

انجمن پژوهشگران ایران

Association des Chercheurs Iraniens (ACI)

# Iranian Identity and the Future of Iran

**Internet Survey – 1 October – 31 December 2007**

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**An analytical look to the responses of  
the 20-29 year old age group from Iran**

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**Detailed analysis of responses from outside Iran  
and other analysis with over 1000 tables allowing for  
the most valuable cross referencing of information are  
available through ACI's London Office.**

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## **Survey Aims and Objectives**

### **Iranian Identity and the future of Iran**

- Have you ever thought what gives us our identity and how we identify with it?
- Has our self confidence been damaged?
- If we recognise the sources of our identity we can move towards a free and peaceful society.
- We hope that with this study we can move a little closer to recognising what is important to us at this juncture in time.

The survey's aim was to identify the beliefs, anxieties and desires of the generation born since the 1979 Revolution. ACI firmly believes that overcoming obstacles to democracy, social justice and observance of human rights is not possible without careful planning. As such, any step towards planning a future for Iran must be taken in full knowledge of the positive or negative effects of three decades of religious ideological rule over the largest age group (20 -29) in Iran. With the hope that the finding of this survey is a step in the right direction.

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## General Findings

*Based on answers from within Iran*

The highest number of participants fell in the 20 – 29 years age group.

It is evident from the final analysis that various social groups participated in the survey including 6% who held similar or the same beliefs and viewpoints as the Islamic regime. Between 15 to 20% were made up of those who remained indifferent therefore leaving a majority in opposition to the Islamic Republic at varying levels.

Two main traits were clearly identified:

- 1- the level of importance of Iranian identity over religious or ethnic identities and that the majority of this age group identified themselves with Iran's ancient civilisation and culture;
- 2- Loss of faith or anti-religion sentiments.

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## Significant Findings

*Based on answers from within Iran*

Strong Belief that Islamic Republic is heading towards uncertainty and chaos; that a ruling elite holds the power; that it is an undemocratic dictatorship and a very negative or negative view of the Islamic Republic are how 20 – 29 years old age group living in Iran responded to questions about the Islamic Republic.

23% of Iran's 70 million population fall in the 20-29 years old age group. This generation, born since the 1979 Revolution, make up the largest age group in Iran. In an internet survey carried out over a three month period their beliefs, anxieties and desires were measured.

They show a strong sense of identity with Iran's ancient civilisation and culture and their sense of Iranianness is far stronger than their religious or ethnic identity.

Failure to islamise the society in the last three decades is clearly demonstrated by answers to the section dedicated in assessing religion and religious viewpoints. Although state published figures declare 99.34% of Iranians as Moslems, almost 40% of this age group declared itself as without any religious convictions. Furthermore, almost 22% declared that they have turned against religion.

The survey leaves no doubt that economic instability is the main point of concern (over 80%) for this age group.

Disillusioned and with little or no hope for their future almost 90% of them wish to leave Iran at varying degrees.

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## Other Findings

*Based on answers from within Iran*

### **Economy**

- Economic hardship is demonstrated through the following responses:
  - High percentage of the participants remained single (84.3% men; 71.3% women)
  - High percentage of the participants remained living at home (76.7% men, 81.2% women)

### **Education**

- Level of education was high among both men and women of this age group (graduate level: 44.2% men, 52.5% women). Yet, higher numbers of women had attained or were still studying for post graduate degrees (19.3% men, 25.6% women). Interestingly both men and women had chosen technical sciences, engineering and computers as their main subject.
  - Based on available data from Iran these figures correctly reflect the present situation in Iran. It further points to the fact that since culturally men are identified as “providers”, they enter the job market as soon as possible. On the other hand, it could be an indication of lack of job opportunity for women which in turn encourage them to study to a higher level.

### **Religion**

- Men’s religious beliefs and convictions were lower than women in this age group. A main point evident throughout the answers to this section of the survey was that as their age increased, religious beliefs and convictions decreased.
  - Only about 6% which remained constant throughout the survey declared that their religious beliefs were stronger. Their other answers were in support of the Islamic Republic.

### **Identity**

- The strength with which Iranian identity was chosen repeatedly throughout the survey could be viewed as a strong reaction to the

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governing religious ideology and the failure of three decades of efforts to replace Iranian identity with Islamic identity.

### ***Media and Communications***

This age group has little trust in the Iranian State broadcasters and their main source of information is the internet followed by Persian language satellite broadcasts into Iran. Among the foreign state satellite broadcasts in Persian the Voice of America benefited from the highest level of trust and audience numbers.

### ***Views about the Islamic Republic and the Future***

- The overwhelming view was very negative or negative towards the Islamic Republic (over 80%). Fewer than 7% found it democratic.
- The main concern expressed was economic instability. This also figured high among women (80.9%)
- Lack of democratic system for men (71.4%) and fears about security and safety for women (72.6%) were named as second point of concern.
- Lack of job security was the third concern for both men and women of this age group in close percentages (63.7% women, 66.5% men).
- Complete and relative hopelessness was how this young generation viewed its future (78.5% men, 85.9% women). The higher level of hopelessness among the women is in keeping with the other findings of this survey.

**A full statement on survey methods,  
survey questions and charts follow.**

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## Methodology

The Survey was prepared in Persian for those in Iran and in Persian and English for the participants outside Iran. The questions were adjusted for those answering from outside Iran.

The questionnaire for those living inside Iran consisted of 33 substantive questions including 8 demographic questions.

The questionnaire for those living outside Iran consisted of 34 substantive questions including 12 demographic questions.

During the three month period (1 October – 31 December 2007) 5112 forms were filled and returned. Redundant posts (votes with similar key answers) within a few minutes by the same IP address and the same user agent were filtered (1088 forms).

Therefore, 4024 reliable answers were used. 2523 lived in Iran (72% male, 28% female) and 1501 lived outside Iran (75% male, 25% female) of these 314 chose to answer in English.

The 20-29 years old age group made up 52.7% of the 2523 participants from Iran (59.6% men, 40.4% women).

Internet was employed instead of face-to-face research in Iran because of the constraints involved. Face-to-face data gathering in Iran can be difficult for interviewers who may become liable for prosecution and imprisonment.

According to Internet World Stats in December 2007 Iran had an estimated national internet usage of 18 million with an international penetration rate of 25.6%, per ITU<sup>1</sup>. This is a growth of 7100 percent in the 2000 – 2007 period. Internet World Stats estimated internet user in Iran to be 23 million as of March 2008 with a penetration rate of 34.9%, per ITU<sup>2</sup>.

The survey yielded demographic results similar to those available from the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) and based on the national census carried out in Iran during 2006.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8611210365>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm>

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## Charts

Based on responses from within Iran (20-29 age group)

### Socio-Political Outlook

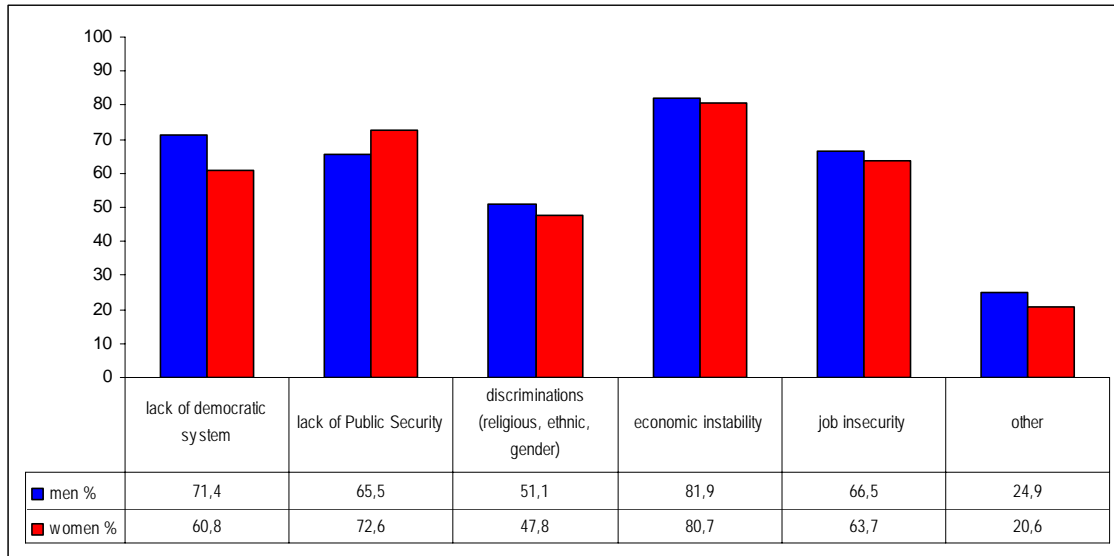


Figure 1 - Question 32: What do feel the most shortcomings are? (Multiple answer)

### Religion and Religious Views

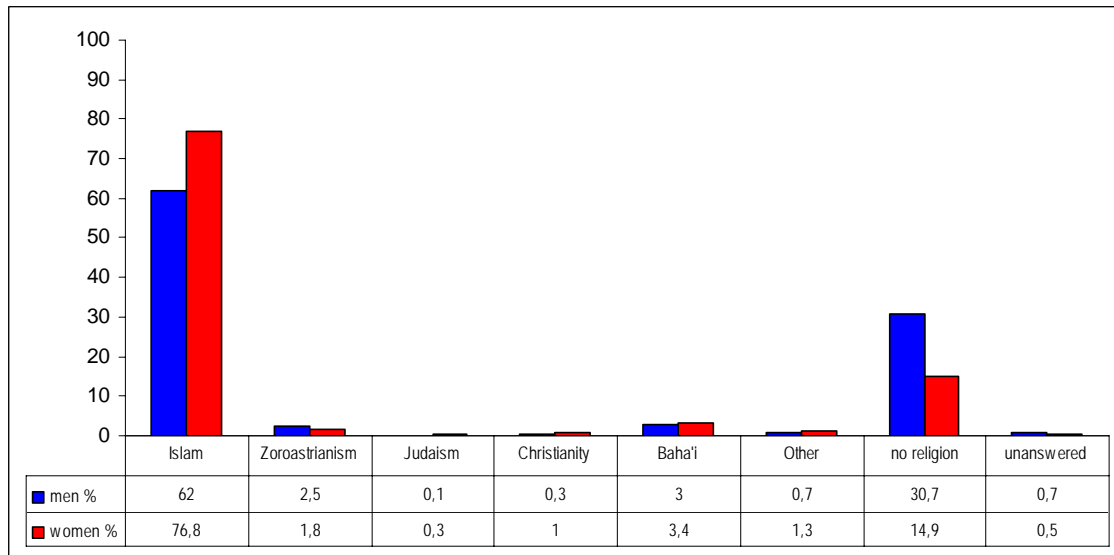


Figure 2 - Question 9: My religion is

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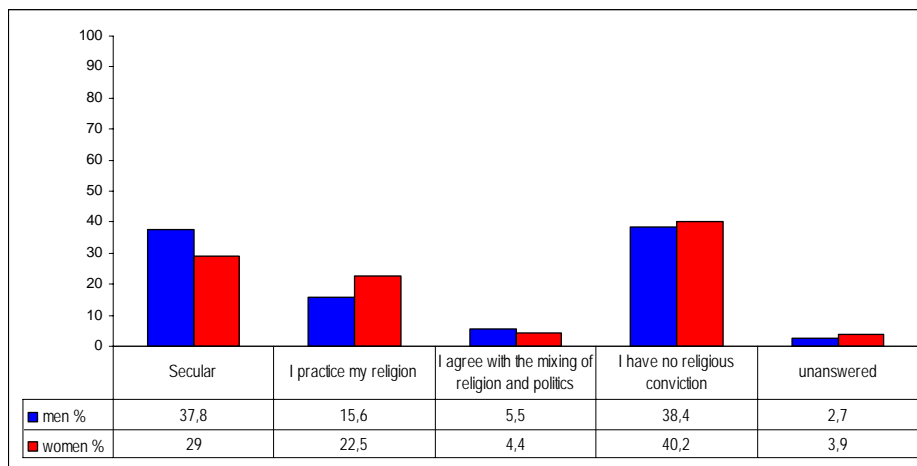


Figure 3 - Question 10: My religious viewpoint / conviction

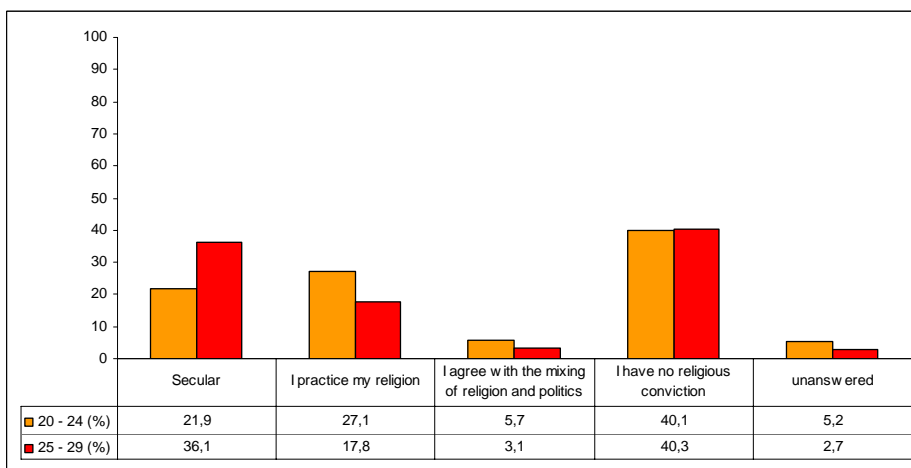


Figure 4 - Question 10: My religious viewpoint / conviction - (Women / By Age)

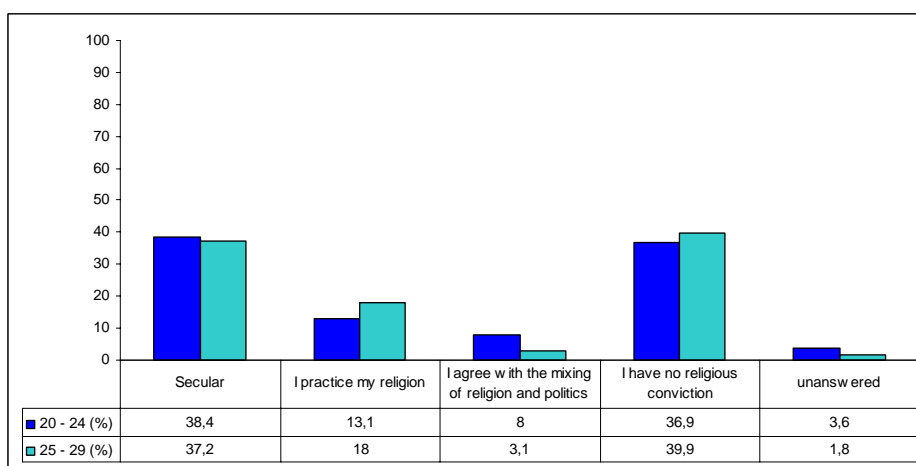


Figure 5 - Question 10: My religious viewpoint / conviction – (Men / By Age)

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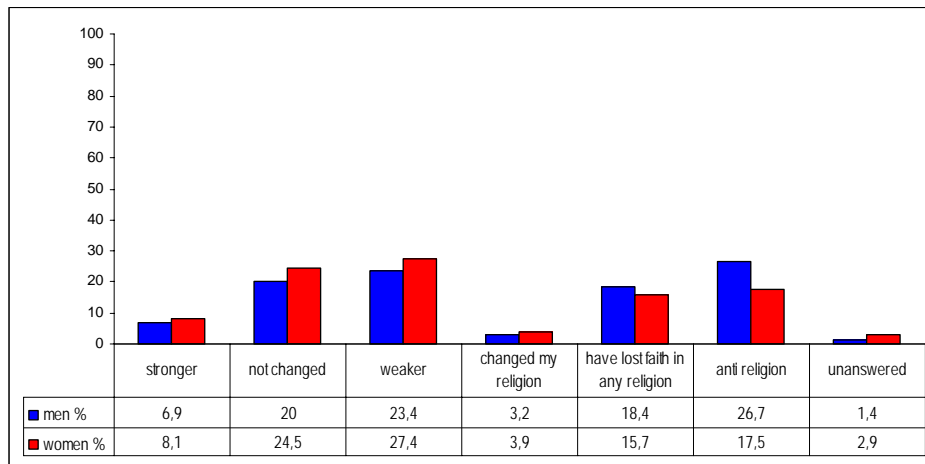


Figure 6 - Question 11: In view of the events and developments in Iran under the Islamic Republic, How have your religious beliefs been affected?

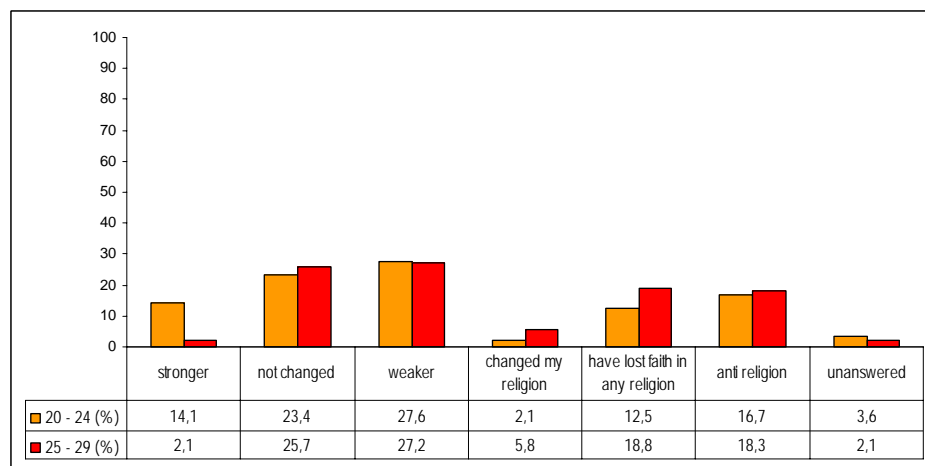


Figure 7 - Question 11: In view of the events and developments in Iran under the Islamic Republic, How have your religious beliefs been affected? (Women / By Age)

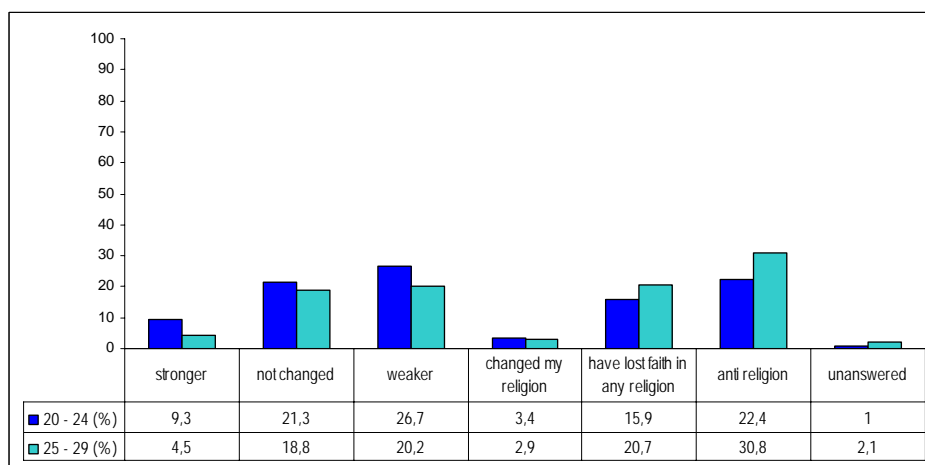


Figure 8 - Question 11: In view of the events and developments in Iran under the Islamic Republic, How have your religious beliefs been affected? (Men / By Age)

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## Identity

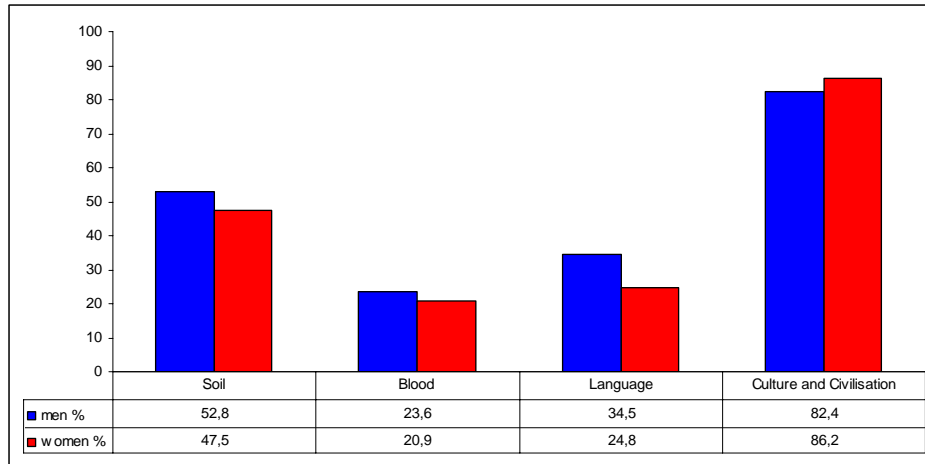


Figure 9 - Question 14: Where do you derive your identity from? (Multiple answer)

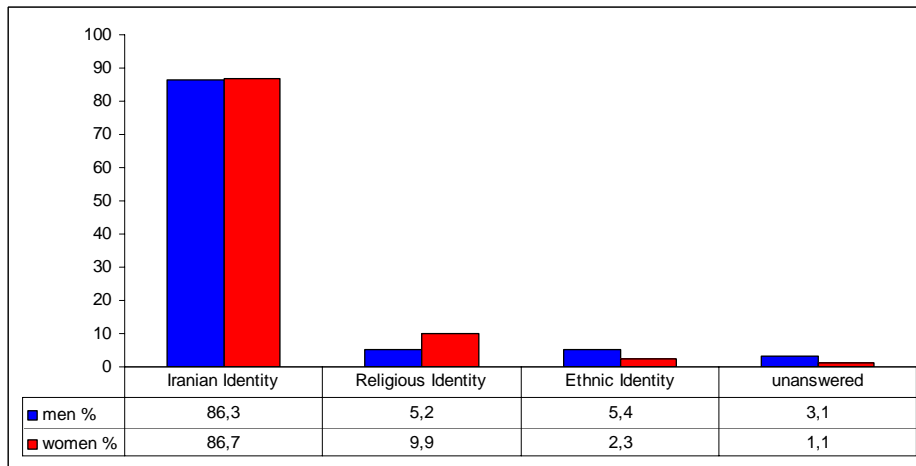


Figure 10 -Question 16 : Which of the following idnetity is important to you

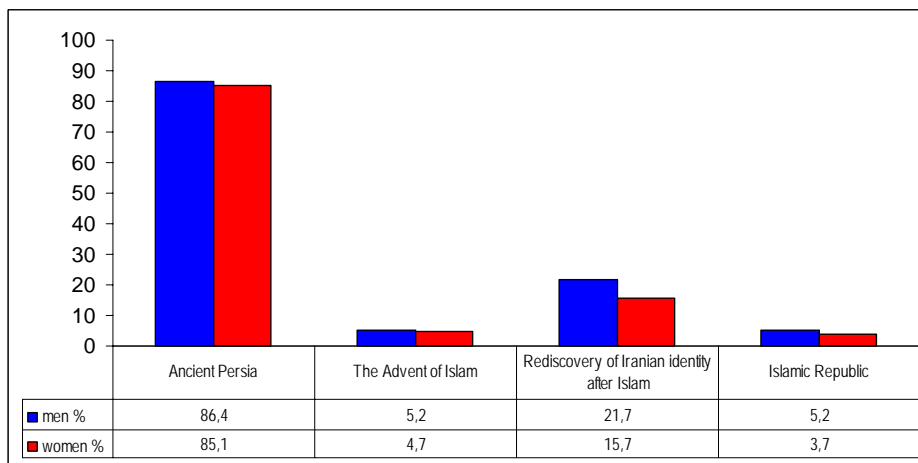


Figure 11 - Question 17: Which historical period do you derive your identity from? (Multiple answer)

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## Media and Communications

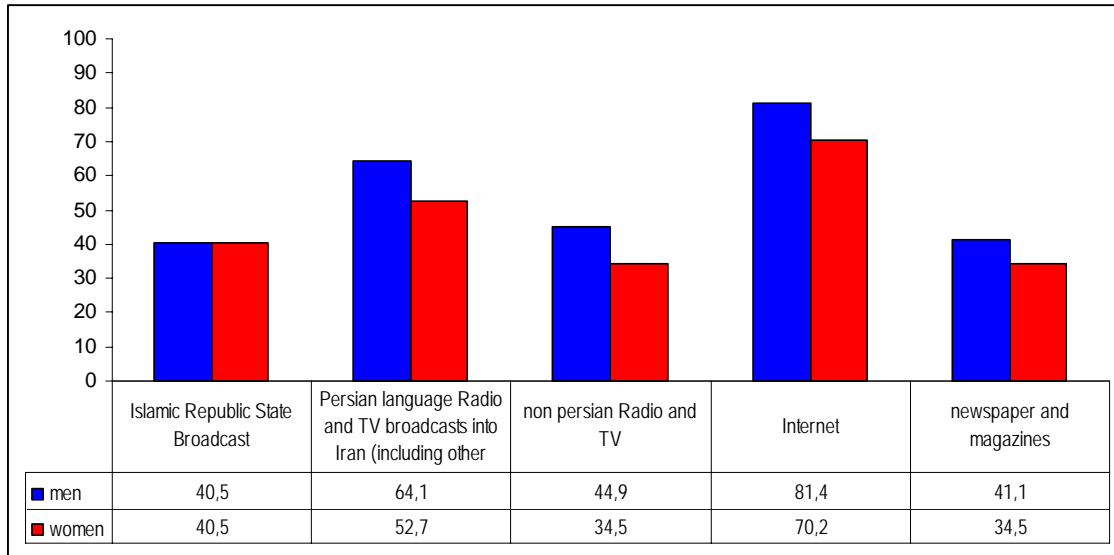


Figure 12 - Question 12: I receive my information / news about events in Iran from the following media (multiple answer)

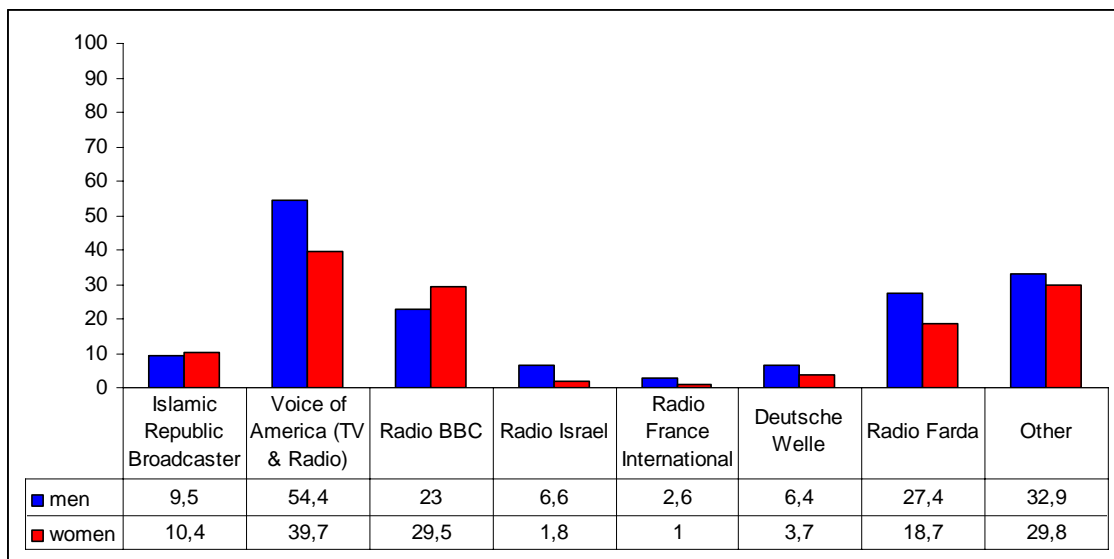


Figure 13 - Question 13: - I trust the following news sources (Multiple answers)

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## Views on the Islamic Republic

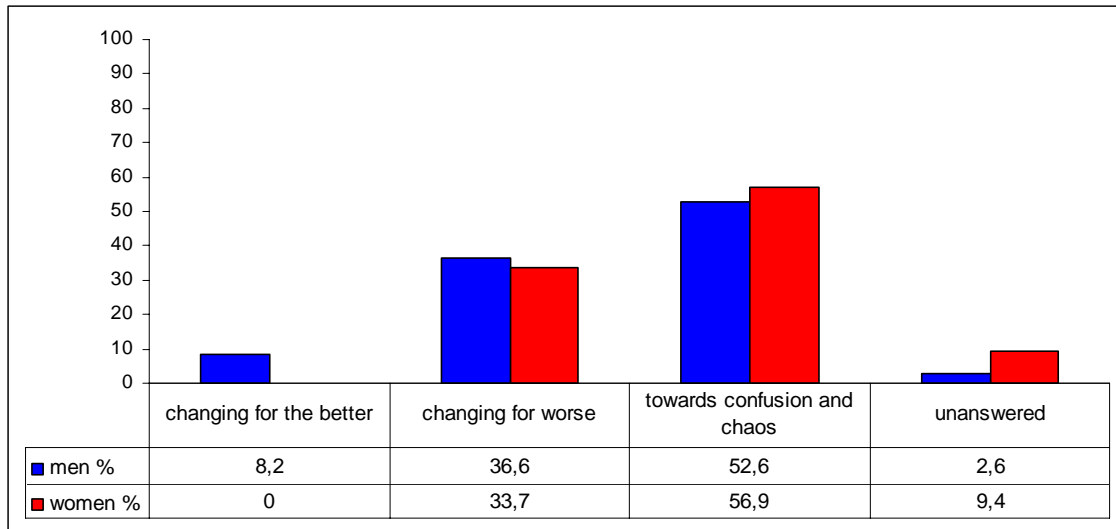


Figure 14 - Question 31: How do you think the Islamic Republic will evolve?

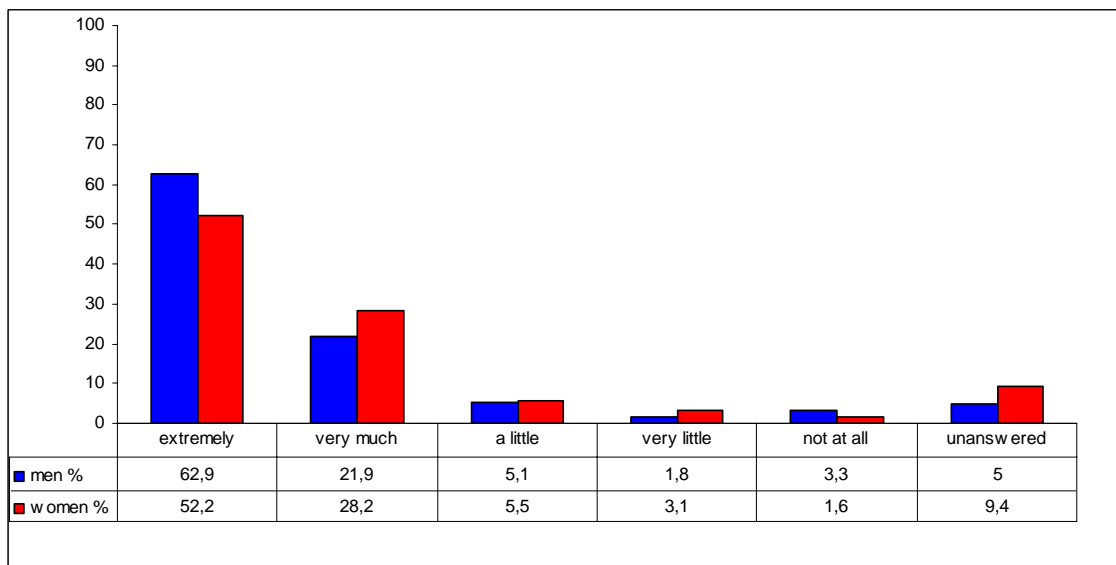


Figure 15 - Question 25 - In your opinion how much of the power in Iran is in the hand of an elite group (oligarchs)?

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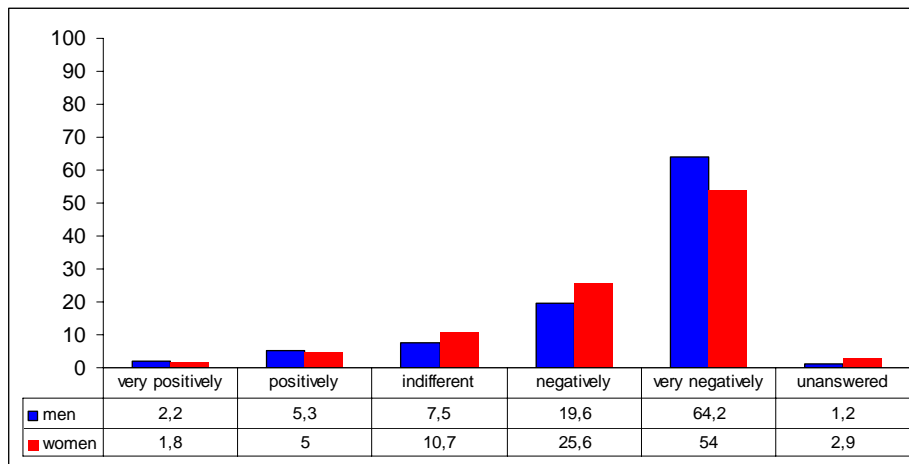


Figure 16 - Question 23: How do you view the Islamic Republic?

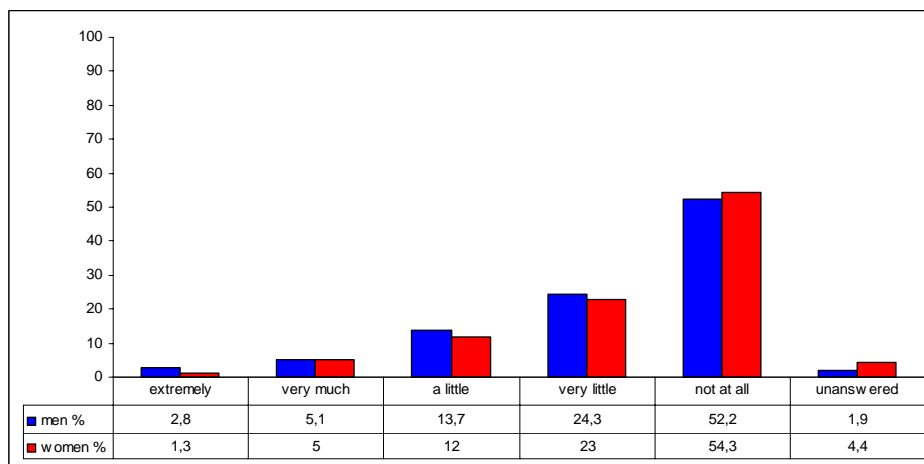


Figure 17 - Question 24: In your opinion how democratic is the Islamic Republic?

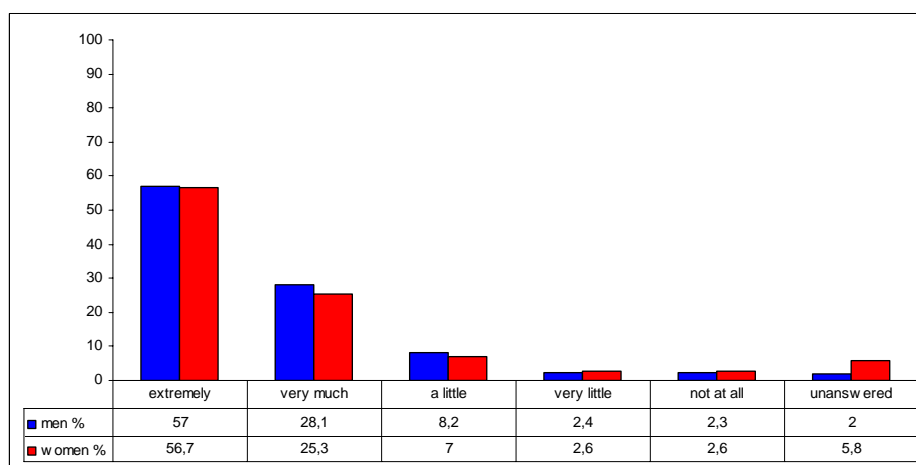


Figure 18 - Question 26: In your opinion how dictatorial is the Islamic Republic's governing structure?

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## Personal View to the Future

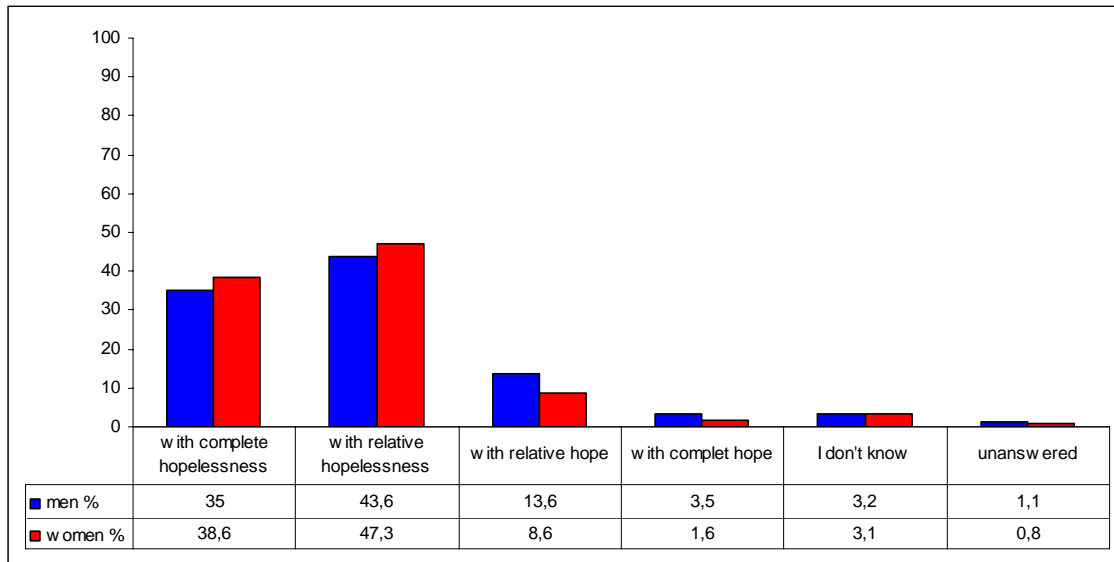


Figure 19 - Question 21: How do you / Iran's young generation view their future?

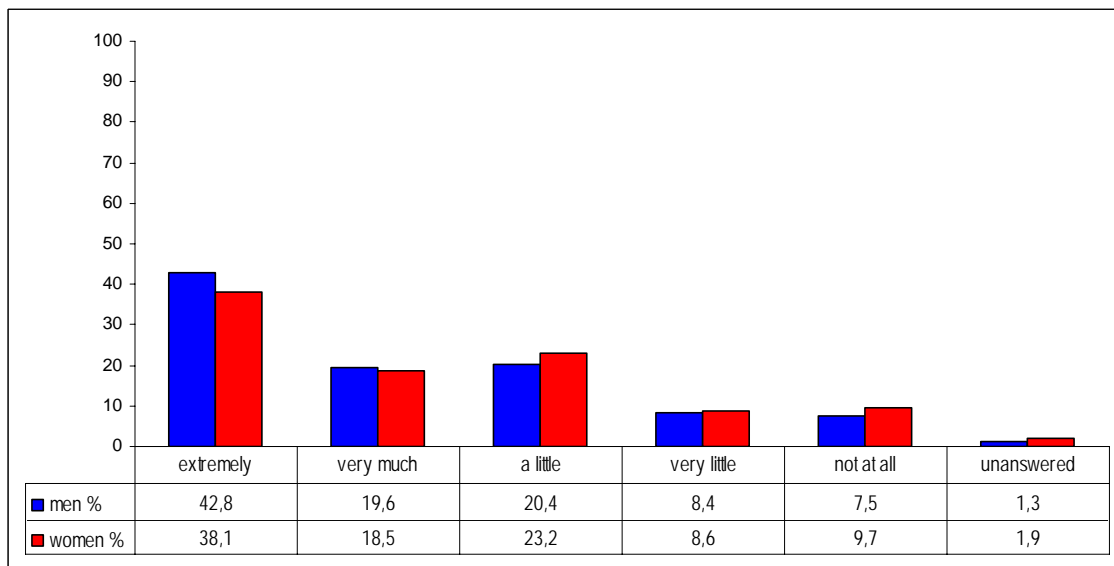


Figure 20 - Question 33: Are you thinking of leaving Iran?

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## Questionnaire – Iranians Living Inside Iran

### Demographic Details

#### 1 - Gender

Male	Female
------	--------

#### 2- Place of Birth

Iran	Outside Iran
------	--------------

#### 3 - Age

Under 15	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 34	35 - 39
40 – 44	45 – 49	50 – 54	55 – 59	60 – 64	65 - 69
70 And Above					

#### 4 - Marital Status

Single	Married	Living Together	Divorced
Separated	Spouse in Another Country	Widowed	

#### 5 - I Live:

On My Own	With Family
Sometimes With Family, Sometimes Alone	

#### 6 - My Education Level

Below High School Diploma	High School Diploma	Vocational/ Professional
Graduate Degree	Post Grad / Masters	Doctorate And Higher

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## 7 - My Subject

(You may choose more than one topic)

Sciences	Medical/ Pharmaceutical/ Psychology	Technical Sciences/ Engineering / IT	Humanities
Education	Arts	Religious Science	Other

## 8 - Your Employment Status

(You may choose more than one topic)

Still Studying	Stock Market	Sales	Service Industry
Industry / Agriculture	Education/Teaching	Administrative	Military / Police
Housewife/husband	Unemployed	Other	

## Religion and Religious Beliefs

9 - My religion is:

Islam	Zoroastrianism	Judaism	Christianity
Baha'i	Another religion	I have no religion	

10 – My religious viewpoint / conviction:

Secular	I practice my religion	I agree with the mixture of religion and politics	I have no religious conviction
---------	------------------------	---	--------------------------------

11- In view of the events and developments in Iran under the Islamic Republic, how have your religious beliefs been affected?

Become stronger	Become weaker	I have changed my religion
I have lost faith in religion	I have become anti religion	

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## Media and Communication

**12- I receive my information/news about events in Iran from the following media: (you may choose more than one topic)**

Islamic Republic's State Broadcasts (Seda va Sima - IRIB)	TV and Radio broadcasts outside Iran either in Persian or other languages spoken in Iran	TV and Radio of my country of residence
Printed matter such as newspapers and magazines	Internet	

**13 - I trust the following news sources: (You may choose more than one topic)**

Islamic Republic's State Broadcasts (Seda va Sima - IRIB)	Voice of America TV and Radio	Radio BBC	Radio Israel
Radio France Internationale (RFI)	Deutsche Welle	Radio Farda	Others

## Identity

**14 - Where do you derive your identity from?**

(You may choose more than one topic)

My place of birth (soil)	Family bloodline (blood)
Language	Culture and civilisation

**15 - At home I mostly speak:**

Persian (Persian)	Azari	Kurdish	Balouchi
Gilaki	<u>Armenian</u>	Asouri	Turkamani
Another language of Iran	Another language		

**16 - Which of the following identity is more important to you?**

Iranian Identity	Religious Identity	Ethnic Identity
------------------	--------------------	-----------------

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**17 - In which of the following historical periods do you draw your Iranian identity from?**

(You may choose more than one topic)

Ancient Iran (Persian Empire)	The Advent of Islam	Reclaiming Iranian identity after Islam	The Islamic Republic period
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**18 - I like the following music:**

(You may choose more than one topic)

Iranian music	Western Music
Eastern music other than Iranian	None of the above

**19 - I like the following types of Iranian music**

(You may choose more than one topic)

Traditional music	Folk music	Pop Music
Other types of music	I don't listen to music	

**20 - Do you like Iranian poetry and literature?**

(You may choose more than one topic)

Classical poetry and literature (Ferdowsi, Hafez, Sa'adi ...)	Contemporary Iranian poetry and literature (Sadeqh Hedayat, Forough Farokhzad ...)	I'm not interested
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**Socio-Political Issues**

**21- How does Iran's young generation view their future?**

Complete hopelessness	Relative hopelessness
Relatively hopeful	Hopeful
I don't know	

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**22 - Are you interested in the political developments in Iran?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

**23- How do you view the Islamic Republic?**

Very positively	Positively	Indifferent
Negatively	Very negatively	

**24- In your opinion how democratic is the Islamic Republic?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

**25 - In your opinion how much of the power in Iran is in the hand of an elite group (oligarchs)?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

**26 - In your opinion how dictatorial is the Islamic Republic's governing structure?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

**27 – How safe/secure do you feel in your everyday life?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

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**28 – How discriminated do you feel in your everyday life?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

**29 – How stable do you feel economically in your everyday life?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

**30 - How much job security do you feel you have?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

**31 - How do you think the Islamic Republic will evolve?**

Change for the better	Change for worse	Towards confusion and Chaos
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**32 – What do feel the most shortcomings are?**

(You may choose more than one topic)

Lack of a democratic system	public security	gender, religious ethnic and other discriminations
economic instability	job security	other

**33 – Do think about leaving Iran?**

Extremely	Very much	A little
Very little	Not at all	

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## Questionnaire – Iranians Living Outside Iran

### 1- Gender

Male	Female
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### 2- Place of Birth

Iran	Outside Iran
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### 3- Country of Residence

Europe	USA	Australia And New Zealand	Japan
Turkey	Persian Gulf States	Other	

### 4- Age

Under 15	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 34	35 - 39
40 – 44	45 – 49	50 – 54	55 – 59	60 – 64	65 - 69
70 And Above					

### 5- At What Age Did You Leave Iran?

Under 15	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 34	35 - 39
40 – 44	45 – 49	50 – 54	55 – 59	60 – 64	65 - 69
70 And Above	I was not born in Iran				

### 6- Marital Status

Single	Married	Living Together	Divorced
Separated	Spouse in Another Country	Widowed	

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### 7- Your Spouse / Partner

Iranian	Not Iranian	I'm not married/have a partner
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### 8- How Interested Are You In Sharing Your Life With An Iranian Partner?

Extremely	Very Much	Little	Very Little
Not At All			

### 9- I Live:

On My Own	With Family
Sometimes With Family, Sometimes Alone	

### 10- Your Education Level

Below High School Diploma	High School Diploma	Vocational/ Professional
Graduate Degree	Post Grad / Masters	Doctorate And Higher

### 11- Your Subject

(You may choose more than one topic)

Sciences	Medical/ Pharmaceutical/ Psychology	Technical Sciences/ Engineering / IT	Humanities
Education	Arts	Religious Science	Other

### 12- Your Employment Status

(You may choose more than one topic)

Still Studying	Stock Market	Sales	Service Industry
Industry / Agriculture	Education/Teaching	Administrative	Military / Police
Housewife/husband	Unemployed	Other	

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## Religion and Religious views/convictions

### 13- My religion is

Islam	Zoroastrianism	Judaism	Christianity
Baha'i	Another religion	I have no religion	

### 14- My religious view / conviction is

Secular	I practice my religion	I agree with the mixture of religion and politics	I have no religious conviction
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### 15- In view of the events and developments in Iran under the Islamic Republic, how have your religious beliefs been affected? My religious beliefs have:

Become stronger	Become weaker	I have changed my religion
I have lost faith in religion	I have become anti religion	

## Media and Communication

### 16- I receive my information / news about events in Iran from the following media:

(You may choose more than one topic)

Islamic Republic's State Broadcasts (Seda va Sima - IRIB)	TV and Radio broadcasts outside Iran either in Persian or other languages spoken in Iran	TV and Radio of my country of residence
Printed matter such as newspapers and magazines	Internet	

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**17- I trust the following news sources:  
 (You may choose more than one topic)**

Islamic Republic's State Broadcasts (Seda va Sima - IRIB)	Voice of America TV and Radio	Radio BBC	Radio Israel
Radio France Internationale (RFI)	Deutsche Welle	Radio Farda	Others

**18- How do you make contact with other Iranians in and out of Iran?  
 (You may choose more than one topic)**

I travel to Iran	I have a circle of Iranian friends where I live	Telephone
Internet	Others	

**Identity**

**19- Where do you derive your identity from?  
 (You may choose more than one topic)**

My place of birth (soil)	Family bloodline (blood)
Language	Culture and civilisation

**20- At home I mostly speak:**

Persian (Persian)	Azari	Kurdish	Balouchi
Gilaki	Armenian	Asouri	Turkamani
Another language of Iran	The language of my country of residence		

**21- Which of the following identity is more important to you?**

Iranian Identity	Religious Identity	Ethnic Identity
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**26- If there is a sports match (such as football) between Iran and the national team of my country of residence, I would support:**

Iran	My country of residence
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**33- How do you think the Islamic Republic will evolve?**

Change for the better	Change for worse	Towards confusion and Chaos
-----------------------	------------------	-----------------------------

**34- Under what conditions are you prepared to settle back in Iran?**

Establishment of a democratic system	Security and stability	Lack of gender, ethnic, religious and other discriminations	Economic stability
Job security	I am not prepared to return to Iran under any circumstances.		

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## About ACI

Association des Chercheurs Iraniens (ACI), an intellectual forum, works to identify the problems concerning the future of Iran and Iranians. By analysing the issues and problems facing the future of Iran, ACI hopes to offer well-informed and expert solutions to improve and overcome them. Our objective is to offer a framework for social, political, cultural, and economic planning for the future of Iran.

The publication of the papers and communication of such findings to international public and private decision-makers as well as most importantly to the general public is an integral part of our work.

ACI has organised forty six international conferences and published eleven books in the last sixteen years with papers presented by over seven hundred experts and scholars.

ACI is a non-profit, non-partisan international organization based in London with offices in Paris, Berlin, Zurich and Washington D.C. To maintain our independence, we accept no government funding and are funded purely through the generous work of volunteers.

Our belief is that by acting together we can bring about change to establish the democracy, equality, and justice Iranians have been fighting for since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.

This survey is the third of its kind carried out by ACI.

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