



IOM International Organization for Migration



# IRAN

MAPPING EXERCISE  
LONDON, MARCH 2007



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The aim of this Mapping Report is to guide IOM's outreach activities and communications strategies. The report does not purport to be exhaustive. The mapping consultant who conducted the exercise and wrote the report on behalf of IOM has taken every effort to ensure accuracy in his/her reporting and the views expressed in this report are his/hers. IOM cannot be held responsible for any omissions or inaccuracies.



# INTRODUCTION

## AIM OF THE MAPPING EXERCISE, TARGET GROUP AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the mapping exercise carried out by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was to identify the main channels of information used by potential beneficiaries of IOM's voluntary return programmes, which are open to asylum seekers and irregular migrants. The aim was also to identify the location of their communities in the UK. The ultimate goal of the mapping exercise is to help IOM to improve its communications with diaspora communities in the United Kingdom through media articles, advertisements and presentations to community groups.

A mapping exercise of the Iranian community across the UK was carried out between January and March 2007. A British national of Iranian origin was recruited on a part-time basis as a consultant to engage directly with the Iranian community and collect the necessary information. The mapping consultant's fluency in Farsi, inside knowledge of her community, and established contacts with its members in the UK, proved to be an essential resource for this exercise.

IOM designed a questionnaire with twenty questions divided into two sections. The first section asks about media channels and other sources of information (i.e. voluntary organisations, religious centres and festivals) that are available to Iranians in the UK. It also investigates the geographical locations and sizes of the Iranian communities across the UK. The second section of the questionnaire requests baseline data from each respondent about their age, gender and length of stay in the UK.

Data was collected using in-depth interviews with multipliers<sup>1</sup> as well as through the distribution of questionnaires. Extensive networking was carried out to identify media, organisations, religious centres and individuals who interact with Iranian nationals. Iranians do not live only in London and visits were made to Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow, cities with significant numbers of Iranian nationals.

During this period, the consultant collected 39 questionnaires. These completed questionnaires do not just represent the views of individuals but the consensus views of various groups and communities. Wherever possible, an extended interview was conducted with the respondents to obtain a greater insight into their responses to the questionnaires. This report includes tables and charts with all the questionnaires' results.

<sup>1</sup> This term is used to indicate individuals or organisations, that are well known amongst diaspora groups and could, therefore, play a key role in delivering information.

# 1 IRANIANS IN THE UK

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to identify the main channels of information used by Iranian nationals in the UK. The questions were divided into three categories: media; other sources of information; and information on other community groups. The contact details identified by the respondents in the questionnaire about media, community centres and religious centres were merged with the contact details provided by the multipliers. This list of contacts constitutes an action plan for IOM, containing details of organisations and agencies with which IOM should liaise to increase awareness of its voluntary return programmes among the Iranian community in the UK<sup>2</sup>.

One of the unintended and immediate results of this extensive networking was that a form of outreach became a part of the mapping exercise. Some Iranian publications were interested in having a briefing on IOM's voluntary return programmes and air-time on them was made available on *Persian Seda*, an Iranian radio show. No presentations or seminars about IOM programmes were actually suggested to the community but the consultant was invited to many social and cultural events – especially over the March period of Iranian New Year — to talk about IOM's work, and build rapport at an individual level.

## 1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE IRANIAN COMMUNITY IN THE UK

Small numbers of Iranians have migrated to the UK from the early twentieth century but the first major migration occurred during the Islamic Revolution. An estimated 500,000 citizens had fled Iran by the end of 1979. They were essentially refugees running for their lives or trying to escape prosecution. Others left because they were opposed to the Islamic regime of Ayatollah Khomeini. Amongst the latter group, there were many who were familiar with Europe and America, where some of them had studied or had previously lived. In the following years, the dynamics of emigration changed. Many now left Iraq for economic reasons and their make up was more middle and working class.

The earlier waves of immigrants are settled residents in the UK now and are in their second generation. Members of this group are not typically IOM's target clients but this mapping exercise does take into account information supplied by some of them. They tend to be leaders of community groups and Iranian business owners and they can offer IOM indirect access to the Iranian migrant community.

It is the later wave of Iranian immigrants that are the main target group for IOM's activities. Interviews with this group suggest that they come from all over Iran, bringing with them their own regional culture and languages. For example, Kurds, Turks (Azaris), and Armenians all took part in this survey.

<sup>2</sup> This document is confidential and does not form part of this report.

## 1.3 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND SIZE OF THE IRANIAN COMMUNITY

When asked, many of the respondents said they had no idea about the size and location of Iranian communities in the UK. Exact figures are difficult to establish but it is generally thought that there are about 75,000 to 80,000 Iranians living in the UK.

Areas inhabited by IOM's target group include Barnet (the largest ethnic minority in Barnet is Iranian), Acton, Ealing Broadway, Finchley, Golders Green, and Hammersmith. Many respondents said that large numbers of Iranians lived in Kensington, St. John's Wood and Chelsea but this group tends to be more established in the UK and is not IOM's target.

Cities outside London with large Iranian populations are: Newcastle; Sheffield; Manchester (Cheadle Hulme area); Birmingham; Leeds; Glasgow; Brighton; Nottingham; and, to a lesser extent, Wolverhampton, Sunderland, Liverpool, Cardiff, Leicester and Coventry.

### Census

Census statistics from 2001 record 42,377 people born in Iran who are resident in Britain. The census also records that 10,000 people born in Iran came to Britain from 1991 onwards.

### Home Office

According to Home Office statistics in 2005, Iranians were in the top five nationalities applying for asylum in Britain. They were also in the top ten nationalities who were refused initial decisions (86%). Iranians were among the top three nationalities applying for National Asylum Support Service (NASS). Below are the numbers of Iranian applications received for asylum in the UK from 1997 to 2005.

1997	585
1998	745
1999	1,320
2000	5,170
2001	3,420
2002	2,630
2003	2,875
2004	3,455
2005	3,150



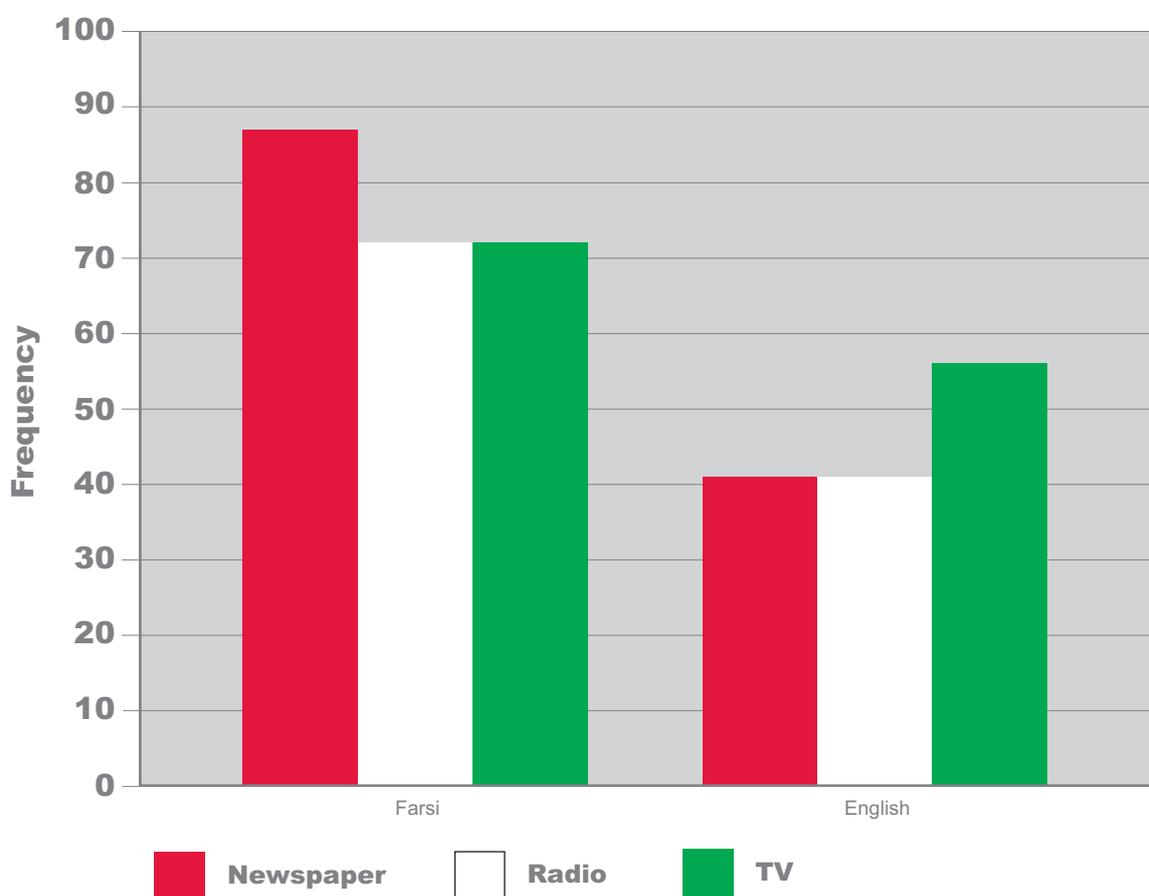
## 2 MAPPING EXERCISE OUTCOMES

### INFORMATION CHANNELS

#### 2.1 MEDIA

Respondents were asked in which language they could best understand newspapers, radio and television. Respondents could tick as many or as few options as they wished so the total of selections does not equal 39 (This is often the case throughout this survey). Figure 1 shows the results.

**Figure 1: Media Consultation**



## Media Comprehension

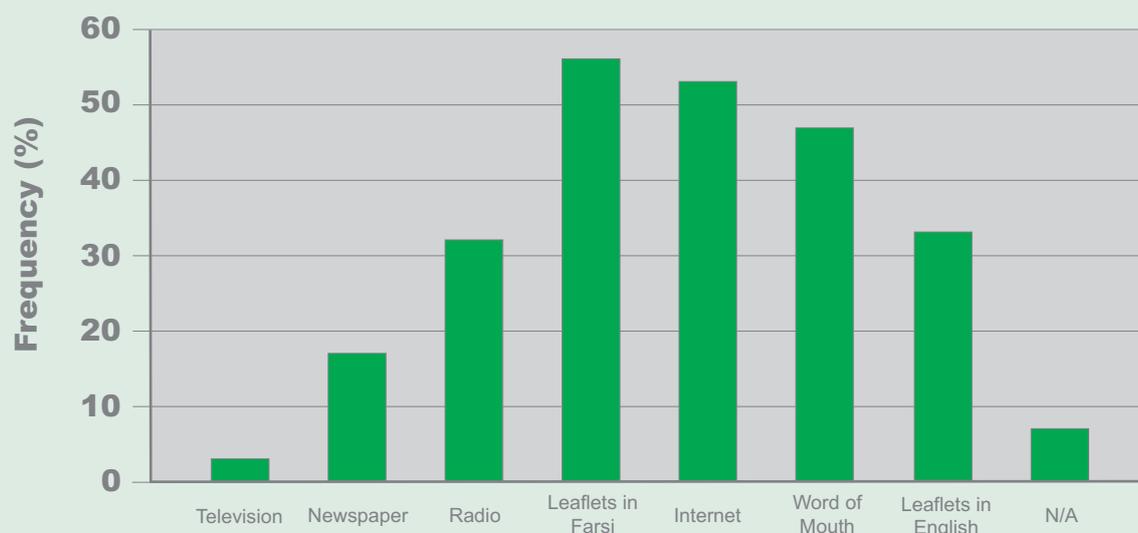
Figure 1 shows that the majority of respondents feel more comfortable reading, watching and listening to media in Farsi. Many of the respondents ticked more than one category: 14 of the 39, said they were just as comfortable with English as Farsi.

In the category of other languages, respondents chose Kurdish (3 responses), Azari Turkish (2), Russian (1), Romanian (1), Armenian (1), Dari (1) and French (1). The Kurdish and Azari Turkish dialects are spoken widely in Iran, suggesting that these results are a good representation of the various dialects spoken by Iranians. Although consideration could be given to printing leaflets in Kurdish and Azari Turkish, the large majority of Iranians would be comfortable with Farsi alone.

## Information Sources

Figure 2<sup>3</sup> shows the preferred channels of information for Iranian nationals. The most popular choices were television, newspapers, and radio. IOM should therefore consider advertising more in these media.

**Figure 2: Information Channels**

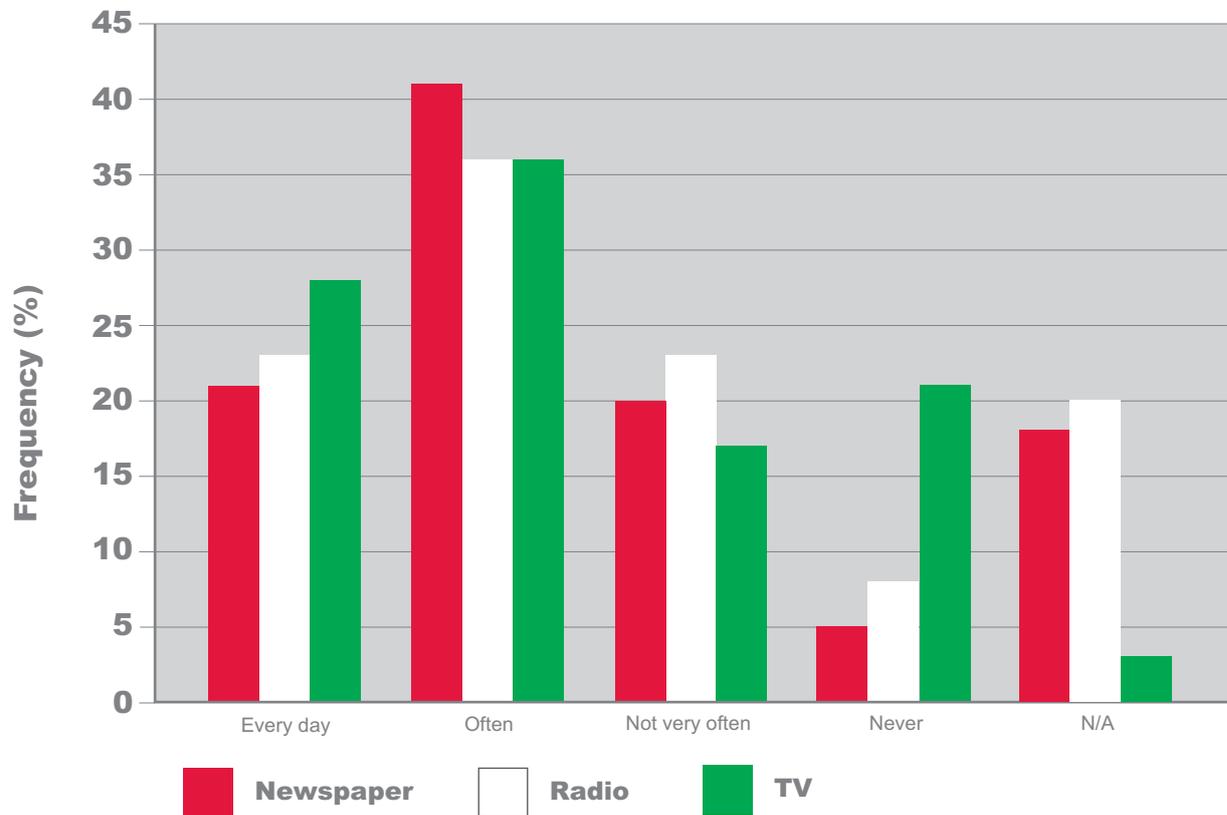


<sup>3</sup> "N/A" records the number of respondents who did not choose to answer the question.

## Frequency of Media Consultation

Figure 3 shows that most respondents watched television, read newspapers or listened to the radio often or everyday.

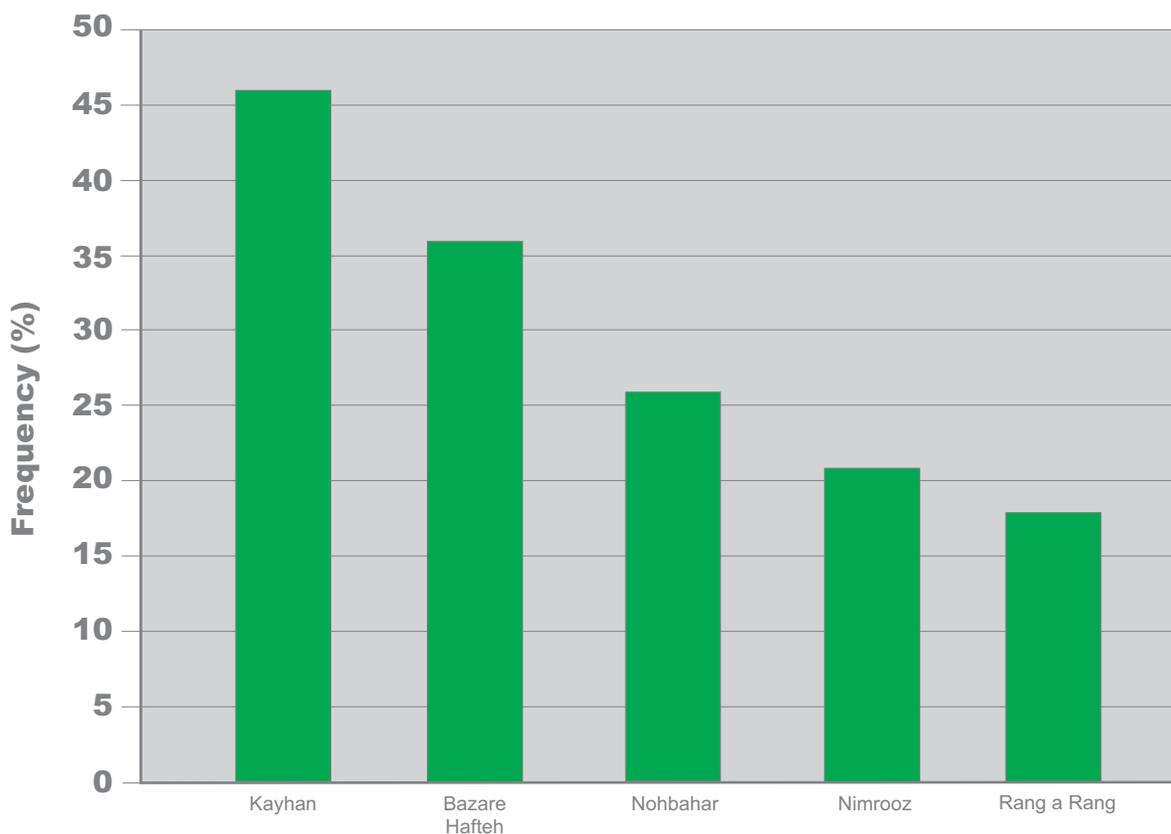
**Figure 3: Frequency of Media Consultation**



## Newspapers Readership

Figure 4 shows that *Kayhan* (1,200 print run) was read most often by respondents, followed by *Bazare Hafteh* (2,500 print run). Other newspapers and publications listed in the questionnaire were: *Nimrooz* (30,000 print run); *Nohbahar* (7,000 print run); and *Rang a Rang* (7,000 print run).

**Figure 4: Newspaper Readership**



Some publications were not listed in the questionnaire. *Etelaat*, a newspaper with a print run of 30,000, and *Metro* were also popular. Others had only one vote: the *Manchester Evening News*; *Time Out*; *The New Yorker*; and *Barge Sabz*, with a print run of 3,000.

The range of newspapers and publications is, obviously, most extensive in London and the choice reduces outside the capital. Free newspapers were very popular with Iranian nationals. In Glasgow, *Nimrooz* was the only Iranian publication to be found.

Some respondents gave broad answers and simply said they read Iranian publications from the UK, from Iran, and from the US.

Nearly all the Iranian community groups were asked about newsletters. Some said they had published them in the past but none did so presently. Many explained that all their information was now on their website and was updated regularly. Putting advertisements on some of these websites should therefore be considered by IOM.

IOM should continue to advertise in the publications it uses at present but should also consider an article and advert in *Kayhan* and possibly *Eteelal*. An advert in *Ireea* (print run of 2,500) is also recommended because it is the sole Iranian publication outside London, and is distributed in Birmingham – a key place for disseminating knowledge of IOM in the West Midlands. Some community leaders suggested that IOM insert leaflets in these newspapers before they are distributed to shops. This could be an interesting idea to explore.

## Radio

Radio was popular with respondents but not as much as newspapers and television. The most popular station was *Radio Farda*. It is supported by the U.S Government and broadcasts in Farsi from the US and from the Czech Republic. “Farda” means “tomorrow”, and implies the changes that the US could make in Iran. Its website is blocked in Iran.

Popular stations broadcasting in Farsi were: *Voice of America* (US); *BBC Persian Service* (UK); and *Radio Sedaye Iran* (US). *BBC Radio4* and *BBC Radio7*, broadcasting in English, were popular, as were some English language commercial radio stations such as *Capital*, *Virgin*, *Galaxy*, *LBC* and *Heart FM*.

The difficulty with advertising on *Voice of America* is that potential returnees might believe it to be a government-sponsored programme. Throughout the mapping exercise, there was great concern among interviewees that IOM is part of the government or working with the Iranian government.

The only Iranian radio station in the UK that was visited was All FM, which broadcasts *Persian Seda* from Manchester for two hours a week and can also be listened to online (like most radio nowadays). This is a not-for-profit community radio station and this show has been running for many years. IOM should consider placing advertisements with it and possibly offering an interview and live phone-in. A few minutes were dedicated to the voluntary return programmes when IOM was visiting the station and the show received some immediate inquiries.

A second radio show broadcast from the UK, *Simorgh*, is planned. IOM should keep track of its progress, and consider advertising on it.

## Television

Television usage was high amongst respondents, who watched English and Iranian television fairly equally. This may be due to a lack of access to Iranian television. All the terrestrial channels in English, *BBC News 24* and *National Geographic* were singled out by respondents.

The main access to Iranian channels broadcast from Iran, the US, and the UK is by satellite. Many of the respondents said they watched these channels but none of the people interviewed for the exercise actually had satellite in their homes. They all, including community leaders, said they watched these channels at their friends' houses.

*Jaam-e Jam*, *Iran TV Network*, *Pars TV* and *IRIB* were popular. *Iran TV* has offices in London and the US and *Jaam-e Jam* and *Pars TV* are broadcast from the US. *IRIB* is the State television of Iran.

IOM should consider advertising or offering an interview on *Iran TV Network*. At present IOM only advertises with *Rang a Rang* television.

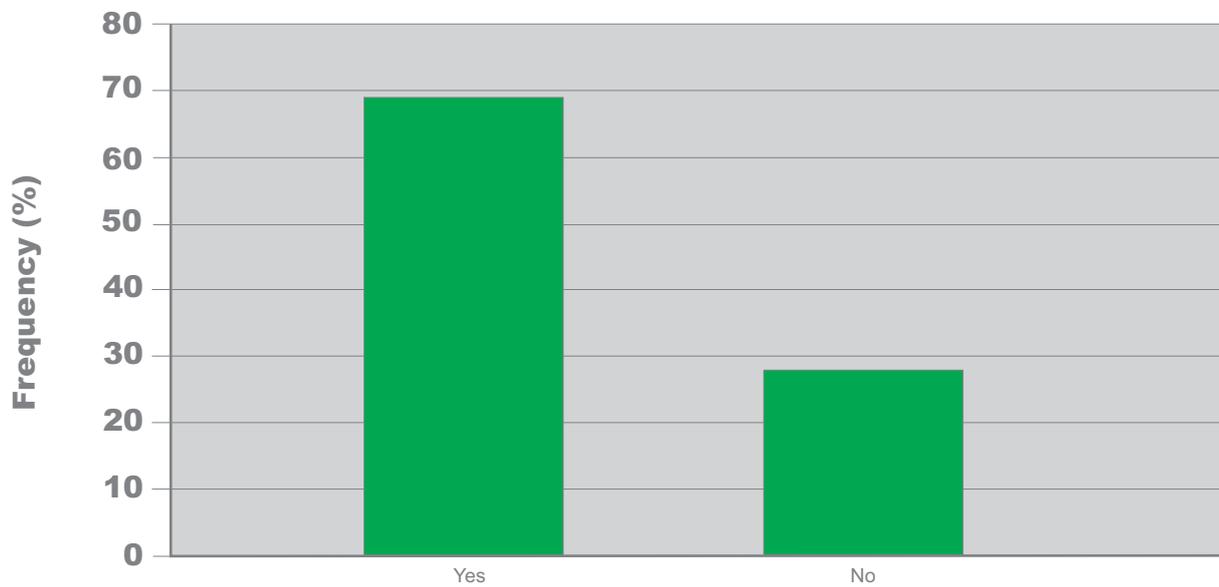
The US and Iranian channels were popular with Iranian nationals but there would be concerns about advertising with them. IOM might be perceived as working with the government, if it advertised with the official television of Iran, and potential returnees could back away. Advertising on US Iranian channels might also alarm some viewers since these channels are known to be against the current regime in Iran.



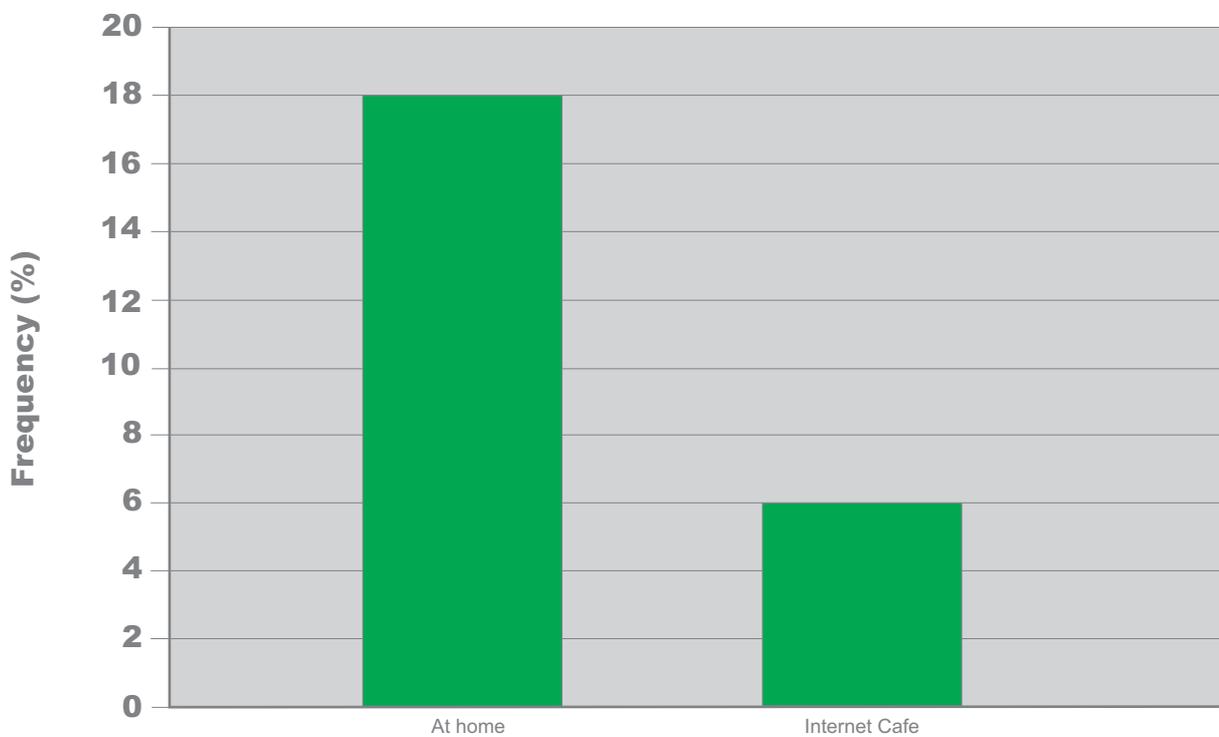
## Internet

Computer and Internet usage was high amongst respondents. Nearly 70% were able to access the Internet. This is shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Internet Usage**



**Figure 6: Internet Access**



The majority of respondents go online at home and/or at the library (figure 6). Other means of going online included accessing the Internet from college, work, and their friends' houses.

The high levels of computer usage among the respondents should be no surprise. Many media channels in Iran are patrolled and monitored by the government and the Internet is a popular place to access (somewhat) unrestricted information.

The most popular websites in Farsi were *BBC.com (Farsi)*, *Taktaz.com (US)*, *Rooz.com* and *Gooya.com (US & UK)*. Also popular were *google.com*, *yahoo.com*, *irbi.ir (Iran)*, *iranproud*, *irannews*, *persianhub (US)*, *1000irani.com (US & UK)* and the Home Office website. Iranian sites based in the UK that may be considered by IOM for advertising are *Iraniandirectoryuk.biz*, *Iraniandirectory.com* and *Iranianyellows.co.uk*.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- IOM should continue to advertise regularly in the Farsi language media.
- IOM should continue to advertise in the newspapers it presently uses but also consider articles and advertisements in *Kayhan* and *Etelaat*.
- IOM should advertise in *Nimrooz* and consider *IREEA*. Free newspapers are popular with Iranians outside London and IOM should consider them.
- IOM leaflets might be inserted into popular Iranian newspapers. This would be particularly effective when newspapers have a large circulation. This is the case at Iranian New Year (March) when most publications bring out special editions.
- Community newsletters seem to be published irregularly at best. In their place, advertisements and links should be placed on the websites of some of the Iranian community organisations, such as the Iranian Association, Harrow Iranian Community Association, the Iranian Scottish Association, and the Iranian Christian Fellowship.
- IOM should advertise on *Persian Seda*.
- IOM should advertise on more Iranian television stations, such as *Jaam-e Jam* and *Pars TV*.
- IOM should consider interviews and possibly a live phone-in and question and answer sessions on both radio and television.

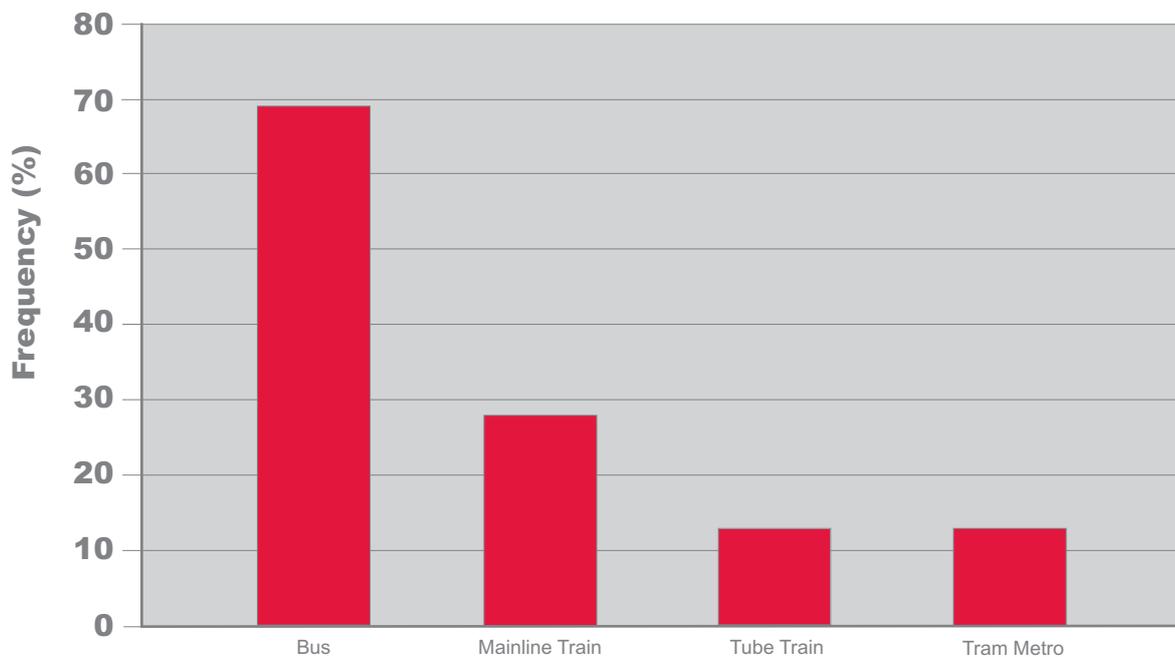
## 2.2 USE OF SERVICES

Questions were included in the questionnaire to investigate where else IOM could advertise its voluntary return programmes.

### Means of Transport

Respondents were asked what means of transport they use most often. Figure 7 shows that 69% of respondents used buses, followed by mainline trains (28%). A little less 12% used cars and one person usually bicycled. The large number of respondents using buses may be financially motivated. Travelling by bus is more affordable in London than by Tube. Outside London, there are normally more extensive bus networks than other forms of public transport.

**Figure 7: Transport**

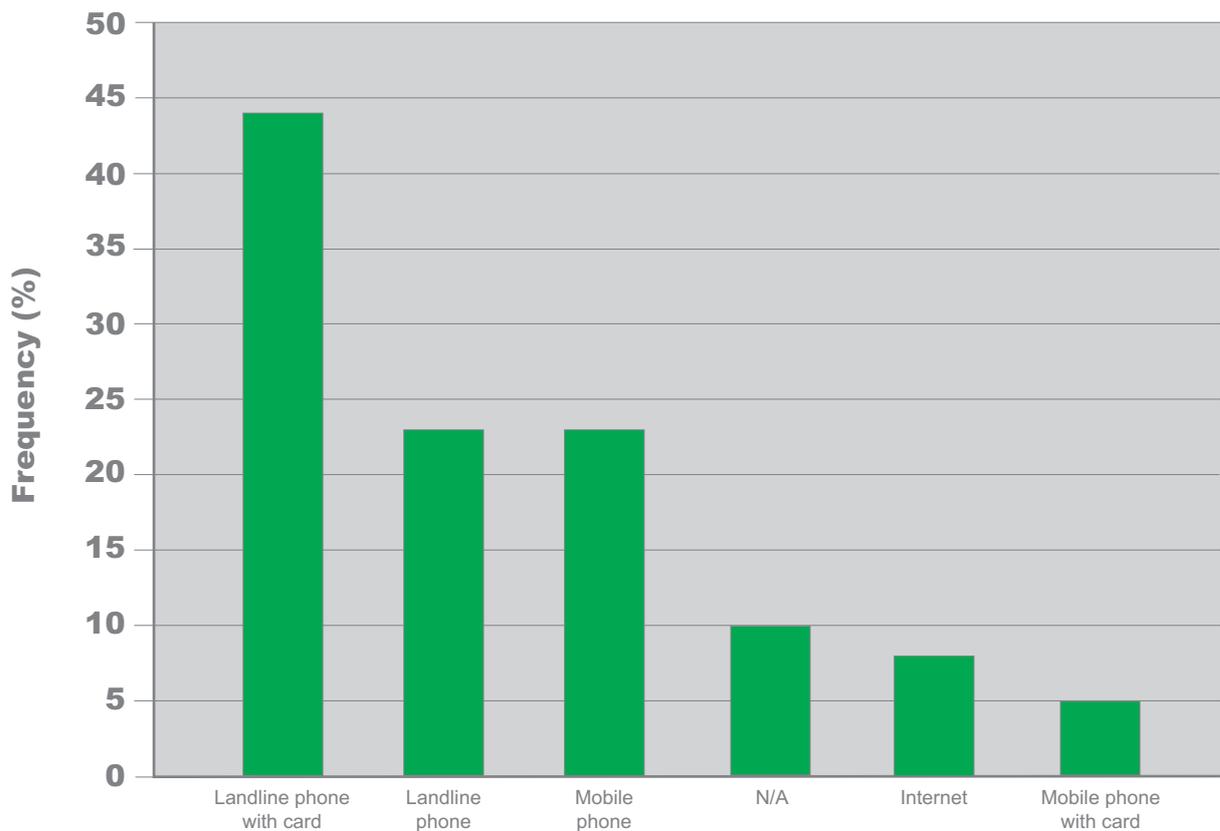


## Phone Calls

Figure 8 shows the most common ways in which respondents phoned family and friends in Iran. 45% of respondents use a landline with phone card. Many said that they used the most recent kind of phone cards in which a special access number is dialled and then the telephone number in Iran.

*Go Loco* was a popular choice of phone card. Many respondents said that they were not loyal to one particular phone card. They bought whichever was recommended (by word of mouth) or cheaper. The quality of the phone cards was thought to change quite often.

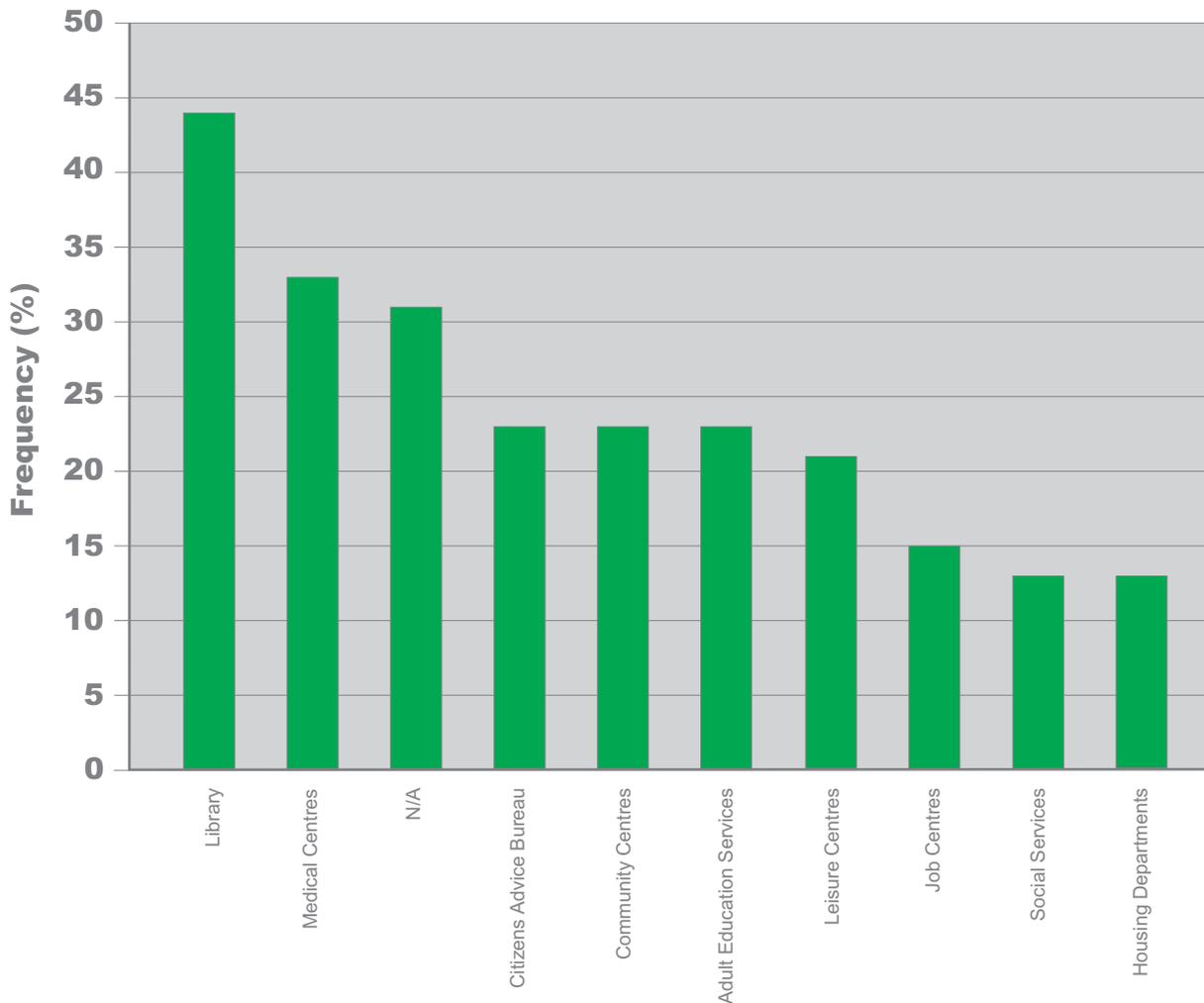
**Figure 8: Phone Calls**



## Local Services

Respondents were asked which local services they used most. The results are shown in Figure 9. By far the most popular public service was the library, used by 43 % of the respondents.

**Figure 9: Local Services**



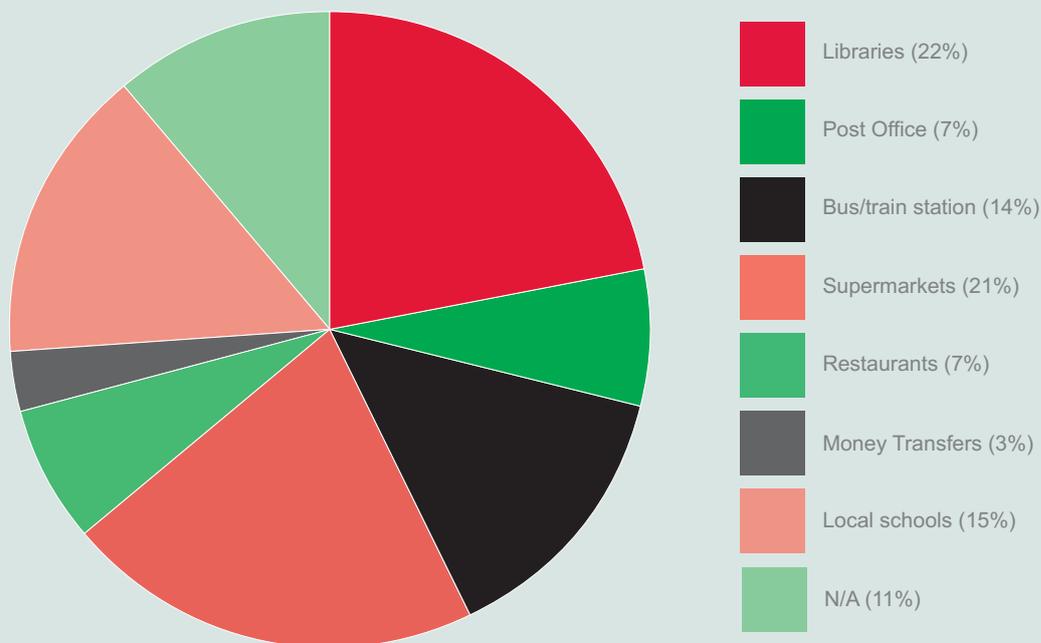
During the mapping exercise, libraries located in areas inhabited by Iranian nationals were researched in and outside London. It is recommended that IOM place leaflets in these libraries.

Medical services were also used significantly by the respondents. This may reflect the many older Iranian nationals living in the UK. A few Iranian health charities and organisations were identified during the mapping exercise, for example the Iranian Health and Welfare Association in Sheffield and the Birmingham Asylum Seekers Health Outreach Team (BASHOT). Working with these health centres may be an important opportunity to increase awareness of IOM's work.

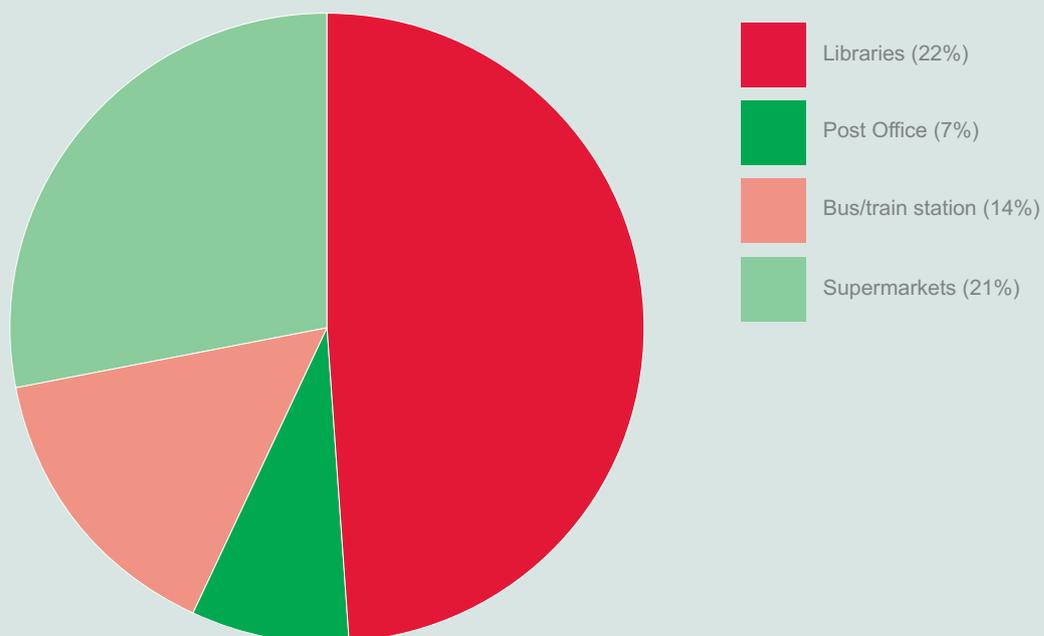
## 2.3 PREFERRED SOURCE OF INFORMATION

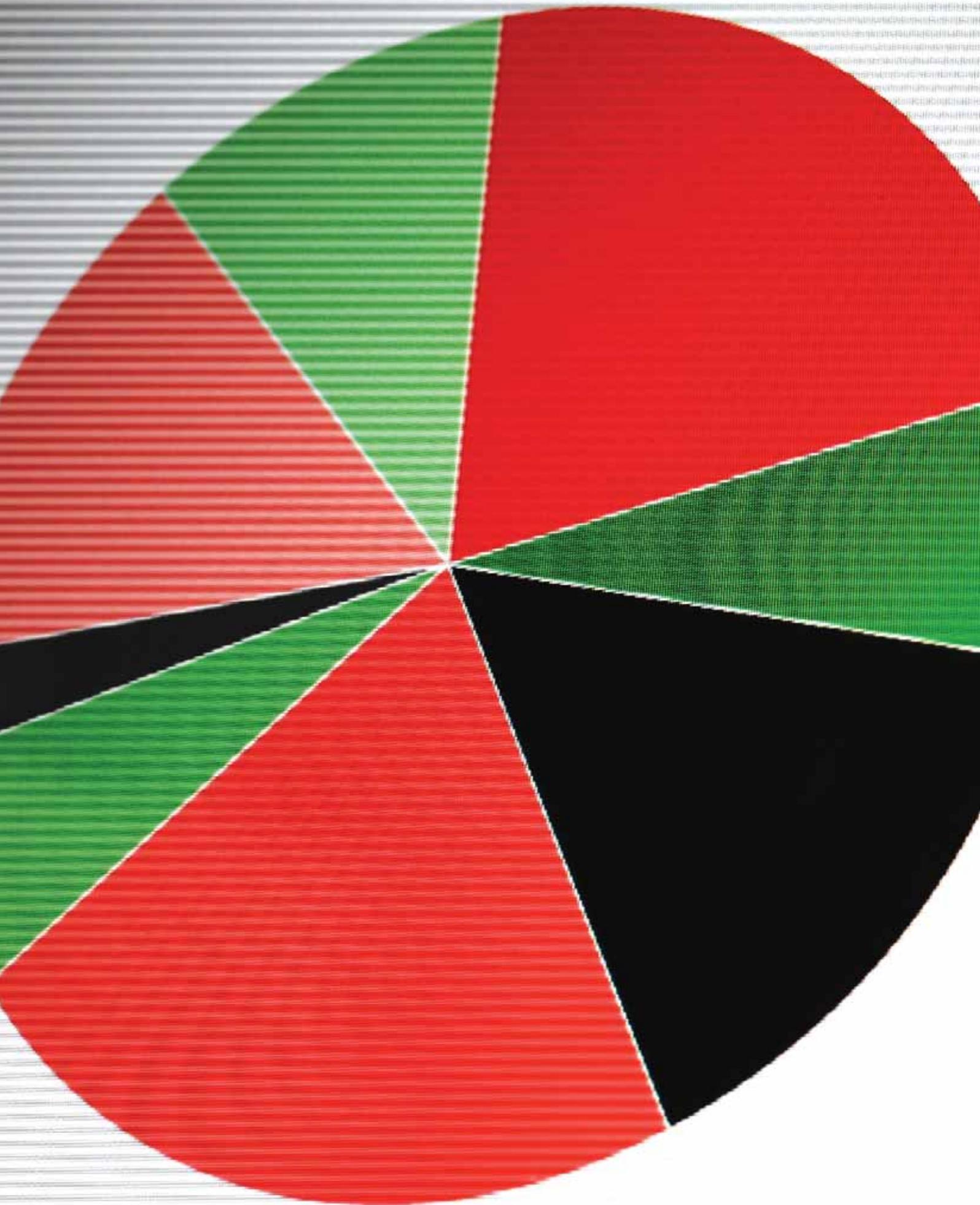
A number of questions were intended to establish where respondents thought information materials could be most effectively displayed, and in what formats. Figures 10 and 11 display the respondents' answers.

**Figure 10: Preferred Locations for Information**



**Figure 11: Preferred Format for Information**





Libraries, supermarkets, schools, and bus or train stations were seen as important places to leave information about the voluntary return programmes. A list of potential libraries and Iranian supermarkets has been drawn up for IOM.

Leaflets and other texts in Farsi were strongly supported (49%) as the best format for informing potential returnees. IOM should continue translating information for leaflets.

## 2.4 COMMUNITY GROUPS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

There is no umbrella group for Iranian community organisations and researching them for the mapping exercise was not easy. First, there are only a handful of established community organisations and all these are in London. The community groups outside London are much smaller and have not been running for long. Some of the latter groups have problems with funding and have closed and re-opened in the past.

Many websites and phone numbers for community groups were given to the consultant but these, when they were eventually tracked down, had been discontinued. This is mostly caused by a lack of funding, and sometimes a lack of communication (disputes between members). In addition, some groups and charities appear to be fronts for political organisations.

However, the consultant met some smaller and newer organisations. They will be an important part of spreading awareness of IOM's work outside London. The London community organisations know about IOM, and have even attended seminar days with them in the past, but the people attending them are now more settled. Potential returnees have been dispersed to the rest of the UK.

IOM should stay in contact with these smaller groups, which are all on the list of contacts. IOM should try to keep up to date with the closure and launch of these organisations, however difficult this may be. Future target groups will increasingly live outside London.

Respondents did not use religious centres that often. However, the *Markaz Eslami* (Islamic Centre of England) in London was quite popular. This centre was visited during the exercise. They were unfamiliar with IOM but looked forward to spreading awareness of its voluntary return programmes. The centre has, in the past, raised funds for people who wanted to return and they thought IOM's programme might be useful for some of their attendees. The centre also gave the contact details of Iranian Muslim centres outside London.

The Iranian Christian churches in Glasgow and London were also visited during the exercise and they were happy to work with IOM in the future. They believe there are potential returnees amongst their congregations. The London church will pass on details to its fellowships across the country.

A large number of respondents cited *Nowrooz* (Iranian New Year in March), *Yalda* (Winter Solstice in December), *Mehregan* (the start of Autumn), *Chahar Shambah Soori* (pre-New Year celebrations, also in March) and *Sizda Beda* (after New Year) as major events they attend. In addition, they visited *Shabe Shehr* (poetry readings), concerts and plays. However, respondents who gave no information said they either did not attend Iranian events or did not know how to find out about them. Popular events are held for the New Year in most areas where Iranians live in the UK, The mapping consultant has been invited to these to spread awareness of IOM's work at a grass roots level.

# 3 MAPPING EXERCISE OUTCOME

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The second section of the questionnaire collected baseline data from each respondent about their age, gender and length of residence in the UK.

### 3.1 GENDER

14 of the 39 respondents were men and 15 were women. 10 chose not to offer the information.

### 3.2 AGE

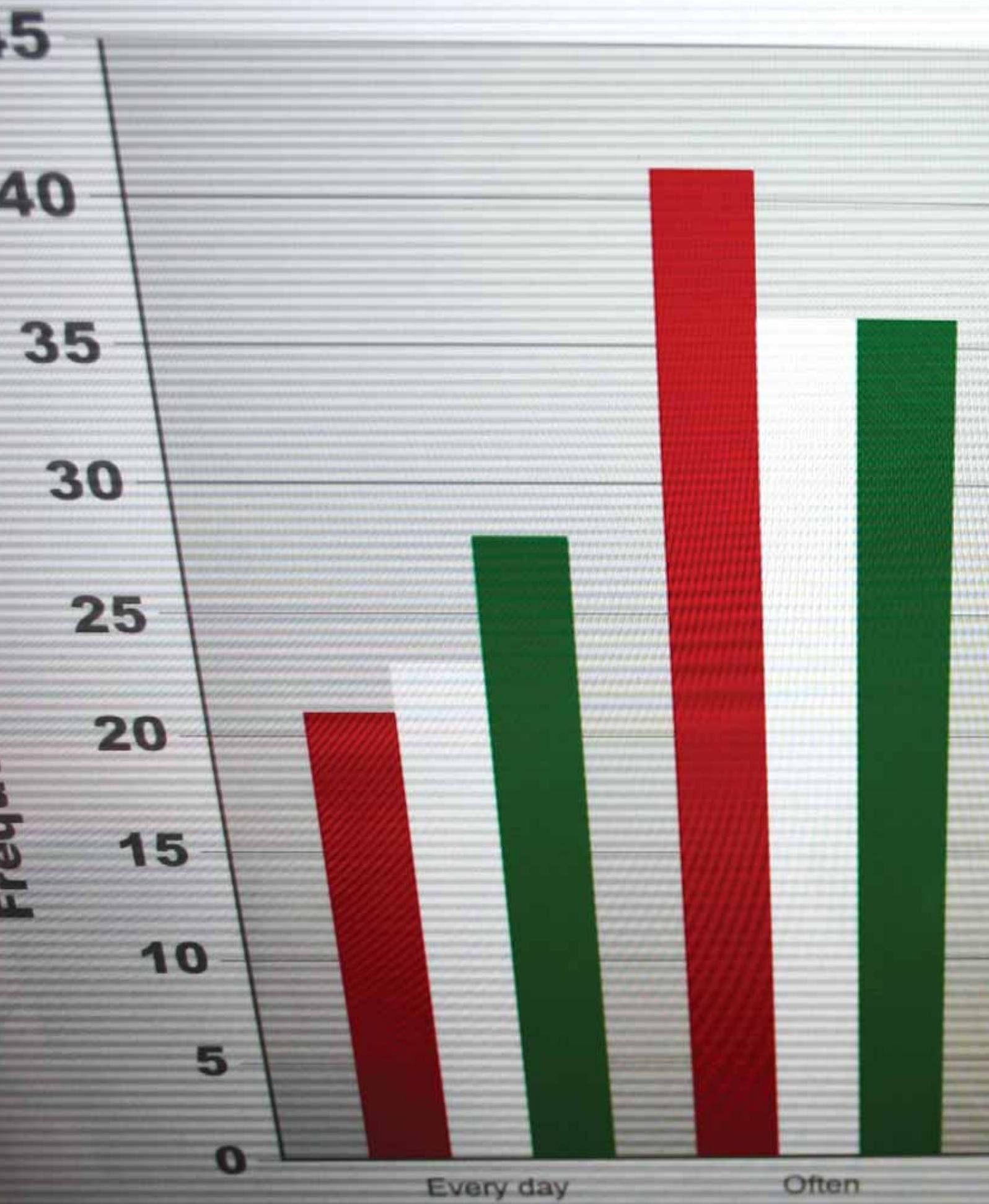
Figure 12 shows the age of respondents. The numbers were quite evenly spread but the largest proportion were in the age range 55-64. This could be explained by the number of community leaders interviewed, who tended to be in this age group (and male in most cases).

AGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Under 18	1	3%
18-24	6	15%
25-34	5	13%
35-44	6	15%
45-54	3	8%
55-64	9	23%
65 and over	4	10%
No answer	5	13%
<b>TOTAL: 39</b>		

### 3.3 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Figure 13 shows the variation in respondents' length of residence in the UK. The large percentage of respondents who have been here for over 10 years (33%) is an indication of the presence of community leaders in the sample.

LENGTH OF TIME	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Less than 12 months	5	13%
1 year but less than 3	6	15.5%
3 years but less than 5	2	5%
5 years but less than 10	7	18%
10 years or more	13	33%
No answer	6	15.5
<b>TOTAL: 39</b>		



## 4 CONSTRAINTS

The Iranian mapping exercise ran reasonably smoothly. With any survey, there is a risk of a poor response to the questionnaire. The consultant was satisfied with the number of questionnaires received. A much worse response was initially predicted because of Iranians' mistrust of data collection and their lack of respect for research. The consultant would, however, have liked to receive questionnaires from Iranians visiting the IOM London drop-in centre.

Some questionnaires were collected in the cities visited during the exercise but in Glasgow and Birmingham the data collected was based more on interviews with community leaders and conversation with Iranian nationals who were met by chance in those cities.

Questions requiring open-ended answers tended to be left unanswered and some respondents asked for clarification of the kind of answers that were required. Future questionnaires should limit the number of open-ended questions so as to limit the confusion of respondents. Most respondents left at least one question unanswered, though usually more. There was no pattern to the unanswered questions although boxes to be ticked were the most popular type to answer.

Questionnaires were normally better answered when an explanation was given beforehand. Thus, some questionnaires were given to English language classes aimed at Iranians, where the teacher would explain the task and reassure the students beforehand. Simply leaving the questionnaires in public places did not have much success.

As the consultant was a woman, there were a few meetings with clerics that did not go as smoothly as might be hoped. However, this was not a big problem and, with the right tact and sensitivity, did not affect the outreach aspect of the exercise.

# 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The mapping exercise achieved its aims and identified the main channels of information used by Iranians in the UK and the main locations of the community. The following recommendations emerged from the mapping exercise.

- An extensive list of contacts has been collected during the mapping exercise which lists Iranian media, community organisations, religious centres, and support agencies. It also includes details of businesses, restaurants, money transfer facilities, libraries and legal services used by the Iranian community in the UK that should be the target of outreach activities.
- IOM should continue to advertise in the publications it uses at present but also consider *Kayhan*, *Etelaat*, *Barge Sabz* and *IREEA*.
- IOM should consider advertising on some key Iranian websites, including *gooya.com* and *taktaz.com*.
- IOM should leave materials at key libraries. These are in the contact list.
- IOM should secure some airtime on *Persian Seda* and *Radio Farda*.
- Buses – in and outside – London could be areas for IOM to advertise.
- IOM should liaise regularly with multipliers to ensure a wide dissemination of information on the voluntary return programme and maintain regular contact with community organisations and religious centres.



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