

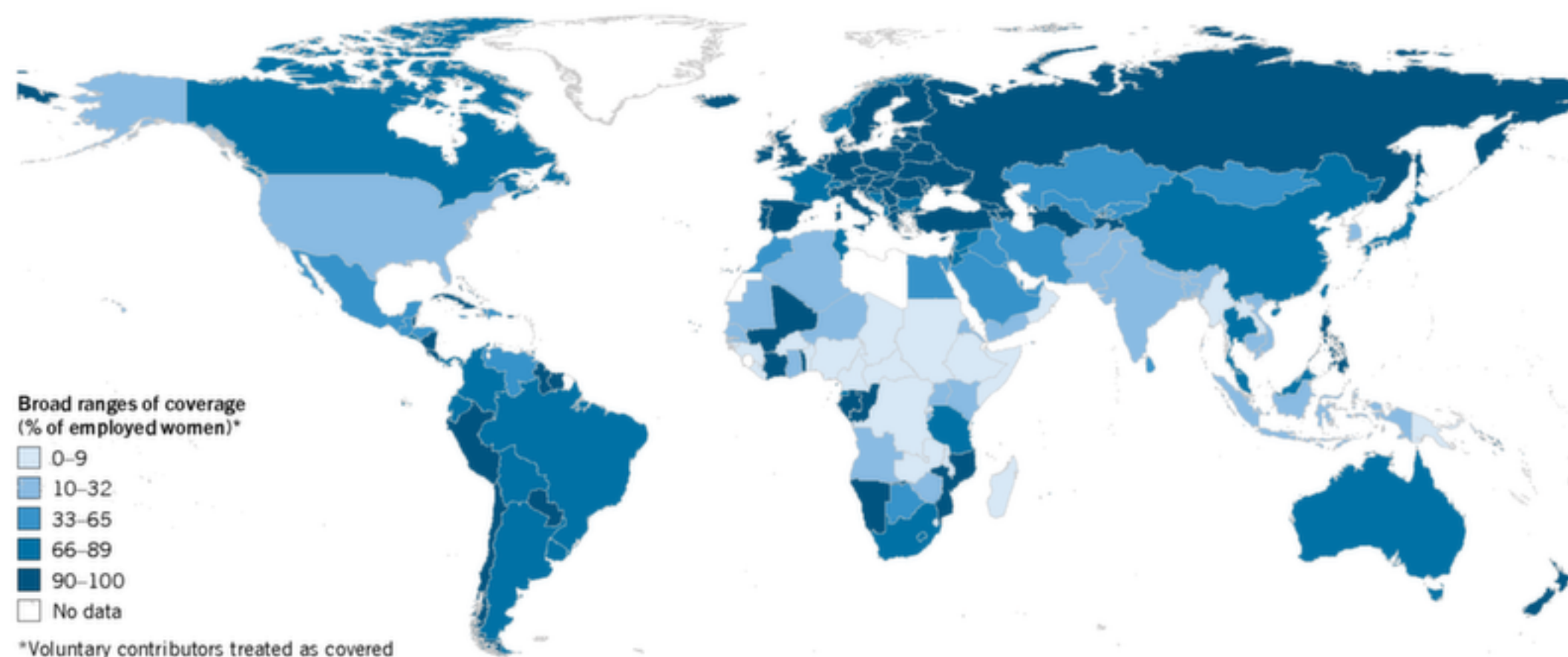
(see map 2.3). Low legal coverage rates also affect Asia, where 16 countries out of 26 grant this entitlement to a section of the workforce ranging between 10 and 32 per cent of the total. Statutory coverage of maternity leave largely reflects country-level labour force characteristics. Since the scope of labour codes is often restricted to employees, countries with a significant share of self-employed women in total employment (especially, own-account workers and unpaid contributing family workers) tend to show the lowest level of legal coverage.

Similar regional variations are found for coverage in law of maternity leave cash benefits (see map 2.4), although the level of legal protection is higher when taking into account workers entitled to voluntary coverage. It ranges from a total of almost 27 per cent of women workers in Africa (only 18 per cent without voluntary coverage) to 91 per cent in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where social security legislation is more likely to cover self-employed workers on a mandatory basis. The share of voluntary coverage has particular weight in Asia, where the difference resulting from the inclusion of mandatory legal protection is almost 37 percentage points. In fact, in China, self-employed workers, who would otherwise be excluded from maternity leave, are entitled to contribute to social insurance on a voluntary basis. In more than

one-third of all countries for which data are available (67 countries out of 172), more than 90 per cent of women in employment enjoy a statutory right to cash maternity benefits on a mandatory basis (56 countries when excluding voluntary coverage). At the other side of the range, in 21 countries,⁷⁰ most of which lie in sub-Saharan Africa, less than 10 per cent of women workers are entitled to maternity leave cash benefits.

Despite the statutory requirements, additional obstacles to the effective implementation of the legislation, such as lack of awareness of legal entitlements and benefits, reluctance to rely on social security systems, inadequate enforcement of legal provisions, insufficient contributory capacity, discriminatory practices, informality and social exclusion, can prevent women from receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. In fact, just over one-quarter (28.4 per cent) of employed women worldwide are effectively protected through contributory or non-contributory cash benefits in case of maternity (see map 2.5). This means that globally only around 330 million women workers, regardless of their employment status, would receive income support in the event of childbirth, almost 38 per cent of whom are workers in the Developed Economies. In Africa and Asia, only a minority of women in employment (less than 15 per cent) are effectively protected with maternity leave cash benefits. As shown in the previous

Map 2.4 Coverage in law – maternity leave cash benefits: Percentage of women workers entitled to maternity leave cash benefits, including workers entitled to voluntary coverage, 2010 (172 countries)



Source: ILO estimates based on data from official sources.