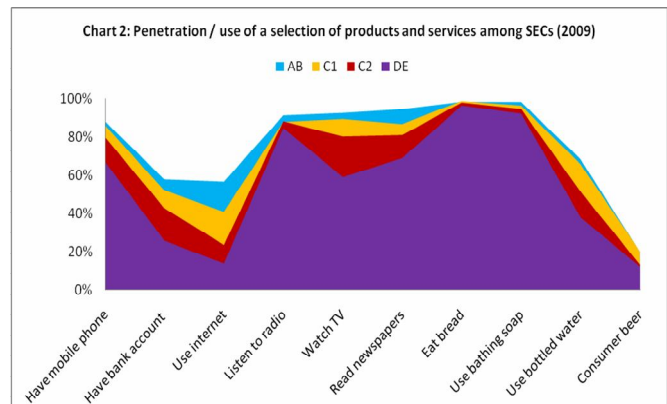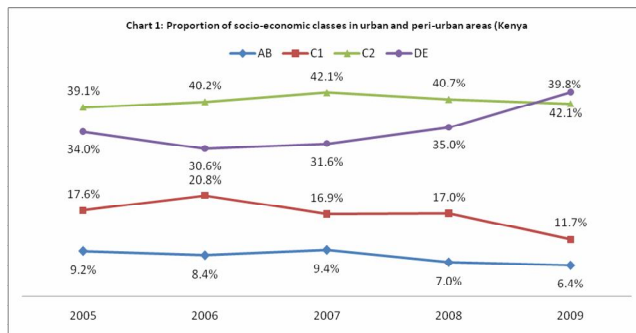# The changing demographic makeup of urban Kenya

The socio-economic classification of populations allows one to approximate the proportion of society who live in upper, middle, and lower income households. The AB, C1, C2, and DE taxonomy has been used for decades and is the more widely understood method in this market notwithstanding the recent migration to Living Standard Measures (LSMs). The AB socio-economic class (SEC) represents upper income households, C1C2 middle income, and DE lower income.

For many years, C2s (the lower end of middle income households) made up the largest proportion in urban and peri-urban areas of Kenya and many mass-market products, services, and brands were targeted to this demographic, not least because they were many in absolute numbers and were not considered destitute or cashless.

But as the first chart below illustrates, the proportion of DE households has been rising over the last 4 years and overtaken that of C2 households – C2 and DE homes now constitute 82% of households up from 73% in 2005; the proportion of C1s (the upper end of middle income households) and ABs has gone down, comprising just 18% of households down from 27% in 2005. This suggests that there are more urbanites slipping towards impoverishment which implies that the proportion of households with a decent amount of disposable income is shrinking. This does not mean that bottom-of-the-pyramid households are not consumers – as the second chart shows, penetration and use of mobile phones, radio, TV, newspapers, bread, and bathing soap are high among all households including lower SECs. These consumption patterns are no doubt driven by an increasingly younger population – the 18 to 34 years olds have surged from 53% of the urban and peri-urban population in 2005 to 91% in 2009 while the other age groups seem to be fast disappearing from the urban landscape (third chart).
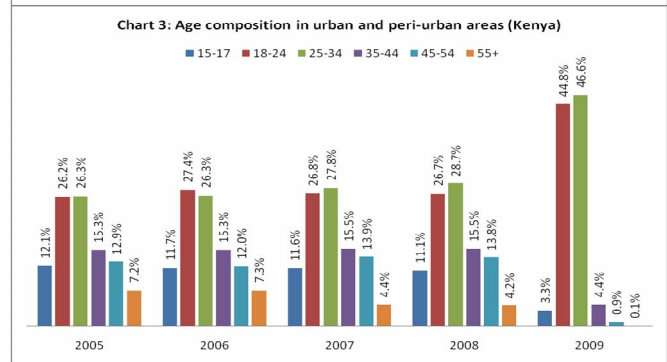

Chart 1: Proportion of socio-economic classes in urban and peri-urban areas (Kenya)

Chart 2: Penetration / use of a selection of products and services among SECs (2009)

Chart 3: Age composition in urban and peri-urban areas (Kenya)

the emerging wisdom of crowds
from 'me' to 'we' research

By **Boniface Ngahu**

Since biblical times, crowds have not been known to be the best source of wisdom. They actually opted to have Jesus crucified and Barrabas (a prisoner charged with theft) set free (John 18: 39-40). The wisdom of the crowds is also associated with mob psychology where the mob makes irrational decisions that lead to catastrophic results. One of the fiercest critics was Gustave Le Bon, whose, *The Crowd, A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895) rejected the rise of democracy. He wrote, *"In Crowds it is stupidity and not mother wit that is accumulated"*

Recent thinking suggests that the crowd can indeed be very wise. Team building experts administer individual test to members of a team and then ask the team to take the test jointly. The test results are then marked based on the variance against an expert solution, the group results are always closer to the expert solution compared to the average of the individual scores.

This is the basis of the upcoming "We" Research methodology. At the most basic level of this methodology is Mass Anthropology where smart observation of the mass behavior is made from free data that is readily available in the world. Clever statistical analysis can reveal very rich insights. The next level is mass prediction. A good example is an agricultural show competition where show attendants were asked to guess the weight of a grade bull when slaughtered. To the surprise of the contest organizers the average of the weights submitted only slightly differed with the actual weight of the bull. In predictive markets the masses accurately put money/bets against the presidential candidate who ends up winning the election. In the Hollywood Stock Exchange, they accurately predict the movie that wins the Oscar through a similar system. The next level is mass ethnography which explores people's natural abilities to observe their peers and what goes around them. This is based on the fact that we may be unreliable witnesses for our own issues but we are super social animals with very potent powers of observation. For example, according to marriage experts, friends and relatives of a couple are more accurate in predicting whether a marriage will last or not as compared to the couples own prediction.

The ultimate level is mass creativity which is achieved through co-creation and collaboration. A good example is crowd sourcing where a big document in English can be translated into Masai within an hour by sending bits of the document in SMSs to hundreds of people who are conversant with both languages. Each person sends back their translation for bits of the document and the job is done in no time. Wikipedia is said to have taken about 100 million man hours to build which experts estimate to be less than 1% of people's cognitive surplus currently devoted to watching television.

We need to pay more attention to these evolving research directions as we face the future. Remember not all crowds are the same and the quality of your results will depend a great deal on the quality of your crowd. Significantly here, as was the case with (Prof. Y. Ghai-led) Constitution of Kenya Review Commission of Kenya after 2002, the current Committee of Experts conducted no national survey on the subject matter of their work (so that only those who came forward at scheduled and publicized public hearings had a chance to express their preferences), leading various political and civil society actors to claim to speak on behalf of "all Kenyans", without really knowing what their (surely quite divergent, and apparently somewhat fluid) views are.

While the capacity for survey research of this nature is not always exploited when it might be useful, such poll results have become a standard and generally applauded ingredient of the country's national discourse about its current condition and future leadership and policy choices. And this is so even if a few dissenting voices remain. One recent example is that of Kigumo MP and PNU Vice-Chairman Jamleck Kamau, who rejected the provincial results from Synovate's December SPEC poll-ratings on potential presidential candidates, which put Raila Odinga slightly ahead of (actually, in a statistical tie with) Uhuru Kenyatta in the latter's own Central Province ('PNU trashes poll showing Raila's rising star in Central', *The Standard*, 11 January, 2009), claiming it to be "malicious" and "tailored to favour certain political sides."

sub haiti

Opinion by **Naftali Waburi**

Haiti is situated in the Caribbean near Cuba and Dominican Republic. It boasts the title of the poorest country in the western hemisphere (half of the earth west of the Prime Meridian). Haiti is in the news of late with a massive earth quake measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale.

It took the intervention of the world powers, all but Russia, to come to Haiti's aid, with the first survivors and dead being excavated after the week when the international intervention had arrived. It's a pity that the death toll surpassed the Tsunami of "2006" considering the fact that the Tsunami affected more than 10 countries including Kenya and Somalia thousand of miles away. Initial assessment had 100,000 dead from the now on now off president. Current estimated more than 200,000 dead. However, this was never independently verified.

That's the direct dead from the earthquake. Other deaths came from bullet wounds from marauding gangs looting from the dead city and the dead, the diseases brought about by the dead not being collected and disposed, and lack of basic amenities such as medicine and medical help. What a pity.

Where was the country's military, police, government etc? What has gone wrong? By the way, has the president resurrected? The answer is simple. The 3rd world has little or disaster management system. Even the early warning mechanisms are virtually dead.

Take Africa for example, a Kenya Airways plane went down in Cameroon forest some few odd miles from the commercial hub in Doula. It took Kenya Airways control to even inform the Cameroonians that the plane was down and the Cameroonians could not even locate where the plane was! It's a pity.

In Kenya, where we pride ourselves on being a bit advanced, we are always caught flat footed though our reaction is immediate (but this does not help the dead). Can somebody explain what is prepared at the Likoni channel? Do we have divers on stand-by? Do we have life saving mechanisms near the channel? Do we have funds to pay the dead – sorry the government will finance the cost of burying the dead – the ones that will survive the sharks, and I am applying in advance for a seat in the commission that will be appointed to investigate the "accident" and or the task force that will look into the reasons why the commission did not come up with actionable results, and recommend compensation to the dead to the tune of 1 billion shillings, the price of 2 brand new modern and efficient ferries and 4 2nd hand ferries.

Question is - are we sub-Haiti or just plain stupid?