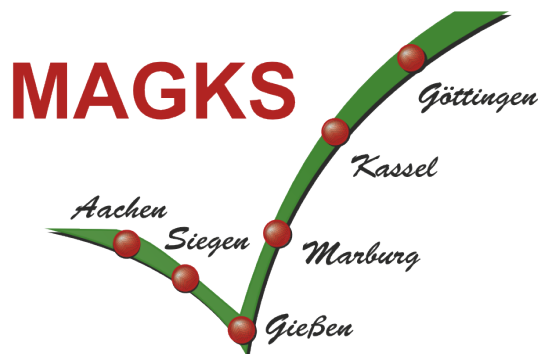




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Economic Insecurity and Women's Preference for State Ownership in Iran

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Abstract

Iran's move toward market-oriented reform faces political barriers. This paper examines a key but often overlooked group favoring state ownership: Iranian women, who consistently show stronger support for government involvement in the economy than both Iranian men and the global female average. Using World Values Survey (Wave 7, 2020) microdata, we show that this preference reflects a risk-averse response to economic insecurity. Traditional gender role beliefs, materialist orientations, confidence in government, and support for fundamentalist parties all raise the likelihood of preferring a larger state role. Older women, homemakers, and those in smaller towns and villages also show stronger support. These patterns point to a durable political-economic coalition backing state-led development, with implications for future reforms and social protection policy.

Keywords: Iranian women; economic preferences; size of government; World Values Survey

1. Introduction

This study is motivated by the observation that Iranian women, over the past two decades, have expressed stronger preferences for government ownership of business than Iranian men and women globally. As reported in Table 1, the average score for Iranian women on the government ownership scale increased from 5.9 in 2005 to 6.7 in 2020, compared with 5.2 and 5.6 for Iranian men, and a global female average of around 5.7. The differences between men and women in Iran are statistically significant in both years. These results suggest that Iranian women's demand for state intervention not only exceeds that of men in their own country but also surpasses the global female average. This robust and growing preference is highly consequential within the political economy of Iran, where critical economic development policies—such as privatization and subsidy reform- are often stalled by popular opposition and institutional resistance. This paper asks why Iranian women express stronger support for state economic intervention than Iranian men and women globally, and examines the social, political, and demographic factors that make them a powerful constituency for maintaining state economic control.

Table 1. Iranian women's preference for government ownership of business in 2005 and 2020

2005				2020		
	Iranian women	Iranian men	Women in the world	Iranian women	Iranian men	Women in the world
Government ownership of business should be increased	5.90	5.23	5.73	6.67	5.55	5.74
Two-sample t-test Pr(T > t) = 0.00			Two-sample t-test Pr(T > t) = 0.00			

Note: The mean value of responses to the question asking WVS respondents about their opinion on the role of government ownership of business. The question in the survey reads, "... How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between. Private vs state ownership of business": (1) Private ownership of business should be increased ... (10) Government ownership of business should be increased.

Source: World Value Survey (WVS), <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp>

This study makes two main contributions. First, it extends the literature on gender differences in economic preferences by analyzing Iran. Iran is a critical case study in development political economy, with its unique institutional structure, resource-rich status, and severe exposure to external sanctions. Examining gendered preferences here provides insight into the popular basis of support for a large state in a context where economic security is highly volatile. Previous research shows that women, across many countries, are more likely than men to support welfare policies, redistribution, and government intervention (Ranehill & Weber, 2022; Deeming, 2018; Blekesaune, 2007; Edlund, 2006; Iversen & Rosenbluth, 2006; Gelissen, 2000; Svallfors, 1997). Yet, notable exceptions exist: in South Korea, for instance, women tend to oppose welfare policies or exhibit no significant gender gap (Huh, 2023), a pattern also observed in other East Asian countries (Kim & Ahn, 2010; Wong et al., 2009). Little, however, is known about how gendered economic preferences emerge in the Middle East, and particularly in Iran, where the state has historically played a dominant role in economic and social life.

Second, the study provides micro-level evidence on the determinants of Iranian women's preferences. Using the World Values Survey (Wave 7, 2020) and applying ordered logistic and OLS regressions, we examine how gender role beliefs, value orientations, political confidence, party preferences, and demographics shape attitudes toward state ownership which is a dimension of support for government intervention in the economy. By analyzing these factors, we shed light on how political culture and social structures influence women's economic views.

Our results indicate that traditional gender roles, confidence in government, political orientation, post-materialist values, age, employment status, and settlement size are the major determinants of Iranian women's preference for a larger government role.

The findings are relevant for both policymakers and political actors. Women constitute nearly half of Iran's population and have played a visible role in recent movements, including the "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprising of 2022 (Alami Fariman & Hakiminejad, 2024, Farzanegan & Fischer, 2023). These findings are also valuable for political parties in Iran during their election campaigns. Women's preferences strongly impact political and social movements (Tadrissi Hassani, 2024), making it critical to consider their views when shaping policies and campaign strategies.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly explains the conceptual background. Section 3 provides a historical overview of the role of Iranian women in society and the economy from the Qajar dynasty to the present. Section 4 explains the dataset and estimation method. Section 5 presents the regression results. The final section provides a conclusion.

2. Review of theoretical and empirical literature

Theoretical studies have long explored how political and economic preferences are shaped by group characteristics. Rodrik (1996) highlights that trade, and economic policies are not solely determined by efficiency concerns but also by political pressures, implying that women's distinct social and economic positions may lead them to favour stronger government involvement. Drazen (2000) similarly argues that political outcomes reflect bargaining among groups, suggesting that women, as a separate group, may push for policies that provide them greater security and benefits. Roland (2002) extends this view by stressing the role of historical and institutional contexts in shaping preferences for government intervention. Public choice theory and the median voter theorem further connect individual preferences to policy outcomes (Black, 1948). If women, on average, prefer a stronger government role, and the median voter is female, then political decisions will tend to align with preferences for greater public

intervention. These theoretical perspectives collectively suggest that gender differences in economic preferences are not accidental but are influenced by structural, historical, and institutional factors.

Empirical studies support these theoretical arguments. Using cross-country data, Cavalcanti and Tavares (2011) find that women generally prefer a larger government role than men, which is consistent with the median voter mechanism. Schlesinger and Heldman (2011), using U.S. survey data, conclude that women's stronger support for government programs is shaped by emotional responses to social problems, perceived fairness, and trust in the efficacy of government policies. Other studies reinforce these findings: May et al. (2018) show that female economists in the EU are less likely to favour market-based solutions than their male colleagues, echoing May et al. (2014), who find similar patterns in the United States.

Other contributions highlight how women's attitudes extend beyond redistribution to questions of trade, globalization and climate change-related fiscal policies. Ore et al. (2021), using surveys from six Asian economies (Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand), show that female respondents are less supportive of international trade, which may reflect a preference for domestic protection over market openness. Becchetti and Conzo (2022) find no significant gender differences in preferences for climate change mitigation policies across European countries.

Beyond gender-specific analyses, a broader literature examines the determinants of economic values and preferences, including inequality and redistribution (Alesina & Giuliano, 2011; Almas et al., 2010, 2020; Litwiński et al., 2023; Barr & Miller, 2020; Kölln & Wlezien, 2024; Brandt & Reyna, 2017; Or et al., 2021). However, despite these contributions, there remains a notable gap in research on gendered preferences in the Middle East, and particularly in Iran.

Iran offers a unique case for examining these issues. On the one hand, Iranian women are highly educated and politically active; on the other, their labour force participation remains low, and they depend disproportionately on state transfers, subsidies, and public employment opportunities (Chamlou, 2016). Combined with the pervasive effects of international sanctions, which have led to rising poverty and extreme economic insecurity (Farzanegan & Habibi, 2025 and Farzanegan & Batmanghelidj, 2023), restricted private sector growth, and the country's institutional structure, these conditions create strong incentives for women to favour a more active government role in the economy. Such preferences are also consistent with evidence that women, on average, are more risk-averse than men (Charness & Gneezy, 2012). In this developmental context, the preference for state control is viewed not as ideological but as a rational economic strategy for risk mitigation. While existing global and regional studies highlight general gender differences in preferences for government intervention, the specific drivers of such preferences in Iran remain empirically underexplored.

3. Historical and contemporary determinants of Iranian women's economic preferences

Iranian women's economic and social roles have changed significantly over the history, shaping their current preferences for government intervention. During the *Qajar* dynasty that ruled Iran from 1789 to 1925, the main role of women was in household production, indicating early economic agency in a pre-industrial society (Moghadam et al., 2016).

Late 19th and early 20th centuries were associated with industrialization and gradual increase in urbanization in Iran which was then accompanied by more presence of women in the workforce (Behnam, 1977). Political engagement also emerged slowly during the Constitutional Revolution which took place between 1905 and 1911, in which women formed associations to advocate for social and political rights (Shahsavari, 2001; Mousanejad, 2023).

Following *Qajar*, the *Pahlavi* dynasty improved women's participation in education and the labor market. Reforms under Reza Shah (r. 1925–1941) and later Mohammad Reza Shah (r. 1941–1979) stimulated women's entry into administrative, technical, and professional roles. Education rights for women expanded under Reza Shah who in 1936 mandated girls schooling and abolished the veil. Voting right for women were granted by Mohammad Reza Shah in 1963 under the White Revolution reforms. Moreover, the legal protections through the Family Protection Law were implemented under this dynasty (which was first enacted in 1967 and later expanded in 1975) (see Najm-Abadi, 1998; Ghani Pour Khandani et al., 2022; Masoudnia et al., 2013; Béland et al., 2013; Shiani & Zare, 2022; Sabahi, 2002). These policies embedded expectations of state-supported social development among women.

After collapse of *Pahlavi* regime following Islamic revolution of 1979, women faced restrictions in their social and economic activities under revolutionary Islamic government which was emphasizing family and ideological roles (Moghadam et al., 2016; Ghani Pour Khandani et al., 2022; Kar, 2000; Sadeghi, 2021). Yet, post-war (the war with Iraq ended in 1988) development plans and policy initiatives gradually reopened opportunities, with institutions such as the Office of Women's Affairs, promoting engagement in education, administration, and professional sectors (Sadeghi, 2021; Shojaei, 1997). By the late 1990s and 2000s, under reformist administrations, women's social and economic participation grew further. This was reflected in higher education enrollment, workforce expansion, and leadership roles in civil and governmental organizations (Alaeddini & Razavi, 2004; Khatami, 2003).

Exposure to local constraints within traditional community, interrupted workforce participation (which have amplified under sanctions), and periods of supportive state policies (as documented in different parts of Iranian history) have created both economic vulnerability and awareness of the protective potential of institutions among women. Periods of restricted access to education, labor markets, and political participation limited women's opportunities.

Reforms during these periods likely reinforced preferences for government policies that mitigate uncertainty and promote social protection. By situating women's economic preferences within both historical constraints and contemporary activism, this section argued how institutional, social, and economic factors jointly shape support for active government intervention in the Iranian context.

4. Data and Method

Data

This study is based on the most recent WVS carried out in Iran in 2020¹ (Haerpfer et al., 2022). The data were collected from 1,499 respondents in March and April 2020. Of the 1,499 respondents, 733 (49%) were female, and 766 (51%) were male. The mode of data collection was Paper-and-Pencil Interviewing. Data were collected from all provinces, various ethnic groups, and different city sizes.²

Dependent variable

The dependent variable in our study is women's preference for government ownership of business. We measure this variable using the following question from the WVS survey: "*Now I'd like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.*" Respondents could choose from a range of 1 (Private ownership of business should be increased) to 10 (Government ownership of business should

¹ The World Values Survey (WVS) is "an international research program devoted to the scientific and academic study of social, political, economic, religious and cultural values of people in the world" (<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>). The WVS data have been widely used in the economics literature over the past four decades (e.g., Ali, 2025; Farzanegan & Gholipour, 2021).

² For more information about the survey, see <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp>

be increased). Higher values suggest that respondents exhibit a preference for increased state ownership of businesses.

Explanatory variables

We distinguish four groups of variables as potential determinants of Iranian women's preference for a larger government role in the economy. The first group concerns women's perceptions about the traditional role of women in society. As a proxy for this variable, we use a question from the survey that asks respondents: "For each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how much you agree with each. Do you agree strongly (1), agree (2), disagree (3), or disagree strongly (4)? *A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.*" We reverse the values for ease of interpreting coefficients in the regression analyses. We expect that Iranian women who believe more in traditional gender roles tend to support expanded government economic roles, as limited labor market participation increases their reliance on state support, their primary responsibility for household welfare makes them more dependent on public services, and greater risk aversion leads them to favor a stronger safety net.

The second variable is the respondents' score on the post-materialist index, which ranges from 0 (Pure Materialist) to 5 (Pure Postmaterialist). This scale is derived from responses to a set of questions designed in the WVS³ to capture whether a person emphasizes material needs (e.g., economic and physical security) or postmaterialist values (e.g., freedom of speech). We expect that women with higher scores on the postmaterialist index tend to have a lower tendency for a larger government role in the economy.

³ For example, the survey includes the following sample questions to assess respondents' values: If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most important? 1. Maintaining order in the nation, 2. Giving people more say in important government decisions, 3. Fighting rising prices and 4. Protecting freedom of speech.

The third group of variables pertains to the respondents' political views. We use two questions from the survey to capture women's confidence in government and their political orientation. Confidence in government is measured by the following question: "I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: The government. The possible answers are (1) great deal of confidence, (2) quite a lot of confidence, (3) not very much confidence, or (4) none at all. We reverse the values for ease of interpreting coefficients in the regression analyses. We hypothesize that women who have more confidence in government prefer a larger government role in the economy. To measure political orientation, we use this question from the WVS survey: "If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote? If 'Don't know': Which party appeals to you most?" We recode the responses into three categories: (1) Others, (2) Fundamentalists, and (3) Reformists. Iranian women with diverse political views are expected to have differing preferences on supporting government economic activities. In the Iranian context, one may expect fundamentalist women to favor stronger state involvement in the economy given their alignment with distributive state policies, reformist women to show relatively greater support for market-oriented reforms and reduced state dominance, and women identifying with other groups to display mixed preferences depending on their political leanings.

The final set of explanatory variables includes respondent demographics: employment status, educational attainment, marital status, income, age, and city size. We expect that women who are homemakers, less educated, married, lower-income, and living in smaller cities or villages will be more supportive of an expanded government role in the economy. These demographic expectations reflect greater reliance on state support among homemakers, lower-income and less-educated women, the household-oriented priorities of married women, and the

limited private-sector options in smaller cities and villages. Table 2 presents the definitions and descriptive statistics of all variables.

Table 2. Variable definitions and descriptive statistics

Variable	Questions in the WVS	Frequency %	Women		Frequency %	Men	
			Mean	Std. Dev.		Mean	Std. Dev.
Gov_Preference	Q107. Now I'd like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between. 1. Private ownership of business should be increased ... 10. Government ownership of business should be increased We removed respondents who did not answer or responded with 'Don't know' to this question.		6.67	3.12		5.55	3.45
Gender_Role Traditional gender role	Q30. For each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how much you agree with each. A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl. Do you agree strongly (1), agree (2), disagree (3), and disagree strongly (4)? We reverse the values for ease of interpreting coefficients in the regression analyses. We removed respondents who did not answer or responded with 'Don't know' to this question.		2.26	0.95		2.65	1.02
PostMaterialist Post-Materialist Index	Y001. Post-Materialist Index 12-item. It ranges from 0 (Materialistic) to 5 (Post-Materialistic). We removed respondents who did not have score for this index.		2.08	1.23		2.13	1.20
Confidence_Gov	Q71. I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all? The government (in your nation's capital). The possible responses are: (1) A great deal, (2) Quite a lot, (3) Not very much, and (4) None at all.		2.46	1.08		2.37	1.12

We generate a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the respondent is from scales 8, 9 and 10, and 0 otherwise.			
Age	Age groups		
Age of respondents	(1) Up to 29	(1) 29%	(1) 27%
	(2) 30-49	(2) 53%	(2) 49%
	(3) 50 and more	(3) 18%	(3) 28%
City_size	Settlement size		
Type of settlement	We generate a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the respondent is from cities with a population of 500,000 or more, and 0 otherwise.	1: 36%	1: 30%

Estimation methods

The baseline specification of the model is as follows:

$$\text{Gov_Preference}_i = \alpha + \beta \text{Gender_Role}_i + \gamma' X_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Equation (1) specifies government preference as a function of gender role attitudes, our main explanatory variable, while X_i denotes a vector of control variables including postmaterialist values, confidence in government, political orientation, employment status, education, marital status, income, age, and city size.

We employ two estimation methods to examine the relationship between the explanatory and dependent variables. They are ordered logistic regression and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Given that our dependent variable (self-reported preference of government ownership of business) is an ordinal variable (measured on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 to 10), we employ ordered logistic regression. We also present the results of the OLS estimation for comparison purposes.

5. Estimation Results

Table 3 presents the estimation results from ordered logistic regression in column 1 and OLS regression in column 2. Across both methods, we observe that a stronger belief in traditional gender roles is positively and significantly associated with Iranian women's preference for government ownership of businesses. This suggests that women who adhere more strongly to traditional gender roles tend to favour larger government involvement in the economy. Gender

discrimination has created a lack of social security for Iranian women (Farahzadi & Rahmati, 2020; Afra, 2024). Considering that women feel more afraid than men because if they are victims, they suffer from more physical, psychological, family and social consequences (Sarafi et al., 2018), the intensity of the feeling of insecurity in women is more than men (Bastomski & Smith, 2017). Therefore, a larger government is often perceived as more likely to implement and enforce policies promoting gender equality, such as anti-discrimination laws, maternity leave, and programs to encourage women's participation in education and the workforce.

Relating to post-revolutionary Iran, more supportive policies regarding women and their activities were adopted by the end of the Iran-Iraq war. The post-revolutionary development plan called for women's participation in social, cultural, educational, and economic affairs while preserving family and transcendent values (Program and Budget Organization, 1994). The establishment of different women's offices for more participation of women and approval of the women's employment plan by the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council in 1993, which allowed women to work alongside men based on their abilities, gradually provided women with the opportunity to increase their presence in public spheres, including in high-ranking government positions from the early 1990s (Sadeghi, 2021). In many countries, including Iran, the public sector is a significant employer of women.

The Post-Materialist Index shows a negative and significant relationship with preference in both columns of Table 3, indicating that Iranian women with stronger post-materialist values prefer smaller government intervention in the economy. Since they believe in liberalism and secular democratic values, government intervention loses its preference. Indeed, liberal-democratic values stress limited government and, in return, more freedom for individuals. The coefficient for confidence in government is positive and statistically significant, indicating that women with greater trust in government are more likely to support a larger role for the public sector in the economy.

Additionally, our findings reveal that women who support fundamentalist political parties (conservative or principlists) in Iran prefer a larger role for the government in the economy. It stems from the intertwining of religion and politics that influences societal norms. Based on their religious tradition, Iran's theocratic government is God's representative and absolute owner of the country's resources (Vahabi, 2023). Also, the female supporters of fundamentalist political parties believe that the government's control of the economy can better materialize social justice. In other words, they see the clerical government of Iran as 'the father of the people' (Tajali, 2022) that can supply social protection, economic opportunities, and policies that address gender disparities. In addition, the history of the Iranian government providing substantial social services, especially after the 1979 Revolution, has shaped public expectations. As beneficiaries of these services, women may associate a larger government with an improved quality of life and greater support.

We also find that homemakers and women not engaged in full-time or part-time employment tend to favour greater state intervention. From their viewpoint, a larger government is often associated with expanded social programs, such as healthcare, education, childcare, and welfare, which can support women and their families (Tavares, 2011). In Iran, where traditional gender roles may limit women's participation in the labor force, government protection programs can serve as a safety net, reducing economic vulnerability (Afra, 2024).

Regarding demographic factors, our estimations suggest that education, income, and marital status are not the primary determinants of Iranian women's preferences. However, we find that younger women (especially those up to 29 years old) and those residing in larger cities tend to prefer smaller government intervention. This finding is consistent with the theories proposed by Roland (2002) and Black (1948). It is also consistent with empirical studies such as Cavalcanti and Tavares (2011), which suggest that women prefer larger government roles due to their specific economic, cultural and social positions.

Women, particularly those from rural or less privileged backgrounds, may view a larger government as an advocate for marginalized groups. Expanded government initiatives can help address inequalities and provide opportunities for upward mobility. In this context, we can mention the strategy of empowering Iranian women, especially rural women, which is on the government's agenda to improve the productivity and economic growth of the society (Vatankhah Noghani et al., 2016).

Table 3. Estimation results: Sample of Iranian women

<i>Dependent variable: Preference for government ownership of businesses</i>		
<i>Explanatory variables</i>	Ordered logistic regression (1)	OLS regression (2)
Traditional gender role	0.170** (.085)	0.237* (.143)
Post-Materialist Index	-0.191*** (0.064)	-0.326*** (0.109)
Confidence in government	0.128* (0.078)	0.244* (0.132)
Political orientation		
Fundamentalists	0.418* (0.218)	0.773** (0.368)
Reformists	-0.094 (0.186)	-0.063 (0.325)
Employment- homemaker	0.458** (0.211)	0.669** (0.348)
Education		
Primary	0.393 (0.543)	0.715 (0.887)
Secondary	0.136 (0.504)	0.338 (0.817)
Tertiary	0.193 (0.519)	0.383 (0.841)
Married	-0.173 (0.205)	-0.234 (0.338)
Income	0.245	0.391

	(0.278)	(0.476)
Age		
30-49	0.385* (0.203)	0.712** (0.343)
50 and more	0.760*** (0.279)	1.278*** (0.468)
City size	-0.508*** (0.171)	-0.825*** (0.295)
Number of observations	517	517
F statistic		4.55***
LR chi2	65.10***	
R-squared		0.11

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; constants were included; asterisks indicate significance at the 10% (*), 5% (**), and 1% (***) levels, respectively. The base category for Age is “up to 29,” for Education is “early childhood/no education,” and for Political orientation is “others.”

We also estimate equation (1) for Iranian men. By doing this, we can identify which determinants of the preference for a larger government role in the economy differ between Iranian men and women. The results are presented in Table 4. Like the findings for Iranian women, the Post-materialist Index, confidence in the government, support for the Fundamentalist party, and settlement size are significant determinants of men’s support for a larger government role in economic activities. However, unlike women’s preferences, perceptions about traditional gender roles, types of employment, and respondents’ age do not explain the variation in men’s preferences for government ownership of businesses. Therefore, we can conclude that these three factors are key drivers of women’s support for a government role in the economy.

Table 4. Estimation results: Sample of Iranian men

<i>Dependent variable: Preference for government ownership of businesses</i>		
<i>Explanatory variables</i>	Ordered logistic regression (1)	OLS regression (2)
Traditional gender role	0.091 (0.076)	0.162 (0.140)
Post-Materialist Index	-0.131** (0.061)	-0.266** (0.116)
Confidence in government	0.239*** (0.070)	0.450*** (0.128)
Political orientation		
Fundamentalists	0.390** (0.190)	0.710** (0.349)
Reformists	0.105 (0.177)	0.218 (0.337)
Employment		
Part time	0.115 (0.276)	0.252 (0.520)
Self employed	-0.313 (0.219)	-0.633 (0.412)
Retired/pensioned	-0.143 (0.386)	-0.262 (0.690)
Student	0.056 (0.312)	0.058 (0.599)
Unemployed	-0.115 (0.238)	-0.144 (0.440)
Other	-0.042 (0.814)	0.478 (1.417)
Education		
Primary	-0.039 (0.690)	-0.264 (1.223)
Secondary	-0.180 (0.656)	-0.240 (1.167)
Tertiary	-0.717 (0.661)	-1.252 (1.177)
Married	-0.052 (0.235)	-0.090 (0.449)
Income	0.153 (0.333)	0.440 (0.636)
Age		

30-49	0.336 (0.264)	0.566 (0.500)
50 and more	0.503 (0.319)	0.809 (0.594)
City size	-0.364** (0.166)	-0.665** (0.311)
Number of observations	597	597
F statistic		3.60***
LR chi2	65.66***	
R-squared		0.10

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; constants were included; asterisks indicate significance at the 10% (*), 5% (**), and 1% (***) levels, respectively. The base category for Age is “up to 29,” for Education is “early childhood/no education,” for Political orientation is “others,” and for Employment is “full-time.” We do not consider homemakers in our estimation of men, as there were no men who were homemakers in our sample.

6. Conclusion

Using microdata from the World Values Survey (Wave 7, 2020), we examine the determinants of Iranian women's preferences for greater state economic intervention, which is highly relevant to the political economy of reform in Iran. We applied ordered logistic and OLS regression methods and show that traditional gender role beliefs, materialist orientations, confidence in government, and support for fundamentalist parties are main positive predictors of women's support for increased government ownership of businesses. Moreover, older women (aged 30-49 and 50+), homemakers, and those residing in smaller towns or villages show stronger preferences for a larger state role, while education, income, and marital status do not significantly influence these attitudes. These demographic findings identify a specific, vulnerable constituency that acts as a significant political constraint on market liberalization.. We also compared the results based on women sample with men subsample. We find that traditional gender roles, employment status (specifically homemakers), and age uniquely drive women's preferences with respect to support of state engagement in business ownership.

We contribute to the literature on gender differences in economic preferences by providing individual-level evidence from an understudied resource-rich country.

We illustrate how cultural values, political trust, and demographic factors play a role in shaping women's demand for state intervention, perceiving it as a source of security, equality, and social protection under external pressures and economic vulnerabilities. The results have direct, significant implications for economic policymakers in Iran, illustrating that the demand for state control is a rational response to economic insecurity, and any reform agenda must be highly gender-sensitive.

The results have implications for policymakers and political actors in Iran, where women have shown influential roles in recent social and political movements like the 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom". Understanding these preferences can inform electoral strategies, and efforts to address gender disparities in state-market relations and inform successful development strategies.

This study has its own limitations due to its cross-sectional nature and thus the results should be read as robust associations. Future research could explore longitudinal trends or examine how external factors like sanctions may influence these preferences.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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