Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Digitizing Civil Registration and Legal Identity in the Arab Countries

24 March 2025

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Agenda

- Opening remarks
- Round table discussion
- Presentation of survey results
- Country insights
- Q&A
- Closing remarks

Round Table Discussion

- Key challenges in digitizing civil registration and legal identity systems & possible solutions – EMRO/WHO
- Improving the production of timely and reliable vital statistics for marriage and divorce in the Arab region – ASRO/UNFPA
- Ensuring inclusivity in digital civil registration systems for marginalized and hard-to-reach populations – UNHCR & UN Women
- The role of regional organizations in enhancing data exchange among CRVS partners – League of Arab States

Survey - Intro

- The survey launched in mid-February.
- 14 out of 22 countries completed the survey:
  - Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen
  - Kuwait and Qatar just sent responses, but they are not included in the presentation of the results.
- The survey will close in several weeks to allow countries more time to complete the survey in advance of the report.

Survey - Background

- Digitization is a key pillar of the strategic framework for improving CRVS systems in the Arab region (2021-2025).
- Importance further underscored in last year's mid-term review as it was found that digitization is limited across the region and limited within countries to some components of the civil registration system.
- Countries reported significant challenges in e-connectivity, including limited international and regional support, weak cooperation between national partners or lack of readiness among partners, in addition to a lack of technical expertise.

Survey - Methodology

- Legal environment (2 questions)
- Computerization and digitization (12 questions)
- Challenges and gaps (3 questions)
- Opportunities and future directions (11 questions)
- Digitization and contribution to demographic indicators and policy formulation (8 questions)

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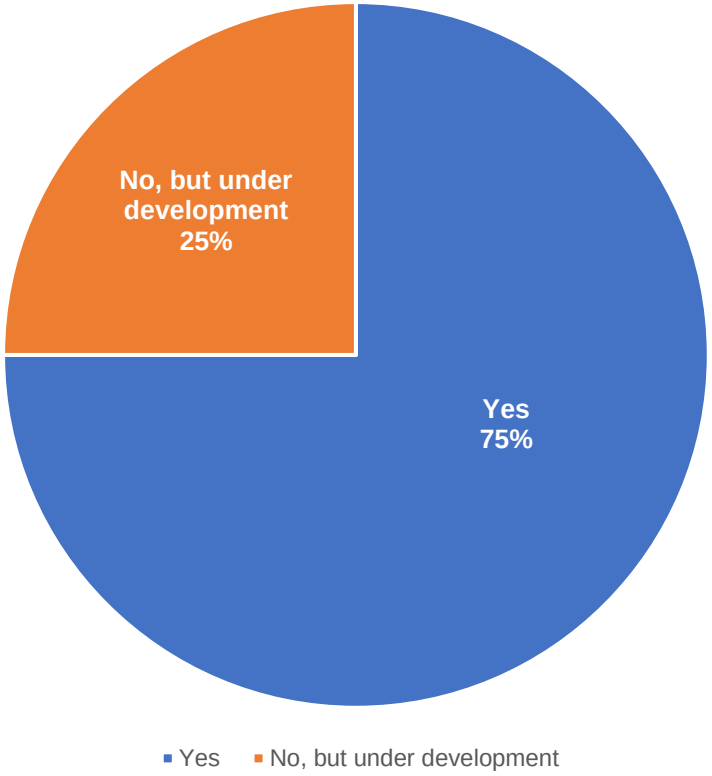
Preliminary Survey Results

Q1. Is there legislation that has provisions to support the registration of vital events and link them to other systems/databases?



Legal Environment

- Most countries reported having legislation that supports the registration and linkage of vital events to other systems (Q1).
- All 12 countries reported policies in place governing data management and security of the civil registration system (Q2).

Computerization and Digitization

- All 12 countries that responded to the survey reported having a national strategy for digitizing the civil registration system (Q3).
- All but two countries, Djibouti and Somalia, reported having a national/central database where civil records are maintained (Q6).

Digitizing Vital Events

Q4. Do local civil registration offices have electronic records for birth and death incidents?

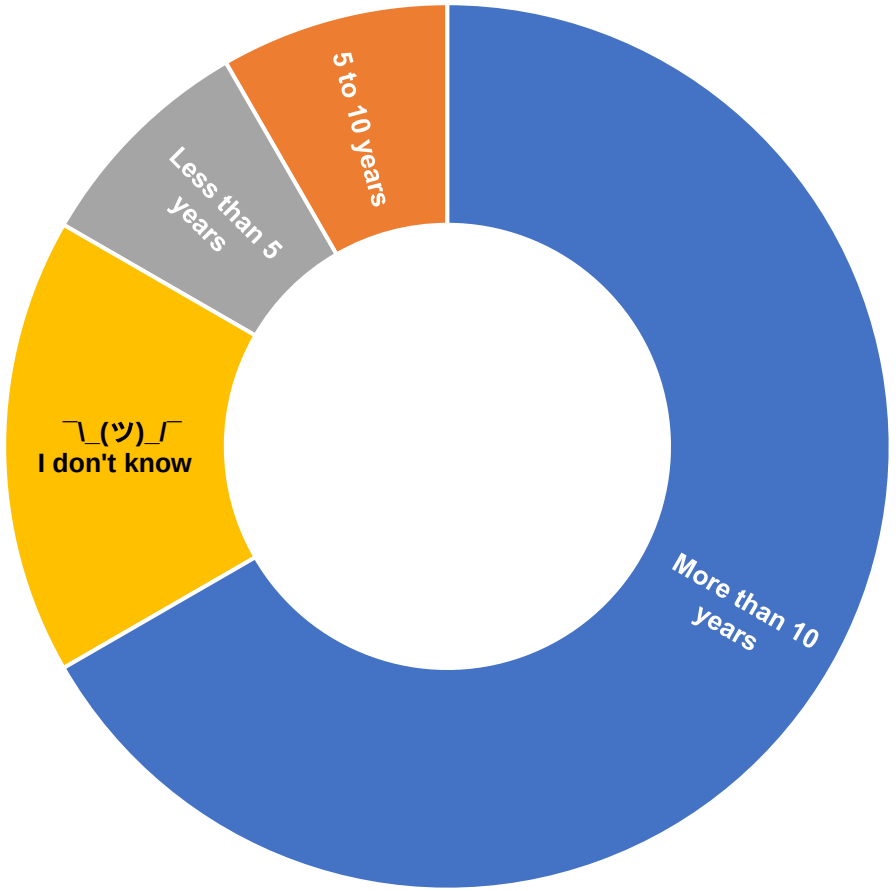
Country	Yes, all civil registration offices	Yes, but only some civil registration offices	No
Algeria	X		
Bahrain	X		
Djibouti	X		
Egypt	X		
Jordan	X		
Morocco		X	
Oman	X		
Palestine	X		
Saudia Arabia	X		
Somalia			X
UAE	X		
Yemen		X	

Q5. Do local civil registration offices have electronic records for marriage and divorce incidents?

Country	Yes, all civil registration offices	Yes, but only some civil registration offices	No
Algeria	X		
Bahrain	X		
Djibouti			X
Egypt	X		
Jordan	X		
Morocco			X
Oman	X		
Palestine	X		
Saudia Arabia	X		
Somalia			X
UAE	X		
Yemen		X	

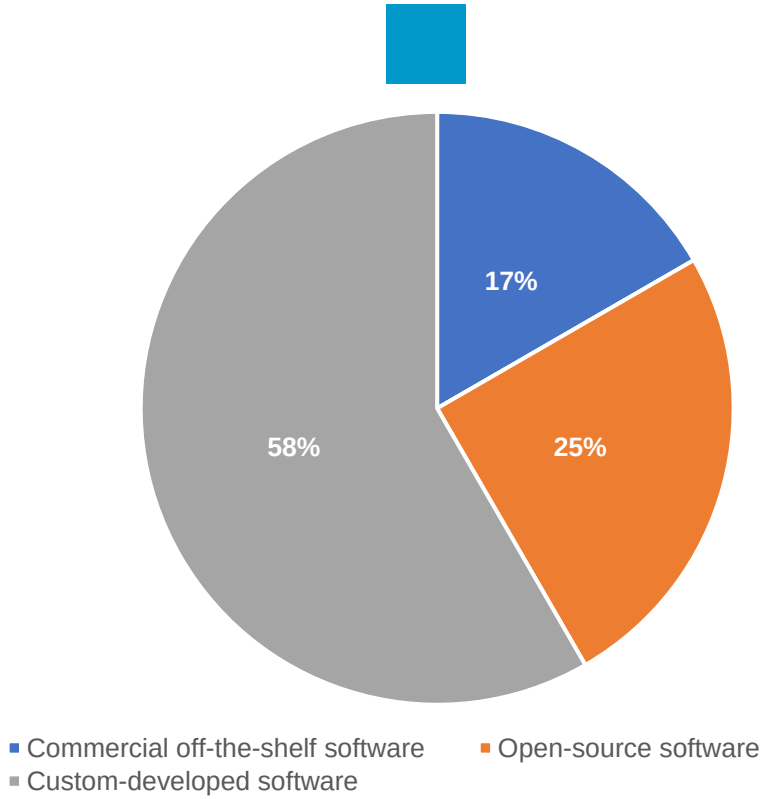
Q7. How long ago did the process of storing vital data in electronic records start?

- Eight countries reported more than 10 years.
- One country reported 5-10 years.
- One country reported less than 5 years.
- Two countries did not know how long ago the process started.

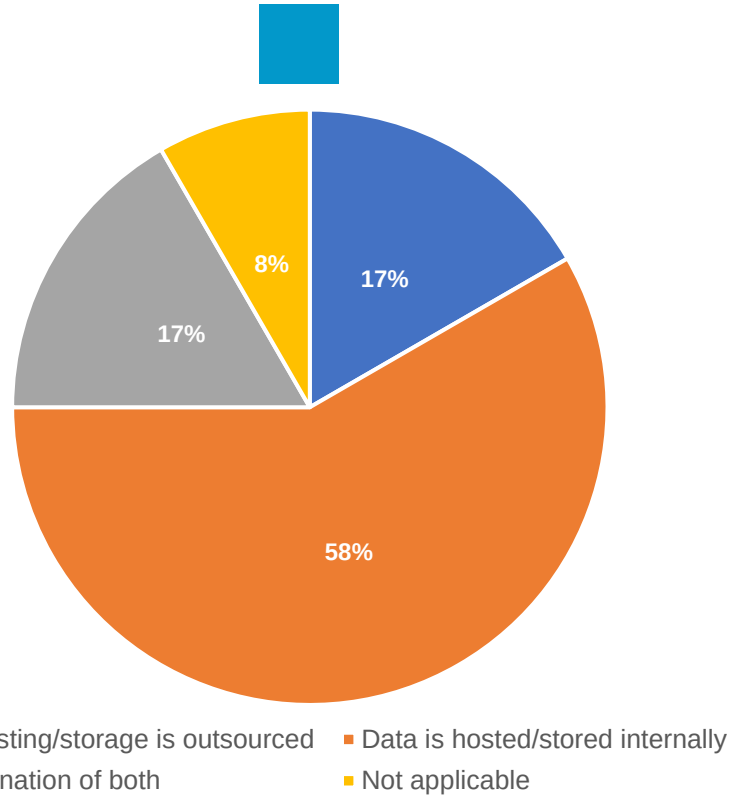


Systems and Data Storage

Q8. What kind of IT systems/software does the civil registration office in the country use?

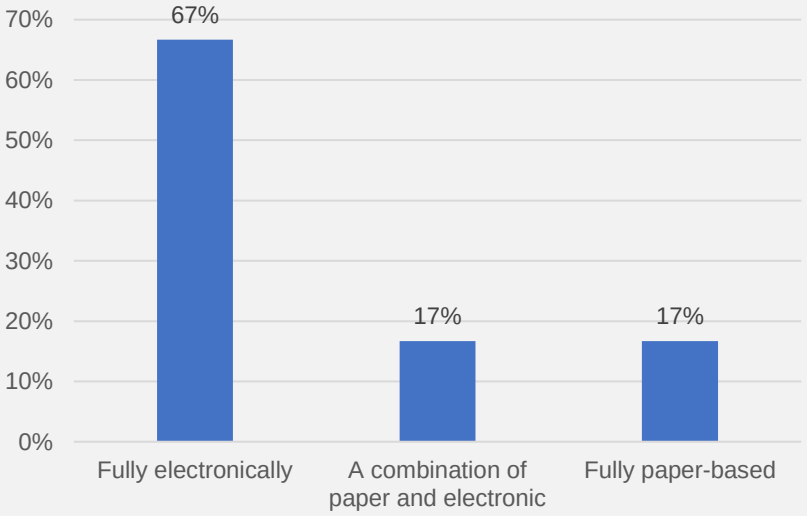


Q9. How is the data hosted/stored by the civil registration office in the country?

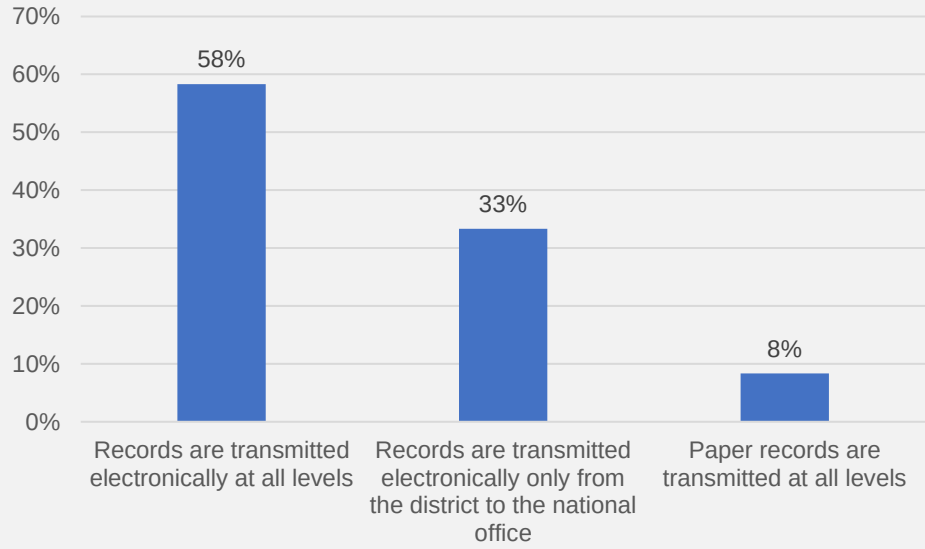


Digitization - Exchange of Civil Registration Records

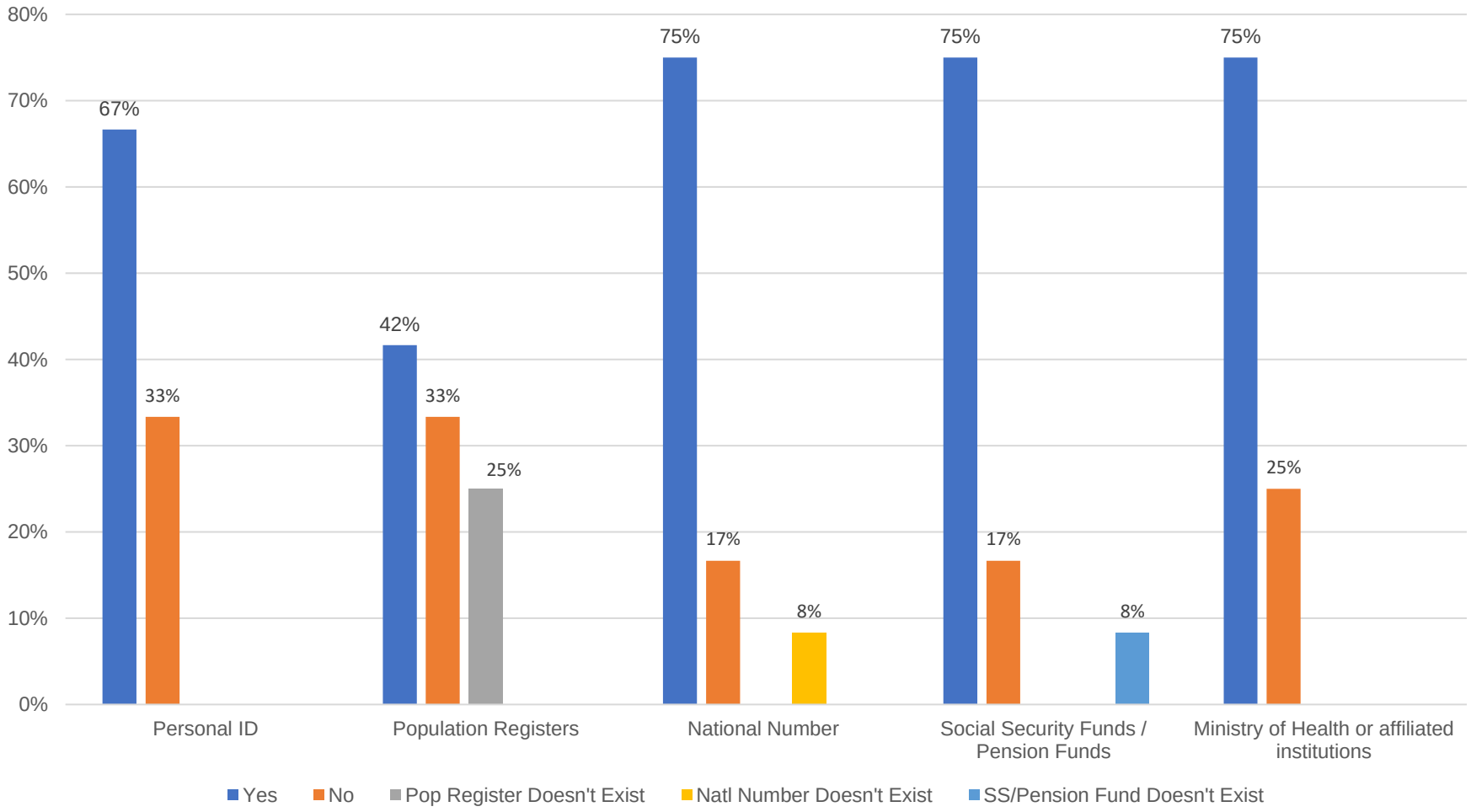
Q10. How is data exchanged between different government institutions involved in CRVS?



Q11. How are records transmitted from the civil registration offices at the local level to the district or national level?

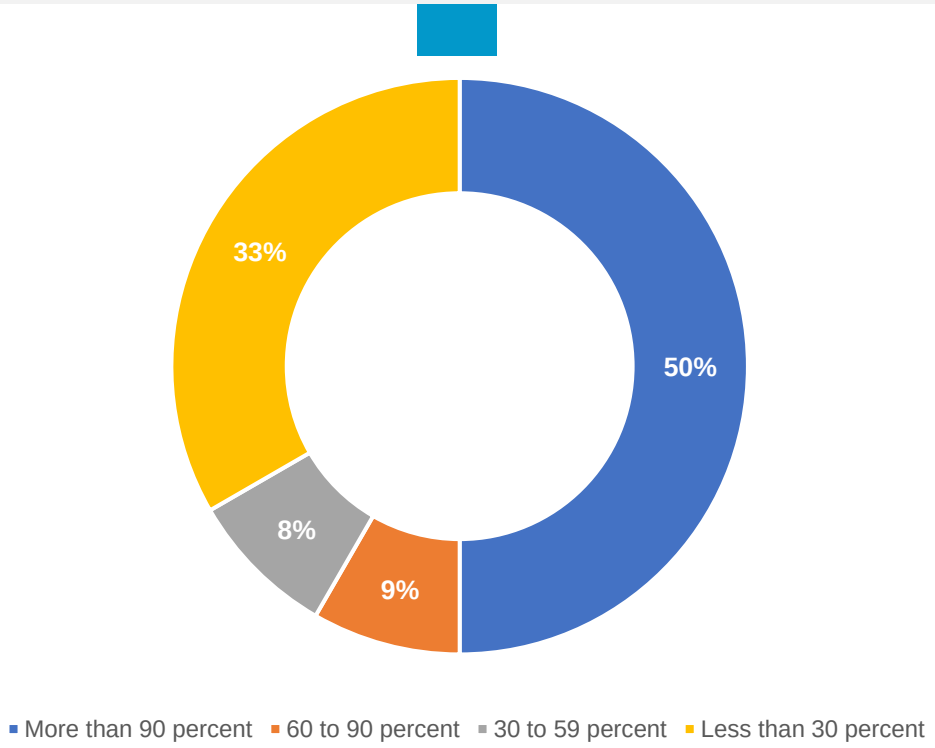


Q12. Can administrators of the following programs use civil status data directly (i.e., by electronic network)?

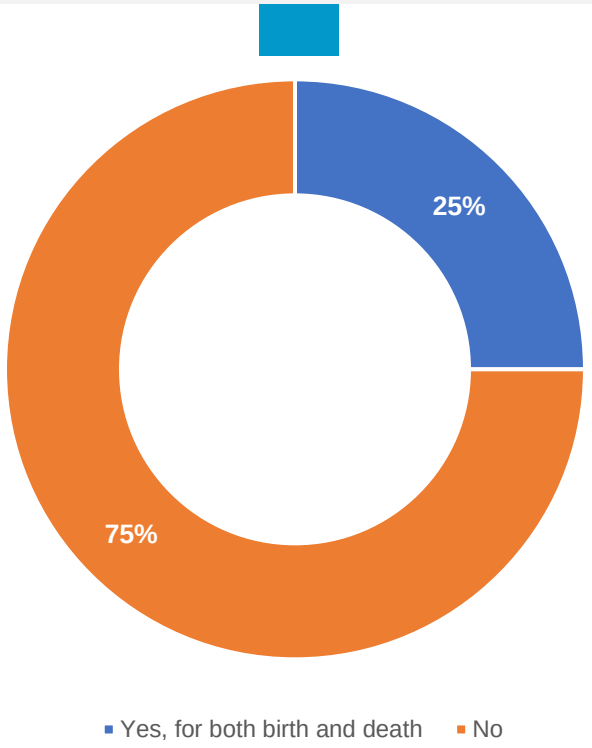


Digital Birth and Death Registration

Q13. What percentage of health facilities notify local registration offices electronically about the occurrence of birth and death?



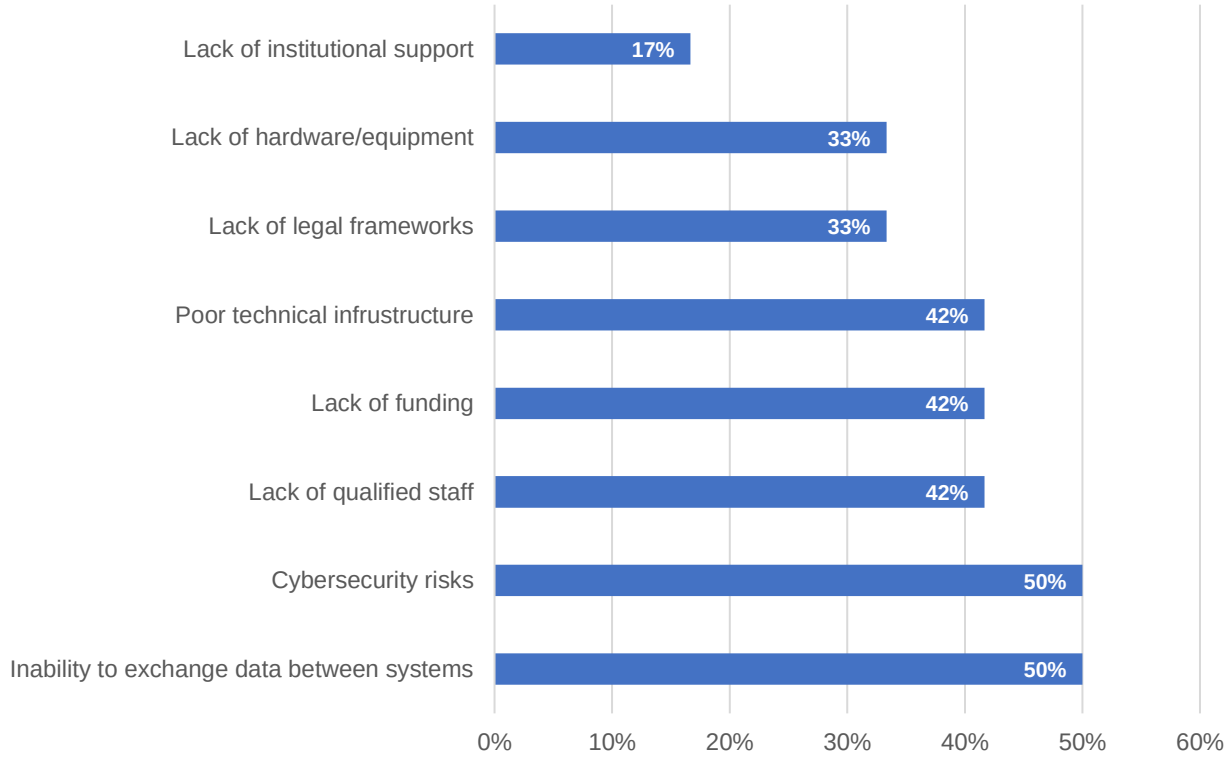
Q14. Is mobile technology used to notify about the occurrence of birth and death at the community level?



Challenges and Gaps

- 8 countries reported the government provides adequate funding required to maintain and update the CRVS IT system over its lifetime (Q15).
- 11 countries reported the CR office having dedicated staff responsible for the management of the IT system (Q16).
- 10 countries reported that challenges remain, with the most common being inability to exchange data and cybersecurity risks (Q17).

Q17. What are the main challenges in digitizing the civil registration system?

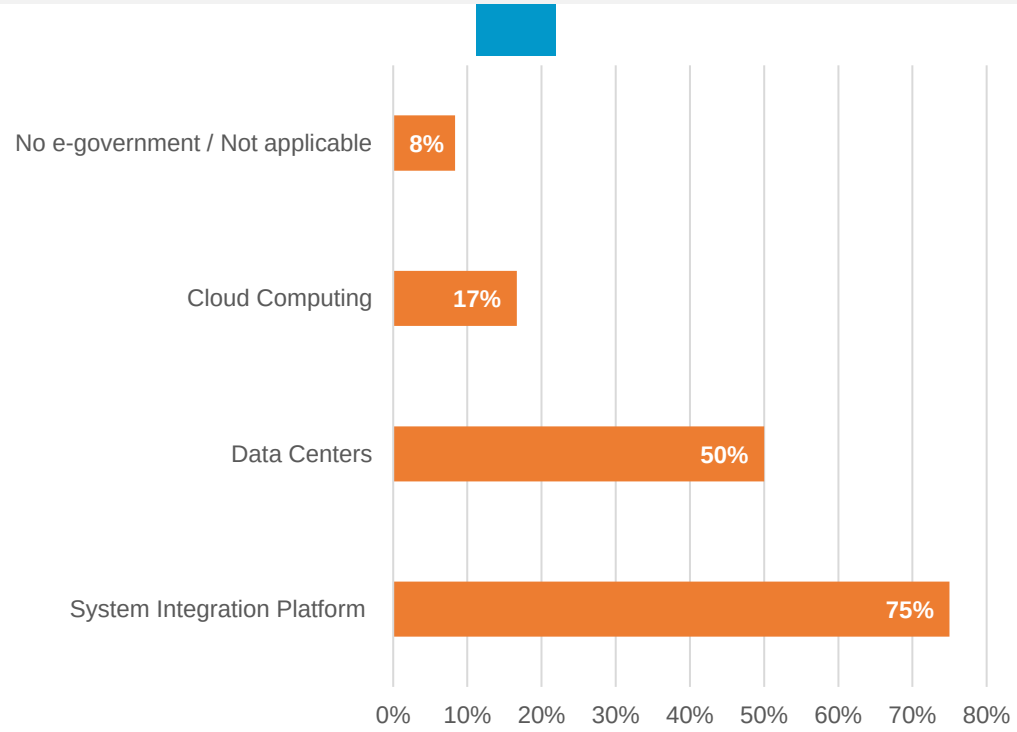


Opportunities and Future Directions

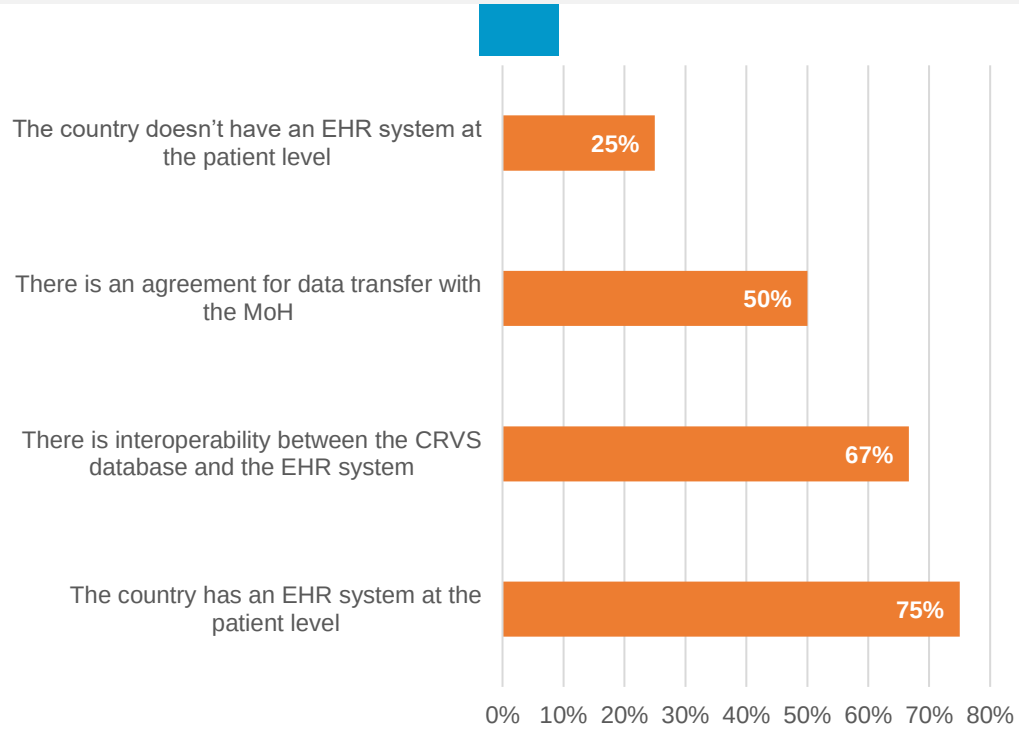
- 11 out of 12 countries reported the existence of legal identity (Q18).
- In two out of the 11 countries that affirmed legal identity, it does not included migrants, refugees, stateless or similar populations (Q19).
- In nine countries, legal identity is digitized and linked to the CRVS system (Q20-21). Civil registration and national IDs share a unique ID number in nine countries as well, and the majority are under the management of the same Ministry (Q22-23).

Technical Infrastructure and Systems Interoperability

Q24. What does the e-government technical infrastructure include?

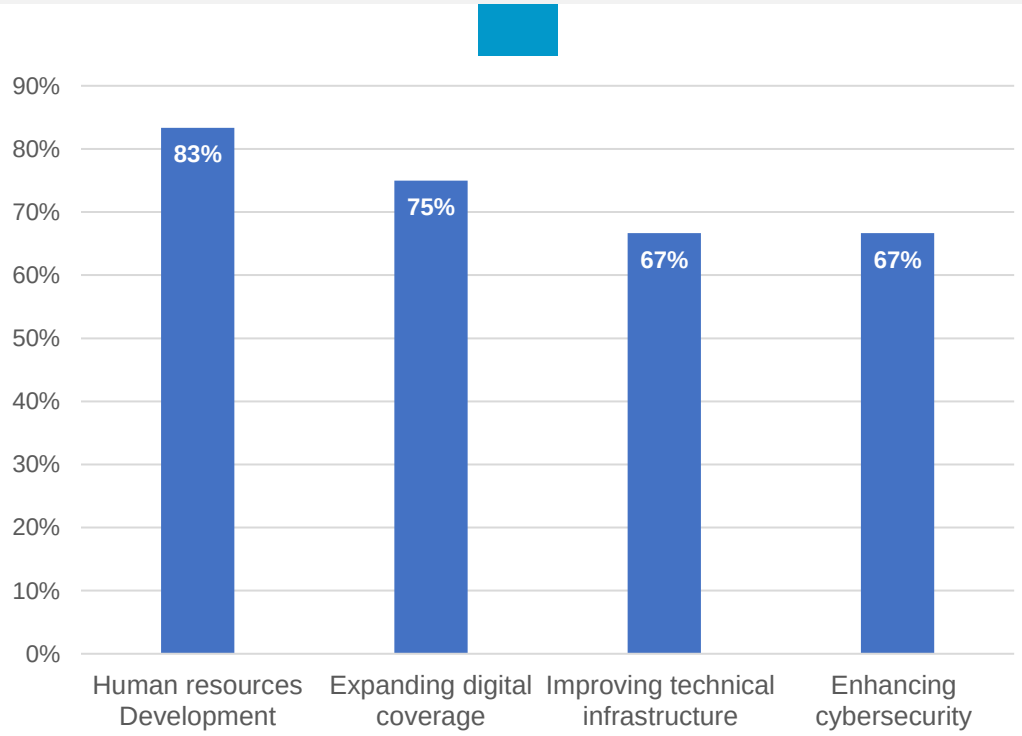


Q25. What is the technical possibility of exchanging information (interoperability) between the CRVS database and the individual (patient)-level electronic health record (EHR) system?

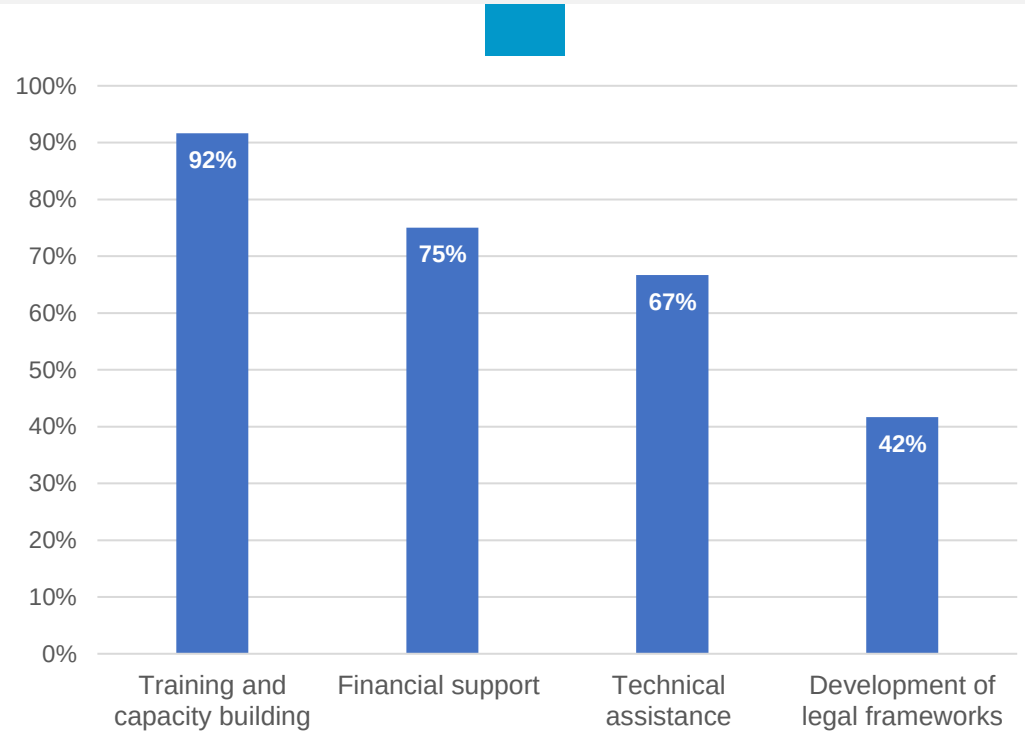


Priorities and Additional Support

Q26. What are your country's priorities to improve the digitization of civil registration system over the next five years?



Q28. What additional support would be most useful to promote digitization?

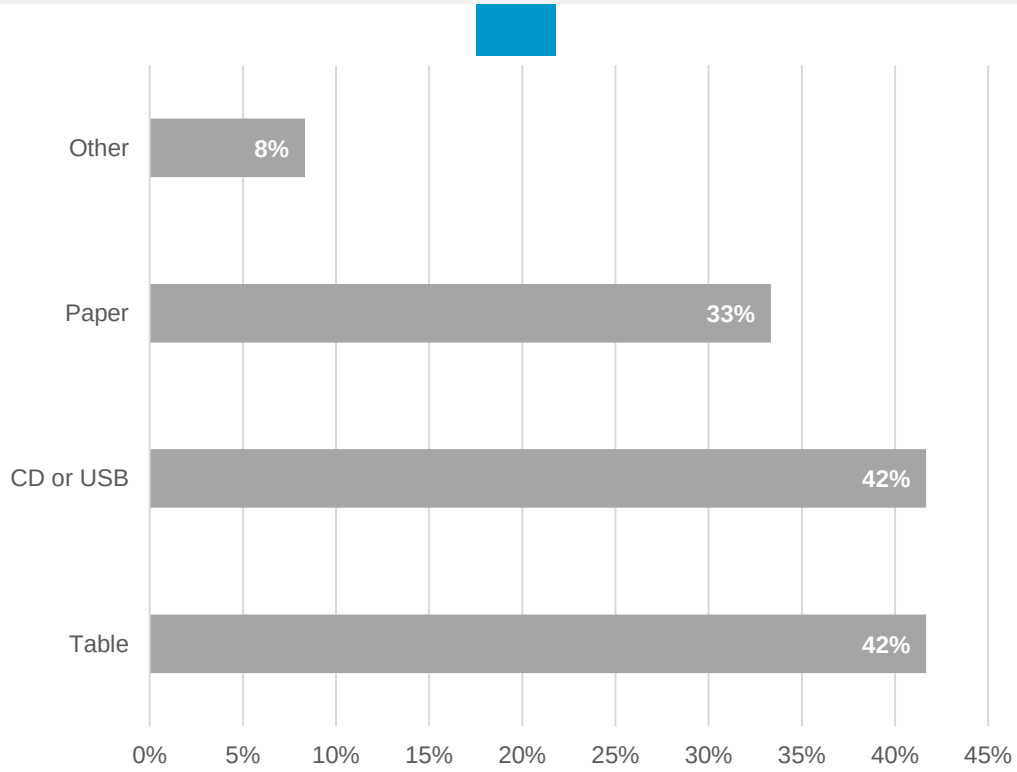


Demographic Indicators and Policy Formulation

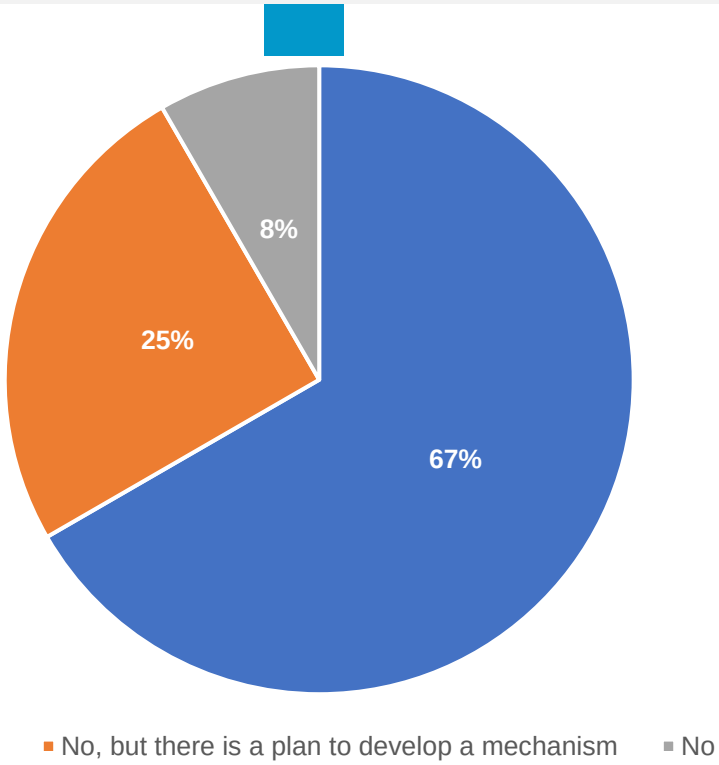
- 7 countries reported that civil registration records are transmitted electronically from the civil registration office to the agency responsible for compiling the relevant vital statistics (Q29).
- Of those, ~60% receive all the data electronically and then calculate the relevant demographic indicators, while the remainder use a combination of tables and electronically linked data (Q30).

Transferring data and ensuring validity and accuracy

Q31. What are the means of transferring CR data/information?



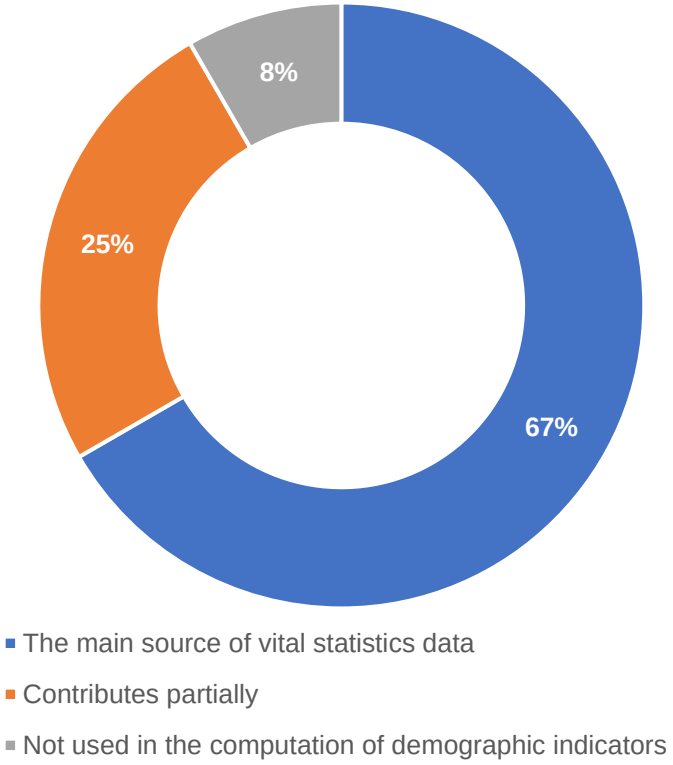
Q32. Is there a mechanism in place to ensure the validity and accuracy of CR data?



Demographic Indicators

- 8 countries reported that digitization contributes substantially to the computation of vital statistics (Q34).
- 9 countries reported that the vital statistics information is disseminated (Q35), with most countries doing so on an annual basis (Q36).

Q34. How does digitization contribute to the computation of demographic indicators in your country?



Conclusion and Recommendations

- Significant progress has been made in digitizing vital events, yet gaps remain. The survey revealed this is especially true at the local level where just under half of the countries reported either a mixture of electronic and paper record sharing or exclusively paper.
- Transitioning from traditional storage of vital records to electronic takes a long time (more than 10 years). Countries need to prepare themselves well in advance.
- Most countries reported their civil registration offices are using custom software and storage solutions. Care should be taken to make sure these systems are well documented and that the relevant skillsets are developed to maintain these systems.
- Inability to exchange data between systems and cyber security risks were the most reported challenges. Fully digitizing and upgrading existing systems could help alleviate these challenges.
- Respondents overwhelming reported capacity development and human resources development as a key priority in the coming years towards digitization efforts. Financial allocations and international cooperation and partnerships can help achieve these.

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Q & A

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Country insights

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Thank you