



**WORLD Policy
Analysis Center**

FACILITATING GIRLS' ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION: GLOBAL FINDINGS ON TUITION-FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION

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About the WORLD Policy Analysis Center

The goal of the WORLD Policy Analysis Center (WORLD) is to improve the quantity and quality of comparative data available to policymakers, citizens, civil society, and researchers around the world on policies affecting equity, development, human health, and well-being. Under the leadership of Dr. Jody Heymann, Dean of the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, WORLD is committed to making its broad, globally comparative findings publicly accessible to inform and encourage improvements in legal and policy frameworks worldwide, allow nations to learn from the approaches taken in other countries, facilitate studies of the feasibility and effectiveness of laws and policies in critical areas, and support global and local civil society in their efforts to hold decision-makers accountable.

About This Report

It has been 20 years since the international community committed to advancing equality for women around the world through the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Using our global datasets capturing the legal and policy contexts shaping gender rights worldwide, we have created a series of policy briefs that highlight areas of progress and areas needing further improvement in education, constitutional rights, work and family, and child marriage. In this brief, we draw on our global database to identify countries that have adopted policies that contribute to ensuring that girls have equal access to education. We then examine how enrollment rates for girls have changed in the past 20 years and whether there is room for poor-performing countries to adopt policies that could remove some of the barriers for girls' education. WORLD is committed to making a lasting difference on the ground through interactions among researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders invested in translating evidence into practice.

Acknowledgments

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ABSTRACT

Access to education is critical for girls' and women's opportunities. In 1995, the international community made a commitment with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to "ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education" and "close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education."

While there are many factors that determine girls' access to education, evidence shows that cost is a significant barrier. Moreover, it has been extensively documented in many parts of the world that parents predominantly choose their sons when confronted with the choice between paying for the education of their sons or daughters. Studies show that tuition-free and compulsory education overwhelmingly benefits girls and reduces barriers for girls' access to education.

The vast majority of countries have made significant progress in terms of making primary education financially accessible: 89% of low-income countries, 97% of middle-income countries, and 100% of high-income countries have made primary education tuition-free.

Despite significant strides made by the international community in reducing barriers for girls' education at the primary level, much more work is still required at the secondary level. While beginning secondary-school education is tuition-free and compulsory in 122 countries, only 28 countries continue to provide tuition-free and compulsory education through completion of secondary school or until age 18.

Countries with low enrollment rates for girls that have not taken the step of removing these barriers should consider doing so. Even though providing tuition-free and compulsory education carries costs, it also yields significant economic returns. Moreover, our analyses reveal that more than two out of five of the countries that charge tuition before the completion of secondary education are devoting less than the usual share of their GDP to education.

BACKGROUND

In 1995, the international community made a commitment with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to “ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education.”¹ This pledge builds on an earlier commitment made by States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to “make primary education compulsory and available free to all” and “encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, ... make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.”²

Despite global commitments, it is estimated that 65 million girls around the world are out of school.³ Moreover, data reveal that despite important improvements in access to education for all children, girls continue to face greater barriers than boys: according to recent estimates, only 62 out of 168 countries for which data was available will close the gender gap in secondary school enrollment by 2015.⁴

Access to education is critical for girls’ and women’s opportunities. Evidence shows that education increases girls’ employment prospects later in life: a girl who completes primary education can increase her earnings as an adult by up to 15%.⁵ Education has a significant impact on health: a study conducted in Uganda demonstrated that each additional year of education for girls is associated with a 6.7% reduction in the risk of contracting HIV.⁶ The risk of infant mortality is also reduced when girls go to school: a child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to survive past the age of five.⁷ Educated girls are less likely to marry young: studies have shown that girls with eight years of education are four times less likely to be married as children.⁸

Given the clear benefits of educating girls, why are so many of them out of school? While there are many factors that determine girls’ access to education, including transportation, lack of adequate sanitation facilities for girls in schools, and fear of violence and harassment, evidence shows that cost is a significant barrier. It has been extensively documented in many parts of the world that parents predominantly choose their sons when confronted with the choice between paying for the education of their sons or daughters. This is in part due to the fact that educating boys is perceived to be a better investment, since the expectation is for sons to get jobs and stay close to the family, while girls have fewer job opportunities and may join their husband’s family.⁹

Studies have shown that when the cost barrier is removed, school attendance for girls increases considerably. When school fees were eliminated in Malawi in 1994, the gap between girls’ and boys’ primary completion rates closed: from 36% of boys and 21% of girls completing primary school in 1991, Malawi achieved 55% completion rates for both boys and girls in 2006.¹⁰ In 1997, Uganda removed tuition fees at the primary level for up to four children per household; at least two of them had to be girls. Attendance rates increased and gender gaps narrowed, particularly for the poor: by 1999, 74% of girls and 77% of boys from low-income families attended primary school, compared to just 40% of girls and 51% of boys in 1992.¹¹

Another obstacle for girls' education stems from the role they are expected to fulfill at home. Girls carry a significant burden when it comes to performing household chores and looking after family members. A survey carried out in India in 2008 revealed that 42% of girls who had dropped out of school reported that they had done so because their parents had asked them to drop out to look after the house and their siblings.¹² Making school compulsory can be an important tool for gender equity, as it impedes parents from keeping girls out of school to benefit from their domestic labor or for any other reason. When schooling is compulsory, however, it is even more critical that financial barriers be eliminated. If countries are to fulfill the commitment they made in 1995 to ensure that girls have equal access to education, decisive action will be required to lower the barriers they face. In light of compelling evidence showing that tuition-free and compulsory education overwhelmingly benefits girls, have countries taken this important step?

METHODS

In order to answer this question, the WORLD Policy Analysis Center analyzed qualitative reports, as well as national legislation and policies to determine which countries have made education tuition-free and compulsory. Information on education policies of all 197 U.S.-recognized countries was analyzed based on information collected from UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) reports, reports from the 48th International Conference on Education, and official documents accessible through Planipolis, a portal of education legislation, plans, and policies from UNESCO Member States available as of July 2014.¹³ When information was incomplete or unavailable through these sources, they were supplemented with information available through the Eurydice Network on education systems and policies in Europe.

A multilingual team of researchers translated this information into a format amenable to comparative analysis. Sources were analyzed independently by two researchers and their results compared to ensure accuracy.

Because in many cases education policy is made at the subnational level and country reports to UNESCO frequently contain subnational information, our data reflect provisions that apply to the majority of states or provinces in the country.¹⁴

FINDINGS

In this section, we examine whether countries have adopted policies that contribute to achieving strategic objective B.1 (80b and 80h) of the Beijing Platform for Action, which urges governments to “close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education” and “improve the quality of education and equal opportunities for women and men,” among others. We analyze global data on education policies to identify which countries report offering tuition-free education, compulsory education, and tuition-free and compulsory education combined, at the primary and secondary levels. Recognizing that the goal is not simply for girls to enroll in

school, but for them to learn and benefit from the instruction they receive, we also examine teacher-training requirements at the primary and secondary levels that affect educational quality.

ACCESS TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

Spurred by international commitments made in the context of the Education for All movement as well as the Millennium Development Goals, the vast majority of countries have made significant progress in terms of making primary education financially accessible: 89% of low-income countries, 97% of middle-income countries, and 100% of high-income countries have made primary education tuition-free. There are only seven countries in the world that report charging tuition fees for primary education: Comoros, Guinea, Papua New Guinea, Somalia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (see Map 1). Similarly, most countries have adopted policies to keep children in school at the primary level: there are only 15 countries that have not made primary education compulsory (see Map 4).¹⁵

When we combine our data on free and compulsory primary education, we find that a large number of countries have adopted policies to facilitate access: 159 countries make education both free and compulsory at this level (see Map 7).

ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

In contrast to the number of countries that offer primary education without tuition, progress is still required at the secondary level. Our data show that 24 countries report charging tuition for the first year of secondary school, two of which are high-income countries: Singapore and the Republic of Korea (see Map 2). Additionally, there are 48 countries that have not made it compulsory to begin secondary school (see Map 5).

When we examine which countries continue to offer tuition-free education through completion of secondary school, the number of countries that report charging tuition increases to 40, three of which are high-income countries: the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Switzerland (see Map 3). Moreover, only 29 countries require children to stay in school until they complete their secondary education or turn 18 years old (see Map 6).

Combined data on free and compulsory education at the secondary level show that the first year of secondary school is compulsory and tuition-free in 122 countries (see Map 8), but only 28 countries continue to provide tuition-free and compulsory education through completion of secondary school (see Map 9).

TEACHER-TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Our global data on teacher-training requirements provide an overview of some of the steps taken by countries to improve educational quality. At the primary level, there are marked disparities around the world. Ninety-two countries require teachers to have completed at least a bachelor's degree to teach at this level. However, there are 11 countries that require primary-

school teachers to have completed only lower-secondary. While most of these countries require teachers to complete additional specialized teacher training, Maldives allows teachers to teach with only a lower-secondary education. An additional 66 countries require primary-school teachers to have completed their secondary education. Nine of these countries require no known additional specialized teacher training beyond a secondary education (see Map 10).

Data on training requirements for lower-secondary-school teachers show that even though 118 countries require at least a bachelor's degree to teach at this level, some countries require teachers to have completed little more education than their students. Zimbabwe only requires teachers at this level to have completed lower-secondary education and three years of teacher-training college, and 46 countries require them to have completed only secondary school, whether or not they require specialized teacher training (see Map 11).

At the upper-secondary level, our data reveal a troubling picture for some countries: while 137 countries require at least a bachelor's degree to teach at this level, there are 26 countries where teachers are only required to have completed secondary school or secondary school and some teacher training. Zimbabwe is the only country where teachers are required to complete less schooling than their students: upper-secondary teachers are only required to complete lower-secondary education and three years of teacher-training college (see map 12).

NEXT STEPS TOWARDS EQUITY

In this section, we examine how enrollment rates for girls have changed since the Beijing Declaration, and whether there is room for poor performers to adopt policies that could remove some of the barriers for girls' access to education.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

Prior to the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, there were 39 countries where enrollment rates for girls at the primary level were below 90%, and 47 countries where there were fewer than 90 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. The world has made significant progress in primary education since then. Recent data show that the number of countries where the enrollment rate for girls at the primary level is below 90% has declined to 19, and there are only 15 countries with fewer than 90 girls in school for every 100 boys.

Could some of these countries that continue to perform poorly do more to facilitate girls' access to primary education? Although many factors contribute to erecting barriers to girls' schooling, tuition is an important one, as noted above. While many of these low-performing countries have made primary education tuition-free and compulsory, there are still others that have not taken this important step. Guinea, for example, has made significant progress since 1995, but enrollment rates continue to be alarmingly low: rates for girls are at 83%, and there are 84 girls for every 100 boys enrolled at the primary level. Similarly, in Comoros, the gender gap has improved by almost nine percent since 1995, but there are still just 91 girls for every 100 boys enrolled at the primary level; only 18 countries in the world have such a large gender gap in

primary enrollment. Removing the cost barrier could contribute to reducing gender-based disparities in primary education in these countries.

Making education compulsory at the primary level could also facilitate access for girls in some of these countries. For example, the Gambia offers free primary education, but does not make it compulsory. Despite having increased girls' enrollment rates by 31% since 1995, just 87% of girls are currently enrolled; only 14 countries in the world have lower enrollment rates for girls.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Compared to the significant advances that the world has made in terms of facilitating access for girls' education at the primary level, progress at the secondary level of education has been more limited. Before 1995, 96 countries had less than 90% of girls enrolled in secondary education, and 46 countries had fewer than 90 girls enrolled for every 100 boys; the most recent data reveals that there are 74 countries with less than 90% of girls enrolled, and 30 countries with fewer than 90 girls for every 100 boys.

There is still much room for improvement in terms of removing barriers that keep girls out of school at the secondary level. For example, Burundi, Guinea, Mozambique, and Uganda charge tuition throughout the entirety of secondary education, and in all cases, enrollment rates for girls are at or below 30%. Other countries, such as Eritrea and Burkina Faso, offer tuition-free education at the beginning of secondary school, but charge tuition before completion; in both cases, girls' enrollment rates are below 30%. The gap between girls and boys also remains troublingly high in some countries that charge for tuition throughout secondary education; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, and Benin, for example, have fewer than 65 girls for every 100 boys enrolled at the secondary level.

Making the completion of secondary school compulsory could also contribute to improving enrollment rates for girls. For example, in Angola, Central African Republic, Mauritania, and Niger, enrollment rates for girls are below 25%, and with the exception of Mauritania, fewer than 70 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys. None of these countries make secondary school compulsory through completion.

FEASIBILITY

Offering tuition-free education carries significant costs, and making it compulsory signals an important government commitment to make education available to all children. The question, naturally, is whether countries can afford to take this step. While international aid and cooperation may play a role in achieving this goal in some cases, countries could also be doing more themselves. Among those countries with available expenditures data in the last five years, our analyses reveal that 43% that charge tuition before the completion of secondary education spend less than four percent of their GDP on education.

Our data also show that low- and middle-income countries are capable of removing this barrier to girls' education: 93% of low- and middle-income countries offer tuition-free primary education, and 68% provide tuition-free education through completion of secondary school.

Increasing training requirements for teachers is an important step for improving quality of education. This is particularly true at the secondary level.

Finally, there is an important void in terms of the availability of data on girls' education. While there is data on gross enrollment rates, and to a lesser extent, net enrollment rates, data on completion rates and learning outcomes is scarce. There is an important difference in terms of the impact that completing a level of education and gaining measurable skills has on a girl's life compared to the impact of simply attending school. Additionally, reliable data on access to transportation, sanitation, and violence against girls in schools is not available at a global level. Collecting this type of data consistently could contribute significantly to providing a more comprehensive picture of girls' educational opportunities and where they stand.

¹ Declaration, Beijing. "Platform for Action adopted by the UN Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality." (Beijing, 1995).

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Convention on the Rights of the Child", Art. 28.

³ UNICEF. "The State of the World's Children 2004 - Girls, Education and Development" (UNICEF, 2003).

⁴ Mannathoko, Changu and Heather Milkiewicz. "Empowering Adolescent Girls Through Education: Eliminating Exclusion and Discrimination" (UNICEF, 2012), accessed at www.worldwewant2015.org/file/290405/download/314813 on May 9, 2014.

⁵ Patrinos, Harry Anthony, and George Psacharopoulos. "Returns to investment in education: a further update." Research Working papers 1.1 (2002): 1-28.

⁶ De Walque, Damien. "How does the impact of an HIV/AIDS information campaign vary with educational attainment? Evidence from rural Uganda." Journal of Development Economics 84.2 (2007): 686-714.

⁷ UNESCO, "Education Counts: Towards the Millennium Development Goals" (UNESCO, 2010), accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001902/190214e.pdf> on May 9, 2014.

⁸ Mensch, Barbara S., Susheela Singh, and John B. Casterline. "Trends in the timing of first marriage among men and women in the developing world." *The changing transitions to adulthood in developing countries: Selected studies* (2005): 118-71.

⁹ Interview, Population Health: Moving from Evidence to Effective Policy (Malawi, 7 July 2008).

¹⁰ Heymann, Jody. *Children's chances: how countries can move from surviving to thriving*. Harvard University Press, 2013; United Nations Statistics Division, Millennium Development Goals Indicators, "2.1 Net Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education," accessed at <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/data.aspx> on May 14, 2014; United Nations Statistics Division, Millennium Development Goals Indicators, "2.2 Proportion of Pupils Starting Grade 1 Who Reach Last Grade of Primary," accessed at <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/data.aspx> on May 14, 2014.

¹¹ Deininger, Klaus. "Does cost of schooling affect enrollment by the poor? Universal primary education in Uganda." *Economics of Education review* 22.3 (2003): 291-305; Heymann, Jody. *Children's chances: how countries can move from surviving to thriving*. Harvard University Press, 2013.

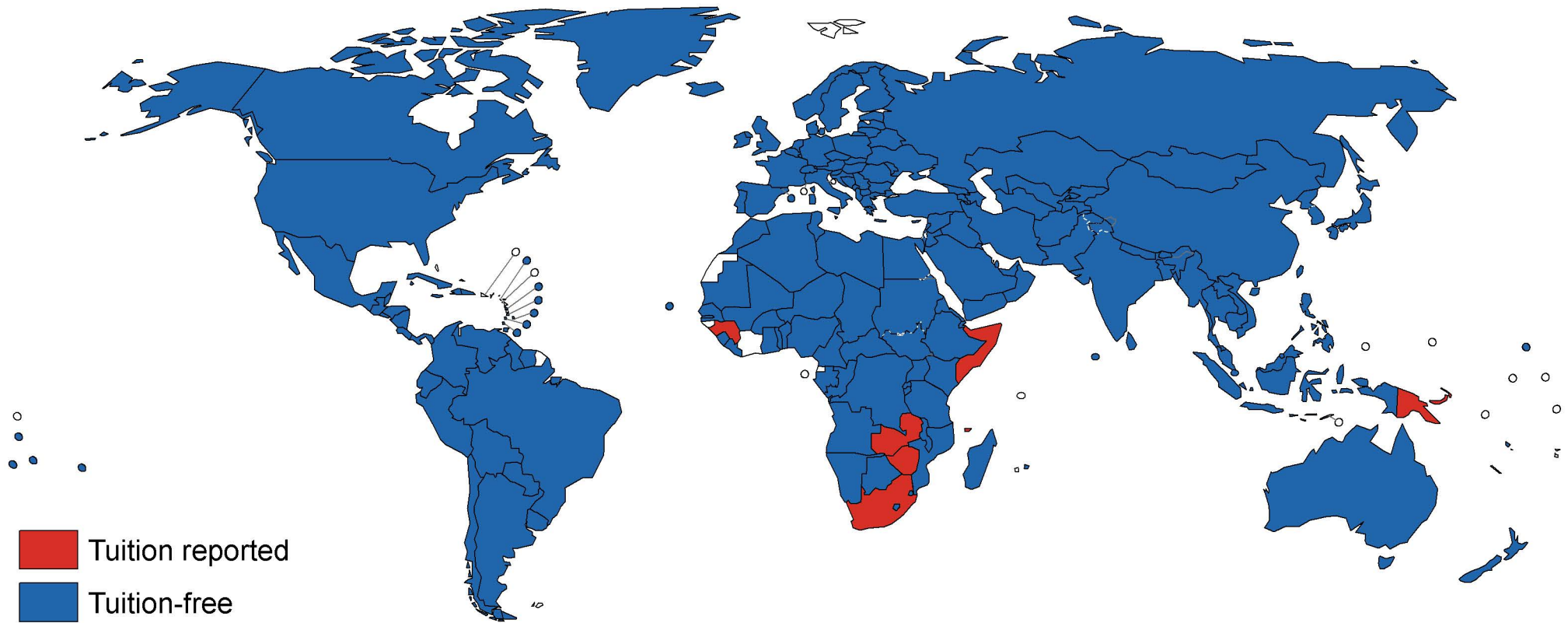
¹² Bhowmick, Nilanjana. "School Is a Right, but Will Indian Girls Be Able to Go?" Time Magazine. April 29, 2010. Accessed at <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1985026,00.html> on May 9, 2014.

¹³ Greenland is self-governing. WORLD data on education reflects Greenland's legislation and policies where information is available. Greenland is omitted from country counts when calculating the number of countries that have a given policy.

¹⁴ In order to increase comparability, when countries did not split their education systems according to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, we assigned these categories based on the available information on levels of schooling. When countries reported having eight or more years of primary school, and split it into a lower and upper level (but did not report a split in secondary school), we considered the upper level of primary to be equivalent to lower secondary.

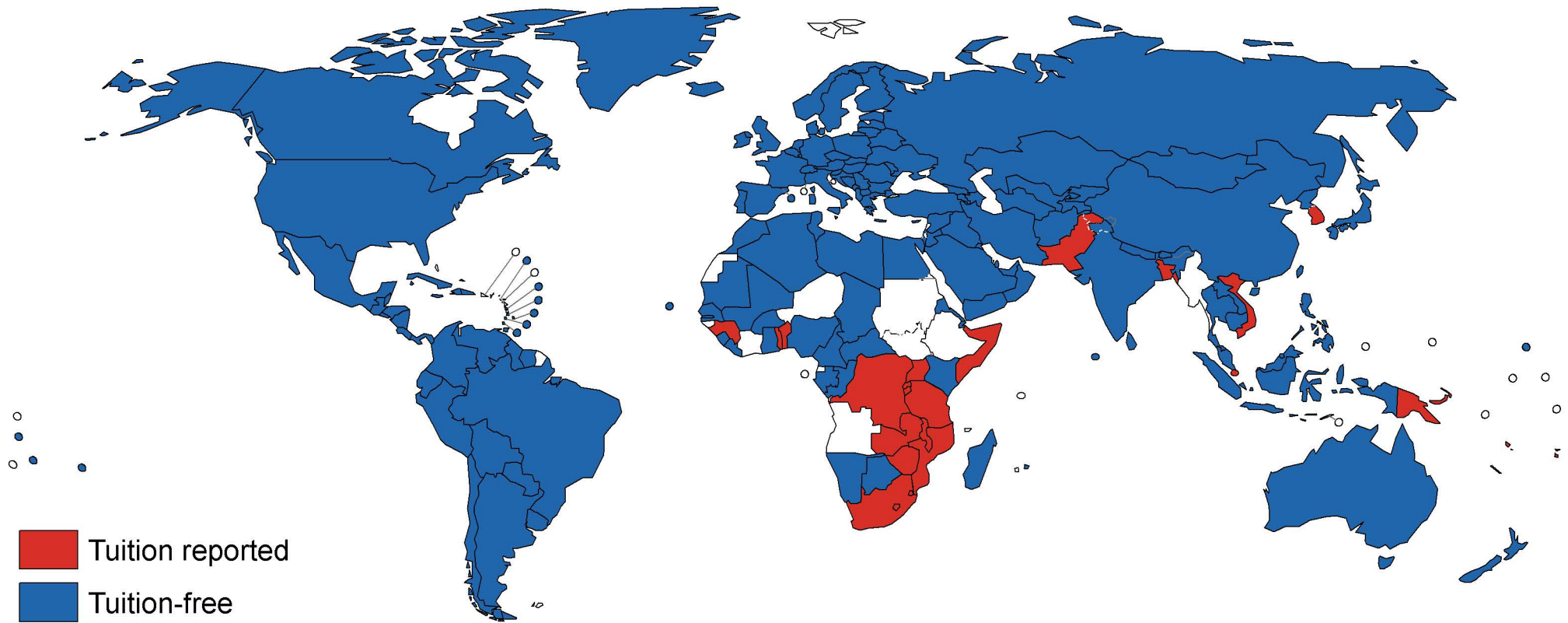
¹⁵ Senegal makes beginning primary school compulsory, but this requirement ceases before completion of primary school. In all other countries where primary school is compulsory, it is compulsory for the duration.

Map 1: Is primary education tuition-free?



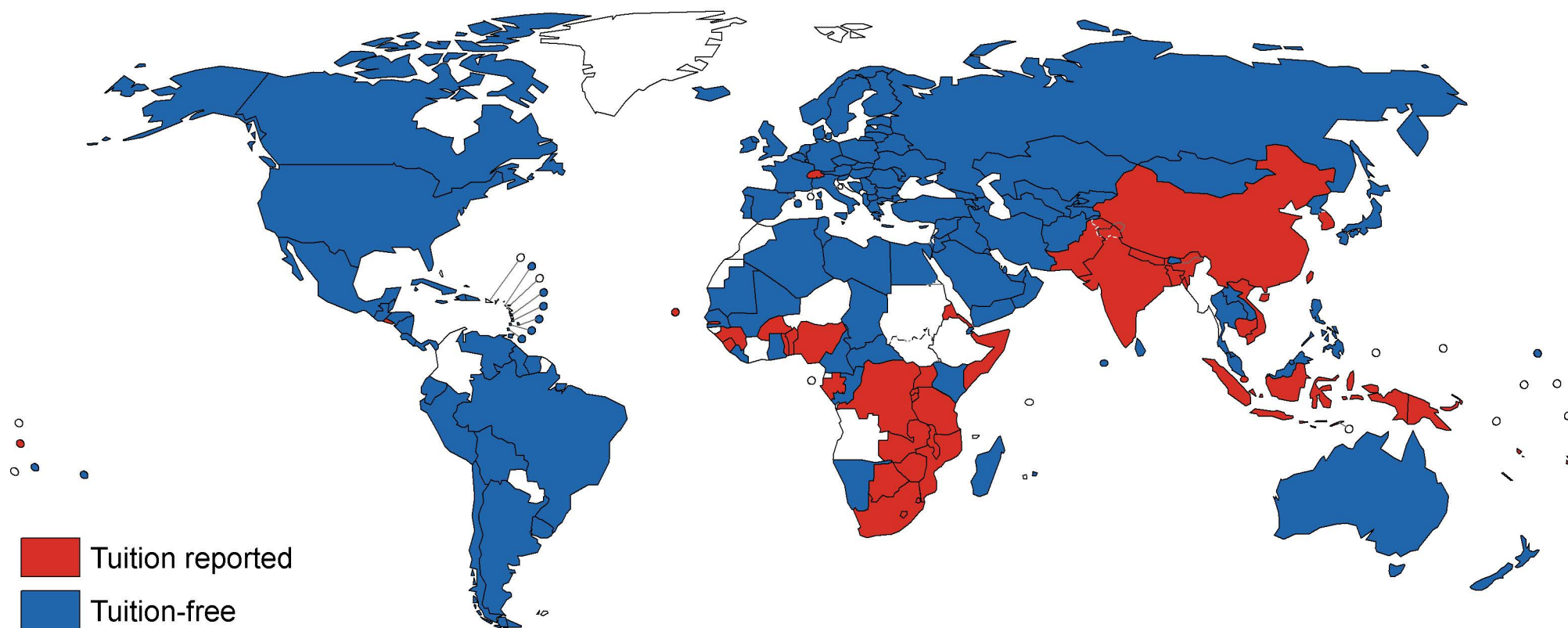
Tuition-free includes cases where no tuition is charged. Other fees may be charged. Global data to compare additional fees across countries is not available.

Map 2: Is beginning secondary education tuition-free?



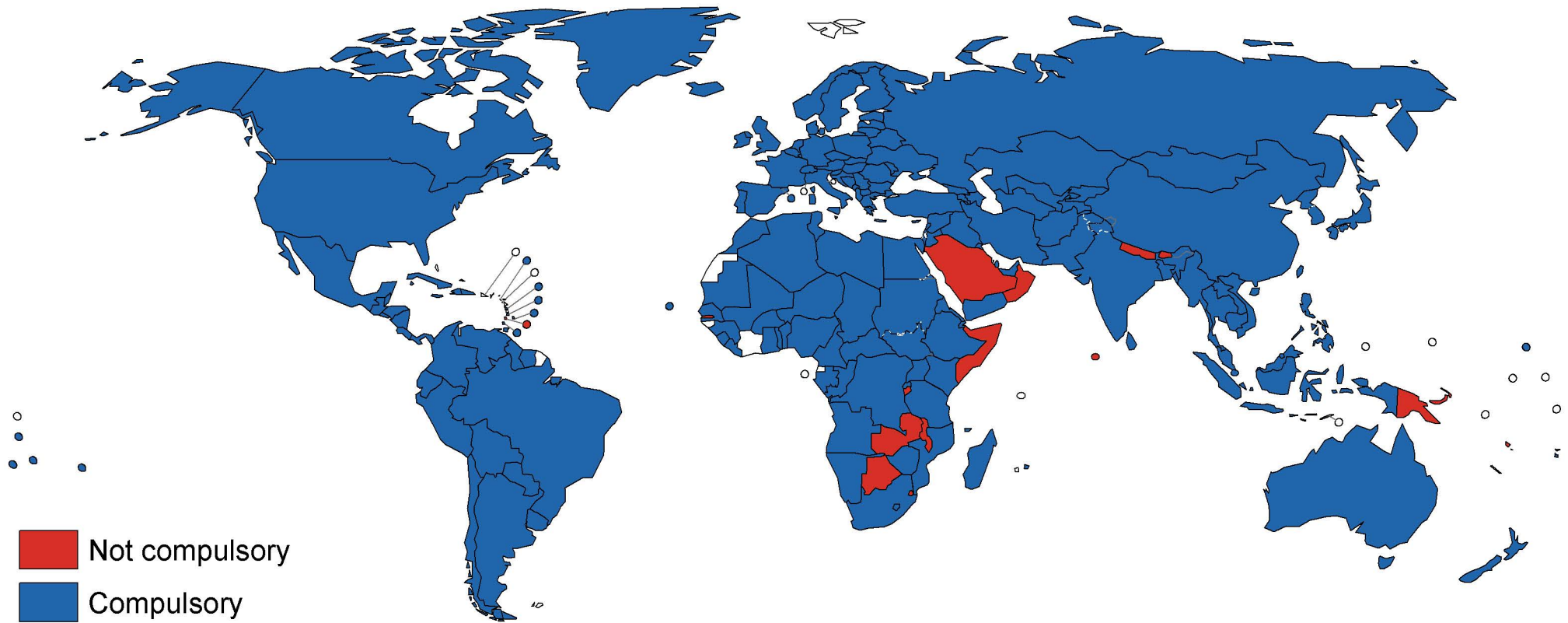
Tuition-free includes cases where no tuition is charged. Other fees may be charged.
Global data to compare additional fees across countries is not available.

Map 3: Is completing secondary education tuition-free?



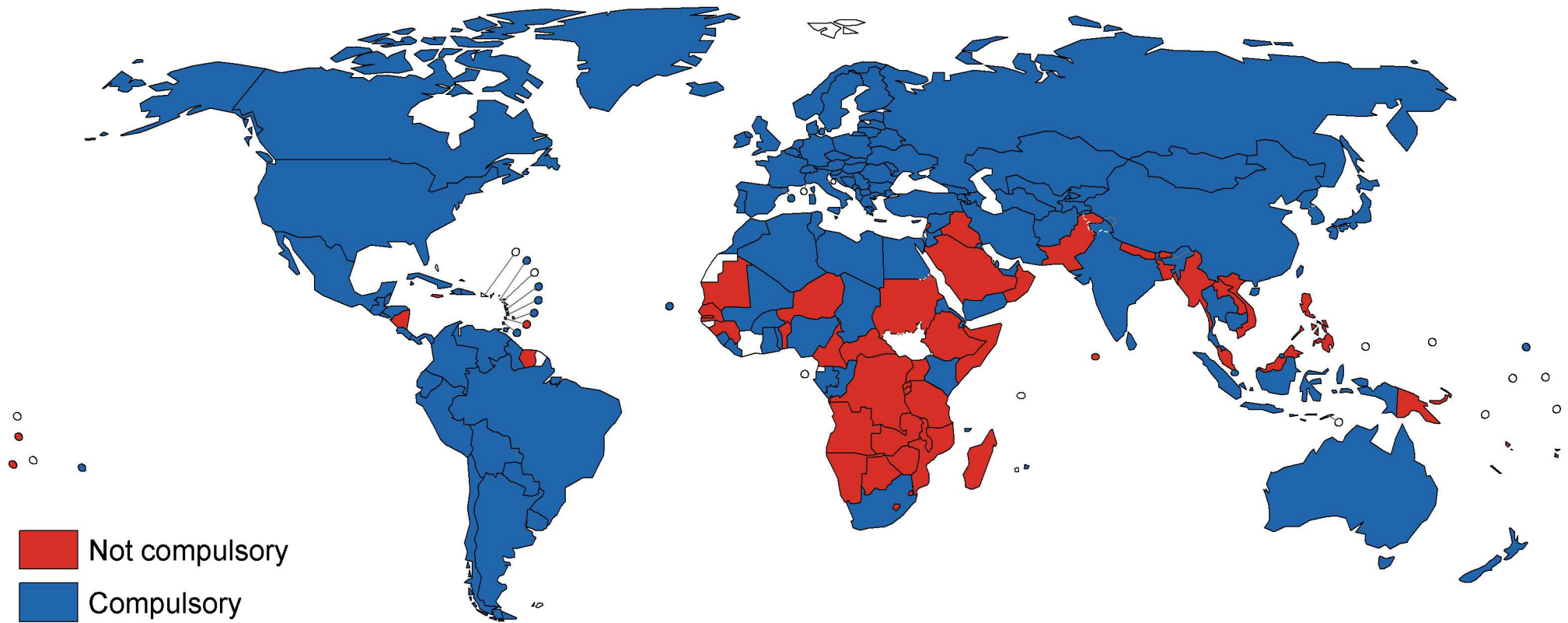
Tuition-free includes cases where no tuition is charged. Other fees may be charged.
Global data to compare additional fees across countries is not available.

Map 4: Is primary education compulsory?

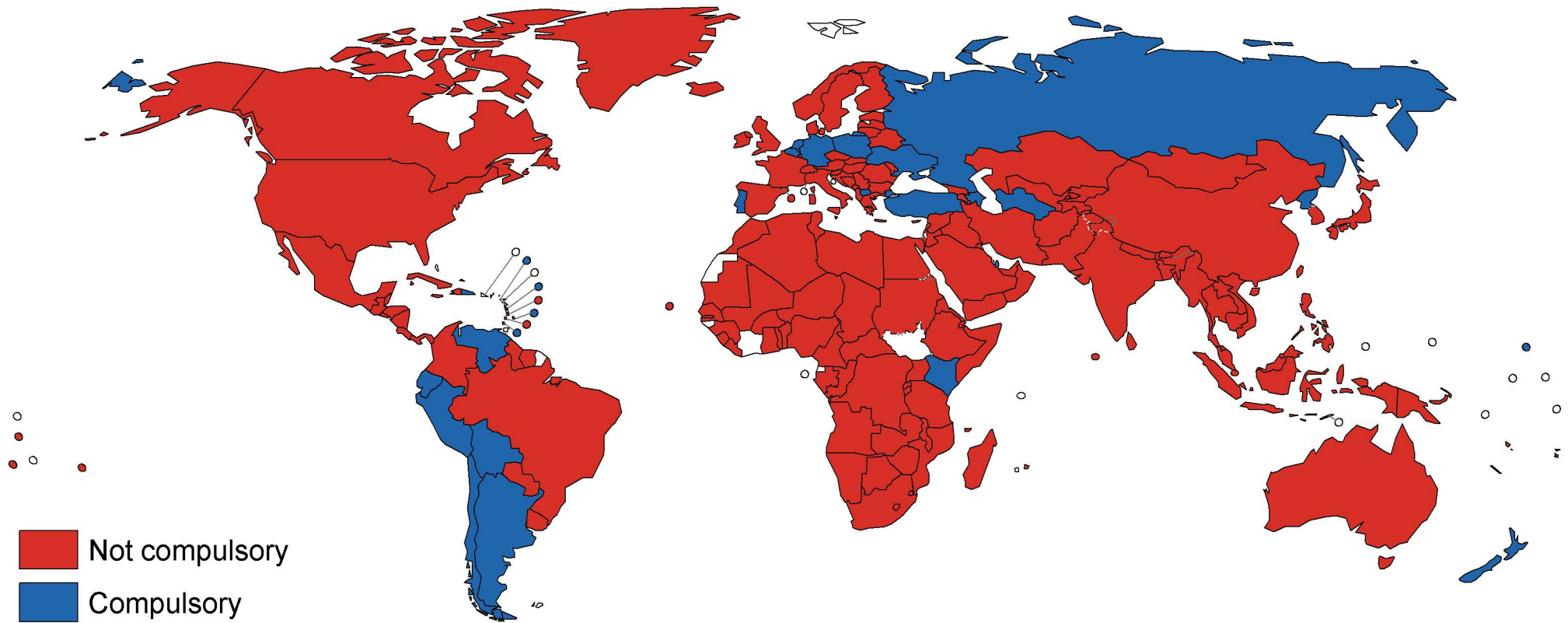


Senegal makes beginning primary school compulsory, but this requirement ceases before completion of primary school. In all other countries where primary school is compulsory, it is compulsory for the duration.

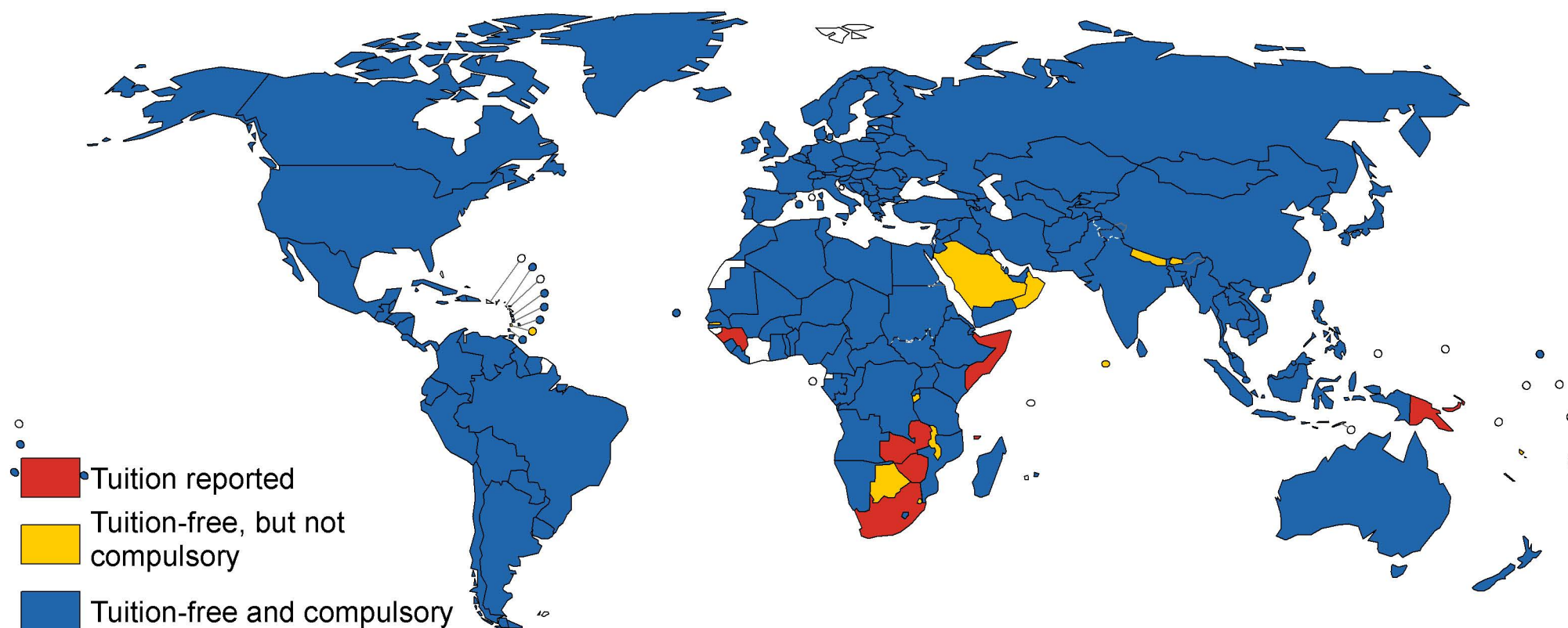
Map 5: Is beginning secondary education compulsory?



Map 6: Is completing secondary education compulsory?



Map 7: Is primary education tuition-free and compulsory?



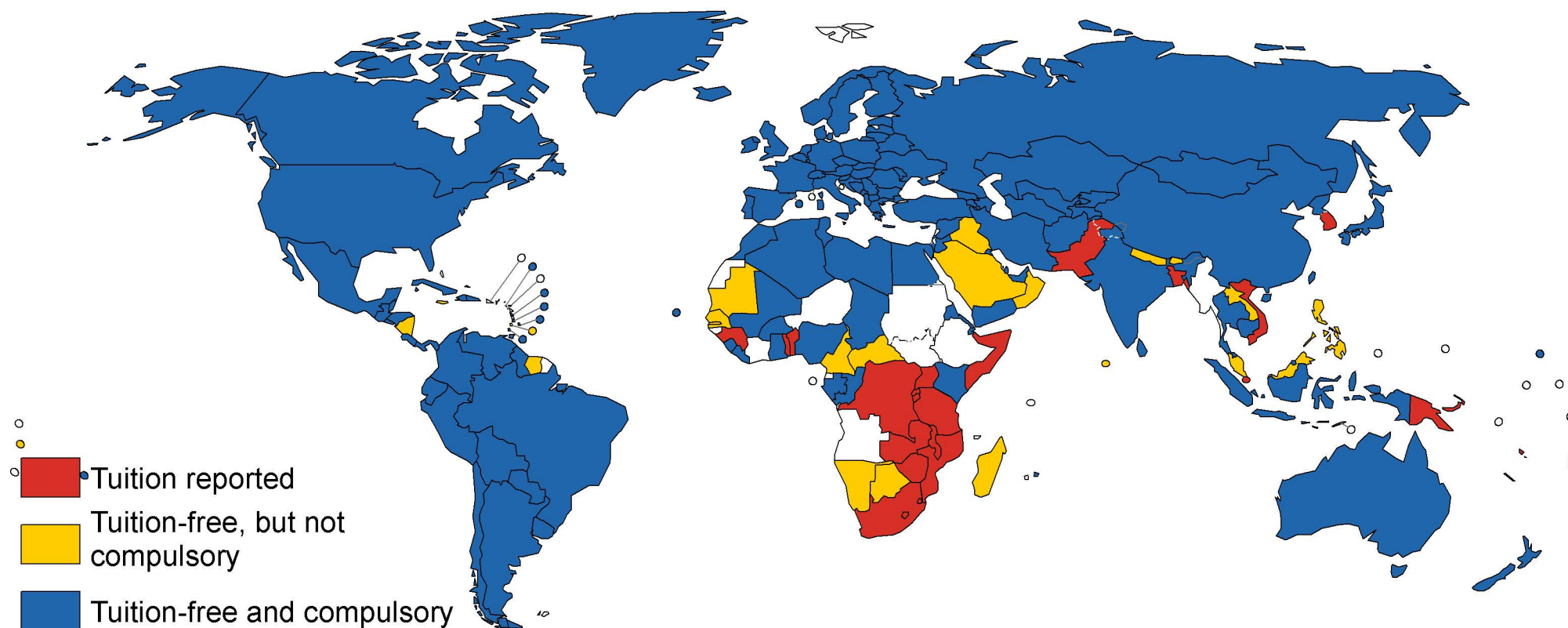
Tuition-free includes cases where no tuition is charged. Other fees may be charged.

Global data to compare additional fees across countries is not available.

Senegal makes beginning primary school compulsory, but this requirement ceases before completion of primary school.

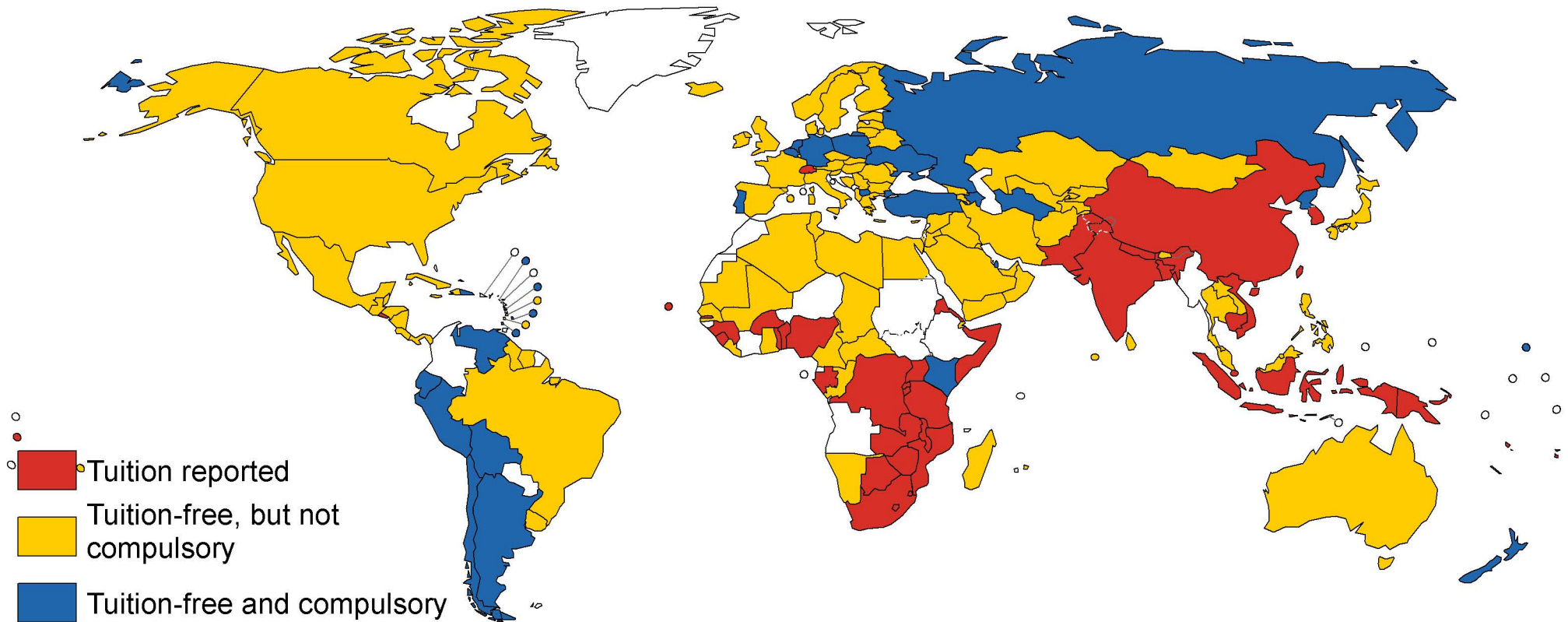
In all other countries where primary school is compulsory, it is compulsory for the duration.

Map 8: Is beginning secondary education tuition-free and compulsory?



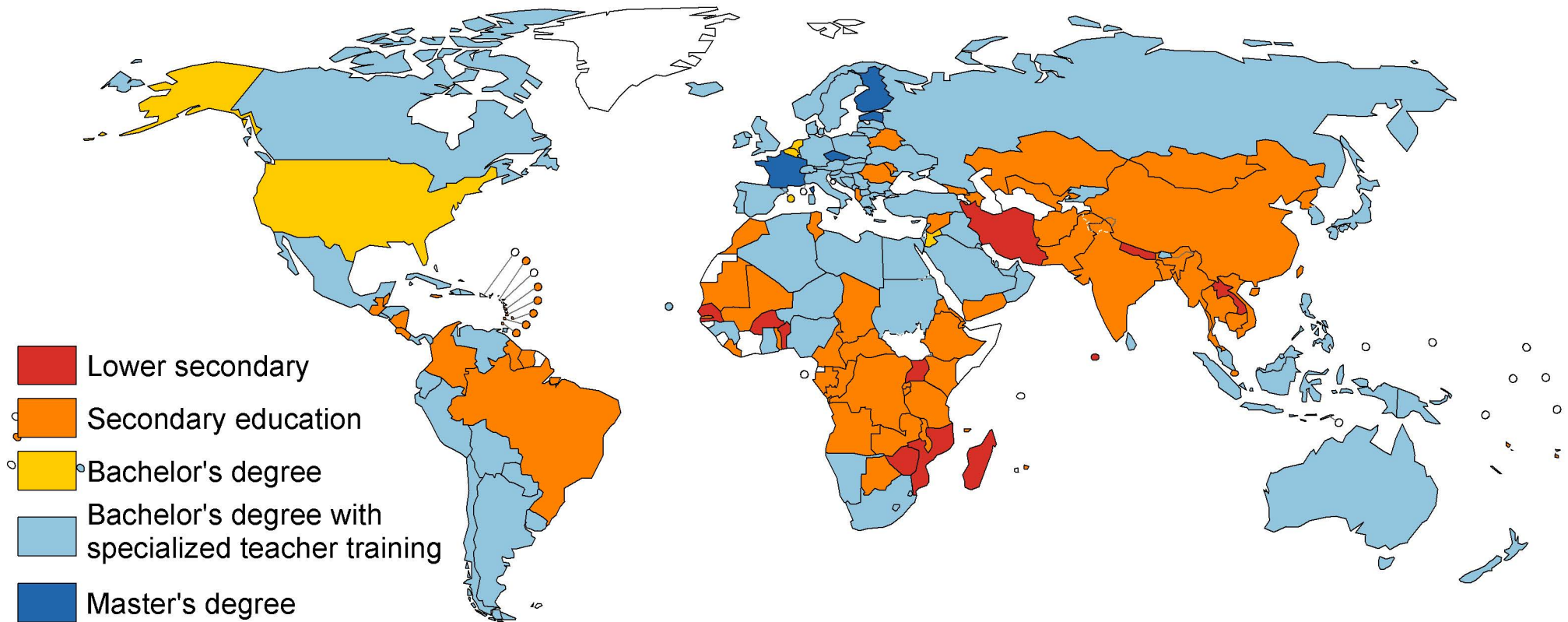
Tuition-free includes cases where no tuition is charged. Other fees may be charged.
Global data to compare additional fees across countries is not available.

Map 9: Is completing secondary education tuition-free and compulsory?



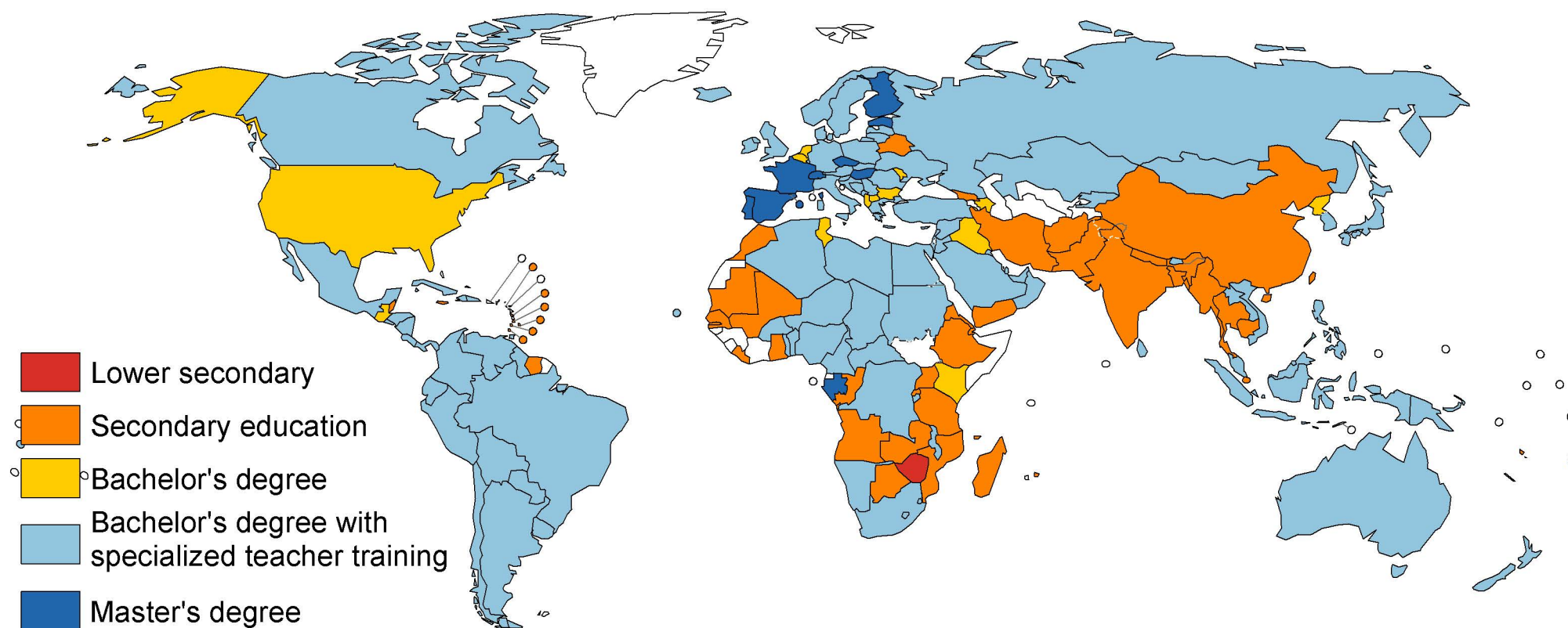
Tuition-free includes cases where no tuition is charged. Other fees may be charged.
Global data to compare additional fees across countries is not available.

Map 10: How much education must primary-school teachers complete?



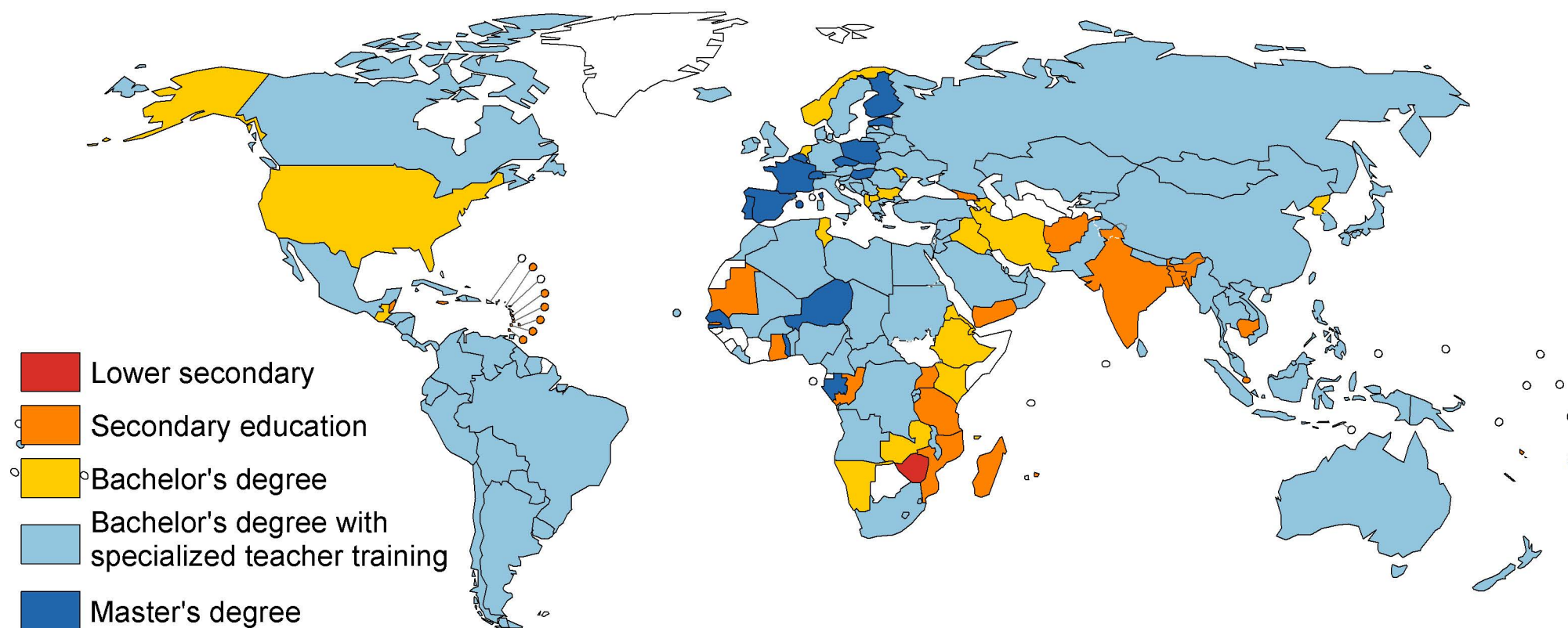
Lower secondary, secondary education, bachelor's, and master's degree include countries that require a teacher to have completed no more than that level of education, whether or not they require specialized teacher training. Bachelor's degree with specialized teacher training includes a bachelor of education or a general bachelor's with additional teacher training.

Map 11: How much education must lower-secondary-school teachers complete?



Lower secondary, secondary education, bachelor's, and master's degree include countries that require a teacher to have completed no more than that level of education, whether or not they require specialized teacher training. Bachelor's degree with specialized teacher training includes a bachelor of education or a general bachelor's with additional teacher training.

Map 12: How much education must upper-secondary-school teachers complete?



Lower secondary, secondary education, bachelor's, and master's degree include countries that require a teacher to have completed no more than that level of education, whether or not they require specialized teacher training. Bachelor's degree with specialized teacher training includes a bachelor of education or a general bachelor's with additional teacher training.