



## ISFAHAN III. POPULATION

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Isfahan's population size from the Safavid through the Qajar periods, as reported by European travelers and diplomats, remained largely a matter of speculation. A number of Western travelers who visited Isfahan in the 17th century reported that Isfahan was the largest city in Safavid Persia, but its exact population at that time remains unknown. Estimates for the population of Isfahan, given by various travelers, ranged from 200,000 (Herbert [q.v.] in 1627-29; p. 126) to 500,000 inhabitants (Olearius in 1637; p. 553). Jean Chardin (q.v.) maintained that by the late 17th century the population of Isfahan almost equalled that of London, with about 500,000 inhabitants (Blake, p. 38).

There are a number of population estimates by Western travelers and diplomats as well as city officials available for the Qajar period, ranging from 60,000 to 300,000. One of the first official population censuses, conducted in Isfahan in 1870, gave a population size of 76,000 (see sec. 1 with Table 1, below). A more reliable census of Isfahan, which was carried out during the period 1939-41, counted a population of 204,000 for the city. Reliable, modern demographic data on Isfahan's population have been reported since 1956 in regular 10-year-interval population censuses from 1956 to 1996, showing a rapid five-fold population growth from about 255,000 in 1956 to 1,266,000 in 1996 (see secs. 2 and 3, below).



Isfahan's population will be divided into three articles:

- (1) The Qajar period.
- (2) Isfahan province, 1956-96.
- (3) Isfahan city, 1956-96.