



A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF **BIRTH REGISTRATION** IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, November 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

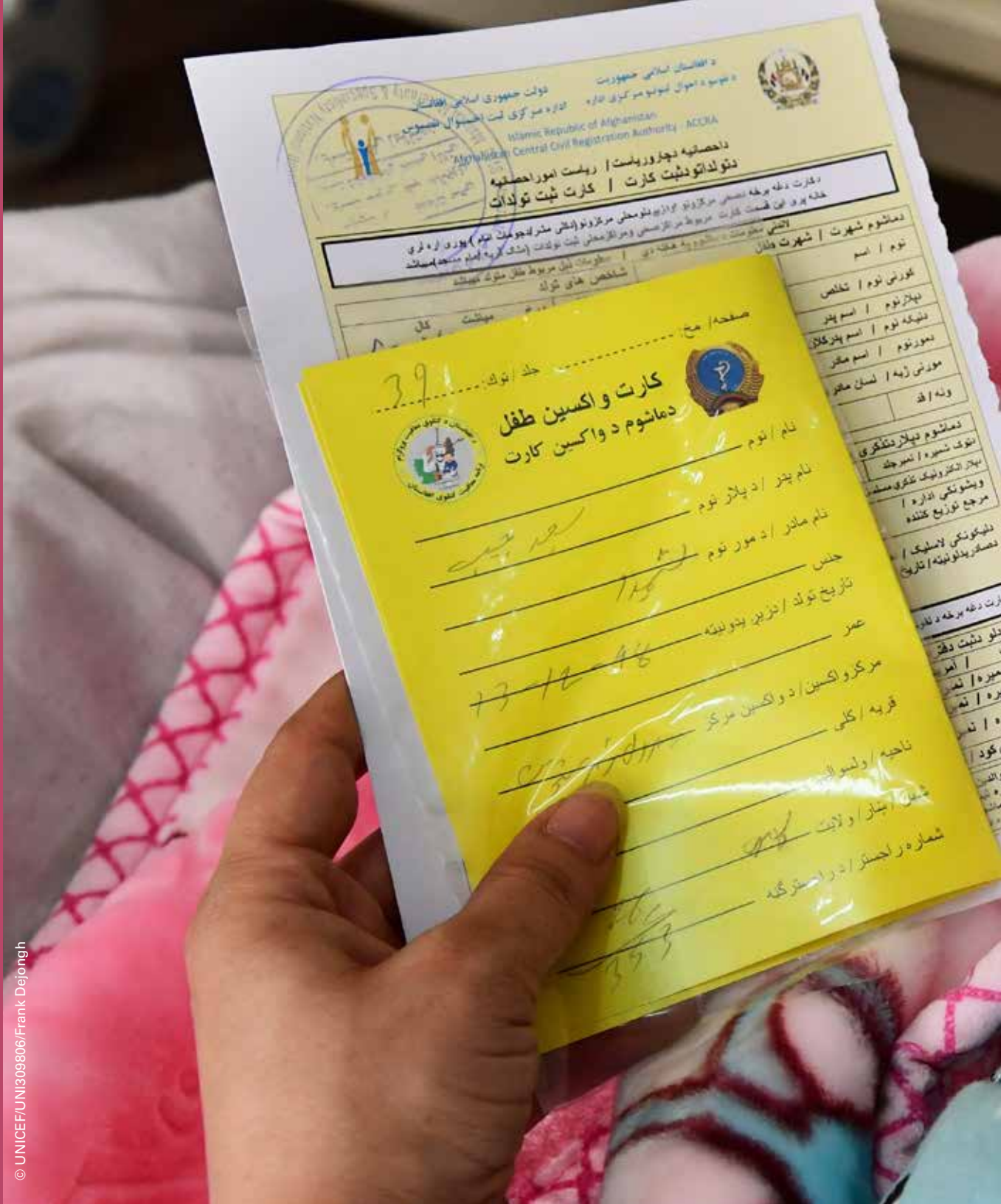
This brochure was prepared by Claudia Cappa and Nicole Petrowski (Data and Analytics Section of UNICEF Headquarters), with inputs from Lucio Valerio Sarandrea (UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific) and Bhaskar Mishra (Child Protection Section of UNICEF Headquarters). It was edited by Tina Johnson and designed by Era Porth (independent consultants).

SUGGESTED CITATION

United Nations Children's Fund, *A Statistical Profile of Birth Registration in Asia and the Pacific*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.

COVER PHOTO

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BIRTH REGISTRATION AND **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

States first acknowledge 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 on which children can establish a nationality, avoid the risk of statelessness and seek protection from violence and exploitation. For example, proof of age is needed to help prevent child labour, child marriage and underage recruitment into the armed forces. A birth certificate may also be required to access 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. They include 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.



“GET EVERY ONE
IN THE PICTURE”

In November 2014, governments gathered in Bangkok, Thailand for the First Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific. They proclaimed the Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade (2015-2024) as a time frame for realizing the shared vision that all people in the region are able to benefit from universal and responsive CRVS systems.

During the conference, governments also adopted the Ministerial Declaration to “Get every one in the picture”; in which they committed to strengthening national CRVS systems, and endorsed the Regional Action Framework for assessing progress and focusing efforts.

The Regional Action Framework includes three goals:

Goal 1. Universal registration of births, deaths and other vital events

Goal 2. All individuals are provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events, as necessary

Goal 3. Accurate, complete and timely vital statistics (including on causes of death) are produced based on registration records and disseminated

Under Goal 1, there are four targets (to be set at national level) on birth registration:

1A. Increase the number of births registered within a year after their occurrence

2A. Increase the provision of birth certificates after registration

1B. Increase birth registration of children under five

1C. Increase birth registration among the total population

Registering a birth soon after its occurrence is important to ensure access to services, reduce misreporting and produce accurate and timely vital statistics. Many countries, especially those that had low rates at the beginning of the CRVS Decade, have implemented interventions to improve timely reporting of births. Although considerable progress has been made in the region, increased investment is needed and many countries must accelerate progress in order to achieve the targets by 2024.

OF THE 167 MILLION
UNREGISTERED CHILDREN
WORLDWIDE, SLIGHTLY
MORE THAN 1 IN 3
(AROUND 65 MILLION)
LIVE IN ASIA AND
THE PACIFIC

NEARLY 1 IN 5 CHILDREN
IN THE REGION ARE
UNREGISTERED, WITH
LEVELS VARYING WIDELY
AMONG COUNTRIES IN
SOME SUBREGIONS

SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST
ASIA IS HOME TO THE
LARGEST NUMBER
OF UNREGISTERED
CHILDREN IN THE REGION

MANY REGISTERED
CHILDREN STILL
LACK PROOF OF
THEIR IDENTITY:
97 MILLION CHILDREN
IN THE REGION (AROUND
1 IN 4) DO NOT HAVE A
BIRTH CERTIFICATE

OF ALL INFANTS
(CHILDREN UNDER 1 YEAR
OLD) IN THE REGION,
1 IN 4 (SOME 17 MILLION)
HAVE NOT BEEN
REGISTERED

10 KEY FACTS ON **BIRTH REGISTRATION** IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

ABOUT
23 MILLION INFANTS
IN THE REGION DO
NOT POSSESS A BIRTH
CERTIFICATE; MORE THAN
8 IN 10 OF THEM LIVE IN
THE SOUTH AND
SOUTH-WEST SUBREGION

WHILE GAPS REMAIN,
ADVANCES IN BIRTH
REGISTRATION
HAVE REACHED SOME OF
THE POOREST CHILDREN
IN THE REGION

AMONG COUNTRIES
IN THE REGION WITH
AVAILABLE DATA,
4 OUT OF 10 ARE
NOT ON TRACK
TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL
BIRTH REGISTRATION
BY 2030

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
WILL FALL SHORT
OF ACHIEVING
UNIVERSAL BIRTH
REGISTRATION BY
THE END OF THE CRVS
DECADE, EVEN WITH
ACCELERATED PROGRESS
IN THE COMING YEARS

EVEN WITH ACCELERATED
PROGRESS, THE
TOTAL NUMBER OF
UNREGISTERED
CHILDREN IN THE REGION
COULD STILL BE
18 MILLION BY 2024 AND
3 MILLION BY 2030

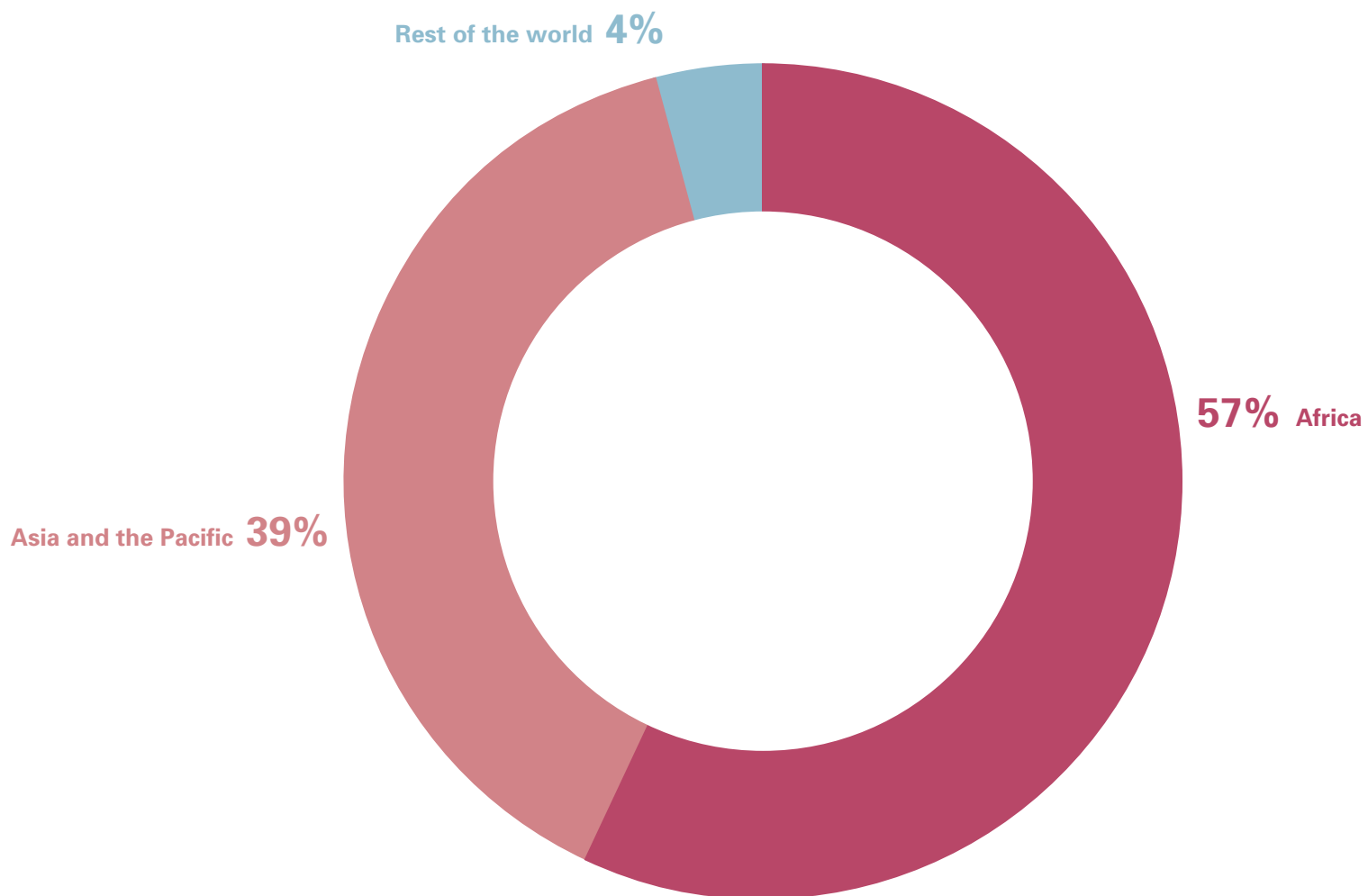




WHERE
WE STAND
TODAY

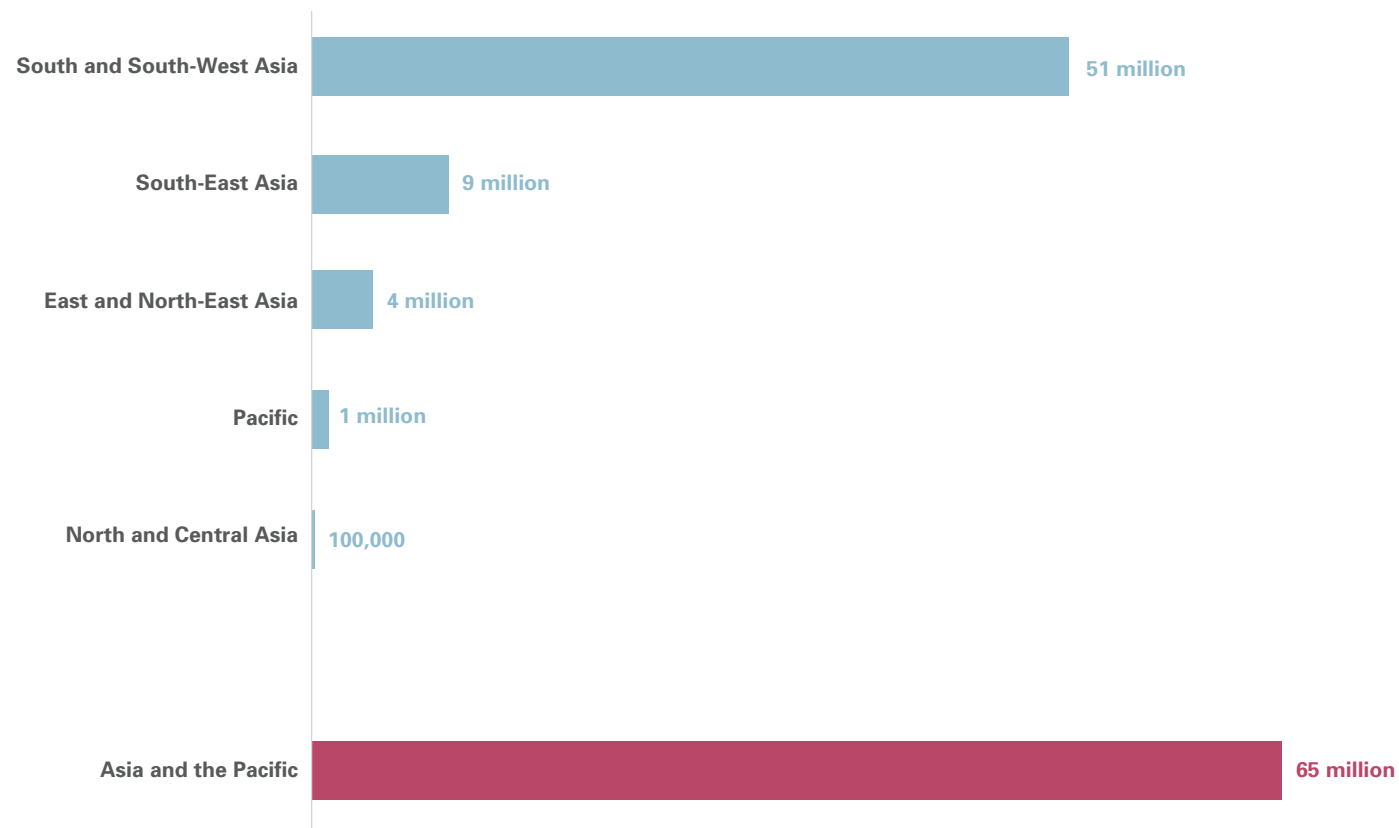
OF THE 167 MILLION UNREGISTERED CHILDREN WORLDWIDE, SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 1 IN 3 (AROUND 65 MILLION) LIVE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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



SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA IS HOME TO THE LARGEST NUMBER OF UNREGISTERED CHILDREN IN THE REGION

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



Notes: Figures have been rounded. Estimates are based on a subset of 46 countries in Asia and the Pacific with available data between 2010 and 2020, covering 90 per cent of the population of children under age 5. Subregional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the subregional population.

MANY REGISTERED CHILDREN STILL LACK PROOF OF THEIR IDENTITY: 97 MILLION CHILDREN IN THE REGION (AROUND 1 IN 4) DO NOT HAVE A BIRTH CERTIFICATE

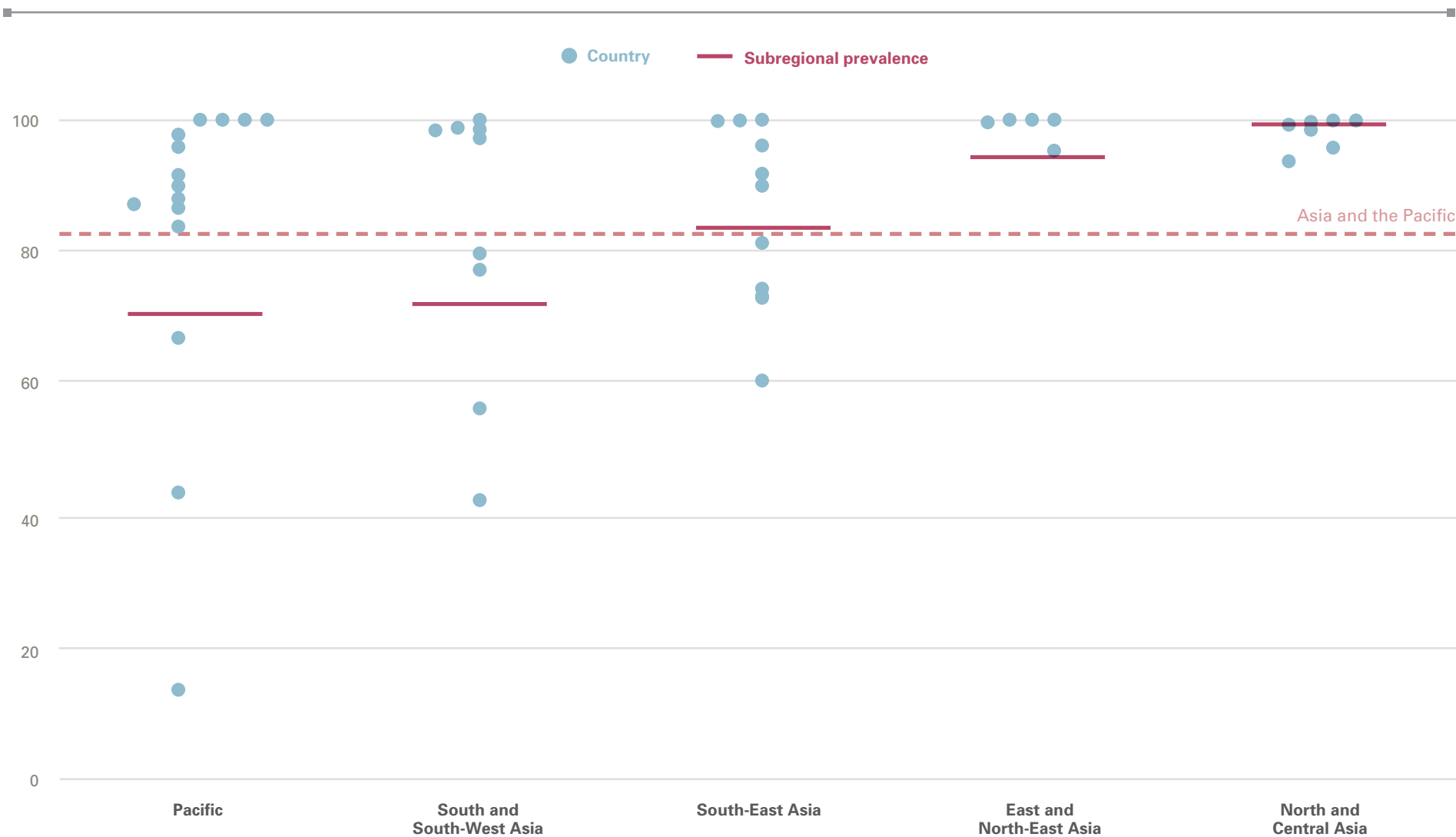
FIG. 3 Number of children under age 5 without a birth certificate, by subregion



Notes: Figures have been rounded. Estimates are based on a subset of 32 countries in Asia and the Pacific with available data between 2010 and 2020, covering 76 per cent of the population of children under age 5. Subregional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the subregional population. The population coverage for East and North-East Asia is below 50 per cent since there are no data for China.

THE PACIFIC SUBREGION HAS THE GREATEST VARIATION IN BIRTH REGISTRATION PREVALENCE AMONG COUNTRIES

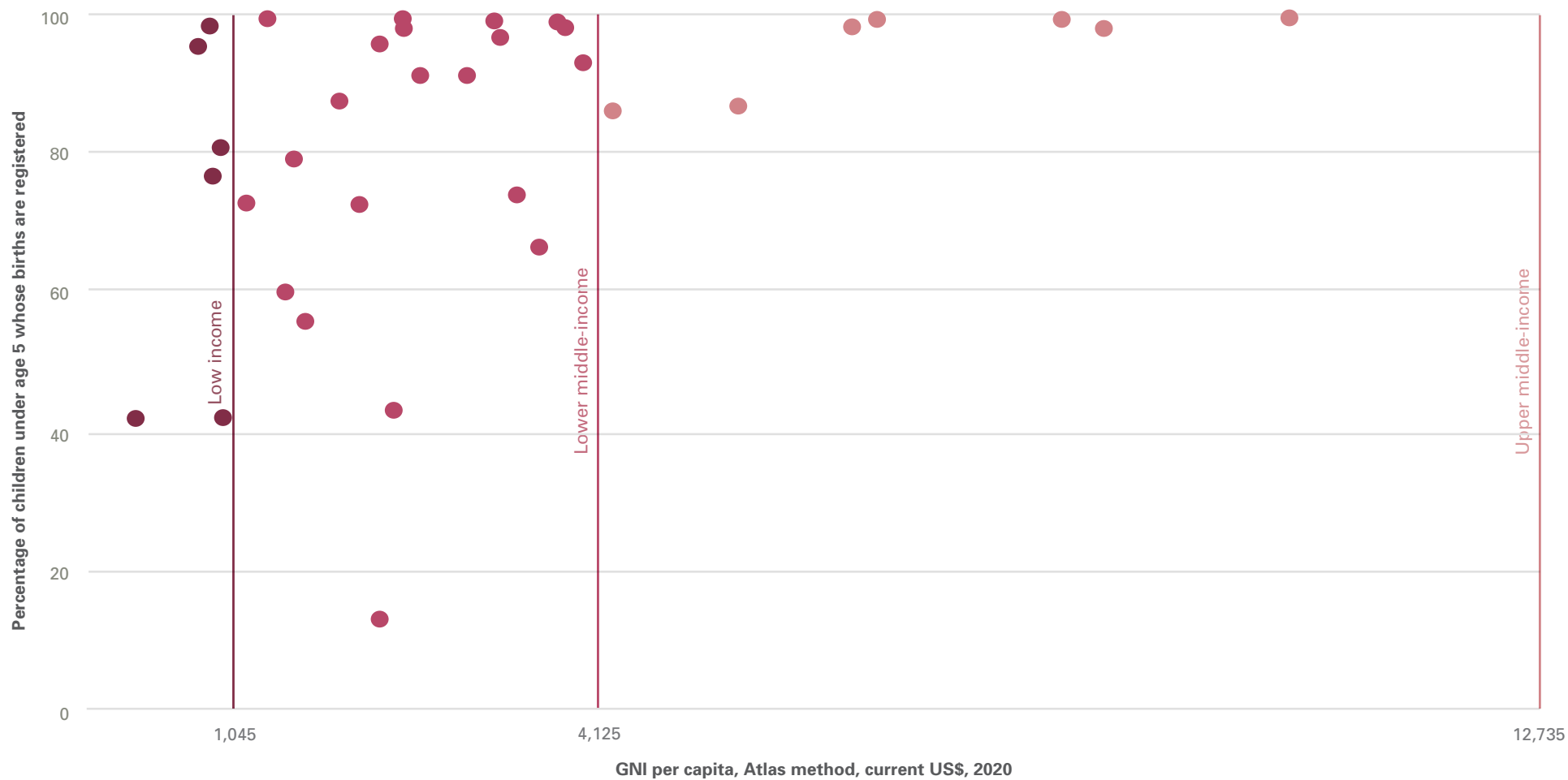
FIG. 4 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, by subregion



Note: Subregional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the subregional population.

SOME COUNTRIES IN THE REGION HAVE ACHIEVED HIGH LEVELS OF BIRTH REGISTRATION EVEN WITH LOW PER CAPITA INCOME

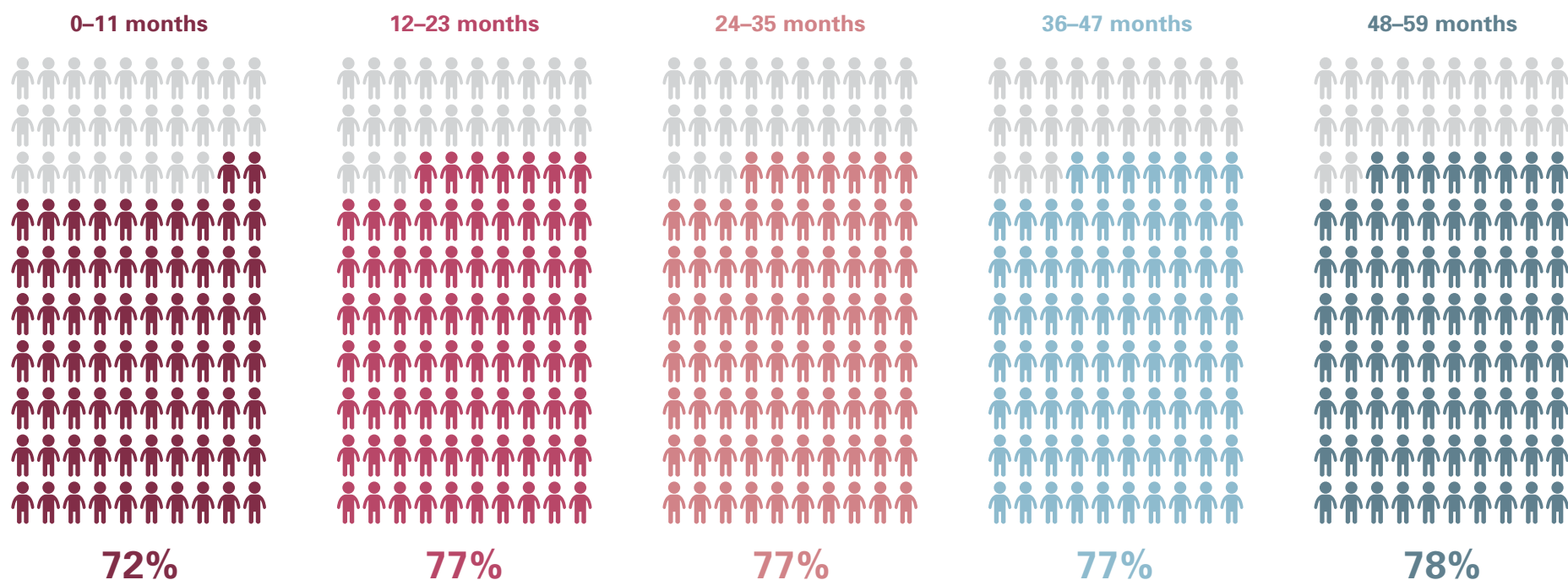
FIG. 5 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered and 2020 gross national income (GNI) per capita in US\$, based on the Atlas method, in countries in Asia and the Pacific with GNI per capita below \$12,736



Notes: Low income countries had a GNI per capita in 2020 of \$1,045 or less. GNI per capita was between \$1,046 and \$4,125 for lower middle-income countries and between \$4,126 and \$12,735 for upper middle-income countries.

MORE EFFORT IS NEEDED TO ENSURE TIMELY REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS IN THE REGION

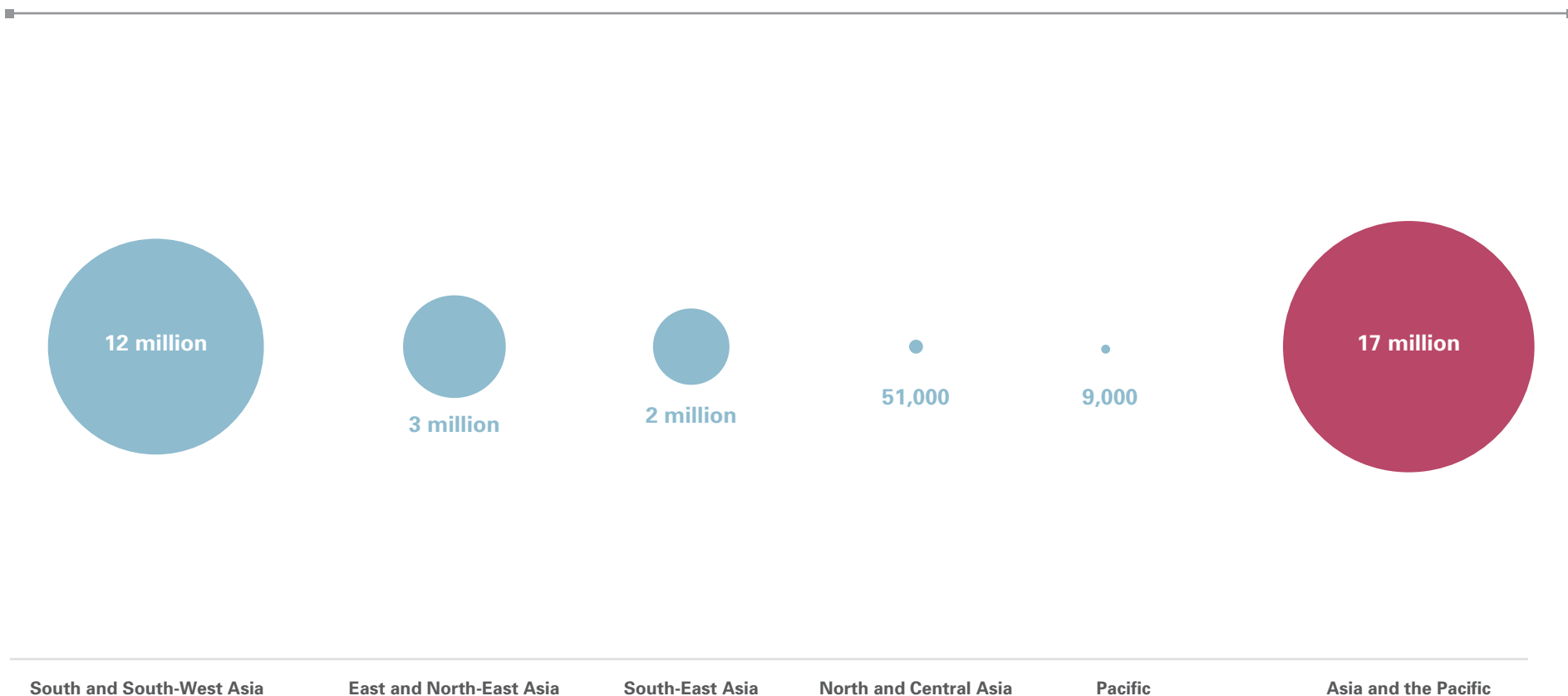
FIG. 6 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered in Asia and the Pacific, by age in months



Notes: Estimates are based on a subset of 31 countries with available data between 2010 and 2020, covering 69 per cent of the population in each age group. Estimates presented here are not directly comparable with those in Figures 4, 9 and 11 since this chart is based only on the subset of countries with data disaggregated by age.

OF ALL INFANTS IN THE REGION, 1 IN 4 (SOME 17 MILLION) HAVE NOT BEEN REGISTERED

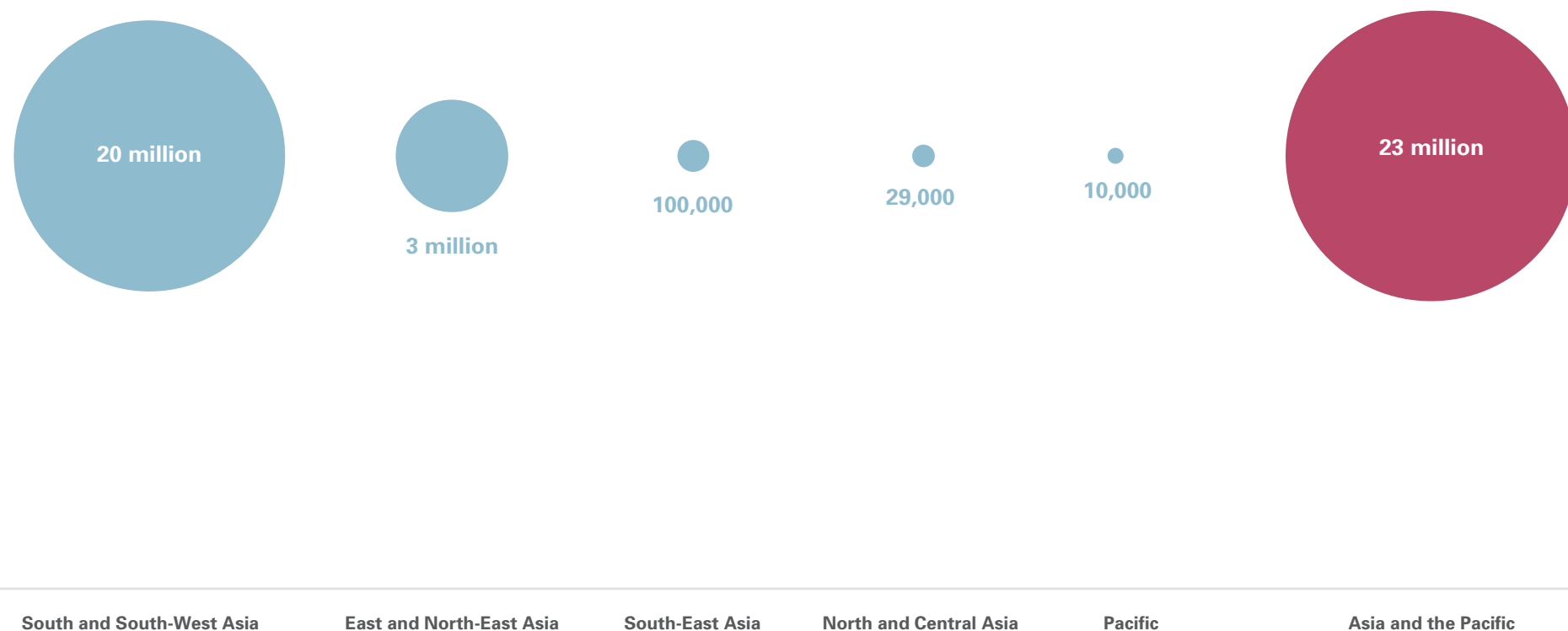
FIG. 7 Number of children under age 1 whose births are not registered, by subregion



Notes: Figures have been rounded. Estimates are based on a subset of 38 countries in Asia and the Pacific with available data between 2010 and 2020, covering 88 per cent of the population of children under age 1. Subregional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the subregional population.

ABOUT 23 MILLION INFANTS IN THE REGION DO NOT POSSESS A BIRTH CERTIFICATE; MORE THAN 8 IN 10 OF THEM LIVE IN THE SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST SUBREGION

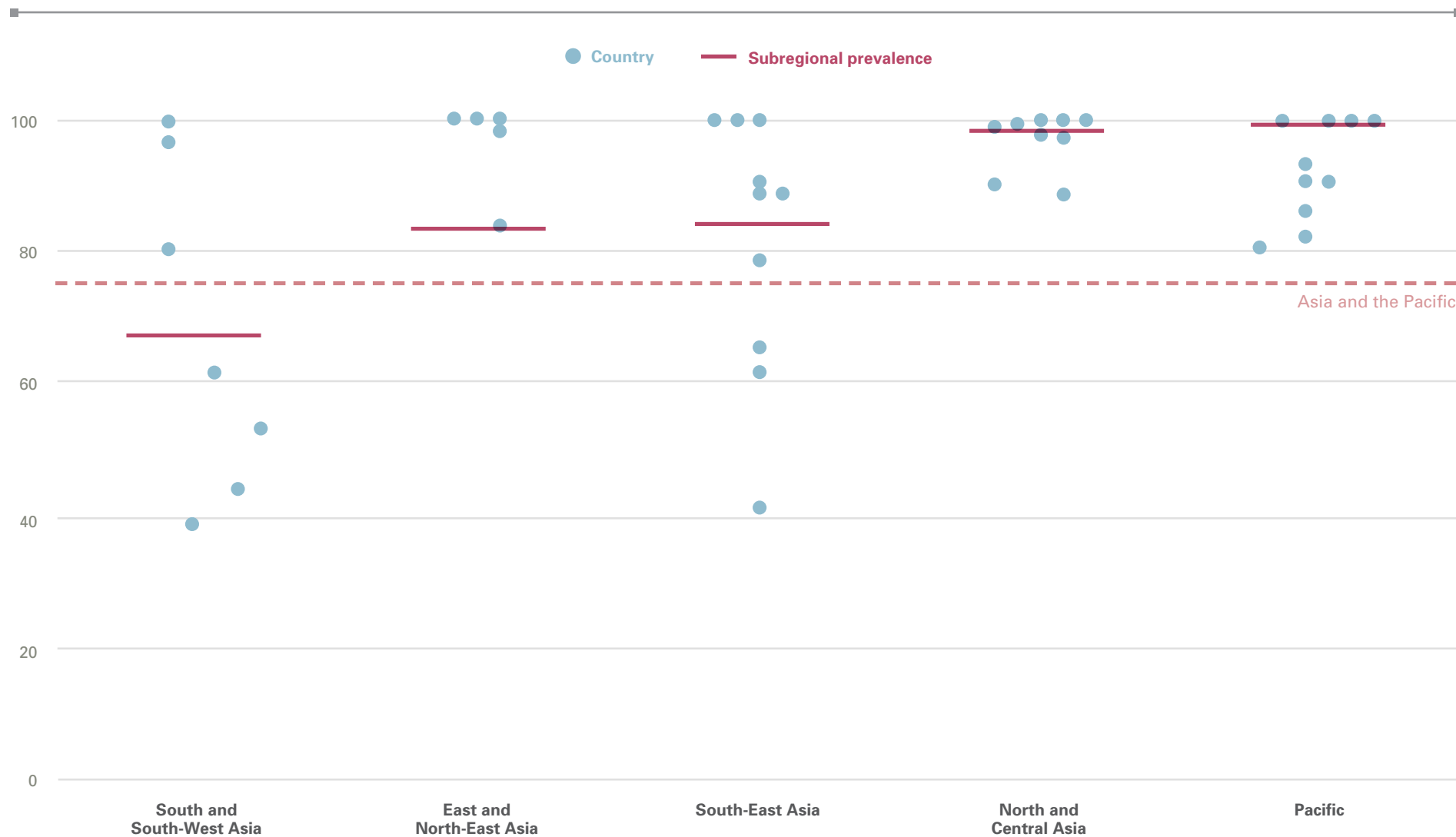
FIG. 8 Number of children under age 1 without a birth certificate, by subregion



Notes: Figures have been rounded. Estimates are based on a subset of 28 countries in Asia and the Pacific with available data between 2010 and 2020, covering 78 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. The population coverage for East and North-East Asia is below 50 per cent since there are no data for China.

THERE IS WIDE VARIATION IN BIRTH REGISTRATION LEVELS OF INFANTS AMONG COUNTRIES IN THE SAME SUBREGION

FIG. 9 Percentage of children under age 1 whose births are registered, by subregion



Note: Subregional estimates represent data from countries covering at least 50 per cent of the subregional population.



ASSESSING
PROGRESS
AND
LOOKING AHEAD
TO 2030

WHILE GAPS REMAIN, ADVANCES IN BIRTH REGISTRATION HAVE REACHED SOME OF THE POOREST CHILDREN IN THE REGION

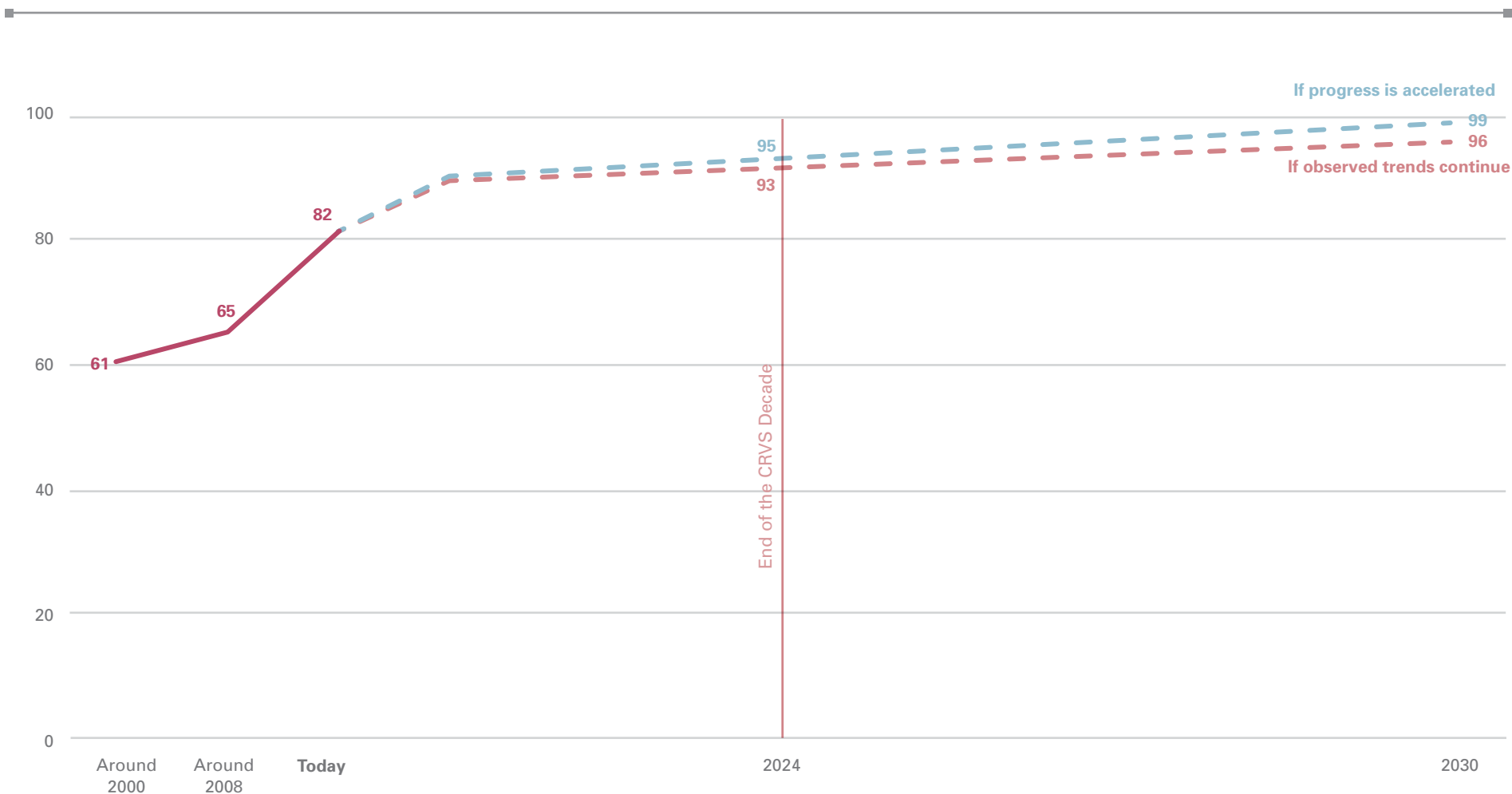
FIG. 10 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered, by household wealth quintile and by subregion



Note: Population coverage was insufficient to calculate estimates for East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia and the Pacific.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC WILL FALL SHORT OF ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL BIRTH REGISTRATION BY THE END OF THE CRVS DECADE, EVEN WITH ACCELERATED PROGRESS IN THE COMING YEARS

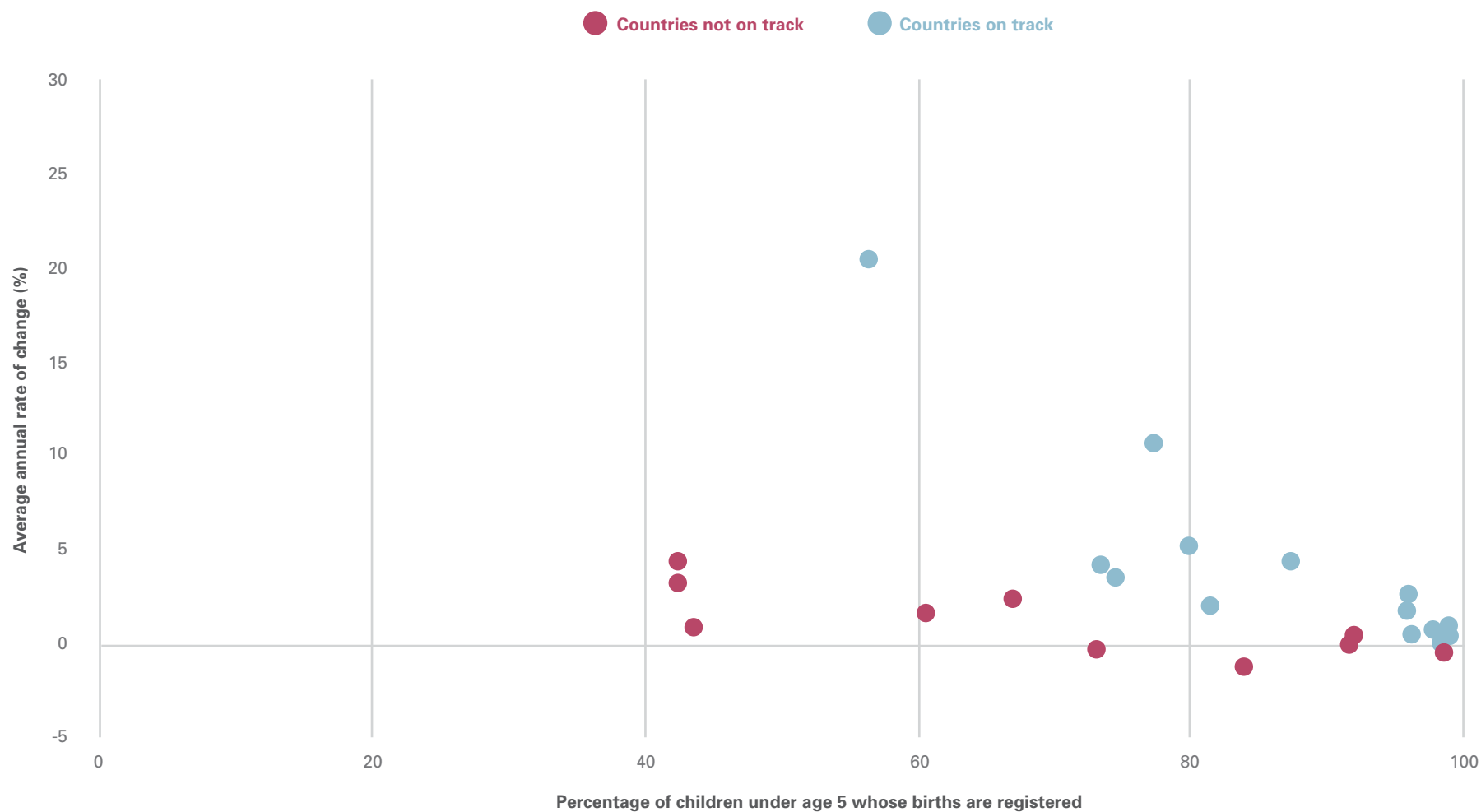
FIG. 11 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered in Asia and the Pacific, observed and projected



Notes: The projection scenarios build on existing trends. The scenario depicting 'observed trends continue' shows expected values if each country were to continue on its observed (or assumed) path of progress. The 'progress is accelerated' scenario shows expected values if: (1) those countries that are projected to be on track to achieve universal birth registration by 2030 continue on their observed path of progress; (2) those countries that have a positive average annual rate of change catch up to countries in the region that are on track; and (3) those countries that have either a negative average annual rate of change or have not made any progress catch up to countries in the region that have made at least some progress but are not on track. 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.

AMONG COUNTRIES IN THE REGION WITH AVAILABLE DATA, 4 OUT OF 10 ARE NOT ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL BIRTH REGISTRATION BY 2030

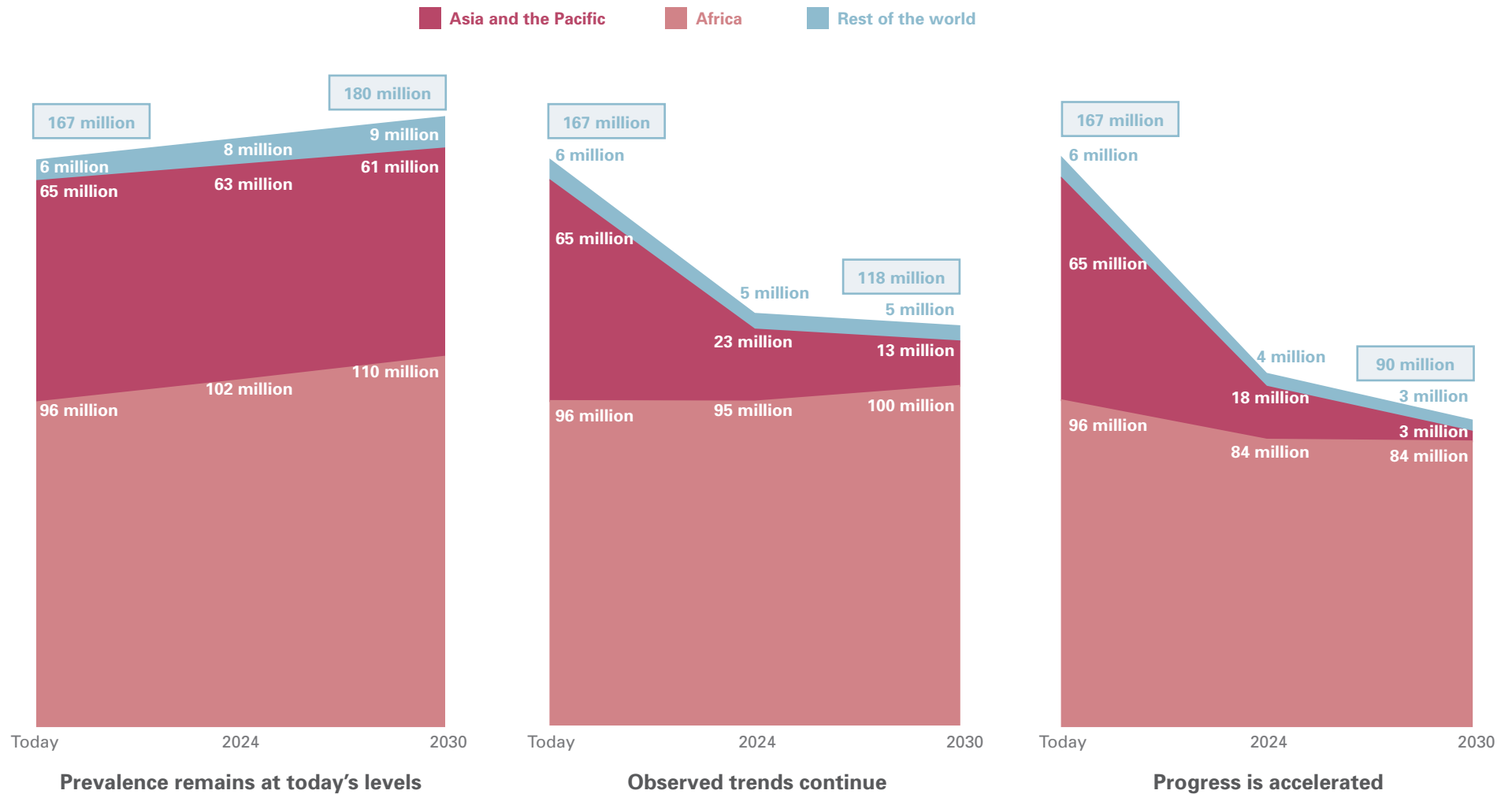
FIG. 12 Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered and average annual rate of change in countries in Asia and the Pacific on track and not on track towards the SDG target



Note: 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.

EVEN WITH ACCELERATED PROGRESS, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF UNREGISTERED CHILDREN IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC COULD STILL BE 18 MILLION BY 2024 AND 3 MILLION BY 2030

FIG. 13 Number of children under age 5 whose births are not registered, observed and projected, by region





SUBREGIONAL CLASSIFICATION

East and North-East Asia

China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia and Republic of Korea

North and Central Asia

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

Pacific

Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu

South-East Asia

Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam

South and South-West Asia

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey

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UNICEF
Data and Analytics Section
Division of Data, Analytics, Planning
and Monitoring
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA

Email: data@unicef.org
Website: data.unicef.org