



# ISFAHAN III. POPULATION (3)

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The city of Isfahan is the capital of Isfahan Province (*ostān*), the capital of Isfahan Sub-province (*šahrestān*), and the center of the Isfahan comprehensive regional planning complex. According to the 1996 census, Isfahan Sub-province was comprised of eight cities, 19 rural districts, and 531 inhabited settlements. Of a total population of 1.61 million, 86.8 percent lived in urban areas. Furthermore, 90.5 percent of the urban population of Isfahan Sub-province were living in the city of Isfahan, with the remainder living in the other seven cities of the sub-province. After Isfahan, the most populated cities in Isfahan Sub-province were K̄vorāskān with a population of 61,211, and the city of Renān with a population of 41,819. The smallest city in the sub-province was Kuhpāya with a population of 3,650 (*National Census*, Isfahan Sub-province, 1996, pp. 40-45).

The city of Isfahan, as the capital of Isfahan Province, accounted, in 1996, for about 32.2 percent of the total population of the province and 43.4 percent of its urban population. Isfahan is also the third most populated city in the country, behind Tehran and Mashad.



*The Isfahan regional planning complex.* In 1995, the cabinet assigned to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (Wezārat-e maskan o šahrsāzi) the responsibility of preparing comprehensive master plans for the country's complexes of large cities and their satellite urban and rural areas. Regional planning aimed to reduce the urban population pressures on the city of Isfahan by means of a more even population distribution at the regional level, especially in the western part of the city (*Āmār-nāma-ye ostān-e Ešfahān*, 2004, p. 19). As a result, a development plan for the Isfahan region was prepared in 2001 and ratified in 2003 by the High Council of Urban and Architectural Development (Šurā-ye 'āli-e šahrsāzi wa me'māri). The plan encompassed cities in nine sub-provinces with an approximate area of 35,000 sq. km. At the time of its preparation in 2001, this plan included 52 townships, with a population of 3,088,000. This plan identified the settlement order of urban and rural housing zones of the Isfahan region in four patterns: (1) the dense and populous pattern of Greater Isfahan; (2) the linear pattern of the Zāyandarud river; (3) the linear pattern of Najafābād; and (4) the cluster pattern of the region's northern, eastern and southern areas (*ibid.*, p. 20; *Faṣl-nāma-ye ābādi* 9/8, 2004, p. 19).

*Population size.* At the time of the first census of the cities of Iran, which was carried out between 1939 and 1941, the city of Isfahan had a population of 205,000 (Zanjani, 1991, p. 5). As such, Isfahan ranked third in terms of population after Tehran (540,000) and Mashad (214,000). According to the 1996 national census, the city had a population of 1,266,000, exhibiting an approximately six-fold increase in the span of 56 years. The population of the city and its relative share of the population of Isfahan province from 1941 to 1996 are given in [Table 1](#).

**Figure 1.** Population density per sq. hectare in various quarters of Isfahan city.

Accounting for the fact that the borders of Isfahan Province were not the same in the various censuses, and that they included what is now Yazd Province until 1966, and considering the current geographical borders of Isfahan Province, the city's relative share of the province's total population was 27.5 percent in 1966, rising to 30.8 percent in 1976. The city's relative share of the province's total population has seen a consistent increase in each census except for 1986 (for which figures reflect the effects of the Iran-Iraq War on the concentration of the population in large cities) and almost doubled between 1956 and 1996 (Zanjani et al., 1983).



The average annual growth rate of the population of Isfahan was close to 0.25 percent between 1956 and 1996. In [Table 2](#) these figures are compared to the average annual growth rate for the total urban population of Iran in various periods between censuses.

Accordingly, the average annual growth rate of Isfahan's population has been less than that of the country's urban population, except for the period between 1956 and 1966.

In terms of urban planning, the city of Isfahan is considered one of the largest cities in Iran, with 10 townships. Each township has its own municipality that, as part of Isfahan's municipality, is responsible for urban services.

*Age and Gender Structure.* The gender (male/female) ratio of Isfahan's population in the census years is given in [Table 3](#).

Due to changes in the definition of households between the 1976 and 1986 censuses, the 1956-76 data are not completely comparable with the 1986 figures. The significant increase from 1956 to 1966 can be attributed to the presence in the city of 20,367 men in the 15-24 age group who were born in other provinces, as opposed to only 10,149 women in the same category. The gap between the population of men and women in this category was made up of students, soldiers, and young immigrants, who had a noticeable effect on the gender ratio of the population (1.12 instead of 1.09). The influx of these men was undoubtedly the result of Isfahan's transformation into an important employment center in 1956 with the opening of the steel mill (Dawb-e āhan) and its subsidiaries as well as the development of the University of Isfahan.

These figures are given in [Table 4](#).

The age structure of Isfahan's population showed significant changes between 1986 and 1996. As a result of the new birth-control measures that were officially adopted towards the end of 1987, the percentage of the population under 5 years old dropped from 16.12 percent in 1986 to 8.66 percent in 1996, a significant success in terms of birth-control policies. This downward trend has continued in the years since 1996 and has affected the age structure of the population.

*Literacy and education.* Among the 6-year-old and over population of the city in 1996, approximately 89.2 percent (91.9 percent of men and 86.3 percent of women) were literate, 41.2 percent of whom were students. Of the 418,000



enrolled students, 38.9 percent were at the elementary level, 28.3 percent were at junior high school level, 23.8 percent were at high school level, and 9 percent were enrolled in institutions of higher education. In recent years, the number of women entering university has exceeded the number of men. The literacy rate in the city of Isfahan increased from 48 percent in 1966 to 89.2 percent in 1996. These figures are given in [Table 5](#).

It should be noted that in the period between 1966 and 1996 the percentage of literate women greatly increased as compared to the percentage of literate men, and the gap between the two genders decreased from 24.9 percentage points to 5.6 percentage points.

*Marital status.* The percentage of married men (among the population 15 years old and over) and the percentage of married women (among the population 10 years old and over) decreased between 1966 and 1996. These figures are given in [Table 6](#).

Accordingly, the percentage of married men has remained steady since 1979 (70 percent in 1986 and 1996), while the percentage of married women decreased in the same period (69.3 percent in 1986 and 63.78 percent in 1996). This decrease is attributable greater numbers of women enrolling in high school and higher education.

As detailed marriage and matrimony tables on the city level were not published in 1986 and 1996, the average age for first marriages among men and women cannot be calculated for these years. This information is available, however, for Isfahan Sub-province's urban population, with the city of Isfahan accounting for 83.9 percent and 90.3 percent of this population in 1986 and 1996, respectively. The average age of first marriages among the population of Isfahan in 1966 and 1976 is given in [Table 7](#) alongside the average age of first marriages for the urban population of the province. If we disregard the differences of statistical groups between 1966 and 1976 (the population of Isfahan City) and that of 1986 and 1996 (the urban population of Isfahan Sub-province), the average age at first marriages among men and women has increased by 0.5 and 4 years, respectively, in the 30-year period between 1966 and 1996.

*Housing status.* [Table 8](#) shows the use of housing units by ordinary households of the city by type of tenure, as follows.



*Housing Facilities.* In 1986, 98.4 percent of the city's households had electricity, 90.7 percent had plumbing, 18 percent had telephones, 90.6 percent used gas for cooking. In this year the majority of households (69.1 percent) used kerosene for heating needs. In 1996, 99.6 percent had use of electricity, 96.9 percent had plumbing, and 58.4 percent had telephones. Furthermore, 98.2 percent of households used gas for cooking, and 86.6 percent used gas for heating needs. The high rate of use of gas is due to the gas pipelines reaching Isfahan in that period.

*Economic activity.* It must be noted that there were changes in the description and tabulation of what constitutes economic activity in various census years before and after the 1979 Revolution. Accordingly, this survey will only compare economic activity of Isfahan City for those categories which saw minimal changes in their description or tabulation.

The percentage of the 10-year-old and over economically active and employed population of Isfahan decreased from 40.6 percent in 1966 to 33.4 percent in 1996. The changes in the relative share of the main economic activities in the active and inactive populations of the city are presented in [Table 9](#).

It is clear that the percentage of the employed among the population 10 years of age and over has decreased. In fact, in the 30-year period between 1966 and 1996 the employment rate decreased by 8.4 percent, while the percentage of students notably increased in the same span.

The unemployment figures given in [Table 9](#) (above) have been obtained through comparison with the total population 10 years of age and over. If we calculate these figures among the active population, the unemployment rate experiences an increase in the census years, from 3.45 percent in 1966 to 4.17 percent in 1976, to 12.66 percent in 1986, and finally to 8.42 percent in 1996. The employment rate is also obtained by subtracting the aforementioned figures from a unit of 1. Therefore, the employment rate for the city's population in the years mentioned above would be 96.5 percent, 95.8 percent, 87.3 percent and 91.6 percent, respectively.

The distribution of the employed population in the main industry groups in 1966 and 1996 is given in [Table 10](#). This comparison clearly demonstrates the structural changes in the city's employed population in this 30-year period.

In 1996, of the 28,199 unemployed residents of Isfahan, 86.2 percent were men



and 13.8 percent were women. Among this unemployed population, 40.7 percent were in the 10-24 age group, 51.7 percent were in the 25-64 age group, and 7.6 percent were in the 65 and over age group. In terms of literacy, 18.6 percent of the unemployed population had elementary education, while 55 percent had been educated at higher levels (high school, advanced education).

Among the urban population of Isfahan Country (the city of Isfahan and seven other small and medium sized cities), a total of 54,772 employed people had undergone advanced education, amounting to 15.5 percent of the total employed population. Furthermore, in 1996 approximately 9.63 percent of the unemployed population who were seeking employment also had an advanced level of education (7.61 percent for men and 24.06 percent for women).

*Population projection.* In recent studies conducted by the Comprehensive Regional Planning Project (Ṭarḥ-e āmāyeš-e sarzamin), the population of the city has been projected according to two options: the medial one, which predicts that the country's total population will reach 101.6 million in 2021, and the low option, which projects a total population of 91.2 million for the country in the same year (Zanjāni, 1999, 3rd level, pp. 14-15). The results of these projections are presented in [Table 11](#).

The data from these projections have been used in studies relating to housing planning up to the year 2021. The average size of households in the city of Isfahan has been calculated according to the low option in the years considered by the housing plan and is presented in [Table 12](#).

#### *Bibliography:*

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