

NARRATIVE REVIEW OF WOMEN'S HEALTH IN IRAN: CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

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Background and aims: In each society, the health of women in different periods may be endangered by an unequal distribution of resources, facilities, and gender prejudices. The present study evaluated the time trend of Iranian women's health between 1990 and 2013.

Methods: This narrative review includes an integration and descriptive summary of the existing evidence on trends and criteria of different aspects of women's health from social determinant point of view. The evidence was drawn from peer-reviewed, cross-national or large-scale studies, official sources of the Ministry of Health, reviews, and online scientific databases published between 1990 and 2013.

Results: The average life expectancy of Iranian women has increased from 44.15 years in 1960 to 75.75 years in 2012; in most deprived provinces of Iran, however, this criterion is about 67.3 years, and in the capital it is 75.8 years. In 2011, 43.37% of DALYS, 36.21% of YLL, and 1.92% of YLD were dedicated to women; these figures were 3.63% lower than they were in 2003. Although a significant reduction has occurred in maternal mortality rate, which dropped from 83 to 23 per 100,000 between 1990 and 2013, there is no equal distribution in maternal mortality across the country as manifested by the unfavorable conditions of border provinces (SD=19.2). The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is an alarming health problem among Iranian females, increasing approximately 546% between 2007 and 2015. As for mental health, depression in women was ranked first among diseases in 2011 compared to a second place ranking in 2003. As regards social health, the delinquency of women has increased in recent years compared to men with women committing more crimes related to drugs and actions against virtue. The annual report of the United Nations for the gender gap index in 2013 ranked Iran as 130 among 136 countries (from 0.622 in 2000 to 0.584 in 2013).

Conclusion: Generally, over the last three decades, the health indices of Iranian women have grown in aspects of physical, mental, and social health. Remarkable differences can be seen among female health indices based on geographic location and in comparison with men. To promote an improved health status for Iranian women, the root causes of the discrepancies must be identified and a comprehensive national plan must be established.