



COI QUERY

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Title	Situation of divorced women
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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Iran

Situation of divorced women

1. Background and prevalence

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted in September 2024 that the Iranian government “has intensified its efforts to suppress the fundamental rights of women and girls and crush remaining initiatives of women’s activism.”¹ Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, women’s rights were limited.²

The Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA)³ additionally reported that political and legal reforms have affected women through both physical violence and systemic changes, such as granting men sole rights to divorce, enforcing mandatory hijab laws, and lowering the legal marriage age for girls to nine.⁴

Sources indicated that the Iranian government considered divorced women as ‘second-class citizens’⁵ with Amnesty International reporting that disparity in treatment was also ‘in relation to [...] child custody, employment, inheritance and political office.’⁶

Additional information on women and girls in Iran can be found in the EUAA [Iran – Country Focus](#), published in 11 June 2024.

According to the media outlet Channel 8,⁷ the Civil Registry Organization of Iran recorded 201 468 divorce cases in 2023, reflecting a 3 % decrease compared to the same period in 2022.⁸ The United Nations Statistics Division reported that in 2022 there were 204 301 divorces in Iran, of which 189 773 were in urban areas and 14 528 were registered in rural areas.⁹

¹ OHCHR, Iran intensifying efforts to repress women and girls on second anniversary of nation-wide protests, UN Fact-Finding Mission says, 13 September 2024, [url](#)

² The Iran Primer, Part 3: Iran Laws on women, USIP, 13 August 2023, [url](#); HRANA, An Increase in Women’s Activism alongside Rising Government Hostility in Iran – “They can imprison our bodies, but they will never imprison our fight for justice.”, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

³ HRANA ‘keeps Iranian community and the world informed by monitoring human rights violations in the country and disseminating the news about such abuses.’ HRANA, About us, n.d., [url](#)

⁴ HRANA, An Increase in Women’s Activism alongside Rising Government Hostility in Iran – “They can imprison our bodies, but they will never imprison our fight for justice.”, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

⁵ AI, The State of the World’s Human Rights; Iran 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#); NCRI Women’s Committee, The Feminization of Poverty in Iran: Female Heads of Household and Their Untold Struggles, 16 October 2024, [url](#)

⁶ AI, The State of the World’s Human Rights; Iran 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷ ChannelL8 ‘is an independent contemporary media corporation, established in 2023 in the Kurdistan Region with its headquarter in Sulaymaniyah, the capital of culture’. Channel 8, About Channel 8, n.d., [url](#)

⁸ Channel 8, Iran witnesses a 3 % decrease in divorce rates after 30 years, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

⁹ UN Data, Divorces by urban/rural residence - Iran, 2024, [url](#)



2. Legal framework

Chapter 2 of the Civil Code of the Islamic Republic ‘On General Considerations’ describes the conditions and forms of divorce.¹⁰ Article 1133 of the Civil Code states that ‘a man can divorce his wife whenever he wishes to do so.’¹¹

Regarding women’s right to divorce, Article 1130 of the Civil Code states that:

‘In the following circumstances, the wife can refer to the Islamic judge and request for a divorce. When it is proved to the Court that the continuation of the marriage causes difficult and undesirable conditions, the judge can for the sake of avoiding harm and difficulty compel the husband to divorce his wife. If this cannot be done, then the divorce will be made on the permission of the Islamic judge.’¹²

According to the source Iran Primer¹³, Article 1130 of the Civil Code, which was amended in 2002, was described as follows:

‘The *osr-va-haraj* (difficult and undesirable conditions) mentioned in this article refers to the conditions that make the continuation of [marital] life intolerable and difficult for the wife; the following circumstances, if proved in the relevant court, shall be considered as a case of *osr-va-haraj*:

- 1: The husband’s leaving of marital life for, at least, six consecutive months, or, nine alternative months in a one year period, without any acceptable reason.
 - 2: The husband’s addiction to any kind of drugs or alcohol that, damages the marital life, and his refusal, or impossibility of compelling him, to quit the addiction in a period prescribed by the doctor. If the husband does not fulfill his promise [to quit], or, again begins his abuse, the divorce shall be granted by the request of the wife.
 - 3: Final conviction of the husband to five years, or more, imprisonment.
 - 4: Wife battery or any kind of mistreatment of the wife that is intolerable in the wife’s condition.
 - 5: Husband’s affliction to incurable mental illnesses or contagious disease or any kind of incurable diseases that disrupts the marital life.
- The circumstances mentioned in this article are not exhaustive and the court may grant the divorce in other cases that *osr-va-haraj* is proved in the court.’¹⁴

In the case of child custody following a divorce, Article 1169 of the Civil Code amended in 2002, as explained by the Iran Primer states that:

‘For the custody of children whose parents are separated, the mother has priority until the age of seven; and then, custody will devolve upon the father. After reaching seven years of age, in

¹⁰ Islamic Republic of Iran, Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 23 May 1928, [url](#)

¹¹ Islamic Republic of Iran, Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 23 May 1928, [url](#), art. 1133

¹² Islamic Republic of Iran, Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 23 May 1928, [url](#), art. 1130

¹³The Iran Primer, a website hosted under the United States Institute of Peace, ‘brings together 50 experts—Western and Iranian—in concise chapters on politics, economy, military, foreign policy, and the nuclear program.’ Iran Primer, Homepage, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴ The Iran Primer, Part 3: Iranian laws on women, USIP, 13 August 2023, [url](#)



the case of dispute, considering the best interest of the child, the court will decide who receives custody of the child.¹⁵

According to Freedom House, ‘women do not enjoy equal rights in divorce and child custody disputes.’¹⁶ Similarly, confidential sources consulted in April 2023 by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that ‘a man has the right to divorce a woman, while a woman, in principle, does not have the right to divorce a man.’¹⁷

According to sources consulted by the EUAA, the practice of ‘triple talaq’ is accepted in certain regions of Iran, particularly in Sunni-majority areas such as Kermanshah and Kurdistan provinces.¹⁸ This form of divorce occurs when the husband declares the word ‘talaq’ (divorce) three times in front of an assembly or council, without the presence of his wife.¹⁹ The same source stated that in this practice, ‘divorce is not legally settled but rather arbitrarily and in a sudden manner that often impacts women economically and emotionally.’²⁰

The Iran Primer noted that divorce cases often ended in mutual agreement in court, but if the husband was unwilling to consent, the wife needed to prove that he was physical abusive or psychologically unstable.²¹

In its 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Iran, the U.S. Department of State (USDOS) noted that although laws exist recognizing a divorced woman’s entitlement to alimony and a share of marital property, these laws ‘were not always enforced.’²² The Iran Primer also mentioned that in practice, divorced women often face the risk of losing custody of their children, particularly if they rely on alimony for financial support.²³

3. Societal attitudes

Different sources reported that in Iran, divorced women faced societal stigma.²⁴ A study on Iranian Immigrant Women’s Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence published in 2024 by the Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health²⁵ mentioned the ‘oppressive culture against Iranian

¹⁵ The Iran Primer, Part 3: Iranian laws on women, USIP, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Iran, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran, September 2023, [url](#), p.47

¹⁸ EUAA, Iran - Country Focus, June 2024, [url](#), p. 92

¹⁹ EUAA, Iran - Country Focus, June 2024, [url](#), p. 92

²⁰ EUAA, Iran - Country Focus, June 2024, [url](#), p. 92

²¹ Iran Primer, Part 3: Iranian laws on women, USIP, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

²² USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 - Iran, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 67

²³ The Iran Primer, Part 3: Iranian laws on women, USIP, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

²⁴ Iranwire, It's 2022, and Iranian Divorcées are Tired of Being Stigmatised, 22 March 2022, [url](#); Niroomand, S., et al, Iranian Immigrant Women’s Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence: A Literature Review, 2 July 2024, [url](#), p. 921; Davarinejad, O. et al, Give yourself a break: Self-compassion mediates insecure attachment and divorce maladjustment among Iranian women, 2022, [url](#), p. 3

²⁵ ‘The Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health is an international forum for the publication of peer-reviewed original research pertaining to immigrant health.’ Springer Nature Link, Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, n.d., [url](#)



women who divorce.²⁶ Similarly, a study on the role of the Iranian culture in divorced women's mental health published in 2022 by the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships²⁷ indicated that women needed 'to confront social-cultural stress after a divorce due to divorce stigma.'²⁸ The same source mentioned that in Iran, divorce is regarded as 'disgraceful' due to 'strong' societal norms prioritising the preservation of marriage.²⁹ Furthermore, a 2022 study investigating the causes of early marriage among women in Zahedan, Iran, found that in regions where early and forced marriages are common, women are often denied the right to choose their spouse or seek a divorce.³⁰ Families largely control these decisions, and this restrictive practice may lead to higher rates of suicide, domestic violence, and homicide in some communities.³¹ Between March 2022 and March 2023, HRANA reported at least 12 suicides in Iran, including four cases of self-immolation.³² These incidents were attributed to the lack of equitable laws, particularly regarding the difficulties women face in obtaining a divorce and losing custody of their children.³³

4. Access to employment and social/ support services

According to Bonyad Vokala, an Iranian legal platform that provides information on different legal aspects in Iran, [informal translation] in Iran 'more than 89 % of divorced women have not received any alimony, and because most women are not employed outside the home—even those with higher education degrees—many of them stop working after marriage for various reasons. After divorce, they face many difficulties in finding a suitable job and supporting themselves. Only 16 % of divorced women are employed.'³⁴

In a report released in March 2024, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) Women's Committee³⁵ highlighted that approximately 45 % of women over 50 in Iran are unmarried,

²⁶ Niroomand, S., et al, Iranian Immigrant Women's Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence: A Literature Review, 2 July 2024, [url](#), p. 920

²⁷ The Journal of Social and Personal Relationships is an international, peer-reviewed journal that publishes high-quality research on social and personal relationships, covering a range of disciplines like psychology, sociology, and communication. Sage, Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, n.d., [url](#)

²⁸ Davarinejad, O. et al, Give yourself a break: Self-compassion mediates insecure attachment and divorce maladjustment among Iranian women, 2022, [url](#), p. 3

²⁹ Davarinejad, O. et al, Give yourself a break: Self-compassion mediates insecure attachment and divorce maladjustment among Iranian women, 2022, [url](#), p. 3

³⁰ Hosseini M., Asadisarvestani K., Reasons for early marriage of women in Zahedan, Iran: a qualitative study, 23 December 2022, [url](#)

³¹ Hosseini M., Asadisarvestani K., Reasons for early marriage of women in Zahedan, Iran: a qualitative study, 23 December 2022, [url](#)

³² HRANA, Report on the Situation of Women in Iran for International Women's Day, 7 March 2023, [url](#)

³³ HRANA, Report on the Situation of Women in Iran for International Women's Day, 7 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁴ بنياد وكلا [Bonyad Vokala Foundation of Lawyers], مشکلات زنان بعد از طلاق [Problems Women Face After Divorce], updated 23 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁵ The NCRI Women's Committee works with Iranian women both inside and outside Iran, collaborates with international women's rights organizations, and plays a key role in reporting on women's issues within Iran, while actively opposing the regime's misogynistic policies through participation in global forums like the UN. NCRI, The NCRI Women's Committee Promotes Gender Equality, n.d., [url](#)



including divorced, with 80 % of them living in poverty.³⁶ The same source noted that after divorce, women experienced a 73 % decline in their standard of living and that single Iranian women were ‘deprived of accessing various insurance services.’³⁷ In another article published on 16 October 2024, the NCRI Women’s Committee noted that female heads of household had a ‘minimal share in the job market’, as they were either jobless or worked in part-time, informal roles.³⁸ There are reports of single women selling their organs or becoming involved in prostitution,³⁹ due to the scarcity of suitable jobs and the need to provide for their family.⁴⁰

5. Access to housing

According to a 2024 report by the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) Women’s Committee, women who head households, especially those without stable incomes or social support, were not able to afford the rising costs of rent, linked to an ongoing housing crisis.⁴¹ According to a 2019 study⁴² on women housing rights in Tehran, female-headed households allocated approximately 49 % of their income to housing, which significantly impacted their ability to meet other essential needs like food, clothing, healthcare, and education. The shortage of adequate housing and rising rental costs have pushed many of these households into informal settlements and substandard living conditions.⁴³

6. Access to healthcare

A qualitative study published in 2022 on the health challenges faced by divorced Iranian women in Theran revealed that personal factors like limited competence, and absence of control and emotional support hindered their health behaviors.⁴⁴ In addition, external factors such as insufficient community support, lack of financial resources, and labor market support further contributed to their difficulty in maintaining healthy behaviors.⁴⁵ For instance, women

³⁶ NCRI Women’s Committee, Robbed Riches is the story of the stolen wealth of Iranian women, a report to CSW68, 10 March 2024, [url](#), p. 35

³⁷ NCRI Women’s Committee, Robbed Riches is the story of the stolen wealth of Iranian women, a report to CSW68, 10 March 2024, [url](#), p. 21

³⁸ NCRI Women Committee, The Feminization of Poverty in Iran: Female Heads of Household and Their Untold Struggles, 16 October 2024, [url](#)

³⁹ NCRI Women Committee, The Feminization of Poverty in Iran: Female Heads of Household and Their Untold Struggles, 16 October 2024, [url](#); BBC News, Selling sex to survive in Iran, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰ NCRI Women Committee, The Feminization of Poverty in Iran: Female Heads of Household and Their Untold Struggles, 16 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹ NCRI Women’s Committee, Robbed Riches is the story of the stolen wealth of Iranian women, a report to CSW68, 10 March 2024, [url](#), p. 54

⁴² This source is outside of the reference period but was included due to its relevance

⁴³ Ghaedrahmati S., Shahsavari F., Women housing right, affordable housing for female-headed households, case study: City of Tehran, August 2019, [url](#), p. 952

⁴⁴ Golboni, F. et al., A Qualitative Analysis of Personal Health Care Challenges Experienced by Iranian Divorcees, 12 September 2022, [url](#), p. 2795

⁴⁵ Golboni, F. et al., A Qualitative Analysis of Personal Health Care Challenges Experienced by Iranian Divorcees, 12 September 2022, [url](#), p. 2795



also reported difficulties in accessing free medical care centers and following up on cancer screening results.⁴⁶

In the 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices on Iran, USDOS indicated that ‘It was illegal for a single woman to access contraception without a doctor’s prescription.’⁴⁷ The same source reported that the government did not ensure sexual and reproductive health services for survivors of sexual violence, and essential care like emergency contraception and post-exposure prophylaxis were not consistently available.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Golboni, F. et al., A Qualitative Analysis of Personal Health Care Challenges Experienced by Iranian Divorcees, 12 September 2022, [url](#), p. 2790

⁴⁷ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 - Iran, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 71

⁴⁸ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 - Iran, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 71

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