



In-depth analysis of ethnic births in Colombia

A case study of indigenous populations in the Chocó department

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Birth registration context in the Chocó department

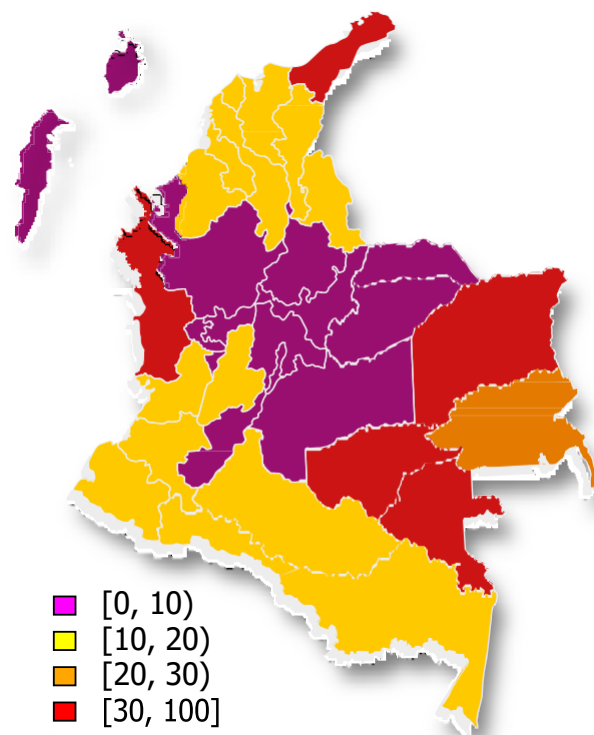
The following exercise was carried out in order to generate alternative analysis for statistical production and demographic monitoring, and to propose solutions to the shortcomings in the coverage of vital statistics in the regions. It also puts two issues of significance in Colombia under the microscope: the challenge of monitoring birth dynamics in indigenous populations, and the contribution of traditional birth attendants in assisting childbirth.

Therefore, the aim was to research and supplement the traditional methods of producing demographic statistics, in order to provide statistics that are more useful for designing public policies that will stimulate social development while taking into account the impact of phenomena associated with demographic dynamics, and specifically fertility.

Through this exercise, our intention is to highlight the gaps that exist in the registration of births for vital statistics, and by doing so strengthen the collection of vital data. This data collection is a priority, particularly in remote rural areas with a large presence of indigenous and Afro-descendant populations where there has been a historical absence of state presence. While these may seem to be events of low prevalence, they exacerbate the conditions of poverty and conflict that violate the guarantee of rights for the most vulnerable populations with a higher risk of dying, in particular expectant mothers and newborn babies.

For this reason, this analysis focuses on an indigenous population, showing typical characteristics in terms of birth attendance and location, and the person who registered the birth.

Maternal Mortality Ratio Colombia



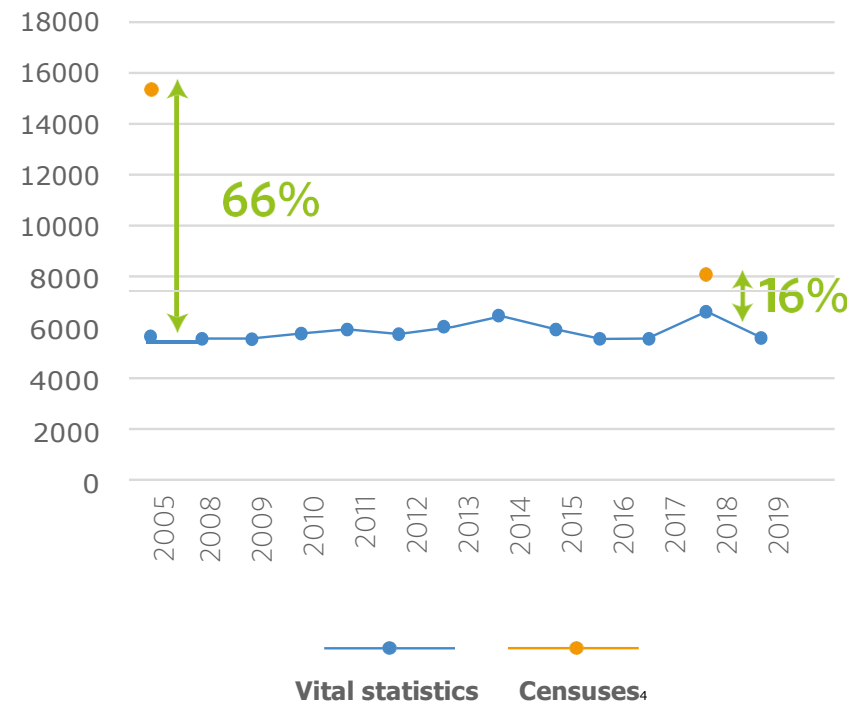
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Historical birth rate trends in the Chocó department

Total births in the Chocó department



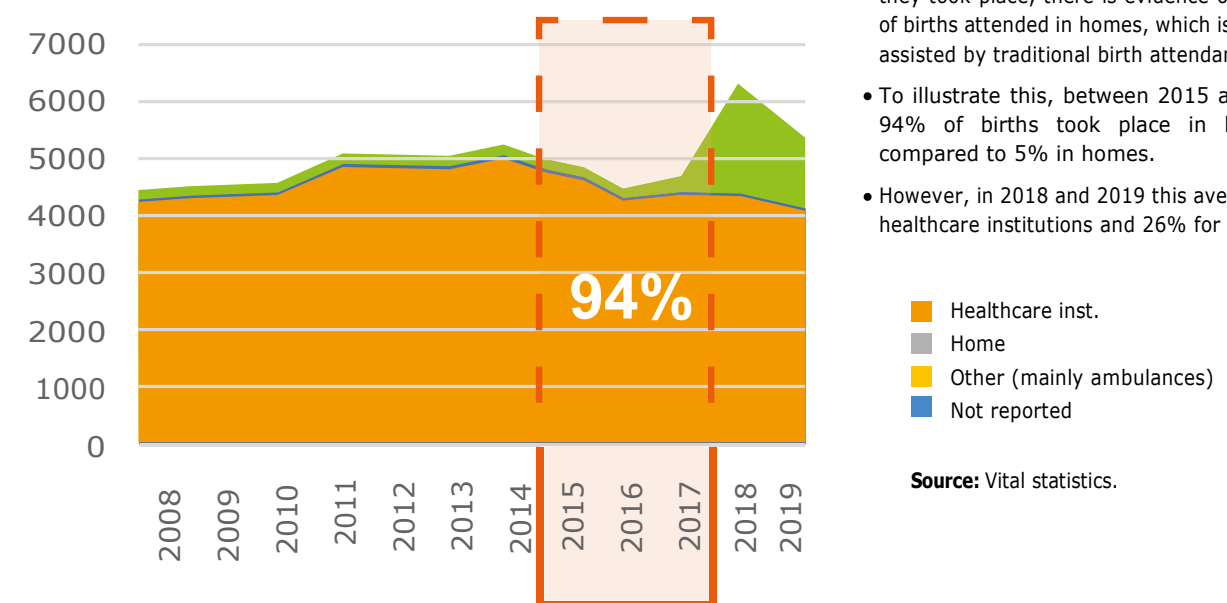
Source: DANE - 2005 and 2018 censuses and vital statistics 2005-2019.

When the historical number of live births recorded in vital statistics for the Chocó department is compared with the data from the last two national censuses in Colombia (population below one year of age)⁴, an improvement in registration is shown. In 2005, birth registrations were 66% lower than the population identified in the census, whereas in 2018 this figure changed to 16%. The above can be interpreted as an improvement in the registration of births in Chocó.

What is this improvement in birth registration due to?

Historical birth location trends in the Chocó department

Number of live births by birth location in the Chocó department



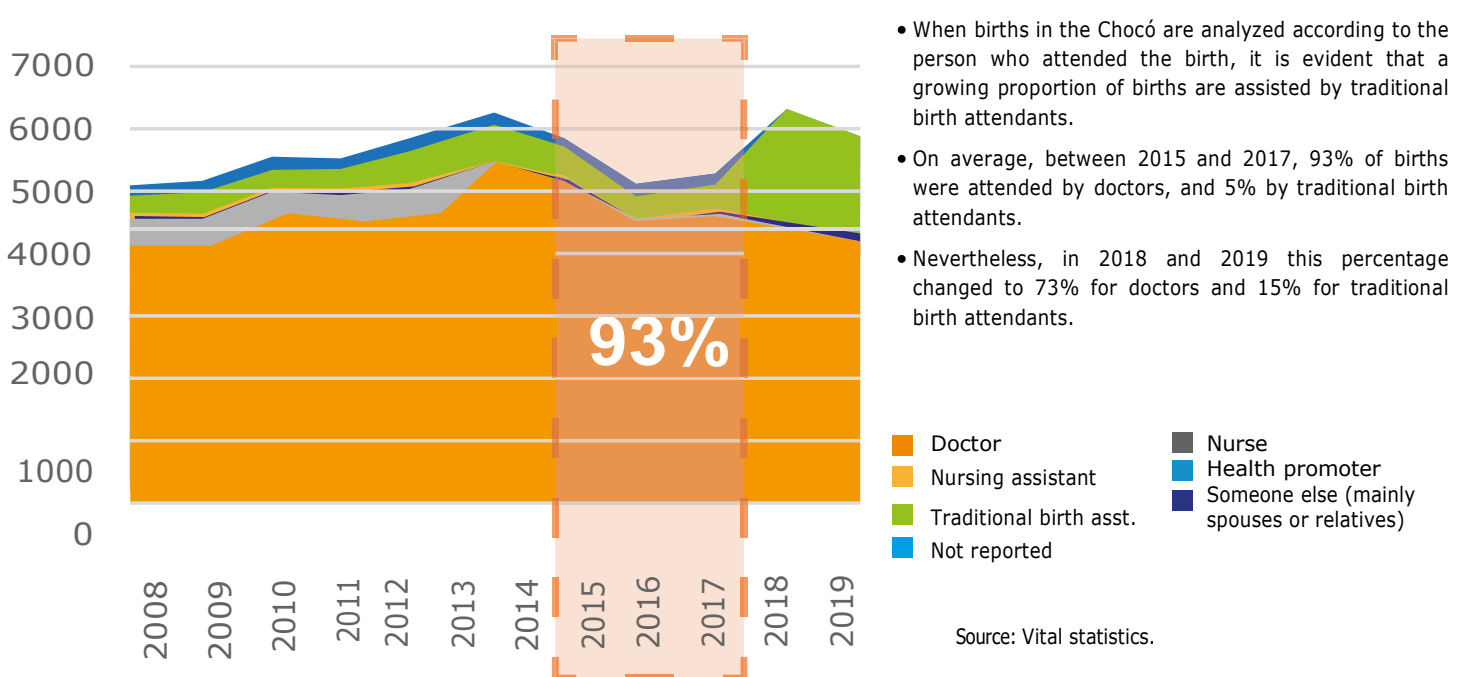
Next, when births are analyzed according to the place where they took place, there is evidence of a rise in the proportion of births attended in homes, which is directly related to births assisted by traditional birth attendants.

- To illustrate this, between 2015 and 2017 an average of 94% of births took place in healthcare institutions, compared to 5% in homes.
- However, in 2018 and 2019 this average changed to 73% for healthcare institutions and 26% for homes.

Source: Vital statistics.

Historical trends of people attending births in the Chocó department

Number of live births broken down by the person who attended the birth in the Chocó department

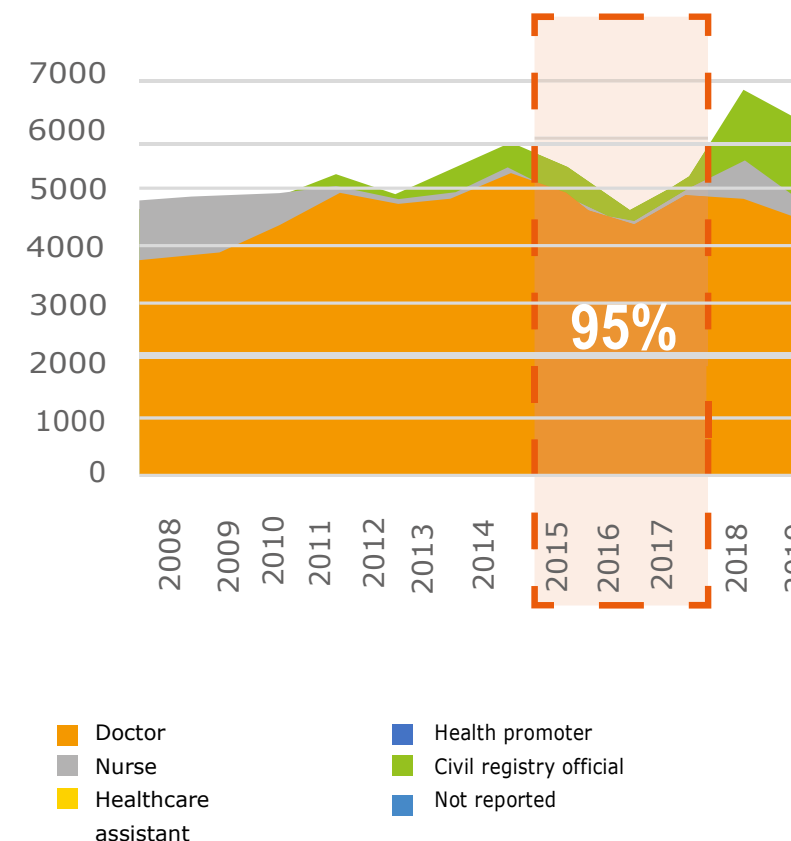


- When births in the Chocó are analyzed according to the person who attended the birth, it is evident that a growing proportion of births are assisted by traditional birth attendants.
- On average, between 2015 and 2017, 93% of births were attended by doctors, and 5% by traditional birth attendants.
- Nevertheless, in 2018 and 2019 this percentage changed to 73% for doctors and 15% for traditional birth attendants.

Source: Vital statistics.

Historical trends of people certifying births in the Chocó department

Number of live births in the Chocó department broken down by the professional who certified the birth



Analyzing births according to the person who certified them shows civil registry officials and nurses occupying a growing share. This is directly related to births assisted by traditional birth attendants; despite traditional birth attendants being legally able to certify births, misinformation exists among officials from regional civil registration bodies.

- To demonstrate this, between 2015 and 2017, an average of 95% of births were certified by doctors, and 5% by registry officials.
- In comparison, in 2018 and 2019 this average changed to 74% of births certified by doctors, 16% by registry officials and 9% by nurses.
- **These findings were shared with traditional birth attendants and regional DANE officials, and a flaw in the way children are registered into the system was identified. The traditional birth attendants themselves reported that the growing number of births certified by nurses was associated with one-off payments made to nurses by mothers who gave birth with the support of traditional birth attendants. This is due to regional civil registry officials not accepting delivery certificates generated by traditional birth attendants, even when it is legally possible to do so.**
- **As a result of this finding, and as part of the Partera Vital projects, regional civil registry institutions and bodies belonging to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) were strengthened to avoid the flaw detected in the system. It can't be the case that payment is required to obtain a birth certificate for newborns, and that on top of that the work done by traditional birth attendants during childbirth is disparaged and discredited.**

Source: Vital statistics.

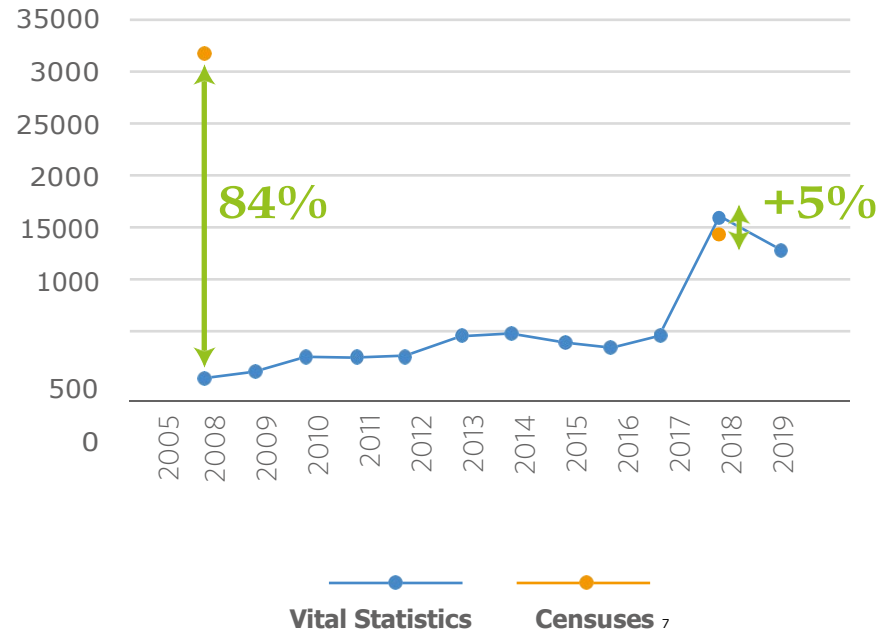
6 <https://unfpa-analytics.com.co/o1/parteraVital/inicio>

4 Registered population under the age of one, i.e., live births who survived up to the census-taking period.

5 It should be noted that, although this figure contains bias related to child mortality and migration, it is a proxy with underreporting that allows for monitoring of birth registrations.

Historical indigenous birth rate trends in the Chocó department

Total indigenous births in the Chocó department



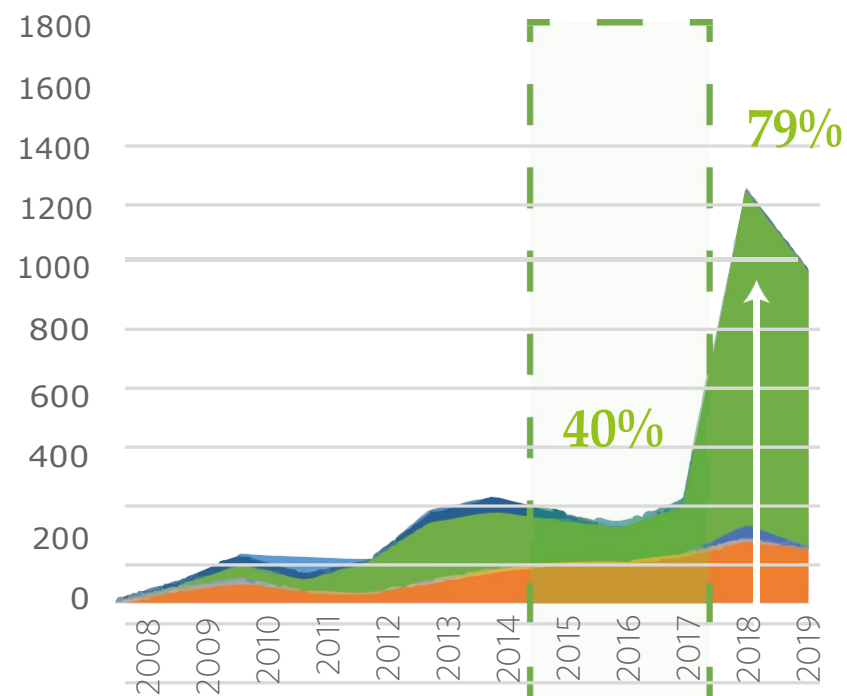
Source: DANE, 2005 and 2018 censuses and vital statistics.

1. The ethnicity variable has been included from 2008 onwards, which for this reason will be our first year of analysis for the vital statistics.
2. When the census data corresponding to the number of infants under the age of one in 2005 is compared with the number of live births according to the vital statistics for 2008, the latter is 84% lower.
3. In contrast, an improvement in the registration of vital statistics was found for 2018, whereby the total number of live births recorded in the vital statistics was actually above the number of infants below the age of one identified in the census.

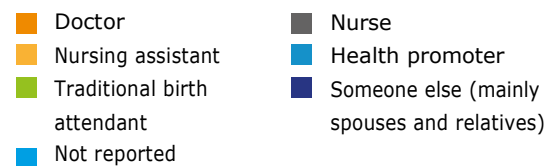
What is the reason for this significant improvement from 2018 onwards (which also shows continuity in 2019 according to indigenous birth registrations)?

Historical trends of people attending indigenous births in the Chocó department

Number of live indigenous births broken down by the person who attended the birth in the Chocó department



- When births in Chocó are analyzed according to the person who attended the birth, there is evidence that a growing proportion of births are assisted by traditional birth attendants.
- To illustrate this, an average of 52% of births between 2015 and 2017 were attended by doctors and 40% by traditional birth attendants.
- In comparison, in 2018 and 2019 this figure changed to 17% by doctors and 79% by traditional birth attendants.



Source: DANE - vital statistics

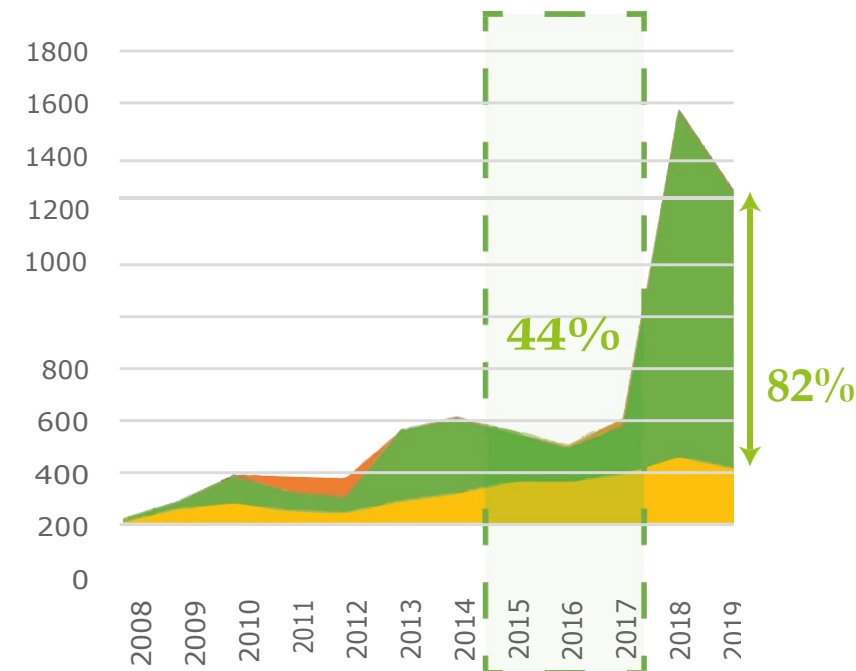
Health promoter Civil registry official

7 Registered population under the age of one, i.e., live births who survived until the census-taking period.

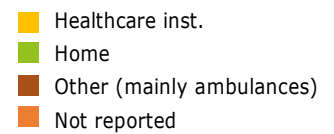
Historical indigenous birth location trends in the Chocó department

Number of live indigenous births by birth location

Chocó department



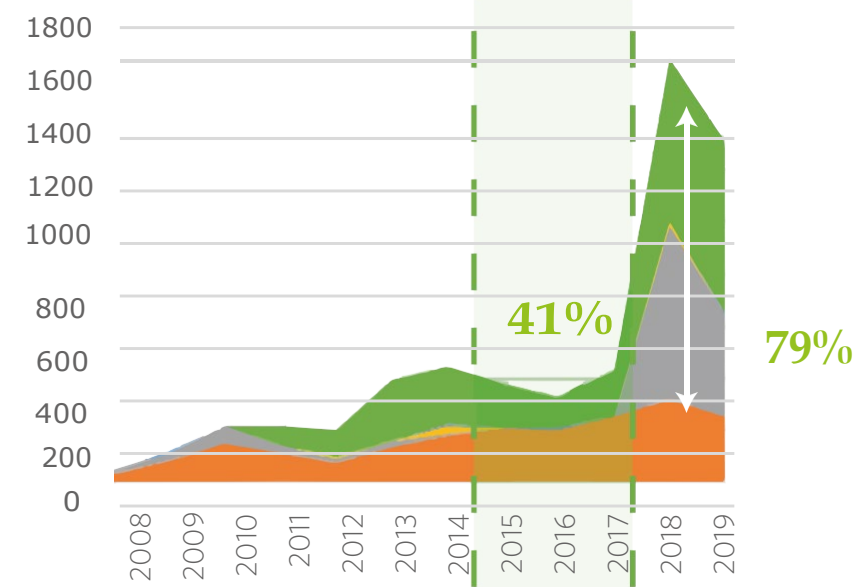
- Next, when births are analyzed according to the location where they took place, it is evident that a growing proportion of births are attended in homes. This is directly related to the childbirth assistance provided by traditional birth attendants.
- This is shown by an average of 54% of births between 2015 and 2017 being attended in healthcare institutions, compared to 44% in homes.
- However, for 2018 and 2019 this average changed to 26% in healthcare institutions and 82% in homes.



Source: DANE - vital statistics

Historical trends of people certifying indigenous births in the Chocó department

Number of live indigenous births broken down by birth location in the Chocó department



- Next, analyzing births according to the person who certified the birth shows civil registry officials and nurses occupying a growing share. This is directly related to births assisted by traditional birth attendants; despite traditional birth attendants being legally able to certify births, misinformation exists among officials from regional civil registration bodies.
- Between 2015 and 2017, on average 60% of births were certified by doctors, and 40% by civil registry officials.
- However, in 2018 and 2019 this average changed to 20% of births certified by doctors, 44% by civil registry officials and 35% by nurses.



Source: DANE - vital statistics

Actions and achievements on the ground arising from the birth registration study in the Chocó department

- This study was shared with the DANE vital statistics workgroup and raised a warning about the regional issues identified.
- It also helped to highlight the role of traditional birth attendants in the region, saving lives and enhancing the registration of vital data. We would like to draw attention to the Partera Vital strategy as one of the measures taken to enhance registration and strengthen the ability of traditional birth attendants to play a part in the registration of births. The aim of managing the knowledge associated with the ancestral culture and transmitted through experience and down through generations is to help data registration to take root by involving the social innovation project 'Partera Vital'. Through this, the ethnic and non-ethnic communities in the Chocó department were integrated to consolidate the progress made in characterizing needs and generating information for the construction of social capital.
- In particular, the Partera Vital project was able to foster an agreement between the institutions comprising the civil registry and vital statistics system to provide technological tools for recording vital events in the region.

As a result of this exercise, Partera Vital managed to integrate information gathering systems with community experience, strengthen democracy and protect the rights of vulnerable populations, and newborns in particular.
- Taking the focus of the ConVERGE initiative into account, previous analysis was also carried out by disaggregating data by the gender of the newborn, and it didn't show any gaps with regard to this differentiation.

Future activities

- Calculating how much registration improved as a result of the intervention.
- Including the relationship between birth registration coverage and maternal and child mortality in the analysis.
- Carrying out more detailed analysis on a geographical level of the places where births took place, showing the relationship between good coverage across the region and the distribution and location of its healthcare institutions.
- DANE and UNFPA are currently looking for resources and strategic partners to drive the implementation of Partera Vital 2.0, in order to expand the activity to other departments and monitor and follow up on the work done in Chocó.

8 <https://unfpa-analytics.com.co/o1/parteraVital/inicio>



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