

Bible Translation Progress: The World in Numbers October 2020

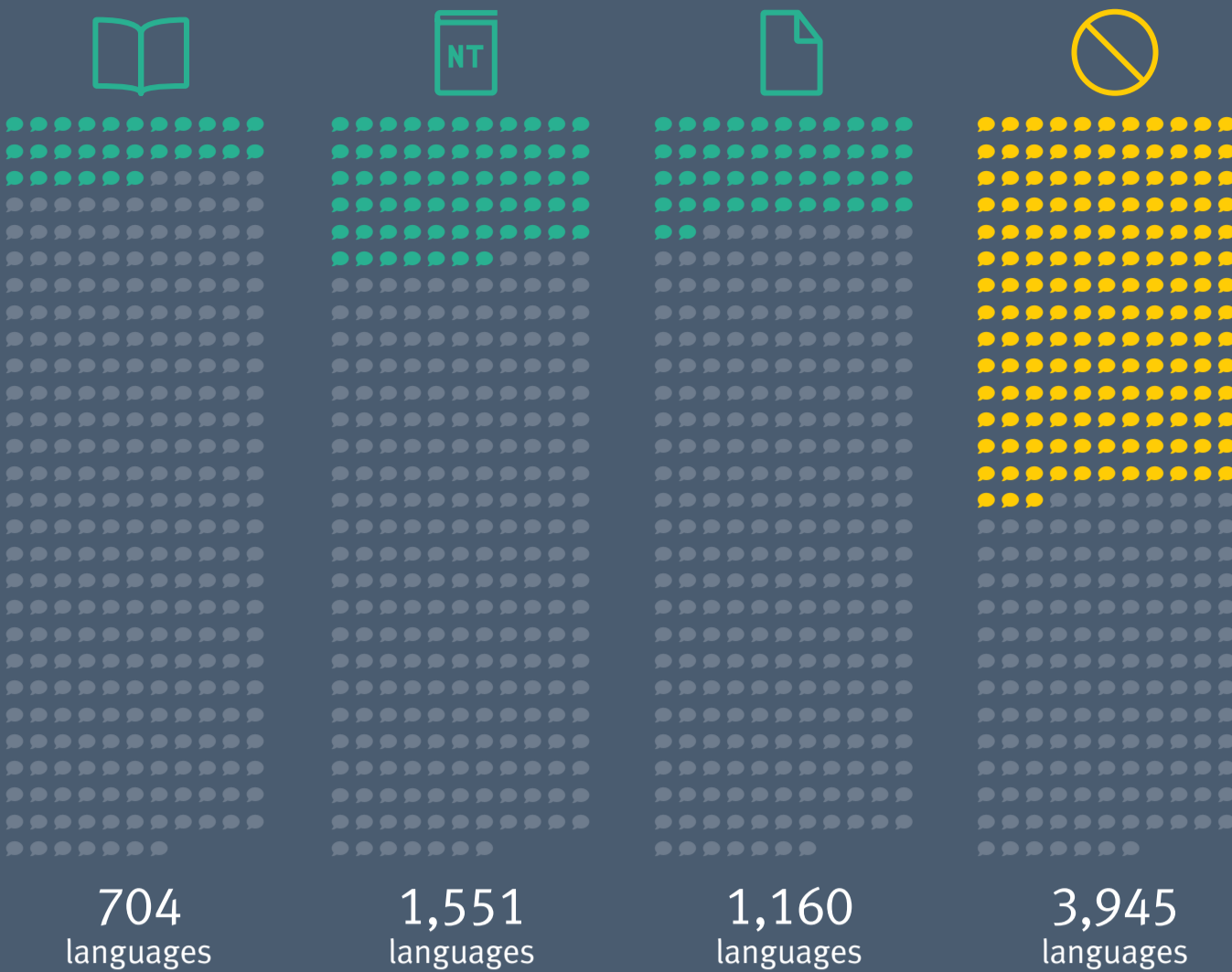
KEY Full Bible New Testament Portions No Known Scripture

Languages with and without Scripture

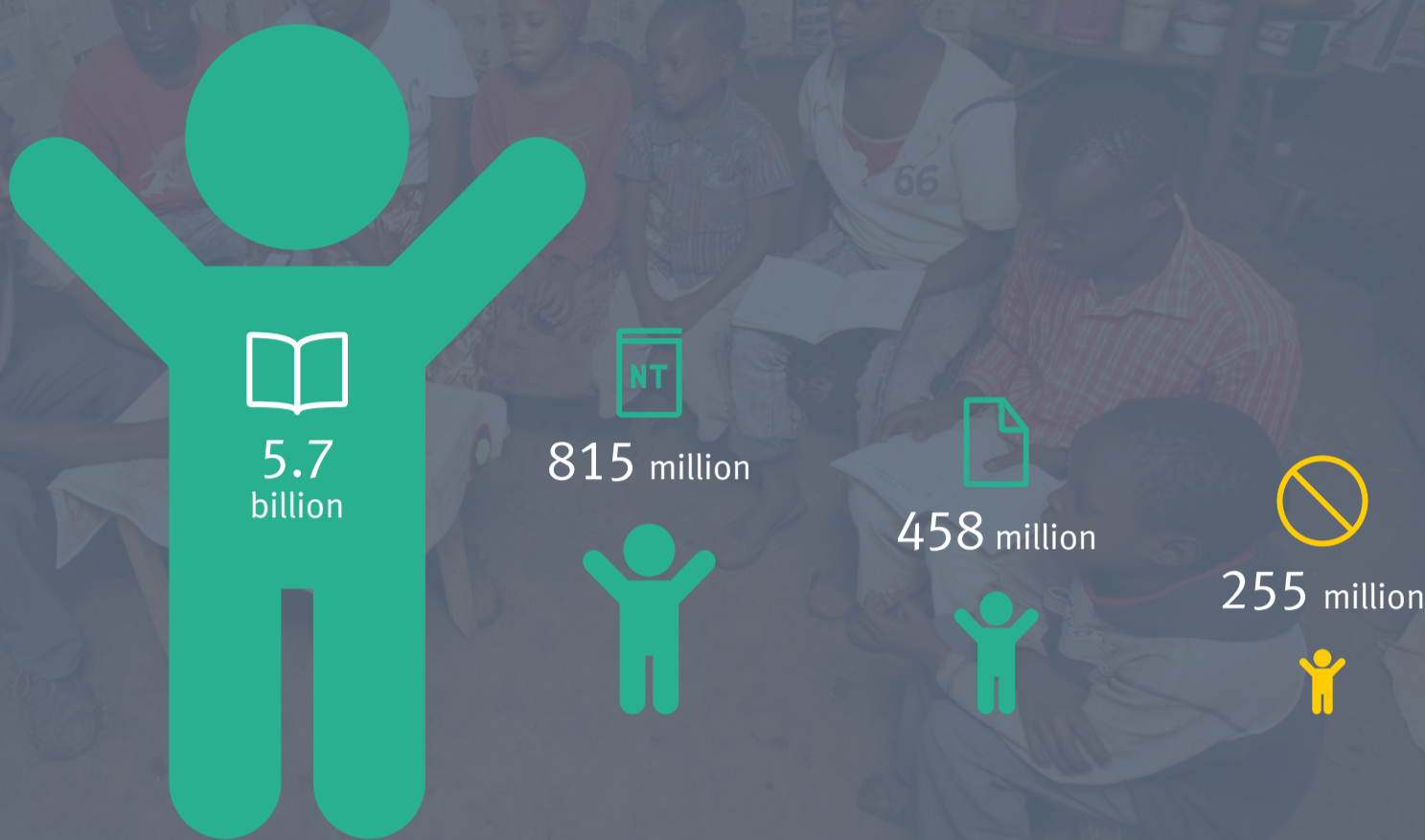
= 25 languages

7,360 known living languages, including sign languages

Of 385 sign languages included within this data 143 are recognised in ISO 639-3



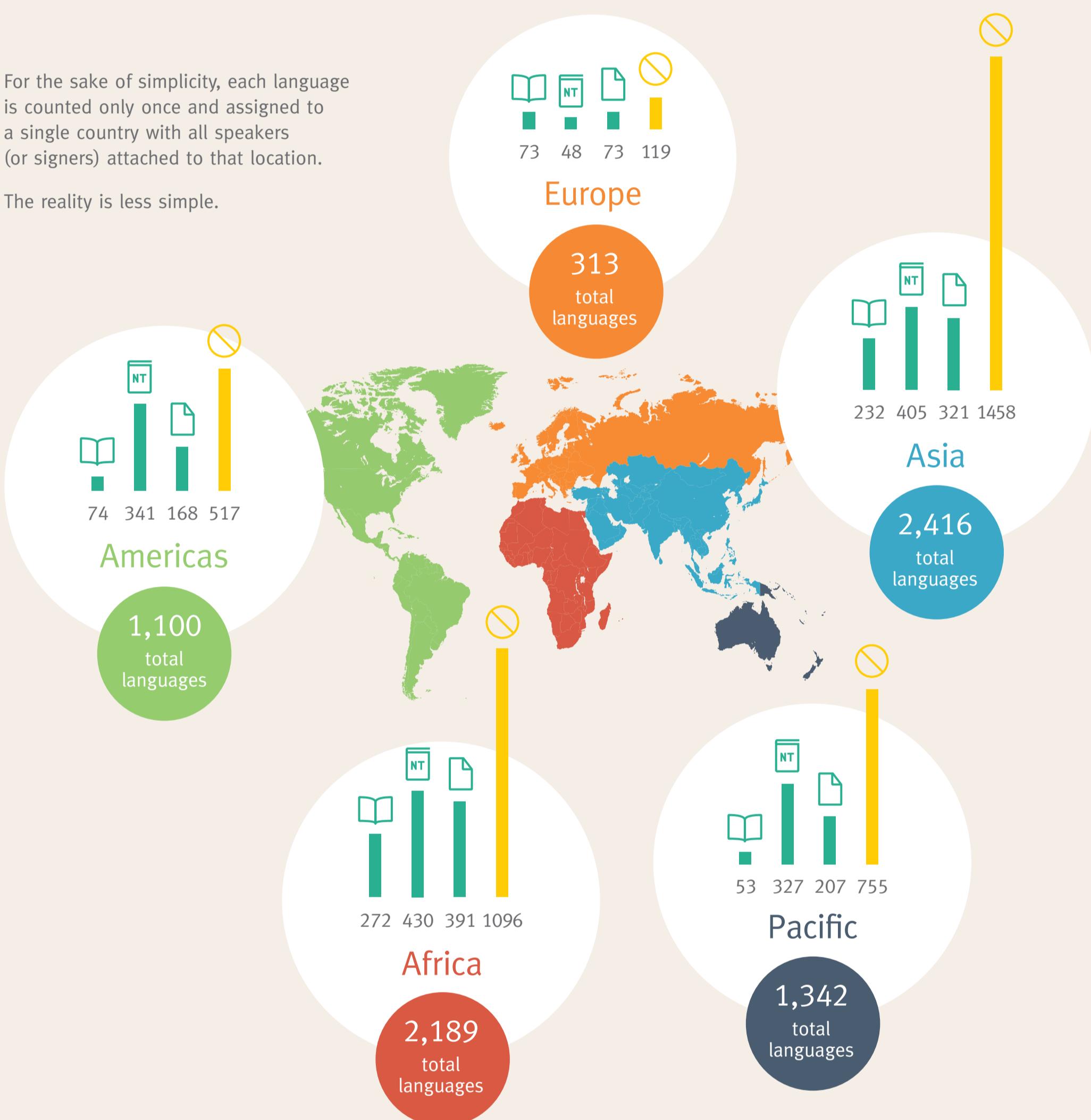
People with and without Scripture



Distribution of languages

For the sake of simplicity, each language is counted only once and assigned to a single country with all speakers (or signers) attached to that location.

The reality is less simple.



Which languages need Scripture?

Languages don't need Scripture. People need Scripture.

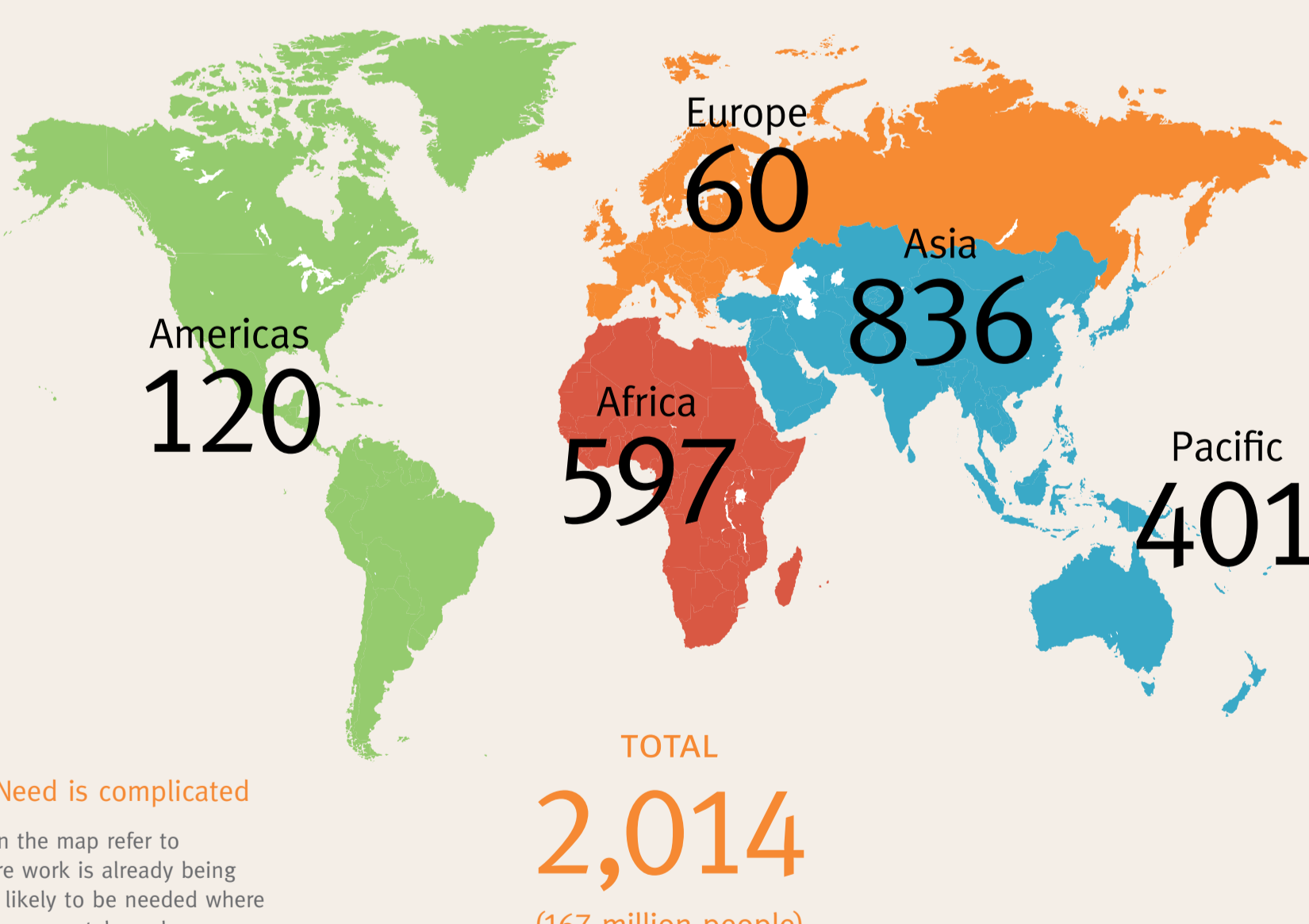
Which people need Scripture in a language that speaks to them?

Everyone needs access to the Bible (all of it) in a language they understand clearly and that speaks to his/her heart and mind. Usually this will be the primary language they learned as a child, although some people grow up with multiple languages in which they can communicate with ease.

In which languages is Scripture translation needed?

Having some Scripture is not the end. Ongoing work is needed in thousands of languages. Ongoing work is happening right now in many languages. The figures below show potential and expressed need in languages with no translation programs and no Scripture.

Potential Bible translation needs



Translation Need is complicated

The numbers on the map refer to languages where work is already being requested or is likely to be needed where no translation has ever taken place.

In which languages is Scripture translation *not* needed?

Since 1999 Wycliffe and partner organization, SIL, have talked about the goal of "a Bible translation project in progress for every people group that needs it."

Implicit in that goal is the idea that, although every people group needs the Bible, the Bible may not need to be translated into every language. This sounds shocking to some people until you look at the numbers and see that of the 7000+ languages listed by the Ethnologue about 200 no longer have any first language users, and just under another 200 have 12 or fewer speakers the last time anyone counted them.

Even in languages used by hundreds or thousands of people, there is often a clear shift underway as the next generation functions more and more comfortably in a 'language of wider communication.'

Today many communities are taking greater ownership and action in determining their own needs and are working in partnership with others to achieve their own translation goals.

...into all the world

The world is changing. The world's need for Christ is unchanging. Bible translation movements across the globe continue to creatively adapt to a changing world through new partnerships and innovations. The Wycliffe Global Alliance's 100+ organizations are pleased to be serving within the worldwide Church, participating in God's mission through Bible translation and related ministries. Read more about the work of the Wycliffe Global Alliance at www.wycliffe.net