

## CHAPTER V

# DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND LOCATION

### INTRODUCTION

UNHCR and its partners recognize that women, men, girls and boys have common, but also specific, protection needs. They work towards ensuring that every person of concern, especially those groups which are most at risk, are properly monitored in order to provide them with the appropriate assistance and protection. As such, UNHCR is fully committed to developing policies to protect refugee children and ensure gender equality. In order to monitor those groups, UNHCR encourages its offices to collect and provide sex and age-disaggregated information in their various reporting requirements and processes. In addition to demographic information, UNHCR offices are also called upon to collect location-disaggregated data (e.g. by camps, urban areas etc.) because protection and assistance gaps and needs are different across countries and types of locations. Information on demographic and geographical characteristics of UNHCR's population of concern is therefore critical for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating humanitarian support and programmes.

Although the available demographic, and to a lesser extent geographic, information on persons of concern to UNHCR is still partial, and tends to be variable across countries and population categories, the recent years have witnessed an improved data coverage, especially with the increasing use of data derived from UNHCR's registration software *proGres*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the data coverage tends to be high for refugees and returnees and low for stateless persons and IDPs. It is also higher in camps than in urban and rural locations.

The primary source of UNHCR's demographic and location data is the Annual Statistical Report compiled by UNHCR offices and available for some 150 countries. Most of the data originates from UNHCR registration processes, government sources and estimations made by NGOs and various other partners. In 2006, demographic data was reported by over 115 countries, hosting more than 75 per cent of the total population of concern to UNHCR. Not all countries, however, were able to provide a complete breakdown by sex and age. In fact, a complete breakdown by sex is available for only 70 countries, representing 10.3 million persons of concern. The corresponding values for age data are 52 countries and 4.6 million persons of concern. Most demographic information is available from countries where UNHCR has an operational role. The countries without any demographic information are in most cases industrialized countries where governments are responsible for data collection. The absence of demographic data in most industrialized countries and the incomplete data on sex and age in many other countries bias the demographic profile of persons of concern. For instance, with the industrialized countries under-represented, UNHCR statistics show a relatively high presence of children and few older refugees which reflects the general demographic profile of developing countries.

This chapter presents demographic and location characteristics of UNHCR's persons of concern for which data are available. The first part describes the sex and age data

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<sup>1</sup> Profile Global Registration System. See also Chapter I for more details.

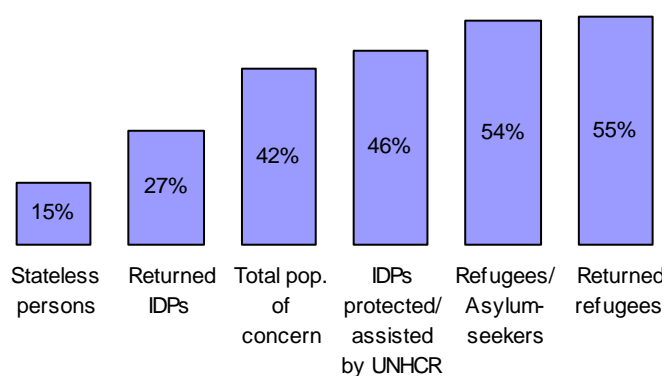
availability as well as distribution by population category for countries which have reported such data. The second part analyses statistics on the location of the population of concern, i.e. the type of location in which refugees and other populations live. This includes camps/centres, urban or rural/dispersed locations.

## SEX AND AGE

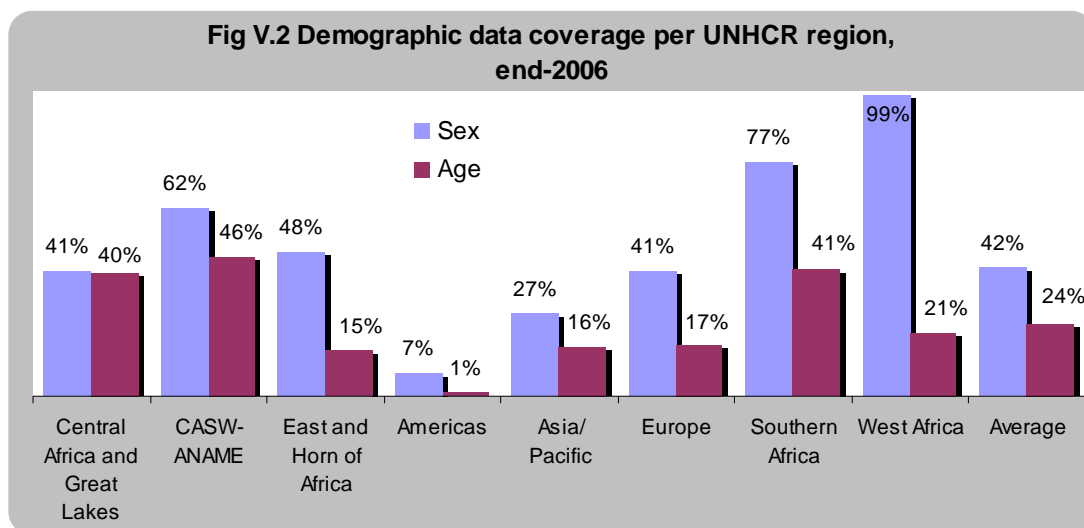
In absolute terms, the availability of demographic data (data coverage) on the population of concern has increased from 11.1 million in 2005 to 13.9 million the year later. In relative terms, however, the data coverage by sex has decreased from 53 to 42 per cent while the corresponding figure for the age breakdown decreased from 28 to 24 per cent. The main reason for this development is the sharp increase in UNHCR's total population of concern, as a consequence of an unprecedented increase in IDPs included in UNHCR statistics, and whose demographic data is weak or inexistent.

In addition to the available data not being fully representative of the total population of concern, the partial data coverage also hides marked differences across different types of populations. For instance, information on the breakdown by sex for refugees/asylum-seekers (54%) and returned refugees (55%) is much higher than for stateless persons (15%) and other groups (see Figure V.1). Taking into account only the demographic data that has been reported to UNHCR by the end of 2006, refugees and IDPs are the main population groups where data is available. This is not surprising given the fact that these two populations form 69 per cent of UNHCR's population of concern.

**Fig V.1 Availability of demographic data by population category, end-2006**

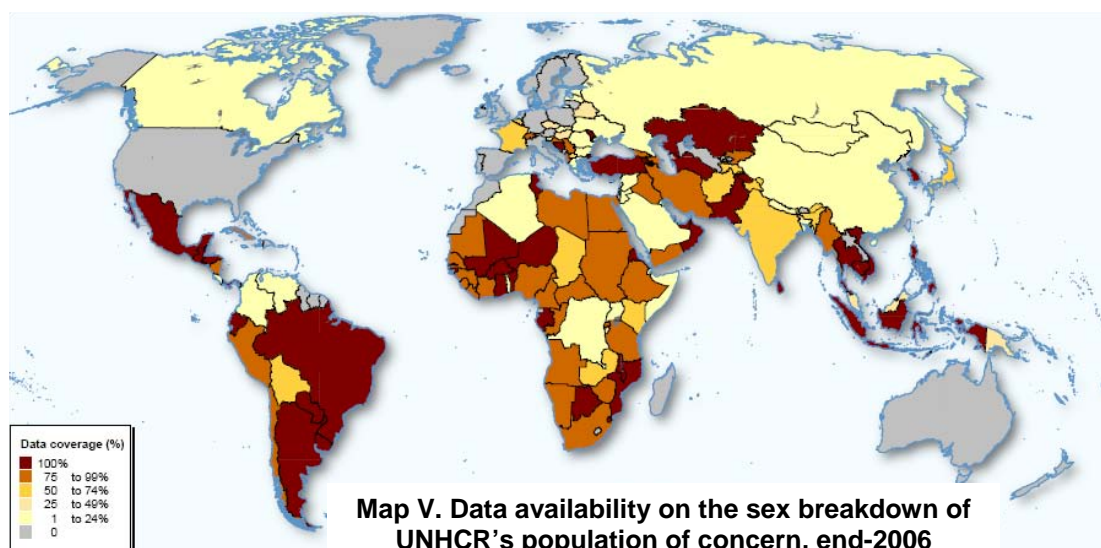


**Fig V.2 Demographic data coverage per UNHCR region, end-2006**

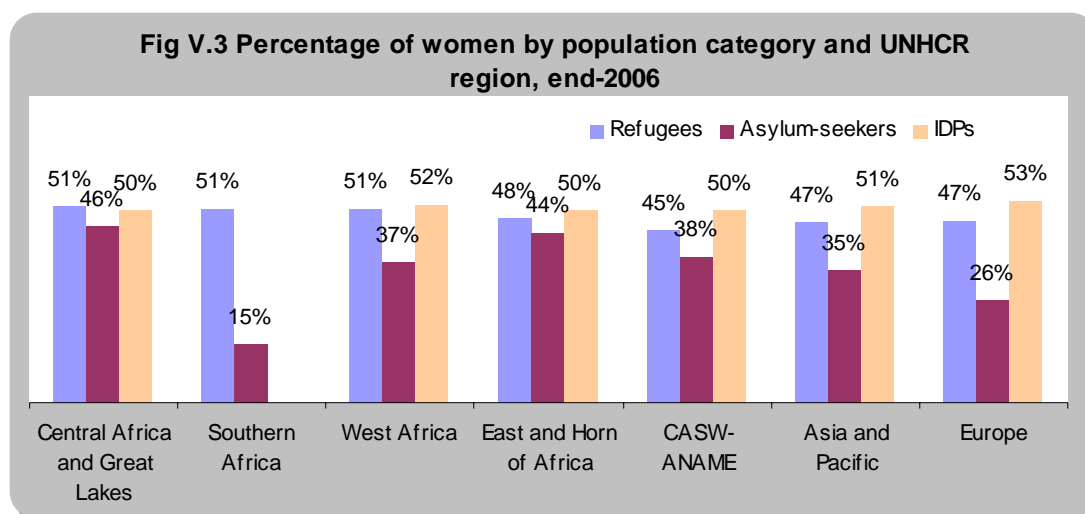


Data on the sex distribution of persons of concern at the end of 2006 was available for only 42 per cent of the overall population of concern against 53 per cent in 2005. Roughly half of these are female (49%), although the proportions vary greatly depending on the refugee situation, region of asylum, age distribution etc.

As already indicated, the availability of demographic information is particularly limited for developed countries in Europe, North America and Oceania with some major asylum countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States of America having provided only limited or no demographic information at all.



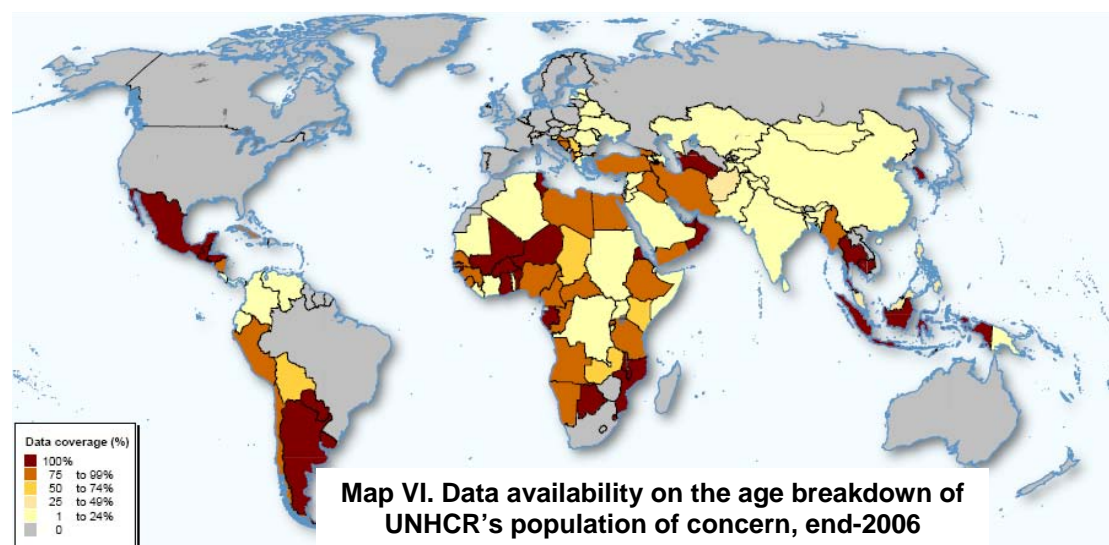
Map V shows the percentage of data broken down by sex available per country of asylum. It refers to the entire population of concern to UNHCR in the country and is thus not limited to one population group only. As such, it clearly confirms the limited coverage in industrialized countries as compared to the coverage in the developing world.



Although not fully representative, the available information indicates that women represent the majority of returnees (51%), IDPs (51%) and stateless persons (51%). In contrast, they represent only 46 per cent of refugees and asylum-seekers. The sex distribution broken down by UNHCR region also shows important differences. In Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, West Africa and countries falling under UNHCR's Bureau for Europe, women represent the majority of persons of concern (51% each). Conversely, they represent between 44 and 49 per cent in all other regions with the exception of Southern Africa where on average only one out of three persons of concern (34%) is a woman.

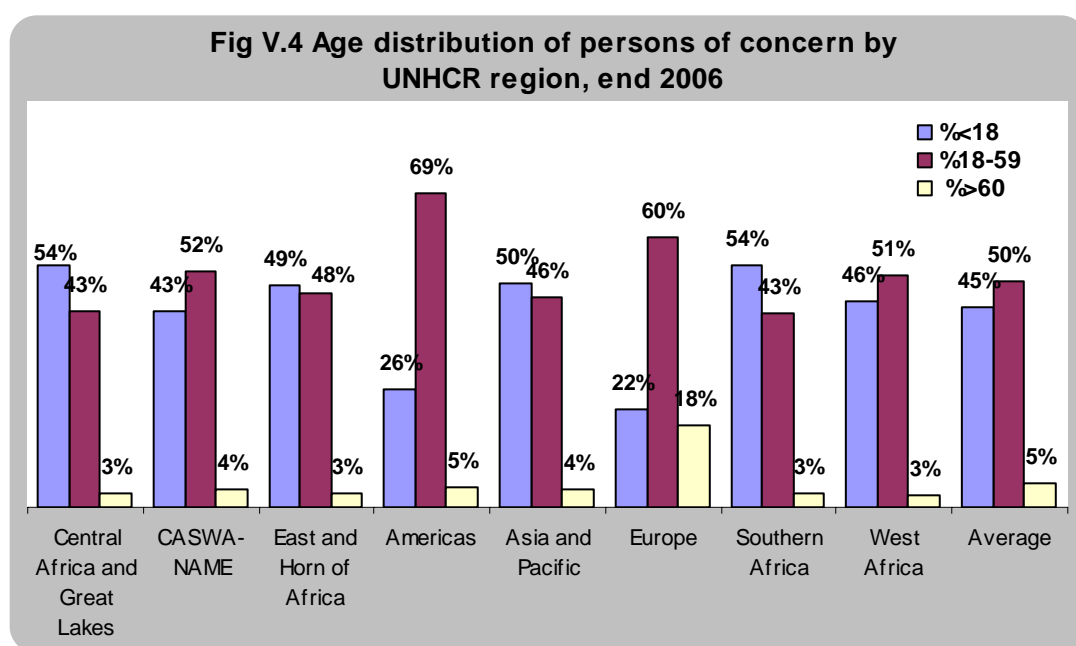
Information on the age breakdown itself was available for only about one quarter (24% or 7.8 million persons) of persons of concern (see *Map VI below*). The availability of data on age has improved considerably. In absolute terms, in 2006,

breakdown by age was available for an estimated 2 million persons more than in 2005, when such data was available for only 5.8 million individuals. As highlighted above, considering that most demographic data is available on refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and others of concern living in developing countries, these figures are not fully representative for the entire population of concern to the Office.



On average, some 45 per cent of these 7.8 million persons of concern for which age data is available are children under the age of 18, with 11 per cent being under the age of 5 and 19 per cent between 5 and 11 years. Half of the population (50%) is between the ages of 18 and 59 years, whereas 5 per cent are 60 years old or more.

The regional analysis in Figure V.4 shows that children and adolescents represent the majority of persons of concern in UNHCR's regions of Central Africa and Great Lakes and Southern Africa (54% each) and around half (49%) in the East and Horn of Africa. The lowest proportion of children is found in the Americas region (26%). The larger proportion of elderly persons of concern (18%) is hosted in countries covered by the Europe Bureau, constituting at least three times more than the figures found in any other region. The range in all other regions varies between 3 and 5 per cent.



## LOCATION

Although the precise number of locations is difficult to establish, in 2006, UNHCR offices identified over 1,100 different locations, including over 310 camps/centres and 460 urban locations, hosting an estimated 13.4 million persons of concern or 41 per cent out of the 32.9 million total population under the Office's competency. Among the 13.4 million persons reported, 3.7 million live in camps, 5.1 million in urban areas and 4.6 million in rural areas dispersed among the local population. The type of location was unclear or unknown for about 58 per cent of the population of concern to UNHCR.

**Table V.a Distribution of persons of concern by type of settlement and region, end-2006**

UNHCR region	Camps	Rural	Urban
Central Africa/Great Lakes	17%	15%	1%
Southern Africa	3%	2%	4%
West Africa	3%	12%	14%
East/Horn of Africa	30%	38%	21%
CASWANAME	35%	3%	34%
Americas	0%	0%	1%
Asia/Pacific	10%	17%	4%
Europe	2%	13%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%

*This table excludes populations where the location is unknown.*

Due to the changes in the statistical reporting format in 2006, it is difficult to provide a trend analysis by type of location, with the exception of camp populations, which have remained relatively stable over the last three years. With 3.9 million persons of concern in 2004 and 3.6 million in 2005, the number of persons living in camps for whom data is available has slightly increased in

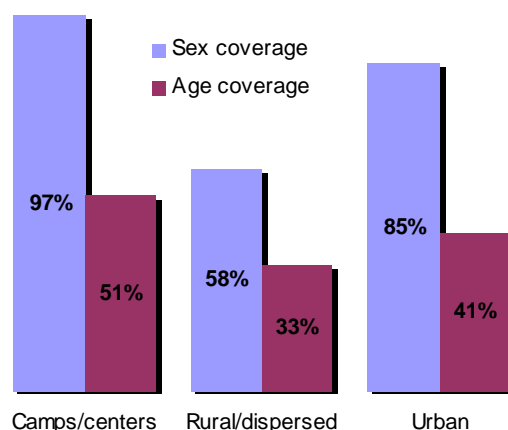
2006 (3.7 million), but has remained lower than for 2004. People residing in camps are mainly located in countries covered by the UNHCR Bureaux for Africa (53%) and for CASWANAME (35%). Within Africa, most camp residents are located within the East and Horn of Africa (1.1 million or 30 per cent of camp residents worldwide) and the Central Africa and Great Lakes region (some 630,000 persons or 17 per cent of camp residents worldwide). Within the CASWANAME Bureau, Pakistan hosts by far the largest number of refugees living in camps within the region, and also in the world. As noted, industrialized countries, where asylum-seekers are often placed in reception or detention centres, are generally not included in these data. Countries covered by the Regional Bureau of Asia and Pacific host the third largest camp population with 360,000 persons of concern, primarily located in India and Thailand.

In 2006, for the first time since at least 2000, persons of concern living in urban areas outnumbered those living in camps, due to three main factors. The first reason is the inclusion in UNHCR statistics of some 900,000 IDPs who reside in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. A second factor is the reclassification of Afghan refugees living in the Islamic Republic of Iran whose location has now been reported as urban, as compared to previous years where it was rural/dispersed. The third reason for an increase in urban populations of concern to UNHCR is the number of Iraqi refugees residing in Jordanian and Syrian cities. Because of the latter, over one third (34%) of all persons of concern living in urban agglomerations are residing in countries covered by UNHCR's CASWANAME region making it the second largest regional Bureau, after Africa which hosts 40 per cent of all urban residents, and followed by countries falling under the Europe Bureau (20%).

Over two third (67%) of refugees and other persons of concern located in rural settings are hosted by African countries, mainly by the regions of East and Horn of Africa (38%), Central Africa and the Great Lakes (15%), as well as West Africa (12%). The Asia and Pacific region hosts the second largest rural caseload (17%) followed by countries falling under the Europe Bureau (13%), which primarily refers to countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Serbia.

The sub-regional analysis of the 2006 data in African countries reveals some hidden patterns. In West Africa, persons of concern are predominantly located in urban areas (51%) and only a few in camps (9%). The contrary can be observed in the Central Africa and the Great Lakes region where only 2 per cent reside in urban locations but one fifth (21%) in camps and 23 per cent in rural areas. In the East and Horn of Africa region, however, persons of concern are mainly in rural areas (37%), while the remaining are equitably distributed between camps (24%) and urban locations (23%). In contrast, in the CASWANAME region, the predominant location type is urban (22%) and camps (17%). Here, only 2 per cent were reported as living in rural areas.

**Fig V.5 Sex and age coverage by type of settlement, end-2006**



As UNHCR is either carrying out, or is at least involved in, most camp data collection exercises, information on sex and age is much more available for camps (97% for sex and 51% for age) than for urban (58% and 33% respectively) and rural locations (85% and 41%). The data coverage of information by sex for camps is close to ideal because of the use of UNHCR's registration software *proGres*.

Looking at the availability of age data in camps, countries falling under the CASWANAME and Europe Bureaux have less than 30 per cent coverage while all other regions have at least 60 per cent. As already highlighted in the 2005 Statistical Yearbook, the situation in Asia is particularly complex since availability of data broken down by sex tends to be high, while information on age is still very low. This clearly is a large gap that needs to be addressed through more efficient data collection mechanisms.

In camps, sex and age disaggregated data is available for 3.6 and 1.9 million respectively on UNHCR's persons of concern. Although women represent on average half of the persons of concern for whom demographic data is available, their proportion tends to be higher in camps and rural locations and lower in urban settings. Women represent the majority in camps in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region (54%) and West Africa (52%). They are also predominantly represented in rural locations of Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Southern and West Africa. Women are, however, highly under-represented in urban areas, especially in the CASWANAME region (41%), Asia and Pacific (34%), as well as Southern Africa (only 16%).

The age distribution by type of location indicates that camp populations are younger, as compared to persons of concern living in rural or urban settings. Moreover, camps located in developing countries show a higher proportion of children. Children below the age of 5 represent on average 18 per cent of UNHCR's population of concern in camps in Africa for which data on age and sex are available, followed by the Asia and Pacific (12%) and CASWANAME (10%) regions. The lowest rates, however, are observed in Europe (4%). In contrast, camps in more developed countries host fewer children, but more elderly refugees.

Available data also suggests that children below the age of 18 represent more than half (55%) of the camp populations in Africa and 49 per cent in Oceania while they represent only 2 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 21 per cent in

Europe. In contrast, Europe hosts many more elderly people (18%) compared to other regions which have on average between 3 and 4 per cent of people over 60 years of age. Data also indicate that 10 per cent of elderly persons in the Americas live in rural areas as compared to only 3 per cent in urban locations.

Table V.b shows that people living in urban locations tend to be older than those living in camps. In Africa, for instance, on average over 60 per cent of the urban caseload is composed of adults or elder persons as compared to less than half in the camps. Some of the data presented in this table should, however, be considered with caution because some of the percentages are influenced by the relatively small numbers of persons of concern for whom age and sex information is available.

Location type	UNHCR region	%FEMALE	%<5	%5-11	%12-17	%<18	%18-59	%>60	Age-coverage	Sex-coverage
Camps, etc.	Central Africa/ Great Lakes	54%	19%	24%	17%	59%	38%	3%	100%	100%
	Southern Africa	50%	20%	15%	20%	55%	42%	3%	98%	100%
	West Africa	52%	11%	21%	17%	49%	48%	3%	100%	100%
	East and Horn of Africa	49%	15%	20%	15%	50%	46%	3%	60%	99%
	CASWANAME	49%	10%	23%	14%	47%	50%	3%	5%	93%
	Asia/Pacific	49%	12%	17%	15%	43%	52%	5%	79%	100%
	Europe	50%	4%	11%	11%	25%	58%	17%	26%	92%
Rural/disp.	Central Africa/ Great Lakes	48%	13%	20%	15%	48%	49%	3%	73%	73%
	Southern Africa	55%	23%	16%	16%	54%	41%	5%	51%	51%
	West Africa	51%	15%	19%	14%	48%	49%	3%	10%	99%
	East and Horn of Africa	50%	..	..	..	..	..	..	0%	9%
	CASWANAME	50%	20%	24%	13%	58%	39%	3%	59%	100%
	Americas	46%	12%	15%	16%	44%	46%	10%	100%	100%
	Asia/Pacific	51%	14%	24%	17%	55%	41%	4%	86%	86%
	Europe	52%	1%	9%	10%	20%	59%	20%	22%	100%
Urban	Central Africa/ Great Lakes	49%	10%	24%	8%	42%	53%	5%	87%	87%
	Southern Africa	16%	8%	13%	15%	36%	62%	1%	6%	80%
	West Africa	51%	10%	15%	16%	41%	56%	2%	16%	100%
	East and Horn of Africa	50%	6%	12%	13%	31%	66%	3%	4%	90%
	CASWANAME	41%	8%	23%	12%	43%	54%	3%	74%	76%
	Americas	45%	6%	7%	7%	21%	76%	3%	44%	100%
	Asia/Pacific	34%	7%	6%	9%	22%	76%	2%	31%	38%
	Europe	50%	3%	10%	11%	23%	60%	17%	44%	96%