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3.7. Women and girls

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: January 2025

This profile refers to women and girls and the different forms of violence and discrimination to which they are subjected. Please note that women and girls may be targeted by both the Iranian authorities and non-State actors, such as their family or community.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report and query: Country Focus 2024, 3, 4.3, 4.7.2, 4.11; COI Human Rights, 1.5, 1.7. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Iranian government has imposed significant restrictions on the rights of women and girls, which have deeply impacted their lives.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which women and girls could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. In particular, women and girls in Iran have been subjected to the death penalty, torture, corporal punishments, domestic violence including domestic servitude, forced and child marriage, honour killings and FGM practices, trafficking in human beings and related executions in case of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Forced marriage amounts to persecution. Child marriage is considered forced marriage, therefore, persecution.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that women and girls could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. 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. Women are also prohibited from entering the workplace without wearing a hijab, dancing in public, riding bicycles, joining the army, participating in public sports, and becoming president. Women's mobility and autonomy are further restricted by the requirement of a male relative’s permission or consent. Their court testimony and inheritance are deemed worth half that of men. The Chastity and Mandatory Hijab Bill approved by the Guardian Council in September 2024 further intensified the State's control over women’s bodies and movements, and escalated penalties for unveiled women, including

social service restrictions, and property confiscation. The enforcement of this bill, despite promises to halt the morality police, signals increased repression.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for women and girls to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as:

- **Political profile:** Women have been subjected to severe restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, with harsh penalties for dissent, including death or imprisonment. Women activists and protesters are at higher risk of physical, psychological, and sexual violence, including State-sanctioned torture and inhumane and degrading treatment in detention. Please refer to Political dissent and opposition.
- **Ethnic and/or religious background:** Women and girls of ethnic and religious minorities face several layers of discrimination which make them more at risk than other women. Please refer to Ethnic minorities and Religious minorities.
- **Perception of traditional gender norms in the family:** The risk of honour-based violence as well as of domestic violence is dependent on how the (extended) family, including the husband, perceive the traditional gender norms.
- **Home area and residence:** Women and girls originating from (more) conservative areas are at higher risk. In rural areas, control over women is stricter due to close-knit community surveillance, while in larger cities like Mashhad, Isfahan, and Tehran, the higher education levels and open-minded attitudes afford women more freedom, including the dress-code.
- **Socio-economic situation:** Poor socioeconomic situation could render the applicant more vulnerable to abuses, such as sexual exploitation, trafficking in human beings and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation.
- **Family status:** Alone women are at higher risk of sexual exploitation, trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings.

Links to persecution under other profiles may also be relevant, in particular Individuals perceived to have transgressed Islamic norms or laws.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant falling under this profile, this is likely to be for reasons of membership of a particular social group(18). This may apply for instance to women victims of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Such women may be stigmatised by the surrounding society because of their common background which cannot be changed (sex outside marriage). Other grounds such as religion and (imputed) political opinion may also be substantiated.

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CJEU, Intervyuirasht organ na Darzhavna agentsia za bezhantsite pri Ministerskia savet v WS, case C-621/21,
judgment of 16 January 2024, para. 81.

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