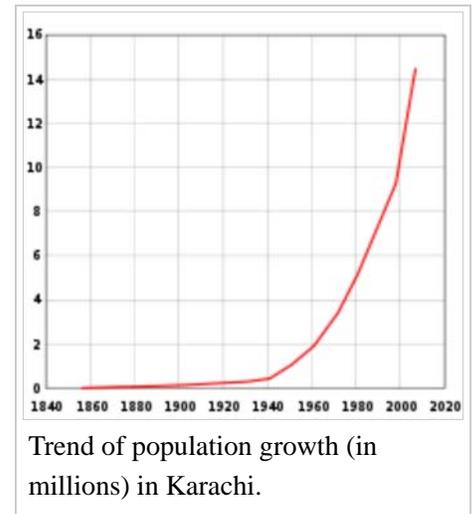


Demographics of Karachi

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Karachi is the largest and most populous city in Pakistan. The population and demographic distribution in the megacity has undergone numerous changes over the past 150 years. On 15 August 1947, when it became the capital city of Pakistan, its population was about 450,000 inhabitants. However, the population rapidly grew with large influx of Muslim refugees after independence in 1947. By 1951, the city population had crossed one million mark.^[1] in the following decade, the rate of growth of Karachi was over 80 percent.^[2] Today, the city has grown 60 times its size in 1947 when it became the country's first capital.^[3] Although, Islamabad remains the nation's capital since the 1960s, the city's population continues to grow at about 5% per annum, largely thanks to its strong economic base.^[4]



A person from Karachi is known as a *Karachiite*.

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Migration

Whereas most megacities in the developing world have grown out of rural-urban migration from the countryside not too distant from them, Karachi's demographics are the largely contributed by long-distance immigration.^[3] Before the independence of Pakistan, Karachi already had a diverse mix of religions and ethnic groups. After independence, most of the Muslim refugees from South Asia settled in Karachi. Likewise, a large number of Hindus left the city for India. Predominantly Urdu speaking, the refugees known as Muhajirs formed the dominant ethnic group in Karachi. Muhajirs originated from different parts of India and brought with them their local cultures and cuisines, thus further adding to the already diverse mix of people that earlier inhabited Karachi. Currently, these older groups of people and continuing migration from different parts of Pakistan have contributed to a rich and diverse mix of people that live in Karachi. This has further been diversified with migration from other non-traditional countries such as by Arabs from different Middle Eastern countries, Persians from Iran, Afghans and more recently from the Central Asian Republics. The city is also home to Pakistan's largest Jewish, Nestorian and Armenian communities. This has given the city a very metropolitan

character, and has earned it the title as the Melting Pot of Pakistan.

Ethnic groups	Year	Urban population
	1856	56,875
Karachi's	1872	56,753
	1881	73,560
	1891	105,199
	1901	136,297
	1911	186,771
	1921	244,162
	1931	300,799
	1941	435,887
	1951	1,068,459
	1961	1,912,598
	1972	3,426,310
	1981	5,208,132
	1998	9,269,265
	2007	14,500,000 *

* Karachi City Government (<http://125.209.91.254/cdgk/Home/AboutKarachi/GeographyDemography/tabid/270/Default.aspx>) estimate, retrieved 13 February 2008.

inhabitants, locally known as Karachiites, are composed of ethno-linguistic groups from all parts of Pakistan, as well as migrants from South Asia, making the city's population a diverse melting pot. At the end of the 19th century, the population of the city was about 105,000, with a gradual increase over the next few decades, reaching more than 400,000 on the eve of independence. Estimates of the population range from 15 to 18 million,^{[5][6]} of which an estimated 90% are migrants from different backgrounds. The city's population is estimated to be growing at about 5% per year (mainly as a result of internal rural-urban migration), including an estimated 45,000 migrant workers coming to the city every month from different parts of Pakistan.^[7]

The earliest inhabitants of the area that became Karachi were Sindhi tribes such as the Jokhio, Mallaah and Jat in the east and Baloch in the west and. Before the end of British colonial rule and the subsequent independence of Pakistan in 1947, the population of the city was majority Sindhi and Baloch Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, but the community is still present numbering around 250,000 residents.^[8] The city was, and still is home to a large community of Gujarati Muslims who were one of the earliest settlers in the city, and still form the majority in Saddar Town. Important Gujarati Muslim communities in the city include the Memon, Chhipa, Ghanchi, Khoja, Bohra and Tai. Other early settlers included the Marwari Muslims, Parsis originally from Iran, Marathi Muslims and Konkani Muslims from Maharashtra (settled in Kokan Town), Goan Catholics and Anglo-Indians. Most non-Muslims left the city to India in the 1950s, after independence, but there are still small communities of Parsis, Goan Catholics and Anglo-Indians in the city.

The independence of Pakistan in 1947 saw the influx of Muslim Muhajirs from India fleeing from anti-Muslim

pograms. Majority of the Urdu speaking and other non-Punjabi Muslim refugees that fled from various states of India settled in Karachi which is why the culture of the city is a blend of South Asia. Most properties vacated by non-Muslims, who left Karachi due to the new settlements made by these refugees, were granted to Muslim refugees through claims on behalf of the properties they claimed of leaving behind in India.^[9] Today, the descendants of these Muslim refugees are known as Muhajirs form a powerful large population of Karachi. These Muhajirs include ethno-linguist Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi, Konkani Muslims, Rajasthani and Malabari Muslims from India. Majority of the Gujaratis in Karachi are ethno-linguistically Sindhis; majority of Rajasthani Muslims settled in the city much before the independence of Pakistan in 1947; Bihari of Bangladesh speak Bhojpuri, Bengali Muslims speak Bengali and Rohingya speak Rohingya language. These small ethno-linguist groups are being assimilated in the Urdu speaking community.^[9]



A mosque of Defence Housing Authority

After independence of Pakistan, a considerable number of Punjabi Muslims from Pakistani Punjab settle in Karachi.^[9] There is also a sizeable community of Kashmiri Muslims from the Kashmir Valley Marathi Hindus and Malayali Muslims in Karachi (the Mappila), originally from Kerala in South India.^[10]

The Pashtuns, originally from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Afghanistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and northern Balochistan, are now the city's second largest ethnic group after Muhajirs, these Pashtuns are settled in Karachi from decades.^{[11][12][13]} With as high as 7 million by some estimates, the city of Karachi in Pakistan has the largest concentration of urban Pakhtun population in the world, including 50,000 registered Afghan refugees in the city,^{[14][15]} meaning there are more Pashtuns in Karachi than in any other city in the world.^[16] As per current demographic ratio Pashtuns are about 25% of Karachi's population.^[17] Seraikis from southern Punjab have also settled in Karachi in large numbers.

After the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, thousands of Biharis and Bengalis from Bangladesh arrived in the city, and today Karachi is home to 1 to 2 million ethnic Bengalis from Bangladesh (see Bangladeshis in Pakistan),^{[18][19]} many of whom migrated in the 1980s and 1990s. They were followed by Rohingya Muslim refugees from western Burma (for more information, see Burmese people in Pakistan),^[20] and Asian refugees from Uganda. One under-privileged sub-ethnic group is the Siddis (Africans – Sheedi) who are now naturalised Sindhi speakers. They are descended from African slaves.^[21] Many other refugees from Iran and the Central Asian countries constituting the former Soviet Union have also settled in the city as economic migrants. A large numbers of Arabs, Filipinos and an economic elite of Sinhalese from Sri Lanka.^[22] Expatriates from China have a history going back to the 1940s; today, many of the Chinese are second-generation children of immigrants who came to the city and worked as dentists, chefs and shoemakers.^{[22][23]}

Karachi is host to many Western expatriates in Pakistan. During the World War II, about 3,000 Polish refugees from Soviet Union evacuated to Karachi, by the British. Some of these Polish families settled permanently in the city.^{[24][25]} There are also communities of American^[26] and British expatriates.

According to the last official census of the country, which was held in 1998, the linguistic distribution of the city was: Urdu: 48.52%; Punjabi: 13.94%; Pashto: 11.42%; Sindhi: 7.22%; Balochi: 4.34%; Saraiki: 2.11%; others: 12.44%. The others include Dari, Gujarati, Dawoodi Bohra, Memon, Marwari, Brahui, Makrani, Khovar, Burushaski, Arabic, Farsi and Bengali.^[27]

According to the census of 1998, the religious breakdown of the city was: Muslim (96.45%); Christian (2.42%); Hindu (0.86%); Ahmadiyya (0.17%); others (0.10%) (Parsis, Sikhs, Bahá'ís, Jews and Buddhists).^[28]

Rank	Language	1998 census ^[29]	Speakers	1981 census	Speakers
1	Urdu	48.52%	4,497,747	54.34%	2,830,098
2	Punjabi	13.94%	1,292,335	13.64%	710,389
3	Pashto	11.42%	1,058,650	8.71%	453,628
4	Sindhi	07.22%	669,340	06.29%	327,591
5	Balochi	04.34%	402,386	04.39%	228,636
6	Saraiki	02.11%	195,681	00.35%	18,228
7	Others	12.44%	1,153,126	12.27%	639,560
	All	100%	9,269,265	100%	5,208,132

Religion

According to a 1998 census of Pakistan, the religious breakdown of the city is as follows:^[28] Muslim (96.45%), Christian (2.42%), Hindu (0.86%), Ahmadis (0.17%) and other (0.10%). Other religious groups include Parsis, Sikhs, Bahai, Jews and Buddhists. Of the Muslims, approximately 75% are Sunnis and 25% are Shi'ites.

Trivia

Stunned by Karachi's diverse demographics, the American political scientist and South Asia expert Stephen P. Cohen once stated that if Karachi's ethnic groups "got along well, it would be an amazingly complex city, a lot like New York."^[30]

See also

- Economy of Karachi
- Demography of Pakistan
- List of metropolitan areas by population

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Further reading

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