

# The role of Social Protection in the Contemporary World: Building universal social protection systems that contribute to equitable, inclusive and healthy societies

Towards Sustainable Societies - Health in All Policies and Social Determinants of Health  
Opening Panel: Towards Social Sustainability  
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## Introduction

- ▶ Recent crises have underscored the urgent need for **UNIVERSAL** and **ADAPTIVE** social protection
- ▶ As a precondition for developing in an inclusive and sustainable manner, social protection systems contribute to **greater health equity** through
  - ▶ Reduction in socio-economic inequalities
  - ▶ Greater individual and societal resilience to shocks
- ▶ **HOW** can countries build such systems?
  - ▶ One size does not fit all, but not everything goes
  - ▶ Using international social security and human rights standards as guidelines
  - ▶ Developing social protection systems alongside other social, health and economic policies

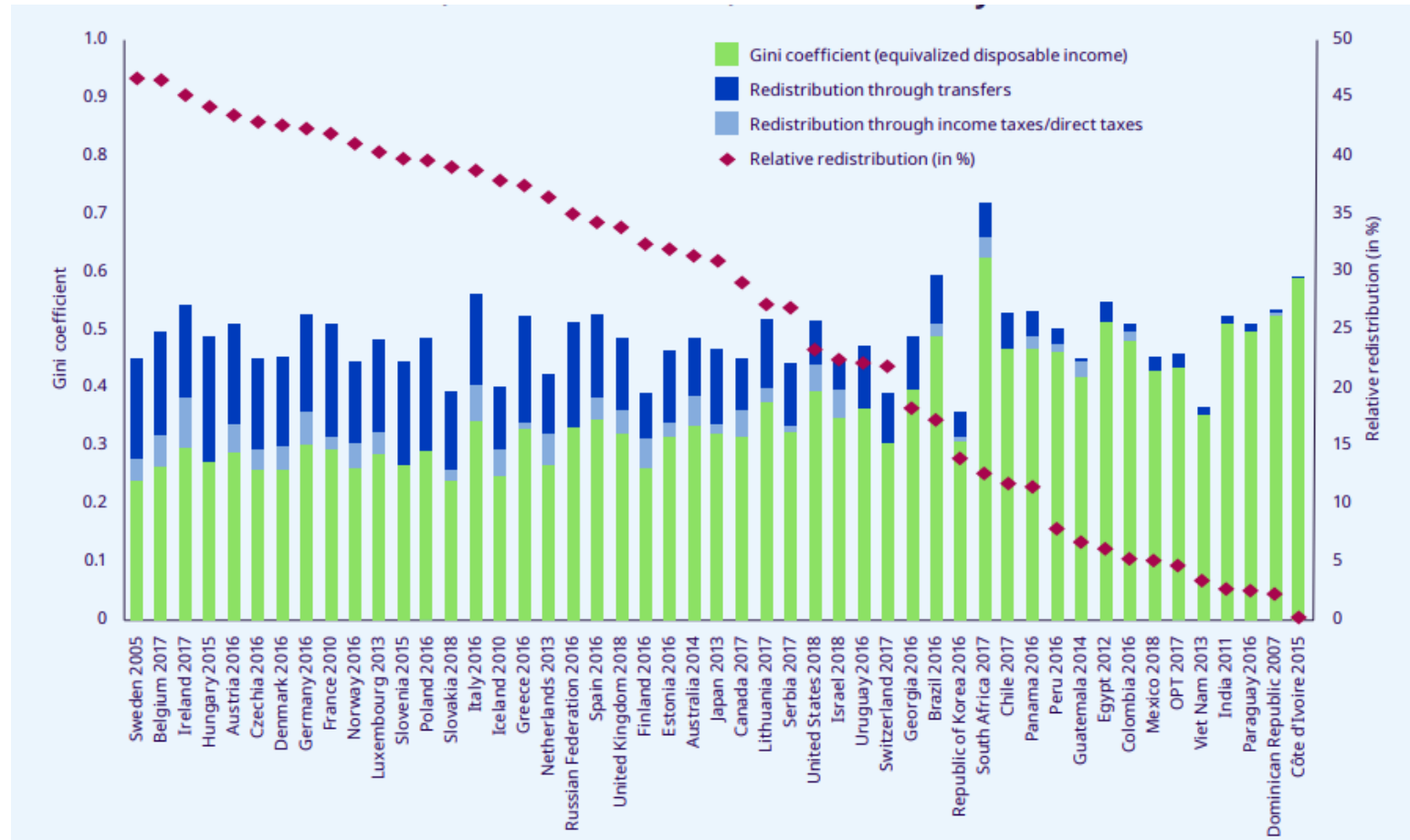


## Inequality reduction

At its core, social protection is a redistribution tool based on solidarity in financing.

Universal social protection systems contribute to social cohesion and are the “glue” that keeps holds societies together.

### Reduction of inequality (Gini coefficient) through social security transfers and taxes, selected countries, latest available year



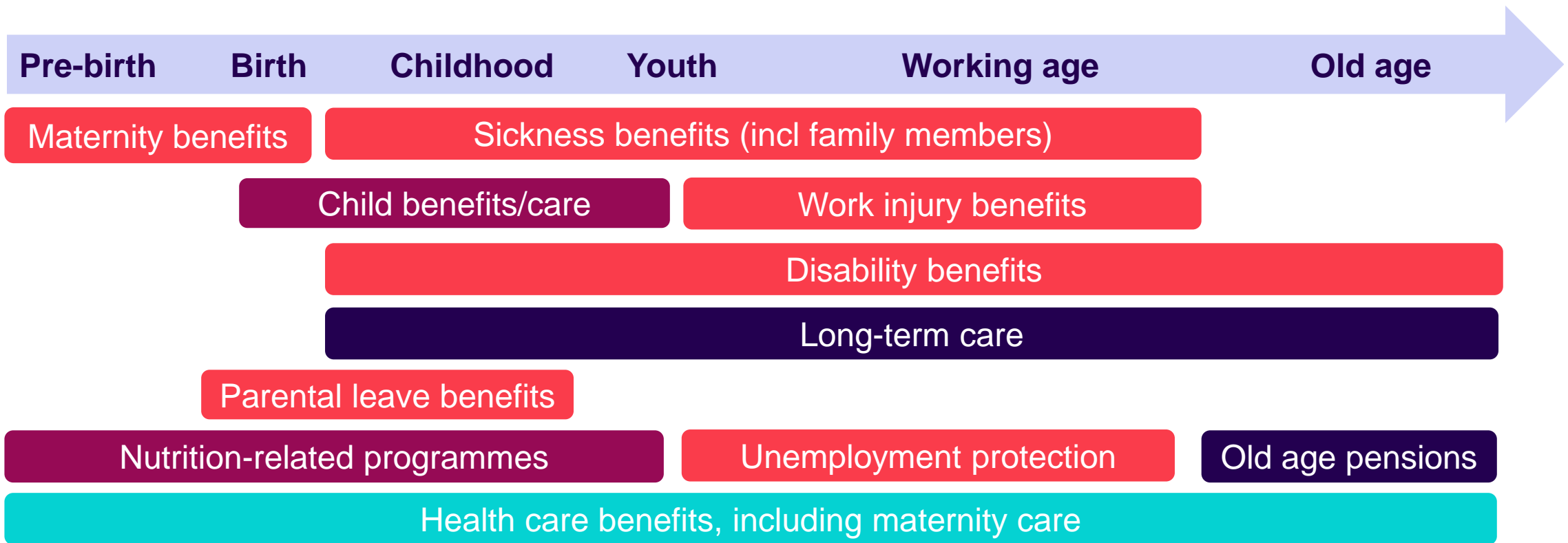
Source: World Social Protection Report 2020-22; ILO calculations based on Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) database (<http://www.lisdatacenter.org>), multiple countries, 2005–18. Link: <https://wspr.social-protection.org>

## ▶ Resilience to shocks

- ▶ A tool to build **long-term resilience** of individuals and societies alike
  - ▶ Access to healthcare without hardship
  - ▶ Income security throughout life contingencies (sickness, maternity, unemployment, etc.)
- ▶ A tool to **support crisis responses** and cushion the impact of:
  - ▶ Conflicts and economic instability
  - ▶ Climate-related impacts
  - ▶ Health security crisis

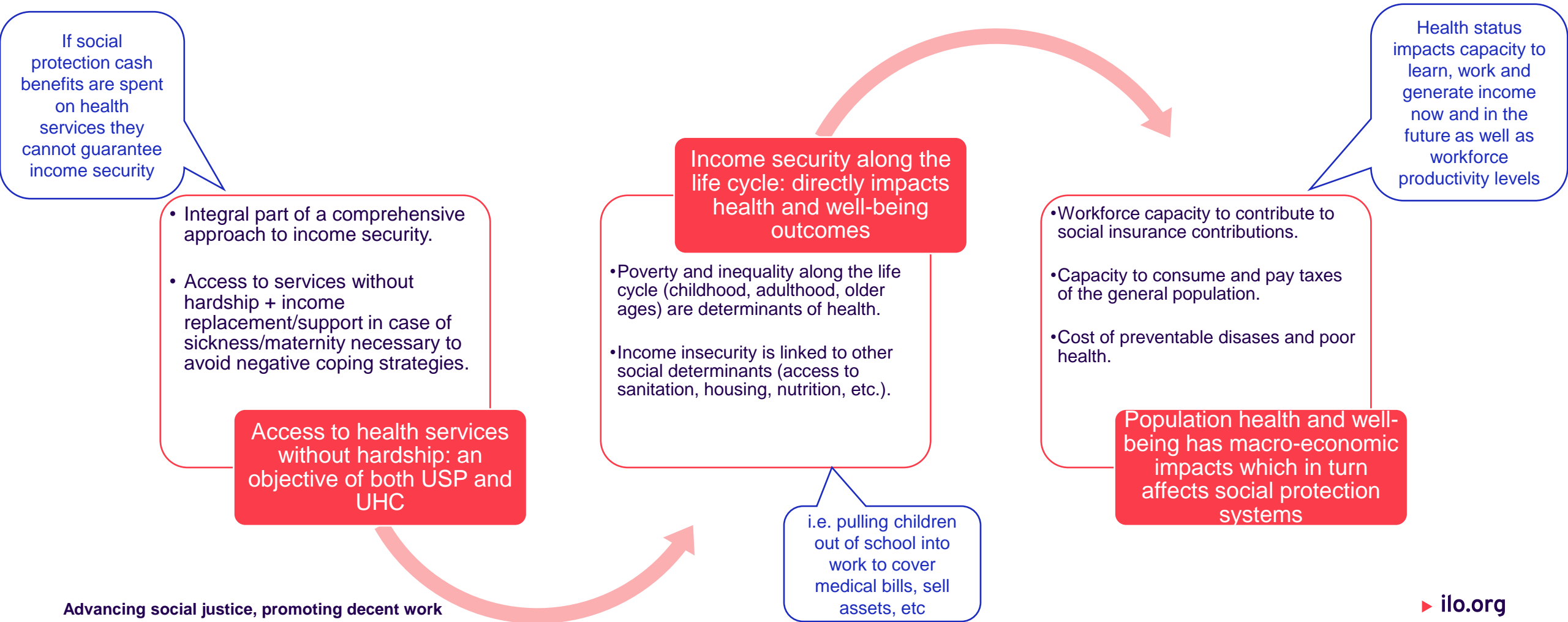


## Income security and the interconnection between SDG 1 and SDG 3 throughout the life cycle





## Social protection and health – mutually reinforcing policies



## ▶ Critical features of effective social protection systems

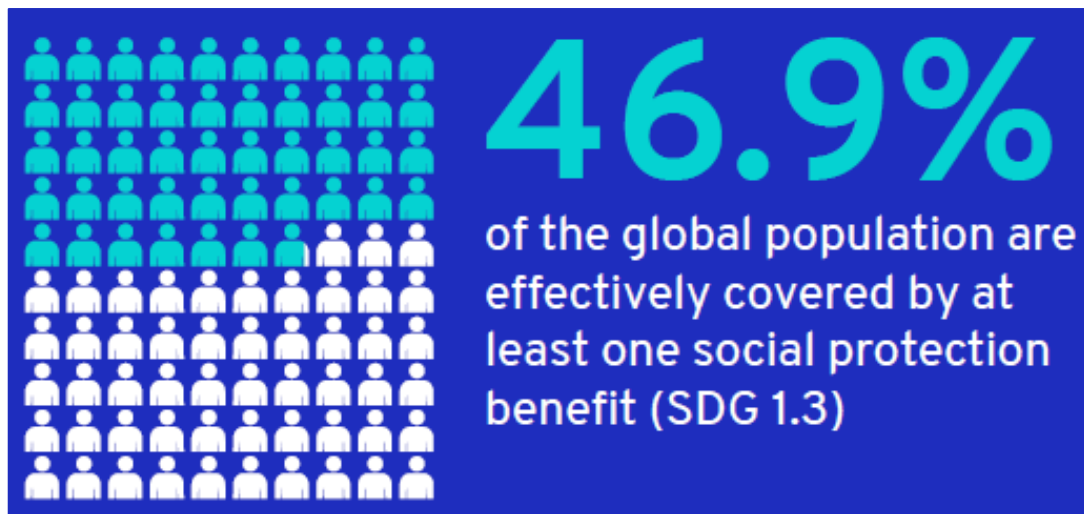
- ▶ Typically 9 branches of social protection to cover a comprehensive range of benefits across the life cycle
- ▶ Historically, most countries have focussed on certain branches first, meaning some branches are more developed
  - ▶ Typically health and pension
  - ▶ Those cash benefits that are most crucial to support people in active age and their health tend to be less developed – sickness, maternity, unemployment
- ▶ Effective social protection systems need to be adaptable to evolving contexts and demands
- ▶ Ensuring adequacy of benefits is important, as benefit levels often remain below the minimum standards of Convention 102



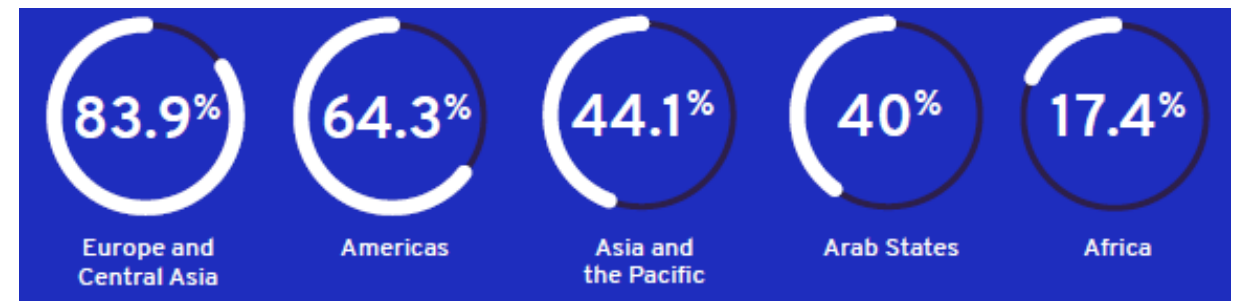
## The state of social protection: Progress made, but not enough

- ▶ Less than half of the global population (46.9%) are effectively covered by at least one cash benefit (SDG indicator 1.3.1); the large majority of the global population – more than 4 billion people – still lack any social protection
- ▶ We also see troubling inequalities across and within regions

Global effective coverage rates (excluding health and sickness)



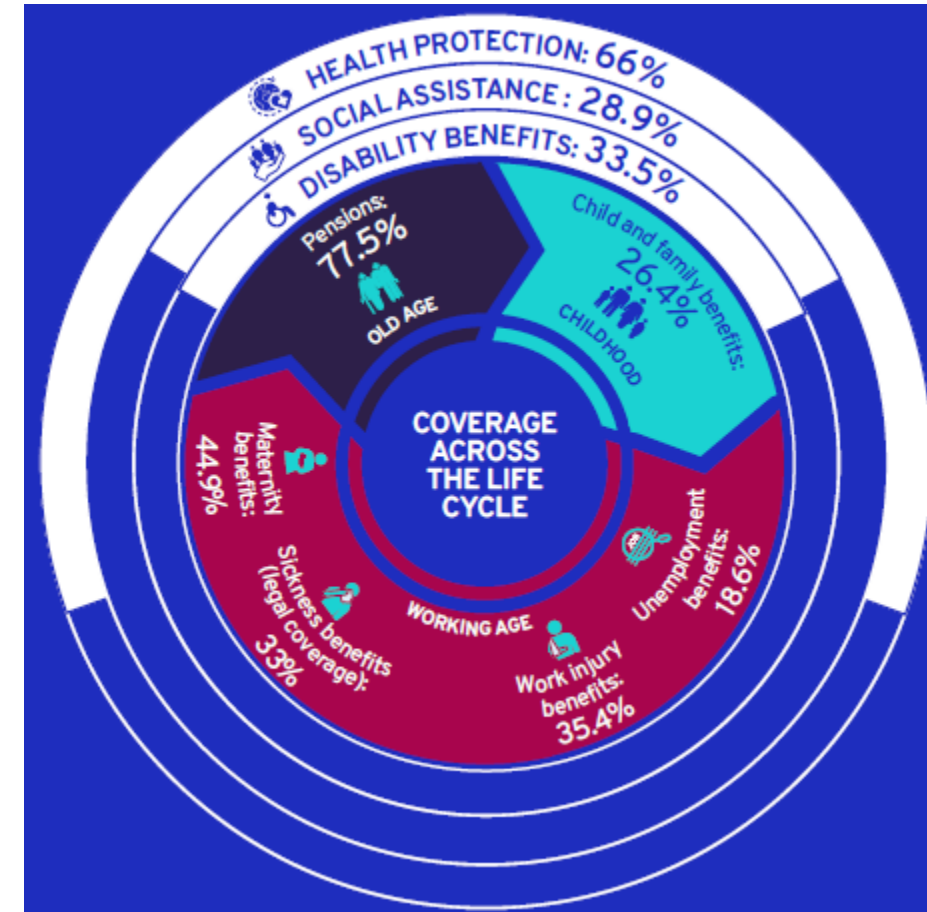
Population receiving at least one social protection benefit (SDG 1.3) by region





## Effective coverage across the lifecycle (SDG 1.3)

- ▶ The vast majority of **children** — **73.6% or 1.5 billion** — receive no social protection cash benefits.
- ▶ Only **44.9%** of **pregnant and childbearing women** receive a cash maternity benefit — **71 million uncovered**.
- ▶ Just **33%** of the working-age population is **legally entitled to sickness benefits**.
- ▶ Only **35.4%** have **employment injury protection** — **2.1 billion uncovered**.
- ▶ Fewer than **one-in-five** unemployed workers actually receive **unemployment cash benefits** — **179 million uncovered**.
- ▶ Just **33.5%** of people with severe disabilities receive a **disability cash benefit** — **150 million uncovered**.
- ▶ **77.5%** of persons above retirement age receive an old-age pension — **164 million uncovered**.
- ▶ Only **two-thirds** of the global population are protected by any kind of **health protection scheme** — **2.7 billion uncovered**



## ► Adequate, equitable and sustainable financing of social protection

- Widespread under-investment leads to low coverage rates
- Need to progressively increase fiscal space and develop a social protection floor
- Benefits should be financed sustainably with ‘due regard to social justice and equity’
- Spending on social protection is NOT a zero sum game
- Social security contributions play a crucial role in financing social protection systems, not to be replaced by general taxation
- Quick fire solutions and temporary safety nets are NOT optimal solutions

## ▶ Repairing the social contract and bringing the State back in

- ▶ Need to build State capacity and recover a sense of public purpose
- ▶ COVID-19 pandemic reshaped thinking about the role of the state
- ▶ How can states be held more accountable to their citizens?
- ▶ In the case of social protection, state capacity needs to go beyond the current focus on delivery systems
- ▶ This focus sidelines crucial questions about State capacity to build effective and well governed social systems and labour markets

Thank you  
[www.social-protection.org](http://www.social-protection.org)