I.4 Demographic and social patterns

Due to historical events and to over 30 years of wars and conflicts, no population census has been conducted in Afghanistan since 1979[1]. Therefore, no accurate statistics for the size, distribution, composition, growth rate and socio-economic characteristics of the population are available.

Since current knowledge of these issues is of critical importance for urban management, we regarded the creation of an updated database on socio-demographic aspects as the first step towards a new Masterplan for Herat city.

Between October 2010 and February 2011 a household survey was conducted on a random sample of 3,083 households and 22,102 individuals (51.3% male, 48.7% female), covering an area of about 56.5 sq.km.

I.4.1 CONSISTENCY AND AGE STRUCTURE OF POPULATION

On the basis of the collected data, the total population living in the 12 Herati districts can be estimated at about 493,600 inhabitants, and the total number of households at about 69,700.

This population figure is about 16% higher than that supplied for the same period by the Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan (2012b), i.e. 423,300 inhabitants. The difference is due to the fact that the CSO figure refers to the central urban area (Herat Centre), while ours includes the entire western area of what is now district 12, only recently integrated into the area under the authority of Herat Municipality. Furthermore, the CSO figure is, by necessity, an estimate while ours is the result of a direct survey. Taking these factors into account, the figure of 493,583 inhabitants is plausible for the whole area included in the 12 Districts of Herat Municipality.

Fig. I.4.1.1 Age pyramid of Herat population, year 2011 (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
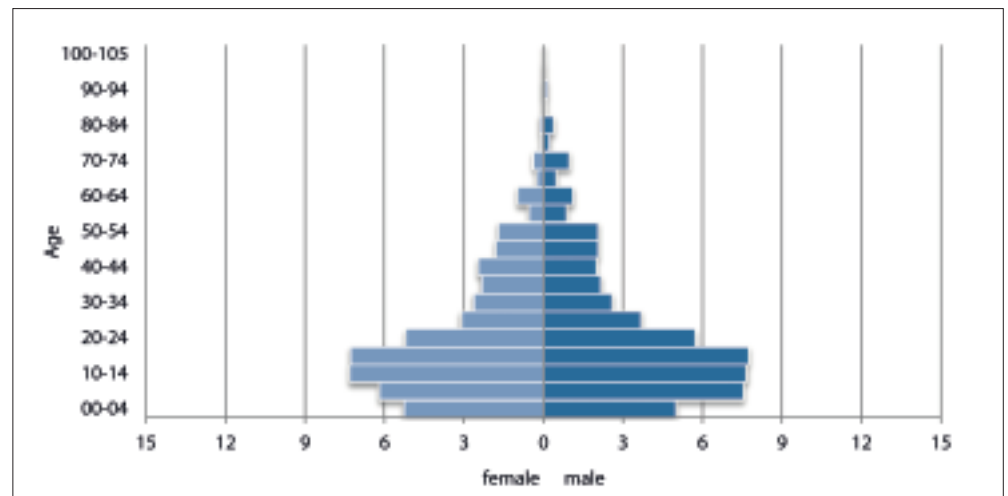
[1] The fully-fledged population census planned by the Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan (CSO) for 2010 has not yet been implemented.

In 1979 Herat had 140,300 inhabitants (data CSO)[2], a figure that testifies to the city's intensive growth in the last decades.

The Herati population is very young (like that of other Afghan cities). The distribution of the population according to age shows that 68% of the dwellers are under 26, while the percentage of older people is only 3%. As a consequence, a high rate of population growth is predictable in the next two-three decades (see Chapter II.1).

The gender-based age pyramid shows that in Herat genders are more evenly balanced than in other Asian countries. These statistics would seem to exclude the widespread practice of selective abortion in China and India which still results in a lower proportion of women over the whole population (e.g. in 2001 in India 927 girls were born for every 1000 boys).

I.4.2 DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

In Herat a fast-growing population lives in a relatively small space. Therefore, the density rate is very high – just shy of 84 inhabitants/ha. This figure is high even compared to crowded Asian cities like Shanghai, and especially considering that Herat's city centre is characterized by low buildings with max. 1-2 storeys.

The distribution of population in the urban area is obviously not homogeneous. Areas with very high population density (blue areas) are located especially in the old city (up to 200 inh/ha), in the adjacent neighbourhood to the north-west, and also in the newly developing urban area at the beginning of the road to Sali Patra village. The new urbanized areas on the north-west and south-west sides of the city show lower density rates (fig. I.4.2.1). Consistency and distribution of population in the districts is described in Tab. I.4.2.1.

District	Area (ha)	Population	Density (people/ha)
1	213	21,035	99
2	167	24,868	149
3	185	19,938	108
4	245	23,009	94
5	701	52,410	75
6	659	59,118	90
7	490	73,390	150
8	1103	61,416	56
9	399	41,297	103
10	202	26,954	133
11	239	27,753	116
12	1263	62,393	49
All	5866	493,583	84

Tab. I.4.2.1 Consistency of population in districts (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).

[2] A lower figure of 100,000 inhabitants for the late 1970s is given by Najimi, whose work in the late sixties (albeit published about twenty years later) offers an invaluable picture of the situation in Herat immediately prior to the above-mentioned conflicts. However, Najimi does not indicate the source of this information (see 1988, p. 19).

Fig. I.4.2.1 Population density in Herat, year 2011. North-Western area of District 12 not represented. (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
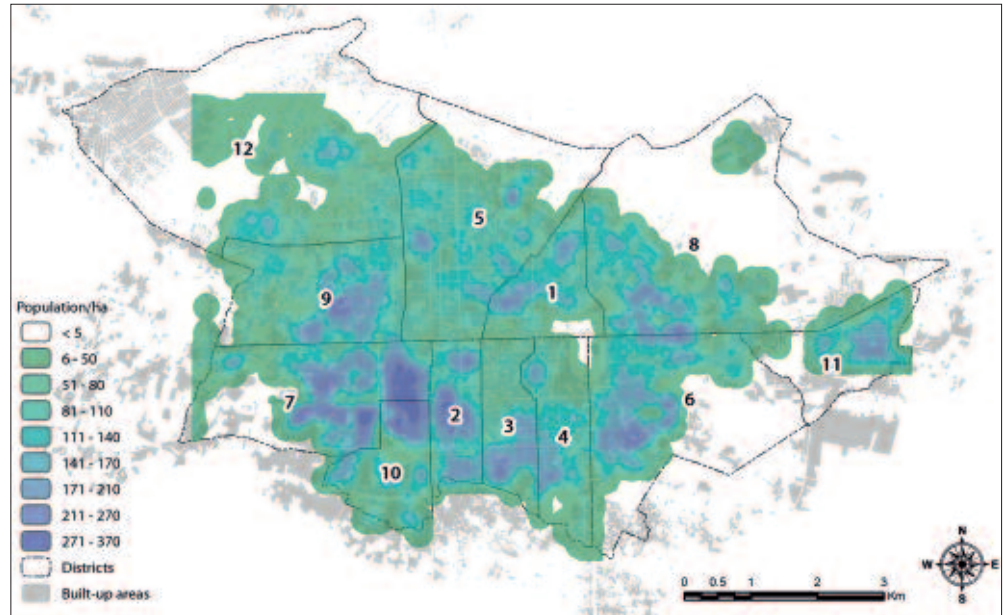
I.4.3 HOUSEHOLD SIZE

On average, Herati households consist of 7.1 individuals. The figure is impressive when compared with western societies (for example the Italian figure in 2010 was 2.4). In Herat the percentage of small families with up to 3 members is very low (4%) while one out of six households has more than 10 members.

In the majority of cases (85%), the household comprises two generations; in one out of eight households three generations live together in the same unit (extended families). One-generation families are extremely rare. No clear tendency to separate generations has been observed.

In 1/3 of cases, collateral branches of the family live under the same roof. The tendency of different family branches to become independent will greatly contribute to improving the housing demand in the future.

There are no clear distribution patterns according to household size in the urban

Fig. I.4.3.1 Number of members per household (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
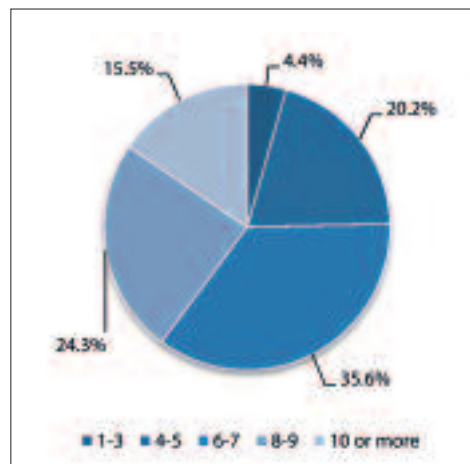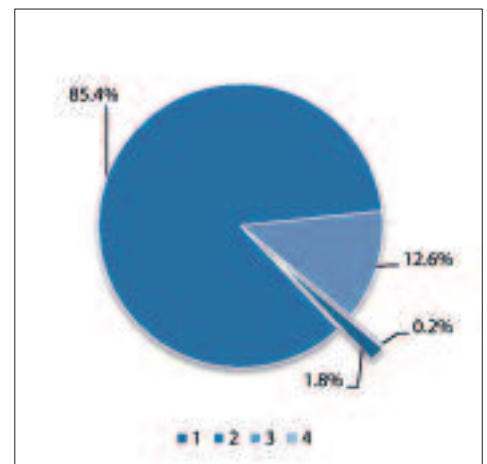Fig. 1.4.3.2 Number of generations per household (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).

area. Families with more than 8 members are distributed fairly regularly throughout the whole urban area. The relatively high presence of families with more than 10 members in the wealthy district 5 (see fig. I.4.4.1) shows that large household size is not correlated to low income and poverty. On the contrary, the extended family proves to be still deeply rooted in local culture.

■ I.4.4 INCOME

The monthly income per household is on average 10,290 Afghans (approx. 195$). The average monthly income per capita is 1,530 Afghans (approx. 29$)[3]. However, the average value conceals huge differences in family income.

Almost 1/4 of Herati families can be considered wealthy, because their members each have a monthly income of more than 1,900 Afg. However, 1/5 of Herati families are very poor, because their members have a monthly income equal to half the average value (18$) or even less[4].
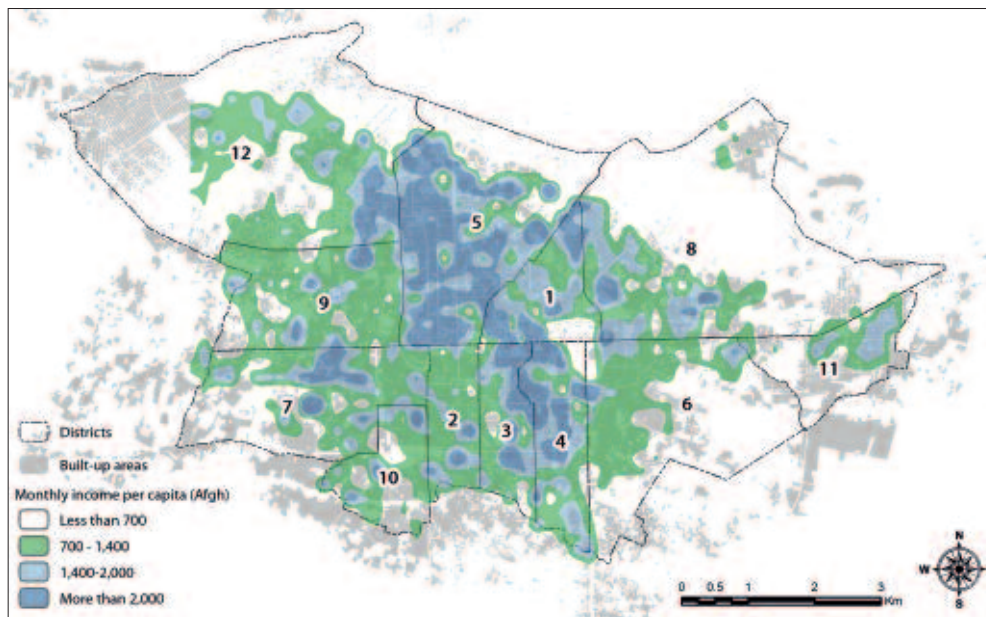

Fig. I.4.4.1 Population distribution according to monthly income North-Western area of District 12 not represented. (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).

The spatial distribution of households according to per capita income is irregular. The spatial pattern is characterized by a concentration of households with a monthly income of more than 2,000 Afgh. per capita in district 5, which stands out as the wealthiest area in the city. Districts 1 and 4, and to a lesser extent 8, show a high concentration of wealthy families, but also the presence of families with a monthly income close to the average.

In the other districts wealthy families are rare, while very poor families are to be found in all districts except in district 5.

For more than 2/3 of Herati families the main source of income is labour or clerical work. Entrepreneurial activities are the main source of income for one family out of five. The percentage of families living on yields or annuities is very low (2.3%).

Due to the high number of students and housewives, a low percentage of people at an active age (15-65) contribute to the family income.

[3] According to data of the World Bank, in 2011 the average per capita income (at nominal values) in Afghanistan was 400$. The latest National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment-NRVA survey (Spring 2007) indicates that 42 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.,

[4] According to ANDS (2008), estimated poverty incidence ranges from 34 percent around harvest season to as much as 42 percent in the leaner season.

Fig. I.4.4.2 Main source of family income (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
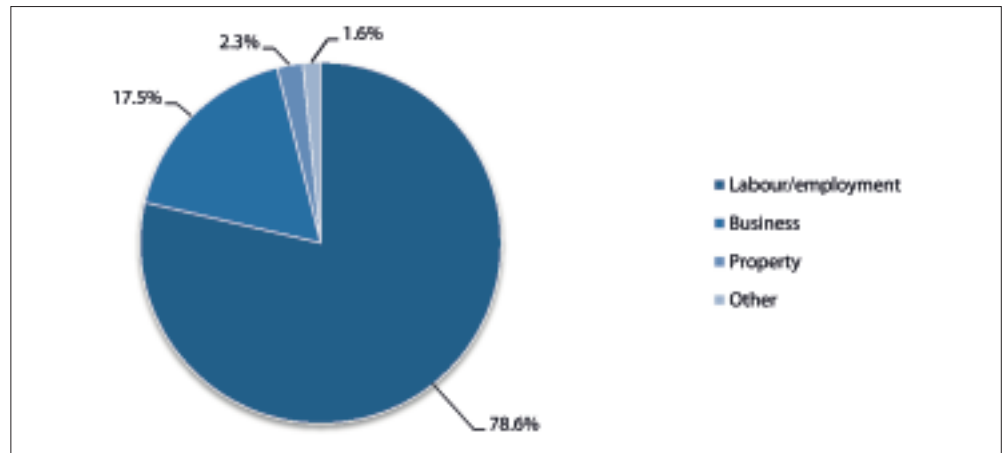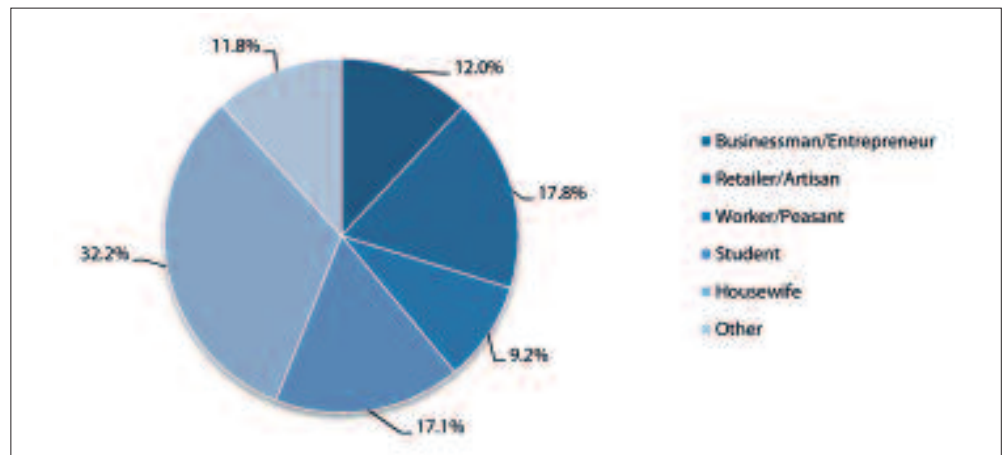

Fig. I.4.4.3 Positions of active people (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).

The occupational structure varies greatly according to gender. Despite the fact that women represent approx. 50% of the student population, they play a very minor role in economic activities.

Very few women embark on a profession after school or university and two out of three become housewives. However, women who enter the work market occupy relatively well-paid and prestigious positions.

Fig. I.4.4.4 Gender in professions (age 15-65) in % (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
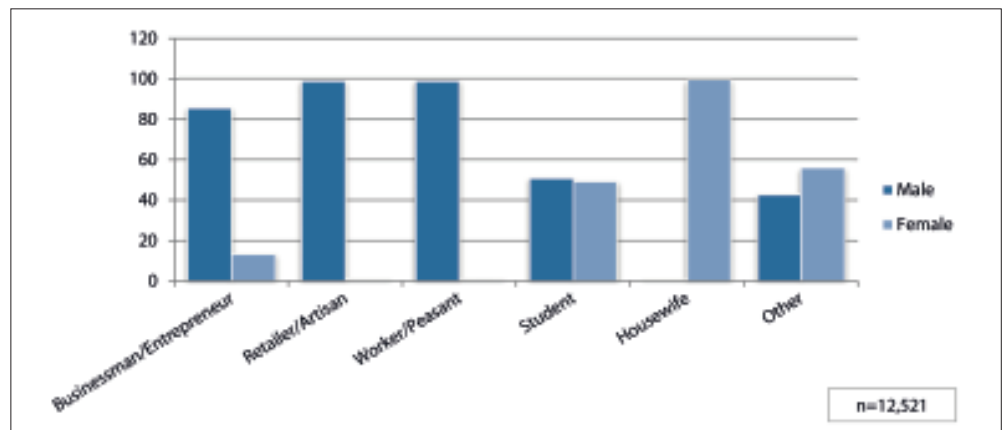
I.4.5 CHILD LABOUR

In Afghanistan school attendance is very low: only half of all school-age children go to school and the drop-out rate is around 70% (Kane, 2005). At the same time, a large number of Afghan children aged 7–14 work. According to UNICEF they amount to almost 25%, but this figure is probably an underestimate. According to UNICEF in 2003 the percentage in Herat city was 10.3% (equal to 186,013 children, see UNICEF, 2006, p. 123).

In Herat City the Department of Labour and Social Affairs (DoLSA) estimates that there are between 5,000 and 7,000 street working children and scavengers and that the number is increasing[5].

In urban child labour, employment is mainly concentrated in shops, restaurants and markets (37%), followed by domestic work (35%) and selling on the street (10%) (Amin 2013).

Reliable data are not yet available on the spatial distribution of child labour in Herat, but it is probably widespread, especially in peripheral urban areas, therefore contributing to the income of poor families.

In Herat city there were 186,013 children currently working.
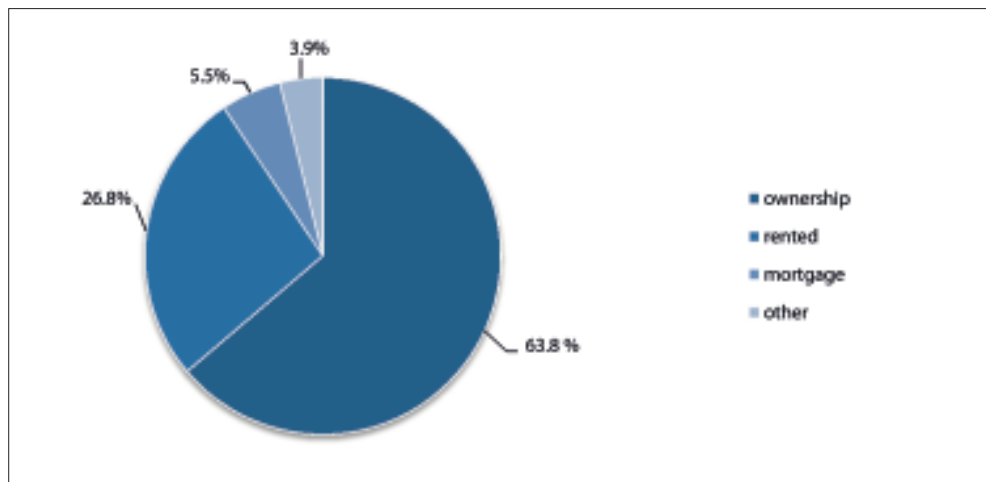
I.4.6 ACCOMMODATION

Fig. I.4.6.1 Accommodation occupancy (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).

A little fewer than 2/3 of households live in a house they fully own; 1/3 of households live in a rented house or are paying off a mortgage.

The spatial distribution of households living in rented property is widespread throughout the city and coincides to a great extent with areas of high population density. Rented homes are mostly located in the old city and in the area to the north–west.

The population boom of recent years, as a result of returning refugees and urban migration, as well as the general growth and development of the urban fabric, have contributed greatly to diminishing rootedness. High levels of rootedness are mostly to be found in the old city and in wealthy districts.

Low levels of rootedness are mostly a feature of the fringe of the urban area (dis-

[5] Survey on WAR CHILD conducted by DoLSA, Herat Office, 2011.

Fig. I.4.6.2 Rootedness. North-Western area of District 12 not represented. (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
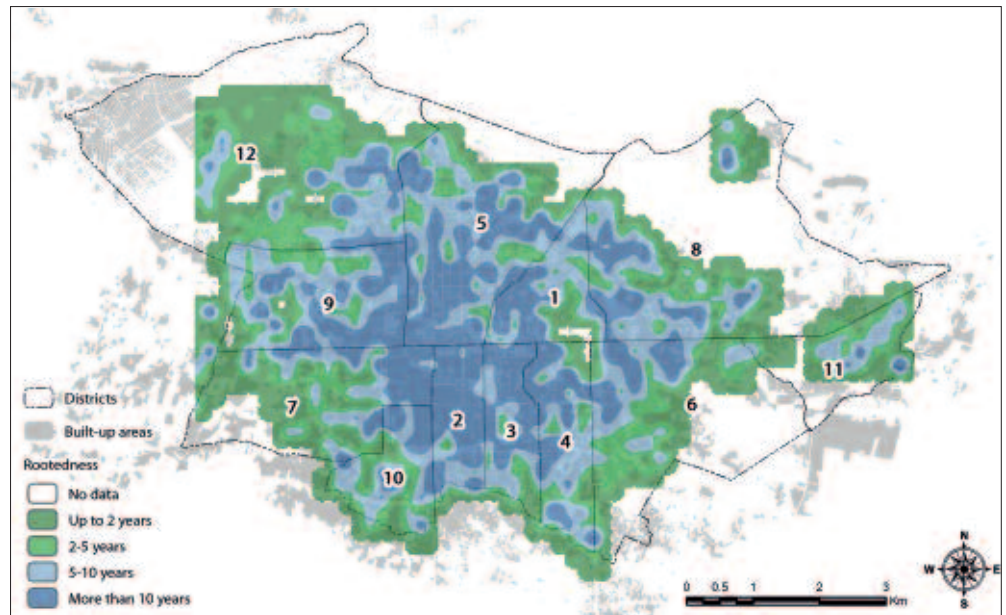

tricts 7 and 9); in the former district it is a result of returning refugees from Iran (often originally from other eastern regions of the country) and in the latter district as a result of migration to the city from the surrounding countryside.

I.4.7 DEGREE OF SATISFACTION

People express a very high level of satisfaction with regard to their living conditions. Above all, appreciation of their own neighbourhood is extremely high.

Fig. I.4.7.1 Degree of satisfaction with neighbourhood (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
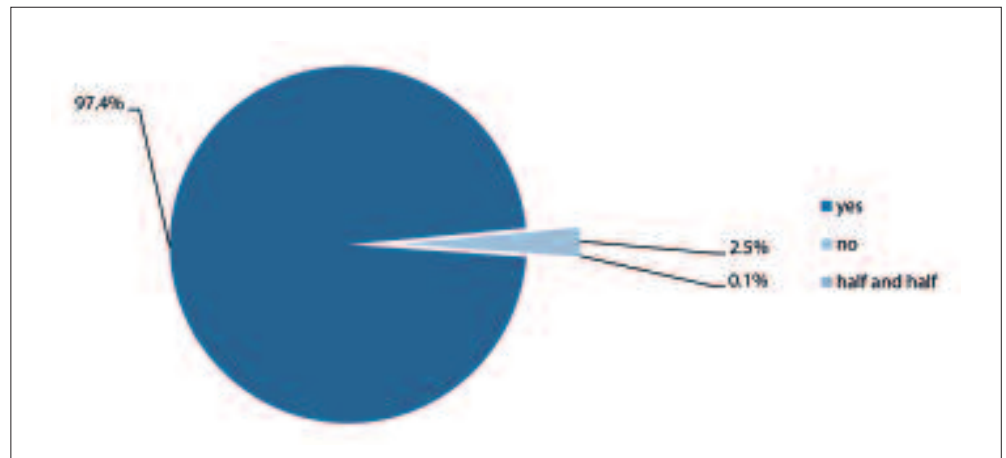
On average, however, opinions vary according to the different aspects considered.

Retail and, above all, religious infrastructures are considered to be highly satisfactory. On the contrary, schools, streets and health infrastructures and services are to some extent in critical condition.
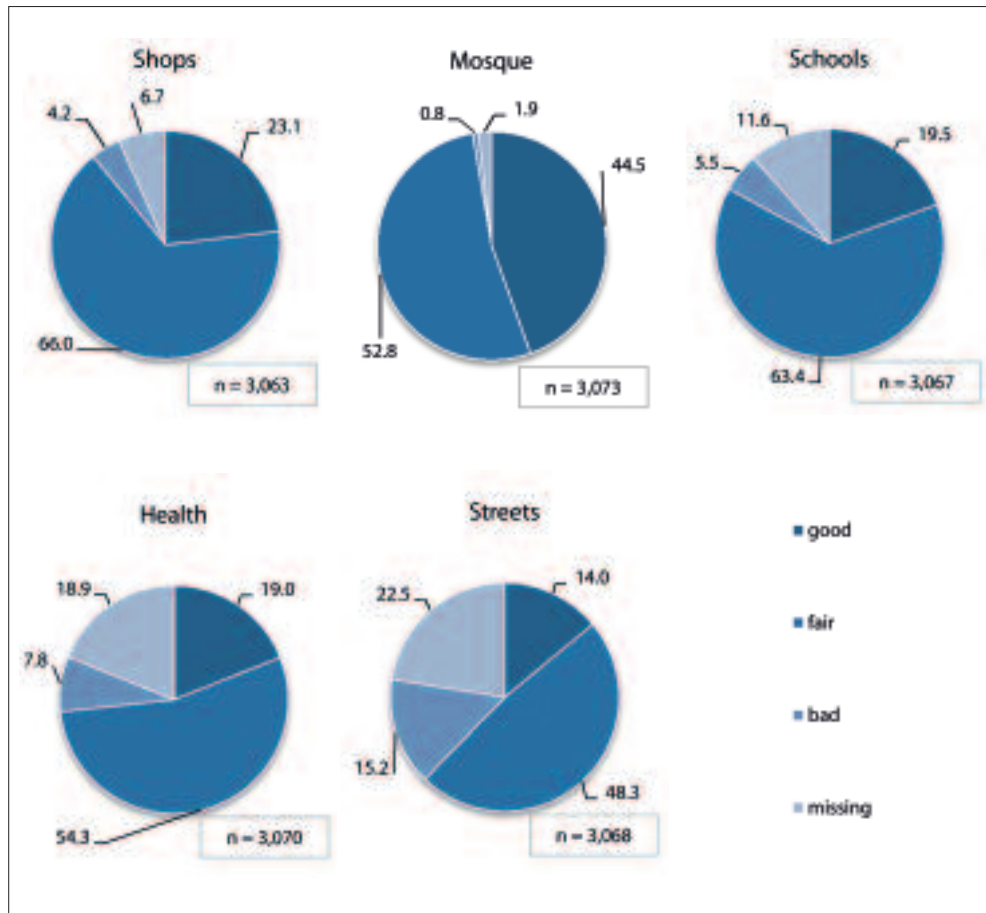
Fig. I.4.7.2 Neighbourhood facilities (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).

Power and water are particularly important utilities because they impact directly on the quality of domestic life.

While opinions on the electricity supply are good on the whole, people are more critical of the water supply. Moreover, unlike other utilities, the evaluation of water supply shows a significant difference between men and women, with women being more critical. Because water supply directly impacts on the quality of domestic life
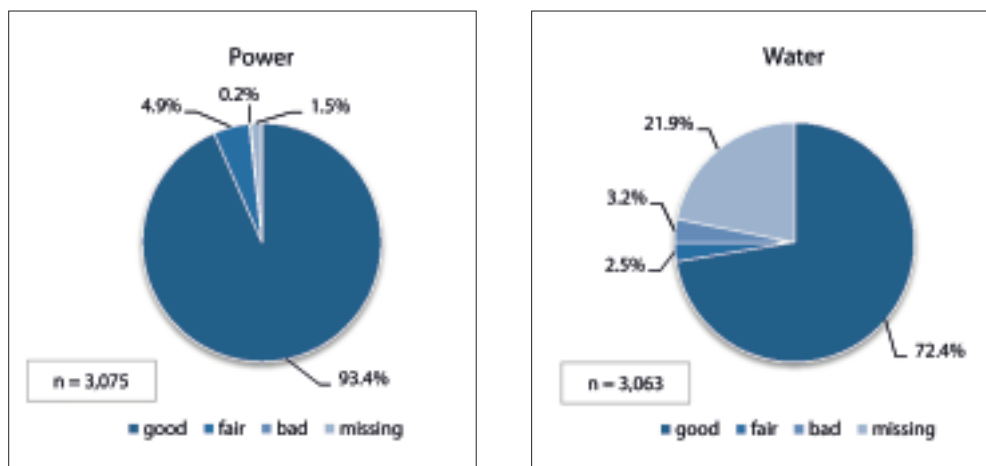

Fig. I.4.7.3 Neighbourhood utilities (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).

6   According to ANDS (2008), in 2005 only about 20-22 percent of urban households in the country had access to safe drinking water.

Fig. I.4.7.4 Evaluation of water supply (only women). North-Western area of District 12 not represented. (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
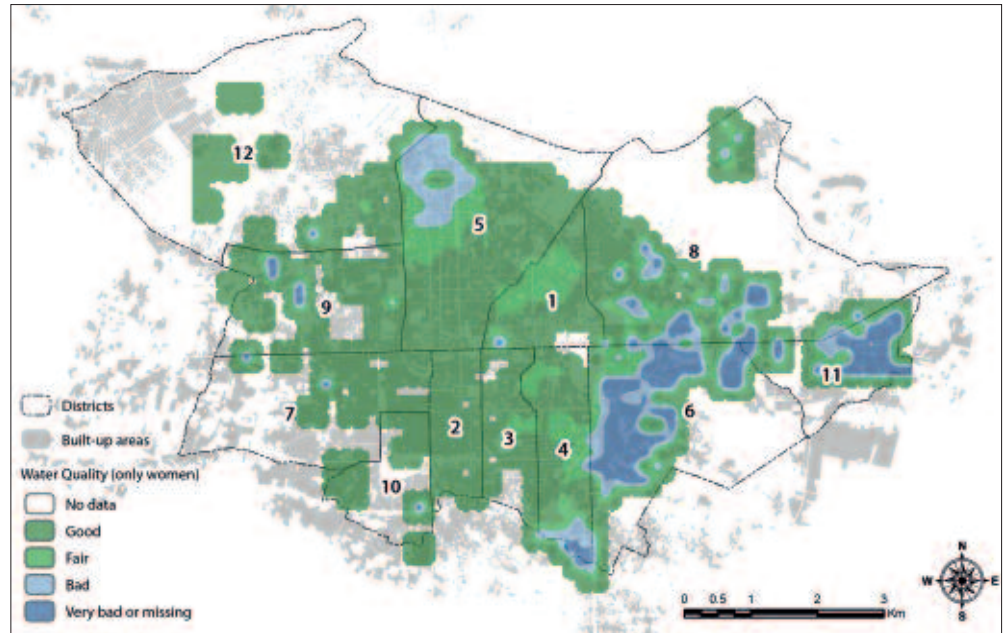

and because women do the housework, their opinion on water supply must be assumed to be more realistic.

According to women, the water supply in Herati districts is very irregular[6]. There are severe problems, especially in the eastern part of the city.

A recent study, though limited to two districts, has revealed a lowering of satisfaction levels also with regard to the availability of electricity. Despite the fact that the connection of buildings to the grid is almost complete (cf. Chapter I.5.2), the disproportion between demand and available energy causes grid overloading and blackouts (Kabiri, 2013).

Libraries and parks, followed by sports facilities, are among the amenities that people most miss in their neighbourhood and that would improve the quality of their lives.

Fig. I.4.7.5 Missing amenities(Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
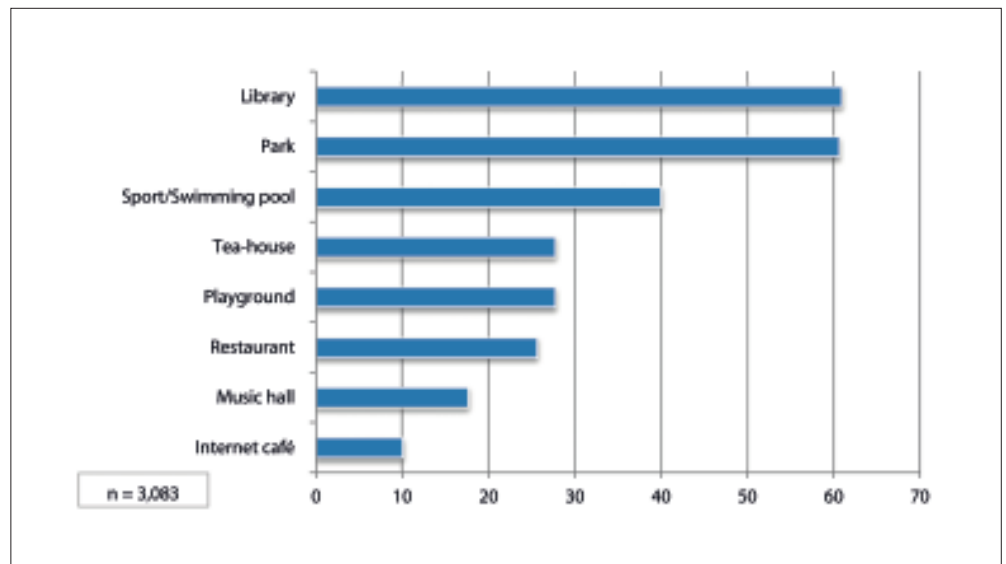
As expected, opinions regarding missing amenities vary according to age. The under-25s attribute more importance to libraries and sports facilities and less to traditional forms of entertainment like tea-houses.

Opinions about missing facilities vary even more according to gender. Women attribute much more importance to sports facilities and to playgrounds for children.
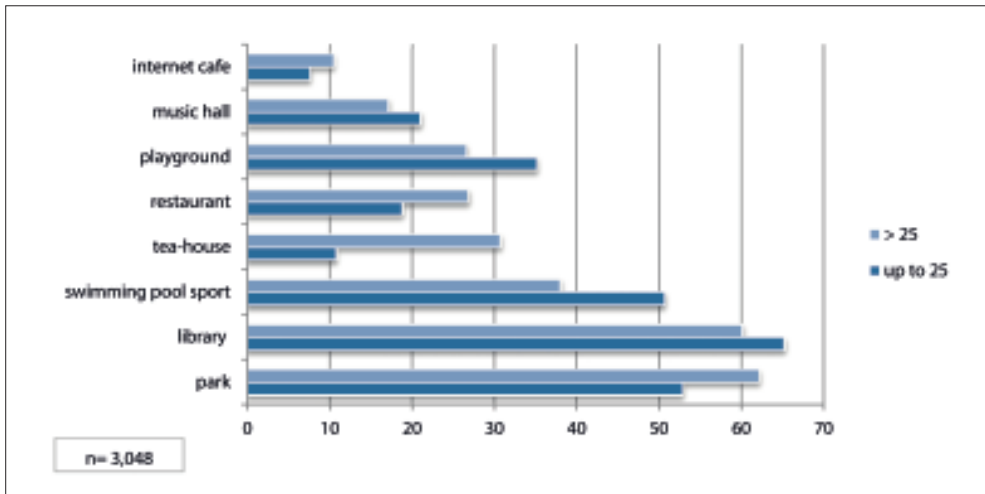

Fig. I.4.7.6 Missing amenities according to age (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).
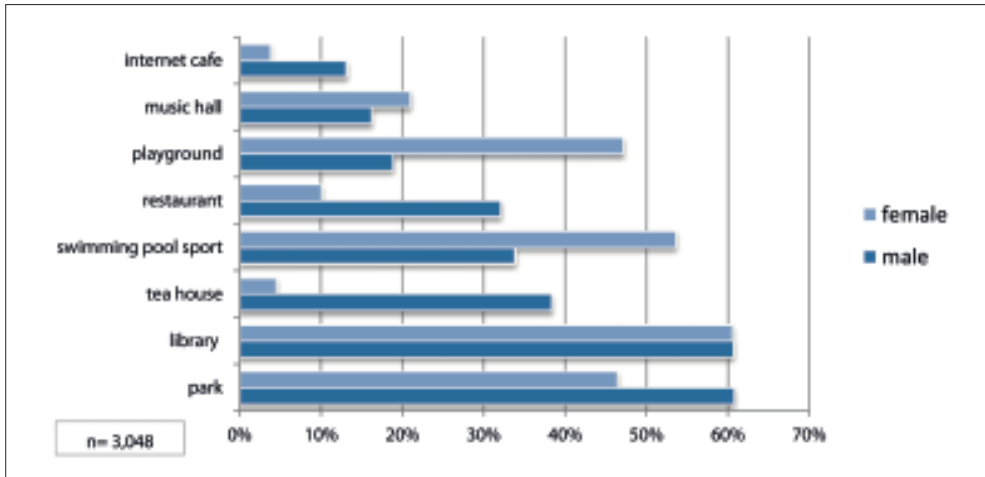

Fig. I.4.7.7 Missing amenities according to gender (Source: our processing of the Household survey data, 2011).