

Iran



REGION: MENA

Also included in this region: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Turkey

PART I: ENROLMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

The Iranian HE system combines features of the unitary and North American models. Over 85% of all HE students were enrolled in comprehensive universities in 2018, with most of the rest in either (private) hybrids or (public) short-cycle HEIs. Enrolments in Iran nearly doubled from 2006 to 2015, rising from just over 2.4 million to just under 4.8 million. This outpaced comparator averages in the rest of the MENA and the Global South. However, Iran subsequently diverged from the trend in the rest of the Global South, as enrolments declined by nearly one-third through to 2018, which meant that over the full period from 2006 to 2018 Iranian enrolment growth was slower than across the rest of the MENA and the Global South. This drop coincided with serious worries about the labour market being oversaturated with university graduates. HEI numbers grew in line with enrolments until 2015 but did not subsequently decline. As a result, the average Iranian HEI was smaller in 2018 than in 2006. Roughly 55% of students attended public HEIs in 2018, which was well below the average in the rest of the MENA region.

TABLE 1 – Types of higher education providers

CATEGORY	INSTITUTIONS	INSTITUTIONS COUNT IN 2018		
		PUB.	PRIV.	TOTAL
Comprehensive Universities	Universities (دانشگاه)	162	15	177
Specialised Universities	Faculties (فکولتې); Institutes (انستېتوت); complexes (مركز); centres (مركز); organisation (سازمان); other form of institute (public - دس س و م)	75	8	83
Hybrids	Other form of institute (private - دس س و م)	0	287	287
Short-cycle HEIs	Junior colleges (دانش زوآ)	172	0	172

FIGURE 1 – Numbers of institutions by type, 2006-2018

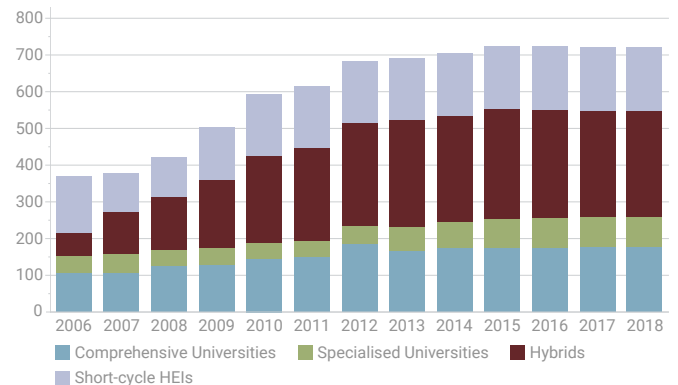


FIGURE 2 – Total enrolments with public and private higher education providers, 2006-2018 (Millions)

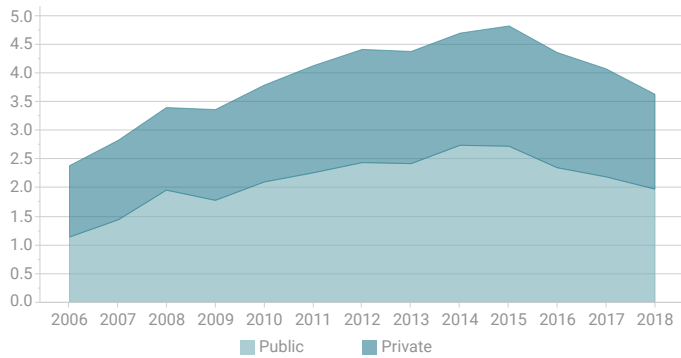


FIGURE 3 – Changes in enrolment, in Iran, the rest of MENA and the rest of the Global South, 2006-2018

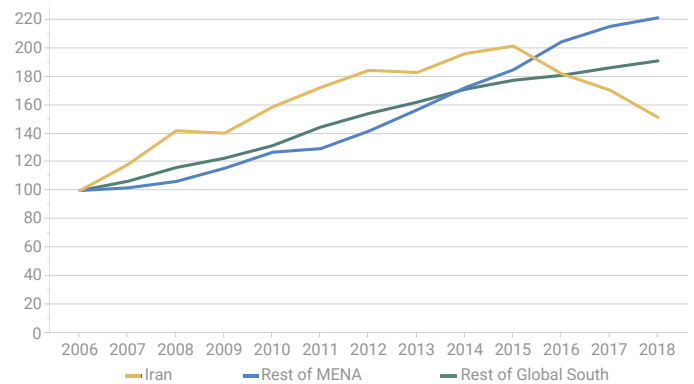


FIGURE 4 – Share of enrolments by institution type in Iran and the rest of MENA, 2006 and 2018 (2006=100)

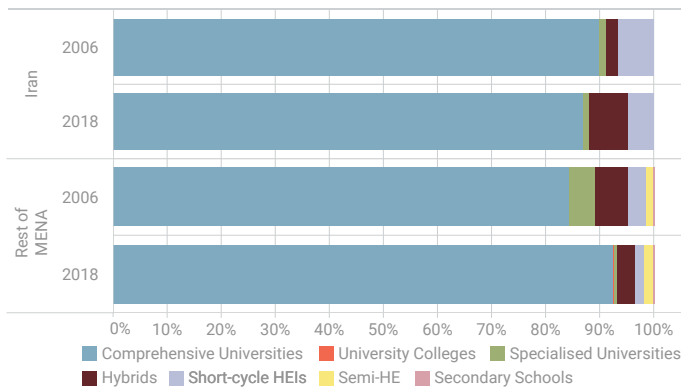


FIGURE 5 – Share of enrolments in public and private institutions, by institution type, in Iran and the rest of MENA, 2018

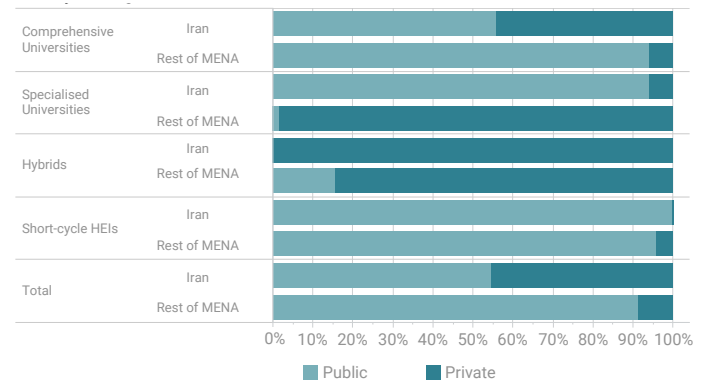
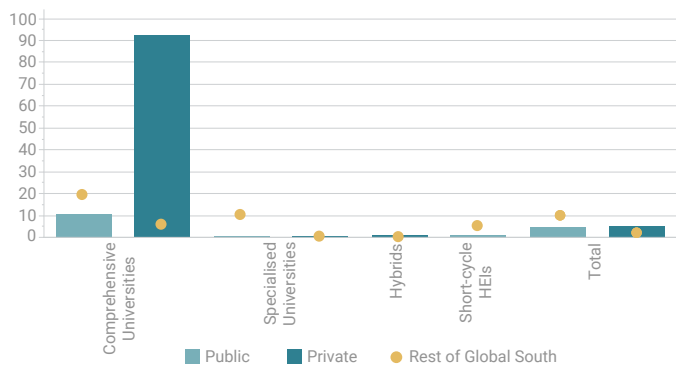


FIGURE 6 – Average institution-size by institution type in Iran and the rest of the Global South, 2018 (Thousands)



Main Entrance Gate, University of Tehran, Iran

PART II: HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING

Public HE spending in Iran doubled between 2006 and 2018, though there was a modest dip in the years after 2013 when oil prices fell. Transfers to public HEIs followed a similar path. Because funding growth continued even after 2015 enrolments fell, transfers to public HEIs increased more slowly than enrolments up to 2015, but funding per student increased after 2015 as enrolments fell. Public HE spending relative to GDP roughly doubled from 0.6% in 2006 to 1.2% in 2018, which was in line with the average for the rest of the MENA and the Global South. This was only partly due to increased spending, however. It had as much to do with declining GDP as a result of foreign sanctions. It is notable that Iran maintained or increased HE spending even in the face of its economic difficulties.

FIGURE 7 – Change in real total public spending on higher education in Iran, the rest of MENA and the rest of the Global South, 2006-2018 (2006=100)

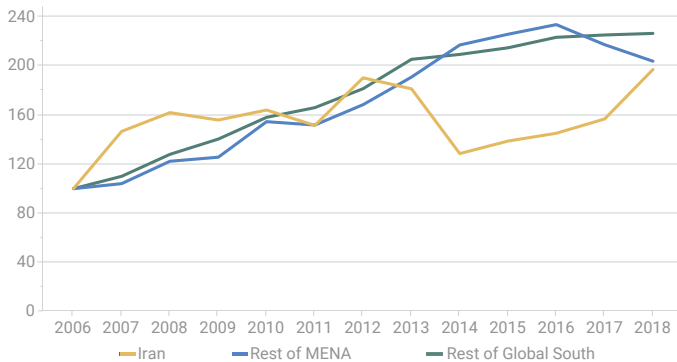


FIGURE 8 – Total public spending on higher education relative to GDP in Iran, the rest of MENA and the rest of the Global South, 2006-2018

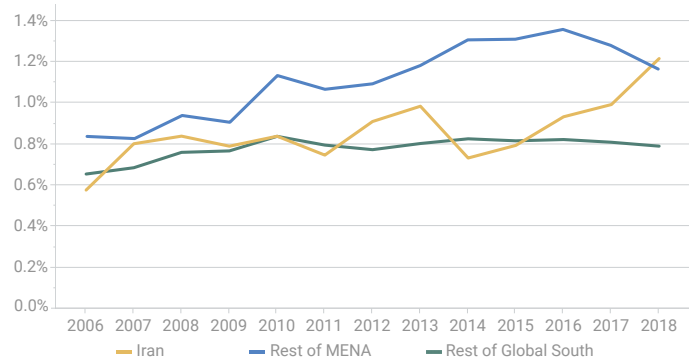


FIGURE 9 – Change in real government transfers to public institutions by institution-type in Iran and the rest of the Global South, 2006-2018 (2006=100)

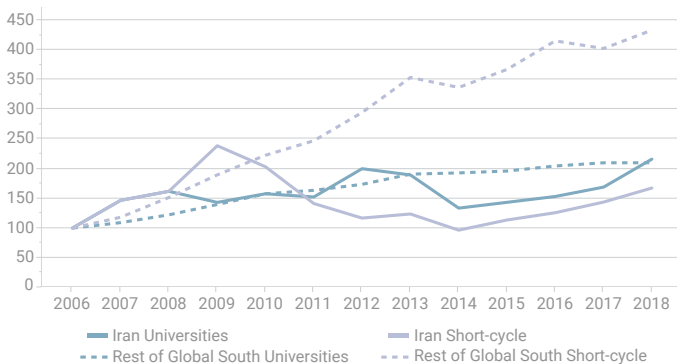
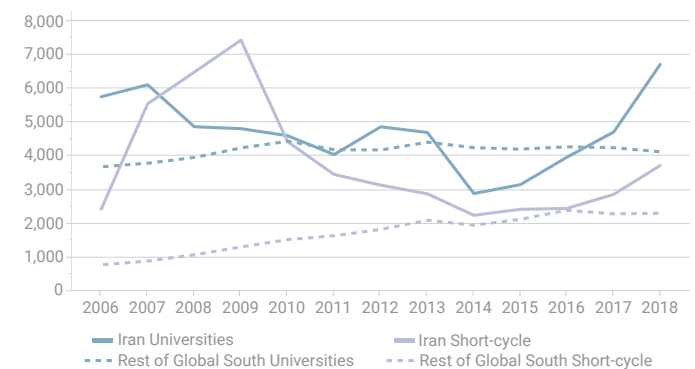


FIGURE 10 – Per-student government transfers to public institutions by institution-type in real PPP, in Iran and the rest of the Global South, 2006-2018



PART III: STUDENT FEES

We classify the student fee regime in Iran as being a mix of privileged-public and token fee-charging. We were unable to gather further data on student fees.

PART IV: STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

There is insufficient data to analyze government student financial aid in Iran.

***Note:** For more on methodology and data quality please see [Appendices A and B](#).