

# Urbanisation and women's health in Khayelitsha

## Part I. Demographic and socio-economic profile

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### Summary

Demographic and socio-economic data and information on migration patterns and urban/rural links was collected from 722 households in the formal housing area and the serviced and the unserviced site areas of Khayelitsha; 659 women and 61 men were interviewed. Thirty-eight per cent of the population were aged under 15 years and 77% under 35 years. There was a predominance of females in the 5 - 35-year age group. There was a mean of 4.9 persons per household, and 93.5% of sites contained 1 dwelling. Of the 659 female respondents, 7% had received no formal education, 39% had primary school education, and 54% had secondary school education. Unemployment among women was 45%. Domestic service accounted for 66.2% of formal employment. Of all women 86% were unskilled, 71.9% had been born in a 'homeland', and 69.7% had migrated to an urban area before 1985. Ties to the rural areas were strong, particularly in the 'shack' areas. 'New arrivals' to an urban area were young, mostly unemployed, and lived in the worst environmental conditions. In the unserviced 'shack' areas, 47.5% of women had migrated to an urban area in the last 5 years. These are important target areas for a study of the health effects of urbanisation and for possible interventions. This study tends to confirm the 'quadruple' oppression of women in Khayelitsha, on the basis of race, social class and gender and as new arrivals in an urban environment.

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Historically, migration in most of Africa has tended to be male-dominated, since it has been linked to paid employment,<sup>1</sup> and in South Africa this pattern has prevailed as a direct consequence of the migrant labour system and influx control legislation.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, following the easing of influx control legislation, it is likely that migration has increasingly involved females.

Black women who migrate to the urban areas have been described as 'quadruply oppressed' — as women in a patriarchal society, as members of the disenfranchised majority, as low-status workers, and as 'incongruent aliens in an urban environment singularly lacking in social support systems'.<sup>2</sup> The need for research into the effects of urbanisation on the health of women in South Africa has led to the current study.

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between socio-economic factors such as geographical location

in Khayelitsha, employment status, social class, environmental factors, urbanisation, including migration history, exposure to urban areas and urban-rural links, and women's reproductive histories as well as gynaecological illness, knowledge and experience of cervical smears and awareness of AIDS. This paper describes the socio-economic and demographic profile of the population of Khayelitsha, particularly of women, and relates this to urbanisation. A companion paper describes the relationship between socio-demography and women's health.<sup>3</sup>

### Methods

Data were collected by means of a household interview survey conducted between September and December 1989 in the formal and informal housing areas of Town 1, Khayelitsha. The background to the project, details of the methods used, and more detailed information on the study area, the study population and the content of the questionnaires are described elsewhere.<sup>4,5</sup>

Eight hundred households in the area were visited by 11 trained female interviewers selected from the community. Respondents in 722 households were interviewed, giving a response rate of 90.3%. Of these, 659 (91.3%) were women and 61 (8.4%) men. The latter were interviewed only if no adult women over the age of 15 years were available. The gender of 2 respondents was unknown.

Unlike the formal housing area and serviced site areas, no demarcation boundaries are available for dividing unserviced areas into sites. Hence for the purposes of this study one unserviced site was seen as being equal to one dwelling. Female-headed households in this study refer to households in which a male head is non-existent as opposed to temporarily or seasonally absent. The geographical areas of residence of Sites B and C and Greenpoint, which include serviced and unserviced sites, will be referred to as the 'shack' areas.

Urbanisation involves complex societal changes. It is not possible to look at the effects of urbanisation in terms of one single factor, since this can lead to stereotypical conceptions of what constitutes urban life.<sup>6</sup> In this study a number of indicators of the 'state of urbanisation' of the respondents have been examined, including place of birth, patterns of migration, ties with rural areas, whether respondents identify most strongly with an urban or a rural area as indicated by the place they see as home and where they would like to live when old, and length of stay in an urban area ('urban years'). This latter was considered an important quantitative measure of urban exposure.

### Results

Results are described in two parts: (i) information concerning the 3229 persons who were living in the 722 households selected; and (ii) data concerning the 659 female respondents. As not everyone responded to all the questions, the total number of respondents varies in the results.

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**Household**

Of 719 sites 93,5% contained one dwelling. The maximum number of dwellings per site was 3. There was an average of 4,9 (range 1 - 14) people per household.

The age structure illustrates a very young population, with 38% below 15 years and 77% below 35 years of age. There is a relative absence of small children and a preponderance of females in the 5 - 35-year age group; 292 households (40,5%) were female-headed.

**Female respondents**

Of the respondents interviewed, 13,7% lived in formal housing (all in the housing area — Villages 1 and 2), 54,3% in serviced sites (in Sites C and B and Greenpoint) and 31,7% in unserviced sites, in Greenpoint and its adjacent areas and scattered within Sites C and B. Of the 659 respondents 59,6% lived in free-dwelling shacks, while 38,1% lived in rented accommodation and 2,3% owned their dwelling.

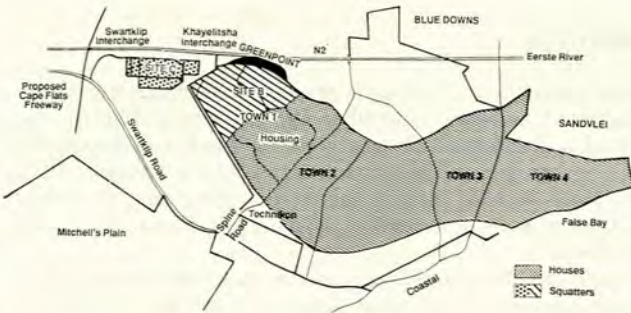


Fig. 1. Khayelitsha.

The mean age of respondents was 34 years (range 16 - 77 years). Mean ages (in years) in the housing and 'shack' areas were 39,0 and 33,6 years ( $t = 4,77; P < 0,001$ ). Table I indicates that the younger respondents were those who had spent a shorter period of time in an urban area.

The mean number of years at school was 7 (i.e. standard 5); 7% of respondents had no formal schooling, 39% had primary school education and 54% had secondary school education, and 22,7% were 'functionally illiterate' (less than Standard 4 educational level). The majority of those without formal education lived in the 'shack' areas; 85% of those in the housing area had an educational level of Standard 5 and above, compared with 64% in 'shack' areas ( $\chi^2 = 16,6; df = 1; P < 0,0005$ ). More respondents who had been born in Cape Town (89%) than of

those born in a 'homeland' (66%) had a level of education of Standard 5 and above ( $\chi^2 = 16,2; df = 1; P < 0,0001$ ). In addition, 50% of the 96 respondents in the housing area had acquired other vocational training, as opposed to only 16,6% in the 'shack' areas ( $\chi^2 = 54,3; df = 1; P < 0,000$ ). There were no major differences between the educational levels of respondents according to the number of years they had spent in an urban area.

Table II demonstrates that the majority of respondents had been born in a 'homeland'. A higher proportion of respondents living in the housing area than of respondents living in the 'shack' areas had been born in Cape Town ( $\chi^2 = 83,9; P < 0,000$ ). Of the 658 respondents, 86,6% had grown up in a 'homeland'.

The vast majority of people (86,1%) had moved from a rural to an urban area, with 57,3% of respondents having moved straight from their place of birth and the area where they grew up to Cape Town. This is the dominant pattern of movement. The primary reasons for migration were firstly to work and secondly to join a spouse.

As described in Table II, most respondents had relocated from within Cape Town to Khayelitsha. This is most marked for the housing area and Greenpoint. Overall only 24,7% had migrated in from the outside.

Of the 651 respondents, 69,7% had migrated to an urban area before 1985. As can be seen from Table I, the younger women are those most recently arrived in an urban area. The differences among respondents in terms of years in an urban area by area of residence and type of housing occupied by the respondents are indicated in Figs 2 and 3. The respondents in the housing area had significantly more urban years than those in the 'shack' areas ( $\chi^2 = 87,63; df = 12; P < 0,001$ ).

As can be seen in Table II, respondents showed substantial ties to the rural areas, which were significantly stronger for the 'shack' areas ( $\chi^2 = 45,45; P < 0,001$  for having a dwelling;  $\chi^2 = 48,93; P < 0,001$  for preference for living in a homeland when old;  $\chi^2 = 53,34; P < 0,001$  for viewing a 'homeland' as 'home').

Of the 659 respondents, 45% had no employment in either the formal or the informal sector; 67% were unemployed if employment in the informal sector was excluded. Table III shows a tendency for employment rates to increase with urban years for traditional occupations (domestic, teachers, nurses). It also shows a counter-trend for employment in manufacturing to decrease. Unemployment decreases linearly with increased number of years in an urban environment ( $\chi^2 = 56,722$  for trend;  $P < 0,001$ ).

Of the 298 respondents who were unemployed, 64,7% were work-seekers and the remaining 35,3% were voluntarily unemployed. Those not seeking work gave reasons such as pregnancy or looking after an infant (28,3%), illness or disability (20,27%) and refusal on the part of the husband or relatives to allow the respondent to work (17,2%).

TABLE I. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY URBAN YEARS

Age (yrs)	No.	Year of arrival				
		1986 - 1989 ( < 5 yrs)	1980 - 1985 ( 5 - 9 yrs)	1970 - 1979 (10 - 19 yrs)	1960 - 1969 (20 - 29 yrs)	before 1960 ( > 30 yrs)
15 - 24	(N = 113)	37,6	12,8	5,3	7,0	0,0
25 - 34	(N = 248)	42,6	51,2	31,0	30,6	27,0
35 - 44	(N = 187)	15,2	26,4	52,6	24,7	31,0
45 - 54	(N = 66)	4,0	4,8	5,9	32,9	20,3
> 55	(N = 34)	0,5	4,0	4,6	2,4	21,6
Unknown		0,1	0,8	0,6	0,1	0,1



TABLE II. URBANISATION FACTORS, MIGRATION PATTERNS AND TIES WITH 'HOMELANDS' (%)

Area	Residence before Khayelitsha			Place regarded as home			Preference of residence when old			Have 'back home'			Send money home
	Cape Town			Cape Town			Cape Town			Dwelling place			
	Homeland	Other	Other	Homeland	Other	Other	Homeland	Other	Other	Children	Relatives		
Housing (96)	38,6	42,7	18,7	70,8	16,6	12,6	70,8	16,6	12,6	37,5	25,0	53,0	44,2
Site C (212)	6,1	81,1	12,8	51,6	47,4	1,0	53,0	46,4	0,6	67,9	42,0	89,0	51,8
Site B (268)	7,5	72,8	19,7	23,8	63,0	13,2	23,0	62,0	15,0	74,3	45,0	95,0	67,5
Greenpoint (82)	4,9	72,0	23,1	6,0	91,5	2,5	12,0	85,0	3,0	78,0	45,0	95,0	56,0
Overall (659)	11,2	71,0	17,8	37,4	55,3	7,3	38,6	53,5	7,9	67,3	41,2	86,9	57,7

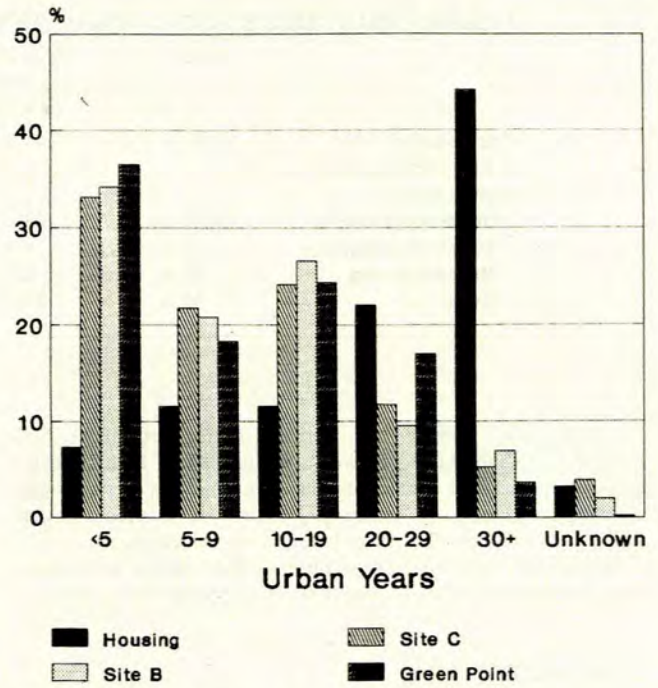


Fig. 2. Urban years by area of residence.

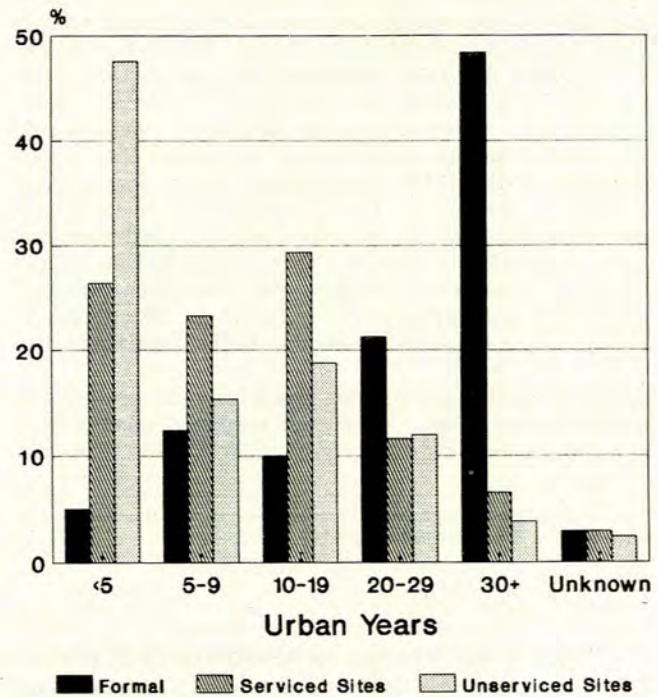


Fig. 3. Urban years by type of housing.

Of the 361 who were employed, the majority (60,7%) were employed in the formal sector; of these 66,2% were in domestic service. The remaining 39,3% of the employed worked in the informal sector.

Number of years spent in an urban area does not appear to have a significant impact on employment in the informal sector. Of the respondents involved in the informal sector, 42,8% were involved in hawking (mostly food), 15,1% worked in or owned shops or cafes, 14,4% were involved in handicrafts (sewing, knitting etc.), and 13,9% worked in shebeens.



TABLE III. URBAN YEARS BY AREA OF EMPLOYMENT IN FORMAL SECTOR AND BY UNEMPLOYMENT (%)

	1986-1989 ( < 5 yrs) (N = 26)	1980-1985 (5 - 9 yrs) (N = 37)	1970-1979 (10 - 19 yrs) (N = 63)	1960-1969 (20 - 29 yrs) (N = 49)	Before 1960 ( > 30 yrs) (N = 38)
<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>65,5</b>	<b>44,0</b>	<b>35,5</b>	<b>26,0</b>	<b>25,7</b>
<b>Area of employment in formal sector</b>					
Domestic service	42,3	62,0	82,5	69,4	57,9
Teachers/nurses	11,5	8,1	6,3	12,2	21,0
Manufacturing	15,4	5,4	5,0	2,0	5,3
Other	30,8	24,5	6,2	16,4	15,8

Among both formal- and informal-sector employees, 80% earned less than R100 per week, while 89% of formal-sector employees and 80% of informal-sector employees earned under R400 per month. In addition, 65,8% of informal-sector employees reported that their income was irregular.

Table IV shows that respondents in the housing area have a very different social class profile to those in the other areas.

## Discussion

The results are considered to be representative of the whole population of Khayelitsha.

The phenomenon of individuals and families living in 'backyard' shacks (common in the other black\* residential areas of Cape Town) is uncommon in all areas of Khayelitsha. The relatively low density of people per dwelling (4,9) in all areas of Khayelitsha confirms other findings.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, a study in other black residential areas in Cape Town (predominantly in formal housing) conducted by the Bureau for Market Research (BMR) in 1985 found a much higher density of 6,4 persons per household.<sup>7</sup> This is probably due to the greater ease with which people can move off and build their own shack as opposed to their own formal house and the relative ease in obtaining a site compared with other black residential areas.<sup>8</sup> The local authorities in Khayelitsha are strong proponents of site and service rather than formal housing development.

The Khayelitsha population has a youthful profile (77% under 35 years of age). The relative absence of small children is a consequence of the large proportion of respondents who

send their children 'back home' for child care and schooling.

The female preponderance in the 5 - 35-year age group appears to be opposite to what is expected for a traditional predominantly male pattern of migrancy and appears to be related to the high number of female-headed households. This phenomenon has, however, also been linked to the migrant labour system, which is associated with the breakdown of the family, and results in single-parent family units of low socio-economic status. This has potentially adverse effects on health.<sup>9,10</sup> Khayelitsha's class structure is heavily weighted towards the lowest social strata, apart from the relatively small housing area population, and could well be operating as a 'social sink' where the poorest individuals (particularly single women) end up.

The high proportion of female heads of households is notable and confirmed by other studies.<sup>7</sup> The proportion of female-headed households in urban areas appears to have increased over the past 2 decades.<sup>11</sup> (A study by Ellen Hellman in 1971 revealed that 20% of households in Soweto were female-headed.)

Rapid growth in the urban population places great pressure on essential services such as housing, water supply, sanitation, food hygiene and refuse removal as well as health services. This is most marked in the unserved sites where a high percentage of persons live (31,7%). All these factors will have major implications for health and the provision of appropriate health services.

Higher levels of education (Standard 5 and above) were found compared with an earlier study in Khayelitsha,<sup>7</sup> but this may be due to the inclusion of the housing area in this study. There is a lower level of functional illiteracy among women in Khayelitsha (22,7%) than the national average for all black adults over the age of 20.<sup>8</sup> This may be due to age and gender differences.

\* The use of this term follows South African legislative practice and the application of the Group Areas Act. It does not imply its legitimacy.

TABLE IV. DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY AREA — UNEMPLOYED, AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT (FORMAL SECTOR) AND SOCIAL CLASS (%)

Areas	Areas of employment — formal sector					Social class				
	Unemployed	Domestic	Teacher/ nurse	Manufac.	Other	Professional managerial	Teacher/ nurse	Semi- skilled	Unskilled	Other
<b>Housing</b> (N = 95)	27,0	45,8	30,5	6,8	16,9	3,4	13,6	8,5	67,8	6,7
<b>Site C</b> (N = 211)	51,0	69,4	4,8	4,8	21,0	0	1,6	6,5	91,0	0,9
<b>Site B</b> (N = 268)	44,0	75,3	3,7	8,6	12,4	0	1,2	4,9	93,9	0
<b>Green Point</b> (N = 82)	56,0	82,4	11,8	0	5,8	0	6,0	6,0	88,0	0



The lack of significant differences in educational levels of respondents, based on length of stay in an urban area, may be explained by the general tendency in South Africa for younger people to have significantly higher levels of education.<sup>12</sup>

A strong relationship emerged between area of residence, type of dwelling and the urbanisation factors identified above. Those in the housing area were more likely to have been born in Cape Town or another urban area and had a longer length of stay in an urban area. They showed a greater orientation toward life in Cape Town and weaker links with the rural areas. Area of residence therefore acts as a good proxy for the 'state of urbanisation' of respondents. In some cases there was a stronger relationship between area of residence and other variables than that between 'urbanisation' indicators and these variables. This may be due to the confounding effects of age, environment or social class.

The study documents the practice of sending children to a rural area for child care and for schooling, away from the turmoil of black education in the cities.

Substantial ties to the rural areas in terms of relationships, attitudes and property, even for the most urbanised, were identified. Many of those who had spent most of their lives in an urban area still sent remittances to the 'homelands'. This underscores the fact the black urban population constitutes a major source of social welfare for those who remain in the rural areas, especially for young and the aged, and reflects the absence of adequate state social security, particularly in the 'homelands' and rural areas.

Our findings confirm the theory<sup>7</sup> that most of the people who have migrated to Khayelitsha have done so from within Cape Town. Influx control and its abolition have clearly not had much impact on this group. However, a significant minority (30,3%) have migrated to Cape Town from outside, mostly from the 'homelands' over the last 5 years. This migration may be expected to increase. New arrivals to an urban area are young, mostly unemployed and live in the worst environmental conditions. The largest percentage of women who have arrived in the last 5 years live in the 'shack' areas and are concentrated particularly in the unserviced site areas (47,6%). A study identifying children at risk in the Cape Town area<sup>13</sup> found that carers of children in the unserviced site areas were least informed about immunisation, least visited by a community health worker, and had least knowledge about treatment of diarrhoea. These are therefore important target areas for a study of the health effects of urbanisation and for possible interventions.

Official national estimates of unemployment, excluding the 'homelands', range between 25% and 54%, depending on the definition of 'unemployed'.<sup>14</sup> The proportion of unemployed women in Khayelitsha is high, with disproportionate representation of the young, new arrivals in the 'shack' areas.

Most formal employment among women is in domestic service. The low income, poor working conditions and low status involved in this sector have been widely documented.<sup>8,15</sup> An increasing number of younger, newer arrivals are entering factory employment. The predominance of hawking in the informal sector, which is associated with arduous work, low income and a 'hand to mouth' type of existence, underscores the fact that informal-sector employment is no adequate solution to unemployment.<sup>16,17</sup>

Despite this, and taking into consideration the limitations of collecting income data in household surveys, those employed in the informal sector do not appear to be worse off in terms of income than those in employed in the formal sector. While this may at first sight appear to be counter-intuitive, it can be understood in terms of most women being in domestic service, underscoring the notoriously poor conditions of employment in this sector. A 1981 survey of domestic wages revealed that average earnings for women in domestic service in Cape Town

were R74 per month.<sup>8</sup> There is a widespread poverty among women in Khayelitsha, with more than 90% of respondents earning below the extremely meagre minimum living level of R570,81 a month for the Cape Peninsula (Labour Research Service, Cape Town — personal communication).

This study tends to confirm the 'quadruple' oppression of women in Khayelitsha, on the basis of race, social class and gender and as new arrivals in an urban environment with implications for health.

The data are being analysed further with a view to meaningful intervention.

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