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Proposal for refining thematic indicator 4.5.3

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Prepared by the Global Education Monitoring Report team



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1. Introduction

SDG 4 does not include a target on education financing, while its global monitoring framework does not contain any education financing indicator. In view of that, the Technical Advisory Group on SDG 4 Indicators had proposed, and the Technical Cooperation Group had approved, three indicators (on public, aid and household expenditure) under SDG target 4.5 on equity. Of these three thematic indicators, indicator 4.5.3 aims to measure the “extent to which explicit formula-based policies reallocate education resources to disadvantaged populations”. Indicator 4.5.3 is considered in need further methodological development.

During the discussions at the Technical Advisory Group on SDG 4 Indicators (2014-2015), the focus was not on formula-based funding per se. Rather, in the spirit of target 4.5 on equity, the intention was to identify an indicator that would capture efforts countries made to reallocate resources to reach vulnerable groups. These original concerns are also reflected in the metadata document on global and thematic indicators, which points at two weaknesses of the current indicator 4.5.3 formulation, namely that it refers to:

- ‘education’ resources, while other resources (e.g. cash transfers under the social protection budget) can also help equalise education opportunities; and
- to ‘formula-based’ resource reallocation, while other approaches can also be used for this purpose.

This paper is addressing this more general concern, which was addressed in Chapter 20 of the 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report.

2. Background

Since the indicator was approved, there have been two attempts to operationalize indicator 4.5.3. The **first** attempt was the 2016 UIS [information paper](#) in November 2016, which made the following observations:

- It dismissed the suggestion that social protection programmes should be used to inform the indicator because it would require assessments of:
 - the share of a social protection programme being used by households to access and participate in education;
 - the marginal cost associated with the trade-off between investing in education or other social sectors.
- It agreed with the second criticism that mechanisms other than those based on formulas could be just as or more important – and therefore also with the idea that the indicator as currently formulated does not capture the original intent.

For a potential operationalization of the indicator it considered two broad categories of options, each at three, increasing levels of detail (which produces nine combinations; **Figure 1**):

Figure 1. Measuring country efforts to equalize education opportunities through their financing system

		Depth/level of scrutiny →		
		Weak	Medium	Strong
		Intention	Implementation /Procedural equity	Implementation/Equality of opportunities
Weak	Existence of financing mechanisms	Does the country have an official redistribution mechanism towards disadvantaged populations? A	Do some of the disadvantaged populations receive additional education resources through the form of direct and transparent transfers based on their background characteristics? D	Do some of the disadvantaged populations benefit from additional/better education resources through the form of direct and indirect transfers and education resources allocation mechanisms? G
	Medium	Does the country have an official redistribution mechanism towards a comprehensive list of disadvantaged populations? B	Do all of the disadvantaged population receive additional education resources through the form of direct and transparent transfers based on their background characteristics? E	Do all of the disadvantaged populations benefit from additional/better education resources through the form of direct and indirect transfers and education resources allocation mechanisms? H
	Strong	Does the country have an official redistribution mechanism towards a comprehensive list of disadvantaged populations? Is the financing mechanism set to equalize educational opportunities? C	Do all of the disadvantaged population receive additional education resources commensurate to the additional marginal cost they carry through the form of direct and transparent transfers based on their background characteristics? F	Do all of the disadvantaged populations benefit from adequate education resources commensurate to the additional marginal cost they carry through the form of direct and indirect transfers and education resources allocation mechanisms? I

Degree of Comprehensiveness

Source: UIS (2016).

- Indicators capturing reallocation mechanisms (policy intent / comprehensiveness) (Group 1 in **Figure 2**):
 - (options A/B) It considered the World Bank's 2016 SABER school finance [framework paper](#). While it dismissed this approach, because questions were too general and prospects for rolling the approach out to many countries were dim, it acknowledged that a stripped-down version of the SABER tool would generate a minimum of basic information: whether or not there are mechanisms to reallocate resources towards (i) the poor (=1) and (ii) other disadvantaged populations (=2). The approach would call for additional questions to the UIS/OECD/Eurostat education survey. (a related but narrower measure based on the SABER teacher module as to whether an education system reallocated teachers to areas in need was also recommended)
 - (options D/E) A much more data-intensive approach based on national education accounts would analyse public education budgets on a line-by-line basis to identify budget items that were reallocated towards vulnerable groups but cautioned that this would only be possible every 5-7 years.

- Indicators capturing the reach of disadvantaged populations (policy effectiveness / depth) (Group 2 in **Figure 2**) These would focus on the actual distribution of resources, regardless of the existence or not of policy:
 - (options G/H) Instead of focusing on government action, one approach would focus on government inaction by analysing the proportion of expenditure devoted to education among the poorest fifth of households: a high percentage would suggest the system was failing the poorest as it was forcing them to pay out of pocket.
 - (options D/E or G/H) Instead of focusing on government teacher allocation policies, one approach would focus on the results of government action or inaction by analysing the actual distribution of teachers, using other administrative or learning assessment data.
 - (options G/H) Related to the last option and using background information from a learning assessment, another approach to the indicator would be an index of access to education resources (not just teachers), comparing its value for students at the bottom and the richest quintile. This was the preferred indicator of the paper.

Figure 2. Potential operationalizations of indicator 4.5.3 according to Information Paper 32.

	Type	Variable	Current coverage	Sources	Scale-up options			Periodicity	Methodological standards required
					Instruments	Time frame	Additional cost		
Group 1: Governments' intentions and existence of reallocation policy mechanisms									
Indicator 1: Do countries have reallocation mechanisms towards disadvantaged populations?	Quali	binary or categorical ordered	4 countries	SABER School Finance	UIS/UEE data collections. Add questions to regular annual education surveys	Could be piloted in 2016 and scaled up in 2017	Low	Annual	Standard definitions for disadvantaged groups and reallocation mechanisms
Indicator 2: Do countries have incentives/reallocation mechanisms to ensure that teachers go to the hard-to-staff schools?	Quali	binary or categorical ordered	21 countries	SABER Teachers	UIS/UEE data collections. Add questions to regular annual education surveys	Could be piloted in 2016 and scaled up in 2017	Low	Annual	Standard definitions for hard-to-staff schools and incentives/reallocation mechanisms
Indicator 3: % of domestic education spending allocated to the disadvantaged populations (From NEA methodology)	Quali	Continuous, Percentage	None		UIS, NEAs	5 to 7 years	High	Annual or Biennial	Detailed reference classification of education expenditures and an agreed list of vulnerable groups, expanded NEA methodology
Group 2: Effectiveness of policies to reach disadvantaged populations									
Indicator 4: Education spending as a % of total household expenditure for the poorest quintile	Quanti	Continuous, Percentage	~20 countries	LSMS, National household surveys	LSMS, National household surveys, ~60 surveys	2 years	Fair	Triennial	Generalization and standardization of questions on education expenditures
Indicator 5: Equity measure of the actual distribution of teachers across pupils (Concentration Index, Parity Index, Odds ratio)	Quanti	Continuous, range will depend on the equity indicator chosen; CI: [-1,1], Parity and odds ratio [0,∞]	~10 countries	UIS regional module	Option 1: scale-up UIS survey to other regions Option 2: use regional LAs as proxy	Option 1: 2-3 years Option 2: < 1 year	Option 1: Fair Option 2: Low	Option 1: Annual Option 2: ~Quinquennial	Option 1: Standardized sub-national characteristics (wealth, urban/rural etc.) at the first level of administrative divisions Option 2: Align methodologies for background variables (wealth, rural/urban, ethnicity etc.)
Indicator 6: Equity measure of access to domestic education resources (Concentration Index, Parity Index, Odds ratio)	Quanti	Continuous, range will depend on the equity indicator chosen; CI: [-1,1], Parity and odds ratio [0,∞]	None		PASEC, SACMEQ, TERCE, PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS	<1 year	Low	~Quinquennial	Standardized and transparent methodology to calculate an Index of Access to Domestic Education Resources (IADER)

Source: UIS (2016).

From the perspective of this review, information paper 32 was correct both in its assessment of the need for indicator 4.5.3 to break free from the narrow confines of a ‘formula-based policies’ indicator and of its openness to the feasibility of a simple, SABER-like approach to such an operationalization through simple questions to be added to the UIS/OECD/Eurostat education survey. By contrast, the alternative approach of measuring the actual distribution of resources was departing from the intent.

The **second** attempt to operationalize indicator 4.5.3 was made in the [background paper](#) submitted for the fourth meeting of the TCG in January 2018. Unlike the information paper, it took a narrow but deep view of the indicator, focusing on ‘formula-based policies’, limited neither to the allocation of cash nor to the allocation to schools (e.g. school boards and municipalities could be targeted). This would need to be



done in refinement of indicator 4.5.3. It provided an overview of different funding models with needs based components in primary and secondary education from three perspectives:

- considered needs and factors used to represent them (except for the distinction between urban and rural schools that does not indicate vulnerability)
- resource allocation formulas and weights
- nature and level of funds

The paper rightly argues that to quantify the 'extent' to which formulas 'reallocate', it is necessary to:

- estimate the volume of the total formula funding programme
- define which elements of the formula are considered as targeting disadvantaged populations and
- quantify the amount that is allocated because of those factors.

It raises the concern that the volume of the programme is usually not explicitly declared and is mixed with the education budget, especially when it allocates core funding. Absent this information, the extent of reallocation could be judged on the basis of the formulas:

- judgement of cost differences between students with and without disadvantage
- comparison of real school budgets
- analysis of funding using student level data

All these options are quite complex and the paper recommends that instead of quantifying amounts of reallocation, collecting funding formulas would be sufficient and could serve as a peer learning effort.

The paper made the following key recommendations:

- Data collection for indicator 4.5.3 should not be done annually but rather every 3-5 years, utilizing opportunities where country education finance experts meet together.
- Due to the complexity of a potential questionnaire on formula funding:
 - Identify countries with formula funding, as part of a regular data collection.
 - Collect the more detailed data collection for countries applying formula based funding.

From the perspective of this review, the background paper looked thoroughly at a series of parameters (e.g. policies operate at different levels, are often contradictory and not geographically comprehensive; different types of costs or resources are covered, estimation of amount 'reallocated' is complex) that render a 'formula-based policies' indicator less interesting for monitoring.

3. Approach

Overall, this paper takes the view that the two approaches above confirm that, for the indicator to be valuable, it is necessary to:

- move away from the narrow concept of 'formula-based policies';



- search for the policies that have the largest potential impact on resource reallocation for disadvantaged populations, with an emphasis on poverty;
- avoid measures of actual distribution of resources that are not informative of the mechanisms
- develop simple questions that can be part of the regular UIS/OECD/Eurostat education survey

As part of its forthcoming 2020 edition on inclusion, the GEM Report is systematically compiling information on the extent to which education and social financing policies are designed to address disadvantage in education: their structure and characteristics, coverage (in terms of students reached) and depth (in terms of resources allocated). As part of this effort, methodological questions related to the feasibility of data collection for a thematic indicator 4.5.3 of broader scope are being addressed and tested more specifically with data from 10 countries: Argentina, Benin, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Mauritania, Paraguay, and Singapore.

Disadvantaged students are those whose educational opportunities are affected by circumstances such as poverty, ethnicity, disability and remoteness. Countries pursue policies of varying form and intensity to mitigate the education impact of such vulnerabilities.

Four categories of financing policies were defined to organize the review in this paper:

1. Overall education financing mechanism with a focus on equity.
2. Policies and programmes that provide resources to schools.
3. Education policies and programmes to provide resources to students and their families.
4. Social policies and programmes to provide resources to students and their families.

The paper limits the collection of information to publicly-funded or subsidised formal education at all levels of education, although there could be advantages from limiting the analysis to primary and secondary education. Publicly funded or subsidised formal education include those that are funded domestically, externally or mixed as long as the execution is led or co-led by the government. While the provision of private education is outside of the scope of this paper, it does not exclude public subsidies that aim to provide disadvantaged students with access to private education.

The paper is inclusive of all the possible modes of the transfers of funds between (different levels of) governments and schools, families and/or students, including: lump-sum, block grant, earmarked grant, school-specific grant or scholarships ([OECD, 2017](#)). The paper does not differentiate whether funds are generated from the recurrent or capital budget. There are some exceptions to these general rules, the details of which are explained in the description of each category.

As part of the research, it was attempted to collect data on the level of resources and the number of students and schools that benefit from the policies under these four categories. An annex presents the collected information in a format that tries to make them comparable across countries. The aim is not to establish a thorough database but to promote a discussion of indicator 4.5.3. The following general questions are asked at each of the four levels:



- whether specific policies/programmes exist to provide resources to disadvantaged populations (and what is the name of the policy/programme)
- how targeting is done – and whether location, poverty, disability, or other criteria are used
- what volume/share total public education spending is used for the main policy/programme
- what is the size of the average transfer under the main policy/programme
- what number/percentage of schools/families/students the main policy/programme reaches

These questions are developed in mind as a short questionnaire to countries for data collection.

Notes on the four categories of financing policies and programmes

A few observations follow with respect to the four categories of financing policies. The category of ‘education financing mechanisms’ is mainly intended to capture the overall resource allocation mechanism from the central government to the lower tiers (local governments or schools) that tend to capitation-based. Such overall budget allocation mechanisms processes can potentially have a major impact on equity in education, as some which target certain population characteristics accounting for their diverse needs. Not included in this category are general policies that support:

- free compulsory education
- school-related expenses for all students, even though these could have a potentially equitable effect on the poorest students

The second category on ‘resources to schools’ includes policies or programmes that compensate schools for being in a disadvantaged area and/or accommodating disadvantaged students. They may:

- be nation- or region-wide; and
- provide cash or cover specific expenditure types (e.g. equipment purchases, teacher training)

Most programmes in this category define vulnerable populations on the basis of on poverty, rurality or ethnicity/indigeneity. Other aspects, such as disability or special needs are also used but not as the first targeting criteria. As many programmes may exist in each country, the largest programme has been selected in terms of budget/expenditure and/or school coverage.

The third category on ‘resources to students and families’ is about ministry of education policies and programmes that directly benefit disadvantaged students and their households. These may be in the form of cash (e.g. scholarship, although most such schemes are not equity-oriented since they are merit-based), exemption from payment (but interest-free or low-interest student loans are not included) or kind (e.g. school meals).

Finally, the fourth category on ‘resources to students and families’ is about other ministry policies and programmes that directly benefit disadvantaged students and their households. These tend to be social protection programmes, such as conditional cash transfers or child grants with an education component that aim to address poverty occasionally with a gender dimension. It is often the case that data on the number of beneficiaries as share of population and expenditure as share of GDP is available. Targeting mechanisms tend to be well articulated and regularly evaluated.



4. Discussion

Indicator 4.5.3 is meant to provide a minimum comparative evidence basis on whether countries recognize disadvantage in education and address it through financing mechanisms. The purpose of the indicator is to be formative and to capture significant differences between countries that can motivate those not sufficiently focused on equity to reconsider their flagship policies.

Clearly this is not an easy exercise. Countries differ in their levels of education development and in their demographic characteristics. They may prioritize different tools and different populations groups. As previous exercises have shown, collecting information on education-related policies and programmes that target vulnerable and disadvantaged group is often complex, although the process of developing an indicator could have the potentially positive consequence of helping countries think how to make their financing mechanism more direct and transparent.

Some key questions for developing an indicator include the following. Should the indicator:

- focus on targeting schools, students/families or both?
- simply confirm the existence of a mechanism or also set thresholds that confirm the existence of a substantive mechanism with the potential to reallocate resources (e.g. at least 10% of schools reached, the support is at least 25% of per student costs etc.)?
- be a quantitative index (based on specific information on coverage and depth) or a qualitative rating (from no mechanism to a full mechanism – with intermediate ratings)?
- be comprehensive trying to capture all mechanisms or focus on the largest mechanism with the largest potential to reallocate resources?
- be based on descriptive information or also include any evidence of success?

This analysis supports extending indicator 4.5.3 beyond the narrow confines of a formula-based indicator and basing it on descriptive information that can be collected through a regular survey but over reallocation policies and programmes of a wider scope (as mentioned in the information paper). It would encourage splitting the indicator in two parts: policies and programmes focusing on schools and students, respectively.

It would also suggest extending the indicator to give a sense of coverage and depth but would postpone a decision on what thresholds to use and whether to use a continuous quantitative indicator or a qualitative rating until a first round of data has been collected.

Collecting such information through the annual UIS/OECD/Eurostat education survey would constitute a significant departure from the type of information currently collected. Alternative mechanisms could be considered to complement the annual UIS/OECD/Eurostat education survey. For instance, the information collected as part of the 2020 GEM Report could be used as a basis to which countries could respond.

5. Recommendations

Based on the previous analysis and the data that are presented on the 10 countries in the annex, the following recommendations are made for indicator 4.5.3:

- Revise the **formulation** of the indicator to capture the original intent of the indicator, e.g. existence of a financing policy or programme that targets vulnerable groups in education
- Collect information through the annual UIS/OECD/Eurostat education survey (or some complementary arrangement) on targeting criteria, volume, coverage and depth of four types of financing policies or programmes (**Table 1**)
- Where there is more than one policy / programme, focus on the **largest** for each of the four types (which practically means focusing on **poverty** or socio-economic disadvantage as the main characteristic of vulnerability and disadvantage) instead of trying to be comprehensive
- Consider two indicators: one on the potentially most impactful policy/programme targeting **schools** and **students/families**, respectively

Table 1. Proposed questions on financing policies / programmes targeting vulnerable groups

Question	Type of financing policy / programme			
	Overall funding mechanism	Schools	Students/families (education)	Students/families (social)
Existence / name of mechanism				
Targeting criteria				
Volume			What share/volume of total public education spending is being used for the main program?	What share/volume of total public education spending is being used for the main program?
Depth	What share of total public education spending is being reallocated?	What share of total public education spending is being reallocated?	What is the size of the average transfer under the main program?	What is the size of the average transfer under the main program?
Coverage	What percentage / how many schools does it reach?	What percentage / how many schools does it reach?	What percentage / number of students / households does the main program reach?	What percentage / number of students / households does the main program reach?



		Country	Argentina	Benin	Bolivia	Chile	D. R. Congo	Dominican Rep.	Georgia	Mauritania	Paraguay	Singapore
2.2	Name of main program		Programa de Acciones Compensatorias en Educacion	Teacher training in deprived districts (GPE)	Programa Nacional de Post Alfabetizacion Yo si puedo seguir	Subvención Escolar Preferencial	Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP)	Programa de apoyo a la vulnerabilidad	School funding formula	Appui aux écoles des Zones d'Education Prioritaires	Escuela Viva	Edusave Grants / Edusave Endowment Fund
2.3	How is targeting done?											
A	Location	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes (rural/ peri-urban)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (priority zones)	No	No
B	Poverty	Yes/No	Yes (vulnerabilidad)	No	No	Yes Chile Solidario; Registro Social; FONASA; other Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
C	Disability	Yes/No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
D	Other	Specify		No (all 77 communes)	Age (15 years+)	Indigenous Industrial zone			Yes School size Grades Language		No Indigenous people	No (all 7-16 year olds)
2.4	Year of estimate		2016	2018	2015	N/A	2019	2017	2013	2018	2008 (-2016)	2017
2.5	What share of total public education spending is being reallocated?	% (or total \$)	4.8%	US\$ 10m/year	16% of MOE budget	15%	US\$ 100m (2017-2021)	10.41%	53%	1.15%	US\$7 million/year Training, textbooks improvement infrastructure equipment	0.3%
2.6	What percentage / how many schools does it reach?	% (or # schools)	729,084 students (5% of school age population)	22,178 / 55% of teachers in deprived district	326,132 students	N/A	10 million students	799,807 students (21% of school age population)		150 schools	1700 rural 260 urban 300 indigenous schools	100%



		Country	Argentina	Benin	Bolivia	Chile	D. R. Congo	Dominican Rep.	Georgia	Mauritania	Paraguay	Singapore
3	Resources to students and families (education)											
3.1	Are there education policies to provide more resources to disadvantaged students / households?	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.2	Name of main program		Becas del Programa de Respaldo de Estudiantes de Argentina (PROG.R.ES.AR)	Integrated National School Feeding Programme (PNASI)	Becas Solidarias	Programa de Alimentación Escolar (PAE)	WFP - Home-grown school feeding	Becas Nacionales	Needs-based grants	Réduire les disparités de scolarisation: financement des fournitures scolaires à 10% des élèves (Fondamental)	Programa de Alimentación	Edusave Pupils Fund Account
3.3	How is targeting done?											
A	Location	Yes/No	No	No	No		No	No	Yes (conflict zone)	Yes	Yes	
B	Poverty	Yes/No	Yes Family income less than 3-month minimum salary	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes (bajos recursos)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
C	Disability	Yes/No	No	Yes	No		Yes	No Academic merit	N/A	No	No	
D	Other	Specify	Age (18 -24 year olds)		Indigenous Afro-descendant				Language Orphans		Malnutrition Dropout / Overage	No (all 7 -16 year olds)
3.4	Year of estimate		2016	2019	2016		2019	2017	2013	2018	2015	2017
3.5	What share/volume of total public education spending is being	% (or total \$)	11%	US\$ 20 million per year	N/A	\$1.78 million	N/A	0.42%	0.60%	US\$ 1 milion	8.3%	1%



		Country	Argentina	Benin	Bolivia	Chile	D. R. Congo	Dominican Rep.	Georgia	Mauritania	Paraguay	Singapore
	used for the main program?											
3.6	What is the size of the average transfer under the main program?	\$	US\$ 280 per year (US\$ 28 for 10 months in one year)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$1,350/year for public \$1,200-6,400 for private	4000 UM (US\$109)	N/A	SG\$230/US \$169 for primary SG\$290/US \$213 for secondary per student per year
3.7	What percentage / number of students / households does the main program reach?	% (or # schools)	675,584 students	1,574 schools (51%); 351,109 students	6,937 students	182,000 students	67,600 students	6,012 students	6% of university students	10%	86,870 students (3.2% of school age population)	89%
4	Resources to students and families (social)											
4.1	Are there education / social policies to provide more resources to disadvantaged students / households?	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
4.2	Name of Main Program		Asignación Universal por Hijo		Bono Juancito Pinto	Subsistema de Seguridades y Oportunidades	DRC Eastern Recovery Project	Progresando con Solidaridad		Alimentation scolaire (fondamental)	Tekoporâ	Home Ownership plus Education (HOPE) Scheme
4.3	How is targeting done?									No		
A	Location	Yes/No	No		No	No	Yes	No		No	No	No
B	Poverty	Yes/No	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		No	Yes	Yes (income)
C	Disability	Yes/No	Unemployed, informal sector, tax record, public works			Registro Social de Hogares		Proxy means test Quality of Life Index (ICV/SIUBEN)		No		
			Yes		Yes	No	No	No		No	Yes	



		Country	Argentina	Benin	Bolivia	Chile	D. R. Congo	Dominican Rep.	Georgia	Mauritania	Paraguay	Singapore
D	Other	Specify			Public schools					No	Indigenous	Single mothers
4.4	Year of estimate		2016		2017	N/A	2019	2017		2018	2016	2018
4.5	What share/volume of total public spending is being used for the main program?	%/\$	0.61% of GDP		0.18% of GDP	0.03% of GDP	US\$ 13 million	0.37% of GDP		No	0.16% of GDP	N/A
4.6	What is the size of the average transfer under the main program?	%/\$	US\$ 75.5-98.2 per month		US\$ 28.9	US\$9.2 per month	N/A	US\$ 8.3-92.5 per month		7.4	US\$ 4-104 per month	US\$2210 per child (per year)
4.7	What percentage / number of students / households as a share of population does the main program reach?	%(or # people or households)	9.05% of population 3.9m people 2.2m households		51% 2.18m students 1.16m households	4.44% population	1 050 000 direct beneficiaries	33.3% population (3.5 m people; 970,171 households)		150,000 rations per year	11.6% of population 778,775 people 141,399 households	N/A