"DOCUMENTS, PLEASE" Advances in Social Protection and Birth Certification in the Developing World

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A birth certificate puts a child on the pathway to full citizenship. Birth registration is the official recording of a birth by the state. Birth certification is proof of this recognition. Whether citizenship is conferred by parents' blood (*jus sanguinis*) or by the soil on which someone is born (*jus soli*), a lack of documents renders a person invisible and stateless. In many countries, a birth certificate is necessary to attend school, receive health care, inherit property, open a bank account, gain access to credit, obtain other forms of identification, vote, and receive a death certificate. Unregistered children are at increased risk of trafficking, underage military service, child marriage, and child labor. Indeed, "[i]f there is one single foundational policy that the world's poor require, it is public acknowledgement of their individual existence from birth to death."[1] Leaving a war-torn country is greatly impeded by not having the identity papers required to obtain a passport. In conflict situations, prior documentation facilitates reuniting family members. As one birth registration advocate states, "Threatening as it is to be without a birth certificate in a settled community, to be denied proof of identity outside the borders of one's home country is to be consigned to the no man's land of statelessness."[2]

Universal registration is also essential to the smooth functioning and planning of modern states. For example, determining the number of

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[1] Szreter 2007, 80.

[2] UNICEF 1998, 6.

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schools and clinics to build rests on having knowledge of the population. Accurate understanding of national epidemiological trends, such as infant mortality and life expectancy, is impossible in the absence of reliable vital statistics provided by a complete civil registry.[3]

Despite the importance of birth registration to individuals and states, governmental efforts to extend it comprehensively remain uneven. Across the globe, one of every three births still goes unregistered. In the last twenty years, improvements have occurred in some regions, such as Latin America, while lags or actual declines have taken place in others, such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Lack of progress persists despite a decades-long advocacy campaign by leading international organizations, the relatively low financial costs of developing a civil registry, and the invention and spread of new facilitating technologies. This differential progress is not immediately explicable. While many countries remain at low levels of registration, others—even some with low levels of income—have shown remarkable commitment to expanding their civil registries and have moved rapidly toward universal birth certification. What then explains this variation?

Social science has paid little attention to the issue of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS).[4] The neglect of birth registration by political scientists is puzzling given that it is the beginning of an individual's relationship to the state and a precondition for broader citizenship rights, including eligibility to vote. Entire books devoted to child protection in the developing world make no mention of birth registration. Other works recognize the lack of birth records as unfortunate—for example, in determining whether someone is a child soldier or not[5]—but do not flag the problem itself as demanding further research. Exceptionally, two academic researchers wrote recently, "The subject of registration itself needs to be 'registered' in the academic world."[6] Development practitioners have also noted this lack of attention, observing that "legal identity and lack of documentation are rarely debated in academic circles and seldom addressed in development projects."[7]

The central question we pursue concerns under what conditions universal birth registration becomes a priority for developing-country governments. Do developing countries attend to the matter when

[3] McGuire 2010.

[4] This is true even as international media sources have begun to cover the plight of people without birth certificates. See, for example, "No Place Like Home," *Economist*, May 31, 2014, or "Stateless in Santo Domingo," *Economist*, December 16, 2011.

[5] Simmons 2009, 343.

[6] Breckenridge and Szreter 2012, 30.

[7] Harbitz and Boekle 2009, 4.

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international organizations promote the norm and practice, when economic modernization reaches a certain level, or when a state-centered administrative rationale for doing so emerges? To assess these frameworks, we turn for insight to Latin America, a region where governments have significantly expanded birth registration in recent years.

The constructivist approach, which expresses faith in the ability of international organizations to disseminate progressive norms globally, cannot readily explain the woeful lack of progress in birth registration overall or its striking unevenness among countries despite a long international campaign. An economic development framework also falls short in explaining global trends. Although wealthier and more technologically advanced countries have higher rates of birth registration on average, wealth is unnecessary for universal registration. At the same time, medium levels of wealth are insufficient to produce complete registration.

An analysis centered on state policy goals accounts for important variation left unexplained by the other two approaches. Rapid progress is made when governments reach an administrative barrier to achieving some other objective, be it one oriented toward inclusion or control. In the case of contemporary Latin America, developing an inventory of the population has become crucial to the projects of social inclusion that many governments are pursuing. The inauguration of social programs targeted to the poor motivates the citizens who want to qualify for them and the bureaucrats who need to administer them. This sequence for acquiring identity documents represents an inversion of the order envisioned by T. H. Marshall,[8] whereby the civic dimension of citizenship precedes the social one.

The literature's overwhelming focus on population inventorying by totalitarian regimes obscures an important rationale for registration that is increasingly relevant in the post–Cold War world—birth registration as the result of welfare-state building. Countries with large numbers of poor people who work outside the formal economy have begun to extend social benefits to their neediest. Elected politicians across the ideological spectrum have enacted these extensions, which consist mainly of cash transfers to low-income families with children and noncontributory pensions for impoverished elders. As a consequence, more individuals have pursued documentation and more governments have improved measures to facilitate the process. Latin America, where birth registration has made significant gains in the last fifteen years,

[8] Marshall 1950.

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exemplifies this recent pattern, which appears poised to spread to other developing regions.

The first part of this article establishes the pervasiveness of underregistration. Part two examines the plausibility of applying a constructivist or world-society framework to explain global patterns in birth registration. Part three considers economic development as a straightforward explanation of when countries make birth registration a priority. It entertains, but finds unsatisfactory, the hypothesis that birth registration is part of a predictable sequence of priorities that developing countries address as they grow wealthier. Part four presents an alternative approach based on the state's administrative needs driven by other programmatic goals. We highlight universal birth registration as a tool of social inclusion and welfare state development. Part five draws on cases from Latin America, specifically Brazil and Bolivia, where recent expansions in social protection have increased the demand for and supply of documentation. The dynamic we demonstrate promises to have broader applicability as similar social safety nets spread to other developing countries.

The Extent of Underregistration

The scope of underregistration is vast. In 2012, only 51 percent of the world's population was registered. Approximately half of all children in South Asia and two-thirds of those in sub-Saharan Africa are not registered. Several countries record less than 10 percent of all births.[9] Even in Latin America, a region where significant progress in this area has occurred recently, civil registries in many countries remain incomplete.[10] Births in impoverished and rural areas are especially likely to be unregistered.

Global rates of birth registration have increased only slightly in recent decades and rates have stagnated in many countries.[11] The best estimate for the period between 1965 and 1974 is that 33 percent of the global population lived in countries with universal birth registration; thirty years later, between 2003 and 2013, only 30 percent did.[12] One region where notable improvement has occurred since 2000 is Latin America. Authorities observe that "from an initially stronger position,

[9] These include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Somalia. Muzzi 2010, 2–3.

[10] Duryea, Olgiati, and Stone 2006; Harbitz 2013.

[11] CRCD 2013, 8.

[12] This is the outcome of incomplete registration systems and growing populations. CRCD 2013, 23, 24. Complete registration is 90 percent of all births registered in the year that they occurred.

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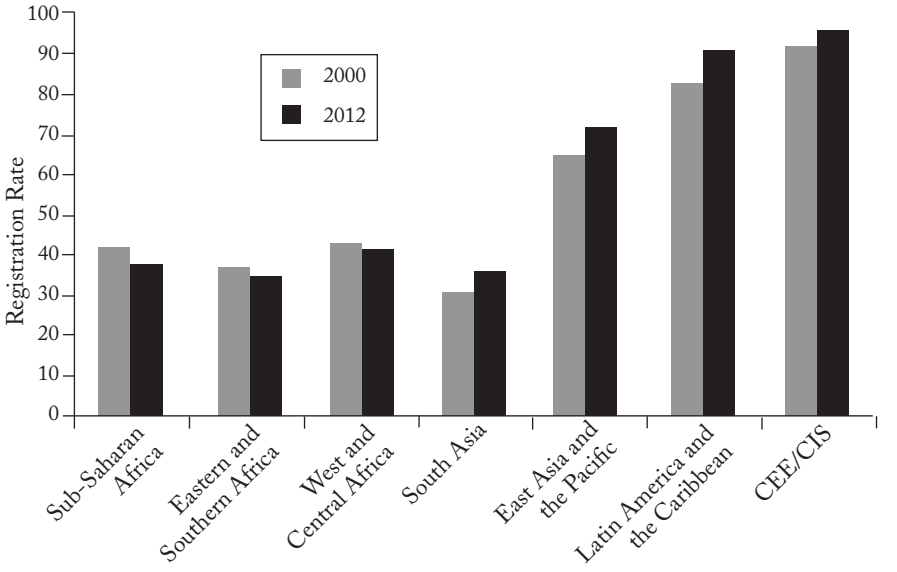


FIGURE 1
BIRTH REGISTRATION RATES BY REGION, 2000–12

SOURCE: UNICEF 2013; Dunning, Gelb, and Raghavan 2014.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE/CIS) have made major progress compared to regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The percentage of unregistered births halved in LAC."[13] This region should be examined for insight into why birth registration might expand in the contemporary period. See Figure 1.

The relatively low cost of civil registry infrastructure and the ample technical assistance offered by international organizations make gaps in birth registration especially noteworthy. Civil registry expenses pale in comparison to those associated with building effective education or health systems. Moreover, birth registration is less likely to challenge cultural sensitivities than efforts to expand health and education, as seen in controversies over issues such as female literacy. Authorities argue and the record shows that with domestic political will and international resources, birth registration can be accomplished at low levels of socioeconomic development.[14] It bears reminding that most developed countries achieved near-universal birth registration with ink and

[13] Dunning, Gelb, and Raghavan 2015, 5–6.
[14] Szreter 2007; Breckenridge and Szreter 2012.

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paper. Without a single computer, a government can still implement the reforms recommended in a 1953 United Nations guide for creating a comprehensive birth registration system.[15]

Assessing Constructivism and the International Spread of Norms

How well do constructivist ideas about international norm creation and promotion account for observed outcomes? Beyond its low costs and simple technological requirements, birth registration is precisely the kind of issue that constructivist scholars would regard as grist for successful international campaigns. Under constructivist expectations, convergence toward universal birth registration should occur for various reasons: it is central to childhood protection and individual rights; leading international organizations have championed it; and states are both the main target of international advocacy and the decisive actor responsible for implementation. We treat each of these in turn.

What kinds of norms—defined as standards of appropriate behavior—are thought to capture international interest and commitment? Transnational advocacy networks since the end of World War II have organized most effectively around issues of basic needs, human rights, and equality of opportunity, especially for vulnerable populations.[16] The advocacy campaign by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has highlighted such frames, complete with emotion-laden stories and graphic portrayals of the hardships that unregistered children face.[17]

The United Nations, the most prominent champion of birth registration since 1948, should be well positioned to shape the aspirations and decisions of developing country governments. As "teachers," organizations like it are thought to establish norms of appropriate behavior and promote general principles that developing countries would otherwise not adopt.[18] The resources they possess enhance their leverage over targeted states. Together with professional researchers within the UN Statistics Division, UNICEF has leveraged its dense transnational network (seven regional offices, over 120 country offices, and partnerships

[15] The general components of a functional system are: (1) clear legal definitions of events (birth, marriage, divorce, death); (2) informants authorized to report these events to registrars; (3) registrars who record events and issue certification of them; (4) a filing system that allows for confirmation of details at a later date. Many countries with minimal bureaucratic capacity and low technology have fulfilled these criteria.

[16] Finnemore 1996; Keck and Sikkink 1998.

[17] UNICEF 1998; UNICEF 2002; UNICEF 2005.

[18] Finnemore 1996; Meyer et al. 1997.

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with nongovernmental organizations [NGOs], including Plan International, and with the World Bank and regional development banks) to advocate for birth registration. UNICEF has also recruited well-known figures such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa to speak on behalf of the cause.

In addition, because states are exclusively responsible for birth registration and subsequent decisions about citizenship, international advocates have a clear target at which to aim. The state is the sole entity authorized to grant citizenship. The birth certificate serves as the standard for determining who is a citizen. Unlike other aspects of development, such as education and health provisioning, an international organization or a domestic NGO cannot co-opt or compete with this state function and it cannot recognize the details of an individual's birth or certify an individual's belonging to the polity. Notably, the centrality of the state in this matter diminishes the salience of the social and cultural factors that have created resistance in many other campaigns, such as those aimed at educating and protecting girls.[19]

Studies on the rise of the modern census heighten the expectation of a world-society explanation. In understanding the widespread emergence of the modern census, Marc Ventresca assigns causal primacy to international factors exogenous to states as key to the rise of census activity at similar points in time across countries of different development levels, territorial sizes, and functional needs.[20] These factors include the rise of global professionals interested in putting statistics to epidemiological use, the growing notion of the individual (as opposed to kinship or family group) as a fundamental unit, and the formation of international organizations concerned with surveying the population.

In sum, a constructivist framework would expect universal birth registration to be a prime candidate for successful international advocacy. Yet, despite a long-standing, widespread, and well-funded UN campaign on a relatively uncontroversial issue that is largely within a state's control, global convergence toward universal registration has not occurred; while "teaching" has occurred globally, "learning" has been uneven. The proportion of the world's population living in a country with universal birth registration has actually declined since the campaign began in the 1950s. UNICEF itself admits that it has had little or no effect on registration in many countries and that results have been dis-

[19] In most countries there are no significant gender differences in the registration rates of boys and girls. UNICEF 2013, 23.

[20] Ventresca 1995.

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appointing overall.[21] Moreover, where advocacy campaigns and success have occurred contemporaneously, it is far from clear that the efforts of international organizations drove the increase. To this point, a Plan International official acknowledged that general exhortations issued by the international community have been of limited utility and that the organization has been most successful when countries have first decided (on their own) to work on birth registration and then signaled their interest in technical assistance.[22]

Assessing the Role of Economic Development

If constructivism leaves much to be explained, how well does economic development, measured by wealth, account for variation in birth registration rates? A country's level of modernization is an obvious place to look for an explanation. Why wealth would bring progress is easy to imagine. Richer countries tend to have a larger share of hospital births, larger urban populations, more developed bureaucracies, and greater access to technologies—all of which facilitate birth registration—than poorer ones. Furthermore, children born in richer countries are more likely to survive past infancy, which increases the probability that parents will regard a birth certificate as worth obtaining.

Yet evidence suggests that the relationship between birth registration rates and economic wealth is not as clear-cut as a modernization approach would expect. Although at upper levels of income—defined as over US $12,276 gross national income (GNI) per capita, purchasing power parity (PPP)—most countries have universal birth registration,[23] below that threshold there is significant variation that income does not explain. Authoritative UNICEF sources note that the "relationship between income and birth registration rates becomes murky" in the lower income ranges.[24] Figure 2, which shows countries at very low levels of wealth—below US $1,400 GNI per capita—reflects this.[25] For example,

[21] CRCD 2013, 4, 25.

[22] Author interview with Nicoleta Panta, advocacy manager for Plan International's birth registry campaign, June 26, 2013, Woking, U.K.

[23] With few exceptions, countries above this income level have consistently reported complete registration for as long as the UN has collected data. Exceptions include Equatorial Guinea, which has only 32 percent registration despite gross national income per capita of $23,000, and Botswana, which has a yearly GNI per capita of $13,910 and only 72 percent registration.

[24] UNICEF 2013, 21.

[25] The figures cited here are from 2010, the most recent available year for many countries' birth registration coverage data.

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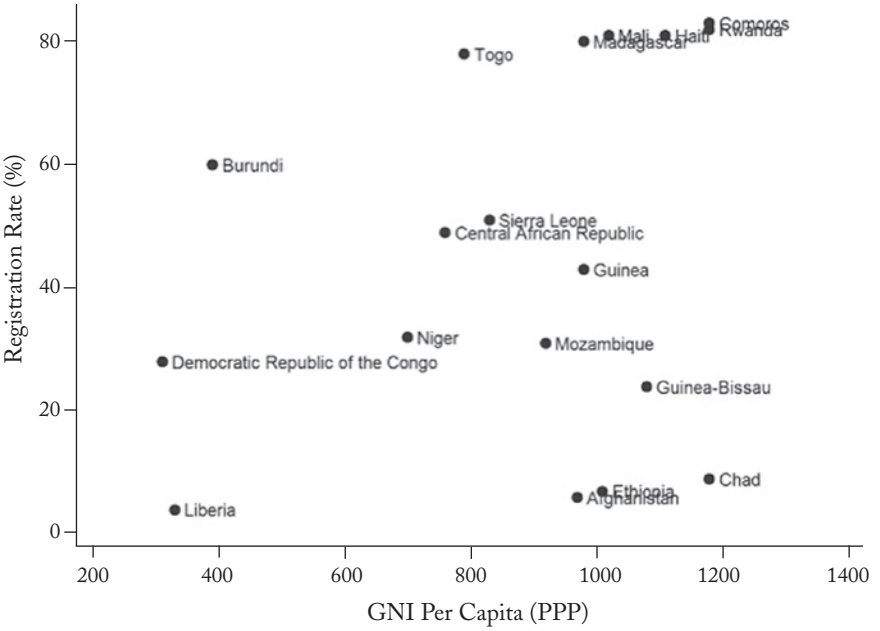


FIGURE 2
BIRTH REGISTRATION RATES AT LOW INCOME LEVELS

SOURCE: World Bank 2013; UNICEF 2014.

at the extremely poor end, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Liberia all have a GNI per capita of approximately $400 and yet their respective registration rates are 60 percent, 28 percent, and 4 percent.

Moving up the income scale, Cape Verde, East Timor, and Mongolia have almost identical income levels ($3,700 GNI per capita) but Cape Verde's registration rate is 91 percent, East Timor's is 55 percent, and Mongolia's is 98 percent. Being a low-income country does not preclude high registration rates; significant coverage is indeed possible at relatively low levels of development. The following countries have a GNI per capita of less than $5,000 and nevertheless have registration rates of over 90 percent: Cambodia, Djibouti, Honduras, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. At the same time, being a middle-income country does not guarantee high registration rates, as the case of Brazil shows. Figure 3 reveals how much variation exists at similar levels of income, notwithstanding a relationship that

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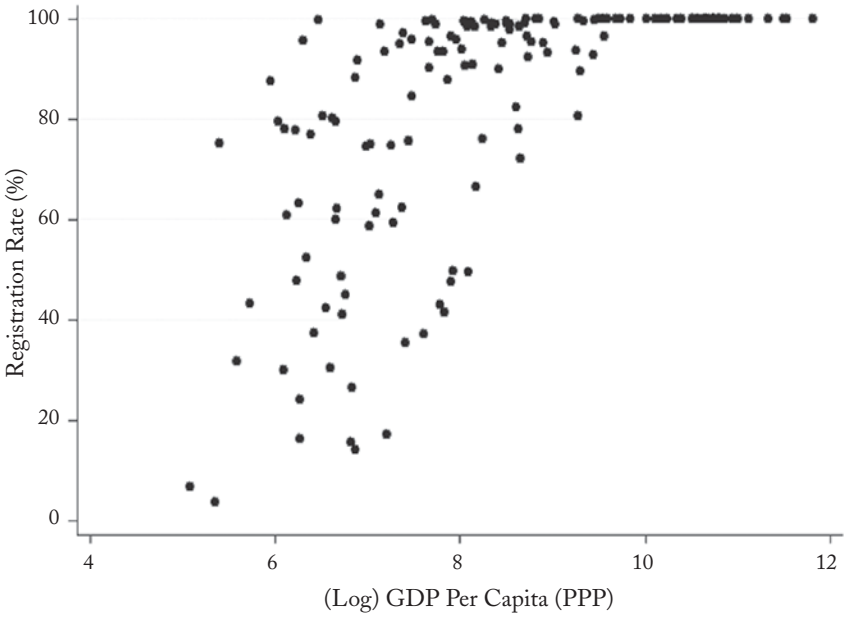


FIGURE 3
BIRTH REGISTRATION RATES WORLDWIDE AT VARIOUS INCOME LEVELS

SOURCE: World Bank 2013; UNICEF 2014.

is positive overall.[26] Although clearly a facilitator of birth registration, wealth is not a driving cause.

In line with explanations that focus on material progress are those that invoke technological innovation. Recent efforts have looked optimistically to information technology as a catalyst for rapid development of birth registration systems.[27] For example, UNICEF has implemented programs in Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda whereby midwives can report births to a central agency via mobile telephones. Much attention has also been paid to India's ambitious Unique Identification (UID) project that aims to use biometric scans to develop identity documents for 1.2 billion Indians.[28] The rapid rate of progress in birth registration in some countries (for example, Cambodia) raises the possibility of

[26] It is plausible that urbanization is a more compelling explanation for registration rates than income. This could be for the simple reason that people who live in cities are closer to government offices that record births and because they are likely to have more information about a birth certificate's importance. We examine this hypothesis and find a generally positive but not entirely clear-cut association between urbanization and the rate of registration. See Figure A1 in the appendix.

[27] See Gates 2010, *Daily Star* 2014, Sunday 2014, and IRIN 2014.

[28] Gelb and Clark 2013a; Gelb and Clark 2013b; Zelazny 2012.

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modern technological improvements as a key determinant of successful outcomes.

Yet most experienced development practitioners contend that technology is not the main barrier or answer to progress. They are especially skeptical of the assumption that high technology can leapfrog what are essentially political commitment deficits rather than logistical obstacles.[29] For example, past attempts to improve CRVS involved the United Nations Population Fund purchasing computers for governments to compile statistics. Computers, the "new technology" of yesterday, made little difference to governments that did not prioritize the issue to begin with.[30] More recently, mobile telephones have captured the imagination of the development community.[31] Yet midwives with cell phones still need a functioning civil registry infrastructure, complete with institutions and laws, to call in to. As one official from the Inter-American Development Bank explained, "Mobile registration only works when a prior system is in place."[32] It is worth remembering that many countries achieved virtually complete civil registries well before any such technology came along. Ink and paper generally sufficed, and in the best of cases, carbon paper and print machines eased the task. In sum, technology can surely assist committed states in making rapid progress but does not substitute for making birth registration a top-priority issue.

If the development of complete birth registries is not a simple matter of diffusing global norms or of acquiring wealth and technology, what explains them? Why, in the face of common international pressures to form a world polity, have outcomes varied across countries? And why are outcomes somewhat independent of a country's income level? Below we develop an argument that explains variance with reference to the development of social policy and the state capacity that it generates.

Government Policies and the Need for Population Inventories

Our explanation assigns a central role to the pursuit of large-scale government projects that rely on detailed knowledge of the population.

[29] Author interviews with Carol Bellamy, executive director of UNICEF, 1995–2005, August 28, 2013, via Skype; Mia Harbitz, senior expert in public registries, Inter-American Development Bank, August 29, 2013, via Skype; and Panta, June 26, 2013.

[30] Padmanabha 1993, 57–58.

[31] Gates 2010.

[32] Author interview with Mia Harbitz, senior expert in public registries, Inter-American Development Bank, August 29, 2013, via Skype.

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Rather than assigning primary importance to international norms and organizations (as does constructivism) or to rising incomes and technological advancements (as in the economic development approach), we emphasize state interests as reflected in projects that require the enumeration of all people within national borders and their ability to prove an individual identity.

Like James C. Scott, we understand documentation as an "administrative ordering" by the state.[33] Yet departing from the literature's marked tendency to understand population registries in terms of the surveillance and control of subjects by autocratic governments,[34] we draw attention to the inclusive and protective aspects of registration. While documents can be used to "discipline and punish," they also serve to "include and protect." Indeed, in most modern states, having identity documents is a precondition for receiving social assistance.

As the concept of policy feedbacks suggests, social policies themselves can contribute to state building.[35] Work on the U.S. welfare state, especially in the period after the New Deal, inspires our thinking about emerging institutions in the Global South. Just as the Social Security Act of 1935 reshaped the organization of the American state and enhanced later opportunities for "bureaucratic activism,"[36] recent antipoverty policies in many developing-world contexts are contributing crucially to building state infrastructure, including civil registries.

The notion that "social policy builds states," a theme of the European welfare state literature à la Bismarck, stands out against the understanding that "war makes states" through processes (such as taxation and conscription) necessary to launch and sustain military campaigns, especially by absolutist governments.[37] Democratic governments, too, can build state infrastructural capacity. Dan Slater makes this clear in his finding that even minimally competitive elections in Southeast Asia contributed to the territorial extension of state institutions, in part by motivating the state's registration of marginal populations.[38] In his depiction, as in ours, the expansion of state authority need not be an imposition on society.

[33] Scott 1998.

[34] For example, Foucault 1979, Foucault 2007, Torpey 2000, and Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005. To be clear, although most totalitarian governments invest in birth registration, a wide array of authoritarian regimes neglects the issue.

[35] For an instructive article on the concept of "policy feedback," see Pierson 1993.

[36] Weir, Orloff, and Skocpol 1988, 25.

[37] Tilly 1990.

[38] Slater 2008.

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We build on earlier scholarship that suggests that "having a clear identity is a prerequisite for receiving entitlements in most modern state systems"[39] and on more recent elaborations of this idea, seen, for example, in research by Susan Jennifer Pearson on the rise of the birth certificate in the United States. Pearson shows that the advent of child protection laws and social security provisions mobilized a campaign for birth registration that institutionalized vital records in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She concludes that "the more protections and entitlements the states and federal government offered, the more important both age and documentation became to the basic functioning of social institutions."[40] Notwithstanding this recognition, the inclusionary logic for advancing birth registration is seldom noted. By highlighting the link between welfare programs and documentation (and by association, civil registries), we hope to extend the line of research that suggests that state development occurs as a result of the state's own understanding of its immanent needs.

Governments that seek to sustain popular approval have an interest in promoting reforms whose enactment rests on the existence of a complete and well-functioning civil registry. The evermore prevalent conditional cash transfer (CCT) is one such policy among governments across the ideological spectrum; a government that creates an individual entitlement despite an incomplete registry faces the choice to exclude those who are undocumented or to extend documentation to otherwise eligible citizens. The entitlement thereby directs attention to a development issue that many state officials recognize as important, but frequently leave on the back burner: the documentation of individual identity. Welfare initiatives transform birth registration from an abstract aspiration to a useful and immediately needed tool. In short, although insights from constructivism may bear on why governments extend welfare protections in the first place, prior experiences (for example, Social Security in the United States) suggest that governmental decisions arising from concrete interests and imperatives, not general norms spread through international advocacy, provide the strongest and most direct impetus to documentation initiatives.

[39] Scott 1998, 371.

[40] Pearson 2015, 1165. She also notes, "In the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States, between one-half and three-quarters of all births went unregistered" (1145). On the link between Social Security and identity documentation in the United States, see also Rosenwaike and Hill 1996, 311. Similarly, Breckenridge and Szreter note that the Chinese state registered citizens with "the aim of measuring and preserving the well-being of its population at least one millennium before the 19th century processes that scholars have explored." Breckenridge and Szreter 2012, 3.

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To individuals, legal identity becomes a precondition of access to social protection entitlements. When states implement programs that provide clear and tangible benefits, they stimulate the demand for documentation among the very poor. Absent social assistance, impoverished individuals with little education may understand in some abstract way that lacking documentation deprives them of access to future opportunities and protections. Yet concrete logistical challenges—the need to travel to far-off government offices, fill out extensive forms, and pay significant fees—loom large over the nebulous advantages of obtaining documents. Some individuals do reap the benefits of documentation eventually, but that return is probabilistic for the very poor. In their perception, concrete present costs outweigh possible future benefits. As two practitioners note, "Unless identity documents serve some higher purpose and have some relevance to people's daily lives, they are unlikely to take the time, money, and effort to register."[41]

This observation reflects a more general conclusion of behavioral economics, encapsulated well by Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo. When it comes to making an investment to improve one's future life chances, "it makes sense, from today's perspective, to wait for tomorrow. Unfortunately, when tomorrow becomes today, the same logic applies."[42] The trap of poverty is that "people are present-biased because they are poor, but that in turn keeps them poor."[43] A development-minded state should therefore strive to overcome this time inconsistency. Providing concrete and timely material benefits dependent on documentation can spur undocumented citizens to action. Lowering the logistical costs and obstacles to registration also helps. Such measures include reducing registration and certification fees, increasing the number of registrars and making them more accessible, diminishing the stigmatic burden of illegitimacy, and eliminating the requirement that the registration of a child rests on parents having a legal identity. All of these are discussed below.

Trends from Latin America

We draw on evidence from Latin America, where one group of practitioners pronounced the birth certificate as "the key to social inclusion"[44] after observing the interaction between birth registration and access to

[41] Vandenabeele and Lao 2007, xv.
[42] Banerjee and Duflo 2011, 65.
[43] Banerjee and Mullainathan 2010, 5.
[44] Brito, Corbacho, and Osorio Rivas 2013.

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social programs. Latin America's civil registry tradition dates from its colonial era. These registries, however, mirrored the unequal societies in which they existed. Wealthy, white, and notable people were registered at birth and granted full citizenship rights as early as the nineteenth century. Social policy reforms came to encompass a greater portion of the population over the course of the twentieth century, yet generally left excluded large numbers of poor people in the informal sector, especially those with indigenous or African origins. Early policymakers assumed that labor would be absorbed into an expanding formal economy, yet subsequent economic models did not yield that outcome. Occupationally based provisioning of pensions and health care left many people unprotected, including in old age.[45] In this light, the benefits and rights conferred by a birth certificate were so implausible that not pursuing certification was sensible behavior for many. For those left behind by reform, social protection relied on personal relationships and handouts by patrons, for which documents are unnecessary.

Barriers on the supply side further constrained the poor from registering births. In many countries, the sheer cost of registering a birth and the long distances between registries and households were deterrents. There was no tradition of having birth attendants register babies at birth. Distance makes information about benefits and procedural requirements more difficult to attain and adds to logistical costs.[46] Moreover, recording a live birth and adding it to the civil registry were two separate processes. Unresolved legal paternity constituted another barrier to documentation. Throughout Latin America, mothers feared stigmatizing a child by officially declaring that it was fatherless.[47] In addition, parents without documentation were not allowed to register their children. This rule effectively condemned a child of highly marginalized parents to a similar station in life.

In the second half of the 1990s, many of the recently democratized governments brought a new mix of policies to the welfare state, instituting programs to protect impoverished elders and children. Between 1990 and 2014, fourteen Latin American countries adopted some form of a noncontributory pension scheme to prevent destitution among elders with no institutionalized retirement income.[48] Between 1997 and 2008, eighteen Latin American countries introduced national-level cash transfer programs to provide income support for low-income families

[45] Haggard and Kaufman 2008.
[46] Corbacho and Osorio Rivas 2012, 5.
[47] Ordóñez and Bracamonte Bardález 2005.
[48] ILO 2014.

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with children, usually conditional upon regular school attendance and basic pediatric care, including essential vaccinations.[49] Beyond addressing the vulnerabilities left by the previous welfare state model, these policies were a response to neoliberal reforms, which had further reduced formal employment, and to pressures on democratically elected governments to find ways of "adapting social protection to the new realities."[50] The new income transfers pay benefits to individuals rather than block sums to collectivities. They rely on identity documents from all members of a family to reduce the risks of fraud, corruption, and inefficiency. Those individuals most in need of the programs are precisely those least likely to have obtained documentation at birth. The advent of these social assistance policies created a surge in demand for birth certificates at the turn of the twenty-first century.

It soon became obvious that the region's exclusive registries would pose a serious obstacle to the successful rollout of these social innovations, substantiating the claim that many social programs could not be properly accessed without legal identity.[51] Identity documents were a crucial precondition to enter the "unified registries" created to operate the new entitlements.[52] Governments began to reduce the financial costs of birth registration in addition to addressing problems posed by distance, paternity avoidance, and undocumented parents. The governments of Peru and the Dominican Republic have gone as far as providing support for obtaining identity documents at the moment of application for the cash transfer program. Decreasing the barriers to birth registration no doubt stimulated a higher demand for documentation than introducing benefits alone would have.[53]

As a result of these intertwined interventions, the Latin American and Caribbean region has made substantial progress—from 2000 to 2012, birth registration of children younger than five years old increased from 82 percent to 91 percent.[54] Given that some countries, such as Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, already had virtually complete registration, others had to improve significantly to yield this increase. That the

[49] Sugiyama 2011.

[50] Huber and Stephens 2012, 175.

[51] Harbitz 2013b. See also Harbitz and Tamargo 2009; Plan International 2010; HelpAge International 2011; Ordóñez and Bracamonte Bardález 2006, 6; and Perrault and Arellano 2011, 8.

[52] Examples include the Cadastro Único in Brazil, the Clave Única de Registro de Población in Mexico, and the Registro Único Nacional in Bolivia.

[53] In a cost-benefit framework, higher benefit amounts could theoretically reduce the need for lower costs. Pragmatically, however, increasing the monetary value of benefits arguably requires more political capital than removing barriers to registration.

[54] Brito, Corbacho, and Osorio Rivas 2013.

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rise entailed the incorporation of highly marginalized segments of the population makes it all the more impressive.

Latin America's experience with income transfers suggests that state capacity increases as a means to welfare state expansion. With various levels of foresight and intentionality, governments in the region undertook measures necessary to operate income subsidy programs. As Ana De La O notes, the multiple requirements of a well-managed CCT, which beyond registry development include accurate demographic data collection, targeting, monitoring, and evaluating, means the state needs to assume a more, rather than a less, active role. This challenges the criticism that Latin America's new social assistance orientation represents welfare state residualism and state retrenchment.[55] Indeed, incorporating millions of poor households that were formerly outside the government's reach has meant an expansion of the state throughout the national territory.

The cases of Brazil and Bolivia usefully demonstrate the factors and sequence described above. A "different systems" logic motivates the decision to focus on these two particular cases. Although they vary in ways that could potentially create different outcomes, namely, their levels of economic development and population composition, Brazil and Bolivia converge in the significant improvements made to their birth registration profiles in recent years. Their contemporaneous efforts to incorporate the poor through improvements in social assistance—efforts that required proof of individual legal identity—caused the collateral expansion of the infrastructure necessary to deliver them.

Brazil

We turn first to Brazil.[56] With an annual GNI per capita of US $14,750, Brazil sits at the opposite end of the region's economic spectrum from Bolivia, which has an annual GNI of $5,750.[57] Beyond being wealthier than Bolivia, historically Brazil has been more exposed to international norms and influences. Yet Brazil's concern with outside appearances (expressed in the colloquialism *para inglês ver* or "for the English to see") and its substantial economic progress in the twentieth century did not lead to universal birth registration; it is a case in which modernization did not produce a complete civil registry. As late as 1998, the country still failed to register over one-quarter of all births in a

[55] De La O 2015, 41.
[56] For a detailed examination and analysis of the Brazilian case, see Hunter and Sugiyama 2015.
[57] World Bank 2011.

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timely fashion—a rate far higher than expected given that 98 percent of all babies were born in hospitals and clinics in that year. By 2013, the number of unregistered births of babies born had fallen to roughly 5 percent.[58]

The limited welfare state that Brazil developed in the early twentieth century, which covered only civil servants, the military, formal sector workers, and professional classes, did not provide impetus for broader registration. Essentially, birth registration extended only as far as did institutionalized social protection, leaving behind a remnant of society so marginalized that the immediate costs of obtaining a birth certificate outweighed any foreseeable benefits. Even periods of reform in the twentieth century did little to raise the value of a birth certificate. The presidency of Getúlio Vargas (1930–45), for example, generated social welfare legislation, but the changes implemented were based on corporatist principles and confined almost exclusively to industrial and public sector workers in urban areas. Consistent with this, estimates suggest that only between 50 and 60 percent of all Brazilians had birth certificates in the decade between 1950 and 1960. This figure climbed somewhat in the next decade, but after 1970 birth registration rates hit a plateau.[59]

Barriers on the supply side further constrained the poor from registering births. Until recently, registration expenses were formidable. Strong vested interests were associated with the country's partially private system of notary publics (*cartórios*), which had long extracted rents by charging exorbitant fees for documents.[60] For example, in Brazil in 1970 the price of registration was set at approximately one-seventh of a minimum monthly salary, and late registration added 50 percent to the cost.[61] Moreover, many territorially enormous municipalities in Brazil's northeastern and Amazonian states had only one registrar, so geographic distance was indeed a problem. [62] Historically in Brazil, men had to claim paternity at a civil registry office to have their names listed on the birth certificate. Physical presence was often difficult as many men worked in faraway urban centers. If no man claimed

[58] IBGE 2013, vol. 40.

[59] Brill 2013.

[60] Many cartórios within families date back to the Empire.

[61] Levy et al. 1971. Pending extenuating circumstances entailed by distance, a birth needed to be registered within fifteen days to avoid the late penalty.

[62] For example, the single largest municipality in Brazil is Altamira, located in the Amazonian state of Pará. Larger than the state of Illinois, Altamira had only one cartório until recently (and even today less than a handful exist). Hunter and Sugiyama 2015, 10. The Brazilian Ministry of Justice has mapped the location of civil registries. See http://www.acessoajustica.gov.br/. A quick examination of this site reveals the scarcity of cartórios in the geographically large states of the north and northeast.

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paternity, feelings of shame inhibited many mothers from registering a child altogether.[63]

A shift occurred in the late 1990s, when the implementation of document-dependent income subsidy programs under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002) required that Brazil address a crucial missed step in its welfare state development. In 1996 his government made the first payments associated with the *Benefício de Prestação Continuada* (Continuous Cash Benefit Program, or BPC), a fully noncontributory pension equivalent to one minimum salary each month, a sizable sum, for destitute elders over sixty-five.[64] At that time, less than half of all Brazilian workers—and only one of every four workers in the poorest region of the country (the northeast)—had ever contributed to a pension plan.[65] But receiving the BPC requires documents; elders must prove their age and situation of extreme poverty, and typically do so with a birth certificate and a sworn statement. These seemingly minimal requirements revealed the official nonexistence (and thus technical ineligibility) of much of the target population. The experience of the BPC and the difficulty of documenting elders, who sometimes do not know when or where they were born,[66] made clear to relevant authorities the need to improve registration.

In 2001, Cardoso federalized a preexisting CCT that had been piloted in cities, the *Bolsa Escola* (School Grant), initiating its implementation nationally. The means-tested program, which required all family members to present birth certificates, was intended to reach sectors of society that the federal government had long neglected. Following the center-right Cardoso administration, the center-left presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–6, 2007–10) transformed the CCT, renaming it the *Bolsa Família* and expanding the number of people it reached. By 2015 the Bolsa Família paid benefits to fifty million Brazilians, roughly one-quarter of the population. In addition to the positive effects of achieving poverty reduction, higher rates of school attendance, and more consistent use of public health services, it motivated more people to register their children's births.

Alongside these policy shifts, federal, state, and local governments

[63] Milanesi and Silva document the importance of paternity problems in mothers' reluctance to register their children. Milanesi and Silva 1968.

[64] Brazil's military government had previously expanded social protection to rural elders through the Fundo de Assistência ao Trabalhador Rural (FUNRURAL), a program that began in 1971. Weyland 1996. Notably, following the implementation of this program, late birth registration also experienced a spike. Brill 2013.

[65] Power and Roberts 2000, 246.

[66] In areas where Catholicism is prevalent, people who were baptized may have a baptismal certificate or the Church likely has a record of the event.

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began to conduct advertising campaigns to reinforce the public's consciousness about the importance of documentation. They created catchy television ads and distributed glossy flyers through government offices where economically disadvantaged people enroll in social programs. The national campaign featured celebrities, including Brazilian soccer stars, who emphasized that a birth certificate is "a right that confers other rights." The ads stressed that identity documents are necessary to receive various social programs and instructed people on how to go about getting registered.[67]

The first sign that authorities recognized that deficient documentation might hinder people's ability to access new social programs came in 1997 with Cardoso's unilateral removal of registration offices' right to charge for the first copy of a birth certificate. Cardoso's "free law" mandated that the first copy be free for everyone and that additional copies be provided without charge to the poor. When the material benefits associated with heightened state commitment to social inclusion stimulated demand for birth registration, authorities became more fully aware of how widespread underregistration truly was.[68] That officials had underestimated the problem in Brazil is somewhat surprising given the country's high prevalence of institutional births and reputable census bureau. The Lula administration, which dramatically expanded the CCT, implemented further measures to reduce birth registration barriers, decreasing costly fees, attenuating the problem of distance, and diminishing complications stemming from unresolved paternity.[69] Several of these measures required confronting or working around the interests of notary publics. Given the resistance of many cartórios to honor Cardoso's 1997 free law, which contained no penalty for uncooperative registrars, in 2003 Lula signed a law that guaranteed federal reimbursement for their income loss. His government also eliminated penalties for delayed registration. A series of efforts to bring registrars closer to undocumented populations unfolded as well. Beginning with a Ministry of Health initiative in December 2002, federal, state, and local governments have worked to subsidize registrars to establish locations in birthing hospitals and clinics, a seemingly obvious measure not undertaken until then.[70] Government entities at all levels have conducted

[67] Brazil Ministry of Social Development n.d.

[68] Author interview with Beatriz Garrido, general coordinator, Promotion of Civil Registry of Births, National Secretariat for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights, June 27, 2012, Brasília.

[69] These changes are summarized well by Wong and Turra 2007.

[70] Muzzi 2010. See decree number 938/GM of May 20, 2002. Yet a problem is that notary services only find hospital registration worth doing where a considerable number of babies are born.

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mobile registration drives in remote communities where previously undocumented people can enter air-conditioned buses equipped with computers and internet connections to have their existence recognized by the state. Also, new laws put the burden of disputing paternity ever more on men. Since 2009, mothers can assign paternity on the birth certificate unless the indicated father proves otherwise through a DNA test.[71] Having the mother's word as the default on paternity no doubt reduces the number of children who lack a birth certificate due to the anticipated stigma of illegitimacy. In cases where paternity is not disputed but the father cannot be physically present to register the birth, the law has evolved such that mothers can go alone to a cartório to register a baby within the first fifteen days of its life.[72] Finally, with the assistance of two witnesses who have documents, children of parents without identification can now have their births registered, breaking a crucial aspect of the intergenerational transmission of exclusion.

Qualitative and quantitative evidence substantiates the catalyzing role of income transfers in the acquisition of identity documents. While data suggest that noncontributory pension schemes provide impetus for elders to obtain documentation, exact information on how many elders obtained official identification retroactively is scarce and arguably less reliable than are data for children receiving timely birth registration.[73] Thus, our focus is on the evidence concerning Brazil's CCT and the registration of children's births.

Interviews with program administrators and social workers elicited the observation that the Bolsa's introduction significantly increased the demand for birth registration among the poor.[74] Local program managers had to instruct their administrative staff to explain the procedures for acquiring documentation to applicants who themselves (or whose family members) lacked the necessary identification. Survey data from northeastern Brazil further confirm the link between the Bolsa Família and documentation; 17 percent of respondents in one poll reported that

[71] For the evolution on paternity law, see http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Leis/L8560.htm.

[72] Law 13.112/15 makes this possible, replacing the previous law that allowed only fathers to register a child in the first fifteen days of life.

[73] Research on Brazil's BPC suggests that eligibility for the program increases the probability of obtaining a birth certificate as an adult. After the program's implementation, elders were significantly more likely to obtain birth certificates in their sixty-fifth year. See Brill 2013. Consistent with this finding, an administrator of the *National Program for the Documentation of Rural Workers* observes that the majority of those pursuing documents as older adults do so with the expectation of receiving the BPC. Author interview with Andrea Butto, director, Women in Small Scale Agriculture, Ministry of Agrarian Development, June 7, 2012, Brasília.

[74] Author interviews with Lucia Modesto Pereira, former director of the Bolsa Família program, July 1, 2011, Brasília; and Garrido, June 27, 2013.

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they had obtained identity documents (of one type or another) to enroll in the program.[75]

Brazil has experienced a marked decrease in the overall share of children who do not become registered in their first year. Whereas an estimated 27.1 percent of babies born in 1998 were not registered within a year, the number fell to 5.1 percent by 2013.[76] Second and relatedly, among the births registered, a higher percentage of registration takes place in infancy. Figure 4 shows the growth of timely registration.[77]

The dramatic increase in timely registration for the two regions with the lowest registration rates and highest concentration of Bolsa Família grants coincides with the 2003 rollout and expansion of the CCT. The sharpest increase in the registration of children younger than one took place in the five-year period from 2004 through 2008. As we might expect, this increase parallels an equally dramatic decrease in rates of late registration, as reflected in the cohort of one- to seven-year-olds. Although the gradual improvement that occurred in the preceding years may stem from the country's modernization, the punctuated upward rise in the initial years of the Bolsa Família reflects a political and policy story.

A state-by-state analysis that examines the relationship between the concentration of Bolsa Família grants and timely birth registration in 2002, 2007, and 2012 supports the hypothesized link between the income transfer and the growth in documentation.[78] It makes sense to analyze only the states of the northeast and north (sixteen in all) as a ceiling effect exists for the other regions and comparing across development levels would introduce a number of confounding factors. To provide some indication of the numbers entailed, in the group of states with the highest concentration of families that receive the Bolsa Família (Alagoas, Ceará, Maranhão, Paraiba, and Piauí), where on average 50.5 percent of all families have the CCT, the average decline in the percentage of people without timely registration was 81.10 percent between 2002 and 2012. Notably, the decrease in late registration was greater between 2002 and 2007 than between 2007 and 2012 (62.47 versus 43.42 percent, respectively). Figure 5, which controls for the geographic size of the state (a supply-side factor related to distance), shows the correlation

[75] This roughly 1,000-person survey took place in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco. See Hunter and Sugiyama 2015.

[76] IBGE 2013, vol. 40.

[77] The tables in the appendix show these numbers.

[78] Information about the share of families per state who receive the Bolsa Família comes from Camargo et al. 2013, 163. Figures on birth registration for the years 2002, 2007, and 2010 come from IBGE 2012, vol. 39, p. 22.

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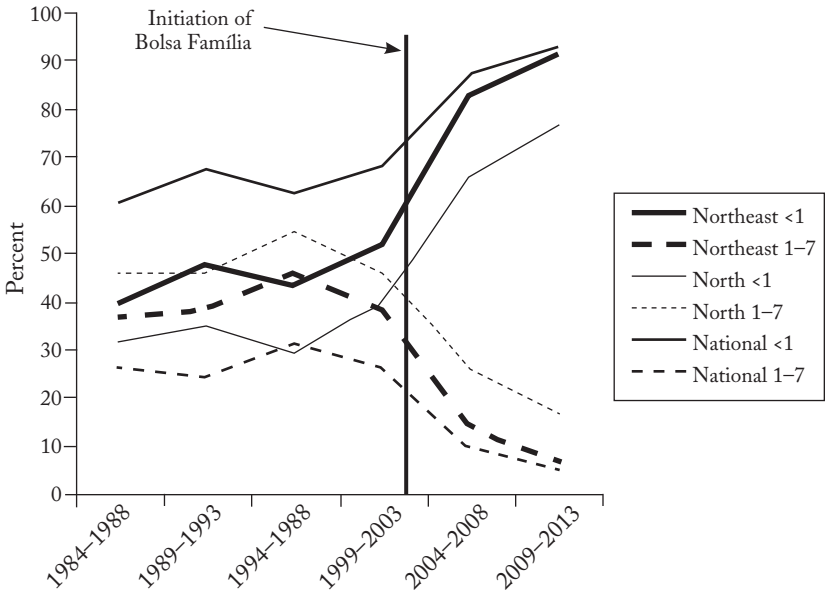


FIGURE 4
SHARE OF BIRTH REGISTRATIONS IN BRAZIL THAT TAKE PLACE IN INFANCY (<1) AND LATER CHILDHOOD (1–7)

SOURCE: IBGE 1984–2013, vols. 11–40.

between the percentage of families with the Bolsa Família and the percentage drop in late registrations between 2002 and 2012. Anything within the gray zone is within a 95 percent confidence interval of the estimated coefficient. Taking into account the Bolsa Família and state size variables, the estimated coefficient is 0.48.

All in all, among poor populations in the poorest regions of the country, the share of Brazilians who leave early childhood without a birth certificate has decreased markedly in the last decade and a half.

BOLIVIA

Bolivia, the second poorest country in the Americas and one of the most indigenous, went through the 1990s with a birth registration rate similar to that of Brazil. In 2001, it was estimated that only 74 percent of children five years of age and younger were registered.[79] Yet even handicapped by factors that complicate birth registration—a large rural population, a high proportion of births outside of hospitals, an alarm-

[79] Author calculations from INE 2001.

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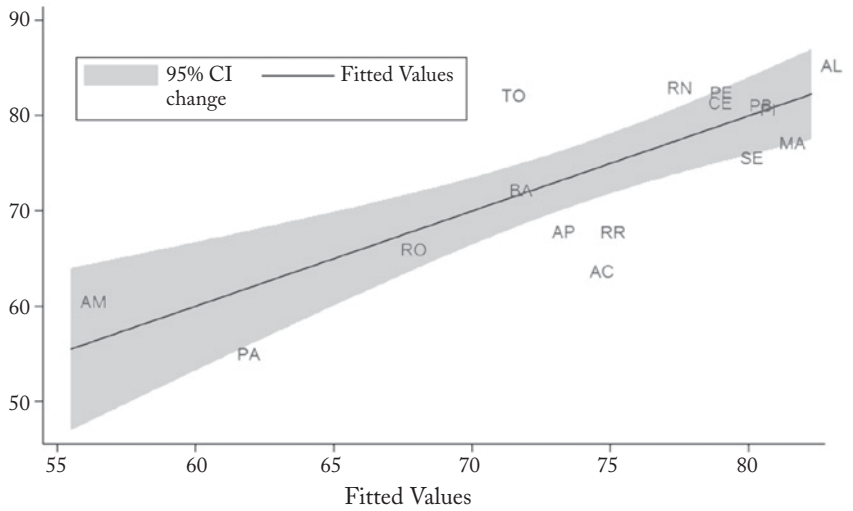


FIGURE 5
SHARE OF FAMILIES WITH THE BOLSA FAMÍLIA AND PERCENTAGE DECREASE IN LATE REGISTRATIONS, 2002–12, BY BRAZILIAN STATES IN THE NORTHEAST AND NORTH[a]

SOURCE: IBGE 2012, vol. 39; Camargo et al. 2013.

[a] AC (Acre); AL (Alagoas); AP (Amapá); AM (Amazonas); BA (Bahia); CE (Ceará); MA (Maranhão); PA (Pará); PB (Paraíba); PE (Pernambuco); PI (Piauí); RN (Rio Grande do Norte); RO (Rondônia); RR (Roraima); SE (Sergipe); TO (Tocantins).

ing rate of infant mortality, and a sizable indigenous population, which for historical reasons is wary of the state[80]—Bolivia was able to increase the rate of registration of children five-years-old and younger to 87 percent by 2011.[81] Progress in the difficult Bolivian context is evidence that a country's development level need not be a binding constraint to universal registration. Political will matters. Compared to Brazil, Bolivia addressed through social assistance the poverty of its large informal sector at an earlier stage in its economic development. To do so, it needed to resolve the matter of individual identity.

Many historical factors worked against the growth of a stronger demand for birth registration in Bolivia. The weak development of anything resembling a welfare state was among them. Reformist impulses

[80] One-third of all Bolivians live in rural areas. United Nations Statistics Division 2012. Slightly less than one-third of all births still take place outside of hospitals, and the infant mortality rate is 32.8/1,000 live births; World Bank 2008. In all, 60.6 percent of Bolivians are considered indigenous. Author calculations from INE 2001.

[81] Author calculations from INE 2011.

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arose in fits and starts in twentieth-century Bolivia, most prominently in the Revolution of 1952, but never achieved lasting significance. If a person was poor, there was very little benefit from a birth certificate. The social provisioning that existed often took the form of patronage, which emphasized personal and political connections, not identity documents, and was doled out by politicians in exchange for votes.

Beyond low demand, many supply-side factors constrained birth registration. Before 1999, birth registration and the issuing of a birth certificate itself carried separate fees. Stiff late penalties also existed. A 1999 code eliminated the charge for the registration component, but the fee for a birth certificate itself persisted. Considering fees and travel expenses, the registration of a child could cost as much as a third of a Bolivian family's monthly minimum wage.[82] Long distances to registration centers also posed a significant barrier, especially given Bolivia's mountainous geography and vast lowlands. In 2000, nearly one-third of Bolivians surveyed in the lowest income quintile of the population listed cost and distance as the main reasons for not registering their children.[83] Fathers who failed to recognize their children also inhibited unmarried mothers who feared formalizing the status of "illegitimate" on a birth certificate.[84] The tradition of Spanish surnames, whereby most individuals carry both the mother's and father's last names, makes formalizing the lack of a father's name even more obvious and stigmatic.[85]

President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993–97 and 2002–3) inaugurated a new era of social inclusion, thereby increasing the demand for birth registration. Going beyond the limits of Bolivia's small formal labor market, he took important steps to put the poorest Bolivians under systematic state protection. In 1997 his government initiated a universal noncontributory old-age pension scheme, the *Bono Solidario* (Solidarity Voucher, shortened to *Bonosol*). The unusually large size of Bolivia's informal sector[86] and the prevalence of extreme poverty among elders quickly made the program a critical income support.[87] The program was

[82] UNICEF 2002; Plan International and UNICEF 2009, 26.

[83] INE 2000.

[84] Plan International and UNICEF 2009, 28. The 1971 family code mandated that there be a space for "father" and if no father came forth, the state would fill in "hijo ilegítimo." This situation also existed in many other Latin American countries. Author interview with Blanca Mendoza family law attorney and former employee of Plan International-Boliva, June 22, 2015, La Paz.

[85] In some countries, historically a child without a legal father had its mother's last name listed twice on the birth certificate (e.g., Martínez Martínez), a stigma that led some mothers to avoid acquiring a birth certificate altogether.

[86] In 2004, Bolivia had eighteen times as many citizens over sixty-five who had never contributed to a pension system as elders who had, FIAP 2011, 3.

[87] Martínez 2013, 97.

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expanded, institutionally strengthened, and renamed the *Renta Dignidad* (Dignity Income) in 2007.[88] Launching these programs, especially the Bonosol, was complicated by the difficulty many impoverished elders had in meeting the sole requirement: documented proof of age.

Sánchez de Lozada also created a successful maternal health insurance program and proposed a conditional cash transfer for children in 2002. The latter was implemented when Evo Morales assumed the presidency in 2006. This program, the *Bono Juancito Pinto*, offers income support for all families of children in public schools.[89] Initially, it covered children only in grades 1–5, but over time it expanded to include older children and eligibility currently extends through grade 12. Roughly two-thirds of all age-eligible Bolivian children receive the benefit; in 2011, the program had 1.9 million recipients.[90] To receive program payments, parents must present the birth certificates of all their children along with their own legal identity documents. Students must attend school at least 80 percent of the time to receive the funds. Among other benefits, such as improved enrollment rates,[91] the Bono Juancito Pinto appears to have stimulated demand for birth registration, as shown below.[92]

Further bolstering demand for birth registration, Bolivia's civil registry agency used mass media to raise awareness of the need for identity documents and the steps to obtain them. With the logistical and financial assistance of organizations like Plan International and the Organization of American States, these ads have reached an estimated two-thirds of Bolivia's population.[93] Images of poor Bolivians receiving documents through mobile campaigns figure prominently.

To meet rising demand, the Bolivian government has worked to facilitate the supply of documentation. A 2003 law rendered birth registration cost-free for all children up to twelve years of age. The same law issued a three-year amnesty, extended twice, allowing all undocumented twelve- to eighteen-year-olds to obtain late birth registration

[88] Loza, Wilde, and Córdova 2013, Martínez 2013, 116.

[89] Although the Bono Juancito Pinto is not means-tested, its benefit incidence is progressive because poor families generally have more children and wealthier Bolivian parents generally send their children to private schools. See McGuire 2013.

[90] Marco 2012, 27.

[91] Yáñez, Rojas, and Silva 2011.

[92] Another program, *Bono Juana Azurduy*, likely has similar effects on demand. Also requiring documents, it provides a series of payments to expectant and neonatal mothers (and their children for the first two years of life) in exchange for health clinic visits. The program, enacted in 2009, rolled out slowly. Preliminary evidence suggests an increase in demand among intended beneficiaries. See Vidal et al. 2015, 132.

[93] Plan International n.d. The Organization of American States program is called PUICA (Programa de Universalización de la Identidad Civil en las Américas).

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without incurring financial penalties.[94] The government also extended a lifelong amnesty for peasants and members of indigenous groups. Beginning in December 2004, any person of indigenous origin, at any age, could pursue retroactive birth registration free of charge.[95] Reforms have also made civil registries and vital records offices more accessible and efficient; beyond setting up more permanent units, the national and state governments have supported mobile registration drives in distant communities. As in Brazil, media and community groups announce in advance the itinerant registrars' arrival and what registration will require. Notably, these brigades are equipped with simple technology: photocopiers, computers, printers, and generators.[96] In addition, through a constitutional change implemented in 2009, a child's mother is allowed to designate a father and have his name appear on a birth certificate unless he actively rebuts this status through a DNA test. Refusing the test (or simple absence) creates the presumption of paternity and creates legal fatherhood.[97] The state has also ended the requirement that the parents be legally documented; undocumented parents can now register a birth provided two witnesses with legal identities testify to the parentage.

Evidence for Bolivia, although not quantified as well as it is for Brazil, suggests that these intertwined developments lifted birth registration. The first sign of a positive connection between social programs and birth registration came with the noncontributory pension, leading Laurence Whitehead to observe, "The *Bonosol* . . . convinced many elderly to apply for papers for the first time in their lives."[98] Similarly, HelpAge International reports, "the primary demand for socio-legal services in Bolivia is associated with problems associated with identity documents needed for the pension and health entitlements."[99] These legal support services have played a significant role in registering people for the universal pension. Absent the noncontributory pension, it is highly unlikely that undocumented elderly Bolivians would suddenly decide to pursue birth registration.

[94] The law is number 2616; it also makes provision for errors to be rectified by administrative personnel rather than to require a judicial process.

[95] This was enacted through Supreme Decree 27915, December 2004.

[96] Plan International n.d., 1; author interview with David Dávila, director of operations, National Identification Services, June 25, 2015, La Paz; author interview with Luis Soto, former director of modernization, National Civil Registry, June 22, 2015, La Paz.

[97] If the test shows that the indicated man is not the father, the person who identified him erroneously must assume the cost of the test.

[98] Quoted in Müller 2009, 166. See also Martínez 2013, 105.

[99] HelpAge International 2011, 12.

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In implementing the CCT for children it became clear that the Bolivian state had underestimated the problem of documentation even among the younger generation,[100] due in part to large numbers of babies born outside of institutional settings and less-than-reliable census data. Clearly, however, the Bono Juancito Pinto resulted in a rise in birth registration. Child protection specialists from Bolivian agencies and international organizations point to an increase in Bolivians' receptivity to documentation after the prospect of receiving state benefits arose. An official from World Vision-Bolivia noted in an interview, "A culture of documentation did not exist when we initially tried to convince people to get themselves and their children a legal identity. In the 1990s there was nothing to get from having a birth certificate, and people were not open to our efforts."[101] In the words of one UNICEF official, "We felt that we had reached a plateau by about 2003. But now because the state is providing more services and there is a benefit to having an ID, people are taking documentation more seriously."[102] These reflections suggest that international organizations can play an important supporting role after a state has decided to prioritize the issue.

The temporal proximity of when Bolivians apply for birth certificates and the payout of benefits supports the link between documentation and social programs, as well. That the Bono Juancito Pinto is dispensed only once a year, a decision made to reduce administrative costs, increases the credibility of this attribution. An official in the Ministry of Education who has worked with the Bono Juancito Pinto in various parts of the country reports that in the period right before the funds are paid out (at the end of the school year), the lines of parents with children at civil registry offices are unusually long. This was especially the case in the first years of the program.[103] A report by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean corroborates the observation that lines for birth certificates for children and identity documents for parents are very long in the period before the yearly payout.[104] Also, when interviewed, program recipients themselves make mention of the association between birth registration and their ability

[100] Plan International 2009.

[101] Author interview with Jimena Tito, child protection specialist, World Vision-Bolivia, June 23, 2015, La Paz.

[102] Author interview with Paula Vargas, child protection specialist, UNICEF-Bolivia, June 24, 2015, La Paz.

[103] Author interview with Nicolas Torrez, Bono Juancito Pinto administrator, June 23, 2015, La Paz.

[104] Marco 2102.

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to receive the CCT.[105] Practitioners regard birth registration for children and adolescents as one of the program's downstream benefits.[106]

Additionally, the data that do exist support a link between birth registration and social programs. In 2005 (one year before the inauguration of the Bono Juancito Pinto), only 56 percent of children younger than eighteen were registered. By 2008, the cohort of those under eighteen who were registered increased to 87 percent.[107] For a somewhat different age breakdown comparing the 2001 and 2012 censuses, in 2001, only 74 percent of children in the zero- to four-year-old age group had their births registered, by 2012 the number had risen to 88 percent. Looking at the cohort of five- to nine-year-olds, in 2001 6.5 percent did not have birth certificates. By 2012 the corresponding number was only 1.6 percent. Correlation is not necessarily causation, but layered upon other, more qualitative evidence, these numbers lend credence to the basic argument that social provisioning can bring about greater civil registration. That a poor country like Bolivia could make such progress in a relatively short time calls into question the strict economic-development interpretation of when birth registration occurs. The Bolivian case also suggests that international organizations matter, but mainly in facilitating the process of documentation once a national government makes the matter a priority.

To summarize, government policies that address both sides of the documentation equation—stimulating demand through social programs designed to include previously neglected people and easing long-standing restrictions on the supply side—have lifted the number of registered births in a region where a large number of births had gone undocumented. These interventions, which have occurred in countries as different as Brazil and Bolivia, resulted in the strikingly convergent outcome of higher rates of birth registration. That Bolivia—a country of marked poverty, modest health and bureaucratic infrastructure, and with a large indigenous population—has raised birth registration rates considerably suggests that political choices matter more than organizational limits, at least in some issue areas. Even inchoate states can create effective registration mechanisms if policies exist that require them. Indeed, the supply of such capacities is partly a function of the demand for them, itself created by a state's interest in pursuing social inclusion.

[105] Plan International and UNICEF 2009, 22.
[106] Marco 2012.
[107] Plan International 2009.

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Conclusion

Legal documentation constitutes a crucial precondition for enjoying full citizenship rights and protections. Across the developing world, lacking an official record of their existence deprives large numbers of people of full citizenship in the only country they know. Given the attention paid to the vulnerabilities suffered by undocumented immigrants, it is surprising that so few academic studies have sought to understand the lack of documentation among nationals and the conditions under which this situation shifts. Focusing on the role of welfare state projects, our study represents an effort in political science to do so.

What accounts for such low registration rates in the developing world overall and the unevenness of outcomes across regions? We probe three major frameworks in political science and assess the light they shed on birth registration outcomes. The factors highlighted by constructivism—progressive norms and their international diffusion—account poorly on their own for the alarming levels of nonregistration that still exist globally. Economic development is insufficient to explain the observed variation in registration even though economic and technological progress, coupled with urbanization, can surely facilitate the implementation of registration if a government is committed to its pursuit. The gaps left by these approaches, coupled with the case-based evidence we have brought to bear, suggest the merits of a policy-driven explanation.

The explanation we posit for recent registration gains in nontotalitarian countries centers on social welfare advances and their reliance on individual identity. Welfare initiatives can shift the cost-benefit calculations that states and citizens make in attending to birth registration. In other words, improvement in one area of social policy creates a demand for improved bureaucratic tools in another, building state infrastructure (a civil registry) in the process. Public policies can thus determine the relevance of developing population inventories. In the absence of specific projects that incorporate citizens into the state's fold, registries are often of limited governmental concern. Birth registration becomes vital with the emergence of policies (such as welfare entitlements) that create institutionalized linkages between individuals and the state. As income transfers increase the demand for documentation among unregistered individuals, many governments also enact measures to decrease the costs of registration. In the absence of increased benefits, measures to facilitate registration alone would have less effect on lifting birth registration rates. Because citizens' mental calculus is affected not only by

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what they reap from registration, but also by what they pay for it, both sides of the equation require consideration.[108]

Diminishing the remaining stock of undocumented citizens seems to flow from specific public policy incentives and imperatives rather than from abstract development goals and advocacy. As in many first-world scenarios, for example, Social Security in the United States, universal documentation is a downstream effect of other initiatives. The direct angle that international organizations have pushed with developing world governments—to develop civil registration and vital statistics for general planning and human rights purposes—does not move states to take decisive action. Rather, it is when states develop public policies and confront the barrier that underregistration poses to successful implementation of those policies that universal registration follows. The importance of country "ownership" is relevant here. Just as birth registration is an abstract idea for the poor, who face competing and more immediate priorities, governments that face constraints are unlikely to make birth registration a central concern until they have pressing reasons to do so. Electoral politics in the wake of structural adjustment provided the impetus in Latin America.

Commenting on the annual Progress of Nations report by UNICEF in 1998, human rights judge Unity Dow deemed an effective system of birth registration "fundamental not only to the fulfillment of child rights but to the rational operation of a humane government in the modern world."[109] If the recent past is any indication of the future, birth registration is inclined to spread globally. Given the diffusion of Latin American-style cash transfers to countries in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East, an increase in birth registration may well repeat itself across the developing world. There are signs that this dynamic is already unfolding in sub-Saharan Africa,[110] Southeast Asia[111] and some countries of the Middle East, such as Turkey.[112] South Africa, for instance, has seen a "spectacular rise in birth registration within the first year of life," from 50 percent in 2001 to 95 percent in 2012.[113] As one study notes, "A major incentive to early registration is

[108] For the sake of precise causal attribution, it would be ideal to ascertain empirically the relative importance of introducing benefits versus reducing costs in inducing people to pursue birth registration. Field experiments that disentangle benefits and costs could address this question, the answer to which has obvious implications for how states (under inevitable financial constraints) calibrate the mix of policies they pursue.

[109] UNICEF 1998, 5.

[110] Garcia and Moore 2012, 7, 93.

[111] Vandenabeele and Lao 2007.

[112] Kudat 2006, 10.

[113] UNICEF 2013, 33.

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the requirement that a birth certificate be presented in order to obtain social protection grants, including the Child Support Grant."[114] India's development of its UID, a biometrically based universal identification system for social provisioning, will be an important test case. Thus, notwithstanding some aspects of the story that are particular to Latin America, our argument promises to have broad relevance. If a similar dynamic applies elsewhere, the adoption of individual entitlements will end up producing the same downstream effect. As such, the contribution of these kinds of entitlements to development will transcend their immediate poverty-reducing effect and result in greater state capacity.

States that incorporate the poorest and most marginalized citizens will in turn further their own construction and better leverage the human resources available to them. As individual entitlements have begun to dot the global landscape, so too have inventories of beneficiaries, making previously invisible citizens visible to their governments. The momentum toward protective registration that welfare state developments are unleashing provides hope for progress in the twenty-first century.

Appendix

Table A1
Brazil National Registration by Age Segment and Period, 1984–2013

		Age at Registration				
	Period	*% <1 Year Old*	*% 1–7 Years Old*	*% 8–15 Years Old*	*% Older*	*Total Regist.*
Registration by period	1984–88	60.11	26.08	5.40	8.41	22,338,016
	1989–93	67.35	24.83	3.61	4.20	18,069,315
	1994–98	63.01	30.56	3.88	2.56	19,122,195
	1999–2003	68.05	26.19	3.41	2.34	19,384,488
	2004–8	87.75	9.29	1.24	1.71	16,018,744
	2009–13	92.83	5.00	0.72	1.45	15,096,041

Source: *Estatísticas do Registro Civil 1984–2013.*

[114] UNICEF 2013, 33.

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TABLE A2
BRAZIL NORTHEAST REGION REGISTRATION BY AGE SEGMENT AND PERIOD, 1984–2013

		Age at Registration				
	Period	*% <1 Year Old*	*% 1–7 Years Old*	*% 8–15 Years Old*	*% Older*	*Total Regist.*
Registration by period	1984–88	39.65	36.97	8.66	14.72	8,678,116
	1989–93	47.09	38.83	6.10	7.98	5,871,947
	1994–98	43.48	45.29	6.69	4.54	6,105,390
	1999–2003	51.90	38.61	6.00	3.49	6,635,699
	2004–8	82.79	13.36	1.57	2.28	5,012,118
	2009–13	91.32	6.68	0.62	1.38	4,372,206

SOURCE: *Estatísticas do Registro Civil 1984–2013.*

TABLE A3
BRAZIL NORTH REGION REGISTRATION BY AGE SEGMENT AND PERIOD, 1984–2013

		Age at Registration				
	Period	*% <1 Year Old*	*% 1–7 Years Old*	*% 8–15 Years Old*	*% Older*	*Total Regist.*
Registration by period	1984–88	31.35	45.08	10.63	12.94	1,751,187
	1989–93	34.27	46.06	10.17	9.50	1,584,408
	1994–98	29.60	53.78	10.62	6.00	2,027,056
	1999–2003	39.97	46.04	7.52	6.47	2,312,399
	2004–8	66.35	25.73	3.49	4.43	1,909,990
	2009–2013	76.96	16.67	2.18	4.19	1,773,254

SOURCE: *Estatísticas do Registro Civil 1984–2013.*

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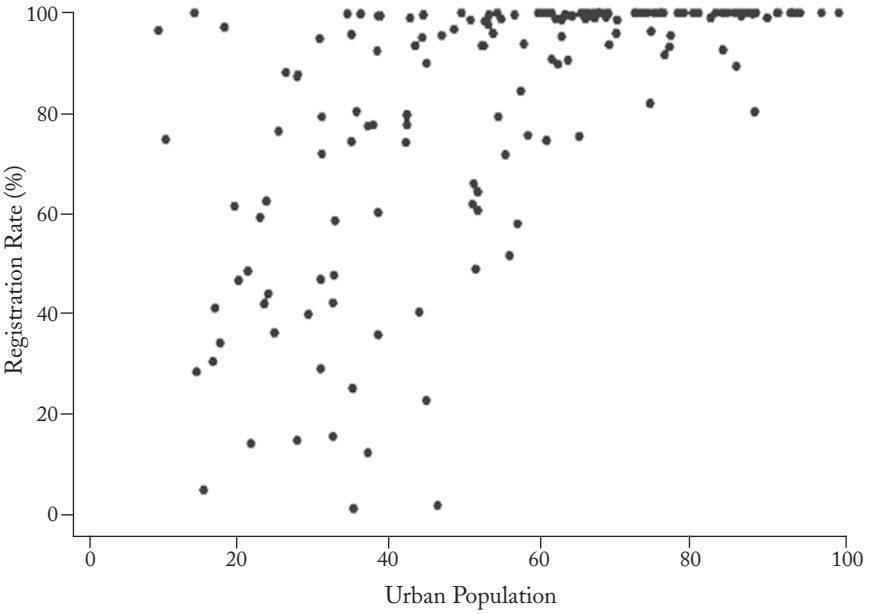


FIGURE A1
URBAN POPULATION AND GLOBAL RATES OF BIRTH REGISTRATION

SOURCE: World Bank 2013; UNICEF 2014.

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