

CHAPTER V

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND LOCATION

INTRODUCTION

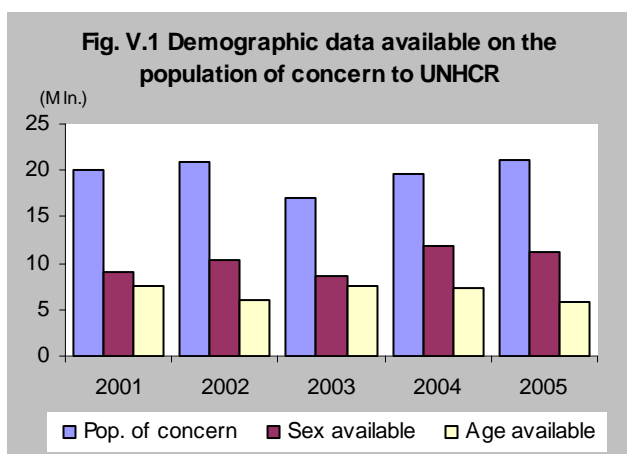
The need to address the specific situation of displaced women and children have led UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations to pay increased attention to demographic data over the past years. Indeed, issues such as sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), equal access to services for women, women's participation in assistance programmes and unaccompanied and separated children, have risen to the top of the humanitarian agenda. Many recent initiatives have been taken to address women and children's issues, including the release of the "Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Emergencies" by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (September 2005), and the creation of a working group by the UN Security Council to address the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

UNHCR policy priorities on gender equality, children, including adolescents, and older refugees require the availability of age - and sex - disaggregated data of the people of concern and their geographic distribution. Location data is therefore crucial to identify gaps in interventions, as well as within and between country differences. Information on demographic and geographical characteristics of UNHCR's population of concern is critical for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating humanitarian support and programmes. Unfortunately, there is currently a lack of reliable and complete statistics on sex, age and, to a lesser extent, geographic distribution of UNHCR's populations of concern.

UNHCR compiles demographic and location data using annual statistical reports from some 150 countries. In 2005, complete or partial demographic data was reported by 83 per cent of the countries, the latter covering about 89 per cent of the total population of concern to UNHCR. Not all countries, however, are able to provide a complete breakdown by sex and age of the population of concern. In fact, complete breakdown by sex is available in only 27 per cent of all countries whereas the corresponding value for age data is 19 per cent. Most demographic information is available from countries where UNHCR has an operational role. The 27 countries without any demographic information are mostly 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 most other countries affects not only global demographic profiling but also programme planning. 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 has two main parts. The first part presents demographic characteristics, mainly sex and age, for countries which have reported such data. The second part contains statistics on the location of the population of concern, i.e. the type of settlement in which refugees and other populations live. This includes camps/centres, urban or rural/dispersed settlements.

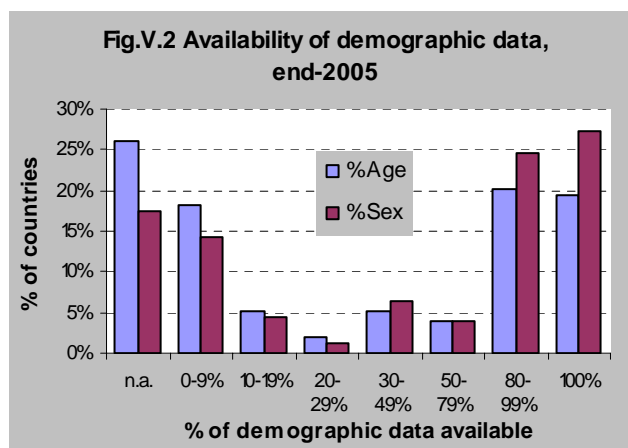
SEX AND AGE



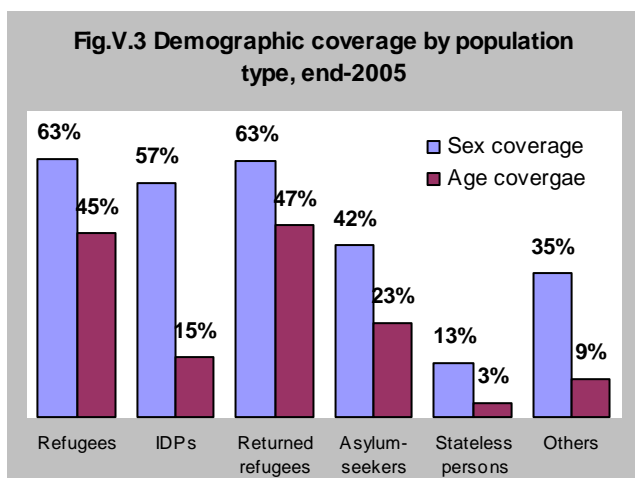
Demographic information on UNHCR's population of concern is not available for all countries. At the end of 2005, data by sex were available for roughly half of the population of concern to the Office (53%) and by age for about one quarter (28%) (see Fig.V.1). The availability of information is particularly limited for industrialized countries in Europe, North America and Oceania but information tends to be more complete in countries where

UNHCR has an operational role. This should be kept in mind when interpreting demographic characteristics. Major asylum countries, including South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, have provided only limited or no demographic information.

Figure V.2 shows the distribution of countries according to the availability of data on sex and age. In 18 per cent of countries, mostly industrialized ones, there is no information on breakdown by sex. Similarly, no age information is available for 26 per cent of the countries and for the remaining countries, only partial demographic information is available, reflecting mainly different statistical systems and reporting procedures according to the category of population of concern. In spite of UNHCR efforts to compile such characteristics, most countries lack the capacity to collect or report them.



It is however worth mentioning that countries with 80-100 per cent coverage of sex and age data represent 52 and 40 per cent respectively of all countries, resulting in an improved coverage compared to 2004. In the absence of data in some countries, UNHCR estimates the demographic breakdown based on previous years data or other available information including NGO surveys.

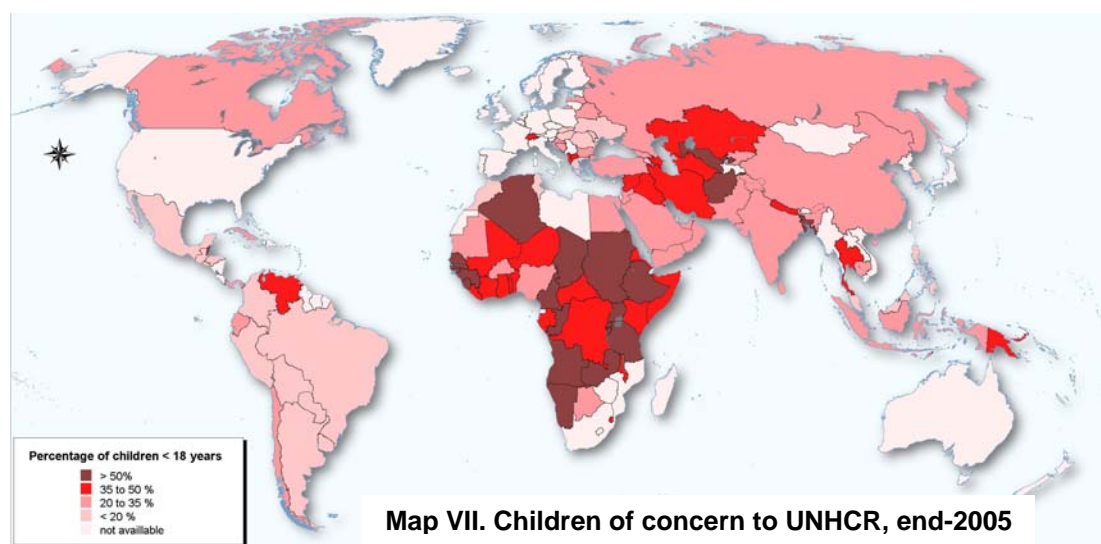


Even the partial data coverage hides marked differences across different types of populations. Data availability on breakdown by sex for refugees, returned refugees and IDPs is much higher than for asylum-seekers and other

groups (see Fig.V.3). In contrast, for asylum-seekers the age coverage is better than for instance for IDPs. In reality, refugees represent half (49%) and IDPs 34 per cent of the more than 11.1 million persons of concern for whom information by sex is available, while the corresponding values for age are 68 and 17 per cent respectively. In general, most countries have demographic information primarily on refugees and returnees.

The breakdown by sex, available for 11.1 million out of the 21 million persons of concern to UNHCR, indicates that roughly half of them are female (49%) and that this balance is common to all regions and groups. The proportion of female refugees varies however greatly, depending, for example, on the nature of the refugee situation, the region of asylum or age. For instance, in countries with mass refugee situations, the proportion of female refugees tends to be around 50 per cent. The percentage of females among asylum-seekers, however, is significantly lower both in developing as well as developed countries. Moreover, women are over-represented in the older age category (60 years and older). The over-representation of women in this group (53%) probably reflects among other factors the higher life expectancy of women in general.

The available information on the breakdown by age of UNHCR's population of concern, covering some 5.8 million persons, suggests that these persons tend to be young. The data indicates that some 44 per cent are children under the age of 18, whereas 12 per cent are under the age of five. Half of them (50%) are aged between 18 and 59, whereas six per cent are 60 years old or more. As highlighted above, considering that most demographic data are available on refugees, asylum-seekers and others of concern living in developing countries, these figures are not fully representative for the entire population of concern to the Office.



Regional analysis of available data indicates that Africa is the only region where more than half (53%) of the persons of concern are under the age of 18. The proportion of refugee children is significantly lower in Asia (43%), Europe (22%), Latin America and the Caribbean (25%), and North America (22%)¹. Children under five represent one out of six (17%) of the population of concern in Africa, 12 per cent in Oceania (mainly in Papua New Guinea) and 10 per cent in Asia (see Map VII).

Higher fertility rates and presumably the death of many parents during armed conflict

¹ The data refers mainly to asylum-seekers in Canada.

in developing countries may be among the main factors for the observed age configuration. The relatively low proportion of children in Europe (22%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (25%) generally reflects the lower birth rates prevalent in these regions. In addition, the low proportion of children in some countries might reflect age-selective refugee movements to urban locations and industrialized countries.

Countries with low birth rates tend to have a relative high proportion of older persons. This demographic process, referred to as ageing, is also reflected in the refugee population. The proportion of refugees aged 60 years and over is significant in Europe (18%), but only three to five per cent in the rest of the UN major areas.

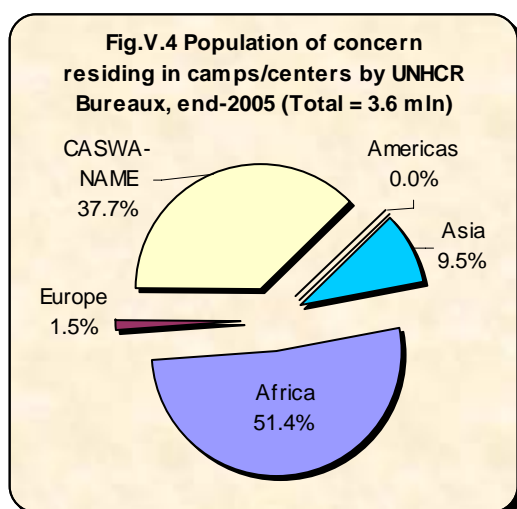
LOCATION

UNHCR protection and assistance programmes are generally implemented at the field level. A key question in every project is the settlement pattern of the assisted population: are refugees living in camps, in urban areas or in rural areas among the local population? The exact numbers of refugee camps and people living in them are difficult to establish, for many reasons, including the lack of definition and the dynamic of camps. Should a camp have a minimum size or population density? Should camps have a clearly marked perimeter? Should detention centres, transit centres, collective centres and settlements be considered as camps? Moreover, reliable camp statistics may not always be available due to lack of UNHCR access or presence.

Given the temporary nature of many camps, it is difficult to compare camp statistics over years. For statistical purposes, refugee centres, including detention and transit centres in industrialized countries, or other collective settlements are grouped under the term "camp/centre".

The 2005 Yearbook provides demographic data disaggregated by age and sex at the camp level as well as for urban locations.

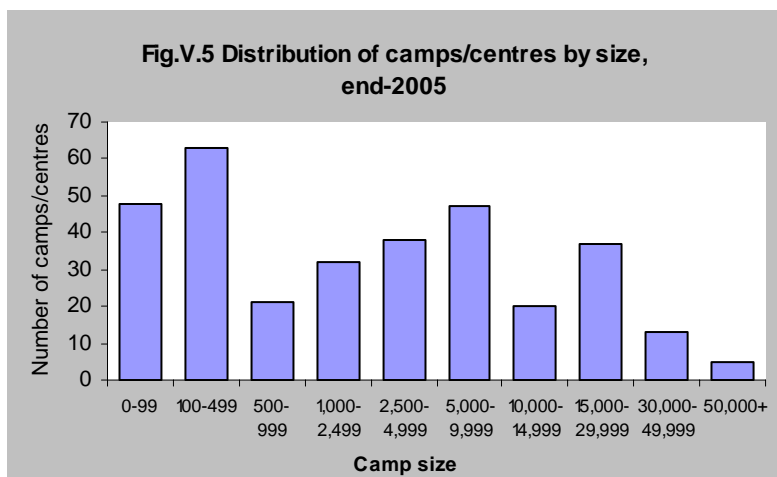
In 2005, the type of location was reported for some 14.2 million persons in 129, mainly non-industrialized countries. This represents 77 per cent of the total population of concern. Of these, 3.6 million were residing in camps or centres (26%), 2.5 million (18%) in urban areas, whereas 8.1 million persons (56%) were either living in rural areas among the local population or their type of settlement was unknown.



People residing in camps are mainly located in countries covered by the UNHCR Bureaux of Africa (51%) and CASWANA (38%). Within Africa, most camp residents are located within the East and Horn of Africa as well as Central Africa and Great Lakes regions (some 700,000 persons each). Within the CASWANA Bureau, Pakistan hosts not only the by far largest number of refugees living in camps within the region but in the world. As noted, industrialized countries, where asylum-seekers are often hosted in reception or detention centres are generally not

included in these data.

In 2005, UNHCR received information on over 320 locations classified as camps or centres. The average camp size was around 7,600 residents with a large variation in



population size (this excludes the camps in Pakistan, for which no information was provided). Four out of 10 camps (132 camps or 41%) had fewer than 1,000 residents, about half (51%) had less than 2,500 residents while 75 camps (23% of all camps) hosted more than 10,000 residents.

The biggest camps with more than 50,000 persons include Kakuma (Kenya, 95,000), Lugufu (United Rep. of Tanzania, 91,000), Tindouf (Algeria, 90,000), Nyarugusu (United Rep. of Tanzania, 59,000), and Adjumani (Uganda, 52,000). It should be noted that while nominally classified as one camp, some of these camps are composed of smaller ones administered by the same office.

All location types combined, women represent 49 per cent of the 18-59 years group where data is available. However, the percentage of females differs depending on the location: it is 51 per cent in camps and 48 per cent in urban areas.

As UNHCR is involved in most camp data collection exercises, sex and age data availability is much better for camps than for urban locations, with the coverage of breakdown by sex for camps close to ideal (91%). However, there are large regional differences ranging from 100 per cent coverage in Latin America and the Caribbean to only one third coverage (33%) in Oceania. In Africa and Asia, the availability of data on the breakdown by sex of refugees and other persons of concern remains very high (90%).

Looking at the coverage of age data in camps, Latin America and the Caribbean (100%) and Africa (89%) show a significantly better result than Asia (24%) and Oceania (33%). The situation of Asia is particularly complex as it shows that for 68 per cent of the population of concern, data on sex is available but not on age. Clearly, this is a large gap that needs to be addressed through more efficient data collection mechanisms.

Data from major refugee camps and settlements indicate that most refugee camps have a balanced sex ratio, between 48 and 50 per cent, with the exception of Latin America and the Caribbean where the percentage of female refugees amounts to 58 per cent. Camps located in developing countries show a higher proportion of children. In contrast, camps in more developed countries host fewer children, but more elderly refugees. Children below five represent 18 per cent of UNHCR's population of concern in African camps for which data on age and sex are available. Africa is followed by Oceania (12%) and Asia (11%) while the lowest rates are observed in Europe (3%). Available data also suggest that children below 18 represent more than half (55%) of the population in camps in Africa and 49 per cent in Oceania while they represent only two per cent in Latin America and 21 per cent in

the Caribbean and Europe respectively. In contrast, Europe hosts much more elderly people (18%) compared to other regions which have on average between three and four per cent of people above 60 years.

Urban locations are considerably smaller than camps or centres. In 2005, the over 270 urban locations with at least 10 persons of concern to UNHCR hosted on average 4,700 persons. It is however important to note that, similar to camps, the term "urban" is not very well defined and sometimes might include several settlements or towns in a province or district. At the end of 2005, over 190 urban locations hosted fewer than 1,000 persons, while some 86 locations hosted more than 1,000 persons. The sex ratio is less balanced in urban locations, varying from 31 per cent females in Africa to 51 per cent in Asia.

Camp data								
UN major area	Age group					% FEMALE	Age-coverage	Sex-coverage
	%<5	%5-17	%<18	%18-59	%>60			
Africa	18%	37%	55%	42%	3%	50%	88.5%	91.3%
Asia	11%	34%	45%	51%	4%	49%	23.7%	92.0%
Europe	3%	19%	21%	60%	18%	48%	67.5%	83.0%
Latin Am./Caribbean	0%	2%	2%	95%	3%	58%	100.0%	100.0%
Oceania	12%	37%	49%	47%	4%	48%	33.3%	33.3%
Grand Total	17%	36%	53%	43%	3%	50%	58.9%	91.4%
Urban data								
UN major area	Age group					% FEMALE	Age-coverage	Sex-coverage
	%<5	%5-17	%<18	%18-59	%>60			
Africa	9%	27%	35%	63%	2%	31%	35.9%	64.6%
Asia	7%	23%	30%	62%	8%	51%	55.8%	79.6%
Europe	3%	20%	23%	61%	17%	49%	73.4%	97.2%
Latin Am./Caribbean	6%	18%	24%	69%	7%	42%	77.0%	99.2%
Oceania	25%	13%	38%	63%	0%	38%	0.3%	0.3%
Northern America	6%	15%	22%	75%	3%	43%	100.0%	100.0%
Grand Total	6%	22%	28%	62%	10%	47%	56.7%	81.3%

When analyzing Table V.a above, it appears that refugee women in Africa and Latin American and the Caribbean tend to be located in camps (50% and 58% respectively) than in urban locations (31% and 42% respectively). The contrary is observed in Asia where 49 per cent of refugee women are living in camps compared to 51 per cent in locations defined as urban.

The available data suggests that people living in urban locations tend to be older than those living in camps. In Africa, for instance, only nine per cent of urban refugees are children below the age of five as compared to 18 per cent in camps. Similarly, 35 per cent in urban areas in Africa are children under 18 years. This is in strong contrast to camps in Africa where the percentage of children below the age of 18 is much higher (55%). Some of the data presented in Table V.a 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, as is the case for Oceania.