

Chapter 3 : People and social conditions

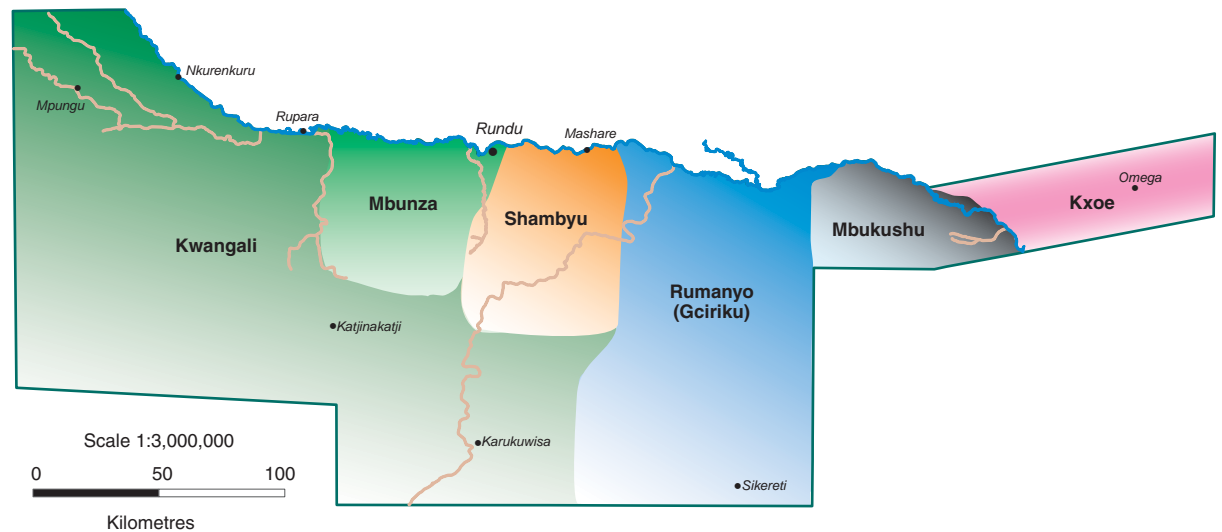
Introduction

This chapter presents information on the region's population, housing, health and education. The population has grown rapidly in recent decades and is dominated by young people. Substantial movements by people into the region have also added to the population, but other people have moved out to seek work in other regions. Likewise, many people have moved from rural areas to Rundu, which has the only urban population in the Kavango. Most rural people live in homes built of wood and grass harvested locally, and most homes use wood for cooking fuel. The majority of rural people live and farm in small settlements near the Okavango River or along a number of omurambas. It is in these more densely populated areas that most schools and health facilities are to be found. Enrolments are dominated by pupils in the lower primary grades and relatively few people have completed higher grades. The most important ailments are HIV/AIDS, malaria, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, bilharzia and malnutrition.

Language groupings

The distribution of people speaking different languages (Figure 19) was derived from the 1991 Population and Housing Census. That census provided for five major languages in the region: Kwangali, Shامbyu, Rumanyo (Gciriku), Thimbukushu and Bushman (primarily Kxoe) languages. Several other languages are recognised as being spoken by significant numbers of people, including Mbunza in an area just west of Rundu. There are also substantial numbers of people that have Nyemba as their mother tongue. This is an Angolan language, which in 1999, was reported as being spoken by 15% of the rural population and by 30% of the urban population in Rundu⁷.

Figure 19 Approximate boundaries of the major language groups⁸.



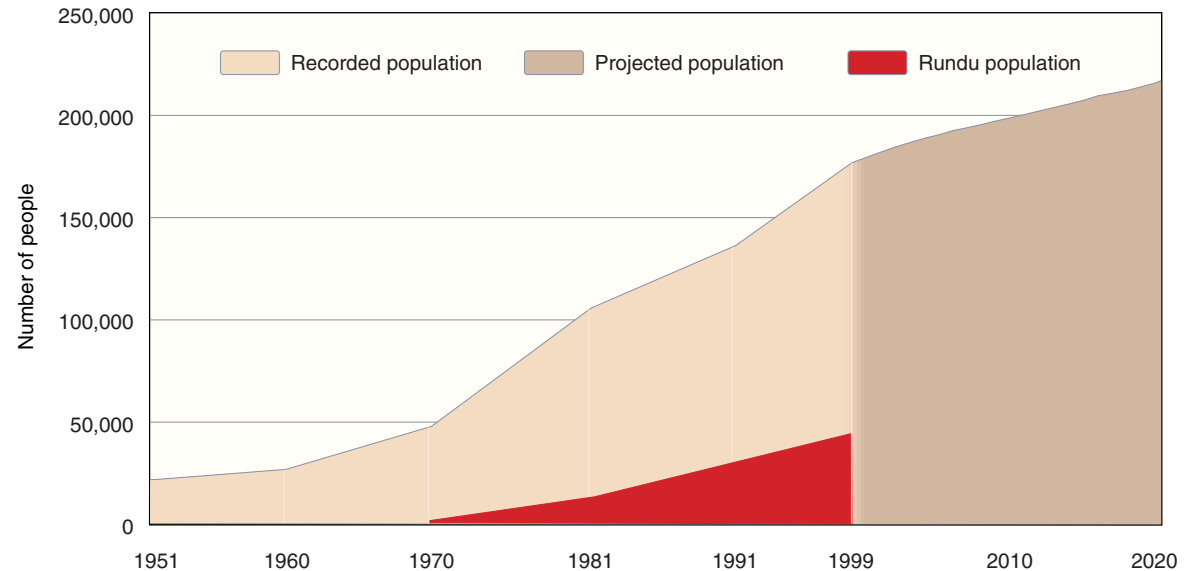
Population

Estimates of the number of people in the region are available from 1951 onwards (Figure 20). These figures suggest that the population grew very rapidly from 1951 until 1981, and especially so between 1970 and 1981 when the population grew at about 7.5% per year. The growth rate between 1960 and 1970 was 6.0%. While it seems certain that growth rates were indeed high, the rates might have been inflated if the coverage of people in 1960 and 1970 was less than complete. In addition, some of the growth has been due to the migration of people into the region from Angola (see below), and it is possible that rates of migration have been greater in some periods and lower in others.

The most recent population estimate based on a survey is from 1999, when the total number of people in the region was put at about 176 600⁷. Population projections from then onwards estimate the total population to be 179 400 in 2000. Subsequent growth over the next two decades suggests that the population will amount to about 216 000 in 2020 (Figure 20). These projections assume rates of population growth to be about 1.5% over the next few years, before dropping to below 1% as a result of the increasing effects of AIDS mortality.

Average life expectancies in 1996 were 55 years for men and 62 years for women, while the most recent estimate for 1999 by the United Nations Development Programme is 49 years. This reduction is attributed to high rates of HIV infection in Kavango (see below), and predictions by the Central Statistics Office and Ministry of Health and Social Services suggest that life spans will drop to 38 years for men and 40 years for women by 2011. Thereafter, they are expected to rise to 48 and 50 years in 2021 for men and women, respectively.

Figure 20 Growth of the population between 1951 and 1999 and projected growth to 2020⁹.



Rundu has grown at a very rapid rate, from about 1 500 people in 1971 to roughly 45 000 in 2000. Those changes mean that the proportion of the region's urban and rural population has changed to a great degree. About 97% of the population was rural and 3% urban in 1971, while in 2000 about 75% is rural and 25% of the population is urban.

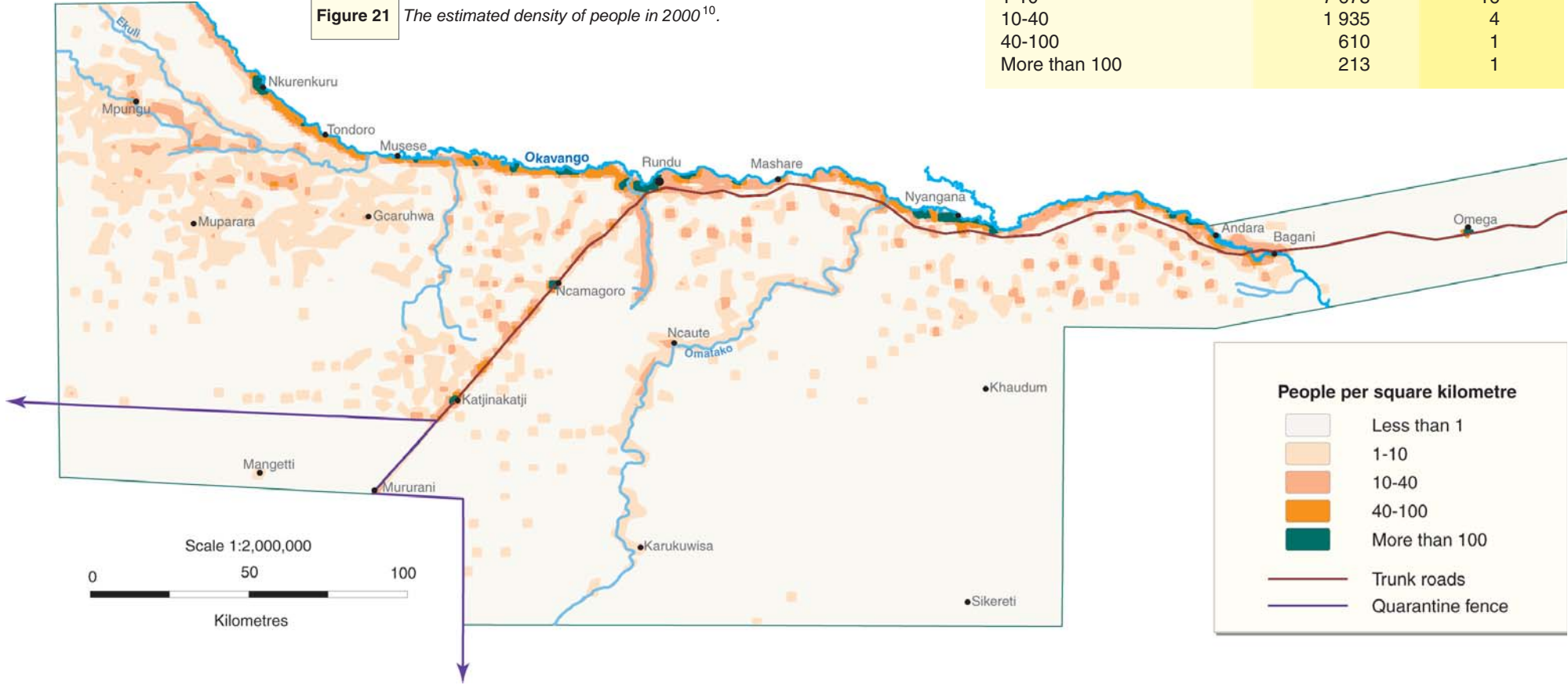
The distribution and density of people can be classed into three zones (Figure 21). The first is the very densely populated ribbon along the river, where densities are generally higher than 40 people per km² and exceed 100 people per km² in some places. About 114 000 people, or about two thirds of the region's population, live close to the river. Forty-five thousand of these people are in Rundu. There are also very high densities along certain sections of the Mururani-Rundu road, indicating

that the distribution of people, at least in that part of the region, has been strongly influenced by the presence of good road access. Secondly, there is a large area consisting of many small, scattered settlements south of the river and west of the Mururani-Rundu road. Many of these small settlements are clustered along some of the dry drainage lines or omurambas. Densities around the settlements generally range between 1 and 10 people per km². It is clear that many of the settlements were established quite recently. The third zone consists of the very sparsely populated remainder of the region where there are very few or no people. This zone, with population densities of less than 1 person per km², makes up about 78% of the total area. Most large, open areas are in the south-east, south west and in the Caprivi Strip.

Table 4: Areas and percentages of the region with different population densities.

Density (people per km ²)	Area (km ²)	Percentage
Less than 1	38 037	78
1-10	7 678	16
10-40	1 935	4
40-100	610	1
More than 100	213	1

Figure 21 The estimated density of people in 2000¹⁰.

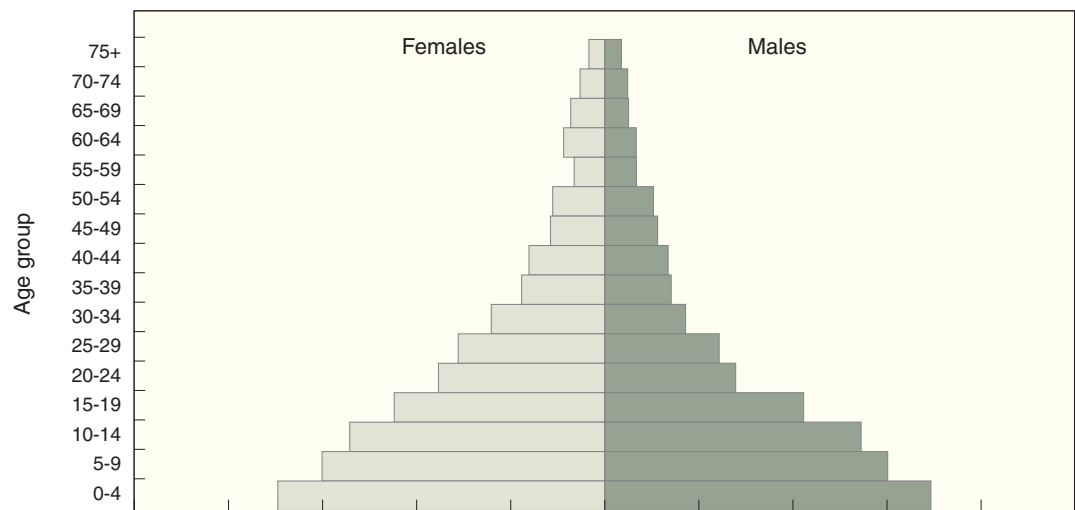


The age and sex structure of the population in 1999 (Figure 22) reveals several noteworthy features. Firstly, young people make up a huge proportion of the population: 75% of all people are less than 30 years old and 43% are less than 15.

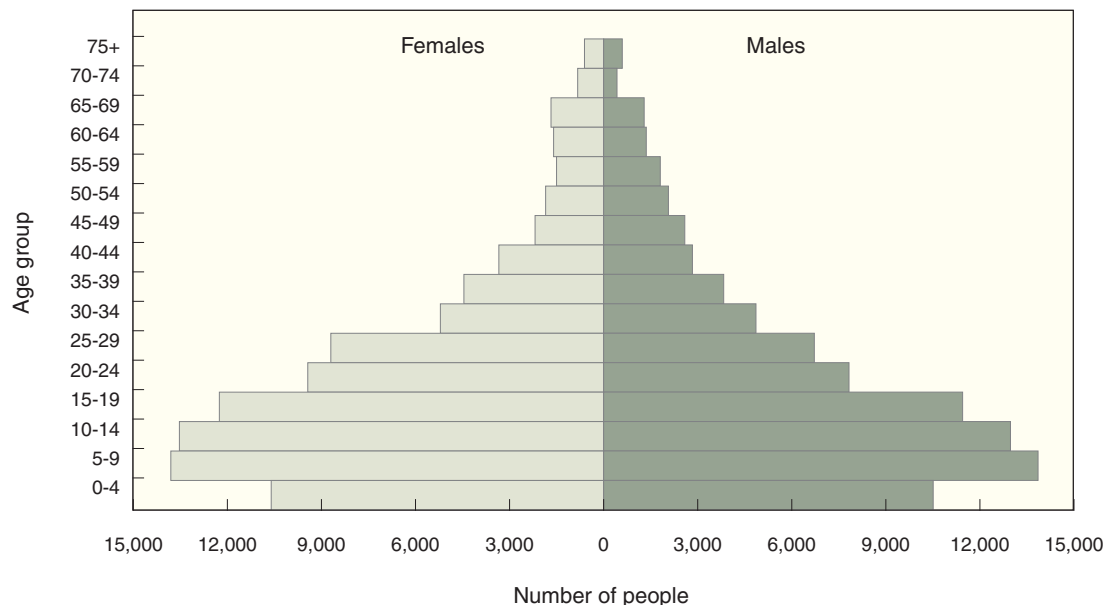
Secondly, there are significantly fewer 0-4 year-olds than older children, and this reduction has happened since 1991. The fall suggests that population growth may be slowing down, perhaps as a result of increased mortality due to HIV transmitted by infected mothers. Part of the reduction is also probably due to a decline in fertility. The average fertility rate in 1991 was 7.1 children while in 1996 it had fallen to 6.6 children.

Thirdly, there are roughly equal proportions of adult males and females in the region, unlike some other regions in Namibia where there are far fewer males as a result of migration.

Figure 22 *The age and sex structure of the population in 1991 and 1999.* 1991



1999



While large numbers of men remain resident in the region, it is clear that more males than females have indeed left to live and work elsewhere (Figure 23). Moreover, these graphs indicate that men started to leave as migrants before women, and that the proportions of men and women now living elsewhere have increased over the past few decades.

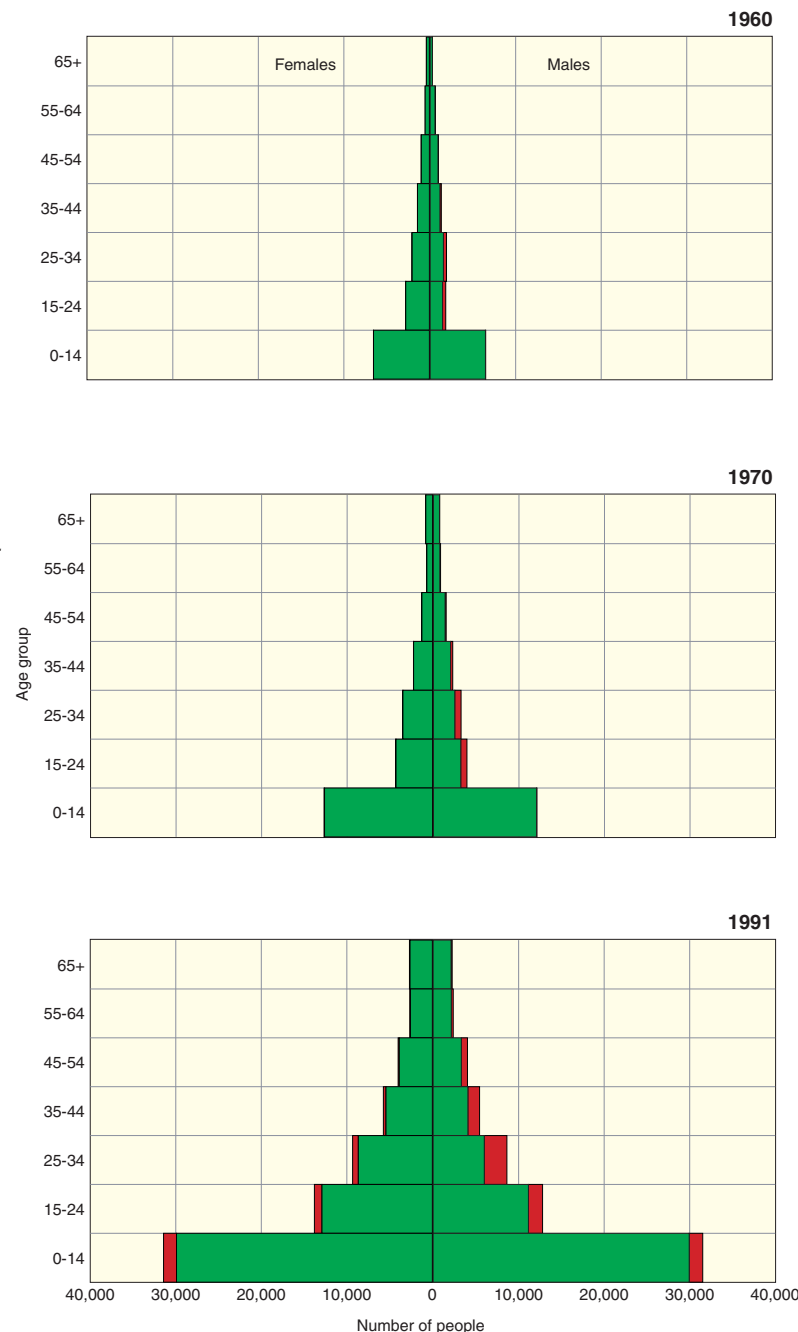
These graphs reflect migration away from Kavango, but large numbers of people have also moved into the region, especially from Angola. In 1991, 8% of all people counted during the census in Kavango had been born in Angola, 2% in Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Oshana or Omusati, and 2% in other places⁸. These figures probably underestimate the number of immigrants since a significant number of people may have been reluctant to declare that they were born in a foreign country. That conclusion is supported by the observation that 15% of all people reported Nyemba (generally considered to be an Angolan language) as their home language in 1999⁷.

In addition to migration in and out of Kavango, there have been large-scale movements of people within the region. One significant movement is of people from rural areas to the urban area of Rundu, thus contributing to the substantial growth of the town. In 1999, 24% of residents in Rundu had moved there within the past 10 years. Two-thirds of people had moved to Rundu from elsewhere in Kavango, while 12% had come from Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Oshana or Omusati, 9% from Angola, 5% from Caprivi and the remainder from elsewhere⁷.

Another significant movement is of people between settlements, and 2.8% of people were reported in 1999 as having arrived to live in new villages within the last three years. Many such movements are from homes along the river to small villages in the inland. At least some of these movements are apparently initiated by wealthier people who establish cattle posts in unsettled areas, and then recruit family members and other people to live at the cattle posts. These new settlements become more permanent and developed as the new settlers clear land for crops, and boreholes are drilled nearby. However, it is also evident that many such small settlements do not last permanently, their residents either moving back to the river or to other new villages in the interior.

Figure 23

The age and sex structure of the population in 1960, 1970 and 1991, and the number of people speaking Kavango languages resident inside the region (green bars) and elsewhere in Namibia (red bars)⁹.



Households and housing conditions

The majority of people live in rural households consisting of about 6-7 people, while urban homes in Rundu are smaller on average, consisting of 5-6 people (Figure 24). However, there are also substantial numbers of bigger homes of 10 and more people. Female-headed households are smaller (average of 5 people) than male-headed homes (7 people). About 70% of households are headed by men, both in rural areas and Rundu. Most households have about one active person for each dependant in the home. A dependant is someone under the age of 15 or older than 64, and dependency ratios are calculated as the total number of dependants as a percentage of the total population. In 1991 the dependency ratio was 51%, while an estimate in 1999 gives the ratio as 46%.

As might be expected, the great majority of homes rely on locally available natural resources for fuel and building materials. Thus, 97% of homes use wood for cooking, and 92% have the walls of their houses made of wood or mud. Eighty four percent of houses have grass roofs, most others being of iron (9%) or wood or sticks. A slight change in sources of domestic water is shown in the following table.

Table 5 : Percentages of homes using different sources of domestic water in 1991 and 1999^{7,8}.

	Piped water	Wells	Boreholes	River water
1991	14%	12%	24%	48%
1999	18%	7%	24%	41%

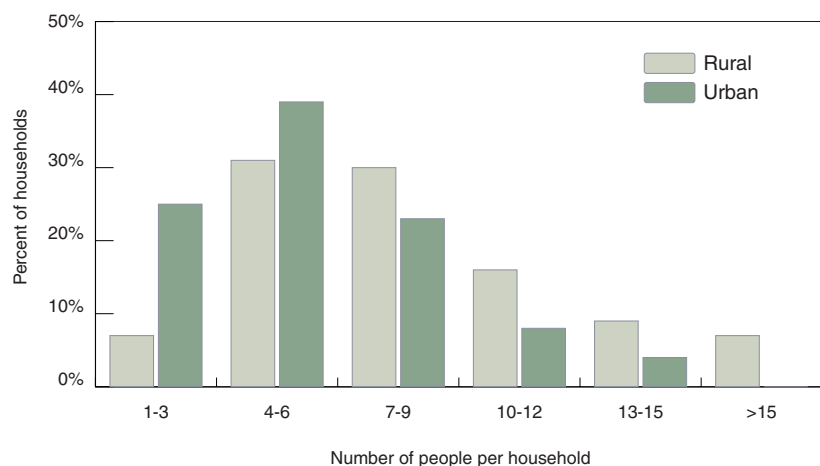


Figure 24
Percentages of rural and urban households of different sizes⁸.

Health

A comprehensive set of reliable statistics to reflect on health issues is currently not available. However, it is clear that many people in the region suffer from diseases and conditions commonly associated with a poor, rural and subtropical environment. The most important of these are malaria, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, malnutrition and bilharzia, the latter ailment being common along the river. HIV infection rates have risen dramatically in recent years (Figure 25), as reflected by rates of infection among pregnant women attending four hospitals. The figures, which are reliable indicators of infection rates among all sexually active adults, suggest that rates of infection may have stabilised at about 15-20%.

Mortality rates among children are high, Caprivi being the only region in Namibia with higher death rates. Of 1 000 children born in the Kavango, 84 die before the age of one, 109 will not reach the age of five, and 122 will die before the age of ten years.

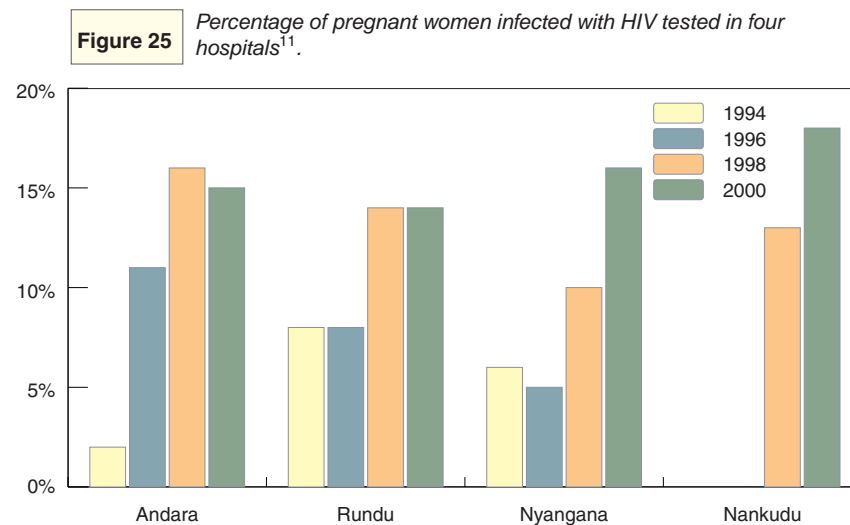
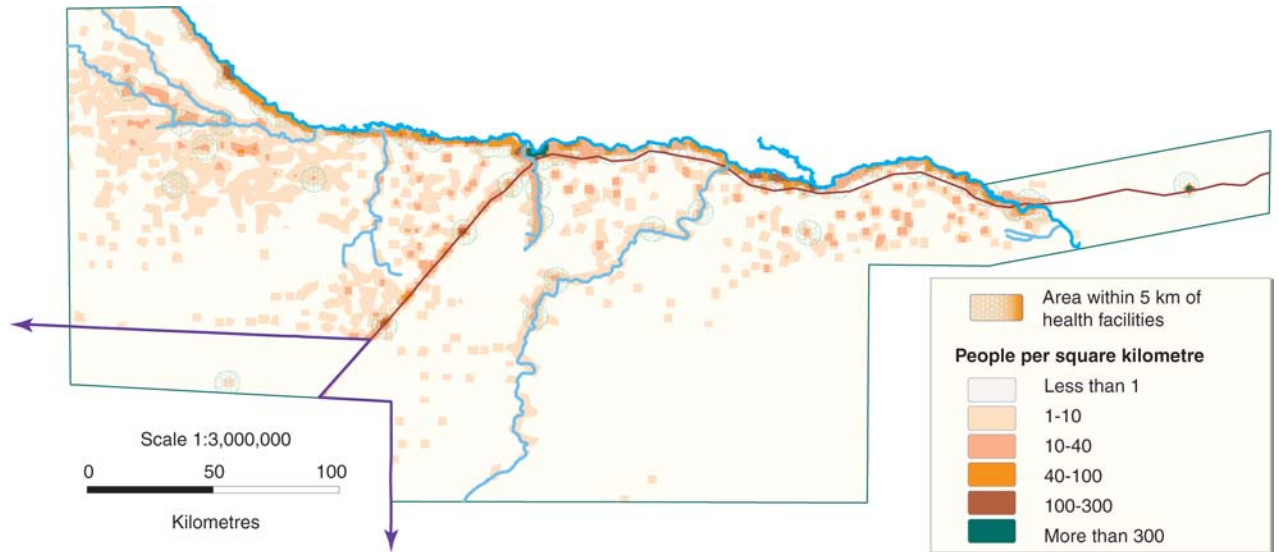


Figure 25 Percentage of pregnant women infected with HIV tested in four hospitals¹¹.

Figure 26 provides an indication of the breadth of coverage of health facilities. This is based on the assumption that people within 5 kilometres of these facilities have good access to health services. Using the underlying density of people, estimates suggest about 67% of people live within 5 kilometres of a health facility, leaving about 33% of the population beyond 5 kilometres of health services.

Figure 26 Areas within 5 kilometres of health facilities compared with the density of people.

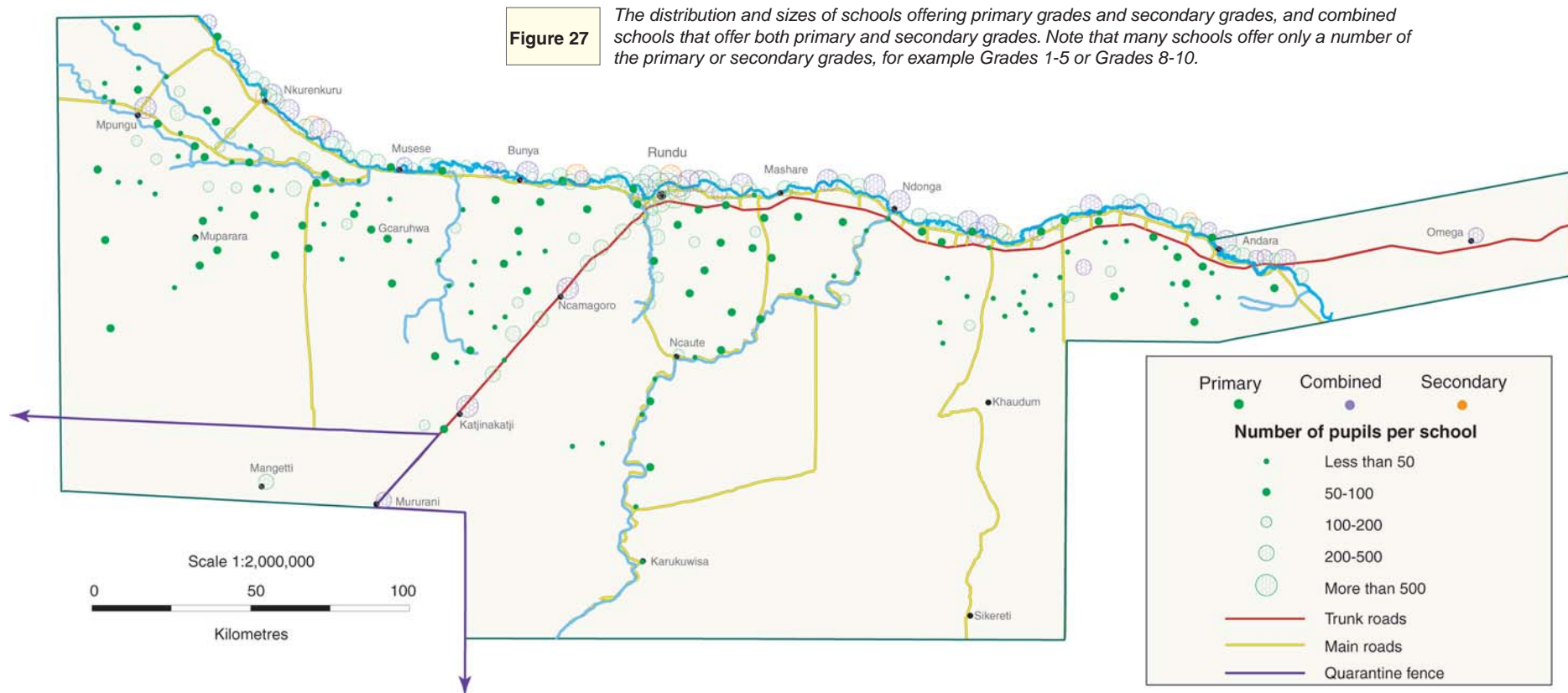


Education

Compared with other regions in Namibia, the education system in Kavango is extremely deficient. Teachers are less qualified than elsewhere, there are few secondary schools, physical facilities at schools are often in bad shape, most adults have received little formal education, and relatively few children complete their schooling.

In the middle of 1999, there were some 58 000 children enrolled at 301 schools (Figure 27). The many schools along the river and the road between Mururani and Rundu are comparatively large, while those elsewhere in the inland areas are much smaller. Almost all the small, inland schools offer only lower primary grades, so most children in those

areas are forced to either drop out of school after completing the first few grades or to leave home and move to a school offering higher grades along the river.



In addition to the lack of schools offering higher primary grades in the inland areas, there is also a lack of schools providing secondary grades along the river. This is one reason why there are so many more pupils in primary than in secondary grades (Figure 28). There are also more boys than girls in secondary grades, largely because many girls drop out of school as a result of teenage pregnancies.

Levels of education amongst adults are extremely low, especially for women and older people (Figure 29). In 1996, only 4% of men and 1.5% of women aged 15 and older had completed Grade 11 or any higher level of education. Taking the completion of Grade 4 as an indicator of literacy, most men older than about 50 years and most women older than about 40 cannot read or write.

Figure 28 Numbers of male and female pupils in Grades 1-12 in 1999¹².

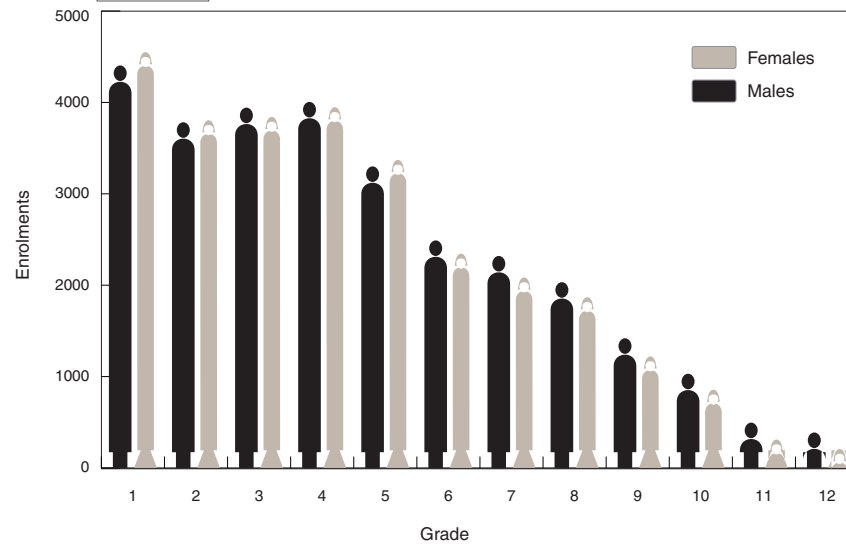
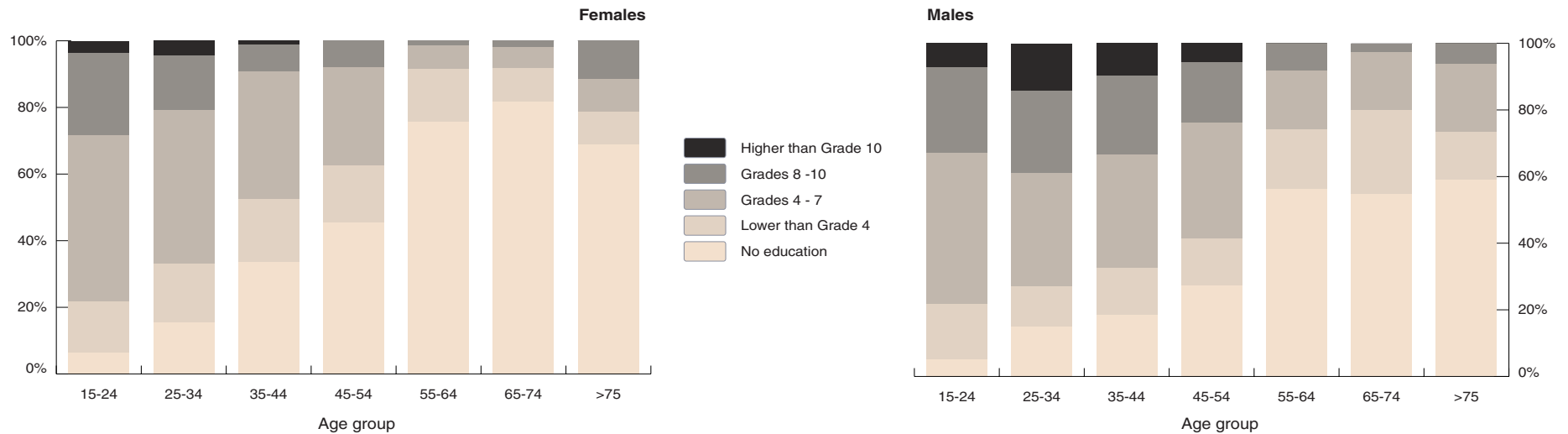


Figure 29 Percentages of people aged 15 and older that have completed various levels of education¹³.



Total enrolments in the 12 grades have increased from about 41 100 pupils in 1992 to 58 100 in 1999. Part of that increase has been due to population growth, but enrolments also increased because more children now remain at school for longer to complete higher grades (Figure 30). For example, numbers of Grade 4 pupils almost doubled from 4200 to 1992 to 8000 in 1999, and there were only 212 Grade 12's in 1992 compared with 600 in 1999. By contrast, numbers of Grade 1's dropped because of policy changes introduced to prevent pupils from failing and repeating the same grades; the lower grades were previously over-enrolled with many repeaters before these changes.

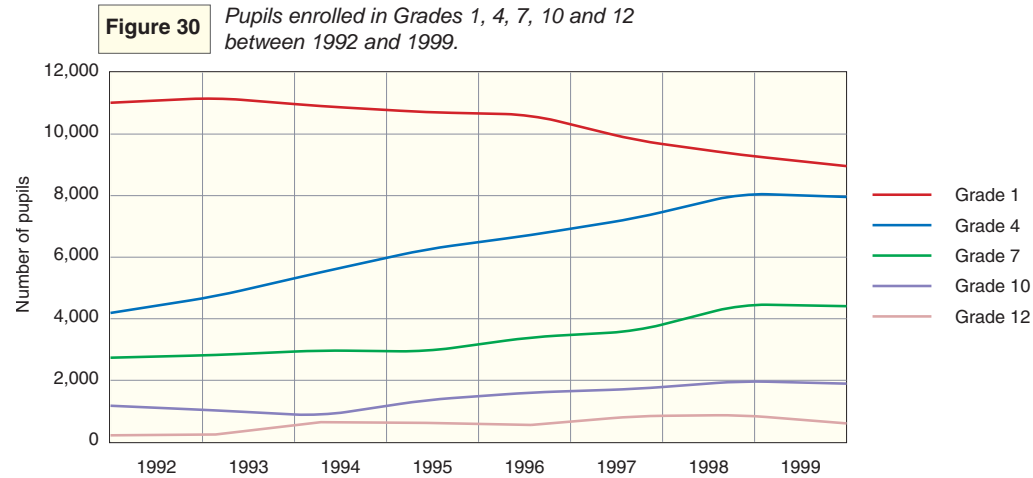


Figure 31 provides an indication of the breadth of coverage of schools. This is based on the assumption that people within 5 kilometres of schools have good access to education. Using the underlying density of people, estimates suggest about 94% of people live within 5 kilometres of a school, and 6% live beyond a distance of 5 kilometres of schools.

