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9 NAMIBIA'S PEOPLE

Past and present

About 2.1 million people were counted in the 2011 population census, the most recent count before this book was published. Population projections by the Namibia Statistics Agency predict there to be about 2,600,000 people living in Namibia in 2022.¹

While the number of people living in Namibia will remain modest by comparison to other countries – and, indeed, even some cities in the world – the way in which the population is structured and distributed has many dimensions. So, too, does population growth, and the considerable changes that take place as more and more Namibians move from rural livelihoods dependent on subsistence goods to urban livelihoods reliant on cash incomes. Most Namibians are young, and many live far from the rural homes where they or their parents and grandparents were born. This continues a history of migrations that previously brought many of their ancestors and earlier predecessors to Namibia.

Namibian homes today are spread across the country in surprising ways, reflecting the availability of resources, the country's history and people's changing priorities and values. Many are aggregated in small villages close to water or along roads or rivers. Others are spread widely and evenly across rural areas. Many more are densely packed in formal and informal urban settlements.

Before examining these current, yet ever-changing, dynamics of Namibia's population, this chapter first illustrates aspects of Namibia's prehistory and history. These provide snapshots of where people first settled, and insights on the strategies they adopted to live. It also depicts migrations that first brought many people to this land, and more recent historical events.

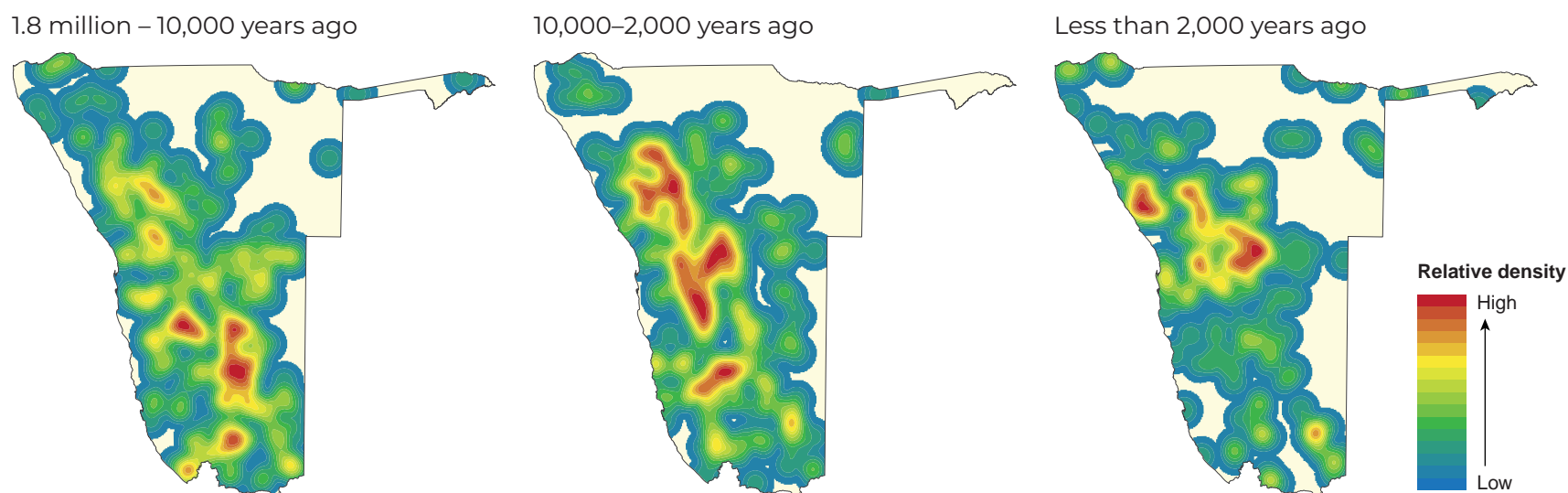
Namibia's people are extremely diverse. Indeed, there is no such thing as a typical Namibian. Namibians are also changing their way of life rapidly, moving from one area to another, adjusting the ways in which they make a living, and becoming increasingly educated and dependent on modern telecommunications, consumer products, medical services, financial management and systems of government. Much has changed; and much will change in the years ahead.

Shards of history illustrated

The oldest Namibians

Archaeological sites provide snapshots of the past, showing where people have lived at different times. Artefacts and environmental evidence found at these sites also provide clues as to how they once lived. Evidence collected worldwide suggests that hunting and gathering has been the dominant lifestyle for much of human history, and that pastoral nomads

and crop farmers emerged only in the last few thousand years. It is often believed that the occupants of archaeological sites in Namibia were San people.² While the genetic lineage of the San is thought to be 100,000–150,000 years old,³ no-one really knows what languages were spoken or how these ancient ancestors were related to any present-day groups.



9.01 Relative densities of archaeological sites occupied during different times⁴

These maps show the distribution and relative concentrations of archaeological sites found from different periods of Namibia's prehistory. Most sites are in the western, southern and central rocky and more arid areas of the country, which are currently sparsely populated; paradoxically few sites have been found in the wetter northern and eastern more productive areas where most rural Namibians live today. It seems unlikely that major changes in the distribution of rural Namibians have occurred, although western Namibia may have been wetter and supported more people 12,000 years ago during the early Holocene period than nowadays.⁵ It is more likely that artefacts – including rock paintings – have been better preserved and have been easier to find in the rocky and more arid areas of southern and western Namibia. More archaeological field research has also been done there than elsewhere in Namibia. Additionally, many places previously occupied by people have probably been covered by Kalahari sands in the east and north, but also by Namib sands in the far west.

The earliest and longest period, between about 1.8 million and 10,000 years ago, illustrated here (left) falls within much of the Pleistocene geological period and Stone Age. Numerous stone tools have been found at many sites in Namibia, some of which could be dated reliably to their origins several hundred thousand

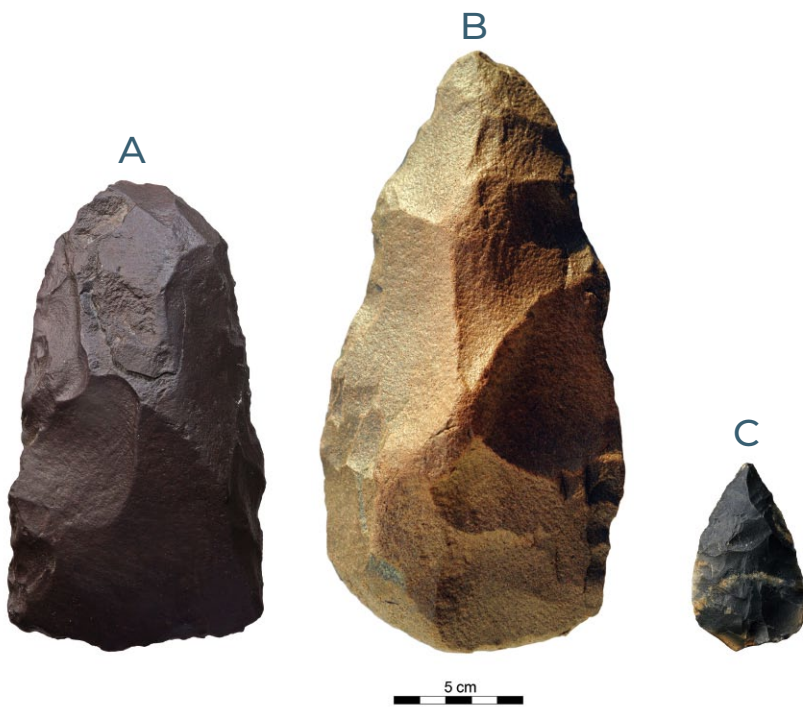
years ago. It was towards the end of this period that the first rock art was produced in Namibia (pages 288–289). Little can be surmised about how these early Namibians lived, other than they hunted and gathered food using stone tools that became more sophisticated over the millennia. Undoubtedly, they moved extensively following sources of water and food that came and went with the seasons, and with drier or wetter climate cycles.

Between 10,000 and 2,000 years ago (centre), Namibians continued to live by hunting and gathering, but used a greater range of tools including arrows, spears, grindstones and tools for digging and scraping. The first evidence of trade comes from this period, suggesting widespread movement and connections with people elsewhere in addition to journeys in response to changes in the availability of food and water.

It is during the last 2,000 years (right) that farming of crops and livestock started, representing a major change in the livelihoods of people settling in places suited to agricultural production. Technical innovations included pottery and metalworking. Copper smelting was one form of metalwork, and many smelting sites have been found close to the Matchless Belt (page 50); copper was also extracted from the hills around Tsumeb and Otavi. While crop cultivation was largely limited to northern Namibia, livestock farming was much more widespread.



Circles of stones, thought to mark the walls of shelters used by people when they foraged in and around the Namib long ago.



Stone tools were made and used for hundreds of thousands of years by Namibia's first inhabitants. The three stone tools shown here would have had different uses: (a) this cleaver, found in the Brandberg area, has sharp edges and was probably used for cutting meat, skins and plants; (b) the hand axe with its pointed tip and broad bottom from the Huib-Hoch Plateau in southwestern Namibia, was probably used to break bones to get to their marrow, among other uses; (c) spearheads were attached to wooden shafts to form spears, one of mankind's earliest long-distance weapons.



This fossil is the lower jaw of a hominoid primate named *Otavipithecus namibiensis* that lived some 13 million years ago near Berg Aukas, close to Grootfontein. *Otavipithecus* belonged to the line of primates that eventually evolved into present-day great apes and humans. This fossil find in 1991 generated international interest, as it helps to piece together the patchy evolutionary history of primates.

Rock art⁶

The 80,000-plus individual rock art images known in Namibia testify to the wishes of early societies to express themselves pictorially. These desires go back a long time. The oldest images, which in the broadest sense might be called rock art, were drawn on small, portable stone slabs found embedded in debris in the Apollo 11 Cave near the Huns Mountains, in southern Namibia.⁷ The deposits of debris are estimated to be about 30,000 years old.

Unlike those slabs, rock art typically refers to representations made on immovable rocks, often in terrain where dating of the images is difficult. However, lucky circumstances that do allow dating suggest that some Namibian rock art is as old as the beginning of the Holocene, which was about 12,000 years ago, but most images are more likely to have been made in the last 5,000 years.

Images on rocks are divided between paintings, with various pigments applied on the stone surface, and engravings (known also as petroglyphs) which are carved, scored, chiselled or scratched into the stone. Their motifs generally differ. Painted art is dominated by depictions of humans and large animals, often characteristically in delicate, fine forms. By contrast, rock engravings depict mainly large animals and animal footprints, as well as abstract, non-figurative and geometric forms.

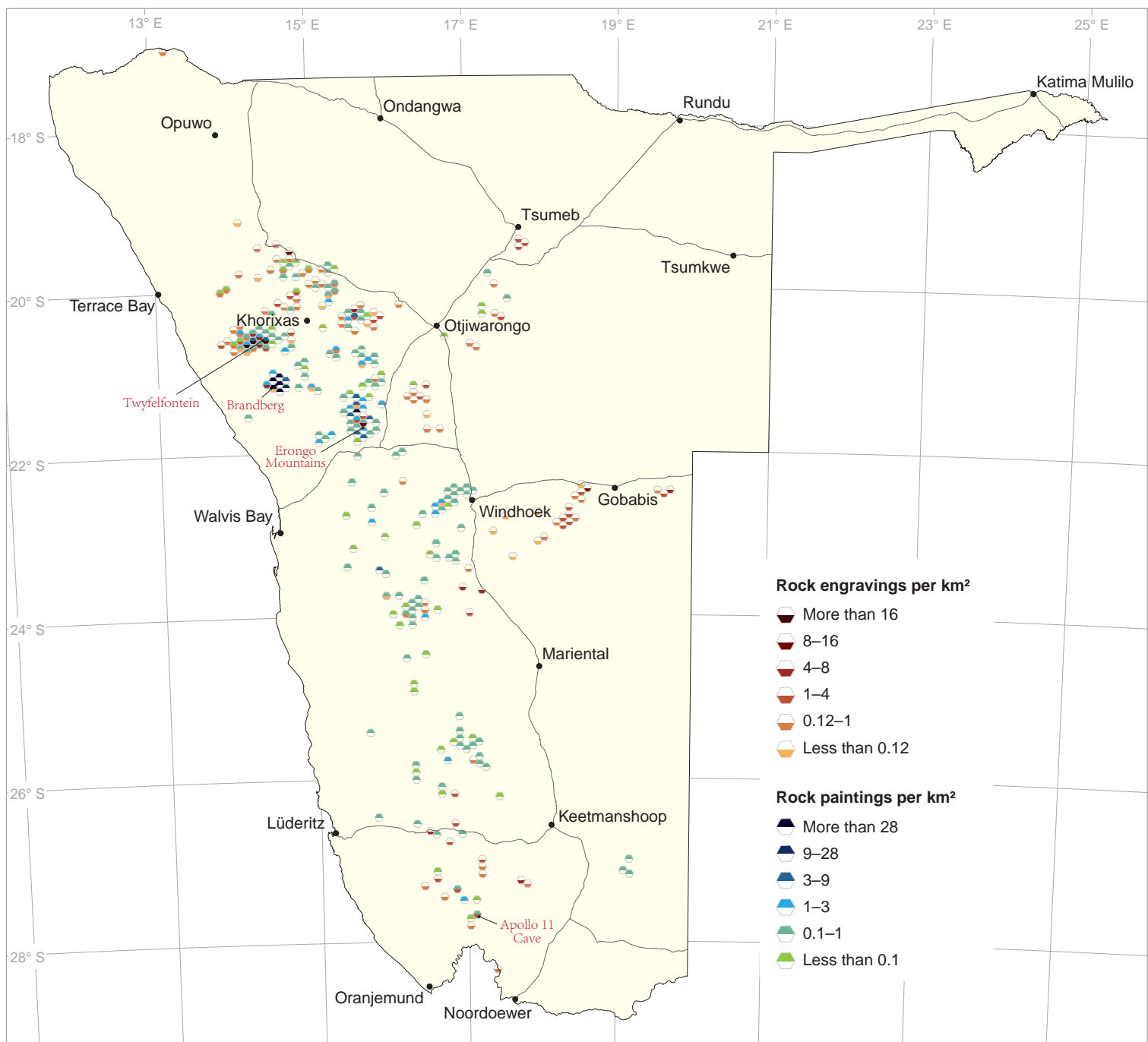
Paintings and engravings may have had different purposes. For example, they may have served to signify the presence and rights over an area by different groups of people, each group having its own tradition and style. Or perhaps they reflected the differing norms and behaviour of the groups.



Rock engravings of a multitude of recognisable wildlife species and their spoor from a site near Twyfelfontein suggest that these animals were highly valued by early communities in the area. The image has been enhanced digitally to emphasise detail.



This rock painting on Farm Anibib in the Erongo Mountains illustrates the typical delicate depictions of humans and animals. The image has been highlighted digitally to portray the fine detail that has been lost by fading over many years. All rock art in Namibia is protected by legislation.



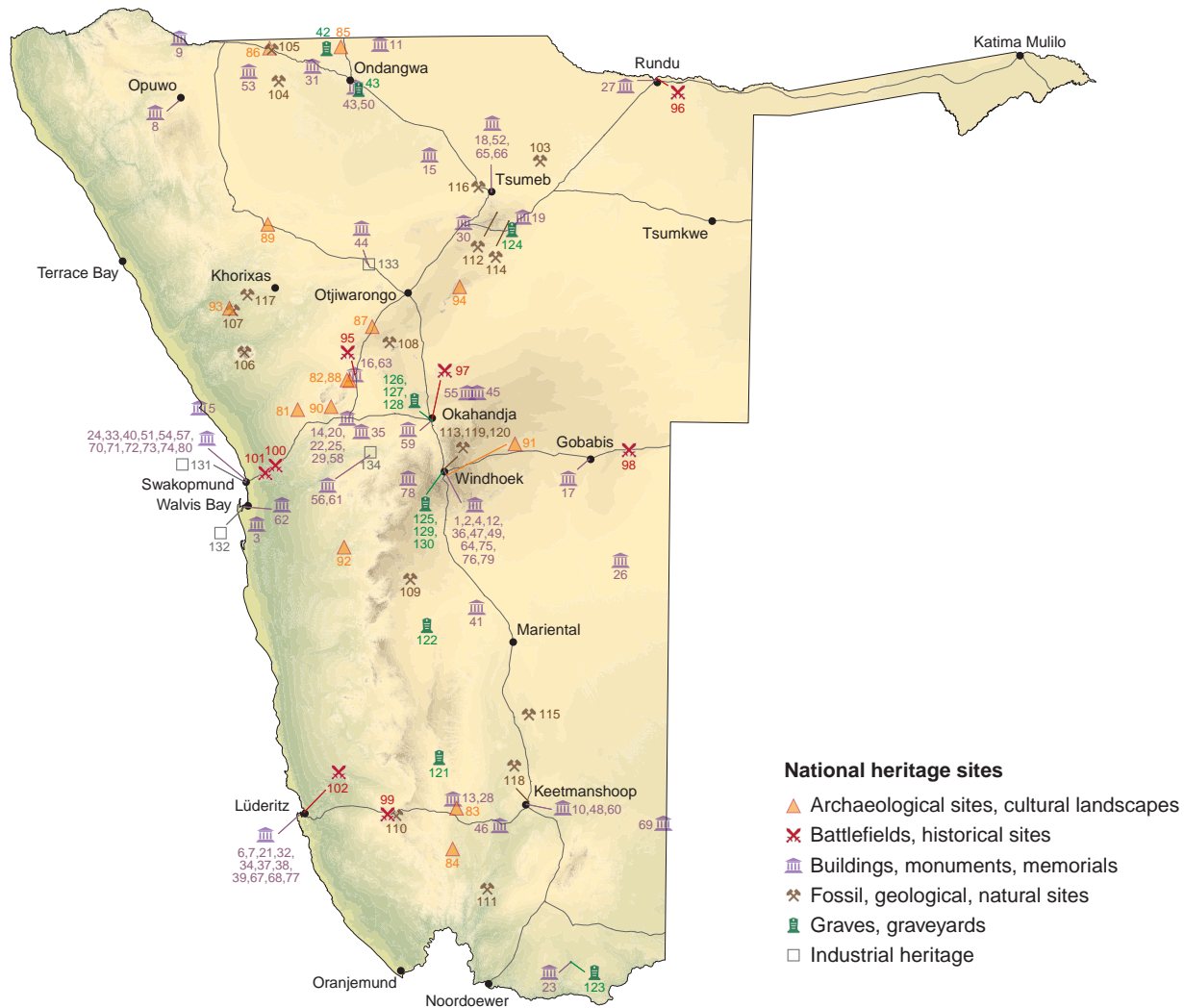
9.02 Distribution of engravings and paintings on rocks⁸

The highest concentrations of rock art per square kilometre have been found at three centres – the Brandberg, the Erongo Mountains and the Twyfelfontein area – where there are extraordinary numbers of paintings and engravings.

In southern Africa, paintings and engravings are usually not found together in the same location. This is true for the 6,000-plus images in central Namibia where paintings are concentrated around the western escarpment and petroglyphs dominate rock art in the eastern areas between Windhoek and Gobabis. However, paintings and engravings are not separated in southern Namibia where 3,500 individual images have been documented, or in the

northwest where there are 73,000 images. Mixes of paintings and engravings are most striking at the Twyfelfontein, Brandberg and Erongo sites. All three sites offered sources of water, shelter and other vital resources to people living close to the inhospitable Namib Desert. The overlap of paintings and engravings raises several questions. Did residents of the area change their preferred styles and motifs? Or did groups of people favouring different motifs come and go from these areas? How did newcomers to these areas react to the presence of images made by other people? Did competing groups use rock art to stake their claims over water sources or hunting grounds?

National heritage sites



Buildings, monuments and memorials

- 1 Alte Feste
- 2 Berthold Himunieme Primary School (certain rooms)
- 3 Boundary Post at Kuiseb River
- 4 Christ Church
- 5 Cross at Cape Cross (replica of original)
- 6 Deutsche Bank Afrika Building
- 7 Dias Cross (site of original)
- 8 Dorsland Trekker Cottage
- 9 Dorslandtrek Monument
- 10 Eagle Monument
- 11 Eenhana Shrine
- 12 Elisabeth House
- 13 Evangelical Lutheran Church Complex
- 14 Façade of Rösemann Building
- 15 Fort Namutoni
- 16 Franke Tower
- 17 German Lazarett
- 18 German Private School
- 19 Grootfontein Fort
- 20 Hälbbich Buildings
- 21 Haus Glück Auf
- 22 Haus Woll
- 23 Historical Gateways
- 24 Hohenzollern Building
- 25 Hotel zum Grünen Kranze
- 26 House of Hosea Kutako
- 27 House of the first Native Commissioner of Kavango
- 28 Josef Fredericks' House
- 29 Kaiserbrunnen
- 30 Khorab Memorial at Kilometer 500
- 31 King Ipumbu Ya Tshilongo Memorial Site
- 32 Krabbenhöft and Lampe Building
- 33 Kramersdorf Building
- 34 Kreplin House
- 35 Kubas Station Building
- 36 Look-out Post
- 37 Lüderitz Evangelical Lutheran Church
- 38 Lüderitz Magistrate's Residence
- 39 Lüderitz Memorial
- 40 Marine Denkmal
- 41 Monument at Kub
- 42 Monument to the Unknown PLAN Soldiers, Ondeshifilwa
- 43 Nakambale House, Church and Graveyard
- 44 Naulila Monument
- 45 Okaharui War Memorial
- 46 Old German Fortress
- 47 Old German School Building

Archaeological sites, cultural landscapes

- 48 Old Post Office
 - 49 Old Prison
 - 50 Omandongo Mission
 - 51 OMEG-Haus
 - 52 OMEG-Minenbüro
 - 53 Ongulumbashe Memorial Site
 - 54 Otavi Bahnhof
 - 55 Ovikokorero War Memorial
 - 56 Powder Magazine
 - 57 Prinzessin Rupprecht Heim
 - 58 Proviantamt
 - 59 Rhenish Mission Church and Cemetery, Okahandja
 - 60 Rhenish Mission Church, Keetmanshoop
 - 61 Rhenish Mission Church, Otjimbingwe
 - 62 Rhenish Mission Church, Walvis Bay
 - 63 Rhenish Mission House, Omaruru
 - 63 Roman Catholic Cathedral
 - 65 Roman Catholic Church
 - 66 Second Director's House
 - 67 Semi-detached House
 - 68 Station Building
 - 69 Stone Rondavel
 - 70 Swakopmund Barracks
 - 71 Swakopmund Conservation Area
 - 72 Swakopmund Evangelical Lutheran Church
 - 73 Swakopmund Prison Building
 - 74 Swakopmund Railway Station Building
 - 75 Ten-Man House
 - 76 Three Heroes' Statues, Parliament Building
 - 77 Two Historic Dwellings
 - 78 Von Francois Fort
 - 79 War Memorial
 - 80 Woermann House
- Archaeological sites, cultural landscapes
- 81 Bushman Paradise Cave
 - 82 Etemba Rock Paintings
 - 83 Heitsi Ghub
 - 84 Musical Stone
 - 85 Omhedi Cultural Landscape
 - 86 Onelungo Ponds
 - 87 Otjitoroa-West Rock Engravings
 - 88 Paula Cave
 - 89 Peet Alberts Koppie Rock Engravings
 - 90 Phillip's Cave
 - 91 Prayer Mounds
 - 92 Rock Paintings
 - 93 Twyfelfontein
 - 94 Waterberg Plateau

National heritage sites

- ▲ Archaeological sites, cultural landscapes
- ✕ Battlefields, historical sites
- 🏠 Buildings, monuments, memorials
- ★ Fossil, geological, natural sites
- ⚰ Graves, graveyards
- Industrial heritage

Battlefields, historical sites

- 95 Franke Tower Battlefield
- 96 Mataratara
- 97 Moordkoppie
- 98 Ozombu Zovindimba
- 99 Prisoner-of-War Camp Site
- 100 Regimental Badges, Farm 157
- 101 Regimental Badges, Farm 158
- 102 Shark Island

Fossil, geological and natural sites

- 103 Baobab Tree, Farm Keibeb, (No. 1063)
- 104 Baobab, Okahao
- 105 Baobab, Outapi
- 106 Brandberg Area
- 107 Burnt Mountain
- 108 Dinosaur Footprints
- 109 Driedoornvlakte Fossil Site
- 110 Farm Aar Fossil Site
- 111 Fish River Canyon
- 112 Ghaub Cave
- 113 Gibeon Meteorites
- 114 Hoba Meteorite
- 115 Mukorob Rock
- 116 Otjikoto Lake
- 117 Petrified Forest
- 118 Quiver Tree Forest
- 119 Site of Relics of Prehistoric Elephant
- 120 Waterfalls

Graves, graveyards

- 121 Cemetery at Mooifarm
- 122 Cemetery at Nomsas
- 123 Edward Cook's Commemorative Stone
- 124 Grave of Axel W Eriksson
- 125 Grave of John Ludwig
- 126 Grave of Jonker Afrikaner
- 127 Grave of Kahimemua Nguvauva
- 128 Herero Grave Complex
- 129 Heroes Acre
- 130 Mass Grave at Old Location Cemetery

Industrial heritage sites

- 131 'Martin Luther' Steam Locomotive
- 132 Railway Engine No. 652
- 133 Stone Tower
- 134 Windmill

9.03 Namibia's national heritage sites⁹

In Namibia, 134 national heritage sites were proclaimed between 1950 and 2020. These include a variety of types of sites ranging from those that are home to natural phenomena and archaeology to those that represent the country's history, art and culture. Their locations largely mirror the unfolding of Namibia's written history. Almost half the sites relate to Namibia's short history of German rule between 1894 and 1914. Most are close to major towns in the historic 'Police Zone' covering the southern two-thirds of Namibia (page 280).

Sites reflecting earlier exploration and settlement between 1484 and 1893 are predominantly in the coastal and south-central areas of the country. Heritage sites associated with South African rule are clustered in the northern areas where many battles were fought during the liberation struggle. Few heritage sites have been proclaimed in the eastern and northeastern regions. All archaeological and rock art sites are legally protected in Namibia.



This fossilised tree trunk at the Petrified Forest is estimated to have grown some 280 million years ago. There are 18 fossil, geological and natural heritage sites in Namibia. Five fossil sites have been proclaimed to date but it is likely many more remain to be discovered. Three natural sites include various baobab trees in the north, while another proclaims the Quiver Tree Forest in the south. The Brandberg, fallen Mukorob sandstone pinnacle, Burnt Mountain, Fish River Canyon, Ghaub Cave and Lake Otjikoto are recognised as notable geological sites.



The Onelungo Ponds are one of 14 archaeological and cultural monuments. Following heavy rain, water collects in the ponds (locally known as eendobe). The ponds support indigenous fruit trees around their perimeters and fish that reproduce seasonally. In the tradition of Mbalantu people who live in that area, fishing was only allowed after one fish had been caught, roasted at the king's residence and then thrown back into the eendobe. That season's fishing in the Cuvelai's waters could then begin.



Moordkoppie (murder hill) is one of eight battlefields and historical sites that pay tribute to events in which many Namibians lost their lives. A historic battle was fought on and around this small hill in Okahandja on 23 August 1850 when Nama forces attacked and killed some 700 Herero.



Buildings and monuments comprise 78 of the 134 proclaimed heritage sites, reflecting the historical value given to architecturally notable buildings. Most heritage buildings are in Karibib, Lüderitz, Omaruru, Swakopmund, Tsumeb and Windhoek. The only historical area that is conserved is in Swakopmund where the concentration of German colonial buildings defines the character of the town. This photo shows the Old Post Office in Keetmanshoop, which was built in 1910.



There are four recognised industrial heritage sites, two of which are railway engines at the coast. The other two sites are historic windmills, located inland at Otjimbingwe and Outjo. In their respective ways, railways and windmills were influential. Railways had a major impact on trade in providing transport services, while windmills made groundwater available for farming and domestic use. Outjo's Stone Tower, shown here, was the base of a windmill built in 1900.



Graves and graveyards are proclaimed at 15 sites. Only a small number of graves of noteworthy individuals that shaped Namibia's history have been declared heritage sites. Many mass graves and other gravesites relating to the genocide and liberation struggle are yet to be found and given due recognition as heritage sites. This is the commemorative stone and likely grave of Edward Cook, an English missionary, who founded Warmbad in 1834.

Shipwrecks¹⁰

Combinations of thick fog, strong winds, heavy swells and shifting sands make the Namibian coastline hazardous for ships. Just how risky is illustrated by the great number of shipwrecks along our coast. Many of the wrecks are clustered in areas more hazardous than others, or in places where ships often congregated. For example, the 45 wrecks known around Ichaboe Island date from the mid-1840s when several hundred ships at any time were loading bird guano – the ‘white gold’ that was so highly valued (pages 30–31). Many other ships came to harvest whales and fish along the Namibian coast.

Nowadays, ships are more robust, navigation systems and information are improved, and merchant vessels normally remain far from the coast. Most wrecks in recent decades are of fishing vessels or ships under tow that break free in bad

weather. Tragedy and bravery surrounded each wreck, as in the circumstances told of the *Dunedin Star*. This cargo ship hit a submerged object in November 1942 near Cape Fria. All 21 passengers and 42 of the 85 crew reached shore; the rest of the crew remained on board. Two overland expeditions, four ships and a Ventura bomber were then sent to rescue them. The 43 crew members still aboard the *Dunedin Star* were saved by the ships. The Ventura landed on the beach to rescue the others, but it got stuck in the sand. Thirteen long days after the grounding of the *Dunedin Star* the survivors were eventually evacuated overland using vehicles. A team sent to free the stuck Ventura got the aircraft airborne, but an engine soon seized causing the plane to crash in the surf. Only two lives were lost in this whole sequence of events.



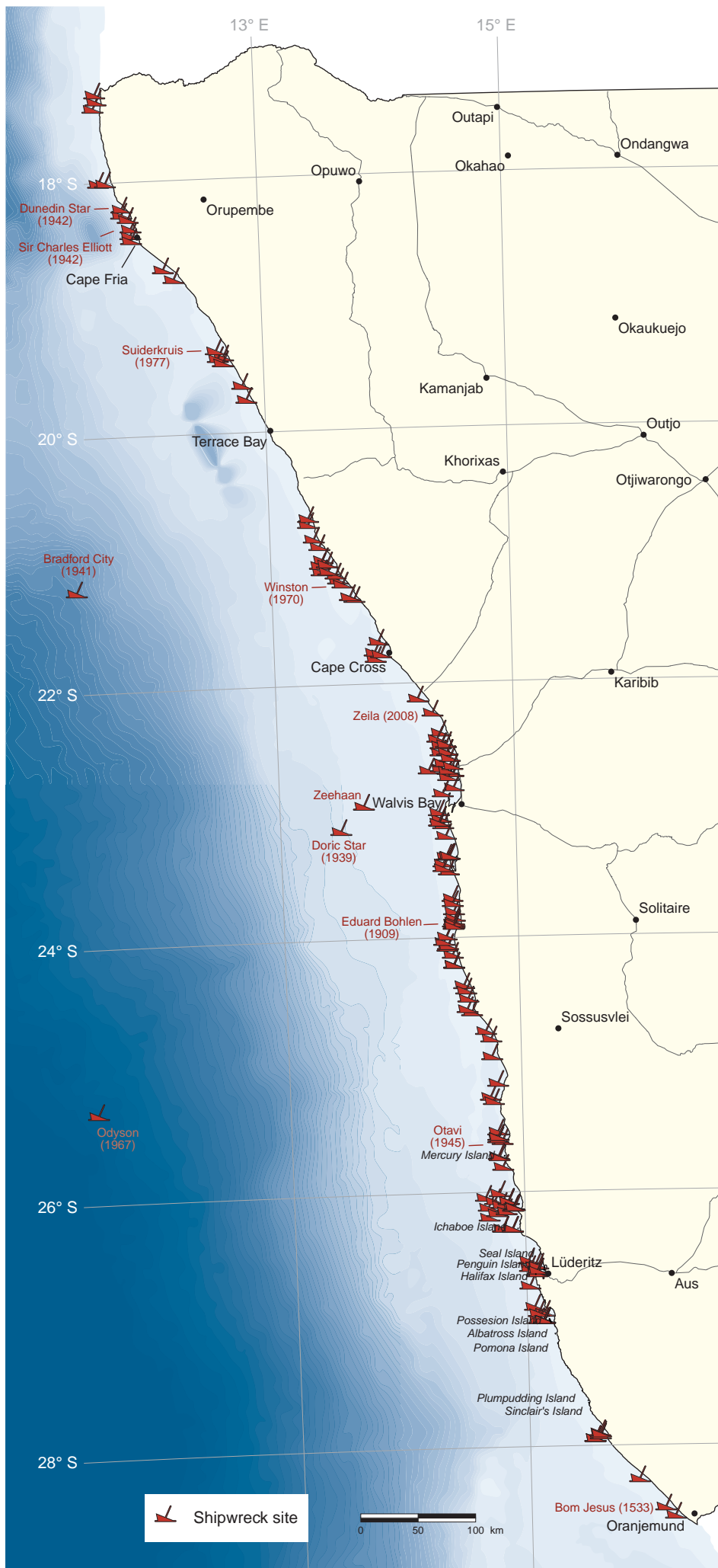
The wreck of the *Bom Jesus* was found north of Oranjemund in April 2008. The trading vessel had sunk in about 1533 en route from Portugal to India.¹¹ The volume and variety of cargo recovered by archaeologists was remarkable: swords, guns and cannons; elephant tusks (upper left); 1,845 copper ingots (upper right); gold, silver and copper coins and dividers used for navigation (bottom); lead and tin ingots; astrolabes (for navigation); pewter plates, cups and jugs; and a variety of personal effects. The great number of ingots were probably intended for trade once the ship reached India. Between 1525 and 1600 twenty-one Portuguese ships were lost along the African coast on their way to the East, but only the *Bom Jesus* was known to have disappeared off Namibia.



The wreck of the 2,272-tonne *Eduard Bohlen* near Conception Bay now lies about 470 metres inland of the shoreline which has gradually shifted west by that distance since the ship ran aground in September 1909. In 2004 the wreck was only 390 metres from the shore (page 33). Brown hyenas sometimes shelter in the wreck.

9.04 Shipwreck sites off the Namibian coast

About 300 ships are known to have sunk off the Namibian coast, while there is evidence that at least another 200 ships might also have been lost in these waters. This map shows the known locations of some wrecks. Many others were simply reported as having gone down somewhere off the coast. Each symbol on the map represents the location of a wreck.



Wrecked in 1945, the *Otavi* is more intact than most Namibian shipwrecks because Dolphin Head in Spencer Bay protects the grounded vessel from the southerly winds and ocean swell.



The *Zeila* ran aground south of Henties Bay on 25 August 2008. The fishing trawler had been sold as scrap metal and was under tow from Walvis Bay when it broke free and was wrecked.

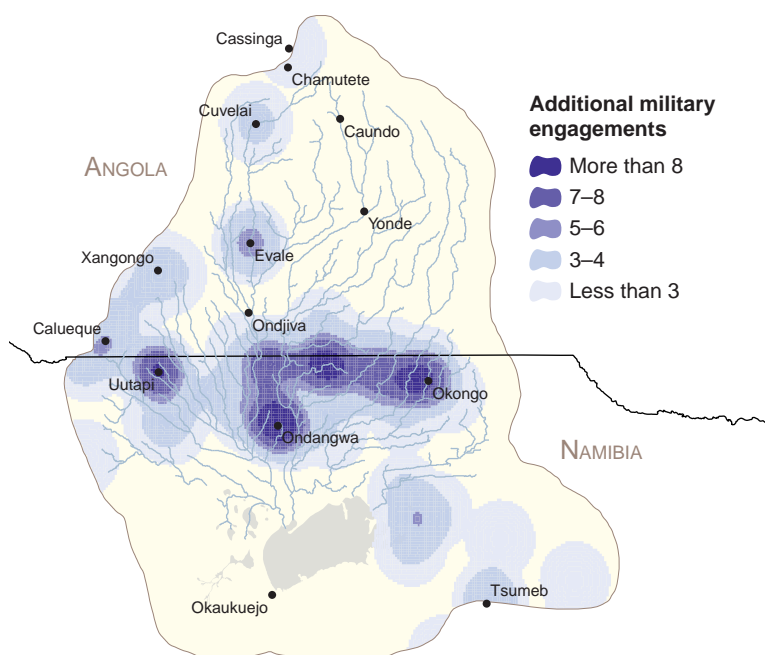
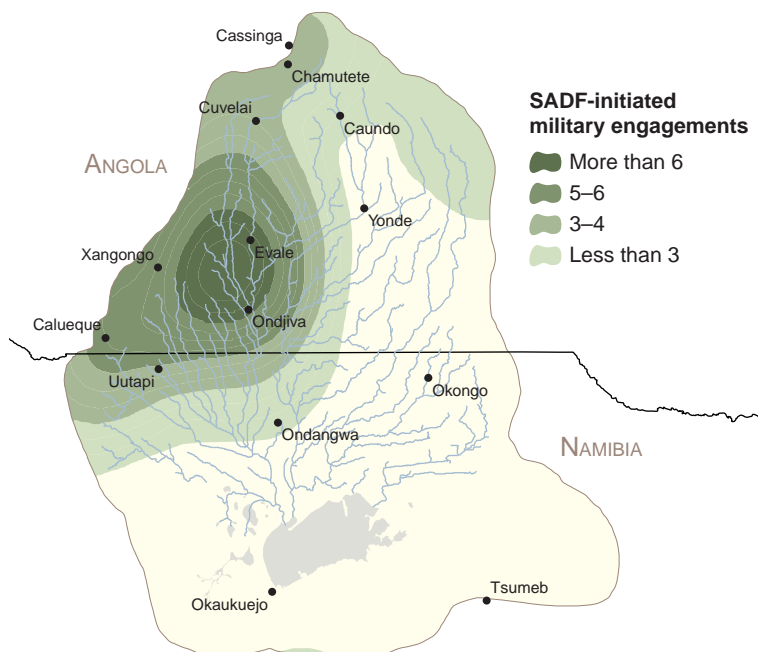
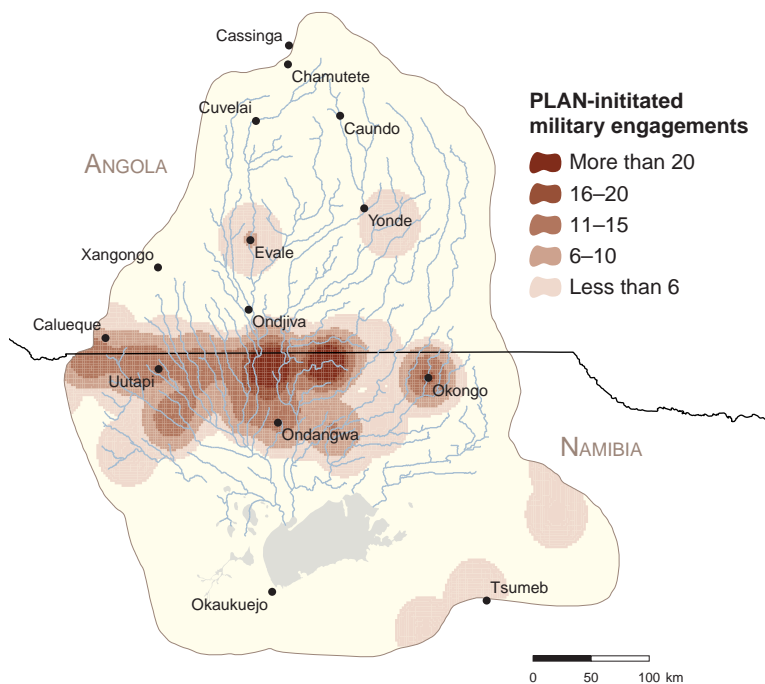


The bulk cargo carrier *Frotamerica* broke free of its tow and moorings and ran aground about 30 kilometres north of Lüderitz on 25 February 2013. Pollution from the 35,000-tonne vessel posed a risk to nearby marine life and seabirds on Ichaboe Island (pages 30 and 204–207).

Colonisation and liberation¹²

The telling and analysis of history often requires time to pass and wounds to heal. At the time of compiling this atlas, there had been little mapping or spatial analysis of events during the Namibian War of Independence waged from 1966 to 1989 between the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) – the military force

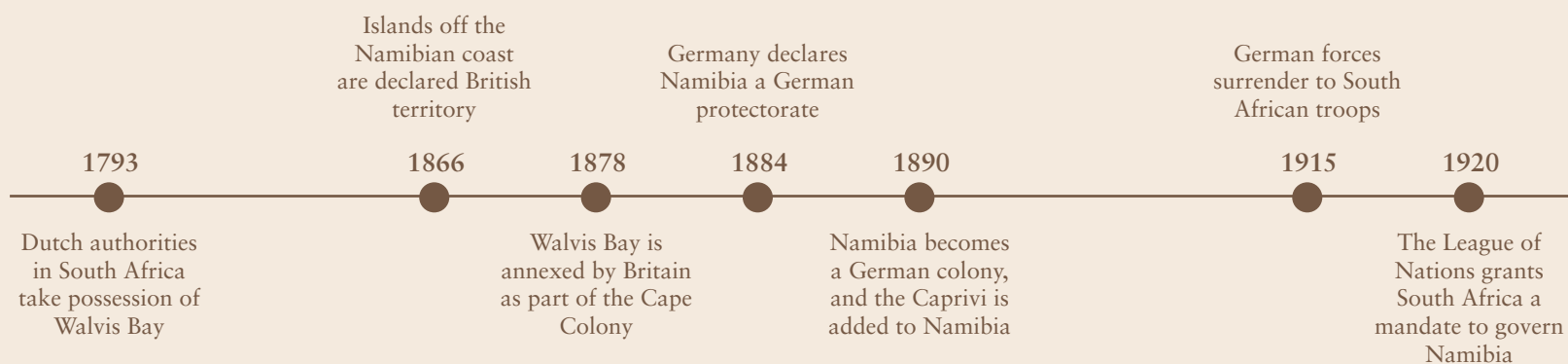
of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) – and the South African Defence Force (SADF), South Africa's armed forces. One study, however, has provided some insight into where military engagements took place during this 24-year war that led to Namibia's independence from colonial rule.

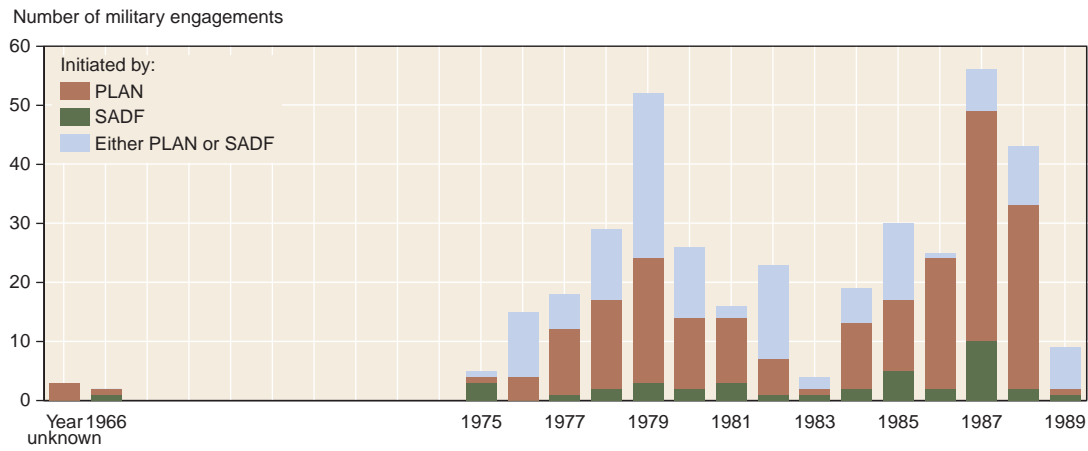


9.05 Military engagements in the Cuvelai basin, 1966–1989

Many of the attacks and battles during the Namibian War of Independence were concentrated in the Cuvelai, especially those fought between 1976 and 1989. These maps illustrate the locations of 383 military engagements in the Cuvelai, which straddles Angola and Namibia (page 120). PLAN was on the attack on 209 occasions (top left), while 39 events were attributed to SADF offensives (above). It is not clear which party was on the offensive in the remaining 135 of these military engagements (left). There is a clear pattern to the spatial distribution of these military engagements. PLAN initiated attacks mainly in Namibia, just south of the Angola–Namibia border, whereas most SADF offensives took place in Angola where PLAN military bases were located during much of this period. The distribution of incidents attributed to either party mirrors this pattern, with more incidences occurring on the Namibian side of the Cuvelai Basin.

9.07 Major events related to the colonial occupation of Namibia¹³





9.06 Number of military engagements of the warring parties, 1966–1989

During the first decade of the Namibian War of Independence (1966–1975), relatively few engagements took place in the Cuvelai area. SWAPO’s headquarters were in Zambia at that time, but were relocated to Angola following Angola’s independence in 1975. Military operations then became more

numerous, reaching a peak in 1979 and then declining in the early 1980s. Several factors may have led to the decrease in offensives, including two consecutive years of drought in 1981 and 1982. Thereafter, military activities intensified again, reaching a final climax in 1987.



The two parties concentrated their offensives at different times of the year. PLAN attacked in the wet season, especially late in the season when water levels in the iishana are often highest, while the SADF conducted most offensives at the end of the dry season. These differences may be related to their respective tactical strategies. PLAN’s operations – usually on foot – required concealment, which was best provided by lush groundcover and heavy tree foliage towards the end of the rainy season; rain would have also washed away the soldiers’ tracks. By contrast, to move its troops, the SADF depended largely on heavy military vehicles which would have bogged down in flooded areas.

The UN rejects attempts to turn Namibia into South Africa’s fifth province

1946

SWAPO, which was to lead the struggle for independence, was established

1959

SWANU, the first nationalist movement in Namibia, is formed

1960

1961

The UN starts to recognise the need for Namibia’s independence

The armed liberation struggle begins at Omugulugombashe

1966

1968

The UN declares South Africa’s occupation of Namibia illegal

Namibia becomes independent on 21 March

1990

1994

Walvis Bay is integrated into Namibia

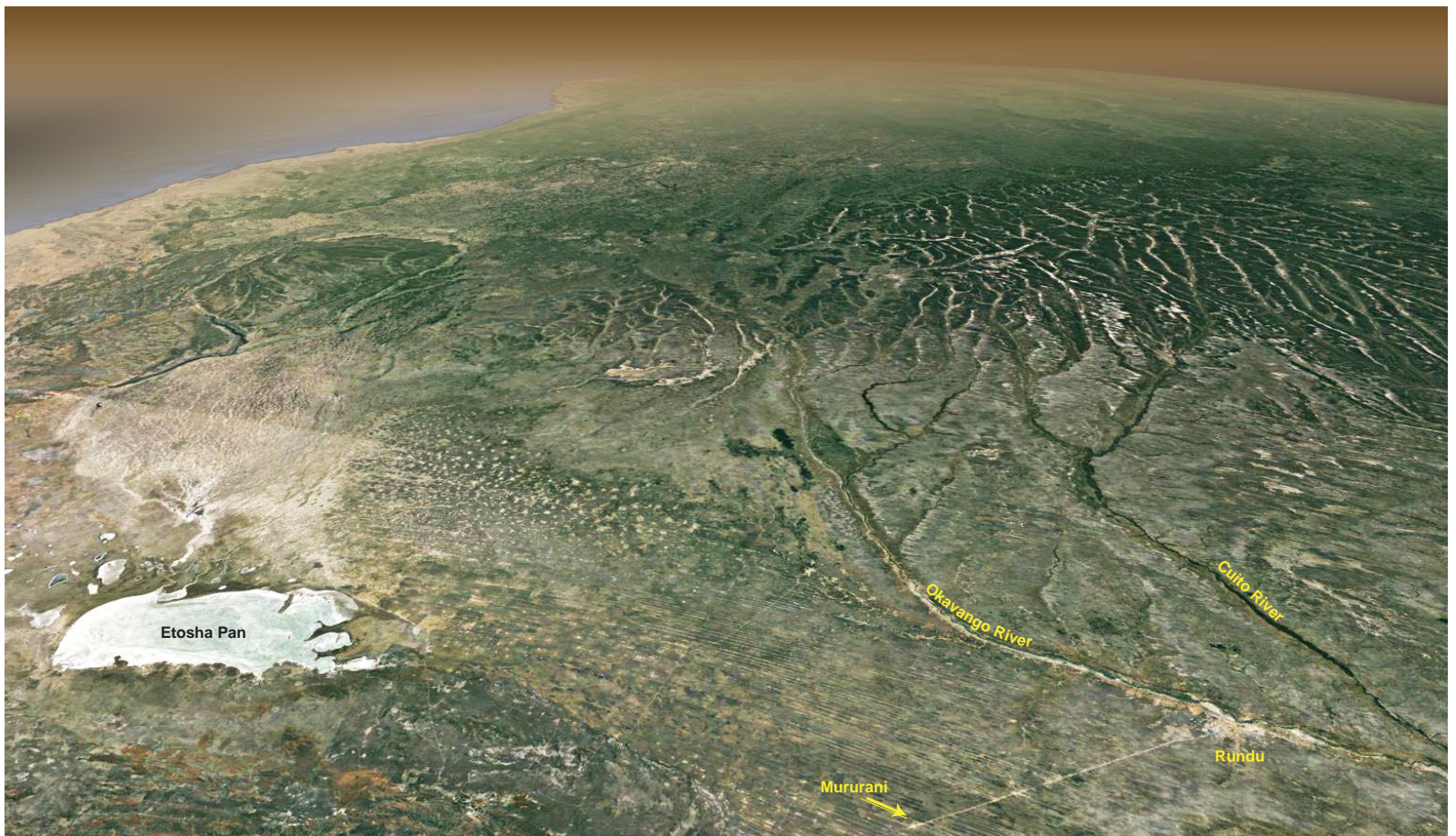
People on the move

Migrations from centuries past¹⁴

Certainty about what happened in the past becomes more difficult the further back we go. In the absence of written accounts, much about Namibia's history over the past few thousand years had to be assumed from oral histories or interpreted from archaeological remains. More recently, studies of genetic and linguistic relationships have shed new light on the origins and affinities of Namibians.¹⁵

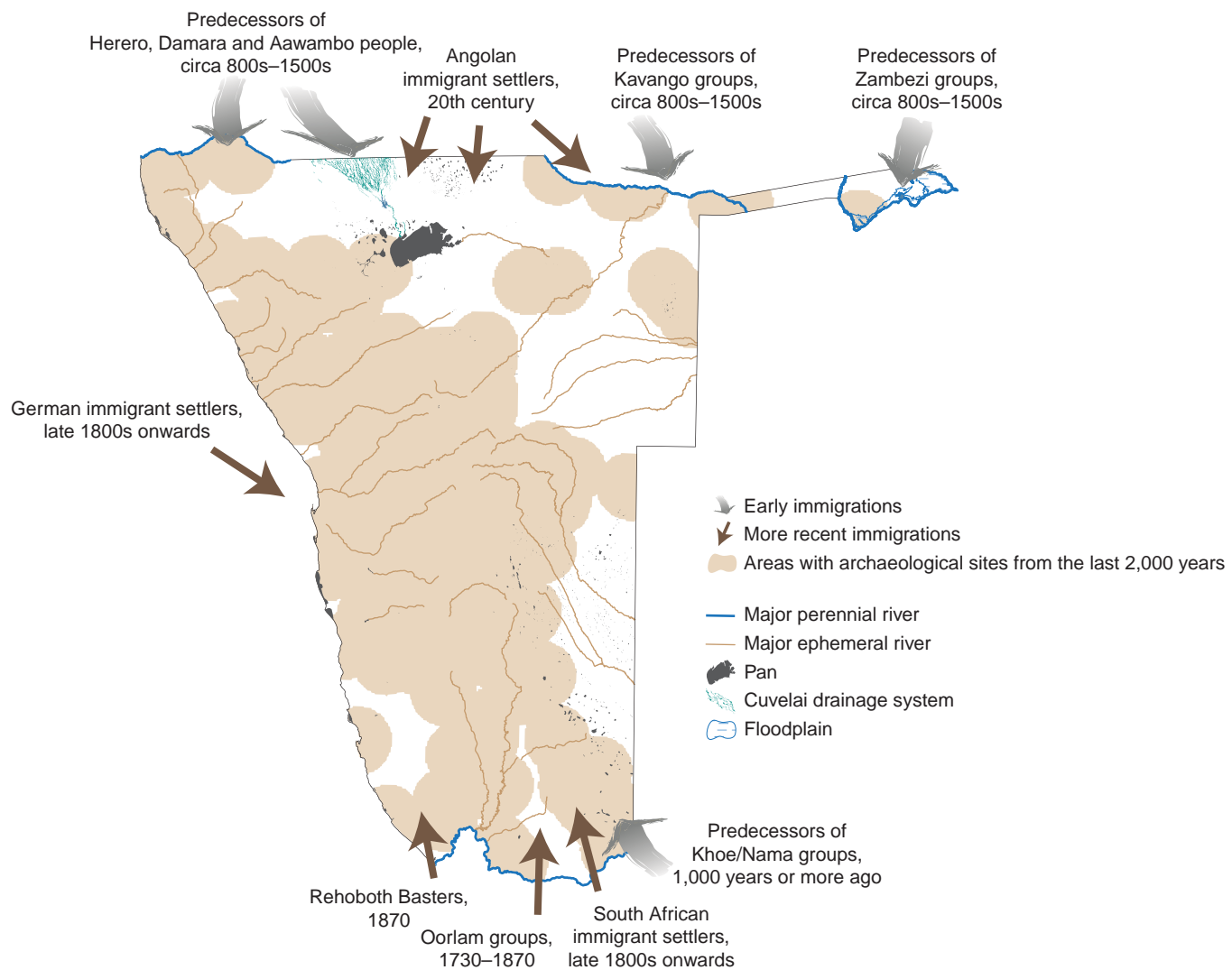
Three aspects of early Namibian history seem rather clear. First, the relatively few people who lived here until about 2,000 years ago made a living by hunting, foraging and gathering. Second, those earliest Namibians were then joined at different times by groups of Khoekhoegowab-

speaking pastoralists and Bantu agro-pastoralists; these were Namibia's first livestock and crop farmers (page 245). Third, many more immigrants, in turn, arrived in Namibia over the past several hundred years. Most have come from Angola, whilst others came from South Africa, Europe and elsewhere in Africa. It is probably true that most Namibians are descendants of people who immigrated here less than four or five generations back – within the last 150 years.¹⁶ All of this reflects the mobility and adaptability of Namibians, which continues today as more and more people move from rural areas and livelihoods to towns and cities and the urban livelihoods offered there.



Few of the world's international borders are as visible from space as the one between northern Namibia and southern Angola. Most conspicuous is the boundary across the Cuvelai drainage system north of Etosha. The straight line separates the darker, more wooded area in Angola where there are fewer people, from the paler, more denuded and populated part in Namibia. Of all the people living in the Cuvelai, approximately 35 per cent live in Angola and 65 per cent in Namibia.¹⁷

A similar effect of high densities of people is also visible along the Okavango River where very few people live on the northern, Angolan riverbank, whereas tens of thousands of people live along the river on the southern, Namibian side. The road from Rundu to Mururani is also clear in the image because most trees have been cleared either side of the road by the many people living there.



9.08 Distribution and migrations of people over the past 1,200 years

Although many of the details of directions, dates and names on this map are approximations, they present a reasonable perspective on where many people lived and came from over the past 12 centuries.¹⁸ Importantly, blank areas on the map reflect a lack of information rather suggesting that people were absent from those areas. San people, comprising distinct but related hunter-gatherer groups, and their ancestors were probably the only residents for tens of thousands of years, as suggested by archaeological evidence (page 286). Those early residents were apparently widespread, probably regularly moving over large areas between sources of water, productive hunting grounds and plants brought to life by sporadic, often patchy rains. Namibia's climate was at times much wetter or much drier than it is now, and people would have migrated from one area to another accordingly.

Bantu farmers and pastoralists and Khoekhoe pastoralists probably began to enter Namibia about 1,200 years ago, perhaps even earlier. Oral accounts place many of the immigrations in the 1500s or thereabouts, but these later dates may be on record because word-of-mouth accounts are only recalled with some credibility over short periods of history.

Herero (including Himba), Damara, Aawambo and Kavango people were likely derived from agro-pastoralists living in the central highlands of Angola, who themselves descended from earlier Bantu migrants that moved south from Cameroon.¹⁹ People

who settled in Zambezi probably moved from Bantu origins north and east of here. Khoekhoe pastoralists are thought to have come from East Africa to South Africa, and then into Namibia.

More recent immigrations are better documented. Between 1730 and 1870 large numbers of Oorlam people from South Africa's Cape moved into central and southern Namibia. Rehoboth Basters also moved from the Cape to settle at Rehoboth in 1870. In 1908, the German Schutztruppe's defeat of Herero and Nama forces encouraged a significant influx of German settlers who acquired land, as did demobilised German soldiers. Some white farmers from northwestern South Africa moved into Namibia before 1915, but many more came to acquire farms after World War I when South Africa was granted mandate over Namibia.

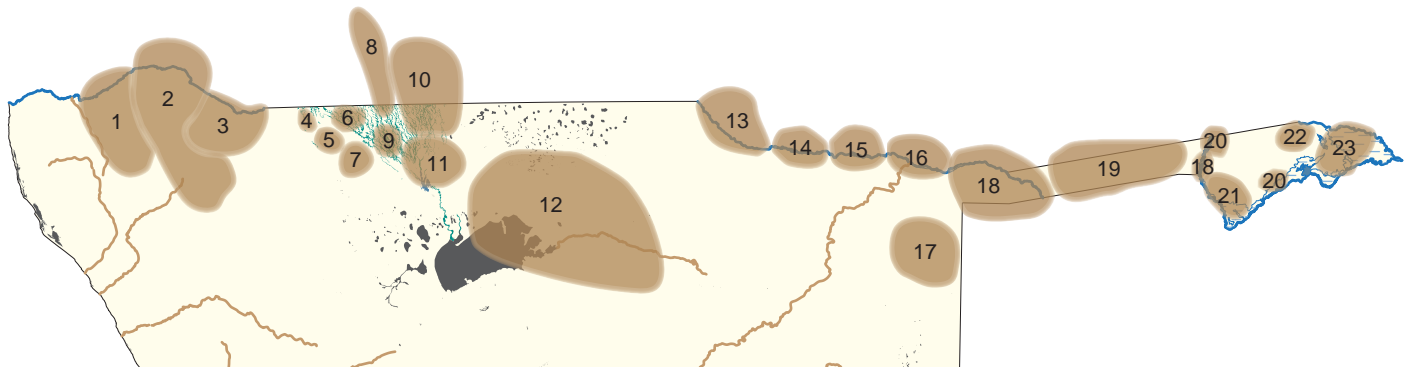
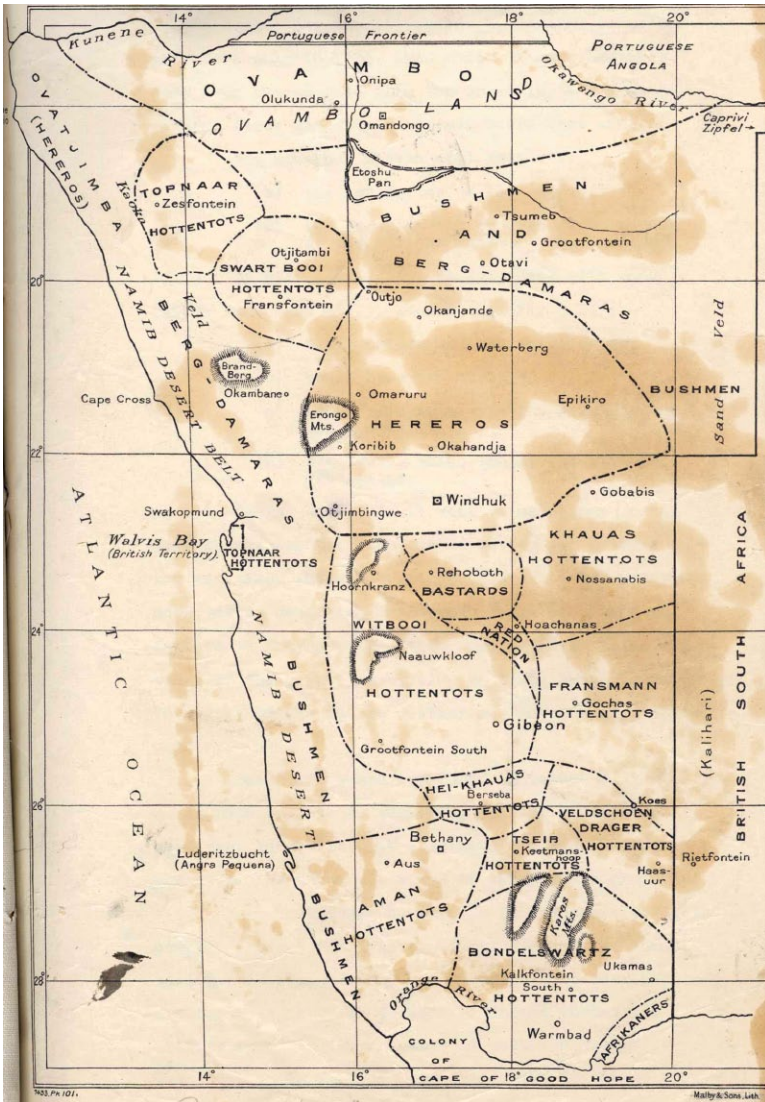
Also in 1915, some 25,000 Ovakwanyama people moved from Angola into northern Namibia following the Portuguese victory over their king, Mandume ya Ndemufayo. This immigration increased the number of Aawambo people in Namibia by about 30 per cent. More immigration followed as Angolans fled rural taxation and forced labour, and later the hostilities during the Angolan Civil War (1975–2002). Many people were – and continue to be – attracted by economic opportunities and health and education services in Namibia, all of which has led to the rapid growth of populations in Kavango East, Kavango West, Oshana, Oshana, Oshana and Oshikoto regions.

9.09 Namibia in the late 1800s²⁰

This map provides perspectives on how and where various groups of people were distributed in the country before substantial colonial settlement. The Caprivi, as it was then known (now Zambezi Region), was added to the German colony in 1890 (page 4-5).

At that time most European explorers, missionaries and colonial authorities tended to focus their attention on southern and central Namibia, where their maps depict much more detail than they do about the north; this reflects the substantial interests that colonists had in land in southern and central Namibia. Central Namibia had been long known as Damaraland (and later, Hereroland), while southern Namibia was known as Great Namaqualand.

No mention is made of different groups or separate communities in Kavango – the map simply indicates most of the northern area as being occupied by the ‘Ovambos’.



- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 Kakurukouye | 9 Oukwambi | 17 Jul'hoansi |
| 2 Mbanandja | 10 Oukwanyama | 18 Hambukushu |
| 3 Muhonakatiti | 11 Ondonga | 19 Kxoe |
| 4 Oukolonkadhi | 12 Hai lom | 20 Fwe |
| 5 Oukwaluudhi | 13 Ukwangali | 21 Yeyi |
| 6 Ombalantu | 14 Mbunza | 22 Totela |
| 7 Ongandjera | 15 Sambyu | 23 Subiya |
| 8 Ombadja | 16 Gciriku | |

9.10 Northern Namibia in the late 1800s and early 1900s²¹

Northern Namibia lay beyond the ‘Police Zone’ – the area that the German administration proclaimed for white settlement in 1907 (figure 8.27). These northern areas were thus left largely to their own devices under their own rulers, usually with little regard for the identities of the societies living there. However, many societies with defined names, languages, memberships and leaderships had long been in existence, probably at least since the 1600s. Much of

that diversity remains today in the many languages and dialects spoken in northern Namibia (figure 9.14).

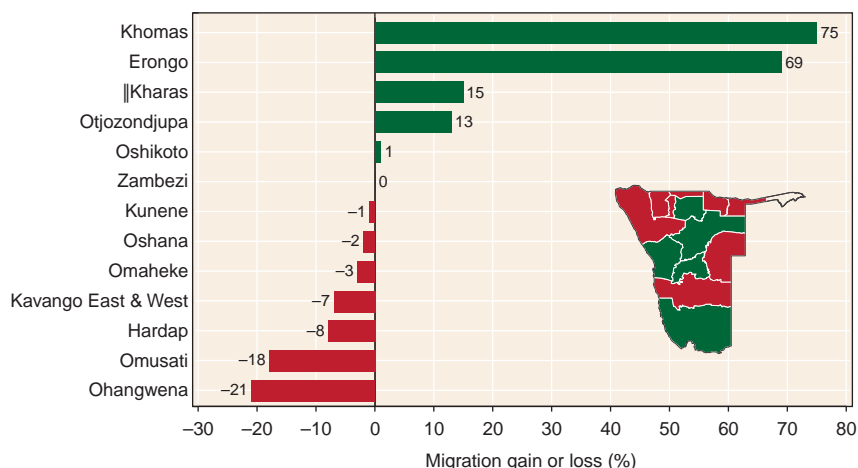
That diversity and the strong, often monarchical traditional leadership systems in northern Namibia developed in association with agro-pastoralism. By contrast, pastoral societies have generally been more mobile with less-distinctive borders, membership and governance systems.

On the move again

Namibia is currently witnessing a major transformation of its society, economy and demography, which is largely brought about by the large-scale migration of people from rural farms and villages to towns and cities. Soon, even more people will

be living far from where they or their parents or grandparents were born. For many the movements will be permanent, but others will return to their roots to retire or to lead a life simpler than that of urban hustle and bustle.

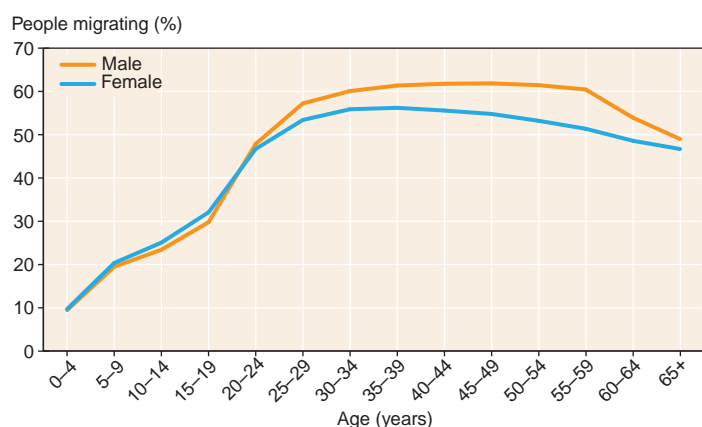
9.11 Regional migration gains or losses, 2011²²



In 2011, Khomas and Erongo had many more residents than were born in these two regions. Smaller gains were made in IlKharas, Otjozondjupa and Oshikoto, while Ohangwena, Omusati and Hardap lost the greatest proportions of people that had been born there. These figures are growth rates, expressed as the change in population per hundred people born in each region. For example, 21 of every 100 people born in Ohangwena had left the region, while Khomas acquired 75 people for every 100 people born in Khomas.

While the numbers in the graph are for each region, they largely reflect the presence or absence of substantial urban and economic centres. Thus, migrants to Khomas and Erongo were mainly attracted to Windhoek, Walvis Bay and Swakopmund where large urban centres with economic activities were present, while Omusati and Ohangwena both had small urban and economic centres in 2011.

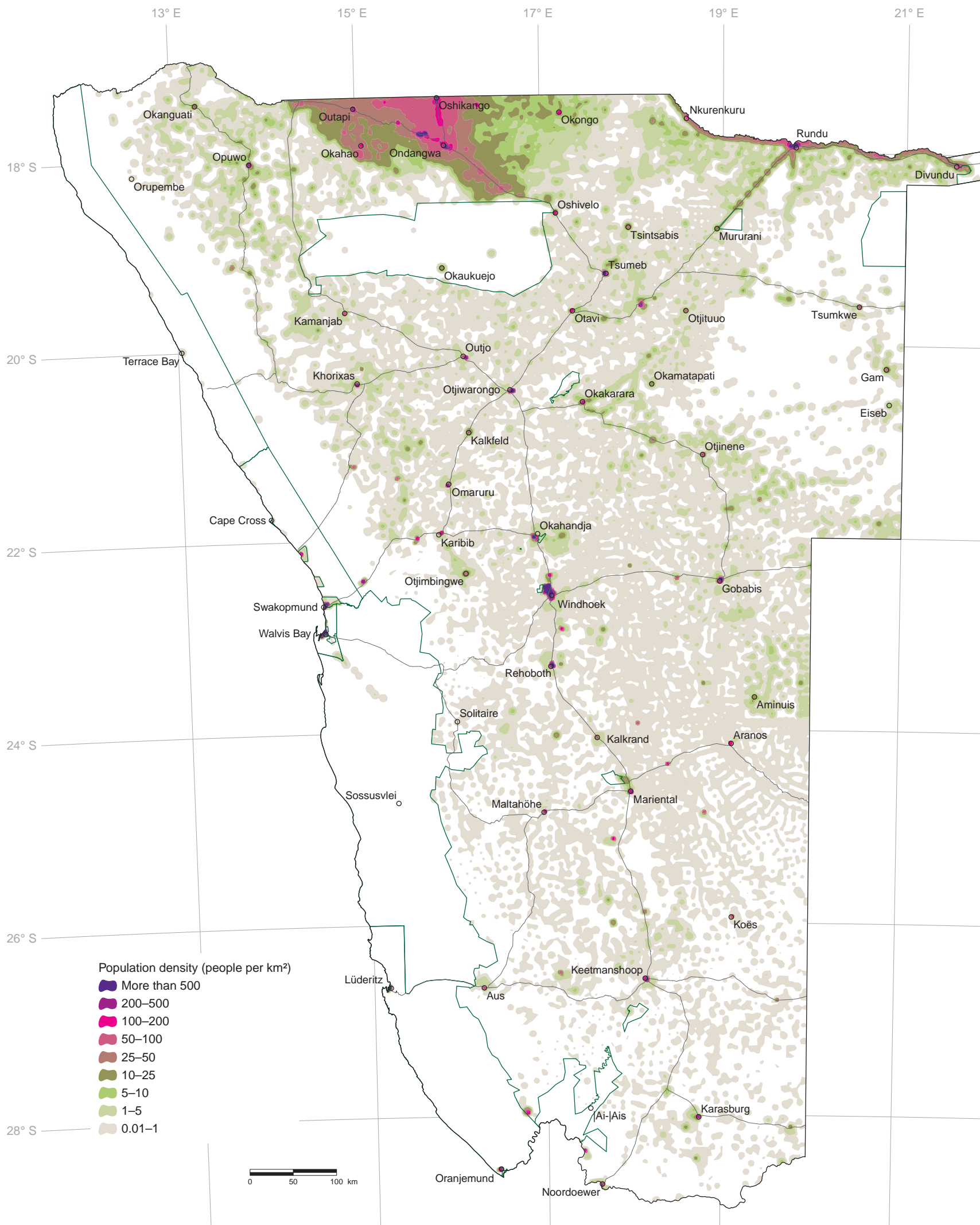
9.12 Proportions of females and males no longer living where they were born, 2011²³



In 2011, more than half of all Namibians aged 25–59 years no longer lived where they were born, with somewhat more men having left their birthplaces than women. By the age of 60, the proportion of migrants decreased, perhaps because fewer people had migrated years ago when they were younger or because they had returned to retire in their original home villages and towns.



Nothing better reflects the mobility and adaptability of Namibians than the great many people living in the Namib Desert outside Swakopmund, many of them living in the township of DRC, which was founded in 2001.



23° E

25° E



Current distribution of people

People are distributed across the Namibian landscape in interesting and surprising ways. More than half live in urban areas; most of these urban areas are too small to be clearly visible on a map of the whole country at a scale that this atlas allows. Most rural residents are in the northeastern and central-northern regions. At the opposite extreme are vast open areas where

no-one lives permanently, or where the only souls are nomadic herdsmen or hunter-gathers, or tourists. Limited rain or available water, high temperatures and evaporation, and infertile soils (pages 88, 96, 102 and 148) combine to make life tough in these sparsely populated landscapes, many of which are spectacular, despite their remoteness and apparent desolation.

9.13 Population density, 2011²⁴

This map reflects the density of people (in numbers of people per square kilometre) in 2011. The highest rural densities are north of 18.5-degree latitude in the eight northern regions of the country, particularly along roads in Zambezi and Kavango East and Kavango West, and along the Okavango River and across the Cuvelai drainage system. Densities gradually decline southwards of this latitude. Exceptions to these broad

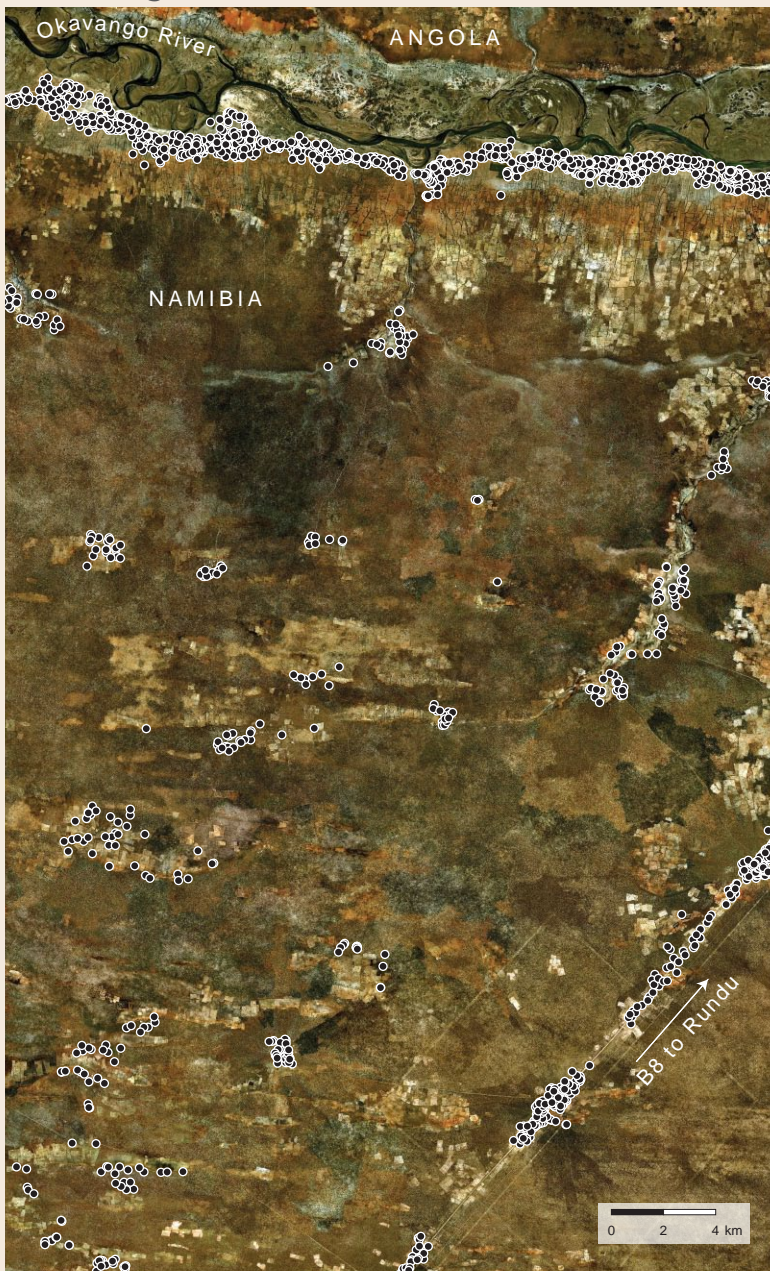
patterns are the virtual absence of people within 100 kilometres of the coast and the very low densities in northeastern Otjozondjupa and southern Kavango East.

The patterns shown here are comparable to those in a map compiled in 2002 for an earlier atlas of Namibia.²⁵ These patterns should continue over the next decade or two, although population densities in rural areas will decline steadily as more people move to urban areas.

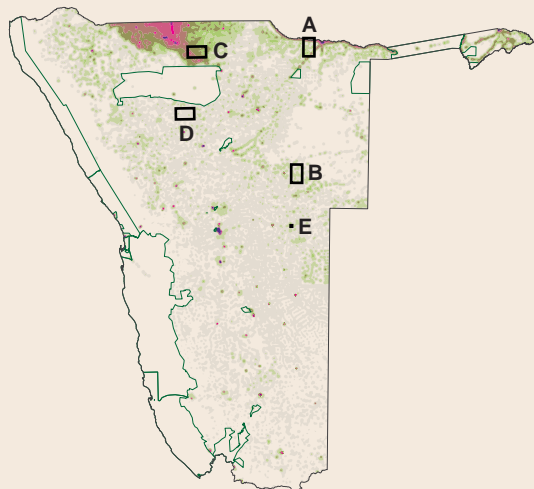


The greatest population densities are in confined urban areas, and especially in informal housing settlements. These concentrations of people are hard to illustrate in a map of this scale, but this is where about half of the country's population lives.

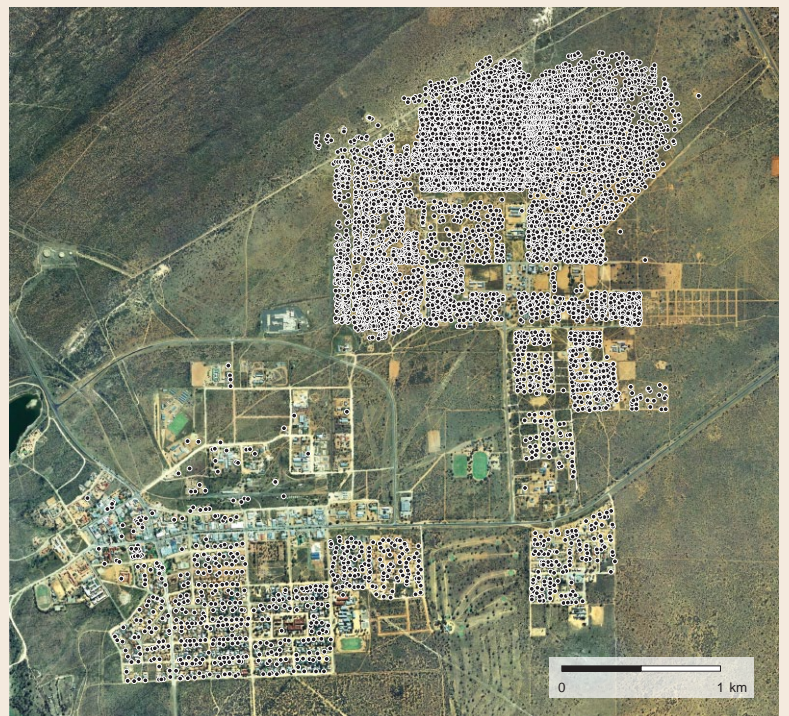
A. Kavango



B. Former Hereroland



E. Gobabis



C. Cuvelai



D. Outjo



The places people live, and the ways in which their homes are spread across the landscape, are diverse, as these five images show. Much of the diversity in rural areas relates to access to soils suitable for cultivation, water, markets and social services. These patterns are clear in the distribution of homes just west and south of Rundu (image A) where most households are close to more fertile soils along the Okavango River or along old drainage lines away from the river, or along the road south to Mururani and Grootfontein where services (water, schools and clinics) and retail outlets are nearby [18.07° S, 19.41° E]. Likewise, homes in parts of former Hereroland in Otjozondjupa (B) are clustered around old pans where water is more available [21.17° S, 19.20° E]. In the Cuvelai (C), soils suited to cultivation, and water in shallow wells are much more widely available and evenly spread than elsewhere, as reflected in this image just north of Omuthiya in Oshikoto [18.17° S, 16.56° E]. Further north in the Cuvelai, people live on the western margins of dry rivers and old pans where the soils are most fertile (pages 21 and 82). Across much of Namibia, farms are large and homes

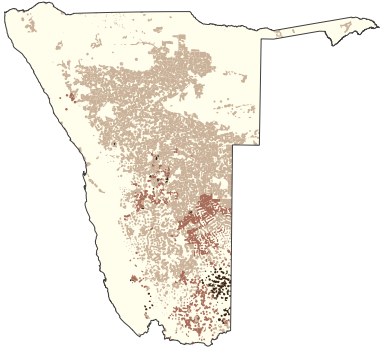
widely spread because of the arid environment, poor soils and limited water, as illustrated in a freehold farming area north of Outjo (D) [19.65° S, 16.24° E].

These four images (A, B, C and D) each cover 1,500 square kilometres or 150,000 hectares. As might be expected, the number of homes in each area differs greatly: (A) west of Rundu there are 1,958 houses; (B) communal land in Otjozondjupa, 340 houses; (C) Cuvelai in Oshikoto, 5,989 houses; and (D) Outjo freehold farms, 175 houses.

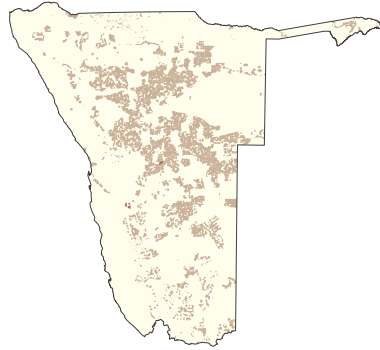
The smallest image (E) covers just 16 square kilometres or 1,600 hectares and shows the town of Gobabis where 7,449 houses were visible when this image was taken [22.44° S, 18.98° E].²⁶ The numbers of houses differ greatly between the formally planned part of the town allocated to commerce and white families prior to independence (566 houses), the low-income housing area (2,119 houses) and the rapidly increasing informal settlements (4,764 houses). These numbers will change, but the patterns and differences in the density and distribution of households are likely to continue.

Languages spoken in Namibia

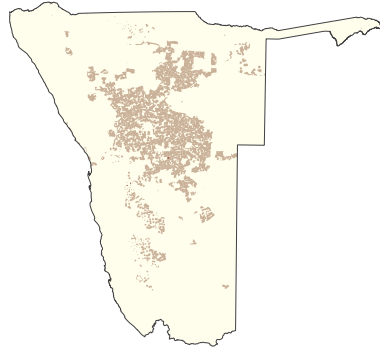
Afrikaans



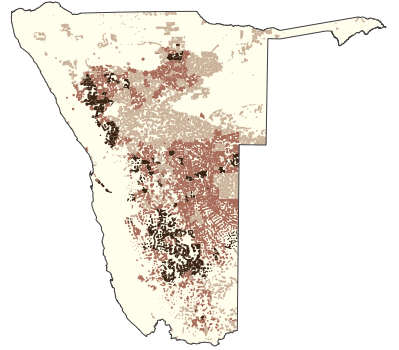
English



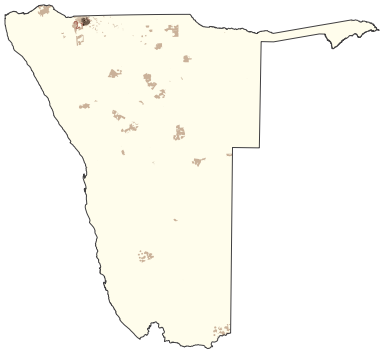
German



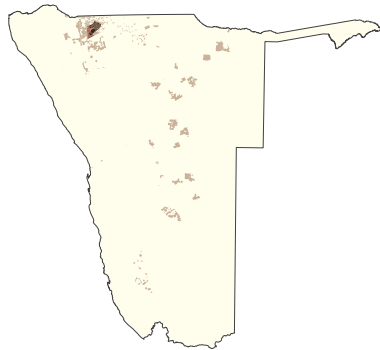
Khoekhoegowab



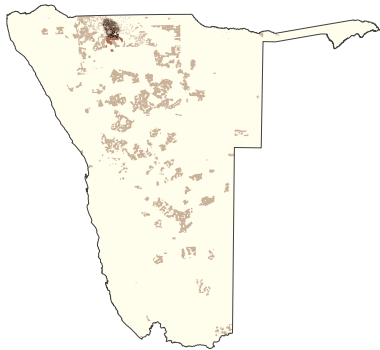
Oshikolonkadhi



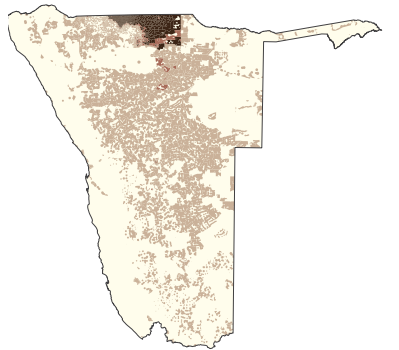
Oshikwaluudhi



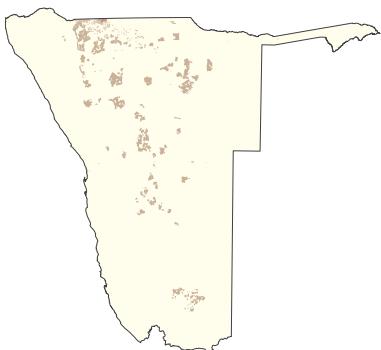
Oshikwambi



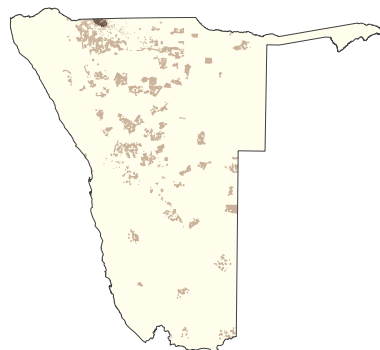
Oshikwanyama



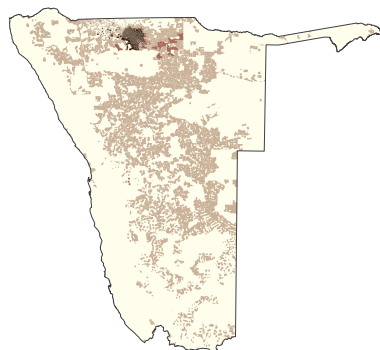
Oshimbadja



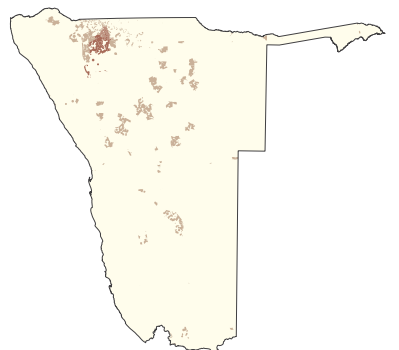
Oshimbalantu



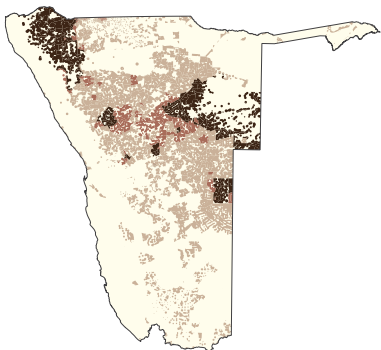
Oshindonga



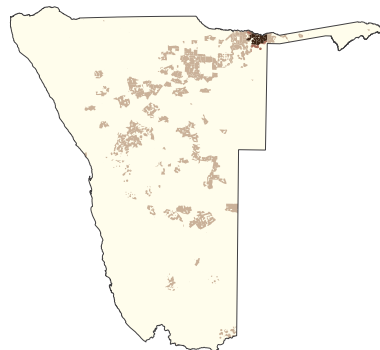
Oshingandjera



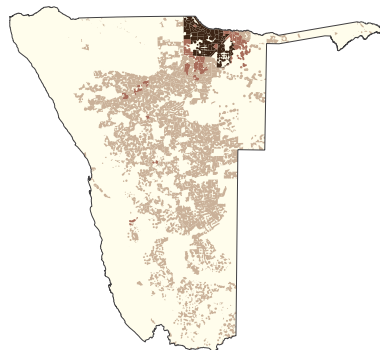
Otjiherero



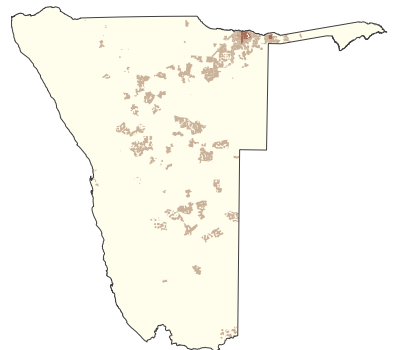
Rugciriku



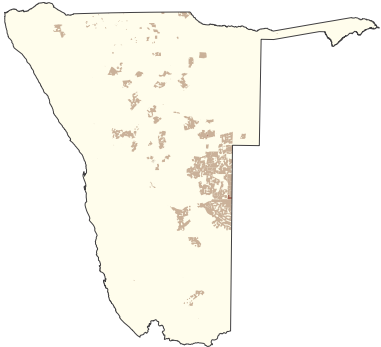
Rukwangali



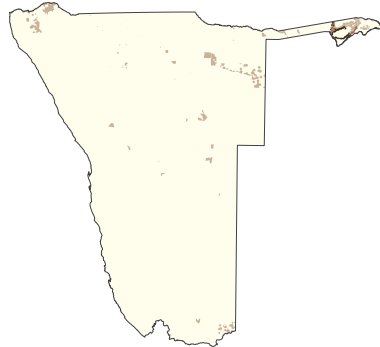
Rushambyu



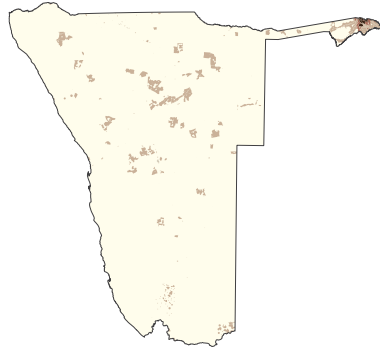
Setswana



Sifwe

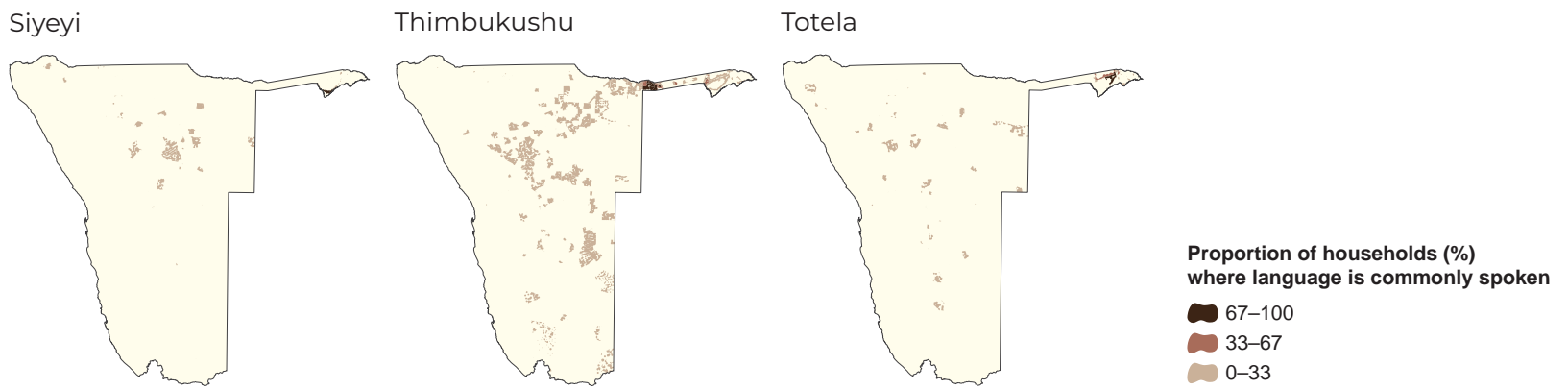


Silози



Sisubiya





9.14 Distribution of major languages and dialects, 2011²⁷

Despite its relatively small population, Namibia is home to a surprising number of languages and dialects.

Three categories of language presence are shown in these maps: areas where the language is present in a minority (less than 33 per cent) of households; areas where the language is commonly spoken (33–66 per cent of households); and areas where the language is spoken in the more than 66 per cent of households in a census enumeration area. These data, collected during the 2011 population and housing census, also showed that five languages were predominant and most commonly spoken in Namibian households:

Otjiherero, 9.7 per cent; Afrikaans, 10.3 per cent; Khoekhoegowab, 11.3

per cent; Oshindonga, 15.1 per cent; and Oshikwanyama, 21.2 per cent of households.

Although English is the official language of Namibia, it was not the language spoken in most households in 2011. As can be seen from the maps, Otjiherero (and its dialects), Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Rukwangali, Khoekhoegowab and Afrikaans were spoken most widely across Namibia. Other major languages taught in schools include English, German, Jul’hoansi, Rumanyo, Setswana, Thimbukushu and Silozi.²⁸

In general, multiple dialects are found within certain languages. Seventeen languages in the northern regions predominate in small areas

strung along the northern border from east to west. This profusion in the northern areas is associated with crop production and the consequent development of smaller, sedentary societies, each with its own leadership and language. Afrikaans, English and German are spoken widely and commonly in urban areas.

The map of Khoekhoegowab speakers covers the distribution of three peoples: Nama in the southern half of Namibia, Damara in the western-central areas and Hailom south and east of Etosha National Park. Both Hailom and Damara people are considered to have switched to speaking Khoekhoegowab dialects from !Kung (also known as !Xung or Sekele) and Otjiherero languages, respectively.



9.15 Distribution of six languages spoken by San people in Namibia²⁹

Because San people are generally widely and sparsely distributed, the presence of their languages is not as prominent as the more commonly spoken languages (figure 9.14). Other San languages are

spoken elsewhere, and they collectively form part of the Khoesan (also spelt Khoe-Sān) language family, of which Khoekhoegowab is a member.

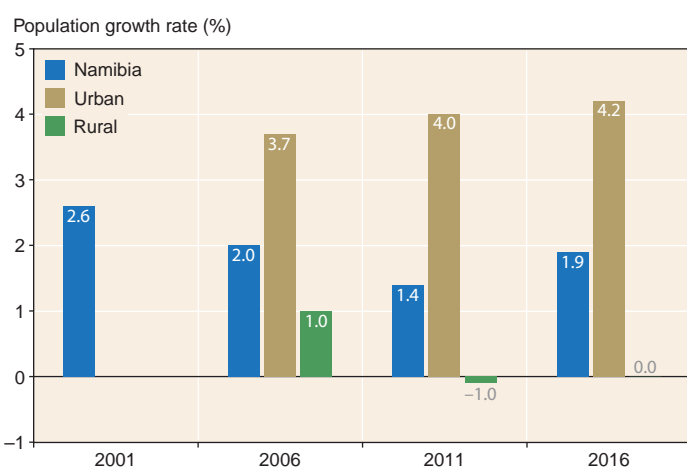
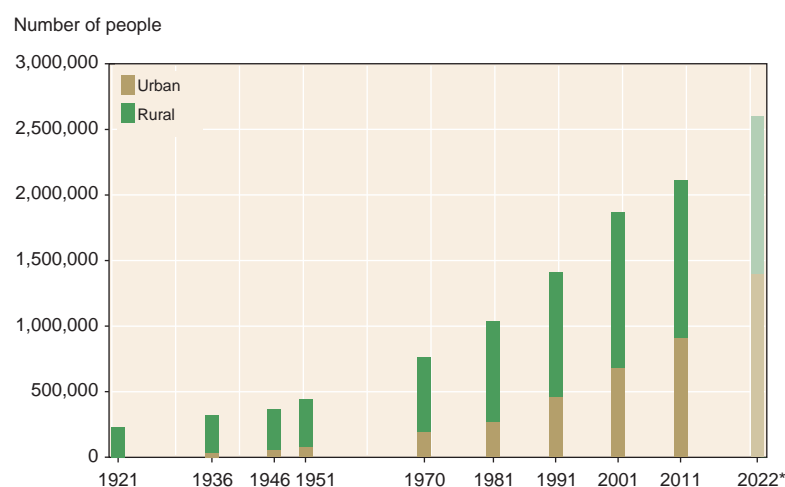
The demography of Namibians

Census year	Population numbers			% urban
	Urban	Rural	Total	
1921	0	228,916	228,916	0
1936	31,321	289,136	320,457	10
1946	52,258	310,206	362,464	14
1951	70,256	368,825	439,081	16
1970	189,094	571,916	761,010	25
1981	261,301	771,895	1,033,196	25
1991	455,840	954,075	1,409,915	32
2001	676,194	1,187,540	1,863,734	36
2011	903,434	1,209,643	2,113,077	43
2022*	1,389,669	1,206,368	2,596,037	54

* projected figures

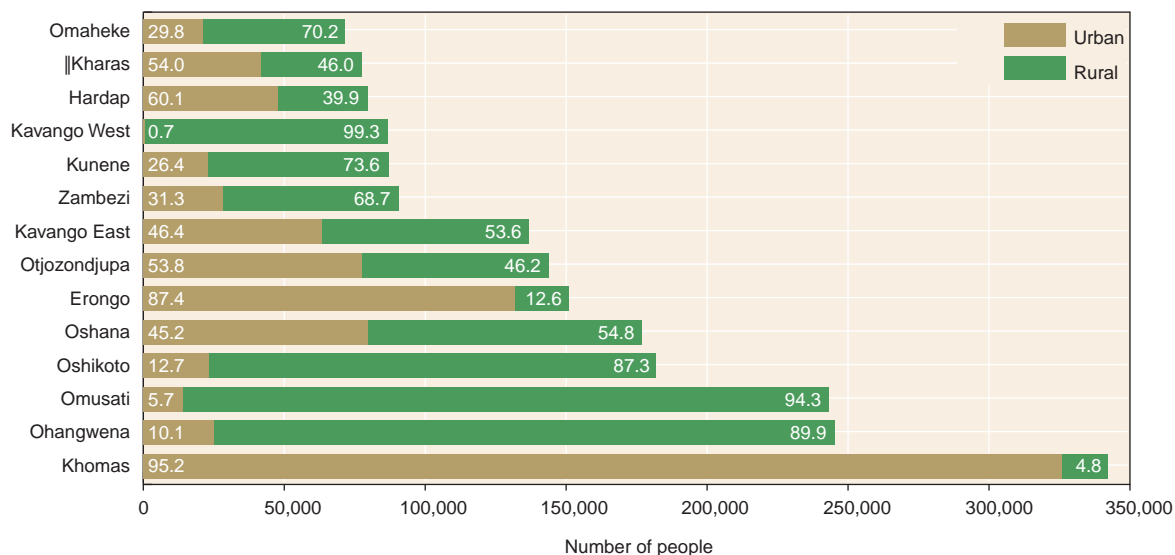
9.16 Namibia's urban and rural population, 1921–2022³⁰

In the 101 years between 1921 and 2022, the number of people in Namibia is estimated to have grown 11-fold: from about 228,900 in 1921 to about 2,600,000 people in 2022.³¹ Roughly 10 per cent of Namibia's population lived in towns in 1936. That proportion has grown steadily and rapidly as more and more Namibians moved into towns, and rural settlements grew into large villages and then into towns. In 2011, urban residents made up 43 per cent of the population, and by 2022 the proportion of townsfolk was projected to be 54 per cent. Two thirds (67 per cent) of the population is expected to live in urban areas by 2041, leaving one third (33 per cent) in rural areas.³² The ratios of urban and rural residents will then be the opposite of those 50 years previously when only 32 per cent of people were in towns.



9.17 Population growth rates³³

Until 1991, average annual population growth rates were 3.0–3.5 per cent. This rate decreased to 2.6 per cent in 2001 and subsequently lower, ranging between 1.4 and 2.0 per cent in the period 2006–2016. Urban populations have been growing at about 4 per cent per year in recent decades. Rural populations stopped growing by 2011, and are projected to decline steadily as Namibians continue to be attracted to urban areas (pages 264–267 and 299).



9.18 Proportions and numbers of urban and rural residents in each region, 2011³⁴

Namibia has been urbanising rapidly, but the places and rates at which this has happened differ across the country. In 2011, four regions – Kavango West, Omusati, Ohangwena and Oshikoto – had small proportions (less than 20 per cent) of urban residents; Kunene, Omaheke and Zambezi had between 20 and 40 per cent of their populations in towns; Oshana, Kavango East, Otjozondjupa, ǀKharas and Hardap had between 40 and 60 per cent of people in urban areas; while Erongo and Khomas stood out in having 87 and 95 per cent of their populations in towns, respectively. In 2011, Windhoek housed 15 per cent of the total population, and 36 per cent of the total urban population.

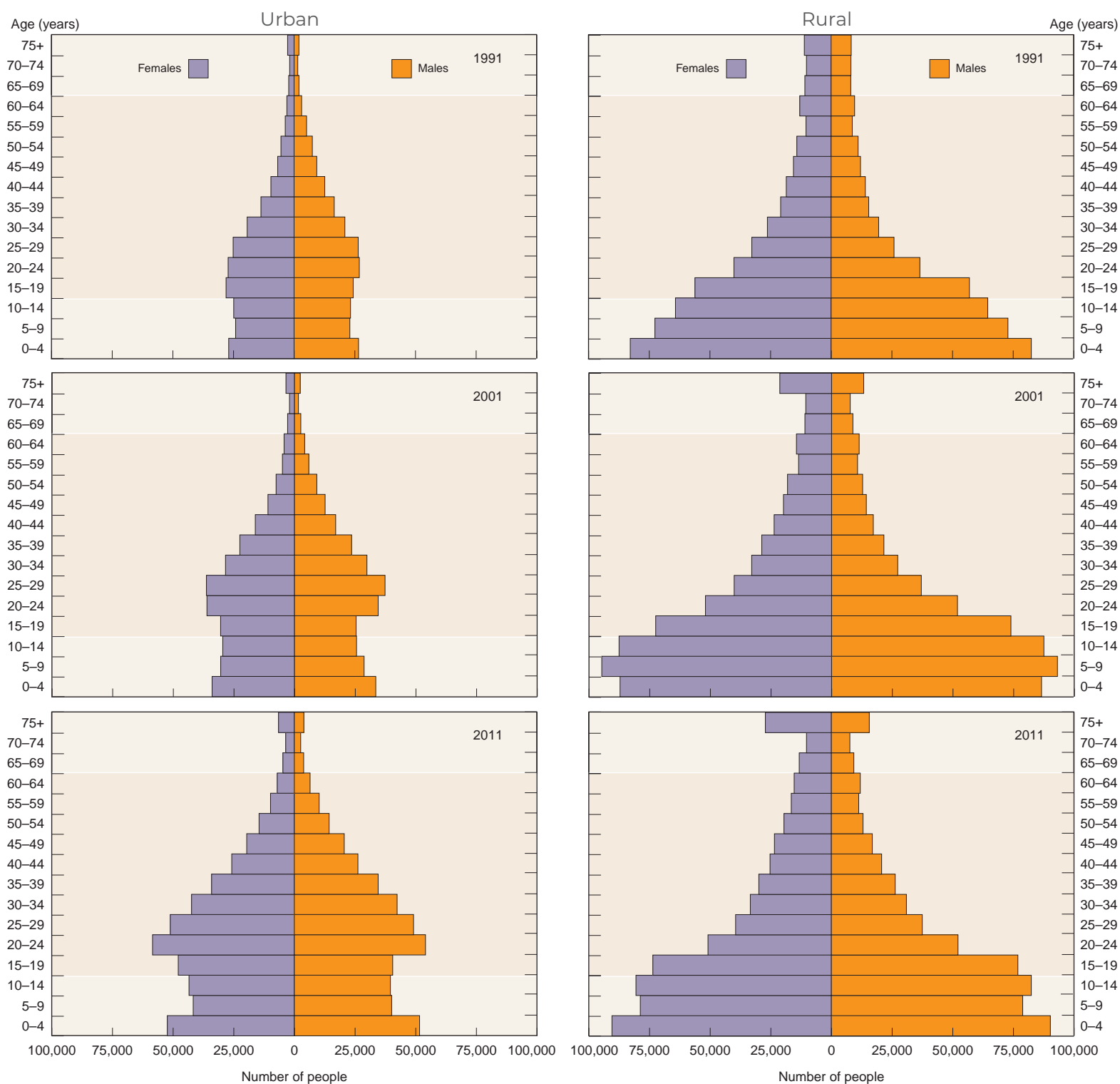
While the increasing number of people in urban areas is clear, some statistics are influenced by changes in the classification of enumeration areas. For example, an area regarded as rural in one census could be classified as urban in the next census. The major difference in the ratios of urban to rural residents in Kavango West in comparison to Kavango East is a consequence of the decision to include Rundu in Kavango East when it was separated from Kavango West. Even though new towns such as Katwitwi and Nkurenkuru in Kavango West, and Ndiyona and Divundu in Kavango East are growing rapidly, they are much smaller than Rundu.



This housing development of Kanaan in Gobabis – new at the time of publication – has helped accommodate people who moved to town. The fastest growing urban areas between 2001 and 2011 were Oshakati and Rundu with annual growth rates of 6.9 and 6.1 per cent, respectively. If those rates continue, these towns will double in size every 11–12 years. Other rapidly growing towns were Eenhana, Helao Nafidi, Okahao, Omuthiya, Ondangwa, Outapi, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. Windhoek is by far the largest urban area in Namibia; it was home to 323,500 people in 2011 after having grown at 3.5 per cent per year since 2001. At that rate of continued growth, there would be about 470,000 people in the capital city in 2022.

These graphs, known as population pyramids, illustrate the age and sex of the population in different years and place of residence (rural or urban). The pyramids provide quick and easy perspectives on the structure of Namibia's population and

changes over time. For example, a pyramid with a wide bottom indicates a high proportion of young people, while a bulge in the middle as seen in many urban pyramids indicates a high proportion of working-age people.



9.19 Structure of urban and rural populations in 1991, 2001 and 2011³⁵

These pyramids show how the structures of urban and rural populations differ, and how they have changed between the censuses conducted in 1991, 2001 and 2011. Urban populations are dominated by people aged 20–40, while children and

teenagers dominate rural populations. These patterns were due to the substantial migration of young adults to towns, a movement that was clearest from the age of 20 onwards in 2001 and 2011.

9.20 Structure of Namibia's population in 1960, 1970, 1991, 2001 and 2011³⁶

The greatest number of people in the population is usually the youngest – those younger than 5 years. This was the case in all the censuses, but not in 2001. The relative decrease in numbers of children in 2001 was probably due to a decline in birth rate associated with the high HIV infection rates prevalent in the 1990s (page 316), before antiretroviral drugs became widely available.

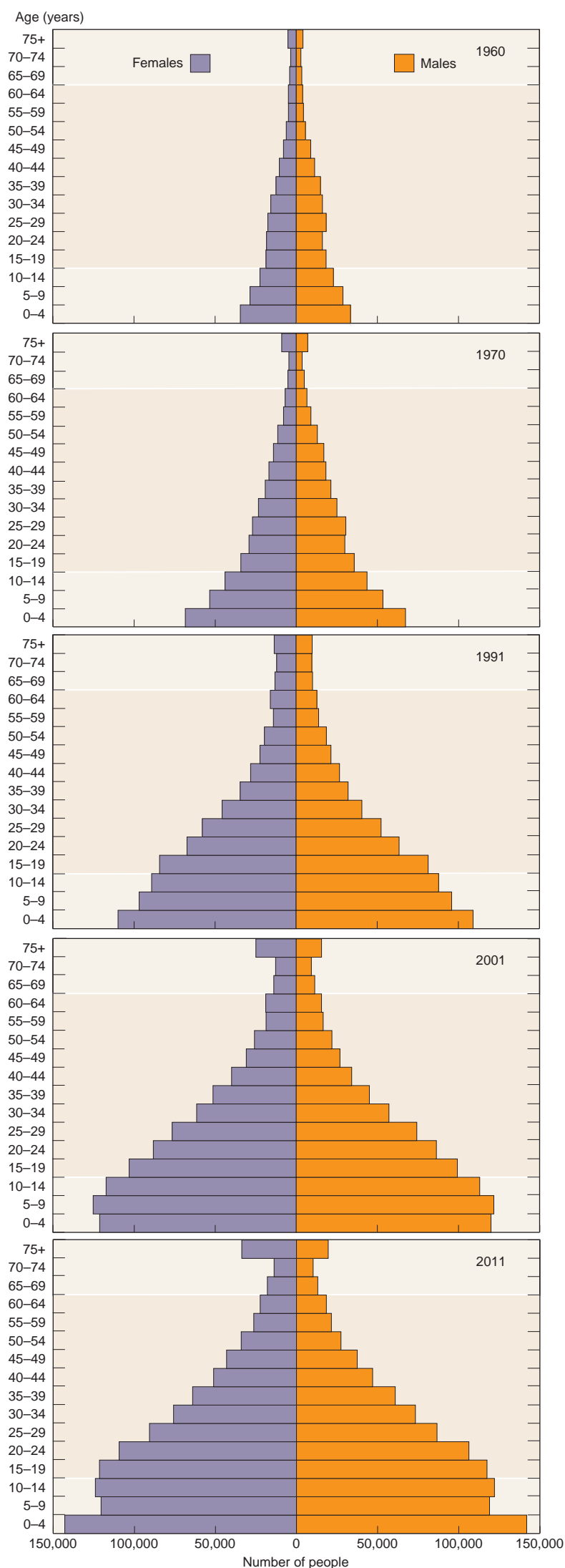
Sex ratios – which compare numbers of males and females – are about 100 among young people, which means that there are 100 females for every 100 males. However, there are more older females than older males because men die earlier than women, on average (figure 9.25). The sex ratio begins to diverge significantly from the age of 40 when the number of women is about 10 per cent higher than the number of men. This percentage difference then grows steadily as the years pass. Interestingly, the ratio of females to males in the entire population has increased over the years, from less than 100 in the 1960s and 1970s to almost 107 in 2011.

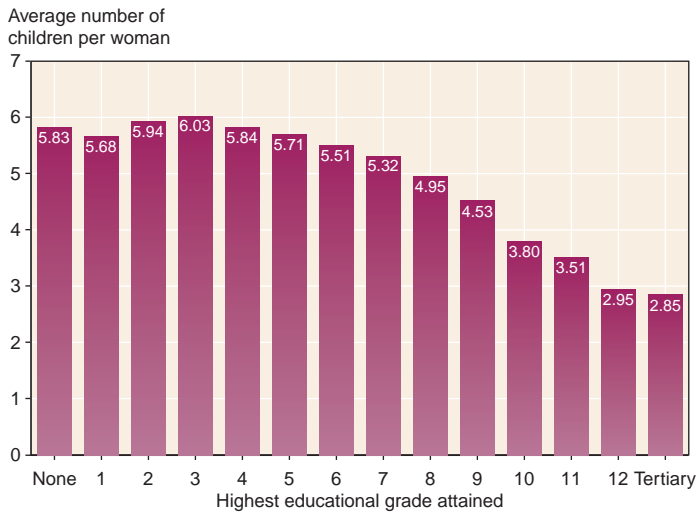
9.21 Proportions of dependants in the total population³⁷

Year	Proportion of 0–14-year-olds (%)	Proportion of people aged 65 and more (%)
1960	39.8	5.4
1970	43.4	4.5
1991	41.7	4.9
2001	39.3	4.8
2011	36.4	5.1

People under 15 and older than 64 years of age can be regarded as dependants. The total of these two groups as a percentage of the total population provides the statistic known as the dependency ratio. In Namibia, this has ranged between 47.9 in 1970 to 41.5 per cent in 2011, mainly because of the proportion of children decreased. The decrease in the proportion of children is probably a consequence of reduced fertility (figure 9.22) which, in turn, is attributable to the high HIV infection rates in the early 2000s (figure 9.31) and the increasing numbers of educated young women (figure 9.24).

Proportions of elderly people aged 65 and more in the population have been rather stable since the 1960s, ranging between 4.5 and 5.4 per cent.



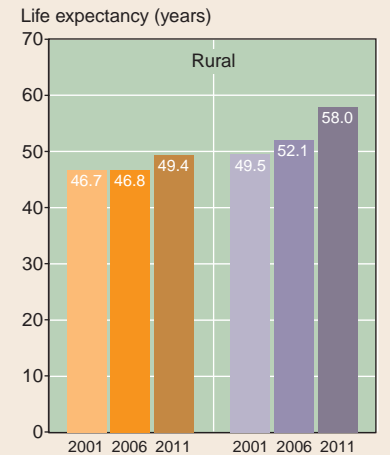
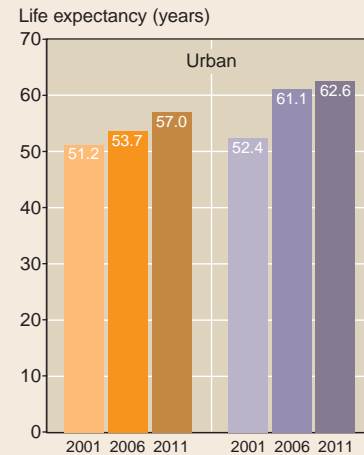
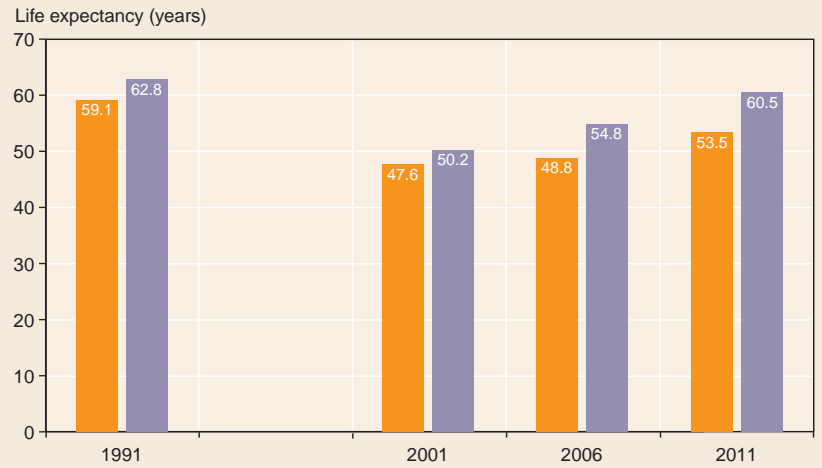


9.24 Fertility rate and a mother's education, 2011⁴⁰

On average, the longer a girl remains at school and the higher her level of completed education, the fewer children she will bear. This trend holds true throughout the world. Here in Namibia, fertility rates start to decrease once Grade 4 has been attained, and continue to drop with higher levels of education. The average number of births halves from 5.8 children per female having attained Grade 4 to 2.9 children per female having attained Grade 12.



The substantial reduction in fertility rates in Namibia is associated with several factors: increasing levels of education of women, increased urbanisation where women are more frequently employed rather than being homemakers, and less risky sexual behaviour as a result of high HIV infection rates that peaked in the early 2000s (figure 9.31).



Males Females

9.25 Life expectancy⁴¹

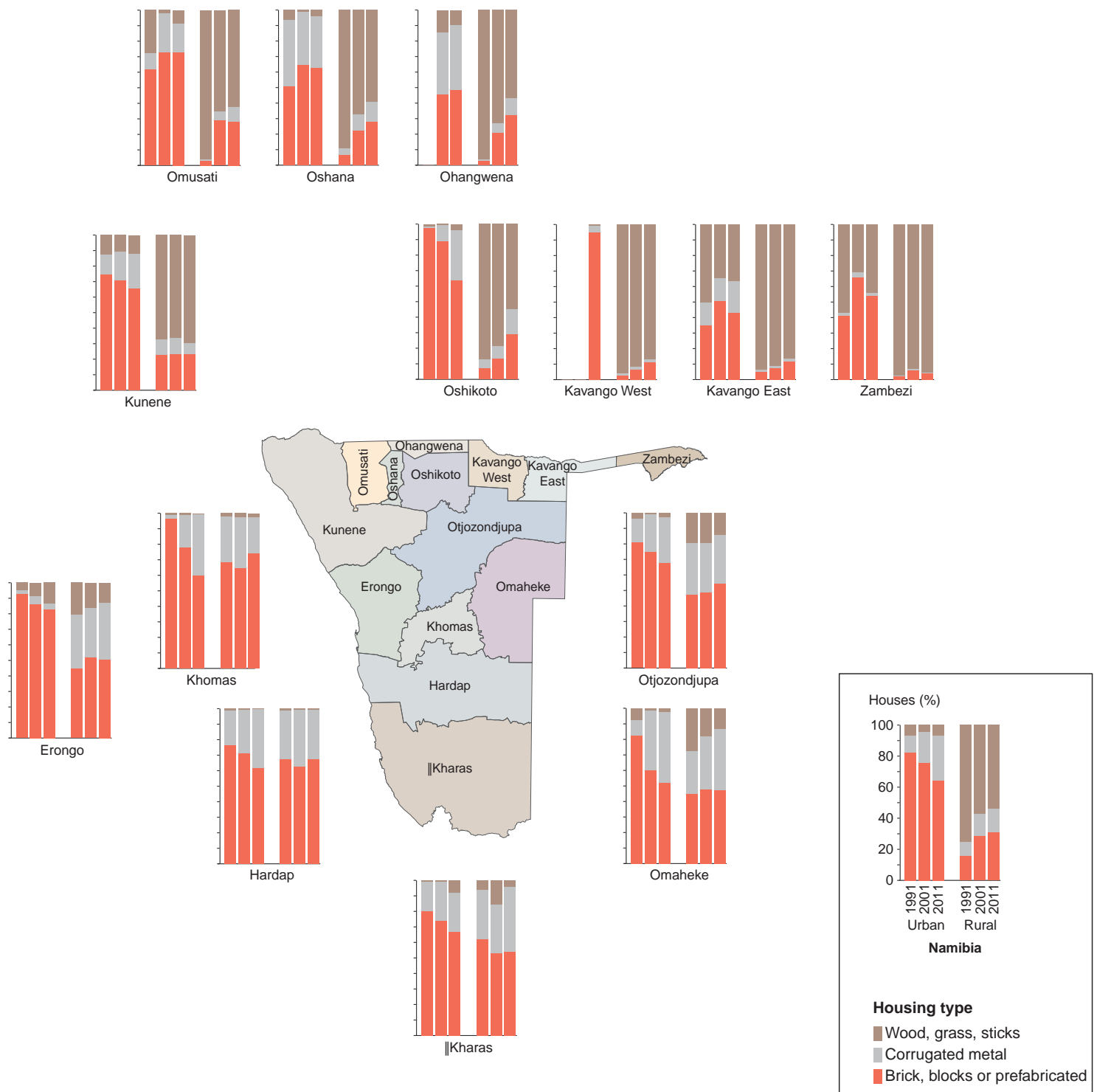
Between 1991 and 2001 life expectancies declined substantially from about 60 to 50 years because of the sharp increase in HIV/AIDS infections over the same period (figure 9.31). This trend reversed after 2001 and approached 60 years in 2011, in tandem with the increasing use of antiretroviral medicines and a decline in HIV infection rates. The life expectancy of females has always been higher than that for males. Likewise, the increase in female life expectancy (2001–2011) has been greater than that for males, especially in rural areas.

Household conditions

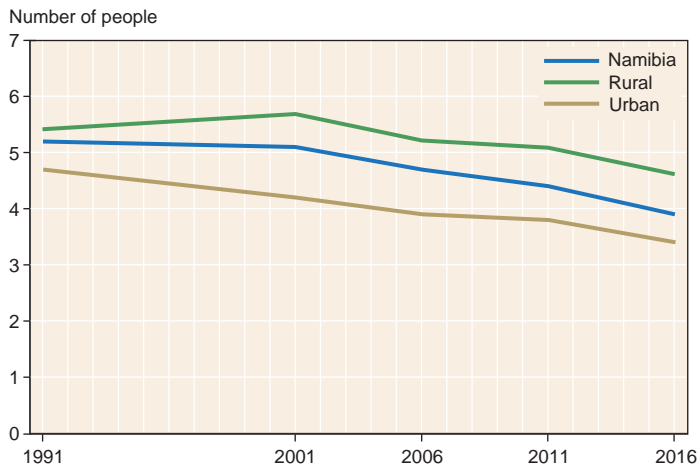
The homes of Namibians vary greatly, for instance in their physical structure, size, density, economic resources and access to services. These features are also changing rapidly, especially as increasing numbers of people move from traditional rural homes built of wood, grass and poles into urban shacks. The pages ahead explore variations in Namibian households: the types of housing and sizes,

their facilities, and the materials used in their construction. Elsewhere, information is presented on domestic water supplies (pages 134–135); the tenure of land on which homes are built (pages 270–274); the spacing and location of houses (pages 302–303); household wealth, incomes, and poverty (pages 325–329); and the types of energy used in houses for lighting and cooking (pages 344–345).

Housing types and materials

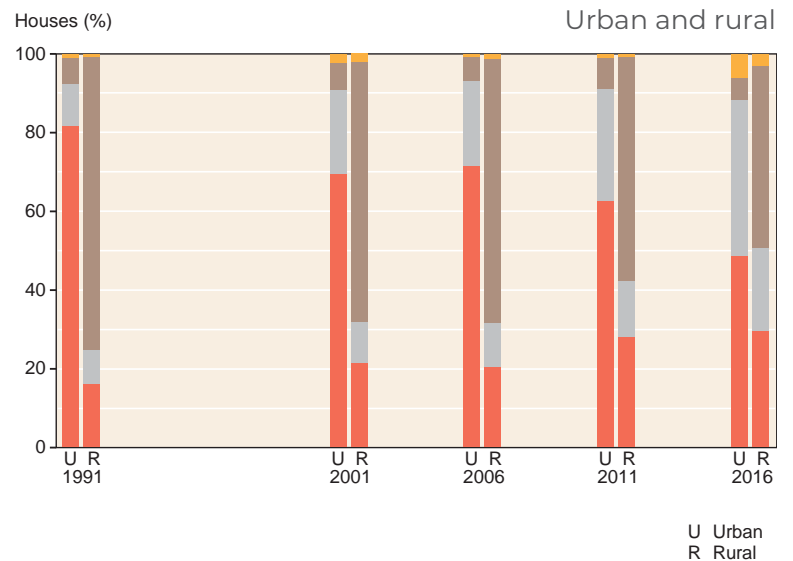
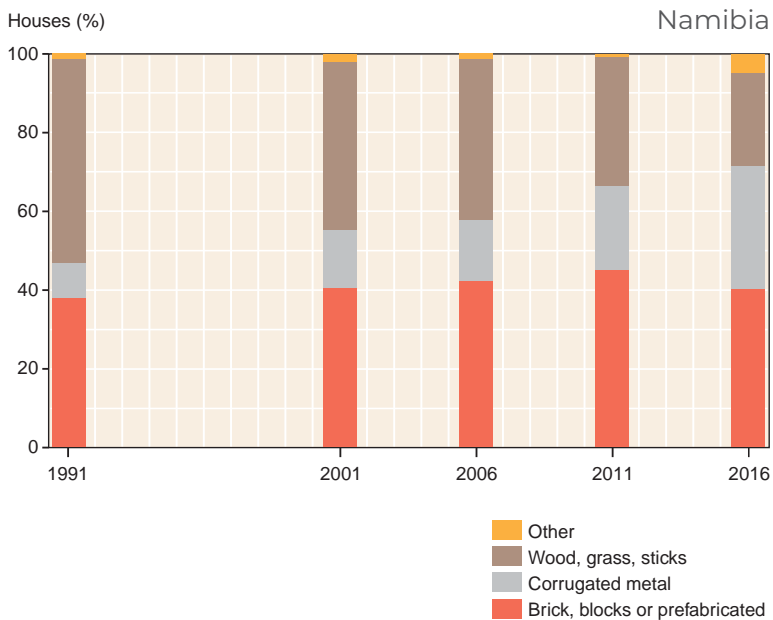


9.26 Household size, 1991–2016⁴²



On average, households in Namibia have between three and six members, with those in rural areas having one or two more members than urban households. Generally, the residents are family members.

The overall average of 5.2 people in 1991 dropped substantially to 3.9 people in 2016. Much of this reduction is due to the migration of rural family members to urban areas, often causing nuclear families to be split between rural and urban households. Family and household sizes are therefore no longer as equivalent as they were when all family members lived together. Nevertheless, resources flow frequently between family members in urban and rural households (pages 22 and 331).



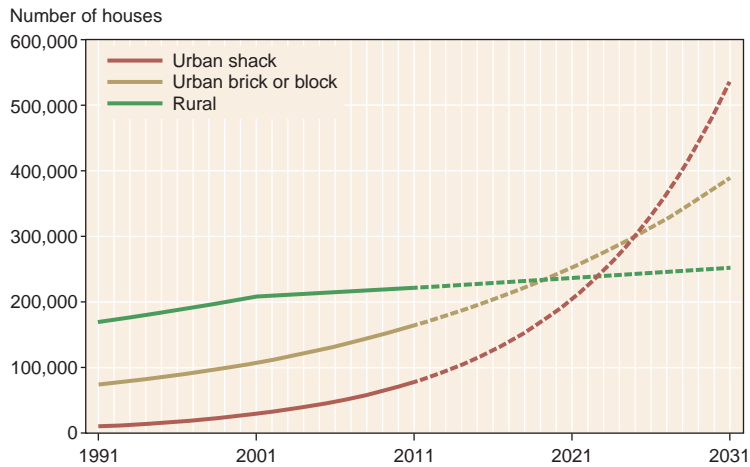
9.27 Housing types in regions and urban and rural areas, 1991–2016⁴³

Countrywide, the proportion of formal brick-and-cement or prefabricated homes remained relatively constant at about 40 per cent between 1991 and 2016 (above, left). The biggest changes were in the substantial decrease in the proportion of traditional homes of wood and thatch in rural areas and the increase in the proportion of corrugated-metal shacks in urban areas (above, right). These trends in housing reflect the large-scale migration of people from rural to urban areas. Also reflected here is the growing change from traditional to

formal homes in communal rural areas during this period, most substantially in the northern regions of Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto, and to a lesser degree in Kavango West, Kavango East and Otjozondjupa.

The regional graphs (left) summarise information on the three major types of housing recorded during the censuses held in 1991, 2001 and 2011. The graphs below include information from the intercensal surveys held in 2006 and 2016, and also show the proportions of ‘other housing’, such as tents or caravans.

9.28 Growth in housing, past (1991–2011) and projected (2011–2031)⁴⁴



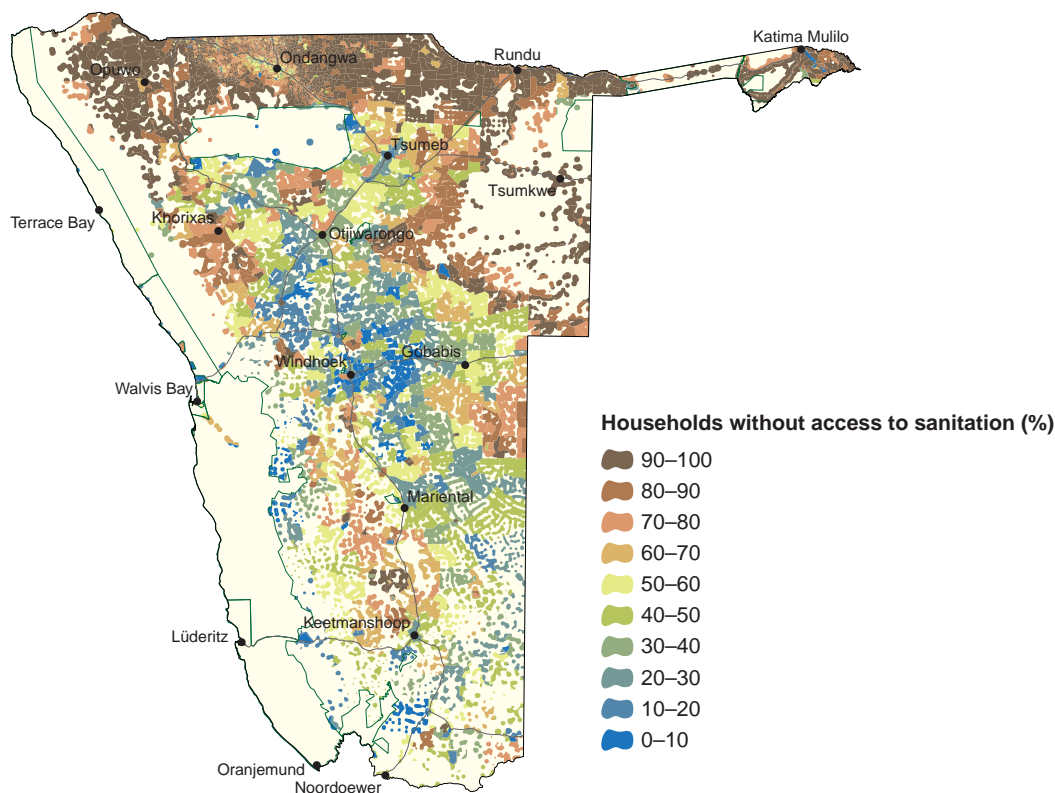
Urban migration and growth has been substantial in recent decades. Normally, housing areas would have been planned and set aside as towns expanded. Planned houses would then be built on formal plots of land in these areas. Whilst some formal growth and planning continued, it has been rapidly overtaken by informal growth. For example, the number of formal houses roughly doubled from 73,881 to 163,793 between 1991 and 2011, while the number of shack homes in urban areas increased more than seven-fold from 10,288 to 77,899 over the same period. In 1991, 81.5 per cent of all urban houses were made from bricks, blocks or were prefabricated and only 10.9 per cent were shacks, but by 2011 one third (32 per cent) of all urban homes were shacks.



The average annual rate of growth in the number of urban shacks between 1991 and 2011 was 10.6 per cent – this also provides a measure of how demand for formal houses increases each year. Should this rate of increase continue, by 2025 shacks will be the predominant form of house in Namibia outnumbering formally built urban houses and all rural houses. In 2030 there are likely to be about 500,000 urban shacks housing approximately two million people; the number of urban homes will then be about 3.5 times greater than the number of all rural homes.⁴⁵



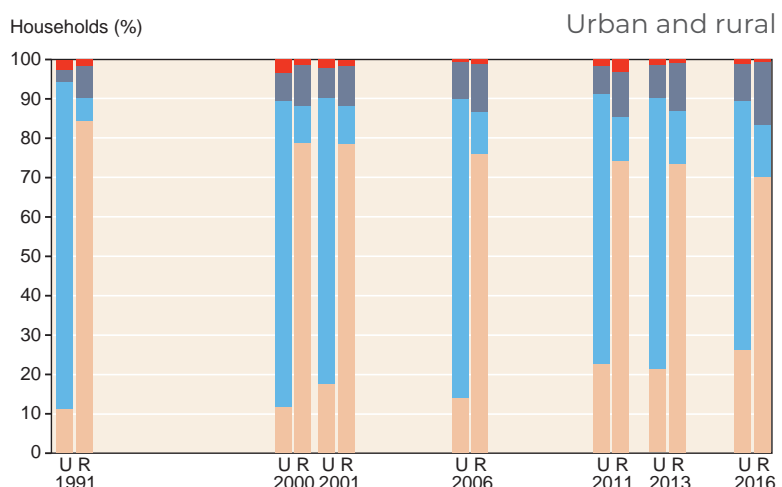
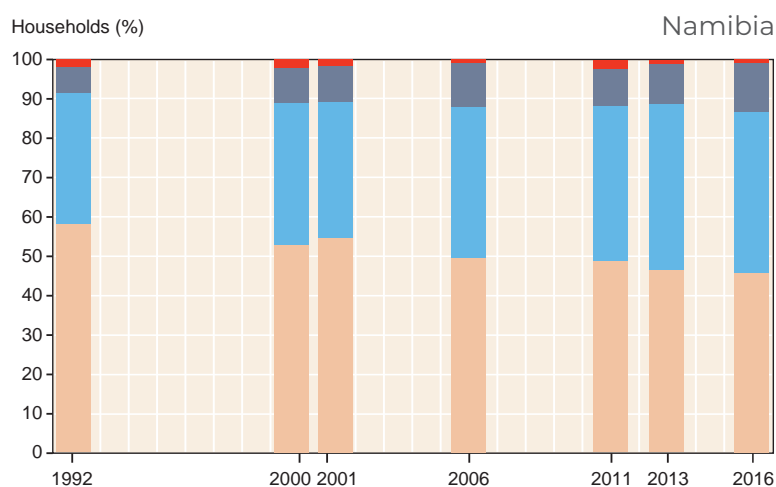
The types of houses found in communal rural areas provide a measure of how household economies there are changing rapidly from subsistence farming to income-based livelihoods (page 329). More and more modern brick-and-mortar homes are being built as the supply and availability of money increases, and urban wage-earners and businessmen build second homes as investments and for holidays and retirement in and around their home villages. Although the two households shown here differ in affluence – one built using family labour and local wood, the other with bought labour and fabricated materials – both have traditional granaries to store harvests of mahangu (pearl millet), emphasising the importance of food reserves in areas that have experienced devastating famines.⁴⁶ The granary of these ‘eeshisha’ baskets of the brick home is at the back outside the homestead, while those of the more traditional home are within the homestead in the front left corner.



9.29 Proportion of households without access to toilet facilities, 2011⁴⁷

The great majority of households that lack improved sanitation – flush, dry, pit or bucket toilets – are in northern Namibia and other rural communal areas. Crowded, unsanitary conditions are most prevalent and concerning in low-income, informal urban settlements where the risk of disease transmission can be

significant. In 2011 there were about 57,000 urban households with approximately 250,800 residents lacking access to any toilet facilities. Census results also showed that the percentage of urban residents without toilets almost doubled from 13 per cent in 1991 to 24 per cent in 2011.



■ Other U Urban
■ Pit latrine R Rural
■ Flush toilet
■ None/bush

9.30 Household sanitation facilities, 1992–2016⁴⁸

Over the years, about half of all Namibian homes had no formal toilet facilities, and thus had to use the bush for nature’s calling. That proportion decreased from 57.9 per cent in 1992 to 45.7 per cent in 2016, although the total number of homes without toilets increased as the number of homes rapidly increased with population growth. For example, 187,778 homes in 2001 –

or 54.2 per cent of homes at that time – did not have toilets, whereas 225,911 in 2011 (48.6 per cent of homes) did not have toilets. While the graphs show a marked decrease in the proportion of rural homes with bush toilets between 1992 and 2016, there was an equivalent marked increase in the proportion of urban homes with no toilets during the same period.

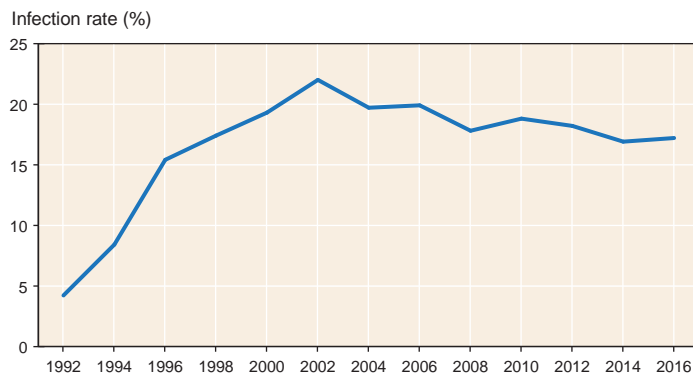
Health

While most people live healthy lives, a considerable variety of diseases and other afflictions affect Namibians. The most common maladies are respiratory infections (such as influenza, pneumonia and tuberculosis), gastric infections (such as diarrhoea and gastroenteritis), malaria, malnutrition, violence and traumas, alcohol and other addictions, poisoning, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections,

cancer and bilharzia. Rarer diseases include rabies, plague and measles.

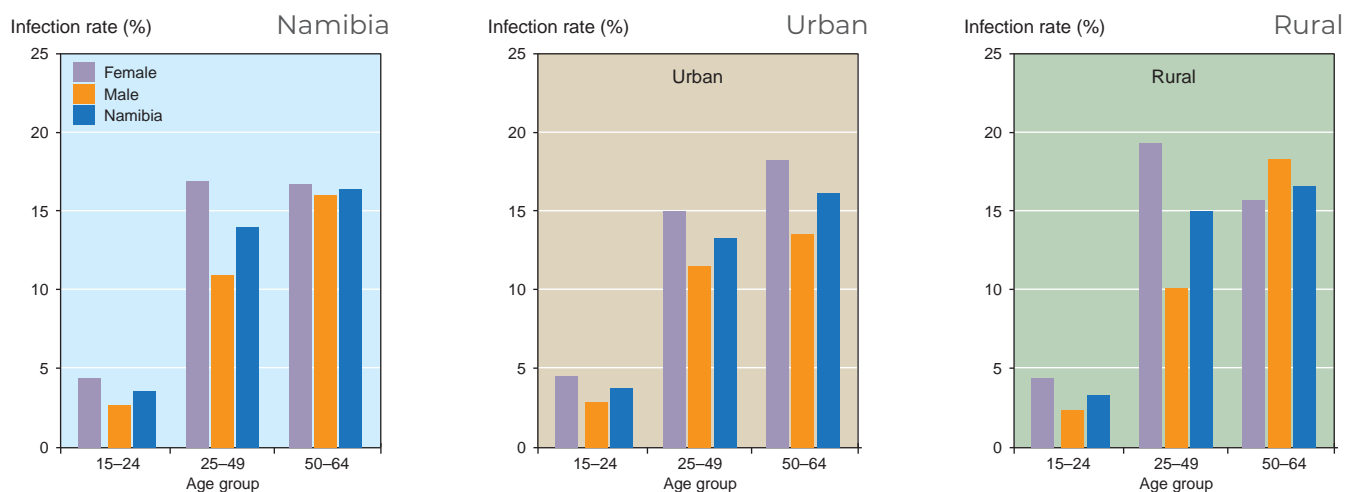
At the time that this atlas was being compiled, Namibia and the rest of the world was caught unprepared for the flu pandemic caused by the coronavirus of 2019 (COVID-19). It will take years for Namibia to recover from the economic and social costs of the measures put in place to control this disease.

HIV/AIDS



9.31 HIV infection rates among pregnant women, 1992–2016⁴⁹

Rates of HIV infection in women aged 15–49 years attending antenatal care services in public health facilities rose rapidly in the 1990s. It peaked in 2002, and then slowly declined and levelled off at about 17 per cent. These recorded changes reflect changes in infection rates in the population as a whole.



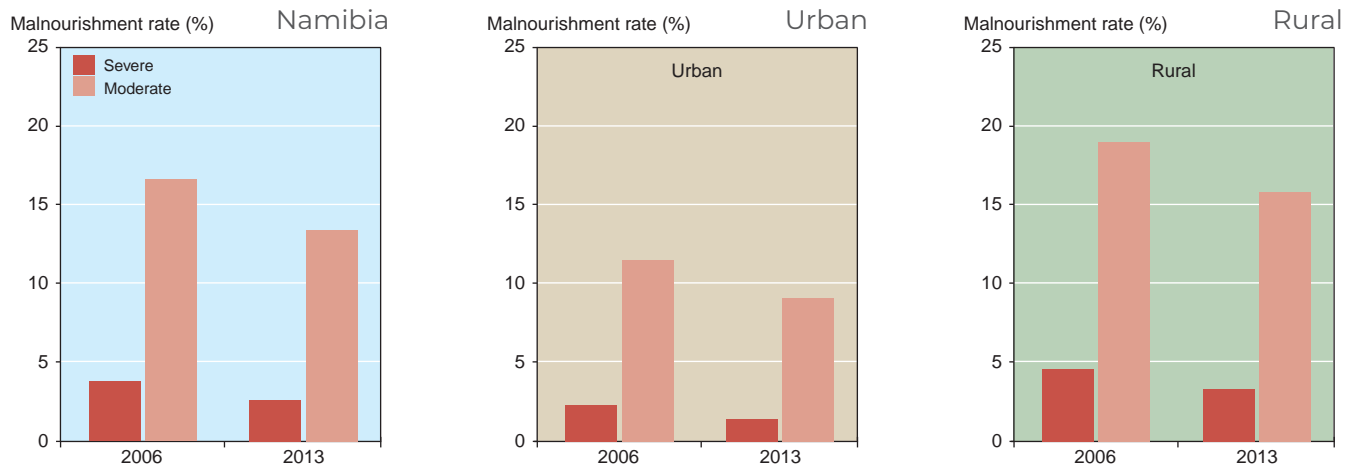
9.32 HIV infection rates in 2011/12

HIV testing was conducted on the general population in Namibia for the first time in 2011 and 2012, when HIV prevalence among 15–49-year-olds was estimated to be 13.4 per cent. Infection rates among younger people aged 15–24 years averaged 3.6 per cent, much lower than those of older people: 14.0 and 16.4 per cent among 25–49- and 50–64-year-olds, respectively. In general,

women had higher infection rates than men, but especially in urban areas and among rural people aged 25–49 years.

An estimated 185,000 people (about 8 per cent) younger than 65 years were living with HIV in 2017, when prevalence rates varied from 7.9 per cent in Kunene to 17.9 per cent and 22.3 per cent in Ohangwena and Zambezi, respectively.⁵⁰

Children's health

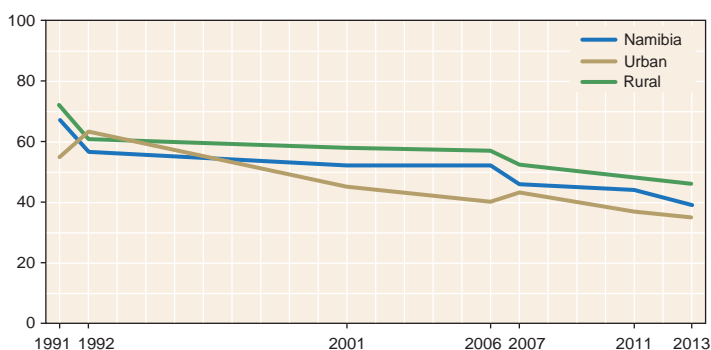


9.33 Incidence of malnourishment among young children, 2006/07 and 2013⁵¹

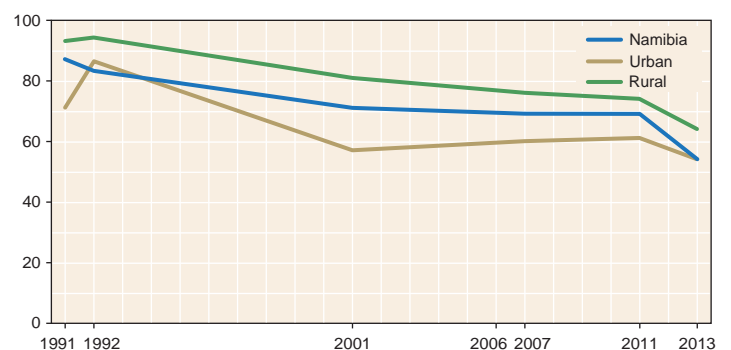
Rates of malnourishment among children in Namibia decreased between 2006 and 2013 from 3.8 to 2.6 per cent for severe cases, and from 16.6 to 13.4 per cent for children moderately

underweight for their age. The incidence of malnourishment was highest in rural areas, especially among children who were severely underweight for their age.

Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)



Under-5 mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)



9.34 Infant and under-five mortality rates, 1991–2013⁵²

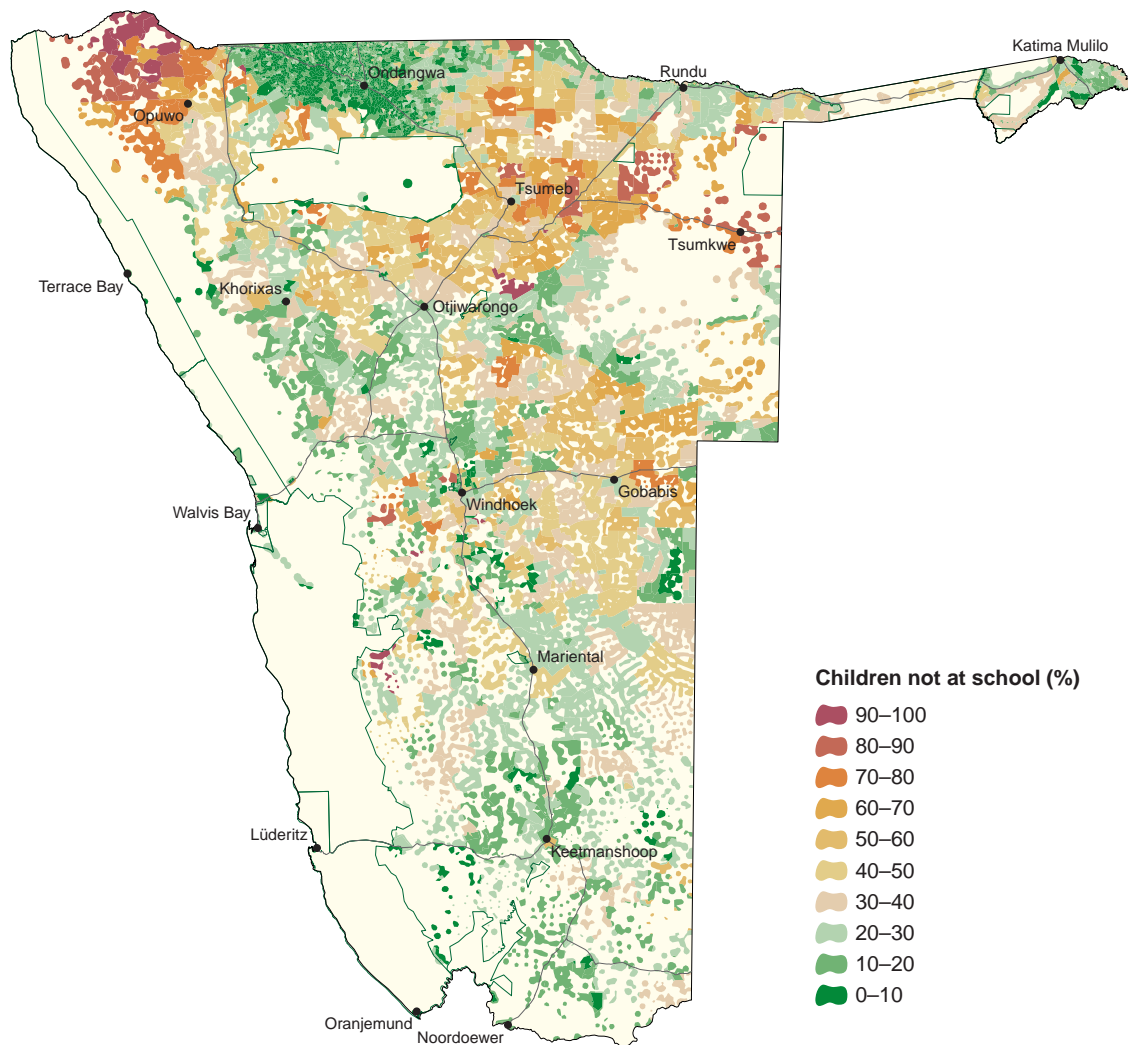
Infant mortality is the death of an infant before his or her first birthday; infant mortality rate is the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births. Under-five mortality rate is the number of deaths of children under 5 years old per 1,000 live births. Several patterns are clear in these graphs. Mortality rates dropped significantly between 1991 and 2013, presumably because of

improved health care and nutrition. The chances of infants or children under 5 years dying in urban areas are lower than in rural areas, most probably because access to effective health care is greater in towns than in remote rural areas. Although not illustrated here, mortality rates of young boys are slightly higher than those of young girls.

Education

Schooling in Namibia is a significant activity. In 2011, 41.3 per cent of the population was at early childhood development, primary or secondary school. Furthermore, spending by the government of public money on education has been high, close to 30 per cent of the annual revenue budget in recent years. Education has always been important

to Namibians, with enrolment rates among the highest in Africa, even before independence. Reflecting this demand for schooling, most schools in Namibia were started by parents as private initiatives, often as rudimentary structures under village trees.⁵³ Despite high enrolment rates, the quality of educational achievement is a major concern.⁵⁴

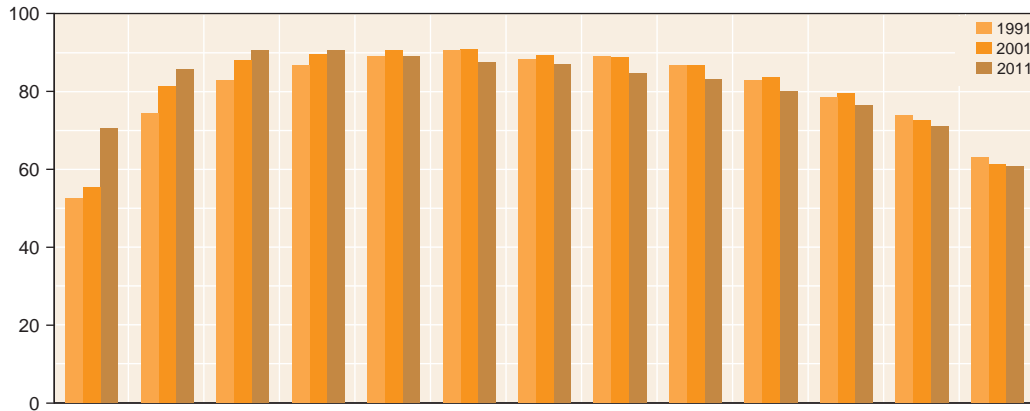


9.35 Proportion of children aged 6–18 not attending school, 2011⁵⁵

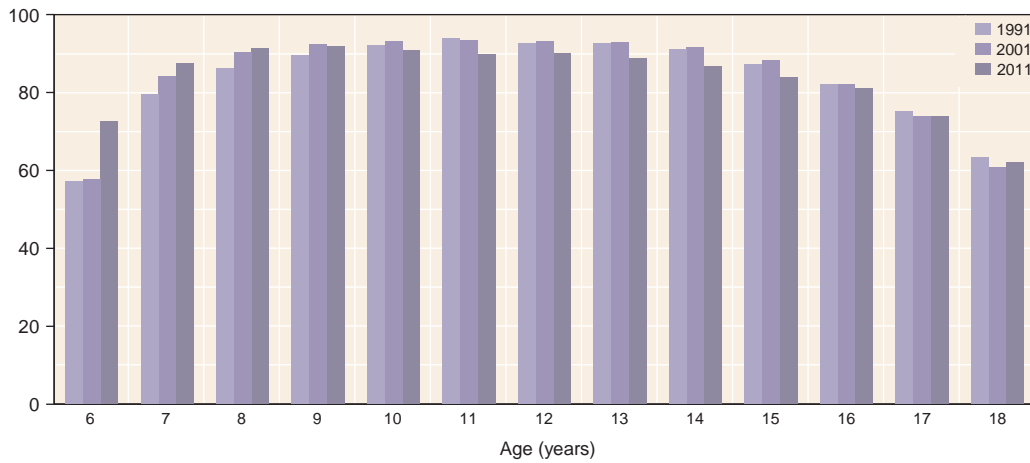
Although demands for schooling are generally high, school attendance in some areas is lower than expected. This is especially true in northern Kunene and more remote areas of Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa, Kavango West and Kavango East. Many of the

children thus affected come from marginalised Ovahimba and San communities. Factors that keep children out of school include a lack of access to schools, demands on children to work at home or earn money elsewhere, and teenage pregnancies.

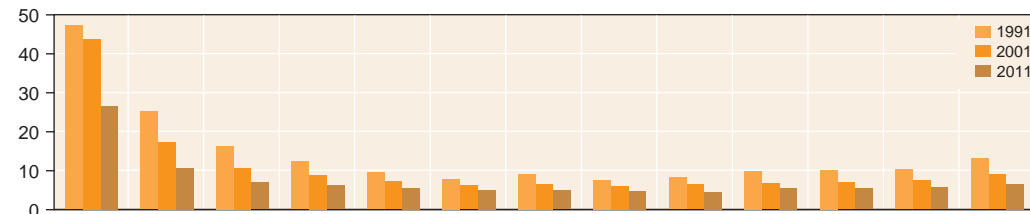
Attending school (% boys)



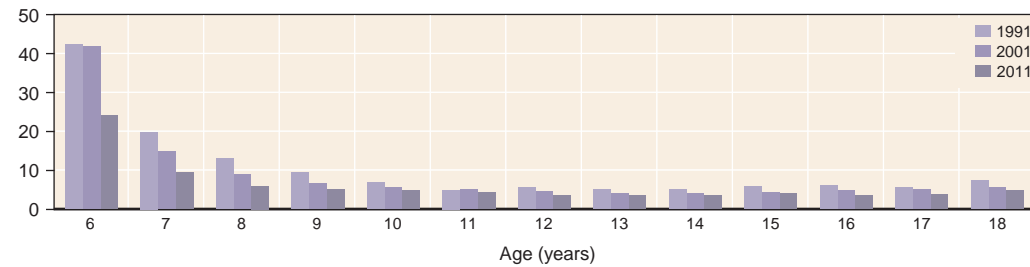
Attending school (% girls)



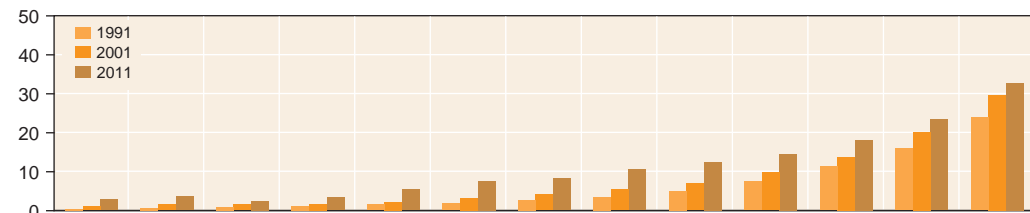
Never attended school (% boys)



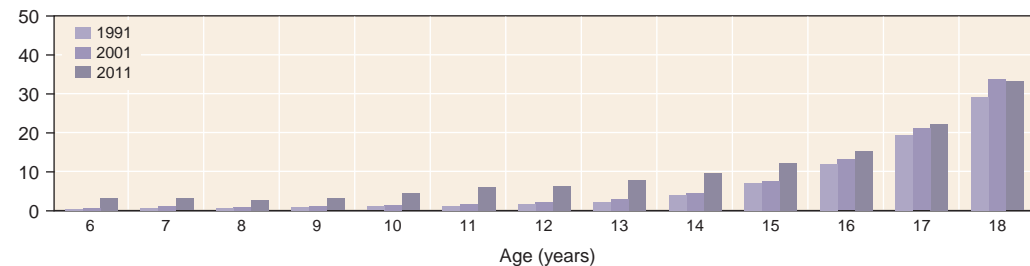
Never attended school (% girls)



Left school (% boys)

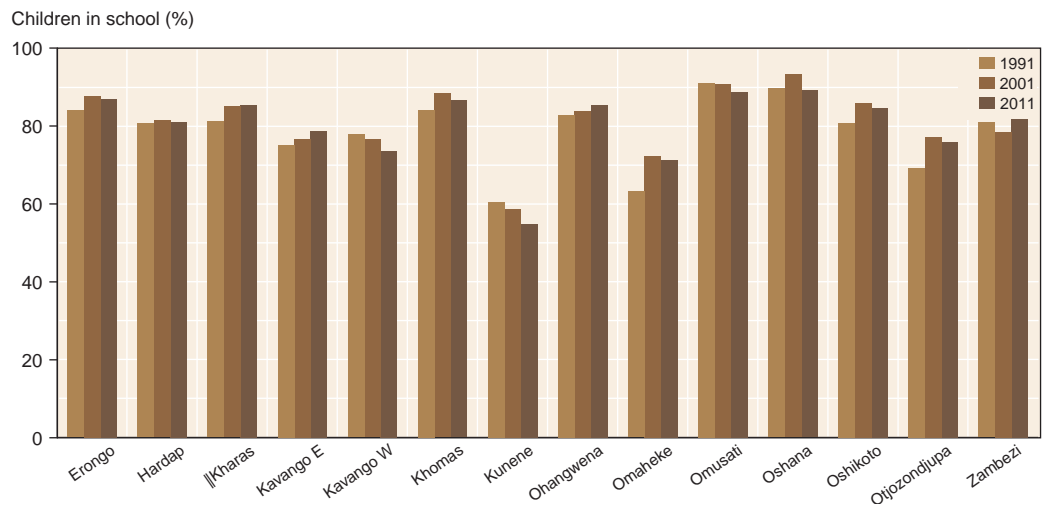
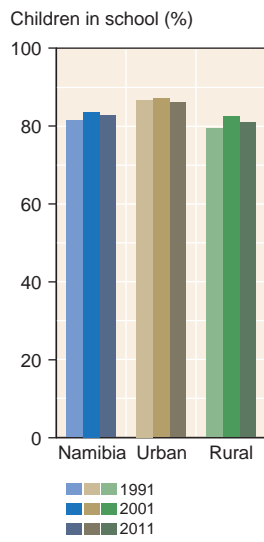


Left school (% girls)



9.36 School attendance and drop-out rates in 1991, 2001 and 2011⁵⁶

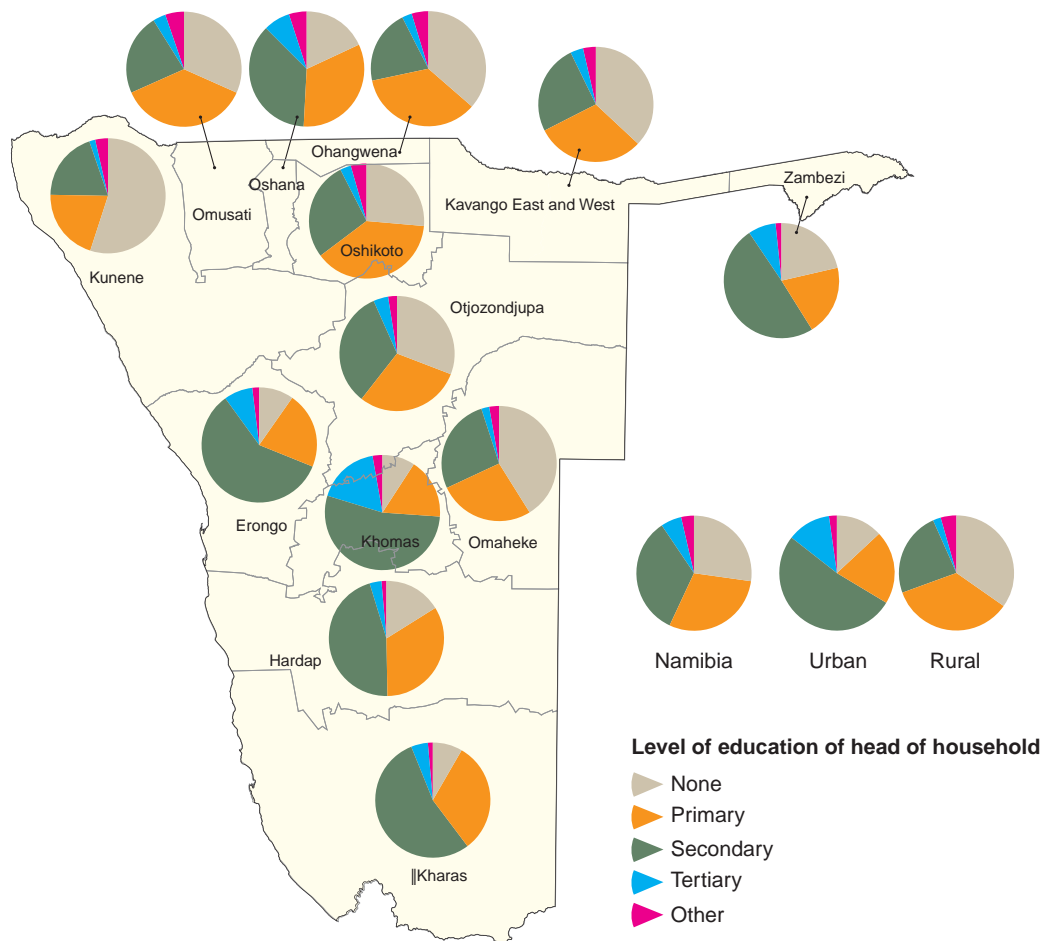
The six graphs alongside show the proportions of girls and boys, aged 6–18 years, who attended school, who never attended and who left school prematurely. In most developing countries more boys than girls go to school. The reverse is true in Namibia where enrolment rates of girls were 2–4 per cent higher than those of boys in 1991, 2001 and 2011. This was true for girls of all ages. It is then not surprising that higher proportions of boys had never been to school, and more boys of 16 years or younger had left school prematurely. Enrolments of boys were highest between the ages of 8 and 11 years, while those for girls were highest between 8 and 14 years. The two lowest graphs show how proportion of boys and girls who left school prematurely increased over the years.



9.37 Proportion of children aged 6–18 years at school in 1991, 2001 and 2011⁵⁷

Enrolment rates rose nationally from 81.4 per cent in 1991 to 83.7 per cent in 2001 before slipping to 82.7 per cent in 2011. Similar changes occurred in urban and rural areas, and in most regions. Exceptions were in Kavango West and Kunene where enrolment rates decreased between 1991 and 2011. By contrast,

enrolment rates increased over the same period in !Kharas, Kavango East and Ohangwena. In the absence of urban schools in Kavango West, migration to schools in Rundu in Kavango East might explain why enrolment rates increased in the eastern region and declined in the western one.



9.38 Levels of formal education of household heads, 2011⁵⁸

Older Namibians generally have lower levels of education than younger people, simply because many older people did not go to school or left school at an earlier age. One consequence of these lower levels of schooling is the high number of households who

are headed by people who have relatively little formal education. Children in these homes may be disadvantaged in multiple ways, for example, in lacking guidance, encouragement, role models and resources to do well at school.

Key points

- People have lived in Namibia for several hundred thousand years at least. Archaeological sites have been found mostly on the central ridge of rocky highlands, probably because people were attracted by its relative abundance of springs. The same is true for rock art, of which more than 80,000 individual images are known. There is also evidence that people moved to the coastal and eastern plains to hunt and gather food when, and where, water was available. Namibians were mobile then and, still today, continue to migrate in pursuit of resources.
- Land uses changed in many areas when crop and livestock farming was introduced to Namibia, probably when Bantu and Khoekhoe communities first migrated to Namibia around 800 CE, perhaps even earlier. More recent immigrations include those from South Africa between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, from Germany after 1908 and from Angola during the twentieth century.
- More than 500 ships have been wrecked along the coast over the past 600 years, many having fallen victim to the Benguela Current's heavy seas and thick fog, and strong winds from the South Atlantic Anticyclone.
- Namibia's population is steadily transforming from one that was largely rural to one that is mainly urban. About 10 per cent of Namibians lived in towns in 1936. By 2021 that proportion was projected to reach 53 per cent; and by 2041 urban populations are expected to be double those in rural areas (67 per cent urban, 33 per cent rural). Most of the rural–urban migration has been by working-age people.
- Towns have grown rapidly, at about 4 per cent per year on average, and rural populations have decreased in size. The growth of informal shack housing has been substantial, such that shacks will be the predominant form of housing in Namibia by 2025 if current trends continue.
- Rural population densities are highest in the eight northern regions, especially across the Cuvelai, along roads in Zambezi Region, and near roads and the Okavango River in Kavango East and Kavango West.
- As a result of migration, Namibia's many home languages are now widely spoken across the country. Five languages were each spoken in 10 per cent or more of Namibian households in 2011: Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Khoekhoegowab, Afrikaans and Otjiherero.
- In the past 100 years (1921–2021), the number of people in Namibia grew 11-fold. Annual population growth was 3.0–3.5 per cent until 1991. It subsequently decreased to about 2 per cent in association with rising levels of education and women having fewer children, and the impacts of HIV/AIDS.
- Households have become smaller from an overall average size of 5.2 people per household in 1991 to 3.9 people in 2016.
- Between 1991 and 2001 life expectancies declined from about 60 to 50 years due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. This trend reversed after 2001, with people now again expected to live for about 60 years on average. Life expectancies are higher in urban than rural areas, and higher for women than for men.
- Rates of HIV infections and related deaths rose rapidly in the 1990s to a peak in 2003, and then declined. In 2017 about 8 per cent of people younger than 65 years were living with HIV/AIDS.
- The malnourishment of children under 5 years of age decreased between 2006/07 and 2013. Infant and under-five mortality rates also decreased significantly between 1991 and 2013. Proportions of underweight children and under-five mortality rates were higher in rural than in urban areas.
- School enrolment rates of children aged 6–18 years varied between 81.4 in 1991 and 82.7 per cent in 2011. The lowest school attendance rates were in Kunene and Omaheke. Nationally, higher proportions of girls were at school than boys. The proportion of boys and girls who left school prematurely has increased over the years. Older Namibians generally have low levels of education because many of them did not go to school or left school at an early age.