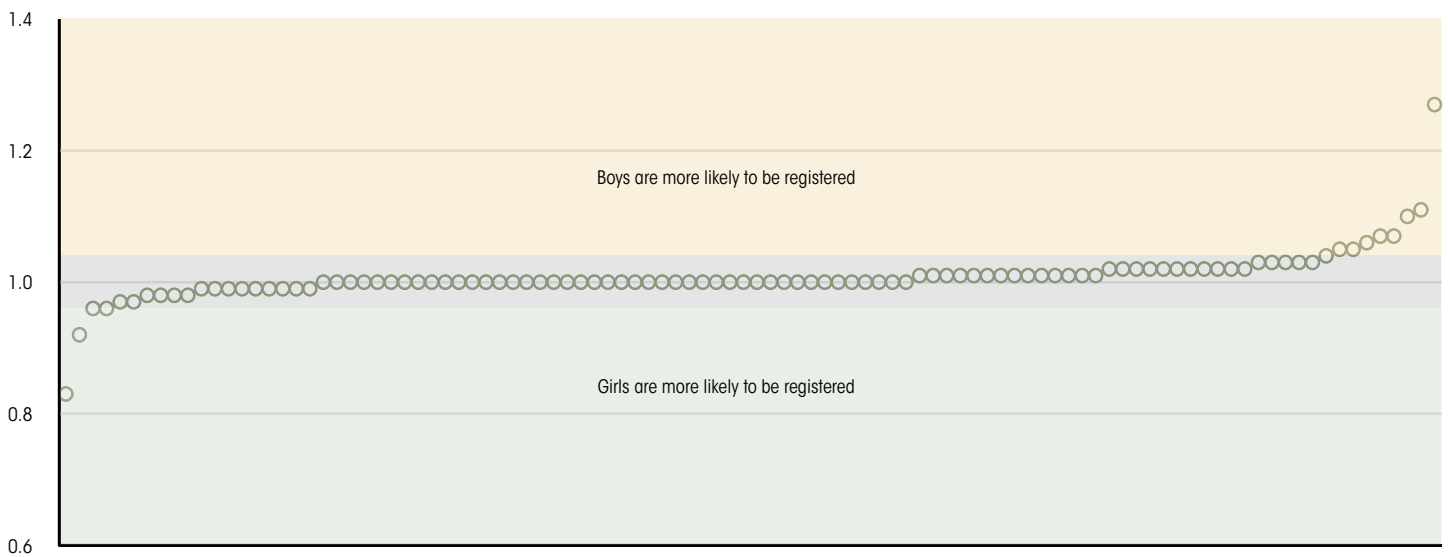
Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by sex and region



Notes: Estimates are based on a subset of 145 countries covering 73 per cent of the global population of male children under age five and 74 per cent of the global population of female children under age five. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least half of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate regional estimates by sex for East Asia and the Pacific and for Latin America and the Caribbean. The estimates presented in this figure cannot be compared with the regional and global estimates presented in previous figures since they are based on a subset of countries with available data. Their sole purpose is to illustrate differentials. Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys, censuses and vital registration systems, 2005-2012.

## Gender parity in birth registration appears to be the norm in almost all countries

Ratio of children under age five whose births are registered, by sex (boys over girls)

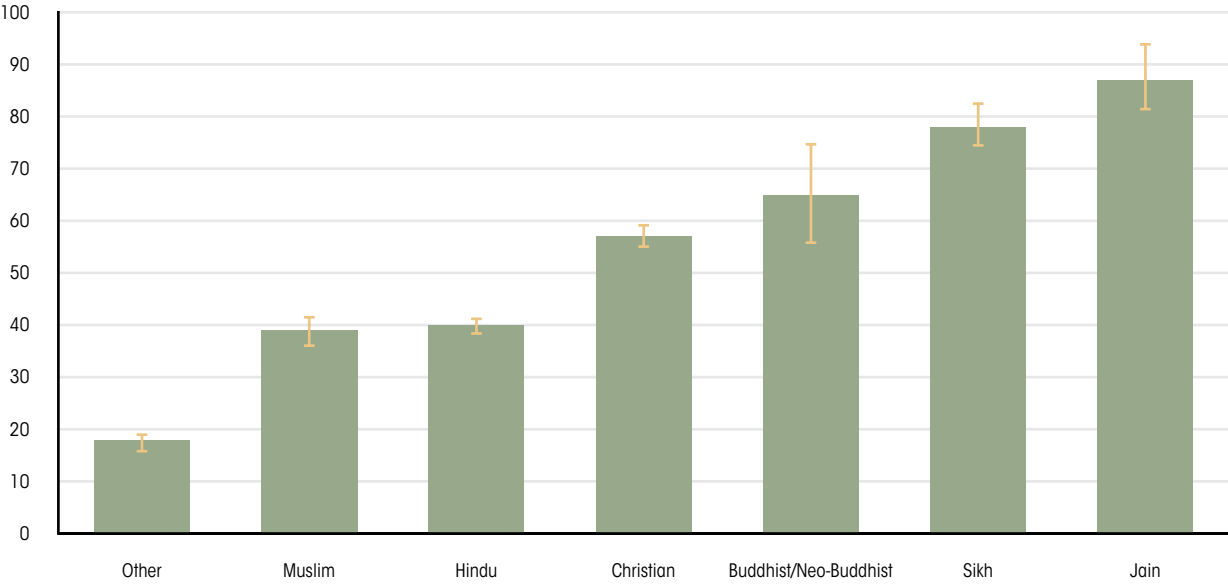


Notes: Each dot represents a country. A ratio of 1.0 (0.95-1.04, grey band) indicates that birth registration levels in the two groups (boys/girls) are equal. Countries with very low prevalence levels have been excluded since data bear some level of uncertainty that would affect the significance of the ratio. Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys and vital registration systems, 2000-2012.

# certain religious or ethnic groups may be at a disadvantage

## Differences in birth registration levels can be found among children of different religious backgrounds

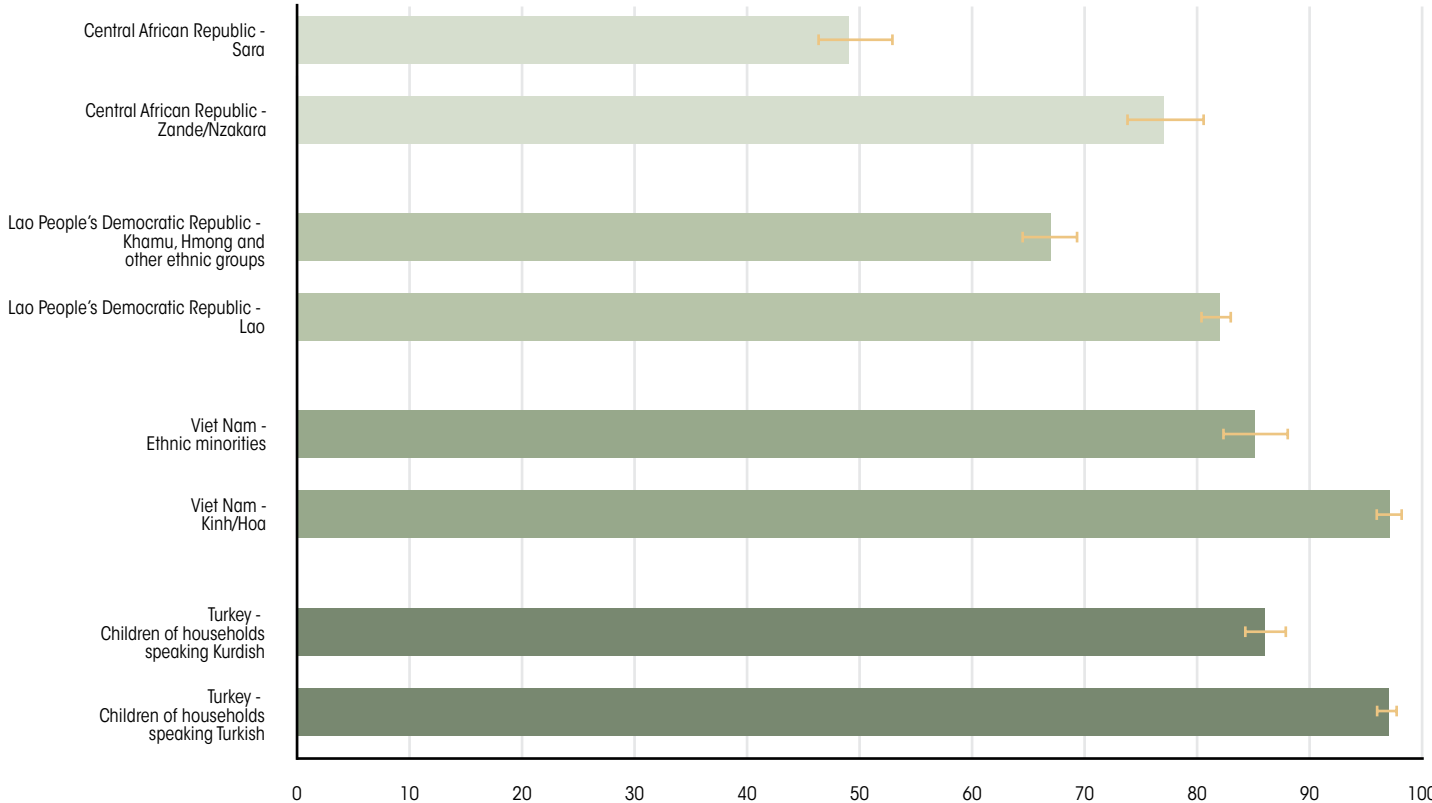
Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by religion in India



**Note:** The chart includes error bars to show the 95 per cent confidence interval for the estimate, within which the true value for the population can reasonably be assumed to fall.  
**Source:** National Family Health Survey, 2005-2006.

## Ethnicity is associated with different birth registration rates in some countries

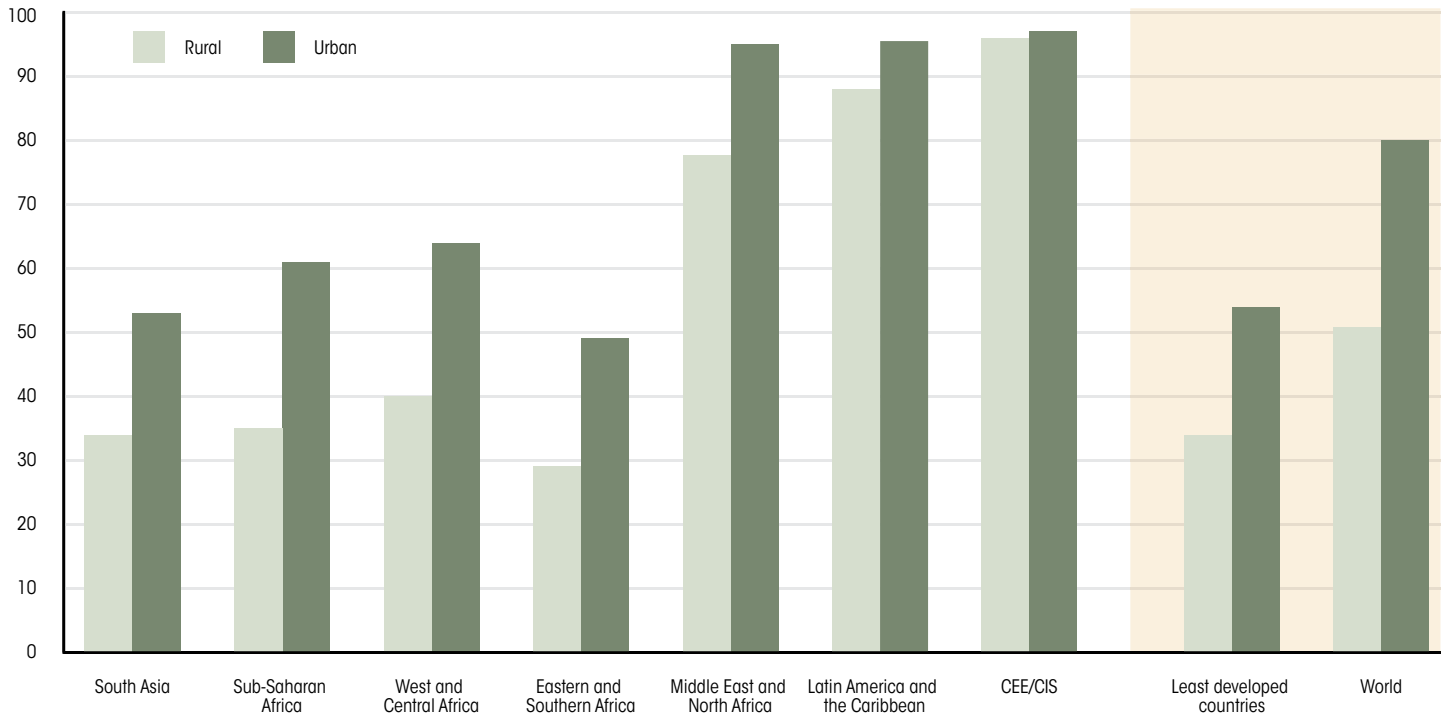
Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by ethnicity in selected countries



**Note:** The chart includes error bars to show the 95 per cent confidence interval for the estimate within which the true value for the population can reasonably be assumed to fall.  
**Sources:** UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS and MICS, 2008-2012.

## Birth registration is higher in urban than in rural areas in almost every region

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by place of residence and region

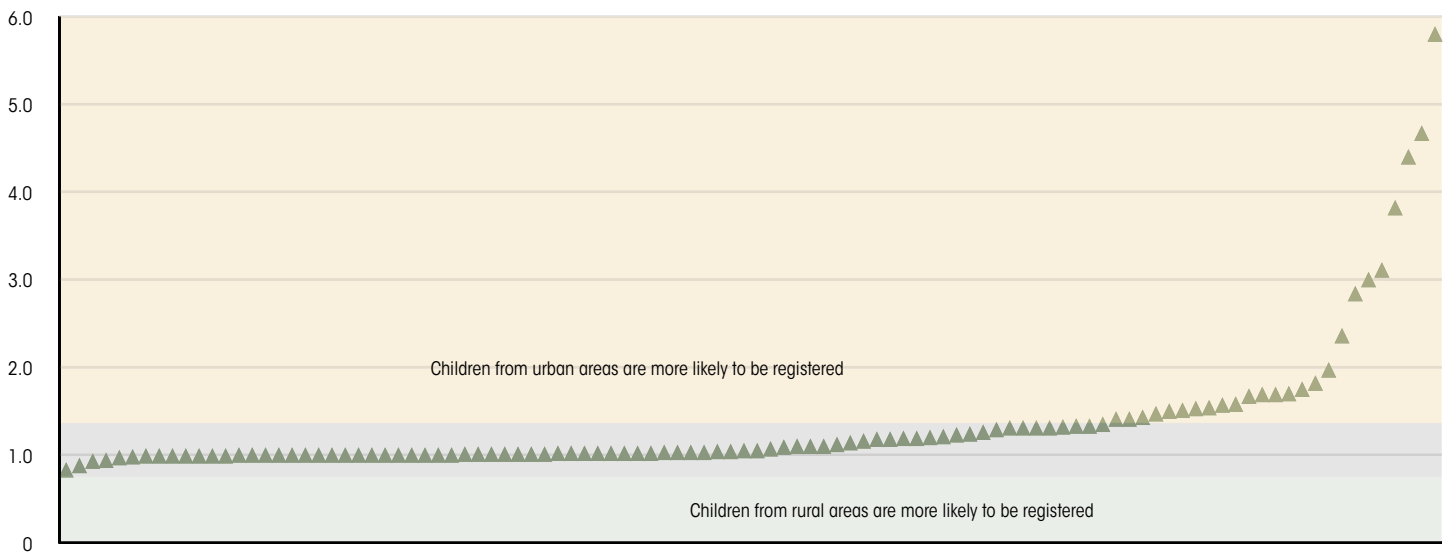


Notes: Estimates are based on a subset of 147 countries covering 72 per cent of the global population of urban children under age five and 81 per cent of the global population of rural children under age five. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least half of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate regional estimates by place of residence for East Asia and the Pacific. The estimates presented in this figure cannot be compared with the regional and global estimates presented in previous figures since they are based on a subset of countries with available data. Their sole purpose is to illustrate differentials.

Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys, censuses and vital registration systems, 2005-2012.

## In some countries, children living in urban areas are up to six times more likely to be registered

Ratio of children under age five whose births are registered, by place of residence (urban over rural)



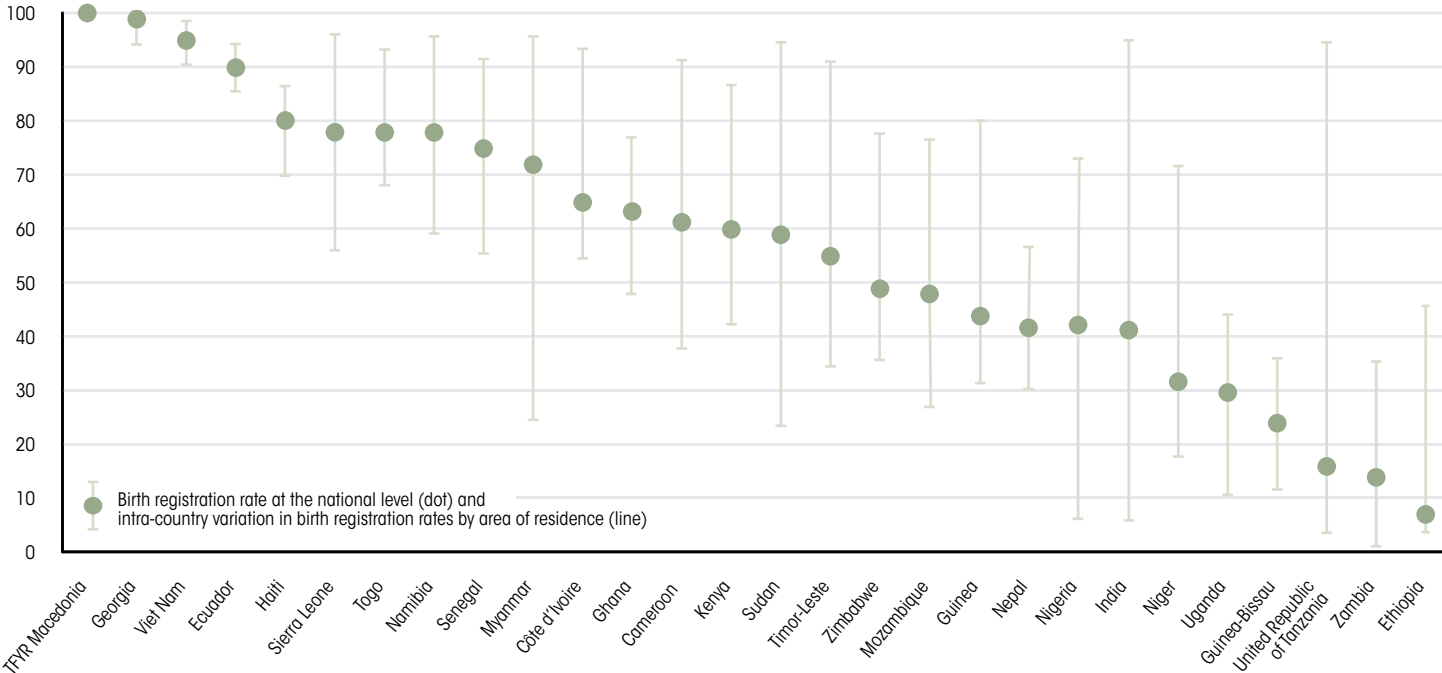
Notes: Each triangle represents a country. A ratio of 1.0 (0.95-1.04, grey band) indicates that birth registration levels in the two groups (children from urban/rural areas) are equal. Countries with very low prevalence levels have been excluded since data bear some level of uncertainty that would affect the significance of the ratio.

Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys and vital registration systems, 2000-2012.

# appears to affect birth registration levels

## National birth registration prevalence may hide geographic disparities

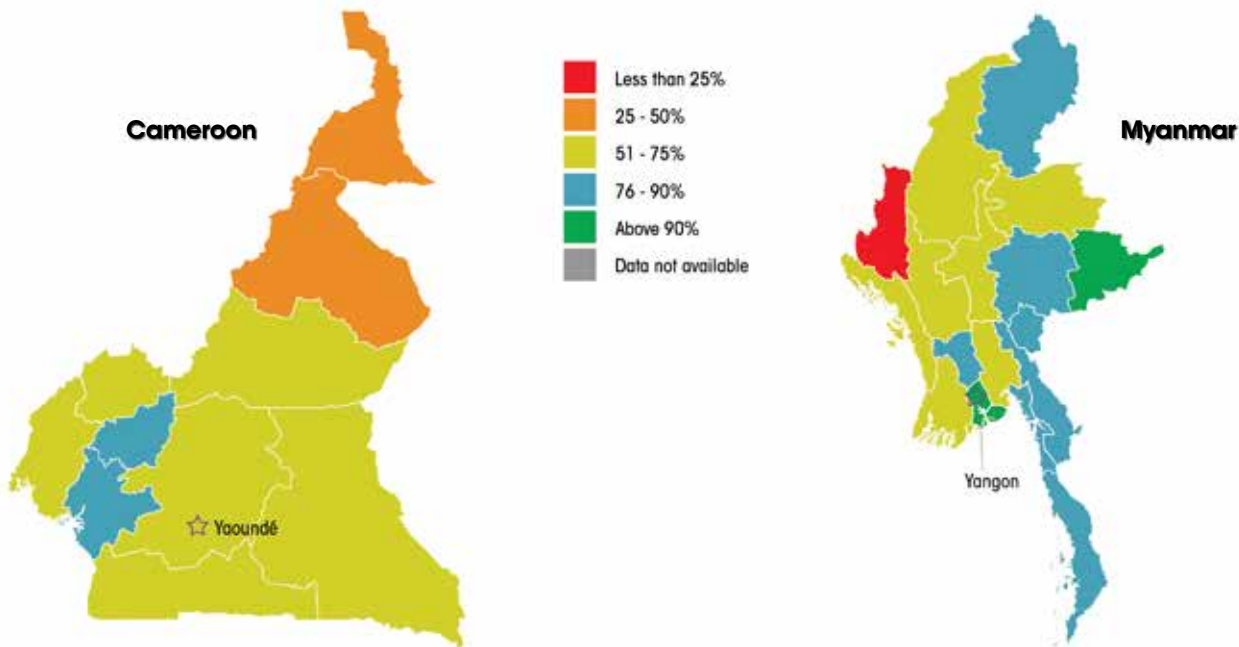
Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered and the geographic area with the highest and lowest level of birth registration, in selected countries



Note: Data for Namibia refer to the percentage of children under age five with a birth certificate.  
Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys and censuses, 2005-2012

## In some countries, birth registration levels are higher in regions concentrated around main cities

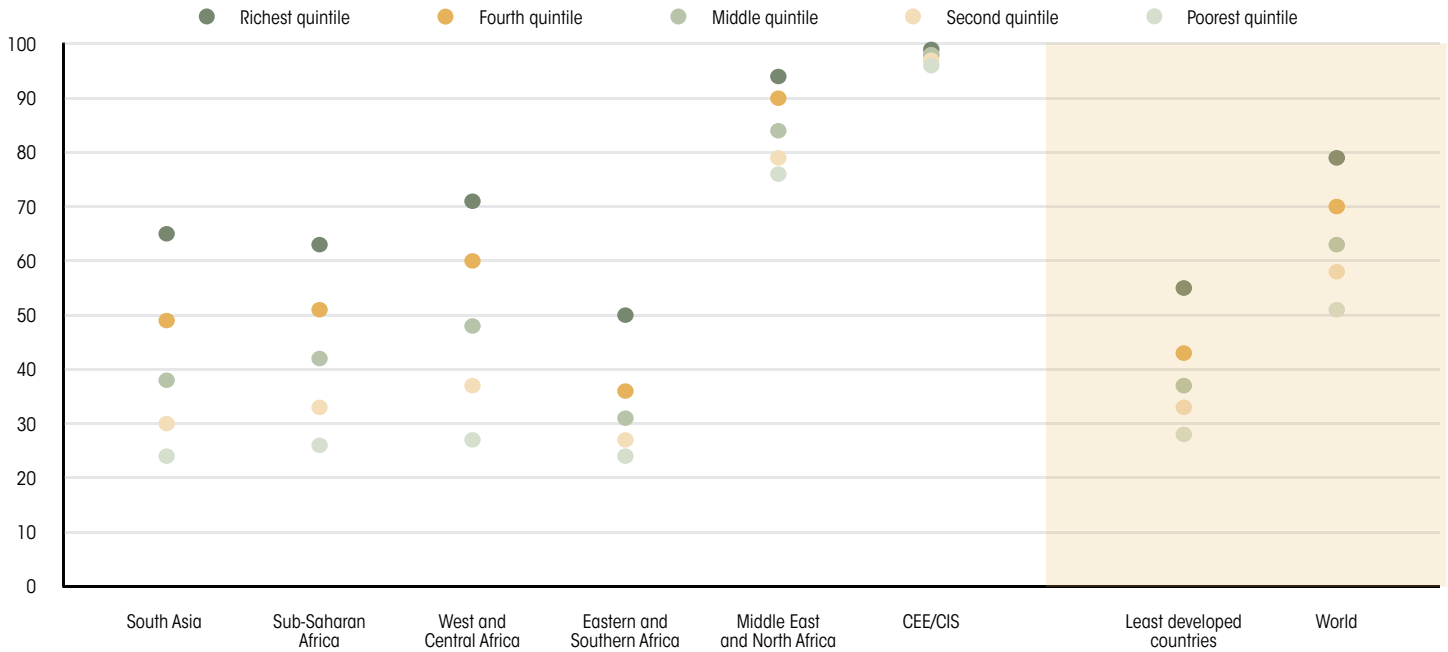
Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered in Cameroon and Myanmar, by region



Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS 2011 (Cameroon) and MICS 2009-2010 (Myanmar).

## Children from the richest households are more than twice as likely to be registered as children from the poorest households

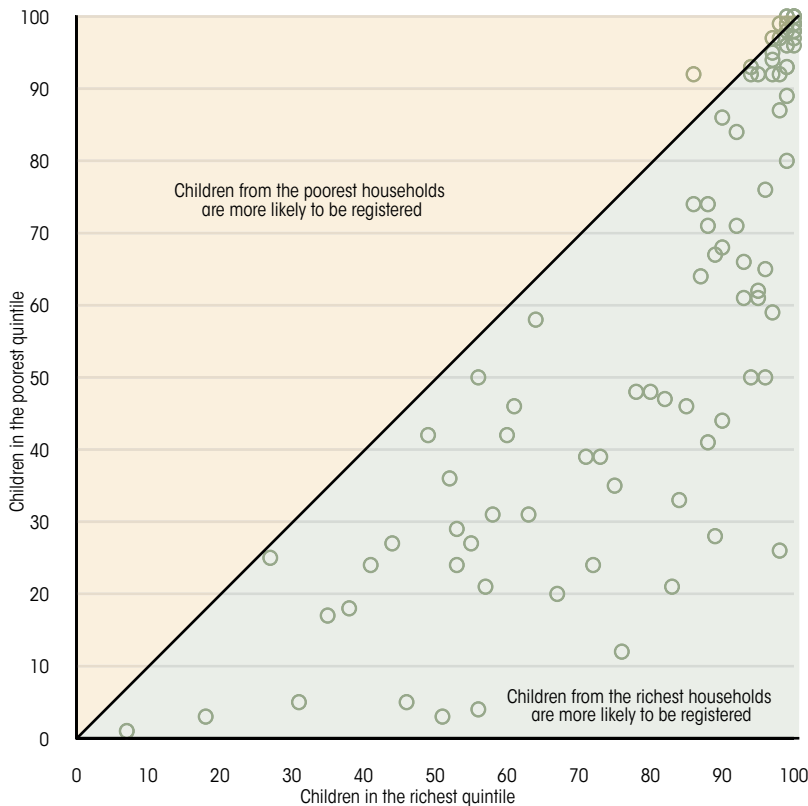
Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by household wealth quintile and by region



**Notes for chart above:**  
Estimates are based on a subset of 140 countries covering 72 per cent of the global population of children under age five. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least half of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate regional estimates by household wealth quintiles for East Asia and the Pacific and for Latin America and the Caribbean. The estimates presented in this figure cannot be compared with the regional and global estimates presented in previous figures since they are based on a subset of countries with available data. Their sole purpose is to illustrate differentials.  
**Sources for chart above:** UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys, censuses and vital registration systems, 2005-2012.

## In most countries, a family's wealth is correlated with higher birth registration rates

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by household wealth quintile

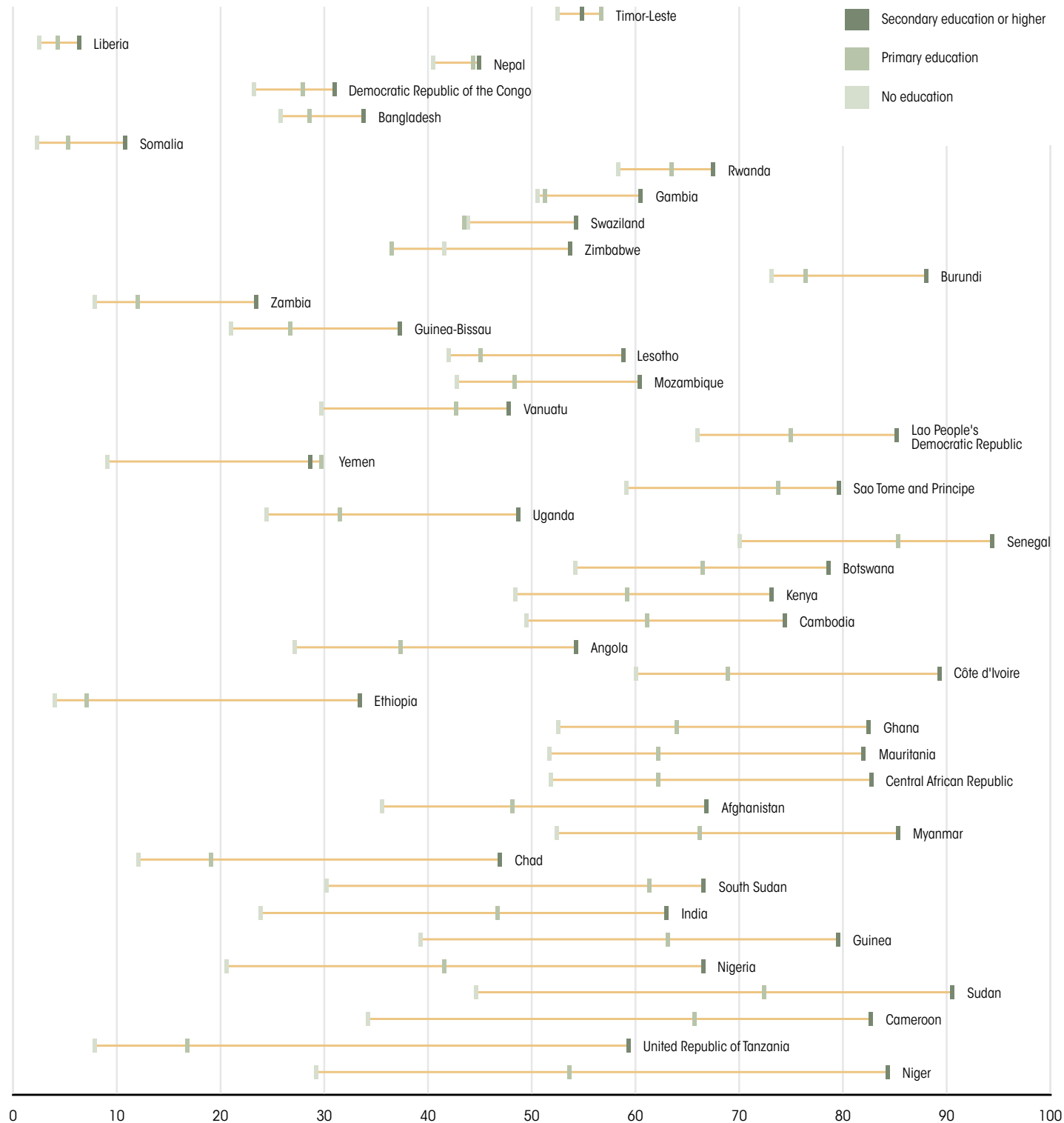


**Notes:** Each dot represents a country.  
**Sources:** UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS and other national household surveys, 2000-2012.

# mothers are least likely to be registered

## Children of mothers with some level of education are more likely to be registered

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by mother's level of education in countries with birth registration levels equal to or below 75 per cent



Note: Data for Liberia and Yemen refer to the percentage of children under age five with a birth certificate.  
Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS and other national household surveys, 2001-2012.



## 05. Progress and prospects

© UNICEF/NIGB2010-00561/Pirozzi

The importance of birth registration has been recognized for decades. However, it is only since the late 1990s that the international community has stepped up efforts to promote it. Since 2005, and especially since 2010, action to increase birth registration levels has intensified with the support of many partners, including governments, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, religious and other civil society groups, and local communities. Some of the strategies adopted rely on linking birth registration to the delivery of health services, while others are based on innovative approaches, including the use of mobile technologies to record births. More systemic approaches are introducing legislative reforms and supporting the creation or strengthening of civil registration systems.

Due to the lack of comparable trend data for some countries, the results of these efforts cannot yet be fully assessed. However, as more statistics become available over the coming years, a clearer picture should emerge. In the meantime, an analysis of the current data reveals patterns that allow us to draw general

conclusions about trends and challenges to date.

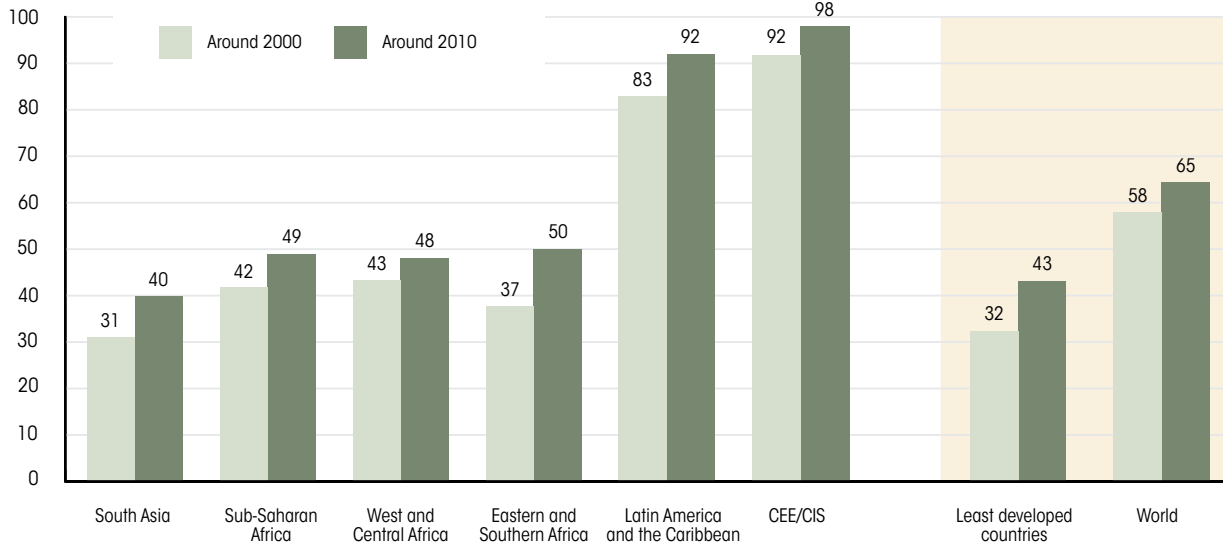
Overall, some progress, albeit small, has been achieved in raising birth registration levels. Globally, between around 2000 and 2010, the proportion of children under five whose birth is registered has grown from 58 per cent to 65 per cent. A much sharper rise in the proportion of registered children has been recorded in the least developed countries, where birth registration levels have increased by more than 30 per cent. Progress has been uneven across countries, however, and is mainly driven by the achievements of a small subset of countries.

Over the same period (2000-2010), the global number of unregistered children has decreased by almost 30 million. Faster progress in raising birth registration rates is needed, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, to keep pace with a growing population. If current levels persist, the number of unregistered children in Eastern and Southern Africa, currently 44 million, will rise to 68 million by 2050, and will almost double in West and Central Africa.



## Some progress, albeit small, has been achieved in raising birth registration levels since 2000

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by region



Notes: Estimates are based on a subset of 119 countries with available trend data covering 68 per cent of the global population of children under five. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least half of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate trends for the Middle East and North Africa and for East Asia and the Pacific. The estimates presented here cannot be compared with the regional and global estimates presented in previous figures since they are based on a subset of countries with available trend data.

Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, MICS, other national household surveys, censuses and vital registration systems, 1998-2012.

### ADVANCING BIRTH REGISTRATION IN ASIA

A significant increase in birth registration prevalence has occurred in certain parts of Asia. Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam saw the greatest progress in terms of percentage change.

In **Viet Nam** today, about 95 per cent of children under five are registered, compared to 73 per cent in 2000. Since that time, UNICEF has been working at the highest levels of government to boost birth registration. The period from 2000 to 2005 focused on legal reform (resulting in the Law on Child Protection, Care and Education), awareness-raising, capacity-building and the strengthening of birth registration mechanisms. These long-term efforts contributed to the registration of 88 per cent of children under five by 2006, and the following year, the Government of Viet Nam made birth registration free of charge.

Although the right to a name and nationality is established in the Family Registration Law in the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, the country has no national system for civil registration. Rather, families are encouraged to keep a 'family book' in which births, marriages and deaths are recorded and witnessed by the village chief. Between 2000 and 2006, household surveys in that country reported that registered births rose from 63 per cent to 73 per cent. This increase followed a 2005 census, in which many families were encouraged to update their family book. Since 2006, however, birth registration levels have stagnated. According to the 2011-2012 Lao Social Indicators Survey, 75 per cent of children under the age of five are registered.

A similar path of expansion and stagnation is observed in **Cambodia**, where fewer than one in four children under age five were registered in 2000. By 2005, two out of three children had reportedly been registered, which is similar to the 2010

figure. In both Cambodia and Lao PDR, this pattern of growing and stalled progress suggests that efforts could most effectively be directed to establishing strong national systems for civil registration and vital statistics.

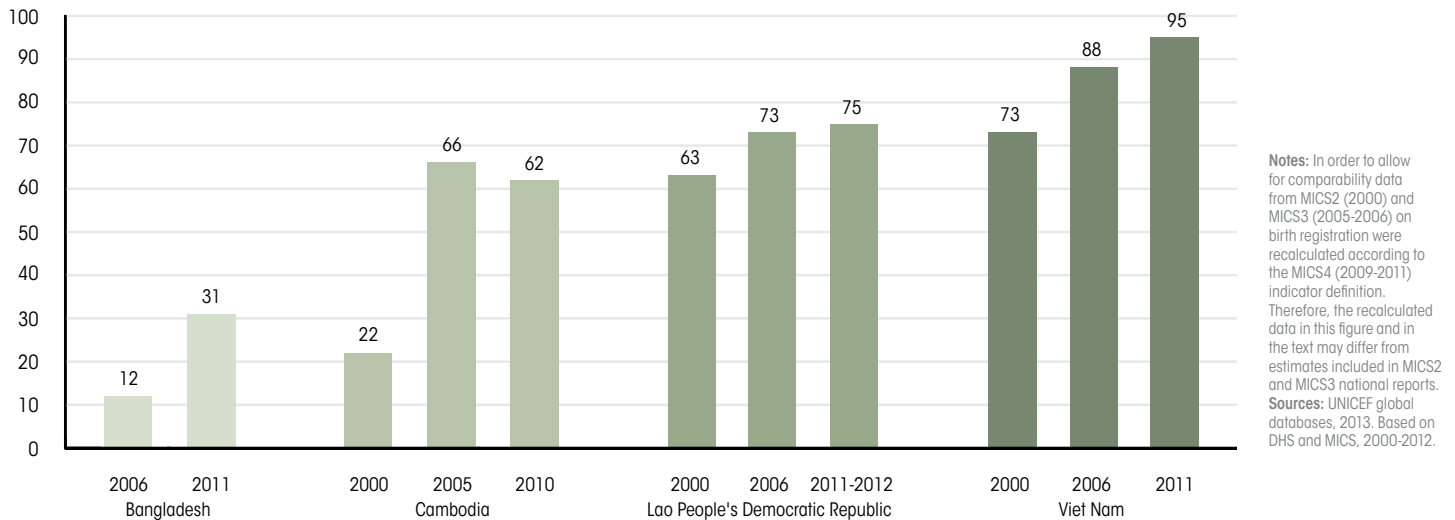
In **Bangladesh**, the rate of registration of children under five increased dramatically – from 12 per cent in 2006 to 31 per cent in 2011. This improvement was prompted by a range of advocacy and programmatic actions, from the development of a legislative framework to a national birth registration campaign and the strengthening of institutions. The 2004 Birth and Death Registration Act, which came into force in 2006, provides a legal basis for the use of a birth certificate as proof of age to access services, including passport applications, school admissions and marriage registration. It also mandates that the registration structure be instituted within the country's decentralized government administration and obliges service providers, particularly in health and education, to facilitate birth registration. The 2004 Act was amended in 2013 to expedite the establishment of a permanent structure within the government to oversee birth registration. And in 2009, an online Birth Registration Information System was put in place, enabling local registrars and embassies abroad to register births and deaths and issue official certificates through a web-based application. All birth and death records are transmitted to and securely stored in a central database.

### CLOSING GAPS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Some progress has also been made in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region that registered a 10 per cent increase in birth registration between 2000 and 2010. In 2007 and 2011, Latin American regional conferences on Birth Registration and the Right to Identity resulted in a commitment by States to achieve full, universal and free registration by 2015. Countries including **Argentina, Colombia, Jamaica and Peru** are moving towards

## Some Asian countries are realizing important gains in birth registration

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, in selected countries in Asia



universal coverage – a target already reached by neighbouring countries, including Chile, Cuba and Uruguay. Continued investments are now needed to reach pockets of children left behind, such as those from certain indigenous communities, from poor and marginalized population groups in urban areas or those living in remote locations affected by armed conflict.

National birth registration rates have also improved steadily in **Brazil**, increasing from 64 per cent in 2000 to 93 per cent in 2011. A birth certificate is the first step towards citizenship in Brazil: It is only with this document that one can obtain other important papers, apply for social protection or graduate from school. Legal reforms, including national legislation guaranteeing the right to birth registration, were enacted in 1997, making it free of charge. And in 2002, the Ministry of Health began providing a financial incentive to all maternity hospitals that kept an advanced birth registration post on their premises, allowing new parents to start the registration process before going home. The following year, the Human Rights Secretariat began partnering with civil society to raise awareness of the issue. The first National Birth Registration Mobilization Day was instituted, a campaign that became permanent and marked the beginning of a national movement. In 2007, a national policy was established to promote collaboration between civil registration authorities and the health sector, and a long-term budget was allocated. Subsequently, civil registration services in public hospitals went online, with information fed into a national database. The greatest improvements have been observed in underserved northern states, partly as a result of outreach registration programmes. In 2007, the Brazilian government committed itself to achieving birth registration rates of 95 per cent in all 27 states by 2011, although some areas are still falling behind.

### OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The pace of progress in sub-Saharan Africa is mixed. In West

and Central Africa, birth registration levels have fluctuated in many countries; in others, they have stagnated or declined. Nevertheless, a number of countries, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal are moving forward.

In recent years, the Government of **Benin** has made important advancements in refining its civil registration system, which helped boost birth registration levels from 60 per cent in 2006 to 80 per cent in 2011-2012. For example, public awareness campaigns and training for civil servants have been instituted, along with the computerization of civil registration systems in some municipalities. The primary reason for the rise, however, is an increase in the number of attended births. Trained midwives and other health personnel now have a legal obligation to complete and forward a birth sheet to a civil status centre for every child delivered in a birthing centre.

Birth registration rates in **Côte d'Ivoire** fell from 72 per cent in 2000 to 58 per cent in 2006, with a slight increase (to 65 per cent) in 2011-2012. The general decline is attributed to the political and military crisis between 2002 and 2011, which effectively divided the country in half and temporarily halted civil registration services in the north. Hostilities around elections between November 2010 and April 2011 caused another disruption of civil registration, the destruction of many records, and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Identity has been a key driver of the conflict, and the civil registration of all people in Côte d'Ivoire was recognized in the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement (2007) as essential for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In 2008, government and donors agreed on an ambitious civil registration reform agenda, which stalled due to the post-election crisis. The programme has been relaunched and includes a civil registry component, a feasibility study for reforming the system, and measures to ensure access to education for unregistered children. The agreement also calls for systematic monitoring of a presidential

decision to enable children born during the crisis to be registered through simplified procedures.

In **Senegal**, the percentage of children under five whose birth is registered grew from 55 per cent to 75 per cent between 2005 and 2010-2011. Many different initiatives were introduced by the Senegalese government and its partners during those years, including mass campaigns on the importance of birth registration, the reduction of fees to obtain a birth certificate, and the creation of new registration offices throughout the country. These initiatives have been consolidated in a national strategy and action plan that are expected to be implemented in 2014.

While no improvement has been registered in certain Eastern and Southern African countries, progress in the region overall has accelerated, with Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania leading the way.

In **Mozambique**, the percentage of children under age five who are registered rose from 36 per cent in 2008 to 48 per cent in 2011. Despite rapid progress, the share of children who have a birth certificate remains low and increased at a slower pace (from 21 per cent in 2008 to 28 per cent in 2011).

In **Namibia**, for example, the percentage of children under five with a birth certificate rose from about 60 per cent in 2006 to 78 per cent in 2011. This was achieved despite an increase in the number of vulnerable children, due in large part to the impact of the HIV epidemic. Some of the barriers to birth registration included long distances to registration points, regulations hampering the registration of orphaned or abandoned children as well as children of unmarried parents, and cultural practices around the naming of children. In 2008, with UNICEF support, the government embarked on a three-pronged strategy to reach rural communities. Four years later, registration facilities had been set up in 21 out of 34 hospitals across the country; the number of subregional offices had expanded from four to 26; and annual mobile registration campaigns had been initiated in the most remote communities. The last stage is reaching children most at risk, including children who are undocumented, orphaned or abandoned, with no record of their parents.

**South Africa** has seen a spectacular rise in birth registration within the first year of life, increasing from 24 per cent in 1991 to 50 per cent in 2001, 75 per cent in 2005 and 95 per cent in 2012.<sup>9</sup> The government has focused its efforts on addressing the needs of rural communities by establishing fixed service centres as well as hospital registration points, mobile units and Multi-Purpose Community Centres. A major incentive to early registration is the requirement that a birth certificate be presented in order to obtain social protection grants, including a Child Support Grant.<sup>10</sup> In some of South Africa's poorest, most disadvantaged communities, challenges remain, including high fees for registration after the first month of life.

In **Uganda**, national birth registration rose from 21 per cent in

2006 to 30 per cent in 2011. The increase can be attributed in part to collaborative efforts among government and its partners to extend coverage. A new approach, recently launched, is enabling trained personnel to capture birth declarations submitted by parents on mobile phones or computers and transmit the information directly into the civil registry.

In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, the registration of children under five doubled between 1999 and 2010 – from 6 per cent to 16 per cent – but the proportion of those with a birth certificate remained unchanged. In the past, parents would have to travel to district headquarters to collect the certificate 90 days after registering a birth. For most families, travel costs as well as the fee for a birth certificate made registration prohibitively expensive. The fact that a birth certificate was not required to access services contributed to the low rates of certification. To address these challenges, the government piloted a new birth registration system in 2012 in the country's mainland. Assistant registrars were trained at ward levels, in local government offices as well as in hospitals and health clinics, allowing children to be registered at birth or at the same time as immunization. The process was also simplified: In one step, parents are able to register their child and receive a birth certificate, which is now free of charge for children under five. Birth registration data is transmitted instantaneously to a centralized system through SMS (text messaging) and can be continuously monitored. Following a successful pilot, the new system was launched in 2013 in one region and is now in the process of being rolled out countrywide.

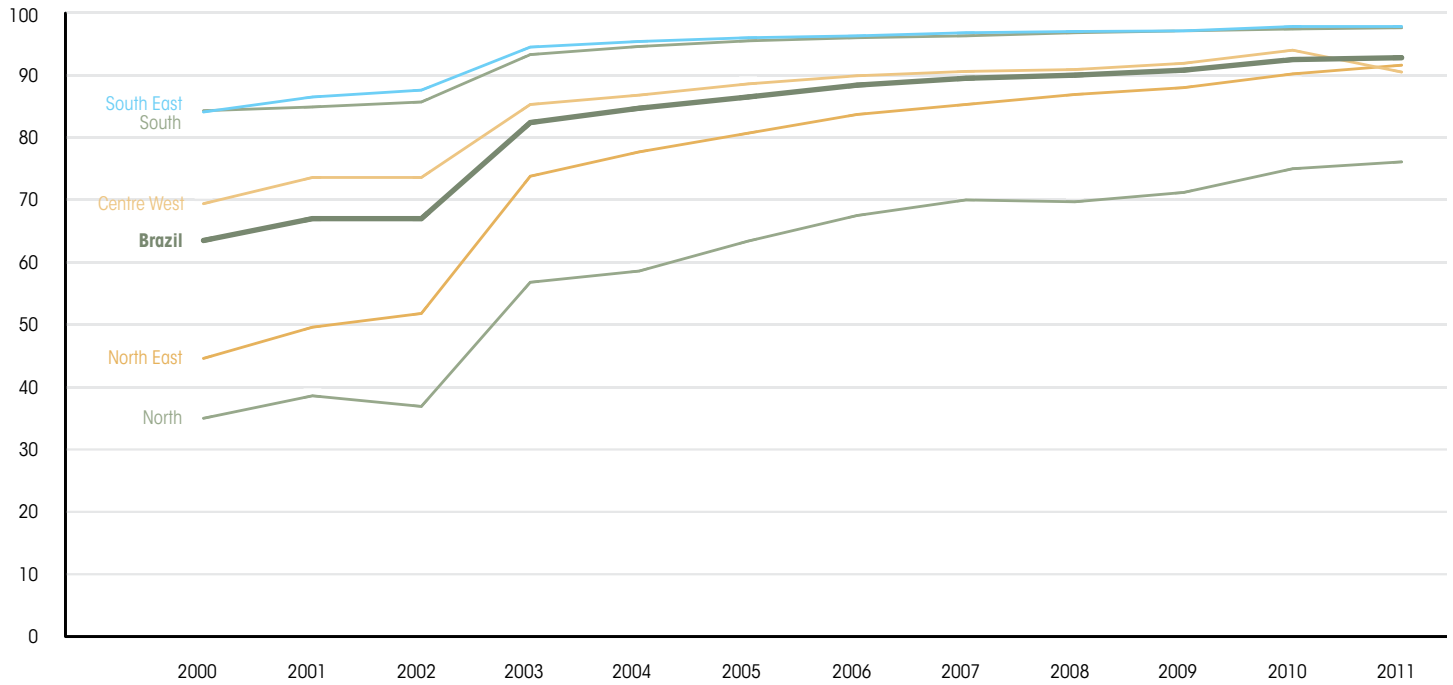
#### REACHING UNIVERSAL REGISTRATION IN CEE/CIS

Countries in CEE/CIS have traditionally had high birth registration rates. Consequently, the last two decades have been devoted to making birth registration universal by reaching marginalized population groups and closing the gaps between geographic areas.

Progress has been notable in **Turkey**: The last four household surveys in that country suggest that the proportion of unregistered children has been falling since the early 1990s, and gaps are being closed between children of different social and economic backgrounds. In fact, national birth registration levels rose by almost 20 percentage points between 1993 and 2008 (the last year for which data are available), with an uptick in progress after 2003. Moreover, while the proportion of unregistered children in urban areas fell from 13 per cent to 5 per cent between 2003 and 2008, the corresponding decline in rural areas was even larger – from 21 per cent to 8 per cent. The gap between the poorest and richest children is also narrowing, as are inequities among children of different ethnicities. In fact, the largest increase in birth registration levels across wealth quintiles in Turkey has been registered among the poorest 20 per cent of children. At the same time, children of Kurdish-speaking mothers have seen their birth registration levels rise from 68 per cent to 86 per cent. Efforts to close the remaining gaps have continued, but data are currently unavailable to assess their impact. The results of the 2013 DHS will reveal whether the country has been able to achieve universal birth registration.

## Brazil is improving its national birth registration rate while closing regional gaps

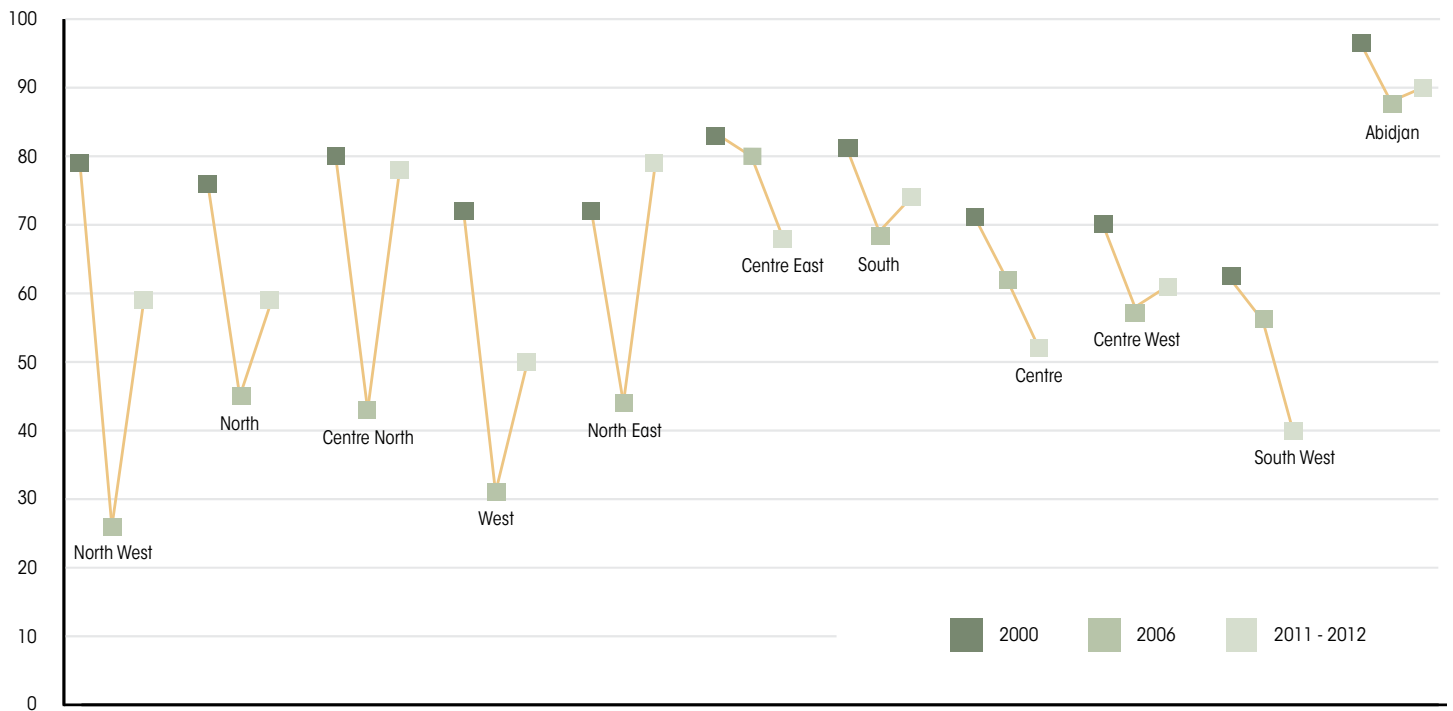
Percentage of births registered in Brazil, by region



Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), *Estatísticas do Registro Civil*, 2000-2011.

## Birth registration levels in Côte d'Ivoire are recovering from the effects of a decade-long crisis

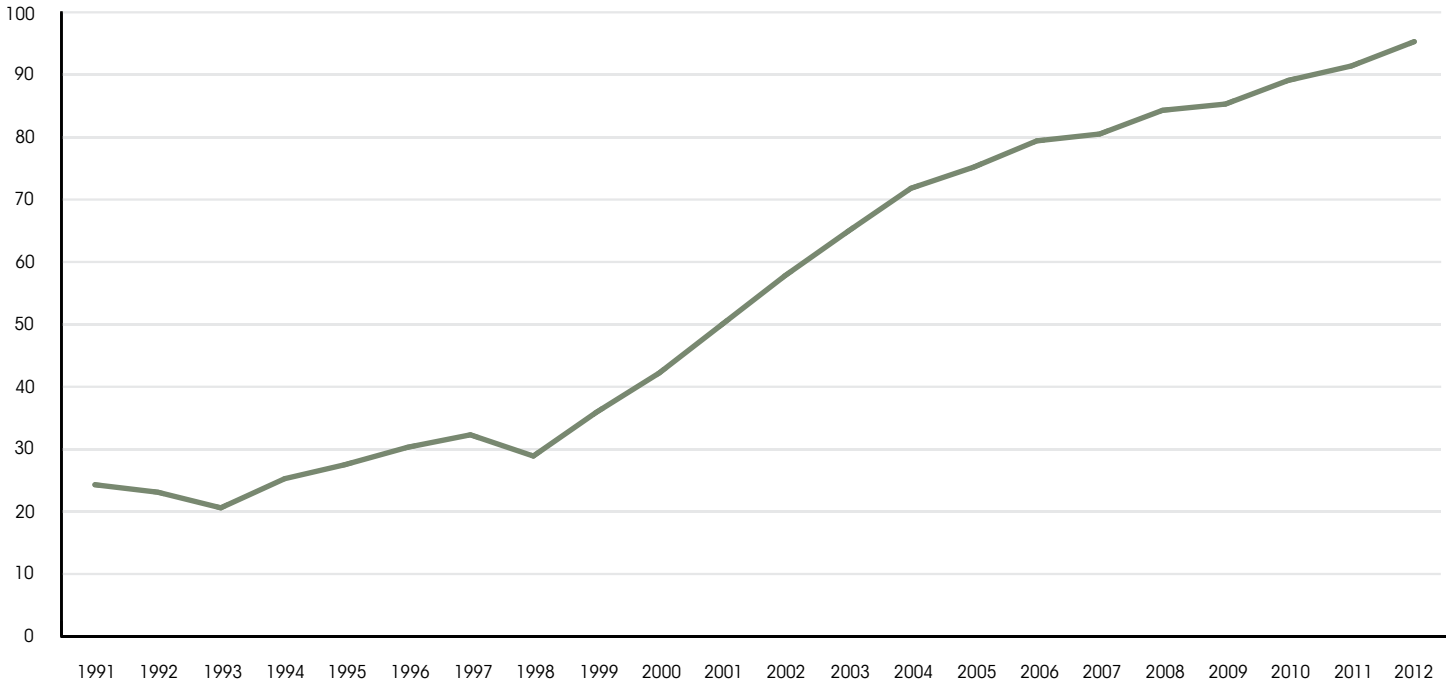
Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered in Côte d'Ivoire, by region



Notes: In order to allow for comparability data from MICS2 (2000) and MICS3 (2005-2006) on birth registration were recalculated according to the MICS4 (2009-2011) indicator definition. Therefore, the recalculated data in this figure and in the text may differ from estimates included in MICS2 and MICS3 national reports.  
Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS and MICS, 2000, 2006 and 2011-2012.

## South Africa has seen a steady increase in birth registration over two decades

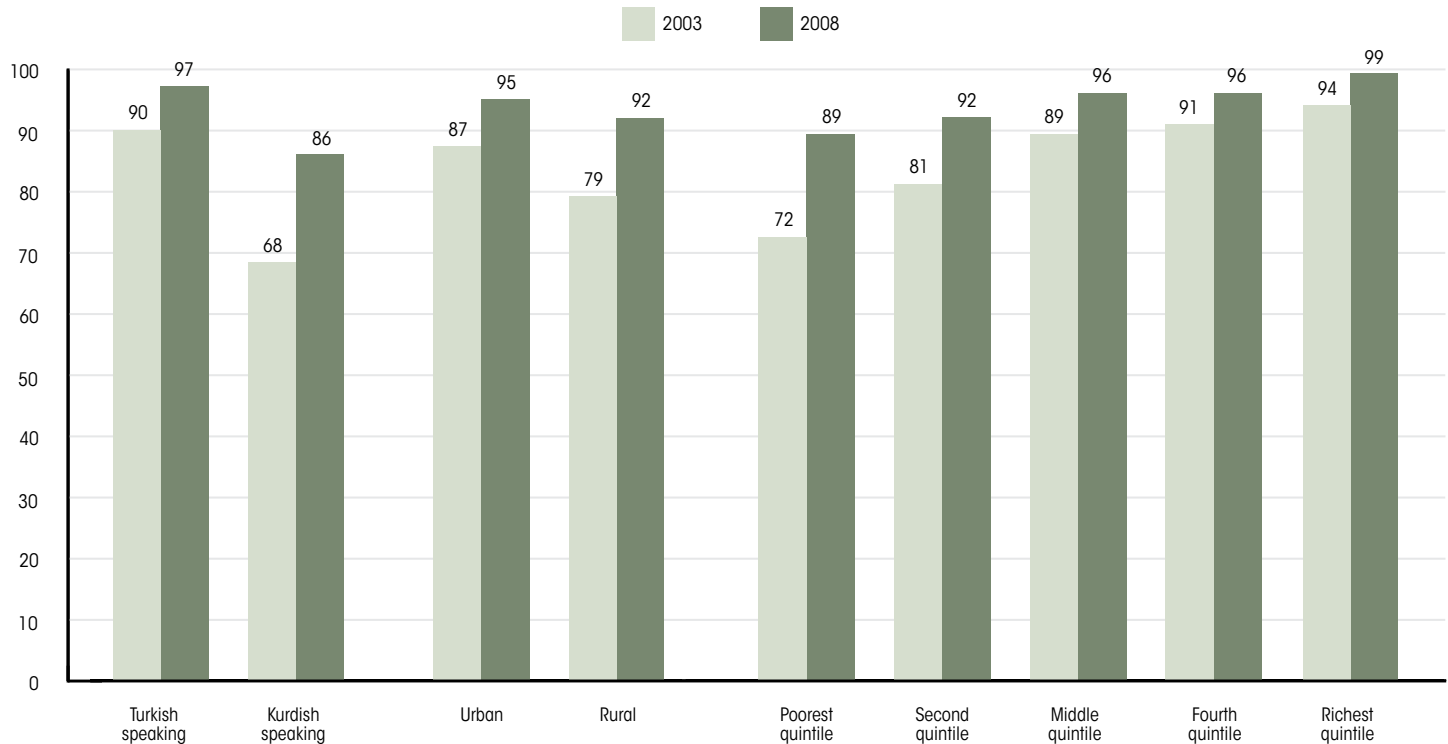
Percentage of births registered in South Africa



Note: Figures for South Africa presented in this chart include late registrations.  
Source: Statistics South Africa, *Recorded Live Births*, 2013.

## Birth registration rates are rising in Turkey, and gaps are being closed

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered in Turkey, by ethnicity, place of residence and household wealth quintile



Sources: UNICEF global databases, 2013. Based on DHS, 2003 and 2008.



## 06. Key findings and implications for programming

© UNICEF/BANA2012-00797/Khan

**B**irth registration is a fundamental human right that can safeguard children from harm and exploitation. It is also the first step in the realization of other rights – throughout a person’s lifetime. Birth registration establishes a child’s official identity, which can later open doors to entering school, finding employment, travelling abroad, running for political office and participating in other aspects of civic life. Birth registration is also central to a country’s vital statistics, which provide the data needed for sound social and economic planning.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Nearly 230 million children under age five do not officially exist.** Of these, more than half (59 per cent) live in Asia and another 37 per cent live in sub-Saharan Africa. In that region, 44 per cent of children under five have been registered, with levels ranging from 3 per cent in Somalia to 95 per cent in South

Africa. Birth registration stands at only 39 per cent in South Asia, the region with the largest overall number of births and children under five. India is home to nearly one in three unregistered children worldwide.

**Some progress has been achieved in raising birth registration levels.** Between approximately 2000 and 2010, birth registration levels improved, with the global average rising from 58 per cent to 65 per cent. At the same time, the number of unregistered children declined. One especially encouraging finding is a spike of more than 30 per cent in the overall birth registration level of least developed countries. Accelerated progress is needed, however, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. If current levels persist, the number of unregistered children in Eastern and Southern Africa will rise to 55 million by 2050 (from 44 million today), and will almost double in West and Central Africa.

**Registration rates are lowest among socially disadvantaged children.** There are many reasons why a child may not be registered at birth. The statistical analyses on the preceding pages show no differences in birth registration as a result of a child's sex. However, being socially disadvantaged does play a role. In general, 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 rates 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. Worldwide, around 290 million children under the age of five are without a birth certificate; of those children, 85 per cent are reported as registered.

In terms of national wealth, most countries with a per capita income above \$6,000 have birth registration rates over 80 per cent. However, among lower-income countries, both high and low rates of birth registration are found. This points to the fact that progress for children can be achieved despite economic challenges.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

All of these findings suggest that interventions to accelerate progress in birth registration should be given priority, especially in the poorest countries, in rural areas within a country and among socially disadvantaged groups. Experience shows that such interventions can achieve maximum coverage by combining them with services that children and their parents are likely to come into contact with, particularly those related to health and education. Significant disparities suggest that targeted action must be taken to ensure that all population groups are covered. This necessitates careful review of the legislation regulating registration procedures and requirements, and of the operation of the civil registry. It also requires looking at the demand for birth registration among various population groups.

In seeking to increase birth registration rates, it is important to remember that a narrow focus on this objective can detract from the larger issue of improving the reliability of the civil registration system as a whole. For example, a concerted campaign can result in improved birth registration rates. But if birth records are full of errors and poorly preserved, they may be of little value. Progress in birth registration is closely linked to the quality of a civil registration system.

Improving both the quantity and quality of records means that birth registration must be:

**FREE.** To ensure that birth registration is available

to everyone, it must be free of charge, whether for regular or late registration. In those countries where a fee for registration and penalties still apply, interventions may be targeted at policy and legal reforms. In Indonesia, for example, technical assistance at the policy level resulted in the adoption of legislation guaranteeing free birth registration in more than 30 UNICEF-supported districts by 2007.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the direct costs of registration are indirect costs, which can be equally burdensome to poor families. These include travel expenses to the registrar and time away from employment to register a child. Creative measures to bring services closer to the people who need them and to reduce their cost can be explored, as many of the country examples show.

**CONTINUOUS, PERMANENT AND AVAILABLE.** Civil registration records must be kept forever. At the same time, they must be easily retrievable, and the registration process itself must be accessible. In many countries, the use of computerized birth registration systems are introducing new avenues for making information permanent and easily retrievable. In Afghanistan, digital technology is now being instituted and replacing decades of paper files, ensuring that data can be available in real time. Having a civil registry that is networked or coordinated centrally allows for data to be retrievable within civil registrar offices across a country.

**UNIVERSAL.** All people who are born in a country must have access to birth registration – without discrimination. The data indicate that in some countries, children living in rural areas are less likely to be registered than those living in cities and towns. Programmes need to take this into account, and make a special effort to reach rural areas where warranted. In Uganda, UNICEF and a private sector partner, Uganda Telecom, are piloting a mobile and web-based technology to digitize birth records, making the birth registration process faster, more accessible and more reliable.

Evidence also suggests that registration rates among various ethnic groups are sometimes lower than national averages. In such cases, removing obstacles to registration can include the translation of application forms into local languages, ensuring that 'different' names are accepted, and providing flexibility as to when a name appears in the registry (among people whose custom dictates later naming of a child).

Another obstacle evident in the data is lack of awareness about what the registration process entails, or of the benefits of registering. Working with community leaders, including religious leaders, on communicating the importance of registration and facilitating access is

one way to increase demand. The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children has universal and free birth registration as one of its advocacy goals, and encourages religious leaders to work with their congregations to promote birth registration and to support its members in the process. In Belize, a communication for development approach was used to inform community leaders and families about birth registration, using group discussion and radio shows. In Paraguay, football games were used to draw attention to non-registration, while in Nicaragua, a 'crowd-sourcing' challenge, a social media tool, had as its aim an increase in demand for birth registration among indigenous families. Increasing registration among refugees and people in other situations who are stateless may require examining the legal aspects of the registration process to ensure that it is inclusive.

**CONFIDENTIAL.** Information in any registry is personal and sometimes highly sensitive. For this reason, access to the registry must be strictly controlled. In certain situations, especially involving conflict and/or ethnicity, mistrust over confidentiality can be the reason why people may choose not to register their child(ren). In such cases, programmes should review the structure of the registration system, legislative acts that govern it, and the protocols for data transmission to ensure that confidentiality is guaranteed. The design of birth certificates is an important factor in this regard, and should include only the minimal amount of personal information in order to protect vulnerable individuals from unnecessary risk.

**TIMELY AND ACCURATE.** The information registered at birth is a permanent record, with implications for the rest of a person's life. Completing registration as soon as possible after a delivery increases the probability of accurately recording the event. Nonetheless, the data show that many children are registered when they are four or more years of age.

Children whose birth is attended by a trained medical professional are more likely to be registered, as are those who are immunized. This suggests that, wherever possible, birth registration interventions should be integrated within other programming. This could include devising programmes that ensure that families who seek health care and who enter their children in school are given information about registration. In Brazil and Thailand, online connections have been established between maternity hospitals and the civil registry. In Sierra Leone, birth registration is available at the time of immunization. However, the space for a name can be temporarily left blank, since a 'naming ceremony' may not yet have taken place. Examining cultural traditions, including naming practices, and adjusting programmes accordingly is essential to effective promotion and acceptance of registration.

The certificate that is obtained once a child's birth has been recorded is proof of registration. A birth certificate is considered a 'breeder document' in that it provides the proof of identity necessary for applying for a passport, a driver's license and other official documents. Programmes to ensure that a certificate can be received immediately after registration allow for the full birth registration process to be completed.

**PART OF THE CIVIL REGISTRY.** Births can only be recorded as part of a country's civil registration system. Although birth registration cannot directly establish citizenship, the information it provides (nationality of the parent or place of birth) is the basis for granting citizenship.

UNICEF often acts as a convenor to bring together the government officials necessary to ensure support for a civil registry and its role in birth registration. Such action in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for example, resulted in a commitment to develop a legal framework and action plan to strengthen the country's civil registry and vital statistics, using digital technology. In Uganda, a petition to Parliament ultimately led to a change in the law and the development of a national policy on birth registration, which was drafted in 2011 with UNICEF's support.<sup>12</sup>

#### UNTIL THE LAST CHILD IS REACHED

Realizing every child's right to birth registration – despite sometimes overwhelming obstacles – has to be at the core of every country's policy. A number of programmatic actions are available to achieve this: Legislative review can ensure that birth registration is free, universal, confidential and incorporated into the civil registry. Communication for development efforts that work with community leaders and parliamentarians can promote a broader understanding of the process. Mobile and digital technology can be used to obtain timely, accurate and permanent records. And working through programmes in other sectors can facilitate broader reach of the system. Many of these strategies are now being adopted in Yemen, with support from UNICEF and the European Union, to raise low birth registration levels, ease glaring disparities, and help the country recover from recent civil unrest.

International efforts such as these have intensified in recent years, accompanied by high-level regional and global commitments. The evidence presented in this report suggests that such investments 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, the progress under way will gain momentum, and the promise of fulfilling every child's birth right will be achieved.



# References

1. United Nations Children's Fund, *Birth Registration: Right from the start*, Innocenti Digest No. 9, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, 2002.
2. United Nations Children's Fund, *Birth Registration: Right from the start*.
3. United Nations Children's Fund, *The 'Rights' Start to Life: A statistical analysis of birth registration*, UNICEF, New York, 2005.
4. United Nations Children's Fund, 'Country Office Annual Report Summary 2012', unpublished document, Child Protection Section, Programme Division, UNICEF, New York, 2013.
5. Birth registration levels for industrialized countries and the Russian Federation were estimated at 100 per cent based on the completeness of each country's civil registration system. The 'completeness' of a country's registration system refers to the level of birth registration at which every vital event that has occurred among the population of a particular country (or area), within a specified time period, has been registered in the system – that is, has a vital event registration record – and thus has attained 100 per cent coverage. Any deviation from complete coverage is measured by 'coverage error'. Sources: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Population and Vital Statistics Report*, Statistical Papers, Series A, Vol. LXV, Statistics Division, United Nations, New York, 2013; United Nations Children's Fund, *A Passport to Protection: A guide to birth registration programming*, UNICEF, New York, 2013.
6. However, gender inequality is still operating in an indirect way. Many countries demonstrate a bias towards the nationality of fathers in determining the nationality of a child. Children born out of wedlock to single mothers, or to fathers who are temporarily absent, might not be registered irrespective of whether the child is a boy or girl. Source: United Nations Children's Fund, *A Passport to Protection: A guide to birth registration programming*.
7. Sampling errors must be considered when interpreting disparities, since sample sizes of children belonging to minority religious or ethnic groups are often too small to generate statistically significant results.
8. The wealth index breaks down the population into quintiles (fifths) from the poorest to the richest. The index is constructed of household assets, such as ownership of televisions and cars, as well as material living conditions, such as the characteristics of a dwelling. Each item is assigned a weight, and individuals are ranked according to the total score of the household in which they reside.
9. The registration of births in South Africa is governed by the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992) and is administered by the Department of Home Affairs. In accordance with the Act, every live birth needs to be registered within 30 days, by either the children's biological parent/s, a caregiver assigned by the parent/s, or the guardian. Births that are not registered within 30 days are deemed late registration and are subjected to additional requirements. The figures presented here include births that were registered beyond the 30-day deadline.
10. The Child Support Grant is a means-tested non-contributory cash transfer. It is the country's largest social transfer programme in terms of population coverage. Introduced in 1998, in the context of a progressive realization strategy, the grant currently reaches some 11 million children (almost 60 per cent of the country's child population) each month, contributing to enormous positive outcomes. Source: Hagen-Zanker, J., J. Morgan and C. Meth, *South Africa's Cash Social Security Grants: Progress in increasing coverage*, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2011.
11. United Nations Children's Fund, *A Passport to Protection: A guide to birth registration programming*.
12. United Nations Children's Fund, *A Passport to Protection: A guide to birth registration programming*.

# Statistical table

Countries and areas	Total registered (%)	Sex (%)		Age in months					Place of residence (%)		Region (%)		Household wealth quintile (%)					Reference year	Data source	
		Male	Female	0-11	12-23	24-35	36-47	48-59	Urban	Rural	Highest registration	Lowest registration	Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest			
Afghanistan	37	38	37	39	42	37	36	35	60	33	60	19	31	34	30	37	58	2010-2011	MICS	
Albania	99	99	98	97	99	99	99	99	99	98	99	98	98	99	98	99	99	2008-2009	DHS	
Algeria	99	100	99	99	99	100	100	99	100	99	100	99	99	100	100	100	100	2006	MICS	
Andorra	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	UNSD	
Angola	36x	35x	36x	21x	30x	36x	45x	50x	40x	26x	41x	28x	24x	28x	33x	37x	53x	2001	MICS	
Antigua and Barbuda	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Argentina	99y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2007	Estadísticas vitales	
Armenia	100	100	99	100	99	100	99	100	99	100	100	99	100	100	99	99	100	2010	DHS	
Australia	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	UNSD	
Austria	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD	
Azerbaijan	94	93	94	88	93	98	95	96	96	92	98	90	92	92	95	94	97	2006	DHS	
Bahamas	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bahrain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bangladesh	31	31	31	9	19	28	41	53	35	29	44	26	24	28	31	32	41	2011	DHS	
Barbados	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Belarus	100y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	Vital registration	
Belgium	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	UNSD	
Belize	95	95	95	87	96	97	99	97	95	96	98	93	95	95	95	95	97	2011	MICS	
Benin	80	81	80	-	-	-	-	-	87	76	95	42	61	74	84	90	95	2011-2012	DHS (prelim)	
Bhutan	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	100	2010	MICS	
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	76y	76y	75y	47y	73y	81y	87y	91y	79y	72y	79y	69y	68y	72y	75y	83y	90y	2008	DHS	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	100	100	99	98	100	100	100	100	99	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	99	2006	MICS	
Botswana	72	72	73	76	73	74	71	66	78	67	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2007-2008	BFHS	
Brazil	93y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	IBGE	
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bulgaria	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	Vital registration	
Burkina Faso	77	77	77	73	80	79	78	75	93	74	93	40	62	69	78	86	95	2010	DHS/MICS	
Burundi	75	75	75	65	75	79	79	79	87	74	87	69	64	73	74	80	87	2010	DHS	
Cabo Verde	91	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	Censo	
Cambodia	62	62	62	50	61	64	66	69	74	60	82	35	48	60	65	68	78	2010	DHS	
Cameroon	61	62	61	56	61	65	62	63	81	48	91	38	28	54	67	82	89	2011	DHS	
Canada	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	UNSD	
Central African Republic	61	61	62	51	61	65	64	68	78	52	83	47	46	51	59	71	85	2010	MICS	
Chad	16	16	15	13	17	16	18	17	42	9	59	6	5	8	10	14	46	2010	MICS	
Chile	100y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	Estadísticas vitales	
China	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Colombia	97	-	-	90	99	99	99	100	97	95	98	94	-	-	-	-	-	2010	DHS	
Comoros	88x	88x	88x	88x	90x	87x	86x	87x	90x	87x	94x	78x	76x	88x	88x	91x	96x	2000	MICS	
Congo	91	91	91	88	91	91	92	93	95	85	96	69	80	91	93	96	99	2011-2012	DHS	
Cook Islands	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Costa Rica	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Côte d'Ivoire	65	65	65	59	65	67	67	67	85	54	90	39	44	60	63	80	90	2011-2012	DHS	
Croatia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cuba	100y	100y	100y	-	-	-	-	-	100y	100y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	National Health Statistics	
Cyprus	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	UNSD	
Czech Republic	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	UNSD	
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	-	-	-	-	-	2009	MICS	
Democratic Republic of the Congo	28	28	28	23	28	29	30	32	24	29	61	9	25	28	28	30	27	2010	MICS	
Denmark	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD	
Djibouti	92	93	91	91	93	90	92	94	92	84	92	92	-	-	-	-	-	2006	MICS	
Dominica	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dominican Republic	82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	ENHOGAR	

Countries and areas	Total registered (%)	Sex (%)		Age in months					Place of residence (%)		Region (%)		Household wealth quintile (%)					Reference year	Data source
		Male	Female	0-11	12-23	24-35	36-47	48-59	Urban	Rural	Highest registration	Lowest registration	Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest		
Ecuador	90	92	88	-	-	-	-	-	89	92	94	87	-	-	-	-	-	2010	ENNA
Egypt	99y	99y	99y	96y	100y	100y	100y	100y	99y	99y	-	-	99y	99y	99y	99y	100y	2005	DHS
El Salvador	99	99	99	-	-	-	-	-	99	99	100	97	98	99	99	99	99	2008	FESAL
Equatorial Guinea	37x	39x	35x	27x	35x	40x	41x	45x	49x	28x	83x	15x	29x	25x	52x	36x	53x	2000	MICS
Eritrea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estonia	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Ethiopia	7	6	7	7	8	7	6	7	29	5	46	4	3	4	6	7	18	2005	DHS
Fiji	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
France	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Gabon	90	91	88	88	93	93	89	85	89	91	96	80	92	90	90	89	86	2012	DHS
Gambia	53	53	52	35	53	56	60	67	54	52	74	39	46	50	54	53	61	2010	MICS
Georgia	99	98	99	99	100	95	100	100	99	98	100	94	99	98	98	100	98	2011	WMS
Germany	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Ghana	63	63	62	45	68	68	66	66	72	55	77	49	47	54	65	69	82	2011	MICS
Greece	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	UNSD
Grenada	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Guatemala	97	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	96	97	98	95	-	-	-	-	-	2008-2009	ENSMI
Guinea	43	44	42	37	44	45	45	48	78	33	80	32	21	30	39	61	83	2005	DHS
Guinea-Bissau	24	25	24	14	18	20	32	41	30	21	36	12	17	23	23	29	35	2010	MICS/RHS
Guyana	88	88	88	85	89	87	93	85	91	87	96	83	84	90	88	88	92	2009	DHS
Haiti	80	80	80	57	82	87	88	88	85	77	86	70	71	76	81	86	92	2012	DHS
Holy See	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Honduras	94	94	94	77	97	97	98	98	95	93	98	72	92	94	93	95	95	2011-2012	DHS
Hungary	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Iceland	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	UNSD
India	41	41	41	39	42	43	42	40	59	35	95	6	24	31	39	54	72	2005-2006	NFHS
Indonesia	67	66	67	59	67	67	72	70	76	58	91	28	41	60	70	79	88	2012	DHS
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	99y	99y	99y	-	-	-	-	-	99y	98y	100y	96y	-	-	-	-	-	2010	MIDHS
Iraq	99	99	99	98	99	100	100	100	99	99	100	98	98	99	100	100	100	2011	MICS
Ireland	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	UNSD
Israel	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	UNSD
Italy	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Jamaica	98	97	99	-	-	-	-	-	97	99	-	-	96	98	100	100	99	2008	JSLC
Japan	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	UNSD
Jordan	99	99	99	-	-	-	-	-	99	100	100	98	-	-	-	-	-	2012	DHS (prelim)
Kazakhstan	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	100	2010-2011	MICS
Kenya	60	61	59	57	62	57	64	60	76	57	86	42	48	54	59	66	80	2008-2009	DHS
Kiribati	94	95	93	94	94	93	93	93	95	93	-	-	93	91	95	95	94	2009	DHS
Kuwait	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	96	96	95	91	96	97	97	98	97	95	99	91	97	94	94	96	97	2005-2006	MICS
Lao People's Democratic Republic	75	74	75	60	74	77	81	82	88	71	98	6	66	69	76	81	93	2011-2012	MICS
Latvia	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Lebanon	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	-	-	100	98	-	-	-	-	-	2009	MICS
Lesotho	45	46	45	35	44	45	51	51	43	46	55	39	42	43	46	47	49	2009	DHS
Liberia	4y	3y	4y	4y	3y	4y	4y	3y	5y	3y	7y	1y	1y	2y	5y	4y	7y	2007	DHS
Libya	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liechtenstein	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Lithuania	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Luxembourg	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	UNSD
Madagascar	80	80	79	73	81	82	80	82	92	78	94	51	61	78	86	91	93	2008-2009	DHS
Malawi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malaysia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Maldives	93	93	92	91	93	94	94	92	93	92	97	86	92	94	94	90	94	2009	DHS
Mali	81	81	80	78	83	80	81	82	92	77	95	41	65	74	81	92	96	2010	MICS
Malta	100z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Marshall Islands	96	96	96	95	95	97	97	97	96	96	-	-	92	95	98	95	98	2007	DHS
Mauritania	59	60	58	51	58	62	61	62	75	49	92	31	33	48	68	72	84	2011	MICS



Countries and areas	Total registered (%)	Sex (%)		Age in months					Place of residence (%)		Region (%)		Household wealth quintile (%)					Reference year	Data source
		Male	Female	0-11	12-23	24-35	36-47	48-59	Urban	Rural	Highest registration	Lowest registration	Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest		
Swaziland	50	50	49	41	44	49	52	61	62	47	55	42	39	42	46	56	73	2010	MICS
Sweden	100 z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Switzerland	100 z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	UNSD
Syrian Arab Republic	96	96	96	89	97	97	98	99	97	95	99	87	93	95	97	98	99	2006	MICS
Tajikistan	88	89	88	80	89	91	91	92	88	89	92	86	86	87	89	91	90	2012	DHS
Thailand	100	100	99	99	99	100	100	100	100	99	100	98	99	99	99	100	100	2005-2006	MICS
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	99	99	100	100	100	100	2011	MICS
Timor-Leste	55	55	56	30	52	61	64	69	50	57	91	34	50	54	59	57	56	2009-2010	DHS
Togo	78	78	78	72	81	80	79	78	93	71	93	68	59	71	80	91	97	2010	MICS
Tonga	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Trinidad and Tobago	97	97	97	88	98	99	97	100	-	-	99	95	96	96	98	95	99	2006	MICS
Tunisia	99	99	100	98	99	100	100	100	100	98	100	98	98	100	100	99	100	2011-2012	MICS
Turkey	94	95	93	89	95	95	98	98	95	92	99	87	89	92	96	96	99	2008	DHS
Turkmenistan	96	95	96	87	97	99	97	99	96	95	99	94	94	96	96	96	97	2006	MICS
Tuvalu	50	49	51	54	54	47	47	47	60	38	-	-	39	43	38	60	71	2007	DHS
Uganda	30	30	30	25	28	31	32	33	38	29	45	11	27	26	27	28	44	2011	DHS
Ukraine	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	99	2012	MICS
United Arab Emirates	100 y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	National Bureau of Statistics
United Kingdom	100 z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2010	UNSD
United Republic of Tanzania	16	17	16	15	18	16	16	16	44	10	94	4	4	6	10	23	56	2010	DHS
United States	100 z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2009	UNSD
Uruguay	100 y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2012	Vital registration
Uzbekistan	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	2006	MICS
Vanuatu	43	39	47	38	46	44	47	40	53	41	66	21	27	43	45	50	55	2007	MICS
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	81 y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2011	INE
Viet Nam	95	95	95	85	96	97	98	99	97	94	98	91	87	96	97	98	98	2011	MICS
Yemen	17 y	19 y	15 y	-	-	-	-	-	42 y	11 y	-	-	3 y	4 y	8 y	30 y	51 y	2012	NSPMS
Zambia	14	14	14	13	15	16	12	15	28	9	35	1	5	9	12	22	31	2007	DHS
Zimbabwe	49	48	49	35	44	49	57	63	65	43	77	36	35	41	47	55	75	2010-2011	DHS

#### SUMMARY INDICATORS#

Sub-Saharan Africa	44	42	41	36	42	43	43	43	61	35	-	-	26	33	42	51	63		
Eastern and Southern Africa	38	32	32	28	33	33	34	35	49	29	-	-	24	27	31	36	50		
West and Central Africa	47	48	47	42	48	49	48	48	64	40	-	-	27	37	48	60	71		
Middle East and North Africa	87	88	87	89	92	92	91	92	95	78	-	-	76	79	84	90	94		
South Asia	39	39	39	34	38	40	40	41	53	34	-	-	24	30	38	49	65		
East Asia and the Pacific	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Latin America and the Caribbean	92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	96	88	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
CEE/CIS	98	98	97	95	98	98	99	99	98	97	-	-	96	97	98	98	99		
Least developed countries	38	38	38	31	37	39	41	43	54	34	-	-	28	33	37	43	55		
World	65	63	63	59	65	66	66	66	80	51	-	-	51	58	63	70	79		

# For a complete list of countries and territories in the regions, subregions and country categories, see page 44.

**Indicator definition:** Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered at the moment of the survey. The numerator of this indicator includes children whose birth certificate was seen by the interviewer or whose mother or caregiver says the birth is registered.

- Data not available.

x Data refer to years or periods other than those specified in the column heading. Such data are not included in the calculation of regional and global averages.

y Data differ from the standard definition or refer to only part of a country. If they fall within the noted reference period, such data are included in the calculation of regional and global averages.

z Estimates of 100 per cent were assumed given that civil registration systems in these countries are complete and all vital events (including births) are registered. Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, *Population and Vital Statistics Report, Series A, Vol. LXV, New York, 2013.*

**Notes:** Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least half of the regional population. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate the percentage of children who are registered in East Asia and the Pacific because comparable data on birth registration are not available for China. Regional estimates by levels of disaggregation cannot be compared with the regional estimates for 'total registered' since they are based on a subset of countries with available data. Their sole purpose is to illustrate differentials. Changes in the definition of birth registration were made from the second and third rounds of MICS (MICS2, 2000; MICS3, 2005-2006) to the fourth round (MICS4, 2009-2011). In order to allow for comparability data from MICS2 and MICS3 on birth registration were recalculated according to the MICS4 indicator definition. Therefore, the recalculated data presented in this table and in the text may differ from estimates included in MICS2 and MICS3 national reports.

### **Sub-Saharan Africa**

Eastern and Southern Africa; West and Central Africa; Djibouti; Sudan

### **Eastern and Southern Africa**

Angola; Botswana; Burundi; Comoros; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Kenya; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Mauritius; Mozambique; Namibia; Rwanda; Seychelles; Somalia; South Africa; South Sudan; Swaziland; 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; Djibouti; Egypt; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Iraq; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Libya; Morocco; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; State of Palestine; Sudan; Syrian Arab Republic; Tunisia; United Arab Emirates; Yemen

### **South Asia**

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

### **East Asia and the Pacific**

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

### **Latin America and the Caribbean**

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

### **CEE/CIS**

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

### **Least developed countries/areas**

[Classified as such by the United Nations High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)]. Afghanistan; Angola; Bangladesh; Benin; Bhutan; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cambodia; Central African Republic; Chad; Comoros; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Djibouti; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Gambia; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Haiti; Kiribati; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mozambique; Myanmar; Nepal; Niger; Rwanda; Samoa; Sao Tome and Principe; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Solomon Islands; Somalia; South Sudan; Sudan; Timor-Leste; Togo; Tuvalu; Uganda; United Republic of Tanzania; Vanuatu; Yemen; Zambia



**Contact:**

UNICEF  
Data and Analytics Section  
Division of Policy and Strategy  
3 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017, USA  
Tel: +1 (212) 326-7000  
Email: [childinfo@unicef.org](mailto:childinfo@unicef.org)