

Demographic and Socio-economic Status of Youth in I.R. Iran



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Foreword

Over the past three decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran (I.R. Iran) has been experiencing rapid socio-demographic and economic changes. These shifts have an impact on national development patterns, as well as on the socio-economic situation and the population structure of the country, and vice versa. Rapid urbanization, new patterns of internal migration, declining fertility, the current youth bulge, an upcoming aged population, as well as the growing number of female-headed households are some of the main population issues to have emerged due to broad socio-economic changes. All have the potential to significantly influence the I.R. Iran's future development. Consequently, developing a comprehensive knowledge and generating scientific evidence on these emerging population issues should be a priority for all relevant government and civil society institutions. Such knowledge and evidence will significantly strengthen the capacity of decision-making, programming, planning and evidence-based policy formulation in the I.R. Iran.

Considering the importance of these emerging population issues and associated needs, the 5th Country Programme of the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) in the I.R. Iran (2012-2016) placed great emphasis on the analysis and utilization of relevant and up-to-date evidence for decision-making. In addition, a key focus area of the Country Programme is upstream engagement with the government for advocacy and policy formulation in the area of population and development. In this regard, UNFPA has worked closely with its national partners, including the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), the University of Tehran and the Statistical Research and Training Center (SRTC) of SCI to provide and disseminate comprehensive data and information, as well as to develop in-depth situation analyses on four key emerging population issues: urbanization/internal migration, youth, ageing and female-headed households.

This report is a comprehensive situation analysis on youth which has been prepared by the Department of Demography of the University of Tehran. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Jalal Abbasi Shavazi and Prof. Rasoul Sadeghi from the University of Tehran who developed this valuable report, and their team. I would also like to thank my colleague Mr. Kambiz Kabiri, UNFPA Programme Analyst for his contribution and support to these reports.

I am confident that this report will provide valuable inputs and recommendations for policy- and decision-makers in the area of population and development in the I.R. Iran.

Dr. M. Hulki Uz
UNFPA Representative

Preface

Iran has been experiencing a youth bulge in recent years, whereby one third of its population is made up of people 15-29 years of age. The increases in number and percentage of young people are unprecedented phenomena in the socio-demographic history of Iran. Additionally, changes in the young population have been followed by changes in social and cultural conditions. Young adulthood is a period of multiple transformations in people's lives, which is associated with a high density of demographic events and social transitions. In other words, the majority of demographic events and actions happen during youth: graduation, entering the workforce, transition to adulthood, marriage and raising a family, parenthood, divorce, high-risk behaviour, and migration. When the density of events during youth are coupled with rapid, exciting and incredible socio-technological changes, young people become driving forces of social change.

In addition to their demographic weight, youth have significant social, economic, and political contributions to the country. Not only have youth grown in number in comparison to the total population, but the growth in qualitative measures (such as literacy, urban residency, access to and use of social media) have also been more considerable among youth. Therefore, the younger population enjoys the benefits of development, such as higher education, as well as increased knowledge and skills, which can foster social, economic and technological changes in the country. Having in mind the lessons learned in a nation-wide population transition, demographers call such a demographic structure a "window" or a "gift", and economists use the term "demographic dividend". In order to realize this potential asset, it is necessary, initially, to develop an understanding of the attributes and advantages of this population, and having done so, to implement the necessary structures and conditions to reap the rewards. In this way, the young population can bring about production and growth, and thereby guarantee economic prosperity and well-being for years to come.

The importance of youth bulge has been reflected in development plans and policies in Iran. Yet, youth-related development indicators are still below desired levels; and researchers, decision-makers and organizations involved in youth affairs have not been able to reach a comprehensive realistic understanding of various demographic aspects of youth. It is necessary, both in terms of science and policy-making, to have an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of different social and demographic aspects of the young population. On this basis, the present report aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the socioeconomic, demographic and health situation of the population 15-29 years of age in Iran, through secondary analysis of recent data. This report can act as a foundation for policy-making, planning and improved cooperation between various relevant organizations and bodies.

The present study could not be realized without the valuable efforts by Dr Meimanat Hosseini Chavoshi, Dr Fatemeh Torabi, Serajedin Mahmoudiani Gilan, and Mohammad Torkashvand. We are also thankful for the support we received from Dr Hossein Mahmoudian (Director for Population and Development project), Dr Hulki Uz (UNFPA Representative in the Islamic Republic of Iran), Kambiz Kabiri, Niki Tavakoli, and Mehrnaz Soleymanlou (UNFPA Program Officers). Mitra Behnam Mojtahedi has made significant contribution to the report in the translation of report to English. The present study was further improved through comments from the staff of the Department of Demography at the University of Tehran and editorial comments on the English report by Ehsan Abbasi-Shavazi.

This report aims to provide basic information for policy dialogue, planning and more co-ordination among relevant sectors and stakeholders. It is our hope that the findings of this study foster a reinvigorated commitment to the consideration of youth as unique assets to the country, and result in comprehensive targeted policy-making for this important section of the population.

Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi

Rasoul Sadeghi

Executive Summary

Background

During the last decade, Iran has experienced a “youth bulge”. Today, the country is faced with an unprecedented growth and number of its young population, which has never occurred in Iran’s social and demographic history. Currently, around one-third of the Iranian population is comprised of youth who are 15-29 years old. From a demographic standpoint, the period of youth is of special importance in comparison with other stages in the life course.

Change in the number of youth has been accompanied by transformation in social and demographic composition. As compared with other life cycles, young age represents a dense period of multiple demographic and social events and transitions. In other words, age group 15 to 29 years, i.e. young adult years, is an age group with the most demographic density. Rindfuss (1991) called the youth period, a “demographically dense” period; meaning that most demographic events such as completion of education or leaving school, entering the labour market, transition to adulthood, marriage and family formation, parenthood, divorce, risk behaviours, migration and so on occur during these years. The density of events during young adult years would be even more dramatic during periods of rapid change, because young adults typically are the engines of social change.

In addition to the importance credited to the youth based on their significant population size, their economic, social and political presence has also merited great attention. Indeed, the young population has not only grown in terms of number, but they have also exhibited a higher quality (such as literacy, urbanization, access to and use of social media) as compared with the rest of the population. Thus, the young population of Iran enjoys higher education, skills and knowledge which can be sources of social, economic and technological change for the country. In acknowledging the potential windfall and benefits of this demographic transition in the country, researchers have termed this population structure a demographic “window” or “gift”, and economists have termed it a “demographic dividend”. In order to realize this potential asset, it is necessary to first, develop an understanding of the attributes and advantages of this population, and second, to put in place the necessary structures and conditions to reap the rewards. It is only in this situation that a young population can bring about production and growth, and thereby guarantee economic prosperity and social wellbeing.

Using secondary and situational analysis of recent national data, this study is aimed at providing a comprehensive situation analysis/mapping of young population aged 15 to 29 years. The report is to be used as basic information for policy dialogue, programming/planning and more coordination among relevant sectors and stakeholders.

Key Findings

The situation analysis of youth considering economic, social, demographic, and health aspects revealed the following:

1. Demographic situation

- In the context of the age structure transition, a phase of demographic change occurs in Iran, the striking feature of which is a noticeable increase in the number and percentage of the young population. This stage is termed the “youth bulge”. The peak in the number of Iran’s young population was experienced in recent years when the youth represented close to one-third of the total population of the country.
- From 1976 to 2006, the number of youth increased rapidly, from 8.5 million (25% of the total population) to 25 million (35.4% of the total population). From 2006 onwards, the number of the youth has decreased gradually, reaching 23.7 million (31.5% of the total population). It is projected that this decline will continue with slow pace in the future. Based on projections, in 2050, depending on different fertility scenarios, the youth population will be around 16 to 17.6 million (around 16 to 18% of the total population).
- Youth, overwhelmingly, live in urban areas (71%), of whom, one-sixth live in Tehran province. In 2011, with regard to the share and percentage of youth population, the highest percentage related to Ilam province (35.3%) and the lowest percentage observed in Gilan province (28%).
- Migration aspirations and behaviour of people vary throughout life cycle. Most migrations and population movements occur during the young ages (15-29). The share of the youth in migration flows has been between 46 to 50 percent during the last two decades.
- Analysis of the causes on youth migration reveals that employment prospects constitute the main reason for this decision. Acquiring human capital or furthering education are also important factors for youth migration.
- In addition to a large percentage of youth in internal migration flows, a large number of Iranians who have migrated abroad are also university-educated youth. Although, there is no official data available on brain drain migration from Iran to abroad, today emigration has become a desired and accepted way of life for many of the elite and talented youth.
- The noticeable presence of youth among Afghan immigrants along with their three-decade long residence in Iran accompanied by their young age structure and high fertility patterns has resulted in a large and ever-increasing cohort of second-generation migrant youth. Second-generation Afghans in Iran are a large and socializing group, and have exhibited marked changes with regard to their identity, and thus have low intention towards returning to Afghanistan.
- With regard to marriage, the country has seen increasing rates of singlehood among youth during the last three decades. Between 1986 and 2011, the ratio of single men has risen from 60 to 70 percent while the figure for women has risen from 36 to 48 percent.
- Despite the increasing trend of the ratio of unmarried youth, the singlehood ratio, particularly for women aged 15-24 years old, has declined slightly during the last five years. However, the increasing trend of the ratio of unmarried for the age group 25-29 years still continues.

- During the last three decades (1986 to 2011), the percentage of never-married men and women between ages 25-29 has increased sharply; it has risen from 9.4 to 26.2 and from 18.5 to 40.5 percent for women and men, respectively. In other words, the ratio of unmarried women in age 25-29 age groups has increased three-fold, and for men, this increase has been two-fold. The highest ratio of unmarried men between 25-29 years of age was found for Ilam province (57%), and the lowest figure was recorded in South Khorasan province (22.4%). For women aged 25-29, the highest ratio is also observed in Ilam province (39.5%) and the lowest ratio is seen in Yazd (15%).
- In analyzing the reasons for the increase in the unmarried ratio, or, delayed marriage among youth, three main factors have been emphasized in the literature, namely accessibility (access to suitable partner, considering the balance of sex ratio during marriage age and suitable partner criteria), possibility (possibility of marriage with regard to social and economic conditions), and desirability (desirability of marriage taking into account social norms and pressures as well as the intention of individuals).
- Increasing rate of divorce has become a growing social problem for youth. In 2011, for every 100 marriages, 16.3 divorces were registered. Divorce is more prevalent in urban areas, and is twice that of those in rural areas. Also, in 2011, in Tehran province, for every 3 marriages, one instance of divorce was recorded. Following Tehran province, Kermanshah, Qom, and Kurdistan provinces had the highest rate of divorce. In contrast, more traditional and conservative locations in the country, such as Ilam, Sistan and Baluchistan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and Yazd had the lowest rates of divorce.
- The highest rates of divorce occur in the 15-29 age range. In 2011, two- (42%) and three- fifth (60%) of divorces for men and women, respectively, occurred in the 15-29 age groups. Also, 15% of divorces occur in the first year of marriage, 13% in the second year, 10% in the third year, 8 % in the fourth year and around 7 % in the fifth year of marriage. On this basis, more than half of divorces occur during the first 5 years of marriage and mostly during youth. Additionally, an age-structure analysis of divorcees shows that around a quarter of those who have been divorced are of the youth age.

2) Reproductive and health situation

- According to the 2011 census, during the 5-year period 2006-2011, total fertility rate in rural and urban areas were 2.3 and 1.7, respectively, and for the total country the TFR was 1.8 children per woman. During the early 1980s the total fertility rate was around 7.0 children per women and the rate of fertility among the youth (i.e. number of children for women aged 15-29) was about 4 children. In 2011, a slightly more than one children of the total fertility of 1.8 was due to youth fertility.
- Share of fertility of the two age groups 20-24 and 25-29 have been consistently higher than others age groups. The two age groups had similar share in total fertility rate until 1996, but the share of fertility in age group 25-29 increased and this has led to an increase in fertility rates for the age group 30-34 in recent years. This is due to the postponement of marriage and increased spacing between marriage and first and subsequent births.
- The percentage of women who had their fourth children by age 30 has been reduced significantly. Childbearing has been concentrated on narrow age ranges and most women give birth to two children or less these days.
- Given that fertility rates have been reduced to its minimum level, fertility decline will be a slow in the future. However, such factors as rising living and childbearing costs as well as youth unemployment which have

been effective in reducing fertility will also play a role for fertility to decline slowly during the coming years.

- Due to the increasing age at marriage as well as the concentration of childbearing during young adult years, health policies and programs should pay special attention to youth reproductive health services.
- One of the target groups in the ICPD and the Millennium Development Goals are youth. This is due to youth being exposed to crucial and numerous challenges such as reproductive and sexual health issues including premature pregnancies, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as HIV/AIDS. Such risks account for 33.4% of the sum of years of potential life lost due to premature mortality and the years of productive life lost due to disability (DALYs) among young women, and 9.5% of young men.
- Given that age at marriage has increased and significant proportions of youth remain single by the end of their twenties, they are exposed to various risk factors including STDs. On the other hand, childbearing for married youth is concentrated between ages 20-29. Thus, health programs and reproductive health services should pay special attention to unmarried youth on the one hand, and married ones on the other hand.
- Studies on reproductive health needs of young people before and after marriage show that the main subject for health education pre-marriage is “health in sexual relations” and for post-marriage is “best physical, psychological and social conditions” for childbearing.
- Abortion rates were higher among unwanted - than wanted pregnancies. Abortion in age groups less than 25 years of age was around 115, and in age group 25-29 was around 181 per 1000 unwanted pregnancies. These rates of abortion among wanted pregnancies for the two groups were 56 and 74 per 1000 pregnancies, respectively and it mainly includes spontaneous abortions.
- In recent years, proponents of pronatalist policies have been in favour of stopping family planning programs to increase fertility. This report shows that continuation of family planning services particularly for newly married couples is necessary. Lack of family planning services will lead to such consequences as unwanted pregnancies and abortion which in turn will have negative and irrecoverable impacts on the health of women and couples.
- In Iran, mortality rates due to accidents are high among youth (15-29) especially for men. Deaths due to unintentional accidents (car accidents) and intentional accidents (suicide, murder, etc.) are greater during the youth years than other ages. Therefore, accidents, suicide and violence which result in death are greater and more visible among youth than among other age groups.
- The period of youth is a period of interwoven and emergence of risk factors and risk behaviors. Findings show that illnesses and high-risk behaviours are increasing during youth. Four high-risk categories affecting youth in Iran are substance abuse (smoking, alcohol, and illicit drugs), high-risk sexual behaviour, HIV/AIDS, and traffic accidents.
- By 2013, 27,041 cases of HIV in the country were recorded. Approximately 57 percent of them are in the age group 15 to 34 years. Hence, most people with HIV / AIDS are young.
- In Iran, a sexual and age transition is occurring in regard to HIV/AIDS, with HIV/AIDS prevalence shifting from men to women, and from middle-aged people to youth and adolescents. Nevertheless, in most Iranian provinces, there is a low level of correct knowledge/ awareness regarding

prevention of HIV/AIDS. Based on findings from the 2010 IrMIDHS, only 19.6 % of women aged 15-24 had correct knowledge regarding prevention of AIDs.

3) Economic situation

- Since 2006, Iran entered a phase in its demographic transition that is termed the “Demographic Window”. In this phase, a youth bulge is experienced in the age structure. The number and ratio of population in the 15-64 age range increases and reaches its maximum.
- The Demographic Window opens golden opportunities for development. However, this does not happen automatically. Reaping the rewards of this phase of demographic transition necessitates ideal social, economic, institutional and political environments.
- Benefitting from the Demographic Window, and converting it to economic and social opportunities needs empowerment of youth for economic development, increased employment opportunities, ideal investment, improved quality of human capital and increased opportunities for the presence of women in the work force.
- Unemployment of Iranian youth has become one of the main economic and social problems and challenges. Around 70% of the unemployed in Iran are in their youth. Also, unemployment rate of the youth has increased to around 25%. The increase of this indicator has resulted in youth experiencing increased poverty and social exclusion. In 2011, labor force participation rate for young men was 60.6% and for women was 13.1%. Hence, the rate of economic participation of young men is nearly five times more than young women. As compared to other age groups, employment rate among youth is lower and unemployment rate is higher. In 2011, unemployment rate among youth aged 15-29 was 25.3 per cent. Youth unemployment rate in urban and rural area, respectively, were 27 and 18 per cent. The rate for young male and female was, respectively, 22.1 and 40.6 per cent.
- There are significant provincial differences of youth unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for young men has exceeded 30 per cent in eight provinces; the youth male unemployment rate in Khuzestan and Sistan and Baluchestan has risen to 38 percent. The rates in Ilam, Kohkiloye and Boyerahmad, Lorestan and Kermanshah tend to be 35 percent. The unemployment rate for young women in five provinces, namely, Kohkiloye and Boyerahmad, Ilam, Lorestan, and Khuzestan exceeded 50 percent, even 60 percent in Kermanshah.
- Unemployment is highest among youth with university degrees (37 per cent). The figures for young males and females with university degrees are 29 and 48 per cent, respectively.
- Poverty is more prevalent among households with young heads. Poverty among young household heads has been increasing between 2000 and 2010.

4) Socio-cultural situation

- Between 1956 and 2011, literacy rates among young men increased from 28 to 96 percent, and that of young women increased from 10 to 97 percent. Youth have higher literacy rates than the total population. In 2011, 28 percent of women and 24 percent of men had tertiary-level education.

- Rates of school drop-out are higher among young boys than girls. Additionally, the highest rates of school drop-out exist for young children of illiterate fathers and mothers. As the education of the parents increases to higher levels, the rate of drop-out for their children decreases.
-
- Analysis of human capital development among 15-29 year old youth and its related factors using the Leisure Time Use Data 2009 shows the low level of human capital development activities in Iran. More than half of the youths in the study (52.6 %) did not spend any time during the day towards activities relating to gaining human capital. However, girls were more likely than boys to devote their time to gaining human capital.
- The greater the amount of time that people spend in paid employment, the less amount of time they dedicate to building their social capital. Also, the higher the level of parent's education, the greater average amount of time that their young children spend toward increasing their social capital. Additionally, data shows that as family size and number of children decreases, the average gain of human capital of the children increases. One-child and two-child families are the best situation for children to acquire their human capital.
- Analysis of the patterns of time use by youth (15-29 years old), using data from the Leisure Time Use Survey in 2009, showed that youth spend most of their time on activities related to their personal roles, followed by house-related roles, work-related, social and parental role daily. Among activities related to personal-roles, educational activities (whether formal or informal education), watching television, individual prayer, and personal health were more common.
- Social-role activities not only have less time devoted to them than other roles, but in contrast to other roles, are impacted to a very small extent by the personal attributes of the person. On this basis, plans to increase the social presence of youth have to enable the procurement of relevant facilities for all youth to take part. Design of various volunteer activities in different education, social, and cultural disciplines can nurture the talents of young people, and allow them to acquire experience for the later stages of their lives.
- Study of the patterns and methods of leisure time use of Iranian youth aged 15-29, based on the results of the Socioeconomic household characteristics survey (2001) shows the importance of leisure in the social lives of youth, and its relation to various social differences and inequalities. The data show a situation where youth have diverse degrees of access to opportunities and positions related to leisure time, and on this basis, experience different patterns and behaviours based on the various aspects of social inequality, i.e. spatial, ethnic, gender, and social status.
- Investigation of internet use shows that a significant segment of internet users in Iran are youth. Their internet use has shown a steady increase in recent years. In 1997, 10 percent, in 2002, 19 percent, and in 2011, 29 percent of youth in Iran used the internet. In provinces such as Tehran, Semnan and Isfahan, accessibility to the internet among youth is close to 40 percent.

Review policies and programs on youth

In addition to the above finding, analysis of policies and programmes related to youth showed that:

- Ministry of Sport and Youth, Council for Youth, Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology, National Elite Foundation, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Office of Adolescent and Youth Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Technical and Professional Organizations are responsible and related to policy making on youth in Iran.
- Unclear status of official institutions responsible for youth policy and planning, unclear status of documents in the Youth Policy and Planning, ambiguous position of youth programs in the state budget, lack of monitoring and evaluation, and enforcement of youth law are challenges facing above official centres and organizations in policy- making on youth.
- During different periods, and with governments of different persuasions at the helm, who in turn have their own views towards youth, it has been seen that certain policies have been neglected, and at times, completely abandoned. On this basis, it is imperative that independent and non-political organizations must be set up for planning, and implementation of policies relevant to youth.
- In recent years, the focus of many programs and policies relating to youth has been on cultural-related issues. However, currently, most of the issues confronting youth relate to economic problems, and thus, it is necessary, more than ever before, that economic aspects of policies and programs be given greater attention. Reducing unemployment is a major challenge which must be given prominent attention.
- Certain policies and programmes relating to youth, such as promotion and facilitation of marriage have not been effectively implemented. These policies need to be revised to ensure they meet the stated objectives.
- With regard to the health of youth, policies which focus solely on this section of the population have not been devised. This is in spite of the fact that youth are prone to many risk factors relating to health. Comprehensive plans and policies must be implemented to reduce the risk factors affecting youth.
- Overall, educational programs relevant to teaching life skills for family, employment and healthy lifestyles for youth are limited and inappropriate. The lack of, or weakness in, auditing of programs has been a major flaw in many policies and regulations. A final point worthy of note is that effective implementation of programs and policies necessitate the acquisition of data and in-depth knowledge of the situation and needs of youth.

Recommendation and policy implications

- Age-structural transition of population is usually accompanied by a large cohort of youth who compete for job and resources. This transition brings with it economic rewards, such as rapid growth in the labour market, and the potential for accumulation of human capital. To reap these rewards, social institutions have to be flexible, and capable of aligning themselves with the realities of a changing population.
- Therefore, Iran's current and future demographic challenges depend upon the ways in which the youth bulge and the demographic window are utilized. Taking advantage of this golden opportunity, and its transformation into an economic and social opportunity necessitates the

empowerment of youth for economic development, expansion of employment opportunities, productive investment, and improvement of human capital and provision of opportunities for the presence of women in the workforce. For this purpose, government policies and programs have a fundamental role in management and engineering this “demographic window” period.

- Social investment in education, health and employment of youth allows countries to put in place strong economic foundations, and in turn, the resulting increase in youths’ capabilities allows them to reap more rewards throughout their active financial life. On the other hand, unemployed youth, with unhealthy lifestyles can lead to an expensive exodus of human capital and resources from a country.
- Currently, the focus and main concern of policy-makers centres on consequences of the next phase of the demographic transition, namely population aging which occurs after the demographic window phase. This has resulted in a neglect of the benefits and golden opportunities of the demographic window phase. It is only through investment and implementation of policies for employment of youth in the demographic window period that a healthy, active and prosperous aged population is achieved, and in turn leads to the second demographic bonus which occurs during the population ageing period. Otherwise, not only will the golden opportunity be missed but also it leads to further challenges, and demographic gifts will be easily turned into demographic burdens during the ageing period.
- Preparing databases through surveys and research such as design and implementation of longitudinal research on youth’s values and attitudes, their needs and capacities could be useful for policy-makers of youth.
- In recent years, population policies have focused much attention towards ageing population in the coming decades. An often-cited justification of the pronatalist policies is to prevent rapid population aging. The message inherent in the current report is that population policies must be formulated considering the structure and realities of the current population, and policy makers must facilitate meeting the demands of the youth as their policy priority. Population policies should also be geared towards taking care of youths’ needs and aspirations, including their desire to continue their education, and also be given employment, housing and health facilities and opportunities. A healthy and active young population results in their increased social, economic and political participation. An active, employed, and productive young population results in an increase of production and human capital for the country. This situation not only provides social and economic security and population welfare, but also serves to secure the future of the aged population. More importantly, participation of the youth in planning, implementation, and evaluation of development plans has a direct impact on their future lives, and will lead to a sustainable development in the country.
- In summary, it is clear that youth is a time of opportunity, and at the same time, one of risk and challenges. It will be to our detriment if policies fail to provide for the development needs of this population in various economic and social areas.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Social scientists have always regarded social changes, individual behaviour and demographic attributes of the young population to be very important. Decision-makers and international organisations agree on the importance of youth issues as well. These phenomenal changes are results of an experience called “youth transition” during which the number and ratio of young people increases and, naturally, the number of single adults grows alongside the number of unmarried young students entering schools and universities (Xenos and Kabamalan, 2005:58). The youth period of a population is a period of social, cultural and political change, and thus this period is important not only from demographic perspective, but socially and politically. It is in the course of youth transition that people acquire conditions necessary for independent action and enter the social arena. Therefore, changes occurring during youth transition are temporally related to demographic transition and socioeconomic change. In the context of modernity and development, changes in the number of young people are coupled with changes in the social composition of the population. There are more single and educated youth today compared to earlier generations. They are increasingly exposed to new media and information and communication technologies. They are the force that is changing the world today; the main actors in the arena of development and social change. Not only do youth build the future of the country, they also constitute the main components of the present society.

Focusing on the youth reflects that administrations, non-government organisations and international bodies recognise the youth both as development assets and important resources of socioeconomic and demographic challenges and issues. This paradox of opportunity/threat indicates the necessity of accurate, scientific and all-encompassing knowledge of all aspects of young-life. The importance of young population bulge has manifested itself in development plans and policies and various measures taken in Iran during the recent years. Nevertheless, youth-related development indicators are still at undesirable levels and the scientific circles, decision-makers and relevant organisations have yet to form a sound, realistic understanding of demographic subtleties of youth.

1.2. Objectives

The present study analyses recent demographic data to:

- Offer a comprehensive analysis of socio-economic, demographic and health situation of population 15-29 years of age;
- Provide a province-based view of the youth;
- Review youth support plans and policies of the last two decades;
- Suggest youth related policies.

Thus, the present study can provide basic information for policy-making, planning and coordination among relevant organisations and bodies.

1.3. Concept of Youth Transition

In the latter half of the 20th century, and especially in its last decades, youth transitions led to appearance of enormous numbers of young people in transitioning countries; which in turn led to

numerous studies on the subject (e.g. Rindfuss 1991, Xenos and Kabamalan 1998, Westley and Choe 2002, Salehi Esfahani and Egel 2007). The majority of these studies used two interrelated theoretical frameworks: (a) youth as a demographically dense period, and (b) youth transition, a recent development in demographics literature. Before moving to analyse the demographic situation of Iranian youth, these notions will be explored.

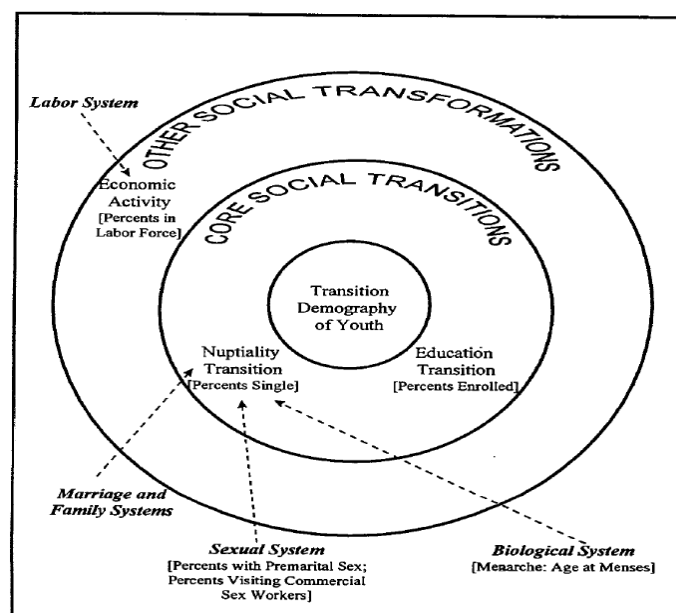
A. Youth as a Demographically Dense Period

From a demographic perspective, youth is more important than other stages of a life cycle. As such, youth has been called “a dense period of demographic events” (Rindfuss, 1991). Most of the demographic events and actions occur sometime between 15 and 30 years of age. Density of events in youth reaches astounding levels during periods of rapid change. Majority of changes and transitions of life take place in these years: graduation, entering the labour force, transition to adulthood, marriage and raising a family, parenthood, divorce, high-risk behaviour, migration, etc.

B. Youth Transition

Essential changes to the social composition of younger populations are more important than qualitative/quantitative demographics of the youth. Forces of social change go hand in hand with a young population and create new forms of social and demographic composition. These changes might be called “youth transition” (Xenos and Kabamalan, 1998:5-6). The most important aspects of social change in youth transition are late marriages and higher educational attainment. They constitute focal points for social transitions and lead to inevitable changes among youth. Other changes occurring during youth are entering the labour force and other economic changes.

Figure 1.1. Elements of Youth Transition



Source: Xenos and Kabamalan, 1998:15.

As seen in Figure 1.1., demographic transition is at the core of youth transition. It entails notions of “youth bulge” and places youth demographics at the centre of youth transition studies. Changes related to youth transition in the first stage are (a) changes in marriage transition and education transition; and then in later stages (b) changes in labour market and youth participation in labour force. The present study focuses on three essential transitions of the youth: education, occupation and raising a family. Key facilitators for these transitions will also be highlighted.

1.4. A Review of Youth Studies in Iran

A systematic review of about 380 studies and investigations about youth in Iran shows that most of the studies have focused on challenges, threats and social issues related to the youth; while studies that consider their plans and aspirations (especially future issues) are scarce. Other areas of research have been education and occupation, leisure, marriage and raising a family, social involvement, identity, high-risk behaviour, internet, media and cyberspace, religiousness, inter-generation relations, migration, and pre-marriage relations (see Appendix, Table 1).

Majority of the studies were from the preceding decade, especially during the last five years, which can signify an increase in attention paid to the younger population of the country on the part of policy-makers and academics. Close to 47% of the studies were scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals, while 28% were theses at masters and PhD levels, and 25% were research reports. Indeed, the establishment of National Youth Organisation and its subsequent change to Ministry of Sports and Youth during the last years indicate a realistic understanding of the young demographic structure of Iran and, consequently, of the need for more research funding in related fields of study and publishing of the results.

Table 2 of the Appendix contains the main subjects and themes of each of the 13 youth-related research domains. Review of studies in the youth domains indicated that, while there has been no shortage of research regarding the young, there is neither continuity nor coherence in such efforts. Hence, the understanding of the situation is by no means comprehensive. Moreover, there is a gap between policy-making and research, resulting in studies that fail to answer crucial demands from policy-making circles. Lastly, recent developments in the younger population and their socioeconomic characteristics have not come under any significant study yet. Therefore, it is necessary, both in terms of science and policy-making, to have an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of different social and demographic aspects of the youth. The present study analyses the social and demographic situation of the youth using the most updated data available (including the 2011 Census).

1.5. Data & Method

United Nations defines “youth” as having 15 to 24 years of age; while Ministry of Sports and Youth recognises 15-29 years of age as youth. The present report uses the latter definition for its analysis.

This study uses documentary study method and secondary data analysis. Main sources for the data were People and Housing Censuses by Iranian Statistics Centre (primarily the 2011 Census), individuals data from the 2011 and the 2006 censuses, individuals data from Time-Use Plan, individual data from Iran Reproductive Developments Survey 2001-2006, vital registration data, the 2010 DHS results, as well as research conducted in the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, as well as the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

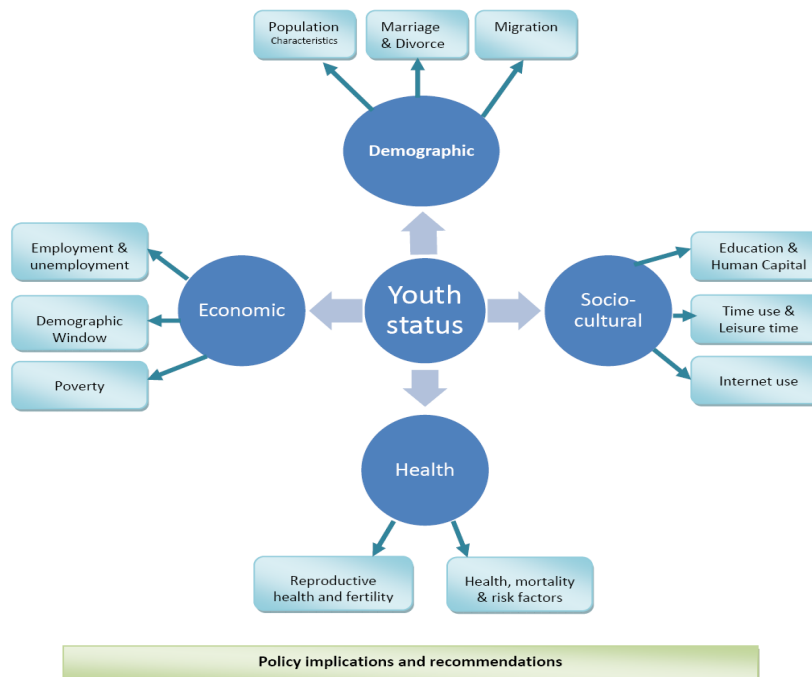
1.6. Report Structure

The present study primarily offers a comprehensive report regarding the situation of the youth, in the following layout:

- 1. Introduction, Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**
- 2. Situation of the Youth**
 - 2.1. Demographic Situation
 - 2.2. Health Situation
 - 2.3. Economic Situation
 - 2.4. Social-Cultural Situation
- 3. Support Mechanisms for the Youth**
 - 3.1. Rules and Regulations
 - 3.2. Socioeconomic Intervention Programmes
- 4. Executive Summary and Policy Recommendations**

An analysis of economic, social, demographic and health situation of youth is provided, mainly based on the 2011 Census. As Figure 1.2 illustrates, various aspects are described for each situation.

Figure 1.2. Aspects in Youth Situation Analysis (in this study)



Chapter 2: Situation Analysis of Youth in Iran

The following chapter analyses youth situation from a demographic standpoint followed by an examination of economic situation of the youth. The chapter continues with health situation and related risk factors. Finally, socio-cultural situation of the youth in Iran will be discussed.

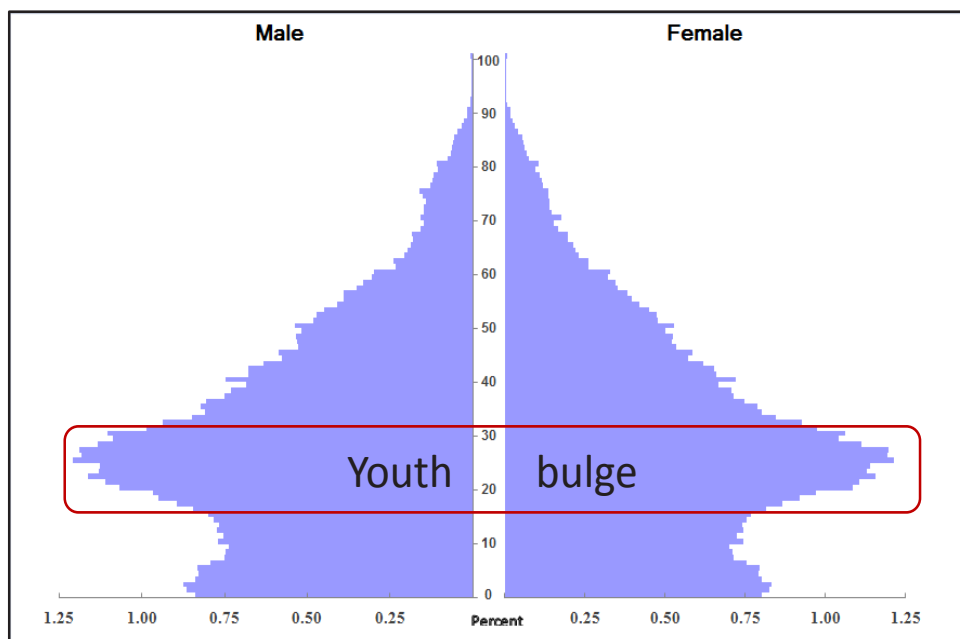
2.1. Demographic Situation of Youth

Demographic Youth Bulge, current trends and future projections as well as geographical distribution of youth will be discussed in this chapter. Discussions on marriage and related aspects in a young person's life, particularly age at marriage and age at divorce, will be analysed. Finally, the youth's migration and its share in migration in recent years will be discussed.

2.1.1. Youth Bulge: Demographic trends and projections

In the context of age structure transition, “youth bulge” is an emerging demographic development characterised by significant percentage and increasing number of young people. Youth bulge is sometimes defined as any population made up of more than 20 % of people who are aged 15 to 24. Conversely, populations with less than 15% youth suffer from “youth deficit” (Westley and Choe, 2002:57). Size and duration of youth bulge depends on fertility decline rate and time-frame, and also migration currents.

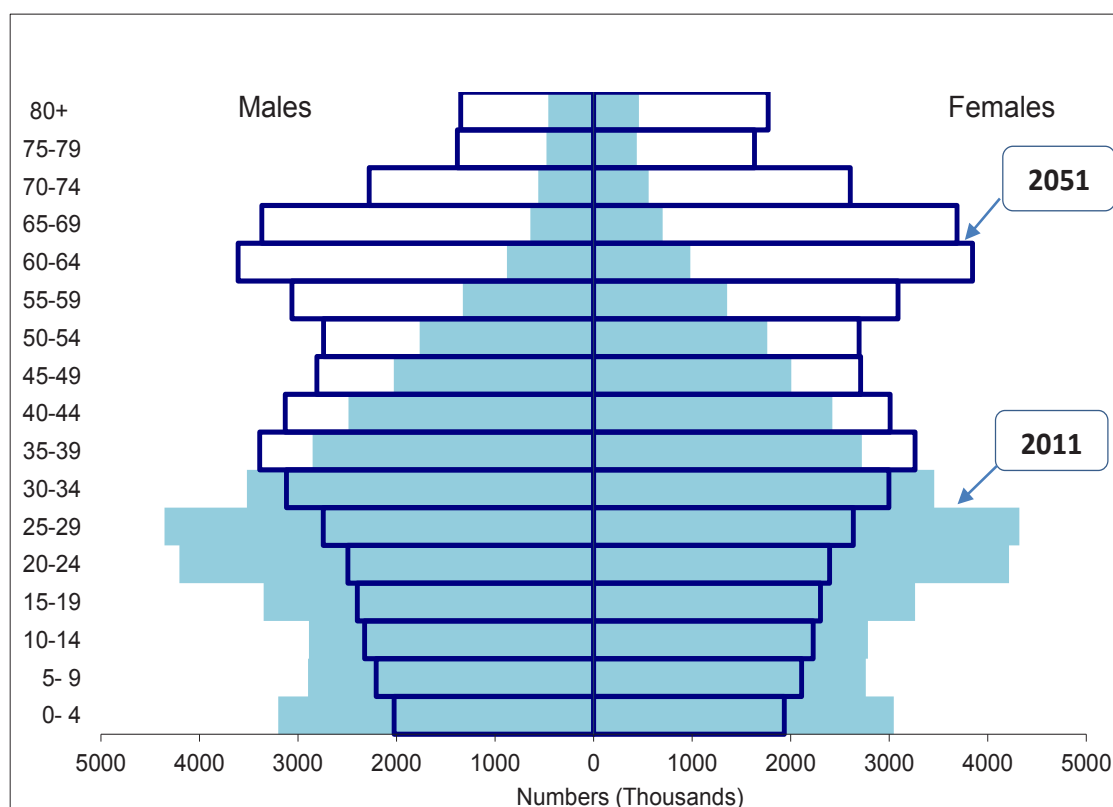
Figure 2.1 Population Age Structure of Iran, 2011



Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Population and Housing Census.

From a demographic standpoint, Iran is experiencing a youth bulge, as seen in Figure 2.1. In 2011, close to one third of the total population were 15 to 29 years of age. Youth bulge results in “population momentum”, demographically unusual and excessive number of youth that, even despite low fertility rates, results in high birth rates and brief population growth. Additionally, in case of inappropriate management of the youth bulge, there will be an increase in the possibility of rapid social changes, social movements, increasing social problems, and high-risk behaviour. Therefore, during the youth bulge, the youth gain more economic, social and policy-making importance (in addition to their demographic importance).

Figure 2.2. Iran Population Age Structure Transition 2011-2051

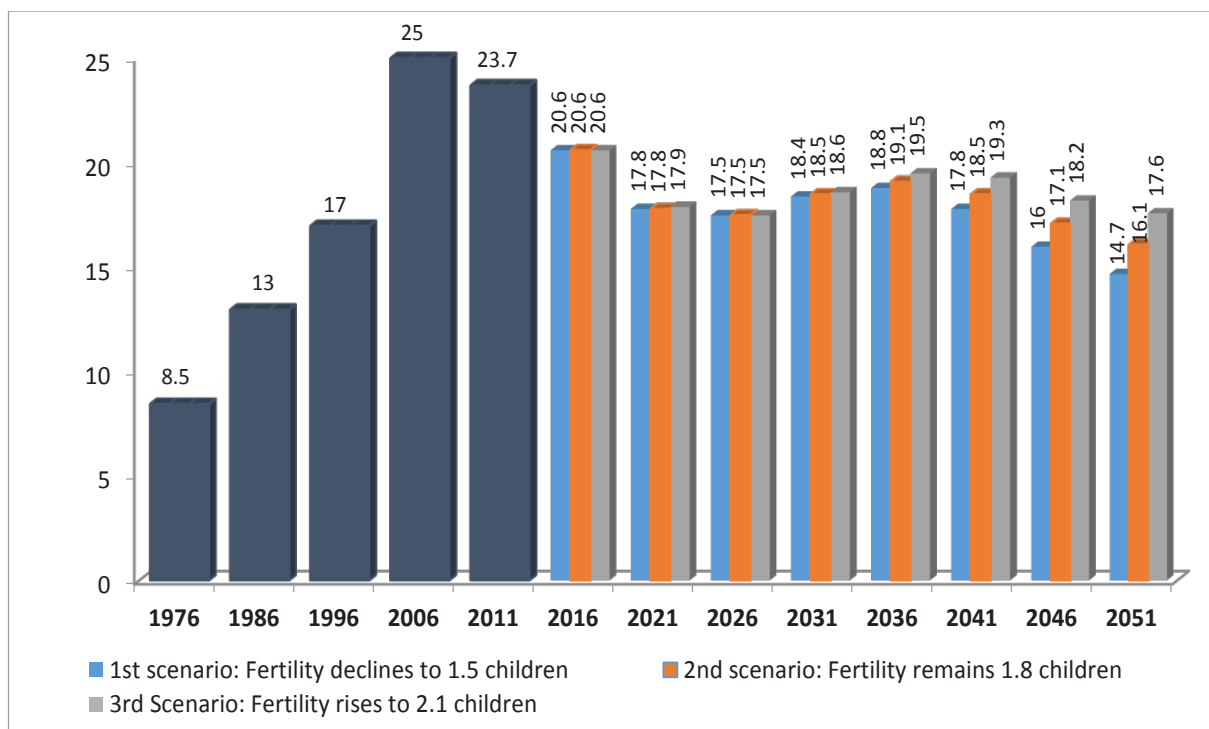


Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census & estimation of population in 2051 at TFR= 1.8

It should be noted, however, that the youth bulge in Iran is temporary. It is a result of high reproduction rates of the first post-revolution decade; which is passing through its youth and will ultimately reach old age after 2040 and bring about an ageing population. Accordingly, as illustrated in Figure 2.2., the senior citizens of tomorrow are today's youth. National managers and policy-makers, however, are mainly concerned with later stage consequences and aged population problems. As a result, the youth and related opportunities and challenges are partly ignored. However, healthy, active and successful senior citizens, as well as second demographic benefit, specific to aged populations, cannot be ensured without investments and policies for the youth employment and utilisation in the demographic window stage. Thus, demographic window opportunities will be lost and such efforts will prove counterproductive, leading to transformation of potential benefit to demographic burdens and to a problematic aged population phase.

The key indicator for youth bulge is significant growth in size and share of young people. A review of statistics for 15-29 years of age population in Iran reveals a rapid growth from 1976 to 2006, reaching 25 million from only 8.5 million. Since 2006, the figure has declined gradually, reaching 23.7 million in 2011. It is estimated that the gradual decline will not stop soon. Within different reproduction scenarios, the young population is estimated to be somewhere between 15 to 17.6 million in 2051. Thus, 2006 and 2011 constitute the peaks of young population, when almost one third of the population were young, and was comprised of 50% male and 50% female (11.9 million and 11.8 million, respectively).

Figure 2.3. Number of Population Aged 15-29 (Youth) 1976-2051 (in million)



Source: Calculated based on 1976-2011 Censuses and the 2051 estimates.

In 1976, people of 15-29 years of age comprised 25% of the total population. The percentage gradually increased in 1976-2006 period, reaching a maximum of 35.4% in 2006. Since then, the percentage of young people decreased and reached 31.5 percent in 2011. Given the reproduction levels and trends of the last decade, youth population will continue its decline until 2051 when it will reach 16 to 18 percent.

Interestingly, during the last five years (2006-11), the decrease of youth has been limited to the 20-24 age range, especially the 15-19 age range. But the size of 25-29 age range have actually increased. Similarly, the young population of 15-19 years of age declined gradually from 42% in 1976 to 28% in 2011, while that of 20-29 years of age increased from 25% in 1976 to 37 % in 2011.

Table 2.1. Distribution of Size and Percentage of Young Population by Age Groups, 1976-2011

Year	Number			Total Youth 15-29	Percentage		
	15-19	20-24	25-29		15-19	20-24	25-29
1976	3,600,265	2,792,215	2,111,585	8,504,065	42.3	32.8	24.8
1986	5,192,202	4,193,724	3,652,297	13,038,223	39.8	32.2	28.0
1996	7,115,547	5,221,982	4,709,154	17,046,683	41.7	30.6	27.6
2006	8,726,761	9,011,422	7,224,952	24,963,135	35.0	36.1	28.9
2011	6,607,043	8,414,497	8,672,654	23,694,194	27.9	35.5	36.6

Source: Calculated based on 1976-2011 Censuses

Geographical distribution of young people in Iran shows that 71% resided in urban areas (16.8 million) and 29% lived in rural areas (6.9 million) in 2011. Distribution by province indicates that Tehran Province has the most number of young residents; followed by Khorasan Razavi, Khouzestan, Isfahan and Fars. Ilam province, the least populated province, accommodates the least number of youth. As Table 2.2 shows, the highest share of youth in provincial population is in Ilam province, with 35.3% of its population being 15-29 years of age in 2011. On the other hand, Gilan Province shows the lowest percentage of young population per province, where 28 percent of the province are youth.

Thus, Iran is currently experiencing a youth bulge. Together with other factors of social change, youth bulge has led to a series of demographic consequences. Increasing role for youth in migration is one of the consequences that has been emerging in the last few decades.

Table 2.2. Provincial Distribution of Youth and Young Population in each Province, 2011

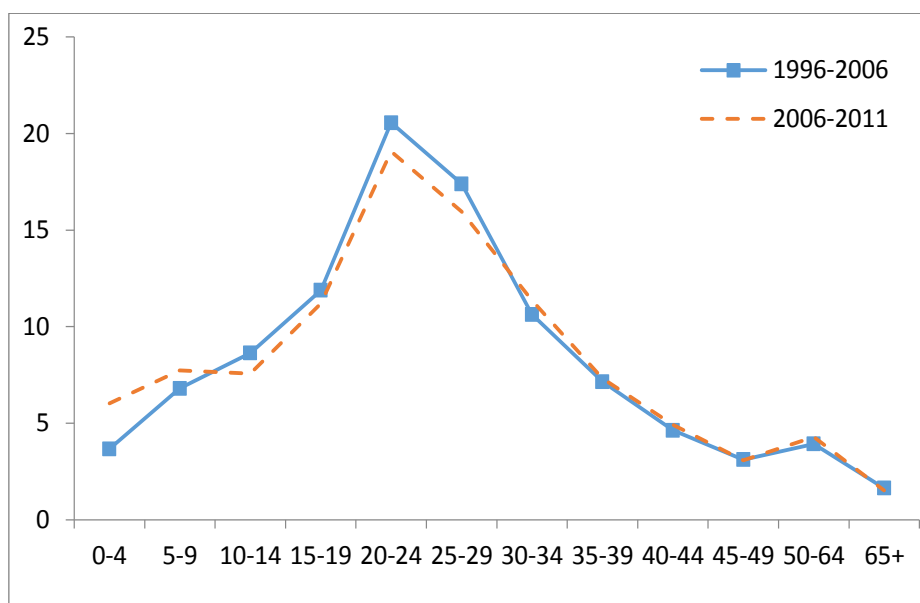
Province	Young Population	Young Population Provincial Distribution	Province	Young Population Proportion from Province Total Population
Tehran	3,634,761	15.3	Ilam	35.3
Razavi Khorasan	1,871,367	7.9	Bushehr	34.1
Khuzestan	1,536,246	6.5	Kohgilu. Boyerahmad	34.1
Fars	1,504,292	6.3	Khuzestan	33.9
Isfahan	1,498,183	6.3	Hormozgan	33.9
East Azerbaijan	1,102,825	4.7	Lorestan	33.8
Kerman	980,627	4.1	Kerman	33.4
West Azerbaijan	971,073	4.1	Kermanshah	33.4
Mazandaran	921,633	3.9	Chahar ...Bakhtiari	33.1
Sistan & Baluchestan	817,320	3.4	Kurdistan	32.9
Alborz	737,648	3.1	Fars	32.7
Gilan	694,825	2.9	Zanjan	32.5
Kermanshah	649,323	2.7	Ardebil	32.3
Lorestan	593,104	2.5	Hamedan	32.3
Hamedan	568,047	2.4	Sistan&Baluchestan	32.2
Golestan	567,096	2.4	Qazvin	32.2
Hormozgan	535,407	2.3	Qom	32.2
Kurdistan	492,056	2.1	North Khorasan	32.1
Markazi	433,551	1.8	Semnan	32.1
Ardebil	403,697	1.7	Golestan	31.9
Qazvin	387,312	1.6	West Azerbaijan	31.5
Qom	370,487	1.6	Yazd	31.4
Bushehr	352,534	1.5	Razavi Khorasan	31.2
Yazd	337,475	1.4	South Khorasan	30.9
Zanjan	330,393	1.4	Isfahan	30.7
Chahar ... Bakhtiari	295,995	1.2	Markazi	30.7
North Khorasan	278,308	1.2	Alborz	30.6
Kohgilu.&Boyerahmad	224,772	0.9	Mazandaran	30.0
South Khorasan	204,446	0.9	Tehran	29.8
Semnan	202,326	0.9	East Azerbaijan	29.6
Ilam	197,065	0.8	Gilan	28.0
Total (IRAN)	23,694,194	31.5	Total (IRAN)	100.0

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

2.1.2. Youth Migration

Migration and population movement are critical development/demographic aspects of population age structure change and the period of youth. Analysis of migration levels in five-year age groups reflects different migration situations in the course of a lifetime. As Figure 2.4 shows, majority of migrations occur during the youth stage. In other words, the majority of migrants are young adults in their 20s or 30s. It is in this stage of life that interest in migration and related behaviour emerge. For example, youth contributed to 49.8% of the migrations and movements during 1996-2006, and 46.2% in 2006-11.

Figure 2.4. Migrants Age Structure of Internal Migrants in Iran, 1996-2011



Source: Calculated based on the 2006 and 2011 censuses

Youth made up a larger share of migration flows in rural areas than urban areas. The highest share for youth in migration currents was 54% in Zanzan and North Khorasan provinces; while in Alborz and Tehran provinces, they made up the lowest share (around 37%).

Table 2.3. Share of Youth (15-29) in Migration Flows by Province, 2006-2011

Province	Share of Youth (15-29) in Migration Flows		
	Total	Urban	Rural
East Azerbaijan	48.5	48.8	48.2
West Azerbaijan	50.1	50.2	50.0
Ardebil	53.1	52.5	53.7
Isfahan	44.8	43.1	46.7
Alborz	37.0	34.1	39.9
Ilam	53.1	52.4	54.0
Bushehr	45.9	44.2	47.8
Tehran	36.3	34.7	38.0
Chahar Mahaal and Bakhtiari	49.8	47.2	52.7
South Khorasan	50.1	51.2	48.8
Khorasan Razavi	47.6	46.8	48.3
North Khorasan	54.1	53.7	54.5
Khuzestan	46.7	46.0	47.4
Zanjan	54.2	53.9	54.5
Semnan	47.3	47.2	47.5
Sistan and Baluchestan	46.1	48.9	42.3
Fars	50.7	49.1	52.5
Qazvin	44.2	41.9	46.7
Qom	43.3	40.9	45.8
Kurdistan	53.0	53.2	52.7
Kerman	53.3	51.6	55.1
Kermanshah	51.2	51.6	50.7
Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad	48.6	45.7	51.7
Golestan	50.3	46.2	54.0
Gilan	46.1	42.8	49.4
Lorestan	51.3	49.5	53.4
Mazandaran	46.5	42.7	50.2
Markazi	46.6	44.3	49.0
Hormozgan	47.6	48.1	47.0
Hamedan	52.1	50.3	53.9
Yazd	49.2	47.7	50.8
Total (IRAN)	46.1	45.0	47.3

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 censuses

Young migrants comprised 25% of the 15-19 age group, 40% of the 20-24 age group and 35% of the 25-29 age group. Sex ratio of young migrants was 105, meaning men migrate more than women. However, females who were 25-29 years of age migrated more than males of the same age. Male migration occurs in younger ages mainly due to occupational reasons. The main reason for the higher prevalence of female migration in 25-29 age range might be marriage and consequent family allegiances.

Table 2.4. Young Migrants (ages 15-29) by Number and Gender, 2006-2011

Age groups	Number			Percentage		Sex Ratio
	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	
15-19	618333	330393	287940	53.4	46.6	114.7
20-24	1052595	546283	506312	51.9	48.1	107.9
25-29	880868	432534	448334	49.1	50.9	96.5
15-29	2551796	1309210	1242586	51.3	48.7	105.4
Total of Migrants	5534666	2908560	2626106	52.6	47.4	110.8

Source: Calculated based on the 2006 and 2011 censuses

The main cause for migrations is employment, more so for the young. Other causes include human capital and education. In addition, Table 2.5 shows that youth of ages 15-29 constituted 40% of the occupation-related migrations, 80% of education-related migrations, 26% of housing-related migrations, and 39% of migrations occurred after marriage. So it might be concluded that migration is a major option for youth in identity formation and transition to adulthood. They migrate usually to find employment, education, human capital, and to strive for a better future.

Table 2.5. Percentage Distribution of Causes of Migration for Iranian Youth by Gender, 2006-2011

Age Group	Occupation			Education			Military Service			To Better Housing			Family Allegiance			Other/not stated			Total
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
15-19	4.6	6.8	2.0	37.5	39.3	35.4	9.0	16.9	-	2.7	2.5	3.0	42.0	31.4	54.0	4.2	3.1	5.5	100
20-24	9.5	15.4	3.0	28	25.6	30.6	19.5	37.6	-	3.7	4.2	3.1	34.6	13.8	57.0	4.7	3.3	6.3	100
25-29	23.3	42.1	5.2	9.7	10.0	9.5	6.0	12.2	-	11.2	17.4	5.2	42.4	10.6	73.2	7.3	7.7	7.0	100
15-29	13.1	22.1	3.6	24.0	23.9	24.1	12.3	24.0	-	6.0	8.2	3.8	39.1	17.2	62.2	5.5	4.7	6.3	100
Share of Youth in Migration	40.4	39.4	48.2	79.2	78.1	80.5	97.9	97.9	-	26.3	24.1	33.3	39	29.7	42.9	29.7	24.3	36.1	-

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

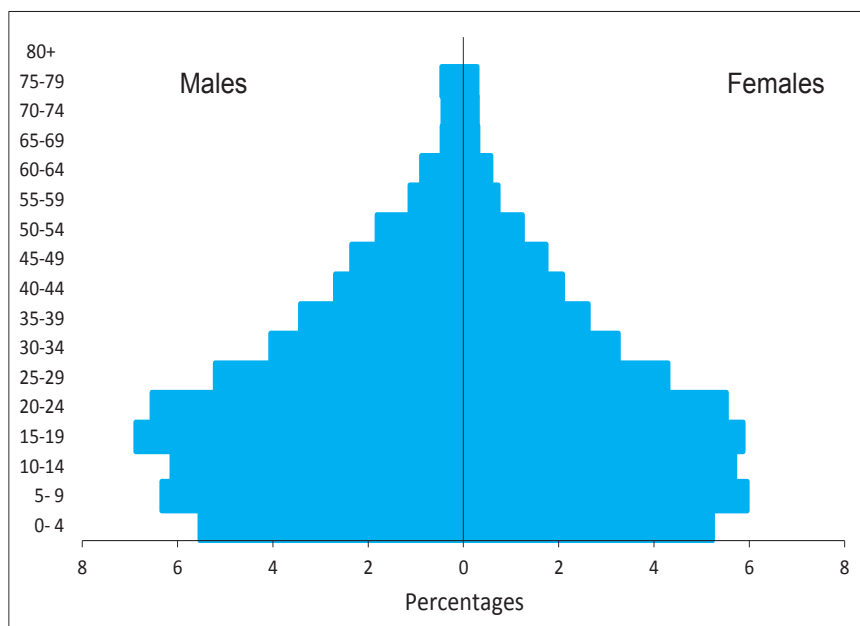
Rural youth are highly inclined to immigrate to urban areas, primarily for employment and education. A review of studies about rural to urban migration among youth shows four main reasons for rural-urban migration: economic (the most important reason), socio-cultural, demographic and natural-agricultural. Among the relevant factors for rural-urban migration, push factors in rural areas are more influential than pull factors in urban areas.

In addition to rural-urban migration, youth also constitute the majority of inter-province migrants, looking for employment and income opportunities in better developed provinces like Tehran. Findings of Sadeghi (2012) reflect different migration patterns and volumes at different stages of life, with different age structures, volumes and patterns occurring at different stages of the transition. Migration movements grow in the demographic window stage because, on the one hand, activity age groups become highly dense and, on the other hand, migration patterns and causes (especially age patterns) increase. Therefore, the emerging demographic window phase (increasing ratio of activity-age

population) and employment deficiencies across the country raises the possibility of internal migration from rural areas to urban areas, from smaller towns to larger cities, and from under-developed provinces to developed provinces.

In addition to internal migration, young migrants comprise the majority of Iranians who opt for international emigration. Previous research shows that young university graduates are highly eager to leave the country. In this respect, influential factors include negative views toward economic, social, political and educational situation in Iran, negative views toward the current economic conditions, and lack of confidence in future improvements. For example, Zakaei (2006) argues that the young elite were all trying to realise their potential capacities and find outlets for their accumulated cultural capital. They wanted access to means of accumulating more cultural capital and converting it to socioeconomic capital. Although they enjoyed cognitive social capital (such as family and friends), respondents expressed dissatisfaction with existing structural social capital (such as resources and opportunities). Thus, international emigration is now seen as a desirable and expectable behaviour and lifestyle among the young elite. For the desperate young elite, emigration is not the last option, but rather a means of having more options and opportunities and of finding more freedom of choice.

Figure 2.5. Age Structure of Foreign Immigrants in Iran, 2011



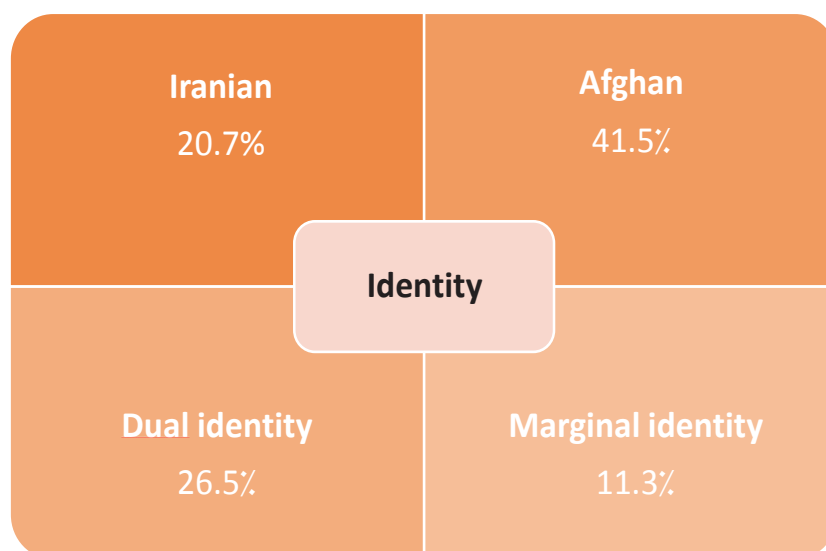
Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

Another related issue here is the significant number of foreign immigrants, mostly from Afghanistan, who live in Iran, and most of whom are young. According to the 2011 Census, more than 1.5 million foreigners live in Iran, of which 34.3% are 15-29 years of age. More than half of these young immigrants are second-generation immigrants born in Iran. In other words, the experience of hosting foreign migrants (from Afghanistan) for thirty years, together with their young population and high reproductive rates, have resulted in rapidly increasing numbers of second-generation immigrants in Iran.

Second-generation, young Afghans have been raised and socialised in Iran, culminating in tangible differences in their identities. In a study of second generation Afghans living in Tehran and Mashhad, 21% thought of themselves as having Iranian identity, 41% as having Afghan identity, 26% as having

dual identity, and 11% as having marginal identity (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Types of Identity among Second Generation Afghans, 2010



Source: Abbasi-Shavazi and Sadeghi, 2013.

Moreover, second generation migrants are seldom eager to return. Less than 6% want to return to Afghanistan, while 61% want to stay in Iran, 24% are still undecided and 9% want to leave Iran for another country (Abbasi-Shavazi and Sadeghi, 2011:8).

In addition to migration, considerable growth in young population (youth bulge) entails several social and demographic changes, one of which is changes to the marriage situation of young Iranians during the last few decades.

2.1.3. Marriage/Divorce Situation of the Young

Marriage and family structures in Iran experienced rapid changes in the last two decades. Reproduction rates have declined; age at marriage for both men and women and the number of unmarried youth have increased significantly. Additionally, divorce rate is increasing among the young. Therefore, discussions of changes in marriage situation of young people aged 15-29 are important, and are presented in the following section.

2.1.3.1. Increase in Never Married Youth

Marital status of youth in the last thirty years is characterised by an increase in number of single men from 60% to 70% and an increase in number of single women from 36% to 48%. On the other hand, marriage ratios for men decreased from 39% to 29% and from 62% to 51% for women. In comparison, however, the unmarried rate of 15-29 youth decreased while the married rate increased.

Table 2.6. Marital Status of Youth in Iran (%), 1986-2011

Year	Male					Female				
	Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Not stated	Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Not stated
1986	59.55	38.54	0.29	0.27	1.35	36.17	62.13	0.72	0.50	0.48
1996	69.94	29.21	0.11	0.15	0.59	50.02	48.69	0.33	0.34	0.62
2006	72.76	26.24	0.10	0.25	0.65	53.37	45.15	0.28	0.53	0.67
2011	69.54	29.72	0.12	0.34	0.28	48.11	50.62	0.30	0.89	0.08

Source: Calculated based on the 1986-2011 censuses

Percentage of unmarried men and, more significantly, women of ages 15 to 19 increased in 1986-2006 period. For example, unmarried rate for men rose from 93 to 98 per cent, while the rate for women rose from 66 to 83. Despite this growing trend, ratio of unmarried women decreased from 83% to 78.6% in recent years (2006-2010). In other words, as of 2011, only 21.4% of women aged 15-19 were married. DHS (2010) reported the same figure.

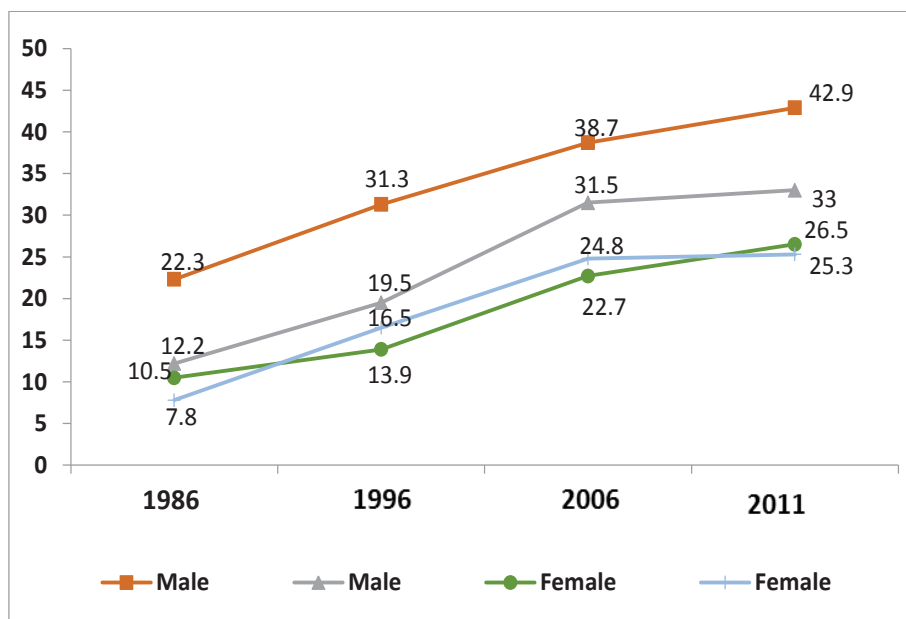
The same pattern exists in the 20-24 age range. As Table 2.7 illustrates, the 1986-2006 period indicates an increase in ratio of unmarried men (from 59% to 79%) and women (from 26% to 49%). Yet, ratios of unmarried individuals of the same age range have declined in the last five years (particularly for women, from 49.5 to 47.1 percent). Although ratios of unmarried people have been increasing in recent years, these ratios have decreased for women of 15-24 years of age.

Table 2.7. Singlehood proportions of Men and Women 15-19 and 20-24, 1986-2011

Year	Singlehood proportions for 15-19 years old (%)						Singlehood proportions for 20-24 years old (%)					
	Total		Urban		Rural		Total		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1986	93.2	65.8	95.4	66.8	90.5	64.7	58.6	25.8	64.3	27.0	50.7	24.1
1996	97.5	82.2	98.1	83.7	96.5	79.8	72.7	39.5	76.7	38.9	66.5	40.4
2006	97.9	83	98.2	85.1	97.3	78.9	78.8	49.5	80.9	50.6	74.2	46.8
2011	97.7	78.6	98.1	81.8	96.9	71.6	77.6	47.1	79.8	49.5	72.2	41.9

Source: Calculated based on the 1986-2011 censuses.

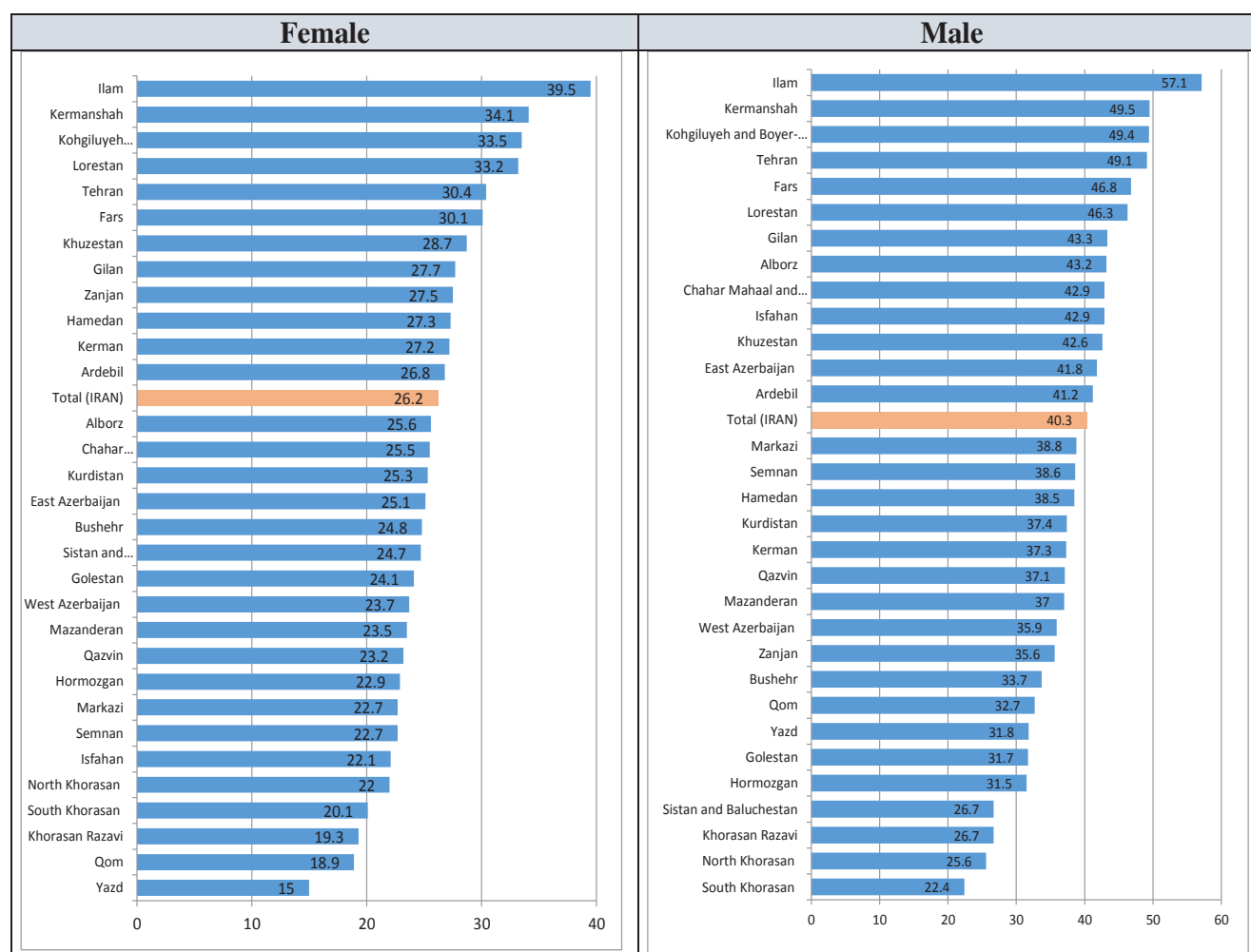
Despite the decline in ratio of unmarried youth of ages 15-24 in recent years, unmarried ratio for people aged 25-29 has been constantly increasing during the course of 1986-2011. As Figure 2.7 shows, number of never-married men and women aged 25-29 has constantly increased in the last thirty years (from 9.4% to 26.2% for women and from 18.5% to 40.5% for men). In other words, ratio of unmarried women of 25-29 years of age tripled, and that of men doubled.

Figure 2.7. Changes in Singlehood Proportions of 25-29 aged, 1986-2011

Source: Calculated based on the 1986-2011 censuses

Accordingly, in 2011, ratio of unmarried men of 25-29 years of age was 40% and that of unmarried women was 26%. In other words, two in five men and one in four women had never married before their 30th birthday. Ratio of unmarried men is considerably larger in urban areas compared to rural areas (43% to 33%), while unmarried women are slightly more prevalent in urban areas than rural areas (26.5% and 25%, respectively).

Figure 2.8. Singlehood Proportions of 25-29 aged by Province, 2011



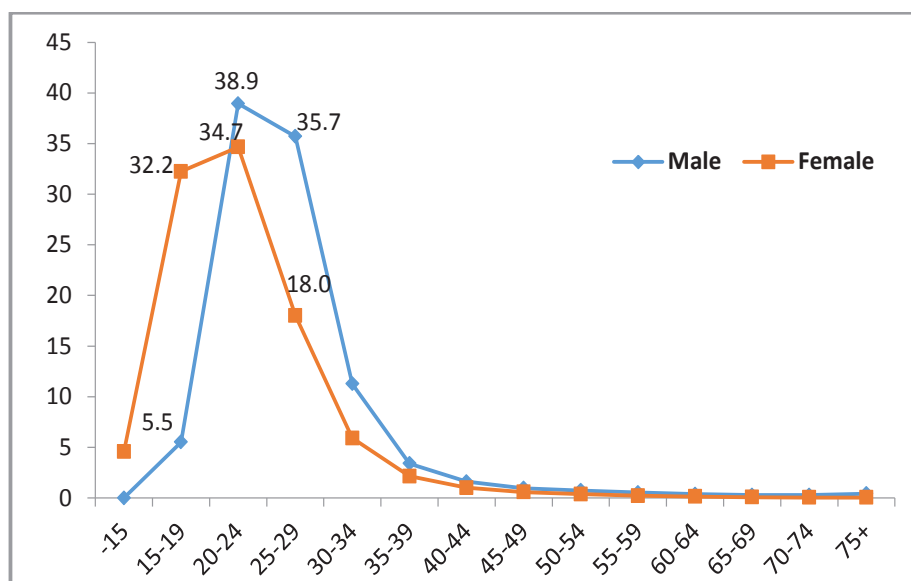
Source: Calculated based on the 2011 census.

There are remarkable differences between provinces in terms of youth singlehood proportions. For instance, the highest ratio of unmarried men is in Ilam province with 57% unmarried men, while the lowest Singlehood Proportions of men is 22.4% in South Khorasan. The highest ratio of unmarried women aged 25-29 is, once again, in Ilam province (39.5%) and the lowest ratio is in Yazd province (15%). As Figure 2.8 shows, the highest ratio of unmarried men and women ages 25-29 are in Ilam, Kermanshah and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad provinces. It should be noted that these provinces also suffer the highest levels of unemployment in the country. In contrast, men from South Khorasan, North Khorasan, and Khorasan Razavi and women from Yazd, Qom and Khorasan Razavi make up the lowest groups of unmarried. Ratios of unmarried men and women might reflect religious/traditional norms in a province. For example, unmarried men and women were fewer in Yazd and Qom. Families living in Yazd give much prominence to marriage and family (Abbasi-Shavazi and Askari Nodoushan, 2008; Abbasi-Shavazi, Askari Nodoushan and Thornton, 2012).

2.1.3.2. Rising Age at Marriage and Its Correlates

Marriage is the most important event in a young person's life. Figure 2.9 shows that 80% of registered marriages for men and 85% of those for women were in ages 15-29 years. In 2011, the most common age combination in registered marriages was between men of ages 25-29 and women of ages 20-24 (131627 out of 874792).

Figure 2.9. Distribution of registered marriage (%) by age and sex in Iran, 2011

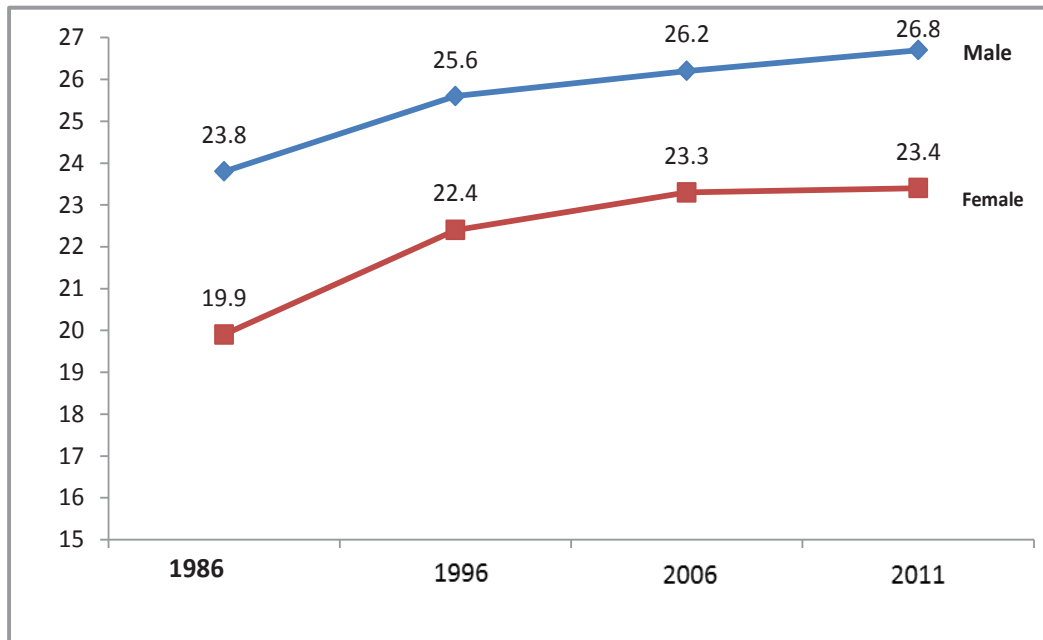


Source: Calculated Based on vital data, 2011

Age at first marriage is a key indicator for age at marriage. Calculating age at first marriage using Hajnal method shows increasing age at marriage, especially for women, in the last thirty years. Mean age at marriage for women increased from 20 to 23.4 and for men from 24 to about 27.

Mean age at marriage, for men (27.1 years) and women (23.7 years), is higher in urban areas than in rural areas (25.9 years for men and 23.2 years for women). The difference is more significant for men. The highest mean age at marriage for men was 29 years of age in Ilam province; followed by 28 years in Kermanshah, Kohkilouyeh and Boyerahmad, and Tehran. In contrast, on average, men of South Khorasan, North Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi and Sistan and Baluchistan provinces married earlier (by their 25th birthday). For women, the highest mean age at marriage was 26 in Ilam; followed by 25 in Kohkilouyeh and Boyerahmad, Kermanshah and Lorestan. In contrast, the lowest average age at marriage for women was 22 years of age in Yazd and Khorasan Razavi provinces.

Figure 2.10. Mean age at Marriage (SMAM), 1986-2011



Source: Calculated based on the 1986-2011 censuses

Changes in marriage and family structures can be explained, in structuralist theories, as systematically adapting to changes in the surrounding social system or, in other words, adapting to socioeconomic conditions. Modernization theory constitutes the main view toward structural change approach. While emphasising structural changes (like moving from traditional agricultural economy to industrial economy), the theory connects changes in marriage and the issues it entails to the structural changes caused by new social forces of industrialisation, urbanisation and universal education (Abbasi-Shavazi and Sadeghi, 2005:27-28). William Good (1963) introduces the notion of “global revolution” in family structures to describe the influences that modernization processes have on families and marriages. He argues that these processes influence marriage and its factors at various individual and social levels. On the other hand, ideational or cultural approaches highlight cultural changes in societies and the innovative nature of ideas and outlooks. In this approach, Caldwell (1982) emphasises widespread Western ideas and values; Lesthaeghe (1983) highlights changes in meaning systems and the spread of individual secularism in European countries (especially in Western Europe); Barbara Mensch et al. (2005) stress rapid changes in value systems of Asian societies; Casterline (2001) emphasises behavioural innovations, changes in ideas and social diffusion dynamics; and Thornton et al. (2001 & 2004) highlight developmental idealism.

Table 2.8. Mean age at Marriage by Provinces, 2011

Province	Total		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
East Azerbaijan	26.8	23.1	27.4	23.4	25.5	22.6
West Azerbaijan	26.1	23.2	26.4	23.2	25.6	23.3
Ardebil	26.7	23.5	26.9	23.2	26.4	24.1
Isfahan	27.2	23.2	27.4	23.4	26.3	22
Alborz	27.2	23.6	27.2	23.7	26.6	22.5
Ilam	28.9	26.4	29.0	26.2	28.8	26.9
Bushehr	26.0	23.4	26.0	23.4	26.0	23.3
Tehran	27.9	24.3	28.0	24.4	25.8	22.1
Chahar Mahaal and Bakhtiari	27.1	23.9	27.5	24.1	26.6	23.6
South Khorasan	24.7	22.7	25.1	22.5	24.2	23.0
Khorasan Razavi	25.0	21.9	25.5	22.2	23.6	21.0
North Khorasan	24.8	22.5	25.5	22.5	24.0	22.5
Khuzestan	27.1	24.1	27.4	24.2	26.4	24.0
Zanjan	26.1	23.6	26.8	23.7	24.9	23.5
Semnan	26.6	23.3	26.7	23.4	26.5	22.6
Sistan and Baluchestan	25.0	22.9	25.3	23.0	24.7	22.8
Fars	27.6	24.1	27.9	24.3	27	23.7
Qazvin	26.4	22.9	26.6	22.9	25.9	23.0
Qom	25.9	22.3	25.9	22.4	25.6	21.3
Kurdistan	26.5	23.7	26.6	23.6	26.1	23.9
Kerman	26.5	23.9	26.9	24.2	26	23.5
Kermanshah	28.1	25.1	28.0	24.9	28.1	25.6
Kohgiluyeh & Boyer-Ahmad	27.9	25.2	28.1	25.1	27.6	25.3
Golestan	25.6	23.3	26.5	23.5	24.7	23.1
Gilan	27.1	23.9	27.4	24.0	26.8	23.8
Lorestan	27.6	24.9	27.9	25	27.1	24.8
Mazandaran	26.4	23.0	27.0	23.6	25.6	22.3
Markazi	26.7	23.0	26.7	22.8	26.8	23.7
Hormozgan	26.0	23.2	26.2	23.2	25.7	23.2
Hamedan	26.7	23.5	27.3	23.9	25.9	23.1
Yazd	25.7	21.9	25.7	21.9	25.6	21.7
Total (IRAN)	26.8	23.5	27.1	23.7	25.9	23.2

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 census

The bivariate relationship between certain social variables and correlates, and marital behaviour of youth aged 15-29 was tested; the results of which can be found in Tables 3 and 4 of the Appendix. It can be concluded that “education” delays marriage and the higher the educational attainment, the lower the marriage ratio. Preparing the foundations of married life requires employment, which in turn requires lengthy periods of education and skill-building, hence the delay in marriages. Moreover,

development of education systems and increase in education levels lead to new views toward the meaning and the importance of marriage. The majority of these new ideas and views favour late marriage. In addition to level of education, being a student, in itself, has a strong negative effect on marriage and decreases marriage ratios. It delays marriage for both boys and girls, as students of both sexes lack economic and/or social requirements of married life.

Another crucial structural determinant of age at marriage is the socioeconomic situation of the young (income, employment, housing, etc.), which Dickson (1971) calls “feasibility”. In this context, the findings reveal “employment” as men's basic preparation for marriage. Marriage proportions are higher for employed men than unemployed men or students. As Ralley et al. (2004) argue, both theory and practice demonstrate that economic resources provide marriage requirements, incentives and motivations, specifically for men (ibid, 873). On the other hand, marriage proportions are lower for employed women. Employed women are usually more educated, which in turn results in marrying older. Similarly, changes in gender roles and widespread employment opportunities for women, especially in non-agriculture sectors, make them economically independent and, subsequently, reluctant to marry sooner. In addition, number of marriages at earlier ages decreases as “class level and status” increases, and people become more inclined to postpone marriage. Young boys and girls from rich family backgrounds have lower marriage ratios compared to middle- and lower-class families.

2.1.3.3. Youth Marriage Problem

In contemporary Iran, marriage is a social problem under the influence of structural changes to society and its values, on the one hand, and disorganised and disharmonious social subsystems, on the other hand. Sadeghi et al. (2007) argue how changes in ideas about and views toward age at marriage go hand in hand with disharmonious social subsystems and transitioning socioeconomic conditions to make marriage a social problem for Iranian youth. Their findings suggest different factors for marriage becoming a social problem of abnormal nature. Unemployment and lack of permanent job for boys are the most important factors. Other factors include marriage limitations, lack of freedom of choice in spouse selection for girls, rigorous unrealistic expectations of marriage among young people and their parents, increasing demand for higher education, problems related to housing and dowries, high marriage costs that are becoming a sign of social status, interfering parents, and lack of trust in or fear of marriage.

Economic hardships, together with inflation, recession, reduced production rates, unemployment, consumerism and rising expectations, influence age at marriage and create economic obstacles for young marrying couples. Marriage might be called a social construct, for its roots in performance of institutional structures (specifically the occupation structure), social structures (modernization processes, changes in social roles, consumerism and materialist values and gender inequalities), cultural structures (racial and cultural traditions), and demographic conditions (imbalanced sex ratio of age at marriage). As such, marriage now involves three kinds of limitations: accessibility, possibility and desirability. Increasing urbanisation and modern education and professions have changed social ideas and roles, at times making cultural actions and norms counterproductive to marriage. As marriage becomes less possible and desirable, youth are beginning to consider alternatives for marriage. Therefore, marriage and raising a family have lost their status as milestones of moving from childhood and youth to adulthood. Most people now consider economic independence, employment, graduation and supporting of a family as conditions for adulthood.

Figure 2.11. Factors Leading to the Marriage Problem of Iranian Youth

Finding the right spouse is another marriage challenge in Iranian society; a result of unbalanced sex ratio among the marrying age people or, in other words, sex imbalance in marriage opportunities. As marriages involving partners of bigger age difference are on the rise (men usually 4 years older), marriage between two groups with unequal proportion of members results in proportions of unmarried group who are unable to marry. Iranian girls born in 1976-86 period face the most considerable marriage limitation. The limitation is the most severe for women having higher-education and female residents of rural areas. The older the women get (particularly the highly educated), the more limited their chances of marriage (Doroudi Ahi, 2002). It is expected, however, to experience marriage squeeze for boys, albeit to a lesser degree, for a few years in 2010s.

Thus, the problem of marriage for young Iranians can be considered from various angles, including structural and institutional changes at levels of family and society; requirements and outcomes of modernisation such as demographic developments, urbanisation, modern education, and modern professions; changes in marriage-related ideas and views; and, at the same time, attempts to preserve certain ethnic and cultural traditions and heritage in the face of emerging modern values.

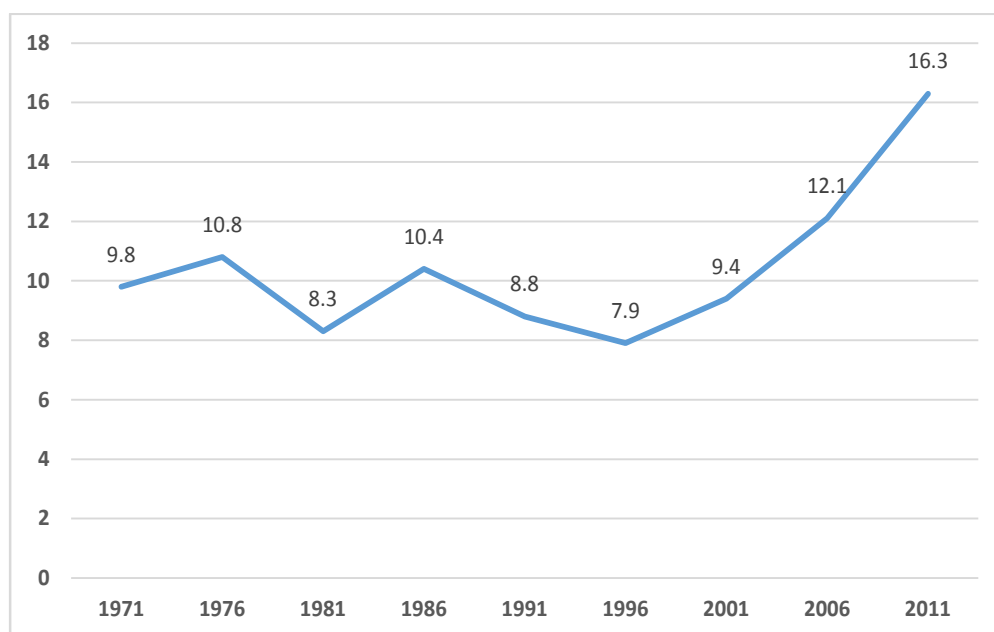
2.1.3.4. Divorce and its trends in Iran

Divorce has been on the rise in the last hundred years. The trend was rapidly increasing in many industrial Western countries during the 1960s; a component of widespread changes in marriage and reproduction patterns called “the second demographic transition”. However, growth of divorce rates was not confined to the West. Yet, divorce rates differ considerably in different societies and depend on cultural and historical backgrounds unique to each society.

Iranian society has always attached religious and social importance and praise to strong and resilient

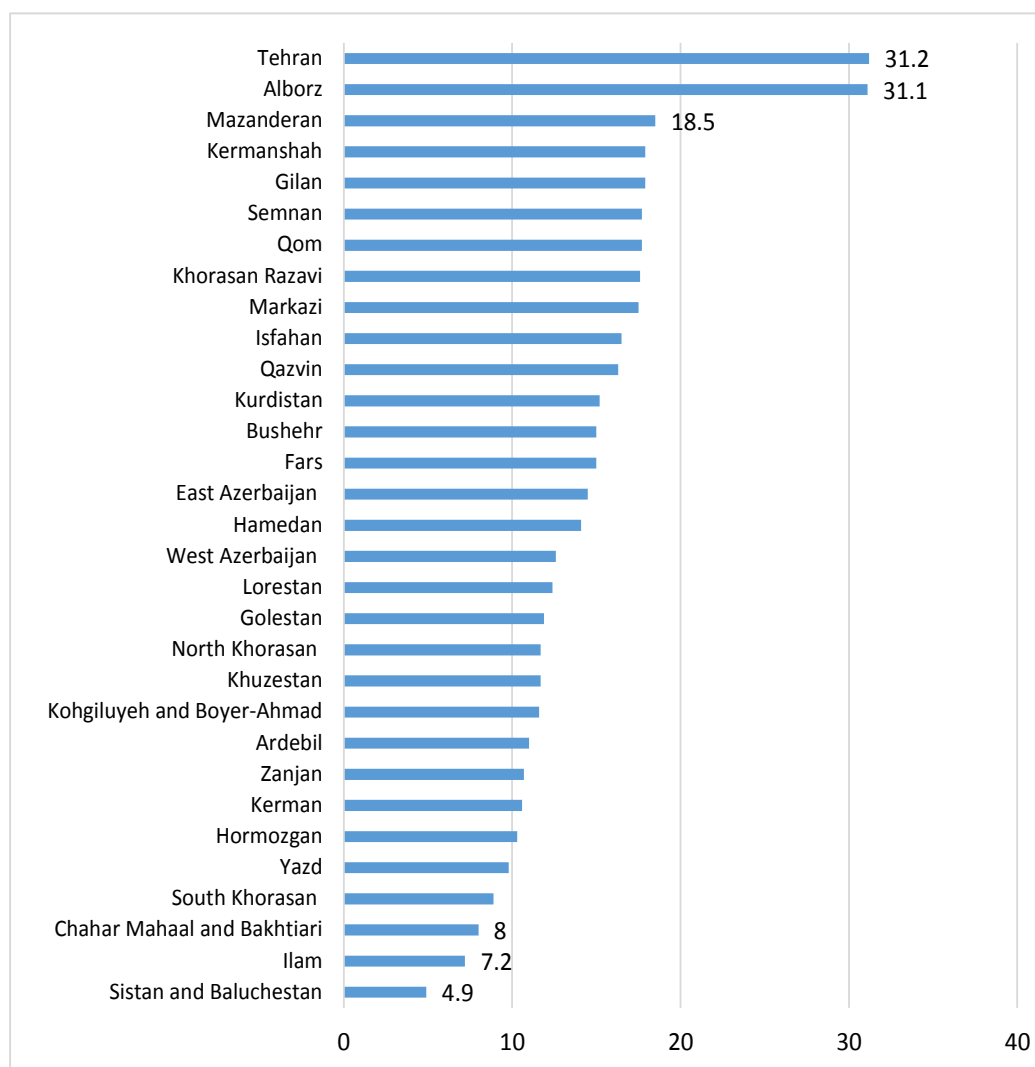
families. Iranian culture could not favour any form of instability within “the warm circle of family”. Although these long-standing and deeply-rooted beliefs have succeeded in hindering divorce rates in Iran compared to Western averages, the number of divorce cases have been constantly increasing in recent years; making it another social challenge facing young Iranians (Figure 2.12). The divorce/marriage ratio reflects increasing divorces since 1996 in particular. In 2011, there was one registered divorce for every six registered marriages (874,792 marriages and 142,841 divorces). Thus, for every 100 marriages there were 16.3 divorces.

Figure 2.12. Divorce to Marriage Ratio in Iran (per 100 marriages), 1971-2011



Source: Calculated based on vital registration data

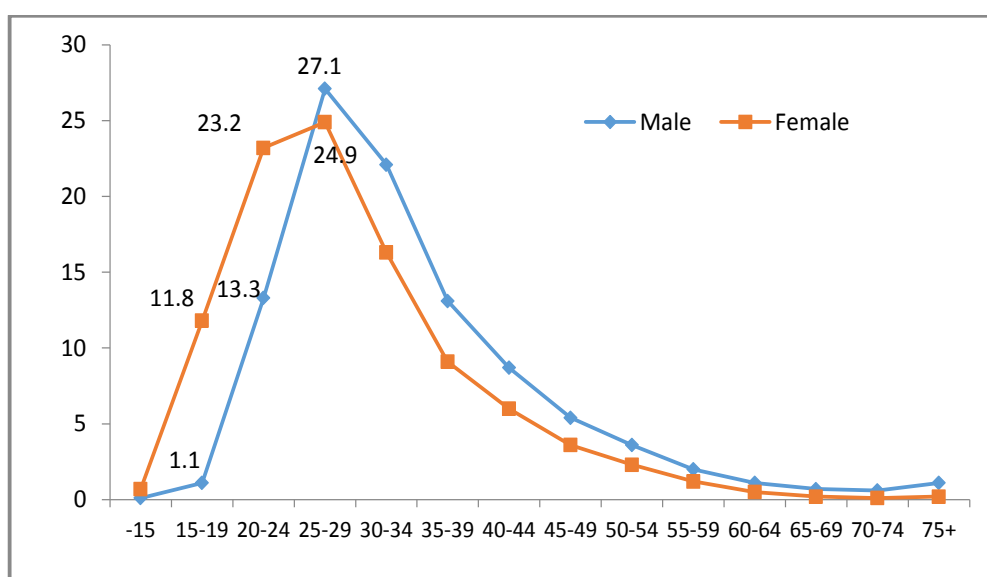
Divorce is more prevalent in urban areas, almost twice that of rural areas. Recent surveys show one divorce for every three marriages (31.2) in Tehran province in 2011. Other provinces with high divorce rates were Alborz (31.1), Mazandaran (18.5) and Kermanshah (17.9). On the other end of the spectrum were Sistan and Baluchistan (4.9), Ilam (7.2), Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari (8.0), South Khorasan (8.9) and Yazd (9.8).

Figure 2.13. Divorce/Marriage Ratio in Iranian Provinces (per 100 marriages), 2011

Source: Calculated based on vital registration data 2011

A review of vital registration data from recent years reveals that the majority of divorces are in 15-29 years age range. In 2011, for example, 142,841 cases of divorce were registered, in which two fifths of men (42%) and three fifths of women (60%) were 15-29 years of age.

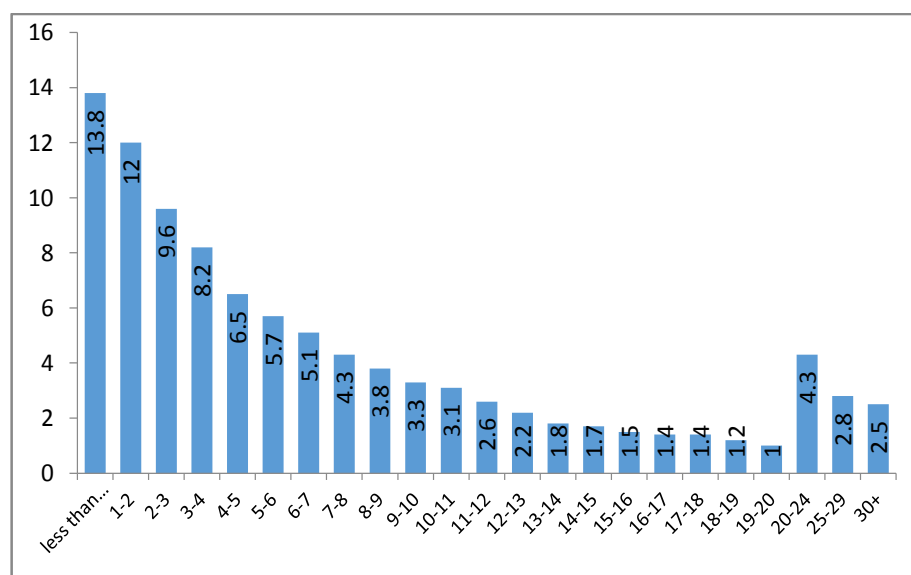
Figure 2.14. The Age Distribution of Registered Divorce, 2011



Source: Calculated based on vital registration data 2011

Additionally, according to vital registration data for 2011, close to 15% of all divorces occurred during the first year of marriage, 13% during the second year, 10% during the third year, 8% during the fourth year, and 7% during the fifth year. Thus, more than half of all divorces happen during the first five years of marriage and often when partners are young.

Figure 2.15. Marriage Stability: the Duration from Marriage to Divorce, 2011

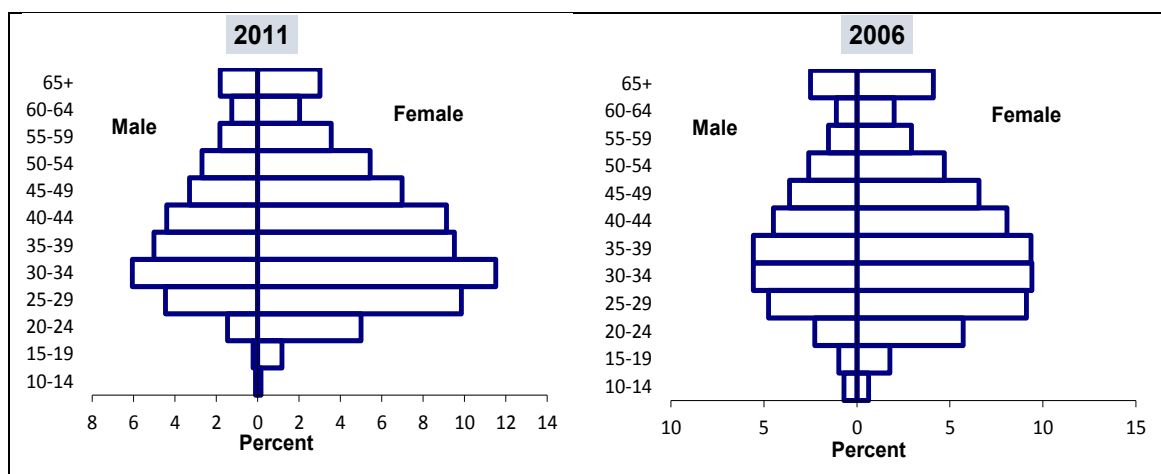


Source: Calculated based on vital registration data 2011

In the 2006 census, divorced singles numbered 392,075. Women comprised 64.3% of the figure and men comprised 35.6%. In other words, sex ratio of the divorced was 55.4. As Figure 2.16 shows, number of divorced women is higher than that of men across all age ranges. The most remarkable difference exists in 20-24 years age range. In 2011 census, number of divorced individuals saw a 68%

increase compared to 2006 and reached 656,852; out which 67.4% were women and 32.6% men. Structural analysis of the divorced in recent censuses shows that one fourth of divorced individuals were young.

Figure 2.16. Age Structure of the Divorced Population, 2006 and 2011



Source: Calculated based on the 2006 and 2011 censuses

Although divorce rates are relatively low in Iran, the increasing trend and its high concentration in young ages deserve due attention. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the Iranian society still treasures raising a family and its stability. Therefore, while considering the increasing divorce rates and its causes and consequences, family-oriented values among youth and provision and facilitation of marriage and sustainable family life should be recognized and appreciated. Such efforts require scientific scrutiny of divorce causes and patterns in Iran and subsequent use of its findings in design and implementation of accurate and realistic plans and policies. Any comparison between Iran and Western countries that leads to exaggerated claims about divorce and growing number of unmarried people will not be only inappropriate but also may lead to further diffusion of these issues.

2.2. Reproductive Health and Health of Youth

Health and reproductive health during youth are critical issues, as they are key aspects of sustainable development. Reproductive health, as defined by International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, is total physical, mental and social welfare related to reproductive behaviour and processes. Sexual and reproductive health, as part of the human rights, rose to prominence after ICPD in Cairo, 1994. It was developed as part of the Millennium Development Goals under reproductive health heading. One of the targets and target groups for ICPD and Millennium Development Goals are the youth; because they are exposed to several related challenges and problems such as early pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and diseases, and HIV/AIDS. The present section, first, provides an overview of reproductive patterns and behaviour of youth, family planning and reproductive health, and subsequently discusses health situation of youth and their mortality rate and high-risk behaviour.

2.2.1. Reproductive Behaviour of Youth

Changes in population policies in recent years have been based on the assumption of rapid decline in fertility rates. As fertility often occurs during youth, pronatalist policies on fertility are mainly focused on young people. In order to prevent further decline on fertility or to compensate for decreased fertility, these policies tend to provide incentives to facilitate marriage and childbearing for young couples and individuals. Given the significant role of fertility of young people on population dynamics of the country, studies regarding fertility levels and patterns of 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29 age ranges deserve due attention. Present section attempts to answer the following four questions: What were the levels and trends of fertility in the country in recent decades? What is the share of fertility in the age group 15-29 as of total fertility rate? How has this share changed over the last three decades? Finally, what is the future outlook for the fertility of youth in Iran?

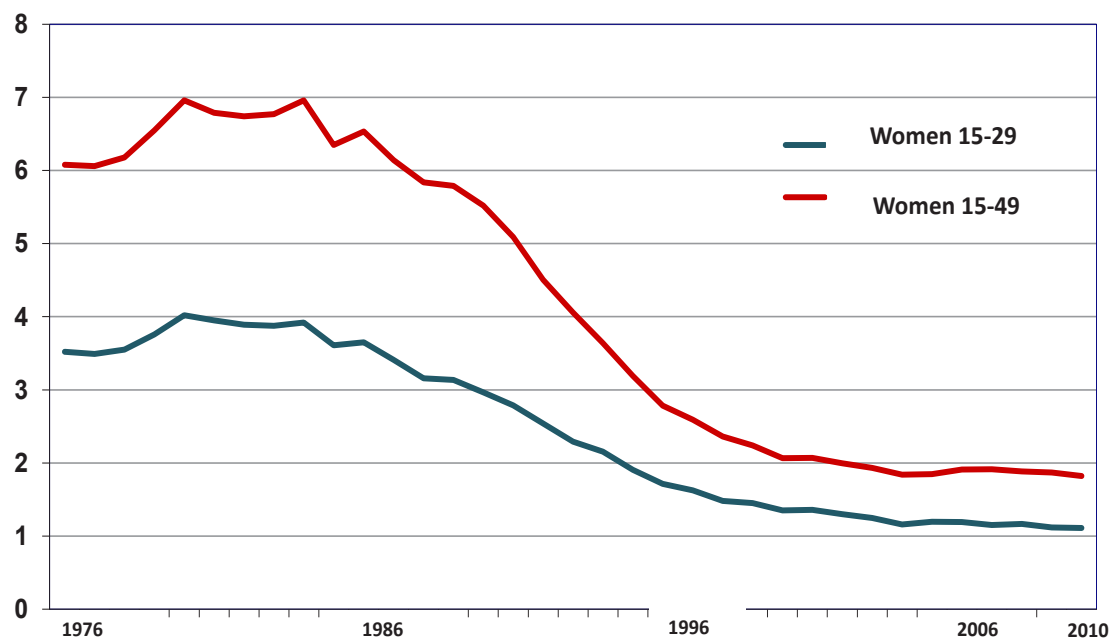
To answer these questions, fertility levels, patterns and trends with emphasis on youth fertility will be examined, then, discussions follow with fertility trends in urban and rural areas and at province levels, followed by the analysis of future trends of fertility in Iran.

2.2.1.1. Fertility Trends in Iran

Study of fertility trends during 1976-2011 reflects significant changes in recent decades. Fertility decline across Iran and in all its provinces commenced in mid-1980s, and currently the total fertility in Iran and most provinces reached below-replacement level. Despite the rapid decline in fertility in 1990s, the decline since mid-1990s (in the last five years in particular) was slow as compared to the 1985-1995 period. According to the 2011 Census, during the five years period of 2006-2011, total fertility rate was 1.7 children per woman in urban areas and 2.3 per woman in rural areas; resulting in 1.8 children per woman at the national level. Total fertility rate of urban and rural areas in 2011 was 1.7 and 2.2 respectively (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2013).

Figure 2.17 provides a comparison between total fertility rate and fertility rate of young women aged 15-29. The significant share of the youth in total fertility is clearly shown. For example, total fertility in 1981-1985 was about 6 children, while youth fertility (women aged 15-29) was close to 4 children. The 1.8 children of total fertility in recent years is comprised of a little more than one child born to young mothers.

Figure 2.17. Trends of Youth Fertility (women aged 15-29) and Total Fertility (Women aged 15-49) in Iran, 1976-2010

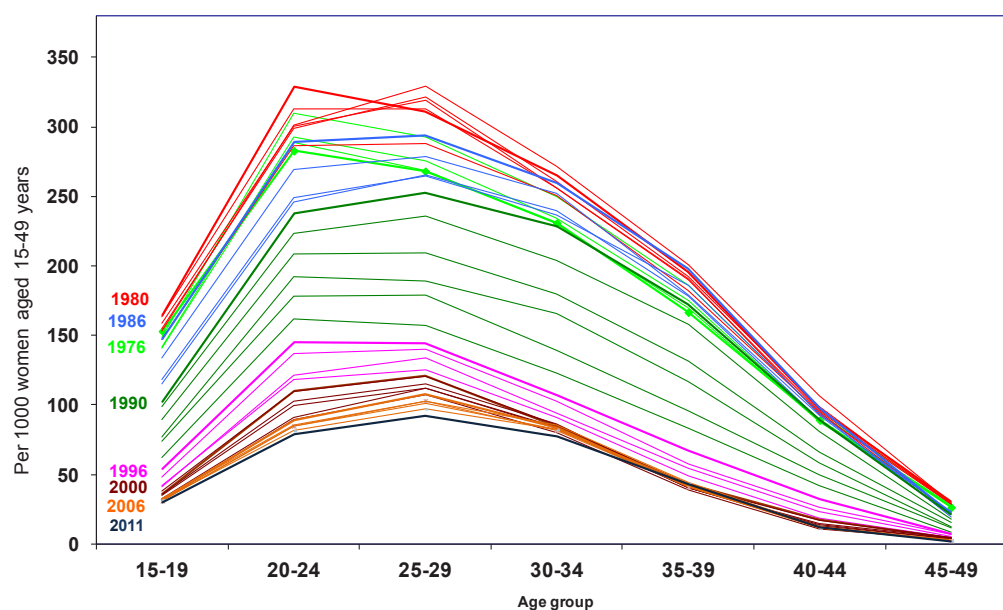


Source: Estimated based on Iranian Censuses, 1986, 1996, 2006, and 2011.

2.2.1.2. Age Patterns of Fertility and Share of the Youth Fertility

Figure 2.18 shows age-specific fertility rates for the period 1976-2011. As can be seen, there has been a phenomenal decline in age-specific fertility across all age groups. Although young age groups have the highest fertility rate during the period of the study, fertility levels for all age groups have reached a very low level and current trend is characterised by late childbearing.

Figure 2.18. Age-Specific Fertility Rates in Iran, 1976-2011



Age-specific fertility rate in 20-24 age group experienced the most remarkable declines during 1992-1996 and 1997-2001 periods. However, it was much slower during 2001-2006 and 2007-2011 periods. In recent years, age specific fertility rates of 25-29 age group was more than that of those aged 20-24. Given the importance of young youth fertility in total fertility rate, the present section focuses on fertility rates in age groups 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29. Table 2.9 shows total fertility rates of youth in each of these age groups.

Table 2.9. Age Specific fertility Rates of women aged 15-29 (per 1000), Iran, 1976-2011

Year	Total			Urban Areas			Rural Areas			Data Source (Census)
	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29	
1976	153.1	282.8	268.1	129.6	240.7	226.0	179.1	321.4	324.1	1986
1981	163.6	312.9	313.2	149.1	276.0	268.2	185.5	348.2	353.2	1986
1986	142.6	277.2	279.5	133.1	254.0	249.2	161.4	327.1	344.1	1996
1991	101.5	226.1	224.9	85.6	184.6	175.0	107.1	255.0	277.3	1996
1996	58.1	148.3	147.3	52.0	138.2	131.5	66.1	163.9	173.8	2006
2001	38.7	110.9	121.8	32.7	103.8	118.0	47.3	122.4	130.2	2006
2006	31.8	89.0	107.9	28.4	83.4	103.4	46.0	116.0	129.2	2011
2011	31.6	81.9	97.5	27.4	77.1	94.1	45.8	102.5	114.0	2011

Age specific fertility rate increased during the late 1970s and reached its peak in 1981 but started to fall again since mid-1980s reaching its lowest level in 2011. For example, age specific fertility rate for 20-24 age group was 313 children per 1000 women in 1981; which has fell to nearly 82 children per 1000 women by 2011. Similarly, fertility for the 25-29 age group was 313 children per 1000 women but this figure has declined to 97 children per 100 women in recent years.

Table 2.10 shows shares of different age groups in the total fertility rate during 1976 and 2011. As can be seen, share of fertility for age groups 15-19, 40-44 and 45-49 has decreased and reproduction has concentrated increasingly in young age groups (20-29 and 30-34) in recent years. Shares of 20-24 and 25-29 age groups remained almost equal until 1996, when share of 25-29 began to increase relatively followed by rise of fertility rate for age group 30-34. This delayed childbearing from 20-24 years of age to 25-29 and 30-34 periods is due to the postponement of marriage and longer durations between marriage and the first birth and, also, between the first and the second childbirths (Hosseini-Chavoshi, McDonald and Abbasi-Shavazi, 2013).

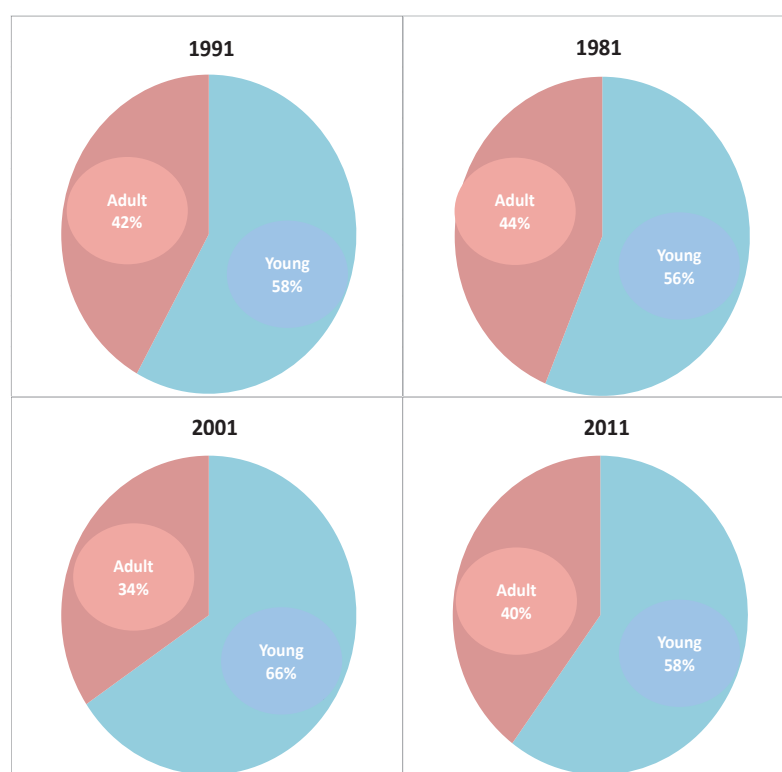
Table 2.10 Total Fertility Rate and its Percentage Distribution based on Mother's Age, Iran, 1976-2011

Year	Total fertility Rate	Percentage Distribution in All Urban and Rural Areas								Data Source (Census)
		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	Total	
1976	6.08	12.6	23.2	22.0	19.0	13.7	7.3	2.2	100.00	1986
1981	6.79	12.0	23.0	23.0	18.9	14.1	6.8	2.1	100.00	1986
1986	6.23	11.4	22.2	22.4	19.6	14.7	7.7	1.9	100.00	1996
1991	4.90	10.3	23.0	22.9	19.5	14.3	7.6	2.2	100.00	1996
1996	2.76	10.5	26.8	26.7	19.0	10.7	4.9	1.4	100.00	2006
2001	2.07	9.4	26.8	29.4	20.2	9.4	3.8	1.0	100.00	2006
2006	1.84	8.7	24.2	29.4	22.6	11.2	3.3	0.7	100.00	2011
2011	1.80	9.0	23.4	27.8	23.3	12.4	3.4	0.6	100.00	2011

Figure 2.19 compares shares of youth fertility (age 15-29) and adult fertility (age 30-49) in total fertility of Iran in 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. Share of youth fertility in 1981 and 1991 was 55-58 percent; which reached 66 percent in 2001 and, then, decreased to around 60 percent in 2011. The main reason for this pattern is relative decrease in fertility by the aged 15-29 and relative increase in fertility by the 30-34 age group.

Analysis of parity progression ratios based on the Iran Demographic and Health Survey data from 2000 reflects a remarkable decline in number of women who gave birth to their fourth or more child before reaching age 30 years. In 1981, only 53% of women had three children or less before their 30th birthday; while 65% of women had four, five or even six children before reaching 30. In 2000, close to 75% of women had three children or less before reaching 30 years of age; while only 25% of women had four children or more. In other words, childbearing is increasingly being concentrated in younger age groups and most women give birth to two children or less.

Figure 2.19. Proportion of Fertility of Young Women (15-29 years of age) and Adult Women (30-49) from Total fertility Rate, 1981-2011



2.2.1.3. Fertility in Urban and Rural Areas

Fertility levels have always been higher in rural areas. Yet, the decreasing trend in recent decades has been the same in rural and urban areas. Although rural areas still have higher fertility levels than urban areas, the difference is currently at its minimum and a remarkable convergence exists between urban and rural fertility behaviour. As 70% of Iranian population lives in urban areas, fertility levels of urban areas have a greater influence on the total fertility rate of the country. The fertility decline in rural areas might be primarily a result of “Health Houses”, as they facilitate access to health services and create changes in health-seeking behaviours of rural people. Of course, improved access to literacy, education

and mass media are undeniable sources of the convergence in rural and urban reproductive behaviour, as they changed the fertility ideals and behaviour of couples and young people.

Figure 2.20. Young and Adult fertility Rates in Urban, Rural and National Levels, 1976-2011

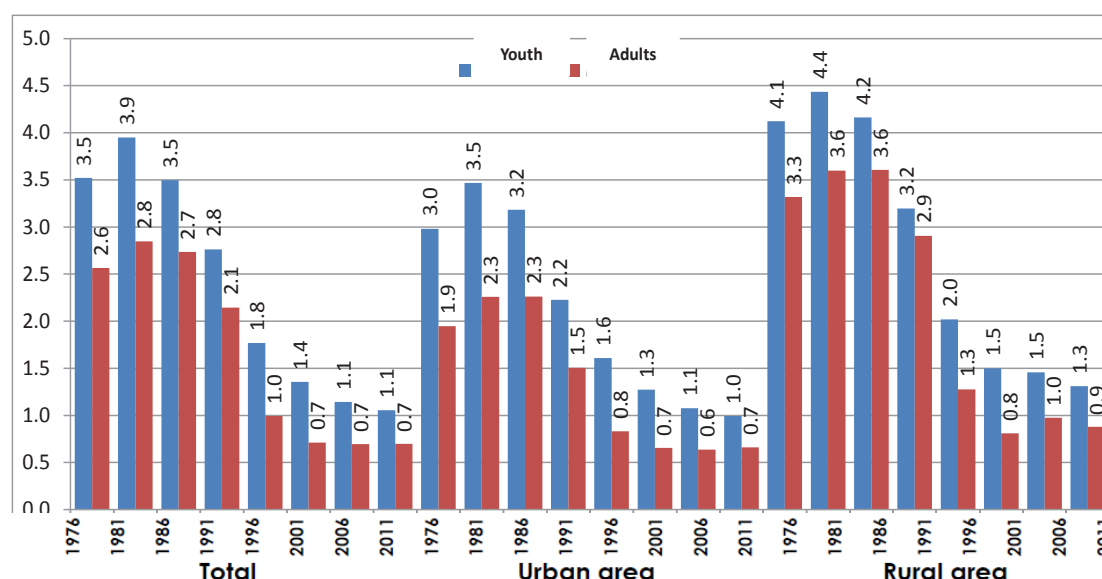


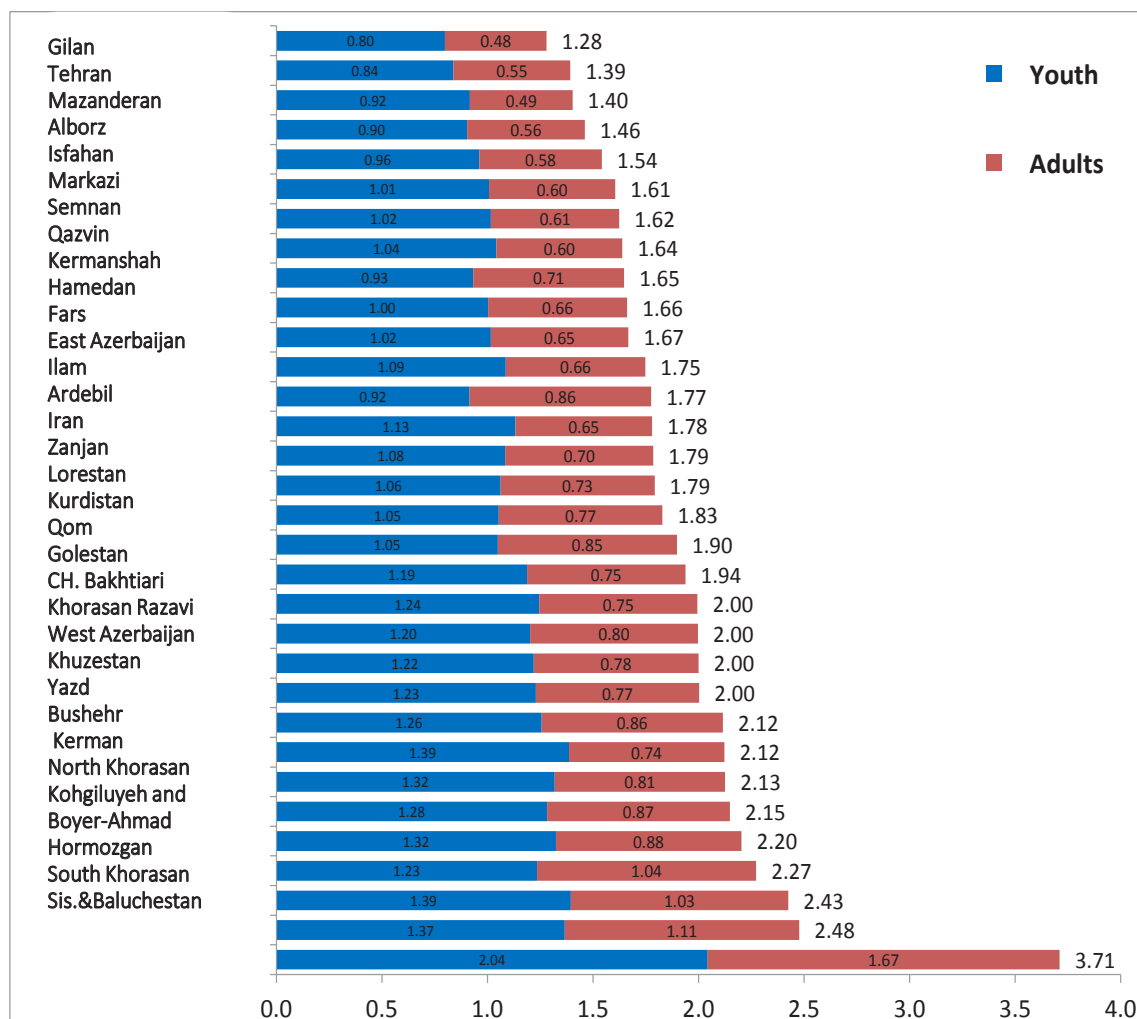
Figure 2.20 shows shares of young and adult fertility at the national level and urban and rural areas. In 1976, for example, fertility level of young women (15-29 years of age) was 3.5 children at the country level and that of adult women (30-49 years of age) was 2.6. The same figures for young rural women was 4.1 children, for adult rural women 3.3 children, for young urban women 3 children, and for adult urban women 1.9 children. In 2011, the difference between urban and rural areas was much smaller: out of TFR of 1.7 for urban areas, young women had 1.0 child and adult women had only 0.7 child; while young women had 1.3 children and adult women had 0.9 child out of 2.2 in rural areas.

2.2.1.4. Provincial Patterns of Fertility

A comparison of fertility in different provinces during five years period 2007-2011 showed that 22 out of 31 provinces experienced fertility levels below replacement level. In the course of this five-year period, the lowest fertility levels were in Gilan (1.3), Mazandaran and Tehran (1.4) and the highest level was in Sistan and Baluchistan (around 3.7). Only nine provinces had above replacement level fertility during this five year period (Figure 2.12). However, the provinces that experienced fertility levels above replacement level, except for Sistan and Baluchistan, had total fertility rate of 2.5 children or less.

The results can also be used to compare shares of youth (15-29 years of age) and adults (30-49 years of age) in fertility in each province. Similar to the national pattern, share of fertility for young women is higher than adult women at the province level.

**Figure 2.21. Distribution of Total fertility Rate by Youth (age 15-29) and Adult (age 30-49)
Women – Estimated for 2007-2011**



2.2.1.5. Explanations of Fertility Decline in Iran

Decline in fertility since mid-1980s reflects a fundamental change in reproductive behaviour of individuals. It shows that the ideal family size for couples is now much smaller than the first few years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The fall in infant and child mortality has reduced the demand for more children. Another main reason for such a fundamental change in fertility preferences has been the increasing number of girls studying at high schools and universities, and rapid growth in literacy among women. This influences ideas and opinions of the couples regarding marriage and childbearing from various angles. Improved girls' educational level means longer duration of education and, as a result, later marriage. Higher age at marriage, in turn, compresses childbearing period to a considerable extent. On the other hand, higher educational levels and easier access to education for girls lead to higher general awareness which affects higher gender equity within the family. Women are now involved more in decision making within the family, especially those related to marriage and mate selection.

Recent studies show that not only reproductive norms and ideal family size have changed for the

young, but ideals of previous generations have also moved closer to ideals of younger generations. Abbasi-Shavazi, Hosseini-Chavoshi and McDonald (2004) compare the fertility preferences and ideals of two age groups – 20-29 and 40-49 – in West Azarbaijan, Yazd, Gilan and Sistan and Baluchestan. They conclude that the ideal family sizes are similar for both groups. Majority of the respondents chose “two children” as the ideal number of children to have. This viewpoint remained constant after controlling for such characteristics as place of residence (rural/urban), education and religion. It can be concluded that although older traditions encouraged high fertility and young people had to follow ideal family size of the older generation and have higher fertility, nowadays, the older generations recognise the experience of the young and, voluntarily or involuntarily, support the small ideal family size and lower childbearing of the younger generation. Younger generations now reside in cities and enjoy access to education and health services and facilities all of which favours fewer children. Low infant and child mortality and high life expectancy ensures higher survival for children and this in turn supports lower fertility. In addition, the parents' generation recognise the new economic, cultural and health situations that their children live in, and thus, they support and assist their children in having fewer children and, as a result, low fertility is attained without much resistance.

It should be added that the proximate determinants of fertility in 1980s and 1990s changed in 2000s. When fertility levels are high, factors like access to family planning services, decreased child mortality, and increased education play a remarkable role in decreasing fertility. However, when fertility levels are low and especially when actual fertility is below replacement level and ideal family size for couples is close to the replacement level, access to contraception plays little role in increasing/decreasing fertility levels. In such circumstances, age at marriage (or delayed marriage) and the time between first and second children plays a much more significant role in decreasing fertility. Therefore, population policies should note that denying family planning services does not necessarily lead to higher fertility levels.

2.2.1.6. Future of Fertility

As fertility levels and particularly fertility levels specific to youth have fallen to the minimum, fertility levels will decline at a slower pace in the future. Age pattern of fertility has been moving from early childbearing to late childbearing in recent years. The late childbearing preference for women might slightly add to the fertility levels of 30-34 and 35-39 age groups. Although fertility levels in Iran are close to the possible minimum, factors such as increasing expenses for living and childbearing, and youth unemployment will continue to negatively influence fertility rates, and the gradual decline in fertility might continue in future.

Undoubtedly, recent demographic trends call for changes in population policies to prevent any more decline in fertility and, if possible, to increase it to replacement level. However, doubts still remain as to whether incentives can stop the declining fertility rate and reverse the trend to the replacement level.

Current conditions are much different to those of the preceding decades. Current low fertility level is the result of social and economic factors such as young population, economic recession, higher educational levels, increasing demand and competition for employment, higher individual aspirations and expectations, and calls for job security and economic stability. Now that new population policies are introduced to the agenda of Islamic Parliament (Majlis) and they will soon be submitted to the administration for implementation, the main factors for low fertility levels must be identified to provide the basis for the incentives that will be integrated into related laws and regulations so that the policies have correct and feasible targets.

Recent fertility trends and lessons learned from other countries provide ample evidence that pronatalist policies are not effective during short-term periods, changing the couples' fertility preferences requires

time, investment and new structures. Therefore, attainment of replacement level fertility and objectives of population policies would not be attained without a deep understanding of fertility ideals, aspirations and expectations of couples and identifying the primary causes of their fertility preferences, and meeting economic needs, occupation demands and related facilities of the young people.

2.2.2. Family Planning and Reproductive Health

One of the prime targets and target groups of the ICPD and the Millennium Development Goals are young people as they are exposed to several challenges and problems in relation to sexual and reproductive health, including early pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and diseases, and HIV/AIDS. These risk factors comprise 33.4% of DALYs for young women and 9.5% of DALYs for young men (Mahmoudian and Sadeghi, 2007).

As age at marriage has increased and a considerable percentage of youth remain unmarried until their 20s, they are always vulnerable to various dangers like STIs. Additionally, young married couples have their most reproductive years in the course of their 20-29 years of age. Therefore, health programs and reproductive health services should consider both single and married young people. A study of reproductive health training needs among youth before and after marriage shows that the most crucial training before marriage is “sexual relationship health” and after marriage it is “the ideal physical, mental and social conditions for women and men to begin childbearing” (Pourmarzi et al., 2013).

Regarding family planning and contraceptives, studies demonstrate a direct relationship between age of women and their decision whether to use contraceptives and type of contraceptive method to use. Table 2.11 compares percentages of young (age 15-29) and adult (age 30-49) women who use contraceptives. As expected, the lowest percentage of contraceptive use is in young age groups (15-29 years of age), 45% of whom use a contraceptive method. The percentage in rural areas (44.3%) is slightly lower than in urban areas (45.5%). Contraceptive usage pattern for young women changes in time and inclines toward more reliable methods during their 20s. For example, the 25-29 age group is the largest user group for the IUD, injectable and/or the pill. A considerable share of urban women, however, use a traditional contraceptive method (rhythm method mostly). Overall, close to 69% of married women aged 15-29 in Iran were using a contraceptive method at the time of the 2010 national survey. One percent used permanent tubectomy, 20.5% used a traditional method, and the rest used temporary modern methods including the IUD (8.9%), injectable (4.4%), the pill (16.6%) or condoms (17.4%). So, young women almost universally use a contraceptive method to space and delay reproduction; while a quarter of adult women of 30-49 age use tubal ligation to stop reproduction permanently.

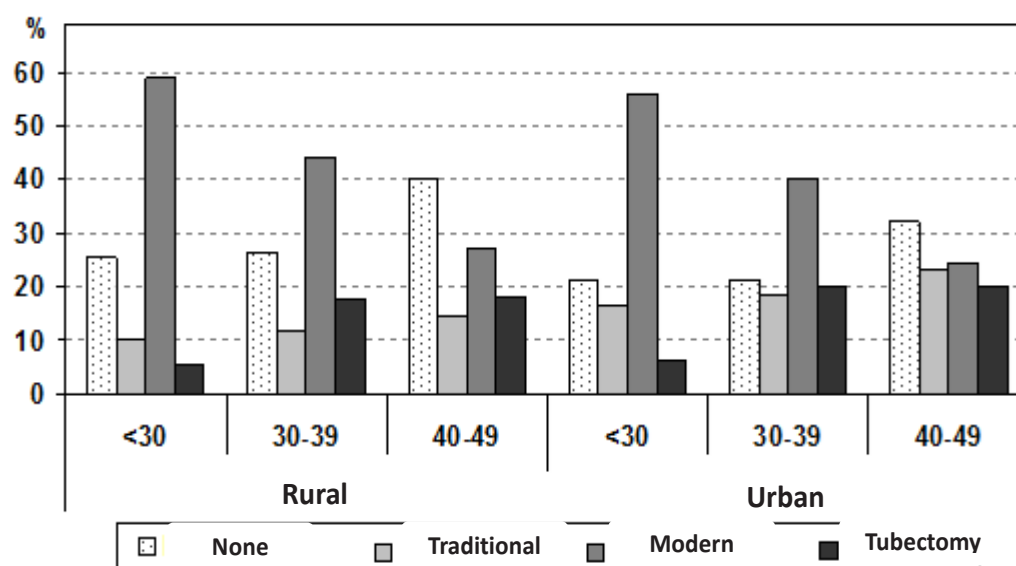
Table 2.11. Percentage of Contraceptive Use for Married Women 15-49 by Residence, Age Group and the Method Used– Multiple Health and Demographic Indicators in I.R.I., 2010

Area Age Group	All	Tubectomy	Vasectomy	IUD	Injectable	Pill	Condoms	Traditional	Other
Rural									
15-19	44.3	0.0	0.0	3.1	2.7	15.5	10.2	12.4	0.4
20-24	63.6	0.2	0.0	8.7	7.7	20.4	12.3	14.3	0.0
25-29	73.9	1.1	0.6	12.4	8.2	26.2	11.6	13.8	0.2
Youth (15-29)	65.0	0.5	0.3	9.4	7.1	22.2	11.6	13.8	0.1
Adult (30-49)	80.1	27.5	2.1	6.3	6.1	18.8	6.6	12.7	0.1
Urban									
15-19	45.5	0.2	0.0	3.7	1.5	8.3	10.8	20.9	0.2
20-24	67.4	0.1	0.2	8.2	3.0	13.1	20.0	22.8	0.0
25-29	78.6	0.8	1.0	10.0	3.5	15.7	22.4	25.2	0.0
Youth (15-29)	70.7	0.4	0.6	8.6	3.1	13.9	20.2	23.9	0.1
Adult (30-49)	83.8	21.2	5.2	8.1	1.7	12.0	12.5	23.0	0.2
Total									
15-19	45.0	0.1	0.0	3.4	2.0	11.4	10.5	17.3	0.3
20-24	66.2	0.1	0.2	8.4	4.6	15.5	17.5	20.0	0.0
25-29	77.1	0.8	0.9	10.7	4.9	18.9	19.1	21.8	0.1
Youth (15-29)	68.9	0.5	0.5	8.9	4.4	16.6	17.4	20.5	0.1
Adult (30-49)	82.7	22.9	4.3	7.6	2.9	13.9	10.9	20.1	0.1

Source: Calculated by Meimanat Hosseini-Chavoshi.

Multi-variable analysis shows that age plays a determining role in the method of birth control chosen for use. As Figure 2.22 illustrates, prevalence of a modern temporary contraceptive (such as the IUD, injectable, pill or condoms) during youth and before 30 years of age is higher; and using no contraceptive is much more prevalent among adult women, rather than younger women. Similarly, the lower prevalence of using traditional or permanent methods among young women indicates that the majority of Iranian women before age 30 use contraceptives for spacing and regulating births.

Figure 2.22. Estimated Probability (%) of Birth Control Methods among Married Iranian Women Age 15-49 by Residence – Iran Low Fertility Survey, 2005



Source: Hosseini-Chavoshi et al., 2007

Postponing childbearing after marriage in order to delay the first child might reflect a mutual decision by a couple to strengthen marital relationship and to ensure better economic conditions and welfare for the newlywed couple. As Table 2.12 shows, younger women are more inclined to prevent their first childbirth; therefore, it is crucial to provide appropriate, timely family planning consultation services for young couples.

Table 2.12. Birth Control Method Used Before First Child- Iran Low Fertility Survey, 2005

Age Group	IUD	Pill or Injectable	Condoms	Traditional	Total
Less than 20	0.7	17.9	11.9	69.5	100.0
20-24	0.0	20.0	14.2	65.8	100.0
25-29	0.0	28.7	0.7	70.5	100.0
30 or more	0.0	11.5	30.2	58.3	100.0

Source: Hosseini-Chavoshi, 2007

Unintended pregnancies are also associated with the quality and ease of access to family planning services, and awareness and reproductive behaviour of couples. Table 2.13 shows abortions or miscarriages per 1000 women by intended and unintended pregnancies in Gilan, Isfahan and Yazd provinces and in Tehran city in 2005. According to the table, abortions or miscarriages after unintended pregnancies are much more prevalent than those after intended pregnancies. In particular, such occurrences increase with mother's age. For instance, abortions for ages below 25 years of age were

115 per 1000 unintended pregnancies, and 181 for 25-29 age group while it reaches 263 per 1000 cases in adult age groups. There is a rather sharp increase in abortions after unintended pregnancies. Increasing number of abortions after unintended pregnancies caused by contraceptive failure indicates a firm decision on the part of women to limit and/or postpone reproduction.

Table 2.13. Abortions in Youth and Adulthood (per 1000 un/intended pregnancies), Iran, 2005

Age Group	Unintended Pregnancy after Failed Contraception			Intended and Planned Pregnancy		
	Spontaneous Abortion	Induced Abortion	Total	Spontaneous Abortion	Induced Abortion	Total
Less than 25	73	42	115	51	5	56
25-29	99	82	181	72	2	74
30 or more	96	167	263	65	4	69

Source: Hosseini-Chavoshi, 2007.

Moreover, out of 1.3 million births in 2006, 9.8% were by mothers of less than 20 years of age (“teenage pregnancy”). Although the same rate decreased to 8.3% in 2011, certain provinces like Sistan and Baluchistan and Ardabil had higher rates (14%) and Isfahan had the lowest rate (4%).

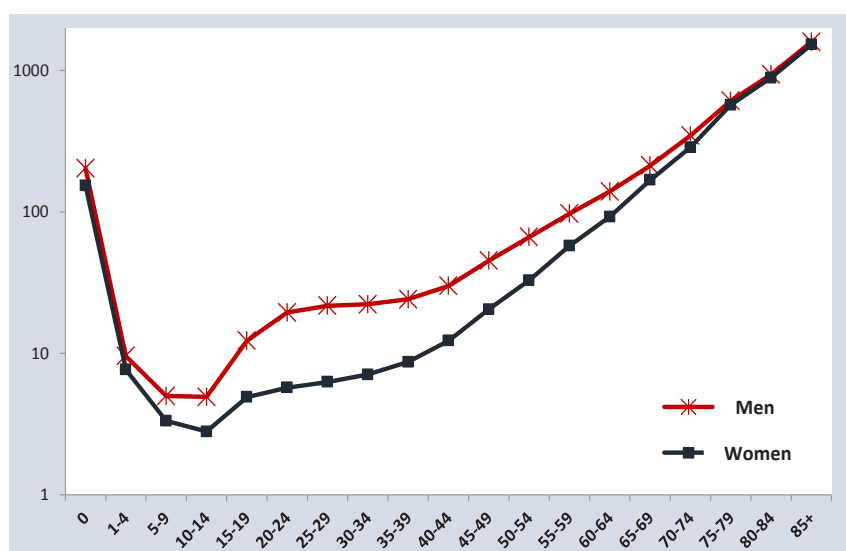
Recently, supporters of pronatalist population policies called for limitations of family planning services in order to increase fertility. The present study suggests continued provision of family planning services particularly to young couples. Otherwise, unintended pregnancies and abortions will cause numerous irreversible adverse effects on women's and couples' health. In addition, another reason for family planning programs is birth spacing. Access to family planning services provides a better marriage outlook for youth and gives them the ability to adapt their childbearing to the conditions they live in (Abbasi-Shavazi, Morgan, Hosseini-Chavoshi and McDonald, 2009). This would be a better strategy for young people than simply postponing marriage.

2.2.3. Health, Mortality and High Risk Behaviour of Youth

2.2.3.1. Young Mortality and Its Causes

Mortality age pattern varies in different countries, depending on their experiences of demographic transition period. Countries that have already experienced a demographic transition have very few infant mortality while those in first stages suffer high infant mortality rates. Different countries can be associated with one of those two categories according to their level of development. Generally, mortality rate decreases to a minimum in ages 5-14, but rises again during youth (for men in particular) and then increases from 50 years of age onwards. Although mortality rate for young people is significantly lower than those for other age groups and subpopulations like children, adults and the elderly, young mortality rate is relatively higher in transitioning countries. In addition, almost 70% of early or untimely deaths among adult people are linked to the behaviour and conditions they had during their adolescence or youth.

Figure 2.23. Age Pattern of Mortality of Iranian Men and Women, 2006

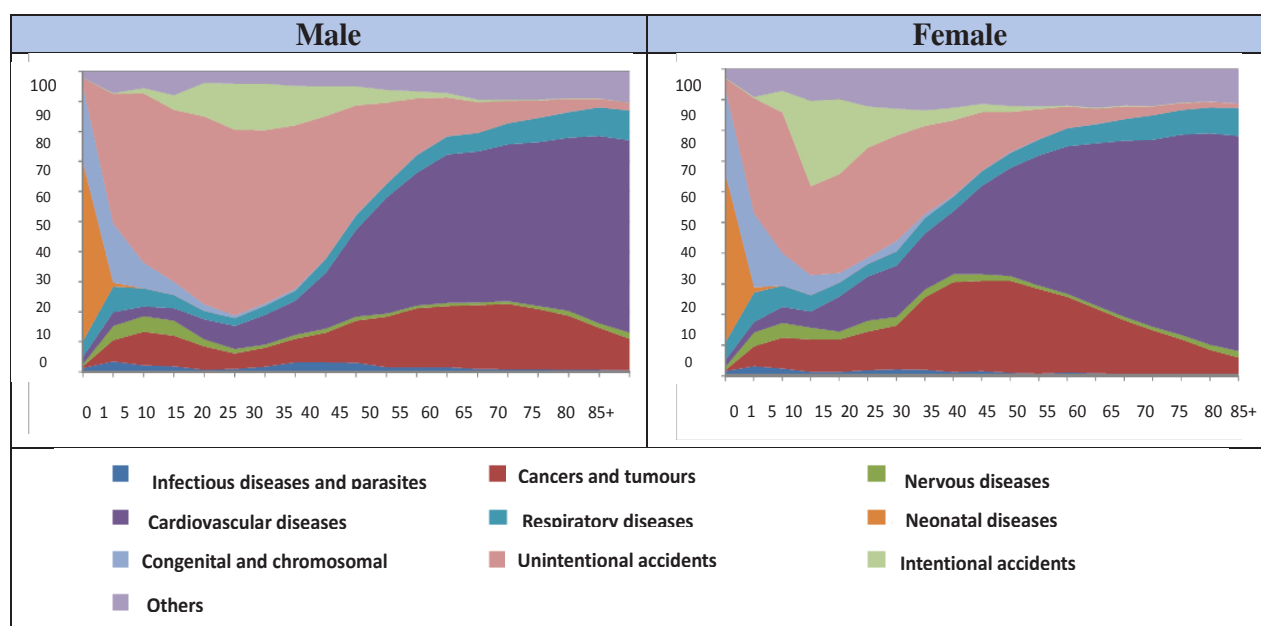


Source: Mirzaie et al., Forthcoming.

Ratio of age-specific mortality rates of young men to that of young women (age 15-29) is higher than expected (see Figure 2.23). The multi-decrement life table reflects higher rate of deaths by accidents in Iran compared to other countries. In fact, higher number of young male mortality is mostly due to motor accidents (Mirzaei and Qodrati, 1390). Although more men than women lose their lives in car accidents all over the world, the situation in Iran is so noticeable that it has become alarming among public health authorities (Khosravi et al., 2004).

Almost half of young people die in traffic accidents. Second prevalent cause of death among youth is suicide (10% of all deaths). Other causes include cancers (9%), heart diseases (6%), violence (5%) and other causes (24%). Figure 2.24 shows how accidents (traffic accidents) and deliberate deaths (suicide or homicide) are more prevalent among youth; and traffic accidents, suicides and violence are clearly the main causes for young mortality.

Figure 2.24 Distribution of 10 Causes of Death among Men and Women by Age Group, in 29 Iranian Provinces, 2010

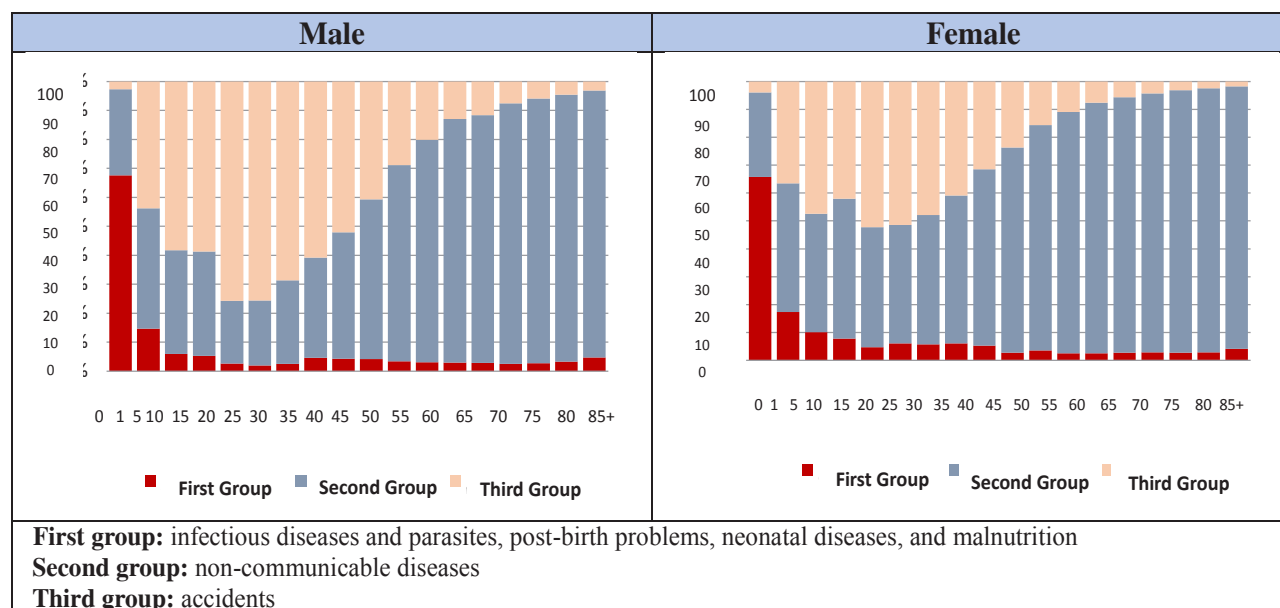


Source: Khosravi et al., 1392:422-3

Figure 2.25, based on probabilities of dying (${}_nq_x$) plotted in the multi-decrement life table, reflects the dominant causes of death in babies less than one year of age to be the first category of causes, including infectious diseases and parasites, post-birth problems, neonatal diseases, and malnutrition. The share of the first category decreases in other age groups, while the second and third categories rise (non-communicable diseases and accidents). From the 15-19 age group onwards, the share of the second category, non-communicable diseases, gradually increases and the share of deaths by accident decreases in proportion. The third category of causes of death reaches its maximum number in 15-19 and 20-24 age groups and its minimum in the last age group. Comparing the figures for women and men indicates similar fluctuations of percentages for different causes; the only exception being the third group, which is much more prevalent among men.

In general, the major health problems that young people face are injuries among men, and sexual and reproductive complications among women.

Figure 2.25. Proportions of Cause-age specific Probabilities of Dying in Total Probability of Dying by Age Group, 2008



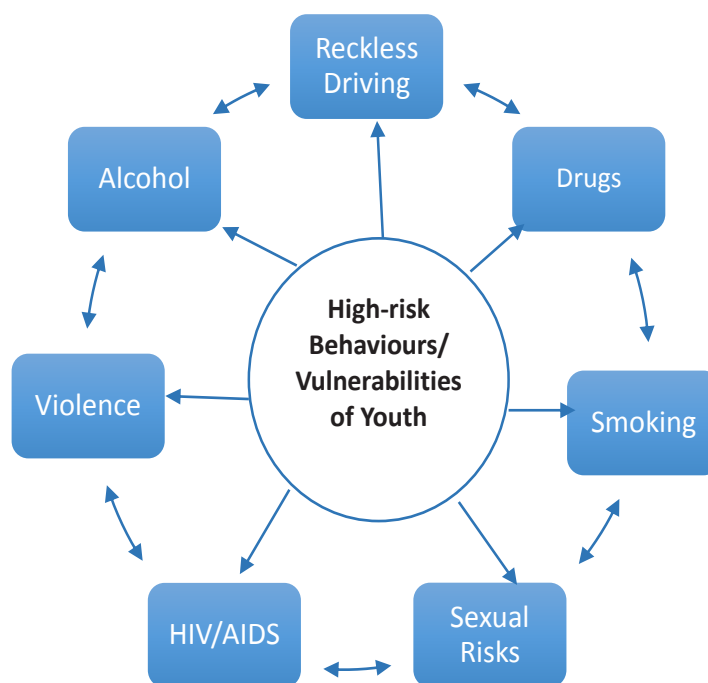
Source: Mirzaei and Qodrat, 2011, p66.

2.2.3.2. High-risk Behaviour/Vulnerabilities of Youth

Risk factors are factors and behaviour threatening young people's health and, consequently, sustainable development. Youth is the most crucial stage of life in terms of health, for it is in youth that high-risk behaviour emerges and reaches its peak.

Available evidence corroborates increasing health problems and high-risk behaviour during youth. The majority of high-risk behaviour occurs during youth, including smoking, drug abuse, alcoholism and unprotected sex. In fact, “young populations are known to have increased high-risk behaviour, the young are vulnerable to high levels of behavioural and health risks (from drugs abuse to unprotected and unsafe sex). Despite the numerous dangers surrounding the youth, there are few economic and social institutions to provide them with advice and support” (Xenos and Kabamalan, 2006:36).

Youth is the period when risks and risk factors emerge and escalate. Various studies and surveys in Iran demonstrate that close to half of Iranians have experienced at least one type of high-risk behaviour in their youth. Moreover, previous studies reflect increasing number of youth engaging in drugs abuse, alcoholism, use of psychedelics, smoking, sexual risks, reckless driving and violence (Sediq Sarvestani 2004; Youth National Organisation 2002; Eslami Tabar et al., 2003; Soleymani Nia et al., 2005; Rahimi Movaqar et al., 2006; Momen Nasab et al., 2006; Seraj Zadeh and Feyzi, 2007; Mahmoudian and Sadeqi, 2009; Mohammadi et al., 2011).

Figure 2.26. Aspects of High-risk Behaviour/Vulnerabilities of Youth

Various high-risk behaviours are interconnected and a direct relationship exists between them. Thus, the high-risk behaviour might be seen as a chain that is weaved during the youth. When developing preventive measures, the concurrence and co-alteration of such behaviour should be taken into consideration (Figure 2.26).

In general, youth high-risk behaviour can be divided into four categories of drugs abuse (including tobacco, alcohol and drugs), unprotected sex, HIV/AIDS, and traffic accidents.

Drugs Abuse

Smoking and drugs and alcohol abuse are prevailing high-risk behaviours that begin and reach a maximum during youth. Available studies show that 15-25% of young Iranians smoke (Sediq-Sarvestani, 2004; Farshad, 2007; Soleymaninia et al., 2005; Mohammadpour Asl et al., 2006). Number of young male smokers is twice the number of young female smokers; yet the habit is growing among girls and gender disparity is gradually disappearing. Moreover, smoking begins at an early age in Iran. National Health and Diseases Plan (2004) found that close to 40% of smokers in Iran begin the habit before their 20th birthday. The trend was more prevalent among youth: almost 70% of people aged 15-24 began smoking before reaching 20 years of age.

Alcohol is another risk factor in youth health, in addition to smoking and drugs. Regarding alcohol abuse, Sediq-Sarvestani's study (2004) shows that 15.8% of Iranian students of 15-18 years of age are exposed to the drinking habit. Another survey in Tehran (Soleimaninia et al. 2005) reflects that 22% of high school students aged 14-19 years have drunk alcohol during the 12 months preceding the survey (30% of boys and 13.7% of girls). Consequences of alcohol abuse and high-risk drinking by youth include absence at school, educational failure, traffic accidents, high-risk sexual behaviour, teenage pregnancies, and even death.

On the other hand, location of Iran at the heart of drug trafficking networks, together with the young

demographic structure of the country, have led to increasing numbers of drugs abuse and young drugs users since 1988. More than 70% of all drugs users in Iran are under 30 years of age. Sediq-Sarvestani study (2004, p 116) shows that 13.3% of Iranian students aged 15-18 are exposed to drugs. A survey by Soleimaninia et al. (2005) shows that 10% of high school adolescents (age 14-19) in Tehran City had used drugs in the 12 months preceding the survey (19.1% of boys and 2.5% of girls).

According to the official data sources, 1.3 million drug addicts live in Iran. Nevertheless, unofficial estimates claim more than two million drug addicts and six million occasional drug users. The population of addicts grows by 8% annually (Keyvan Ara et al., 2008). Close to half of the addicts are young and about half of them began using drugs in their 17-22 years of age period. Early drugs use increases the chances of more frequent, more consistent and more dangerous drugs usage (Mahmoudian and Sadeghi, 2009).

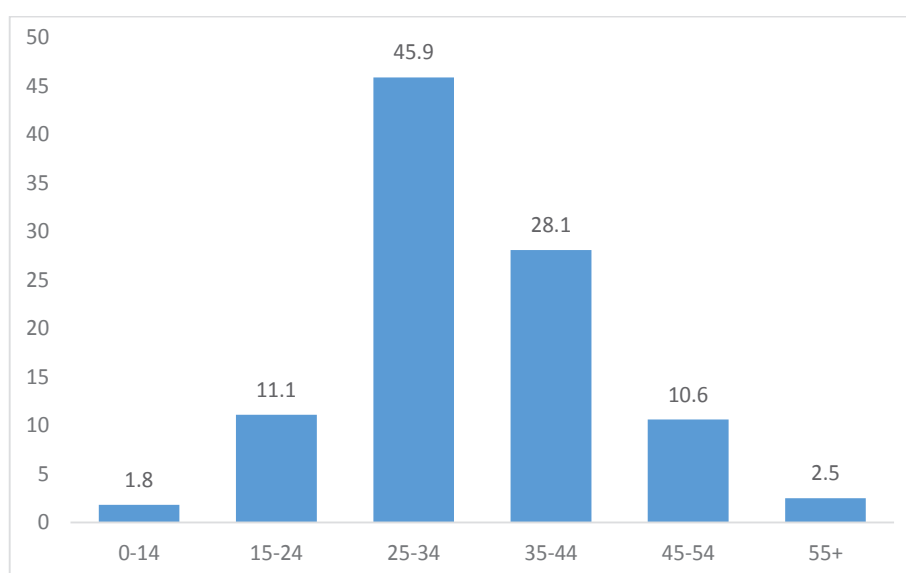
Young people are the most vulnerable social group to drugs abuse due to identity crisis, psychological issues caused by social problems, and the intrinsic tendencies of their age to seek adventure, pleasure and variety (South 1995; Mohammadi et al., 2011). Accordingly, almost 90% of drugs users began the habit in their adolescence or youth. In addition, youth are more than any other age group inclined to use dangerous drugs. Although opium is the most prevalent drug in Iran, the trend among young users has moved toward other drugs, such as psychedelic pills and drugs, in recent years. Therefore, it can be concluded that young people use drugs at higher volumes and in more risky ways.

Unprotected Sexual Behaviour

Against a backdrop of changing values and lifestyles of the young, recent years have witnessed increasing sex before marriage. Nearly half of girls in Tehran have had male friends, a little less than a quarter of them have had a form of sexual contact, and about 10% have experienced sexual intercourse (Khalaj Abadi and Mehryar, 2010). Young people who engage in sexual contact usually have no access to information and services related to protection against STIs, AIDS, unintended pregnancies and abortion. As a result, they are more vulnerable to physical consequences of unprotected sex before marriage and psychological issues after sexual violence (Khalaj Abadi and Mehryar, 2010). Moreover, a survey by National Youth Organisation (2005) that focused on young people who had sex before marriage, found that only 40% of the subjects had used condoms; while the importance attached to virginity made some girls attempt non-vaginal sexual intercourse. Non-vaginal sexual contact increases chances of contracting HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS

World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that half of the new HIV infections are in 15-24 years age group (UNAIDS, 2004). Each day, about 6,000 young people worldwide contract HIV (Lopez, 2003:136).

Figure 2.27. Age Distribution of HIV/AIDS Infections in Iran, 2013

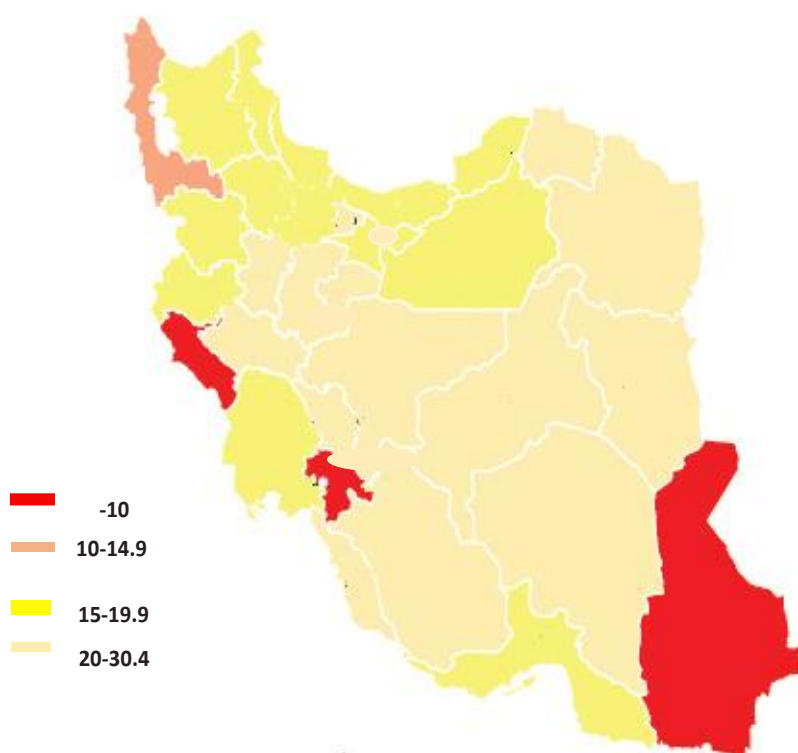
Source: Ministry of Health, Care and Medical Education, 2013 (latest HIV/AIDS data in Iran)

According to the 2013 data from the Ministry of Health, Healthcare and Medical Education, 27,041 cases of HIV infection are identified and registered in Iran. Close to 57% of the cases are 15-34 years of age. Thus, majority of the HIV/AIDS patients are young. HIV infections were caused by injecting drug use in 68% of the cases, unprotected sexual contact in 13% of the cases, maternal-to-child transmission in 1.2% of the cases, infected blood products in 1% of the cases, and nearly 10% by other causes.

DHS project (2010) found out that 86% of women aged 15-24 have heard about AIDS, but only 19.6% of them have correct information regarding HIV/AIDS prevention. Nearly 61% of women believed that using condoms at every sexual intercourse can reduce chances of HIV contraction. As Figure 2.28 shows, there is little awareness about HIV/AIDS protection methods in most of the Iranian provinces.

Nevertheless, a gender-age shift in HIV/AIDS infections has emerged from adult men to young and adolescent women (Ghazi-Tabatabaei et al., 2006:160). Thus, increasing youth coefficient in HIV infections and emergence of unprotected sex as the main cause for HIV/AIDS are alarming concerns for youth health.

Figure 2.28. Percentage of Young Women Age 15-24 with Correct Information about HIV/AIDS Prevention, 2010



Source: Findings from the 2010 IrMIDHS p100.

Traffic Accidents

Close to half of annual losses of young life are in traffic accidents. Given the weight of diseases in 15-29 age group, each year about 59% of men and 27% of women die in accidents (intended or unintended). Traffic accidents are the main reason for higher mortality among men (Mahmoudian and Sadeghi, 2009).

According to WHO (2013), 23,249 people are killed annually in traffic accidents; 79% are men and 21% women. Majority of them are young people of the 15-29 age group. Young people might be emotionally and socially inexperienced, have not honed their driving skills, drive under effects of alcohol and drugs, not use safety equipment, use motor vehicles more frequently, and take driving risks. Thus, they are vulnerable to traffic accidents more than any other age group. Therefore, the issue of traffic accidents constitutes a top priority, if not the top-most priority, for young people's health.

This means that youth is a period of opportunity and, at the same time, risk-taking. Failure to provide for developmental needs of this considerable proportion of the population, including their health-related needs, leads to emergence of risk factors and health-related challenges of youth on the way to sustainable development. Health issues and needs of youth might become even more complex and varied in the face of concurrent and intertwined demographic transitions, such as population transition, age structure transition, epidemiological transition, marriage and family transition, and migration/urban

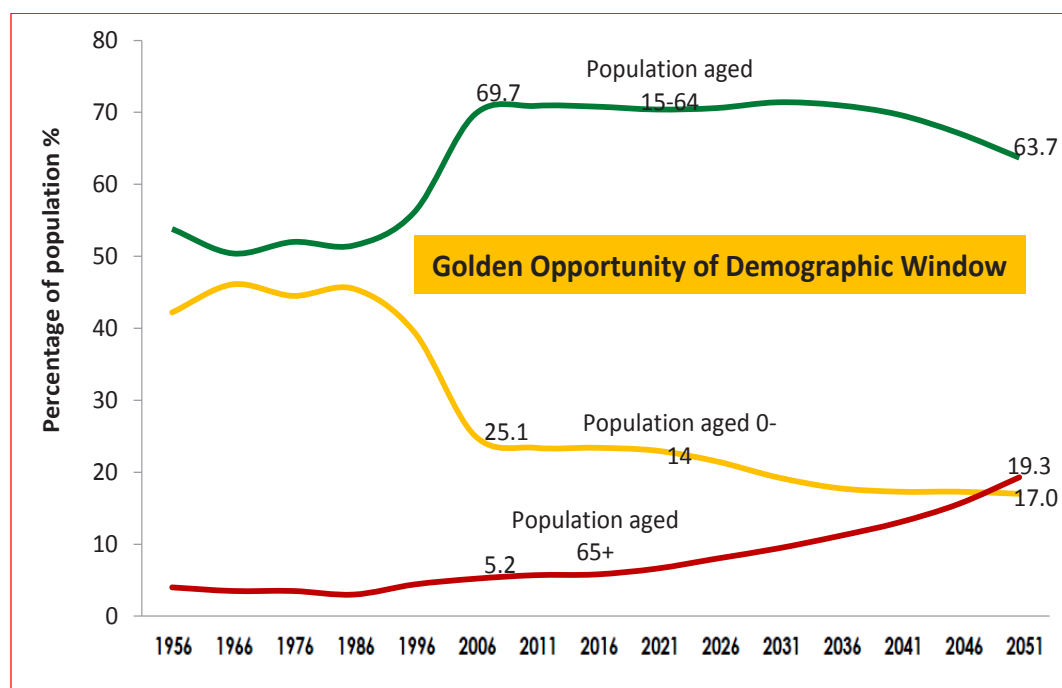
transition. Behavioural causes like early or unintended pregnancies, abortions, STIs, HIV/AIDS, drugs, traffic accidents, depression and self-harm (e.g. suicide) are increasingly leading to health problems and challenges for youth. These challenges are, on the one hand, consequences of unequal and unsustainable development and, on the other hand, obstacles for sustainable development. Therefore, ignoring health-related needs of the young poses a threat to the future and sustainable development of all.

2.3. Economic Situation of Youth

2.3.1. Youth Bulge and the Beginning of Demographic Window Phase

“Demographic window” is a phase of demographic development that begins in the context of demographic transition. Demographic window phase begins with youth bulge and entry of a large cohort of young people competing for employment and accumulation of human capital. Ratio of working-age population increases during the demographic window phase and reaches its maximum.

Figure 2.29. Demographic Window in Iran



Source: Sadeghi, 2012.

Given the increasing ratio of working-age population and the decreasing ratios of age dependence, Iran entered demographic window phase in 2006. As can be seen in Figure 2.29, demographic window is a temporary phase in the demographic structure of the country. Size and timing of a demographic window mostly depends on preceding mortality trends and, more importantly, reproductive trends. Of course, role of emigration should not be overlooked. Therefore, the demographic window phase in Iran began in 2006 and will continue for four decades; until it ends after 2050 when the number of the elderly increases significantly. By 2050, ratio of population aged 65 or over will reach 18-20 percent in

different scenarios. Subsequently, age dependence ratio will rise again.

Composition and behavioural effects of the demographic window are motors of economic development (Bloom et al., 2003). In this context, Bloom and Williamson (1998) believe that demographic window and gift create opportunities for growth of production per capita and economic growth. Firstly, there is a kind of age structure net influence on the total GDP. Growth of working-age population results in increase of producer/consumer ratio; which provides fertile grounds for growth of production per capita. The accumulated effect of these factors paves the ground for women to enter the labour market. The second reason involves behavioural effects of age structure. Behavioural effects have different dimensions because, on the one hand, labour force structures include an increasing body of young labour force, able to improve efficiency and production. On the other hand, with the usual changes during a cycle of life, changes in age structure are followed by changes in production and consumption patterns leading to more production and savings.

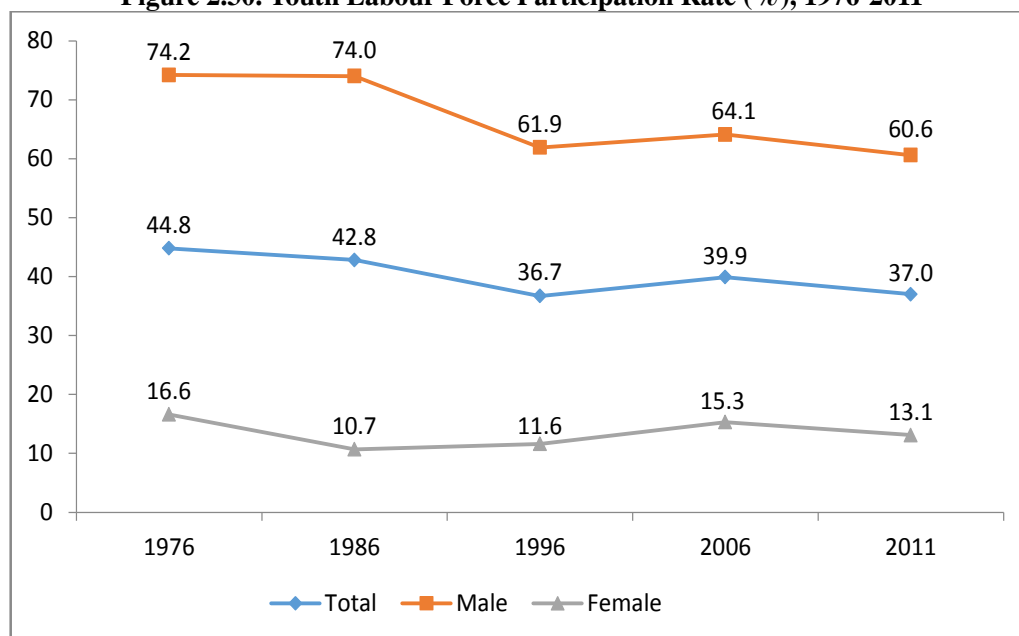
Therefore, the demographic window provides a great opportunity for enhancing economic development and growth through its composition and behaviour mechanisms. The opportunities include additional labour force supply, more involvement for women, lower dependence ratios, interaction between changes of population age structure and production and consumption life cycle, strengthened savings and investments, improving and developing human resources, and improved population qualities. Will the demographic window, become an economic window? In other words, how can the demographic dividend yield development dividends? First, it should be noted that such a process is not an autonomous one. Realization of economic window depends upon economic, social, political and organisational requirements. Two requirements are vital in utilising this demographic opportunity for development: one, developing employment opportunities and, the other, adequate investments. Thus, rewards of the emerging opportunities and challenges depend, more than anything, on sound management of the new trends in changing age structure of Iranian population and adoption of appropriate effective policies. Otherwise, mismanagement will waste the opportunity and, inevitably, lead to threats, challenges and problems.

All in all, the most crucial challenge facing the demographic window and dividend are unemployment and lack of job opportunities and investments for young people. If a majority of the labour force fails to find employment, the potential demographic dividend simply becomes a “demographic burden”.

2.3.2. Labour Force Participation of Youth

In 1976, nearly 45% of youth participated in the labour force (74% were men and 16.6% women). The ratio fell to 37% in 2011, with 61% men and 13% women (Figure 2.30). The decline in labour force participation is mainly due to increasing engagement at schools and universities.

In 2011, 8.7 million out of the 23.7 million young people were active in labour markets. The 8.7 million young working people were made of 7.2 million men and, only, 1.5 million women. Youth labour force participation rate was 37% in 2011. Labour force participation for the young men was 60.6% and 13.1% for women. Thus, young men had five times more economic participation than young women.

Figure 2.30. Youth Labour Force Participation Rate (%), 1976-2011

Source: Calculated based on the 1976-2011 censuses

2.3.3. Employment Situation of Youth

According to the 2011 Census, of the total 23.7 million young people, 27.6% were employed, 9.4% unemployed, 28.1% studying, 25.5% housewives, 0.4 % paid without working, and 7.7% otherwise economically inactive. Obviously, gender differences existed: nearly half of young men were employed, while half of women were housewives (Table 2.14).

Table 2.14. Youth Employment and Activity Situation, Age 15-29 Years, Iran, 2011

Employment and Activity		Both sexes		Male		Female	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Active Population	Employed	6539792	27.6	5622212	47.2	917580	7.8
	Unemployed	2220315	9.4	1593766	13.4	626549	5.3
Inactive Population	Student	6661089	28.1	3339870	28.1	3321219	28.2
	Housewife	6047606	25.5	60921	0.5	5986685	50.8
	Paid without Working	92161	0.4	61765	0.5	30396	0.3
	Other	1826576	7.7	1063848	8.9	762728	6.5
Not Stated		306655	1.3	161263	1.4	145392	1.2
Total (Population)		23694194	100.0	11903645	100.0	11790549	100.0

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

The 8.7 million active youth were comprised of 6.5 million employed and 2.2 million unemployed

people. Thus, employment rate for people ages 15-29 years was 75% and their unemployment rate was 25%. Employment rate for young people was lower than those for other groups. Young men were 78% employed and women 59% employed.

Table 2.15. Occupational Structure of Employed Youth, Iran, 2011

Occupational Structure	Total		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers	1.6	2.6	2.2	3.3	0.5	0.7
Professionals	3.3	22.3	4.6	28.5	1.0	6.2
Technicians and Assistants	3.9	9.9	5.4	12.6	1.2	3.1
Office and Clerical Workers	3.0	12.6	4.0	16.2	1.0	3.4
Services Staff and Salespersons	11.8	9.7	15.6	11.8	4.8	4.2
Skilled Workers in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	15.4	18.2	4.6	6.7	35.6	47.9
Industrial and Related Workers	22.7	13.6	26.1	10.0	16.2	23.2
Operators and Assemblers of Machinery and Equipment and Vehicle Drivers	9.6	1.6	10.7	1.9	7.6	1.0
Unskilled Workers	19.6	4.2	17.1	3.2	24.5	7.0
Other/not stated	9.1	5.2	9.8	5.9	7.6	3.3
Total Occupation	5622212	917580	3672365	662841	1944336	253224

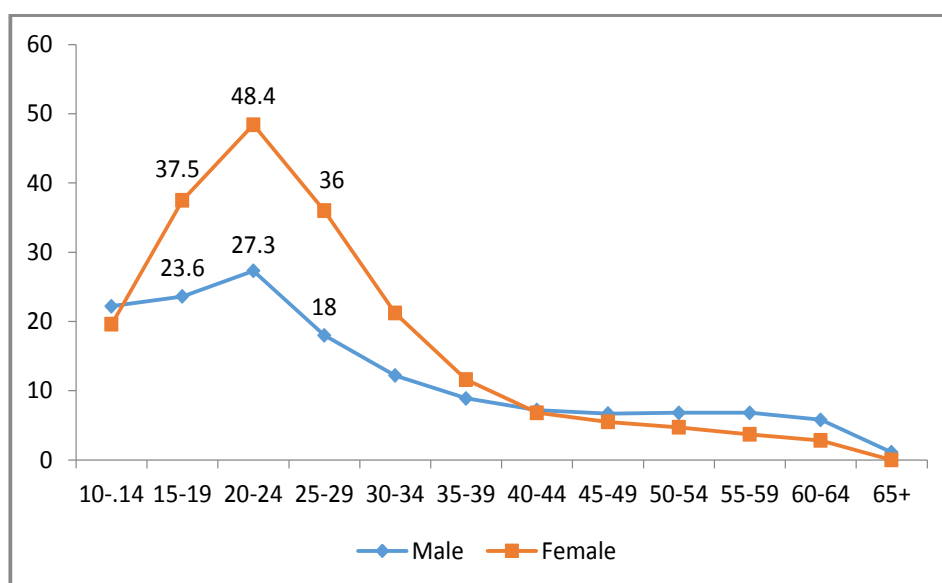
Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census.

Thus, 5.6 million young men and 918,000 young women had a job in 2011. The occupational structure is presented in Table 2.15. According to the table, young men were mostly employed in three categories of Industrial and Related Workers, Unskilled Workers, and Skilled Workers in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. Industrial jobs prevail in urban areas while service-related jobs prevail in rural areas. Young women were mainly employed as specialists or office and clerical workers.

2.3.4. Unemployed Youth

Unemployment, as an important challenge for young Iranians, has had several socioeconomic and cultural consequences. Two main causes of unemployment are the youth bulge resulting from rapid population growth after the 1979 Revolution and shortcomings in socioeconomic planning.

Unemployment rates are more prevalent in young age groups than any other age group. Youth of ages 15-29 were unemployed in 25.3% of the cases in 2011. Unemployment rate for young men was 22.1% and 40.6% for women. Urban youth constituted 27% unemployed and rural youth 18%.

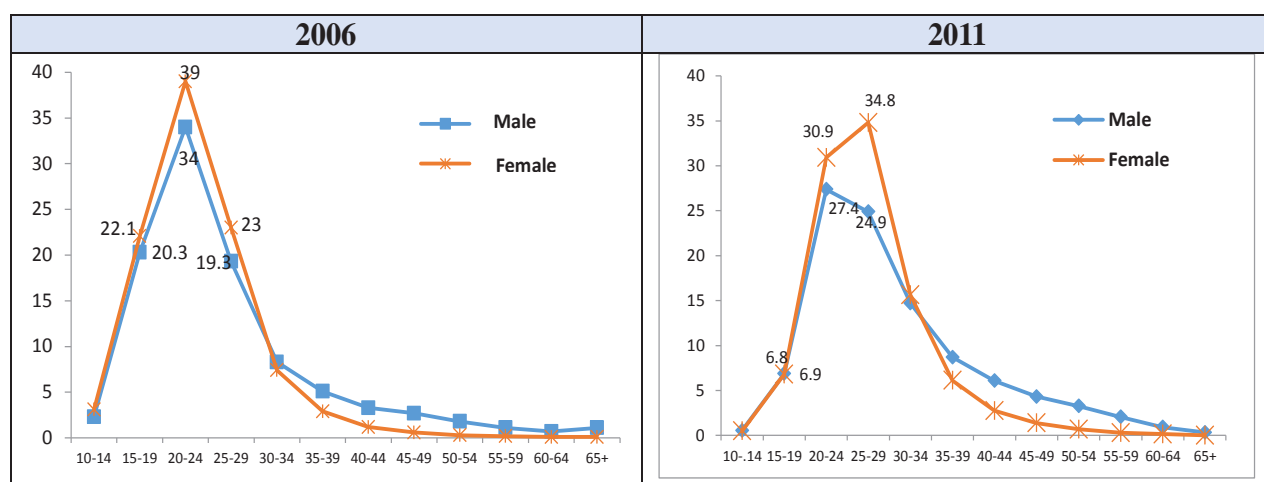
Figure 2.31. Age Specific Unemployment Rates, 2011

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

On average, 1.2 million young people are added to the labour market each year; while, only 300,000 retire annually (Salehi-Isfahani and Egel, 2007:6). Such an imbalance results in higher youth unemployment. As Figure 2.13 shows, age group 20-24 contains the highest number of unemployed youth. Close to 27% and 48% of men and women, respectively, within this age range are unemployed. The number of unemployed women is twice that of unemployed men. Nearly half of active women cannot find jobs in their 20s. In fact, a small proportion of active female population participates or is eager to participate in the labour force.

Therefore, gender disparity is a significant characteristic of Iranian labour market, clearly visible in low labour force participation rate among young women and higher levels of unemployment among women than among men. Labour force participation rates are lower for women; mainly because of traditional clichés and the difficulties of dealing with occupational and family obligations at the same time. Given the increase in participation of women with academic education, women constitute a large ratio of unemployed graduates. Even in the best economic scenarios, young women usually face more obstacles in finding a job; and when they do find a job, they are usually paid lower than men. Women have no job security or social benefits when working in informal economy sectors.

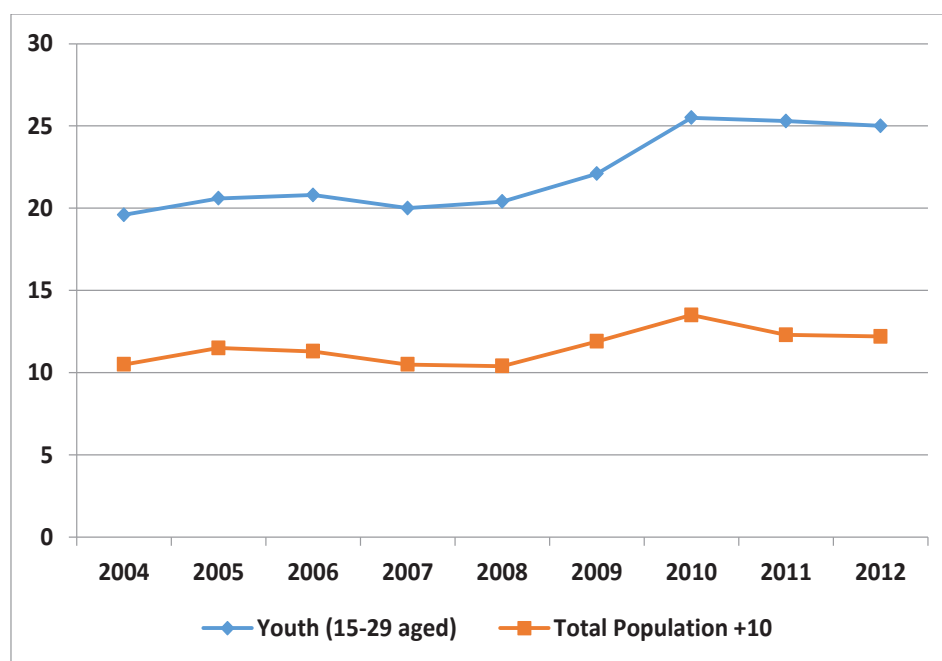
Figure 2.32. Age Distribution of Unemployed People in Iran, 2006 and 2011



Source: Calculated based on the 2006 and 2011 censuses.

In addition to high youth unemployment rates, young Iranians of ages 15-29 made up 43% of the unemployed in 1976; while in 2006, the figure rose to 77%. According to the 2006 Census, nearly 3 million people were unemployed, 77% (2.3 million) of whom were young (15-29 years of age). Unemployment rate was 74% for men and 84% for women. In 2011, there were more than 3.5 million people without jobs; 62.4% (2.2 million) of them were aged 15-29. Unemployed men and women were young in 59% and 73% of the cases respectively (Figure 2.32).

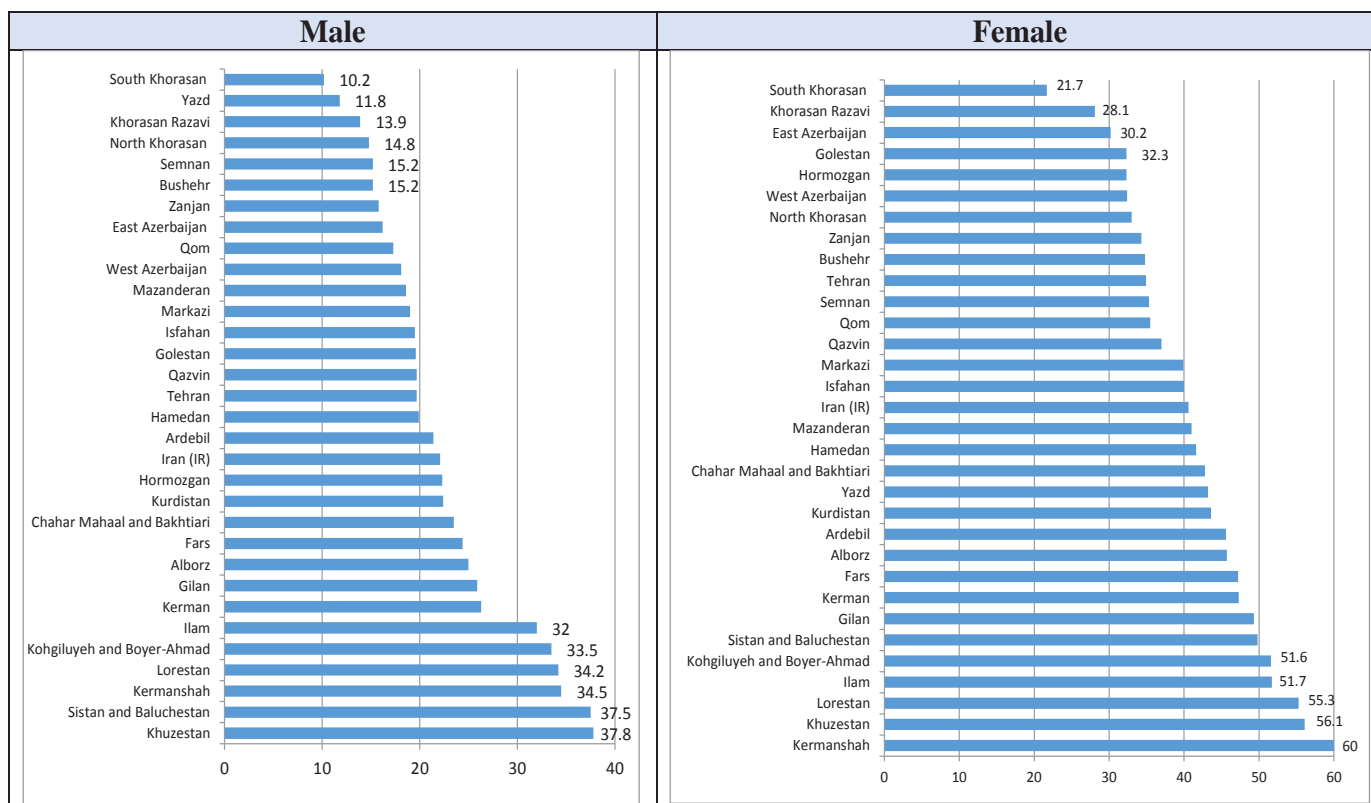
Figure 2.33. Comparison of Youth Unemployment and Total Unemployment Rates, 2004-2012



Source: Calculated based on Labour Force Survey and the 2011 Census

Thus, the existing available data from 2004-12 period reflects a 1.7 to 2.3 million unemployed people ages 15 to 29, in a total unemployed population of 2.6 to 3.5 million. In other words, Iran has been experiencing a surge of job-seekers in the last 8 years. Experts estimate the surge of demands for entering the labour market to continue until, at least, mid 2010s. Along the same lines, and as Figure 2.33 shows clearly, the highest unemployment rates were concentrated in 15-29 age group during the last few years. The 25% rate is twice the total unemployment rate. The existing gap between youth and general unemployment rates is 10%, which is a considerable gap.

Figure 2.34. Unemployment Rate of Youth by Sex, 2011



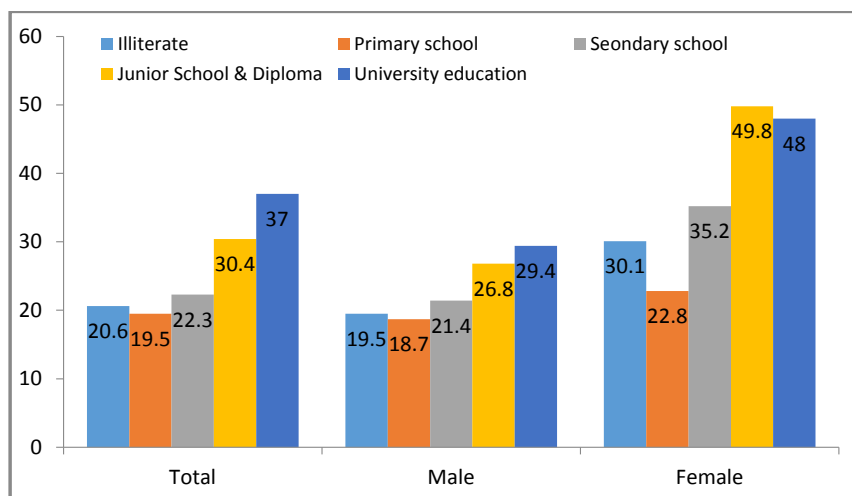
Source: Calculated based on the 2011 census.

Moreover, clear differences exist between unemployment rates in different provinces. More than 30% of young men are unemployed in eight provinces. For instance, Khuzestan and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces have 38% of their young men without jobs. Unemployment rate among young men of Ilam, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Lorestan and Kermanshah is close to 35%. More than half of young women in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Ilam, Lorestan, Khuzestan and Kermanshah are unemployed (the figure has reached 60% in the latter province) (Figure 2.34).

A point of concern regarding youth unemployment rate in Iran is high unemployment rate among university graduates. In recent years, the greatest majority of job-seekers in the country are young people graduating from universities. After passing through a highly competitive educational environment, they face several obstacles in transitioning to employment. University graduates face high rates and long durations of unemployment. Based on Salehi-Esfahani and Egel's estimates (2007), students who are not employed at the time of graduation normally have to wait almost three years for a job.

Current estimates of job-seeking population in Iran indicate that university graduates constitute 43% of this population. In addition, one third of the nearly 3.5 million unemployed people in 2011 were young university graduates. Unemployed graduate women comprised 50% of the total unemployed population. As seen in Figure 2.35, university graduates make the largest share of youth unemployment rate. Unemployment rate among the young was 25%, while it was 37% among university graduates. Unemployment rates for male and female university graduates were 29% and 48% respectively.

Figure 2.35. Youth Unemployment Rate by Level of Education, 2011



Source: Calculated based on Micro-census data 2011.

Thus, youth unemployment has grown rapidly during recent years, making unemployed university graduates the most critical problem of Iranian society today. Young unemployment, particularly among graduates, costs a lot for economy, society, individuals and their families. Some of those who fail to find a job should be supported by their families, creating deficiencies in financial resources and investments of the families. Thus, all the investments on education and schooling before graduation are wasted and all of these issues pose a threat to socioeconomic development of the country.

2.3.5. Youth Poverty

Poverty is another challenge for the young, especially young head of households. Poverty distribution among households by age of head of the household, based on absolute poverty level, reflects an increase in relative percentage of poor households headed by people less than 25 years of age during 1992-2000. In 2000, households headed by people less than 25 years of age comprised 8.2% of the absolute poor; 18.6% of the poor households were headed by people aged 26-35; 25.6% were headed by people ages 36-45; 16.7% were households headed by people 46-55 years of age; and, finally, 30.9% had their head of the household with 55 years or over (Khodad-Kashi and Baqeri, 2005). Of course, varying population shares of different households requires that the age distributions be divided by their respective population shares. The final result is a larger than 1 figure for the ratio of poverty share of "less than 25" group to its population share. As the same process for other age groups yields numbers less than 1, it can be concluded that poverty is more prevalent in households headed by people of less than 25 years of age.

Raghfar and Sadat-Asl (2009) found out that household heads with employment but no higher education are generally a vulnerable group, who have been growing in number during 1990-2000 period across all age groups. As number of household heads with higher education grows, especially for the younger ones, the vulnerability to poverty decreases. Related findings showed that younger household heads with employment but no higher education are more vulnerable than those with academic education. In other words, lower educational level in younger age groups creates more vulnerability to poverty. However, these vulnerabilities are less associable to lower educational level in households headed by older people. This is due to the fact that older age groups have been in the labour market and their work experience compensates for their lack of higher education, and they have educated and employed children. As a result, they are less vulnerable in terms of higher education and are less vulnerable to poverty caused by their low educational level. Moreover, having a job is one of the major factors in household heads' vulnerability to poverty. Young people are more vulnerable than older age groups, for they are more vulnerable to the poverty caused by unemployment. In conclusion, available results indicate an increasing trend in vulnerability of youth during 1990-2000 period; which is mainly due to more demands for employment and poverty vulnerabilities among younger age groups.

Thus, youth are both the largest population group and the most deprived group, particularly in terms of employment. Demographic pressure by young people aged 25 to 29 will peak in the five coming years (i.e. 2014-2019), reaching such above-normal rates that should cause concerns regarding the future of labour market. Hence changing population and age structures in Iran and increasing numbers of university graduates leads to overwhelming demands for participation in the labour market. The importance of providing employment and labour market is undeniable; therefore, more effective government intervention in the form of employment policies and schemes is needed. Providing income-generating opportunities for the youth is a necessity; for not only do they create ideas and innovations, but they are also “drivers of economic development” for a country. Overlooking such potentials will cause irreparable harm to the national economy.

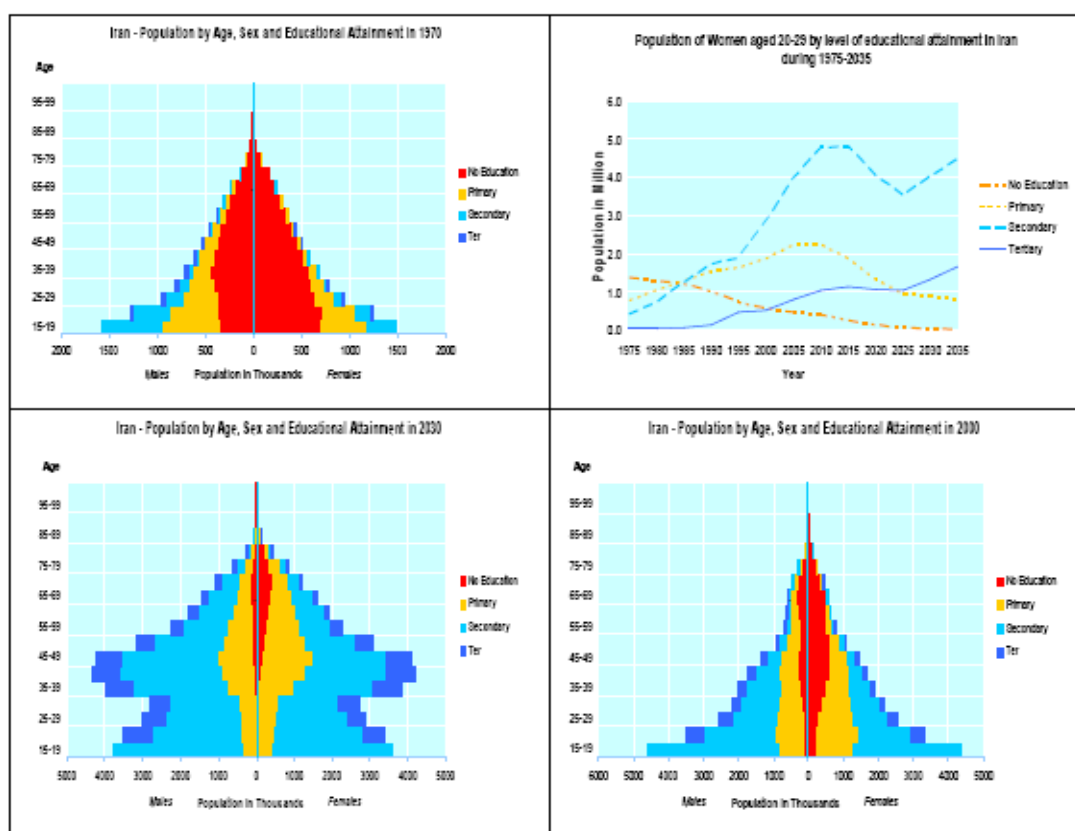
2.4. Social-Cultural Situation of Young People

The present section outlines the educational situation of young Iranians and, then, discusses the time they spend on capacity building and acquiring human capital. Next, patterns of time use, Internet surfing, and leisure are discussed. The section ends with a review of some changes to identity and values of young Iranians.

2.4.1. Education

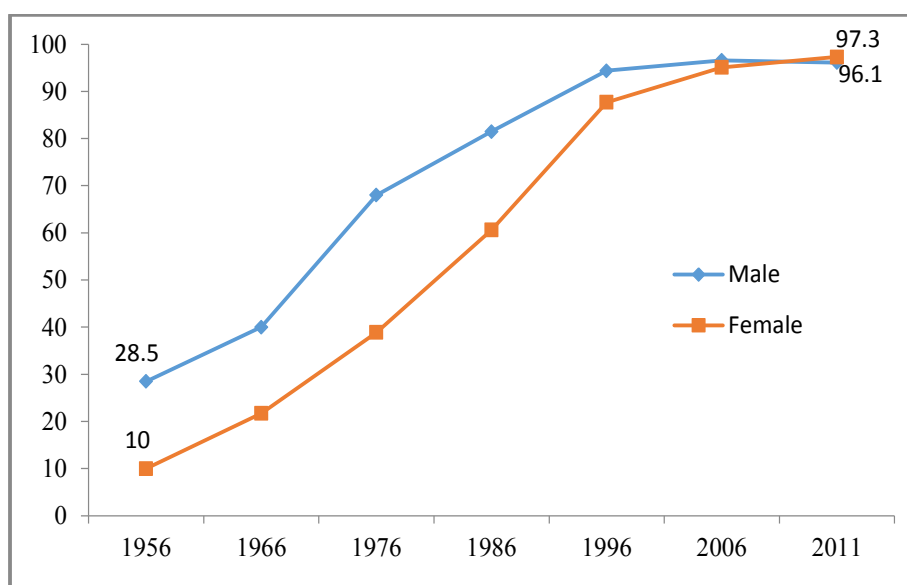
Education is a crucial aspect of social life and a key event in youth. Iran has been facing profound changes in the last few decades. As Figure 2.36 shows, a large majority of Iranians were illiterate in 1970. Since 2000, illiterate population is disappearing from the age structure of Iran and its presence is now limited to the elderly. Additionally, the population with academic educational background has been on the rise.

Figure 2.36. Changes in Level of Education of Population in Iran, 1970-2030



Source: Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2008; Lutz et al., 2010.

Changes in educational level have been most remarkable among youth, as rapid rise of numbers for literacy and level of education among them clearly indicate. In 1956, nearly 28% of young men were literate and, gradually, the percentage reached 96% in 2011. Increasing literacy rates is even more significant for women, reaching 97% after being only 10% in 1965 (Figure 2.37). In addition, gender disparity has disappeared over time and now illiterate women are even fewer than illiterate men.

Figure 2.37. Youth Literacy Rates in Iran, 1956-2011

Source: Calculated based on the 1956-2011 censuses

In 2011, 7.2 million people aged 15-29 were students. In other words, 30.4% of the young were studying in that year (Table 2.16). Full-time students constituted 60% of 15-19 year olds, 28% of 20-24 year olds, and 10% of 25-29 year olds. The number of male students was greater than female students in the 15-19 age range, while the number of female students was greater than that of males in 20-24 age range.

Table 2.16. Current Schooling Rate of Youth, 2011

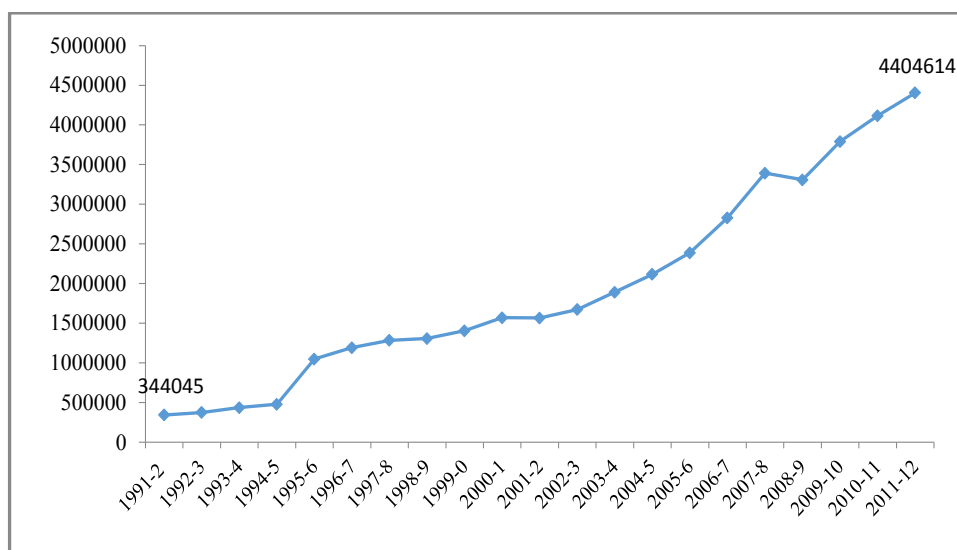
Age Group	Both Sexes			Male			Female		
	Total Population	Current Schooling	Schooling /Total Population (%)	Total Population	Current Schooling	Schooling /Total Population (%)	Total Population	Current Schooling	Schooling /Total Population (%)
15-19	6,607,043	3,958,751	59.9	3,347,436	2,076,434	62.0	3,259,607	1,882,317	57.7
20-24	8,414,497	2,358,351	28.0	4,201,575	1,122,454	26.7	4,212,922	1,235,897	29.3
25-29	8,672,654	881,903	10.2	4,354,634	443,479	10.2	4,318,020	438,424	10.2
15-29	23,694,194	7,199,005	30.4	11,903,645	3,642,367	30.6	11,790,549	3,556,638	30.2

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

Close to 50% of young students aged 15-19 were studying for a bachelor's degree. This ratio was 47% for boys and 52% for girls.

Thus, a considerable proportion of young people are studying at universities. As Figure 2.38 shows, the last twenty years (1991-2011) saw a rapid increase in number of students, growing 13 times from 344,000 in 1991 to 4,405,000 in 2011.

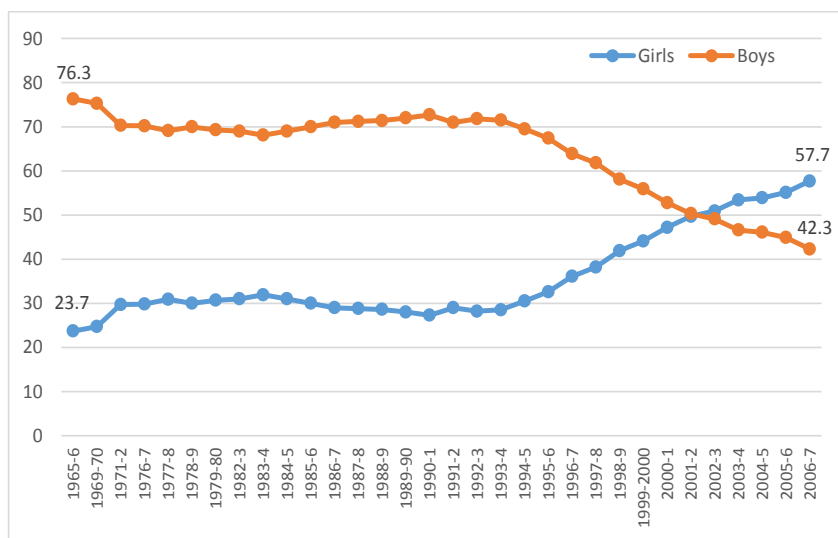
Figure 2.38. Increasing Number of University Students in Iran, 1991-2011



Source: Calculated based on the data obtained from higher education institutes

High enrolment of women in higher educational levels is a relatively new phenomenon. Today, gender ratios of many universities around the world are changing in favour of women. In Iran, 23.7% of university students were women in 1966 and the ratio rose to 31% before the 1979 Revolution. In 2001, there were equal number of boys and girls studying at universities. Now, it is almost a decade that girls are more numerous in universities; for instance, nearly 60% of enrolments at public universities are girls.

Figure 2.39. Proportion of Girls and Boys Studying at Higher Education, 1965-2006



Source: Based on Khosro-Khavar and Qanei Nejad, 2010

Of course, despite the high university enrolment of girls in Iran, gender inequalities in other educational areas still remain. Certain fields of study are dominated by girls while others are less favourable to girl students. Number of girls studying at post-graduate levels, however, is less than boys (Figure 2.39).

Educational levels among the youth in 2011 was divided to primary school for close to 10% of boys and 13% of girls, junior school for 21% of boys and 15% of girls, and high school for 44% of boys and girls. The difference between boys and girls in terms of access to higher education is a considerable 4% (28% for girls and 24% for boys).

Table 2.17. Distribution of Level of Education among the Young Aged 15-29, 2011

Level of Education	Total	Male	Female
Primary school	11.6	10.2	13
Secondary school	18	21.1	14.9
High school & Diploma	44	44.3	43.7
Higher/Academic	26.4	24.4	28.4

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

In addition to increasing level of education and university enrolments, many young Iranians devote a portion of their time to learning new skills and acquiring human capital.

2.4.2. Human Capital and Learning Skills

Youth's human capital was analysed based on a direct definition, using literacy and level of education. This segment performs a secondary analysis on data derived from Time Use in Urban Areas of Iran Survey (2009) to calculate the time spent for acquiring knowledge and skills, in order to indirectly measure the human capital of 15-29 year olds.

Human capital is defined as knowledge, skills, abilities and other attributes related to economic activity, which are endowed to humans (ECO, 1998:9). Human capital, in a broader sense, can be equivalent to intellectual capital, as “knowledge that can be converted into value” (Hormonea, 2011:159). Traditionally, human capital has been defined as investment in human abilities, knowledge, skills and motivations to increase human efficiency.

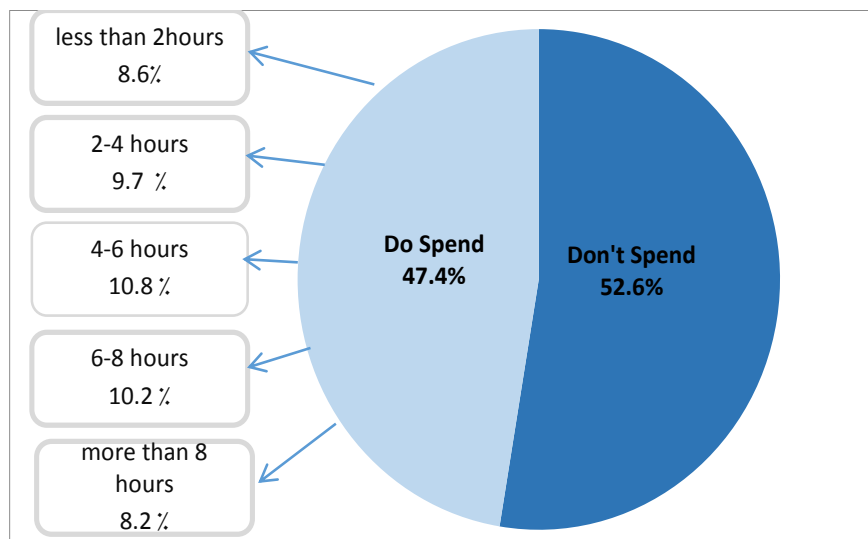
This study uses an indirect method to measure human capital, by calculating minutes spent each day on activities related to human capital. The “acquisition” subcategory used in Time Use Survey is one such activity. It includes participating in educational activities, doing related exercises, studying, going to extracurricular classes (foreign languages, IT, etc.), and other learning activities. Additionally, “remunerated work” subcategory includes apprenticeship activities, which were included in our “skill-learning” calculations to measure human capital acquirement.

Human capital theories consider adolescence and youth as crucial stages of life and skills learned during these periods provide highly accurate predictions regarding future achievements of a person.

2.4.2.1. Human Capital and Skill Learning: Findings of the Study

Study of sample characteristics shows that out of 9036, 15-29-year-old participants of the Time Use Survey, 55% were male and 45% female. The average age of the participants was 20.5 years. Human capital acquirement level among the participants nearly splits the sample group to those who spend no time in activities related to human capital acquirement (52.6%) and those who spend some time on acquiring human capital (47.4%). In terms of daily time spent on acquiring human capital, 8.6% spend less than 2 hours, 30% spend 2-8 hours, and 8% spend more than 8 hours (Figure 2.40).

Figure 2.40. Human Capital Acquirement of Youth and Daily Time Spent on it, 2009



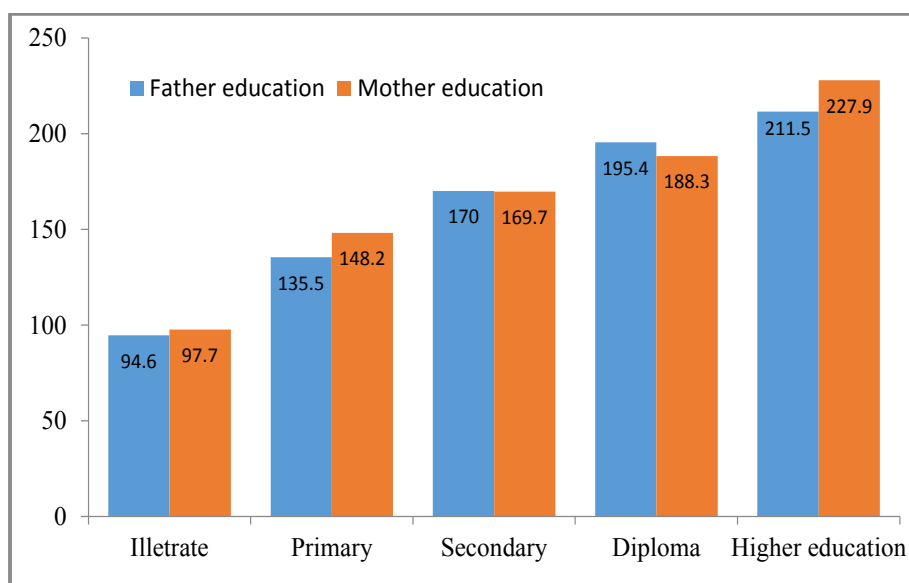
Source: Secondary analysis on data from Time Use Survey, 2009

Regarding the time spent daily on related activities, girls spend an average of 45 minutes more than boys. In all comparisons, girls' percentages are higher than those of boys, the only exception being the number of individuals who spend no time (zero minutes) on related activities. Therefore, it can be said that girls' status regarding human capital acquisition is better than that of boys. Moreover, the more time spent on remunerated work, the less time remains to be spent in human capital acquirement activities ($r = -0.380$).

In addition to individual characteristics, characteristics of the family provide another influential context in which the children create human capital. A related analysis argues that as educational level of the parents increases, their children spend more time on activities related to human capital. Figure 2.41 clearly reflects how children of illiterate parents acquire the lowest level of human capital; while the highest levels of human capital are acquired by children of graduate parents.

Therefore, parents' and mother's literacy and their level of education have a determining effect on the time spent by children on human capital-related activities. The findings corroborate a direct relationship between parents' awareness and their investment in human capital of children. Child's human capital requires investment by the parents, which in itself requires knowledge regarding children's needs and, then, financial resources to satisfy them.

Figure 2.41. Average Time (minutes) Spent Daily of Youth on Activities related to Human Capital Acquisition by Parents' Level of Education, 2009



Source: Secondary analysis on data from Time Use Survey, 2009

In addition to parents' level of education, household size has a negatively meaningful relation to human capital acquisition. That is to say, the smaller a household size is, the larger their average human capital acquisition level. Those who live in families of one or two children spend an hour more on human capital acquisition activities, compared to those who live in families of 5 or more children. As Garry Becker's theory (1975) and Dilution Theory of Judith Blake (1970) argue, increasing the number of children will necessarily create more resource limitations for a family and, consequently, will create negative impacts on human capital of the children. Of course, resources of a family are not confined to material resources that can easily be compensated for. The time parents spend on raising and helping their families is usually limited; a limitation that becomes amplified when more children are added to the family.

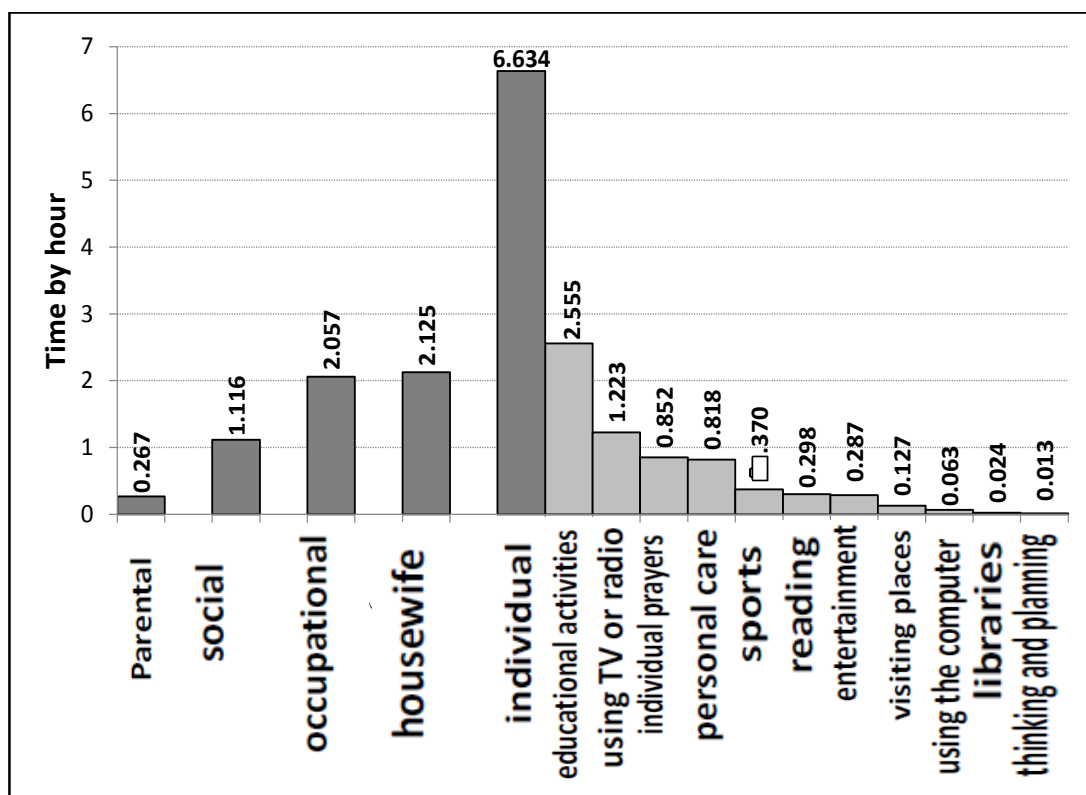
2.4.3. Time Use among the Youth: Patterns and Factors

Transition to adulthood is an important phase of youth, with all its social, psychological, economic and biologic changes playing determinative roles in their future. While preparing for the beginning of their adulthood, their behaviour and the roles they assume gain significant importance (Mortimer and Larson, 2002). Today, young people are facing more challenges in transitioning to adulthood and on the way to assuming socioeconomic roles such as that of a spouse, a parent and an employee.

In this regard, data from Time Use Survey (2009) of about 3471 young persons provided the basis for study. Behavioural roles of youth were defined according to Oppong's categorisation of roles (1980 and 1983). Oppong defines seven roles for women, including spouse, mother, housewife, occupational role, relative, social role and individual role. "Spouse" includes activities and services offered by a wife to her husband. "Housewife" refers to related actions performed inside the house. "Occupational role" includes income-generating activities of various forms. "Relative" encompasses all behaviour of a woman as sister, daughter, grandmother, aunt, etc. "Social role" refers to participation in religious

ceremonies, political events, regional activities and the like. “Individual role” includes any activity that improves individual knowledge and skills, or occupies free time. Although these roles were defined for women, all of them are adaptable for men. Five of these seven roles can be identified in Time Use Survey data: parent, housewife, occupational role, social role and individual role. Each role was defined by activities related to it to measure the time youth spend on each role.

Figure 2.42. Average Time (hours) Spent on Different Roles of Youth, 2009



As Figure 2.42 shows, the bulk of a young person's time is allotted to the individual role (6.6 hours daily); housewife (2.1 hours daily), occupational role (2.1 hours daily), social role (1.1 hours daily) and parent (16.0 minutes daily) follow. Activities related to the individual role among youth include 2.5 hours of educational activities (official or unofficial), 1.2 hours of using TV or radio, 51.1 minutes of individual prayers, and 49.1 minutes of personal care. The remaining time spent on other individual activities (sports, reading, entertainment, visiting places, using the computer, libraries, thinking and planning) is much shorter: from 22.2 minutes per day for sports to less than 1 minute a day for libraries and thinking and planning.

Table 2.18. Average Time (hours) Spent on Different Roles by Individual Characteristics of Youth, 2009**Table 2.18. Average Time (hours) Spent on Different Roles by Individual Characteristics of Youth, 2009**

Role	Total	Gender		Age Group			Level of Education				Economic Activity			Marital Status	
		Female	Male	15-19	20-24	25-29	Primary or lower	Secondary	High school	Academic	Employed	Unemployed	Housewife	Never married	Ever Married
Parental	0.267	0.474	0.052	0.075	0.232	0.491	0.495	0.319	0.26	0.144	0.107	0.693	0.047	0.06	0.74
Housewife	2.125	3.242	0.968	1.451	2.055	2.856	3.217	2.569	1.966	1.637	1.096	3.95	1.208	1.443	3.685
Occupational	2.058	0.727	3.437	0.867	2.132	3.139	2.919	3.222	1.709	1.545	6.824	0.613	0.255	1.839	2.56
Social	1.116	1.107	1.125	0.916	1.226	1.194	1.322	1.212	1.052	1.079	1.191	1.35	0.858	1.073	1.214
Individual	6.634	6.502	6.771	8.964	6.415	4.595	4.14	4.756	7.122	8.095	3.771	4.964	10.17	7.768	4.037
Education	2.555	2.632	2.475	4.714	2.339	0.68	0.24	0.726	3.047	3.896	0.24	0.529	6.102	3.453	0.498
TV/Radio	1.223	1.243	1.201	1.293	1.187	1.192	1.516	1.376	1.221	0.99	1.023	1.517	1.125	1.236	1.192
Individual Prayers	0.852	0.949	0.751	0.81	0.838	0.907	0.833	0.874	0.819	0.907	0.753	0.953	0.841	0.835	0.891
Personal Care	0.818	0.753	0.886	0.787	0.834	0.828	0.824	0.878	0.781	0.847	0.964	0.79	0.74	0.84	0.77
Sports	0.37	0.238	0.506	0.425	0.352	0.335	0.306	0.347	0.374	0.405	0.298	0.381	0.376	0.439	0.21
Reading	0.298	0.301	0.295	0.375	0.279	0.243	0.102	0.197	0.346	0.364	0.16	0.29	0.368	0.357	0.164
Entertainment	0.287	0.21	0.366	0.339	0.284	0.238	0.197	0.21	0.313	0.329	0.197	0.294	0.317	0.343	0.157

Youth behavioural patterns vary by certain individual characteristics such as gender, age, level of education, activity status and marital status. Analysis of time use trends among young Iranians by demographic features indicates that women spend the bulk of their time on roles of parent, housewife and personal prayers; while men spend more time in occupation, personal care, sports and entertainment (Table 2.18).

Aging is in a direct relationship with time allotted to parent, housewife and occupational roles; and in an indirect relationship with individual roles including education, sports, reading and entertainment. As level of education increases, more time is spent on individual roles including activities like education, sports and reading. On the other hand, increases in level of education reduce the time allotted to parent, housewife, social and occupational roles. Unemployed young people spend more time on parent, housewife and social roles, and on using TV/radio and individual prayers within the individual roles category. Employed young people, however, spend more time on occupational roles and personal care. Young students spend more time on individual roles, and on education, reading, sports and entertainment within the category. Young people who have never married spend more time on individual roles such as education, sports, reading and entertainment (in comparison with married, widowed or divorced youth).

2.4.4. Leisure Activities of Young People

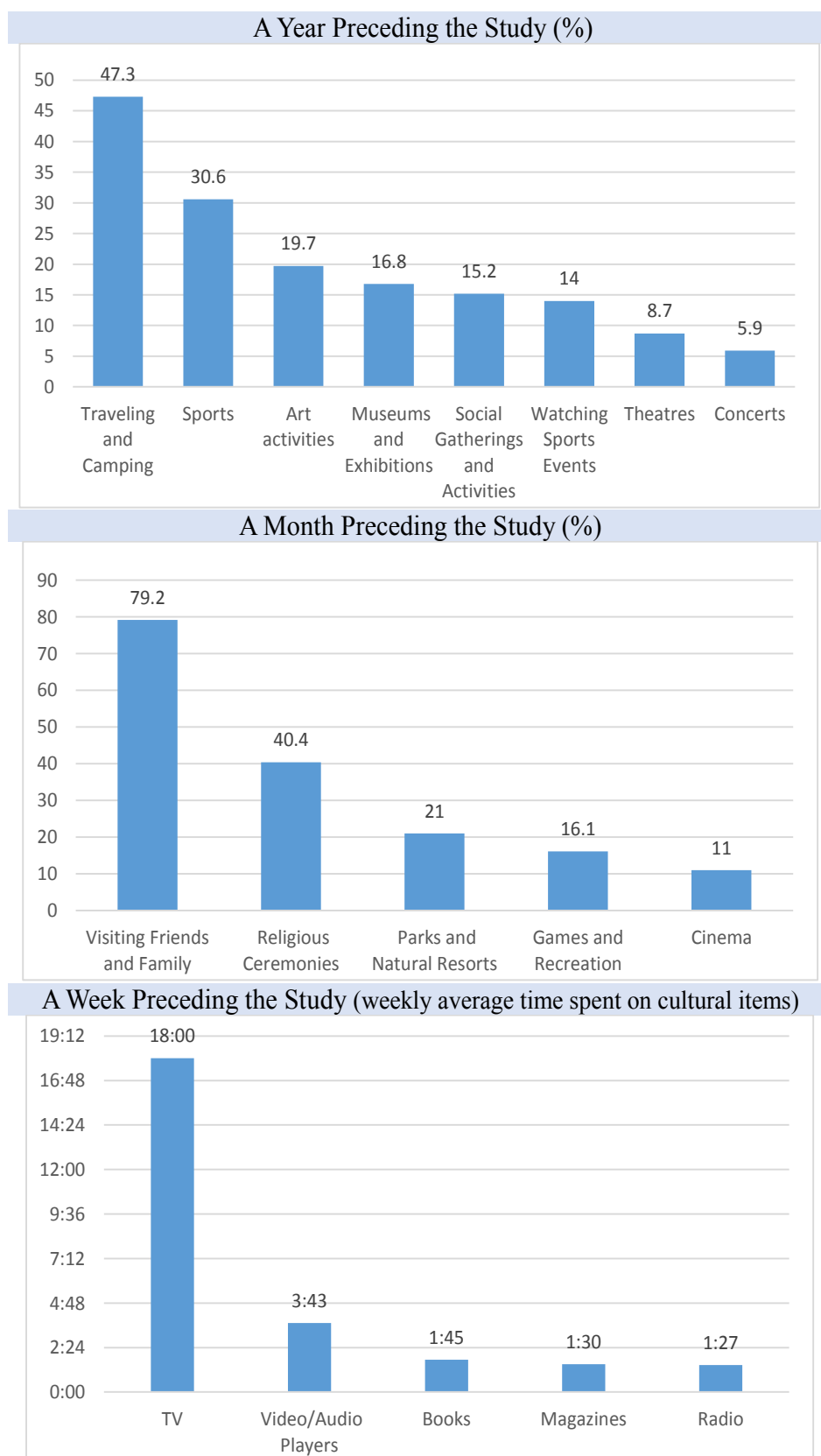
This section examines leisure patterns among Iranians aged 15-29 and the various forms of social inequality present in leisure patterns. Various forms of spending free time were examined through time budget technique in periods of one year, one month and one week. Leisure activities of youth in the year preceding the study included traveling and camping in most of the cases and going to concerts was the least prevalent activity. Visiting friends and family was the most frequently cited leisure activity for the month preceding the study; while going to cinemas held the lowest percentage. Using cultural items in the week preceding the study was dominated by TV while listening to the radio was the scarcest activity. (Figure 2.43).

On the whole, findings of the study reflect a symbolic importance for leisure in social life of youth; with a meaningful relation between time use and various forms of social inequity and disparity. Social inequities culminate in a situation where youth experience unequal leisure opportunities requiring them to adopt different approaches to leisure that conforms to various social inequalities like spatial, gender, ethnic and class-based discrimination.

Social status of individuals gives shape to their leisure activity and behaviour. Young women often face social inequalities in addition to cultural obstacles and limitations in leisure-related resources and spaces. Gender-based segregation plays a determining role in patterns of spending free-time, leading to material manifestations of gender stereotyping. Thus, girls' presence in majority of leisure activities, and public space activities in particular, is much more confined compared to that of boys. Other factors that lead to less participation on the part of girls and young women in leisure activities include limited leisure spaces, as well as discriminative cultural and social views. Therefore, social status, social roles, gender-based division of labour, and sexist stereotypes and views result in gender discrimination in leisure activities.

In addition to gender inequalities, there are (urban/rural) spatial inequalities in majority of leisure activities of youth. Spatial inequality is even more evident in activities that require special venues and facilities. Moreover, findings of this report reflect a strong association between leisure activities and social class. Lower and higher social classes are different in their hobbies, cultural tastes and social relations, and lower classes usually spend the least amount of money on leisure. Therefore, differences in social class and status of young people lead to differences in facilities they can access. Finally, there are ethnic variations in youth leisure activities and behaviour. Such differences might be a result of ethnic inequalities in access to leisure resources and opportunities, and/or different preferences of leisure activities in different ethnic groups.

Figure 2.43. Leisure Patterns and Behaviour among Iranian Youth



Source: Sadeghi and et al., 2006

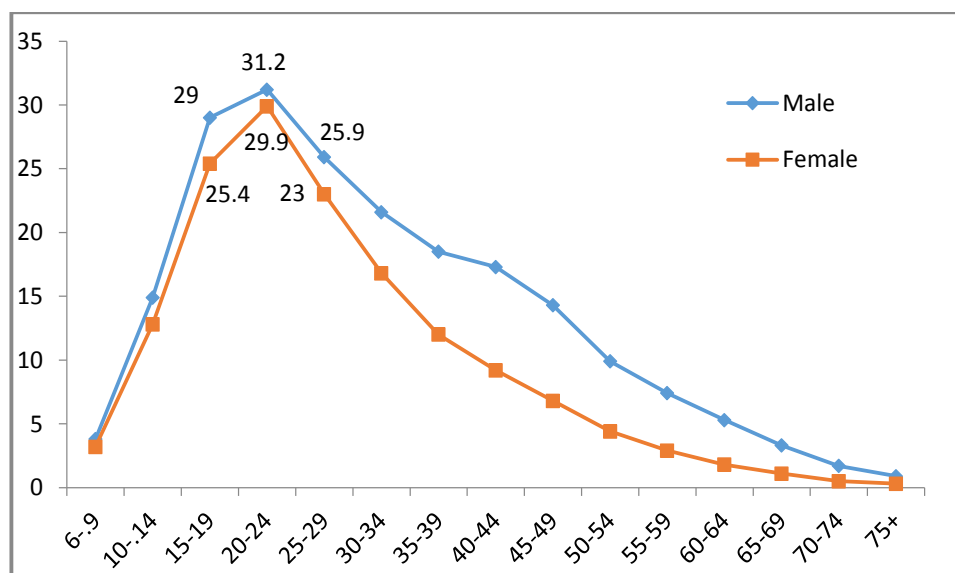
2.4.5. Youth and Internet

In recent years, young people have favoured media-oriented leisure behaviour over other behaviour. In fact, new leisure resources and contexts such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and cyberspace now take the bulk of young people's free-time. The internet holds a unique status in this regard.

Internet use has been increasing in recent years. In 1997, 10% of youth used Internet, while in 2002 and 2011 the percentage rose to 19% and 28% respectively. Age distribution of internet users in Figure 2.44 is dominated by youth. Men use Internet more than women and ages 20 to 24 use Internet more frequently than other age groups.

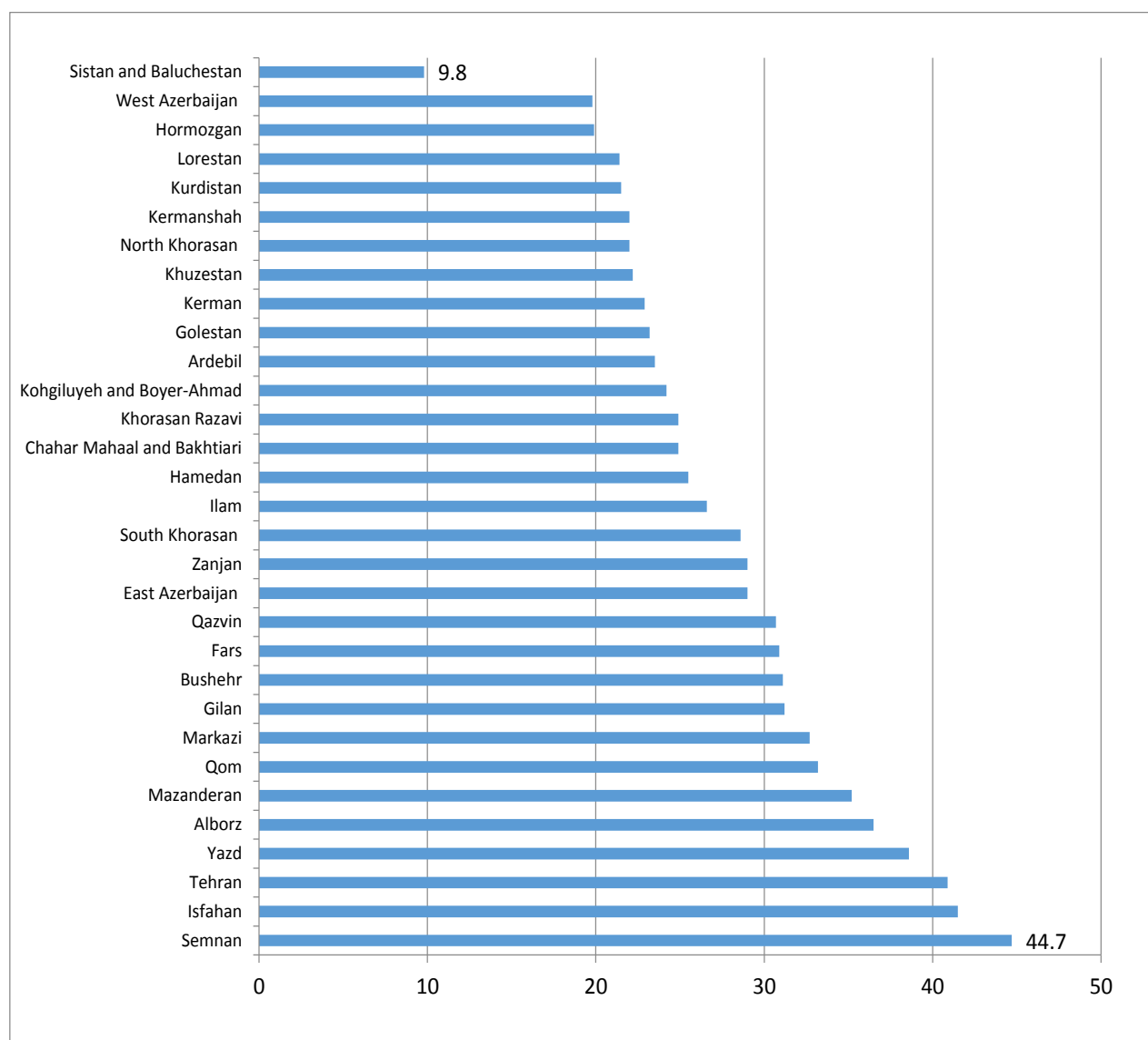
Widespread Internet use among youth and much lower usage among adults and parents have led to a “digital divide”. Digital divide refers to the distance between people who have effective access to digital and information technologies and people who have very limited or no access to them. It highlights the considerable divide between young people and previous generations in terms of familiarity, interest and usage of ICT.

Figure 2.44. Age Distribution of Internet Use during 12 Months Preceding the 2011 Census



Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

Close to 10% of young rural people and 35% of young urban people use the internet. Additionally, there are clear differences among Iranian provinces in terms of internet penetration. As Figure 2.45 shows, internet usage among youth is nearly 40% in certain provinces like Tehran, Semnan and Isfahan, while internet penetration rate is less than 10% in Sistan and Baluchestan province.

Figure 2.45. Internet Use among Youth by Province (%), 2011

Source: Calculated based on the 2011 Census

Internet brings about social changes that usually occur to its most frequent users: young people. Iranian youth have gone through socio-cultural transformations caused by the internet. While using internet, they acquire global values that, at times, differ from those of their parents. Religious pluralism and argumentative attitudes have been on the rise (Javaheri and Baqeri, 2012). Internet use can also assist in building capacities and developing knowledge and, in case of effective utilisation, can help to increase human capital for the country.

2.4.6. Social Values and Expectations

Values, rooted in social beliefs and relations, are crucial components of cultural meta-systems and personality micro-systems that shape behavioural and mental patterns. Different societies have different values and personal values, views, inspirations and wishes differentiating people living in them.

Values and beliefs change more rapidly than other areas of human life. Younger generations have material concerns, in contrast to the metaphysical concerns that older generations have. Fatalism and belief in luck are now disappearing from public cultural spheres of youth (Abbasi-Shavazi and Sadeghi, 2012). One influential factor in this new trend is the increasing level of education. Moreover, international cultural forces have gained a more prominent role in forming youth culture and value systems in the last few decades. Globalisation has been a determining force in this regard, with all its technological advancements, increasing communication, emigrations, cultural transactions, and the opening of societies to consumer goods produced in foreign cultures. Many young people think of globalisation as a multidimensional phenomenon that influences their expectations, needs and ways of interaction and creates contrasts between them and youth of earlier generations.

2.4.6.1. Youth and Changing Values in Marriage and Family

Certain values and ideals related to marriage and family life in Iran have been subject to change; the most prominent of which are age at marriage time and marriage conditions. Earlier studies on ideal conditions for marriage (for example Ahmadnia and Mehryar, 2004; Askari Nadoushan, Abbasi-Shavazi and Sadeghi, 2009) show that nearly 90% of youth believed that ideal conditions of marriage for boys include employment and adequate economic means; and nearly half of the respondents believed that ideal conditions for girls include graduation from university and economic independence. The latter opinion reflects a change in social values and emergence of new social roles for women (Sadeghi et al., 2007).

Regarding the criteria for selecting a spouse, studies reflect transformations in traditional systems of spouse selection. Ahmadnia and Mehryar's study of Tehran (2004) shows that 95.3% of the respondents believed that young couples should communicate with each other before marriage to get familiar with each other; 57.8% prefer to select their future spouse according to their personal preferences, though with advice from their parents; and just 9% are satisfied with what their parents might decide for them. Hence, the traditional way of marriage in Iran (i.e. arranged by the parents) is now changing to independent selection with some advice from parents. Another finding of the same report is that the hierarchy of marriage values among the young is topped by equality (of partners and marital responsibilities) and autonomy (independent spouse selection, independence from parents, divorce acceptance, and accepting love as the most important principle of married life); while the values at the bottom of hierarchy are being surrounded (like attachment to parents after marriage, obeying parents in spouse selection, adhering to traditional marital roles, belief in the love born after marriage, adherence to marriage rites and traditions) and hierarchical values like male-domination in married life. Tehran

residents were more autonomous and equal in their marriage than all other provinces (Delkhamoush, 2009). Thus, the abovementioned changes in marriage and family patterns, values and norms among youth encompass an emphasis on modern values of marriage over traditional ones.

2.4.6.2. Social Satisfaction and Youth

Satisfaction with a certain aspect of life is a reflection of the gap between wishes and the actual situation: the more accessible and hopeful the goals, the more satisfaction with the actual situation will be felt.

Table 2.19. Satisfaction Levels among Young Women Age 15-24, 2010

Satisfaction	Total	Urban	Rural
Satisfaction with family	89.5	89.2	90.1
Satisfaction with friends	79.2	78.6	80.5
Satisfaction with Education place	78.3	78.0	79.3
Satisfaction with current occupation	81.2	82.4	77.7
Satisfaction with living environment	71.2	71.6	70.4
Satisfaction with themselves	86.8	86.8	86.9
Satisfaction with income	64.2	64.0	64.8
Very/Relatively happy	60.0	61.1	57.7

Source: Processed results from IrMIHDS, 2010, pp. 103-2

According to DHS (2010) data, social satisfaction among young women aged 15 to 24 is at a relatively acceptable level. Close to 90% of young women are satisfied with their family life; 87% are satisfied with themselves; 80% are satisfied with their friends; 78% are satisfied with where they study; 81% are satisfied with their jobs; 71% are satisfied with their living environment; and 64% are satisfied with their income. Thus, the highest level of satisfaction is with family and the lowest level is with income. On the other hand, all satisfaction levels (except with the living environment) are higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Lastly, nearly 60% of young women (61% in urban areas and 57% in rural areas) expressed themselves as very happy or relatively happy (Table 2.19).

2.4.6.3. Social Capital and Youth

Social capital is a network of relations and connections that is based on social trust among individuals, among groups, as well as between individuals and social groups, organisations and institutes. It is akin to social coherence and social protection and the energy and support that individuals and groups possess for assisting in achievement of individual and collective goals (Mousavi, 2006). Notions of social capital were introduced by sociologists like Bourdieu (1985), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993) as a practical and objective method to assist in identification of collective action and institutionalised behaviour, while applying them to various elements of social structure such as trust, practicality, norms, and reliability of communication channels. The central questions to answer in this approach are how to practice social institutes, structures and relations? And, what roles trust and reliability, information transfer and the like play in potential collective cooperation and action? At any

rate, social capital is made of institutes, relations, views and values that direct interactions between people and assist in socioeconomic prosperity.

Findings of the Young Iranians' Social Capital survey of 2006 show that in a sample measurement of more than 4500 persons aged 15-29 living across Iran, based on criteria of various dimensions, there are social capital deficiencies in terms of community relations and trust in strangers and the authorities (Shiani et al., 2009). Other findings from this survey are reflected in Table 2.20. In summary, the lowest level of social capital of youth is in community relations, and the highest level in feeling supported by the society.

Within the community relations category, the lowest level of social capital is present in accepting executive responsibilities in civil bodies; followed by financial and intellectual assistance. The highest level of social capital within the category is in collaboration with civil bodies. In the category of social norms and trust, which is evaluated to be generally at a “low-middle” level, the highest percent is in trust in social groups and the lowest in trust in the authorities. Interpersonal relations and trust is at a low level on the whole. The highest level within this category is seen in co-operating in collective efforts of others, while the lowest level is in communicating with others and trust in other people. Social coherence is low in 41% of the cases, medium in 33% and high in 26% of the cases. The highest level within this category is in religious toleration and the lowest level in social acceptance. Young people stated that they feel social support to a large extent.

Therefore, social capital levels among young Iranians are at low to medium levels for the most of categories. Social capital is particularly very low in terms of accepting executive responsibilities and assisting in civil bodies. It is high in social norms and trust, and trust in social groups and institutes; but it is at a low level in trust in the authorities and confidence in civil responsibilities. Cooperating in collective efforts and voluntary action for solving the problems of others is at a high level, while communicating with others is at a low level. Social capital in terms of religious and ethnic toleration and ethnic solidarity is at a normal level; but social toleration is at an undesirable level. The youth feel supported by others to a reasonable extent. All in all, social capital of youth is low in 34.7% of the cases, medium in 33.5% of the cases and high in 31.8% of the cases (Shiani et al., 2009)

Table 2.20. Social Capital Indicators Distribution (%) for Young Iranians, 2006

Indicators for Social Capital of the Young	Distribution (%)		
	Low	Medium	High
Community Relations	49.3	34.7	16.0
• Cooperation with civil bodies	38.7	38.4	22.9
• Membership in civil bodies	48.6	38.0	13.4
• Participation in civil programmes	50.1	26.3	23.6
• Intellectual assistance to civil bodies	80.7	13.3	6.0
• Financial assistance to civil bodies	77.7	16.3	6.0
• Taking executive responsibilities in civil bodies	83.4	15.3	1.3
Social Norms and Trust	37.5	32.7	29.8
• Trust in institutes and organisations	33.1	34.1	32.8
• Trust in social groups	30.4	32.4	37.2
• Evaluation of social conditions	32.5	42.3	25.2
• Trust in the authorities	48.5	31.1	20.4
• Confidence in civil rights	41.4	35.8	23.0
• Confidence in civil responsibilities	41.2	38.1	20.7
• Confidence in moral values of society	37.0	37.2	25.8
Interpersonal Relations and Trust	44.9	26.6	21.7
• Sense of belonging to others	38.0	32.1	29.9
• Trust in others	39.1	33.1	27.8
• Collaboration and voluntary action to solve the problems others have	34.5	33.6	31.9
• Cooperating in collective efforts	33.7	33.9	32.4
• Communicating with others	41.6	36.1	22.3
Social coherence	41.1	33.0	25.9
• Social toleration	43.9	37.5	28.6
• Ethnic solidarity	35.1	31.0	33.9
• Religious and ethnic toleration	29.1	33.6	37.3
Social support			
• Feeling of social support	23.7	7.2	69.1
Total Social Capital	34.7	33.5	31.8

Source: Shiani et al., 2009, p76.

Therefore, although values and attitudes have always been changing and developing from one historical period to another, the changes have been more pronounced in the last few decades. Young people are exposed to numerous currents and trends of change, and are more prepared to embrace new different norms, values and views than their elders might be.

Chapter 3: Youth Related Laws, Policies and Plans

3.1. Introduction

Meeting the wide-ranging needs of youth requires comprehensive planning and policy-making. Given the demographic developments in and the large size of young population in Iran, policy-making for youth has always been a major concern for various government bodies in Iran. Youth affairs are part of the tasks defined for the Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, and other related bodies.

Scientific, educational and research activities of youth are mainly pursued through Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Ministry of Education, and the National Elite Foundation. Building technical and professional skills is a responsibility of the Technical and Vocational Organisation; providing employment and supporting employment schemes for the young fall under the auspices of Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Cooperation. The Adolescence and Youth Organisation, a subsidiary of Ministry of Health, provides healthcare for youth and promotes their health through different programs. Young volunteers in the Red Crescent Society perform majority of emergency interventions during crises. Yet, it might be added that the most active role in plans and activities related to youth is played by the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

The Ministry of Sports and Youth was established on 29 December 2010 after the merger of the Physical Education Organisation and the National Youth Organisation. Main goals for the ministry include developing physical health and healthy spirit for the people, developing sports and coordinating physical exercises and healthy recreational activities, establishing and operating sport centres, developing and promoting professional sports in line with major government goals, providing solutions and improvements for youth, and improving youth efficiency, effectiveness, talents and capacities. In addition, Ministry of Sports and Youth is endowed with a strategic research and development centre to execute and support several studies on issues surrounding youth (see Table 5 in Appendix).

Youth policies are so crucial that a majority of Five-Year Development Plans of Iran have included a segment on youth. Yet, the gap between planning and executing the plans is considerable. Multiple complex problems facing youth, like unemployment, attest to programmatic ineffectiveness and impracticality. When more than 32% of Iranian population today are young people aged 15-29, youth policies become even more critical. The present young population can drive development of the country, on the condition that developmental requirements of youth –and especially their employment– are planned and provided for, otherwise, the young population will create multiple challenges for the country. Haphazard policy-making leads to nowhere. Therefore, specialists of different related fields should be consulted in order to develop practical systematic policies for organisation of the energies that the youth possess.

A review of enactments, documents and instructions of related institutions would be valuable for a deeper understanding of theoretical backgrounds and basis of youth policies in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The present section discusses officially published and publically available texts only related to the relevant authorities and organizations include National Youth Organisation, Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Ministry of Health. The section continues with a consideration of youth policies in three parts: discussions on major approaches in youth policies;

discussions on certain youth-related regulations of the Five-Year Development Plans; and, finally, discussion of related regulations, plans and enactments of administrative bodies.

3.2. Major Approaches to Youth Policy-making in Iran

Major discourses on the young can be divided into five periods (Table 3.1). In the first period, beginning with 1979 Islamic Revolution, superstructures for administering youth affairs are virtually non-existent. With the beginning of Iran-Iraq War, the second period, youth were usually seen as forces that manage the war. Youth-specific intersectoral organizations still were not established by this time. During the Reconstruction period (1989-1997), cultural views toward the young gained strength and leisure activities of the young and preventing cultural invasion by the West became usual focal points. In 1994, High Council on the Young was established as a superstructure to administer youth affairs. In another instance of the cultural view towards youth, the very first effort by the Council was to enact an educational charter. To conclude the period, the first two Development Plans mostly highlighted cultural aspects of the youth.

Table 3.1. Main Approaches to Youth Policy-making in Iran

Period	Main Policy-making Approach
1978-1980	Youth as pioneers of Islamic Revolution
1980-1988	Youth as pioneers of the Holy Defence (Iraq-Iran war)
1989-1997	Youth as victims of cultural invasion by the West
1997-2005	Youth as social change agents
2005-2013	Youth as social equity agents and beneficiaries

Source: Based on Taj-Mazinani, 2013.

Reforms period (1997-2005) viewed the young as agents and drivers of social change. Reforms period might be further divided into two sub-periods. The earlier 6 years of the Reformist administration retained the existing youth authorities and added a social aspect to the merely cultural views toward the youth; along with National Youth Consultancy and Youth Leisure plans, an unprecedented emphasis on youth participation in NGOs began; National Youth Organisation was established; and National Network of Youth NGOs was established. Another interesting change during this sub-period was that the Third Development Plan paid extra (socio-cultural) attention to the young. Through the course of last 2 years of the Reforms period, more reformists took responsibilities for youth affairs. The second wave of changes in this area included adoption of intersectoral and multidimensional approaches; emphasis on youth policies and plans; establishment of National Youth Forum and even more emphasis on Youth NGOs; development of The Young Rights Charter; development of a Youth Document within the 20-Years Vision Plan; development of Comprehensive Superstructure Document on Organisation of Youth Affairs; establishment of Youth Affairs Administrative Organisation; and enactment of National Policy on Youth.

The Principality administration (2005-2013) viewed the young mostly as both agents and beneficiaries of social equity. Although the Young Presidential Advisers Committee was established during the period (2005-2013) and the Imam Reza Mehr Fund and Mehr Housing Plan were founded to prioritise marriage, employment and housing for youth, adequate attention was not paid to High Council on the Young. Furthermore, only two sessions were held during the period. The new administration followed

its own priorities through several isolated new plans (Taj-Mazinani, 2013)

3.3. Policy Documents on the Young

3.3.1. Legal Articles on Youth in the Fifth Development Plan (2011-2015)

The latest Islamic Republic of Iran Development Plan, the fifth of its kind, encompasses the five years from 2011 to 2015. Ten articles of the Plan concern youth affairs; which are summarised in Table 6 of the Appendix. All in all, education and culture are the main approaches in majority of legal articles on youth.

3.3.2. Laws, Plans and Enactments on Youth

- **20-Years Vision**

Regarding cultural, scientific and technological affairs, Paragraph 10 concerns reforms in the educational system (including primary, secondary and tertiary education and technical and vocational training) and improving effectiveness to provide human resources required for goals of the 20-Years Vision. Paragraph 15 concerns strengthening national identity among youth along the same lines as ideals of the Islamic Revolution, and considering the following:

- a. Providing an environment that stimulates mental and scientific growth; attempting to solve employment, marriage, and housing concerns and related social issues.
- b. Considering requirements, needs and capacities of youth.

- **Youth Marriage Facilitation Act of 2005**

Marriage Facilities Scheme and its 14 Articles and 4 Notes were enacted by the Islamic Majlis (Parliament) on 18 December 2005 and verified by the Guardians Council on 28 December 2005 to be submitted to the administration and, subsequently, to the Management and Planning Organisation, in accordance with Principle 123 of the Legislation. Certain Articles of the Law are provided in Table 7 of the Appendix.

- **Executive Instructions on Youth Marriage Administration**

The Cabinet enacted the Executive Instructions on Youth Marriage Administration on 2 March 2005, following Recommendation #11328س of National Youth Organisation on 21 February 2005, in accordance with Article 112 of the Fourth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan. Table 8 of the Appendix includes these instructions and their articles.

- **Enactments of High Council on the Young**

Enacted plans of the High Council on the Young during sessions held from 7 October 1992 to 26 April 2007 are summarised in Table 9 of the Appendix. The plans include Young Generation Educational Charter, Youth Religious and National Identity Improvement, and Administrative Document on Housing for Youth.

- **Enactments of the Joint Meeting of the Cabinet and Youth**

A joint meeting of Iranian Cabinet and youth was held in 15 November 2012 to consider the latter's demands and requests. Enactments of the meeting included the following:

- Legal mechanisms for youth participation in related management and collaboration processes
- Allotting a current cultural budget for youth at all provinces
- Reviving National Youth Organisation (following requests by many young participants to revive the National Youth Organisation, President Ahmadinejad ordered Mr Rahimi, the Vice President, to prepare the proposal and submit it to the parliament)
- Involvement of youth in Mehr Mandegar Plans (President Ahmadinejad ordered Mr Mehrabian, responsible for Mehr Mandegar Plans, to prepare the grounds for youth participation and involvement)
- Research budget allocation in provinces for the elite (President Ahmadinejad ordered Nasrin Soltankhah, the Science Deputy, to allocate adequate funds for the enactment; he also promised to assist in this regard)
- Facilitating employment for youth elite in public organisations of Iranian provinces (President Ahmadinejad said that necessary regulations are in place and provincial governments have begun implementing the enactment)
- Emphasis on Science & Technology Parks, where already built, and construction of more parks in provinces without them (ISNA website, news code: 91082415628)

- **Instructions on Organisation and Financial Provision of Consultancy Centres**

The Cabinet enacted the Instructions on Organisation and Financial Provision of Consultancy Centres on 15 October 2012, following recommendation 25338-100 of the Strategic Planning and Monitoring Deputy on 28 July 2012, and in accordance with Article 43 of the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan. Article 3 of the instructions included the following items on youth:

Article 3. Marriage and Family Strengthening Consultancy Centres provide the following services:

- a. Trainings and consultations on the reciprocal rights and responsibilities of husbands, wives and children within a family
- b. Trainings and consultations on marriage (before and after marriage)
- c. Trainings and consultations on religious, cultural, educational and behavioural matters of the family
- d. Trainings and consultations in order to improve individual and social capabilities of youth
- e. Facilitating spouse selection

- **Graduates Internship Plan**

It aims to transfer practical skills and experience to university graduates and to prepare their entrance into the labour market. Additionally, it aims to measure performance of the higher education system against demands of the labour market, in order to identify academic fields that various sectors of the country might demand. Note that the Fifth Development Plan, Article 21, Paragraph A concerns the same issue.

Major objectives of the plan include improving professional capabilities of university graduates in line with labour market organisation; familiarisation with certain occupational tasks and learning the related skills, preparing and fostering a culture of using experts in economic units; and, improving scientific levels in production sectors to reform production structures of the country. Minor objectives are, among others, identifying educational fields required by various sectors (demand side gaps); comparing

graduates' fields of study with needed specialisations in the labour market; systematising existing mechanisms within the private sector that are similar to the Graduates Internship Plan; preparing the grounds for specialised employment in related fields and improving human resource qualities to renovate different sectors; promoting interaction and understanding between interns and their employers in a given time period to facilitate long-term employment (Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Cooperation, Graduates Group). It should be added that the Fifth Development Plan, Article 21 concerns the same issue and states that “within the year beginning from the date of approval, the administration should take necessary measures in related areas, such as continuation of internship system and provision of skills improvement, in order to develop professional competence through building of knowledge and skills, in order to realise “actual working” in workplaces, reform the educational hierarchy of labour, improve human resources and build capacities, raise labour force competency levels to global standard levels, provide new employment for youth, and improve technical and vocational trainings in Technical and Vocational Training system as well as in Scientific-Practical Education system, whether official or not.

- **Knowledge-based Cooperative Organisations**

Article 3 of the charter for the Organisation, working under Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Cooperation, formulates that its sphere of action include the following:

- Training, empowering and retraining graduates and students to develop and offer feasibility studies for start-up businesses;
- Surveying employment for graduates schemes and providing advice on entrepreneurship, employment and implementation of inventions/research;
- Grouping graduates and students in specialised cooperative organisations to provide employment and assist in entering the business world;
- Identifying, attracting and transferring facilities for inventors, entrepreneurs and researchers.

- **Initialising a Youth Studies Masters Programme**

Youth Studies Masters programmes have been developed in many universities of Europe and U.S since 1970s, as a multidisciplinary program with links to sociology, social studies, psychology, cultural studies and religious studies. In Iran, Educational Planning Board of Tehran University approved Youth Studies curriculum in November 2004 to prepare for the first youth studies Masters programme in Iran. September 2005 witnessed the first students of the programme enter Tehran University. In recent years, Mazandaran University has begun its own youth studies programme as well.

Youth studies are now a branch of social studies at the Masters level. It includes studies on characteristics, issues and subcultures of youth, and social developments, institutions and organisations active in youth-related fields. Youth studies Masters Programmes aim to train and offer specialists in various socio-cultural areas to perform research, education, management and planning in different youth-related socio-cultural areas. However, interactions between universities, youth research centres and policy-makers are always necessary.

3.4. Conclusions: Evaluation of Policies and Plans

Despite the little progress made so far, youth policies and plans still suffer several deficiencies. In particular, many youth-related documents and plans of the last twenty years have not been implemented (especially those dedicated exclusively to youth). Taj-Mazinani (2013) gives five reasons for the failure:

1. *Unclear position of youth policymakers and planning authorities:* In accordance with the Supreme Council on Cultural Revolution, High Council on Youth is the highest-ranking authority on youth policies and plans; and National Youth Organisation (Ministry of Sports and Youth), according to the Islamic Parliament, is the executive and theoretical arm and the main coordinator of various related bodies. Nevertheless, there are overlaps between the authority spheres and duties of these bodies and those of other related bodies (such as the High Council on Labour or High Council on Education). As most of the latter group of bodies are better-established, better-known, more institutionalised and better-defined, executives act on their enactments, rather than those of High Council on Youth that are merely enforceable within the sphere of Ministry of Sports and Youth.
2. *Unclear position of Youth-specific documents within national policies and plans:* The plans from the High Council on Youth and its executive and theoretical arms usually follow the same path and remain ambiguous and untouched. For example, National Youth Organisation held several meetings with the Ministry of Labour to discuss integration of Youth Employment Development Document of 2005 (one of the 13 sub-documents of Youth Affairs Organisation Comprehensive Document) within National Employment Development Document (enacted by the High Council on Employment), in order to implement the documents in a unified mechanism. While similar legal ambiguities continue to exist in health, social welfare, education and collaboration, youth-specific documents will face serious obstacles on way to being implemented.
3. *Ambiguous position of youth-specific plans in the national budget system:* The funds for different plans in Iran are provided through proposals by the administration (in turn, made of proposals from various other organisations) to the parliament for discussion and approval. Having in mind the last two ambiguities, ministries and organisations usually focus on their own plans when requesting their annual budgets and overlook their previous youth-specific agreements with the High Council on Youth. Moreover, Ministry of Sports and Youth is not considered an executive body that implements the plans enacted by High Council on Youth. Its budget is strictly confined to the amount needed for coordinating related bodies plus some marginal expenditure. Having no budget item for youth-specific items, plans and documents enacted by the Council never appear in annual budgets of other organisations. At the end of the day, the same plans that ministers and managers of executive bodies had agreed on during meetings with the High Council on Youth or the Cabinet, face difficulty in implementation phase.
4. *Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation:* No accurate, stable and powerful monitoring and evaluation mechanism exists to monitor youth-related plans and documents, in order to provide systematic evaluations of their various aspects, and to report findings to the related authorities for their future decisions (High Council on Youth and the Cabinet in particular).

5. *Lack of Enforcement:* Enacted documents and plans are not enforced properly and organisations will not receive any penalties or rewards for ignoring or performing them.

The following general conclusions emerge after studying youth-related laws and regulations of the last few years:

- Approaches to youth and their affairs have been subject to change in different periods and under various administrations having different policies. As a result, youth-related policies of an administration come to naught in the next administration. Therefore, a non-political and independent body should be established to develop and implement policies and regulations on youth.
- Although young people are facing economic issues today, youth planning has often been done from a cultural standpoint. An economic approach is now a necessity in youth policy-making more than ever.
- Increasing age at marriage in recent decades indicates inefficient implementation of marriage plans and policies for the young (like Marriage Facilitation Law and Young Marriage Organisation Law). Thus, related rules and regulations should be reviewed to identify reasons of failure. Have they been evaluated as practical and reasonable before approval, rather than being abstract goals of unrealistic policy-makers?
- Five-Year Development Plans merely hint at some issues of youth. The considerable size of young population in Iran, however, requires clear and detailed consideration of youth affairs.
- To reach a better understanding of issues of youth and to better implement the policies, young individuals should be involved in designing rules and regulations. In other words, true recognition of young people's needs should be followed through actually involving them in legislative processes.
- In addition to political limitations in systematic and comprehensive national youth strategies and plans, clear deficiencies exist in national surveys, in terms of values and expectations of youth. National surveying of youth-related values and views is an essential necessity. Developing information databases and complementary surveys and research (including longitudinal studies on values, views, needs and capacities of youth) can provide adequate knowledge basis for policy-making on youth.
- Regarding the youth-related laws and unemployment, as the most critical problem of youth and particularly graduates, no enforceable systematic plan could be found within any related body. There are only a few marginal references to the issue in discussions of certain more general concerns. Youth unemployment should be considered in a more serious manner in order to develop independent policies and solutions.
- On health situation of youth, none of the laws or policies include health programmes dedicated to youth. Young people are vulnerable to hazards such as traffic accidents. Growing age at marriage makes them more vulnerable to high-risk sexual behaviour and other threats to health. None of these issues are integrated into plans or legal statements

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Appendix

Table 1. Distribution of Research Fields in Youth Studies

Research Fields	Frequency	Percent
Social Problems	82	21.6
Education and Employment	43	11.3
Leisure and Time Use	39	10.3
Marriage and family formation	35	9.2
Social Involvement	28	7.4
Identity	27	7.1
High-risk Behaviour	24	6.3
Internet, Media and Cyberspace	22	5.8
Religiousness	21	5.5
Inter-generation Relations	16	4.2
Migration and Movement	15	3.9
Opposite Sex Relationships before Marriage	15	3.9
Social Values and Expectations	13	3.4
Total	380	100

Table 2. Major Subjects in Research Areas of Youth Studies

(1) Marriage and Raising a Family	(2) Opposite Sex Relationships before Marriage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage views and ideals (age at marriage and spouse selection criteria) • Increased age at marriage and factors influencing it • Marriage problems and reasons for them • Evaluation of temporary marriage • Interest in single life and independence from the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposite sex relations before marriage: patterns and distribution level • Evaluation of opposite sex relations before marriage and factors influencing it • Pathology of opposite sex relationships before marriage and its consequences
(3) Inter-generation Relations	(4) High-risk Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generation divide • Generation differences in values and ideas (religious values in particular) • Generation differences in marriage and family values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health situation of youth • Mental health issues of youth • High-risk behaviour among youth, reproductive health • Awareness and evaluation of and actions related to unprotected sex, HIV/AIDS, etc. • Traffic accidents among youth
(5) Education and Employment	(6) Immigration and Movement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational situation of youth • Employment and unemployment among youth (academic graduates in particular) • Occupational and skills needs of youth • Young women and labour market: interests and realities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration situation of youth • Economic, social and demographic contexts of youth migration • Consequences of youth migration • Young people's interest in migration
(7) Leisure	(8) Internet, Media and Cyberspace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time use and leisure behaviour among youth • Needs assessment and views on leisure activities • Sports and physical exercises among youth • Youth and mass media (TV, Internet, etc.) • Social inequalities in leisure • Harmful aspects of leisure activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth and living with the internet • Youth and internet social networks • Youth, cell phones and interpersonal relations • Digital divide between youth and parents and previous generations • Internet addiction and its consequences
(9) Identity	(10) Religiousness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and collective identities of youth • National and ethnic identities • Identification processes for youth • Factors influencing young people's identity and life style • Identity crisis and alienation among youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religiousness and its measures among youth • Religious sociability among youth • Factors influencing religious views and behaviour of youth • Evaluation of religious values and practices • Interest in hijab among young girls and factors influencing it
(11) Social Involvement	(12) Social Values and Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and political involvement of youth • Youth involvement in NGOs • Youth involvement in religious ceremonies • Social capital and social networks of youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values and views of youth • Wishes and interests of youth in education, employment and family • Youth and future vision
(13) Social Evils	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crimes and deviations among youth • Crimes and their factors among youth • Sexual perversions among youth • Social contexts for urban youth criminality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs abuse and addiction among youth • Social evils situation of youth (suicide, theft, etc.) • Vandalism tendencies among youth

Table 3. Results from Bivariate Analysis on Socioeconomic Factors of Youth Marriage, 2006

Socio-demographic Factors		Marriage proportions (%)					
		15-19		20-24		25-29	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Residence	Rural	2.6	24.5	30.6	57.3	71.8	75.4
	Urban	1.6	18.4	23.2	55.8	66.0	79.6
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	***	***	***	***	***
Full-time Studies	Yes	0.6	5.8	7.2	22.6	45.3	48.4
	No	3.8	36.1	29.6	62.4	69.6	79.2
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	***	***	***	***	***
Level of Education	Illiterate	7.6	36.1	38.6	64.0	73.3	81.5
	Primary	5.0	33.2	42.7	64.5	80.0	79.9
	Secondary	3.1	36.4	32.8	70.6	73.8	84.7
	High school & Diploma	1.1	13.9	21.4	56.2	65.1	78.7
	University education	1.1	9.8	10.4	29.2	50.7	61.6
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	***	***	***	***	***
Economic Activity	Unemployed	1.1	21.1	11.7	57.6	39.0	79.5
	Employed	5.3	21.6	39.8	45.1	77.0	67.7
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	ns	***	***	***	***
Occupational Status	Unemployed	1.2	21.2	11.9	57.7	39.9	79.5
	Low	5.4	19.3	40.9	45.0	78.8	65.8
	Middle	5.2	21.7	39.0	43.2	76.7	65.0
	High	9.1	27.6	36.7	49.5	69.7	71.4
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	ns	***	***	***	***
Household Economic status	Low (poor)	3.7	28.1	37.9	61.8	77.6	77.8
	Middle	2.0	23.2	28.2	59.9	71.0	78.8
	Wealthy	1.2	14.4	17.0	48.0	57.3	76.4
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	***	***	***	***	ns
Sample Size		71,403	74,964	68,464	77,888	63,422	63,532

Note: ns = insignificant; * P<0.05; ** P<0.01; *** P<0.001

Source: Processed raw data from the 2006 Census 2% File

Table 4. Results from Bivariate Analysis on Socio-economic Factors of Marriage of the Young, 2011

Socio-demographic Factors		Marriage proportions (%)					
		15-19		20-24		25-29	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Residence	Rural	3.1	28.6	28.4	59.6	67	74.4
	Urban	1.8	18.6	20.6	52.3	57.2	73.9
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	***	***	***	***	ns
Full-time Studies	Yes	4.6	42.1	28.5	66.3	62.4	77.5
	No	0.8	6.1	7	22.7	37	41.2
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	***	***	***	***	***
Level of Education	Illiterate	8.2	31.7	35.6	63.6	64.9	74
	Primary	6.1	36.2	39.5	68.9	75.6	80.7
	Secondary	4.1	46.6	33.1	75.3	67.8	85.3
	High school&Diploma	1.4	15.9	22.3	64.8	61	82.7
	University education	1.3	9.9	9.7	29	42.2	54.8
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	***	***	***	***	***
Economic Activity	Unemployed	1.3	21.7	10.2	54.8	30.8	75.9
	Employed	8.8	23.6	41.6	44.9	73.1	58
	<i>Sig.</i>	***	ns	***	***	***	***
Occupational Status	Low	6.9	16.4	35.5	29.3	69.8	38.3
	Middle	7.3	23.8	39.1	42.7	72.3	56.3
	High	14.6	29.6	39.5	50.5	62.2	59.9
	<i>Sig.</i>	ns	***	***	***	***	***
Within the total sample (%)		2.2	21.9	23.0	54.8	59.8	74.0
Sample Size		62617	63047	77900	81444	84048	86371

Note: ns = insignificant; * P<0.05; ** P<0.01; *** P<0.001

Source: Processed raw data from the 2011 Census 2% File

Table 5. General Obligations of Ministry of Sports and Youth**1. Sports****Planning, Policy-making and Monitoring to:**

- Develop and expand sports and training for improving bodily strength and healthy spirits among the people;
- Train and educate sports referees and coaches across the country;
- Universalise sports across the country;
- Expand sports to villages and nomadic areas;
- Improve championship sports levels to achieve international top rankings;
- Improve professional sports level from an economic perspective;
- Establish, equip and operate sports stadiums and other sports centres;
- Develop requirements for approval/disapproval of sports clubs and determine work ethics for sports centres in the country and monitor them in accordance to the enacted instructions;
- Direct and support sports federations and boards to achieve applicable objectives;
- Monitor technical issues of sports and physical education in schools, universities, colleges and other executive bodies to achieve applicable objectives;
- Provide grounds for relations between subsidiaries of the organisation and other international scientific-sports centres to obtain the latest information and findings in related fields;
- Arrange for improved collaborations with non-governmental sectors and empower voluntary movements in sports activities.

2. Youth

- Study and research in strategic fields of youth affairs to recognise and determine various needs and problems of youth and offer appropriate strategic solutions and coordinate practical research in the field by executive bodies;
- Identification, monitoring, support and empowerment of youth NGOs;
- Identification of activities in executive bodies that are delegable to non-governmental youth organisations and unions in cooperation with related authorities;
- Evaluating efficiency and effectiveness of executive bodies in youth-related activities and reporting to applicable authorities;
- Organising and monitoring centres that provide consultation and information for youth;
- Development and management of specialised national meta-plans and piloting youth-related activities in collaboration with related executive bodies;
- Development of “Youth Affairs Organisation Comprehensive Plan”, with regards to essential roles and goals of various related public and private bodies;
- Studying and assessing youth-related rules and regulations to resolve deficiencies and suggest changes and amendments or to develop new rules for applicable authorities, in collaboration with related bodies;
- Organising leisure activities for youth that are appropriate for their age to assist in development of the country and address socio-cultural limitations for rural and urban youth;
- Providing appropriate methodologies for efficient realisation of capacities of youth and better utilisation of resources and facilities in related executive bodies;
- Collaboration with related executive bodies in defining regulations and standards for the activities of youth-related cultural and arts centres.

Table 6. Youth-related Articles in the Fifth Development Plan (2011-2015)

Article	Provisions
6	e. In order to improve cultural and artistic output of mosques, and to foster cultural equality, promote Islamic culture and attract adolescents and youth to the mosques, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance should arrange for establishment of cultural and arts centres within at least one fourth of all urban mosques and mosques of villages with 1000 or more population, in accordance with Islamic norms, before the end of Plan.
9	The administration is allowed to take the following measures to increase access to cultural, arts and sports spaces for people of all classes and to provide necessary infrastructure for development of cultural and arts measures: a. After enactment by the cabinet, provide, as pro bono, a maximum of 50% of all expenditures in completing cultural, arts, religious and Quranic centres, and a minimum of 50% in the private sector; and establish sports facilities near and for mosques as well as cultural and sports centres for young Basij volunteers, the completion and operation of which is a necessity for the public.
15	In order to bring fundamental changes to higher education, especially in human sciences, and to realise the Software Movement and deepen religious beliefs, values and work ethics, and to improve Islamic sciences and teachings, the following measures should be taken by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Research, and the Ministry of Health, Healthcare and Medical Education: a. Revise academic texts, contents and curricula according to the religious teachings and Islamic-Iranian-Revolutionary identity; and strengthen graduate studies with highest scientific achievements, prioritising labour market demands.
16	The administration is allowed to take the following measures to reach and establish Iran as the second country in the region in terms of science and technology before the end of the Fifth Development Plan: b. Build capacities for increasing the number of students at graduate levels of universities, in a manner that more than 20% of undergraduate students advance to graduate levels. And improve qualities and quantities of higher education institutes and universities to foster equality in education and help in realisation of the Vision plans along with other provisions of this Article. d. Establish, operate and equip practical laboratories in universities and educational institutes, academic, scientific, technologic, research towns, science and technology parks, and development centres, through executive bodies and their subsidiaries. Research staff of these laboratories can be provided from researchers of the executive body or company, or academic teachers and graduate students. Executive bodies and companies can spend parts of their research budget through these laboratories. f. Ministry of Science, Research and Technology and Ministry of Health, Healthcare and Medical Science should collaborate with related bodies to perform, monitor and report annual completion of the following items to the Education and Research Commission of the Parliament: (1) Improve qualities and quantities of higher education institutes and universities to foster equality in education and help in realisation of the Vision plan along with other provisions of this Article.
17	The administration is allowed to take the following measures to develop and spread technologies and support knowledge-based companies: e. Financial support for academic dissertations and theses to improve efficiency and solve national problems; f. Provision and payment of some of the expenditures in registration of inventions and production of technical knowledge; and financial support for producers to purchase technical knowledge and patents.
18	In order to expand targeted material and intellectual support for the elites and innovators of science and technology, the administration should fulfil the following: a. Improve their social respect through awareness-raising; b. Facilitate educational progress and studying areas of interest before and after university entrance; c. Offer financial support and scholarships through Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, Ministry of Health, Healthcare and Medical Education, and National Elite Foundation; d. Direct education toward national priority fields and areas;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Provide social security insurance and basic healthcare insurance for them and their families; f. Remove financial risk concerns in research and innovation; g. Support commercialisation of their achievements; h. Strengthen spirituality, discretion, self-confidence and national pride; i. Develop science, research and technology centres at international levels with specialised equipment in various basic and strategic scientific fields, employing the elite and scientists to create knowledge, new ideas, and meanwhile convert knowledge to wealth; j. Provide employment opportunities suitable for the elite, in line with their specialisations and capabilities and national priorities, through supporting high-risk investments for conversion of technical knowledge to products acceptable in the labour market; k. Establish mechanisms of increased cooperation from scientific foundations and foundations of the elite and the gifted in national decision-making and management; l. Establish necessary mechanisms for scientific foundations and foundations of the elite and the gifted to participate in international science and research conferences and forums, to utilise Iranian scientists and elite globally, and to provide adequate research opportunities both locally and internationally; m. Provide and pay for some of the expenditures in national and international patenting and develop necessary arrangements and procedures for publication of their scientific works.
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In accordance with Paragraph 8 of General Policies #1, in order to foster improvements in three areas of science, skills and Islamic education, the administration is allowed to develop a plan for essential changes in national education system within the framework of applicable laws and in accordance with the following guidelines, and implement the plan after Cabinet's approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing educational and teaching programmes to help Iranians acquire needed competencies from pedagogical graduates, based on Islamic educational philosophies, needs assessments and technologies; 2. Educational guidance according to the interests and characteristics of the students, professional development and human resources that the country needs; 3. Reforming educational progress evaluation system to fully realise teaching-learning process at all educational levels by the end of the Plan; 4. Providing grounds and rationale for talented students to study humanities; 5. Planning to gradually create a balance between the number of students studying different fields of study and needs of the society, and reaching a balance by the end of the Plan; 6. Providing adequate grounds for all secondary school students to acquire at least one competence and skill in order to supply for the labour market by the end of the Plan; 7. Establishment of a quality assurance system to monitor, evaluate, reform and improve efficiency; 8. Measurement and improvement of professional competencies of actual and potential human resources in the education system based on educational indicators; 9. Offering a comprehensive educational programme for Quran teaching, including recitation, comprehension, hybrid programmes, Islamic teachings, and Arabic language for Quranic purposes; 10. Planning for development of physical and psychological well-being based on religious and Quranic teachings; 11. Strengthening and expanding student and family consultancy systems to improve mental health for students; 12. Operate sports facilities of the Physical Education Organisation at idle times to improve physical health for the students; 13. Increasing sports space per capita for the students; 14. Utilise ICT in all procedures to realise educational equality and facilitate existing procedures and offer educational programmes and their lessons in electronic formats; 15. Interacting and communicating with other educational systems of the country, including higher education, as a subsystem of one grand education system; 16. Create educational interactions with other countries and international centres like UNESCO, ISESCO and UNIOC.
21	<p>The administration should provide necessary mechanisms for the following areas and implement them within a year after approval date of the present Article, in order to expand professional competence through building knowledge and skills for purposes of actual work at workplaces,</p>

	<p>reforming educational hierarchy of the labour force, and empowering human resources, decreasing the gap between labour force competence levels of Iran and global standards, providing new and professional employment for youth, improving technical and professional education in Technical and Vocational Training and Applied Science Education systems, whether official or unofficial:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of apprenticeship and internship systems within official secondary and higher education and unofficial vocational and technical and applied science education; Provision of skills improvements through offering financial facilities with proposed interest rates and physical spaces with facilitated conditions; providing grounds for active involvement of private sector in development of official and unofficial education of skills and practical sciences; Increasing and facilitating cooperation in public and private sectors by students of technical and vocational training; Coordinating policy-making and management of technical and vocational training plans as a coherent dynamic system that answers the national demands; Implementing National Professional Competence Framework in a systematic manner to link competences, degrees and licenses of various levels and types of occupation, in order to recognise life-long learning and determine competences of various skill levels; Needs assessment and estimation of needed skilled labour, issuing required licenses, supporting the establishment and development of skilled labour training institutes through private and cooperative sectors to build necessary capacities before the end of the 4th year of the Plan; Ranking official and unofficial technical and vocational training centres according to their executive management indicators, teaching-learning processes, human resources, resources research and development, and comprehensive support indicator.
41	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Executive bodies and related non-governmental public institutes financed through general administrative budgets should develop organisational plans for youth affairs based on Young Generation Educational Charter and National Document on Development and Organisation of Youth Affairs, allocate annual budgets through national and provincial boards for organisation of youth affairs, and take necessary measures to execute the present documents. Executive bodies and related non-governmental public institutes financed through general administrative budgets, in collaboration with National Youth Organisation, should assess and monitor the realisation levels for the indicators that High Council on Youth approves to be part of Organisation of Youth Affairs Plan. The administration should develop a proposal for organising the duties of executive bodies mentioned in Article 5 of National Services Management Law, in order to revise and clarify their duties in term of challenges and issues of youth; and submit the proposal to the Parliament within a year.
43	<p>In order to organise and approve consultancy centres appropriate to Islamic-Iranian culture, and highlighting facilitation of youth marriage and strengthening of families, establishment of consultancy services and provision of any kind of social-psychological consultation requires an approval license in accordance with the Cabinet's enactments.</p>

Source: Fifth Five-Year Development Plan, 1389 (2010)

Table 7. Marriage Facilitation Law, 2005

Article 1. In order to empower youth to raise a family, the administration should establish a Youth Marriage Savings Fund. The statute for the fund, including its nature, financial resources, components, job description and membership provisions, will be prepared by the administration and submitted to the Parliament within three months of the approval date for the present act.

Article 2. The administration should offer housing loans to marrying couples who need housing rents, based on the decision of Saman Marriage Committee and the funds available, from annual budget sources as well as Youth Marriage Savings Fund.

Article 3. The administration should utilise usual facilities (mass-construction and leasing rents), as well as public bodies such as municipalities and Oqaf and Charitable Works Organisation, collaborate with Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation, and utilise public or donated lands to construct buildings as “temporary housing”, with an emphasis on construction in larger numbers, in smaller sizes, with affordable prices and using newer methods. Each couple can stay in the housing units for three years.

Article 4.a. All administrative bodies, public bodies and municipalities that have welfare facilities, culture houses, halls, clubs and camping grounds should offer these spaces to applicable couples for wedding ceremonies, after approval by Saman Marriage Committee.

Article 4.b. If none of the partners in the member family are employed or receives a salary, the member family can receive a compensation allowance for up to two years after their wedding date. The applicable limits will be defined by Saman Marriage Committee based on its available funds.

Article 5. The administration should use the national media and cultural and educational bodies to perform the following to promote the Prophet-endorsed tradition of marriage and create a culture favourable to marriage and its correct patterns: (a) Rectify beliefs and traditions across Iran that discourage youth from marriage. (b) Encourage youth and their families to group weddings together to reduce costs for wedding ceremonies. (c) First of Dhu al-Hijja, Imam Ali and Fatemeh wedding date, will be called the Marriage Day. (d) The mass media, national radio and television and high school (3rd and 4th grades) and academic books should include discussions on raising a family, ways of selecting a spouse, and easy and religious-based marriage.

Article 6. The administration should establish Saman Marriage Committees in all governorates, comprised of the governor, Friday prayers Imam and chairman of the city council, to organise marriage-related activities within provinces and monitor implementation of this law.

Note 1. The committee can, on occasion, invite legal bodies or individuals to participate in meetings and related decision-making processes.

Note 2. All related bodies should cooperate with the committee.

Note 3. The governors, upon receiving reports from the committees, should report to Cultural Committee of the Parliament through annual provincial reports to the administration.

Article 7. In order to remove the factors that delay marriages and to encourage youth to marry and raise a family, Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces should take the following measures, after the commander-in-chief's approval: (a) appoint married soldiers to the nearest barracks or military headquarter from their residence; (b) set their salaries at least twice the level for single soldiers and provide the salary from Youth Marriage Savings Fund.

Article 8. The administration should develop a comprehensive programme of marriage training and consultation (before and after marriage) and submit it to the Parliament within three months of the approval date for the present law. The programme includes advices for spouse selection and family raising, preparations for mutual living, familiarisation with the rights of family members and married life ethics, and preparations for childbearing.

Article 9. The administration should prioritise applicable couples in offering employment opportunities, occupational loans and housing loans.

Article 10. Ministry of Science, Research and Technology and Ministry of Health, Healthcare and Medical Education, and other institutes that have educational centres should take necessary measures and allocate adequate funds within their annual budgets to construct and assign dormitories for the married students; and offer financial support for education to the married students, twice the amount payable to single students (the extra amount will be provided from Youth Marriage Savings Fund).

Note. Married medical students are allowed to participate in medical specialty examinations before their mandatory military services and human resource services.

Article 11. Executive instructions for the present act will be prepared by the administration within three months of the approval date for the statute of the Fund by the Parliament and, then, it will be enacted by the Cabinet.

Article 12. Executive reports on this law will be prepared by the administration once every 6 months and will be submitted to the Cultural Commission of the Parliament.

Article 13. Ministers of Economic Affairs and Assets, Housing and Urban Planning, and Interior are responsible for execution of the present law and answerable to the Parliament.

Table 8. Executive Instructions on Youth Marriage Organisation, 2004

Article 2. In collaboration with other related executive bodies, the organisation should define qualitative and quantitative indicators of marriage and divorce among young couples and finalise their methods of calculation in coordination with the Management Organisation and calculate them for the period since 2004, in order to be used during the Fourth Development Plan as assessment basis.

Article 3. Marriage-related bodies should take necessary measures to realise the plan within the framework of executive programmes, policies and strategies and those of the executing body for the plan, through the course of the Fourth Development Plan. Thus, all the bodies responsible for development of projects in the plan should develop related national and provincial projects and submit them to the secretariat of the commission within three months of the date of issuance for the present instructions.

Article 4. In order to facilitate marriage and attract collaboration from banks, private sector, public institutions and philanthropists, Youth Marriage Fund will be established with Islamic Republic of Iran Central Bank. The charter for the fund will be implemented after approval by the Management Organisation.

Article 5. In order to encourage youth and their families in family formation, Ministry of Social Protection and Welfare will establish a Youth Marriage Savings Fund. Its executive instructions will be developed and issued by the Ministry of Social Protection and Welfare in cooperation with the Management Organisation.

Article 6. As of 2005, all executive bodies of the country are allowed to offer marriage gifts, facilities and special services to their employed young couples, from their current credit savings and in cooperation with the Management Organisation.

Article 7. The organisation is appointed as the responsible body for organising youth marriage, so that it takes measures within the framework of policies, plans and distribution of labour enacted by the Council, to execute the plans and to monitor implementation of the provisions and the quality and quantity of collaborations from related executive bodies, institutes, and public and private sectors, and mobilisation of philanthropists who are involved in youth marriage.

Table 9. Some of the High Council on the Young Acts, 1993-2005

5th Session 9-Mar-1994	Enacted the establishment plan for private and public consultation centres for adolescents and youth; the Young Generation Educational Charter was put in further consideration and some of its main articles were approved by the Council
6th Session 14-Jun-1994	Young Generation Educational Charter was enacted, including an introduction and 98 principles in 14 areas of belief and knowledge, morality and spirituality, education and pedagogy, foresight, culture and civilisation, family and marriage, human relations, endeavour and construction, cooperation and social responsibility, science and technology, creativity and innovation, arts and literature, tourism, and sports and physical education. Members of the Council agreed to develop policies, objectives and actions and to define allocation of tasks for each related body, by the secretariat of High Council on the Young in collaboration with Special Revision Committee on Young Generation Educational Charter, in order to realise the principles of Young Generation Educational Charter.
7th Session 8-Nov-1994	Given the necessity of supporting and preparing marriage among youth, it was announced that the chairman of the Central Bank should order bank managers of the country to execute enactments of the administration and the parliament regarding interest free loans to applicable young people.
8th Session 8-May-1995	The session, attended by the majority of members, agreed on the following: emphasising provision of consultation services for youth regarding all areas related to education, family and occupation; the Consultation Centres Coordination Council was appointed as the responsible body for developing policies, regulations and plans for establishment, coordination and direction of consultations centres.
9th Session 1-Sep-1995	Instructions on Consultation Service Centres Plan was revised and finalised.
10th Session 1-Jan-1996	Secretariat for High Council on the Young was appointed to establish Provincial Youth Councils consisting of executive managers and specialists from each province, to plan and coordinate youth affairs at the province level. Moreover, alongside its national studies, the secretariat should report to various bodies about recommended ways for the adolescents and youth to use their free-time to participate in social and political activities and to improve their individual and social creativity.
11th Session 5-Jan-1997	Given the necessity of enriching leisure activities of youth and directing time use toward progress and activating youth, Youth and Life Experience in Leisure Comprehensive Plan was enacted. Regarding youth participation in construction and development of the country, High Council on the Young agreed to provide 5 million youth/days for construction of the country within the plan proposed by the secretariat and in cooperation with the administration for the coming year, in order to actively participate in constructions.
12th Session 22-May-1999	Three national plans previously proposed and submitted to the High Council were enacted: national determination and cooperation from all executive parties related to youth affairs; plans for development and empowerment of youth NGOs and providing grounds for social involvement of youth and establishment of youth forums across the country and developing youth cooperation through organisation of youth NGOs. The three plans were enacted and issued to the National Youth Organisation as initial steps for increasing social status of youth and enabling achievement of the primary demands and resolving major problems of youth. The 13 th Session agreed on developing the Fourth Development Plan with an emphasis on youth affairs.
15th Session	1. National Development Plan for Youth Employment and Human Resources, with an emphasis on ICT, aiming to provide 300,000 generative employment

29-Oct-2003	opportunities for youth within a two-year timeframe. 2. Issuing credit cards and banking facilities for youth. 3. Establishment of National Youth Forums to increase youth involvement in science, culture, society and economy.
16th Session 9-Jun-2004	Youth Legal Charter was enacted and its articles and tasks were agreed to be integrated within Young Generation Educational Charter, to be developed as “Rights and Responsibilities of Youth”. The organisation should submit the document to legal authorities for final approval.
18th Session 17-Nov-2004	Youth Marriage Organisation Comprehensive Plan was enacted, including marriage empowerment and facilitation, and family empowerment.
20th Session 17-Jan-2005	Youth Housing Organisation Document was enacted within the Fourth Cultural, Social and Economic Development Plan of Islamic Republic of Iran. Agreements include: (a) Planning and execution should be within the framework of national housing policies and three strategies of (i) empowering youth for supporting the administration; (ii) building capacities for youth to develop the non-governmental sector; (iii) privatisation and improving transparency to develop housing models specific to youth. According to the second plan of the document, 80% of youth will no longer be in need of housing. Additionally, housing model specific to youth will provide a minimum of 100,000 houses for youth through the course of the Fourth National Development Plan. (b) Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning should determine housing shares of youth in the National Housing Plan based on the abovementioned plan. (c) National Youth Organisation should develop the executive instructions for Youth Housing Organisation Document in collaboration with related bodies and submit it to the Cabinet within two months.
21st Session 14-Feb-2005	Given the high unemployment rate in the country, National Youth Organisation agreed on 50% as the minimum youth employment ratio, in a manner that youth unemployment rate does not exceed 17% by the end of the Fourth Development Plan. As unemployment rates for young women are nearly twice that of young men, gender equality should become a serious imperative in providing employment for young women.
22nd Session 15-Mar-2005	Essential strategies and approaches for Religious and National Identities Improvement for Youth were enacted, including: addressing the essential needs of youth in line with their identification and identity-seeking issues; empowering youth in identification processes with a developmental approach; empowering environment (family, society, culture, office) with an approach to adapting education methods to youth; equal, cooperative and reasonable formation of various aspects of identity; developing local notions in identity-related areas.
23rd Session 27-Apr-2005	Following discussions on definition of youth and its age-range in Islamic Republic of Iran, ages 15 to 29 were defined as being young in Iran; National Youth Organisation was appointed to perform complimentary research on this age range and report the findings to the Organisation.
26th Session 20-Jul-2005	National Document on Youth within the 20 Years Vision and its general policies, approaches and national plans, developed in National Youth Organisation, were discussed and enacted. Social Protection and Welfare for Youth Plan within the Fourth Development Plan and its general policies, approaches and executive plans, jointly developed in National Youth Organisation and the Ministry of Social Protection and Welfare in line with policies of the Fourth Cultural, Social and Economic Development Plan, were discussed and enacted. Given the necessity of national planning for prevention and alleviation of social evils and improving health levels and education and research for youth, Youth Social Evils Prevention and Alleviation Plan, and Youth Physical, Mental and Social Health Protection and Improvement Plan, as well as Youth Education and Research Improvement and Organisation Plan were enacted in order to organise youth affairs in accordance with Article 112 of the Fourth Cultural, Social and Economic Development Plan.

“The views and the opinions expressed in this report are those of the Government institutes of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Population Fund.”



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