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# THE EVOLUTION OF THE IRANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

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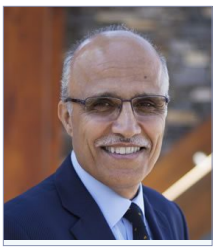

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# Executive Summary

Over the course of the last five decades, Iranian American community has grown, becoming one of the most educated and skilled immigrant communities in the U.S. This success is attributable to every generation of Iranian immigrants. In this report, we explore and document their longitudinal immigration patterns and socio-demographic structure. Based on 2024 data, 70.7% of the Iranian Americans 25 years or older have a bachelor's degree or higher. For comparison purposes, 36% of those 25 years and older in the U.S. hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Despite the current conflict with their mother country, the community continues to evolve and become more diverse.

More than

**33%**

were born in the U.S.

More than

**25%**

speak only English at home

Due to inter-ethnic and interracial marriages, over

**10%**

of Iranian Americans identified a second ancestry, covering close to 90 different nationalities/ identities.

The achievements of the Iranian Americans over a short five decades are astonishing. With a decline in the number of immigrants from Iran, as well as students, however, the future of Iranian American community will be shaped mostly by those who were/are/will be born in the U.S. Given the current multi-generational commitment of Iranian Americans to education and positive contribution to the society, they promise to remain a key asset for America and, hopefully, in the future, Iran as well.

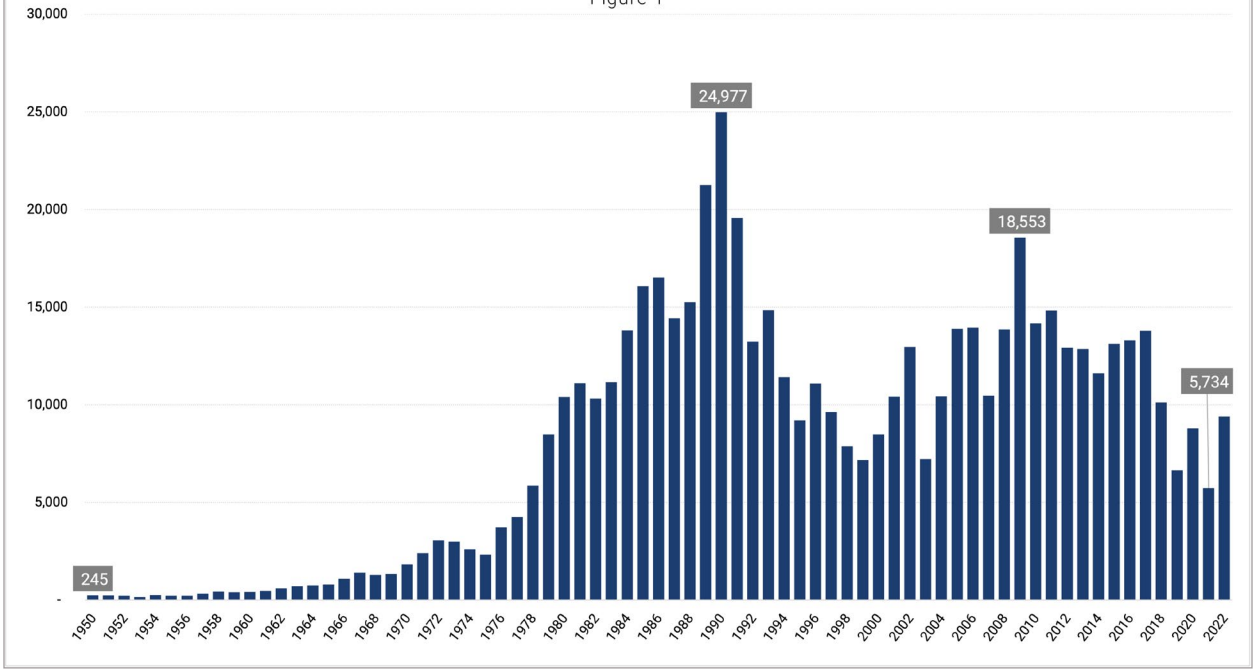
# Immigration Patterns

In the collective imagination of the Iranian American community, the revolutionary upheavals of 1978-1979 marked the beginning of the Iranian global diaspora, particularly immigration to the U.S. Even though by magnitude this is a correct observation, immigration of Iranians to the U.S. began long before 1978. In fact, the first year with more than 100 immigrants from Iran was 1950, when 245 Iran-born individuals immigrated to the U.S. (See Figure 1). It took another decade before the annual volume of immigration from Iran exceeded 500. In 1962, 601 immigrants were reported as having been born in Iran. Five years later, in 1966, over 1,000 such individuals immigrated to the U.S. After that, annual immigration of Iranians accelerated to 2,411 in 1971 and 4,261 in 1977. But it was in 1978, when revolution was in the air, that immigration spiked, with 5,861 immigrating that year to the U.S. The volume grew rapidly thereafter, reaching over 10,000 in 1980 and nearly 25,000 in 1990, the record year of Iranian immigration to the U.S.

The post Iraq and Iran war showed the pent-up demand for immigration for Iranians. While the 1990s slowed down the annual volume of immigration, by the 2000s, five-digit annual immigration became more common, peaking in 2009. Thereafter, immigration of those born in Iran slowed down, reaching levels not seen since the last few years of the 1990s and the pre-revolutionary era. For example, in 2021, Iranian immigration registered at 5,734.[1] This can be partially explained by changes in the U.S. policy and less restrictive processes for immigrating to other countries (e.g., Canada).

Iranian Immigration to the U.S. By Country of Birth

Figure 1



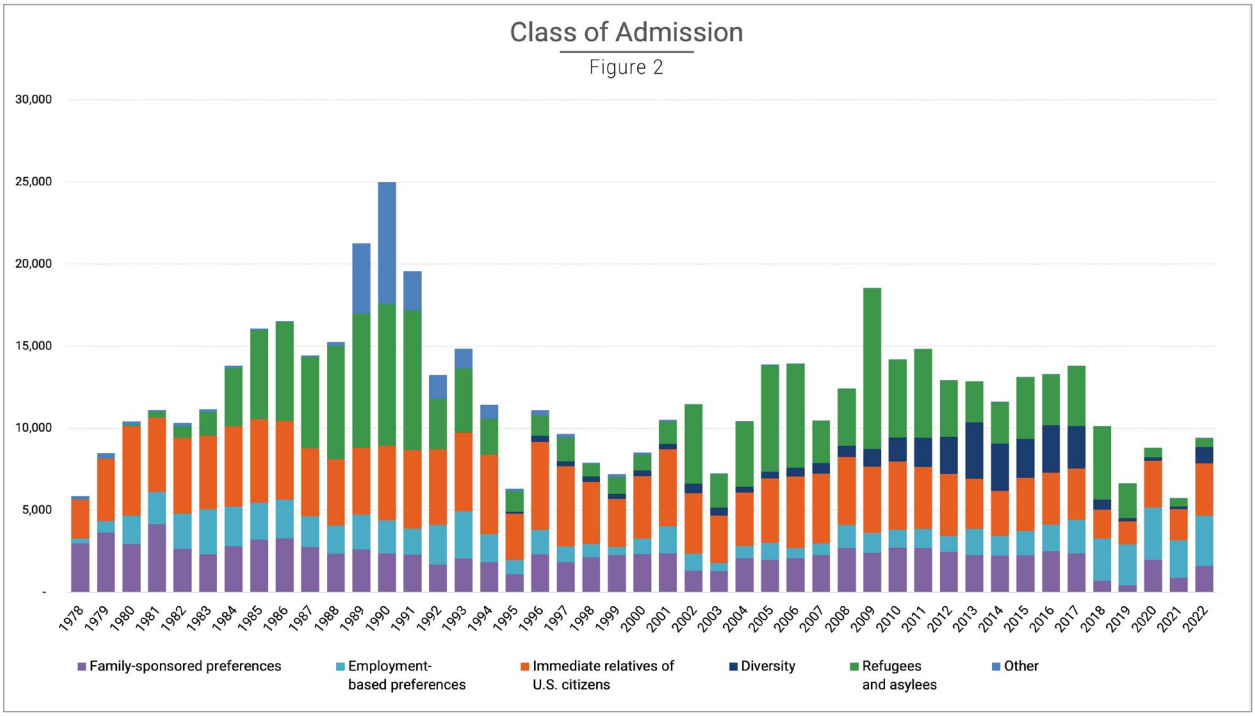

1 All immigration data are obtained from the annual year books of immigration statistics. For this research, all Annual Yearbooks from 1970 to 2022 were used.

To provide an aggregate review of Iranian Americans' immigration pattern, the data for each decade since 1820 (the first year when immigration data was collected) is presented in ***Table 1***.[2] This is also captured in the longitudinal data in Figure 1, above (please see ***Table 2*** for the annual data reflected in Figure 1). As this data illustrates, immigration from Iran reached triple digits in the 1920s and exceeded 1,000 in the 1940s. However, the larger immigration era began in earnest during the 1950s and the1960s.

The significant growth started in the 1970s with over 30,000 Iranian immigrants (mostly right before and after the revolution), reaching its peak in the 1980s with close to 100,000 immigrants.

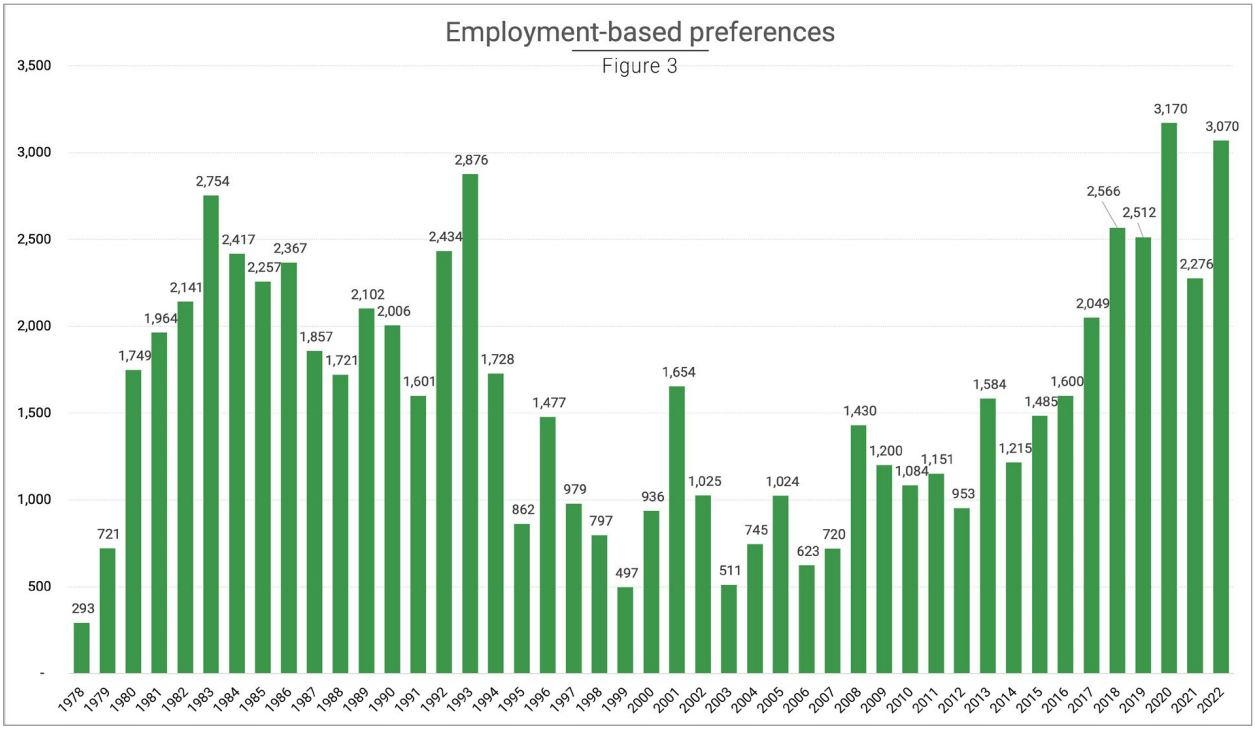
Students have been a critical factor in shaping the Iranian American community by gaining their legal status for residency (through marriage or employment) and eventually becoming naturalized citizens. Since immigration data captures those who have become legal residents, it is important to remember that the volume of immigration in any one year does not only reflect those who arrived that year, but also those who converted their status. The latter group includes those who have arrived in the U.S. first on work visas, as students, or as non-immigrants (e.g., visitors who have been able to change their status).

The volume of immigrants and their temporal variation is an important part of the Iranian immigration story. Under what immigration category (i.e., class admission), when they arrived in the U.S., and where they settled are the added information needed to provide the diverse experience of the growing community of Iranian Americans. Figure 2 provides that information, highlighting five categories of admission, plus a general "other category," which reflects various immigration policies, including IRCA (Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986).



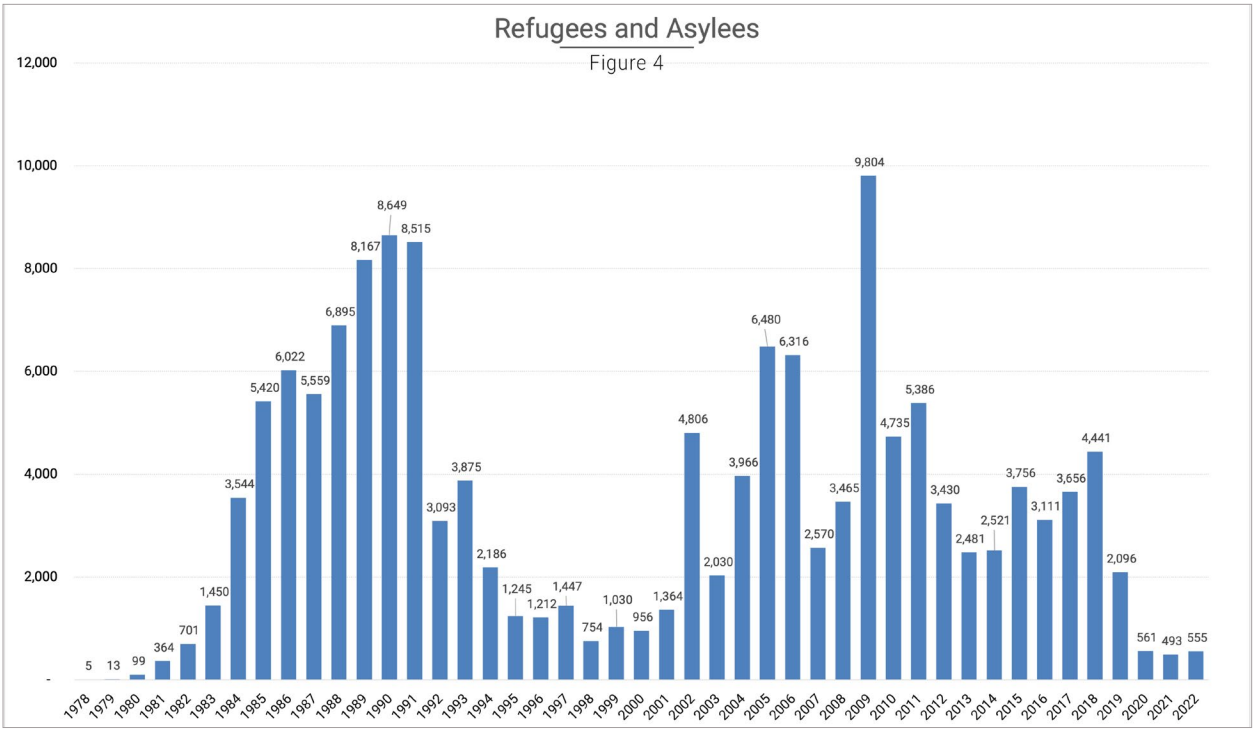

2 Please note that Table 1 captures data from the country of last residence, while Figure 1 focuses on the country of birth. While there might be some differences, in the case of Iran, these numbers are very close to each other.

Since 1978, "family-sponsored preference" and "immediate relatives of U.S. citizens" make up slightly more than half (i.e., 51%) of immigration class of admission for Iranian Americans. Additionally, 13% were admitted under the employment preference category and 26% were refugees and asylees. While in the 1980s Iranian immigrants who arrived under employment-based preference were sizable (close to 2,000 per year), starting in 2017, this admission category grew in size, getting closer to 3,000 per year (See Figure 3). ***These patterns do much to explain the highly professional and educated characteristics of the current Iranian American community.***




Another important category of immigration admission to the U.S. is under refugees and asylum seekers. While family-sponsored preference suggests the possibility of creating an immediate sense of community with close relatives, allowing immigrants to face some of the challenges of immigration, for refugees and asylees there is a challenge of knowing that, for the time being, they were shutting all doors behind them.

This pattern accelerated with of the onset of the Iran-Iraq war, which took place between 1980 and 1988, with massive disruption and casualties on both sides. During this period, the volume of refugees and asylees from Iran increased significantly, with 1983 marking the beginning of a tidal wave of this population (see Figure 4, below). The number of refugees and asylees peaked in 1990, then declined precipitously in the second half of the 1990s. This admission category once again grew in the 2000s, peaking in 2009, the year with the record level of Iranian refugees and asylees since 1978. The pace of growth in this population was somewhat slower in the 2010s, remaining within 2,000 and 5,500 annually. Overall, between 1978 and 2022, 28% of Iranians admitted to the U.S. were refugees and asylees, reflecting the trauma experienced in this immigrant community.




Even though we do not know exactly what percentage of those admitted under family preference or refugee/asylee categories were professionally trained and educated individuals, thirteen percent of Iranian immigrants between 1978 and 2022 were admitted under the "employment preferences" category. These were both individuals who arrived with the needed professional credentials and students who upon graduation were able to capitalize on their education and skills and attain jobs that could provide them clear paths to immigration. As Figure 3 (above) illustrates, the volume of immigration in this category grew in the 1980s and remained in high levels until the early 1990s. After more than a decade of relatively lower numbers, admission under employment preference became even more pronounced starting in 2018. This graph clearly indicates a "brain drain" of skilled population from Iran.

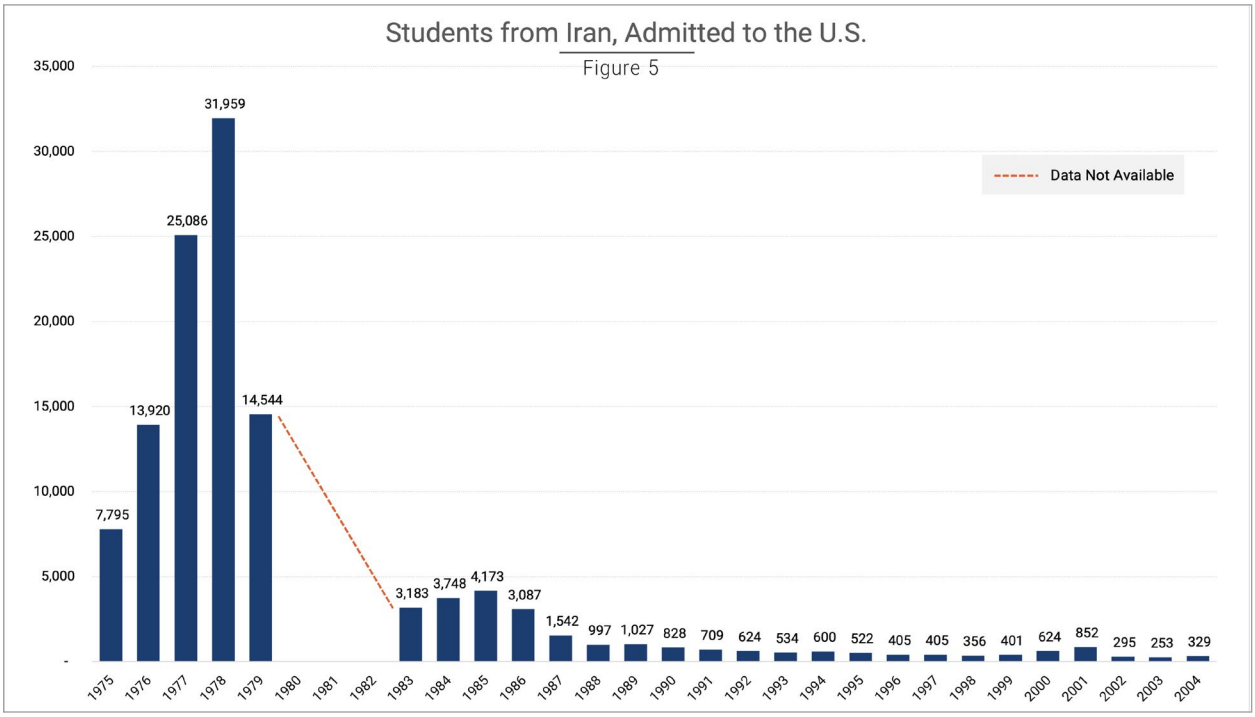
One of the early publications on the topic of Iran's migration of skilled workers was published in the journal of ***Iranian Studies*** in 1977 (Askari, et al. 1977).[3] This article clearly illustrated that even in the years prior to the revolution skilled/highly educated Iranians had begun migrating to the U.S. Indeed, they noted that "the escalation in Iran's economic promise since 1973 may not relieve its brain drain problem. In fact, the much larger number of Iranian students seeking training abroad during the next decade or so might lead to even higher leakages to the Western economies."

The appeal of the U.S. thus predates the Iraq war and the revolution. Iranian students were already in the U.S. in 1978 and more arrived in the years after the revolution (albeit in much smaller numbers). Europe had historically attracted Iranian students prior to the 1970. However, by 1973 more than half of the Iranians engaged in advanced studies abroad were in the U.S. (Askari, et al., 1977). The number of students arriving in the U.S. surged from 1975 to 1979 and declined precipitously thereafter (see Figure 5, below).

3 Askari, Hossein, Cummings, John T. and Mehmet Izbudak. Winter - Spring, 1977. Iran's Migration of Skilled Labor to the United States, *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. ½: pp. 3-35.

Many of these individuals became "accidental immigrants," a label I use here to suggest that while they had full intention to return, with the onset of the revolution, the preferred choice in many cases became attaining higher degrees, while waiting, and eventually starting their lives in the U.S. This story is common among many who arrived as students after 1975.

For the earlier student population, Askari, et al. (1977) provide data on their disciplinary focus. During the 1973-1974 academic year, 45.7% of the 9,623 Iranian students were studying in an engineering field, 9.8% were in physical sciences, 9% in business administration, and 3.1% in medical sciences. Social sciences and humanities made up 6.7% and 10.5% of Iranian students, respectively. Today, American higher education institutions find many of those students from the 1970s and the early 1980s stand among their academic ranks.




Students were not the only source of skilled Iranian labor in the U.S. For example, in 1975, 8.6% of Iranians admitted to the U.S. arrived under occupational/employment preference. Going further back, Askari et al (1977) illustrated that during the period of 1967 to 1969, among the 2,143 technology professionals receiving permanent residency, 647 were Iranian students who adjusted their status.

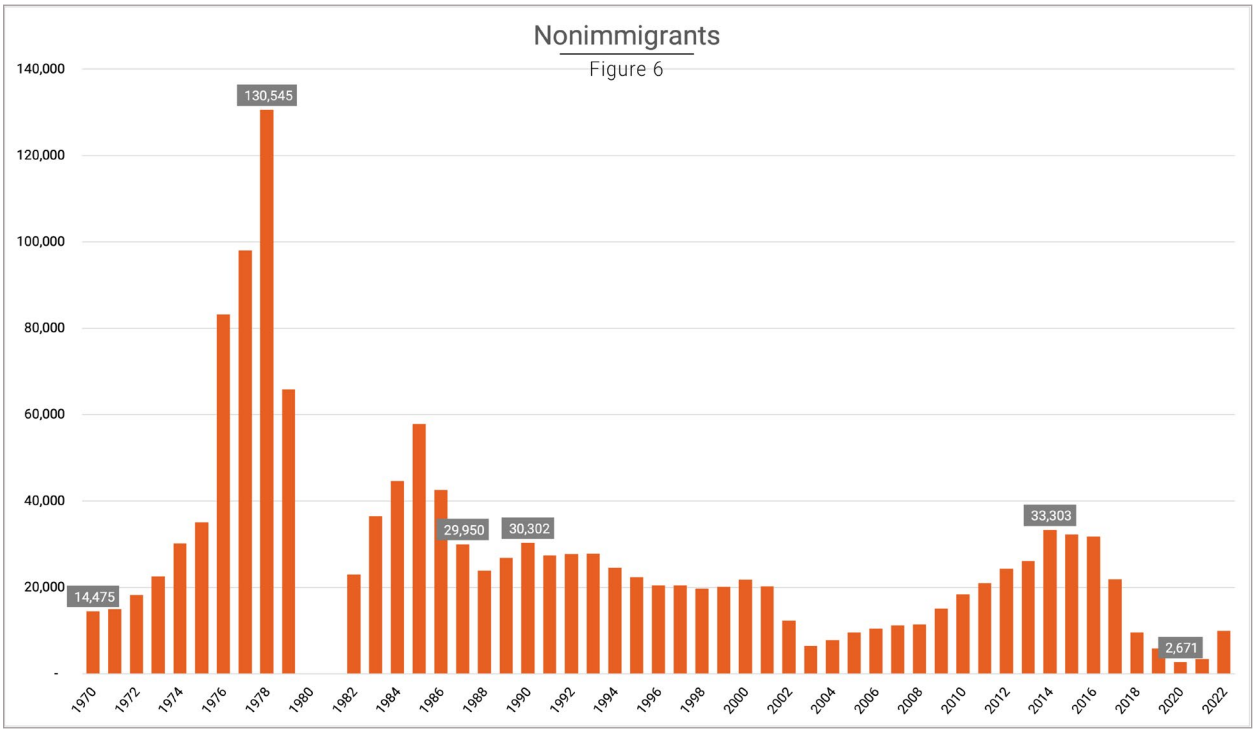
Even in the early years, the Iranian American community clearly demonstrated deep commitment to higher education, attaining professional status, and aspirations for success. This does not mean that there were not hardship and disenchantment experienced in the community. It simply suggests that the community, as it appears in the data, took its current shape well before the revolution, only accelerating afterwards. Like many countries around the globe, Iran lost many of its internally educated population as well. In 1970, there were 1,631 physicians practicing in the U.S. who were educated in Iran. These numbers grew in the years to follow, translating to significant loss of skilled labor in various medical fields.[4]

**4** Ronaghy and Shajari (2013) indicate that 5,045 Iranian physicians migrated to the U.S. by 2010. Ronaghy, Hossain A and Shajari, Anoshirvan, Oct. 2013. The Islamic Revolution of Iran and Migration of Physicians to the United States. *Arch Iran Med*,16(10):590-3.

In the post-revolutionary era, as migration to the U.S. accelerated, Iran lost both its students who were in the process of finishing their advanced degrees in the U.S. and those practicing in Iran who left for the U.S. In that light, Figure 5 can be seen as a loss of human capital, which seems to continue unabated.

## From Visiting to Becoming an American

Over the course of the last five decades, the rate of visits by Iranians to the U.S. has witnessed substantial increase. Figure 6 illustrates the pattern of "non-immigrants" arrival to the U.S. This includes students and other temporary visitors. As illustrated, Iranians arrived in significant numbers prior to the revolution. In 1970, 14,475 Iranians arrived in the U.S. as non-immigrants. It is important to note that this was the beginning of an important era for Iranian students.




As with immigration in general, Iranian students in the 1970s shifted their focus to the U.S. As Askari et al. (1977) documented, by 1973, nearly half or 9,623 of the 19,504 Iranian students studying abroad were in the U.S. Many of these students remained behind and contributed to the expansion of the Iranian American population.

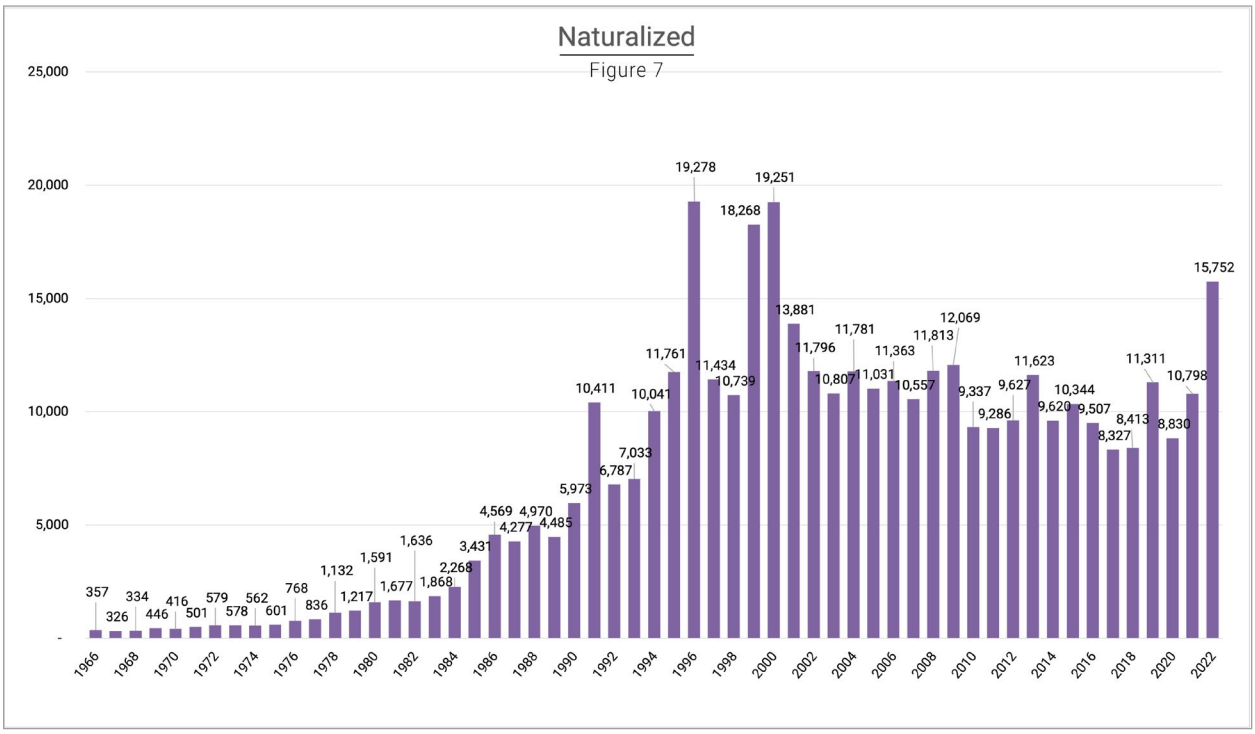
The impact of the revolution boosted this trend, as evidenced by the significant increase in the number of "non-immigrants" (see Figure 6, above). On the eve of the revolution in 1978, the numbers of students, regular visitors, and family members reached to over 130,000. More specifically, starting in 1975, the number of students admitted to the U.S. grew significantly, reaching its peak in 1978 (see Figure 5, ***page 6***).

This was the year when the Shah's government allowed Iranian students leave for universities overseas, with commitment to return. Revolution followed which discouraged many students from returning home. Overall, the period of 1976 to 1979 witnessed a surge in the number of non-immigrants, declining significantly in the early 1980s and remaining at or below 30,000 per year until 2014. The decline in the number of non-immigrants can be attributed to the decline in the number of Iranian students and visitors as a result of more restrictive U.S. policies, making it more challenging to obtain visas. Starting in 2017, the decline in the number of non-immigrants continued until 2020, when less than 3,000 such individuals came to the U.S. To find a similar year in the past, one needs to go back to the pre-1970s era, specifically 1958, when 2,595 (inclusive of students, who numbered 897 and 1,698 visitors) arrived in the U.S. (Askari, et al., 1977).

## The Road to Citizenship

Of those who came to the U.S. some converted their status and others were admitted as permanent residents. However, the decision to become a citizen, the final step in a journey to adopt a new nationality, either as a dual citizen or a complete change from one citizenship to another is not an experience shared by everyone.

Some might have remained "green card" holders indefinitely. This is particularly the case for those Iranians who received their permanent residency through family preference, simply to facilitate their visits to the U.S., even though they might live in Iran or other countries. Becoming a citizen is a commitment that only a subset of U.S. immigrant population has embraced.




Indeed, it was often a long journey for Iranian immigrants to arrive at this decision (see Figure 7). In the pre-revolutionary era, the number of Iranians becoming naturalized (a term used to indicate becoming a citizen) remained below 1,000 per year until 1978. Even after the revolution,

particularly until 1985, there was only a slow, if steady, increase in the number of Iranian immigrants becoming citizens.

After the war with Iraq ended and a decade of the new government remaining in place, the number of Iranians opting for American citizenship grew. An important contributing factor to the length of time is the US required residency years before applying for citizenship. In 1991, for the first time, more than 10,000 Iranian immigrants became citizens of the U.S. Five years later, over 19,000 Iranian Americans became naturalized citizen in 1996, the largest volume of Iranian citizenship in any one year since the 1960s. That record has never been matched in any year since then.

Taking citizenship indicates a commitment to adopting a place as a new home. Of course, the memory of the old home never fades from the minds of the first generation. Second generation hears the stories and interpretations of a place called home from their parents. Some teach their children the old language, celebrate the holidays, and overall introduce their children to some celebratory aspects of their culture.

The third generation is likely to maintain a desire to know more about who they are and rediscover the cultural heritage of their grandparent. Historian, Marcus Hensen, labeled this as the "Law of Third Generation Interest" in his 1938 article,[5] which explored the adaptation process of various immigrant groups, including Italians.

For those who teach Iranian Studies classes in various universities, finding third generation Iranian Americans in their classes is not an uncommon experience. The class, at times, turns into a comparative study of "what I was told" and what is written in the academic books and articles. This is where family narratives get tested, verified, challenged, and more important relived and deeply appreciated. Occasional tears, notwithstanding, the outcome is becoming more deeply engaged with the stories of "us."

**5** Hansen, Marcus Lee. 1938. *The Problem of the Third-Generation Immigrant*. Augustana Historical Society Publications. Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern.

# The Shape and Location of the Early Iranian American Community

The geography and composition of the Iranian American community tell us where the early group decided to settle and make the most impact. For this, we turn to data from the Census Bureau and other sources of information.

At the onset, it is important to note that many in the Iranian American community believe that they are undercounted by the Census Bureau. This is partially caused by the difficulty of capturing the Iranian identity under race or ethnicity. However, people of Iranian heritage can self-identify under ancestry data, which we rely on for this study.

There is no disagreement that the Iranian American community is larger than what is captured under the ancestry data; however, there are no other verifiable and official sources of population data for the Iranian American community. For that reason, readers are advised to focus on proportions/percentages, rather than the magnitude/numbers, of various indicators. In other words, we ask that readers pay attention to patterns rather than the actual numbers.

For the purpose of this report, we will rely on two census data points: 1980 and 2024. The first gives us a quick look at the shape of the early community and the second brings us closer to the current state, using the latest available census data.[6]

Using the single ancestry data from the 1980s census, it is clear that the early concentration of the Iranian American community shaped their current geography/distribution. In 1980, five states with the highest percentage of Iranians were California (35.2%), New York (8.4%), Texas (6.3%), Virginia (3.3%) and Illinois (3.1%).

With nearly one-third of Iranians in one state, it is clear that California would become the cultural, political, and social anchor for the larger community. Demographically, this was a relatively young population with median age of 31.7. This was partially caused by the presence of then younger student population in the Golden State.[7]

Within California, nearly half of the population could be found in Los Angeles County, with Orange County, Santa Clara County, San Diego County, and Marian County serving as the second to fifth concentration of Iranians. Due to this early settlement pattern, Southern California evolved into the sociocultural center for the emerging Iranian American community in the decades to come. Within Los Angeles and Orange Counties, those immigrating between 1975 and 1980 made up slightly more than two-thirds of the population. Nearly 80% were not citizens at that time and only a small percentage were born in the U.S. This included the large Iranian student population who had come to California for their higher education/advanced degrees. This was reflected in the age composition of Los Angeles and Orange County Iranian population, three-quarter of whom were under the age of 40.

6 Analysis of the 1980 census data on the Iranian American community was documented by: Modarres, Ali. 1990. *Ethnic Community Formation: An Ecological Perspective on Iranians in Los Angeles*.

7 Please note that respondents to the Census survey do not need to be a citizen or a permanent resident.

Within Southern California, census tracts encompassing Beverly Hills, Westwood, and Santa Monica were home to the greatest concentration of Iranians in 1980. By then there were already emerging geographic concentrations in San Fernando Valley, particularly in Encino and Canoga Park, as well as Anaheim and, later, in Irvine

Iranian owned businesses followed a similar pattern. Based on the 1981 Iranian Yellow Pages, there were also an emerging concentration of businesses/firms in Encino and Beverly Hills, as well as Westwood and Sherman Oaks.[8] Among the businesses listed, close to 40 were Physicians.[9] This was followed by Real Estate offices. The 1988 Iranian Yellow Pages showed a significant growth of the listed Iranian businesses, with 60 listed in one census tract alone. However, the geography of Iranian American community had naturally expanded over the years. By then, in addition to the old bastions like Beverly Hills, Westwood, and Santa Monica, there was a growing concentration in San Fernando Valley (e.g., Encino, Woodland Hills, Reseda, and Sherman Oaks), Downtown Los Angeles, Glendale, Redondo Beach, Santa Ana, Irvine, Newport Beach, and Burbank, among many more locations. There were also close to 230 physicians listed in the Iranian Yellow Pages, followed by over 70 dentists, close to 70 attorneys, realtors, insurance companies, contractors, accounting, restaurants, clinics, etc. The growth in the number of Persian markets was equally indicative of the full establishment of the community only a decade after the revolution. This was equally suggested by the rate of immigration in the 1980s (see ***Figure 1***) and the full establishment of its residential, commercial, and service/professional geographies.

**8** Iranian Yellow Pages for various years were coded and analyzed by Ali Modarres in the late 1980s. That information was included in the 1990 publication, mentioned earlier.

**9** Please note that only a small fraction of Iranian physicians would have appeared in the Iranian Yellow Pages at that time.

# The Shape of the Community in 2024, Nearly Fifty Years Later

For the purpose of this report, we rely on the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) data. Using single ancestry data, we have found over half million records, representing those who self-identified as having an Iranian ancestry. We use this data to compare with similar ancestry data from 1980 in order to provide a longitudinal perspective on the evolution of the community. Please note, once again, that since we have to rely on ancestry data to analyze the socio-demographic structure of the community, the size of the population will not reflect what many in the community believes to be its actual size.

However, since census data is a statistical sample, the percentages more accurately reflect the entire population. For that reason, readers are encouraged to focus on that aspect of the data represented here.

Nearly fifty years since the mass arrival of Iranian immigrants in the U.S., the community has become more established, older, and diverse. The following pages provide the current socio-demographics and geographic distribution of the population. We start with what might be considered the first indicator for the creation of a permanent community of Iranian Americans. In 2024, more than one-third of those claiming an Iranian ancestry were born in the U.S., nearly one-half were naturalized citizens, and about 14% were not citizen yet (see ***Table 3***). For those who immigrated to the U.S. (63.5% of the population),11.6% arrived between 1971 and 1980 (with majority arriving the second half of the 1970s) (See ***Table 4***). The largest cohort arrived in the first two decades of the 21st century (26.3%). This patten closely reflects the immigration data presented earlier in this report.

The 2024 data, however, begins to show an interesting change in the community. ***Table 5*** provides a profile of the community by age cohorts. While the immigration data highlighted the importance of students and younger population in the formation of the earlier community, by 2020s, the population is clearly older, with 55.2% being 40 year or older.

The earlier student population and the continued emphasis on higher education have contributed to high levels of education achievements. The 2024 Census data indicates that 31.2% of Iranian Americans 25 years or older have an undergraduate degree (see ***Table 6***), another 20.5% have attained a graduate degree, 8% have received a professional degree, and 11% have been awarded a doctorate. This translates to 70.7% of the Iranian Americans 25 years or older having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an astonishing achievement for an immigrant community, making Iranian Americans one of the most highly educated immigrant populations in the U.S. For comparison purposes, 36% of those 25 years and older in the U.S. hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

Reflecting this achievement, the top ten occupations of Iranian Americans (See ***Table 7***) include, managers, physicians, post-secondary teachers, retails sales, software developers, chief executives, teaching assistants, civil engineers, lawyers, and elementary and middle school teachers. Presence of Iranian Americans at all levels of educational structure suggests that not

only the community values education, but also contributes to the educational and professional ecosystem in the U.S.

Geographically speaking, the majority of Iranian Americans live in California (***Table 8***). The overall pattern, with some small changes, reflects the geographic distribution of the community in 1980. Texas, New York, and Virginia continue to be home to this community, but, as before, at a much smaller scale. The geographic distribution of Iranian Americans across all states in the U.S., albeit very small in some locations, is the first indication of the growing diversity in the community. Many people of Iranian ancestry report occupations that are external facing, allowing for social, cultural, and business interactions with others outside the community.

Over the last five decades, they have also married outside the Iranian American community. These and many other factors have contributed to increased linguistic, racial, and cultural diversity (as measured by the inclusion of other ancestries) among Iranian- Americans. Linguistically, nearly 29% of the population indicated that they speak only English at home (see ***Table 9***). Also, a small, but growing number of Iranian Americans marked themselves as being in a racial group other than White (see ***Table 10***). The largest racial category after White was Asian. However, "some other race alone" was larger than the Asian category, and "two or more major race groups" was the largest after White. This suggests the growing sense of racial diversity in the community.

The White and other racial categories are also not void of their own internal diversity. After selecting their first ancestry (the data which we are using to analyze the Iranian community), respondents could also select a second ancestry. While about 86% of Iranian Americans did not report a second ancestry or chose Iranian for their second ancestry also, nearly 14% chose other cultural/national identities for their second ancestry! Among them, the top categories were: American, Irish, German, Italian, White, Armenian, Mexican, English, Israeli, French, Scottish, Spanish, European, Filipino, and African American (see ***Table 11***).

This data reflects the growing cultural diversity within the community. While Iranian identity is important to the population, as indicated by their first choice of ancestry, second and most likely third generation Iranian Americans celebrate all their ancestries and proudly identify themselves as such. If the success of a culture is its willingness to include "others" and treat them as their own, the Iranian American community is well on its way to achieve that. While 14% of population reporting second ancestries might seem small, one should remember that the Iranian American community has been here for slightly less than 50 years. If the last five decades are any indication, the census of 2100 will surely find a community more diverse, while centering its Iranian identity. One can only hope that while celebrating diversity, knowledge of Persian language is retained and celebrated, a critical medium for sustaining the culture among future generation of Iranian Americans.

# HUMANIZING THE DATA

While data analysis provides us with the much-needed understanding of the evolution of the Iranian American community in the U.S., it is important to humanize this information through a sample of personal experiences. For that reason, we interviewed a diverse, but small group of Iranian Americans, who live in Southern California. The interviewees varied by when they arrived in the U.S. and how they experienced their immigration. Below, we summarize their stories. We hope that readers appreciate how these varied experiences highlight the findings of our data analysis and reaffirm the importance of continuing with both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the community in the years to come.

## Interviewee I & II (A Couple)

They were born in Iran and arrived in the U.S. in 1969 to continue their higher education. Having completed their undergraduate degree in Iran, he received his Ph.D. and she finished her master's degree in the U.S. (later completed her Ph.D. in Europe).

After finishing their studies, the couple returned to Iran but came back to the United States in 1982 due to political persecution following the revolution. The revolution marked a traumatic turning point in their lives. Once a respected dean, he became a target of persecution. His description of fear, betrayal, and the unexpected help of a former student reveals the dangers intellectuals faced in post-revolutionary Iran.

His wife, who had been waiting in London with their two young children, described the heartbreak of their separation, the loss of everything they owned, and the emotional weight of their reunion:

> **"We lost everything. He arrived with only $200 from Tehran to England. I went to meet him. When I saw him from the airport balcony, he looked like a man who had lost something deeply precious. It was as if he had just come from a graveyard."**

The couple lost everything they had in Iran and had to rebuild their lives from the ground up. Despite their advanced education, they faced economic hardship and professional barriers. Their story reflects humility, perseverance, and creativity in survival.

They now live in California, where the husband accepted an academic position. This move was motivated by a job opportunity rather than the desire to co-locate with other Iranian

Americans. The couple has two children—one a doctor and the other an engineer—both of whom identify as Iranian American and are married to non-Iranians. Intergroup marriage is also common among their extended family. While they speak primarily Persian at home, the marriage to non-Persian speaking partners necessitates speaking English with guests.

The couple socializes with diverse group of friends, indicating that not unlike many other Iranian Americans, living in Southern California does not create an exclusive interaction zone for this particular ethnic group. The professional status of many Iranian Americans and the growing number of inter-ethnic marriages facilitate the expansion of socio-cultural and linguistic boundaries of the group.

## Interviewee III

The interviewee's immigration story begins with his mother's academic achievement, which represented both a milestone for women in Iran and a turning point for their family's future. In 1965, when he was eleven years old, his mother received a prestigious scholarship sponsored by the Shah's wife. Although the family had relatives across Europe, his father's side had already settled in the United States in the late 1950s. For them, America represented "the new frontier," a place of opportunity and progress. The decision to choose the United States, as the interviewee later reflected, was one that profoundly shaped the course of their lives.

His mother, pregnant at the time, traveled to the United States by plane, while his father chose a more adventurous route, taking his sons with him by ship. The interviewee vividly recalled the moment of arrival in Manhattan at dawn after days at sea. As the ship entered the harbor, the Statue of Liberty came into view.

> **"That was the first thing I saw," he said, recalling how he ran to the deck in excitement. "After being on the water for so long, seeing that sight—it felt like heaven. The tall buildings, the skyline—it was magical."**

It is rare to speak with an Iranian immigrant who refers to seeing the Statute of Liberty as they approached the U.S. At a young age, this Iranian American experienced what could be called a traditional method of arriving in the country.

The family initially settled in a northern U.S. state, where his mother pursued her studies. Growing up in America from an early age, the interviewee witnessed and participated in the country's social, economic, and political developments, particularly those that defined the 1960s and the early 1970s. He completed his schooling and higher education in the United States, attending a university on the East Coast before eventually relocating to California.

After both parents earned their Ph.D.s, the family returned to Iran about a year before the 1979 Revolution. His mother accepted a high-ranking academic position, and the family began their lives there. However, during their first summer visit back to the United States, his mother received a call from one of her students, warning that the situation in Iran was deteriorating and advising the family to extend their stay. That single phone call changed the course of their lives once again, anchoring them permanently in the United States.

The interviewee is married to an American and maintains a close circle of Iranian American friends. Having spent many years working in East Asia, he also feels a strong connection to Asian cultures. English is the primary language spoken in his home, and he expressed regret that his children did not learn Persian—a reflection of the cultural compromises that often accompany immigration and cultural integration.

Interestingly, the presence of an Iranian American community did not play a significant role in his decision to move to California—a sentiment shared by several other interviewees in this study. He rarely participates in Iranian American events, describing his identity as American in nationality but culturally Persian.

Throughout his life, he has wrestled with the duality of being both Persian and American, yet he feels at home in both identities. He indicated that America is his home, but as he has got older, he has come to appreciate the Persian culture more, experiencing a bifurcation of what he called his "cultural DNA."

## Interviewee IV

He arrived in 1966 as an eighteen-year-old student, full of anticipation and curiosity about his new life. "Expecting a bustling metropolis like New York, I instead landed in a small, unfamiliar town—it was a very shocking experience," he recalled. The moment underscored the stark contrast between his life in cosmopolitan Tehran and the rural simplicity of his new surroundings.

He first settled in a southern state to learn English and later attended universities in the Mountain West and California, ultimately earning a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering. Like many students who remained in the United States, he adjusted his immigration status through marriage and even took his partner to Iran for a period. He did not want to return to the U.S. because everyone was being drafted for the Vietnam war. He eventually did so. His brothers also immigrated to the United States, with the older one arriving shortly before the revolution.

Today, he has family members living in New Jersey, Texas, and Southern California. His residence in Southern California is shaped less by the presence of a large Iranian American community and more by business opportunities and proximity to family. He is married to an Iranian American and has three children, all of whom identify as Iranian American. The two children from his first marriage do not speak Persian—though they identify strongly with their heritage—while the third child from his current marriage does.

A successful entrepreneur, he founded a major business and built a wide network of colleagues and friends, including many non-Iranians. Interestingly, he observed that he now sees fewer new immigrants arriving from Iran (which supports the data presented in the previous section), reflecting his awareness of the community's evolving future.

A defining aspect of his story is his deep empathy for other immigrant and ethnic groups. He expressed a strong sense of moral obligation to assist newcomers, viewing it as both a personal calling and a way of giving back:

> **"I have always been inclined to—feel obligated, almost—to help immigrant groups, because I myself was an immigrant, and I knew how badly I needed people to help and support me when I came to this country. It's a kind of payback—my contribution."**

This statement reflects not only gratitude but also a broader ethic of reciprocity common among successful first-generation immigrants who remember their own early struggles.

Similar to the majority of interviewees, he would not consider returning to Iran, further suggesting the permanence of the community in the U.S. Given the growing rate of inter-group marriage, as well as the varying degrees of inter-and-intra-group interactions, the Iranian American community will likely continue to diversify into the future and further settle into their multiple identities.

## Interviewee V

This interviewee came to the U.S. in 1978, when the revolution was in full swing. Arriving at the age of 8, she could be classified under the category of generation and a half. She came along with her parents, who arrived as tourists and later were admitted as refugees. They went through significant hardship to leave Iran.

She vividly recalled the day they were heading to the airport. "It was very early in the morning," she said. "They woke us up suddenly. I was in the back seat of the car when my father said, 'You guys need to get down.' So, they pushed us into the space where you keep your feet and covered us with a rug. The rug was damp—and if you've ever smelled a wet Persian rug, you know it has a very distinct scent. That smell has stayed with me all these years; even now, it takes me right back to that moment."

She remembered feeling confused, sensing the tension but not fully understanding why they were hiding. Beneath the rug were three small children—eight, five, and three years old—pressed close together as the car moved.

> **"We were fortunate," she reflected, "because of my father's position, we were able to leave and eventually fly to the United States."**

They came to Los Angeles directly and since they did not have the necessary financial wherewithal they settled in East Los Angeles. With parents working hard, they were able to move to other areas of Los Angeles, each move reflecting further financial stability of the family. She indicated that the presence of other Iranian Americans was very important in her choice of where she lives now, allowing her to participate in community events. She is married to an American and while she identifies herself as Iranian American, her children refer to themselves as half Persian and half American. She and her children speak Persian at home. Being multilingual was highlighted by the interviewee as being important to them (beyond English and Persian). The family interacts with and has many friends and colleagues outside the community. However, she sees identity preservation as a continuous endeavor for Iranian Americans. In terms of personal success, having finished her second grade in Iran, she continued her education in the U.S. Despite all the initial hardships, the family overcame various obstacles. She earned her bachelor's degree, two master's degree and a Ph.D., and currently works as an administrator in a higher education institution.

## Interviewee VI

Similar to the previous interviewee, he arrived in 1978 as a 14-year-old. His brother had come to the U.S. for his higher education in 1976. During the summer of 1978, the brother asked his family to come to the U.S. for a visit since he was about to graduate. His mother and sister, along with the interviewee, came to U.S. for a summer break in May 1978.

As the revolutionary period began, his father asked the family to stay put. Not being able to extend their tourist visa, they all (including his mother) obtained student visas. He had finished 8$^{th}$ grade and his sister 2$^{nd}$ grade in Iran. He and his family continued their education in the U.S. Even though they were relatively comfortable in the U.S. during the initial few months, his father lost everything in Iran and their situation changed. Due to heart problems, dad was able to obtain a medical visa and come to the U.S. for his operation. Interviewee expressed his positive experience with his high school administrator and the support he received during the hostage crisis, which affirmed his decision to stay. He finished his high school and higher education in the U.S., receiving a bachelor's degree in economics. Other members of his family also immigrated to the U.S., benefiting from family sponsorship.

There was not a sizable Iranian American community where they settled in the late 1970s, suggesting that their choice of residence was not driven by the presence of an Iranian American community. However, at this point, they enjoy the presence of a larger population and the ability to attend community events. Like some of the other interviewees, he is not married to an Iranian. His wife is a Mexican American, born in Mexico. The couple have two daughters, who self-identify as Iranian American. However, one feels more Iranian and the other more Mexican. They speak Persian, Spanish, and English at home. However, children's fluency in Persian varies. Like other interviewees, he also built a life in the U.S. and established a business, which he continues to operate. Not unlike the interviewee, other family members have also married outside the Iranian American community, illustrating further diversification of the community.

It is important to note that not unlike others who came to the U.S. as children or young adults, they possess a growing affinity with local cultures and are open to inter-ethnic marriages. Their pattern of socialization has created a more diverse community than one would find in the 1970s or 1980s. The younger immigrants who arrived in the 1970s and the 1980s are now in their late 50s and 60s. Their children are beginning to shape the next generation of Iranian Americans identity regardless of how fluent they are in Persian.

## Interviewee VII

He arrived in the U.S. in 1968 as a 17-year-old student, by himself, driven by the desire for education and independence. This moment reflects courage, determination, and the immigrant spirit of starting from almost nothing.

> **"I took $500 from my mother and came here."**

Even though he had received a scholarship, he had limited funds. So, he worked two full-time jobs while studying. He completed his higher education in the U.S., earning his Ph.D. in electrical engineering.

This early period of struggle and self reliance shaped his later commitment to supporting other immigrants who faced similar challenges. He indicated that his current place of residence in Southern California was driven by employment and business opportunities and was not influenced by the presence of other Iranian Americans. That said, he is currently quite active in the Iranian American community and was the founder of a major organization that coordinates Iranian festivals and activates. He is married to an Iranian American and their only child, who is about 40, self-identifies as Iranian and speaks Persian fluently. Like many other second-generation Iranian Americans, he is married to someone from outside the community. Interviewee is a successful businessman/entrepreneur who has founded major companies.

His story demonstrates a deep sense of community leadership, generosity, and gratitude. Drawing from his own experiences of arriving alone in a foreign country, he sought to "pay it forward" by helping others find their footing in America. His efforts not only provided tangible support, such as employment opportunities and visa sponsorships, but also helped cultivate a sense of belonging among Iranian Americans navigating the complexities of identity and integration.

By now, it is clear that, while many of our interviewees live in Southern California, their journey to this locality was not driven by the larger presence of an Iranian Community. Perhaps the large number of universities, job and business opportunities, as well as an established immigrant culture played more important roles in getting many people, including Iranian American community to this region.

## Interviewee VIII

She came to the U.S. in 1986, along with her parents, when she was 11 years old. They were sponsored by her aunt (family sponsorship). They left Iran because of war, family hardship, and religious discrimination. She recalled the painful discrimination her family endured as Zoroastrians after the revolution in Iran. Even as a child, she sensed the quiet but hurtful exclusion her parents faced because of their faith.

> **"It was awful," she said. "I was too young to understand, but now I realize how much hardship my parents went through."**

Her sister had come to the U.S. prior to the revolution. Her brother during the revolution. She went along with her mom to Switzerland and tried to get her dad out. They went to Los Angeles first, then Texas, Santa Cruz, and eventually the Bay Area and Orange County. Initially, the presence of an Iranian American community was not a factor, but having more friends who are moving to Orange County is perhaps a positive bonus. She attended elementary school in Iran but finished the rest of her education in the U.S., receiving an undergraduate degree in mathematics from UC Berkeley. She does self-identify as an Iranian American, but she is not socially active and rarely participates in Iranian event. She is married to an Iranian and their only daughter primarily identifies as an Iranian American. The daughter understands Persian but does not speak it. Like many other interviewees, she indicated that marriage with people outside the Iranian American community is common in her family, particularly among the second generation.

Today, she takes pride in the Iranian American community's educational and professional success and hopes future generations will carry that legacy forward. "Our generation has always been driven to succeed," she reflected. "We work hard to honor our parents' sacrifices—and I see the same determination in our children, who continue to achieve and

contribute to this society."

This interviewee reminds us of some of the hardship faced by those who came as children and regardless of the challenges they faced, they built a life full of hope and personal, as well as professional, success stories. Growing up in the U.S., they were perhaps more open to marrying outside their ethnic group, embracing other cultures, while retaining their identity.

## Interviewee IX

This interviewee arrived in the U.S. in 1997, when she was 18 years old. This would make her a member of the post-revolution generation, experiencing the 1980s Iran-Iraq war as a child, and perhaps more specifically the post-war era. Her grandparents were in the U.S. and sponsored their immigration. She and her mom came together. Unfortunately, the process took too long, and her sister became too old (i.e., turned 21) for family sponsorship. Dad stayed behind with her sister. It took another 10 years before they could join them. The family first settled in San Jose and then moved to Orange County.

Presence of an Iranian American community was not mentioned as a deciding factor for where they settled. She indicated that she lived her early years in the U.S. with an American family and embraced the culture. She rarely attends Persian events and feels somewhat distant from the community. She does self-identify as Persian. She is married to an American and speaks English at home. She finished her High School in the U.S. and received a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. She practices as a graphic designer and started a related business with her husband. She indicated that she has a lot of non-Iranian friends and most of her clients are not Persian.

This interviewee approaches the category of out-groupers. These are typically first and second-generation immigrants who are inclined to keep their distance from the community. At times, this is caused by the fear of stigma that can be associated with a particular identity. We observed this in the case of another interviewee who felt identifying as an Iranian could pose a problem (particularly during specific political periods).

## Interviewee X

This interviewee arrived in the U.S. in 1979 as a 23-year-old student. He received a scholarship to continue his graduate studies, earning two master's degrees and a Ph.D. This was followed by postdoctoral degree. During his master's studies, the revolution changed everything. "Halfway through my program, I got a letter from the Minister of Science and Higher Education in Iran—my scholarship was stopped," It was with the help of his faculty mentor and being able to work, albeit in low-paying jobs, that he was able to stay in the U.S. and finish his education.

> "Those were hard days," he said, "but I stayed and finished what I started. Education was my way forward."

He eventually settled in Southern California but lived in other places during his educational journey. Like others, he too indicated that the presence of an Iranian American community was not a factor in his decision about where to live. While he rarely attends Persian events and feels distant from the community, he self-identifies as Iranian American and is proud of both identities. He is married to an Iranian and they have two children, who self-identify as Iranian American and maintain knowledge of Persian with different levels of fluency. He has worked as an engineer, educator, and business owner. He founded a company and served as its Chief Operating Officer until his retirement. His circle of friends includes people with diverse backgrounds. During the interview, he highlighted an important generational difference regarding the desire to live in Iran at some point in the future. He suggested that while older immigrants might consider doing that, the younger generation is not likely to do so. This is another indication that the Iranian American community is becoming a more permanent part of the ethnic landscape in the U.S.

## Interviewee XI

The last immigration journey focuses on a different experience. She arrived in the U.S. in 1978, when she was 2-year-old. Having no memory of Iran, she falls clearly under the category of generation and a half. As the revolution unfolded, as a Jewish family, they felt they had to leave. First, mom and the two daughters, which included the interviewee, came to the U.S. Her father came later. Parents had a green card and many in the extended family, including her grandparents, were already in the U.S. Even though they first went to Chicago and then to San Francisco, they finally settled in Los Angeles. Her childhood in Los Angeles was shaped by immigrant adaptation—learning English through television, being raised by grandparents, and feeling culturally "in-between."

> "I started preschool at a little Jewish day school. My parents worked full-time in the garment industry in downtown."

She did all her education in the U.S., attending some of the most prestigious universities in the U.S., including UC Berkeley, Harvard Divinity School (on a full scholarship), and UC Santa Barbara, where she earned her Ph.D. (also on a full scholarship). She indicated that the presence of a large Iranian Jewish community in Los Angeles was an important factor in deciding where to live. She participates in Iranian American community events and self-identifies as Persian and a Jewish American, with different aspects emphasized depending on the context. She does indicate having a hybrid identity. She has an American

partner and has a 3-year-old son. He understands Persian, and the interviewee encourages her family to speak with him. Some other members of her family also married Americans, suggesting an increasing level of diversity through marriage and friendship. Professionally, she is a former college professor, a scholar, and director of a major research center. Reflecting on the future of the community, she indicates that the earlier generation held a "suitcase mentality. It took at least over 20 years for Persian Jews to realize" they needed to unpack their suitcases. Since then, Persian Jews have become rooted and active in U.S. life.

It is interesting to view the Iranian community through the lens of those who came as children to the U.S. and spent a portion of their lives observing and systematically studying the community. The degree to which they embrace their dual or even multiple identities is a reminder that the Iranian American community is not only diverse by their immigration journeys, but also by their religion, culture, and ethnicity.[10]

**10** Our interviews focused on those who live in Southern California both for ease of access and for the fact that this is the largest concentration of Iranian Americans in the U.S., or for that matter, the entire diaspora. However, it is important to acknowledge that living in other localities in the U.S. (e.g., Texas, New York, Virgina, etc.) has produced different experiences and different perspectives on what it means to be an Iranian American. While the origin matters, the journey shapes the experience. By no means does Southern California represent the totality of the experience. However, given the large concentration of Iranian Americans, it is an important part of the larger community in the U.S.

# Arriving at a Conclusion

The short stories in the previous section and the larger data analysis section remind us that there are two simultaneous truths about the Iranian American community. First, despite their diasporic experience and being mostly hesitant and/or accidental immigrants, the community has established roots in the U.S., built internal resiliency, and worked hard to maintain itself as highly successful and contributing members of society.

Clearly, a sharp focus on education and entrepreneurialism has served the community well and continues among second and third generation Iranian Americans. This is regardless of how the first generation arrived in the U.S., at what age, and under what circumstance. As the first generation has aged, the second and the third generation have followed the high achievements of their parents and grandparents.

At the same time, they have also become more diverse and immersed in multicultural identity of the U.S. They have married outside the Iranian community, and some have gradually adopted English as their daily and at-home medium of communication. This does not negate their continued self-identification as Iranian Americans and their love of their rich ancient culture. They have been successful in navigating both, regardless of their linguistic choice.

**In the end, it is the success of the entire community, which was highlighted in the quantitative portion of this report, that should be celebrated. This success, particularly in the current climate, should be recognized as well by the general American public.**

Of course it is important to recognize the diversity of experiences. As has been the case with other ethnic groups, success can be both a point of pride and a challenge. Many have paid a significant price in joining the diaspora. The loss of their home and relationships, as well as the cost of building a new life among "others," both in terms of financial costs and sociocultural costs, are significant. Nearly five decades after the 1978-1979 revolution the impact varies from one person and location to another.

Most immigrants think about what they have lost, regardless of in what city and neighborhood they live. They are reminded of their loss looking at their children and grandchildren, even though they are proud of them. For those who married outside the community and have children with multiple heritages, it is hard to impose a cultural boundary on them. If the third generation reaches back into the community to learn about who they are, it will not only be within the cultural geography/neighborhoods of Iranian American community, but also in the larger and increasingly diverse society.

Seeing students, some studying Persian history and culture, on various campuses, celebrating Persian New Year and Yalda, suggests that, like other recent immigrant groups, this community is now firmly rooted in the U.S. even while embracing an accented Iranian identity.

However, one thing is certain. Iranian Americans will evolve in ways different than Iranians in Iran. In due time, the Iranian American community, like many other immigrant groups, will be on its way to that happy space of expanded cultural boundaries, where food, cultural events, and cultural artifacts become the instruments for remembering and celebrating an imagined "home" in their now adopted country.

## Postscript

During the writing of this report, the war between the U.S. and Iran began. International conflicts have historically contributed to population movements. In the case of Iran, the Revolution of 1978-1979 and the Iran-Iraq war contributed to the growth of the Iranian diaspora, particularly the community in the U.S. In the case of the current war, it is too soon to predict the resulting population movements. Will more Iranians emigrate? Where will they go? Only the future will tell how and in what way the diaspora, particularly the Iranian American Community, will be impacted demographically and socially by current events.

# TABLES

## TABLE 1

| Region and country of last residence | Iran |
|---|---|
| 1820 to 1829 | 0 |
| 1830 to 1839 | 0 |
| 1840 to 1849 | 7 |
| 1850 to 1859 | 0 |
| 1860 to 1869 | 4 |
| 1870 to 1879 | 17 |
| 1880 to 1889 | 18 |
| 1890 to 1899 | 26 |
| 1900 to 1909 | 0 |
| 1910 to 1919 | 0 |
| 1920 to 1929 | 208 |
| 1930 to 1939 | 198 |
| 1940 to 1949 | 1,144 |
| 1950 to 1959 | 3,195 |
| 1960 to 1969 | 9,059 |
| 1970 to 1979 | 33,763 |
| 1980 to 1989 | 98,141 |
| 1990 to 1999 | 76,899 |
| 2000 to 2009 | 76,755 |
| 2010 to 2019 | 83,378 |

*Source: Annual Yearbooks of Immigration Statistics*

## TABLE 2

| Annual Immigration | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Year** | **Region & Country of Birth, Iran** | **Year** | **Region & Country of Birth, Iran** |
| 1950 | 245 | 1987 | 14,426 |
| 1951 | 237 | 1988 | 15,246 |
| 1952 | 223 | 1990 | 21,243 |
| 1953 | 160 | 1991 | 24,977 |
| 1954 | 249 | 1992 | 19,569 |
| 1955 | 219 | 1993 | 13,233 |
| 1956 | 227 | 1994 | 14,841 |
| 1957 | 328 | 1995 | 11,422 |
| 1958 | 433 | 1996 | 9,201 |
| 1959 | 409 | 1997 | 11,084 |
| 1960 | 429 | 1998 | 9,635 |
| 1961 | 471 | 1999 | 7,873 |
| 1962 | 601 | 2000 | 7,176 |
| 1963 | 705 | 2001 | 8,487 |
| 1964 | 754 | 2002 | 10,425 |
| 1965 | 804 | 2003 | 12,960 |
| 1966 | 1,085 | 2004 | 7,230 |
| 1967 | 1,414 | 2005 | 10,434 |
| 1968 | 1,280 | 2006 | 13,887 |
| 1969 | 1,352 | 2007 | 13,947 |
| 1970 | 1,825 | 2008 | 10,460 |
| 1971 | 2,411 | 2009 | 13,852 |
| 1972 | 3,059 | 2010 | 18,553 |
| 1973 | 2,998 | 2011 | 14,182 |
| 1974 | 2,608 | 2012 | 14,822 |
| 1975 | 2,337 | 2013 | 12,916 |
| 1976 | 3,731 | 2014 | 12,863 |
| 1977 | 4,261 | 2015 | 11,615 |
| 1978 | 5,861 | 2016 | 13,114 |
| 1979 | 8,476 | 2017 | 13,298 |
| 1980 | 10,410 | 2018 | 13,791 |
| 1981 | 11,105 | 2019 | 10,116 |
| 1982 | 10,314 | 2020 | 6,640 |
| 1983 | 11,163 | 2021 | 8,805 |
| 1984 | 13,807 | 2021 | 5,734 |
| 1985 | 16,071 | 2022 | 9,407 |
| 1986 | 16,505 | | |
| | | **Total** | **586,031** |

## TABLE 3

| Citizenship Status | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent** |
| Born in the U.S. | 187,714 | 36.4 |
| Born abroad of American parent(s) | 10,292 | 2.0 |
| U.S. citizen by naturalization | 246,381 | 47.8 |
| Not a citizen of the U.S. | 71,298 | 13.8 |
| **Total** | **515,685** | **100.00** |

## TABLE 4

| Iranian Ancestry by Decade of Arrival in the U.S. | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Decade** | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent** |
| 1950 or before | 744 | 0.1 |
| 1951-1960 | 3,769 | 0.7 |
| 1961-1970 | 9,479 | 1.8 |
| 1971-1980 | 59,624 | 11.6 |
| 1981-1990 | 44,639 | 8.7 |
| 1991-2000 | 42,816 | 8.3 |
| 2001-2010 | 52,913 | 10.3 |
| 2011-2020 | 82,398 | 16.0 |
| After 2020 | 31,589 | 6.1 |
| Subtotal | 327,971 | 63.6 |
| Native Born or Missing Data | 187,714 | 36.4 |
| **Total** | **515,685** | **100.00** |

*Source: Census Bureau, ACS 2024; Tables 3 and 4*

## TABLE 5

| Age Cohorts | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Years** | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent** |
| 0-9 | 47,832 | 9.3 |
| 10-19 | 44,337 | 8.6 |
| 20-29 | 51,287 | 9.9 |
| 30-39 | 87,543 | 17.0 |
| 40-49 | 85,253 | 16.5 |
| 50-59 | 61,430 | 11.9 |
| 60-69 | 71,834 | 13.9 |
| 70-79 | 44,727 | 8.7 |
| 80-89 | 17,771 | 3.4 |
| 90+ | 3,671 | 0.7 |
| **Total** | **515,685** | **100.00** |

*Source: Census Bureau, ACS 2024*

## TABLE 6

| Educational Attainment 25+ | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Education Level** | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent** |
| No schooling completed | 4,352 | 1.1 |
| Nursery school, preschool | 129 | 0.0 |
| Grade 3 | 54 | 0.0 |
| Grade 4 | 98 | 0.0 |
| Grade 5 | 244 | 0.1 |
| Grade 6 | 1,909 | 0.5 |
| Grade 7 | 87 | 0.0 |
| Grade 8 | 444 | 0.1 |
| Grade 9 | 918 | 0.2 |
| Grade 10 | 802 | 0.2 |
| Grade 11 | 493 | 0.1 |
| 12th grade - no diploma | 3,392 | 0.8 |
| Regular high school diploma | 42,804 | 10.6 |
| GED or alternative credential | 2,529 | 0.6 |
| Some college, but less than 1 year | 10,766 | 2.7 |
| 1 or more years of college credit, no degree | 24,654 | 6.1 |
| Associate's degree | 24,395 | 6.1 |
| Bachelor's degree | 125,540 | 31.2 |
| Master's degree | 82,434 | 20.5 |
| Professional degree beyond a bachelor's degree | 32,413 | 8.0 |
| Doctorate degree | 44,250 | 11.0 |
| **Total** | **515,685** | **100.00** |

*Source: Census Bureau, ACS 2024*

## TABLE 7

| Top 10 Occupations | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Occupation** | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent of all Iranian Ancestry** |
| Managers | 14,725 | 2.9% |
| Physicians | 12,586 | 2.4% |
| Post-Secondary Teachers | 12,503 | 2.4% |
| Retail Salespersons | 11,481 | 2.2% |
| Software Developers | 10,151 | 2.0% |
| Chief Executives | 8,281 | 1.6% |
| Teaching Assistants | 6,384 | 1.2% |
| Civil Engineers | 6,201 | 1.2% |
| Lawyers | 5,896 | 1.1% |
| Elementary and Middle School Teachers | 5,576 | 1.1% |

*Source: Census Bureau, ACS 2024*

## TABLE 8

| Distribution Pattern | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **State** | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent** | **State** | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent** |
| California | 232,896 | 45.2 | Kentucky | 2,450 | 0.5 |
| Texas | 43,467 | 8.4 | Kansas | 2,310 | 0.4 |
| New York | 27,203 | 5.3 | Indiana | 2,206 | 0.4 |
| Virginia | 23,869 | 4.6 | Minnesota | 2,040 | 0.4 |
| Florida | 16,971 | 3.3 | Alabama | 1,934 | 0.4 |
| Washington | 15,316 | 3.0 | Wisconsin | 1,807 | 0.4 |
| Maryland | 13,896 | 2.7 | Rhode Island | 1,760 | 0.3 |
| Georgia | 13,307 | 2.6 | Utah | 1,717 | 0.3 |
| Arizona | 11,069 | 2.1 | Hawaii | 1,627 | 0.3 |
| Massachusetts | 10,464 | 2.0 | Louisiana | 1,561 | 0.3 |
| Illinois | 10,023 | 1.9 | New Mexico | 1,334 | 0.3 |
| New Jersey | 8,274 | 1.6 | Wyoming | 951 | 0.2 |
| Colorado | 8,023 | 1.6 | Arkansas | 834 | 0.2 |
| Michigan | 7,075 | 1.4 | Delaware | 664 | 0.1 |
| Ohio | 6,681 | 1.3 | West Virginia | 660 | 0.1 |
| North Carolina | 6,266 | 1.2 | New Hampshire | 527 | 0.1 |
| Pennsylvania | 5,393 | 1.0 | Nebraska | 488 | 0.1 |
| Nevada | 4,851 | 0.9 | Iowa | 279 | 0.1 |
| Oregon | 4,297 | 0.8 | Mississippi | 209 | 0.0 |
| Tennessee | 4,066 | 0.8 | Montana | 175 | 0.0 |
| Oklahoma | 3,841 | 0.7 | North Dakota | 116 | 0.0 |
| South Carolina | 3,653 | 0.7 | Maine | 104 | 0.0 |
| Missouri | 3,560 | 0.7 | Idaho | 80 | 0.0 |
| Connecticut | 2,836 | 0.5 | Alaska | 41 | 0.0 |
| District of Columbia | 2,514 | 0.5 | | | |
| | | | **Total** | **515,685** | **100.00** |

*Source: Census Bureau, ACS 2024*

## TABLE 9

| Language other than English spoken at home | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent** |
| Yes, speaks another language | 341,957 | 66.3 |
| No, speaks only english | 148,085 | 28.7 |
| Total | 490,042 | 95.0 |
| Unknown | 25,643 | 5.0 |
| **Total** | **515,685** | **100.00** |

## TABLE 10

| Iranian Ancestry by Race | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Iranian Ancestry** | **Percent** |
| White alone | 431,957 | 83.8 |
| Black or African American alone | 231 | 0.0 |
| American Indian alone | 465 | 0.1 |
| Asian Alone | 3,809 | 0.7 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone | 49 | 0.0 |
| Some other race alone | 4,863 | 0.9 |
| Two or more major race groups | 74,311 | 14.4 |
| **Total** | **515,685** | **100.00** |

*Source: Census Bureau, ACS 2024; Tables 9 and 10*

## TABLE 11

| Second Ancestry | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Nationality** | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Nationality** | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
| Iranian | 58,979 | 11.4 | Kurdish | 410 | 0.1 |
| American | 10,994 | 2.1 | Asian | 402 | 0.1 |
| Irish | 4,683 | 0.9 | Vietnamese | 397 | 0.1 |
| German | 4,073 | 0.8 | Hispanic | 373 | 0.1 |
| Italian | 3,775 | 0.7 | Not Used | 363 | 0.1 |
| White | 3,211 | 0.6 | Czech | 350 | 0.1 |
| Armenian | 3,057 | 0.6 | Dominican | 345 | 0.1 |
| Mexican | 2,579 | 0.5 | Norwegian | 344 | 0.1 |
| English | 2,513 | 0.5 | Portuguese | 322 | 0.1 |
| Israeli | 2,098 | 0.4 | Belgian | 308 | 0.1 |
| French | 2,050 | 0.4 | Iraqi | 255 | 0.0 |
| Scottish | 1,738 | 0.3 | Swiss | 253 | 0.0 |
| Spanish | 1,596 | 0.3 | Arabic | 235 | 0.0 |
| European | 1,593 | 0.3 | Honduran | 225 | 0.0 |
| Filipino | 1,237 | 0.2 | Brazilian | 213 | 0.0 |
| African American | 1,101 | 0.2 | Assyrian | 211 | 0.0 |
| Hungarian | 871 | 0.2 | Welsh | 210 | 0.0 |
| Greek | 870 | 0.2 | Northern European | 209 | 0.0 |
| Russian | 867 | 0.2 | Japanese | 204 | 0.1 |
| Polish | 753 | 0.1 | Puerto Rican | 191 | 0.1 |
| Turkish | 719 | 0.1 | Slovak | 187 | 0.1 |
| Black | 692 | 0.1 | Peruvian | 180 | 0.1 |
| British | 613 | 0.1 | Romanian | 166 | 0.1 |
| Eastern European | 578 | 0.1 | Afghan | 166 | 0.1 |
| Dutch | 561 | 0.1 | Lithuanian | 150 | 0.1 |
| Asian Indian | 560 | 0.1 | United States | 148 | 0.1 |
| Mideast | 499 | 0.1 | Korean | 145 | 0.1 |
| Jordanian | 491 | 0.1 | Danish | 141 | 0.1 |
| Syrian | 468 | 0.1 | Azerbaijani | 137 | 0.1 |
| Palestinian | 441 | 0.1 | Germanic | 135 | 0.1 |
| Ecuadorian | 433 | 0.1 | Mexican American | 118 | 0.1 |
| Lebanese | 431 | 0.1 | Canadian | 115 | 0.1 |
| Scandinavian | 428 | 0.1 | Pakistani | 111 | 0.1 |
| Mixture | 425 | 0.1 | Colombian | 108 | 0.1 |

## TABLE 11, contd.

| Second Ancestry | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Nationality** | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
| Trinidadian and Tobagonian | 102 | 0.1 |
| Laotian | 102 | 0.1 |
| Nicaraguan | 98 | 0.0 |
| Finnish | 97 | 0.0 |
| American Indian | 92 | 0.0 |
| Malaysian | 90 | 0.0 |
| African | 87 | 0.0 |
| Mongolian | 85 | 0.0 |
| Czechoslovakian | 83 | 0.0 |
| Swedish | 82 | 0.0 |
| Bulgarian | 73 | 0.0 |
| Chinese | 60 | 0.0 |
| Ukrainian | 55 | 0.0 |
| Moroccan | 55 | 0.0 |
| Hawaiian | 49 | 0.0 |
| Indonesian | 48 | 0.0 |
| Native American | 47 | 0.0 |
| Cambodian | 40 | 0.0 |
| Latvian | 37 | 0.0 |
| Austrian | 34 | 0.0 |
| Argentinean | 34 | 0.0 |
| Slavic | 27 | 0.0 |
| Yugoslavian | 22 | 0.0 |
| French Canadian | 10 | 0.0 |
| Other Responses | 4,043 | 0.784 |
| Not Used | 60 | 0.012 |
| Not Reported* | 386,269 | 74.904 |
| **Total** | **515,685** | **100.0** |

* "Not Reported" refers to the portion of the population that only chose first ancestry. In this case, Iranian. We can make the same assumption about "Not Used."

*Source: Census Bureau, ACS 2024*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