

INSPIR

International Network  
for Social Protection Rights



**SOCIAL**  
**PROTECTION:**  
TAKING  
THE  
'HIGH ROAD'

SUMMARY OF **THE WORLD SOCIAL**  
**PROTECTION REPORT**  
2020-2022

Connected by **WSM**



# Opinion of **THE EXPERT**

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**T**he ILO's *World Social Protection Report 2020-2022: «Social protection at the crossroads – in pursuit of a better future»* shows some, very small, progress in the effective realisation of the right to social protection for all. Effective coverage with at least one social protection guarantee reached 47% of the world population in 2020. 2% up from the situation in 2017 when the previous edition of the world social protection report was written.

*Progress indeed, but way too little. Despite numerous measures taken to overcome the first year of the covid-pandemic, more than 4 milliard people remain entirely unprotected. Many measures taken were only temporary responses to the crisis and have not contributed to a sustainable reinforcement of social protection systems. Even is the crisis has proven once more that countries that had robust social protection systems in place before the crisis could respond in a much more resilient way.*

*If we continue this way, a 2% improvement in 3 years, it will take another 72 years to cover the remaining 53,1% of the world population with at least 1 social protection guarantee. Providing comprehensive coverage will obviously take even longer.*

*So, taking the «low road» as the ILO secretary General Guy Ryder calls it: leaving policies as they are, not increasing investments in social protection, possibly even returning to austerity politics, cannot be an option anymore. If the pandemic has proven one thing, it's the importance of comprehensive, broadly supported, rights based social protection.*

*The summary below provides some more details on coverage gaps and on the regional differences in coverage shown in the ILO's report. The challenge to effectively cover all people with comprehensive social protection is immense. And the report is a strong call for taking the «high road» for social protection: with more investment in social protection and a call to increase both domestic financing and international cooperation to strengthen the social protection systems to be able to close the coverage gaps.*

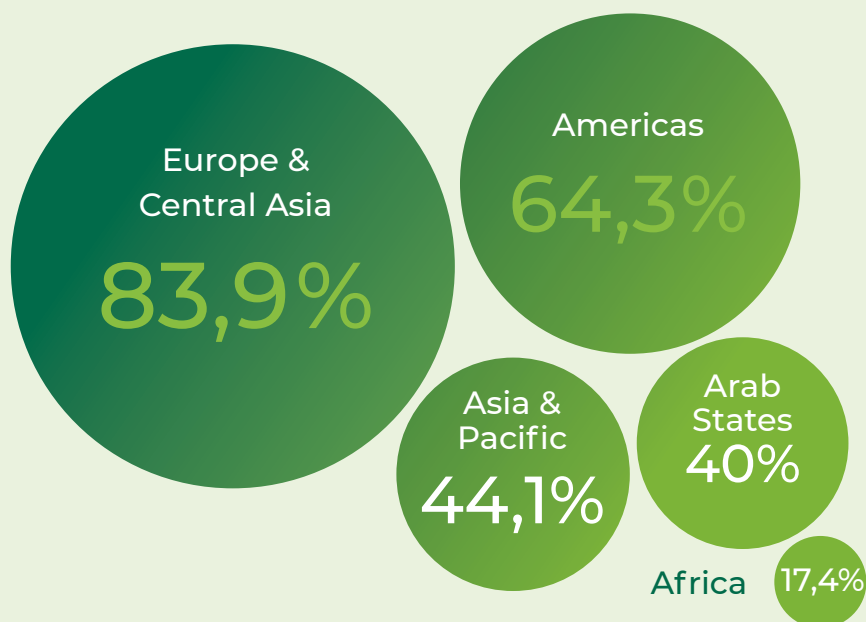
# SUMMARY OF THE WORLD SOCIAL PROTECTION REPORT

## 2020-2022

**T**he pandemic has highlighted the inequalities and gaps in terms of social protection. More than that, the existing gaps are bigger. By revealing the difficulties encountered, it offers the opportunity to take a step forward and move in the right direction.

In 2020, more than half of the world's population (53.1%) didn't receive any social protection benefits. Gaps observed are associated with underinvestment in this sector, especially in Africa, Asia, Arab States and in some states of Latin America. This financing gap has widened since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and therefore, greater investment is required if progress on poverty reduction is to be sustained.

### Differences per continent:



In other words, more than 80% of the population of the African continent doesn't have any social protection !

# 80%

Ways of dealing with the crisis have been adopted to varying degrees around the world. Higher-income countries were better placed to face it and were able to respond better to the needs in terms of social protection.



# 0,4%

**Regarding the children,** the big majority of them still don't have effective social security coverage and globally, only 26.4% have the right to social protection benefits. Following the COVID-19 crisis, some countries have put in place universal or nearly universal protection systems for children and families. However, better results could be reached by integrated systems approach considering all the links in the problem.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 0.4% of GDP is allocated to social protection and coverage of children. Yet, this region of the world has one of the largest shares of children (40.6%).

**Concerning women and men of working age,** progress have been made but gaps can still be found, in terms of maternity, sickness or disability. In respect of employment injury, occupational diseases or employment protection, efforts are still be needed.

**In general, only 3.6% of the global GDP is spent on public social protection to ensure income security for people of working age.** To guarantee an elementary level of social protection at a national level (including all sectors), lower-middle-income countries<sup>2</sup> should invest 5.1% of their GDP, upper-middle countries 3.1% of their GDP and low-income countries 15.9% of their GDP.

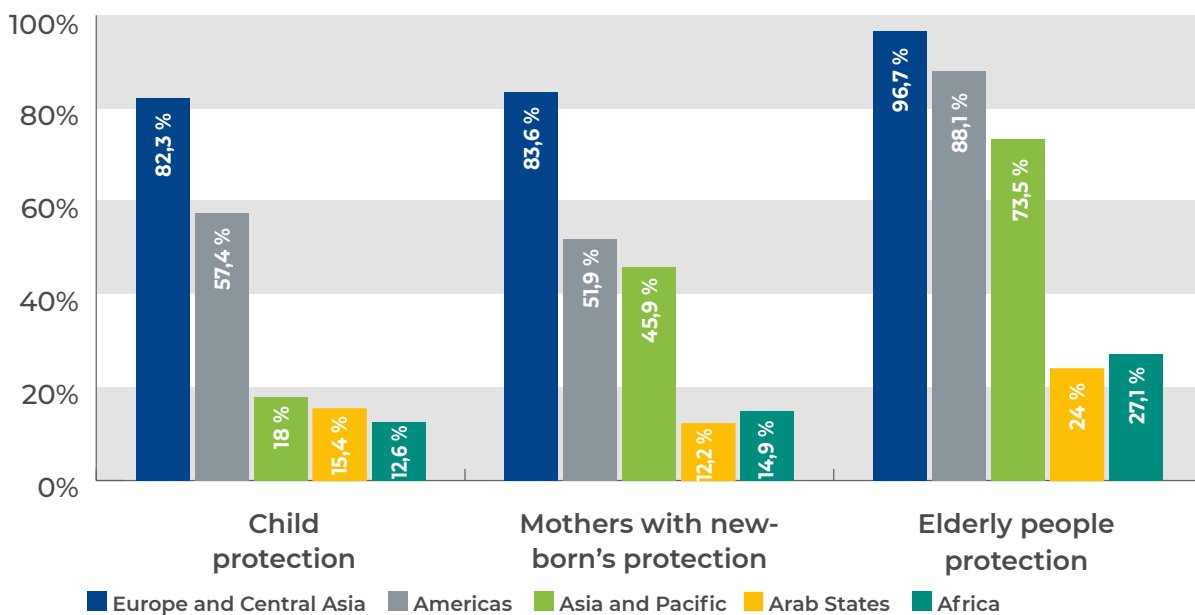
69.4% of the world's population of working age don't have a social protection at all, which represents 4 billion people in the world.

As regards the provision of care for severe disabilities, there are huge disparities. In Central Asia and Europe, the social coverage exceeds 80% while in Africa and Arab States, it doesn't exceed 10%.

<sup>2</sup> The States included in this category and the following ones are mentioned at page 239 of the world social protection report 2020-2022.

In terms of pensions for older women and men, the system has improved in developing countries and in numerous countries, universal systems have been put in place. Nevertheless, the priority in the reforms undertaken was the fiscal sustainability, creating an obstacle to the extension of pensions systems.

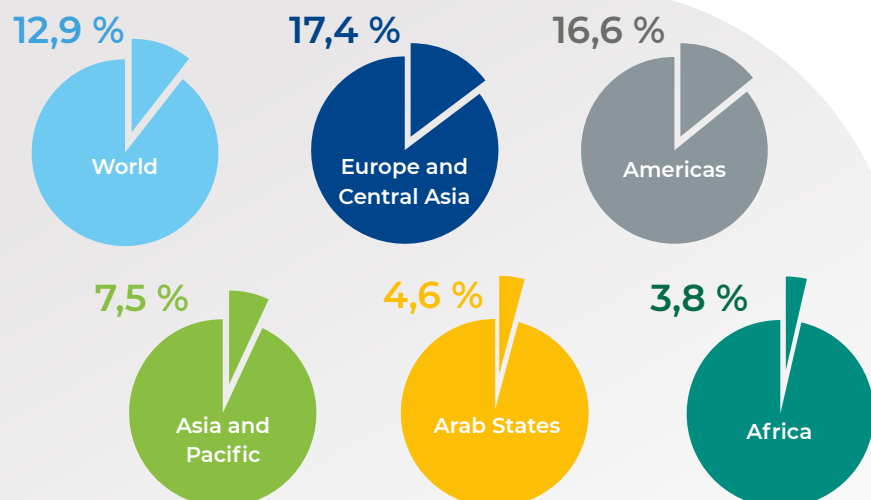
In respect of health coverage, big progress has been made. However, there are still many obstacles in this area.



Sufficient, adequate, and comprehensive social protection is highly dependent on the funding allocated to it. In this regard, significant disparities can be observed between the different regions of the world, depending on the level of economic development of the States.

Nevertheless, in countries with similar levels of economic development (or budget allocation), differences are found, demonstrating that this funding is also a question of political will, regardless of the economic situation of the country.

Financing of the social protection (excluding health) as a percentage of the GDP





In terms of financing, developing countries have less fiscal space and are therefore less likely to finance social protection. But there are existing tools. To illustrate this, increasing the number of taxpayers increases the level of social coverage (based on the contributory system). It is also possible to create new taxes, as the Plurinational State of Bolivia has done to finance universal pensions, children allowances and other benefits from taxes imposed on mineral and natural gas activities. Thus, financing opportunities can be explored.

In general, a universal social protection is crucial for a more inclusive, human-centred future. In this respect, the measures put in place following Covid-19 should be maintained until the crisis is resolved. The austerity and the fiscal consolidation policies should be left aside and investment in protection is needed to allow a return to normality. The Covid-19 brought about an understanding of the value of social protection and the realisation that individual well-being is highly dependent on collective well-being and the authorities could act if they really wanted to. This is the way forward, also after the crisis. Therefore, it is essential to put in place permanent universal protection systems to deal with future insecurities.

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The full report can be found on the ILO's website in English, French and Spanish:



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