

Mission Atlas Project

Iran

(Islamic Republic of Iran *Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran*)

Basic Facts

Name:

The official name is the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran for short. The local long-form name is *Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran*. The country formerly was known as Persia until 1935. Earlier the country was known as the Empire of Iran (*Keshvare Shahanshahiye Iran*). Many refer to the nation adjectivally as *Iranian* or *Irani*

Population:

The 2000 Iranian population was estimated at 67,702,199 people. Population growth at + 1.58 percent will produce a population of 76, 931, 899 by 2010 and further growth at + 1.17 percent will enable population to reach 94,462,501 by 2025.

The population age breakdown is 32.97% are between the ages of 0 – 14, 62.38% are 15 – 64, and 4.65% are over 65. The population growth rate is estimated in 2001 to be 0.72%. The life expectancy for a male is 68.61 years and a female is 71.37 years.

Area:

Iran has 1.648 million square kilometers, which includes 12,000 square kilometers of inland water. Iran also has 2,440 kilometers of coastline. In comparative size, Iran is slightly larger than Alaska.

Iran is located in the Middle East and borders the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, and the Caspian Sea. Geographically, it is between the counties of Iraq and Pakistan. Countries that border Iran include Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan.

Iran is divided into four major land areas: the interior plateau, the mountains, the Caspian Sea coast, and the Khuzistan Plain. The interior plateau occupies half of the total land area and contains two almost uninhabitable deserts, the Dasht-e Kavir and the Dasht-e Lut. They are among the most arid and barren deserts in the world. The mountainous regions include the Elburz and Zargos mountain ranges, which rim most of the interior plateau. The Elburz Mountains are along the northern border of Iran along the Caspian Sea. The Zargos Mountains extend to the south and east from the Turkish and Azerbaijan borders down to the Persian Gulf. The Caspian Sea coast is a narrow strip of land between the Caspian Sea and the Elburz mountains. This is the most heavily populated area of Iran and land most suitable for farming. The Khuzistan Plain is north

of the Persian Gulf, between the Zargos Mountains and the Iraqi border. This plain contains Iran's richest petroleum deposits.

Economy:

The economy of Iran grew rapidly under Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, when he used part of their oil reserves to finance new businesses and industries during the 1960's and 70's. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) multiplied several times during this time period.

The revolution of 1979 and the war against Iraq severally affected the economy. During the revolution, many trained workers, managers, and technicians left the country because they did not support the new Islamic regime. Many factories were forced to close during this time, as trained workers became scarce. The war with Iraq caused oil production and exports to drop. After the revolution, the GDP decreased sharply.

Service industries account for 50% of the GDP and employs 46% of the workers. These include government agencies, hospitals, schools, banks, insurance companies, and restaurants.

Agriculture accounts for 23% of the GDP and employs 28% of the workers. Iran can only farm about $\frac{1}{4}$ of its land due to water shortages, so large amounts of food must be imported. Wheat and barley are the major crops, grown on 75% of the farming land. Farmers also raise corn, cotton, dates and others fruits, lentils, nuts, rice, sugar beets, tea, and tobacco. Cattle, goats, and sheep are raised for dairy products and meat.

Manufacturing and construction account for 18% of Iran's GDP and 25% of its workforce. The country manufactures brick, cement, food products, petroleum products, and textiles.

Mining comprises 9% of the GDP and 1% of the workforce. Petroleum is the most important mineral product and Iran has oil fields with contain 48 billion barrels of petroleum. The National Iranian Oil Company operates the oil industry and is owned by the government. Iran remains one of the world's largest producers of oil.

The fishing industry of Iran is known for their main product of sturgeon eggs, which is used to make caviar. Fishing also includes carp, catfish, whitefish, and white salmon in the Caspian Sea and sardines, shrimp, and tuna in the Persian Gulf.

Petroleum accounts for 90% of exports from Iran. Exports also include caviar, cotton, dried fruits, mineral ores, nuts, and spices. Leading imports include electric appliances, food, industrial machinery, medicine, and military equipment. Iran's trading partners include Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.

Government:

After the 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers drafted a constitution for the new Islamic republic. The constitution is based on the teachings of Islam and the nation's supreme leader is the *faqih*, a scholar in Islamic law and the religious leader of most Iranians. Khomeini was named the first *faqih* by the Constitution, which gave him tremendous power, as he was placed above all government officials. Khomeini held this position until his death in 1989, when Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was chosen as the next leader.

Iran's Constitution establishes a three-branch government: executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Many Islamic clergy have prominent places in all the branches of government. The executive branch is controlled by the president, which is elected by the people for a four-year term. The president is responsible for choosing his cabinet, which helps him rule.

The legislative branch of government consists of two elected bodies and two appointed bodies. The Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis) and the Assembly of Experts are both elected groups. Majlis are the main legislative group and its 290 representatives are elected to four-year terms. The Assembly of Experts prepares changes to the Constitution and chooses the successor to the position of Supreme Guide. The Council of Guardians and the Discretionary Council are both appointed groups. The Council of Guardians has six lawyers and six judges that review all new laws to find if they violate Islamic principles or the Constitution. The Discretionary Council rules on all legal and theological disputes between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians.

The government does not allow any official political parties to operate. Loosely organized groups and associations do take part in elections and all Iranian citizens over the age of 15 are allowed to vote. The Iranian government must approve all political candidates.

The Judicial Branch includes a five member Supreme Court and other lower civil and criminal courts. There are also special clerical courts to try clergy members and revolutionary tribunals to hear cases of people opposing the Islamic revolution. The Supreme Guide appoints the head of the Judicial Branch. All judges in Iran are members of the Islamic clergy and base rulings on Islamic law.

Opposition to the government includes the Iran Liberation Movement. This organization works for democracy and human rights through peaceful methods. Several opposition groups are made up of Iranians living outside Iran. These groups include the Islamic-socialist Mojahedin-e Khalq (People's Holy Warriors) and groups that seek a democratic and secular government for Iran.

Locally, Iran is divided into 24 districts, called ostan. Each ostan has a governor that is appointed by the national government and a council elected by the ostan's voters. Ostan

are divided into counties, districts, cities, towns, and villages that have their own system of government. These local governments are controlled by the national government.

Society:

Islam strictly influences Iranian society. The government restricts freedom of speech and other civil rights and bans all forms of entertainment that they consider non-Islamic. Schools are required to stress the teachings of Islam and Iranian women are forced to abide by strict rules of dress code and public behavior.

Most cities in Iran have an older section and a more modern section. The older and more traditional sections include blue-domed mosques and a bazaar, where merchants sell food, handmade goods, and other products. Modern sections include hospitals, schools, apartments, and offices. Newer districts in larger cities also include movie theatres, parks, and restaurants.

City housing includes apartments and traditional Iranian housing. Traditional houses are small mud or brick buildings surrounded by high walls. Each home has a central courtyard that includes trees, flowers, and a small pool of water. Most homes and apartments have western style furniture and Persian rugs.

Rural villages typically have a small village square and a wide main street. A mosque and public bath are positioned on the main square. A small village grocery is often the only shop in the village. Rural homes are usually one or two bedroom mud or unbaked brick buildings with thatched or flat mud roofs. Simple rugs or felt mats are used to cover the floors. The people sit on cushions and sleep on mattresses placed on the floor. Most rural homes lack electricity and running water.

Some Iranians are nomadic traveling across the country with their sheep, goats, and other livestock to seasonal grazing lands. Nomads live in round, black felt tents that they pack on donkeys or camels when they travel.

Most city dwellers wear western-style clothing. Many women wear long, usually black, body veils called *chadors* over their clothes. The wearing of a *chador* is based on Islamic moral teaching and the government strongly encourages women to wear them or at least head coverings. Most men in the villages wear rough cotton shirts, baggy black trousers, and sometimes long blue or black cotton coats. Most rural women wear loose blouses and black cotton trousers gathered at the ankles. They cover their head with a scarf instead of a *chador*.

The main foods in Iran are rice and bread. Bread is typically eaten at every meal. Iranians often mix rice with meat and vegetables and cover it with a spicy sauce. Kebab, lamb roasted on a skewer, is a popular food of Iranians. Popular beverages include fruit syrups mixed with water, sweetened tea, and a yogurt drink called *dough*.

Iranians spend leisure time visiting with friends and entertaining relatives or friends in their homes. They enjoy basketball, soccer, volleyball, and weightlifting. Live theatre, motion pictures, videocassettes, and television are becoming popular among young people in the cities.

Iranian law requires that children attend school between the ages of 7 and 13, but some still do not attend however. Those not attending school are mainly girls living in the rural areas. Higher education in Iran is accomplished through colleges, universities, technical, vocational, and teacher-training schools. The Open Islamic University has branches throughout Iran and has a total of 300,000 students.

Iran is known for its architecture, poetry, and painting. Iranian architecture is known for its mosque design. Iranian painting is known for its fine detail and jewel-like colors. Firdausi, Hafiz, and Saadi are known as Iran's greatest poets. Some use Hafiz's *Divan*, a collection of mystical poems, to plan their lives. They open the book at random and use the first line they see as a guide to action.

Craft workers make jewelry, pottery, and metalwork. The hand-woven Persian rugs are prized for their patterns and colors, which often take months to complete. Other arts include embroidery, silk weaving, and woodcarving.

Language:

The official language of Iran is Persian, also called *Farsi* belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and has borrowed many words from Arabic. It is written using Arabic script. Most people speak Persian as either a first or second language. Persian is used in schools and in government communications. Other languages spoken in Iran include *Arabic, Baluchi, Kurdish, and Azeri-Turkish*.

Urbanization:

Of the total population, 61% are classified as urban. The largest city is Tehran, which is the capital, with 11 million people. Other major cities include Mashhad (2.15 million), Isfahan (1.63 million), Tabriz (1.28 million), Shiraz (1.13 million), and Qom (880,000).

Literacy:

A total of 72.1% of the population over the age of 15 can read and write. This figure includes 78.4% of males and 65.8% of females as literate.

Religion:

An overwhelming majority, 99%, of the people of Iran is Muslim. About 95% of these people belong to the Shiah branch of Islam, which is the state religion of Iran with the remaining following the Sunni branch of Islam. About 250,000 people claim to be Baha'i, but they are not officially recognized by the government and are forbidden to

practice their faith. Iran also has some Christians, Jews, and people who practice Zoroastrianism. The Islamic government has little tolerance for religious minorities and Baha'is in particular are severely persecuted.

History of Iran

Early History

The *Elamites* settled Iran as early as 3000 B.C. and became the first major civilization in that country. *Aryans* began migrating from central Asia in the 1500's B.C. and eventually two groups of Aryans settled in Iran. One group settled in the northwest and founded the *Kingdom of Media*, while the other settled in the south. The Greeks called the area in the south *Persis*, which is where the name Persia originates. Both the Medes and the Persians called this country Iran, which means land of the Aryans. By the 600's B.C., the Medes had become the ruler of the Persians.

The Archaemenid Empire

Cyrus the Great led the Persians to overthrow the Medes around 550 B.C. Cyrus was a member of the Persian dynasty called the *Archaemenid*. By 539 B.C., Cyrus had added Babylonia, Palestine, Syria, and all Asia Minor to his empire. Cyrus' son, *Cambyses*, would later add Egypt to the empire in 525 B.C. *Darius I* became king in 522 B.C. and the empire prospered. Darius built roads, established shipping lanes, and introduced gold and silver coins. At the peak of the empire in 500 B.C., it stretched from modern day Libya, east to modern day Pakistan, and from the Gulf of Oman in the south to the Aral Sea in the north.

The Archaemenid Empire declined during the mid 400's B.C. because of a series of weak kings and *Alexander the Great* conquered the empire in 331 B.C. Alexander's goal was to combine the Greek and Persian Empires into one great world empire, but he died in 323 B.C. and never reached his goal. The territory of Iran was given over to *Seleucus*, one of Alexander's generals that founded the *Seleucid Dynasty*. The Seleucid dynasty ruled until 250 B.C., when armies from *Parthia*, a kingdom located southeast of the Caspian Sea, conquered the country.

The Sassanid Dynasty

In A.D. 224, *Ardashir* led the Persians in the overthrow of the Parthians. Ardashir then founded the *Sassanid dynasty* that ruled Iran for over 400 years. The Sassanid kings improved the country's cities, roads, and irrigation systems. Their reign, however, was weakened due to frequent Roman invasions. Sassanid rule ended when Muslim invaders from Arabia conquered them.

The Rise of Islam

Arabian armies conquered Iran in the mid AD. 600's and gradually converted the people to Islam. Arabic replaced Persian as the official language of the government, but most people continued to speak Persian. Persian was also used in their literature. Iran became known as a world center in art, literature, and science. Arab control weakened in the 900's, and Iran broke into small kingdoms with various rulers.

Seljuk Turks from Turkestan conquered most of Iran by the mid 1000's. These Turkish tribes would rule until 1220, when the Mongols, under the leadership of *Genghis Khan*, attacked the country. The Mongols destroyed many cities and killed thousands of people, causing Iranian civilization to decline. During the 1400's, the Mongols began fighting among themselves and eventually lost control of Iran.

The Safavid Dynasty

In the late 1400's and 1500's, the *Safavids*, a family of Persian descent, gained control over several regions of Iran. *Ismail*, the family leader, was crowned king in 1501 and began the Safavid dynasty. The greatest Safavid king was *Shah Abbas*, who ruled from 1587 to 1629, and was responsible for stopping invasions of the Ottomans from central Asia and Uzbek tribes from Turkestan. The Safavid dynasty kings strongly supported the development of architecture and the arts. They established *Isfahan* as their capital, which was regarded as one of the world's most beautiful cities. Safavid rule was ended in 1722, when armies from Afghanistan invaded and captured Isfahan.

Rule of Nadir Shah

Nadir Shah, a Turkish tribesman, drove the Afghans out of Iran and became king during the 1730's. He later went on to conquer Afghanistan and in 1739 took the city of Delhi in India. He brought back many treasures from India including the jewel-encrusted Peacock Throne. Nadir Shah was assassinated in 1747 and various Iranian leaders struggled for power. *Karim Khan*, a Kurd of the Zand tribe, gained control of Iran in the 1750's.

The Qajar Dynasty

After Karim Khan died in 1779, a struggle for power erupted between the *Zands* and the *Qajars*, a Turkoman tribe from the Caspian Sea region. During this time, Iran lost Afghanistan and the other areas that Nadir Shah had conquered. The Qajars were victorious in 1794 and ruled Iran until 1925. The Qajars capital was located at Teheran, where most of their supporters lived.

Russia invaded Iran in 1826 because they wanted to gain an outlet to the Persian Gulf. Iran was defeated in 1827 and in 1828, Iran and Russia signed the *Treaty of Turkomanchai* that gave Russia the land north of the Aras River. In 1856, Iran attempted to recapture its land in northwestern Afghanistan, but the United Kingdom controlled

Afghanistan and consequently declared war on Iran. In 1857, Iran signed a peace treaty with the United Kingdom in which Iran gave up all claim to land in Afghanistan. British and Russian influence increased during the rest of the 1800's. In the early 1900's, the British corporation named Anglo-Persian Oil Company began developing the oil fields of southwestern Iran.

Iranian contact with the West introduced to the people ideas of political freedom. Many Iranians then began to demand a constitutional government. In 1906, the Qajar monarch, *Shah Muzaffar al-Din*, was forced to give Iran its first Constitution and parliament, called the *Majlis*.

World War I and Reza Shah

Iran declared itself neutral during the World War I, but it still became a battleground. Russian troops, who were defending the Baku oil fields on the Caspian Sea, fought against the Turks in northwestern Iran. A British army defended the Khuzistan oil fields against attack by Iran's Qashqai people, who were being led by German agents.

Seyyed Zia al-Din Tabatabai, an Iranian politician and journalist, and *Reza Khan*, a cavalry officer, overthrew the Qajar government in 1921. In 1925, Reza became shah and changed his family name to Pahlavi. Reza Shah introduced many programs to modernize Iran and to free it from Western influences.

Growing Nationalism

Iran declared its neutrality in 1939, just after World War II began. The Allies desired to use the Trans-Iranian Railway to ship supplies from the United Kingdom to the Soviet Union and Reza Shah refused to cooperate. British and Soviet troops invaded Iran in 1941 and forced Reza Shah to give up his throne. Reza Shah's son, *Mohammad Reza Pahlavi*, became shah and signed a treaty with the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union to allow them to use the railway and keep troops in Iran until the end of the war.

The presence of these foreign troops stirred up nationalistic feelings among many Iranians. *Mohammad Mossadegh* led a group of nationalists in the *Majlis* and demanded an end to the British control of the oil industry. In 1951, the *Majlis* voted to place the oil industry under government ownership and control. When the prime minister refused to carry out the new law, he was dismissed and replaced by Mossadegh.

The British boycotted Iranian oil in 1953. This coupled with a surplus of oil on the world market made it difficult for Iran to sell its oil. Iran suffered heavy financial losses and the shah attempted to remove Mossadegh from office. Mossadegh and his followers then forced the shah to go into exile. The shah returned to power in a few days with the help of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Mossadegh was arrested.

Reforms and Growing Unrest

The shah began a series of economic and social reforms known as the *White Revolution*, later called the Shah-People Revolution, during the 1960's. The shah began a program to redistribute the holdings of wealthy landowners to the peasants that worked the land. The shah also promoted education, improved welfare services, and gave women the right to vote. Iran's oil revenue was used to develop new industries so that this could provide for future economic growth.

The shah exercised almost complete political control over the country, which aroused opposition from students and intellectuals. The shah's critics demanded freedom of speech and other civil rights and also condemned the shah's use of a secret police force, called the *SAVAK*, to defeat opposition to his rule. Opponents also alleged that his policies and government corruption were ruining Iran's economy. The conservative Muslim opponents alleged that the shah's modernization programs violated traditional Islamic teachings.

Revolution and the Islamic Republic

In the late 1970's, the opposition to the shah united under Muslim religious leader *Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini*. The shah left Iran in January 1979 because of mass demonstrations, strikes, and riots against his rule. In February 1979, the revolutionaries took control of the government

Khomeini established a new government based on the teachings of Islam and Iran became an Islamic Republic. Khomeini became the *faqih*, or supreme leader, of Iran. The Revolutionary Council, appointed by Khomeini, carried out the new government's policies for the first year after the revolution. Former officials from the shah's government were tried by revolutionary courts, convicted, and executed by firing squads. The new Islamic government closed magazines and newspapers, banned political parties, closed universities, and restricted the citizens' personal freedoms. In 1980, the Iranian people elected the first president and first Majlis of the republic.

The new Islamic government became bitterly anti-American because of the U.S. support of the shah. Jimmy Carter allowed the shah to enter the U.S. in October 1979 to receive medical treatment. On November 4, Iranian revolutionaries seized the U.S. Embassy in Teheran and held the embassy workers as hostages. The United States and other countries denounced these actions and demanded that the hostages be freed. The Iranians declared that the hostages would be freed if the shah returned to Iran for trial. The United States refused to return the shah to Iran and he moved to Panama in December 1979 and to Egypt in March 1980, where he died that July. The hostages were finally freed on January 20, 1981.

War with Iraq

Iran and Iraq began fighting in 1980 over territorial disputes and other disagreements. Hundreds of thousands of Iranians were killed and over a million people were left homeless. Iraqi planes repeatedly bombed oil installations, industrial targets, and civilian centers in Iran. Iran and Iraq finally agreed to a cease-fire in August 1988. Negotiations for a peace treaty began shortly after the cease-fire began.

The Death of Khomeini and Recent Developments

Ayatollah Khomeini died in 1989 and *Ali Khamenei* was chosen by Iran's top religious leaders to become the next faqih. Khamenei had been the president. *Hashemi Rafsanjani* was elected as Iran's new president in 1989 and was reelected in 1993.

Iran now faces serious economic and political issues. The nation's oil exports have reduced sharply because of a decrease in production capacity and lower demands in the world market for Middle Eastern oil. This decline in oil revenue has made it difficult for Iran to pay for its needed imports. Iran also has problems with rising prices, increasing foreign debt, drop in the exchange rate of Iranian currency, and high unemployment.

Iranian and United States relations continue to remain strained. Since the Iranian revolution, the United States has accused Iran of supporting international terrorism. In the 1990's, the United States became concerned about Iran's efforts to develop nuclear technology. The U.S. feared that this technology would be used to develop nuclear weapons that might fall into the hands of terrorists or be used against Israel. Bill Clinton issued an order in May 1995 that barred U.S. trade with Iran. The order was designed to punish Iran for seeking nuclear technology and for allegedly supporting terrorism. Iran's other trading partners did not cut off trade with Iran.

Political discontent increased in Iran after Khomeini's death. Serious conflicts and rivalries developed among the country's leadership on political issues. A growing number of people began to blame the government for the mismanagement of the economy and for political corruption. In the general election of 1997, the public elected *Mohammad Khatami*, a former minister of culture, as president. Khatami is widely considered a moderate. The parliamentary elections of 2000 saw the reform groups win a majority of the seats in the Majlis. These groups support freedom of the press and less government control over the Iranian people's lives. After these elections, the United States announced that it was easing some of its sanctions against Iran.

People Groups

Name	Number	Language	Religion	Notes
Afghan Persian	1,691,000	Farsi	100% Sunni Muslim	Live in Khorasan and are refugees from Afghanistan's 10-year war
Afshari	290,000	Afshari	100% Muslims	Turkish people
Aimaq, Jamshidi	30,000	Jamshidi	100% Sunni Muslims	refugees and migrants from Afghanistan
Aimaq, Timuri	181,000	Taimuri	Muslim	Semi-nomadic refugees and migrants from Afghanistan
Alviri-Vidari	None given	Vidar	Muslim	Located near Saveh
Arab, Iranian	1,200,000	Arabic, but speak Mesopotamian	99% Shiite Muslim, but a few belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, Chaldean Catholic Church, and the Episcopal Church	They are Khuzestan, Mesopotamian, and Eastern Colloquial Arabic
Armenian, Ermini	170,800	Armenian	Armenian Apostolic Church and the Roman Catholic Church	Found in northern Iran
Assyrian, Alsor	10,000	Assyrian Neo-Aramaic and Iranian Koine	Ancient Church of the East, which is sometimes and perhaps inaccurately related to the Nestorians), Roman Catholic Church, Assyrian Assemblies of God, and the Evangelical Church in Iran	
Astiani	18,000	Ashtaini	100% Muslim	Bilingual in Farsi, found in the Tafres area
Aynallu, Inallu	7,625	South Azerbaijani	Muslim	

Azerbaijani Jewish	1,375	Lishan Didan	Jewish origin and religion, but most have now immigrated to Israel	Kurdistan Jewish Aramaic
Azeri, Afsar	13,000,000	South Azerbaijani	Muslim	
Bakhtiari	1,136,000	Luri	Shiite Muslims	Partially nomadic
Balkan Rom Gypsy	27,504	Romani	95% Muslim	Also found in Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and seven other countries
Baloch	1,410,000	Balochi	100% Sunni Muslim	Found in the southern Baluchistan Province. They are mostly in Pakistan, but also in Oman and the United Arab Emirates.
Bashkardi	6,700	Bashkardi	100% Sunni Muslim	Related to the Baloch
Brahui, Kur Galli	10,000	Brahui, most speak Balochi in Iran	100% Sunni Muslim	Nomads mostly found in Pakistan, also Oman and the United Arab Emirates
British	6,000	English	Episcopal Church, Seventh-day Adventist, and Jehovah's Witness churches	Expatriates from Britain and are involved in business
Central Kurd	687,591	Mukri	100% Sunni Muslim	Found in central Kurdish regions around Senna
Domari, Ghorbati Gypsy	80,000	Domari and Yuruk	Muslim	
Eshtehardi	None given		Muslim	Found in the Karaj District in the Central Province
Fars	6,700	Fars, which is an Indo-Iranian	Muslim	

		language distinct from Farsi and related to Lari		
French	9,626	French	13% non-religious and others belong to the Roman Catholic Church, and the Eglise Evangelique Francaise in Tehran	Expatriates from France involved in business
Gabri	10,000	Gabri, which is a private language of Persian Zoroastrians, also bilingual in Farsi	99% Zoroastrians	Found in Yezd and Kerman cities and surroundings
Galeshi	68,759	Galeshi	Muslim	Found in the mountains near Gilaki
Gazi	6,770	Gazi	Muslim	Found in central Iran
Georgian	16,000	Georgian	45% non-religious, 30% Muslim, others Georgian Orthodox Church	
German	688	German	Deutsche Evangelische Kirche in Teheran, New Apostolic Church, or the Roman Catholic Church	Expatriates from Germany in Iran on business or involved in the oil business
Gilaki	3,196,000	Gilaki, also bilingual in Farsi	99% Shiite Muslim, some belong to Roman Catholic Church	Found in the Gilan Province, coastal plain, and south of Talysh
Gozarkhani	None given	Gozarkhani	Muslim	Found in the Alamut area
Gujarati	24,000	Gujarati	50% Muslim, 50% Hindu	Traders from India
Gulf Arab	200,000	Arabic	90% Muslim	Immigrants from Gulf states. They are mainly in

				Kamsch, Khuzestan, and the islands
Gurani	38,000	Bajelan and Hawrami	Muslim	Found in the west part of the Kordestan Province, near the Iraqi border, also found in Iraq
Harzani	24,000	Harzani	Muslim	Located north of Tabriz
Hazara	283,000	Hazaragi	Muslim	Found in northern Iran.
Herki	18,000	Herki	Muslim	Located in the Kermanji area. Also found in Iraq and Turkey
Hulaula	300	Hulaula		Found in Tehran
Irani	23,000,000	Farsi	90% Muslim, 2% Baha'i, 8% Zoroastrian, few are Roman Catholic Church, Episcopal Church, Assemblies of God, and the Evangelical Church in Iran	Almost two million of them are in exile in 15 countries
Italian	11,001	Italian	Roman Catholic	Expatriates from Italy in commerce
Jewish Tat, Judeo-Tat	120,000	Farsi	Cultural and religious Jews	Found mainly in Tehran
Jharawan	None given	Sarawan, which is a dialect of Brahui	Muslim	Pastoralists
Judeo-Persian	198,000	Farsi	Jewish origin and religion	
Kabatei	None given	Kabatei	Muslim	Rudbar district of the Gilan Province
Kajali	None given	Kajali	Muslim	Khalkhal district in the Eastern Azerbaijan Province and in the Kaqazkonan District in the

				Kajal Province
Karakalpak	36,000	Karakalpak	Muslim	Found in Uzbekistan
Karingani	15,000	Karingani	Muslim	Found northeast of Tabriz
Kazakh	3,000	Kazakh	Muslim	Found in the Gorgan City in the Mazandaran Province
Kelhuri	None given	Kelhuri, which is a dialect of Lori	Shiite Muslim	Live in southwestern Iran
Khalaj	17,000	Khalaj, bilingual in Farsi	Muslim	Found in the northeast of Arak in the Central Province
Khoini	None given	Khoini	Muslim	Found in the Khoini district of the Zanjan Province
Khorasani Turk	400,000	Khorasani Turk, bilingual in Farsi	Muslim	Found in northeastern Iran, in the northern part of the Khorasan Province, and in the northwest of Mashhad
Khunsari	20,628	Khunsari	Muslim	Found in central Iran
Korean	12,000	Korean	30% Shamanists, Presbyterians	Migrant workers, especially construction industry
Koresh-e Rostam	None given	Koresh-e Rostam	Muslim	Found in the Eastern Azerbaijan Province
Koroshi	160	Koroshi		This group is only 40 to 50 families. They work for the Qashqai people as camel keepers
Kurd, Iranian	4,125,548	Farsi	Muslim	Kurds from Kurdistan who now use Farsi as their mother tongue. They are settled urbanites.

Kurds, Southern (Sorani)	3,000,000	Kurdi	Muslim	Found around Suleimaniyah and adjacent Kurdistan
Kurmanji, Northern Kurd	200,000	Kurmanji	Muslim	Eastern Kurds, who live in mountain villages along the Turkish border in West Azerbaijan Province
Larestani, Lari	34,380	Lari	Muslim	Found in the Fars area
Lasgerdi	None given	Lasgerdi	Muslim	Found in Lasgerd
Luri, Lori	4,280,000	Luri	Muslim	Found in southwest Iran
Mamasani	125,000	Alur, which is a dialect of Luri	Muslim	Found in southwest Iran
Mandaean	5,000	Mandaic	Descendents of Jewish-Christian Gnostics, now called Christians of St. John, Dippers, and Sabaeans	Found in Khuzistan
Maraghei	None given	Maraghei	Muslim	Found in the Upper Rudbar area
Mashadi	None given	Mashadi, which is a dialect of Farsi		
Mazanderani, Tabri	3,265,000	Mazanderani, but bilingual in Farsi	100% Shiite Muslim	Found in northern Iran near the Caspian Sea and the southern half of the Mazandaran Province
Moqaddam	1,000	Tabriz, which is a dialect of South Azerbaijani		
Mussulman Tat	31,000	Tat	100% Shiite Muslim	There are also 22,000 of these people in Azerbaijan
Nafar, Nafar	5,336	South	Shiite Muslim	Agriculturalists

Turk		Azerbaijani or Tabriz		and pastoralists
Natanzi	6,700	Natanzi	Muslim	Found in central Iran
Nayini	6,700	Nayini	Muslim	Found in central Iran
Parsee	350,000	Farsi or Parsi-dari	Zoroastrians	Also live in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Thousands have moved to the United Kingdom and the United States
Pathan	129,000	Urdu	Sunni Muslim	Race of warriors that are found primarily in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Iran, they are found in the Syistan Plateau.
Pishagchi	1,526	Pishagchi, which is a dialect of South Azerbaijani	Shiite Muslims	Agriculturalists and pastoralists
Punjabi	24,000	Punjabi	65% Hindus, 30% Sikhs, 4% Muslim	Traders from India
Qajar	4,572	Qajar, which is a dialect of South Azerbaijani	Shiite Muslim	Agriculturalists and pastoralists
Qaragozlu	3,046	Qaragozlu, which is a dialect of South Azerbaijani	Shiite Muslim	Agriculturalists and pastoralists
Qashqai, Kashkai	1,500,000	Qashqai, but most bilingual in Farsi	Muslim	Nomadic pastoralists in the southwest in the Fars Province. They are also rug weavers.
Rashti	203,000	Rashti, but bilingual in Farsi	99% Muslim	Found in Rasht city, the capital of Gilan

Razajerdi	None given	Razajerdi	Muslim	Found in the Qazvin Kuhpaye area in Razajerd
Romani, Balkan	24,000	Balkan Romani	Muslim	Also found in Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Hungary, Italy, Germany, France, Moldova, and the Ukraine
Rudbari	None given	Rudbari	Muslim	Found in the Sefid Rud Valley
Russian	1,800	Russian	60% atheist or non-religious, 10% are Muslims, or belong to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia	Refugees from the Soviet Union since 1917
Salchuq	None given	Salchuq, which is a dialect of Azerbaijani	Muslim	
Sangisari	None given	Sangisari	Muslim	
Semnani	20,628	Semnani	Muslim	Found in northwest Iran
Senaya	50	Senaya, also use Assyrian Neo-Aramaic	Chaldean Catholic Church	Found in Tehran, originally in Sanandaj, Iranian Kurdistan
Shahmirzadi	None given	Shahmirzadi		Found in Shahmirzad
Shahrudi	None given		Muslim	Found in Khalkhal District in Eastern Azerbaijan Province, Shahrud district, Shal, Kolor, and Lerd
Shahseven, Shahsavani	99,096	Shahsavani or Tabriz, which are dialects of South Azerbaijani	Shiite Muslim	Agriculturalists and pastoralists
Shikaki	24,000	Shikaki	Muslim	Found in the Kurdistan area.

				Also found in Iraq and Turkey
Sivandi	6,700	Sivandi	Muslim	Found in central Iran
Soi	6,700	Soi	Muslim	Found in central Iran
Sorkhei	None given	Sorkhei		Found in Sorkhe
Southern Baluch, Baloch	405,000	Baloch	Muslim	Found in the Southern Baluchistan Province. Mostly in Pakistan, but some also reside in Oman and the United Arab Emirates
Tadzhik, Persian Tajiki	60,000	Dari and Tajiki	Muslim	Mountain farmers, refugees, and migrants from Afghanistan
Takistani	220,000	Takestani, but bilingual in Farsi	Muslim	Found in towns and villages in Azeri-speaking areas north from Khalkhal to Saveh
Talysh	112,000	Talysh, but bilingual in Azeri	Muslim	Found along the Caspian Sea to Kepri-Chal in the northwest Gilan Province along the coastal plain
Taromi, Upper	None given	Upper Taromi	Muslim	Found in the Upper Tarom of Zanjan Province, Hazarrud, and Siavarud
Teimurtash	16,984	Teimuri, which is a dialect of South Azerbaijani		Agriculturalists and pastoralists
Turk	2,250	Turkish	Muslim	Immigrants and residents from Turkey
Turkmen,	1,000,000	Turkomen	Muslim	Found mainly in

Turkomani				the Mazandaran Province near Turkmenistan
Uighur	4,200	Uyghur	100% Sunni Muslim	Agriculturalists
Urdu, Islami	60,000	Urdu	Muslim	From Pakistan
Vafsi	18,000	Vafsi, but bilingual in Farsi	Muslim	Found in the Tafres area in central Iran
Western Baluch, Baloch	451,000	Balochi	Muslim	Found in the Northern Baluchistan Province. Half are nomads and half are settled. Farsi has influenced them, but few speak it.
Western Pathan, Afghani	113,000	Pashto	Muslim	Located in the Khorasan Province east of Qaen
Zott Gypsy, Nawar	1,306,423	Arabic	Muslim	Arab Gypsies, Muslim Gypsies, and nomads

Christianity and Churches in Iran

About 98% of the Christians in Iran are from non-Persian ethnic minorities. Only a few converts from Islam have become members of the Anglican or Evangelical (Presbyterian) churches.

After the Islamic revolution, the revolutionary committee began to circulate throughout the cities looking for compliance with Muslim laws. Many Christian properties were confiscated including the hospitals in Isfahan and Shiraz, the Christoffel Blind Mission, and many churches. Christian education was also effected as mixed classrooms were banned, all schools and universities were required to reflect Islamic thought, and university admission became based on a student's belief in Islam. In 1984, Christian schools were given Muslim principals and the teaching of the Armenian language was forbidden. The Ministry of Education published a new textbook on the catechism that reflects the Koran's teaching about Jesus.

Muslim converts to Christianity are generally martyred. Some are tortured and forced to recant their profession. The government closed the Bible Societies in 1990, after years of extremely high Bible sales in Iran. They also closed all Christian bookshops. Many churches have been forced to go underground and they routinely meet in different homes

weekly. The Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council began a new campaign against churches in 1991 and many were forced to close. Hidden Muslim followers of Jesus are estimated at 7,500 people.

Orthodox Churches

The Armenian Apostolic Church is the largest church in Iran. They have 63 congregations and 110,000 affiliates. It uses the name Apostolic because it traces its roots back to the first century apostles *Thaddeus* and *Bartholomew* and their work in Armenia and northwest Persia. The Armenian community operates many schools and publishes books in their language. Thousands of Armenians make an annual pilgrimage to the 14th century church of St. Thaddeus in Turkey, on the south side of Mt. Ararat.

The Assyrian or Ancient Church of the East is also present in Iran. Traditionally, this church has been called Nestorian, but they reject this name because they claim to have existed before Nestorius and reached their theological position independent of him. Their membership in Iran consists of refugees from persecution in Turkey and Iraq. The Ancient Church of the East, with 8 congregations and 11,000 affiliates, has traditionally been located in the northern part of the country, but have now are gradually moving to the Tehran area. They also operate one school.

In 1863, the Russian Orthodox Church was established in Tehran and is affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. They operate one church with 120 affiliates. Their activities in Tehran include a school, library, and a club.

In 1943, the Greek Orthodox Church was established in Tehran. There is one church with 370 affiliates. They have a small school attached to the church in Tehran.

Catholic Church

Roman Catholicism is represented in Iran by three rites. The Chaldean Catholic Church is the largest. The other two rites are the Latin Church and the Armenian Catholic Church. There are a total of 17 Catholic congregations with 7,000 affiliates.

Protestant Churches

The first Protestant mission to Iran was the American Board (ABCFM) that originally set out to reform the Nestorian Church in 1832. The Nestorian Church resisted these reforms and the mission resulted in the conversion of many Assyrians. The Evangelical Church was then formed in 1855. The Evangelical Church has 9 congregations and 3,100 affiliates. Their membership is 55% Assyrians, 21% Armenian, and 24% have other ethnic origins. They operate 19 schools and through its Christian Service Board, they are affiliated with the Nurbakhsh School of Practical Nurses.

Persians living in Chicago, IL became Pentecostals and returned to Iran spreading Pentecostalism in 1909. During World War I, many of these Pentecostals were killed or

scattered, so their work came to a halt. Missionaries from the Assemblies of God, USA were active in Iran from 1924-38 and returned in 1966. An Armenian group of Pentecostals, *Filadelfia*, began in Iran in 1958 and they have been receiving support from the Assemblies of God since 1965. By the early 1990's, the Pentecostal groups became the largest Protestant group in Iran. The Assemblies of God have 12 congregations and 3,000 affiliates. The Assyrian Assemblies of God have 5 congregations and 630 affiliates.

The Seventh-day Adventists came to Iran in 1911 and the Brethren work began in 1920. These groups have remained small; two-thirds of the Adventists have emigrated to the U.S. Seventh-day Adventists have 2 congregations and 90 affiliates. The Armenian Closed Brethren Church has 1 congregation and 50 affiliates.

Some small American missions to Iran continue to serve but many have only expatriate membership. Protestant growth comes from Orthodox churches, Armenian and Assyrian, and very few Persian converts.

Anglican Church

Henry Martyn, a chaplain with the East India Company, was the first Anglican to enter Iran. He came in 1811 and began translation of the scriptures into the Persian language. In 1844, the London Society for the Propagation of Christianity among the Jews sent missionaries to the Jewish community of Tehran. The Church Missionary Society first came in 1869 and a diocese for Persia was formed in 1912. Unlike the Protestant churches, the Anglican Church has been successful in the conversion of people from Judaism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism. The church has three congregations and 1,200 affiliates. They also operate 2 hospitals, 2 schools, and a school for the blind.

Non-Christian Groups

Islam

Islam is by far the most dominate religion in Iran. Of the total population, 99.02% are Muslim, or 67,038,717 people. About 95% of these people belong to the *Shiite* Branch of Islam. Iran is considered the major center of Shiite Islam in the world. In addition to the Shiites, there are also about 2.6 million *Sunni* Muslims. The Sunni Muslims are mainly the Kurds and Afghanis that reside in Iran.

Iranian Muslims annually remember the martyrdom of Shiite leader *al-Husayn ibn Ali* in 688. This remembrance occurs at the beginning of each lunar year with *ta'ziya* (passion plays), wearing of bloody shrouds, and self-flagellation with chains, scimitars, and bare hands. The former shah attempted to change this festival by encouraging crafts and a national arts festival, but these efforts failed.

The shah limited the Shiite religious leaders' influence, until the revolution in 1979. The veneration of Muslim saints is widely practiced and the shrines of popular saints are

extensively endowed. Iran's important pilgrimage cities include *Qom* and *Meshed*. Qom has 14 Muslim seminaries and is considered the world center for Shiite Muslim activism. The 18,000 Muslim seminary students include 6,000 from Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Nigeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and many other countries, all on full scholarships.

In the 1990's, there were signs that the previous revolutionary religious zeal was waning. Mosque attendance began to decline and women began defying the traditional dress codes. Many complained about corruption and observers recognized a general disillusionment with the revolution's long-term effects.

Baha'i

Baha'i originated in Persia under *Sayyid Ali Muhammed*, who in 1844 added his name as *Bab al-Din* (Gate of the Faith) to the list of the Twelve Imams of Shiite Islam. His successor was named *Baha'u'llah* (Glory of God), from whose name comes the term Baha'i. Baha'is fled Iran in 1852, after being accused of conspiring to assassinate the Persian shah. They were also persecuted in 1955 and forced to go underground, but by the mid-1970's, they had returned to commerce and professions, despite being officially banned. After the 1979 revolution, Baha'is have faced severe harassment, expulsions, and executions. Baha'is are listed in the official census as Muslims. They are 0.52% of the population with a total of 352,051 people.

Jewish

There continues to be an influential Jewish population in Iran, but many have immigrated to Israel. The majority resides in Tehran and operates synagogues, schools, a recreation center, and a hospital. The Jewish population is 0.03% of the population with a total of 25,000 people.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism, known elsewhere as Parsiism, began in the 6th century B.C. with the preaching of *Zarathustra*. He succeeded in eliminating all deities from the Iranian pantheon except *Ahura Mazda*, the One True God. Zoroastrianism was the symbol of national and cultural identity and was the national religion until the Muslim invasion of the 7th century A.D. The largest Parsi communities are in Tehran, Tazd, Kerman, and Isfahan.

Mandaeanism

Mandaeanism is an ancient Jewish-Christian Gnostic syncretistic religion that began in the 2nd century A.D. It is centered on fertility worship and followers call themselves *Mandaiia* (Gnostics). They are sometimes referred to as Mandaeans, Sabaeans (named this by Arabs), Nasoreans, Followers of John the Baptist, Dippers, or Christians of St

John. They are found in Khuzistan in southwest Iran and in Iraq. Estimates number this group at around 9000 in 2000.

Sikhism

Sikhism is a reform movement from Hinduism and has a strong monotheistic emphasis. It entered Iran during the 1920's and most of the Sikhs in Iran are expatriate Indians. Some 6000 Sikhs live in Iran

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelicals should pray and work for the economic and political situation in Iran.

The Iranian people live under a government that controls their lives. The conservative Islamic leaders promote Islamic law and abuse people's human rights through their control of the police and the army who keep them in power. Iran's economy has suffered since the revolution and living conditions have worsened. Pray that the control of the government would be broken and that the gospel would be free to be taught in Iran.

2. Evangelicals should pray for religious freedom in Iran.

All non-Islamic religious groups are being persecuted in Iran. The Baha'is undergo the most severe persecution. Also, persecuted are those who use the Persian language for worship and Muslim background Christian believers. The Bible Societies, Christian bookstores, conferences, camps, church literature, and videos are banned.

3. Evangelicals should pray for the Christians in the Armenian and Assyrian communities and seek to support them where possible

These communities are traditionally Christian. In Iran, they are being increasingly harassed, arrested, and interrogated. The women are forced to conform to Islamic dress and children are educated in Islam. Many of these groups continue to immigrate to other countries. Pray that they would remain strong among the persecution.

4. Evangelicals should pray for the Protestant Churches that have struggled amidst the Islamic Revolution.

The Islamic Revolution has resulted in the reduction of the barriers between the Presbyterian, Anglican, and Pentecostal groups. During the 1990's, a time of severe persecution forced many churches to close, church leaders to suffer

martyrdom, or to flee the country. Pray that these brothers might stand firm amidst the persecution that they face.

5. Evangelical should pray for and support starting new churches

The churches outside of Tehran have undergone severe persecution. In cities like Shiraz and Isfahan, the Christian witness has been severely hampered.

6. Evangelicals should mount and encourage attempts to reach those groups who have fled Iran

Almost 5 million Iranians have fled the country due to the extensive turmoil. Most of these people have gone to the USA, Canada, Western Europe, Turkey, Gulf States, and other lands where it is possible to evangelize them. The ministry of Iranian Christian workers, ELAM Ministries in the UK, and Persian World Outreach all work toward reaching those in the Iranian Diaspora. Iranian Christian workers are trained at ELAM's college in UK, a few at NEST in Lebanon, and a few through non-residential courses in Iran and California. Several others study through correspondence courses.

7. Evangelicals should approach missions in Iran through tent-making opportunities.

Iran is a closed country to missionaries, but it would be possible to enter the country through tourism or tent-making opportunities. Pray that the door to missionary work would once again open in Iran.

8. Evangelicals should target the religious minorities for evangelism.

The Baha'is are the largest religious minority in Iran and the most persecuted group. They have been outlawed, deprived of public service jobs, maltreated, or imprisoned. Little Christian love and witness has been shown them.

The Zoroastrians, who date back to biblical times, number only 30 known Christian believers from this group worldwide. There are an estimated 2 million living in Iran and all are totally unreached. Persian-speaking Jews have been in Iran since the time of the Babylonian exile. They have been declining due to immigration, but some have become active Christians.

9. Evangelicals should attempts to reach Iran's unreached people groups.

Iran is home to some of the largest unreached people groups in the world. Efforts are just now beginning among the Iranic Luri, Bakhtiari, and Turkic Qashqai, who live in the Zagros Mountains. These people have only a handful of believers and most are illiterate.

The Kurdish people in northeast and northwest Iran have become impoverished and desperately need the gospel.

The Turkic Azeri, Khorasani Turks, and Turkmen in the north have limited contact with Christians and ELAM is preparing the Bible in the Azeri language.

The Baluch and Brahui in the southeast are unhappy with Iranian rule. They have no known believers.

Almost 1.5 million Gypsies live in Iran. These communities have no known Christians and no Christian groups are seeking ways to evangelize them.

10. Evangelicals should seek to provide Bibles, Christian literature, and Christian broadcasts for Iran.

The Bible Societies have been closed in Iran and Bible supplies have decreased within the country, but some continue to be smuggled into the country. ELAM published a new translation of the New Testament in Persian in 2001, and the entire Bible should be completed by 2006.

There is a need for translation teams to translate the Bible into some of the smaller languages within Iran.

Christian literature continues to be in demand, despite banning by the government. Organizations outside Iran like Eternal Life Agape Ministries and ELAM are major components of this type of ministry.

Christian radio has been an effective tool in evangelization of Iran. Millions continue to listen, despite government banning. Radio Voice of Christ, International Broadcasting Association, ELAM, and others prepare daily broadcasts in Persian and Azeri. Transworld Radio and Feba provide 2.5 hours of broadcasts daily in Persian. ELAM is preparing to produce broadcasts in Gilaki and Turkmen.

Christian videos, films, and TV broadcasts are also popular. Over seven million people have access to these programs through illegal satellite dishes. Banned secular and religious tapes are bought on the black market. Christian Persian language films from ELAM and the *Jesus* film continue to be shown. The *Jesus* film was available in 12 Iranian languages in 2000 and five more languages are in production.