



# Southern Lur of Iran

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The Southern Lurs, also referred to as the 'Smaller Lurs,' are one of the several groups of people in western and southwestern Iran - in the regions in and around the Zagros Mountains - who are more generally called the Lurs. The million plus Southern Lurs, among whom there are no known followers of Christ, are concentrated in the area between the cities of Ahvaz and Shiraz. The Southern Luri language, although in the larger Persian language family, is more closely related to the Middle Persian of the Sassanid Empire than to the official Modern Persian of Iran. This fact hints at the ancient history of the Lurs, the earliest recorded mention of them coming in the 10th century.



Though the Southern Lurs were originally semi-nomadic shepherds, these days most live a sedentary life in cities and villages, where they engage in agriculture. An independent people who value bravery and simplicity, the Southern Lurs have largely resisted or avoided the trend toward urbanization, permitting women greater freedom while holding fast to their traditions. The Southern Lurs are nearly 100% Shia Muslim, but also maintain some of their ancient, pre-Islamic beliefs and practices.



## Quick Facts

**Population in Iran =**  
**1.2 million**

**Progress: Engaged yet**  
**Unreached**

**Language: Southern Luri**

**Gospel Resources:**  
**Scripture portions available,**  
**but not complete Bible**  
**Jesus Film is available**





## Engage

Effective gospel engagement with the Southern Lurs will likely require a great deal of focus, flexibility and determination.

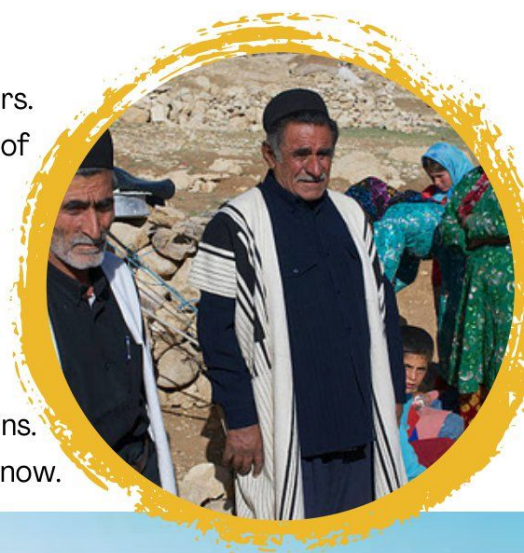
Farsi is fairly widely spoken among Southern Lur men, who interact with men of other ethnicities in business and government. Among Lur women, however, Farsi is much less widely known, as they tend to interact mostly with other Lur women. In both cases, Farsi speakers

are viewed by the Southern Lur as “other,” and Lurs have often been despised as a minority by those from the Farsi-speaking majority. One key to engagement, then, will be a focus on learning to speak Southern Luri.

In addition to the question of language, workers must contend with the reality that in today’s Iran, foreigners are watched very closely by the government’s security apparatus. By focusing on an ethnic minority, one will draw even more attention and suspicion. Fear of retribution by the security services could make the Southern Lurs more reluctant to engage with outsiders.

But Iran is the only country in the world that has a population of Southern Lurs. Someone must go to them in their heartland. Ahvaz, a city with a population of more than a million, could provide an opportunity to study in a university or establish a small business in agriculture or handicrafts, thereby enabling workers to develop relationships with Southern Lurs in the city and beyond.

Many of the Southern Lurs were historically nomads, traveling to higher elevation during the summer heat while spending most of the year in the plains. The Lurs retain features of a nomadic identity even though they are settled now.



## Pray

- **The Southern Lurs have many shrines dedicated to ‘holy men,’ where they go seeking healing and blessing. Ask God to turn their hearts to Christ, who alone can bless and heal them.**
- **Ask the Lord to remove hindrances to Southern Lurs hearing and receiving His love through His people, whether Iranians or others.**

Is God calling you to take the gospel to the Southern Lurs of Iran?  
Contact us. We would love to help you get there!