



ĀBĀDĀN III. BASIC POPULATION DATA, 1956-2011

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This article deals with the following population characteristics of Ābādān: population growth from 1956 to 2011, age structure, average household size, literacy rate, and economic activity status for 2006 and/or 2011 (different dates for the above categories is due to the availability of census data), and finally population projection from 2014 to 2021.

Population growth. The growth of Ābādān population from the first national census in 1956 to the latest one in 2011 may be divided into three different phases: first, before the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 (on which, see [IRAQ vii](#)); second, during the war and its aftermath from 1980 to 1991; and third, the period from 1991 to 2011. The first phase witnessed a gradual population growth with a rather stable rate of 1.3 percent per year between 1956 and 1976 ([Table 1](#)).

Although the Iraqis failed to occupy Ābādān during the second phase, their artillery and aerial bombardments destroyed the city and its refineries. The inhabitants evacuated the town to the point that the city was soon deserted. As a result, the city had no population in the 1986 *National Census*. However, after a couple of years, when the first wave of attacks was repelled, war



refugees started to return to their homes, and the population of Ābādān increased from a small number of military personnel to 84,774 people in 1991.

From 1991 to 2006, when almost all survivors of the initial residents of the city returned, population leaped to 206,073 in 1996 with the average annual growth rate of 19.44 percent. Afterwards, the average growth rate dropped to 0.65 percent from 1996 to 2006, close to that of just before the war. The average annual growth rate declined to -0.65 percent between the years 2006 and 2011. The cause of negative population growth in this period is unknown, but a plausible guess would attribute it to census under-enumeration (Table 1).

Age structure. The population of Ābādān can still be considered as young. In 2006, over 70.8 percent of the population were in the activity ages of 15 to 64, another 25.8 percent were below 15 years of age, and only 3.4 percent were at 65 and over. This distribution seems slightly younger than that of urban areas of the country as a whole in the same year (23.7 percent, 71.5 percent and 4.8 percent respectively; Table 2).

Age distribution in 2011 remained basically the same, with over 72.1 percent of the population in the activity ages of 15 to 64, another 23.8 percent below 15 years of age, and only 4.1 percent at the old age of 65 and over. Similar to the age distribution of 2006, this seems also slightly younger than that of urban areas of the country as a whole (22.3 percent, 72.3 percent and 5.4 percent respectively).

Average household size. In 2006 average household size in the city of Ābādān was 4.57 person per household (SCI, 2010, p. 82), significantly higher than average of 3.89 for the whole urban areas of the country (SCI, 2009b, p. 50).

In 2011 the average size declined to 3.85 persons per household (SCI, 2014) that is again higher than the average size of 3.48 for the urban areas of the country as a whole (SCI, 2014). The relatively higher household size of the city may be attributed to the tribal background of the majority of Ābādān inhabitants, particularly of blue collar workers. But rapid decline of household size within a short period of five years is not known and requires a specific survey.

Literacy rate. In 2006, almost 90 percent of the population of Ābādān at 6 years of age and older were literate. The literacy ratio was not the same for both sexes and was significantly higher for males (93 percent) than the ratio for



females (87 percent; SCI, 2010, p. 141). Comparison with the literacy rate of the urban area of the country as a whole, either for both sexes (88.9 percent) or for each sex (92.2 percent for male and 85.6 percent for females, SCI, 2009b, pp. 223, 225, 227) suggests a relatively higher literacy rate in Ābādān. The higher literacy rate of Ābādān could be attributed to the much higher level of industrialization of the city as compared to other urban eras of the country.

Economic activity status. In 2006, out of 185,615 persons in the population 10 years of age and over (or 84.4 percent of Ābādān population), 36.7 percent were economically active and 62.5 percent inactive, and the status of the rest (0.8 percent) remained unknown (SCI, 2010, p. 171). The corresponding proportion were 62.6 percent, 36.6 percent, and 0.8 percent for males and 10.4 percent, 88.6 percent, and 1.0 percent for females (SCI, 2010, p. 221). The proportion of economically active population in urban areas as a whole was 64.15 percent for males and 12.48 percent for females.

Activity ratio in Ābādān is somewhat lower than the average ratio for all cities of the country (38.8 percent; SCI, 2009a, p. 35).

The employment and unemployment ratios of the active population in Ābādān are estimated at 74.7 percent and 25.3 percent, respectively. Comparing these ratios with those of urban areas of the country as a whole (88.2 percent and 11.8 percent, respectively; SCI, 2009b, p. 288) suggests a much lower employment ratio and higher unemployment ratio in Ābādān (SCI, 2010, Table 5, p. 171; [Table 3](#)).

Population projection. Population projection for cities is not a systematic process in Iran and usually depends upon development plans or the case studies needed in larger plans. The author of this article, in connection with a study to plan for the water distribution network for Khuzestan Province, estimated the city's population would be approximately 246,800 inhabitants in 2021 (Nejatian).

Bibliography (for cited works not given in detail, see the *EIr* [Short Titles](#)):

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