

# A STATISTICAL UPDATE ON **BIRTH REGISTRATION IN AFRICA**



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa



for every child

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unicef

REGISTRE  
(naissance  
certificate)

REGISTRE  
(naissance  
certificate)



# BIRTH REGISTRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**Society first acknowledges a child's existence and identity through birth registration.**

The right to be recognized as a person before the law is a critical step in ensuring lifelong protection and can facilitate access to all other rights.

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

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

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

OF THE 164 MILLION  
UNREGISTERED CHILDREN  
UNDER 5 WORLDWIDE,  
**MORE THAN HALF**  
(AROUND 91 MILLION)  
LIVE IN AFRICA

NEARLY HALF OF ALL  
AFRICAN CHILDREN  
UNDER 5 ARE  
UNREGISTERED, BUT  
LEVELS VARY WIDELY  
ACROSS COUNTRIES  
AND REGIONS

**4 IN 10**  
UNREGISTERED CHILDREN  
UNDER 5 IN AFRICA ARE  
IN THE EASTERN REGION

AFRICA IS HOME TO  
116 MILLION CHILDREN UNDER 5  
WITHOUT A BIRTH CERTIFICATE;  
THIS INCLUDES 91 MILLION  
UNREGISTERED CHILDREN AND  
25 MILLION CHILDREN WHOSE  
BIRTHS ARE REPORTED AS  
REGISTERED BUT WHO LACK  
PROOF IN THE FORM OF A BIRTH  
CERTIFICATE

OF ALL INFANTS IN AFRICA,  
AROUND 27 MILLION  
DO NOT POSSESS  
A BIRTH CERTIFICATE;  
THIS INCLUDES 21 MILLION  
UNREGISTERED CHILDREN  
AND 6 MILLION WHO ARE  
REGISTERED BUT WITHOUT  
A BIRTH CERTIFICATE

## KEY FACTS ON **BIRTH REGISTRATION** IN AFRICA

GREAT STRIDES HAVE  
BEEN MADE IN RAISING  
THE LEVELS OF  
BIRTH REGISTRATION  
IN AFRICA, BUT A  
**SUBSTANTIAL ACCELERATION**  
OF PROGRESS WILL BE  
REQUIRED TO FULFIL ITS  
PROMISE OF UNIVERSAL BIRTH  
REGISTRATION BY 2030

**THE POOREST CHILDREN**  
IN AFRICA CONTINUE  
TO LAG BEHIND, WITH  
THE GAP IN BIRTH  
REGISTRATION BETWEEN  
THE RICHEST AND  
POOREST CHILDREN  
WIDENING OVER TWO  
DECADES, MOST NOTABLY  
IN CENTRAL AFRICA

PROGRESS AMONG  
AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAS  
BEEN UNEVEN:  
20 COUNTRIES ARE ON  
TRACK TO REGISTER  
THE BIRTHS OF ALL  
CHILDREN BY 2030 WHILE  
23 COUNTRIES WILL  
NEED TO ACCELERATE  
PROGRESS

WITH SUSTAINED PROGRESS,  
AFRICA COULD CONTINUE TO  
SEE FEWER UNREGISTERED  
CHILDREN IN THE YEARS TO  
COME; WITH AN ACCELERATION  
OF PROGRESS, THE NUMBER  
OF UNREGISTERED CHILDREN  
**IN 2030 COULD BE 58 MILLION**  
**LESS THAN IT IS TODAY**

CONCERTED EFFORTS  
AND FOCUS ARE  
URGENTLY NEEDED  
TO RAISE BIRTH  
REGISTRATION LEVELS  
AMONG THE POOREST  
CHILDREN



DATE OF BIRTH OF CHILD	SEX	DISTRICT	SUB-COUNTY	PARISH	VILLAGE

# BIRTH NOTIFICATION RECORD

Registration of Persons Act 2015



# NIRA

National Identification and Population Authority  
Uganda's Identity Control by Law

www.nira.gov.ug

SURNAME		MARY IMMACULATE			
RESPECT					
DATE OF BIRTH OF CHILD	SEX	DISTRICT	SUB-COUNTY	PARISH	VILLAGE
NAME OF MOTHER	NAME OF FATHER	NAME OF MOTHER OF MOTHER	NATIONALITY OF MOTHER	NINJA/N	
OTHER NAMES					
MARY IMMACULATE					
CF-9959510042LE					

*Mary Immaculate*  
Signature of Registrar  
14/05/2018  
KITOMI  
MAYOR'S OFFICE  
KITOMI

## MILESTONES IN ADVANCING UNIVERSAL BIRTH REGISTRATION IN AFRICA



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**AUGUST 2010:** The First Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was attended by over 40 ministers from the continent and resulted in a declaration and plan of action.

**SEPTEMBER 2012:** The Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration was held in Durban, South Africa. It led to a strong resolution by ministers calling for reform of national civil registration and vital statistics systems across the continent. This commitment translated into a programme and policy document, *Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS)*. The conference brought health ministries on board and advanced interoperability between civil registration and the health sector.

**FEBRUARY 2015:** The Third Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration took place in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire under the theme 'Promoting the use of civil registration and vital statistics in support of good governance in Africa'. The focus was on innovation and new technology.

**DECEMBER 2017:** The Fourth Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration hosted in Nouakchott, Mauritania was devoted to identifying ways forward in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 for Africa.

**SEPTEMBER 2018:** The United Nations Deputy Secretary-General initiated the establishment of the UN Legal Identity Expert Group to ensure holistic installation and development of civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems. The UN Legal Identity Agenda 2020-2030 was officially launched in Rome in May 2019 in preparation for the UN High-Level Political Forum, with the theme 'Peaceful, just and inclusive societies – SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind'. The initial focus of the Legal Identity Agenda is Africa, with 13 pilot countries.

**OCTOBER 2019:** The Fifth Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration on the theme 'Innovative civil registration and vital statistics system: Foundation for legal identity management' was held in Lusaka, Zambia. The importance of civil registration systems for the realization of a legal identity for all was reaffirmed and the UN Legal Identity Agenda was introduced.

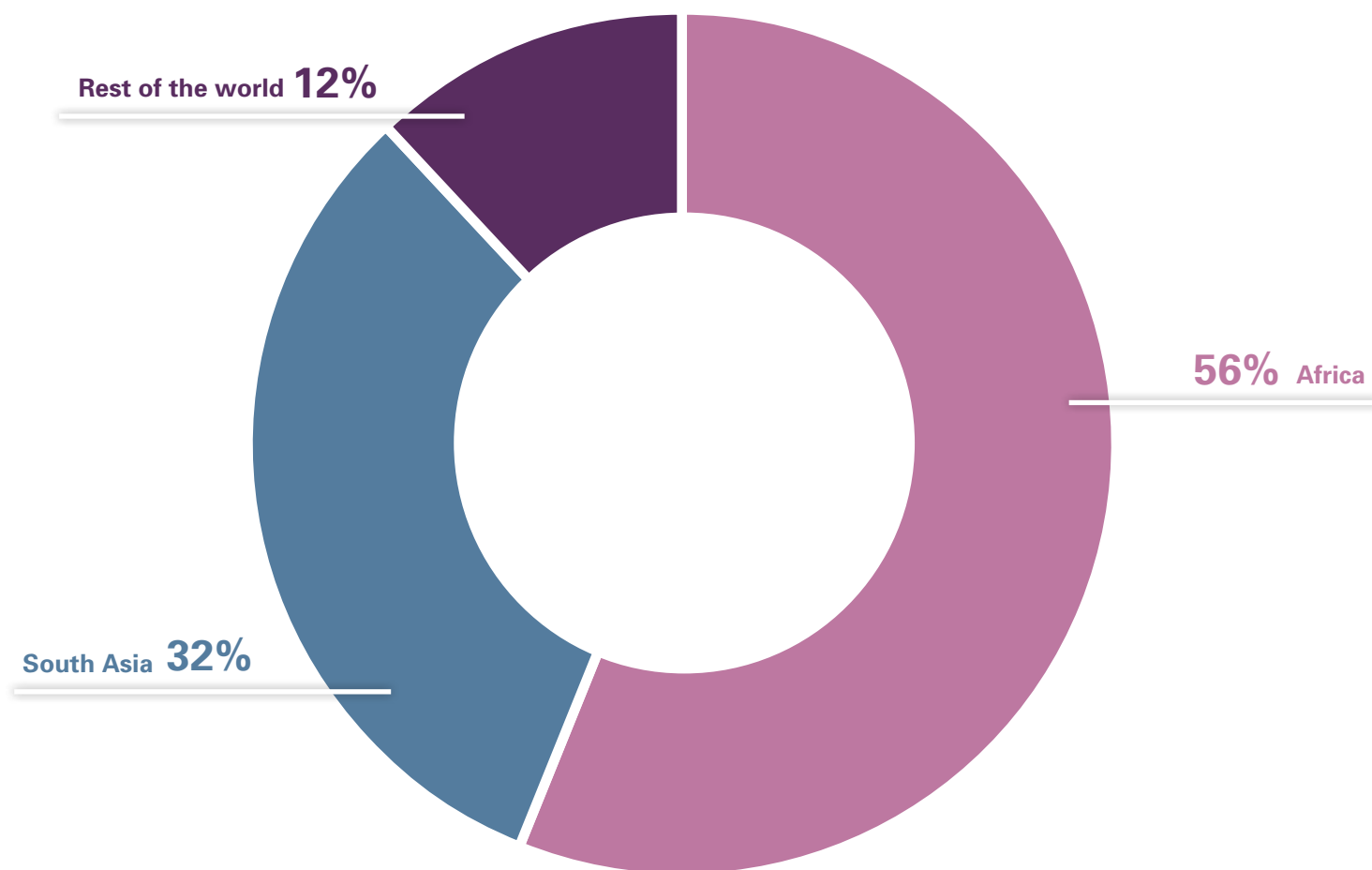
**OCTOBER 2022:** The Sixth Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration is held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with the theme 'A decade into APAI-CRVS: Reflecting on progress and accelerating efforts towards 2030 transformed systems'. The conference aims at reviewing progress in developing CRVS systems, sharing innovative practices and strategies, and providing policy directives for accelerated improvement to inform the new regional CRVS strategy and plan.



WHERE  
AFRICA  
STANDS  
**TODAY**

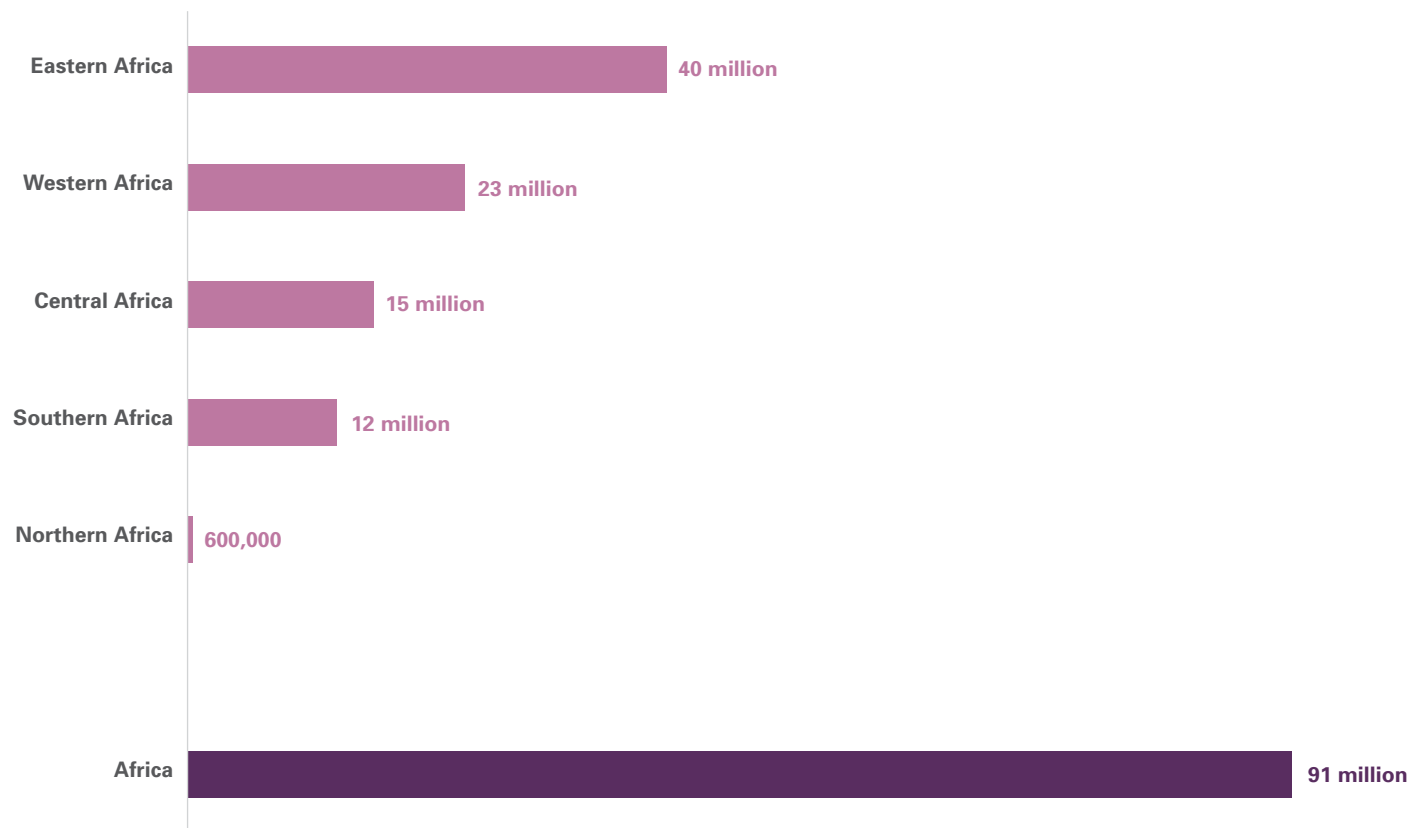
## Of the 164 million unregistered children worldwide, more than half (around 91 million) live in Africa

FIG. 1 Percentage distribution of children under age 5 whose births are not registered



## Four in ten unregistered children in Africa are in the Eastern region

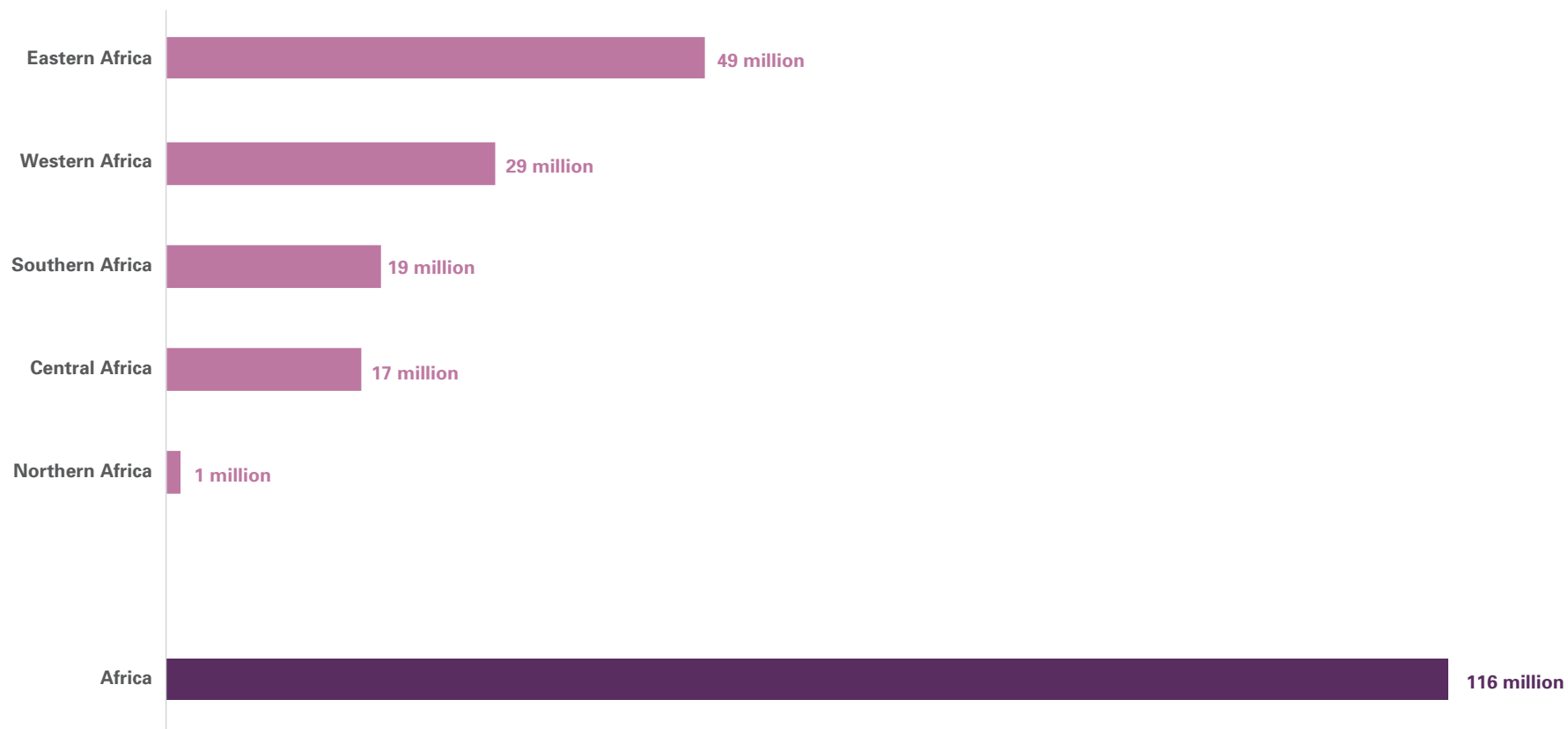
FIG. 2 Number of children under age 5 whose births are not registered, by African region



Notes: Figures have been rounded and do not add up to the total for Africa. Estimates are based on a subset of 48 countries in Africa with data between 2012 and 2021, covering 97 per cent of the population of children under age 5. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.

## Many children still lack proof of registration: Around 6 in 10 children (116 million) in Africa do not have a birth certificate

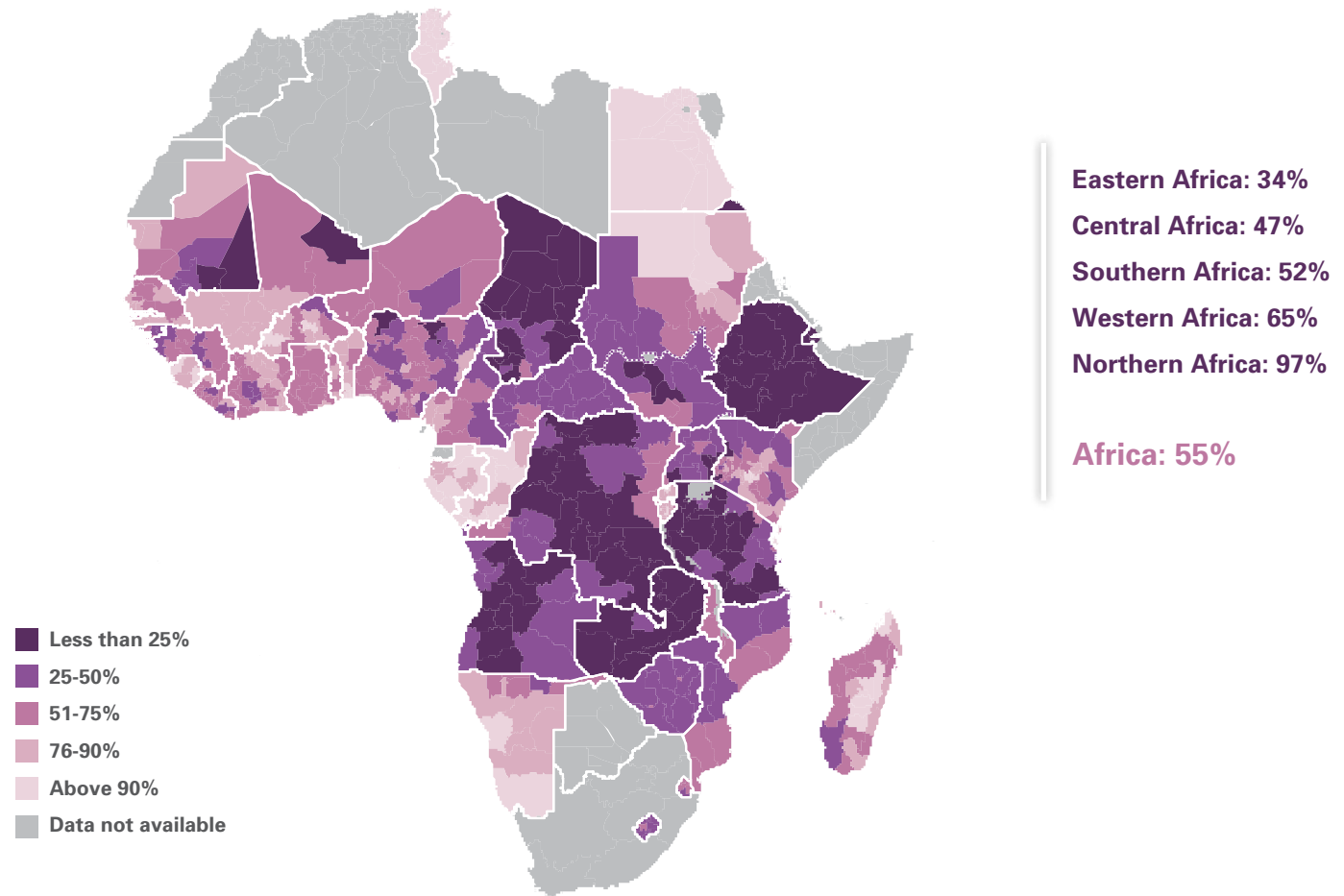
FIG. 3 Number of children under age 5 without a birth certificate, by African region



Notes: Figures have been rounded and do not add up to the total for Africa. Estimates are based on a subset of 43 countries in Africa with data between 2012 and 2021, covering 92 per cent of the population of children under age 5. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.

# Significant disparities in birth registration levels can be found within countries

FIG. 4 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered in Africa, by region and subnational areas



Notes: This map 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 Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined. Data for Namibia refer to children under age 5 with a birth certificate. Data for Egypt were not collected in North and South Sinai due to security issues. Data are not available for some countries either because there are no comparable data on birth registration or subnational data are not available.

## Of all infants in Africa, around half (some 21 million) have not been registered

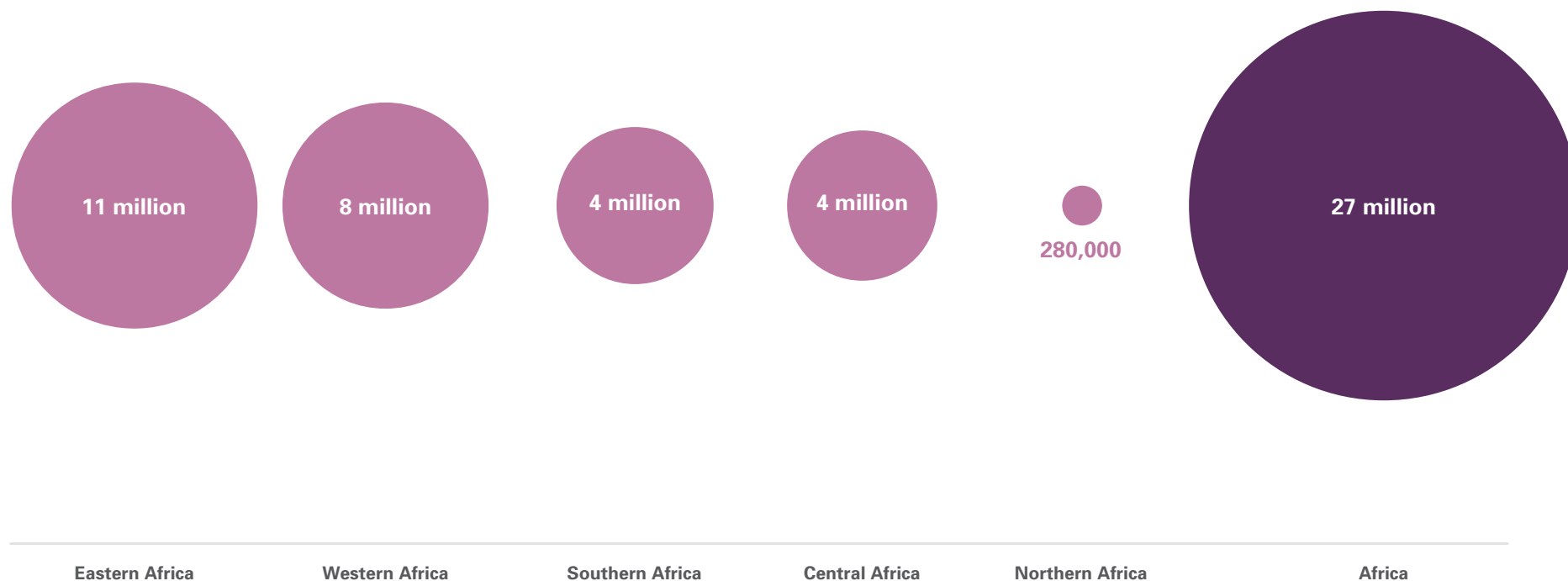
FIG. 5 Number of children under age 1 whose births are not registered, by African region



Notes: Figures have been rounded and do not add up to the total for Africa. Estimates are based on a subset of 45 countries in Africa with data between 2012 and 2021, covering 94 per cent of the population of children under age 1. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.

## About 27 million infants in Africa do not possess a birth certificate

FIG. 6 Number of children under age 1 without a birth certificate, by African region

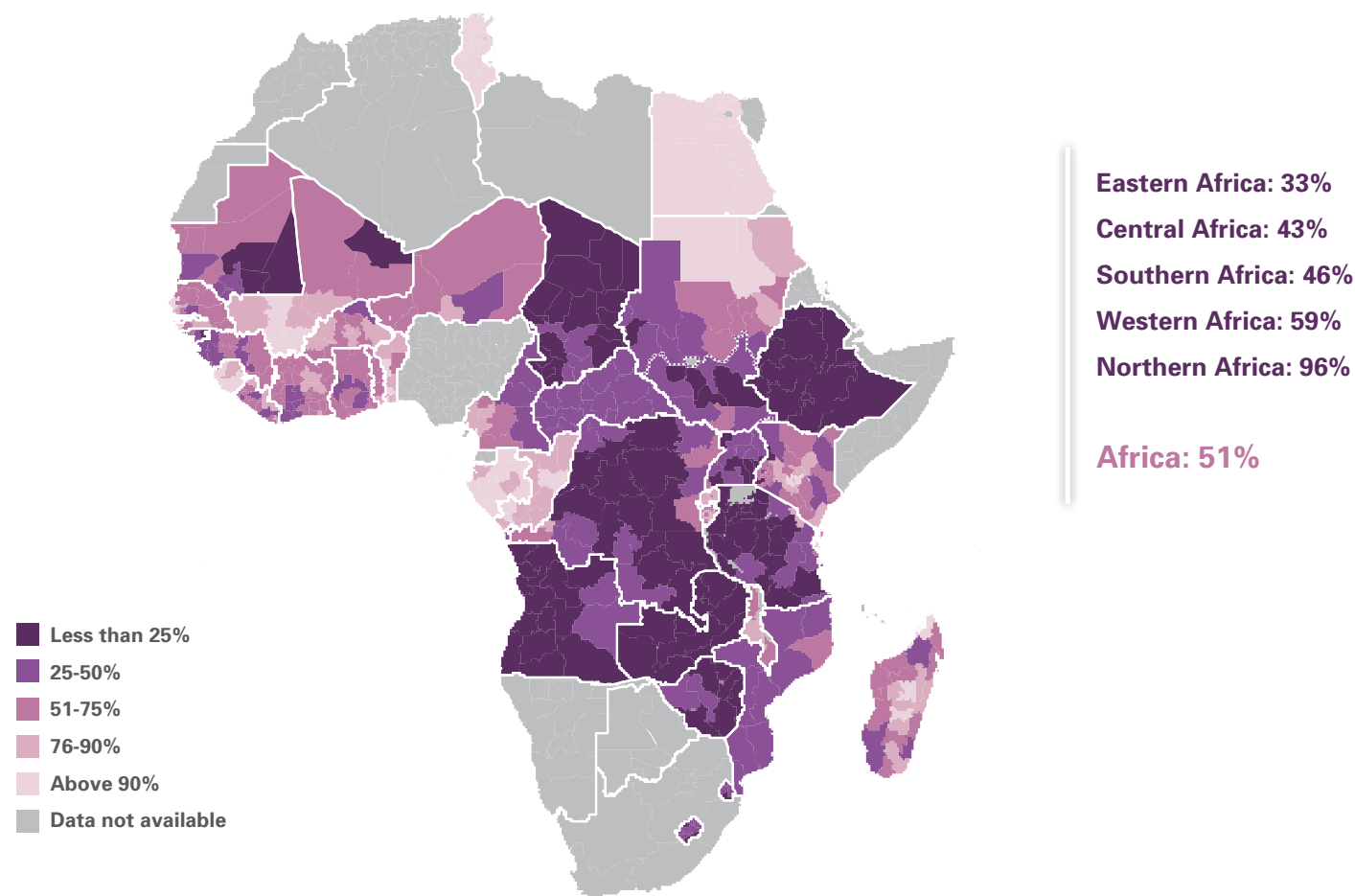


Notes: Figures have been rounded and do not add up to the total for Africa. Estimates are based on a subset of 42 countries in Africa with data between 2012 and 2021, covering 91 per cent of the population of children under age 1. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.



## Wide variations in birth registration levels among infants are found across African countries and regions

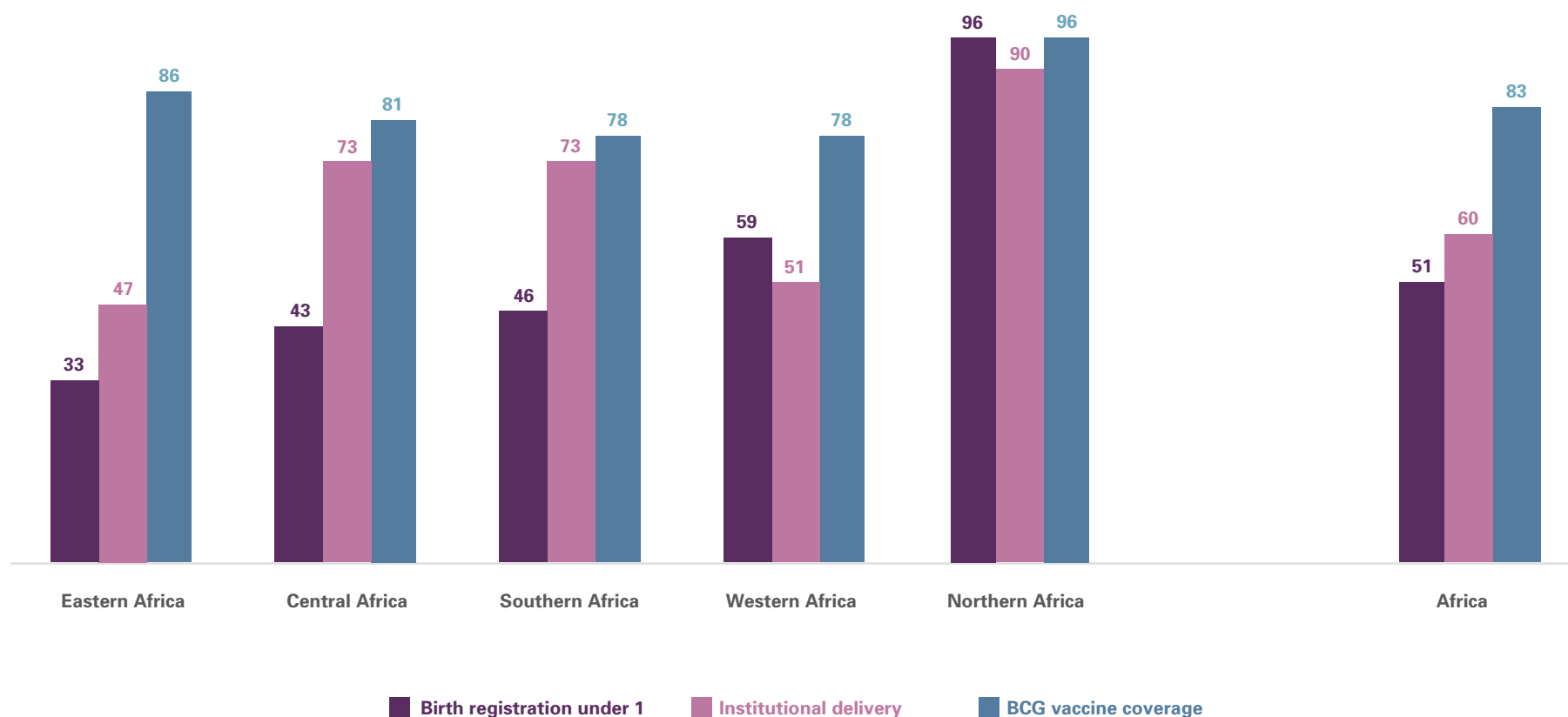
FIG. 7 Percentage of children under age 1 whose births are registered in Africa, by region and subnational areas



Notes: This map 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 Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined. Data for Egypt were not collected in North and South Sinai due to security issues. Data are not available for some countries either because there are no comparable data on birth registration or subnational data are not available.

## In some African regions, linking birth registration to the delivery of certain health and immunization services could be an opportunity to boost registration levels

FIG. 8 Percentage of children under age 1 whose births are registered, percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years whose most recent live birth was delivered in a health facility, and percentage of newborns who received bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine against tuberculosis



Notes: Estimates are based on a subset of 43 countries in Africa with data between 2012 and 2021, covering 94 per cent of the population of children under age 1. Regional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population. This chart is based only on the subset of countries in Africa for which data on all three indicators were available. For each country, levels of vaccine coverage and institutional deliveries in the same year as the latest available data point on birth registration among children under 1 were used.



IVOIRE

AL DE MAS

DE NAISSANCE

Prénoms  
22-06-21

Nom  
AGIMA

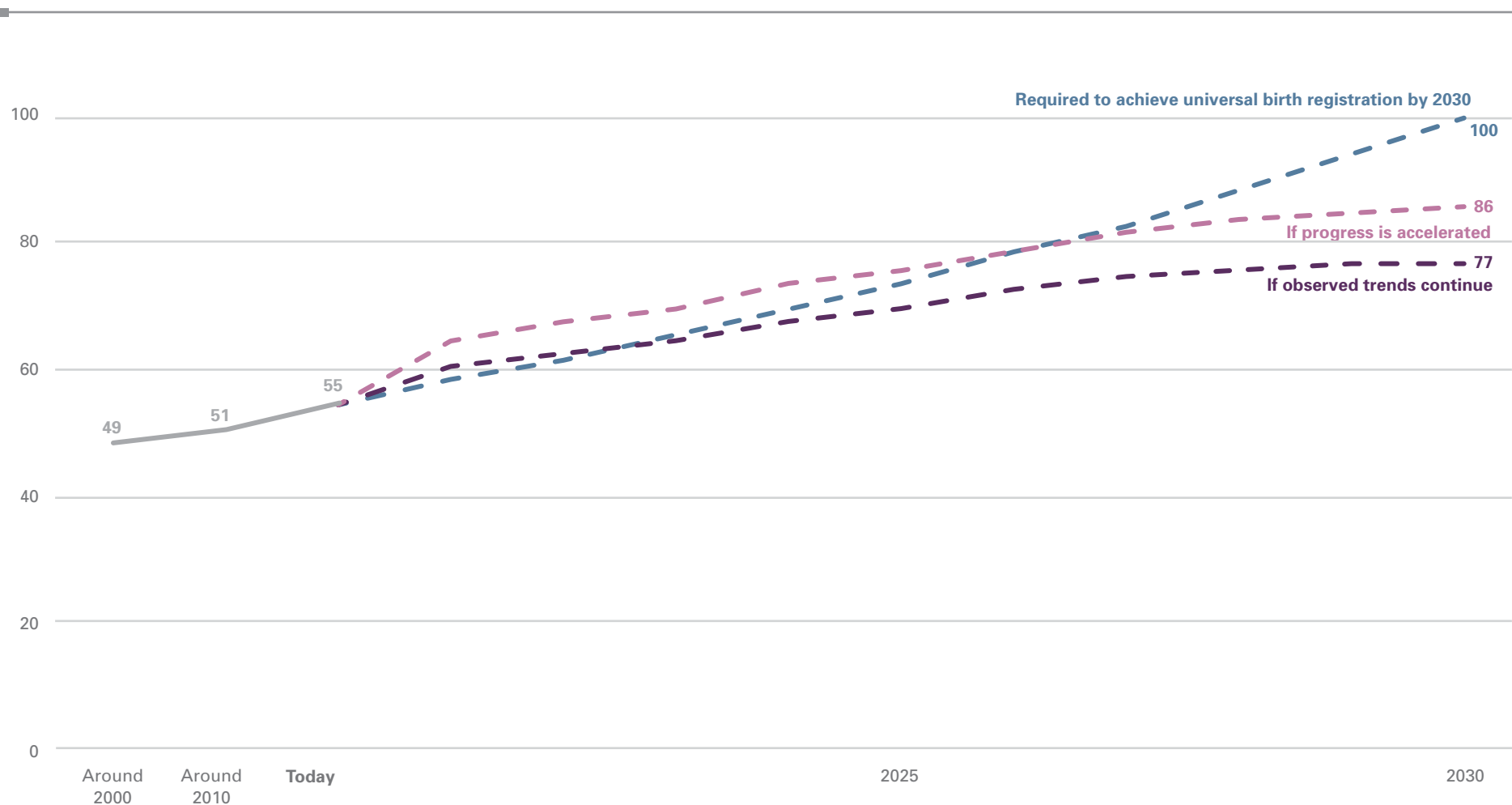
Date de naissance  
22-06-21



# ASSESSING PROGRESS IN AFRICA AND LOOKING AHEAD TO 2030

# Great strides have been made in raising the levels of birth registration in Africa, but a substantial acceleration of progress will be required to fulfil its promise of universal birth registration by 2030

FIG. 9 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered in Africa, observed and projected



Notes: The projection scenarios build on existing trends. The scenario depicting 'observed trends continue' shows expected values if each country with available trend data were to continue on its observed path of progress. The 'progress is accelerated' scenario shows expected values if: (1) those countries that are projected to be on track to achieve universal birth registration by 2030 continue on their observed path of progress, (2) those countries that have a positive average annual rate of change catch up to countries in the same region that are on track, and (3) those countries that have either a negative average annual rate of change or have not made any progress catch up to countries in the same region that have made at least some progress but are not on track. This represents the more ambitious of the two scenarios. Both scenarios account for slowing effects that are to be expected as birth registration levels approach 100 per cent. The scenario 'required to achieve universal birth registration by 2030' applies the average annual rate of change that would be required for Africa to reach a birth registration prevalence of 99.5 per cent (which is the definition of universal birth registration used for statistical purposes) by 2030.

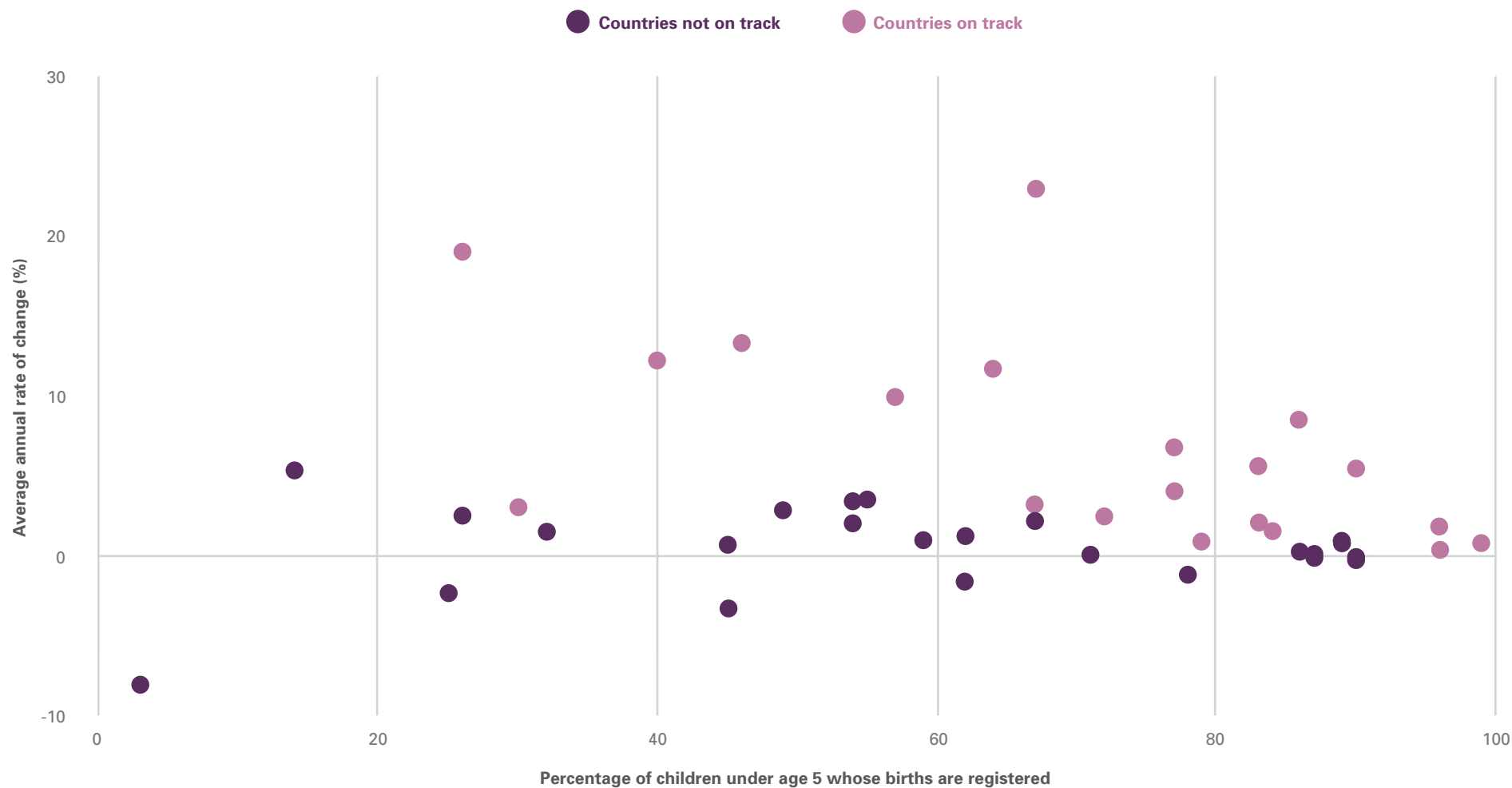
# The poorest children in Africa continue to lag behind, with the gap in birth registration between the richest and poorest children widening over two decades, most notably in Central Africa

FIG. 10 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, by household wealth quintile and by African regions



## Progress among African countries has been uneven: 20 countries are on track to register the births of all children by 2030 while 23 countries will need to accelerate progress

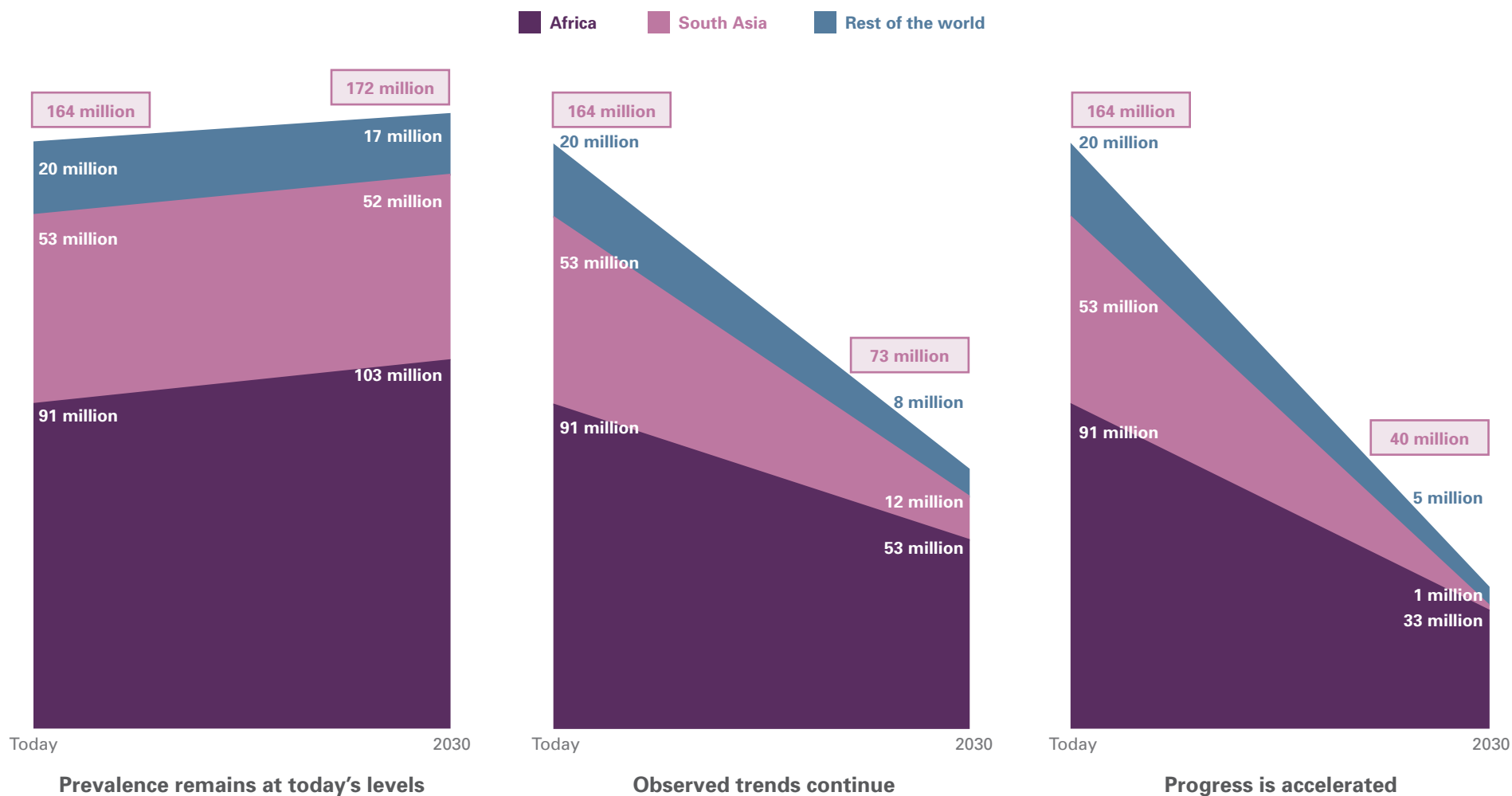
FIG. 11 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered and average annual rate of change, in African countries on track and not on track towards the SDG target



Notes: This chart does not include countries that have already met the target of universal birth registration and those for which there were insufficient data to assess trends. The dots for some countries that are not on track are overlapping and therefore not visible.

# With sustained progress, Africa could continue to see fewer unregistered children in the years to come; with an acceleration of progress, the number of unregistered children in 2030 could be 58 million less than it is today

FIG. 12 Number of children under age 5 whose births are not registered, observed and projected, by region



Note: Figures have been rounded and may not add up to totals.







ACHIEVING  
UNIVERSAL  
BIRTH  
REGISTRATION  
IN AFRICA:  
**WHAT WILL IT TAKE?**

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**Legal identity for all in Africa – starting from birth – could be a game-changer in closing the global identity gap and fulfilling the promise to leave no one behind.**

Progress has been made, but acceleration is needed for African countries to achieve their ambitions for children.

As countries employ both technological and non-technological solutions to improve their civil registration and vital statistics systems, UNICEF has put forth three recommendations for increasing coverage while promoting cost-efficient service delivery.

**1. Revise laws and policies to remove all discriminatory provisions and make registration and certification free within the legally permissible time period and beyond.** All discriminatory provisions and practices need to be removed from national civil registration legislation and policies, and mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure enforcement. This is essential to fulfil the central, transformative promise of the SDGs to leave no one behind. Furthermore, countries should guarantee free birth registration and certification within the legally permissible time period and consider removing fees associated with late or delayed registration, given the challenges faced in ensuring all children are registered at birth or within the legal time frame. Countries may also consider waiving fees and fines for delayed registration for a discrete period

of time to address any backlog of unregistered older children.

**2. Adopt a one-stop approach for newborn registration and certification that is entirely interoperable with health and immunization systems, including in humanitarian contexts.**

The birth registration process should be made entirely interoperable with newborn health and immunization services, through data-sharing and engagement of health agents in the process of registration and certification, if and where possible.

**3. Take a gradual approach to digitization of systems.**

Countries should make a gradual shift towards digitization while adhering to safe and innovative practices.

The target date for the SDGs is now less than a decade away. Concerted efforts are needed to achieve birth registration for all children, anchored in the collective action of partners engaged in the *Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics*, with investments geared towards continued policy and legislative reform, interoperability and digitization. Only by bringing these proven solutions to scale can the registration of every child's birth in Africa become a reality.

## Statistical table on birth registration

	Children under 1 whose births are registered (%)	Children under 5 whose births are registered (%)	Data source
Algeria	99	100	MICS 2018-19
Angola	12	25	DHS 2015-16
Benin	87	86	DHS 2017-18
Botswana	79	88	Demographic Survey 2017
Burkina Faso	73	77	DHS 2010
Burundi	73	84	DHS 2016-17
Cabo Verde	-	91	Censo 2010
Cameroon	56	62	DHS 2018
Central African Republic	41	45	MICS 2018-19
Chad	22	26	MICS 2019
Comoros	87	87	DHS 2012
Congo	94	96	MICS 2014-15
Côte d'Ivoire	66	72	MICS 2016
Democratic Republic of the Congo	38	40	MICS 2017-18
Djibouti	91	92	MICS 2006
Egypt	98	99	DHS 2014
Equatorial Guinea	-	54	DHS 2011
Eritrea	-	-	
Eswatini	38	54	MICS 2014
Ethiopia	2	3	DHS 2016
Gabon	88	90	DHS 2012
Gambia	41	59	DHS 2019-20
Ghana	57	71	MICS 2017-18
Guinea	57	62	DHS 2018
Guinea-Bissau	36	46	MICS 2018-19
Kenya	68	67	DHS 2014
Lesotho	28	45	MICS 2018
Liberia	64	66	DHS 2019-20
Libya	-	-	

	Children under 1 whose births are registered (%)	Children under 5 whose births are registered (%)	Data source
Madagascar	74	79	MICS 2018
Malawi	72	67	MICS 2019-20
Mali	87	87	DHS 2018
Mauritania	36	45	DHS 2019-21
Mauritius	-	-	
Morocco	-	96	Enquête Nationale sur la Population et la Santé Familiale 2018
Mozambique	46	55	AIDS Indicator Survey 2015
Namibia	65	78	Namibia Inter-Censal Demographic Survey 2016
Niger	67	64	DHS 2012
Nigeria	50	57	MICS 2021
Rwanda	77	86	DHS 2019-20
Sao Tome and Principe	99	99	MICS 2019
Senegal	77	79	Continuous DHS 2019
Seychelles	-	-	
Sierra Leone	93	90	DHS 2019
Somalia	-	6	Somali Health and Demographic Survey 2020
South Africa	89	89	Recorded live births 2017
South Sudan	34	35	South Sudan Household Survey 2010
Sudan	62	67	MICS 2014
Togo	79	83	MICS 2017
Tunisia	100	100	MICS 2018
Uganda	26	32	DHS 2016
United Republic of Tanzania	23	26	DHS 2015-16
Zambia	13	14	DHS 2018
Zimbabwe	30	49	MICS 2019

Notes: Data for Botswana and Namibia refer to children with a birth certificate. The data source used for Somalia does not include some parts of the country that could not be sampled due to security issues. The estimates of birth registration for children under age 1 and under age 5 in South Africa are the same because the data refer to the proportion of births registered, and this is used as a proxy for registration among children under 5 overall.

## Technical notes

For statistical purposes, complete birth registration coverage is defined as 99.5 per cent or higher. An assessment of progress was conducted for each country that had at least two comparable data sources, provided that the most recent data source was from 2010 or later. There were 46 countries in Africa for which an assessment of progress was possible. For the remaining countries, there was either no comparable data source on birth registration in the UNICEF global databases or there were insufficient trend data to be able to conduct an assessment of progress.

Data on birth registration and certification are drawn from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), vital registration systems, and other nationally representative household surveys that use a comparable methodology and are compiled in UNICEF global databases. For detailed source information by country, see <data.unicef.org>. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2022, Online Edition*.

Data on institutional deliveries are drawn from MICS, DHS and other nationally representative surveys compiled in the UNICEF Maternal and Newborn Health Coverage Database (updated May 2022).

Data on BCG immunization coverage are drawn from WHO/UNICEF Estimates of National Immunization Coverage (updated July 2022).

## Regional composition

Central Africa: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe

Eastern Africa: Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania

Northern Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia

Southern Africa: Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Western Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo



Form B  
 Caution: Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this certificate or (2) uses a false certificate as true knowing it to be false shall be liable for prosecution.

**ORIGINAL**

**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA  
 NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION  
 Certificate of Birth** AIR 23825390

Issued under the National and State Civil Registration Systems (Coversary Registration Series No. 44 of 1992)

Registration Centre: PHC NITBENG

State: ANIBERG

LGA: MARIG-ABUWA

Date: ADMAMU 1 / 20 / 987

Which certifies that the facts, details of which are recorded herein have been registered on the National and State Registration Systems

1. Full Name: CHRISTOPHER (Surname first) CHRISTOPHER (Given Name)

2. Sex: M

3. Date of Birth: M / 09 / 20 (Month / Day / Year)

4. Place of Birth: MARIG-LANDJA (Name of Locality)

5. Full Name of Father: CHRISTOPHER (Surname first) CHRISTOPHER (Given Name)

6. Full Name of Mother: CHRISTOPHER (Surname first) JAMES (Given Name)

7. Place of Issue: NITBENG (Name of Registrar)

Date: 14-10-20

Signature: PHILIP OBAROMAS  
 Name of Registrar  
 Signature

NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION

unicef  | for every child

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