In 2001, 927 million people lived in ‘slums’ or legally insecure housing identified by its poor condition. As a percentage, 15% of the world population lived in such housing. The legal status of housing affects the improvements that inhabitants are willing and able to make to their homes and neighbourhood. If you might be moved on there is less incentive to improve a dwelling. Further, poorer people live in slums; poverty can reduce the ability to make home improvements.

There are slums in almost all territories. South America is the region with the largest proportion of the population living in slums, at 26%; followed by North Africa, at 25%.

Territory size shows the proportion of worldwide population that live in slums that live there.

“there are two cities within one ... [one] part ... has all the benefits of urban living, and the other part, the slums and squatter settlements, where the poor often live under worse conditions than their rural relatives.” Anna Tibaijuka, 2006