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Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note**

## **Iran: Women – Early and forced marriage**

**Version 5.0**

**June 2025**

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# Executive summary

Deep-rooted gender discrimination, which treats women and girls as inferior to men and boys, runs through Iran's society and its legal system.

While forced marriage is prohibited under Iranian law, child marriage – that is marriage of a girl under 18, with or without her consent – is justified in Iran on religious, cultural, economic and political grounds. Girls can legally be married in Iran from the age of 13, or as young as 8 years and 9 months (9 lunar years) with paternal or judicial permission.

In 2023, the Statistical Centre of Iran reported an annual average of 135,000 registered marriages involving brides under the age of 18, though figures are likely to be considerably higher.

Women form a PSG in Iran within the meaning of the Refugee Convention.

If a woman or girl can show she will be forced to marry, then this would amount to persecution. Whether a woman or girl is at risk of being forced to marry will depend on her particular circumstances, including her age, family background, place of residence, education, and her socio-economic status.

A woman or girl who has a well-founded fear of being forced to marry is unlikely to obtain protection from the state. In general, the state is able but not willing to offer effective protection due to discriminatory laws and practices against women and girls, including legislation that allows child marriage.

Where a woman or girl has a well-founded fear of being forced to marry, whether she is likely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk will depend on her particular circumstances. These will include her level of financial dependence (or independence), whether she has the support or permission of a male guardian to relocate, the extent of her support network (such as that of her extended family), and whether her potential persecutor(s) hold(s) a position of influence over the state authorities and mechanisms.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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# Assessment

Section updated: 20 June 2025

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by non-state actors because the woman or girl is at risk of an early or forced marriage
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

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## Points to note

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not or cannot consent to marriage, and pressure or abuse is used to force them into marriage. Men and boys may also be victims of forced marriage, but this note focuses on forced marriage of women and girls and should not be relied upon in the consideration of any forced marriage claims which may arise from men and boys.

Child (or early) marriage is a marriage where either or both the bride and groom (but in reality, most predominantly the bride) is/are under the legal age of 18, which is the age limit for protection under the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Decision makers should also refer to the instruction on [Gender issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Processing children’s asylum claims](#).

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when such a check has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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## 1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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## 2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed membership of a particular social group (PSG).
- 2.1.2 Women form a PSG in Iran within the meaning of the Refugee Convention because they share an innate characteristic or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it **and** have a distinct identity in Iran because the group is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.1.3 Although women form a PSG, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed is whether the woman or girl has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of her membership of such a group.
- 2.1.4 In the reported case, [TB \(PSG, women\) Iran \[2005\] UKIAT 00065 \(09 March 2005\)](#), heard 30 November 2004 and promulgated 9 March 2005, the IAT noted, in relation to the appellant having fled her father's attempts to forcibly marry her:

'The real risk of this appellant suffering serious harm on return to Iran is primarily for non-Convention reasons (the vindictiveness and retribution of the appellant's father and the Mullah). However, as we consider there would also be a failure of state protection against that serious harm, we find that there is a causal nexus between the persecution (accepting that: Persecution = failure of state protection + serious harm) and her membership of a particular social group. We find therefore that the appellant is at a real risk of being persecuted for reasons of her membership of a particular social group namely: "Young Iranian Women who refuse to enter into arranged marriages".' (paragraph 69 iv). See also paragraphs 67 to 69 of [TB](#) in which the IAT's full reasoning was explained.

- 2.1.5 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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### 3. Risk

- 3.1.1 Women and girls, in general, are unlikely to be subjected to early or forced marriage. However, early and forced marriages occur in Iran. If a woman or girl can show she will be forced to marry, then this would amount to persecution. Whether a woman or girl is at risk of being forced to marry will depend on her particular circumstances, including her:
- age
  - family background
  - place of residence
  - education; and
  - socio-economic status
- 3.1.2 In general, the risk of forced marriage is greater for girls and young women from traditional families, including those belonging to tribes, with strong patriarchal views. While forced marriage can occur in urban areas, in general it is more likely in rural areas. The risk of forced marriage is greater among less educated or illiterate, poor families, who are more likely to view the early or forced marriage of their daughter(s) as a means of alleviating their situation of poverty.
- 3.1.3 The onus is on a woman or girl to show she would be subjected to forced marriage on her return to Iran.
- 3.1.4 Women and girls are broadly protected by the Iranian Constitution. However, they are only recognised as equal to men and boys when their rights conform to 'Islamic criteria', a requirement that has no definition under Iranian law and is therefore open to interpretation. Deep-rooted gender discrimination runs through Iran's society and its legal system, and women and girls are treated as inferior to men and boys. Cultural attitudes contribute to gender-based violence, and women and girls are discouraged from reporting such violence by social stigma. Women's and girls' rights are restricted in most aspects of their lives including marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody (see [Cultural and societal attitudes towards women and marriage](#)).
- 3.1.5 Iranian marriages are conducted according to Sharia law. The Twelver

Ja'fari school of Islam is Iran's official religion, however people belonging to other schools of Islam may perform their own marriage ceremonies in accordance with their school's own laws. Muslim women may only marry Muslim men. As the only recognised religious minorities in Iran, Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians may similarly perform their own marriage ceremonies in accordance with their religious laws. Bahá'í marriages are not recognised and many Bahá'ís declare themselves Muslim in order to register their marriages (see [Marriage and religion](#)).

- 3.1.6 Marriage is governed by the Civil Code which requires never previously married women and girls to obtain permission to marry from their father, paternal grandfather, or a judge, and deems the head of the family to be the exclusive right of the husband. In addition to formal ('nekah') marriage, Iranian law recognises temporary ('sigheh') marriage, which is contracted for a defined period, and practised only by Shia Muslims. While men may have 4 wives, or more for Shia men if they include temporary wives, women may only marry one man. Temporary marriage affords women more liberties but fewer rights than formal marriage and carries social stigma due to the middle classes viewing it as motivated by sexual gratification (see [Marriage laws](#) and [Temporary marriage](#)).
- 3.1.7 Women may seek divorce through the courts, though their rights to do so are restricted. In practice, the lengthy and complex nature of the process, together with social stigma and discriminatory child custody laws that favour the father once children are aged 7, may discourage women from pursuing divorce. Sex within marriage in Iran is considered consensual by definition. Therefore spousal rape, even within a forced marriage, is not recognised. A law introduced in 2021, which criminalised abortion and birth control measures has further reduced the bodily autonomy of women and placed their health at potential risk (see [Divorce and child custody](#) and [Reproductive rights](#)).
- 3.1.8 Iran is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which specifies a minimum age for marriage of 18, for both boys and girls. However, girls can legally be married in Iran from the age of 13 (compared with 15 for boys), or as young as 8 years and 9 months (9 lunar years) with the permission of her father or a judge. An organisation that supports women's rights in the Middle East indicated that permission is readily obtained from conservative male judges. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade stated that girls can be married at any age with the permission of the father and a judge. One source indicated that many families encourage marriage later than the minimum age to ensure maturity and readiness (see [Minimum age for marriage](#)).
- 3.1.9 Forced marriage is prohibited under the Iranian Civil Code, which stipulates that both parties must consent. However, child marriage – that is marriage of a girl under 18, with or without her consent – is justified in Iran on religious, cultural, economic and political grounds. The dowry payment is considered an important aspect of many Iranian marriage customs, and sources indicate that child marriage is both predominantly driven by poverty and normalised through deeply entrenched patriarchal values in society. Child marriage can deeply impact the girl's physical and psychological health, her access to education and her future prospects. Child marriages are reportedly more common in border areas including Sistan and Baluchistan, Hormozgan,

Khuzestan and Kurdistan, where there are higher rates of poverty and illiteracy than more central, developed provinces. Familial pressure, coercion, or abuse is used to force child and other marriages (see [Marriage laws](#), [Definitions](#), [Reasons for child marriage](#), [Effects of child marriage](#), [Marriage customs](#), and [Dowry and maintenance rights](#)).

- 3.1.10 Child marriage is difficult to accurately quantify and according to sources is under-reported due to girls' ages being incorrectly recorded, with many child and forced marriages either going unregistered, particularly in rural areas, or only being registered at a later date. In May 2023, the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) reported an average annual registration of 135,000 marriages involving girls under 18, with approximately 1,700 of those involving girls under 13. Figures are likely to be considerably higher. Reports on whether child marriage in Iran is increasing or in decline vary from source to source, though it is noted that only the government of Iran and one human rights organisation report an overall decrease (see [Prevalence of child marriage](#)).
- 3.1.11 A woman or girl who refuses an attempt to force her into marriage may be at risk of 'honour'-related violence. In 2024, at least 2 girls under 18 committed suicide due to familial pressure placed on them to marry. Whether a woman or girl is at risk of such a marriage or violence depends on the beliefs and actions of the families involved (see [Consequences of refusal to marry](#)). For an assessment of risk and further information on risk of 'honour'-related crimes, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Iran: Women fearing 'honour'-based violence](#).
- 3.1.12 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **4. Protection**

- 4.1.1 A woman or girl who has a well-founded fear of being forced to marry is unlikely to obtain protection from the state.
- 4.1.2 This is because in general, the state is able but not willing to offer effective protection due to discriminatory laws and practices against women and girls, including legislation that allows child marriage.
- 4.1.3 Decision makers must consider each case on its facts. The onus is on the person to demonstrate why they would not be able to seek and obtain state protection.
- 4.1.4 Forced marriage is prohibited under the Iranian Civil Code, which stipulates that both parties must consent (see [Definitions](#)). A draft bill which, it is claimed, will protect women against harm and abuse, including by criminalising forced marriage, remains unpassed after almost 15 years. Furthermore, the bill does not criminalise child marriage and marital rape, fails to acknowledge the existence of domestic violence against women and denies women the right to divorce or custody of her children (see [Legal framework relating to women and children](#)).
- 4.1.5 A national law protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and adolescents was passed in June 2020. State officials have the authority to relocate a child where their situation seriously threatens their safety. However, the law fails to address child marriage. In the male-dominated

justice system, discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls prevail. A woman and her testimony are valued at half that of a man, and child marriage cases rarely receive due scrutiny. While the state claims that legal assistance and support is provided for the protection of women and girls by special offices in all judicial complexes, the judicial system fails to protect girls and women against child and forced marriage (see [Legal framework relating to women and children](#) and [Access to justice](#)).

- 4.1.6 Support in the form of hotlines and intervention centres, health and support centres, and safe houses, exist though sources generally report such support services to be insufficient. Safe houses are not present throughout the whole country and, though non-governmental organisations and charities continue to carry out awareness-raising and advocacy, many such organisations face closures for not being aligned with the Iranian government. Given that some women require the permission of a male guardian to leave the home alone, access to such services may be limited. Iran's recent policies, such as offering marriage loans to young couples, have encouraged the practice of child marriage. The police are rarely willing to intervene in domestic violence incidents, and government-affiliated support services often focus instead on persuading abused women to return to their abusive households (see [Avenues of redress](#) and [Support and internal relocation](#)).
- 4.1.7 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#). Decision makers should also refer to the instruction on [Gender issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Processing children's asylum claims](#).

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## **5. Internal relocation**

- 5.1.1 Where the woman or girl has a well-founded fear of being forced to marry, whether she is likely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk will depend on her particular circumstances, including:
- the degree to which she is financially dependent (or independent)
  - whether she has the support or permission of a male guardian to relocate
  - the extent of her support network, such as that of her extended family; and
  - whether her potential persecutor(s) hold(s) a position of influence over the state authorities and mechanisms
- 5.1.2 Internal relocation may be viable if the woman is financially independent, has the support or permission of a male guardian and/or the support of her extended family or network, and where the woman's potential persecutor(s) does not hold a position of influence over the state authorities and mechanisms.
- 5.1.3 Whilst there are no legal barriers to a woman resettling elsewhere in Iran, official and societal discrimination may impede women from doing so. For example, some women may face difficulties obtaining employment with an income sufficient to meet the cost of living. Given that some women require the permission of a male guardian to leave their home and travel alone, and

that women require the support of their families to settle away from their husbands, particularly in rural areas, internal relocation is likely to be an unreasonable option in such cases (see [Freedom of movement](#) and [Conditions faced by single and divorced women](#)).

- 5.1.4 When assessing internal relocation, in the reported case of [TB \(PSG, women\) Iran \[2005\] UKIAT 00065 \(09 March 2005\)](#), the Tribunal took into account the position in Iranian society of the persons feared. In the case of [TB](#), the appellant feared her father and intended husband (a Mullah), both of whom were members of the Niru-Entezami (Law Enforcement Forces – LEF). The Tribunal concluded that an internal relocation alternative was not realistically available due to the influence of the appellant’s potential persecutors on the state authorities and mechanisms (paras 68 and 69.v).
- 5.1.5 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **6. Certification**

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

## About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **31 March 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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## 7. Legal context

### 7.1 Marriage laws

7.1.1 On 19 November 2024, Generis Global Legal Services, a worldwide network of independent attorneys and legal professionals<sup>1</sup>, published an article entitled 'Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran' (the November 2024 GGLS article) which stated:

'Predominantly influenced by Islamic laws, particularly the Twelver Ja'fari school of thought [the largest of the 3 Shia Islam groups<sup>2</sup>], the Iranian legal system governs marriage and divorce through a framework that emphasizes both religious and legal considerations. In this context, marriage is not merely a personal union; it is regarded as a sacred contract between two families, underscoring the importance of social and familial ties in Iranian society.'<sup>3</sup>

7.1.2 Book 7, Section 1 of the Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), originally published on 23 May 1928, outlines the provisions relating to marriage according to the following chapters:

- chapter 1: On asking for the hand in marriage
- chapter 2: Medical fitness for marriage
- chapter 3: On impediments to marriage
- chapter 4: Circumstances necessary for legality of marriage
- chapter 5: Deputing a third party for giving consent to marriage
- chapter 6: On temporary marriage
- chapter 7: On the dowry (mahr)

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<sup>1</sup> Generis Global Legal Services, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>2</sup> Newman, Andrew J, [Twelver Shi'ah](#) (published by the Encyclopaedia Britannica), no date

<sup>3</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

- chapter 8: Reciprocal duties and rights of parties to a marriage<sup>4</sup>

- 7.1.3 It should be noted that the source cited above and throughout this note is an unofficial English translation and that while the Code was last amended on 31 July 2006, the last amendment included in this translation was dated 29 December 1985.
- 7.1.4 Article 6 of the Civil Code states: ‘The laws relating to personal status, such as marriage, divorce, capacity and inheritance, shall be [sic] observed by all Iranian subjects, even if resident abroad’<sup>5</sup>, while Article 976 of the Civil Code outlines who is considered an Iranian subject<sup>6</sup>.
- 7.1.5 Article 1043 of the Civil Code states:  
 ‘The marriage of a girl who has not married previously is dependent on the permission of her father or her paternal grandfather even if she has reached the full age of majority [see [Minimum age for marriage](#)]. If, however, the father or the paternal grandfather withhold the permission without justifiable reason, the girl can refer to the Special Civil Court giving full particulars of the man whom she wants to marry and also the terms of the marriage and the dowry money agreed upon and notify her father or her paternal grandfather through that Court of the foregoing particulars. The Court can issue a permission for marriage fifteen days after the date of notification to the guardian if no response has been received from the guardian to satisfy refusal.’<sup>7</sup>
- 7.1.6 Forced marriage is prohibited under the Iranian Civil Code which stipulates that both parties must consent<sup>8</sup>.
- 7.1.7 Article 1105 of the Civil Code states: ‘In relations between husband and wife; the position of the head of the family is the exclusive right of the husband.’<sup>9</sup>
- 7.1.8 On 2 November 2023, Iran International, a London-based media outlet that provides news for Iranians both in and outside of Iran<sup>10</sup>, published an article entitled ‘Hardliners In Iran Promote Polygamy, Obedience Of Wives’ which stated: ‘Marriage laws ... [permit] men to have up to four wives simultaneously, while women can only marry one husband. Women also require male guardian [‘typically their fathers or brothers, and when married, their husbands’<sup>11</sup>] consent for marriage ...’<sup>12</sup>

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## 7.2 Marriage and religion

- 7.2.1 The Iran Data Portal, an online portal which hosts social science data on Iran in English and Persian, and is a US-funded project that is run by a collaboration of academics based outside of Iran<sup>13</sup>, published an English translation of the The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It states:

<sup>4</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of ... the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Book 7, Section 1), 23 May 1928

<sup>5</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 6), 23 May 1928

<sup>6</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 976), 23 May 1928

<sup>7</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 1043), 23 May 1928

<sup>8</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Book 7, Chapter 4), 23 May 1928

<sup>9</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 1105), 23 May 1928

<sup>10</sup> Iran International, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>11</sup> HRW, [Trapped: How Male Guardianship ... Restrict Women's Travel ...](#) (page 1 and 17), July 2023

<sup>12</sup> Iran International, [Hardliners In Iran Promote Polygamy, Obedience Of Wives](#), 2 November 2023

<sup>13</sup> Iran Data Portal, [About Us](#), no date

‘Article 4 (Islamic Principle): All civil, penal[,] financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria. This principle applies absolutely and generally to all articles of the Constitution as well as to all other laws and regulations, and the wise persons of the Guardian Council are judges in this matter.’<sup>14</sup>

#### 7.2.2 The Constitution also states:

‘Article 12 (Official Religion): The official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja’fari school, and this principle will remain eternally immutable. Other Islamic schools are to be accorded full respect, and their followers are free to act in accordance with their own jurisprudence in performing their religious rites. These schools enjoy official status in matters pertaining to ... affairs of personal status (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and wills) and related litigation in courts of law. In regions of the country where Muslims following any of these schools constitute the majority, local regulations, within the bounds of the jurisdiction of local councils, are to be in accordance with the respective school, without infringing upon the rights of the followers of other schools.

‘Article 13 (Recognized Religious Minorities): Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs ...’<sup>15</sup>

#### 7.2.3 Article 1059 of the Civil Code states: ‘Marriage of a female Moslem with a non-Moslem is not allowed.’<sup>16</sup>

#### 7.2.4 In February 2021, the Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) updated an article entitled ‘Bahá’í in Iran’, about the religious minority group in Iran, which stated:

‘Marriages involving Bahá’í are particularly problematic due to official intolerance of their faith in Iran. Bahá’í marriages are not recognized, which compels many Bahá’í couples to conduct their marriage according to Islamic rules and declare themselves Muslim to register their marriage. In the case of marriages between Muslims and Bahá’í, although interfaith marriages are accepted in the Bahá’í faith, they are condemned by the Islamic religious establishment ...’<sup>17</sup>

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### 7.3 Temporary marriage

#### 7.3.1 The Civil Code recognises the validity of a temporary marriage. Article 1075 says ‘Marriage is called temporary when it is for a limited period of time.’<sup>18</sup> and Article 1076 that ‘The duration of the temporary marriage must be definitely determined.’<sup>19</sup>

#### 7.3.2 Other provisions relating to temporary marriage are made within the Civil

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<sup>14</sup> Iran Data Portal, [The Constitution ...](#) (page 8), 2/3 December 1979, amended 28 July 1989

<sup>15</sup> Iran Data Portal, [The Constitution ...](#) (page 9), 2/3 December 1979, amended 28 July 1989

<sup>16</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 1059), 23 May 1928

<sup>17</sup> MRGI, [Bahá’í in Iran](#), updated February 2021

<sup>18</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Articles 1075 and 1076), 23 May 1928

<sup>19</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Articles 1075 and 1076), 23 May 1928

Code including within Article 1120 which states: 'Marriage may be dissolved by cancellation, by divorce, or by waiver of the remaining period in the case of a temporary marriage.'<sup>20</sup>

- 7.3.3 On 13 January 2020, Cambridge University Press published sections from a book entitled 'Temporary Marriage in Iran'. In its Introduction, the book, which was written by Claudia Yaghoobi, a Roshan Institute Assistant Professor in Persian Studies at the University of North Carolina<sup>21</sup>, stated:

'Under Iran's civil law, there are two recognized types of marriage: formal marriage (nekah) and temporary marriage (sigheh or mut'a). While formal marriage establishes a more enduring union with the intention of creating a family, temporary marriage is often of shorter duration. In many ways it is a form of concubinage, and requires a set of negotiations about the length, monetary exchange, and the nature of sexual relationships. Sigheh marriage has had a long history in the Arabian Peninsula and was practiced in the region even before the emergence of Islam, which positions it as a cultural practice rather than a religious tradition. In this type of marriage, there is no divorce because the union dissolves at the end of a designated term. While the primary purpose of formal marriage is the establishment of family and procreation, sigheh marriages are mainly for the gratification of sexual desires, often but not exclusively those of men, which is why Iran's middle-class, urban, and educated population has been viewing it as a type of sex work. Therefore, despite the legality and legitimization of both marriages in Shi'i Islam (in Iran), sigheh marriages carry a social stigma that marks the couple, particularly the women who enter such marriages, and the institution itself, as inferior. A sigheh wife does enjoy certain liberties: autonomy to engage in personal, nonsexual relationships, maintain outside interests, leave the household without the husband's permission, live in a city where the husband does not reside, or even take a job. Nonetheless, because the practice is viewed as taboo in society, most sigheh women suffer from vulnerability and insecurity, and most men keep their sigheh relationship secret.'<sup>22</sup>

- 7.3.4 On 13 January 2021, the Middle East Institute (MEI), a Washington DC-based think tank dedicated to the study of the Middle East<sup>23</sup>, published an article entitled 'Temporary marriage in Iran and women's rights' which noted:

'Usually, according to Iranian tradition, virgin girls must obtain permission from their father to marry permanently or temporarily, but according to the Iranian Civil Law Articles 1043 and 1044, girls can obtain permission to become a sigheh wife by simply identifying their husband-to-be by name and providing details about their relationship such as the value of the mehrieh (dowry) and proposed length of the marriage.

'A sigheh can last for one hour, a few days, a few months or longer ... A contract for a sigheh does not make the man responsible for financially supporting the woman. She has no right to inheritance or similar rights that women have in a permanent marriage.

'... To form a sigheh in Iran, a man and a woman must enter into a verbal

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<sup>20</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 1120), 23 May 1928

<sup>21</sup> Yaghoobi, Claudia, [Temporary Marriage in Iran](#), 13 January 2020

<sup>22</sup> Yaghoobi, Claudia, [Temporary Marriage in Iran](#) (Introduction), 13 January 2020

<sup>23</sup> MEI, [About Us](#), no date

contract by reciting an Arabic formula that specifies the value of the dowry and the length of the marriage. Before the Islamic Revolution and for many years after, these rites were performed in a mosque by clergy. For the last few years, however, the need for clergy has been obviated by the availability of documentation online.<sup>24</sup>

- 7.3.5 On 23 November 2023, the UN Human Rights Committee published its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Iran, which stated: 'The Committee is concerned by reports about ... women and young girls being subjected to temporary marriages (sigheh) ...'<sup>25</sup>
- 7.3.6 On 8 December 2023, Iran International published an article which stated: 'In the Iranian Shiite sect, men can ... get married to more than four women on temporary marriage contracts, taking advantage of a religious formula called "Sigheh".'<sup>26</sup> Other sources also indicated that 'sigheh', or temporary marriage, is particular to the Shia sect and not practised in other sects<sup>27 28</sup>.
- 7.3.7 The November 2024 GGLS article stated: '... [S]igheh, is prevalent in Iranian culture. This arrangement allows individuals to enter into a marriage for a fixed duration, without the intention of forming a permanent bond. Sigheh serves various social and economic purposes and reflects the complex attitudes towards marriage and relationships within Iranian society.'<sup>29</sup>
- 7.3.8 On 6 March 2025, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI), a New York-based organisation of journalists, researchers and human rights advocates who document and report on human rights conditions in Iran<sup>30</sup>, published an article entitled 'Gender Apartheid in Iran is Crushing Women's Lives and Futures'. The article stated: '... [O]nly men can claim "temporary marriages" (thus evading adultery charges), while women have no similar right.'<sup>31</sup>

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## 7.4 Marriage registration

- 7.4.1 Article 993 of the Civil Code states that marriages, whether permanent or temporary, 'must be notified to the Census Office during the proper period and in the way stipulated by special laws and regulations.'<sup>32</sup> The US Department of State (USSD) Bureau of Consular Affairs, however, stated: 'Temporary marriages (sigheh or ezdevaj-e movaghat) are religious marriages that ... are performed by ecclesiastical authorities and are not registered with the government.'<sup>33</sup>
- 7.4.2 On 15 July 2013, the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), a non-profit organisation of human rights scholars and lawyers, which focuses on human rights in Iran<sup>34</sup>, published an English translation of the 'Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book Five', which was passed

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<sup>24</sup> MEI, [Temporary marriage in Iran and women's rights](#), 13 January 2021

<sup>25</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, [Concluding observations ...](#) (paragraph 35), 23 November 2023

<sup>26</sup> Iran International, [Tehran's "Revolutionary" Mayor Faces ... Marital Scandals](#), 8 December 2023

<sup>27</sup> Kayhan Life, [... How Temporary Marriage, or Sigheh, is Spreading in Iran](#), 6 September 2018

<sup>28</sup> Hasannia, A. & Masoudian, M., Temporary ... Marriages ... (Abstract of Chapter), 7 February 2021

<sup>29</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

<sup>30</sup> CHRI, [Who We Are](#), no date

<sup>31</sup> CHRI, [Gender Apartheid in Iran is Crushing Women's Lives and Futures](#), 6 March 2025

<sup>32</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 993), 23 May 1928

<sup>33</sup> USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Reciprocity Schedule](#) (Marriage, Divorce Certificates), no date

<sup>34</sup> IHRDC, [Mission](#), no date

on 22 May 1996<sup>35</sup>. The translation states:

‘Article 645 - In order to protect the institution of family, the registration of the marriage contract, a divorce, and revocation of the divorce is mandatory. Any man who concludes a permanent marriage, or divorces, or revokes a divorce without registering in a Register Office, shall be sentenced to up to one year of ta’zir imprisonment [ta’zir crimes are defined by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) as ‘[c]rimes for which the Quran does not specify a punishment, and for which punishments are at the discretion of a judge’<sup>36</sup>].’<sup>37</sup>

7.4.3 On 5 January 2021, Landinfo, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, published a report entitled ‘Iran: Passports, ID and civil status documents’. The report, which cited various sources, stated: ‘To be legally valid, a marriage or divorce must be registered at special registration offices subject to the Ministry of Justice. According to the US Bureau of Consular Affairs ... the English name for this government organization is the National Organization of Registration of Documents and Property.’<sup>38</sup>

7.4.4 In November 2021, the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), responsible for compiling and disseminating global statistical information<sup>39</sup>, published an English translation of the Iranian [Civil Registration Law](#). Articles 31, 32 and 33 of the Civil Registration Law describe the process for registering a marriage or divorce and the documentation these events are recorded in<sup>40</sup>.

7.4.5 The Civil Registration Law also notes at Article 10:

‘Vital events of each person (birth, marriage, divorce waiver of enjoyment of wife's company for the remaining period in a temporary marriage and death) are registered in books as follows:

a) ‘Vital Statistics General Book: The birth of each person is registered in this book at the beginning and then the events related to marriage, divorce, revocation of divorce, waiver of enjoyment of wife's company for the remaining period in a temporary marriage, spouse's death, children's birth or death, and the holder's death is registered in this book from the contents of notices and documents.’<sup>41</sup>

7.4.6 The November 2024 GGLS article stated:

‘Courts are responsible for registering marriages ...

‘... The marriage registration process in Iran is a vital step that ensures the legal recognition of marital rights and responsibilities. This process is overseen by multiple institutions and involves specific steps that couples must follow to formalize their union. Initially, the couple must approach a designated civil registry office, known as the “Sazeman-e Saghfi,” which operates under the Ministry of Interior.

‘Before proceeding to the registry, it is essential for both parties to gather the required documentation. This typically includes their national IDs (or

<sup>35</sup> IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book Five](#), 15 July 2013

<sup>36</sup> DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (page 5), 24 July 2023

<sup>37</sup> IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book Five](#), 15 July 2013

<sup>38</sup> Landinfo, [Iran: Passports, ID and civil status documents](#) (page 35), 5 January 2021

<sup>39</sup> UNSD, [About us](#), no date

<sup>40</sup> IRI, [Civil Registration Law](#) (Articles 31, 32 and 33), no date

<sup>41</sup> IRI, [Civil Registration Law](#) (Article 10), no date

passports for foreign nationals), birth certificates, and medical certificates confirming their health status. The health certificates particularly affirm that the couple has undergone the necessary medical examinations, including tests for sexually transmitted diseases, which are mandatory before marriage in Iran.

‘Once the required documents are prepared, the couple should make an appointment at the civil registry office. During the appointment, both individuals are required to be present. The registrar will review the documentation and ask pertinent questions to confirm the couple’s intention to marry. Following this verification, the couple will proceed to sign the marriage contract, known as “Saql,” which upon completion, grants them marital status under Iranian law.

‘There is also a registration fee associated with this process, which may vary depending on the location of the registry office ... Proper registration is imperative as it safeguards the rights of both spouses, facilitating access to legal benefits and protections within Iranian society.’<sup>42</sup>

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## 7.5 Dowry and maintenance rights

### 7.5.1 The November 2024 GGLS article stated:

‘... [T]he concept of “mahr,” a form of financial obligation by the husband to the wife, is a significant element of the marriage contract, serving both as a symbol of commitment and a financial safeguard for the wife.

‘... This financial arrangement has deep cultural roots and varies significantly depending on social status and familial expectations. Negotiating the mahr is often a crucial step before formalizing the marriage, highlighting the intersection of economic considerations and cultural practices in Iranian society.’<sup>43</sup>

### 7.5.2 The Civil Code states:

‘Article 1106 - The cost of maintenance of the wife is at the charge of the husband in permanent marriages.

‘Article 1107 - Cost of maintenance includes dwelling, clothing, food, furniture in proportion to the situation of the wife, on a reasonable basis, and provision of a servant if the wife is accustomed to have servants or if she needs one because of illness or defects of limbs.

‘Article 1108 - If the wife refuses to fulfil duties of a wife without legitimate excuse, she will not be entitled to the cost of maintenance ...’<sup>44</sup>

### 7.5.3 Book 7, Part 1, Chapter 1 and Book 9, Chapter 1 of the Civil Code outline other provisions relating to the obligation of maintenance<sup>45</sup>.

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## 7.6 Divorce and child custody

### 7.6.1 Book 7, Section 2 of the Civil Code outlines the provisions relating to

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<sup>42</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

<sup>43</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

<sup>44</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Articles 1106 to 1108), 23 May 1928

<sup>45</sup> IRI, [Civil Code ...](#) (Book 7, Part 1, Chapter 1 and Book 9, Chapter 1), 23 May 1928

dissolution of marriage<sup>46</sup>.

- 7.6.2 Article 1130 of the Civil Code states: ‘In the following circumstances, the wife can refer to the Islamic judge and request for a divorce. When it is proved to the Court that the continuation of the marriage causes difficult and undesirable conditions, the judge can for the sake of avoiding harm and difficulty compel the husband to, divorce his wife. If this cannot be done, then the divorce will be made on the permission of the Islamic judge.’<sup>47</sup>
- 7.6.3 Article 1133 of the Civil Code states: ‘A man can divorce his wife whenever he wishes to do so.’<sup>48</sup>
- 7.6.4 On 23 April 2024, the USSD published ‘2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iran’ (2023 Human Rights report) which stated: ‘Laws recognizing a divorced woman’s rights to alimony and part of shared property were not always enforced. A woman could divorce only if her husband signed a contract granting her that right, could not provide for his family, violated the terms of the marriage contract, or was a drug addict, insane, or impotent. A man could divorce his wife without providing any reason.’<sup>49</sup>
- 7.6.5 In June 2024, the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) published a Country of Origin Information report entitled ‘Iran – Country Focus’ which covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 17 April 2024. The report cited various sources including email communications the EUAA received from Leila Alikarami, ‘an expert on Iranian law, qualified attorney, and a member of Iran’s Central Bar Association since 2002 with extensive expertise on the situation of women in Iran who is based outside of Iran’<sup>50</sup>, in March 2024 (though the last digit was omitted from the date of one of the emails, the context suggests that both email communications were in March 2024). Citing those email communications, the report stated:
- ‘Divorce proceedings initiated by women last longer in courts, which “often resulting in women giving up some of their rights” including the “payment of mahriye” (dower [dowry] payment) to accelerate the settlement.
- ‘In Iran, it is religiously accepted if the husband states the word “talaq” (divorce) three times in front of an assembly or a council in the absence of his wife. It is known as the “triple talaq”, which is a form of divorce often practised in Sunni-majority regions of Iran ... The divorce is not legally settled but rather arbitrarily and in a sudden manner that often impacts women economically and emotionally.’<sup>51</sup>
- 7.6.6 The November 2024 GGLS article stated:
- ‘Divorce in Iran, while legally permissible, carries a social stigma that can influence personal relationships and family dynamics. Islamic law recognizes two forms of divorce: “talaq” (the husband’s unilateral right to divorce) and “khula” (the wife’s right to initiate divorce, often contingent upon the husband’s consent or compensation). The complexities of these procedures

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<sup>46</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Book 7, Section 2), 23 May 1928

<sup>47</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 1130), 23 May 1928

<sup>48</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 1133), 23 May 1928

<sup>49</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iran](#) (page 67), 23 April 2024

<sup>50</sup> EUAA, [Iran - Country Focus](#) (footnote 977 on page 92 and page 109), June 2024

<sup>51</sup> EUAA, [Iran - Country Focus](#) (page 92), June 2024

reveal the interplay between Islamic principles and cultural expectations, further illustrating that divorce is often a challenging ordeal for women, who may face societal pressure after the dissolution of a marriage.’<sup>52</sup>

7.6.7 The same GGLS article stated:

‘In Iran, the legal procedures for divorce are primarily governed by the Family Protection Law and the Islamic Penal Code. The process initiates with the filing of a divorce request at the competent civil court. Both parties are required to submit certain documents, including national identification cards and marriage certificates. For women, additional documents may include evidence of the husband’s inability to fulfill his marital obligations, should they seek a fault-based divorce.

‘The Iranian legal framework emphasizes mediation as a crucial step in divorce proceedings. Upon filing, the court will mandate that both spouses attend counseling sessions with a mediator. This step serves to explore the possibility of reconciliation before progressing to divorce ...

‘If mediation fails, the court proceeds to hear the case. A judge will evaluate the evidence presented by both parties, taking into account any prior mediation records along with testimonies, and then issue a ruling based on the law. The proceedings may typically take several months, depending on court availability and the complexity of the case. The judge’s decision will address issues such as property division, child custody, and maintenance responsibilities, which are key factors in the dissolution of marriage.

‘... [R]egardless of the type of divorce - whether mutual consent, judicial, or fault-based - following these procedures is necessary for the legality of the divorce ...’<sup>53</sup>

7.6.8 An undated webpage belonging to Dadsoo, a legal firm operating in Iran<sup>54</sup>, stated: ‘Before 7 years old Children’s custody is with the mother. After that, the girl is only up to 9 years of age and the boy is up to 15 years of age should live with their father. Then, the girl or boy decided to continue living with their mother or father.’<sup>55</sup>

7.6.9 The USSD 2023 Human Rights report stated:

‘The law provided divorced women preference in custody for children up to age seven, but fathers maintained legal guardianship rights over the child and had the right to decide upon many legal aspects of the child’s life (such as issuing travel documents, enrolling in school, or filing a police report). Additionally, the civil code stated, “If the mother becomes insane or marries another man during her period of custody, the custody shall devolve upon the father.” After the child reached age seven, the father could gain custody unless he was proven unfit to care for the child.’<sup>56</sup>

7.6.10 The November 2024 GGLS article stated:

‘The determination of custody does not solely rest on age; several criteria influence the court’s decisions. These include the financial stability of the

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<sup>52</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

<sup>53</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

<sup>54</sup> Dadsoo, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>55</sup> Dadsoo, [Complete guide to divorce law in Iran](#), no date

<sup>56</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iran](#) (pages 67 to 68), 23 April 2024

parents, emotional ties with the child, and the potential impact of the custody arrangement on the child's social development. Additionally, the court may consider the child's opinion, especially as they grow older, reflecting a commitment to respecting their rights. Post-divorce, both parents are obligated to maintain their responsibilities toward the child, including financial support and active involvement in their upbringing, which is crucial for the child's overall well-being.'<sup>57</sup>

7.6.11 The March 2025 CHRI article stated:

'Child custody laws are ... extremely discriminatory in Iran. Under Articles 1180 and 1181 of the Iranian Civil Code, legal guardianship of a child is granted to the father or paternal grandfather. Even if both are deceased, the mother does not gain guardianship, which may instead be given to a male relative on the father's side. Article 1169 states that fathers automatically receive custody of children over the age of seven, and mothers who decide to remarry may lose child custody.'<sup>58</sup>

7.6.12 On 12 March 2025, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) published a report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran. The report, which cited various sources, stated:

'While the law includes wife battery or any kind of mistreatment of the wife as grounds for divorce, judges may still refuse to grant divorce, even in the most severe cases of domestic violence. It is extremely difficult to obtain a divorce in a court system in which judges tend to discredit women's claims or normalize and legitimize violence. The lack of representation of women in judicial decision-making positions may affect how domestic violence cases are evaluated and understood in divorce proceedings, potentially creating additional challenges for women seeking to leave abusive marriages.'<sup>59</sup>

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## 7.7 Reproductive rights

7.7.1 The USSD 2023 Human Rights report stated: 'The law considered sex within marriage consensual by definition and, therefore, did not address spousal rape, including in cases of forced marriage.'<sup>60</sup>

7.7.2 On 2 December 2024, a Factsheet published by Impact Iran, 'a coalition of 19 non-governmental organizations committed to advocating for human rights and driving positive change in Iran'<sup>61</sup>, stated: 'Iranian law does not criminalize marital rape or other forms of domestic violence.'<sup>62</sup>

7.7.3 The same factsheet also stated: 'In November 2021, the Guardian Council ratified the "Youthful Population and Protection of the Family" law, which essentially criminalizes access to abortion, contraception, voluntary sterilization services and related information.'<sup>63</sup>

7.7.4 A 6 March 2024 article published by the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), a press association of human rights advocates in Iran for

<sup>57</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

<sup>58</sup> CHRI, [Gender Apartheid in Iran is Crushing Women's Lives and Futures](#), 6 March 2025

<sup>59</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 58), 12 March 2025

<sup>60</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iran](#) (page 62), 23 April 2024

<sup>61</sup> Impact Iran, [Mission](#), no date

<sup>62</sup> Impact Iran, [Factsheet: Women and Girls' Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 2 December 2024

<sup>63</sup> Impact Iran, [Factsheet: Women and Girls' Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 2 December 2024

the daily reporting of human rights violations<sup>64</sup>, stated:

‘Recent legislation in Iran, ostensibly designed to boost the country’s population, cast a long shadow over the rights and autonomy of women. At the heart of these measures is a draft revision of the Penal Code that significantly escalates the penalties associated with abortion, revealing a concerted effort by the government to exert control over women’s reproductive rights and bodily autonomy ...

‘Under the new draft Penal Code, the act of performing an abortion, facilitating the process, or even disseminating information about how to obtain one could result in severe legal consequences. Healthcare professionals ... could face not only imprisonment but also the revocation of their professional licenses.

‘... The implications of this legislative push are profound ... [T]he government is not only infringing on women’s rights to make decisions about their bodies but also potentially endangering their health. Women seeking to avoid legal repercussions may turn to unsafe methods to terminate unwanted pregnancies ...

‘Furthermore, this legislative approach reflects a broader attempt to control and dictate the terms of women’s existence and roles within society, reinforcing traditional gender norms and expectations.’<sup>65</sup>

- 7.7.5 The UN Human Rights Committee concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Iran, published in November 2023, stated:

‘The Committee regrets the adoption of retrogressive legislation that leaves women at an increased risk of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and illegal, clandestine abortions, putting their lives and health in danger ... The Committee notes with distress article 61 of the Youthful Population and Protection of the Family Law, which provides for the imposition of the death penalty on anyone who performs abortions on a “large scale” (arts. 6–8).’<sup>66</sup>

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## 7.8 Legal framework relating to women and children

- 7.8.1 The Iranian Constitution states: ‘Article 20 (Equality before the law): All citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in conformity with Islamic criteria.

Article 21 (Women’s rights): The government must ensure the rights of women in all respects, in conformity with Islamic criteria ...’<sup>67</sup>

- 7.8.2 An article published on 28 November 2024 by the Women’s Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), which advocates for gender equality and describes itself as the democratic alternative to Iran’s ruling regime<sup>68</sup>, citing various sources, stated:

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<sup>64</sup> HRANA, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>65</sup> HRANA, [The State of Women’s Rights in Iran: Institutional and Individual Violations](#), 6 March 2024

<sup>66</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, [Concluding observations ...](#) (paragraph 21), 23 November 2023

<sup>67</sup> Iran Data Portal, [The Constitution ...](#) (page 10), 2/3 December 1979, amended 28 July 1989

<sup>68</sup> NCRI Foreign Affairs Committee, [... NCRI’s Role as Iran’s Democratic Alternative](#), 9 March 2024

“Elimination of Violence against Women,” “Provision of Security for Women against Violence,” “Protection, Dignity, and Provision of Security for Ladies Against Violence,” “Protection of Dignity and Support for Women Against Violence,” and now “Preventing Women from Harm and Improving Their Security Against Abuse,” are all iterations of a single proposed bill in Iran. For more than 13 years, this bill has remained stalled. It occasionally resurfaces to pacify public opinion, only to be passed from one government body to another with no meaningful progress.

‘... Despite this protracted and exhausting process, the bill’s details and implementation remain unclear.

‘On November 12, 2024, the state-run IRNA news agency quoted Ahmad Fatemi, a member of the mullahs’ Parliament, stating: “There are many bills and drafts; the turn for this bill is not near and will take time, but it is on the agenda.”

‘... The clerical regime’s so-called women’s protection bill is riddled with shortcomings:

- ‘1. Child Marriage: It fails to deter child marriages.
- ‘2. Educational Rights: It does not prevent fathers from barring daughters from continuing their education.
3. Divorce and Custody: It denies mothers the right to divorce or custody of their children.

‘The bill fundamentally does not acknowledge the existence of violence against women, including domestic violence. The term violence is notably absent from the text.

‘... Under the section titled Support Measures, the bill allocates responsibilities to the Prison Organization. This focus bizarrely centers on regulating the punishment of imprisoned women rather than addressing penalties for male perpetrators of violence.

‘The bill [also] reiterates provisions from the mullahs’ Penal Code, notorious for its discriminatory treatment of women.’<sup>69</sup>

7.8.3 On 14 April 2023, IranWire, an Iranian news website<sup>70</sup>, published an article entitled ‘Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “Protect” Women with New Bill’ which stated:

‘The drafters of the bill claim that one of its most important goals is to criminalize certain misogynic and “wrong” traditions. According to the media outlets affiliated with the government, the bill will help protect “women’s privacy” against official bailiffs, will allow them to ask for a “judge’s permission” to leave the country if the husband does not allow it, will punish a husband who throws his wife out of their home and will criminalize force[d] marriage or divorce.’<sup>71</sup>

7.8.4 The same IranWire article stated: ‘Now that its [the bill’s] general outline has been approved, many supporters of women’s rights believe that it has deviated from its original goals ... [Leily Pourzand, a women’s rights scholar]

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<sup>69</sup> NCRI Women’s Committee, [... A Bill That Never Gets Passed](#), 28 November 2024

<sup>70</sup> IranWire, [About IranWire](#), no date

<sup>71</sup> IranWire, [Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “Protect” Women with New Bill](#), 14 April 2023

tells IranWire that the bill does not provide a correct definition of forced marriage.<sup>72</sup>

7.8.5 The Impact Iran Factsheet, published in December 2024, stated:

‘The Bill for the Protection, Dignity and Security of Women Against Violence has been in development since 2011 but has still not been adopted. Although the bill contains a number of positive provisions, it falls short of international standards. For instance, the current draft fails to criminalize marital rape and child marriage. The draft is currently on the Parliament’s agenda for final review and adoption although it is unclear when this would take place.’<sup>73</sup>

7.8.6 An undated webpage entitled ‘Prevention of Violence against Children’ published by UNICEF stated: ‘Children’s rights in Iran are regulated by a blend of sharia law, national legislation, and international legal instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.’<sup>74</sup>

7.8.7 On 5 November 2024, the UNHRC published the national submission of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in advance of the forty-eighth session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The submission stated:

‘Iran has planned and implemented extensive measures to protect the rights of children and adolescents, the most important of which are mentioned below:

- ‘Ratification of the Protection of Children and Adolescents Act on May 12, 2020;
- ‘Amending the bylaws for granting guardianship as well as the protection of ill-cared and orphaned children in order to promote the family-based approach of child care;
- ‘Drafting a bill to amend Article 612 of the Islamic Penal Code (approved on May 22, 1996) with the issue of intensifying the punishment of the father in the case of child murder and creating restrictions on his right to guardianship and custody over other children;
- ‘Approval of the document on the protection of children and adolescents in cyberspace (June 2021).’<sup>75</sup>

7.8.8 An article published on 23 June 2020 by Human Rights Watch (HRW), shortly after the Guardian Council approved the Protection of Children and Adolescents Act on 7 June 2020, stated:

‘Iran’s recently approved law to protect children and adolescents is a small positive step forward but falls short of the fundamental reforms needed to meaningfully protect children’s rights ...

‘It includes new penalties for certain acts that harm a child’s safety and well-being, including physical harm and preventing access to education. The law also allows officials to relocate a child in situations that seriously threaten their safety. But the law fails to address some of the most serious threats

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<sup>72</sup> IranWire, [Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “Protect” Women with New Bill](#), 14 April 2023

<sup>73</sup> Impact Iran, [Factsheet: Women and Girls’ Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 2 December 2024

<sup>74</sup> UNICEF, [Prevention of Violence against Children](#), no date

<sup>75</sup> IRI, published by UNHRC, [National report submitted ...](#) (paragraph 78), 5 November 2024

against children in Iran, such as child marriage and imposition of the death penalty.

‘... In a positive development, article 33 of the new law requires social workers from that State Welfare Organization to promptly investigate the situation of children in “extreme danger” from abuse, exploitation, or being out of school, among other things. Under the law, they have the authority to remove a child from a household and put them under the state’s supervision until the prosecutor becomes involved in the case.’<sup>76</sup>

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## 8. Marriage and divorce documentation

### 8.1.1 The Landinfo report, published on 5 January 2021, stated:

‘Notary publics at these [National Organization of Registration of Documents and Property] offices registers, signs and seals marriages/divorces and issues relevant certificates. This is done for both Muslims, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians ...

‘Marriage is also registered immediately in the couple’s shenasnameh [birth certificate<sup>77</sup> or ID booklet that is issued upon birth registration<sup>78</sup>]. For a divorce, however, it may take some time before the change in marital status is registered and shenasnameh is updated. The reason is that the couple has three months contemplation time after the ruling has been given by the family court ... If the couple does not visit the registration office within three months, they must apply to the family court again and get a new, identical ruling ...

‘The registration offices will send updated marital status information to NOCR [National Organization for Civil Registration] every fifteenth day ... Advances in the digitization of public services may have changed the way this is handled today, but Landinfo has no information about this.

‘According to US Bureau of Consular Affairs ... the following documentation is required to register a marriage and obtain a certificate:

- ‘spouses’ shenasnameh
- ‘spouses’ national ID card
- ‘health certificate
- ‘shenasnameh of the bride’s father

‘The marriage certificate, Sanad-e aghd / Sanad-e ezdevaj, is a small, handwritten booklet with a red/burgundy cover ...’<sup>79</sup>

### 8.1.2 The USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs also described the physical appearance of Iranian marriage certificates: ‘Depending on the year, booklet with turquoise blue, red/burgundy, or green cover, off-white pages with handwritten data. As of April 2024, the booklets are no longer issued and instead a white one-page, type-written certificate is issued.’<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> HRW, [Iran: Child Protection Law Positive, but Insufficient](#), 23 June 2020

<sup>77</sup> DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (page 5), 24 July 2023

<sup>78</sup> Landinfo, [Iran: Passports, ID and civil status documents](#) (page 4), 5 January 2021

<sup>79</sup> Landinfo, [Iran: Passports, ID and civil status documents](#) (page 35), 5 January 2021

<sup>80</sup> USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Reciprocity Schedule](#) (Marriage, Divorce Certificates), no date

- 8.1.3 Iranian Citizen Services, a California and Tehran-based company that offers consulting services to Iranian citizens for documentation and registration procedures<sup>81 82</sup>, published an undated webpage which stated: ‘Marriages and divorces are registered in your birth certificate ... You must ... submit several legal documents including the wife's fathers consent and witness documents and an Islamic marriage or divorce document along with other forms to register your marriage or divorce in your birth certificate.’<sup>83</sup>
- 8.1.4 The national submission of Iran to the UNHRC, published in November 2024, stated: ‘In line with measures to prevent [child] marriage, two-page birth certificates are issued for people under 15, which only include personal and local information for registering birth and death events, and no other event such as marriage is recorded in it. As a result, the applicant for such a marriage must go to the court to change the birth certificate and obtain a marriage license in accordance with the civil law.’<sup>84</sup>
- 8.1.5 DFAT, in it’s ‘Iran Country Information Report’, which it published on 24 July 2023, stated: ‘... [U]ndocumented Farsi Kurds [‘an ethno-religious group historically inhabiting both sides of the Zagros mountain range along the Iraq-Iran border, and [who] can be considered a cross-border population’<sup>85</sup>] are not legally entitled to ... obtain birth, death and marriage certificates.’<sup>86</sup>
- 8.1.6 The USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs stated:  
 ‘Iran does not recognize the Bahai’i faith as a minority religion, thus the documentation of such marriages differs from Islamic marriages or marriages of other religious minorities. Marriage between two Baha’is is registered in two documents. The first is an ecclesiastical marriage certificate issued by the local spiritual assembly – a booklet with the signatures of the couple, the person officiating the ceremony, and nine witnesses. The second is a one-page document issued by the Department of National Registration and Statistics stating that the couple appeared before one of its officials and provided an oath stating that they are a married couple. Baha’i marriages should be evidenced with both documents, as well as the registration of the union in both parties’ shenasnameh documents. However, when a Baha’i marries a person from any other religion, the identity documents may not indicate the marriage.’<sup>87</sup>
- 8.1.7 On 26 June 2024, the USSD published ‘2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran’ (IRF report), covering events in 2023. The report stated: ‘Recognized religious groups issue marriage contracts in accordance with their religious laws. The government does not recognize Baha’i marriages or divorces but allows a civil attestation of marriage. The attestation serves as a marriage certificate and allows for basic recognition of the union but does not offer legal protections in marital disputes.’<sup>88</sup>
- 8.1.8 The Landinfo report stated: ‘We do not have specific information about which documents the couple must submit beyond the court ruling in order to

<sup>81</sup> Iranian Citizen Services, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>82</sup> Iranian Citizen Services, [Contact](#), no date

<sup>83</sup> Iranian Citizen Services, [Iranian Marriage or Divorce](#), no date

<sup>84</sup> IRI, published by UNHRC, [National report submitted ...](#) (footnote 91), 5 November 2024

<sup>85</sup> EUAA, [Country Guidance: Iraq](#) (2.15.9 Farsi Kurds), January 2021

<sup>86</sup> DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (paragraph 2.59), 24 July 2023

<sup>87</sup> USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Reciprocity Schedule](#) (Marriage, Divorce Certificates), no date

<sup>88</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran](#) (page 18), 26 June 2024

register the divorce with a notary public and get a divorce certificate issued. According to the US Bureau of Consular Affairs ... two witnesses must be present at the registration. The divorce certificate, Sanad-e Talaq, is a small, handwritten booklet with a white cover ...<sup>89</sup>

8.1.9 The USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs stated:

‘As of April 2024, newly issued divorce records will be in a one-page type-written certificate. Older records will be in a white booklet with handwritten data.

‘... Divorces are recorded in the older version of birth certificates (shenasnameh), but duplicate birth certificates may not include this information. If the original booklet is lost, a handwritten transcript from the registry office may be acceptable.’<sup>90</sup>

8.1.10 The USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs also noted the issuing authority for the sanad-e talagh (divorce certificate) as being the National Organization of Registration of Documents and Property (Sazman-e Sabt-e Asnad va Amlak-e Keshvar), obtained via application at a local registration office, with two witnesses required<sup>91</sup>.

8.1.11 In September 2023, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ, Dutch abbreviation) published a ‘General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran’ (the BZ COI report). The report, citing a confidential source from June 2023, stated:

‘When an NOCR-authorized registry office records a sigheh marriage, this is noted on the birth certificate (shenasnameh). When the sigheh marriage is terminated, this also has to be noted on the birth certificate. In that case, the woman is formally considered to be divorced. This means that to enter into a first permanent marriage after the termination of a sigheh marriage, she no longer needs her father’s consent. If a sigheh marriage is not officially registered, there is no need to record it on the birth certificate.’<sup>92</sup>

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## 9. Position of women in society

### 9.1 Cultural and societal attitudes towards women and marriage

9.1.1 The Impact Iran Factsheet, published in December 2024, stated:

‘Iran is one of just six UN member states that are not party to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Under the Constitution, the rights of women and girls are only equal to men and boys when these are deemed in conformity with the “Islamic criteria,” a vague requirement with no definition under Iranian law that has led to the adoption and implementation of laws and practices that discriminate directly or indirectly against women and girls in Iran.

‘Under Iranian law, women and girls’ rights are not equal to those of men and boys when it comes to the age of criminal responsibility, rights to marriage, divorce, the custody of children, participation in public and political

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<sup>89</sup> Landinfo, [Iran: Passports, ID and civil status documents](#) (pages 35 to 36), 5 January 2021

<sup>90</sup> USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Reciprocity Schedule](#) (Marriage, Divorce Certificates), no date

<sup>91</sup> USSD Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Reciprocity Schedule](#) (Marriage, Divorce Certificates), no date

<sup>92</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (paragraph 3.1.5.6), September 2023

life, in sports and in arts, work, freedom of movement, the transmission of their nationality to their children, and more.’<sup>93</sup>

9.1.2 The EUAA country guidance note, published in January 2025, considered:

‘Gender discrimination is institutionalised in Iran. Women face significant legal and social restrictions that deeply impact their lives, particularly in areas such as employment, education, and personal freedoms.

‘... Women are ... prohibited from entering the workplace without wearing a hijab, dancing in public, riding bicycles, joining the army, participating in public sports, and becoming president.

‘... [W]omen and girls in Iran ... may need the support of a male family member in order to access different services and to exercise certain rights ... A husband can determine where the couple lives and can prevent his wife from taking certain jobs that he considered contrary to “family values”.’<sup>94</sup>

9.1.3 The March 2025 CHRI article stated:

‘In Iran, women are second-class citizens - systematically oppressed by laws and policies that serve only one purpose: to entrench the power of the government. For over four decades, the Islamic Republic has restricted women’s rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody, work, the courts, political office, travel, lifestyle, and clothing - using their bodies and freedoms as tools of domination - and has blatantly failed to protect women from gender-based violence.

‘... Severe, systematic, and institutionalized gender-based discrimination pervades all aspects of life for women in Iran, from the personal to the public, regardless of age, background, or status. This discrimination is codified in law and entrenched in practice.’<sup>95</sup>

9.1.4 An article dated 24 March 2025 published by the Women’s Committee of the NCRI stated: ‘Hassan Ahmadi, a legal expert within Iran’s judiciary, identified key factors contributing to domestic violence, including cultural attitudes that treat women as property ...’<sup>96</sup>

9.1.5 An article entitled ‘The Fight Against Violence: Iran’s Struggle for Women’s Safety’, published on 31 January 2025 by the Omid Foundation, a foundation which aims to empower marginalised young women and girls<sup>97</sup>, stated: ‘Cultural stigma and victim-blaming ... discourage women from reporting violence. Survivors often fear social ostracization, retaliation, or being dismissed by authorities.’<sup>98</sup>

9.1.6 The 2 November 2023 Iran International article, about polygamy, stated:

‘Typical of regime propaganda, the newspaper, Javan, shared the notion that principles of polygamy and obedience of women are rooted in the fundamental framework of Islamic sexual theory. Among Iran’s young population, especially in urban areas, polygamy is seen as a thing of the past ...

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<sup>93</sup> Impact Iran, [Factsheet: Women and Girls’ Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 2 December 2024

<sup>94</sup> EUAA, [Country Guidance: Iran; Common analysis and ...](#) (pages 14, 44 and 64), January 2025

<sup>95</sup> CHRI, [Gender Apartheid in Iran is Crushing Women’s Lives and Futures](#), 6 March 2025

<sup>96</sup> NCRI Women’s Committee, [Escalating Violence Against Women in Iran ...](#), 24 March 2025

<sup>97</sup> Omid Foundation, [Our Work](#), no date

<sup>98</sup> Omid Foundation, [... Iran’s Struggle for Women’s Safety](#), 31 January 2025

‘... The article even argued that if Islamic principles are correctly implemented in society, it could alleviate the current challenges faced by Iranian society in matters related to sexual issues, referring to Iran's declining marriage and birth rates, a challenge the regime has long been trying to overcome as young women delay marriage in favour of education and careers.

‘... Marriage contracts often include clauses mandating a woman's obedience to receive financial support for housing, clothing, food, and furniture.’<sup>99</sup>

9.1.7 An IranWire article published on 4 February 2025 stated:

‘Nearly half of Iranian marriages are ending in divorce, with rates reaching 52 per cent in Tehran, according to new data released by Iran’s Civil Registration Organization.

‘The statistics cover the first seven months of the current Persian year.

‘The organization reported 108,673 divorces out of 274,596 registered marriages nationwide, representing a 39 per cent divorce rate across the country.

‘... Marriage rates have declined by 46 per cent between 2010 and 2023, according to the Statistical Center of Iran.

‘Tehran, Mashhad, Khuzestan, Fars, and East Azerbaijan provinces recorded the highest number of marriages, while Semnan, Ilam, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Bushehr, and South Khorasan reported the lowest.

‘Economic factors, including unemployment, are driving both the decline in marriage rates and the increase in divorces, according to the Iranian news outlet EghtesadOnline.

‘In response to rising divorce rates, authorities implemented restrictions on divorce registration in 2019.

‘The Marriage and Divorce Notaries Association announced these measures following orders from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who has advocated for simpler marriages with lower dowries to encourage young couples to wed.

‘Despite these efforts, official data indicates that campaigns promoting marriage and childbearing have not reversed the trend.’<sup>100</sup>

9.1.8 The June 2024 USSD IRF report, covering events of 2023, stated:

‘The government continued to require all women to adhere to “Islamic dress” standards in public, including covering their hair and fully covering their bodies in loose clothing – an overcoat and a hijab or, alternatively, a chador (a full body-length piece of fabric worn over both the head and clothes). “Un-Islamic dress” was punished with arrests, imprisonment, lashings, fines, mandatory psychiatric treatment, closure of businesses which did not enforce dress codes, and dismissal from employment ... According to press reports, judges also sentenced women convicted of not wearing the hijab to public service, including work in morgues or street cleaning, in lieu of prison time. Protests against the mandatory hijab under the slogan “Zan, Zendegi, Azadi” (“Woman, Life, Freedom”) continued into the year, originally prompted

<sup>99</sup> Iran International, [Hardliners In Iran Promote Polygamy, Obedience Of Wives](#), 2 November 2023

<sup>100</sup> IranWire, [Iran Records 39% Divorce Rate Nationwide as Marriage Declines ...](#), 4 February 2025

by Mahsa Amini's death in custody [for "improper hijab"<sup>101 102</sup>] in 2022.

'... Analysis published by the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) stated that as of September [2023], regular citizens were being compelled to assist law enforcement efforts regarding the wearing of the hijab. USIP reported citizens were required to deny services to women who did not adhere to hijab regulations, blocking access to banks, shops, and restaurants, and that business owners who failed to comply risked fines or even closure of their establishments.'<sup>103</sup>

- 9.1.9 On 29 April 2025, Amnesty International (AI) published its annual report, 'The State of the World's Human Rights', covering 2024, which stated: 'Authorities continued to treat women as second-class citizens, including in relation to marriage, divorce, child custody, employment, inheritance and political office.'<sup>104</sup>

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## 9.2 Marriage customs

- 9.2.1 The DFAT Iran Country Information Report stated: 'Some Iranians have their marriages arranged by parents. Many other young Iranians organise romances and marriages through dating, including online. Some upper-class women will cohabit with their partner with a temporary marriage licence.'<sup>105</sup>
- 9.2.2 The West Asia News Agency (WANA), an Iranian news outlet aimed at foreign audiences<sup>106</sup>, published an article entitled 'Exploring Iranian Wedding Traditions' on 27 July 2024 which stated: 'The typical stages of an Iranian wedding include Khastegari (proposal), Bale Boroon (engagement), Aghd (marriage contract), Pagosha (welcoming the bride and groom), purchasing the Jahiziyeh (dowry), Henna Night [Henna Bandan], the wedding celebration [Jashn-e-Aroosi], Patakhti (post-wedding party), and the honeymoon.'<sup>107</sup>
- 9.2.3 For details of what happens at each of the typical stages of an Iranian wedding mentioned, see the [WANA article](#). For information about wedding traditions in Iran, see an article entitled '[Sofreh aqd: An inside look at Iranian weddings](#)' published by Middle East Eye (MEE), 'an independently funded digital news organisation covering stories from the Middle East and North Africa'<sup>108</sup>, on 7 April 2022.
- 9.2.4 The WANA article went on to state: '... [M]any traditional Iranian wedding customs have been significantly influenced by global cultural trends. Today, we observe fewer of the authentic Iranian traditions in weddings and related ceremonies than in the past. The widespread adoption of global practices has overshadowed many of these time-honored customs, leading to a decline in their prevalence and practice.'<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Reuters, [Iran steps up internet crackdown one year after Mahsa Amini death](#), 14 September 2023

<sup>102</sup> BBC News, [Iran: A really simple guide to the protests](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>103</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom ...](#) (pages 41 to 42 and 43), 26 June 2024

<sup>104</sup> AI, [The State of the World's Human Rights: Iran 2024](#), 29 April 2025

<sup>105</sup> DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (paragraph 2.135), 24 July 2023

<sup>106</sup> WANA, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>107</sup> WANA, [Exploring Iranian Wedding Traditions](#), 27 July 2024

<sup>108</sup> MEE, [About us](#), no date

<sup>109</sup> WANA, [Exploring Iranian Wedding Traditions](#), 27 July 2024

### 9.2.5 The November 2024 GGLS article stated:

‘The cultural landscape of marriage in Iran is profoundly shaped by a rich tapestry of religious beliefs and longstanding traditions ... In many cases, marriages are celebrated through elaborate ceremonies that reflect adherence to cultural norms and religious rituals.

‘One of the essential aspects of Iranian marriage customs is the traditional dowry, known as “mahr.”

‘... Furthermore, societal expectations around marriage and family play a pivotal role in shaping individual decisions. In many communities, marrying at a certain age and establishing a family with children is viewed as a social obligation, often reinforced by family pressure. Coupled with this is the notion of honor; families may feel a heightened sense of reputation tied to their children’s marital choices.’<sup>110</sup>

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## 10. Early and forced marriage

### 10.1 Definitions

#### 10.1.1 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on child marriage, published by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in February 2025, stated:

‘Child marriage is a marriage or union in which one or both spouses are under 18 years old. Although this definition sounds straightforward, the realities of child marriage can be complicated. Both the words “child” and “marriage” are sometimes interpreted differently. Child marriage can affect girls and boys; however, adolescent girls are the most affected.

‘... United Nations resolutions refer to the term “child, early and forced marriage”. This creates the impression that these terms are distinct. In fact, they are overlapping.’<sup>111</sup>

#### 10.1.2 The UNFPA went on to state: ‘... Regardless of ... varying definitions, child marriage is a serious human rights violation that directly threatens the lives, health, safety, education, economic opportunities and overall well-being of girls and boys, limiting their future prospects.’<sup>112</sup>

#### 10.1.3 The UNFPA FAQs also stated:

‘... [E]arly marriage is also sometimes used to describe marriages in which both spouses are 18 or older but other factors make them unready to consent to marriage, such as their level of physical, emotional, sexual and psychosocial development, or a lack of information regarding the person’s life options.

‘Forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not give full and free consent, regardless of age. Forced marriage can also refer to a union in which one or both spouses are unable to end or leave the marriage.

‘Because in most countries children are not considered able to give legal consent, all child marriages are sometimes considered forced marriages.’<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

<sup>111</sup> UNFPA, [Child marriage - Frequently Asked Questions](#) (What is child marriage?), February 2025

<sup>112</sup> UNFPA, [Child marriage - Frequently Asked Questions](#) (What is child marriage?), February 2025

<sup>113</sup> UNFPA, [Child marriage ...](#) (What is the difference between ...?), February 2025

10.1.4 A guidance webpage entitled 'Forced marriage', jointly published by the UK Home Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), which was updated on 7 March 2023, stated:

'A forced marriage is where one or both people do not or cannot consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used to force them into the marriage. It is also when anything is done to make someone marry before they turn 18, even if there is no pressure or abuse.

'... It is a form of domestic abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

'The pressure put on people to marry against their will may be:

- 'physical: for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence
- 'emotional and psychological: for example, making someone feel like they are bringing 'shame' on their family

'Financial abuse, for example taking someone's wages, may also be a factor.'<sup>114</sup>

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## 10.2 Minimum age for marriage

10.2.1 Article 1041 of the Civil Code states: 'Marriage before the age, of majority is prohibited. Note – Marriage before puberty by the permission of the Guardian and on condition of taking into consideration the ward's interest is proper.'<sup>115</sup>

10.2.2 An undated 'Iran' webpage published by Girls Not Brides, 'a global network of more than 1,400 civil society organisations from over 100 countries committed to ending child marriage'<sup>116</sup>, stated: '... [T]he age of majority is 9 lunar years (8 years and 9 months) for girls and 15 lunar years for boys.'<sup>117</sup>

10.2.3 The Nada Foundation, 'a UK-registered human rights organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of girls and young women'<sup>118</sup>, published an article on child marriage in Iran, on 16 September 2023, entitled 'Childhood Marriage in Iran: Understanding the Harsh Reality'. The report stated: 'In recent years, Iran has made efforts to combat childhood marriage through legal reforms. The minimum age of marriage for girls in Iran was raised from 9 to 13 in 2013 ... While the legal age of marriage for girls in Iran is 13, there are still instances of marriages taking place at younger ages.'<sup>119</sup>

10.2.4 A CNS News article published on 25 December 2018 stated: 'Lawmakers in Iran have defeated a bid to outlaw the marrying of girls aged nine to 13 ... Currently, girls in Iran may be legally married at 13 although those as young as nine may be married with the permission of their fathers or a court. The rejected motion had aimed to lift the legal marriage age to 16, and to enable marriage between 13 and 16 only with the approval of a legal guardian.'<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> UK Home Office and FCDO, [Forced marriage](#), 20 March 2013, updated 7 March 2023

<sup>115</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Article 1041), 23 May 1928

<sup>116</sup> Girls Not Brides, [About us](#), no date

<sup>117</sup> Girls Not Brides, [Iran](#) (What is the minimum legal framework around marriage?), no date

<sup>118</sup> Nada Foundation, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>119</sup> Nada Foundation, [Childhood Marriage in Iran ...](#), 16 September 2023

<sup>120</sup> CNS News, [Iran Won't Outlaw Marriage of Under-13 Girls ...](#), 25 December 2018

- 10.2.5 The DFAT Iran Country Information Report stated: ‘Girls can be married as young as 13 (15 for boys) but marriage is possible at any age with the permission of a judge and the father of the child.’<sup>121</sup>
- 10.2.6 On 23 October 2023, Femena, an organisation which ‘supports women human rights defenders ... , their organizations and feminist movements in the [Middle East and North Africa] MENA and Asia regions’<sup>122</sup> published an article entitled ‘Child Marriage in Iran: An Endless Cycle of Systematic Violence Against Girls’ which stated: ‘... Civil Code Article 1041 ... permits the marriage of girls aged 10-13 with parental and court consent. Notably, these permissions are often swiftly granted by conservative Muslim male judges.’<sup>123</sup>
- 10.2.7 The Nada Foundation published an article on 25 September 2023 entitled ‘Exploring the Legality of Child Marriage in Iran: A Legal Analysis’ (the legal analysis article). The article stated: ‘In Iran, the legal age of marriage is 13 for girls and 15 for boys, provided they have parental consent and a court’s permission. These age limits are significantly lower than the international standards established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both genders.’<sup>124</sup>
- 10.2.8 The November 2024 GGLS article stated: ‘One primary requirement [for a valid marriage] is the minimum age for marriage, which has been set at 13 years for females and 15 years for males, although many families and communities encourage later marriages for both genders to ensure maturity and readiness.’<sup>125</sup>
- 10.2.9 The Impact Iran Factsheet, published in December 2024, stated:  
 ‘Child marriage continues to be permitted under Iranian law. The legal minimum age for marriage is 13 years old for girls and 15 years old for boys, though girls who have reached the age of legal majority, 9 “lunar years” (about 8 years old and 9 months), can be married with parental consent and court approval ... With the permission of the court, the legal guardian has the right to marry for, and on behalf of, a minor daughter – legally sanctioning forced marriage.’<sup>126</sup>

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### 10.3 Reasons for child marriage

#### 10.3.1 The undated Girls Not Brides ‘Iran’ webpage stated:

‘Child marriage is driven by gender inequality and the belief that girls are somehow inferior to boys.

‘In Iran, child marriage is also driven by:

- ‘Poverty: Some families marry their daughters in exchange for money or a house. This has led to the perception that girls are commodities in a deal. A girl’s beauty is considered to be important in determining how high her bride price is.

<sup>121</sup> DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (paragraph 2.132), 24 July 2023

<sup>122</sup> Femena, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>123</sup> Femena, [Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 23 October 2023

<sup>124</sup> Nada Foundation, [Exploring the Legality of Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 25 September 2023

<sup>125</sup> GGLS, [Introduction to Marriage and Divorce in Iran](#), 19 November 2024

<sup>126</sup> Impact Iran, [Factsheet: Women and Girls’ Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 2 December 2024

- ‘Harmful practices: Child marriage can take different forms in Iran. Blood marriages are reportedly still practiced in tribal areas, and involve a girl being married in order to resolve a feud between two tribes. Naval string marriages involve a girl being “pledged” to marry a cousin or distant relative when she is born through a symbolic cutting of the umbilical cord. Temporary marriages (Sigheh), used to get around Islamic restrictions on sex outside wedlock involving minors, are also common.
- ‘Religion: Sharia-based Iranian law states that the legal age for marriage is 13 for girls and 15 for boys, but marriages can still be carried out at a younger age with the consent of fathers and permission from court judges. This has enabled a culture whereby child marriage is considered somewhat socially acceptable.
- ‘Family honour: In some parts of the country, families marry their young daughters to improve their position in their tribe. Girls are also married early to prevent them from entering a relationship and dishonouring the family.’<sup>127</sup>

10.3.2 The 16 September 2023 Nada Foundation article stated:

‘Causes of Childhood Marriage in Iran:

‘1. Cultural and traditional norms: Iran has a deeply ingrained traditional culture, where marriage is seen as a way to ensure the preservation of family honor and social standing. These cultural beliefs often prioritize the perceived benefits of early marriage, such as protection of the girl’s virginity and ensuring she does not engage in premarital sexual relations.

‘2. Poverty and economic factors: In disadvantaged areas, poverty often serves as a major push factor for childhood marriages. Families may marry off their young daughters as a means of financial security, reducing the number of mouths to feed and obtaining a dowry from the groom’s family.

‘3. Gender inequality: In a patriarchal society like Iran, gender inequality plays a significant role in perpetuating childhood marriage. The belief that women are inferior to men and exist solely to serve their husbands drives the practice of arranging marriages for young girls.’<sup>128</sup>

10.3.3 On 24 May 2023, Iran Focus, ‘an independent non-profit news service provider that focuses on events in Iran, Iraq and the Middle East’<sup>129</sup>, published an article entitled ‘The Unsettling Child Marriage Epidemic Sweeping Iran’ which stated:

‘In recent years, an increasing number of young Iranian adults are choosing to postpone marriage due to the overwhelming financial burden it poses for both men and women in the workforce. However, in certain disadvantaged families, there is a tendency to forge alliances with families in better economic circumstances by pressuring their daughters into marrying significantly older men, sometimes with an age gap spanning years or even decades.

“Studies indicate that early marriages are predominantly driven by poverty. In less developed provinces with higher rates of poverty and illiteracy, the

<sup>127</sup> Girls Not Brides, [Iran](#) (What drives child marriage in Iran?), no date

<sup>128</sup> Nada Foundation, [Childhood Marriage in Iran ...](#), 16 September 2023

<sup>129</sup> Iran Focus, [About Us](#), no date

age of (conventional) marriage is lower. Additionally, regions such as Sistan and Baluchistan, Hormozgan, Khuzestan, Kurdshin, and border areas experience higher rates of child marriages compared to more central and developed provinces,” Etemad Daily writes in this regard.<sup>130</sup>

- 10.3.4 Another article published by Iran Focus, on 22 October 2023, stated: ‘Forced marriage is an oppressive tradition that came to light after the 1979 revolution in Iran and is justified under the name of religion, cultural beliefs, economic and political problems ... [P]rimarily victims are girls, [and it] is carried out in Iran with the complete backing of the clerical regime’s leaders due to their misogynist laws. The UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery has announced forced marriages a type of slavery.’<sup>131</sup>
- 10.3.5 The same Iran Focus article also stated: ‘These marriages primarily occur through the coercion of families.’<sup>132</sup>
- 10.3.6 The Femena article, published in October 2023, stated: ‘In Iran, the primary causes of child marriage lie in regressive laws and deeply entrenched patriarchal values. If these legal and cultural norms did not endorse child marriage, families wouldn’t resort to it as a means to alleviate poverty. Most child marriage cases in Iran are linked to communities valuing patriarchy and restricting women’s autonomy.’<sup>133</sup>
- 10.3.7 The USSD 2023 Human Rights report stated: ‘According to human rights organizations, the increase in child marriage [see [Prevalence of child marriage](#)] was due in part to a government “marriage loan” program providing financial relief to poor families who wanted to marry off their girls.’<sup>134</sup>
- 10.3.8 Regarding the marriage loan programme, the Financial Times stated, in an article published on 6 September 2024, that: ‘The government offers low-interest loans to newly-weds to promote marriage and childbearing, and has increased the amounts on offer in recent years ...’<sup>135</sup>
- 10.3.9 In an article published on 1 December 2020, CHRI stated:
- ‘These loans come at a time when many Iranians are suffering severe economic hardship ... As a result, applications for the loans, which are extremely large by Iranian income standards, have never been higher.
- ‘Even though girls from age 13 (and younger) and boys from age 15 are legally able to marry in Iran and therefore qualify for the loans, the money is paid out to their parents, who by law are still their legal guardians until they reach 18. This has created a huge opportunity for impoverished parents to marry off their children for financial gain.’<sup>136</sup>
- 10.3.10 An article that was originally published on 23 January 2024, and was updated on 11 October 2024, by Worldcrunch, a Paris-based, independent, digital media outlet<sup>137</sup>, entitled ‘Top Iran Health Official: Girls Should Start

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<sup>130</sup> Iran Focus, [The Unsettling Child Marriage Epidemic Sweeping Iran](#), 24 May 2023

<sup>131</sup> Iran Focus, [Iran: 26,000 girls under 15 married in the past year](#), 22 October 2023

<sup>132</sup> Iran Focus, [Iran: 26,000 girls under 15 married in the past year](#), 22 October 2023

<sup>133</sup> Femena, [Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 23 October 2023

<sup>134</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iran](#) (page 76), 23 April 2024

<sup>135</sup> Financial Times, [Iran’s urban youth falling out of love with marriage](#), 6 September 2024

<sup>136</sup> CHRI, [Easy State Loans Prompting Surge in Child Marriages in Iran](#), 1 December 2020

<sup>137</sup> Worldcrunch, [About us](#), no date

Having Children At 15' stated: '... [T]he families in question are poor and uneducated, and believe marrying off a daughter for cash will solve some of their problems.'<sup>138</sup>

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#### 10.4 Prevalence of child marriage

- 10.4.1 An article published on 16 December 2024 by Iran Focus, entitled 'Domestic Violence Against Women in Iran' stated:

'... [A]n analysis of the latest raw data from the regime's Civil Registration Organization in 2020 reveals that 767 marriages involving girls under 13 years old were officially registered across Iran that year. Using the international standard of 18 years as the benchmark for child marriage, more than one-fifth of registered marriages in Iran qualify as "child marriages," according to the latest statistics. This means that out of approximately 557,000 registered marriages in 2020, in 118,000 cases, the bride was under the age of 18.'<sup>139</sup>

- 10.4.2 For information about the numbers of child marriage by age group and by location (city and province) in 2020, and for a comparison of the total numbers of child marriages, by age group, across all of Iran between 2013 and 2020, see an IranWire article entitled '[Official Statistics: One Fifth of All Marriages in Iran are Child Marriages](#)', published on 1 April 2022.

- 10.4.3 On 25 April 2023, Carnegie Europe, which provides research and recommendations on European foreign and security policy<sup>140</sup>, published a paper on the EU's approach to women's rights in Iran. The paper, which was written by Barbara Mittelhammer, a political analyst and consultant, Tara Sepehri Far, an Iran and Kuwait senior researcher at HRW, and Sussan Tahmasebi of Femena<sup>141</sup>, stated: 'While the legal age of marriage is thirteen for girls and fifteen for boys, Iranians typically marry later ... Yet, in recent years there has been an alarming increase in marriage among girls under fifteen ...'<sup>142</sup>

- 10.4.4 On 25 May 2023, Kayhan Life, 'an independent media outlet focusing on Iran'<sup>143</sup>, published an article entitled 'Thousands of Child Marriages are Celebrated In Iran Each Year' which stated:

'A recent report by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) said that 27,448 girls aged under 15 were married between December 2021 and November 2022.

'The report added the number of girls under 15 getting married in the fall of 2022 increased by 933 from the summer of that year.

'Also, the number of marriages among couples aged between 15 and 19 years old increased by 5,500 between July and November 2022.

'The report noted that although the number of marriages among girls under 15 had steadily declined since 2017, it had increased since 2019.'<sup>144</sup> CPIT

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<sup>138</sup> Worldcrunch, [... Should Start Having Children At 15](#), 23 January 2024, updated 11 October 2024

<sup>139</sup> Iran Focus, [Domestic Violence Against Women in Iran](#), 16 December 2024

<sup>140</sup> Carnegie, [About](#) (Carnegie Europe), no date

<sup>141</sup> Carnegie Europe, [Rethinking the EU's Approach to Women's Rights in Iran](#), 25 April 2023

<sup>142</sup> Carnegie Europe, [Rethinking the EU's Approach to Women's Rights in Iran](#), 25 April 2023

<sup>143</sup> Kayhan Life, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>144</sup> Kayhan Life, [Thousands of Child Marriages are Celebrated In Iran Each Year](#), 25 May 2023

noted that while the article quantified the increase in child marriages between the summer and the autumn of 2022, the source did not provide any comparison of the same period from previous years. As a result, it is not possible to conclude whether the increase was due to seasonal variations in marriages or indicative of a longer-term trend. The source also did not provide annual numbers of child marriages for the period 2017 to 2022 so it has not been possible to verify or quantify the source's claim that child marriages declined after 2017 and increased from 2019.

- 10.4.5 Citing various sources, the BZ COI report, published in September 2023, stated: 'Child marriages are particularly common in the poorer parts of Iran, but they also take place in Tehran. On 7 April 2023, SCI reported that between April 2022 and January 2023, more than 20,000 girls were married under the age of fifteen. This is thought to be substantially underreported, as many such marriages are consummated before girls reach the age of thirteen and are not registered with the court until later.'<sup>145</sup>
- 10.4.6 The Impact Iran Factsheet, published in December 2024, stated: 'State-sponsored Iran's Students News agency reported "over 20,000" child marriages with girls under the age of 15 between March and December 2022. Numbers, however, are likely to be higher as many child marriages go unregistered.'<sup>146</sup>
- 10.4.7 The October 2023 Iran Focus article stated: 'According to a report by the Statistical Center of Iran 25,900 child girls have married from last winter [2022] until now [October 2023]'.<sup>147</sup> CPIT noted, from the title and the context of the article, that Iran Focus were referring to 'child girls' here as being under 15 years of age.
- 10.4.8 With reference to SCI figures reported by the Etemad newspaper in May 2023, the Iran Focus article also went on to state: '... [A]n average of 135,000 marriages of girls under 18 are registered annually in Iran, with about 1,700 of those marriages involving girls under 13.'<sup>148</sup>
- 10.4.9 The report of the Special Rapporteur, published on 12 March 2025, stated: 'The Special Rapporteur welcomes the reported 25 per cent reduction in underage marriages (girls under 18 years) from 2021 to 2023 in the Islamic Republic of Iran, while noting the absence of absolute numbers in the reporting. The most recent official statistics from 2021/22 indicate concerning figures: 26,974 girls compared to just 15 boys under the age of 15 years were married and 138,151 women and girls aged 15–19 years compared to 23,138 boys and men in the same age group ... The Special Rapporteur highlights important gaps and changes in the country's statistical reporting practices. Since 2017, the Statistical Centre of Iran has altered its data presentation by merging previously separate categories of "below 10 years" and "age 10–14 years" into a single "under 15 years" category. Furthermore, the Centre does not specifically report marriages of girls under 18 years, instead using age brackets of "under 15 years" and "15–19 years", making it difficult to assess the full scope of underage marriages. The absence of published figures for 2022/23 and 2023/24 further complicates efforts to

<sup>145</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (paragraph 3.1.6.2), September 2023

<sup>146</sup> Impact Iran, [Factsheet: Women and Girls' Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 2 December 2024

<sup>147</sup> Iran Focus, [Iran: 26,000 girls under 15 married in the past year](#), 22 October 2023

<sup>148</sup> Iran Focus, [Iran: 26,000 girls under 15 married in the past year](#), 22 October 2023

verify the reported reduction in child marriage.’<sup>149</sup>

- 10.4.10 The national submission of Iran to the UNHRC, published in November 2024, stated: ‘... [W]ith the efforts made and the implementation of educational and cultural programs, the marriage of girls under the age of 18 has decreased by 25 percent from 2021 to 2023.’<sup>150</sup>
- 10.4.11 The IranWire article about the new bill which purported to protect women, published on 14 April 2023, stated: ‘Leily Pourzand, a women’s rights scholar, points out that most child marriages and forced marriages are not legally registered.’<sup>151</sup>
- 10.4.12 The DFAT Iran Country Information Report stated: ‘DFAT understands several thousand girls under 14 are married, several hundred of whom have children of their own. Human rights organisations have reported an increase in the number of girls as young as nine years old marrying, which they assess may be a consequence of increased economic hardship among rural and poor families.’<sup>152</sup>
- 10.4.13 The Nada Foundation legal analysis article stated: ‘Child marriage remains a deeply ingrained practice in certain rural and conservative areas of Iran. While the prevalence of child marriages is difficult to quantify accurately, various studies suggest that the rate of child marriages is declining due to the efforts of activists and awareness campaigns.’<sup>153</sup>
- 10.4.14 The undated Girls Not Brides ‘Iran’ webpage stated: ‘17% of girls in Iran marry before age 18 and 3% marry before age 15.’<sup>154</sup> As the content on the Girls Not Brides webpage is not dated, it is not known what time period these percentages relate to.
- 10.4.15 The same undated Girls Not Brides webpage added:
- ‘Such figures could well be higher given that the numbers published by the [Iranian Statistics Center] ISC only reflect registered marriages, and not unregistered marriages, which are common in rural areas of Iran.
- ‘... According to a member of the Judicial and Legal Commission of the Iranian Parliament, thousands of children get married unofficially without registration, and in many cases, a girl’s actual age is not correctly recorded.’<sup>155</sup>
- 10.4.16 The January 2024 Worldcrunch article, that was updated in October 2024, stated: ‘Since 2017, the country has registered around 184,000 marriages of girls aged less than 15 years, 5,000 of which were later annulled. Underage marriages have risen particularly on the edges of big cities, says Mansur Fathi, a social work lecturer at Tehran’s Allameh Tabataba’i University.’<sup>156</sup>
- 10.4.17 On 26 December 2024, HRANA published ‘Annual Analytical and Statistical Report on Human Rights in Iran for the year 2024’. The report stated: ‘In September 2024, the Etemad newspaper reported on the cessation of

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<sup>149</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 63), 12 March 2025

<sup>150</sup> IRI, published by UNHRC, [National report submitted ...](#) (paragraph 81), 5 November 2024

<sup>151</sup> IranWire, [Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “Protect” Women with New Bill](#), 14 April 2023

<sup>152</sup> DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (paragraph 2.132), 24 July 2023

<sup>153</sup> Nada Foundation, [Exploring the Legality of Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 25 September 2023

<sup>154</sup> Girls Not Brides, [Iran](#) (What’s the prevalence rate?), no date

<sup>155</sup> Girls Not Brides, [Iran](#) (What’s the prevalence rate?), no date

<sup>156</sup> Worldcrunch, [... Should Start Having Children At 15](#), 23 January 2024, updated 11 October 2024

publishing statistics and information regarding child marriage and the number of children born to underage mothers in Iran. According to the newspaper, an official from the Civil Registry Organization stated that “an order has been issued” prohibiting the release of these statistics.’<sup>157</sup>

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## 10.5 Effects of child marriage

10.5.1 The Femena article, published in October 2023, stated: ‘... [T]here is a lack of comprehensive research at both provincial and national levels to understand the root causes and effects of child marriage on girls in Iran.’<sup>158</sup>

10.5.2 The same article also stated:

‘... [G]irls, often lacking accurate information about sexual relations, are forced into marriages with much older men, losing their education, friendships, and childhood in the process. Most become pregnant in the first years of marriage and assume the roles of mothers and caregivers while still being children themselves.

‘These girls, especially when married to significantly older men, endure severe physical and psychological challenges. If they manage to divorce, their lack of education and professional skills leaves them financially vulnerable, often compelling them to remarry, particularly if they come from low-income families.’<sup>159</sup>

10.5.3 The Nada Foundation published an article on 22 March 2024 entitled ‘The impact of child brides in Iran: A look at the consequences of underage marriages’, which stated:

‘Health Consequences of Child Brides

‘Child brides in Iran encounter a range of health issues due to their youth and physical immaturity. These include an escalated risk of pregnancy-related complications like premature birth and low birth weight, limited access to reproductive health services resulting in heightened maternal and infant mortality rates, and increased vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

‘According to Dr. Gholamreza Masoumi, a gynecologist in Tehran, “Child brides are more susceptible to pregnancy and childbirth complications due to their bodies not being fully developed, putting both mother and baby at risk of severe health problems.”

‘Educational Impact of Child Marriage

‘Child brides in Iran often see their education cut short owing to their marital duties. Many young girls are compelled to drop out of school to fulfill domestic responsibilities and care for their families. This lack of education not only limits their future prospects but also perpetuates the poverty cycle within their communities ...

‘Psychological Effects of Early Marriage

‘Forced marriages at a young age impose psychological strains on child

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<sup>157</sup> HRANA, [Annual ... Report on Human Rights ... 2024](#) (Children’s Rights), 26 December 2024

<sup>158</sup> Femena, [Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 23 October 2023

<sup>159</sup> Femena, [Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 23 October 2023

brides in Iran. Early marriage can lead to feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety. These girls are stripped of their childhood and thrust into adult responsibilities, resulting in emotional distress and mental health challenges ...<sup>160</sup>

- 10.5.4 The January 2024 Worldcrunch article, that was updated in October 2024, stated: 'Intermittently there are reports of former child brides killing themselves or turning on their spouses, in-laws or even their own families and in cases, killing them. These are the wages of injustice, resentment and desperation ... For the Islamic Republic, judging by court verdicts and cases like the recent execution of a former child bride who had killed her husband, the wife is usually more guilty.'<sup>161</sup> For more information about the execution of the former child bride referred to, see an article published by Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE / RL) on 20 December 2023, entitled '[Iranian "Child Bride" Hanged For Murder Of Husband, Rights Groups Say](#)'.
- 10.5.5 The Impact Iran Factsheet, published in December 2024, stated: '... 9 lunar year old married girls and older are also subject to the laws governing women and girls' lives in marriage, including Civil Code Article 1108's obligation to fulfill the sexual needs of their husbands.'<sup>162</sup>
- 10.5.6 An article about an increase in the numbers of women being executed in Iran in 2024, published on 18 December 2024 by CHRI, stated:

'Since the start of 2024, Iran has executed at least 29 women. More executions of women may have taken place that are unknown.

'These women are often young and, like many of those executed in Iran, often members of minority communities. What stands them apart from other executed prisoners is that many of these women were victims of child marriage (and thus child rape), domestic violence, and gender-related crimes and injustices, who committed murder as the only way to escape intolerable abuse.'<sup>163</sup>
- 10.5.7 For some examples of women and girls who were executed between 2023 and 2025 for killing their husbands after they were subjected to child or forced marriages, see:
  - an [Independent article dated 21 December 2023](#) about the execution that month of a woman, arrested for the murder of her husband aged 19 after being 'married off' to him at 15 and subjected to domestic violence
  - the [CHRI article dated 18 December 2024](#) which noted the execution of a woman in northwest Iran in October 2024 after she was accused of poisoning him. She was reportedly trapped in an abusive marriage after, aged 17, she was forcibly married to a man 18 years her senior
- 10.5.8 The report of the Special Rapporteur, that was published on 12 March 2025, stated: 'Of the cases of the 114 women executed for homicide [between 2010 and 2024], details were obtained for 75 of them: 69 per cent had killed their husband or intimate partner; 11 had been victims of domestic violence; 8 had been victims of child marriage; and 4 reportedly had killed in self-

<sup>160</sup> Nada Foundation, ... [A look at the consequences of underage marriages](#), 22 March 2024

<sup>161</sup> Worldcrunch, ... [Should Start Having Children At 15](#), 23 January 2024, updated 11 October 2024

<sup>162</sup> Impact Iran, [Factsheet: Women and Girls' Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 2 December 2024

<sup>163</sup> CHRI, [Women Being Sent to the Gallows in Alarming Numbers in Iran](#), 18 December 2024

defence against rape.’<sup>164</sup>

- 10.5.9 The May 2023 Kayhan Life article stated: “The crucial issue is that most ‘child brides’ become mothers at a very young age,” the [Etemad] paper said. “According to the National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR), 69,103 babies were born to mothers aged between 10 and 19 in 2021. In the same year, 1,474 babies were born to mothers aged between 10 and 14.”<sup>165</sup>
- 10.5.10 See the [Kayhan Life article](#) for more information about these statistics, including the number of babies born to underage girls in 2021, by province.
- 10.5.11 The May 2023 Kayhan Life article also stated: ‘Promoting child marriages has also increased the number of underage girls getting divorced.’<sup>166</sup> However, the article additionally stated that according to Shargh (a daily newspaper considered ‘reformist-moderate’, published in Tehran<sup>167</sup>), 1,048 girls under 15, and 16,790 aged 15 to 19, got divorced in 2017, which dropped to 610 and 10,555, respectively, by November 2021<sup>168</sup>. The article also stated that 14,216 girls aged 15 to 19 were divorced in 2019, and 734 girls under 15 by 2020<sup>169</sup>.
- 10.5.12 The October 2023 Iran Focus article stated: ‘Based on [the SCI report covering winter 2022 to autumn 2023, see paragraph 10.4.7] ... over 1,300 infants have been born to mothers under the age of 15, which is higher than the previous year’s statistics. Hammihan Newspaper [a newspaper published in Iran<sup>170</sup>], citing the report of the Statistical Center on October 19 [2023], reported that over 200 girls under the age of 15 have registered for divorce in the past winter.’<sup>171</sup> CPIT noted, however, that the 1,300 infants born to mothers under the age of 15 reported in 2022/2023 were fewer than the 1,474 babies that were reportedly born to mothers aged 10 to 14 in 2021 (see paragraph 10.5.9). CPIT was unable to corroborate, or draw comparisons between, the data due to the various sources having reported figures over different time periods.
- 10.5.13 The Iran Focus article on domestic violence against women that was published in December 2024 stated: ‘The Iranian Statistical Center has stopped publishing birth statistics by maternal age since March 2023. However, available data indicate that between 2016 and 2022, an average of 1,438 births per year in Iran were recorded where the mother was under the age of 15.’<sup>172</sup>
- 10.5.14 For some examples of women and girls who were victims of child marriages and were subsequently killed by their husbands or fathers, see the following:
- an [18 September 2024 IranWire article](#), which reported on the killing of a 36 year-old woman on 28 August 2024 by her father, due to her wish to divorce her husband, who she was forced to marry at a young age
  - a [12 December 2024 IranWire article](#), which reported on the murder, on 5

<sup>164</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 28), 12 March 2025

<sup>165</sup> Kayhan Life, [Thousands of Child Marriages are Celebrated In Iran Each Year](#), 25 May 2023

<sup>166</sup> Kayhan Life, [Thousands of Child Marriages are Celebrated In Iran Each Year](#), 25 May 2023

<sup>167</sup> Worldcrunch, [Shargh](#), no date

<sup>168</sup> Kayhan Life, [Thousands of Child Marriages are Celebrated In Iran Each Year](#), 25 May 2023

<sup>169</sup> Kayhan Life, [Thousands of Child Marriages are Celebrated In Iran Each Year](#), 25 May 2023

<sup>170</sup> Hoover Institution, [Hammihan Newspaper Interview with Abbas Milani](#), 29 May 2007

<sup>171</sup> Iran Focus, [Iran: 26,000 girls under 15 married in the past year](#), 22 October 2023

<sup>172</sup> Iran Focus, [Domestic Violence Against Women in Iran](#), 16 December 2024

December 2024, of a 19-year-old woman, and her sister, by her husband, after she pursued divorce upon learning of his addiction to drugs; the hanging of a 22-year-old woman in November 2024 by her abusive husband who was also her paternal cousin, who claimed she committed suicide; and a 26 year-old woman who was stabbed to death in October 2024 by her husband a year after she left him, after 12 years in an abusive marriage

- a [CHRI article dated 6 January 2025](#), which cited various sources, reported the case of a woman who was shot on 6 July 2024 by her husband in northeast Iran after requesting a divorce following years of domestic violence since her marriage at age 14; a 27-year-old mother who was stabbed to death by her husband on 23 June 2024 in Sanandaj (northwest Iran) during an argument about her wish to divorce him after being in an abusive marriage since age 14

10.5.15 On 8 March 2025, the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights (Hengaw), an organisation that covers human rights violations across Iran, including in the Kurdish region of Iran<sup>173 174</sup>, published a report about what it described as ‘systematic violations’ of women’s rights in Iran throughout 2024. The report noted that of ‘[a]t least 191 cases of femicide ... recorded across 29 provinces in Iran in 2024 ... At least 7 women were victims of child marriage and forced marriage.’<sup>175</sup>

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## 10.6 Consequences of refusal to marry

10.6.1 The EUAA country guidance note, published in January 2025, stated: ‘... [W]omen and girls who refused forced marriages ... may face honour-related violence ... from non-State actors such as their family members.’<sup>176</sup>

10.6.2 The 8 March 2025 Hengaw report noted that in 2024, Hengaw recorded 2 cases of femicide as having been caused by the rejection of marriage proposals<sup>177</sup>. It was not clear whether any of 29 femicide cases Hengaw recorded as ‘honour killings’ in 2024 may also have been related to refusals to marry.

10.6.3 On 30 July 2024, Stop Femicide Iran (SFI), an organisation that seeks to combat femicide in Iran<sup>178</sup>, published a press release, providing a summary of key findings from a report on 149 recorded cases of lethal violence against women and girls in Iran, which took place in 2023 and the first half of 2024. The press release stated that ‘... motives, such as requests for divorce, rejection of marriage proposals, or refusal of second marriages ...’<sup>179</sup> were the cause of 9 incidents of femicide. The source did not provide a breakdown of the 9 incidents of femicide so it is not known how many were due to rejected marriage proposals.

10.6.4 See the sources below for examples of 2 girls who reportedly committed

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<sup>173</sup> Hengaw, [About us](#), no date

<sup>174</sup> Hengaw, [Eight Years of ... Commitment to Advocacy](#), 9 October 2024

<sup>175</sup> Hengaw, [... Report on Systematic Violations of Women’s Rights ...](#) (page 21), 8 March 2025

<sup>176</sup> EUAA, [Country Guidance: Iran; Common analysis and guidance note](#) (page 35), January 2025

<sup>177</sup> Hengaw, [... Report on Systematic Violations of Women’s Rights ...](#) (page 22), 8 March 2025

<sup>178</sup> SFI, [About Stop Femicide Iran \(SFI\)](#), no date

<sup>179</sup> SFI, [... 18-month Report on Lethal Violence Against Women and Girls ...](#) (page 3), 30 July 2024

suicide in connection with their refusal to marry, between 2023 and 2025:

- [Hengaw article dated 27 September 2023](#) about a 17-year-old girl from Kermanshah province, who reportedly committed suicide due to the pressure placed on her by her grandfather to marry her cousin
- [NCRI Women's Committee article dated 4 October 2024](#) about a 15-year-old girl from Lorestan who committed suicide after being pressured by her family to marry a 40-year-old man

10.6.5 For further information on honour crimes, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Iran: Women fearing 'honour'-based violence](#).

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## 10.7 Avenues of redress

10.7.1 The 16 September 2023 Nada Foundation article stated:

‘Efforts to Combat Childhood Marriage in Iran:

‘1. Legal reforms: In recent years, Iran has made efforts to combat childhood marriage through legal reforms. The minimum age of marriage for girls in Iran was raised from 9 to 13 in 2013 ...

‘2. Education and awareness campaigns: Various organizations and activists in Iran are working tirelessly to raise awareness about the negative consequences of childhood marriage. These campaigns aim to change societal attitudes and encourage communities to prioritize the education and well-being of young girls.

‘3. Empowering and supporting girls: Programs that aim to empower and support girls through education and skill development play a critical role in preventing childhood marriage. By providing girls with better opportunities and alternatives, they can have more control over their futures and avoid becoming child brides.’<sup>180</sup>

10.7.2 The Femena article, published in October 2023, stated: ‘... [I]nstead of combating child marriage, the authorities of the Islamic Republic have supported its expansion. They have implemented policies like offering marriage loans to very young couples, further exacerbating the issue.’<sup>181</sup>

10.7.3 The Nada Foundation article that was published in March 2024 stated: ‘Despite the prevalence of child marriage in Iran, continuous efforts are underway to combat this harmful practice. [Non-governmental organisations] NGOs and human rights organizations are tirelessly working to raise awareness about the repercussions of underage marriages and advocate for policy changes to safeguard young girls.’<sup>182</sup>

10.7.4 On 9 July 2024, Equality Now, ‘an international human rights organization ... working to protect and promote the rights of women and girls worldwide’<sup>183</sup>, the Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (CSHR), an NGO working to support the work of rights defenders<sup>184</sup>, and Femena made a joint submission to UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR), outlining ‘gaps in the

<sup>180</sup> Nada Foundation, [Childhood Marriage in Iran ...](#), 16 September 2023

<sup>181</sup> Femena, [Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 23 October 2023

<sup>182</sup> Nada Foundation, [... A look at the consequences of underage marriages](#), 22 March 2024

<sup>183</sup> Equality Now, CSHR and Femena, [Submission to the UN ... UPR ...](#) (paragraph 1), 9 July 2024

<sup>184</sup> Equality Now, CSHR and Femena, [Submission to the UN ... UPR ...](#) (paragraph 2), 9 July 2024

implementation of international human rights obligations and the legislation of the Iranian State in addressing child, early, and forced marriage ...<sup>185</sup>

10.7.5 The joint submission, which cited various sources, went on to state:

‘It is concerning that, during the Islamic Republic of Iran’s most recent review by the Human Rights Committee in 2023, the Iranian representatives dismissed the issues of child marriage ...

‘[It] has failed to take adequate steps to end child, early, and forced marriage - all of which facilitate increased rates of domestic and sexual violence against women and girls - and instead reiterated the legitimacy of the harmful practice by way of marriage registration to the Human Rights Committee in its 2023 review.’<sup>186</sup>

10.7.6 The article published by the Women’s Committee of the NCRI on 28 November 2024 stated: ‘Police are rarely willing to intervene in cases of domestic violence ... Abused women receive minimal support from government-affiliated organizations. In many cases, instead of addressing the violent circumstances of these women’s lives, these organizations focus on persuading them to return to their abusive households.’<sup>187</sup>

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## 11. Relationships outside of marriage

11.1.1 See the [Country Policy and Information Note on Iran: ‘Zina’ \(sex outside of marriage and adultery\)](#).

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## 12. Access to justice

12.1.1 On 4 December 2019, Oxford Academic published a journal article written by Shamin Asghari, a humanitarian worker at Relief International, Iran, who also has a Masters in human rights from Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, focusing in part on women’s rights, early marriage and legal pragmatism in human rights<sup>188</sup>. The journal article, which cited various sources, stated:

‘... [T]he requirement of a court decision [for a child girl to be married, in accordance with Article 1041 of the Civil Code, see paragraphs 10.2.1 and 10.2.6] in the case of an exception is not a strong legal precaution in practice. To issue a permit for marriage below the legal age, courts should determine whether it is in line with the interests of the child. This determination does not follow a uniform procedure. Some judges apply a high level of scrutiny, considering two aspects of the interests of the child: a negative one requiring the marriage not to be harmful to the child; and a positive one requiring the marriage to be beneficial for the child. A judge should cautiously analyse both aspects and seek various expert opinions regarding the mental, physical, and social abilities of the child before being in a position to issue the permit ... But this standard of review is not prevalent. To determine whether marriage is in the interests of the child, most judges only rely on a medical certificate issued by the Legal Medicine Organization testifying to the physical growth of the child. At most, they will ask the child a

<sup>185</sup> Equality Now, CSHR and Femena, [Submission to the UN ... UPR ...](#) (paragraph 6), 9 July 2024

<sup>186</sup> Equality Now, CSHR and Femena, [Submission to the UN ...](#) (paragraphs 8 and 27), 9 July 2024

<sup>187</sup> NCRI Women’s Committee, [... A Bill That Never Gets Passed](#), 28 November 2024

<sup>188</sup> Asghari, Shamin, [Early Marriage in Iran: A Pragmatic Approach](#), 4 December 2019

few broad questions about the meaning of marriage ...'<sup>189</sup>

12.1.2 The HRANA article that was published in March 2024 stated:

'In the intricate landscape of Iran's human rights challenges, the judiciary plays a pivotal role, oscillating between neglect and active suppression of women's rights. This dynamic is glaringly apparent in the treatment of female prisoners, journalists, activists, and those defying the mandatory hijab regulations. Through both action and inaction, the judiciary not only deepens the suffering of these individuals but also signals a systemic incapacity to safeguard fundamental freedoms.'<sup>190</sup>

12.1.3 The same HRANA article went on to describe the judiciary as complicit:

'... in fostering a climate of fear and repression, particularly against women challenging compulsory hijab laws and advocating for broader freedoms. The actions of [several named] judges ... and others, who have imposed heavy sentences on female journalists, activists, and protestors, actively suppress dissent, limit freedom of expression, and encroach on civil liberties, reflecting a pattern of judicial conduct in Iran marked by indifference to prison abuses and a concerted crackdown on female dissent. This underscores a disturbing erosion of basic human rights and freedoms ...'<sup>191</sup>

12.1.4 The USSD 2023 Human Rights report stated:

'Women sometimes received disproportionate punishment for crimes such as adultery, including death sentences. The judiciary's interpretation and application of Islamic law retained provisions that equated a woman's testimony in a court of law to one-half that of a man's and valued a woman's life as one-half that of a man's life. The amount paid in "blood money" for the intentional or unintentional physical harm to a woman was one-half that paid for harm to a man, but a publicly funded trust paid the difference.'<sup>192</sup>

12.1.5 The Impact Iran Factsheet, published in December 2024, stated: 'Women's and girls' testimonies in courts have no legal value for certain categories of crimes, while weights only the value of half that of a man's in other cases.'<sup>193</sup>

12.1.6 The CHRI article, published on 18 December 2024, citing its Executive Director, Hadi Ghaemi, speaking about the execution of women who committed murder in connection with their being made victims of child marriage, stated: '... "This is layer upon layer of crimes against the women of Iran," said Ghaemi. "The judicial authorities make no attempt to situate these women's crimes in the context in which they are committed - deep and systemic violence and abuse of women and girls, from which there is no legal protection or escape."'<sup>194</sup>

12.1.7 The EUAA country guidance note, published in January 2025, stated: 'Women face institutionalised legal, judicial, social, and economic discrimination. They have been facing restrictions and discrimination, including the lowering of the marriage age for girls, limitations on divorce, child custody, inheritance, and dress code ... Their court testimony and

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<sup>189</sup> Asghari, Shamin, [Early Marriage in Iran: A Pragmatic Approach](#), 4 December 2019

<sup>190</sup> HRANA, [The State of Women's Rights in Iran: Institutional and Individual Violations](#), 6 March 2024

<sup>191</sup> HRANA, [The State of Women's Rights in Iran: Institutional and Individual Violations](#), 6 March 2024

<sup>192</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iran](#) (page 68), 23 April 2024

<sup>193</sup> Impact Iran, [Factsheet: Women and Girls' Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 2 December 2024

<sup>194</sup> CHRI, [Women Being Sent to the Gallows in Alarming Numbers in Iran](#), 18 December 2024

inheritance are deemed worth half that of men.’<sup>195</sup>

- 12.1.8 On 6 January 2025, CHRI published an article entitled ‘Killed Because You Are a Woman - Violence Against Women in Iran Reaches New Heights’. The article, which cited various sources, stated: ‘... [T]here is significant under-reporting, as domestic violence is typically suffered in silence, in a judicial context that provides no redress or support to women ... Iran’s laws not only fail to provide women with the necessary protections against violence, they encourage the killing of women through lenient or sometimes nonexistent penalties for femicides.’<sup>196</sup>
- 12.1.9 The same CHRI article also stated: ‘... [M]any women without any reasonable legal recourse who are repeatedly abused and are clearly under the threat of lethal violence, kill their husbands in a desperate act of self-defense. (They then receive no judicial consideration for the context in which their crimes were committed, but are instead sentenced to long prison sentences or execution.)’<sup>197</sup>
- 12.1.10 On 7 January 2025, the UN’s Multimedia Newsroom published a news story entitled ‘UN Human Rights Spokesperson Liz Throssell on Iran Executions in 2024’ which stated: “We understand that at least 31 women were reportedly executed in 2024. Now, that marks the highest number in 15 years,” she [Liz Throssell] said. “The majority of cases involve charges of murder. A significant number of the women were victims of domestic violence, child marriage or forced marriage. A number of them were convicted of murdering their husbands.”<sup>198</sup>
- 12.1.11 The report of the Special Rapporteur, published on 12 March 2025, stated: ‘... [S]urvivors of domestic violence face significant legal obstacles, as no specific law criminalizes it, and a male-dominated judiciary lacking gender-sensitive procedures often disregards women’s claims, particularly in divorce and self-defence in homicide cases and in adultery and sex work-related offences. Qisas [retribution in kind<sup>199</sup>] and diya [blood money<sup>200</sup>] laws further result in unequal penalties, disproportionately affecting women prosecuted under morality laws, who face harsher legal consequences, with limited access to justice.’<sup>201</sup>
- 12.1.12 The 24 March 2025 NCRI Women’s Committee article stated: ‘Despite obtaining forensic medical reports as evidence, victims of domestic abuse face significant legal obstacles, as Iranian courts do not criminalize domestic violence against women due to legal loopholes within the country’s judicial system.’<sup>202</sup>

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## 13. Support and internal relocation

### 13.1 Shelter and support

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<sup>195</sup> EUAA, [Country Guidance: Iran; Common analysis and guidance note](#) (page 44), January 2025

<sup>196</sup> CHRI, [Killed Because You Are a Woman ...](#), 6 January 2025

<sup>197</sup> CHRI, [Killed Because You Are a Woman ...](#), 6 January 2025

<sup>198</sup> UN Multimedia Newsroom, [... \[O\]n Iran Executions in 2024](#), 7 January 2025

<sup>199</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 16), 12 March 2025

<sup>200</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 19), 12 March 2025

<sup>201</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 60), 12 March 2025

<sup>202</sup> NCRI Women’s Committee, [Escalating Violence Against Women in Iran ...](#), 24 March 2025

- 13.1.1 Citing a confidential source from April 2023, the BZ COI report, published in September 2023, stated: 'A system of shelters for women fleeing domestic violence is almost completely absent.'<sup>203</sup>
- 13.1.2 Citing another confidential source, from March 2023, the BZ COI report went on to state:
- '... [B]enefactors and foundations in Iran are generally not allowed to engage in such activities [the funding of shelters supporting women fleeing domestic violence] unless the institutions operate under the supervision of the SWO [State Welfare Organisation]. The activities of some charities and individuals aimed at helping women who were the victim of violence have been discontinued because they were not aligned with the government.
- 'According to the same source, the SWO's guidelines specify that an abused woman can stay in a shelter for two to four months. If a specialist team determines that conditions are not conducive for the woman to return home and she is still physically and mentally vulnerable, this period will be extended. The SWO's website states that a woman is allowed to stay in a shelter for two periods of four months, subject to a judge's ruling. A woman affected by domestic violence is first introduced to shelter through the emergency social services, the police or the judiciary. She is then examined by a medical officer. Her condition is then assessed by a social worker, a psychologist, a doctor and a legal advisor in an interview. According to this source, this process is not always carried out correctly. It is therefore difficult to determine how the police or the courts perform their duties in this area.'<sup>204</sup>
- 13.1.3 The Femena article, published in October 2023, stated: '... [C]ertain NGOs, such as Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society endeavored to assist vulnerable girls forced into early marriages, providing educational opportunities and empowering them economically through skill-based training.'<sup>205</sup>
- 13.1.4 A fact sheet published by CHRI in March 2024, entitled 'Women's Rights in Iran', noted that shelters for abused women were absent in one-third of Iran and that services and shelters were inaccessible to women with disabilities<sup>206</sup>.
- 13.1.5 The IRI submission for the UPR, published by the UNHRC on 5 November 2024, stated:
- 'In relation to dealing with violence against women, in addition to the general approval of the bill "Preventing Women's Harms and Improving Their Safety against Abuse["]", the most important measures are as follows:
- 'Providing legal assistance and support by special offices for the protection of women and children in all judicial complexes;
  - 'Holding training courses by the National Committee for the Prevention of Violence stationed in the Judiciary;
  - 'launching 31 safe houses and five centers to deal with perpetrators of violence in the country;

<sup>203</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (paragraph 3.1.5.10), September 2023

<sup>204</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (paragraph 3.1.5.10), September 2023

<sup>205</sup> Femena, [Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 23 October 2023

<sup>206</sup> CHRI, [Fact Sheet: Women's Rights in Iran](#) (page 3), March 2024

- 'Establishing 430 clinics across the country to provide services to women in need;
- 'Providing mobile social emergency services to women in need;
- 'Having 153 active hotlines throughout the country;
- '... 27 support and rehabilitation centers for socially disadvantaged women and girls in 24 provinces;
- '... 52 health centers for girls exposed to social harm in the country.'<sup>207</sup>

13.1.6 CPIT noted that it was not clear from the submission whether the government of Iran was claiming to have itself provided the above measures, or whether it was referring to support provided by non-state organisations within Iran. Notwithstanding the support provisions referred to by the COI in the rest of this sub-section of the CPIN, and the below articles published between 2018 and 2021 (3 of which were published by state bodies), about:

- emergency social services provided (including mobile units)<sup>208 209</sup>
- the setting up of one support center for socially vulnerable women and girls<sup>210</sup>; and
- the existence of 31 support centres for supporting girls at risk of social harm<sup>211</sup>,

CPIT has been unable to find information to corroborate the above claims made by the government of Iran. It was also not clear whether girls and women who have been the subject of abuse within early and forced marriages (as opposed to girls and woman who have been subjected to abuse outside of early and forced marriages) would be able to access this support.

13.1.7 The Nada Foundation legal analysis article stated: 'In recent years, there have been significant efforts by civil society organizations, activists, and international bodies to advocate for legal reforms and raise awareness about the issue of child marriage in Iran. These endeavors aim to address the root causes of child marriages and promote gender equality, human rights, and education for all.'<sup>212</sup>

13.1.8 In September 2024, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Germany published a 'Country Fact Sheet 2024' that looked at the situation for returnees from Germany to Iran. The fact sheet, which was funded by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Germany) (BAMF), stated:

'Women who are exposed to domestic violence and are in a life-threatening situation, can call Social Emergency by dialing 123. A group of specialists together with the police, also in coordination with judicial authorities, will visit the address provided by the caller. The social worker analyzes the situation and if domestic violence is confirmed, the woman and her children will be referred to intervention centers.

<sup>207</sup> IRI, published by UNHRC, [National report submitted ...](#) (paragraph 77), 5 November 2024

<sup>208</sup> Tehran Times, [Iran to increase emergency social services centers](#), 8 June 2018

<sup>209</sup> SWO, [An introduction on Social Emergency Services\(123\)](#), 1 July 2020

<sup>210</sup> SWO, [Support and empowerment of Socially vulnerable girls and women](#), 28 April 2021

<sup>211</sup> SWO, [Supporting from the girls at risk of social harm](#), 28 April 2021

<sup>212</sup> Nada Foundation, [Exploring the Legality of Child Marriage in Iran ...](#), 25 September 2023

‘Once initial admission is done in intervention centers, the situation of the abused woman will be assessed and if there will be any life-threatening issue at home, which makes the return of the abused woman and her children impossible in short-term, they will be referred to Safe Houses (Khaneh Amn) together with their children (boys until the age of 12).

‘Direct admission is not available in Safe Houses. These shelters, which are limited in the country, look like any other houses, have no signboard and their addresses are only available to Behzisti [the Welfare Organisation<sup>213</sup>], judicial authorities and the police. Women who live in these houses have a normal life. Even the neighbors are not aware that these houses are under the supervision of Behzisti, and victims of domestic violence are living there. Women who are victims of violence can extend their stay in these accommodations if the team of specialists determines that the condition is not suitable for them to return home.’<sup>214</sup>

13.1.9 The CHRI article, published on 6 January 2025, stated:

‘... [T]here are grossly insufficient services for victims or women at risk. Shelters and safe houses are absent in much of the country - a situation exacerbated by the government’s closure of facilities that address violence against women and the state’s persecution of relevant independent NGOs and charitable organizations.

‘For example, the Mehre Shams Afarid NGO safe house, which supported vulnerable women and children in Orumiyeh, in Iran’s West Azerbaijan province, was closed, and previously, NGOs in Iran such as the above-mentioned Imam Ali’s Popular Student Relief Society (IAPSRs), Khaneh Khorshid, and the Omid-e-Mehr Foundation, which also supported vulnerable women and children, were shut down. At the same time, activists advocating to protect vulnerable women and children are targeted by the state with bogus prosecutions and harsh sentencing.’<sup>215</sup>

13.1.10 The Omid Foundation article, published on 31 January 2025, stated:

‘Amid systemic and societal challenges, organizations like the Omid Foundation provide critical support to women affected by violence. By addressing the immediate needs of survivors and empowering them to reclaim their lives, these organizations offer a lifeline to countless women.

‘1. Providing Safe Spaces

‘For women fleeing violence, safety is often the first priority. Omid Foundation creates safe and supportive environments where survivors can heal and rebuild their lives.

‘Shelters: Temporary housing provides women and their children with security and stability.

‘Counseling Services: Trauma-informed therapy helps survivors process their experiences and regain confidence.

‘2. Legal Support

‘Navigating Iran’s legal system can be daunting, especially for survivors of

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<sup>213</sup> IOM Germany, [The Islamic Republic of Iran: Country Fact Sheet 2024](#) (page 6), September 2024

<sup>214</sup> IOM Germany, [The Islamic Republic of Iran: Country Fact Sheet 2024](#) (page 11), September 2024

<sup>215</sup> CHRI, [Killed Because You Are a Woman ...](#), 6 January 2025

violence. Omid Foundation offers legal assistance to help women:

‘File complaints against perpetrators.

‘Seek protective measures or custody of their children.

‘Access justice in a system often biased against them.

### ‘3. Education and Economic Empowerment

‘Financial independence is a crucial step toward breaking the cycle of violence. Omid Foundation empowers women by providing:

‘Vocational Training: Courses in tailoring, technology, and business equip women with marketable skills.

‘Language Classes: Learning English opens doors to international opportunities and resources.

‘Entrepreneurship Support: Small grants and mentorship help women start their own businesses.

### ‘4. Advocacy and Awareness

‘By amplifying the voices of survivors, Omid Foundation raises awareness about gender-based violence and challenges societal norms. Public campaigns and workshops educate communities about the importance of gender equality and the need to protect women’s rights.’<sup>216</sup>

13.1.11 The 24 March 2025 NCRI Women’s Committee article stated:

‘... [W]omen facing domestic violence in Iran struggle with a severe shortage of safe shelters. According to Fatemeh Babakhani, director of the Mehr Shams-Afarid Safe Shelter, there are currently only 17 operational safe shelters for women nationwide, leaving half of Iran’s provinces without any refuge for victims of domestic violence.

‘Babakhani emphasized the essential role these shelters play in providing temporary housing and support services, including psychological counseling, legal assistance, and vocational training. The average age of women seeking shelter is between 18 and 34, but victims include minors as well. She recounted the case of a 13-year-old girl who had been forced into child marriage, became pregnant, and gave birth while staying at the shelter.’<sup>217</sup>

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## 13.2 Freedom of movement

13.2.1 The Civil Code states:

‘Article 1114 - The wife must stay in the dwelling that the husband allots for her unless such a right is reserved to the wife.

‘Article 1115 - If the existence of the wife and husband in the same house involves the risk of bodily or financial injury or that to the dignity of the wife, she can choose a separate dwelling: and if the alleged risk is proved the court will not order her to return to the house of the husband and, so long as she is authorized not to return to the house, her cost of maintenance will be on the charge of her husband.

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<sup>216</sup> Omid Foundation, [... Iran’s Struggle for Women’s Safety](#), 31 January 2025

<sup>217</sup> NCRI Women’s Committee, [Escalating Violence Against Women in Iran ...](#), 24 March 2025

‘... Article 1117 - The husband can prevent his wife from occupations or technical work which is incompatible with the family interests or the dignity of himself or his wife.’<sup>218</sup>

- 13.2.2 The BZ COI report, published in September 2023, stated: ‘... [M]arried women need permission from their husband to travel, even within the country. Under Section 18 of the Passport Act, a married woman needs the written consent of her husband to apply for a passport.’<sup>219</sup>
- 13.2.3 In July 2023, HRW published a report about restrictions on the freedom of movement of women by male guardianship in the Middle East and North Africa, including in Iran. The report, which cited various sources, stated:
- ‘Under Iran’s Passport law, even if a husband initially grants permission for his wife to travel, he can always change his mind and prevent her from traveling abroad by notifying the authorities. Men can abuse this power including as bargaining tools to force women into giving up their financial or other rights during their marriage or when finalizing divorce ...
- ‘Some women explicitly include their right to travel abroad in their marriage contract. However, officials may still require women to get their husbands’ permission. Lawyers advise women to get their husbands to grant them power of attorney so they can complete the travel permit on their husbands’ behalf. The law allows prosecutors to grant permission for women to travel without their husbands’ permission in emergencies. However, this can be difficult to obtain. The authorities have intervened to allow a few women mainly women athletes representing Iran to travel abroad against their husbands’ wishes following public outrage.’<sup>220</sup>
- 13.2.4 Citing confidential sources between February and April 2023, the BZ COI report also stated: ‘Women have few opportunities to escape violence or domestic violence. In some cases they can turn to their parents or other immediate family members. However, according to one source, it is rare for women to be able to settle with relatives elsewhere in Iran to escape violence or domestic violence. In a traditional context, the woman in question will often be forced by her family to return to her husband.’<sup>221</sup>
- 13.2.5 The UN Human Rights Committee concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Iran, published in November 2023, stated: ‘The Committee is ... concerned by discriminatory restrictions on the freedom of movement of women and girls, who are banned from certain public spaces, such as football stadiums, airports, university campuses and government offices.’<sup>222</sup>
- 13.2.6 The EUAA country guidance note, published in January 2025, stated: ‘Women’s mobility and autonomy are ... restricted by the requirement of a male relative’s permission or consent ... The Chastity and Mandatory Hijab Bill approved by the Guardian Council in September 2024 further intensified the State’s control over women’s ... movements ...’<sup>223</sup>
- 13.2.7 The same country guidance note stated: ‘Iranian law guarantees freedom on

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<sup>218</sup> IRI, [Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Articles 1114, 1115 and 1117), 23 May 1928

<sup>219</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (paragraph 3.1.5.8), September 2023

<sup>220</sup> HRW, [Trapped: How Male Guardianship ... Restrict Women's Travel ...](#) (page 39 to 40), July 2023

<sup>221</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (paragraph 3.1.5.9), September 2023

<sup>222</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, [Concluding observations ...](#) (paragraph 37), 23 November 2023

<sup>223</sup> EUAA, [Country Guidance: Iran; Common analysis and guidance note](#) (page 44), January 2025

internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation and these rights are generally respected by the authorities, albeit with certain exceptions concerning ... women ... Furthermore, administrative bodies deny women access to public institutions, including airports, if they do not cover their hair.’<sup>224</sup>

13.2.8 The CHRI article, published on 6 January 2025, stated:

‘Iran’s Civil Code forbids a woman from leaving the matrimonial home without the husband’s permission unless she is able and willing to go to court to prove she is endangered (Article 1114). This leaves women deeply vulnerable to violence, especially given the requirement of witnesses, the fact that a female witness’s testimony is worth half that of a man’s, and the stipulation that if a woman leaves the marital home, she forfeits her right to financial maintenance (Article 1108).’<sup>225</sup>

13.2.9 For more information about exit and entry procedures for women at airports and land borders, including required documentation, the ability of male guardians to prohibit the international travel of women and children, and the treatment of women and children who attempt to leave Iran without prior permission, see a [response to an information request published by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada \(IRBC\) on 7 March 2022](#).

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### 13.3 Conditions faced by single and divorced women

13.3.1 On 10 March 2024, the NCRI Women’s Committee published a report entitled ‘Robbed Riches: The Story of Iranian Women’s Stolen Wealth’. The report, which cited various sources, stated:

‘Female heads of households cover various groups of women in diverse situations ... divorcees ... often find themselves managing and providing for their families without the regular presence of a male figure in the traditional roles of husband or father, while the regime’s laws considers them as second-class citizens.

‘The data from the National Statistics Center in 2020 indicates that nearly 4 million women take on the role of household heads ... [O]f these women, approximately 1.5 million are self-supporting and live in one-person households ... Nearly half of the breadwinners in the family are among the poorest people in society, with about 45% of household heads being women in the poorest decile [10%<sup>226</sup>] ...

‘... [F]emale-headed families are more susceptible to falling into poverty.

‘... In a report on the repercussions of the “inflationary wave on women heads of households,” the state news agency Rokna highlights that, under the current circumstances, a staggering 40 percent of women heads of households in Iran, equivalent to one million and 700 thousand people, find themselves below the poverty line.

‘Government statistics indicate that approximately one million and 500 thousand female heads of households are covered by the Welfare Organization and the Relief Committee. However, the significance of being

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<sup>224</sup> EUAA, [Country Guidance: Iran; Common analysis and guidance note](#) (page 62), January 2025

<sup>225</sup> CHRI, [Killed Because You Are a Woman ...](#), 6 January 2025

<sup>226</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, [Decile](#), no date

covered by the regime's welfare and aid committee is minimal in the current inflationary conditions. The subsidy provided is described as so insignificant that it “practically does not make any difference in the living conditions of these women” and fails to alleviate their hardships.

‘... The exacerbation of social inequalities, a decrease in job opportunities, rising divorce rates, and a shift in the role of women toward household caregiving are contributing to the increasing feminization of poverty each day.’<sup>227</sup>

13.3.2 The same NCRI Women’s Committee report went on to state: ‘In contrast to men, women face unequal access to job opportunities and incomes that match the cost of living.’<sup>228</sup>

13.3.3 On 28 October 2024, the EUAA published a response to a COI query about the situation of divorced women, covering the period from January 2022 to 25 October 2024. The response, which cited various sources, stated:

‘According to Bonyad Vokala, an Iranian legal platform that provides information on different legal aspects in Iran, (informal translation) in Iran “more than 89 % of divorced women have not received any alimony, and because most women are not employed outside the home - even those with higher education degrees - many of them stop working after marriage for various reasons. After divorce, they face many difficulties in finding a suitable job and supporting themselves. Only 16 % of divorced women are employed.”’<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> NCRI Women’s Committee, [Robbed Riches ...](#) (pages 34 to 35), 10 March 2024

<sup>228</sup> NCRI Women’s Committee, [Robbed Riches ...](#) (page 47), 10 March 2024

<sup>229</sup> EUAA, [Iran; Situation of divorced women \[Q71-2024\]](#) (page 6), 28 October 2024

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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# Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal context
  - Laws on marriage, maintenance, divorce, child custody, and reproductive rights - constitution, criminal, penal and civil codes, Sharia
  - Religion and marriage
  - Temporary marriage
  - Protection laws for women and children
- Documentation for marriage and divorce
- Position of women in society
  - Marriage traditions
  - Cultural and societal attitudes
  - Kurdish marriages
- Early and forced marriage
  - Definition of forced marriage
  - Minimum age for marriage
  - Prevalence and reasons
  - Refusing a marriage – consequences
  - Avenues of redress
- State protection
  - Support available to women – shelters and other support
  - Attitudes of the judiciary towards women
- Internal relocation
  - Freedom of movement
  - Safety of movement
  - Vulnerabilities of different groups, such as single women, single mothers

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **5.0**
- valid from **24 June 2025**

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### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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## Changes from last version of this note

Updated COI and assessment.

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## Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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