

## Religion and Migration: An Iranian Survey

Majid Sarfi<sup>1</sup>, Tahereh Sarfi<sup>2\*</sup>, Sharareh Aris<sup>3</sup>, Mostafa Zohouri<sup>4</sup>, Bohran Aeini<sup>5</sup>

### Abstract

*According to research, Iranians have a high propensity to migrate, and Iran is among the top countries that send migrants to the West. The issue of Iranian migration has been studied primarily in relation to the concept of brain drain. This paper, however, examined the migration propensity of Iranians in relation to their religiosity. Despite the decline of religion in Iran, most Iranians are still religious, and religion affects virtually every aspect of their lives. To examine the relationship between religiosity and migration propensity, 454 participants completed our survey. We discovered that Iranians have a high propensity to migrate but that this propensity varies significantly across social groups. According to statistical analyses, religiosity has a strong but inverse relationship with migration propensity. In addition, we discovered that gender and marital status influence the relationship between religiosity and migration propensity.*

**Keywords:** Religion; Migration; Iran; Religiosity.

### Introduction

Outward migration from Iran has received much scholarly attention, especially in the context of political instability, economic challenges, and the search for a better life and professional opportunities abroad (Amanolahi, 2003; Hakimzadeh, 2006). A significant aspect of this migration pattern is the so-called "brain drain," which has been especially widespread among young, educated Iranians. According to data provided by the International Monetary Fund, Iran ranks second in the world for brain drain, with annual human capital losses in the billions of dollars (IMF, 2016).

Estimates of the number of Iranians who have left the country since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 indicate a significant exodus, even though exact statistics on the number of those who have left vary. According to a report from the Iranian Parliament's Research Center, between 150,000 and 180,000 educated Iranians emigrate annually, which has implications for economic development and social cohesion (Iranian Parliament's Research Center, 2018). Iran has made substantial investments in higher education, and the emigration of these educated individuals results in a loss of skills and an economic deficit (Hakimzadeh, 2006).

The population of Iranian emigrants has increased from roughly 500,000 prior to the 1979 revolution to 3.1 million as of 2019. This represents an increase from 1.3% to 3.8% of

---

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. in Private Law from the University of Tehran, Researcher at the University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, majid\_sarfi@ut.ac.ir

<sup>2</sup> B.A. in Law from Azad University, Researcher at the University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, tahere.sarfi@guest.ut.ac.ir

<sup>3</sup> M.A. in Cinema from Soore University, Researcher at the University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, aris.sharareh@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup> Ph.D. Candidate in Private Law from Shiraz University, Researcher at the University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, mostafa.zohouri@alumni.ut.ac.ir

<sup>5</sup> M.A. in Civil Engineering from Azad University, Researcher at the University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, borhanaeini@gmail.com

Iran's population. The United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom are the most popular destinations for Iranian immigrants. According to our estimates, approximately 700,000 Iranians in total have sought university education abroad. Three distinct phases can be distinguished in the number of Iranian students enrolled in foreign institutions: a sharp increase in the decade preceding the 1979 revolution, a substantial decline in the two following decades, and a subsequent surge. Currently, there are 130,000 Iranian students abroad, which is the highest ever recorded. Over the years, there has been a shift towards a greater proportion of graduate students compared to undergraduates, as well as an increase in the number of students who lived abroad before beginning their studies. The likelihood of these students returning to Iran has decreased from over 90% in 1979 to less than 10% today. In addition, we discovered approximately 110,000 Iranian academics working at universities and research institutes outside of Iran. This number represents roughly one-third of Iran's entire research workforce when measured by headcount and arguably a much larger proportion when productivity and impact are considered. The total number of active academics in the Iranian diaspora has increased by a factor of ten since 2000, which serves as a rough indicator of the brain drain problem (Azadi, Mirramezani, Mesgaran, 2020).

Several government policies intended to reverse this trend have had limited success. These strategies have been hampered by economic sanctions and political isolation (Hakimzadeh, 2006; Torbat, 2002). These external factors make it difficult for Iranians living abroad to contribute to their homeland through economic investments and intellectual collaborations.

This trend's economic and social consequences are intricately intertwined. While remittances offer some relief to families and the Iranian economy, they fail to offset the loss of human capital entirely (Torbat, 2002). Moreover, the social repercussions of this mass emigration include a decline in intellectual discourse and a loss of social dynamism, which are essential to the development of any society (Amanolahi, 2003).

Although economic incentives are the primary reason Iranians migrate, religion remains a significant factor in convincing Iranians. There have been numerous publications on the phenomenon of mass migration of Iranians. Still, very few have examined the role of religion in migration decisions (see, for example, Lipson, Muecke, and Chrisman (1992), Talebi and Desjardins (2012), McAuliffe (2007), and Jaspal (2014)). However, it is important to note that other aspects of modern life contribute to unhappiness, encouraging some of them to migrate (Nosrati et al., 2020). Political slacktivism exposes us to a constant stream of bad news and political corruption disclosure (Zohouri, Darvishi, & Sarfi, 2020), and fake news creates social chaos that renders people disoriented and unable to distinguish real stories (Sabzali et al., 2022). However, this paper focuses exclusively on the issue of religion and religious identity and their relationship to Iranians' migration intentions. As the theoretical foundation for our survey and research, we have utilized Everett S. Lee's Theory of Migration.

Understanding immigration and individuals' intentions is crucial for policymakers, especially in countries like Iran. Research has highlighted that people in Iran often have unrealistic expectations about their immigration destinations, as demonstrated in studies like Glöckner and Sabbar's (2022). These idealized notions can obscure the practical challenges of migration. Recognizing this disparity is essential for guiding nuanced and well-informed policymaking processes.

### **Theoretical Framework: Everett S. Lee's Theory of Migration**

Everett S. Lee introduced his Theory of Migration in 1966, which continues to influence the study of migration to this day. According to his Theory of Migration, migration is typically a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. This broad definition does

not limit the move to a particular distance or categorize it according to its voluntary or involuntary nature. Furthermore, it makes no distinction between internal migration and international migration. For example, moving from one apartment to another across a hallway is considered an act of migration, just as relocating from Bombay, India, to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is vastly different despite their circumstances and repercussions. He pointed out that this definition does not encompass all types of spatial movement; it specifically excludes the ongoing relocations of nomads and seasonal workers who do not have permanent residence and temporary relocations such as seasonal vacations to the mountains.

According to Lee, every migration, regardless of its duration, ease, or difficulty, involves an origin, a destination, and a variety of obstacles encountered along the way. Constant among these obstacles is the distance of the relocation. The factors that influence the decision to migrate and the migration process itself can be divided into four categories.

1. Factors related to the area of origin.
2. Factors pertaining to the area of destination.
3. Intervening obstacles.
4. Personal factors.

According to Lee's theories, all four of the principal headings can be related to the religion of Iranians. Migration is rarely a purely rational choice; it frequently involves a substantial irrational component. For some people, the rational elements are dwarfed by fleeting emotions, mental disorders, religious attachments, and random occurrences. These anomalies account for a sizeable portion of global migration patterns. Notably, migration is not always a self-determined choice. Children, for example, are often moved by their parents, regardless of their own preferences. Likewise, wives may follow their husbands, even if it means leaving a cherished environment.

Life stages can significantly impact the propensity to migrate. For instance, certain phases of life have strong ties that discourage migration, such as the requirement for parental care during childhood. Nonetheless, there are key transitional moments, such as the end of formal education, entry into the workforce, retirement, marriage, or the dissolution of a marriage, when these ties suddenly loosen and facilitate migration. Moreover, random events or personal experiences can alter a person's attachment to a particular location and make other locations more desirable. For instance, individuals subjected to unfair treatment or who have committed crimes may find relocation necessary. Despite the fact that such instances may be isolated, they can be significant motivators for the overall migration demographic.

Lee's framework, which considers migration to be influenced by a variety of factors at both the point of origin and the point of destination, as well as obstacles in between and personal circumstances, may appear simplistic. However, it is a useful lens for comprehending migration. It provides a framework for the majority of our existing knowledge on the topic and suggests multiple avenues for future research. This conceptual model can aid in formulating hypotheses concerning migration under different conditions, the emergence of migration patterns, and the characteristics of migrants.

Religious discrimination, which frequently results in the formation of ghettos, can also result in mass migration, as evidenced by the recent migration patterns of people who adhere to non-mainstream religions. However, as communities assimilate, religious diversity may diminish over time. The education system also plays a crucial role in promoting diversity by fostering the development of specialists whose skills may be in short supply in a particular locale but are in high demand on a global scale. Migration becomes a crucial aspect of their careers for these professionals, including academics and engineers.

The difficulty of overcoming intervening obstacles, significantly influences migration decisions. Migration is discouraged by highly hazardous or cumbersome barriers, such as tunneling beneath the Berlin Wall or crossing the Atlantic in the 17th and 18th centuries. In contrast, eliminating immigration restrictions, such as in the countries of the Common Market, can stimulate substantial migration flows. There have been numerous instances in the past in which either the easing or tightening of barriers significantly influenced migration patterns.

Lee was convinced that economic fluctuations also have an impact on migration. Expanding industry and employment opportunities tend to increase migration during prosperous times. However, these opportunities are not distributed uniformly, accentuating the contrast between various locations' attractive and unattractive characteristics. In contrast, economic downturns frequently result in stagnation and a decrease in migration, as the perceived risks of moving outweigh the perceived benefits. The balance of positive and negative factors at both origin and destination becomes more even, making one's current residence more appealing due to its familiarity and relative safety.

The volume and rate of migration tend to increase over time if stringent controls are not implemented. This increase is attributable to several factors, including the diversification of regions and populations and the reduction of intervening obstacles. Communication and transportation have become less difficult and more affordable due to technological advancement, prompting a rise in migration. Even if factors at origin and destination did not change, technological advancements would likely cause an increase in migration rates. Furthermore, according to Lee, migration itself catalyzes further migration. Individuals who have previously migrated are more likely to do so again, as each successful migration lowers the psychological and logistical barriers to another move. All of this suggests that migration is an extraordinarily multifaceted phenomenon, influenced by a multitude of economic, social, and personal factors, each of which contributes to its complexity and vitality.

A stationary population equates to stagnation, which is supported by the aforementioned points. In economically robust nations, technological advances and strategic policies facilitate the movement of people, highlighting the disparity in opportunities and skills between regions and individuals. In developed nations where immigration is permitted, high levels of internal and external migration can be observed. In stark contrast, less developed nations typically have a more static population that relocates primarily due to forced circumstances and, more often than not, as a group rather than as individuals. Lee was particularly interested in the issue of migration in the United States and argued that in this country, which is a global economic leader, the migration rate is astronomically high, with one in five people relocating annually. This trend is also evident in Sweden, Canada, and West Germany, albeit at a reduced degree. The conclusion is that rapid progress necessitates a population that constantly adapts to evolving and rapidly diminishing opportunities.

As for the migration mechanism, it is anything but random. Typically, migration follows well-established channels that lead to specific destinations. Both regional opportunities and established transportation routes influence these pathways. In addition, early migrants serve as trailblazers, facilitating subsequent migrations through the dissemination of valuable information and possibly the active recruitment of new migrants. This creates a migratory highway that bypasses less desirable opportunities, similar to how an elevated highway might bypass smaller towns. In essence, the process of settling new lands frequently involves "leapfrogging" operations. Initially, pioneers, whether they were military personnel or merchants, concentrated on key areas, leaving the territories in between for later settlement. The theory contends that migration is not a random occurrence but rather a structured process that reflects a given nation's economic and social health.

Lee offers a nuanced perspective on migration dynamics by categorizing migrants according to their motivations. Individuals who migrate primarily in response to favorable conditions at their destination tend to be positively selected. Typically, these are well-educated and comfortably situated individuals with the luxury of choice. However, this is not necessarily the case for the educated Iranians who are currently migrating. Their migration is frequently motivated by better opportunities, especially for professionals and managerial personnel, for whom migration frequently represents career advancement.

In contrast, some migrants move due primarily to negative factors at their origin. These people are negatively selected, meaning they are frequently economically or socially disadvantaged or religiously persecuted. Political expulsions or environmental catastrophes, such as the mass exodus of Germans from Poland and East Prussia or the Irish fleeing the potato famine, could also be regarded as overwhelming negative factors that drive migration without regard to selection criteria. Those most adversely affected by their circumstances, such as those who are economically unsuccessful or socially marginalized, are more likely to be forced to migrate.

Regarding all migrants, Lee observes that the distribution tends to be bimodal. Some are positively selected because of their response to favorable conditions at their destination, while others are negatively selected because of harsh conditions at their point of origin. A J- or U-shaped curve is frequently observed when plotting these populations along a continuum from poor to excellent, whether in terms of occupational class or education. This indicates that migrants are not a homogenous group but rather a diverse collection of individuals with varying motivations and abilities.

Lee concludes that the degree of positive selection increases as the difficulty of the obstacles between the origin and the destination increases. Even if selection at the origin is random or unfavorable, the difficulties encountered during migration act as a natural filter that eliminates the weak or incapable. For instance, the arduous voyages to America in the 17th and 18th centuries served this function. The theory thus offers a multifaceted understanding of migration, emphasizing the varied motivations and inherent selection processes that come into play.

Lee has developed a straightforward framework for studying migration, and based on this framework, several hypotheses regarding migration volume, the formation of migration streams and counter-streams, and migrant characteristics have been proposed. Lee's goal was to construct an interconnected set of hypotheses within a broader context, with ongoing research focusing on the assimilation process for migrants and its effect on both source and destination regions. When possible, these hypotheses have been structured to be immediately tested using existing data. Nevertheless, some hypotheses lack the necessary data for testing or must be reformulated in light of the available data. Given the complexity of migration and the impracticality of holding all other variables constant, these hypotheses are expected to be subject to numerous exceptions. Despite these complexities, the current knowledge about migration points to a promising concordance with the theoretical framework discussed in this paper. Comprehensive testing will require the collection of data from diverse cultures. Fortunately, the growing recognition of the significance of migration for socioeconomic development is fueling research, allowing more nations to provide comprehensive migration statistics through censuses or population registries.

## Literature Review

We searched the most important academic databases in both Persian and English but were unable to find any articles that directly address the relationship between religion and the propensity to migrate to foreign -primarily Western- countries. However, as mentioned

previously, Iranian and foreign researchers have conducted extensive research on migration.

Afyouni and Ghasemi (2019) aimed to elucidate the lived experiences of Iranian immigrant women with a master's degree or higher who reside in the Canadian cities of Toronto and Montreal. Their sample consisted of eleven Iranian women between the ages of 20 and 40 who had all moved to Canada to pursue master's or doctoral degrees. They utilized a social interpretive methodology and the Colaizzi method for data analysis. Their findings indicated that the migration experience has had a profound effect on the lives of their participants, particularly in terms of their social interactions, which have undergone significant changes.

Abdollahi & Rezaee (2022) examined the level of inclination among Iranians to migrate abroad and the influence of demographic-contextual and structural variables on this propensity. Using a secondary analysis of microdata from the 2018 National Social Capital Survey, their study included a large sample size of 17,078 individuals aged 18 and older from all 31 Iranian provinces. According to their findings, a sizeable 42 percent of respondents expressed a willingness to emigrate, classifying them as potential migrants. Those inclined towards emigration were predominantly single, young (between 18 and 49 years old), university-educated, middle-class, and urban residents. In addition, Abdollahi and Rezaee's bivariate analysis revealed that structural factors, such as social satisfaction, hope, vitality, a sense of security, and national outlook, correlate negatively and statistically significantly with the propensity to move abroad. Using logistic regression and controlling for demographic and contextual variables, a subsequent multivariate analysis confirmed that levels of social hope and vitality and perceptions of the country's future continue to exert a significant influence on the tendency to migrate.

Rezaei & Sadeghi (2021) quantified the propensity of Iranians to emigrate and attempted to identify the influencing factors. Their study utilized a secondary analysis of microdata from the National Survey of Social Capital and comprised a sample of 14,200 urban and rural residents of Iran. According to their findings, those most interested in leaving Iran were predominately male, single, young, highly educated, and exhibited low levels of social satisfaction. The majority of these individuals were also from the middle and upper classes and resided in major metropolitan areas. This data indicated that most of those with migration aspirations possess advanced degrees and specialized skills. Rezaei and Sadeghi concluded that the desire to emigrate is growing among Iran's younger generations, indicating that the rate of international migration from Iran will likely increase in the future.

Afshari, Moini, and Ansari (2020) investigated the relationship between social capital and the propensity for youth migration. In addition, they analyzed additional variables that influence this inclination. This survey-based study targeted 18- to 35-year-old Tehran residents, with a sample size of 1,217 participants selected using simple random sampling. Social capital emerged as a significant predictor among the variables examined, registering a coefficient of determination of -0.188. In particular, individuals with lower levels of social capital were more likely to migrate. Other variables such as education, age, and income directly affected migration propensity, with coefficients of determination of 0.151, -0.186, and 0.100, respectively. The coefficients for gender, marital status, and employment status were 0.115, 0.133, and 0.102, respectively, indicating their influence. Their research also explores broader sociocultural dimensions, highlighting how the underdevelopment and neglect of human capital in Iran contribute to this youth migration trend. In addition, the study hypothesized that such migration exacerbates the nation's underdevelopment cycle. The research also suggests that the allure of Western ideals, or "Western utopianism," has historically influenced young Iranians and fueled their desire to migrate to Western nations.

Taheri Demneh and Kazemi (2018) used a qualitative methodology to examine the mental images of the future held by young individuals inclined to migrate. By conducting semi-structured interviews until qualitative saturation was achieved, this study garnered insights from 23 participants to better understand the psychological dimensions of migration as they relate to future expectations. The thematic analysis revealed three overarching themes that substantially impact the desire to migrate. These were the themes: 1) dystopian perceptions of their homeland, 2) the impetus provided by pandemic conditions to leave the country, and 3) the destination's allure. The most significant impact was exerted by dystopic images of their native country, significantly shaping the participants' migration desires. This study is notable for its emphasis on the psychological construct of future images, which enables a nuanced comprehension of the motivations underlying migration decisions. This emphasis on cognitive and emotional factors provides a more complete picture, demonstrating that migration is not only a response to material conditions but is also profoundly influenced by the mental landscapes of individuals.

Sadeghi and Seyyed Hosseini (2019) investigated the propensity of young people toward international migration and its contributing factors, focusing on Tehran. Using structured questionnaires, they gathered data from a sample of 385 young people aged 15 to 29 from diverse areas of Tehran. Their findings revealed that a substantial fifty percent of respondents were inclined toward international migration, with nearly forty percent having concrete plans to do so. Respondents cited sociocultural, educational, and economic factors as the primary motivations for selecting Western Europe and North America as the primary target destinations. Migration tendencies and intentions are significantly influenced by gender, educational attainment, employment status, existing social networks abroad, and the desirability of their place of origin, according to multivariate analyses. Their study concluded that the decision to opt for international migration among youth is not solely based on individual characteristics or "selectivity." Rather, it is heavily impacted by the prevalent living conditions and social structures in both their places of origin and potential destinations. Sadeghi and Seyyed Hosseini's study offered a multidimensional perspective of youth migration intentions, incorporating both individual characteristics and broader social context factors. In doing so, they provided a more nuanced understanding of the underlying motivations that lead young Iranians to consider relocating.

Firozysoreh et al. (2020) investigated the factors influencing postgraduate students' migration tendencies at the Science and Research Branch of Islamic Azad University in Tehran. Using survey methodology and a sample of 300 students, Firozysoreh and her colleagues discovered that 47.5% strongly desired to migrate. Migration was most accurately predicted by internal repulsive factors, with a beta of 329%, followed by external gravitational factors, with a beta of 271%, and individual factors, with a coefficient of 249%. The Friedman test indicated that political and social factors ranked highest in influencing migration intentions. They concluded that these educated elites have a negative view of Iran's internal political, social, economic, and cultural conditions, whereas they have a positive view of those in developed nations. Their findings indicated that addressing these issues could potentially halt the brain drain, thereby providing the government with a potential avenue for intervention.

## Methodology

Since we wanted to investigate people's intentions and attitudes, we determined that a survey would help us achieve our goals. We designed a questionnaire with three distinct sections for the questions. The first section included questions regarding age, gender, and other demographic variables. In the second section, we utilized questions from the Serajzadeh (1998) and Sharifi (2002) questionnaires to examine Muslim respondents'

opinions. Serajzadeh had modified Glock & Stark's (1966) instrument to accommodate Muslim and Shi'ite perspectives. We believed the questionnaire developed by Serajzadeh and Sharifi could assist us in eliciting more sincere responses from our participants. The second section of our questionnaire consisted of 26 questions, some of which used a 5-point Likert scale, and others measured respondents' religious activities and behaviors, such as the number of times one reads the Quran per day, week, or year and the frequency of religious fasting. To achieve face validity, Serajzadeh solicited feedback from Ph.D. students in various humanities disciplines.

Since Iran is a large country with a population of over 80 million, we required at least 385 respondents to achieve a significance level of 5 percent before we could generalize our findings. We created an online questionnaire and distributed it to unidentified Iranians. After receiving 454 responses, we ceased sampling and analyzed the results using SPSS.

## Results

We utilized SPSS for hypothesis testing. Our initial hypothesis was that there was a correlation between religiosity and migration propensity. Previous research (e.g., Neudorfer & Dresdner, 2014; Toney, 1973; Massey & Higgins, 2011) has demonstrated a correlation between religiosity and migration propensity. To test our hypothesis, we employed the Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 1 displays the test results.

Table 1: The relationship between religiosity and the propensity to migrate

Number of Participants	Degree of Freedom	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Coefficient of Determination
454	452	-0.619	0.0001	38.3

As shown in Table 1, there is a statistically significant and strong (but negative) relationship between religiosity and migration propensity ( $r=-0.619$ ;  $d.f.=452$ ;  $P<0.01$ ). In addition, since the correlation coefficient indicates the existence of a relationship between these two variables but provides no additional information regarding the level of shared variance, we utilized the coefficient of determination ( $(r)^2 (100)$ ). As the correlation coefficient value between these two variables was ( $r=-0.619$ ), our coefficient of determination would be  $((-0.619)^2 (100)) = 38.3$ , which means there is 38.3 percent shared variance between variables of religiosity and propensity to migrate.

Our second hypothesis was that gender and marital status moderate the relationship between religiosity and migration propensity. To test our hypothesis, a Fisher z-transformation test was conducted. The result is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: The result of the Fisher z-transformation test for comparing religiosity and propensity to migrate among married and single men and women

Index	Moderating Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig	N	Z <sub>r</sub>
Religiosity and Propensity to Migrate	Single Men	-0.299	0.001	454	-3.6
	Married Men	-0.490	0.001	454	
	Single Women	-0.586	0.001	454	-3.2
	Married Women	-0.709	0.001	454	

As shown in Table 2, the calculated Fisher z value for the relationship between religiosity and migration propensity among single and married men is 3.6, while the calculated Fisher z value for the relationship between religiosity and migration propensity among single and married women is 3.2. Therefore, we can conclude that gender and marital status moderate the association between religiosity and migration propensity.



## Conclusion

The phenomenon of Iranian emigration has garnered considerable academic interest, particularly in light of the country's political tensions and economic difficulties. The brain drain, which has disproportionately affected Iran's young and educated population, is one of the most prominent aspects of this emigration trend. According to data from the International Monetary Fund, Iran is second in the world regarding brain drain, with annual losses in human capital worth billions of dollars. Estimates of the scale of this emigration, particularly since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, indicate that a significant number of educated Iranians leave their country annually. Considering the state's substantial investment in higher education, this has significant repercussions for Iran's economic development and social fabric. The departure of these skilled individuals creates an economic and skills gap, which has a significant negative impact on the country's growth prospects.

Yet, very rarely, if ever, scholars have endeavored to study the issue of religiosity in Iran and its role in encouraging and discouraging people to migrate. The role of religiosity in the lives of Iranians is intricately intertwined with both the private and public spheres, influencing social norms, cultural practices, and even political governance (Ahmadi et al., 2015). Iran, a predominantly Shia Muslim nation, places religion at the center of its national identity, with the 1979 Islamic Revolution exemplifying the fusion of religion and state. Since then, Iran's constitution, legal system, and educational curriculum have incorporated religious principles (Ghobadzadeh & Rahim, 2015). Religion serves as a moral compass and provides a framework for interpreting the world and one's place in it for many Iranians. Numerous Iranians punctuate their daily lives with religious activities such as prayer, fasting during Ramadan, and attending religious gatherings. Religious festivals such as Eids and Ashura ceremonies are held with fervor and carry profound significance, frequently serving as occasions for renewed spiritual commitment. These religious practices frequently emphasize the significance of familial values and community bonding. Family structures, gender roles, and even social behavior are heavily influenced by religious teachings, which establish the normative framework within which Iranians function.

In addition, Iran's religious institutions wield considerable power and influence, as documented by Baskan (2011). In addition to serving as places of worship, they serve as centers of social activity and community service by providing educational services, medical care, and welfare programs. Often, clerics serve as religious guides and community leaders, their counsel being sought on both spiritual and worldly matters. Religious authorities also play an active role in politics, with the Supreme Leader, the highest governing authority in Iran, being a religious cleric. This dynamic demonstrates that religion and government are inseparable in Iran.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that religion's influence is not uniform across all demographics. While rural areas tend to be more conservative and strictly religious, urban centers such as Tehran exhibit a more diverse expression of religiosity, with some citizens advocating for a more secular approach to public life. Younger generations, exposed to global perspectives, frequently engage in a more nuanced dialogue about religion's role, though they continue to identify primarily with the cultural and historical aspects of their faith. In recent years, economic difficulties and political isolation have prompted some to question the efficacy of intertwining religion and government. However, this does not necessarily indicate a decline in personal faith. Despite this, religiosity remains a pillar of Iranian identity, influencing daily rituals, life decisions, societal structures, and the decision to migrate.

We conducted a survey to determine the relationship between people's religiosity and their propensity to move to another country. Our study included 454 participants and utilized statistical methods to verify our hypotheses. Our initial hypothesis suggested a

connection between religiosity and the desire to migrate. Our research confirms that the more religious a person is, the less likely they are to have intentions of relocation.

We were also interested in determining whether a person's gender and marital status impacted their migration propensity. For instance, does being a single religious man make one more or less likely to want to relocate than a married religious woman? Our findings indicate that these factors are significant. In particular, marital status and gender moderate the relationship between religiosity and migration propensity.

## References

- Abdollahi, A., & Rezaee, M. (2022). An investigation of inclination to migrate from Iran and factors affecting the process: Results of the secondary analysis of social capital survey in 2018. *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities*, 14(4), 159-187. doi: 10.22035/isih.2022.4600.4549
- Afshari, A., Moini, S. R., & Ansari, H. (2020). A Study on Relationship between Social Capital and Juveniles' Tendency to Migration. *Strategic Studies on Youth and Sports*, 19(47), 9-30.
- Afyouni, S., & Ghasemi, A. (2019). Analysis of Women's Lived Experience of Migration (The Study of Women's Cross-Border Migration). *Social Sciences*, 26(87), 155-178. doi: 10.22054/qjss.2020.46305.2146
- Ahmadi, Z., Darabzadeh, F., Nasiri, M., & Askari, M. (2015). The effects of spirituality and religiosity on well-being of people with cancer: A literature review on current evidences. *Jundishapur Journal of Chronic Disease Care*, 4(2).
- Amanolahi, S. (2003). A Note on Iranian Emigration. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35(3), 407-417.
- Azadi, P., Mirramezani, M., & Mesgaran, M. B. (2020). Migration and brain drain from Iran. *Stanford Iran*, 2040, 1-30.
- Baskan, B. (2011). The state in the pulpit: State incorporation of religious institutions in the Middle East. *Politics and Religion*, 4(1), 136-153.
- Firozysoreh, R., Nejatihosein, S. M., Mousavi, Y., & Amirmazaheri, M. (2020). Social analysis of the tendency of academics to migrate: Case study of graduate students of Science and Research Branch of Islamic Azad University of Tehran. *Iranian Journal of Educational Society*, 6(1), 132-143. doi: 10.22034/ijes.2020.43781
- Ghobadzadeh, N., & Rahim, L. Z. (2015). Islamic reformation discourses: Popular sovereignty and religious secularisation in Iran. In *Religion and Political Change in the Modern World* (pp. 141-158). Routledge.
- Glock, C. Y., & Stark, R. (1966). *Religion and society in tension*: [By] Charles Y. Glock [and] Rodney Stark.
- Glöckner, K. J., & Sabbar, S. (2022). Migration to Kharej: Dreamed Expectations of Iranian Migrants vs. Experienced Actualities of Living Abroad. *World Sociopolitical Studies*, 6(1).
- Hakimzadeh, S. (2006). *Iran: A Vast Diaspora Abroad and Millions of Refugees at Home*. Migration Information Source.
- IMF. (2016). *World Economic Outlook: Too Slow for Too Long*. International Monetary Fund.
- Iranian Parliament's Research Center. (2018). *Report on Brain Drain in Iran*.
- Jaspal, R. (2014). Sexuality, migration and identity among gay Iranian migrants to the UK. *Queering religion, religious queers*, 80, 96.
- Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography*, 3, 47-57.
- Lipson, J. G., Muecke, M. A., & Chrisman, N. J. (1992). The health and adjustment of Iranian immigrants. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 14(1), 10-29.

- Massey, D. S., & Higgins, M. E. (2011). The effect of immigration on religious belief and practice: A theologizing or alienating experience?. *Social science research*, 40(5), 1371-1389.
- McAuliffe, C. (2007). A home far away? Religious identity and transnational relations in the Iranian diaspora. *Global Networks*, 7(3), 307-327.
- Neudörfer, P., & Dresdner, J. (2014). Does religious affiliation affect migration?. *Papers in Regional Science*, 93(3), 577-594.
- Nosrati, S., Sabzali, M., Heidari, A. & Sarfi, T. (2020). Chatbots, counselling, and discontents of the digital life. *Journal of Cyberspace Studies*, 4(2), 153-172. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jcss.2020.93910>
- Rezaei, M., & Sadeghi, R. (2021). Migration Aspiration of Iranians and Its Determinants. *Two Quarterly Journal of Contemporary Sociological Research*, 10(18), 35-62. doi: 10.22084/csr.2021.21216.1772
- Sabzali, M., Sarfi, M., Zohouri, M., Sarfi, T., & Darvishi, M. (2022). Fake News and Freedom of Expression: An Iranian Perspective. *Journal of Cyberspace Studies*, 6(2), 205-218. doi: 10.22059/jcss.2023.356295.1087
- Sadeghi, R., & Seyyed Hosseini, S. M. (2019). Tendency of Youth toward International Migration and Its Determinants in Tehran. *Strategic Studies on Youth and Sports*, 18(43), 9-26.
- Sarfi, T., Nosrati, S. & Sabzali, M. (2021). The new celebrity economy in cyberspace. *Journal of Cyberspace Studies*, 5(2), 203-228. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jcss.2021.93903>
- Serajzadeh, H. (1998). Negareshha va raftarhayeh dinie nojavanane Tehrani va delalhayeh and barayeh secular shodan. *Faslnameye Namyeh Pazhouhesh*, 7(1), 34-51.
- Shahghasemi, E. (2021). Rich Kids of Tehran: The Consumption of Consumption on the Internet in Iran. *Society*. DOI : 10.1007/s12115-021-00626-3.
- Sharifi, T. (2002). Barresie rabete ye negareshe dini ba salamate omoomi, afsordegi, ezterab, parkhashgari , va shakibayi dar daneshjooyane daneshgah azade Eslamie Ahvaz. MA thesis, Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz.
- Taheri Demneh, M., & Kazemi, M. (2018). The Desire to Migrate Among Young Iranians; A Qualitative Study on Future Images. *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities*, 10(4), 53-78. doi: 10.22035/isih.2018.292
- Talebi, M., & Desjardins, M. (2012). The immigration experience of Iranian Baha'is in Saskatchewan: The reconstruction of their existence, faith, and religious experience. *Journal of religion and health*, 51, 293-309.
- Toney, M. B. (1973). Religious preference and migration. *International Migration Review*, 7(3), 281-288.
- Torbat, A. E. (2002). The Brain Drain from Iran to the United States. *The Middle East Journal*, 56(2), 272-295.
- Zohouri, M., Darvishi, M. & Sarfi, M. (2020). Slacktivism: A critical evaluation. *Journal of Cyberspace Studies*, 4(2), 173-188. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.22059/JCSS.2020.93911](https://doi.org/10.22059/JCSS.2020.93911)
- Zohouri, M., Darvishi, M., Sarfi, M., Nosrati, S. & Zamani, M. (2021). Google's University? An exploration of academic influence on the tech giant's propaganda. *Journal of Cyberspace Studies*, 5(2), 181-202. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.22059/JCSS.2021.93901](https://doi.org/10.22059/JCSS.2021.93901).