

7.1.5. Housing and living conditions

Islamabad was planned as a model city but has seen sprawling unregulated suburban zones since its construction in the 1960's.2012 In the ICT, where planned upscale neighbourhoods coexist with slums ('colonies'),2013 marginalised communities residing in informal and peri-urban settlements were disproportionally exposed to ecological risks2014 such as sudden flash floods.2015 Heat waves challenge those living in improvised or ineffectively ventilated housing structures.2016 Air quality has reportedly deteriorated, affecting inhabitants' health.2017

According to the Population & Housing Census 2023, 97.4 % of housing units in Islamabad qualified as *pacca* housing units. *Pacca* is a permanent or concrete house, built from durable materials (bricks, cement and steel etc.) with roofs and walls made of cement concrete, burnt bricks, jack board, timber or stone. 1.4 % were categorised as *katcha* housing units, consisting of bamboo, mud, ply wood or card board walls and a cement, iron sheet, garder, T-iron or pre-fabricated roof. 2018 About 1.2 % of households were categorised as semi *pacca* - a mix between the durable *pacca* and the less-durable *katcha* construction.2019 The average household size was 5.52 persons living in 2-4 rooms.2020 According to a study on four major slums in Islamabad from 2023, 43 % of residents lived in households of seven or more people. 46.3 % of households had 2 rooms.2021 The Population &Housing Census 2023 showed that 58.7 % of households had access to drinking water within homes. 87.9 % of households had a separate washroom, while 3.7 % of households had no washroom. 99 % of households were equipped with a 'separate' or 'shared' toilet, but 1 % of households had none. The vast majority (96.7 %) of households in Islamabad relied on electricity for lighting.2022 As reported in January 2026, family sizes in Islamabad were decreasing and smaller apartment units were preferred for reasons of affordability and rising cost of living.2023 In downtown areas, the cost of lodging has become increasingly difficult to bear,2024 particularly for the working class.2025

Most workers in the ICT live in slums2026 (*katchi abadi*2027) or in low-income apartments.2028 Slums emerge through informal housing markets, in which government officials and informal middlemen are involved.2029 An estimated 242030 to 502031 slums are scattered across all parts of Islamabad, characterised by inequality and marginalisation.2032 There, access to basic services, such as clean water, medical care, schooling, and transportation is limited.2033 In November 2025, the CDA ordered the mass eviction of residents residing in the Abadi 'Muslim Colony', ignoring court-issued stay orders.2034

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