



Population tops 87m as Iran gears up for first digital census

Social Desk

Iran's population has exceeded 87 million, moving to within 128,000 people of the official year-end forecast, while the country is preparing to hold its first nationwide register-based digital census later this year, the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) said on Sunday. The SCI said Iran's population had reached 87.006 million, up from its previous estimate of 86.562 million. The agency had forecast the population would go beyond 87.13 million by the end of the current Iranian year in March 2027, meaning 99.8% of that projection has already been achieved. If the current pace of natural population growth continues, Iran is expected not only to hit that target but also edge past it. The SCI estimates that of the projected 87.13 million people

by the end of the year, about 67.13 million, or 77%, live in urban areas, while 20 million, or 23%, reside in rural areas, reflecting the continued shift toward cities. The average household size has fallen to 3.2 people, the lowest level since the 1950s, according to the SCI. The trend reflects changing lifestyles, later marriages, lower fertility and a growing number of one- and two-person households. Official data for last year showed 892,000 births and 460,000 deaths, resulting in a crude birth rate of 10.3 per 1,000 people, a crude death rate of 5.3 per 1,000 and natural population growth of 432,000 people, equivalent to an annual growth rate of about 0.5%. Nearly two births were registered for every death, indicating a relatively young population despite a declining birth trend.



Births peaked during the summer, while deaths were highest in the spring. Assuming natural population growth continues at an average of about 36,000 people a month, Iran's population could reach around 87.186 million by year-end, exceeding the SCI's forecast by about 52,000 people.

Record-based national census

Meanwhile, SCI chief Gholamreza Goudarzi said Iran's nationwide population and housing census, scheduled for November, would mark a "turning point" for the country's statistical system by relying on administrative and digital records instead of tradi-



People walk in the Grand Bazaar in Tehran, Iran on July 20, 2026.

● REUTERS

tional door-to-door surveys. Goudarzi said the success of the census would depend on the quality of administrative and registry data supplied by government agencies, according to IRNA. Instead of large-scale field operations, the SCI will compile, match and analyze information from government databases, including civil registration, education and property records. Goudarzi said the new methodology would cut down on costs while improving the speed and accuracy of official statistics. He also called for public awareness campaigns to begin immediately because of the different approach being adopted and expressed hope the exercise would

become a "modern, scientific and low-cost experience". Pilot projects and the required technical infrastructure have already been tested in Isfahan, Khuzestan and Hamadan provinces. Officials say the project is a key step toward integrating population data and expanding electronic government services. Iran last conducted a national population and housing census in 2016, when the SCI recorded a population of nearly 80 million, including 59.1 million urban residents and 20.7 million living in rural areas. The annual population growth rate compared with the 2011 census was 1.24%. Iran, which covers 1.64 million square kilometers and is divided into 31 provinces, is the world's 17th-largest country by land area and the 17th-most populous.



Vocalist Hadi Feizabadi joins Tehran Symphony Orchestra for 'Khosouf' performance

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian vocalist Hadi Feizabadi will join the Tehran Symphony Orchestra for upcoming performances of 'Khosouf,' one of the country's leading contemporary symphonic works inspired by the tragedy of Karbala, IRNA reported on Sunday. Feizabadi will perform the vocal sections of 'Khosouf,' composed by Mohammad Saeed Sharifian, alongside the Tehran Symphony Orchestra under guest conductor Arash Amini and the orchestra's choir led by Behrang Shegarfkar. The performances are scheduled for August 6 and 7 at 9:30 p.m. at Tehran's Vahdat Hall.

'Khosouf' is regarded as one of the landmark works of contemporary Iranian symphonic music. Inspired by the epic of Ashura and the tragedy of Karbala, it combines a symphony orchestra, choir and solo vocals to present a musical interpretation of sacrifice, freedom, faith and the search for truth. The addition of Feizabadi is expected to round out the work's vocal dimension and complete its musical narrative. Feizabadi is a well-known Iranian vocalist who has performed with a number of orchestras and appeared in numerous musical productions. His participation in 'Khosouf' will be his lat-

est collaboration with the Tehran Symphony Orchestra. 'Khosouf,' which literally means an eclipse of the moon in Persian, is considered one of the most significant works in Iran's symphonic repertoire related to Karbala, where Imam Hussein (PBUH), the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the third Imam of Shia Muslims, was martyred more than 14 centuries ago in an unequal battle against the forces of Yazid, the tyrannical ruler at the time. The work brings together the expressive power of a symphony orchestra, choir and solo voice to explore themes of mourning, sacrifice, freedom, faith and the pursuit of truth. Rather than relying on direct narration, it invites audiences to reflect on the human dimensions of the Karbala tragedy through music, offering a distinctive blend of symphonic performance with religious and cultural themes. The two-night performance will give audiences an opportunity to take in a symphonic interpretation of one of the defining events in Shia history.

Writers from 38 countries submit over 16,000 entries for Minab story prize

Arts & Culture Desk

A total of 3,354 writers from 38 countries have submitted 16,158 entries for the inaugural international six-word story prize, "Minab School: 168 Unfinished Short Stories," IRNA reported on Sunday, as the competition commemorates schoolchildren killed in a US missile strike on a school in southern Iran. Organizers said the strong international response marked broad participation in the literary initiative and announced the names of writers whose submissions met the competition's criteria and made it through to the judging stage. The entries came from Iran, Argentina, Germany, the United States, Indonesia, Armenia, Uruguay, Australia, Spain, Afghanistan, Algeria, Italy, Brunei, Belgium, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Portugal, Tunisia, China, Russia, Romania, Japan, Chile, Serbia, Iraq, France, the Philippines, Cameroon, South Korea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Egypt, Nicaragua, India and Yemen. Because of the large number of submissions, the need for care-



The photo shows what is left of a primary school in Minab, southern Iran, after a US strike that killed 168 people, mostly schoolchildren on February 28, 2026.

● IRNA

ful evaluation and conditions in Iran due to an ongoing war, organizers said the closing ceremony would likely be held by the end of September, with the exact date and details to be announced later. The competition is organized by the Office of Persian Literature and Language and focuses on the themes of children's rights, peace, patriotism and hope. Its defining feature is a strict minimalist format, requiring participants to tell a story in only six words while leaving room for interpretation and continuation in the reader's mind.

Each writer was allowed to submit up to six entries. Submissions are being evaluated by a panel of Iranian and international judges. Winners will receive a trophy, a commemorative certificate and cash prizes, with organizers saying the award aims to open a new chapter in ultra-short fiction. The competition follows the US missile strike on Shajareh Tayyebbeh School in Minab on February 28, 2026, which killed at least 168 people, including 150 schoolboys and schoolgirls aged between seven and 12. The attack has been remembered in Iran and beyond as a despicable crime.

America's plan to ...

Nevertheless, media outlets affiliated with the United States and Israel launched a psychological campaign from the outset of the war aimed at damaging Iran's relations with Arab countries—a propaganda line that continues to this day. After this introduction, an important question must be addressed: What is America's objective in this ominous plan? The answer is that the United

States has a long history of engineering regional wars in the Middle East. For instance, in the 1970s, during the Republican presidency of Ronald Reagan, Washington provoked Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime into attacking Iran, drawing two major and powerful countries of the region into an eight-year war of attrition that weakened both. Today, under domestic and international pressure, America seeks to gradually extricate itself from direct confronta-

tion with Iran and transfer the front of conflict and tension to Arab countries as its proxy forces. By implementing this policy, the financial costs and human casualties of the war will be shifted from the American government onto Arab nations and governments. At the same time, through the sale of weapons and related equipment, the United States will plunder Arab countries, diverting capital that should be spent on their development into the military domain.

Israel strongly welcomes this plan, as Tel Aviv's explicit strategic policy is to weaken all Middle Eastern countries other than the Zionist regime. It is expected that statesmen and political elites in Arab countries—particularly those on the shores of the Persian Gulf, many of whom, especially the younger generation, are educated and familiar with the rules of the international environment—will, taking into account their own national interests and security, cor-

rectly assess the battlefield of Hormuz, distinguish between true friends and enemies, and refrain from entering this dangerous American and Zionist game. Instead of playing on America's field and incurring enormous costs from the pockets of Arab nations, they should contemplate improving strategic relations with Iran as their historical and permanent neighbor, and believe that genuine peace and security depend on historical, geographical, cultural, and religious ties.