

---

**Gender and Health Indicators in Ghana**  
**Data from the 2008**  
**Demographic and Health Survey**

---



---

# Gender and Health Indicators in Ghana Data from the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey

---

ICF Macro  
Calverton, Maryland USA

August 2010

This atlas is based on findings from the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) and was produced by ICF Macro, Calverton, Maryland USA. The GDHS is part of the worldwide MEASURE DHS project, which is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Additional information about the GDHS may be obtained from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), P.O. Box 1098, Accra, Ghana (Telephone: 233-21-671-732 Fax: 233-21-671-731)

Additional information about the MEASURE DHS project may be obtained by contacting ICF Macro, 11785 Beltsville Drive, Calverton, Maryland 20705, Telephone: (301)572-0200 Fax: (301)572-0999 Internet: [www.measuredhs.com](http://www.measuredhs.com)

Cover photo: © 2008 Erberto Zani, Courtesy of Photoshare

Suggested citation:

ICF Macro. 2010. *Gender and Health Indicators in Ghana, Data from the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey* Calverton, Maryland, USA: ICF Macro



Ghana Statistical Service



Danida

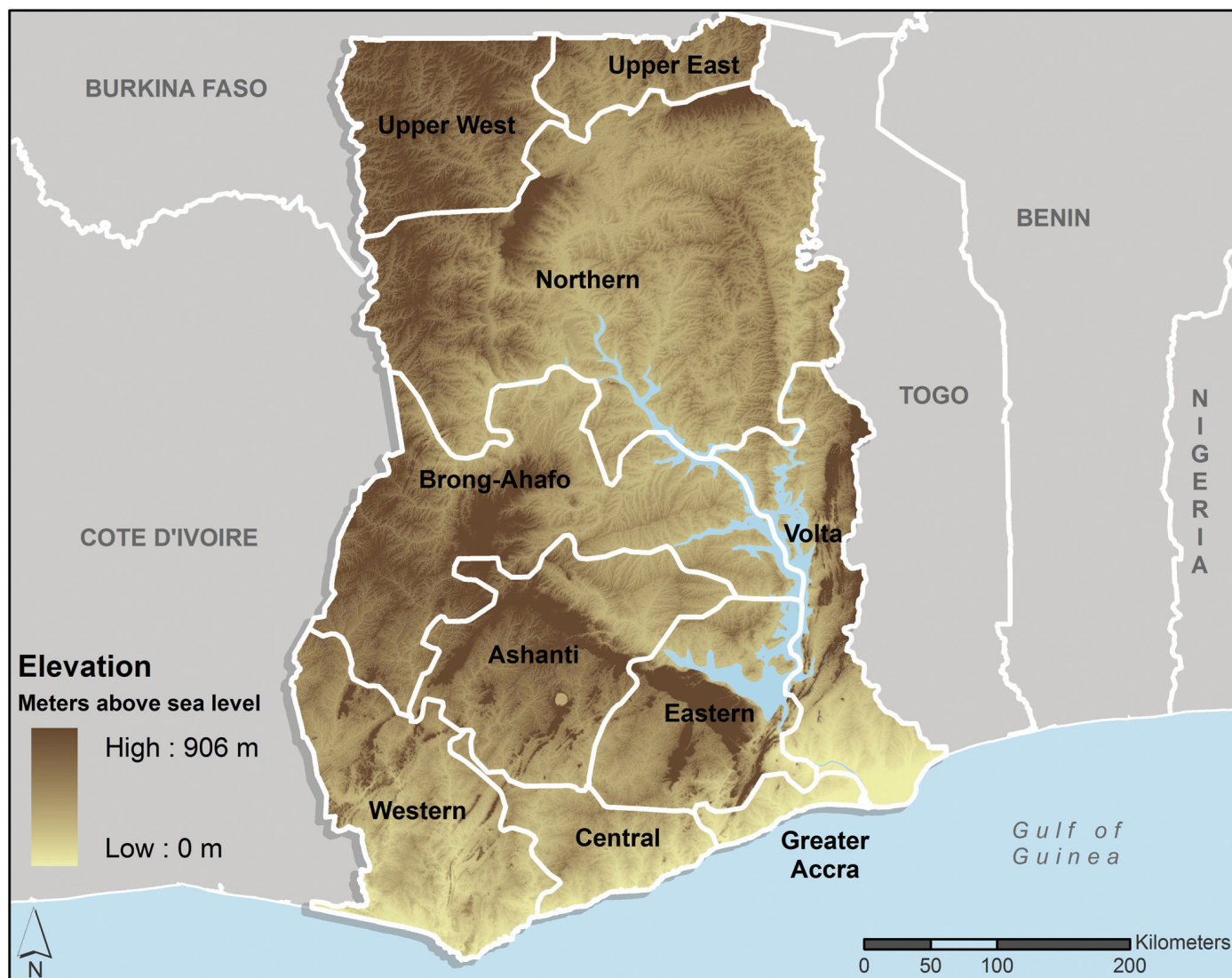


## Contents

<b>Ghana 2008 DHS Regions .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Employment Status .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Occupation.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Literacy .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Educational Attainment .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Lack of Health Insurance Coverage .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Lack of Access to Any Mass Media.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Nutritional Status of Women.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Desire to Limit Childbearing .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Polygyny .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Attitudes Towards Wife Beating .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Experience of Physical Violence.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Experience of Sexual Violence .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Violence during Pregnancy .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Comprehensive Knowledge about AIDS.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Comprehensive Knowledge about AIDS among Youth .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Higher-Risk Sexual Intercourse .....</b>	<b>22</b>

## Ghana 2008 DHS Regions

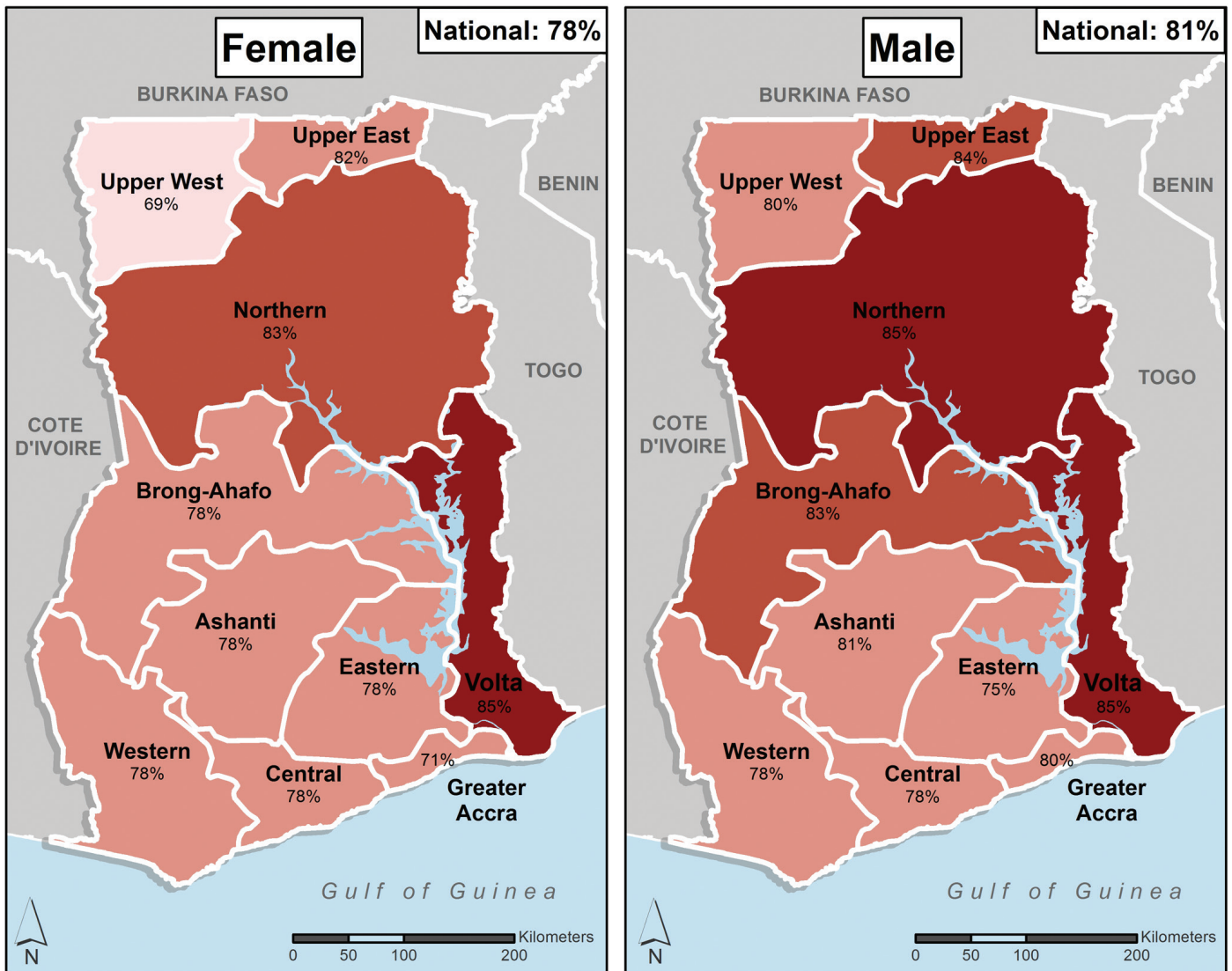
Elevation in meters above sea level



The 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) collected data from 11,778 households, 4,916 women, and 4,568 men from every region in the country. The survey sampling methodology ensures that the data collected are representative for Ghana as a whole, for its urban and rural areas, and for each of its 10 regions.

# Employment Status

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 employed in the 12 months preceding the survey



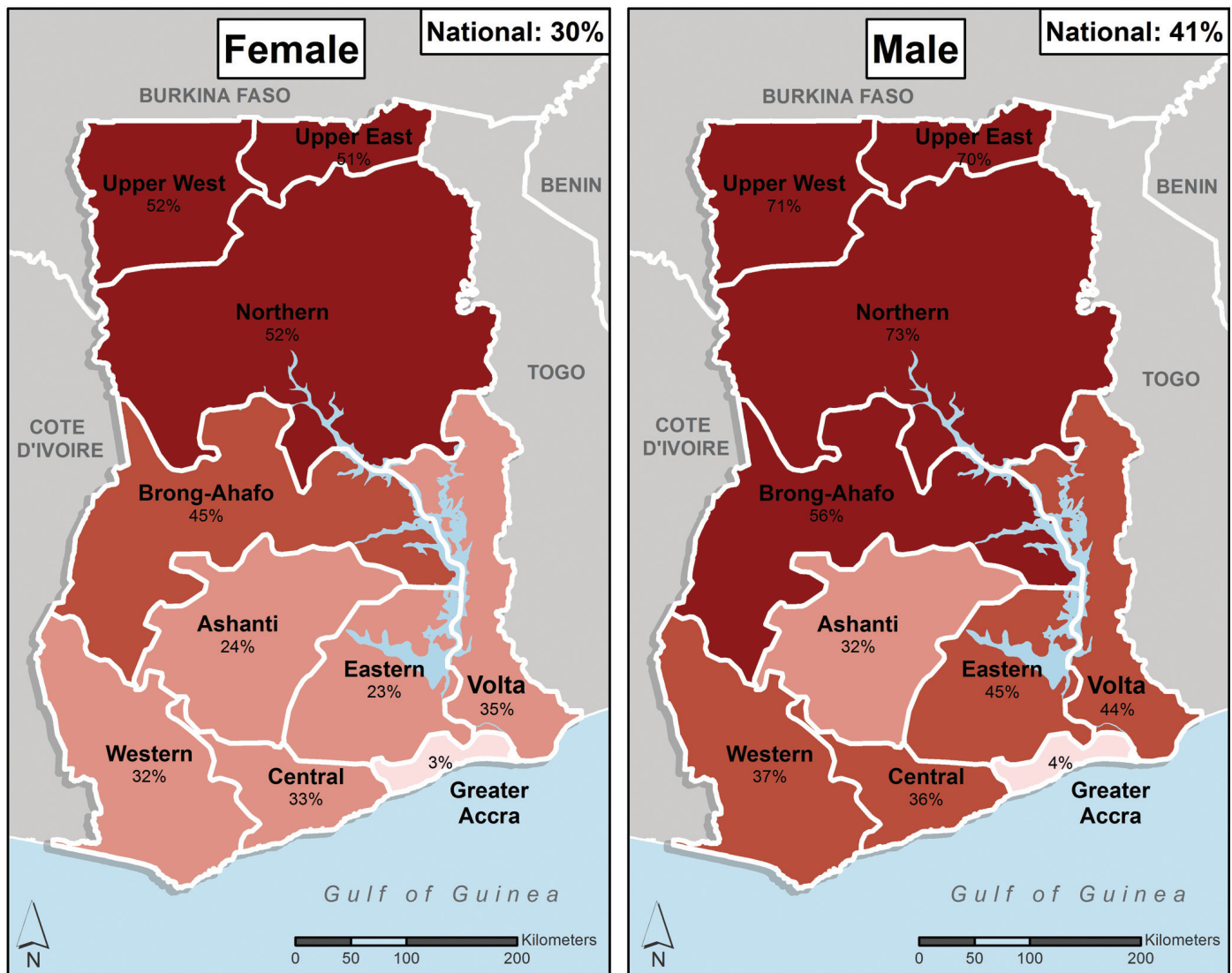
## Legend



Most women and men age 15-49 in Ghana are employed. Overall, 78% of women and 81% of men are currently working or have been employed in the past 12 months. Rates of employment for women range from a low of 69% in the Upper West region to a high of 85% in the Volta region. Among men, rates of employment range from a low of 75% in the Eastern region to a high of 85% in the Volta and Northern regions. Women in the Upper West and Greater Accra regions are much less likely to be employed than men.

# Occupation

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 whose occupation is agriculture



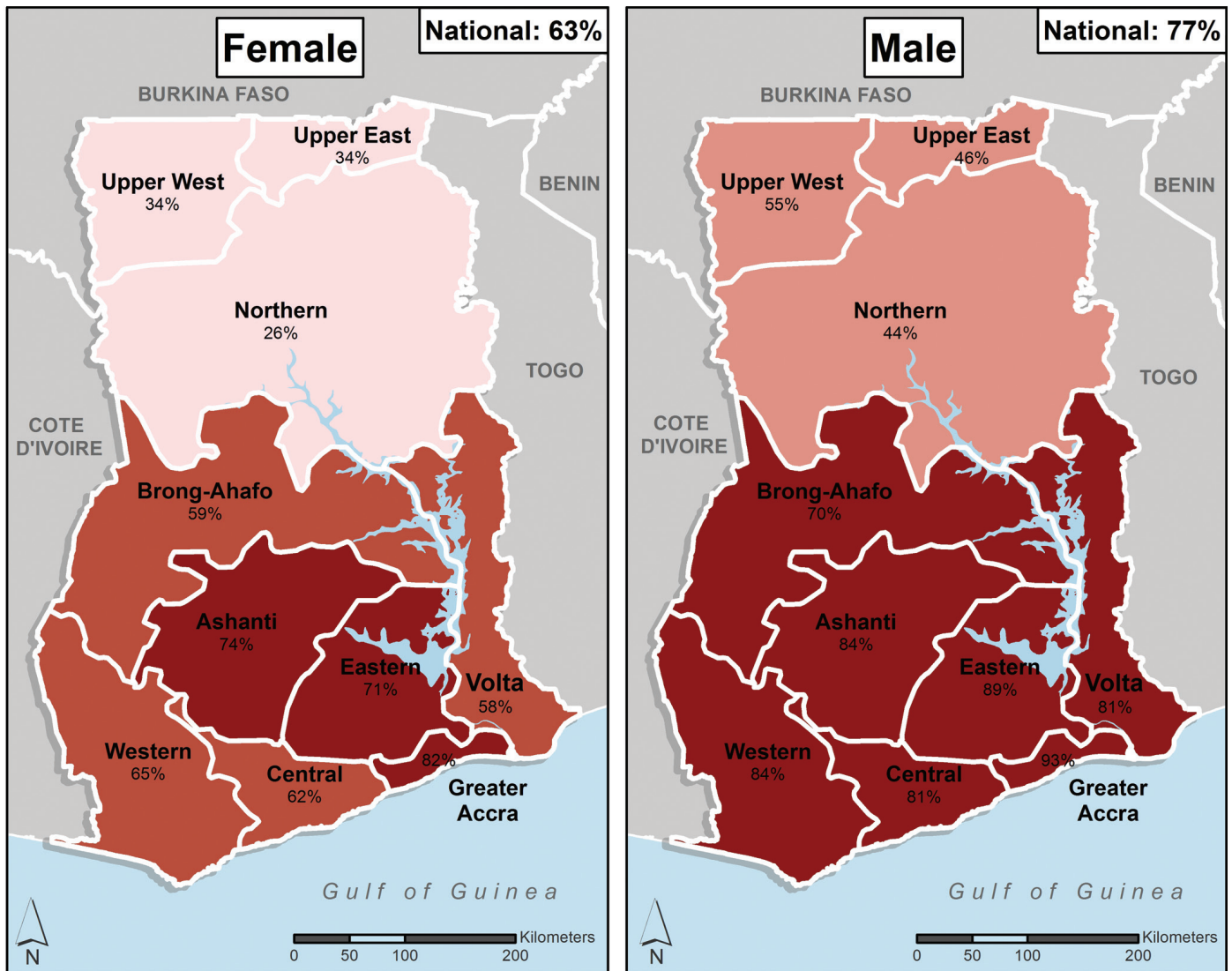
## Legend



About one-third of working women (30%) and two-fifths of working men (41%) are employed in agricultural occupations. In Ghana as a whole, agriculture is the most common source of employment for men whereas more than half of working women are employed in sales or service occupations. Agriculture is the predominant source of employment for both women and men only in the northern regions of Ghana. Seventy percent or more of employed men and more than 50% of employed women in the Northern, Upper West, and Upper East regions work in agriculture.

# Literacy

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 who are literate



## Legend



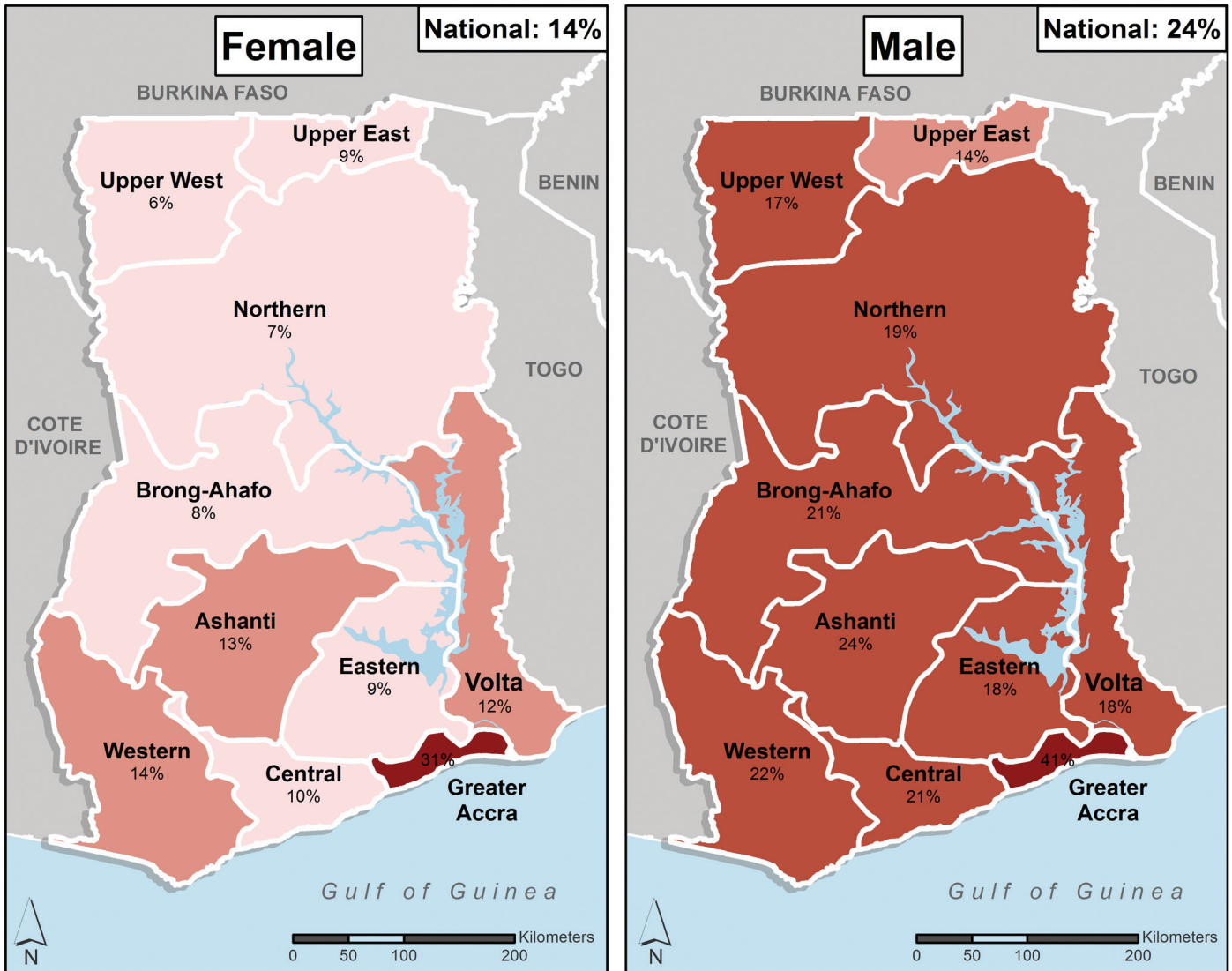
The ability to read and write gives individuals increased opportunities in life. The GDHS defined literacy as being able to read all or part of a sentence. Those who had never been to school and those who had not completed primary level were asked to read the cards in the language they were most likely able to read. Those who had attended secondary school or higher education were assumed to be literate.

More men in Ghana are literate than women. As a whole, 63% of women are literate compared with 77% of men. Women and men living in the north of Ghana are less likely to be literate than women and men in any other region of the country. The proportion of women who can read ranges from a low of 26% in the Northern region to a high of 82% in the Greater Accra region. The regional pattern is similar for men, with literacy ranging from 44% among men in the Northern region to 93% in the Greater Accra region.



# Educational Attainment

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 who completed secondary school or higher



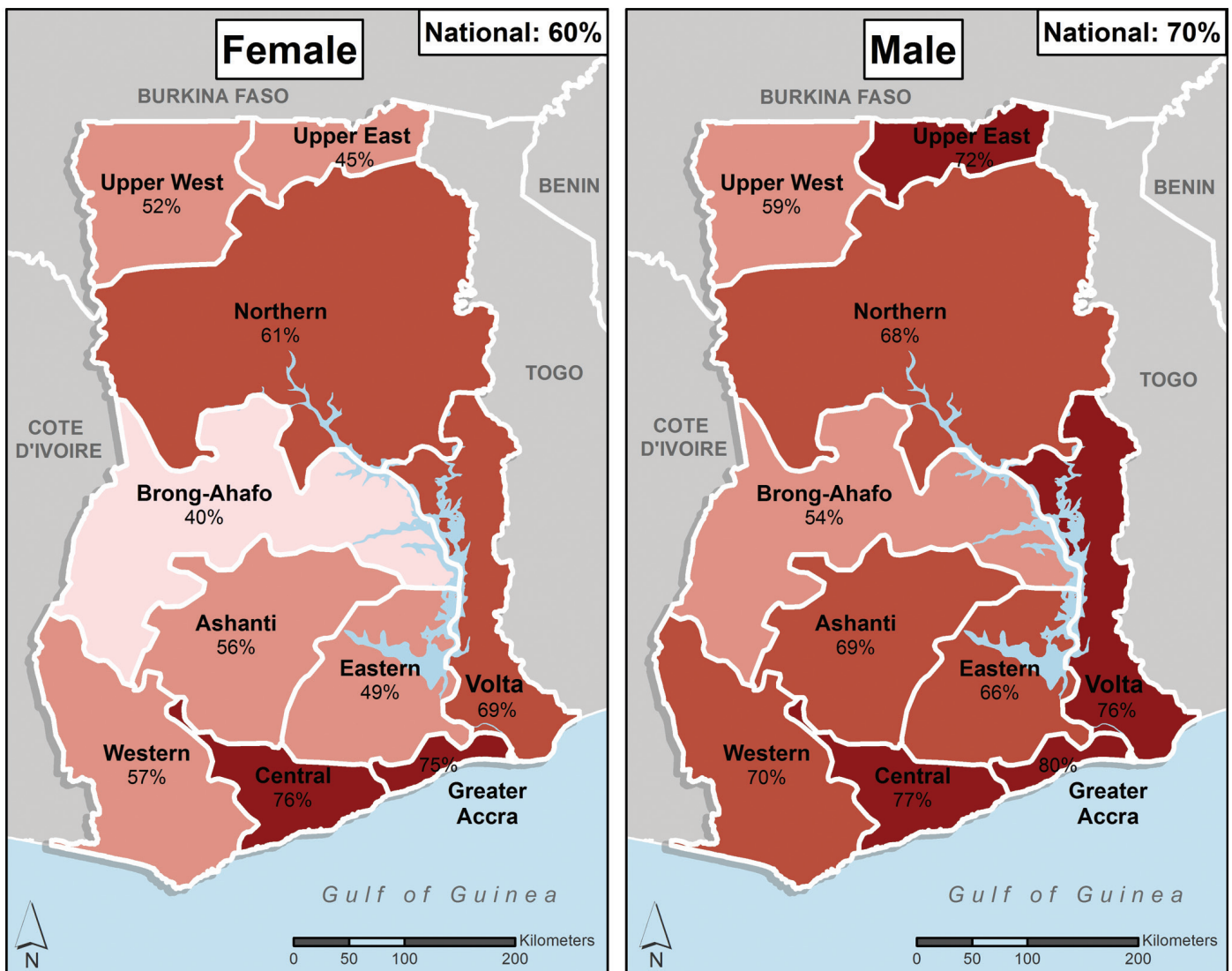
## Legend



More education is closely associated with better health of women and children, as well as better reproductive health behavior among women and men. Twenty-one percent of Ghanaian women have never been to school compared with 13% of men. Educational attainment is much higher for men than women. Only about one in seven women (14%) has completed secondary school or received higher education. In contrast, almost one in four (24%) men has finished secondary school or received higher education. The Greater Accra region has the largest proportion of women and men who have completed at least secondary school—31% of women and 41% of men. Educational attainment is lowest for both women and men in the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions.

# Lack of Health Insurance Coverage

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 who have no health insurance coverage



## Legend

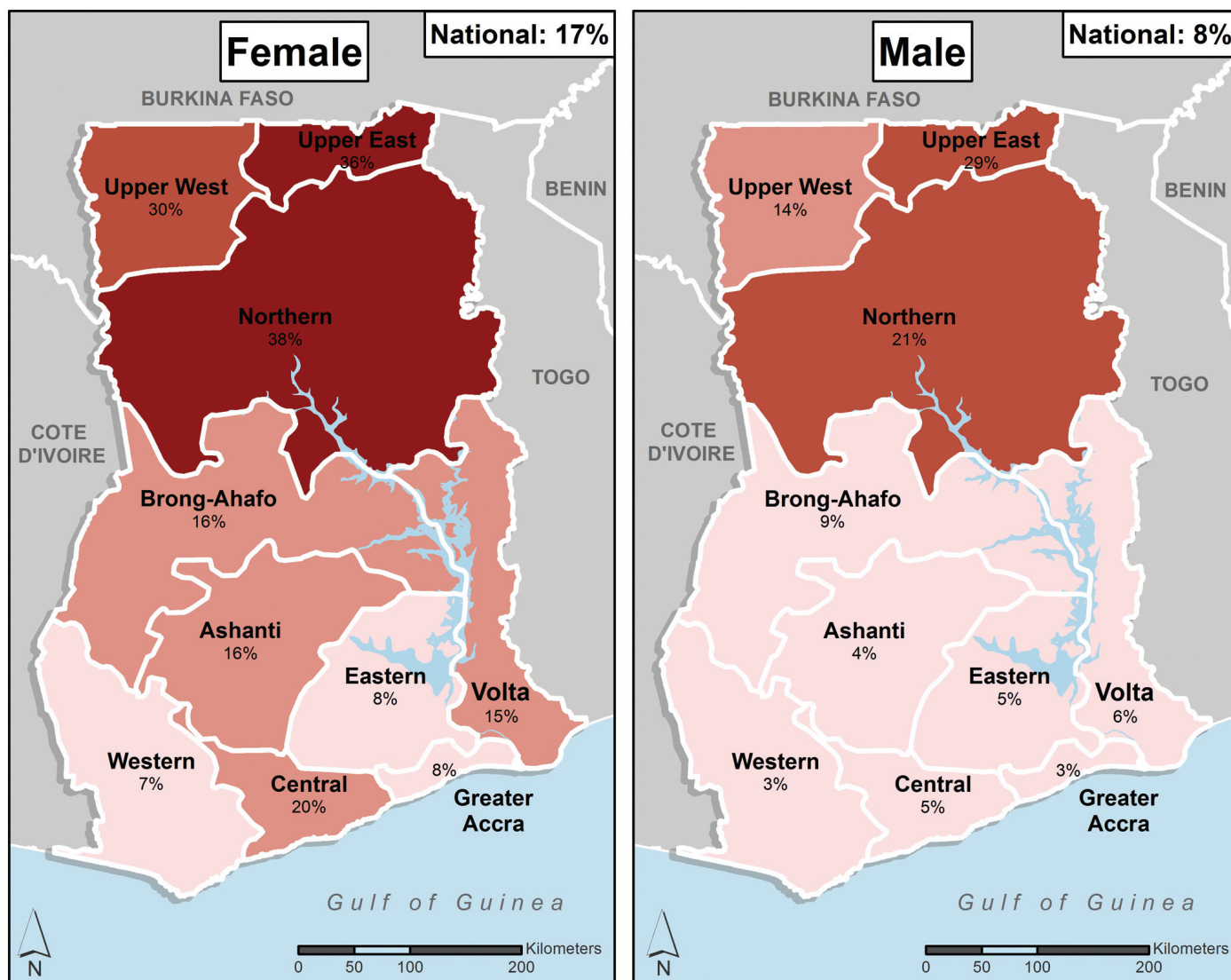


The National Health Insurance Scheme (Act 650) was passed in 2003 with the aim of making health care accessible to all. Despite the act's passage, the majority of Ghanaians do not have any form of health insurance. Men are less likely than women to be insured: 70% of men do not have public or private health insurance compared with 60% of women.

Women and men are least likely to be insured in the Central region. The Brong Ahafo region has the highest level of health insurance coverage (60% of women and 47% of men) in the country.

# Lack of Access to Any Mass Media

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 who are not exposed to any mass media



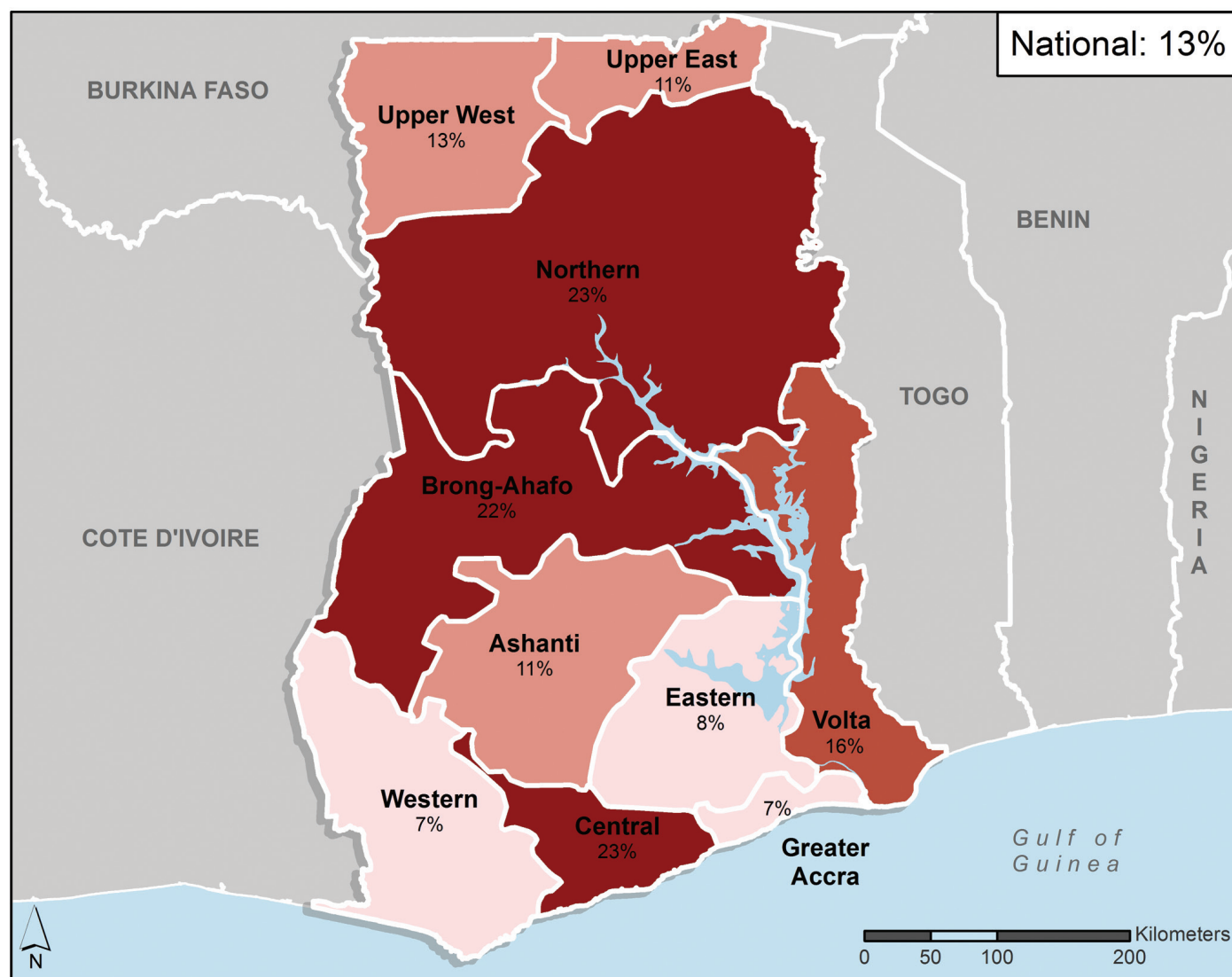
## Legend



Access to information is essential to increasing people’s knowledge and awareness of local and national events, as well as access to potentially life-saving information on health and family planning issues. Most women and men in Ghana have access to one or more forms of mass media. However, twice as many women (17%) as men (8%) nationwide do not listen to the radio, read newspapers, or watch television at least once a week. The proportion of women with less than weekly exposure to any mass media ranges from 7% in the Western region to 38% in the Northern region. The proportion of men with less than weekly exposure to any media ranges from a low of 3% in the Greater Accra and Western regions to a high of 29% in the Upper East region.

## Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood

Percentage of women age 15-19 who have had a live birth or who are pregnant with their first child



### Legend

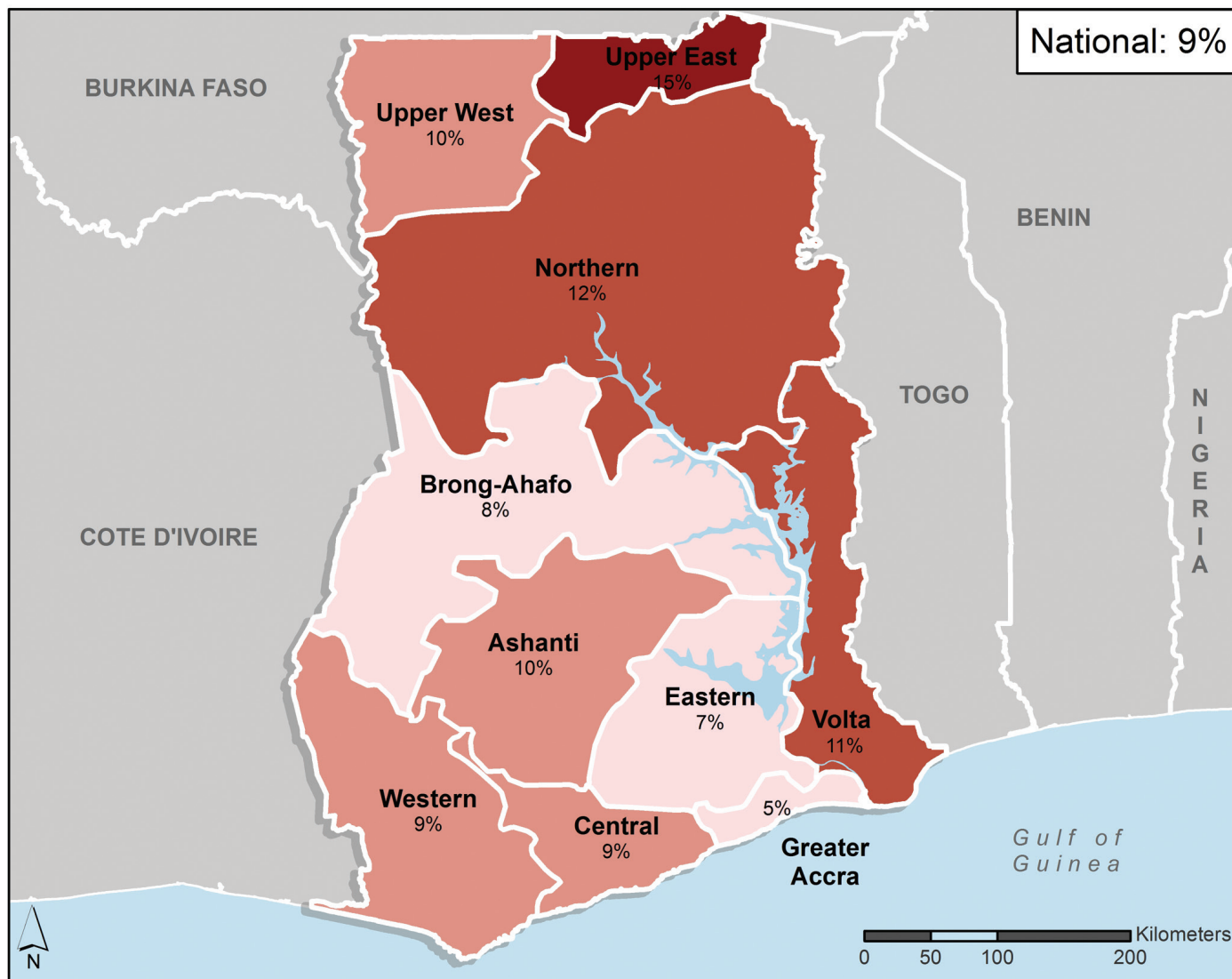


Adolescent childbearing has many negative health, social, and demographic consequences. Children born to women age 15-19 are more likely to die in infancy and early childhood than children born to older mothers. Women who start having children young often do not complete secondary school, limiting their future employment possibilities and other life choices. Additionally, starting childbearing young often results in larger families and reduced economic circumstances.

Nationwide, 13% of girls age 15-19 have either had a live birth or are pregnant with their first child. Young women in the Western and Greater Accra regions are least likely to get pregnant before age 20. In contrast, more than 20% of young girls in the Central, Brong Ahafo, and Northern regions have already started childbearing by age 19.

## Nutritional Status of Women

Among women age 15-49, the percentage with mean Body Mass Index (BMI) <18.5 (total thin)



### Legend

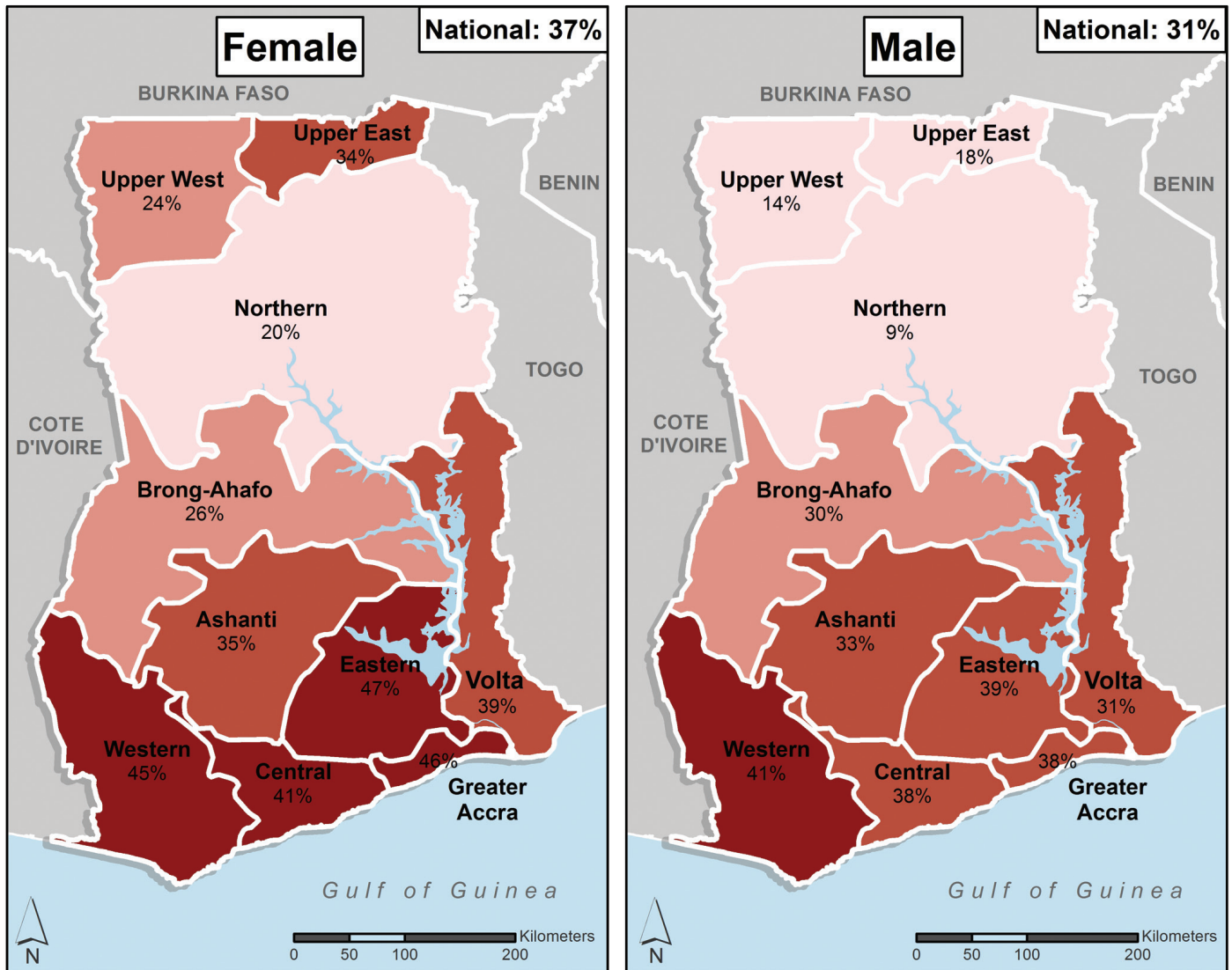


Height and weight were collected for all female respondents age 15-49 to measure the body mass index (BMI) also known as the Quetelet index. Normal BMI for women ranges from 18.6 to 24.9. A BMI of 18.5 or below indicates thinness or acute undernutrition; a BMI of 25.0 or above usually indicates overweight or obesity. Low pre-pregnancy BMI and short stature are risk factors for poor birth outcomes and obstetric complications.

The average BMI for women 15-49 in Ghana is 24. At the national level, 9% of women are considered to be thin (BMI < 18.5). The proportion of thin women is lowest in the Greater Accra (5%) and highest in the Upper East (15%) region.

# Desire to Limit Childbearing

Percentage of married women and men age 15-49 who want no more children



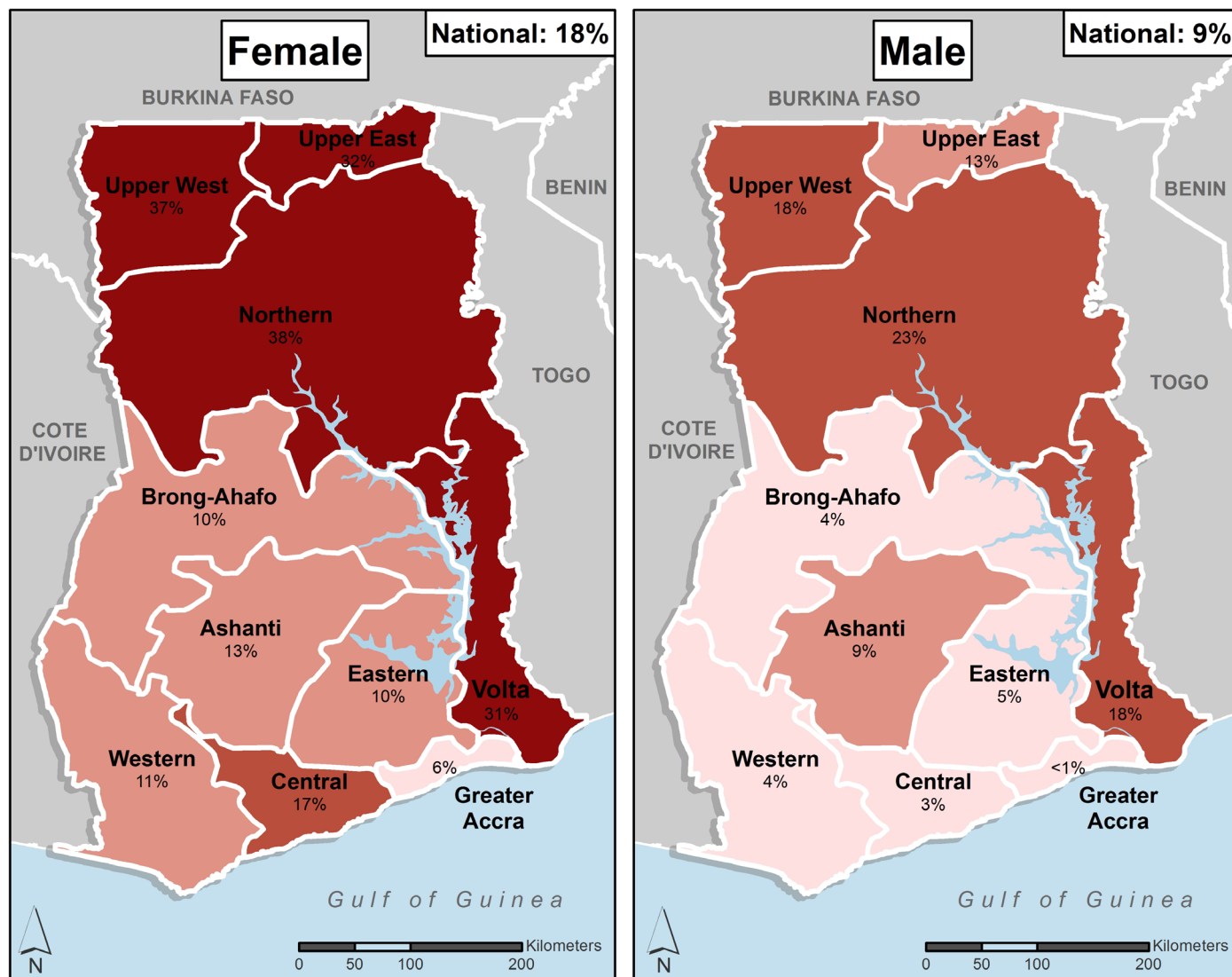
## Legend



On average, married men want more children than married women—5.1 children for men compared with 4.6 children for women. Not surprisingly, more women want to limit childbearing than men. Nationwide, 37% of married women and 31% of married men want no more children. This differential is greatest in the north of the country, particularly in the Upper East region where 34% of married women want no more children compared with 18% of married men. There are marked differences among regions. Only 20% of married women in the Northern region want no more children compared with 47% of married women in the Eastern region. Regional differences among married men are similar, ranging from 9% in the Northern region to 41% in the Western region.

## Polygyny

Percentage of women age 15-49 with more than one co-wife and men age 15-49 with more than one wife



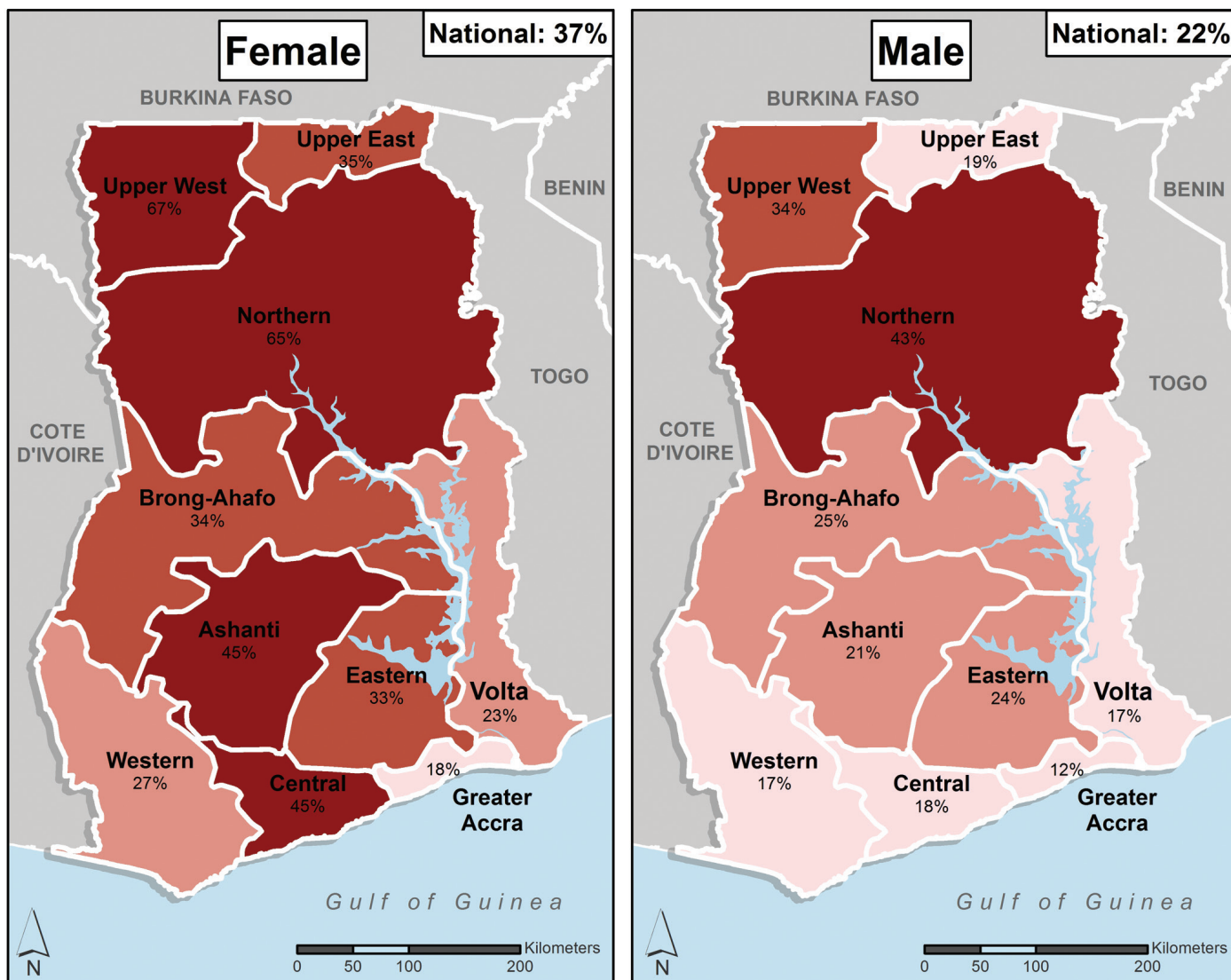
### Legend



Polygyny, the practice of having more than one wife concurrently, is common in Ghana. Overall, almost one in five married women (18%) say they have co-wives, and 9% of married men age 15-49 say they have two or more wives. Polygyny is more common in rural areas, in the north of the country and in the Volta region. More than three out of ten women have at least one co-wife in the Upper West, Upper East, Northern, and Volta regions; less than 17% of women in the other regions report having a co-wife. Among men, 13% or more in the Upper East, Upper West, Northern, and Volta regions report having more than one wife.

## Attitudes Towards Wife Beating

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 who agree with at least one specified reason where a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife



### Legend



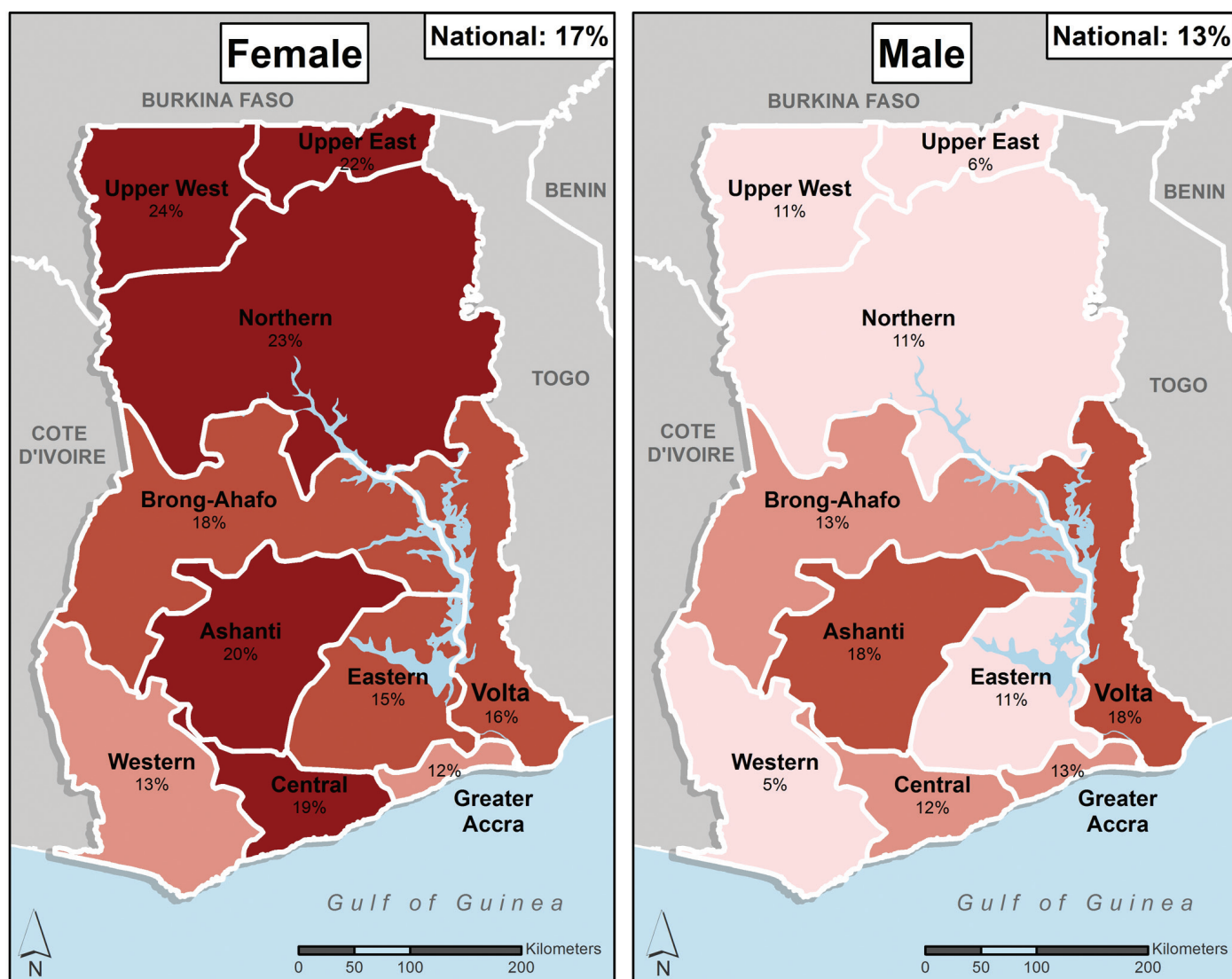
Violence against women has serious consequences for their mental and physical well-being, including their reproductive and sexual health (Heise et al., 1999). Acceptance of domestic violence signifies the lower status of women. The 2008 GDHS asked female and male respondents if they think a husband is justified in beating his wife under a series of circumstances: wife burns the food; wife argues with him, wife goes out without telling him, wife neglects the children, and wife refuses to have sex with him. Almost four in ten women (37%) and one in five men (22%) nationwide think that a husband is justified in beating his wife for at least one of the five specified reasons. Men are less likely than women to think that a husband is justified in beating his wife and this differential is greatest in the Upper West, Central, Ashanti, and Northern regions.

Two-thirds of women in the Upper West and Northern regions think wife beating is justified compared with 18% in the Greater Accra region. Regional patterns for men are similar to the patterns for women.



## Experience of Physical Violence

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 who experienced any physical violence in the past 12 months



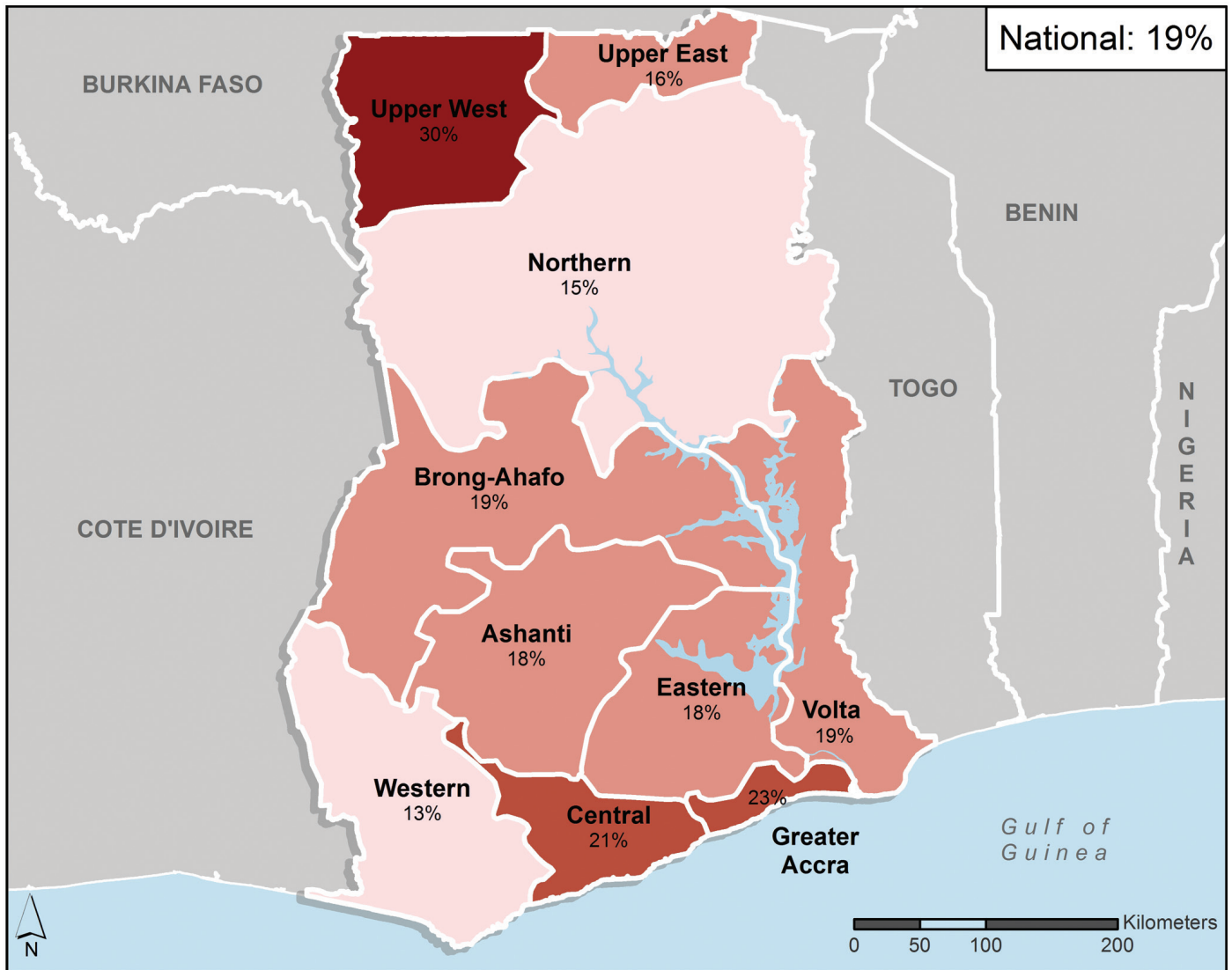
### Legend



Approximately one-third of women (37%) have ever experienced physical violence since age 15, and about half of these women, 17%, have experienced any physical violence in the past 12 months. At least 20% of women in the Northern, Upper West, Upper East, and Ashanti regions have experienced physical violence in the 12 months before the survey compared with 12-13% in the Western and Greater Accra regions. More men (41%) than women report ever experiencing physical violence. However, men are somewhat less likely than women to have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months (13%), and the regional pattern in prevalence of violence for men differs somewhat from the pattern for women. The proportion of men who report experiencing physical violence in the 12 months before the survey ranges from a low of 5% in the Western region to a high of 18% in the Ashanti and Volta regions.

# Experience of Sexual Violence

Percentage of women age 15-49 who have ever experienced sexual violence



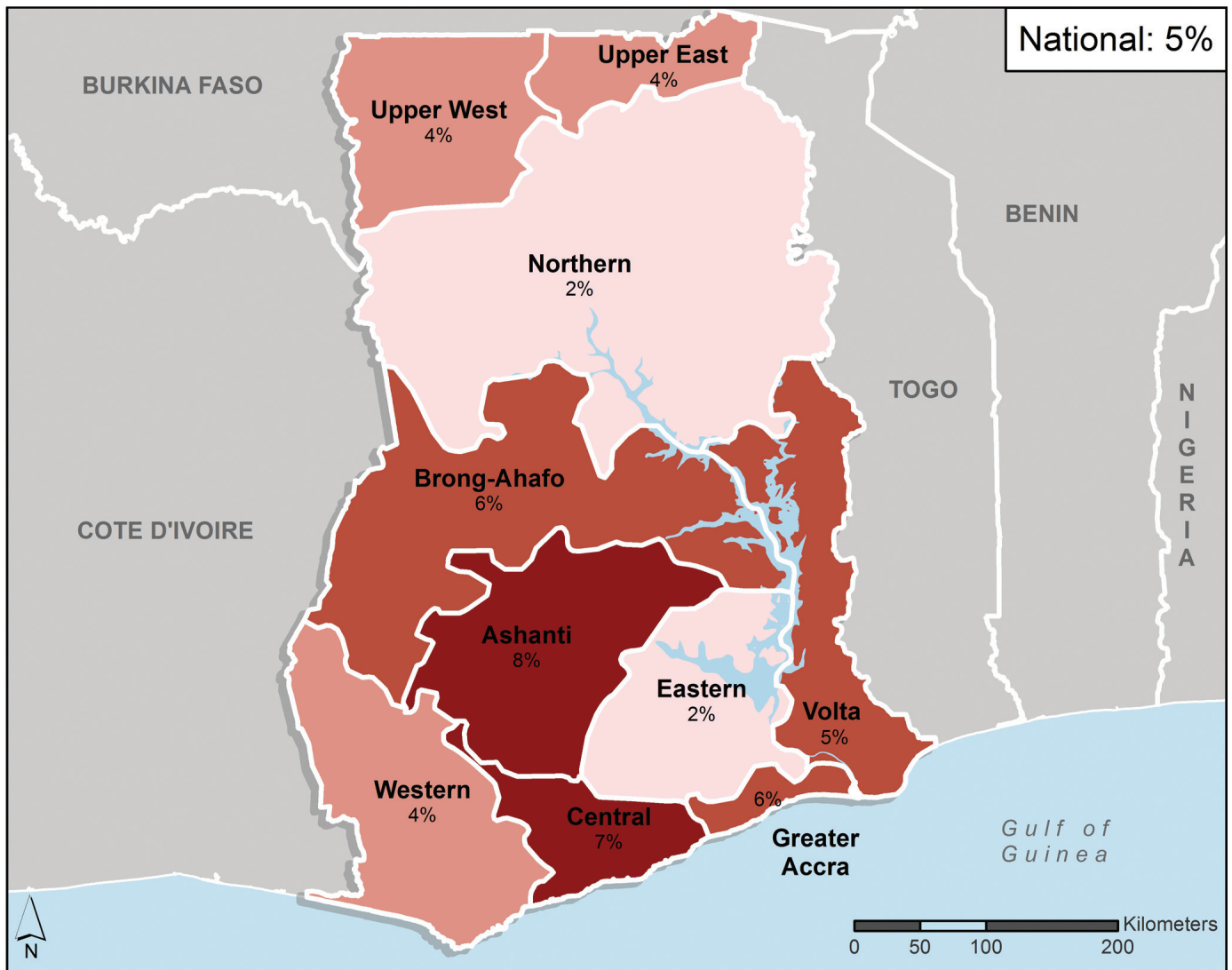
## Legend



Almost one in five women (19%) has ever experienced sexual violence. While there is very little difference in the proportion of urban and rural women who have experienced sexual violence, there is large variation by region. The proportion of women who have experienced sexual violence ranges from a low of 13% in the Western region to a high of 30% in the Upper West region.

# Violence during Pregnancy

Percentage of women age 15-49 who have ever experienced physical violence during pregnancy



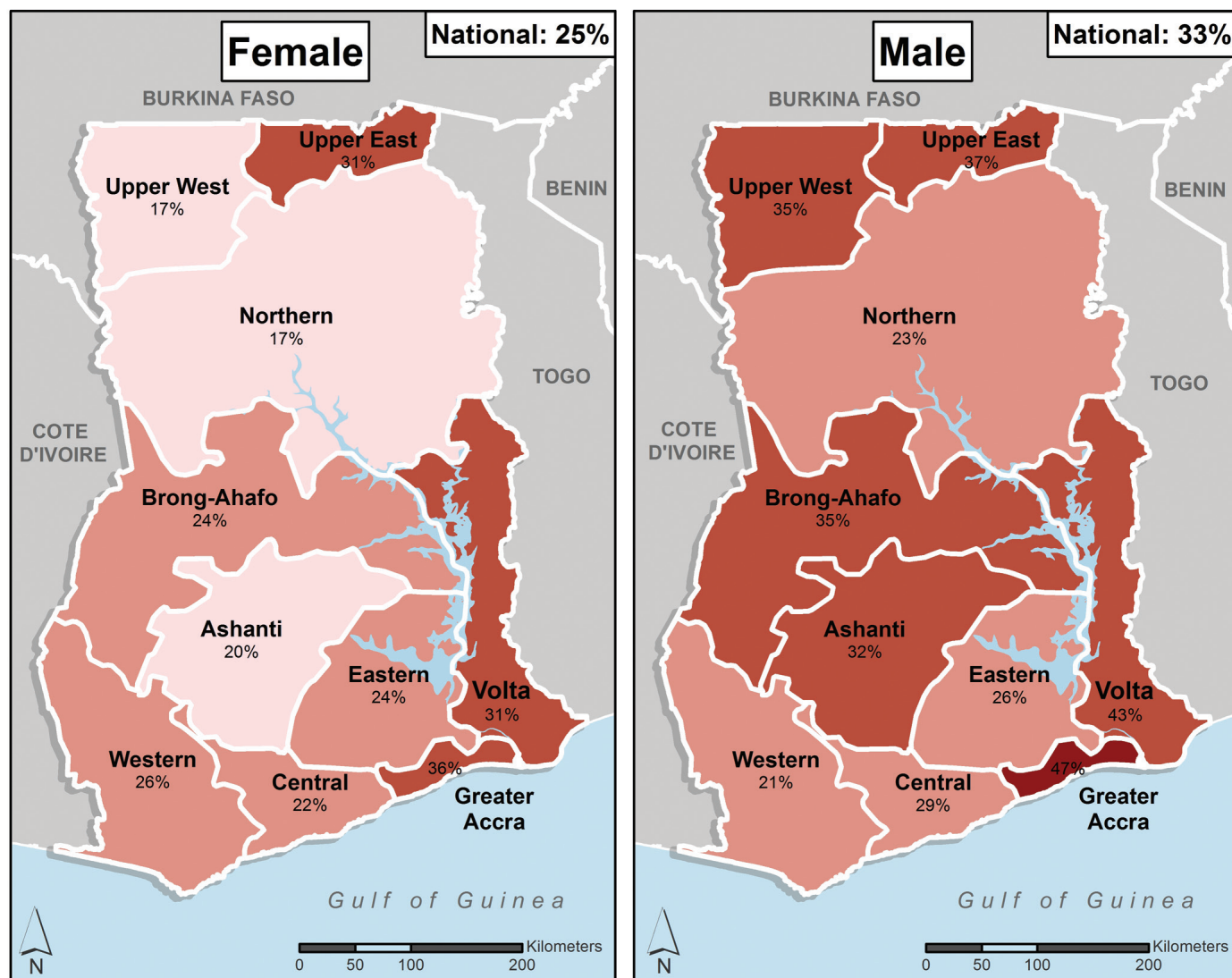
## Legend



Women say that they have experienced physical violence since age 15 most often from their husbands or partners. Violence during pregnancy can have serious effects on women's physical and mental health. The 2008 GDHS asked all women who have ever been pregnant if they had experienced physical violence during any of their pregnancies. Overall, 5% of women who have ever been pregnant said they had been subjected to physical violence while pregnant. There is little difference among women living in the urban and rural areas; however, among the provinces the percentage of women who experienced violence during pregnancy ranges from a low of 2% in the Eastern region to a high of 8% in the Ashanti region.

# Comprehensive Knowledge about AIDS

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 with comprehensive knowledge about AIDS



## Legend

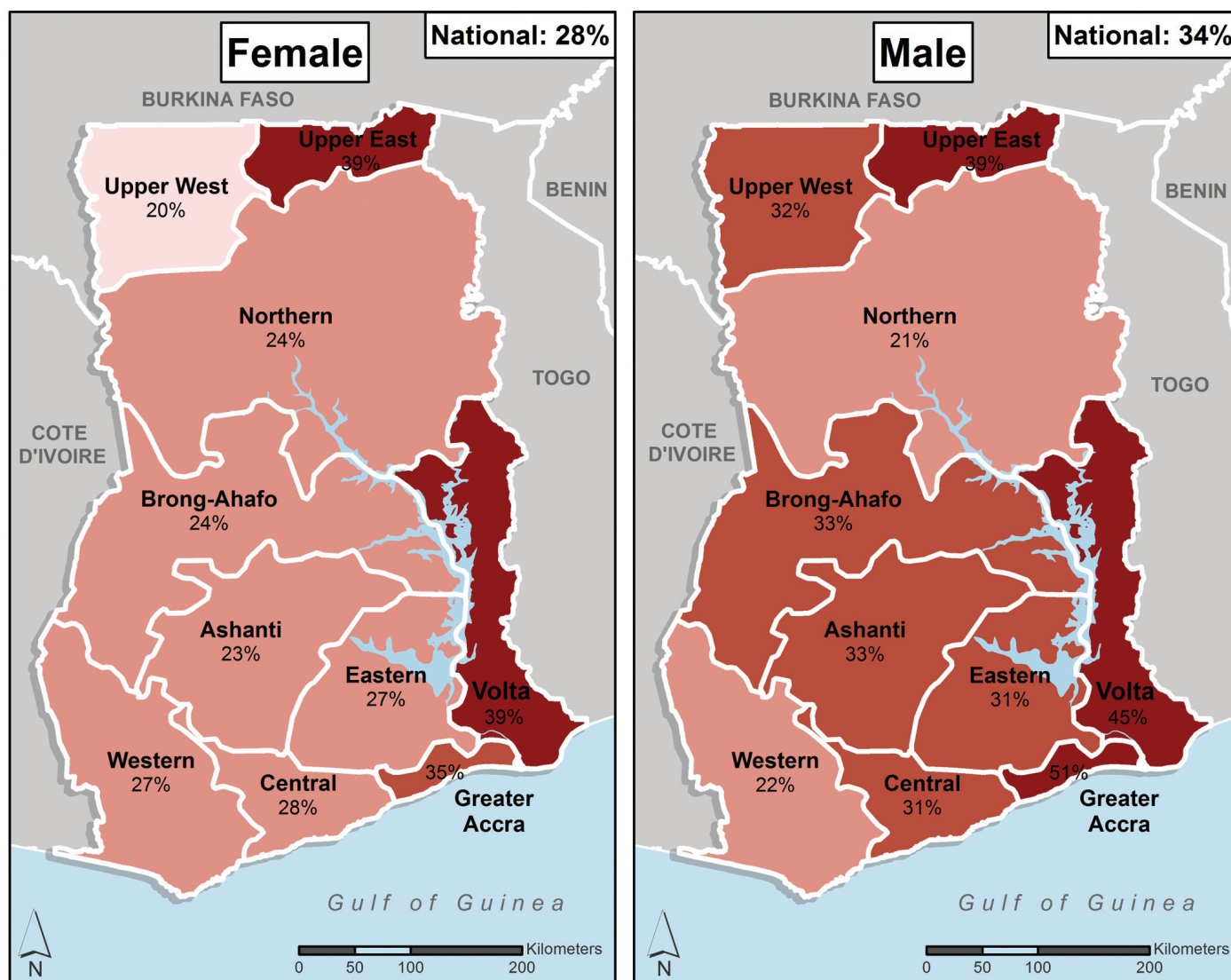


Everyone in Ghana needs to know the facts about HIV transmission and prevention. The 2008 GDHS measured comprehensive knowledge about AIDS which means: 1) knowing that both consistent condom use and limiting sexual partners to one HIV-negative person are methods of HIV/AIDS prevention, 2) being aware that a healthy-looking person can have HIV, and 3) rejecting the two most common local misconceptions about HIV/AIDS transmission or prevention (that the virus can be transmitted through mosquito bites, and by witchcraft and other supernatural means).

Women are less informed about transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS than men, though neither gender is well informed. Only one in four women (25%) and one in three men (33%) in Ghana have comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention and transmission. Urban women and men are more informed about AIDS than rural residents. Variations in knowledge of AIDS are also seen by region. The proportion of women with comprehensive knowledge is lowest in the Upper West and Northern regions (17% each) and highest in the Greater Accra region (36%). Among men, the proportion with comprehensive knowledge ranges from 21% in the Western region to 47% in the Greater Accra region.

# Comprehensive Knowledge about AIDS among Youth

Percentage of women and men age 15-24 with comprehensive knowledge about AIDS



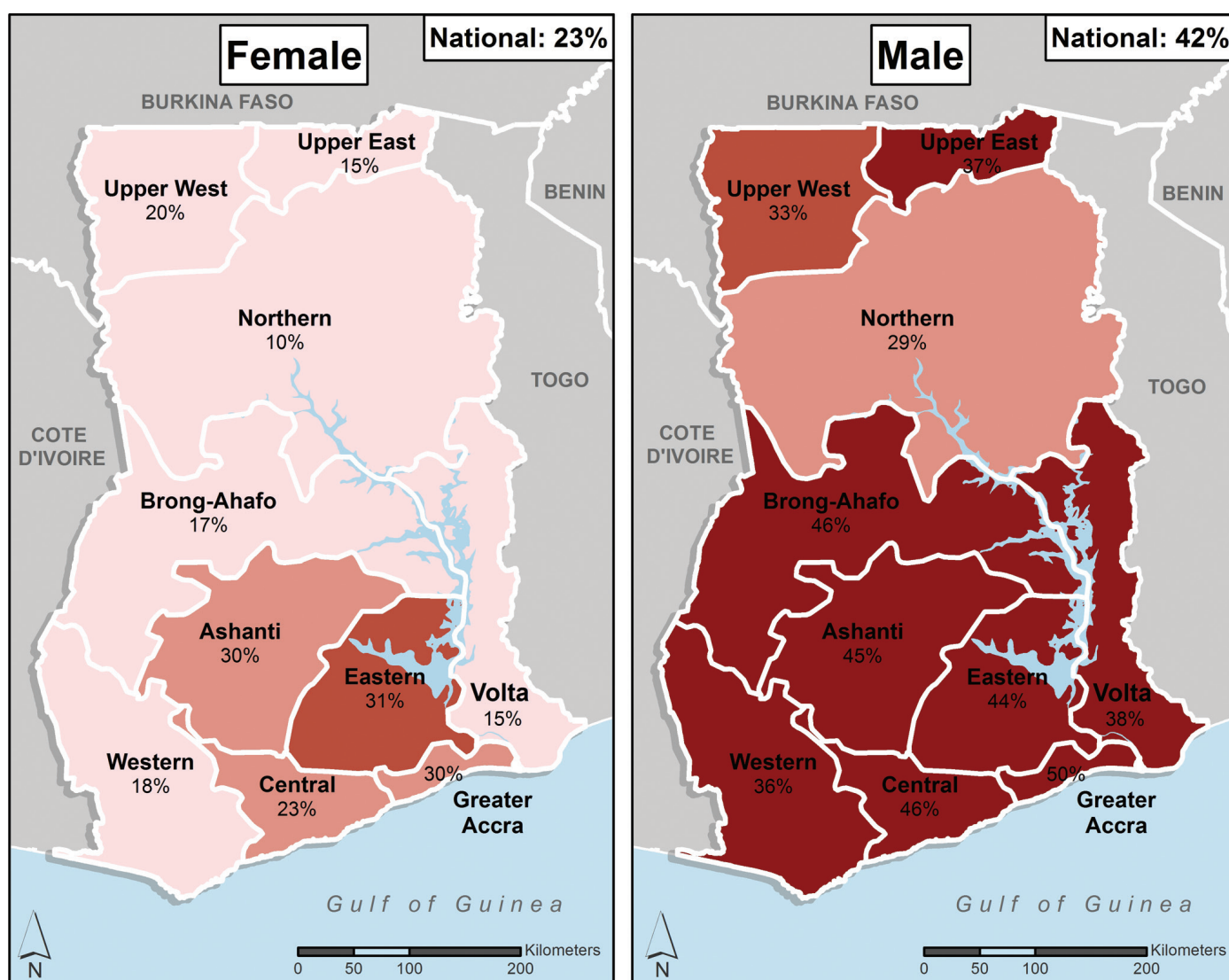
## Legend



Young respondents, age 15-24, are as knowledgeable about AIDS as all women and men surveyed. Young women (28%) are less likely than young men (34%) to have comprehensive knowledge about AIDS. There are only three regions—Greater Accra, Volta, and Upper East—where more than 30% of young women are fully informed about AIDS compared with 8 regions for young men. One in five young women in the Upper West region and about one in five young men in the Northern and Western regions has comprehensive knowledge about AIDS.

## Higher-Risk Sexual Intercourse

Percentage of women and men age 15-49 who had higher-risk sexual intercourse in the past 12 months among those who had sexual intercourse in the past 12 months



### Legend



The 2008 GDHS defined higher-risk sex as sexual intercourse with a non-marital and non-cohabiting partner. Among men and women age 15-49 who were sexually active in the 12 months before the survey, men were almost twice as likely as women (42% versus 23%) to report having higher-risk sex in the past 12 months. Among women, higher-risk sex is more common in the southern part of Ghana with 30% in the Ashanti and Greater Accra regions and 31% in the Eastern region reporting higher-risk sex compared with only 10% in the Northern region and 15% in the Upper East and Volta regions. The proportion of men having higher-risk sex varies from 29% in the Northern region to 45% or higher in the Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, and Central regions, and 50% in the Greater Accra region.



