

Situation of Young Children in Eastern and Southern Africa



Regional Meeting on Measurement of Early Childhood Development in Eastern and Southern Africa

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We know what young children need



What the child's brain and body need

**Enabling environment for nurturing care =
Policy, Services, Communities**



Are essential health services accessible?

75%

of children benefit from the traditional vaccine (DTP)

4 million

children have not received any vaccines (zero-dose children)

Half

of the children with symptoms of pneumonia received the care

Over 80%

of HIV-positive pregnant women receive effective treatment

Half

of all women received the recommended level of antenatal and postnatal care

Health outcomes

Four low-income countries from our region (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda) reduced under-five mortality by more than 75 percent since 1990, a remarkable achievement by any standard

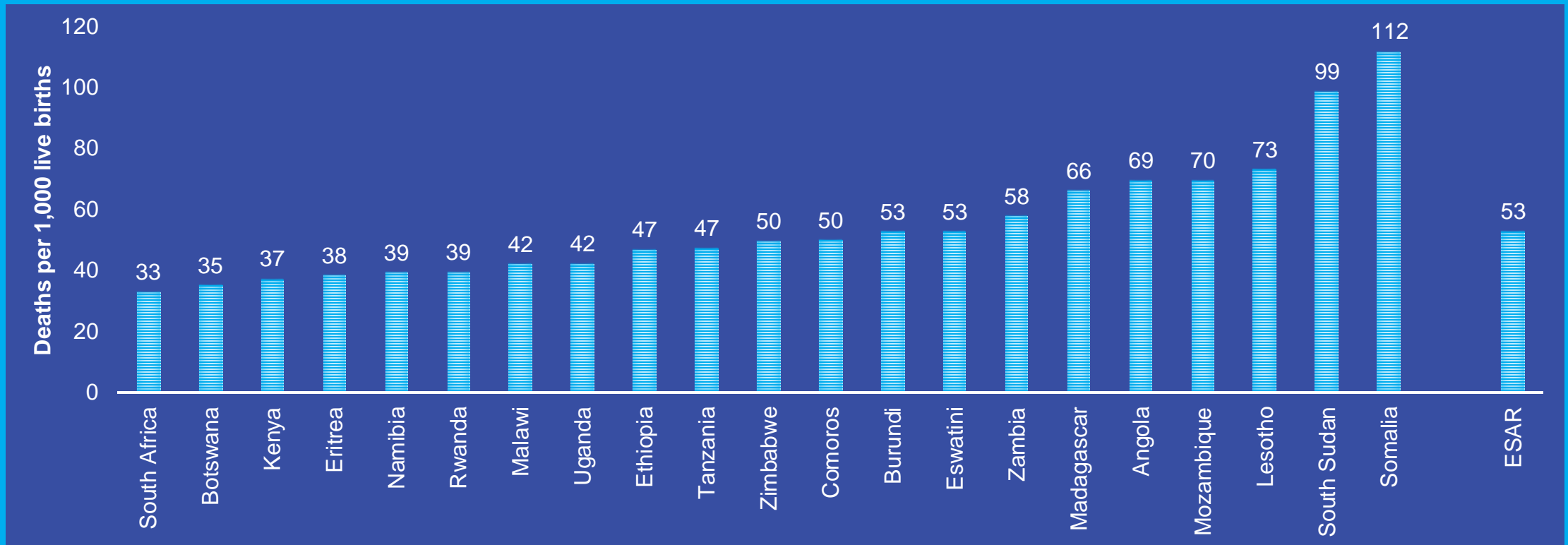
The region made tremendous progress in maternal and child survival over the past three decades.

- The under-five mortality rate has declined by nearly 70 percent
 - Maternal mortality has fallen by around 56 percent
 - Despite these achievements, the region accounted for 18 percent of all under-five deaths globally in 2021, with 926,000 children dying before reaching their fifth birthday
- Children living in fragile and conflict-affected situations are especially vulnerable



Child mortality by country

Number of deaths of children under 5 per 1,000 live births (mortality rate) in 2021



Source: United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME), 2023.

Is nutrition adequate?



Feeding practices



Solid start:

Two out of three children under age 2 are breastfed within the first hour of their life

More than half of all infants below the age of six months are exclusively breastfed

The issue starts later in life, for the poorest in particular:

Only around 1 in 5 children are receiving the dietary diversity needed to grow and develop to their full potential

Around half of all children under age 2 are fed with the minimum frequency required for development

Half of children are exclusively breastfed

Percentage of children aged 0 to 5 months who are fed exclusively with breastmilk in the 24 hours prior to the survey



Nutritional status of young children

The triple burden of malnutrition – stunting, wasting, and overweight – continues to jeopardize children’s ability to survive and thrive

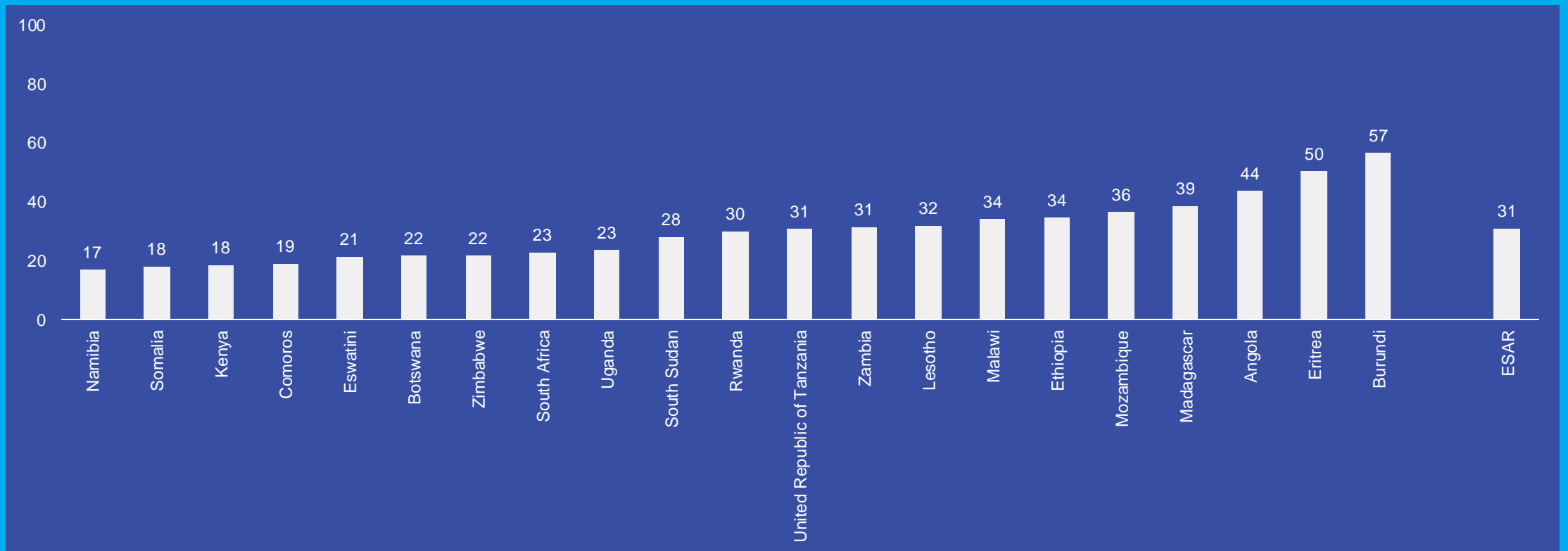
Stunting has the most devastating effects on child development

Despite some consistent yet slow progress, one in three children (or 26 million) have stunted growth, with significant variation among countries



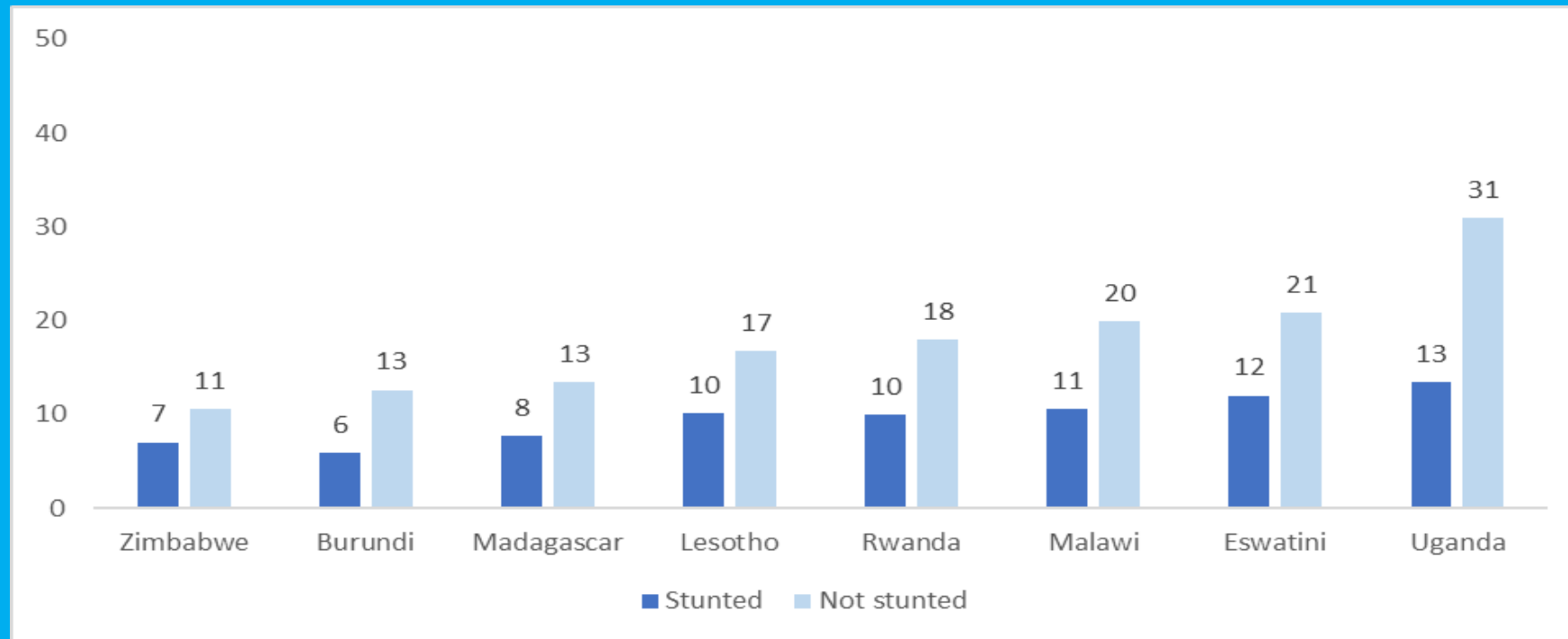
High prevalence of stunting in most of the countries

Percentage of children under 5 who are stunted



Stunted children are less likely to reach key literacy and numeracy milestones

Percentage of children aged 36 to 59 months who are developmentally on track in literacy-numeracy, by whether they are stunted



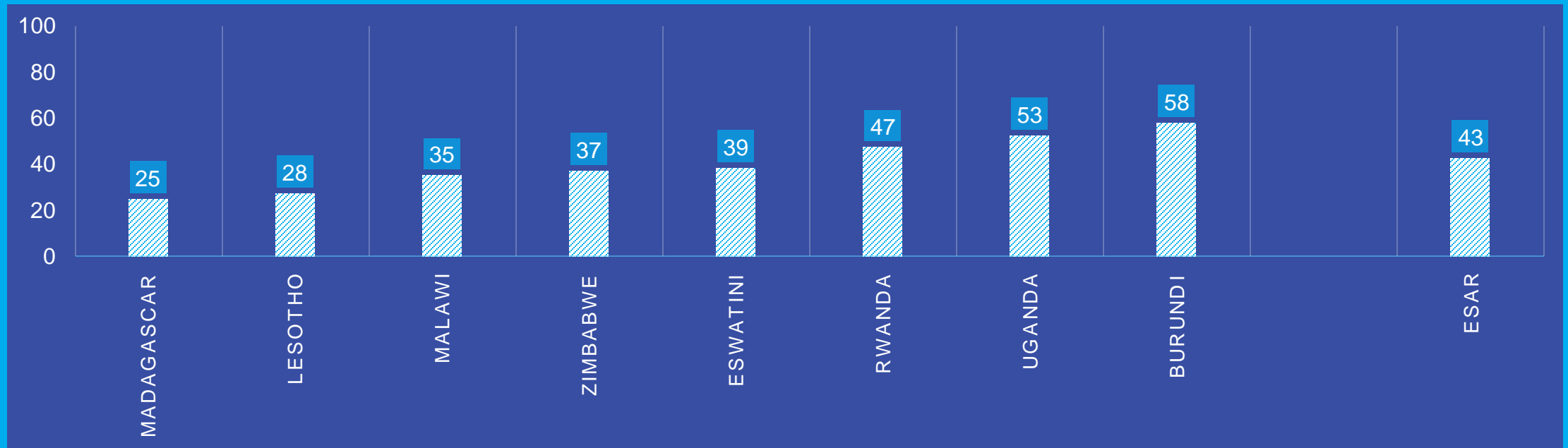
Responsive caregiving

Keeping children safe, healthy, and well nourished, paying attention and responding to their needs and interests, and **encouraging them to learn**, explore their environment, and interact with others



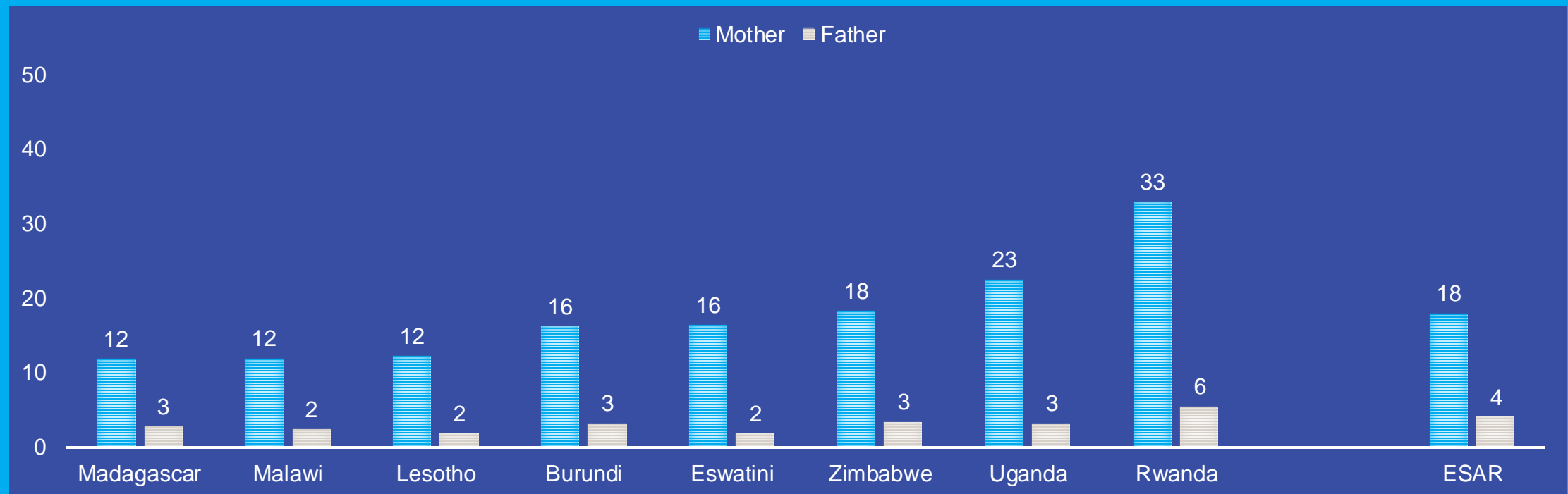
Four in ten children receive early stimulation and responsive care from adults in their household

Percentage of children aged 24 to 59 months with whom an adult has engaged in 4 or more activities to provide early stimulation and responsive care in the past 3 days



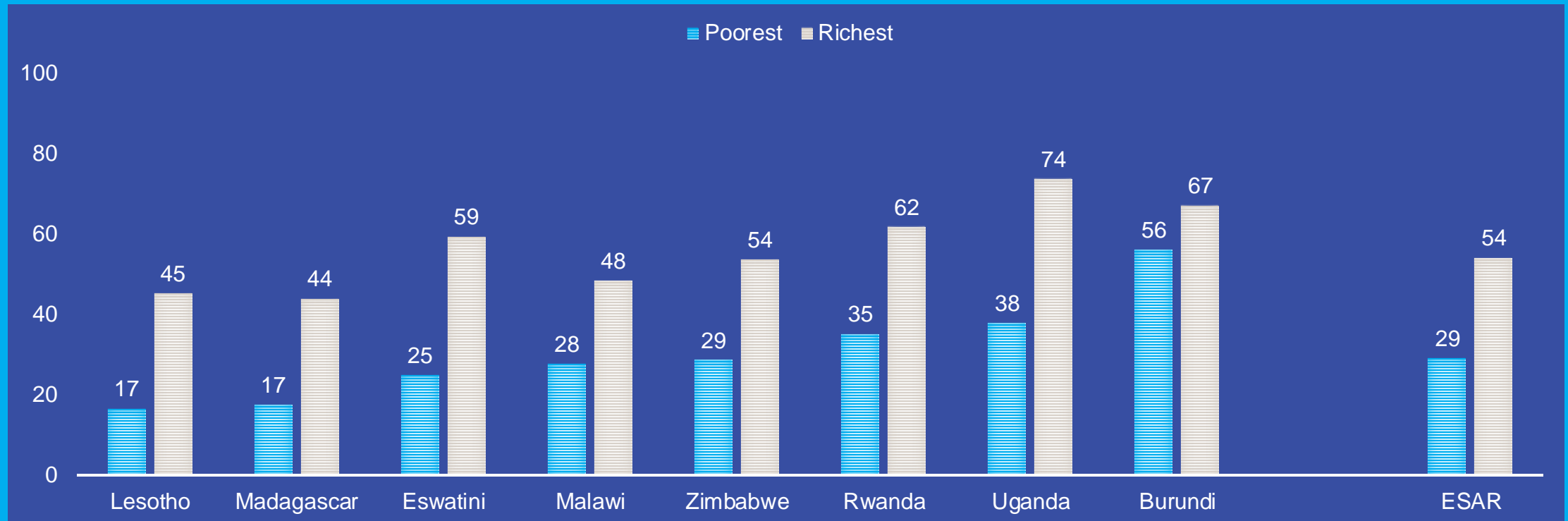
Mothers are more engaged in early stimulation than fathers

Percentage of children aged 24 to 59 months with whom mothers and fathers have engaged in 4 or more activities to provide early stimulation and responsive care in the past 3 days



Children in the poorest households are nearly two times less likely to receive early stimulation

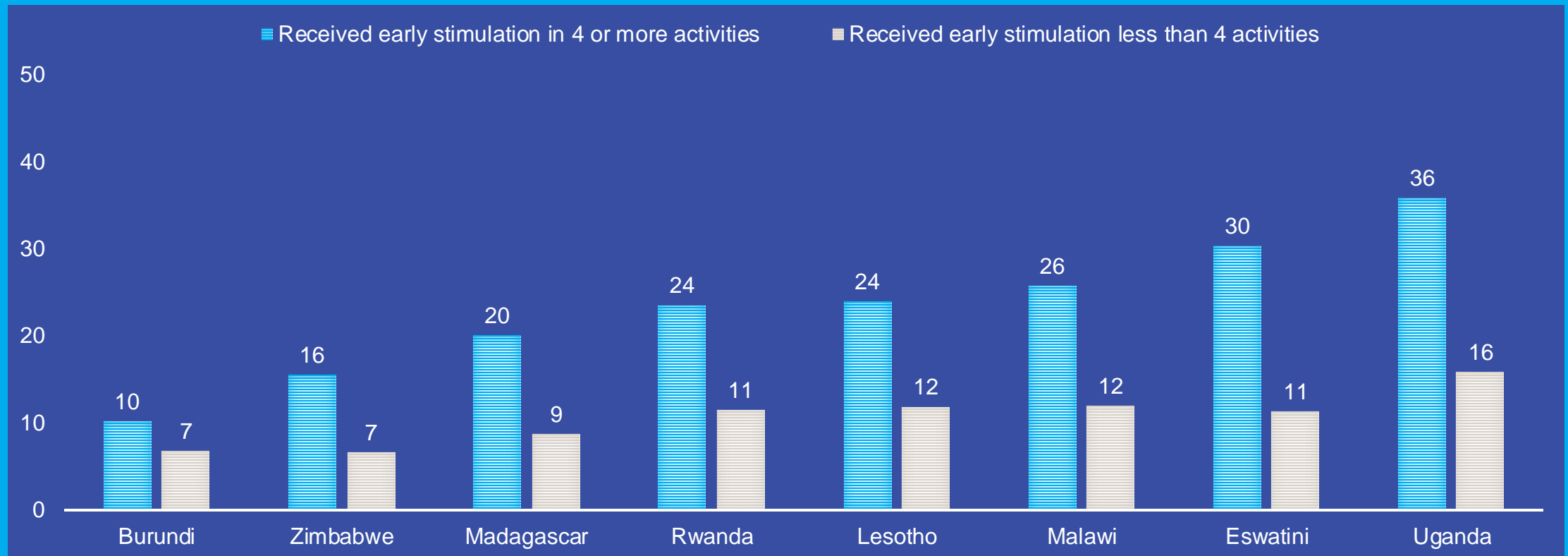
Percentage of children aged 24 to 59 months with whom mothers and fathers have engaged in 4 or more activities to provide early stimulation and responsive care in the past 3 days, by household wealth



Source: UNICEF global databases, 2023, based on DHS and MICS.

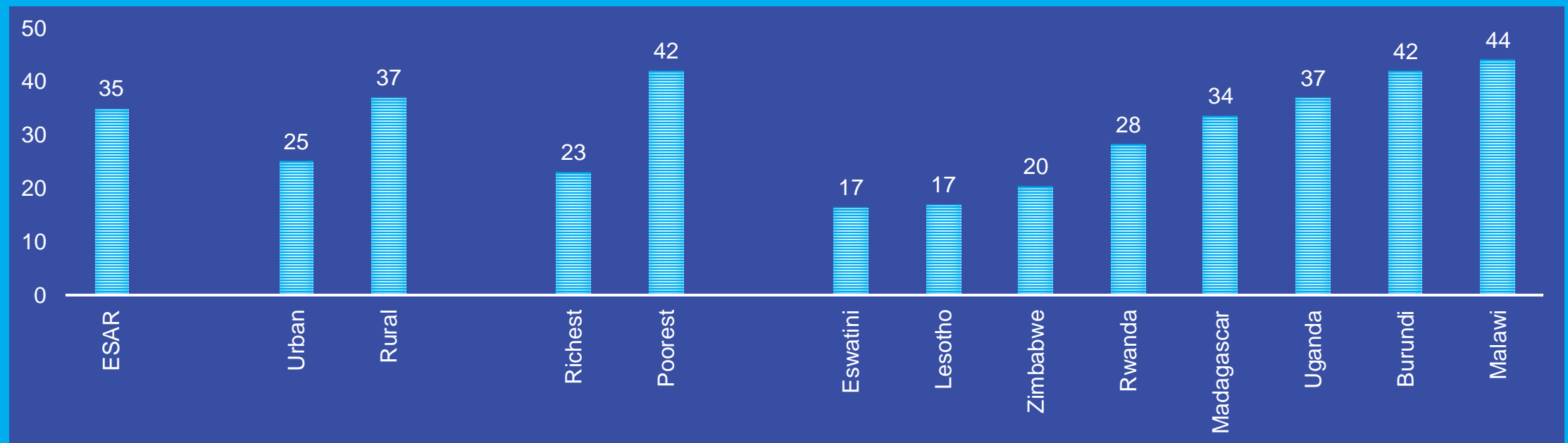
Early stimulation at home benefits early literacy-numeracy development

Percentage of children aged 36-59 months developmentally on track in literacy-numeracy, by whether they have been engaged in four or more activities by any adult household member to provide early stimulation and responsive care in the past 3 days



One in three children experience inadequate supervision

Percentage of children under 5 left alone or in the care of another child under 10 years for more than an hour at least once in the past week, by household wealth, place of residence, and country



Responsive caregiving: stimulative home environment



2%

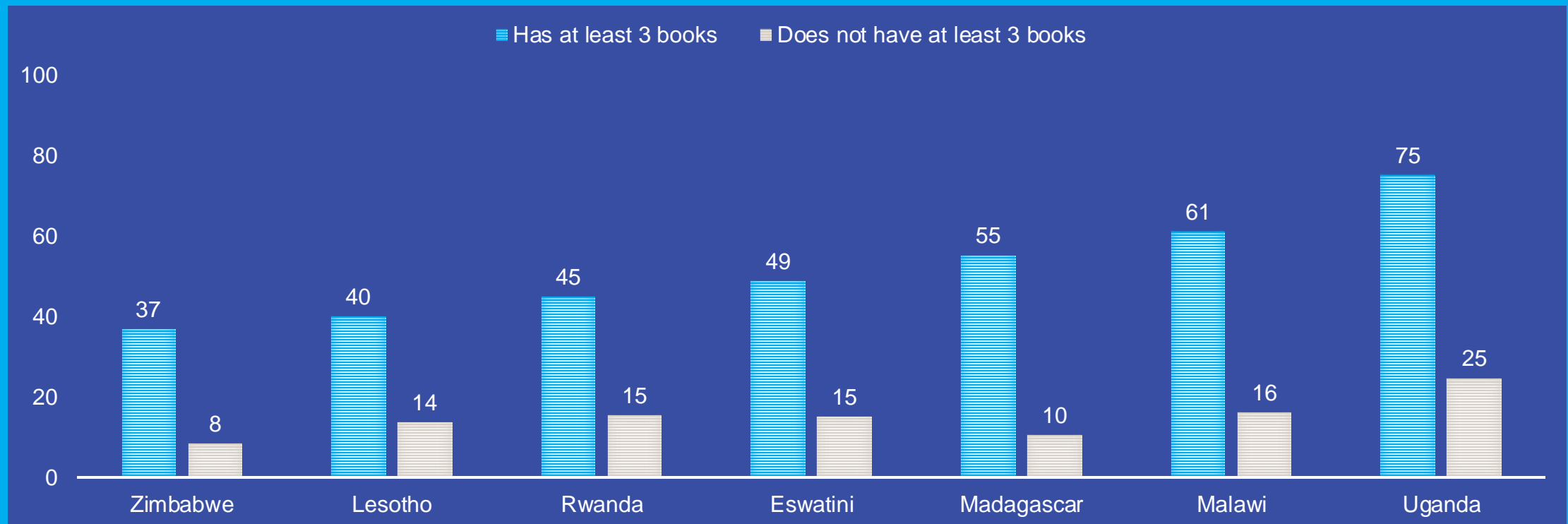
of children have books at home

Half

of children in the region have
two or more playthings at home

Children with access to books at home are more likely to reach literacy-numeracy milestones

Percentage of children aged 36-59 months developmentally on track in literacy-numeracy, by whether they have three or more children's books at home



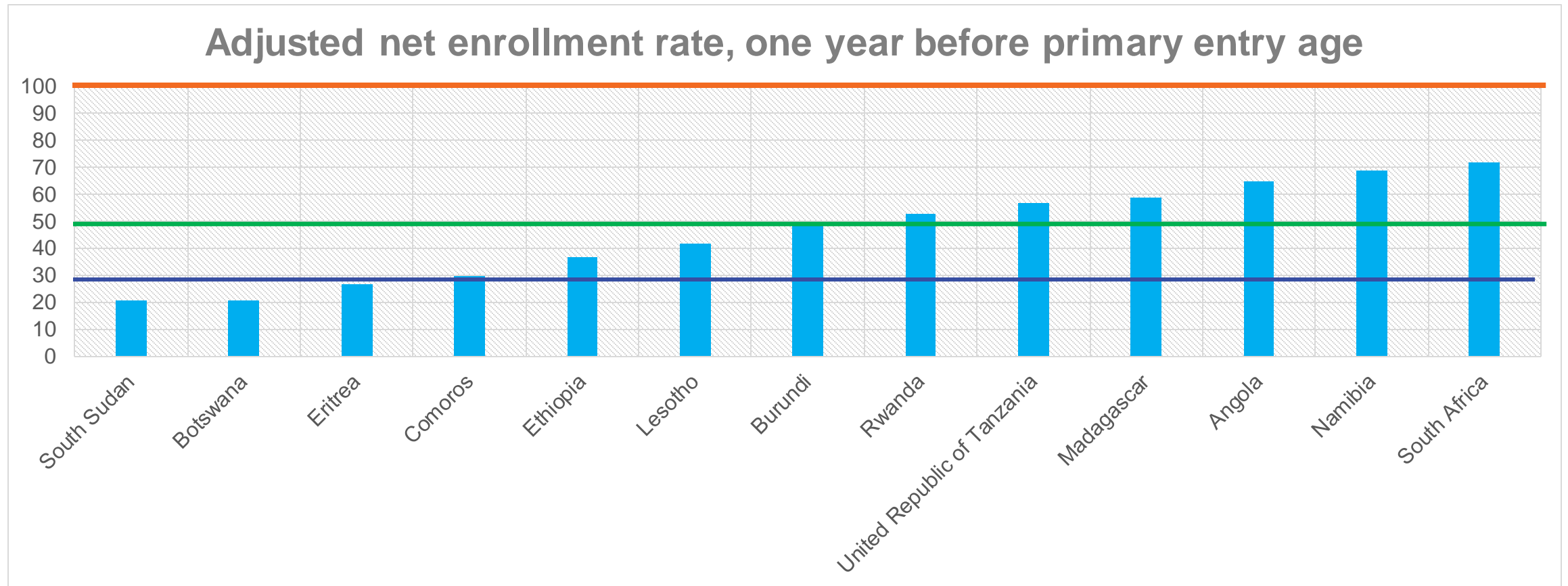
Early learning opportunities



Learning crisis is rooted in the failure to invest in high quality Early Childhood Education

The most vulnerable children are the least likely to enroll or attend

Access to Early Childhood Education is still low...



SDG Target by 2030: 100%

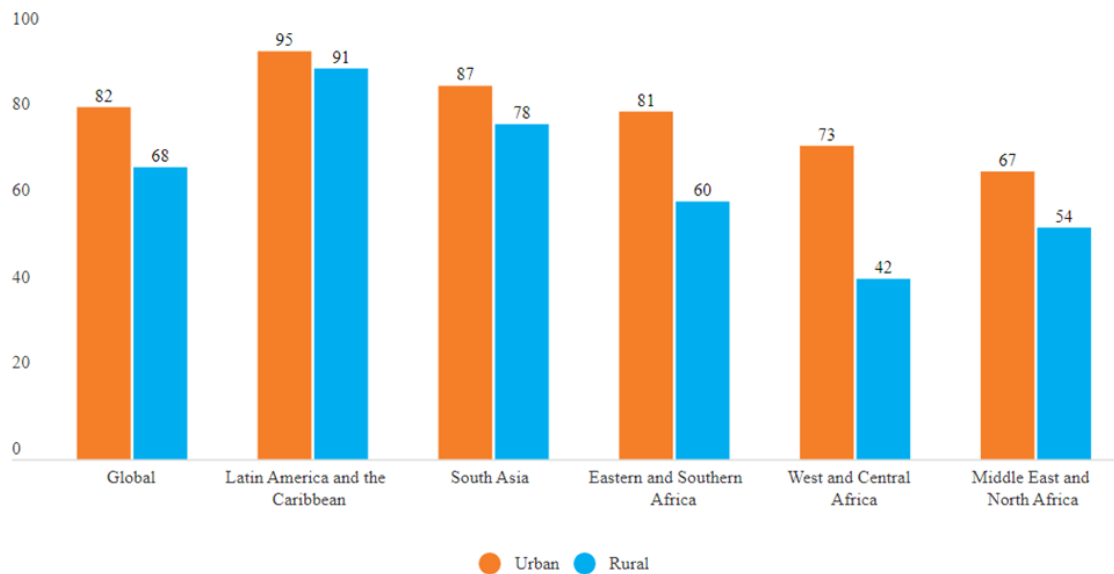
UNICEF Target by 2024: 50%

Current ESAR Average: 30%

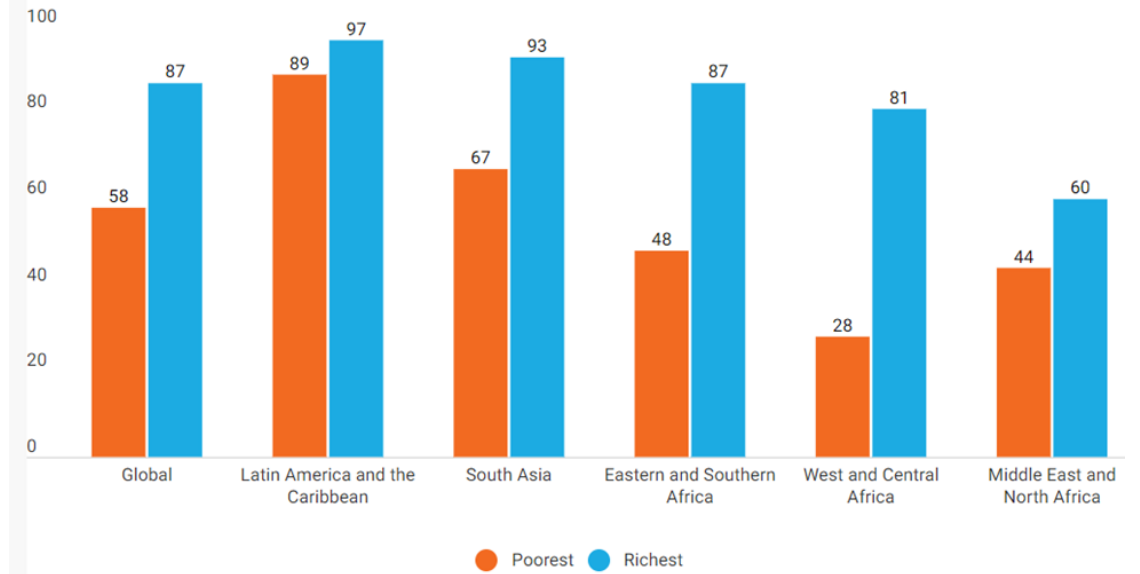
Source: Global Monitoring Report & UIS: 2019-2022

... marked with significant disparities by place of residence and wealth

Adjusted net attendance rate, one year before primary entry age, by region and location, 2021



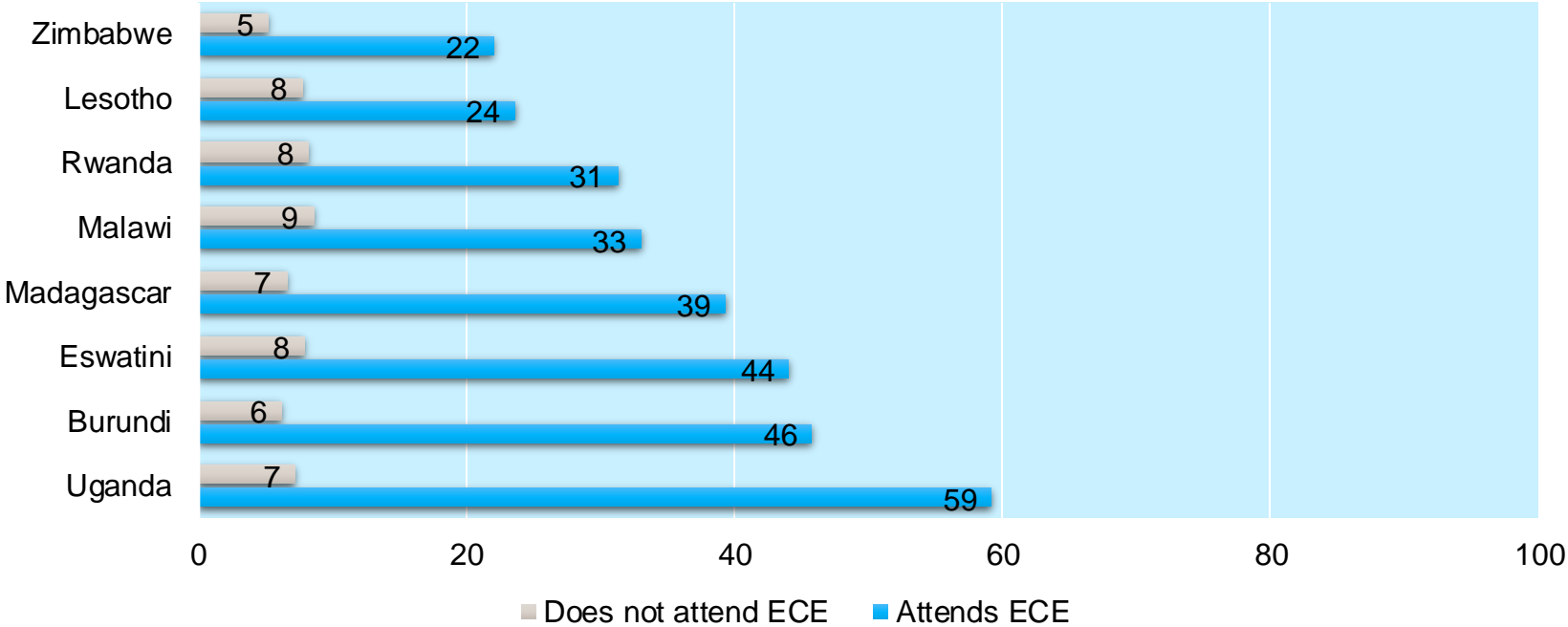
Adjusted net attendance rate, one year before primary entry age, by region and wealth quintile, 2021



Source: UNICEF global databases based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys, and other national household surveys, 2021.

Children who attend ECE programs are more likely to be on track in literacy and numeracy skills

Percentage of children aged 36 to 59 months developmentally on track in literacy-numeracy, by attendance to ECE



Source: UNICEF analyses, 2023, based on DHS and MICS, 2014-2020.

Safety and Security



Birth registration

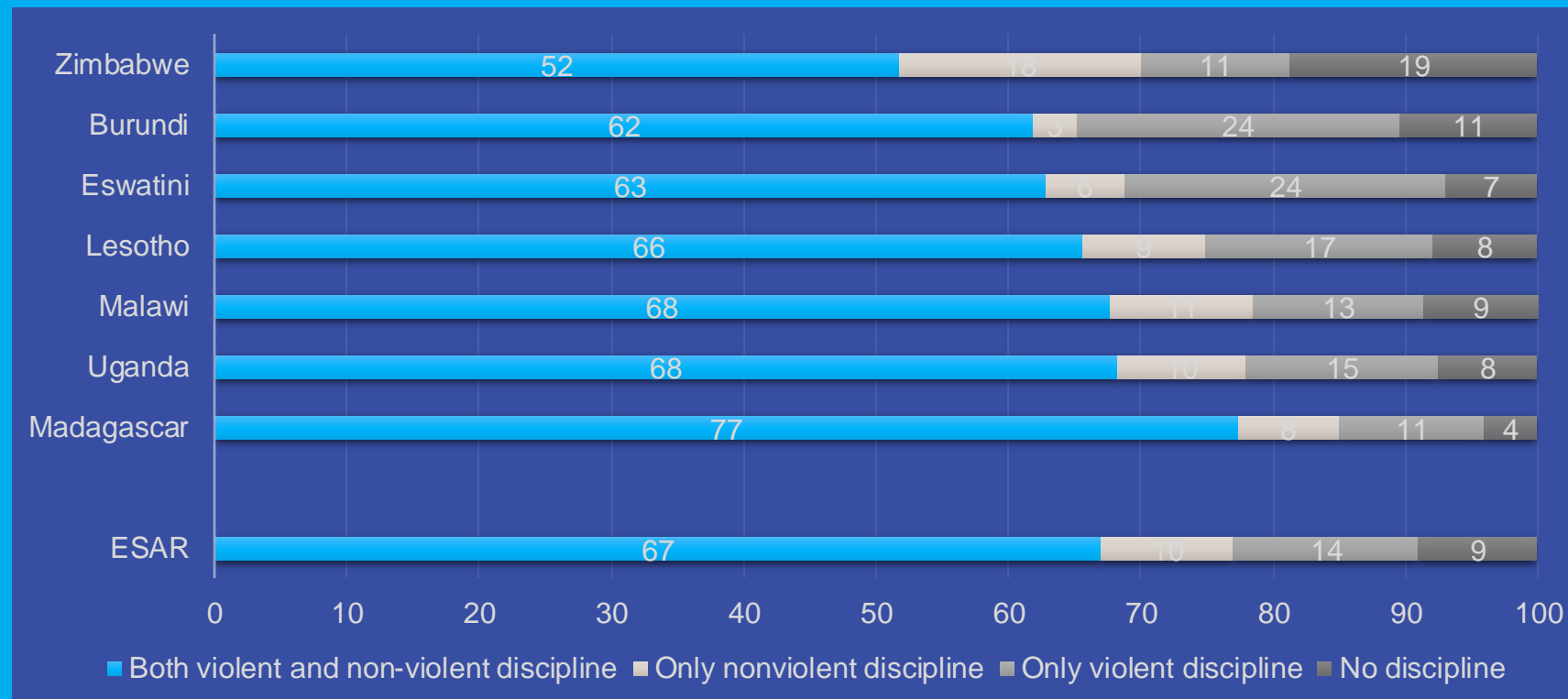
The region is home to 66 million children under 5 without a birth certificate:

50 million unregistered children

16 million were reported as registered but lacked proof in the form of a birth certificate

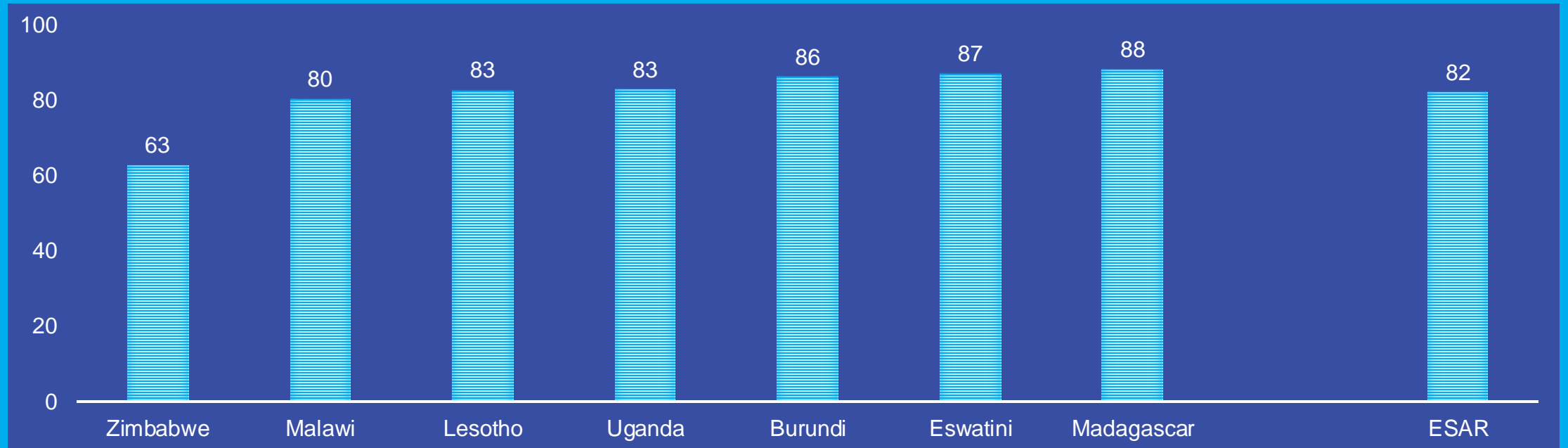
Most children in the region experience both violent and non-violent discipline

Percentage distribution of children aged 1 to 4 years, by type of discipline experienced in the past month



Four in five children in the region experience violent discipline

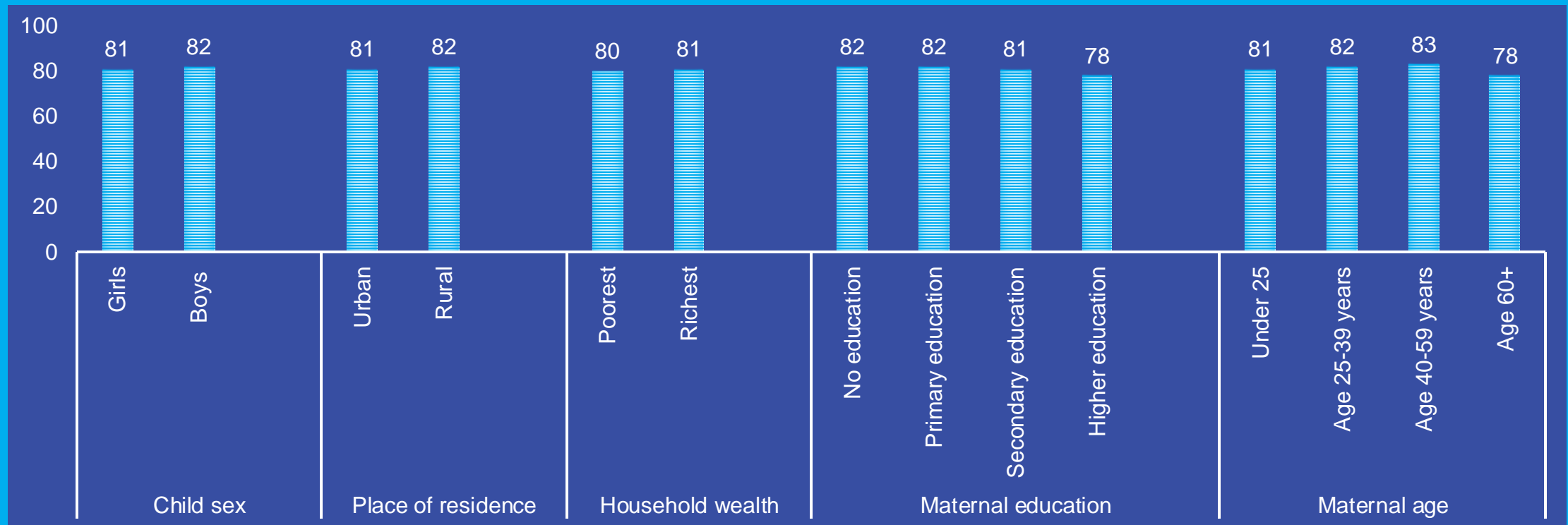
Percentage of children aged 1 to 4 years who experienced any violent discipline (psychological aggression and/or physical punishment) in the past month



Source: UNICEF global databases, 2023, based on DHS and MICS, 2014-2020.

Young children are likely to experience violent discipline regardless of their background

Percentage of children aged 1 to 4 years who experienced any violent discipline (psychological aggression and/or physical punishment) in the past month, by sex, place of residence, household wealth, maternal education and maternal age



Every country in the region is either at extremely high, medium-high, or high risk for climate shocks

Country	Value	Category
Angola	8	Extremely High
Botswana	5	Medium-High
Burundi	6	High
Comoros		no data
Eritrea	7	Extremely High
Eswatini	5	Medium-High
Ethiopia	8	Extremely High
Kenya	6	High
Lesotho	5	Medium-High
Madagascar	8	Extremely High
Malawi	7	High
Mozambique	8	Extremely High
Namibia	5	Medium-High
Rwanda	6	High
Somalia	8	Extremely High
South Africa	5	Medium-High
South Sudan	8	Extremely High
Uganda	7	High
United Republic of Tanzania	7	High
Zambia	7	High
Zimbabwe	6	High



Developmental outcomes



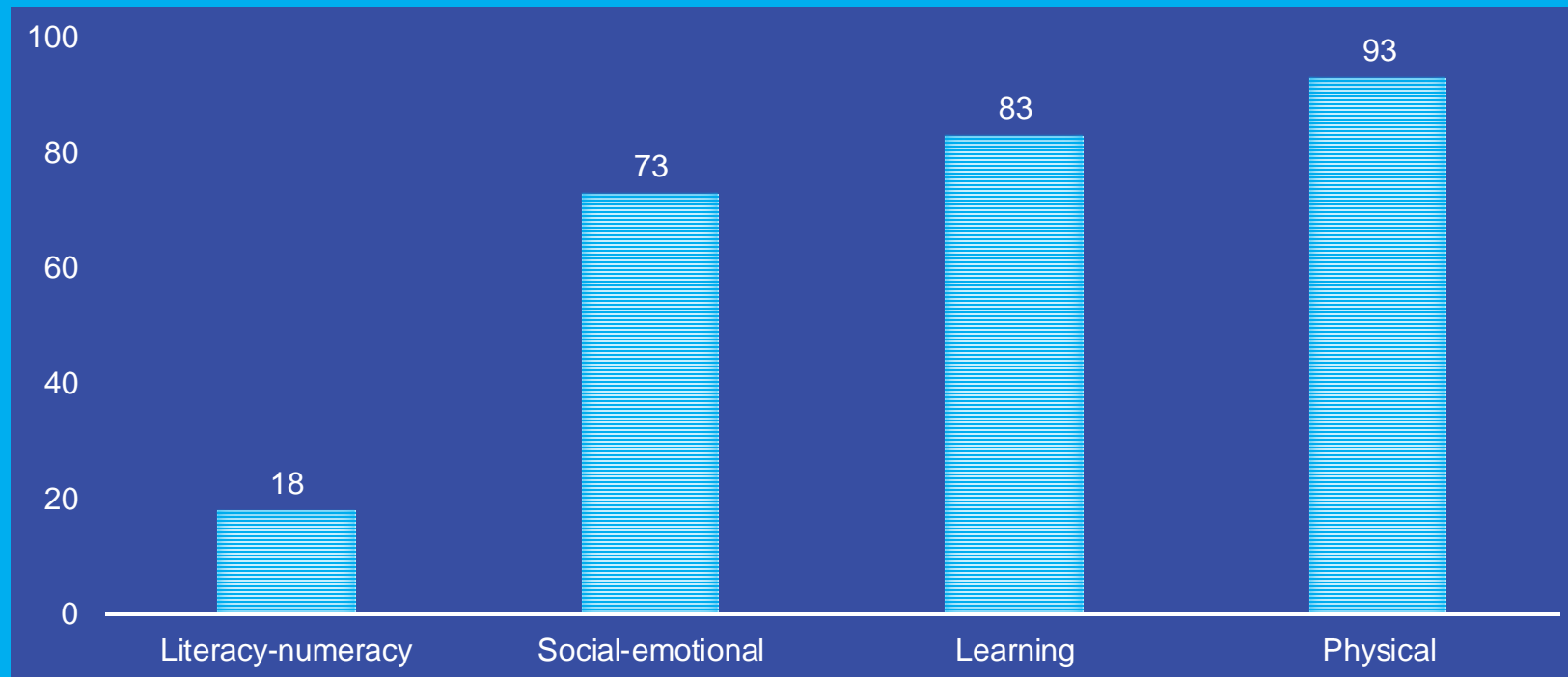
Two thirds of the children in the region are developmentally on track

Percentage of children aged 36 to 59 months developmentally on track in three out of four domains



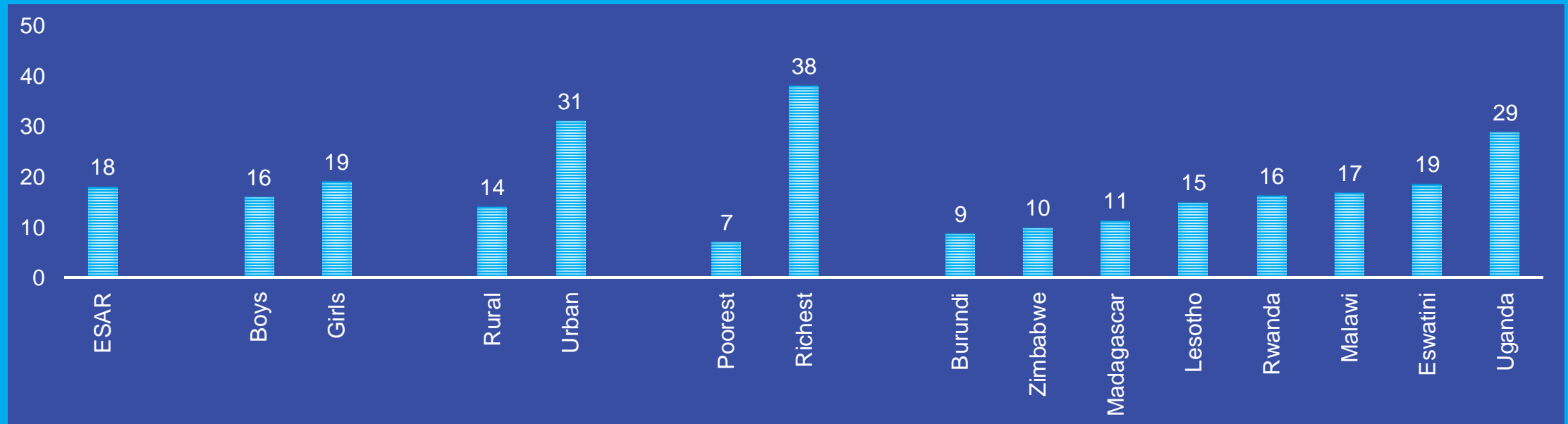
Most children are meeting physical development milestones but only 2 in 10 children are on track in the literacy-numeracy skills

Percentage of children aged 36 to 59 months developmentally on track, by domain



Children in the poorest households and rural areas are less likely to be on track in their literacy-numeracy development

Percentage of children aged 36 to 59 months developmentally on track in literacy-numeracy, by sex, place of residence, household wealth and country



Source: UNICEF global databases, 2023, based on DHS and MICS, 2014-2020.

**What do we
need to do to
improve the
situation?**





**Increase investment in early
childhood development,
starting from the youngest
and the most deprived**

***If we change the beginning
of the story, we will change
the whole story!***



Thank you

