

Introduction

Addressing the specific situation and needs of displaced women and girls as well as of refugees in urban areas requires close monitoring of demographic and location characteristics of refugees and other persons of concern. Issues such as unaccompanied and separated children, sexual and gender-based violence, the recruitment of child soldiers, girls' schooling, equal access to services for women and men, and the participation of refugee women in decision-making bodies can only be monitored if good sex and age-disaggregated data are available. Geographic location data is crucial for identifying gaps in interventions as well as interpreting legal and physical protection disparities between and within countries. Many recent initiatives such as the European Commission's *Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014)* and the *High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges for Refugees in Urban Areas (December 2009)* reflect the increasing needs for demographic and location disaggregated data.

Demographic and location information on displaced populations was not always available for all countries and population categories. This information was more available in countries where UNHCR is operationally active and less so in developed countries where States were responsible for data collection. Demographic information, in particular on the sex breakdown, was available for close to two-thirds of the population of concern only. The absence of refugee statistics by sex and age in most industrialized countries affected programme planning and biased the global demographic profile.

This chapter has two main parts. First it provides an overview of demographic data availability and highlights patterns related to age and sex characteristics of populations of concern. Second, it presents an analysis of the distribution of refugees by location with a special focus on refugees in urban settings. Finally, Box 10 sheds light on the gender-related specificities and characteristics of adult refugees.

Sex and age

UNHCR's effort to improve availability of demographic data yielded significant results in recent years. By the end of 2009, demographic data was available for close to 21.8 million persons of concern in over 140 countries. This is the highest number on record and was double the 2005 levels.

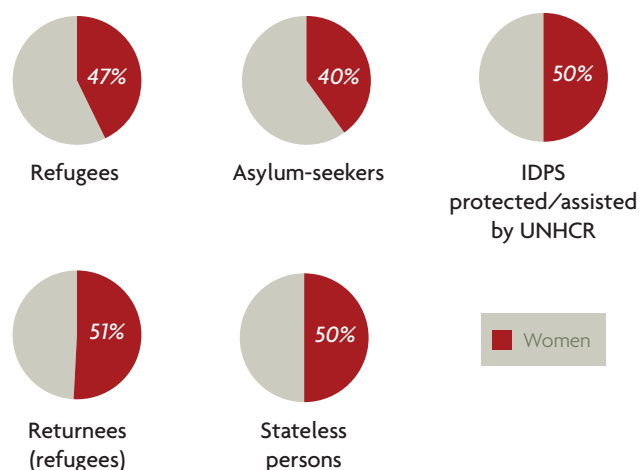
The availability of data varied depending on the population. It was high for refugees (76%), IDPs (78%), and refugee returnees (86%), and low for IDP returnees (13%), others of concern

(23%), and stateless persons (12%). The availability of data also differed by region. In Latin America and the Caribbean, demographic data was available for almost all populations of concern as compared to two-thirds only in Asia. In Africa, demographic information was known for slightly more than half of the population. The corresponding value was 43 per cent in Europe, an increase over 2008 due to the availability of new data from Germany.

Higher data coverage was the result of several factors, including use of UNHCR's registration software *proGres*. In addition, as part of the cluster approach, UNHCR and its partners have successfully conducted a number of IDP profiling exercises leading to more accurate IDP estimates in a number of countries. As a result, demographic information on IDPs was available for some 12.1 million as compared to 9.8 million in 2008.

The available data by sex (21.8 million people) indicated that women and girls made up nearly half of populations falling under UNHCR's responsibility (49%) in all regions. The lowest proportion of women and girls was among refugees in Europe (44%) and the highest in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region of Africa (53%). Women and girls represented slightly less than half (47%) of the refugees. The average figures, however, hid significant variations across population groups. Women and girls represented on average 51 per cent of returnees but hardly 40 per cent of asylum-seekers for which data was available. In Chad, for instance, refugee women and girls represented one-third (33%) of refugees in urban settings but up to 70 per cent of refugees in the Daha 1 camp.

Fig. V.1 Percentage of women by population category, end-2009



Information on the age breakdown was available for 14 million (38%) of the 36.5 million persons of concern to UNHCR. The availability of age data for refugees continued to be relatively high (72% coverage) due to the use of *proGRES*. Some 45 per cent of persons of concern to UNHCR were children under the age of 18 with 11 per cent being under the age of five. Half of the population was between the ages of 18 and 59 years, whereas five per cent were 60 years or older.

Among refugees and people in refugee-like situations, children constituted 41 per cent of the population. Their proportion was significantly higher among those refugees who were able to return home in 2009 (54%). This posed considerable challenges for reintegration programmes, in particular with respect to education in those locations where schools have been damaged or destroyed. In contrast, children constituted only 27 per cent of asylum-seekers, a population which traditionally has been dominated by single men, particularly in the industrialized world. The population was younger in camps (with 52 per cent being under 18) than in urban areas (only 43 per cent of children).

The availability of information according to the age breakdown was particularly limited for developed countries in Europe, North America and Oceania. Thus, the figures just summarized are not fully representative for the entire population under the Office's mandate.

Location

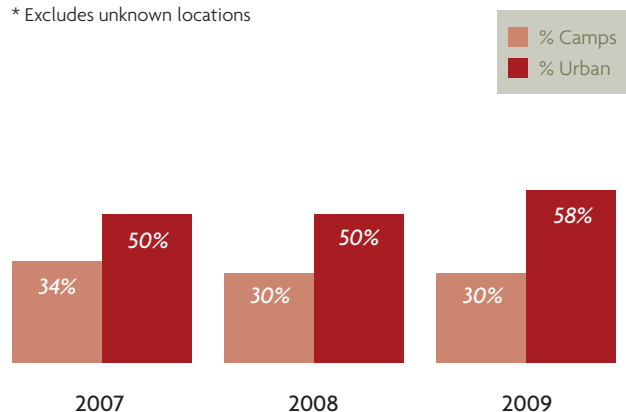
Persons of concern resided either in camps/settlements/centres, in urban settings or in rural areas, within host communities or in spontaneous sites. In 2009, the type of location was reported for some 29 million people residing mainly in non-industrialized countries, of which the settlement type for 14.1 million of persons of concern, mostly IDPs, was either unclear or was a mixture of types. The present analysis focuses on the 14.9 million (41%) persons of concern for which a clear identification of the type of settlement was available.

With some 79 per cent coverage (for 8.3 out of 10.4 million), the availability of location data was higher for refugees than for any other population group. Of these, 2.3 million were residing in camps or centres (30%) and 4.8 million (58%) in urban areas, whereas the remaining one million people (12%) were reported to be living in rural areas dispersed among the local population. The type of settlement was unknown or unclear for 2.2 million refugees (21%).

Refugees in urban areas outnumbered those in camps for the first time in 2007, when large numbers of Iraqis sought

Fig. V.2 Distribution of refugees by type of location*, end-2009

* Excludes unknown locations



refugee in urban centres in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Since then, the gap between the numbers of urban-based and camp-based refugees has significantly increased. The available data indicated that at the end of 2009, the number of refugees in urban settings was almost double those living in camp-based ones. Over 85 per cent of those refugees were in Asia and the Middle East, especially in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Pakistan, and the Syrian Arab Republic.

By the end of 2009, UNHCR received information on some 400 locations classified as urban. The precise number of refugees residing in urban areas was, however, difficult to establish because some collective or transit centres were located in urban areas but listed in the category 'camp/centres'. In countries for which data was available, over 80 locations hosted 1,000 refugees or more and over 180 locations hosted 100 refugees or more.⁶⁹

Sex and age disaggregated data was available for 2.3 million refugees living in camps. Although women represented on average half of the refugees for whom demographic data was available, their proportion tended to be higher in camps and lower in urban settings (47%). Women represented the majority in camps in Africa (51%), especially in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region (54%). Women were also well represented in rural locations of Africa (58%) and Eastern Europe (51%). However, they were under-represented in urban areas in Latin America (41%) and Asia and the Pacific (45%).

The age distribution by type of location indicated that camp populations were younger, as compared to refugees living in

⁶⁹ This ranking excludes most industrialized countries for which location data was not available.

Table V.1 Sex and age distribution of refugees by type of location, end-2009

Type of location	UN major region	Female					Male				
		0-4	5-11	12-17	18-59	60++	0-4	5-11	12-17	18-59	60++
Camps/centers*	Africa	9%	12%	7%	22%	2%	9%	12%	7%	19%	1%
	Asia	3%	12%	8%	23%	1%	4%	13%	9%	25%	2%
	Europe	4%	5%	5%	23%	11%	4%	6%	6%	28%	8%
	Oceania	6%	8%	7%	25%	2%	6%	10%	8%	26%	2%
	Total	6%	12%	7%	22%	2%	7%	12%	8%	22%	2%
Rural/dispersed	Africa	8%	11%	8%	24%	2%	8%	11%	7%	20%	1%
	Asia	2%	3%	5%	17%	1%	2%	4%	7%	60%	1%
	Europe	0%	2%	3%	28%	18%	0%	2%	3%	33%	11%
	Latin America and the Caribbean	6%	7%	8%	21%	3%	6%	6%	7%	29%	7%
	Oceania	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Total	3%	5%	4%	14%	2%	3%	5%	4%	22%	1%
Urban	Africa	5%	8%	7%	25%	1%	6%	7%	9%	31%	2%
	Asia	3%	9%	7%	25%	2%	3%	9%	8%	30%	3%
	Europe	1%	3%	4%	26%	11%	1%	4%	5%	37%	7%
	Latin America and the Caribbean	2%	4%	7%	25%	3%	2%	5%	10%	39%	4%
	Oceania	0%	0%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	86%	5%
	Total	3%	9%	7%	25%	3%	3%	9%	8%	30%	3%
Grand Total		4%	9%	7%	25%	2%	4%	10%	8%	29%	3%

* No camps/centers were reported for Latin America and the Caribbean.

rural or urban settings. Moreover, camps located in developing countries showed a higher proportion of children. Children below the age of 5 years old represented on average 18 per cent of refugees in camps in Africa for which data on age and sex were available, double the value in the Asia and Pacific region (9%). In contrast, camps and collective centers in more developed countries hosted fewer children but more elderly refugees.

Available data also suggested that children below the age of 18 represented more than half (56%) of the camp populations in Africa, while they represented only 31 per cent in Europe. In contrast, Europe hosted many more elderly people (18% each in urban and camps/centers) compared to other regions which hosted on average between 3 and 7 per cent of people over 60 years of age.

Table V.1 shows that people living in urban locations tended to be older than those living in camps. In Africa, for instance, on average over 60 per cent of the urban population was composed of adults or elderly persons as compared to less than half in the camps. Some of the data presented in this table should, however, be considered with caution as some of the percentages were influenced by the relatively small numbers of persons of concern for whom age and sex information was available.

When focusing on urban areas only, women and girls represented less than half (47%) of refugees. Children below five represented 11 per cent in Africa but only two per cent in Europe. In contrast, elderly refugees were more numerous in Europe, where they represented some 18 per cent of the total population. This was in contrast to much fewer numbers in Africa (3%) and Asia (5%).

Box 10. What does the data tell us about adult refugees?

In any population, gender distribution by age should be roughly equal. There are usually slightly more boys born than girls which may affect the under 5 years distribution; women usually live longer than men and thus make up a larger portion of the 60+ age group of refugees. It is by examining the data on adults (18-59) and noting discrepancies in the proportion of men and women, that useful analysis and conclusions can be made. From this we can determine the proportion of whole families, female headed households and single men.

Analysis in this section is limited to those countries where UNHCR has reliable data and where the refugee numbers are large enough for discrepancies to be statistically telling. While in many refugee situations there is a fairly equal gender distribution, some specific patterns occur.

UN major region	% of female among adult refugees by groups				Total no. of countries
	<30%	30-47.99%	48-52%	>52.01%	
Africa	2	21	7	11	41
Asia	6	11	7	3	27
Europe	5	4	2	2	13
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	11	1	0	14
Oceania	0	1	0	0	1
Total	15	48	17	16	96

The analysis reveals two categories of countries. Most of the countries (63 out of the 96 countries for which reliable data exist) had significantly less women than men. Among them are those countries where the adult refugee population is disproportionately male, and where fewer than 30 per cent of adults are female. Those countries, which include Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia and Yemen, are found primarily in Asia and Europe. In some countries such as Indonesia and Yemen, refugees may be part of a mixed migration/asylum flows, with many transiting to other countries. Women face more risks and exposure to sexual and other harassment and exploitation in making such a risky journey, and are thus less likely to try.

In countries such as Egypt, Sudan and Yemen, female refugees can find work as domestic servants and may be able to survive more easily. Interestingly, there is a verification exercise ongoing in Yemen. It is too early to draw conclusions, but adult females make up 48 per cent of the verified current adult population, suggesting that men move on while women stay behind.

In Lebanon and Malaysia, both solid economies, there is an opportunity to find work, legal or illegal, and many refugee men choose to migrate to these countries and remain.

Although the adult refugee population in the Islamic Republic of Iran is slightly more gender balanced, there are still a disproportionate number of men (56%) suggesting that mixed refugee/economic motives could be at play.

The second category of countries includes those where there are more women. Females predominate in the adult refugee populations in Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Rwanda, Sudan, and the United Republic of Tanzania - all large situations in Africa; as well as in Bangladesh. These are mainly camp based operations.

What do these figures really mean? As a survival strategy, men leave camps to tend to livestock, to cultivate fields, to seek employment or to fight. It is safest for women to stay in camps, especially where there is some access to education for children. This movement reflects trends in developing countries where single-male migration to urban areas for economic reasons is more common. The effects of this trend on family structure, decision-making and women's autonomy and well-being are variable. Where family relations are strained by male absences and remittances are irregular or non-existent, it may lead to increased female poverty. On the other hand, female-headed households which do receive remittances may mean that the women in these households are among the better off and gain independence and decision-making power through managing household resources. Unfortunately, experience in protracted refugee situations tells us that often women and children are abandoned and forced into a situation of dependency.

With knowledge of the profile of the refugee population, UNHCR can undertake a more targeted approach to protecting and assisting them.