



AHVAZ IV. POPULATION, 1956-2011

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This article deals with the following population characteristics of Ahvaz (اهواز): 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 are determined by the availability of census data).

Population growth. Ahvaz has experienced a high rate of population growth, increasing more than nine-fold from a population of 120,098 in 1956 to 1,112,021 in 2011. During the period 1956-76, the average annual growth rate was 5.25 percent, with increase from 120,098 to 334,399 people. From 1976 to 1986, the population growth rate of Ahvaz reached a value of 5.66 percent per year, and the population grew to 579,826 people. Since Ahvaz was one of the safer cities in the province during the Iran-Iraq War (see [IRAQ vii](#)), this increase may be attributed to war-related population movements. As the war came to an end (i.e., after the cease-fire of 1988), the population growth rate for Ahvaz dropped to 4.56 percent per year between 1986 and 1991 and to 2.12 percent per year between 1991 and 1996. The population of Ahvaz reached 724,653 in 1991 and 804,980 in 1996. Since then, the annual population growth



rate for Ahvaz has continued to decrease, falling to 2.05 percent between 1996 and 2006 and to 1.21 percent between 2006 and 2011, as the population grew slowly from 804,980 in 1996 to 985,614 in 2006 and to 1,112,021 in 2011 (Table 1).

Age structure. The population of Ahvaz can still be considered as young. In 2011 nearly 72 percent of population were in the activity ages of 15 to 64; another 24 percent were below 15 years of age, and only 4.4 percent were 65 and over. This age structure is younger than that of urban areas of the country as a whole. The age structure in 2006 was even younger than that of 2011 and clearly younger than that of urban areas as a whole in the same year (Table 2).

Average household size. In 2006, the average household size in the city of Ahvaz was 4.6 persons per household (National Census, 2006; SCI, 2010, p. 85), which was significantly higher than the average of 3.89 for urban areas as a whole (SCI, 2009b, p. 50). In 2011 the average size slightly declined to 3.86 persons per household (SCI, 2014), relatively higher than the average size of 3.48 for the urban areas as a whole (SCI, 2014).

Literacy rate. In 2006, almost 90 percent of the population of Ahvaz six years of age and over was literate. The literacy ratio was significantly higher for males (93.4 percent) than the ratio for females (87.0 percent; SCI, 2010, table 4, p. 144). Comparison to urban areas in general, either for both sexes (88.9 percent) or for each sex (92.2 percent for males and 85.6 percent for females; SCI, 2009b, pp. 223, 225, 227), suggests a relatively higher literacy ratio in Ahvaz.

Economic activity status. In 2006, almost 84.2 percent of the population of Ahvaz, or 829,903 people, were in the activity ages (i.e., 10 years of age and over), of whom 35.9 percent were economically active and 63.1 percent inactive, while the status of the rest (1.0 percent) was unknown (SCI, 2010, pp. 55, 176). The activity ratio in Ahvaz is somewhat lower than the national average ratio for cities (38.8 percent; SCI, 2009b, p. 35). Employment and unemployment ratios in Ahvaz are estimated at 83.2 percent and 16.8 percent of the active population (i.e., of 35.9 percent of the population 10 years of age and over). These figures indicate that the ratio of employment in Ahvaz was significantly lower than the national average ratio for cities (88.18 percent and 11.82 percent, respectively; SCI, 2009b, p. 50; SCI, 2010, p. 178; 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 that the city's population would be approximately 1,605,200 people in 2021 (Nejatian, 2013).

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

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