



What Defines Iranian Americans: Child Education Patterns

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Introduction

Iranian Americans in the United States constitute one of the most educated and affluent communities in this country. According to the U.S. census 2000 the size of this community is about 340000, of whom over 57% of the 25 year old and older members have obtained a bachelor or a higher degree and 27% have a graduate degree. Moreover, the Iranian-Americans average income is about 50% over the national average and they have a disproportionately large fraction of households owning homes.

Besides the census statistics, the strong presence of the Iranian-American community in the private sector and entrepreneurial activities highlights the potential strength of this community. On the other hand, there is little known about the Iranian-American community beyond the limited census statistics. For example we don't know what are the common characteristics that brings the Iranian-American community together, what defines their identity, their habits, and their social networks, what sources of information they use and trust, and how do they identify themselves with regard to their national heritage. Answering these questions is critical for understanding the common causes and points of divergence in this community and is a pre-requisite for realizing the potential of this community in pursuing common causes, having a say in the U.S. civic and political life, and for overcoming the challenges that this community faces at the time when individuals of middle-eastern descent are increasingly subject to legal and social challenges in the United States.

In 2005, the Iranian Studies Group at MIT undertook a comprehensive survey of Iranian-American community characteristics to better understand what it means to be Iranian-American. The survey included over 40 questions and 3880 individuals filled it online. The initial phase of the reporting of the results focused on the basic characteristics and statistics regarding this survey. In this paper we report some of the early results from partial regression analysis on some of the interesting themes in the survey.

While online surveys typically tap into a selective sample of the population and therefore their aggregate statistics (e.g. average age, education, etc) do not necessarily represent the characteristics of the community as a whole, conducting regression analysis on survey results often yields more reliable insights. For example, 60 percent of the respondents to an online survey may have a bachelors degree and 30 percent to earn over 100000 \$/year, even though the underlying population on which the survey is conducted has only 30 percent bachelor holders and 20% of that population earns over 100000 \$/year. However, if we conduct a regression to find the determinants of income in this population it is very likely that we get the same determinants of the income (e.g. education, age, and so on), because many of the same variables influence the income regardless of which social group one belongs to.

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Therefore the regression analysis that aims at finding out the correlations and determinants of different characteristics of Iranian-Americans is a suitable way to explore the rich data provided in the above-mentioned survey.

In the following discussion we first report the variables used in the analysis, their statistics, and their correlation table. Afterwards, we focus on a few interesting questions regarding the characteristics of the Iranian American community.

Survey Characteristics

The survey was conducted over the internet between January and March 2005. It was conducted in English. 3880 Iranian American individuals participated in the survey. In this report we analyze a subset of the questions asked in the survey and only report the statistics for that subset. Table 1 reports the number of response, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum for the main variables used in this paper. Appendix 1 reports the questions and coding that defines variable definitions.

| Variable | N | Mean | Stdev | Minimum | Maximum |
|----------------------------------|------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| east_coast_1___west_coast_2 | 3836 | 1.28 | 0.72 | 0 | 2 |
| Gender_Male_0__Female_1_ | 3880 | 0.38 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Age | 3880 | 2.76 | 1.08 | 1 | 5 |
| residency_status | 3880 | 2.02 | 1.56 | 1 | 7 |
| Income | 3141 | 143682 | 136930 | 20000 | 600000 |
| Education | 3688 | 2.85 | 1.08 | 0 | 5 |
| when_moved_to_US | 3880 | 4.55 | 1.69 | 1 | 7 |
| Marital_status | 3880 | 3.21 | 2.45 | 1 | 7 |
| Spouse_Nationality | 2813 | 3.01 | 1.35 | 2 | 6 |
| Number_of_Children | 3880 | 1.69 | 0.85 | 1 | 4 |
| Custody_of_children | 3880 | 4.54 | 2.90 | 1 | 7 |
| EDU_emphasize_on_persian_languag | 3880 | 0.33 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 |
| EDU_emphasize_on_Ethnic_language | 3880 | 0.03 | 0.18 | 0 | 1 |
| EDU_emphasize_on_your_ethnicity_ | 3880 | 0.09 | 0.28 | 0 | 1 |
| EDU_emphasize_on_traditions_and_ | 3880 | 0.33 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 |
| EDU_emphasize_on_religion_yes_1_ | 3880 | 0.08 | 0.27 | 0 | 1 |
| EDU_do_you_emphasize_on_History_ | 3880 | 0.26 | 0.44 | 0 | 1 |
| EDU_emphasize_on_Music__yes_1__N | 3880 | 0.24 | 0.43 | 0 | 1 |
| EDU_emphasize_on_Literature__yes | 3880 | 0.16 | 0.37 | 0 | 1 |
| EDU_emphasize_on_Politics__yes_1 | 3880 | 0.12 | 0.33 | 0 | 1 |
| How_oftenchildren_visited_Iran_ | 3880 | 3.40 | 1.12 | 1 | 4 |
| Introduce_as_Iranian_American_ye | 3880 | 0.12 | 0.32 | 0 | 1 |
| Introduce_as_as_Persian_American | 3880 | 0.05 | 0.21 | 0 | 1 |
| Introduce_as_Persian__yes_1__No | 3880 | 0.23 | 0.42 | 0 | 1 |
| Introduce_as_Iranian__yes_1__No | 3880 | 0.39 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Introduce_as_American__yes_1__N | 3880 | 0.01 | 0.12 | 0 | 1 |
| Introduce_as__depend_on_situatio | 3880 | 0.09 | 0.29 | 0 | 1 |
| Interaction_with_IraniansOn_aver | 3880 | 2.30 | 1.28 | 1 | 5 |
| Iranian_events_attendance | 3880 | 2.85 | 1.30 | 1 | 5 |
| Visiting_Iran | 3880 | 2.91 | 1.72 | 1 | 6 |
| Charity_contribution | 3880 | 1.70 | 0.46 | 1 | 2 |



Analysis of Results

In the following section we explore the variables that correlate with questions of interest through regression analysis. For each question we discuss the main variables that showed significant relationships with the question of interest. Complete regression tables are reported in Appendix 2.

What factors determine that parents emphasize on Persian language when educating their children?

- 1- Gender: Mothers are more likely to be concerned about their Educating their children in Persian than fathers.
- 2- Age: Younger parents tend to emphasize more on Persian language.
- 3- When Moved to U.S.: Those who have recently moved to U.S. emphasize more on Persian language in their children education
- 4- Number of children: Those with more number of children emphasize more on Persian language in their children education
- 5- Interaction with iranians: those who interact more with Iranians emphasize more on Persian language in their children education
- 6- Religion: Muslim tend to emphasize more on Persian language in their children education
- 7- Ethnicity: Azari and Gilaks and Persians emphasize more on Persian language in their children education

What factors determine that parents emphasize on their ethnic language when educating their children?

- 1- Age: Younger parents tend to emphasize more on educating their children about their ethnic language
- 2- Gender: Fathers tends to emphasize more on educating their children about their ethnic language
- 3- Number of children: parents who have less children tend to emphasize more on educating their children about their ethnic language
- 4- Interaction with Iranians: Those who have more interaction with other Iranians tend to emphasize more on educating their children about their ethnic language
- 5- When moved to U.S.: Those who have been in U.S longer tend to emphasize more on educating their children about their ethnic language
- 6- Religion: Muslims tend to emphasize more on educating their children about their ethnic language



- 7- Ethnicity: Azari emphasize more on ethnic language while Gilaks and Persian are less concerned about ethnic language in educating their children

What factors determine that parents emphasize on traditions and festivities when educating their children?

- 1- Gender: Mothers are more likely to be concerned about their children learning Festivities and traditions than the fathers.
- 2- Age: Older parents tend to emphasize more on festivities and traditions in the education of their children
- 3- Number of children: Those with more children emphasize less on festivities and traditions in children education.
- 4- Interaction with Iranians: Those who have more interaction with other Iranians tend to emphasize more on educating their children about Festivities and traditions
- 5- Visiting Iran: Those who visit Iran more often tend to emphasize less on educating their children about Festivities and traditions
- 6- Religion: Spiritual people emphasize tend to emphasize more on educating their children about Festivities and traditions
- 7- Ethnicity: Kurdish people tend to emphasize more on educating their children about Festivities and traditions

What factors determine that parents emphasize on religion when educating their children?

- 1- Age: Older parents tend to emphasize more on religion when educating their children
- 2- Religion: Bahai's emphasize more while spirituals, Agnostics, Atheists and others emphasize less on religion when educating their children
- 3- Marital Status: widowed status parents emphasize less on religion when educating their children

What factors determine that parents emphasize on history when educating their children?

- 1- Age: Older parents tend to emphasize more on history in the education of their children
- 2- Interaction with other Iranians: Those who interact more often with other Iranians tend to emphasize more on history in the education of their children
- 3- Religion: Spirituals emphasize more while Jewish emphasize less on history when educating their children

What factors determine that parents emphasize on traditional music when educating their children?

- 1- Gender: Mothers are more likely to be concerned about their children learning Traditional music than the fathers.
- 2- Residency Status: Those who are on visa status are less inclined to emphasize on traditional music in their children education.
- 3- Interaction with Iranians: Those who less interact with other Iranians are less interested in teaching their children about traditional music.



- 4- Ethnicity: Gilaks tend to emphasize more on traditional music in their children education.

What factors determine that parents emphasize on Persian literature when educating their children?

- 1- Interaction with Iranians: Those who interact more often with other Iranians tend to emphasize more on educating their children about Persian literature
- 2- Visa Status: U.S Citizens with Iranian backgrounds and skilled workers are less likely to teach their children about Persian literature.
- 3- Education: More educated people emphasize more
- 4- Religion: Muslims, Spirituals, Agnostics and Atheists emphasize more
- 5- Ethnicity: Azari and Kurds emphasize more

What factors determine that parents emphasize on Politics when educating their children?

- 1- Age: Older parents tend to emphasize more on politics in the education of their children
- 2- Gender: Mothers emphasize more
- 3- Interaction with Iranians: Those who interact more with Iranians emphasize more
- 4- Religion: Atheists emphasize more while Bahais are less interested
- 5- Ethnicity: Kurdish emphasize more on politics
- 6- East/West Coast: Iranians located in the west coast tend to emphasize more on politics in educating their children

Conclusions

In this paper we discussed some of the characteristics of the Iranian Americans in relation to education of their children. Different groups in the community focus on different characteristics. For example those with non-Iranian spouse tend to emphasize less on Persian language but more on their ethnicity in educating their children. The more persistent results are concerned with older individuals (they typically tend to emphasize different Persian characteristics more) and those with more children.

Appendix 1- Variable definitions for a subset of survey questions:

| Variable Name | Variable Definition |
|----------------------------|--|
| east_coast_1__west_coast_2 | east coast is 1, and west coast is 2, otherwise it's 0 |

What Defines Iranian Americans: Child Education Patterns



| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Gender_Male_0__Female_1_ | Gender(Male=0, Female=1) |
| Age | Age1=18-24, 2=25-34, 3=35-49, 4=50-64, 5=65 and above |
| Religion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim • Christian • Jewish • Zorasthrian • Bahai • Spritual • Agnostic • Athiest • Other |
| Ethnicity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persian • Azari • Kordish • Gilaki • Other(Lor, Turkeman, Arab, etc.) |
| residency_status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. citizen of Iranian ancestry • U.S. citizen born in the U.S. • Permanent resident • Student • Skilled Worker • Refugee or Asylee |
| Income | Average household income |
| Education | Education(some high school=1,high diplome=2, bachelor=3, master's=4, M.D.=5, PhD=6)) |
| when_moved_to_US | In which period did you move to the U.S.1=I was born and raised here2=1940-19593=1960-19694=1970-19795=1980-19896=1990-19997=2000-Present |
| marital_status | <p>What is your present marital status?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married • Living with partner • Divorced • Separated • Widowed • Single |
| Spouse_Nationality | <p>Your current or former spouse/partner is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not apply • Iranian • American of Iranian Ancestry • American • Other Nationalities |
| Number_of_Children | How many children do you have?1=None2or more, 3ormore, etc. |
| EDU_emphasize_on_persian_languag | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on persian language(yes=1, No=0)? |
| EDU_emphasize_on_Ethnic_languag | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on Ethnic language(yes=1, No=0)? |
| EDU_emphasize_on_your_ethnicity_ | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on your ethnicity(yes=1, No=0)? |
| EDU_emphasize_on_traditions_and_ | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on traditions and festivities(yes=1, No=0)? |

What Defines Iranian Americans: Child Education Patterns



| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| EDU_emphasize_on_religion_yes_1_ | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on religion?(yes=1, No=0)? |
| EDU_do_you_emphasize_on_History_ | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on History?(yes=1, No=0)? |
| EDU_emphasize_on_Music__yes_1__N | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on Music?(yes=1, No=0)? |
| EDU_emphasize_on_Literature_yes | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on Literature?(yes=1, No=0)? |
| EDU_emphasize_on_Politics__yes_1 | When educating your children about Iran, do you emphasize on Politics?(yes=1, No=0)? |
| How_oftenchildren_visited_Iran_ | How often have your children visited Iran?1or2)=1,(3-5)=2, (6 or more)=3, never=4) |
| Introduce_as_Iranian_American_ | When asked, you introduce yourself as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iranian-American(yes=1, No=0) • American(yes=1, No=0) • Persian (yes=1, No=0) • Iranian (yes=1, No=0) • American(yes=1, No=0) • Depend on situation (yes=1, No=0) |
| Interaction_with_IraniansOn_a_aver | On average, how often do you interact with others of Iranian Ancestry (outside of your core family)?1=daily 2=weekly3=monthly4=rarely5=never |
| Iranian_events_attendance | How often do you attend Iranian events such as Nowrooz, 13 bedar, Yalda night, Mehregan etc.?1=Always2=Often3=Some times4=Rarely 5=Never |
| Visiting_Iran | How often have you gone back to Iran in the past two decades?1=Never2=Once3=Between 2 to 3 times4=4-5 times 5=More than 5 times6=Does not apply |
| Children visiting Iran | How often have your children visited Iran? 1or2)=1,(3-5)=2, (6 or more)=3, never=0 |

What Defines Iranian Americans: Child Education Patterns

Appendix 2- Regression tables

Logistic Regression results for determinants of child education factors. Parameter estimates represent the vector of α in the regression equation: $Probability(\text{Answer to Question}=\text{Yes})=\frac{EXP(\alpha.X+3)}{(1+ EXP(\alpha.X+3))}$ where X is the vector of independent variables (the rows in the table next page) and intercept. Parameter estimates that are significantly different from zero at 0.0001, 0.01, and 0.05 levels are color coded (Darkest for 0.0001 and so on).

| | EDU/ Persian language | EDU/Ethnic language | EDU/your ethnicity | EDU/traditions | EDU/religion | EDU/History | EDU/Music | EDU/Literature | EDU/Politics |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|
| Intercept | -11.81 | -12.95 | -14.16 | -13.11 | -15.42 | -16.27 | -13.33 | -15.72 | -17.41 |
| Age | -0.31 | -0.17 | 0.02 | 0.20 | -0.24 | 0.27 | -0.05 | 0.15 | 0.52 |
| Female | 0.42 | -0.13 | -0.19 | 0.78 | -0.14 | -0.04 | 0.58 | 0.21 | 0.31 |
| Income | 0.46 | -2.29 | -0.22 | 0.92 | -0.70 | 0.77 | -0.63 | -0.67 | -0.01 |
| Number of children | -0.55 | 0.04 | 0.13 | -0.41 | 0.26 | -0.02 | -0.21 | 0.06 | 0.12 |
| Interaction with Iranians | 0.30 | 0.09 | 0.13 | 0.23 | 0.11 | 0.12 | 0.32 | 0.28 | 0.21 |
| east/west | 0.08 | 0.15 | 0.07 | 0.06 | 0.17 | 0.08 | 0.10 | -0.01 | 0.18 |
| Visiting Iran | 0.01 | 0.00 | -0.05 | -0.08 | 0.06 | -0.03 | 0.03 | 0.06 | 0.05 |
| Recently Moved to U.S. | 0.19 | -0.09 | -0.16 | -0.04 | -0.10 | -0.05 | 0.00 | 0.07 | -0.05 |
| Education | 0.04 | 0.00 | -0.07 | -0.03 | 0.11 | 0.04 | -0.05 | 0.14 | -0.01 |
| Zoroastrian | -0.30 | -0.05 | 1.02 | 0.18 | 0.78 | 0.54 | -0.03 | 0.49 | -0.09 |
| Muslim | 0.92 | 0.12 | 0.63 | 0.49 | 0.42 | 0.45 | 0.17 | 0.53 | 0.24 |
| Spiritual | 0.22 | -0.29 | 0.26 | 0.59 | -1.51 | 0.50 | 0.30 | 0.53 | 0.05 |
| Jewish | 0.21 | -0.68 | -0.04 | -0.25 | 0.55 | -1.30 | 0.33 | -0.88 | -0.85 |
| Agnostic | -0.02 | -0.42 | 0.38 | 0.30 | -2.18 | 0.32 | -0.03 | 0.65 | 0.49 |
| Atheist | 0.17 | -0.30 | -0.23 | 0.17 | -2.15 | 0.35 | -0.11 | 0.63 | 1.11 |
| Bahai | 0.80 | -1.48 | 0.32 | 0.03 | 2.34 | 0.11 | 0.63 | 0.49 | -1.36 |
| Religion/Other | -0.30 | 0.14 | 0.36 | -0.12 | -1.41 | 0.25 | -0.16 | 0.53 | 0.01 |
| Christian | -0.36 | 0.72 | 0.32 | 0.16 | -0.60 | 0.15 | 0.09 | 0.13 | 0.49 |
| Ethnicity/Azari | 0.53 | 0.61 | -0.12 | 0.23 | 0.18 | 0.25 | 0.21 | 0.42 | 0.23 |
| Ethnicity/Gilak | 0.80 | -0.32 | 0.09 | 0.56 | 0.09 | 0.58 | 0.83 | -0.09 | 0.33 |
| Ethnicity/Kurdish | 0.54 | 0.47 | -0.05 | 0.93 | 0.08 | 0.22 | 0.50 | 0.68 | 0.72 |
| Ethnicity/other | 0.11 | -0.06 | 0.05 | 0.06 | 0.33 | 0.04 | -0.30 | 0.36 | -0.07 |
| Ethnicity/Persian | 0.66 | -0.25 | -0.21 | 0.42 | 0.32 | 0.23 | 0.00 | 0.37 | 0.08 |
| Refugee | -0.56 | -12.20 | -1.02 | -0.62 | 0.73 | -0.81 | -0.80 | -0.24 | -0.55 |
| Permanent Resident | -0.14 | -0.49 | -0.29 | -0.53 | 0.15 | -0.38 | -0.32 | -0.27 | 0.14 |
| Skilled Worker | -0.66 | -1.87 | -0.51 | -0.85 | 0.14 | -0.57 | -0.96 | -1.02 | -0.02 |
| Student | -1.15 | -1.32 | -0.38 | -1.00 | 0.40 | -0.76 | -1.51 | -1.07 | -0.91 |
| US Citizen, American | 0.09 | -1.37 | -0.14 | -0.53 | -0.01 | -0.53 | -0.23 | -0.78 | 0.28 |
| US Citizen, Iranian | -0.06 | -0.39 | -0.27 | -0.33 | -0.32 | -0.57 | -0.21 | -0.85 | -0.12 |
| Married | 0.19 | -0.66 | 1.41 | 1.24 | -1.02 | 0.35 | 1.00 | 0.31 | 0.25 |
| Divorced | 0.07 | -0.54 | 1.77 | 1.25 | -1.15 | 0.61 | 0.59 | 0.33 | 0.48 |
| Separated | -0.36 | -13.63 | 1.74 | 0.06 | -0.62 | 0.25 | 0.48 | 0.05 | 0.92 |
| Widowed | -1.70 | -1.22 | 1.50 | 0.68 | -2.63 | 0.09 | 0.48 | 0.06 | 0.40 |
| with Partner | -0.98 | -0.66 | 0.39 | 0.84 | -15.22 | 0.17 | -1.76 | 0.27 | 0.16 |
| Single | -0.58 | -0.03 | 0.63 | 0.21 | -2.82 | 0.10 | -0.04 | -14.31 | 0.49 |
| spouse/American | 12.59 | 13.04 | 12.99 | 13.55 | 15.43 | 15.57 | 14.13 | 13.71 | 14.43 |
| spouse/American-Iran | 13.92 | 13.67 | 12.16 | 13.55 | 15.46 | 15.65 | 14.25 | 13.72 | 14.40 |



What Defines Iranian Americans: Child Education Patterns

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|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| spouse/Iranian | 13.95 | 13.47 | 12.34 | 13.51 | 15.59 | 15.68 | 14.10 | 13.69 | 14.61 |
| spouse/N/A | 13.75 | 13.97 | 12.92 | 13.29 | 14.85 | 15.38 | 13.57 | 13.41 | 14.52 |
| spouse/other nationality | 12.93 | 13.28 | 13.06 | 13.72 | 15.63 | 15.90 | 14.00 | 13.65 | 14.69 |