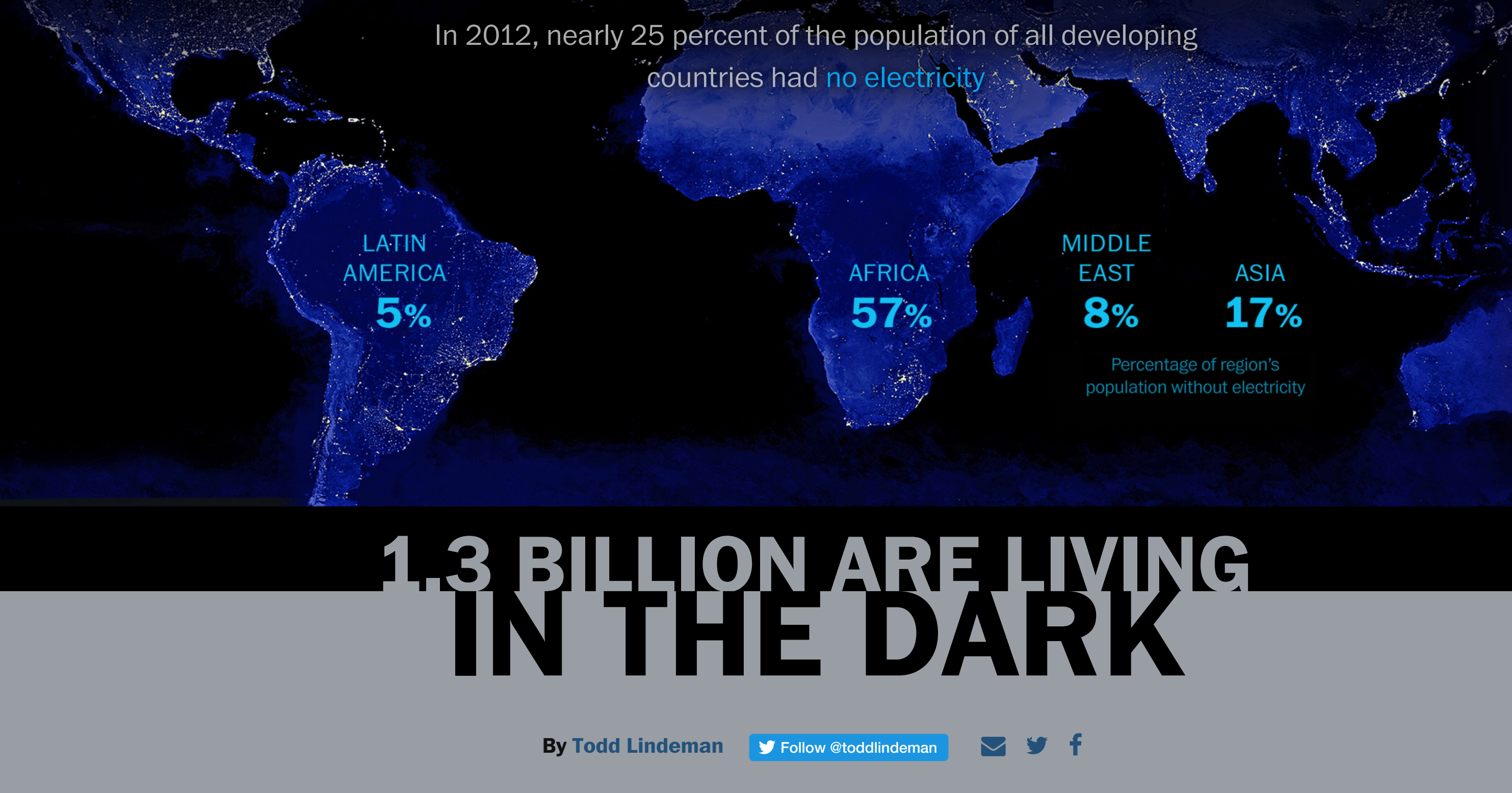


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1.3 BILLION ARE LIVING IN THE DARK

By [Todd Lindeman](#) Follow [@toddindeman](#)

Around the world, 1.3 billion people lack access to electricity. More than 600 million are in sub-Saharan Africa, and more than 300 million are in India alone. Providing electric power to these unserved populations will cause a significant jump in demand in the coming decades. India has promised to place an emphasis on renewable sources of energy; there are programs in Africa to create "mini-grids" using renewables. But as electricity-generating capacity inevitably grows ever larger, India and the other countries of the developing world will not be able to avoid the increased use of fossil fuels as well — and especially coal. New coal-burning power plants will emit less carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases than their predecessors, but the strain on the atmosphere will be substantial nonetheless. [Read the related story.](#)

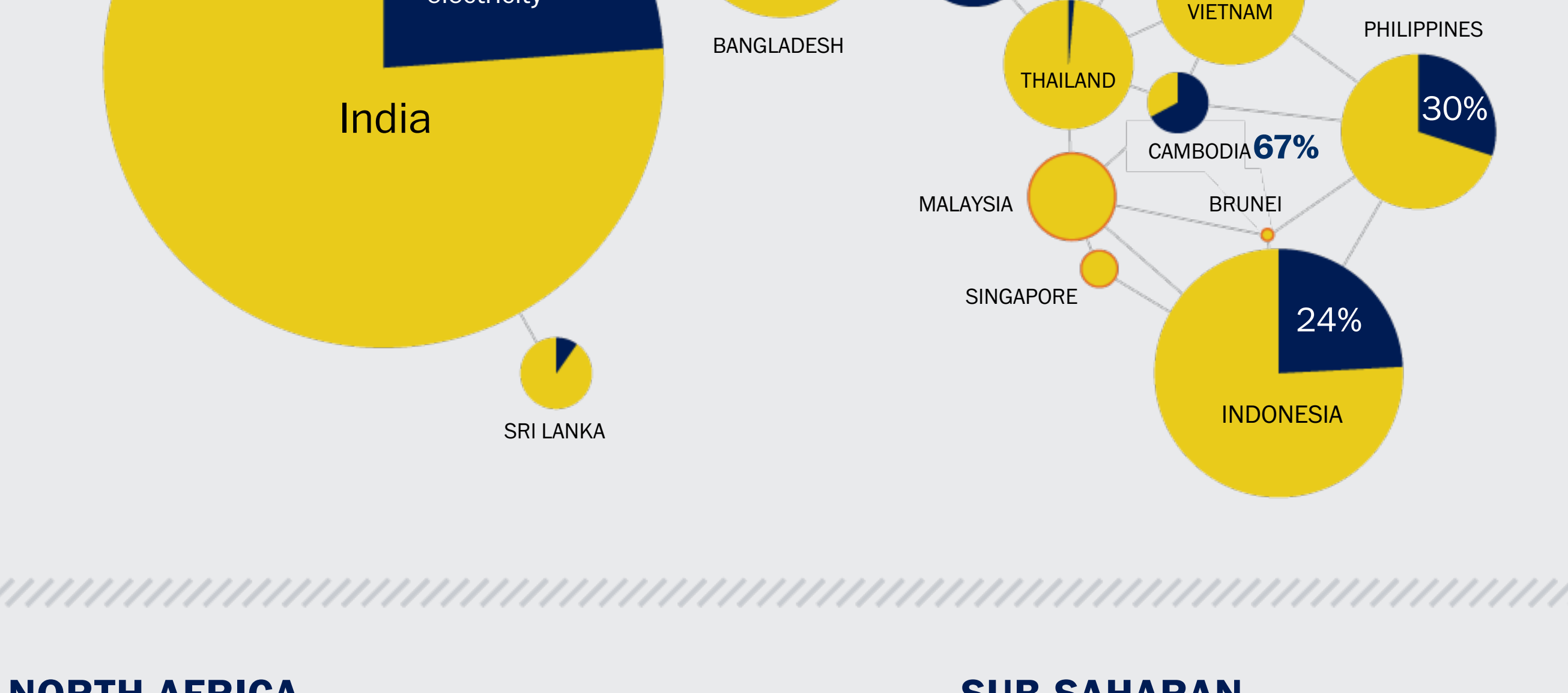
The pie charts below show only developing countries, and the gap between those who have access to electricity and those who do not have access:

- Dark-blue pie slice: Percentage of the population that does not have access to electricity
- Pies are scaled proportionately to each country's 2012 population
- Outlined pie: 100 percent of the population has access to electricity

ASIA

Nearly 2 out of 10 people do not have access to electricity

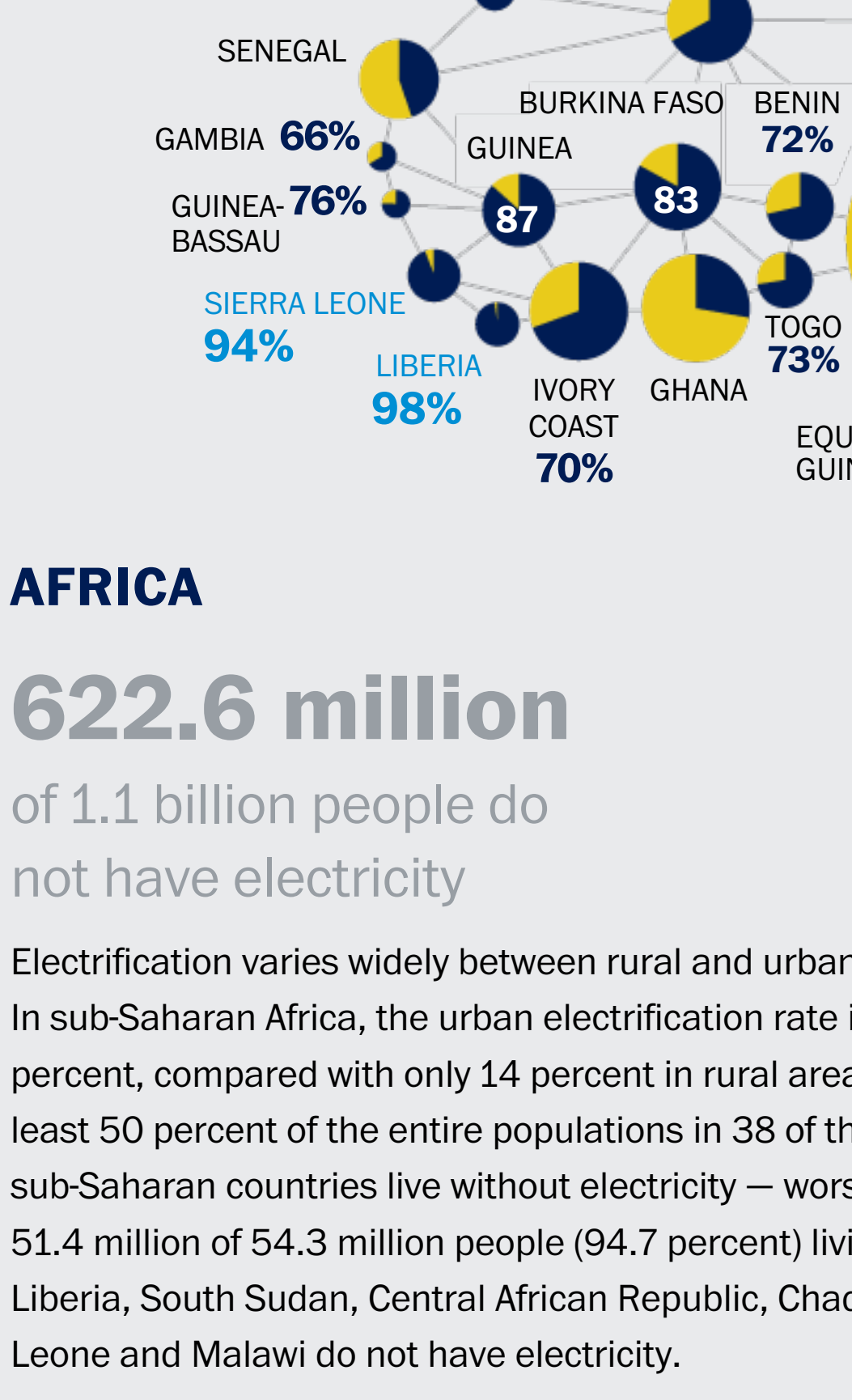
Of all countries, India has the largest population that does not have access to electricity — 304 million people. While 94 percent of Indians living in urban areas have electricity, only 67 percent in rural areas have power. North Korea, Burma and Cambodia have it even worse. About 70 percent of their total population does not have electricity.



622 million of 3.6 billion people do not have electricity

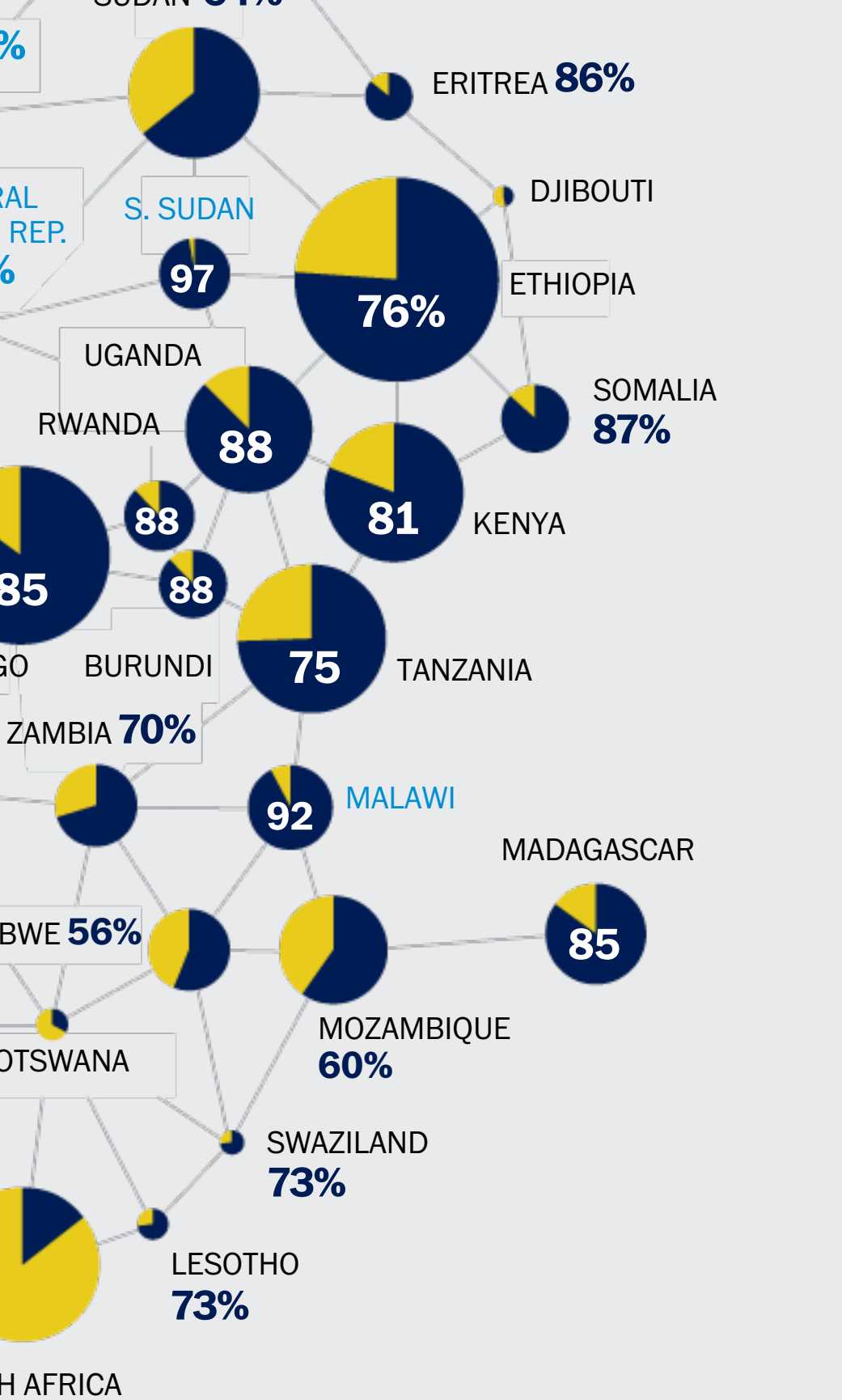
NORTH AFRICA

Fewer than 1 out of 10 people do not have access to electricity



SUB-SAHARAN

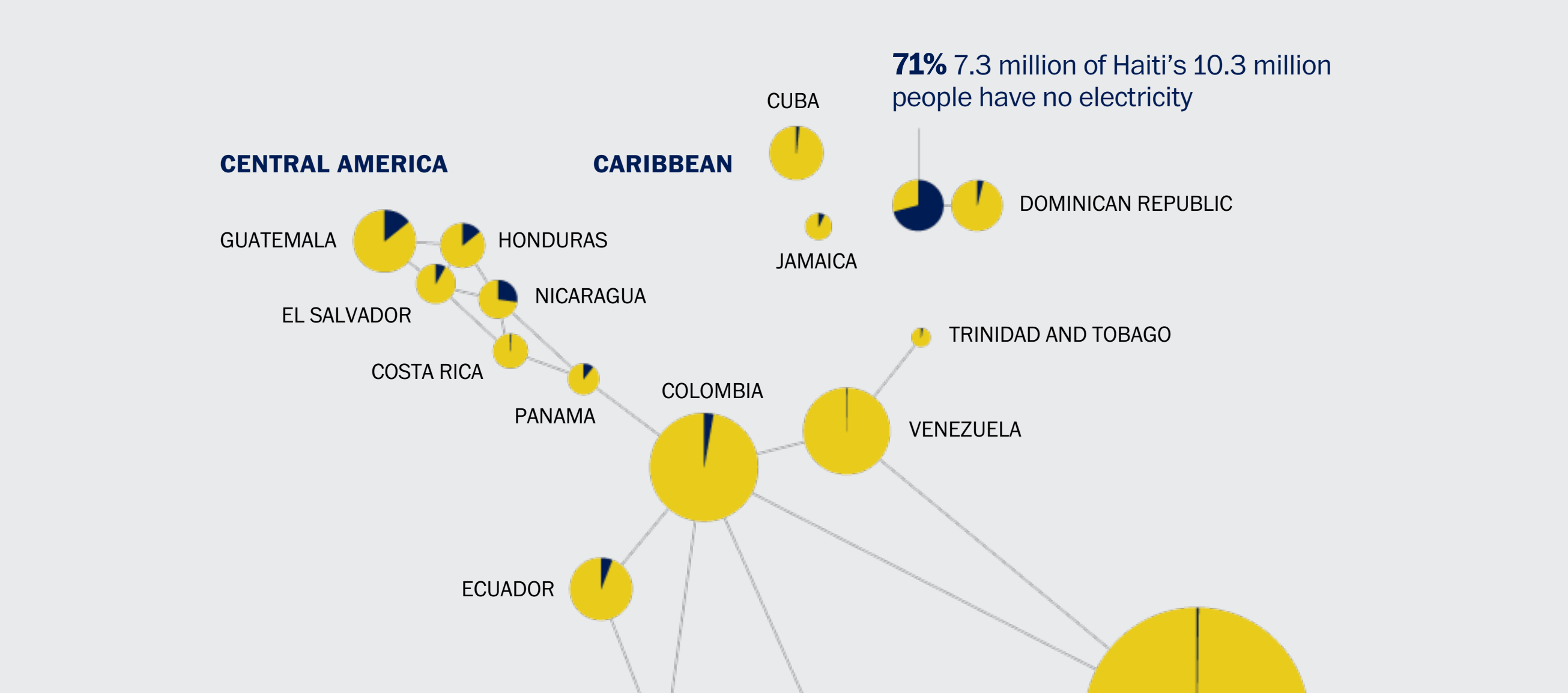
7 out of 10 people do not have access to electricity



AFRICA

622.6 million of 1.1 billion people do not have electricity

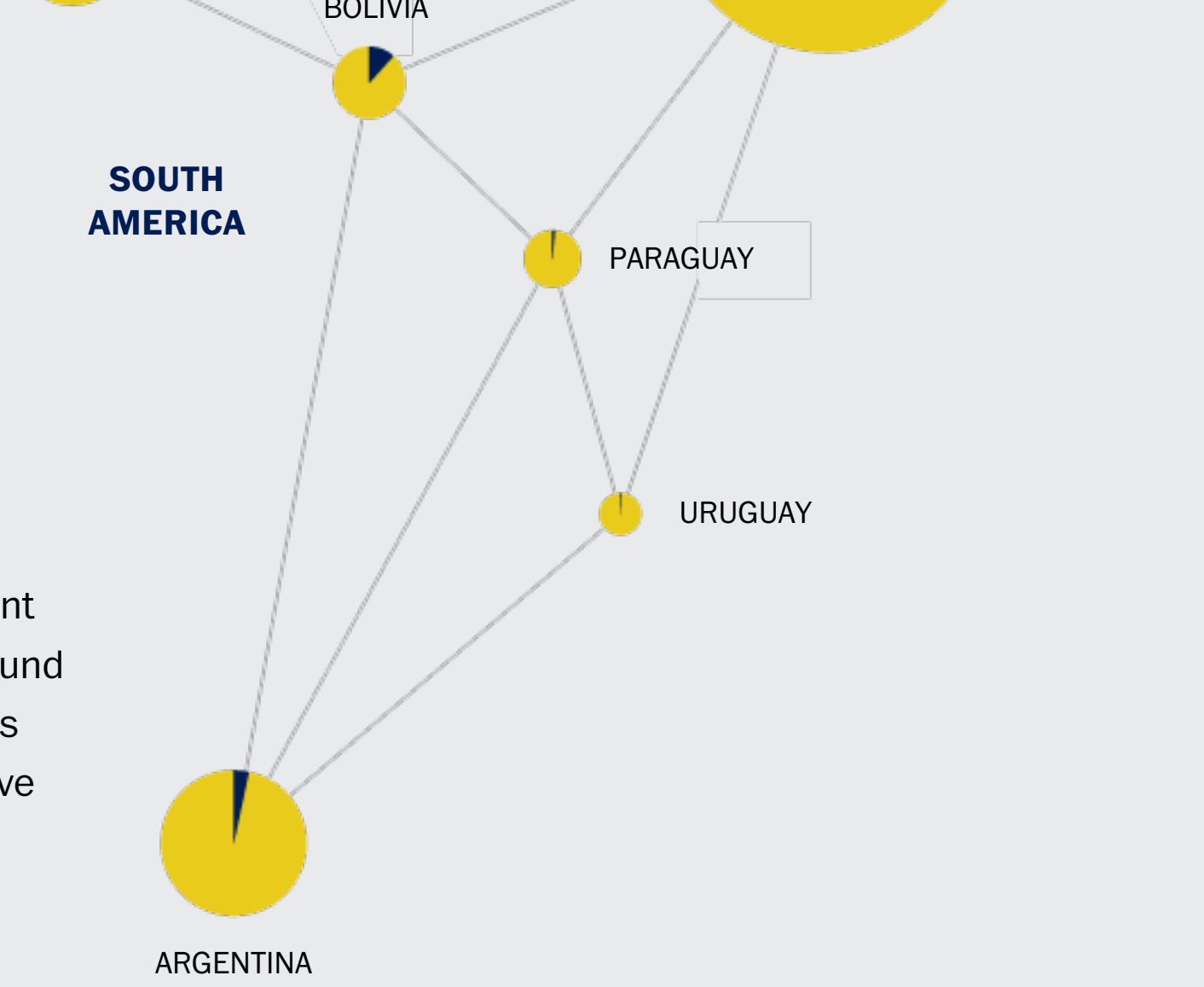
Electrification varies widely between rural and urban areas. In sub-Saharan Africa, the urban electrification rate is 60 percent, compared with only 14 percent in rural areas. At least 50 percent of the entire populations in 38 of the 49 sub-Saharan countries live without electricity — worse off, 51.4 million of 54.3 million people (94.7 percent) living in Liberia, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, Sierra Leone and Malawi do not have electricity.



MIDDLE EAST

Nearly 1 out of 10 people do not have access to electricity

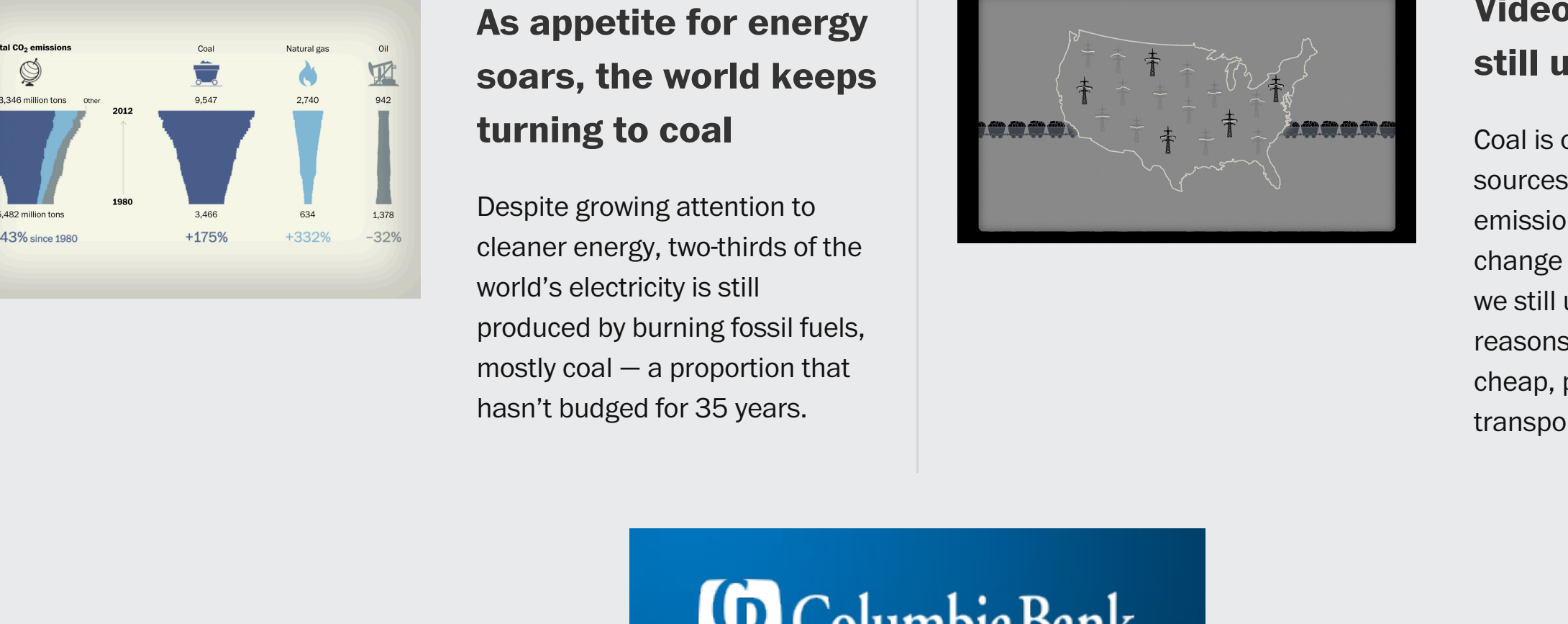
Nearly 80 percent of the people without electricity in the Middle East live in Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the Arab world. Yemen often suffers from prolonged power outages.



LATIN AMERICA

Fewer than 1 out of 10 people do not have access to electricity

Haiti remains a regional outlier, with only 29 percent of its population — mostly concentrated in and around its capital, Port-au-Prince — having access. Haitians who have electricity receive power an average of five to nine hours per day.

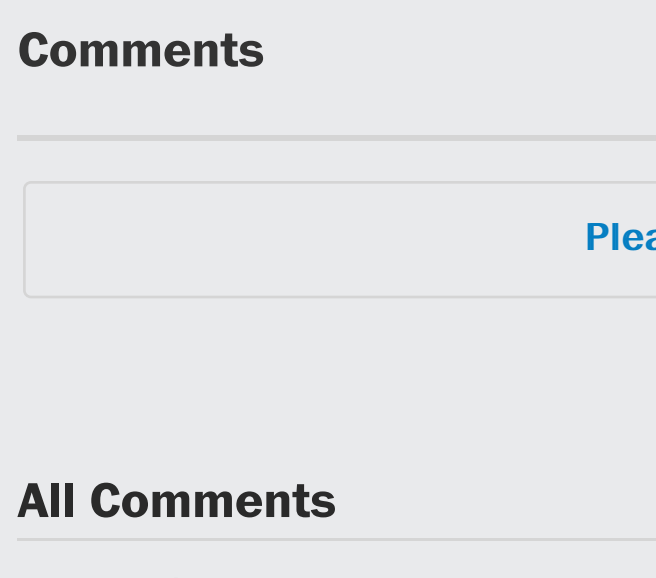


Published Nov. 6, 2015; updated Nov. 10, 2015.

Note: African island countries Sao Tome and Principe (56% without electricity), Comoros (54.5%), Cabo Verde (6%), Seychelles (3%) and Reunion (1%) are not shown.

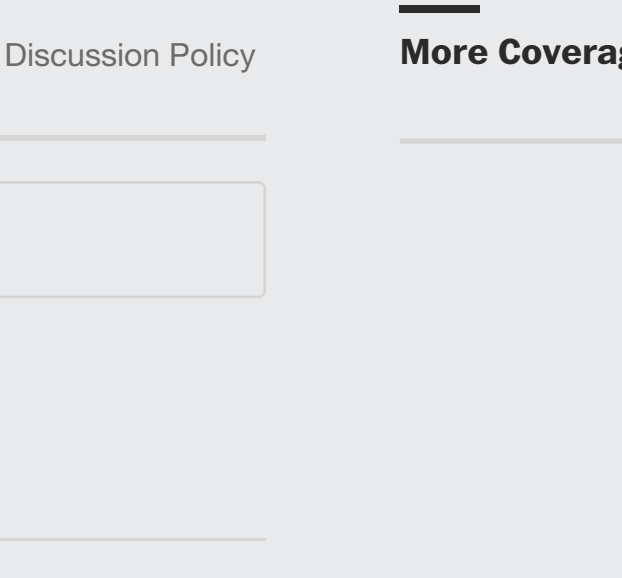
Sources: [International Energy Agency's electricity database](#) and [methodology](#), World Bank, Worldwatch Institute, NASA

Editor's picks



As appetite for energy soars, the world keeps turning to coal

Despite growing attention to cleaner energy, two-thirds of the world's electricity is still produced by burning fossil fuels, mostly coal — a proportion that hasn't budged for 35 years.



Video: Why the world still uses coal

Coal is one of the world's largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions and a major climate change contributor. So why are we still using it? For the same reasons we always have: It's cheap, plentiful, easy to transport and easy to get.

Don't delay. \$100* is waiting.

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*Requirements apply. Member FDIC.

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Phyxxx
11/10/2015 6:20 AM PST
No electricity? How do the watch TV, then? This an obvious hoax

Like Reply Share

kenpittsburgh
11/10/2015 9:20 AM PST
After the first month or two of language training in the Peace Corps, we were each provided with a bus ticket to go to a town for a week and answer some questions about the town. It was essentially some real-world practice in the language and to expose us to the realities of getting around by ourselves.
("Here's a bus ticket to this town, here're some questions, here's some money for the trip, see you in a week")

Anyway ... I got on this bus and rode for 10 or twelve hours over dirt roads, with only a basic understanding of the language ... and finally got off at the last stop. It was a town with no electricity or running water or really much of anything. As I got off the bus at the "inn", there were villagers leaning over the fence rails of the inn's courtyard watching Charlie's Angels on a TV connected to a car battery. It impressed me as very, very surreal.

2 Like Reply

FarTraveler
11/10/2015 5:30 AM PST
Actually, the map is misleading in that no one in sub-Saharan Africa has access to reliable electricity. There may be wires leading to houses that have electricity a few hours a week, but, for the most part no. This is also true for South Asia, notably Pakistan and, yes, India. The real environmental problem is that shopkeepers and homeowners and hotels rely on individual gas- or diesel-powered generators which make a racket, and pump out clouds of noxious gasses.

Like Reply Share

Emily Fausett
11/21/2016 12:44 PM PST
Right, generators are expensive, they break down, the diesel is expensive, and they cause air and noise pollution.

Also a big problem to me is living in a place where institutions don't have reliable electricity. 60% of health clinics in the developing world don't have a reliable energy source. That means no light for emergency nighttime procedures (including childbirth) and no refrigeration for vaccines, medications, insulin, or blood for transfusions. In Kenya, the infant mortality rate (and this is of children actually born in a clinic) was 40%, but for clinics that got electricity and were able to run incubators for the newborns, that rate was dropped to 25%.

Health is also affected at home. An estimated 3.5 million people die every year because of respiratory illness caused by indoor air pollution from using kerosene, wood, crop waste, dung, and other biomass for lighting, cooking, and heating within the home.

There are also communication problems that come when living in rural areas without electricity as opposed to living in the city without electricity. I've spent a good deal of time working in the mountains of Ecuador and Honduras, you know what you don't see? Phone lines and mail boxes. If somebody doesn't live next to you, pretty much the only way to talk to them is on a cell phone...unless you have no way to charge it. Imagine if your son/daughter moves to another town/village.
[See More](#)

Like Reply

Emily Fausett
11/21/2016 12:44 PM PST
This is why I do what I do. I work with a non-profit called Solar Under the Sun that goes to parts of the world without electricity and installs solar energy for schools, orphanages, health clinics, churches, and sometimes homes (that one we have to be somewhat particular about). Most of our systems also house water purification systems so that the communities can have drinkable water (which is also a huge problem in developing countries).

We train volunteers, so if you would like to get involved, you can learn more at [www.solarunderthesun.org](#)

Like Reply

Jedediah Smytheson
11/8/2015 4:01 PM PST
I think Singapore will be surprised to learn it's a "developing" country.

Like Reply Share

Yes Sir
11/9/2015 8:44 AM PST
Sounds like a good place to put in some solar panels.

2 Like Reply Share

Austrolib
11/8/2015 6:17 AM PST
I've stayed in places in Africa with no electricity. It's kind of nice.

1 Like Reply Share

bhadram
11/8/2015 3:14 PM PST
But you wouldn't want to live there, right?

1 Like Reply

kenpittsburgh
11/10/2015 9:11 AM PST [Edited]
I live 3d without electricity or running water for two years while in the Peace Corps. Sometimes I miss it. While it's obviously inconvenient, it also tends a certain (I'm having a hard time coming up with a description) ... maybe peacefulness and ... or maybe "mindfulness." There's just a very different rhythm to life that one gets into. After a month or two, one really isn't walking around wishing for electricity ... one just gets used to living in a different way.

1 Like Reply

Emily Fausett
11/21/2016 12:33 PM PST
In some ways, living without electricity really can be peaceful. There is something nice about knowing that there is a natural "lights out" and you are not expected to work all night. The lack of technology also makes for a more simpler life in so many ways.

The biggest problem to me is living in a place where institutions don't have reliable electricity. 60% of health clinics in the developing world don't have a reliable energy source. That means no light for emergency nighttime procedures (including childbirth) and no refrigeration for vaccines, medications, insulin, or blood for transfusions. In Kenya, the infant mortality rate (and this is of children actually born in a clinic) was 40%, but for clinics that got electricity and were able to run incubators for the newborns, that rate was dropped to 25%.

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[See More](#)

Like Reply

Eric Massoud
11/8/2015 10:25 PM PST
There will be global peace and global economic boom if there's global access to affordable electricity

1 Like Reply Share

DRR3
11/8/2015 5:35 AM PST
Here is the problem: let these people live like they have for thousands of years, burning cow dung and deforesting hills to cook/wash or develop power plants, run power lines and likely burn the dirtiest/cheapest coal available for them to use stoves they can't buy and electricity they can't afford while they continue to live like they always have....

2 Like Reply Share

bhadram
11/8/2015 3:12 AM PST
The only two choices available for the "people" of manifest destiny!!!
They "let" those other people.....AND there are two "likes" already.
News Flash: The "other people" WILL make their own choices. Lords and masters of manifest destiny can help or hurt; the trend is, so far, clear. Ecofreaks to the fore!

1 Like Reply

markinnj
11/7/2015 5:34 PM PST
I see israel is no longer in the middle east. When did that happen?

1 Like Reply Share

Dave Winchester
11/7/2015 7:53 PM PST
Israel is not a "developing country." Maybe try reading?

Like Reply

TrojanFan
11/9/2015 1:15 AM PST
And China is a developing country??

2 Like

tim_anderson44
11/9/2015 11:34 AM PST
Singapore, Malaysia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia is all on the map. None of these are "developing countries." (Although I do note that Japan and South Korea are at least off the map) It does make one wonder what criteria were used to determine whether a country was "developing" or "developed."

1 Like

bhadram
11/9/2015 4:59 PM PST
Israel IS a developing country. It is slowly acquiring more and more land as settlements.

Like

STLEire
11/8/2015 2:09 PM PST
Chile seems to have disappeared also.

Like Reply

Jedediah Smytheson
11/9/2015 4:04 PM PST
Along with Guyana, Surinam, and French Guiana.

1 Like

More