

ESSENTIAL INTERVENTIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF MTCT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSMISSION OF HEPATITIS B

Decades of implementation of hepatitis B vaccine to infants in the Americas have impacted the overall prevalence of chronic hepatitis B, remarkably among children. In 2019, WHO estimated the prevalence of HBV infection among children younger than five years old was at 0.1% [$<0.1-0.2\%$]. This indicates that the Region of Americas have achieved the impact target for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B. By 2021 all 51 countries and territories in the Region of Americas have introduced hepatitis B vaccination in their routine infant immunization schedules, while 31 have also adopted the universal birth dose vaccination policy.

The vaccination coverage with the third dose of hepatitis B vaccine for children under the age of 1 year (HepB-B3) was reported as 81% in the Region of the Americas in 2021. Data reported in 2020 and 2021 show that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted heterogeneously countries in the Region. Even though 15 countries have reported, in 2020, their lowest coverage of HepB-B3 in the past 10 years (Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Turks and Caicos and Venezuela), increases in the coverage reported by Haiti, Mexico, Canada, Guatemala and Brazil maintained the regional coverage relatively stable. In 2020, 15 countries have reported a decrease on national coverages rates of timely hepB-BD, including five countries with reductions greater than 10% (Brazil, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, and Mexico). Ten additional countries have reported stable or increased hepB-BD coverages, including 3 countries with increases greater than 5% (Chile, Colombia, and Suriname).

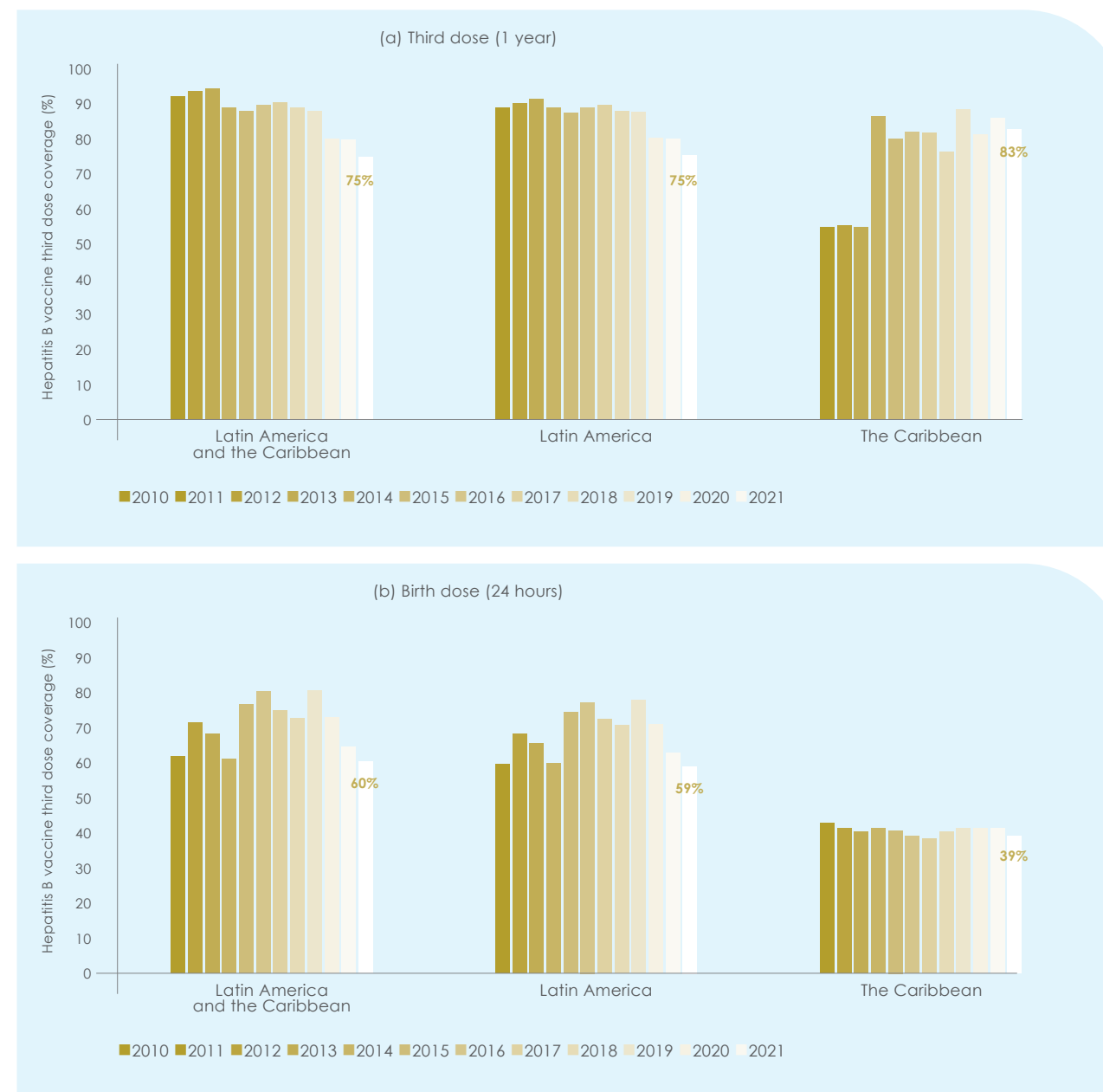
Thirteen countries (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bermuda, Costa Rica, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago) have reported achieving the 95% coverage of at least one vaccination target in 2020 or 2021.

Demonstrating the achievement of the hepatitis B prevalence among 5-years-old remains an important challenge and efforts are needed to improve surveillance

These interventions can be enhanced through antenatal testing for pregnant women, and the use of antiviral drugs for eligible HBsAg-positive pregnant women, and provision of hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) to exposed newborn where available. Data reported by countries to PAHO indicated that by 2020, among 30 countries with information available, 25 have incorporated universal screening of pregnant women for hepatitis B, while 22 provide HBIG to exposed newborns.

Demonstrating the achievement of the hepatitis B prevalence among 5-years-old remains an important challenge and efforts are needed to improve surveillance and generate data regarding incidence and prevalence of hepatitis B, especially among women of reproductive age, pregnant women, and their children. Based on mathematical modelling from the Polaris Observatory, developed by the Center for Diseases Analysis Foundation, at least 19 countries in the Americas have achieved the target of 0.1% HBsAg prevalence among 5-years-old (Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, El Salvador, and the United States of America). Thirteen countries (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bermuda, Costa Rica, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago) have reported achieving the 95% coverage of at least one vaccination target in 2020 or 2021.

Coverage of third dose (a) and birth dose (b) of hepatitis B vaccine in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010-2021



Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Reporting Form on Immunization (JRF), 2022