

Rural settlement: About two-thirds of the rural population of Pakistan lives in nucleated villages or hamlets (i.e., in compact groups of dwellings). Sometimes, as is generally the case in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the houses are placed in a ring with windowless outer walls, so that each complex resembles a protected fortress with a few guarded entrances. Dispersed habitation patterns in the form of isolated single homesteads are rare, occurring only in a few mountainous areas. But it is not uncommon to find numerous satellite hamlets of varying sizes near larger villages; such hamlets are occupied either by a landlord (along with his family, servants, and sharecroppers) or else by members of an extended family group living together in adjoining houses. The spread of tube wells (driven wells) in the Punjab has increased the tendency for such dispersal, for people often prefer to live near their tube wells in order to guard the valuable machinery. The concept of village, therefore, often tends to be equivalent to that of the *mawza* (an area of land that, together with a village and its satellite hamlets, forms a unit in land-revenue records). It is difficult to speak of an average size of village, for patterns of habitation are complex. Most groups of dwellings have a minimum of a dozen or a score of houses, and there are usually a few hundred dwellings in each "village." Large villages rarely have populations exceeding 2,500 persons.

Three basic types of village layout are to be found. Most of the older settlements are of the "spiderweb" form, having at least one focal point, such as the village mosque, some shops, or a well from which lanes radiate. A few villages follow the contours of hill slopes and other natural features. In the Canal Colony areas, villages are of a regular rectangular pattern, with a well, a mosque, and a school, as well as the house of the village headman, at the centre and with the houses being arranged in a series of concentric rectangles. Houses are built from available local materials; the vast majority are of adobe, a material that is not only cheap and reasonably durable in the dry climate but also provides better insulation from extremes of heat and cold than brick or stone. Houses usually have walled courtyards where animals are tethered and where people sleep in the open in the hot summer.

Urban settlement

The urban population of Pakistan represents about two-fifths of the total. Two cities have a dominating position—Karachi, the capital of Sind province (and of the country until 1959), and Lahore, the capital of Punjab. Since the 1960s, government policy has been directed toward the dispersal of industry, which had become heavily concentrated in Karachi. As a consequence, urban growth has been more evenly distributed among several cities. Karachi remains the principal port and center of commerce and industry.

Rapid and unplanned urban expansion has been paralleled by a deterioration in living conditions, particularly in the housing conditions of lower-income groups. Many urban households are unable to pay rent for the cheapest form of available housing and live in shacks in makeshift communities known collectively as katchi-abadis. Water supply and sewerage systems are inadequate, and in many areas residents have to share communal water taps. Inadequate urban transport is also a major problem.

Karachi experienced serious ethnic conflict between the muhajir immigrants and Sindh's and (since the late 1980s) between the Sindh's and Punjabis. Discouraged by civil strife, businesses—both industrial and commercial—began to relocate to Punjab, particularly in and around Lahore. After Karachi and Lahore, the principal cities are Faisalabad and Rawalpindi in Punjab and Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Quetta is the capital and largest city of Baluchistan. The national capital, Islamabad, adjoins Rawalpindi.