

LANGUAGE FACTSHEET

Farsi & Dari

Farsi and Dari are two dialects of the same language, mutually intelligible in written format, but very different when spoken.



Tajik too has diverged from Farsi in both script and vocabulary and they are often mutually intelligible when spoken but not when written.



Only 38% of Afghanis can read and write. Written communication targeted at Dari speaking refugees is often not well understood.



Formal Farsi and Dari are very similar, but differences in pronunciation and the use of certain words are more noticeable when they are spoken informally.



Pashto is a different language than Dari and Farsi. Native Pashto speakers often learn Dari, but few Dari speakers have a good command of Pashto.

Tips



Make sure you know if your audience speaks Farsi, Dari, or Tajik.



Documents can be written in Farsi, but some words that are different in Dari can be depicted with a backslash.



To reduce misinterpretation and establish trust, try to provide Farsi speakers from Iran with an Iranian interpreter and Dari speakers from Afghanistan with an Afghan interpreter.

Digging deeper into Farsi and Dari...

Where are Dari and Farsi spoken?

There are 35 documented languages in Afghanistan and 62 languages in Iran.

Dari and Pashto are the two official languages of Afghanistan. Dari is often spoken as a lingua franca by those whose mother tongue is one of the minority Afghan languages. Dari is also spoken in Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and other neighboring countries.

Farsi is the official language of Iran. It is also spoken by large sections of the population in neighboring countries (chiefly Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iraq, Oman, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates).

To communicate effectively, it is best to know a person's first language or dialect.

Differences with other key languages in the region

Pashto is a different language from Dari and Farsi. Pashto is an official language in Afghanistan. However, Dari is the language of business and higher education, so Pashtuns often learn Dari. Very few Dari speakers have a good command of Pashto.

Tajik is closely related to Dari and Farsi. It is the official language of the Republic of Tajikistan but is also spoken in parts of Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. It is mainly written in Cyrillic script. Tajik and Farsi are mutually intelligible when spoken, but not when written.

Literacy and reading

The literacy level in Iran is much higher (84% overall, 83% for women) than in Afghanistan (38% overall, 24% for women). Consider carefully how useful written material is for an Afghan audience and how else you might disseminate information.

How TWB can help

- Translations in both Dari and Farsi through teams of professionally trained translators (working remotely).
- Online testing of Dari and Farsi language skills to aid the recruitment of multilingual staff.
- Open-access and tailor-made training for interpreters, translators and cultural mediators.
- Practical tools, online glossaries and good practice guides for interpreters and translators available at www.translatorswithoutborders.org.