

Iranian Public Opinion in the Early Days of the Pezeshkian Administration

A public opinion study | May 2025



Nancy W. Gallagher, Ebrahim Mohseni & Clay Ramsay



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Methodology: This report is based on three probability-sample nationally representative telephone surveys fielded by IranPoll®. The first was fielded in early 2023 (February 11 – March 9, 2023), among a representative sample of 1,011 Iranians. The second was fielded from March 8-18, 2024, among a representative sample of 1,009 Iranians. The third survey was fielded six months later, over October 10-14, 2024, among a representative sample of 1,000 Iranians. The surveys’ margin of error is +/-3.1%. The authors are responsible for survey design and analysis.

The samples were RDD samples drawn from all landline telephones in Iran.¹ They were stratified first by Iranian provinces and then by settlement size and type. All 31 Iranian provinces were represented in proportions similar to their actual populations, as were rural and urban areas. When a residence was reached, an adult was randomly selected from within that household using the random table technique. An initial attempt and three callbacks were made in an effort to complete an interview with the randomly selected respondents. All of the interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). All interviews were monitored in real-time by call-center supervisors. Further details about the data collection methodology are available here: <https://www.iranpoll.com/method>.

For the March 2023 survey, the AAPOR1 contact rate of the survey was 81%, the cooperation rate was 57%, and the overall response rate AAPOR1 was 46%. For the March 2024 survey, the AAPOR1 contact rate was 77%, the cooperation rate was 67%, and the overall response rate AAPOR1 was 52%. For the October 2024 survey, the AAPOR1 contact rate was 79%, the cooperation rate was 64%, and the overall response rate AAPOR1 was 51%.

The analyses in the report are based on the unweighted samples. Unless specified otherwise, the results are based on the full sample for the date under consideration at that point in the text.

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¹ In the March 2023 wave, mobile phone numbers were also called in a ratio that yielded 25% of the final sample. Exhaustive comparisons of all attitudinal and demographic questions found only two statistically significant differences between the replies of respondents reached by landline and those reached by mobile phone. See Nancy W. Gallagher, Ebrahim Mohseni, and Clay Ramsay, “[The Raisi Period: Iranian Public Attitudes on Domestic Issues](#),” Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (June 2024).

Introduction

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) has been conducting in-depth surveys of Iranian public opinion on nuclear issues, regional security, economics, domestic politics, and other topics since the summer of 2014. Each survey includes a combination of trend-line questions, some going as far back as 2006, and new questions written to assess and inform current policy debates.

This report explores Iranian public attitudes about the 2024 presidential election and challenges facing President Pezeshkian in the early months of his administration. It also covers Iranian perspectives on their nuclear program, conflict in the Middle East, the war in Ukraine, and a range of other foreign policy issues based on four waves of data collected since 2022. An earlier report, “The Raisi Period: Iranian Public Attitudes on Domestic Issues” presented additional results from the March 2023 and March 2024 survey waves, some of which are also included in this report as part of trendlines or to provide context for interpreting the most recent set of data. Results of questions asked in October 2024 are described in the present tense to provide a snapshot of the public mood in the early months of the Pezeshkian administration, while findings from the earlier three waves are described in the past tense.

Iranians lived through a head-spinning series of events between the two most recent survey waves covered in this report. In late March 2024, Israel killed several high-ranking Iranian generals in Syria. Iran retaliated in April by firing ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and other munitions into Israeli territory, the first time they had done so. The next month, President Ebrahim Raisi died in a helicopter accident along with other senior members of his administration. Elections for new president were held in June and July, and President Masoud Pezeshkian was inaugurated at the end of that month. Israel assassinated the leader of Hamas while he was in Tehran for the festivities. Two months later, Israel killed the leader of Hezbollah, another critical part of the so called “axis of resistance” in the Middle East, prompting Iran to launch another round of missile against Israeli territory in early October.

Viewed against this timeline, the degree of domestic political continuity perceived by the Iranian public in October 2024 is noteworthy. Despite growing opposition to strict enforcement of hijab laws and to controls on social media, around three-quarters of Iranians expected their constitution and political system to be about the same in a decade as it currently is, slightly more than expressed this view soon after the 2023 protests. Iranians were more satisfied with the conduct of this presidential election than they were with the one that put Raisi in office. A majority of people who voted for Pezeshkian generally said they did so because they thought he would be a good president, not to keep his opponent, a staunch conservative, from winning. Expectations for what President Pezeshkian could accomplish during his term seem more realistic than they were when Raisi or his predecessor Hassan Rouhani entered office. Majorities express hope that Pezeshkian will be able to improve relations with neighbors and protect women’s rights, but little confidence that he will manage to lower inflation or improve relations with the West.

Israel’s war in Gaza, assassinations of militia leaders close to Iran, and audacious attacks on Iranian territory have greatly heightened the Iranian public’s sense of insecurity. It should not be surprising, therefore, that public support for Iran acquiring nuclear weapons has grown steadily

since the war in Gaza began. From 2009 to 2023, a clear majority favored having only a peaceful nuclear program, while slightly over a third wanted both atomic bombs and nuclear power. By October 2024, public opinion for and against nuclear weapons was a statistical tie. Growing public support for an Iranian bomb is overwhelmingly driven by a desire to deter other nuclear-armed countries from attacking Iran, not to aggress against Iran's adversaries.

Iranian support for a diplomatic solution to nuclear insecurity is stronger the more comprehensive the proposed agreement is. Two thirds of Iranians favored having a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East in 2023, almost as many who supported this proposal in 2006. The most recent time we asked about the July 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers, in March 2024, a plurality (47%) still approved of that deal even though President Trump withdrew and reimposed sanctions in 2018 and the accord does not address Israel's nuclear program. In October 2024, six of ten Iranians express support for a one possible confidence-building agreement between the United States and Iran in which Iran would accept stricter limits and greater transparency in its nuclear program, while the United States would allow Iran full access to proceeds of foreign oil sales.

As we were finishing analysis and writing of this report, President Trump returned to office, expressed his preference for a diplomatic resolution, and declared that Iran must reach a more comprehensive nuclear agreement with the United States in sixty days or suffer military consequences. If the United States were to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, over three quarters said in March 2024 that Iran should expand its nuclear activities (63%) or rebuild to current levels (17%). If Israel conducted the attack, most Iranians would hold the United States responsible, with six in ten saying that the United States either tells Israel what to do or has the final say when the two countries make important decisions together.

The United States and Iran appear to have reached a critical fork in the road. They must decide soon whether to conclude a deal that would substantiate international confidence that Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons while allowing it to have a strictly safeguarded civilian nuclear program, the approach embodied by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, or to expand the war in Gaza into another war across the Middle East. Although President Pezeshkian entered office with a clear mandate from voters to improve the economy and make life better for the people of Iran, he is also expected to protect Iran's nuclear program and retaliate against anyone who attacks Iranian territory or assets. The situation grows more dangerous with each day that passes.

Summary of Findings

1. The Summer 2024 Presidential Election (p. 9)

Asked who deserves credit for the country's stability during the lead-up to this election—which had to be organized and conducted quickly after President Raisi's passing—large majorities think the most credit goes to the people themselves and to Ayatollah Khamenei, followed by Iran's constitution.

A bare majority say they voted in the second round of the elections, and four in ten that they voted in the first round. One out of ten of all respondents voted in the second round but not the first.

Large majorities of Pezeshkian and Jalili voters both say they thought their candidate would be a good president; less than one in five say they voted mostly to block the opposing candidate.

Those who did not vote in the second round (over four in ten) most frequently mention a loss of hope or trust as the reason. A modest majority think Iran's election law should be changed, but fewer think so than before.

Almost half view the general desire for improvement in Iran's situation as the main message of the presidential election.

2. Economic Dissatisfaction (p. 13)

While seven in ten view Iran's economic situation as bad, those who call it *very* bad are no longer a majority. Three in five see the economy as getting worse, but this is fewer than before.

3. Evaluation of Restrictive Social Policies and System Stability (p. 14)

Opposition to some strict domestic policies is growing. Almost four in five oppose the government continuing limits and filters on social networks, and nearly two-thirds oppose this strongly. Over three in five believe that women who do not observe hijab correctly should *not* be confronted; those who think they should be confronted have dropped to one-third.

Only a third believe that in general, people in Iran feel comfortable voicing their political opinions, but only a quarter say people are generally afraid. The rest say people are somewhere in between.

A slim majority feel that most government officials do not care what people like them think. When asked about officials appointed by the new president Pezeshkian, however, slightly under half feel this way.

Despite these grievances, around three in four expect Iran's constitution and political system to be about the same in ten years, slightly more than in 2023. About one in seven have disagreed since 2023.

4. Expectations for President Pezeshkian (p. 18)

About two-thirds view the new president favorably; a clear majority are also favorable toward Araghchi, the foreign minister.

At the beginning of his term, seven in ten expressed confidence that Pezeshkian will be an honest and trustworthy president, though only a quarter were very confident of this. Three in five name economic issues as the single most important challenge for the country. Majorities express some confidence that Pezeshkian can improve relations with neighboring countries and protect the freedoms of citizens, notably women's rights. Majorities are not confident that he can lower inflation or improve relations with the West.

5. Relations with the United States (p. 22)

In October 2024, about half were following news about the upcoming U.S. election. There was no majority guess at the time as to whether Donald Trump or Kamala Harris would win, though earlier (in March, while President Biden was still the Democratic candidate) a clear majority had expected Trump's victory.

Asked before the U.S. election to rate Trump's probable policies toward Iran on a 0-to-10 scale, the median response was 0. Expectations if the Democratic candidate won were somewhat less negative; the median response in October for Harris was 4, while in March for Biden it was 3.

Seven in ten Iranians view the United States very unfavorably, a very slight drop from 2023. Only one in ten regard the United States as a model country; a quarter see it as no better or worse than any other country; and over three in five view it as dangerous, seeking confrontation and control. In some contexts, though, attitudes have been more nuanced. In 2023 only one in five blamed the United States specifically for the war in Ukraine, and only three in ten believed that the United States and NATO influenced Ukraine such that Russia had to act in self-defense.

6. General Foreign Policy Attitudes (p. 24)

As in the past, a majority say that common ground and peaceful coexistence are possible between the Islamic world and the West, while four in ten think conflict is inevitable. A majority continues to think that Iran needs a president who will refuse to compromise on Iran's rights, rather than one who will focus on negotiating. After years of economic hardship, a slight majority now prefers a strategy of trying to increase Iran's international trade over a strategy of self-sufficiency. As to whether to focus more on European or Asian trade and diplomatic relations, a slight plurality leans toward Europe.

7. The War in Gaza and Relations with Israel (p. 26)

Over four in five have some knowledge of the war in Gaza, and seven in ten think that all countries, including Iran, have a responsibility toward it. Large majorities perceive that Iran provides the Palestinians some aid of various types—political, military, financial and humanitarian—but only four in ten think Iran provides a lot. Fewer than four in ten think Iran should provide a lot, except for food and medicine. A majority feels sure that the

United States is the prime decision maker between itself and Israel; yet, between Iran and Hamas, a majority feels that ultimately Hamas makes its own decisions.

In March 2024, two-thirds said Iran should not recognize Israel; one quarter said it should, as a route to sanctions relief. Three in five think Iran should support a one-state solution that would include the right of return for Palestinian refugees. A fifth think Iran should support a two-state solution, with Israeli and Palestinian states; a tenth support a single state but with no right of return.

8. Attitudes toward Afghanistan, the Taliban, and Afghan Refugees in Iran (p. 32)

In March 2024, 6 in 10 had a negative view of Afghanistan, but only a third of Iranians held very unfavorable views toward the country as a whole.

Iranian attitudes toward the Taliban have been much more negative. Six months after the Taliban regained power in August 2022, nearly 9 in 10 Iranians held a very unfavorable view of them. While a majority opposed Iran working toward diplomatic relations with the Taliban government in March 2023, a third said they would support it. Majorities were also supportive of dialogue with the Taliban to resolve water disputes and address other issues. Almost two-thirds supported offering places in Iranian universities to Afghan women seeking to pursue their education.

Two in three express negative views about Iran's sizeable number of workers who are Afghan refugees, seeing them as taking jobs from Iranians, while one-third view them as simply doing undesirable jobs Iranians will not perform. At the same time, seven in ten support educating Afghan children in Iran's public school system.

Intermarriages between Iranians and Afghans are a related social issue, one in which Iranians' views are entangled with their views of gender. Majorities think there should be some governmental review before such marriages are permitted—but more would allow an Iranian man leeway than would allow it for an Iranian woman. Similarly, for Iranian birth certificates for the children of these unions, a majority would support these if the man in the couple were Iranian—but not if the woman in the couple were Iranian.

9. Regional Security (p. 36)

A quarter of Iranians now say that if they could change only one thing about Iran, they would make it more “safe and secure,” almost twice as many as prioritized security six months earlier. While a majority thinks that Iran should increase its role in the Middle East further, this is down from five years ago. The majority that disagrees with calls for the government to spend less money in places like Syria and Iraq was nearly identical in March 2024 as it had been in January 2018, before then-President Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and began his “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign. Attitudes toward Saudi Arabia have thawed somewhat, though a majority still is unfavorable toward it. Among non-state actors in the Middle East, majorities of Iranians were favorable toward Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis as of March 2024.

Support for Iran's missile program remains nearly unanimous, and a large and growing majority disagrees with calls to spend less money on developing missiles. A majority

still opposes Iran pursuing nuclear weapons, but the number of supporters has increased since the war in Gaza began. Seven in ten believe that violations of Iranian waters or airspace should be punished, rather than Iran attempting to avoid escalation, a somewhat more cautious stance than before.

10. Iran's Nuclear Program (p. 38)

For the first time since 2008, the Iranian public is divided about whether to develop both atomic bombs and nuclear power, or to develop nuclear power alone. Support for developing nuclear weapons rose slightly after the war in Gaza began, but in March 2024 a majority still rejected nuclear weapons. Those who prefer having both atomic weapons and nuclear energy rose again in October after Israel and Iran intensified their attacks on each other, such that there is now no majority against development of nuclear weapons.

Among those who favored an Iranian atomic bomb in March 2024, about two in three said they want nuclear weapons to deter threats from other countries, including those with nuclear arms. Most Iranians said then that the influence of the Gaza war either did not affect their nuclear views or made them more favorable toward the idea of developing a nuclear weapon. As in the past, two-thirds supported a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.

While a majority still said in 2023 that developing nuclear weapons is against Islam's teachings (without being reminded that this is the official position), this majority had eroded significantly since 2014. Awareness of Iran's membership in the Non-Proliferation Treaty is also much lower than in the past. After being reminded that Iran has made a legal commitment not to acquire nuclear weapons, only four in ten were willing in March 2024 to leave the NPT if their leaders decided Iran should develop nuclear weapons.

If Iran's leaders decided to make nuclear weapons, a large and growing majority said their country would succeed, even though about two-thirds expected that the United States and other countries would take actions to stop Iran, military and otherwise. If the United States were to conduct an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, four in five would want to rebuild them; three in five would also want to expand Iran's nuclear activities.

11. Negotiated Constraints on Iran's Nuclear Program (p. 44)

As of March 2024, more still approved than disapproved of the JCPOA, even though there had been no talks about the United States and Iran returning to full compliance for a year and a half. Acknowledgement of sanctions' negative impact, especially on ordinary people, was almost unanimous, but Iranians still attributed their country's economic problems more to internal mismanagement and corruption than to external sanctions. Three quarters thought that a full restoration of the JCPOA would help Iran's economy.

A growing majority in 2023 expected there would be no restoration of the JCPOA. A majority thought it best to let the Europeans seek some flexibility from the United States, rather than Iran showing more flexibility on its own side. Yet, seven in ten were upset to see the negotiations suspended by Western powers after the 2022 protests in Iran. If the negotiations were to end without agreement, Iranians felt they would allocate more blame to the P5+1, but less than one in five would give them the full blame. Three in ten would blame both sides equally.

By October 2024, the focus of diplomatic efforts had shifted from restoring full compliance with the JCPOA to negotiating more limited constraints on Iran's nuclear program in return for partial sanctions relief. Asked to consider hypothetical future agreements, a bare majority reject a possible confidence-building measure in which Iran would resume allowing the IAEA fuller access while the United States and Europe would let Iran recover its frozen money held in foreign countries. However, three in five would support a deal in which Iran would accept limitations and greater transparency in its nuclear program, and in return would gain the ability to sell its oil abroad with full access to the proceeds. A majority thinks such a deal between the United States and Iran is unlikely. If it came about, only a third think the United States would fulfill its side of the agreement.

12. International Trade and Views of China, Russia, Germany and Britain (p. 47)

In October 2024 for the first time, a majority preferred the goal of increased international trade over that of economic self-sufficiency. A slight plurality preferred to do more to increase trade with Western, rather than Eastern partners—a shift from their earlier preference for increasing trade with Asia.

A growing majority was negative toward Russia by March 2024, while a small majority was positive toward China. Choice of terms to describe Iran's relationship with China in 2023 were almost identical to those applied to Russia: slightly over 1 in 10 called both countries "allies," while about a third called them "friends," and 3 in 10 picked a neutral description. In 2023 a slight majority had an unfavorable view of Germany, and a large majority felt negatively about Britain.

Two years after Iran and China signed a 25-year trade agreement in 2021, over three in five thought this cooperation was in Iran's interest, while only three in ten were worried by China's recent expansion of ties with Saudi Arabia.

13. The War in Ukraine as of 2023 (p. 50)

In 2023, four in five would have preferred that Iran not get itself involved in the war in Ukraine, but the public was divided on arms sales to Russia, and there was no majority view about what Iran was in fact doing. A slim plurality thought selling drones to Russia was in Iran's national interest, while almost four in ten disagreed. A slight majority were willing to sell weapons to Russia, at least under some conditions. Offered a hypothetical bargain in which Iran would stop selling Russian weapons in exchange for partial relaxation of sanctions on oil sales, a slim plurality approved.

Fewer than one in ten blamed Ukraine itself for the war. About a third blamed Russia, while a third blamed the United States, Western countries, or Europe. A quarter appeared unsure—more than in 2022. Favorability toward Ukraine had dropped to four in ten, while favorability toward Russia was slightly lower than toward Ukraine. A majority remained unreceptive to the Russian argument that Russia was acting in self-defense against U.S. and NATO influence in Ukraine.

1. The Summer 2024 Presidential Election

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A bare majority say they voted in the second round of the elections, and four in ten that they voted in the first round. One out of ten of all respondents voted in the second round but not the first.

Large majorities of Pezeshkian and Jalili voters both say they thought their candidate would be a good president; less than one in five say they voted mostly to block the opposing candidate.

Those who did not vote in the second round (over four in ten) most frequently mention a loss of hope or trust as the reason. A modest majority think Iran's election law should be changed, but fewer think so than before.

Almost half view the general desire for improvement in Iran's situation as the main message of the presidential election.

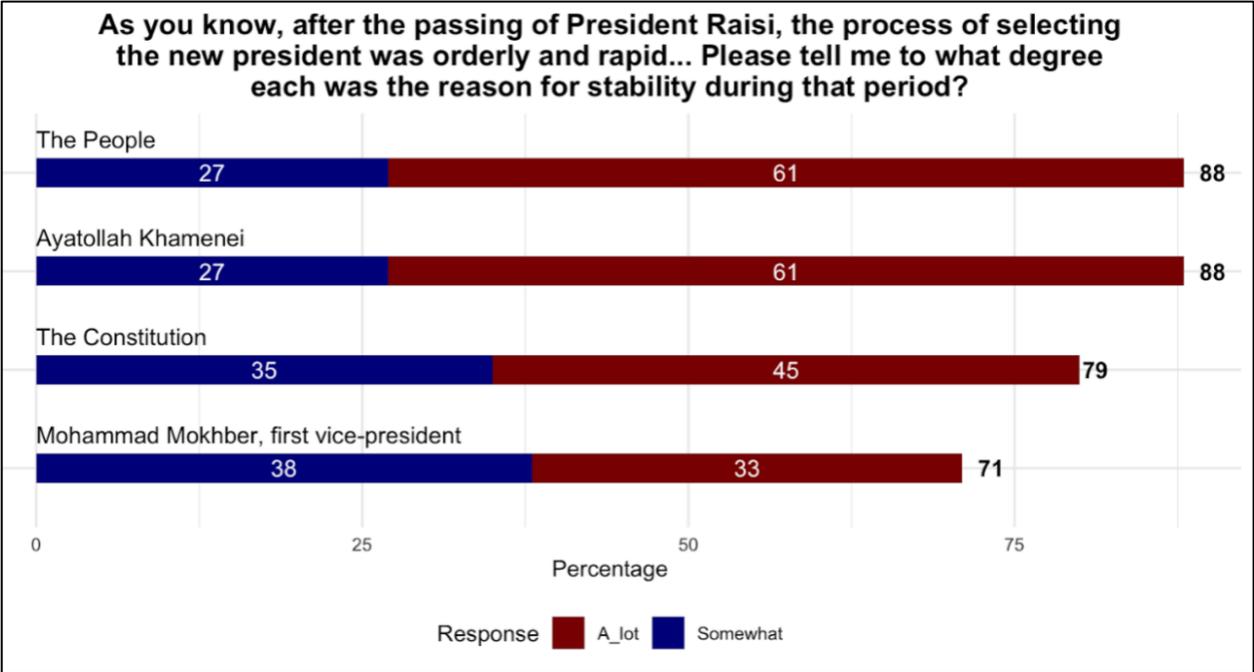
After President Raisi's death in a helicopter crash on May 19, 2024, a new election for president was rapidly organized. Mahmoud Pezeshkian, a long-time member of parliament and the health minister under President Khatami in the early 2000s, emerged from the first round on June 28 with 44% of the votes. Widely viewed as a reformist, at age 69 he is part of the generation that fought in the Iran-Iraq War. In the second round on July 5 he won a 55% majority, beating Saeed Jalili, the conservative candidate.

For Iran as well as other countries of the region, a calm transition after the sudden death of a leader is not necessarily a given, and so respondents were asked about the execution of this transition in 2024:

As you know, after the passing of President Raisi, the process of selecting a new president was orderly and rapid. Despite Iran's other problems, dealing with the passing of President Raisi did not add to them, and the country as a whole was stable. I will read you the names of some officials and institutions. Please tell me to what degree you think each was the reason for the stability of the country during that period.

They were then asked to give or withhold credit to four factors in succession: Ayatollah Khamenei; the first Vice President of Mr. Raisi, Mohammad Mokhber, who was acting president during the transition; the constitution; and the people.

About equal numbers give the most credit to the people themselves and to Ayatollah Khamenei. Eighty-eight percent say the people deserved credit (a lot, 61%). At the same level, 88% allot credit to the Supreme Leader (a lot, 61%). Seventy-nine percent credit the constitution (a lot, 45%), and 71% credit the first Vice President Mokhber (a lot, 33%).



Voter Participation

Respondents were asked in separate questions whether they voted in the first round and in the second round of the presidential election (on June 28 and July 5, respectively). For the first round, 42% said they voted and 57% said they did not. For the second round, 51% said they voted and 45% said they did not.

The official figure for turnout in the first round is 39.93%, and for the second round it is 49.68%. The variation between the survey results and the official figures is two points for the first round and one point for the second round, with the survey’s numbers slightly higher in each case. In similar polling in various countries, it is normal for the survey figure to be slightly higher than the official count because of the social desirability of voting. In Iran’s case, the survey numbers show that respondents who abstained from voting have little or no fear of saying so to an interviewer.

About one in five respondents who said that they did not vote in the first round indicated that they did vote in the second round. Comparing first round voters with non-voters shows that those who turned out for the first round of the presidential election were significantly older and more politically conservative than non-voters, similar to distinctions between voters and non-voters in the parliamentary election a few months earlier.² Such differences were much smaller in the second round, indicating increased participation rates among younger, less politically conservative Iranians. In the first round, there was a 17-point participation gap between youngest and oldest Iranians, which shrunk to 7 points in the second round.

² See our June 2024 report, “The Raisi Period: Iranian Public Attitudes on Domestic Issues,” pp. 31-32.

Age	Parliamentary election	Presidential Round One	Presidential Round Two
Under 25	28%	31%	47%
25-34	34%	38%	49%
35-44	48%	44%	49%
44-54	48%	44%	55%
Over 55	54%	48%	54%

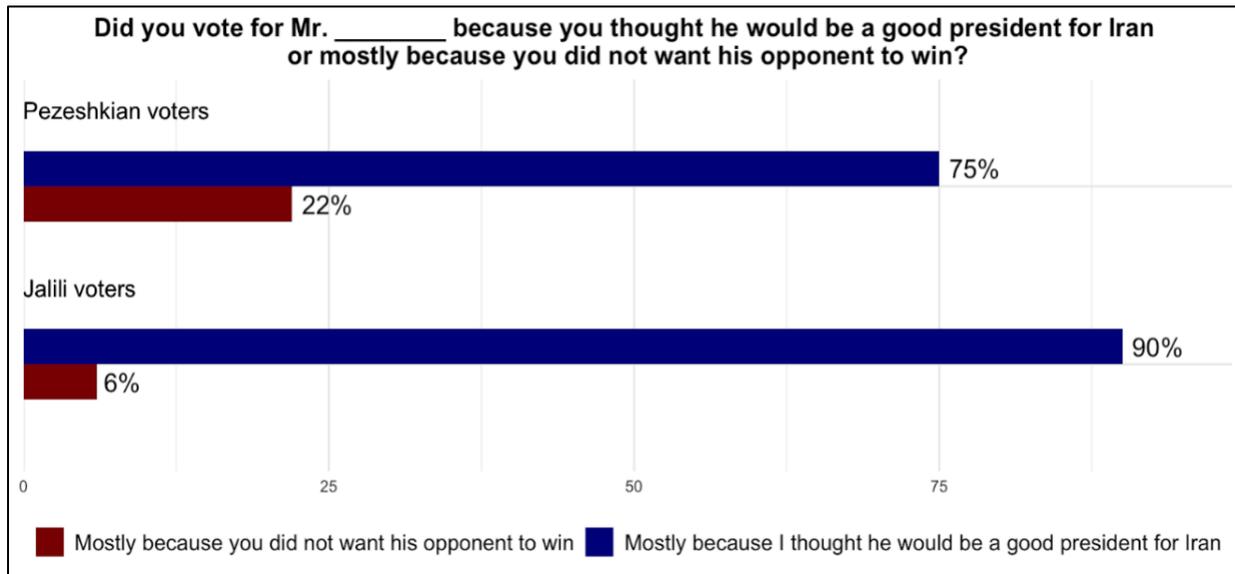
Voters in the parliamentary election saw government officials in a starkly more positive light than non-voters did, but this difference was smaller in both rounds of voting for president. Sixty-six percent of voters in the parliamentary election round said that most governmental officials care what “people like me” thought, compared with only 12% of nonvoters, a 54-point gap. During the two presidential rounds of voting, there was only a 24-point gap between voters and non-voters who said government officials cared about people like them. The same pattern holds when comparing the percentage of voters and non-voters who said that government officials do not care. In the parliamentary election, 77% of non-voters and only 25% of voters expressed that opinion (a 52-point gap). In the two presidential elections, this gap was 30 points in the first round and 26 points in the second round. Both self-reported and official turnout rates were very similar for the parliamentary election and the first presidential round, which suggests that some Iranians who say their government is responsive were more motivated to vote for local representatives than they were to participate in the first round of presidential voting, while more Iranians who are generally skeptical nevertheless turned out to help choose the president than did so for their local representatives. Those expressing both positive and skeptical views turned out in larger numbers for the second-round contest between Pezeshkian and Jalili.

There is also less of a gap between voters and non-voters on a hot-button social issue – wearing hijab -- in the second round of the presidential election compared with the lower turn-out elections. In the parliamentary election, 66% of voters said that women without correct hijab should be confronted, while only a quarter (23%) of non-voters agree. In the first round of presidential voting 49% of voters and 23% of non-voters picked the most conservative option. In the second round, only 43% of voters said that women who don’t wear proper hijab should be confronted (see section 3 for more on attitudes regarding hijab).

Large majorities of Pezeshkian and Jalili voters both say they thought their candidate would be a good president; less than one in five say they voted mostly to block the opposing candidate. Those reporting they voted in the second round were asked which candidate they chose. Fifty-five percent said they voted for Pezeshkian and 42% that they voted for Jalili. Three percent either declined to say, or said they cast a blank ballot (0.8%). Comparing this with election results, the survey’s number of Pezeshkian voters is extremely close to the official tally of 54.76%.

Only about one in five voters say they were primarily voting against the candidate they did not want; by far the greatest number feel they were casting an affirmative vote. Among Pezeshkian voters, three in four (75%) say they voted for him mostly because they thought “he would be a good president for Iran”; only 22% voted for him because they “did not want his opponent to

win.” Among Jalili voters, 90% voted for him because they thought he would be a good president, and only 6% voted for Jalili in hopes of keeping Pezeshkian out.



The percentage of affirmative Pezeshkian voters is slightly higher than the percentage who said in 2017 that they had voted to re-elect President Rouhani because they liked him, not to keep Ebrahimi Raisi from being elected then (72%). The percentage of affirmative Jalili voters is significantly higher, though, than the percentage of Raisi voters who were enthusiastic about him in 2017 (63%) compared with 32% who sought to deny Rouhani a second term.

Those who did not vote in the second round (48%) most frequently mention a loss of hope or trust as the reason. Some blame this feeling explicitly on the political class: they did not regard any of the candidates to be competent (10% of the full sample); they lack trust in Iran’s politicians and officials (5%); or that politicians do not keep promises (3%). For others the feeling was more general: 9% mention dissatisfaction with the economy and 5% say they had lost hope for any improvement. For about 4%, the distrust is systemic: 3% say the elections were not real or that they simply opposed the Islamic Republic, and 1% that the office of the presidency lacks power in any case. Finally, 10% mentioned personal reasons or a lack of interest in politics.

A modest majority think Iran’s electoral system should be changed, fewer than before. Fifty-four percent want change in “Iran’s election law and the process by which authorities are elected in Iran.” This is down from 58% in October 2021, shortly after Raisi won the presidency against a set of opponents that had been limited more sharply than usual by the Guardian Council. Perhaps more striking, those who do not want the rules to change have risen ten points, from 31% in 2021 to 41%. In 2021, 11% said they did not know; this is now only 4%. This suggests that the experience of the 2024 election may have slightly buttressed public confidence in Iran’s election rules.

The meaning of the election outcome

Respondents were asked to say in their own words, “Regardless of how you feel about Pezeshkian and his election as Iran’s next president, please tell me what you think is the main message and meaning of Pezeshkian’s election?” Almost half (45%) say in various ways that the election outcome signifies desires for change. General hope for improvement in the country’s situation was mentioned most frequently (17%), followed by hope for a better economic situation (13%), hope for better relations with the world (5%), and a need for peace and security (2%). About ten percent desired political and social change (wanting change, 4%; desire for more social freedoms, 3%; dissatisfied with Iran’s political situation, 3%).

Beyond this group, 12% feel the election itself was in a sense the message, that the process showed national unity (10%) and that elections in Iran are real (2%). A different 12% voice positive impressions of Pezeshkian: that he will try to serve the people (6%), to keep promises and to be truthful (6%). More negatively, 11% see the election as a reaction against Jalili (9%) or the Principalists political group (3%). Finally, 4% express disgruntled reactions, saying that the system wanted Pezeshkian to win, or mentioning his various negative characteristics.

2. Economic Dissatisfaction

While seven in ten view Iran’s economic situation as bad, those who call it very bad are no longer a majority. Three in five see the economy as getting worse, but this is fewer than before.

When asked “How good or bad is our country’s economic situation?” seven in ten (69%) viewed it as bad, and 45% called it very bad, while only 31% called it good and only 6% called it very good. These numbers show less pessimism compared to the Raisi period, when 52-53% consistently called the economy very bad. Currently, a greater number feel the economy is only “somewhat bad” (25%) than at any time since 2019.^f

Asked “Right now, do you think economic conditions in Iran, as a whole, are getting better or getting worse?”, the majority saying “getting worse” has declined to 62%, which is the lowest since 2019. Thirty percent said the economy is getting better, the most since President Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal with Iran in 2018 and reimposed sanctions.

To see how political views might relate to economic perceptions, we examined those who said they voted in the second round of the recent presidential election. Those who voted were 9 points less negative than the whole sample, with 60% calling the economy bad. However, those who voted for the winner, Pezeshkian, were somewhat more negative (63%) and hence more like Iranians in general, while Jalili voters were less negative at 55%. (Levels of education or settlement size showed no differences.)

3. Evaluation of Restrictive Social Policies and System Stability

Opposition to some strict domestic policies is growing. Almost four in five oppose the government continuing limits and filters on social networks, and nearly two-thirds oppose this strongly. Over three in five believe that women who do not observe hijab correctly should *not* be confronted; those who think they should be confronted have dropped to one-third.

Only a third believe that in general, people in Iran feel comfortable voicing their political opinions, but only a quarter say people are generally afraid. The rest say people are somewhere in between.

A slim majority feel that most government officials do not care what people like them think. When asked about officials appointed by the new president Pezeshkian, however, slightly under half feel this way.

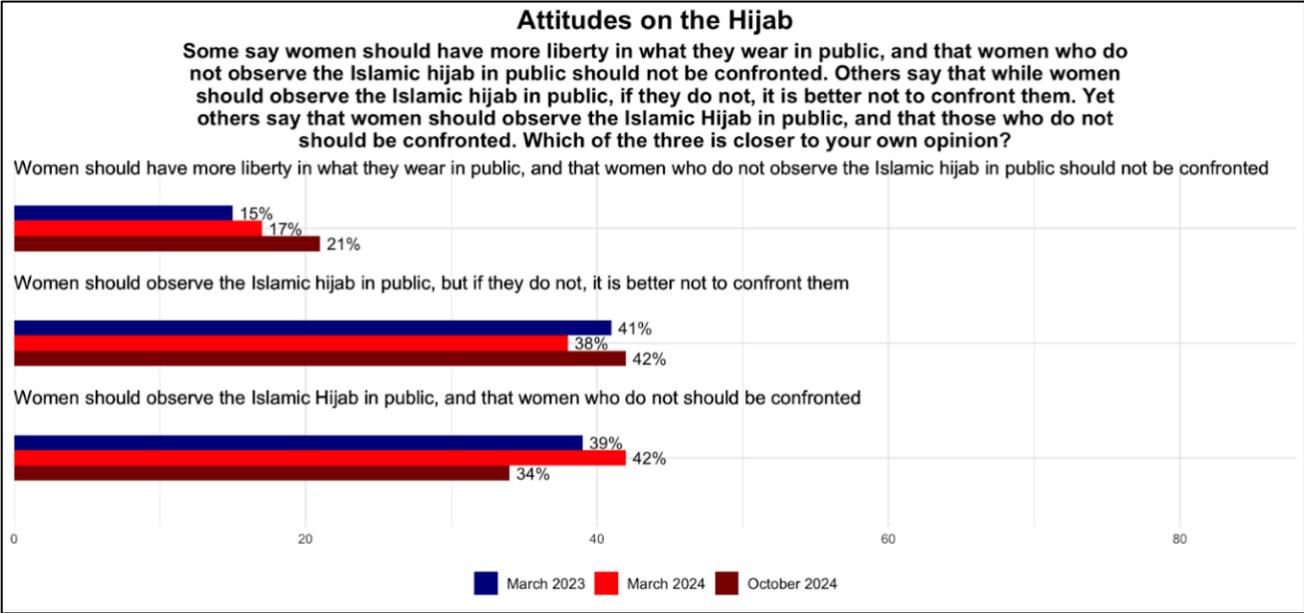
Despite these grievances, around three in four expect Iran’s constitution and political system to be about the same in ten years, slightly more than in 2023. About one in seven have disagreed since 2023.

Asked about “the continuation of the limits and filters that the government has imposed on messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram and social networks such as Instagram,” 78% were opposed, 65% strongly. Only 13% were in favor. Overall opposition has been stable since we first asked this question in 2023, but those who feel strongly opposed have grown by five points.

Support has also diminished for another restrictive measure: the policing of how women wear hijab. Respondents were offered three views and asked which was closest to their own:

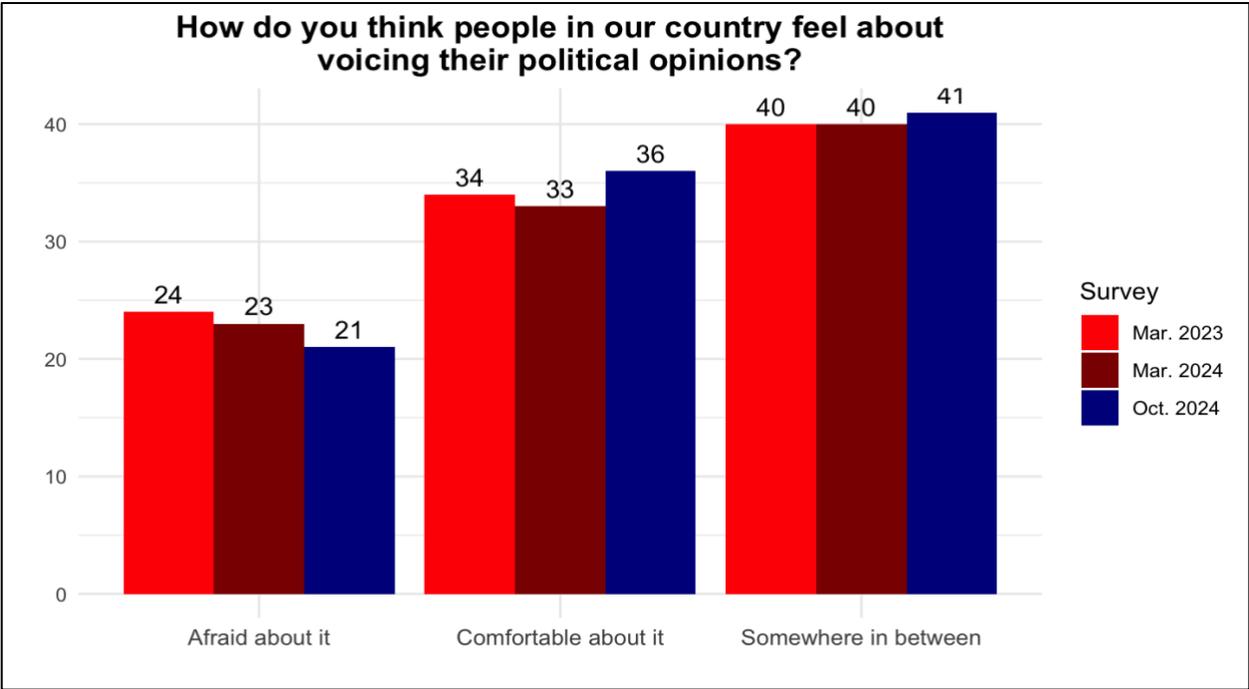
- Women should have more liberty in what they wear in public, and that women who do not observe the Islamic Hijab in public should not be confronted
- Women should observe the Islamic Hijab in public, but if they do not, it is better not to confront them
- Women should observe the Islamic Hijab in public, and that women who do not should be confronted

The most common answer is the second, that women should observe hijab but that it is better not to confront those who do not. Forty-two percent choose this position. Another 21% say that women should have more liberty in what they wear in public (up 5 points since 2023). Taken together, a total of 63% say women should not be confronted over this issue. A third (34%) say they should be confronted, down 8 points since March 2024.



Perceived Willingness to Express Sensitive Opinions

Respondents were asked in October 2024: “How do you think people in our country feel about voicing their political opinions? Do you think that generally, they feel afraid about it, comfortable about it, or somewhere in between?” Thirty-six percent say Iranians feel comfortable about this, while 21% said they are afraid to do so. Forty-one percent say people are “somewhere in between.” Numbers for the mixed response have been stable since we first asked this question in 2023, while those who pick “comfortable” has risen a bit and “afraid” has gone down.



Another way to read this finding is as overlapping majorities: while 77% currently say that Iranians are not highly afraid, 62% believe Iranians are less than fully comfortable in voicing their opinions.

There were notable differences between Pezeshkian voters and Jalili voters on this question. Among Pezeshkian voters 37% thought Iranians are comfortable voicing their opinion, while among Jalili voters this was a majority of 54%. Eighteen percent of Pezeshkian voters thought people are afraid to voice their opinions, but only 5% of Jalili voters believed this. For the response “somewhere in between” there was no statistical difference between the groups (Pezeshkian voters 43%, Jalili voters 40%).

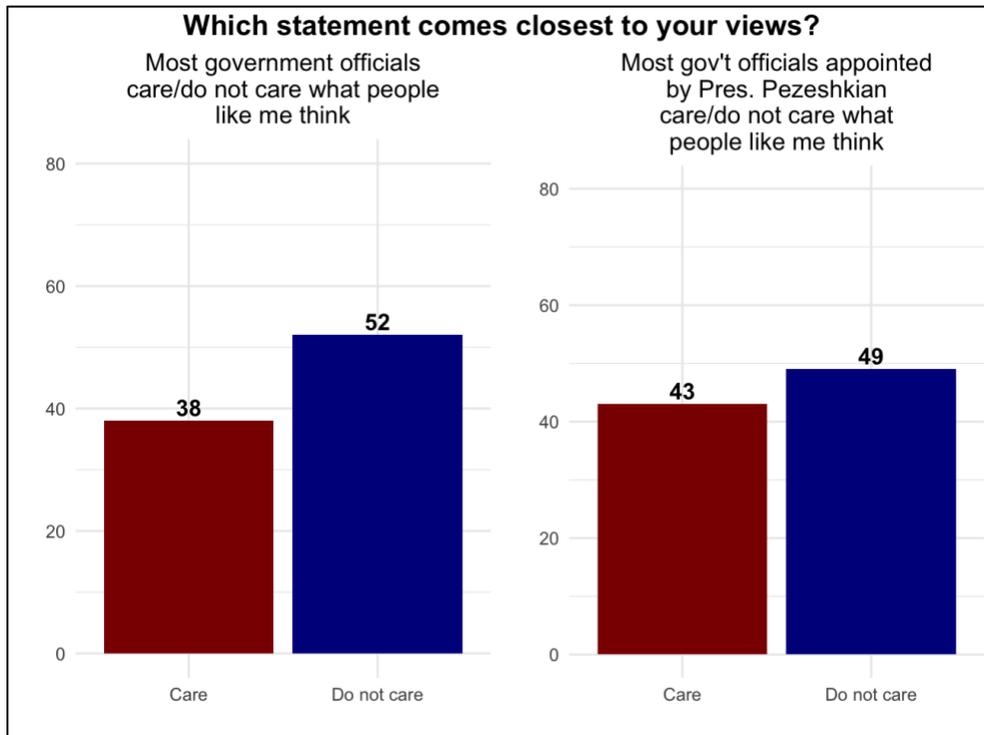
Previous analysis of data from March 2023 found that answers to this question were a more powerful predictor of negative attitudes toward the current Iranian regime than age, media preferences, and other factors tested.³ The subgroup which said that Iranians were generally comfortable voicing their political opinions expressed views that aligned with what regime leaders would want to hear. By contrast, the subgroup which said Iranians were generally afraid to voice political opinions was more negative about specific politicians; more likely to say they would leave Iran permanently, given the opportunity; more likely to say women are not treated with respect in Iran; and more likely to view the 2022-23 protests as mostly peaceful.

Trust in government officials

In October 2024, we asked a half-sample of Iranians a long-standing question about trust in government that has been asked in many countries: “Which statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right. Most government officials care what people like me think—or, most government officials do not care what people like me think?” A slim majority, 52%, feel that most government officials do not care what people like them think; 38% feel they do care. These responses have changed little over the years, but in 2016 a slightly lower 48% felt most officials did not care what they thought.

To learn whether the new president’s appointees might receive some benefit of the doubt, the other half-sample was asked the question differently: instead of “most government officials”, they heard “most government officials appointed by President Pezeshkian.” Asked this way, those responding positively are five points higher (43% instead of 38%). Those responding negatively are three points lower (49% instead of 52%). While the public does offer some benefit of the doubt for the new president’s team, this factor is slight.

³ See our June 2024 report, “The Raisi Period: Iranian Public Attitudes on Domestic Issues,” pp. 35-39.



Forms of this question have been asked worldwide for many years. In 2023, Pew asked about “elected officials” in 24 countries (not including Iran) which offers some comparisons to Iran’s 38% who answer positively in our survey. In India, 41% answered positively; in Indonesia, 37%; in Israel, 33%. In Europe and North America, positive responses tend either to be similar to those just cited (Netherlands 36%, Germany 35%, Canada 34%), or much lower (Italy 22%, United States 15%).⁴

Assumptions About the Future of Iran’s Political System

Despite growing dissatisfaction with specific restrictive social policies and declining trust in government officials, relatively few Iranians anticipate fundamental political changes happening soon. Up to one in six, depending on how they are asked, expect the system will undergo significant changes within ten years. In October 2024, respondents were asked:

Some say in the next 10 years, Iran’s constitution and system of government will probably significantly change, while others think in the next 10 years Iran’s constitution and system of government will probably be similar to how things are today. What do you think?

Thirteen percent say they expect significant change, while three in four (76%) expect things to be similar to today. Eleven percent declined to answer—somewhat higher than for most questions on the survey. (There is no statistical difference from 2023 or March 2024 on this question.) As in 2023, the small subset (21%) of respondents who say that Iranians are generally afraid to voice their true political opinions is twice as likely as the whole sample to predict significant change in

⁴ For the 24 countries that were asked this question in 2023, see <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/02/28/views-about-political-representation/>

the next decade (29% versus 13%), and three times as likely to say that than the much larger subsets who answered that most Iranians are comfortable expressing their political opinions (7%) or are somewhere in between (10%).

Because asking about the prospects for regime change can be viewed as politically sensitive, the March 2024 survey also asked about it indirectly, through a list experiment. In this mode, the sample is divided in two. Both halves are read a list of statements and asked what *number* of them they believe, as follows:

Now I will read to you some statements that some people believe, and others do not. After I finish reading all of them, please tell me, how many of them do you believe? Please just tell me how many of them you believe, and not which ones.

One half's list includes the politically sensitive statement; the other's list does not. By comparing the distribution of numbers cited by respondents, one can calculate the percentage of people who believe the politically sensitive statement without them having to say so.

Asked this way, 17% indicated that they think "Iran's constitution and system of government will significantly change in less than ten years," 4 points higher than when asked directly. When the same list experiment was conducted in 2023, 22% indicated that they thought "Iran's constitution and system of government will significantly change in less than ten years," 7 points higher than when asked directly (14%). This demonstrates that there is a small 'fear factor' in responding to questions about fundamental political change.

Priorities for Change

In recent surveys, we have started asking Iranians "if you could change one thing about Iran, what would that be?" Making Iran "more economically prosperous" has consistently topped the list; 48% currently choose this option. For the first time, making Iran "more safe and secure" is second on the list; 25% pick this option, up from 14% in March 2024 and 17% in March 2023. "More stable and orderly" is currently chosen by 18%, about the same as before. The biggest drop is in "more democratic and free," down from 13% in the aftermath of the political protests that arose across Iran in Fall 2022 to 6% after Pezeshkian took office.

4. Expectations for President Pezeshkian

About two-thirds view the new president favorably; a clear majority are also favorable toward Araghchi, the foreign minister.

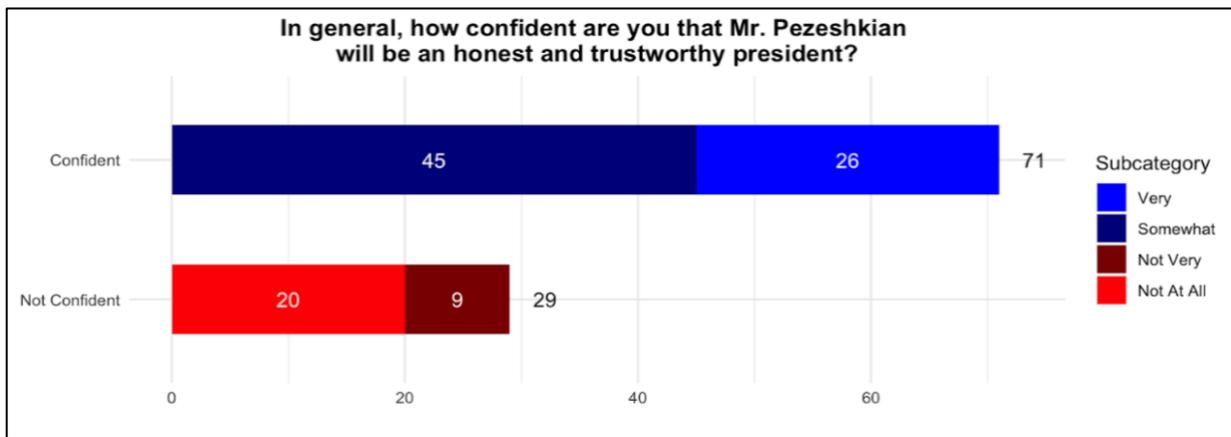
At the beginning of his term, seven in ten expressed confidence that Pezeshkian will be an honest and trustworthy president, though only a quarter were very confident of this. Three in five name economic issues as the single most important challenge for the country. Majorities express some confidence that Pezeshkian can improve relations with neighboring countries and protect the freedoms of citizens, notably women's rights. Majorities are not confident that he can lower inflation or improve relations with the West.

Pezeshkian begins his term with a respectable level of public support for somebody who was not a well-known national political figure before the unusually short campaign season started. Sixty-

nine percent have a favorable view of him; 31% are very favorable. While 29% view him unfavorably, only 8% are very unfavorable. Pezeshkian’s foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi—best known in the West as one of Iran’s negotiators in the P5+1 talks that produced the 2015 nuclear deal—is also viewed favorably by a majority (57%, 22% very favorable).

High favorability levels have been common in the past for newly elected presidents. In July 2014, President Rouhani was viewed favorably by a very large majority (85%, very 51%). President Raisi’s favorability in September 2021 was only slightly lower (78%, very 45%).

Pezeshkian ran and won his presidential race by presenting an image of honesty, reliability and fairness, and so it was appropriate to ask respondents: “How confident are you that Mr. Pezeshkian will be an honest and trustworthy President?” Pezeshkian began his term with 71% expressing at least some confidence, but just 26% having a lot of confidence.



Fifty-one percent of respondents said they voted in the second round of the presidential election. About four in five of this group (41% of the full sample) expressed confidence that Pezeshkian will be trustworthy. Of the 45% who did not vote, about three in five (27% of the full sample) expressed confidence. Almost all Pezeshkian voters express confidence (52% of the full sample, out of 55%), and over half of these (27%) felt very confident. Three in five Jalili voters also express confidence in Pezeshkian’s trustworthiness (26% of the full sample, out of 42%), but a much smaller proportion are very confident (7%, about one in six).

Any new president of Iran faces formidable tasks, and so all respondents were asked:

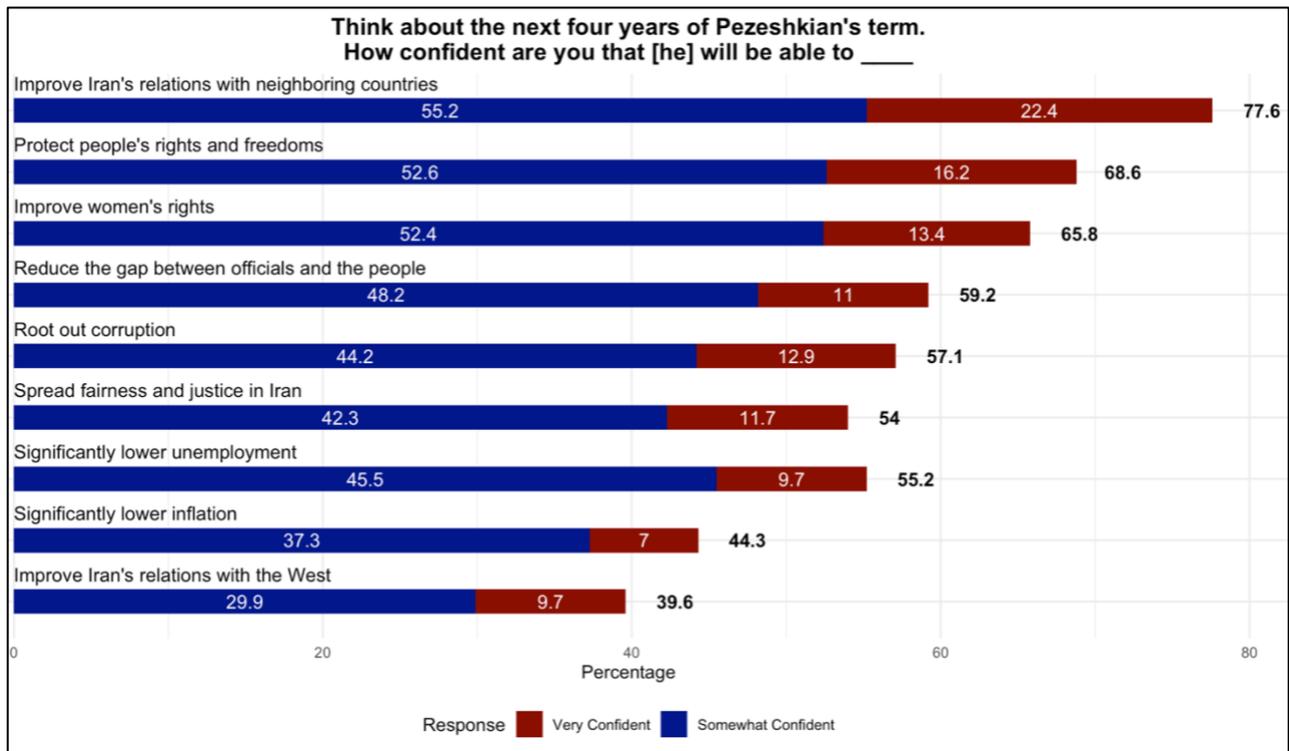
Regardless of what you think about the recent presidential election, what do you think is the single most important issue and challenge that our country faces that President Pezeshkian should try to address?

Respondents answered in their own words. Three in five (62%) named economic issues of various kinds: inflation (23%); poverty (15%); unemployment (9%); problems with the housing sector (4%); or the economy in general (11%). Another 18% brought up issues of poor administration. Ten percent cited mismanagement in the country; 6% spoke of economic and administrative corruption, and 2% of incompetent officials. These two areas—the economy and poor administration—accounted for 80% of the responses.

Beyond this, 9% mentioned Iran’s place in the world, naming either sanctions (4%) or Iran’s foreign relations in general (5%). Finally, 4% brought up social and cultural problems (3%) or discrimination and injustice (1%).

To understand in detail what degree of confidence Iranians feel in their newly elected president, respondents were asked about nine different areas (for space reasons, each area was heard by a half sample). First, they heard:

Think about the next four years of Pezeshkian’s term. How confident are you that Pezeshkian will be able to do each of the following things that I will read to you? For each one, please say whether you are very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident or not at all confident that he can do it.



For all but two areas, majorities express confidence; however, those saying they are “very confident” range only from 7 to 22%. Respondents are most confident that Pezeshkian could “improve Iran’s relations with neighboring countries”; four in five (77%) are confident of this (very, 22%).

Seven in ten (69%) were confident Pezeshkian can “protect people’s rights and freedoms” (very, 16%), and two-thirds (66%) express confidence that he can “improve women’s rights” (very, 13%). This cautious yet widespread confidence is interesting, given the new president’s early actions (along with others) in blocking the implementation of the stringent new law on wearing hijab that the Majlis passed in Fall 2023.

Fifty-nine percent express confidence that Pezeshkian can “reduce the gap between officials and the people” (very, 11%). This is an issue Pezeshkian ran on and that resonates with many (as we saw in the question on challenges, discussed just above). Closely related to this, 57% have confidence that he can “root out corruption” (very, 13%). Fifty-four percent are confident that he can “spread fairness and justice in Iran” (very, 12%), another promise that Pezeshkian ran on effectively.

Iranians express less confidence that Pezeshkian can solve Iran’s economic problems. Fifty-five percent are confident he can “significantly lower unemployment” (very, 10%) and only 44% are confident that he can “significantly lower inflation” (very, 7%). In the past, when these questions were asked about President Raisi, the public expressed a similar lower confidence level where action on the economy was concerned.

Iranians’ lowest expectations are for Pezeshkian “improv[ing] Iran’s relations with the West.” Only 40% are confident (very, 10%). This suggests that if relations with the West remain as they are, the political risks for Pezeshkian are far less than if things worsen in other areas—such as relations with neighboring countries, or women’s rights and personal rights at home—where public expectations are higher.

The table below shows how confidence in a president’s ability to make progress on issues has evolved from the beginning of Raisi’s term to just before its end, and then to the start of Pezeshkian’s term. The issues are shown in descending order of *confidence in Pezeshkian*. On issues of particular importance to reformists—protecting people’s rights and freedoms and improving relations with the West—Pezeshkian begins with a new fund of trust. On economic issues, confidence in Pezeshkian begins essentially where confidence in Raisi left off.

To...	Confidence in Raisi, Sept. 2021	Confidence in Raisi, Mar. 2024	Confidence in Pezeshkian, Oct. 2024
Improve relations with neighboring countries	77%	73%	77%
Protect people’s rights and freedoms	64%	58%	69%
Root out corruption	74%	54%	57%
Significantly lower unemployment	67%	53%	55%
Significantly lower inflation	73%	43%	44%
Improve relations with the West	39%	29%	40%

Low confidence in Pezeshkian's ability to solve some of Iran's most enduring problems may indicate that Iranians are realistic, but not completely pessimistic, about what a new president can do and what is beyond their control. In 2014, 48% had confidence in Rouhani's ability to negotiate a nuclear deal with the United States and other major powers. By 2021, only 40% had confidence that Raisi could do anything to improve Iran's relations with the West, a number that dropped to 29% by March 2024. Iranians initially had high confidence in Raisi's ability to significantly lower inflation (73%) and unemployment (67%), but by March 2024, their confidence in Raisi's economic prowess matched their expectations for Pezeshkian six months later. Confidence that Raisi could root out corruption, one of his signature campaign issues, also started very high (74%), then dropped 20 points by the end of his time in office.

5. Relations with the United States

In October 2024, about half were following news about the upcoming U.S. election. There was no majority guess at the time as to whether Donald Trump or Kamala Harris would win, though earlier (in March, while President Biden was still the Democratic candidate) a clear majority had expected Trump's victory.

Asked before the U.S. election to rate Trump's probable policies toward Iran on a 0-to-10 scale, the median response was 0. Expectations if the Democratic candidate won were somewhat less negative; the median response in October for Harris was 4, while in March for Biden it was 3.

Seven in ten Iranians view the United States very unfavorably, a very slight drop from 2023. Only one in ten regard the United States as a model country; a quarter see it as no better or worse than any other country; and over three in five view it as dangerous, seeking confrontation and control. In some contexts, though, attitudes have been more nuanced. In 2023 only one in five blamed the United States specifically for the war in Ukraine, and only three in ten believed that the United States and NATO influenced Ukraine such that Russia had to act in self-defense.

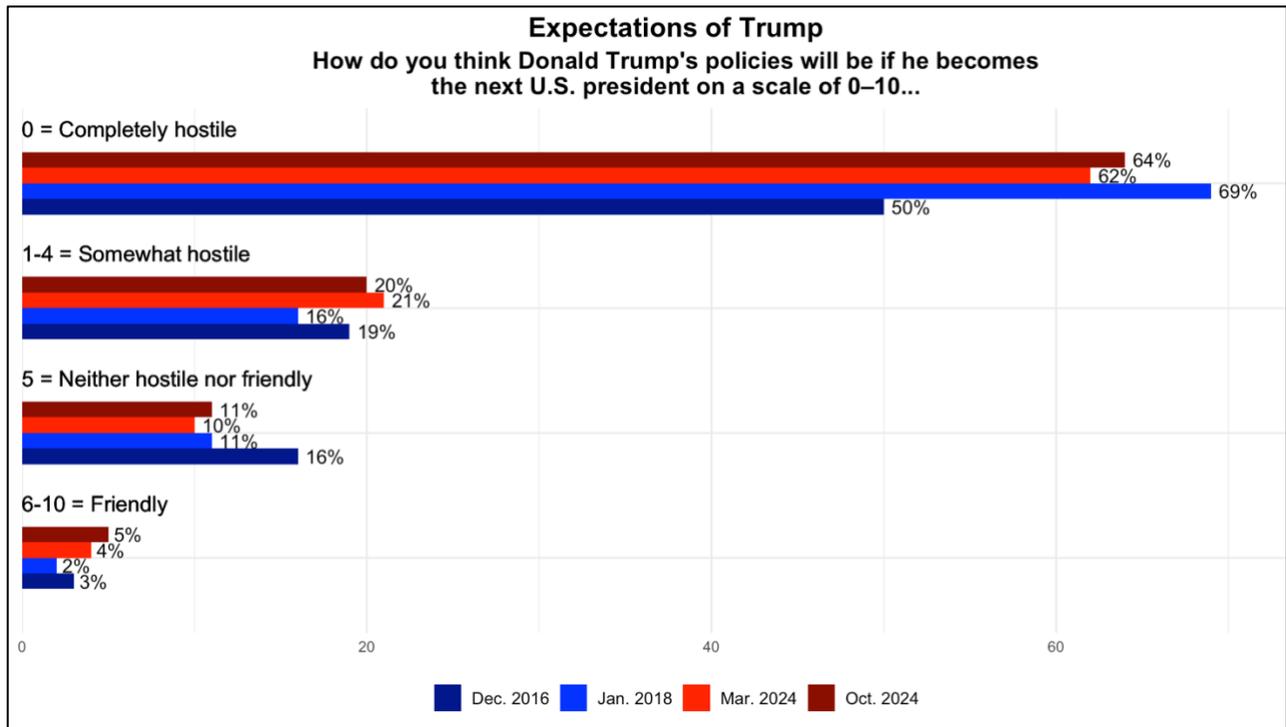
In October 2024, 50% were following US election news, but only 10% were following closely. Seven months earlier, only 42% were paying attention. When the race was between Biden and Trump, 58% thought Trump more likely to win (Biden, 21%). The change in Democratic candidates shifted expectations. In October there was no majority guess among Iranians, with 45% expecting Trump and 41% expecting Harris to win.

The Iranian public expects President Trump's policies toward Iran to be hostile in nature. Respondents were asked in October 2024:

How do you think Donald Trump's policies toward Iran will be if he becomes the next US President on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means completely hostile, 5 means neither hostile nor friendly, and 10 means completely friendly?

Sixty-four percent responded "zero", which means that the median was also zero (average: 1.22). Four percent gave an answer above 5. Iranians have given Trump's policies a median

score of 0 each of the five times they have been asked since 2016.⁵ Before he took office the first time, only half thought he would be completely hostile.



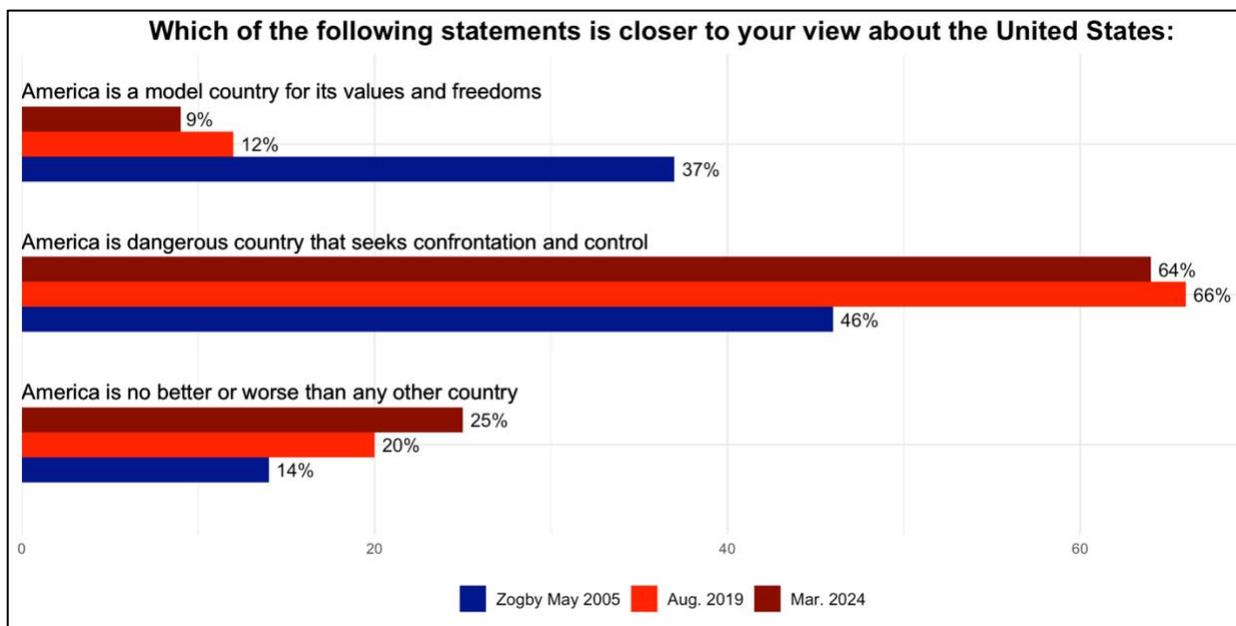
Harris was perceived as distinctly less hostile than Trump. Asked the same question about policies toward Iran, the median response about Harris was 4 (average: 3.53), and 19% gave an answer above 5. When asked the same question in March regarding Biden’s policies, Iranians gave a median response of 3 (mean: 2.94), just as they had on two occasions in 2021.

Attitudes toward the United States

Unfavorable views of the United States remained at 86% when Iranians were asked in March 2024 (very, 72%). Unfavorable views have long been high, but did not reach the mid-80s until 2019, after the Trump administration withdrew the United States from the JCPOA. Since that time these levels have been very stable. Those who are *somewhat* unfavorable have gone from 9 to 14% since 2023—perhaps a sign of moderating views.

A majority views the United States as dangerous to Iran, but there is an interesting evolution in a question first asked in Iran by Zogby in 2005. It offers three views of the United States and asks respondents which is closest to their view. In March 2024, almost two-thirds (64%) chose the statement that “America is a dangerous country that seeks confrontation and control.” Nine percent picked the opposite statement, “America is a model country for its values and freedoms.” A quarter (25%) preferred the third statement, “America is no better or worse than any other country.”

⁵ In January 2018 and February 2021, the question asked, “How would you rate American President Donald Trump’s policies toward Iran...”



The perception of America as a dangerous country grew from 46% in 2005 to 66% in 2019 but has not grown further and is now at 64%. In 2005 those seeing America as a model country were much more numerous than today, at 37%. In 2019 they were down to 12% and now rest at 9%. Those viewing America as just another country has consistently grown, from 14% in 2005, to 20% in 2019, to 25% in March 2024.

Iranians do not believe anything and everything negative said about the United States, as the case of the war in Ukraine has shown (for more on that topic, see section 13 below). Asked in 2023 to say in their own words who is to blame for the war in Ukraine, only one in five (22%) said the United States. Only 30% agreed with the Russian government’s argument that “The United States and NATO have been increasing their influence over Ukraine in ways that endanger Russia’s security in the long run. Iran should view Russia’s military action as a form of self-defense.” A majority (53%) preferred the counterargument that no country should invade and occupy another.

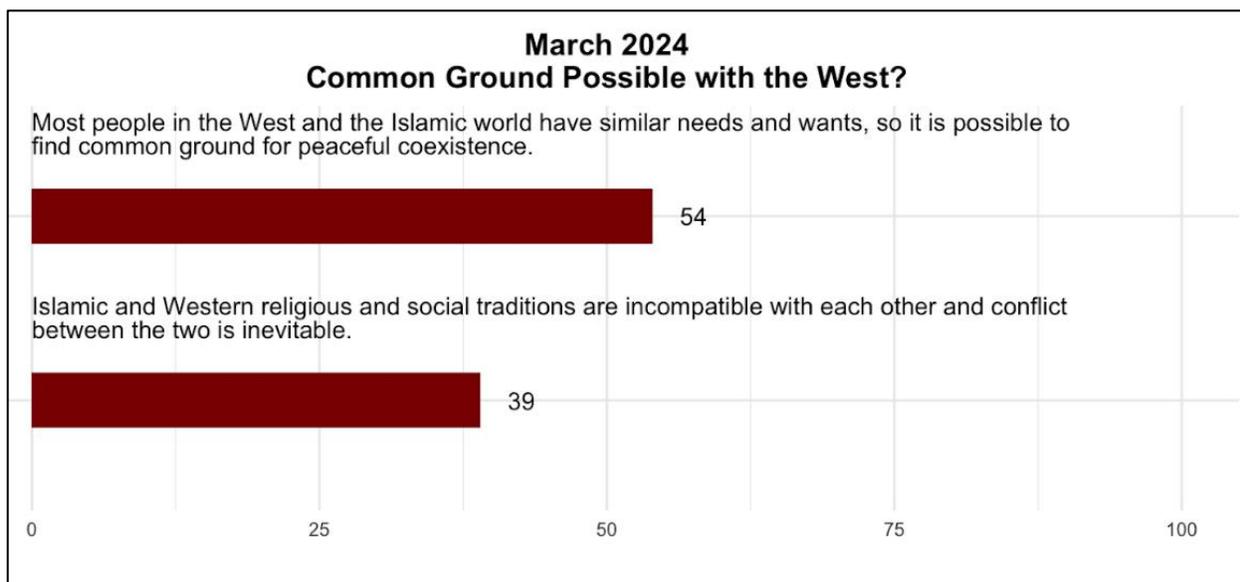
6. General Foreign Policy Attitudes

As before, a majority say that common ground and peaceful coexistence are possible between the Islamic world and the West, while four in ten think conflict is inevitable. A majority continues to think that Iran needs a president who will refuse to compromise on Iran’s rights, rather than one who will focus on negotiating. After years of economic hardship, a slight majority now prefers a strategy of trying to increase Iran’s international trade over greater self-sufficiency. As to whether to focus more on European or Asian trade and diplomatic relations, a slight plurality leans toward Europe.

For ten years these studies have periodically asked Iranian respondents to choose which of two philosophical positions is closer to their own:

- Islamic and Western religious and social traditions are incompatible with each other and conflict between the two is inevitable; or
- Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants, so it is possible to find common ground for peaceful coexistence.

Currently (March 2024) 54% see it as possible to find common ground between the Islamic world and the West, while 39% see conflict as inevitable. This question, asked since 2014, has always found a majority that views common ground as possible, but this majority has dropped from its high of 61% in 2016, soon after the JCPOA took effect.



Since 2016 these studies have also periodically asked respondents about what type of leader Iran needs given the current state of international relations:

Considering the current changes in the world, do you think Iran needs a President who will mostly focus on negotiating and finding common ground with other countries, or stand up for Iran’s rights and refuse to compromise on Iran’s rights?

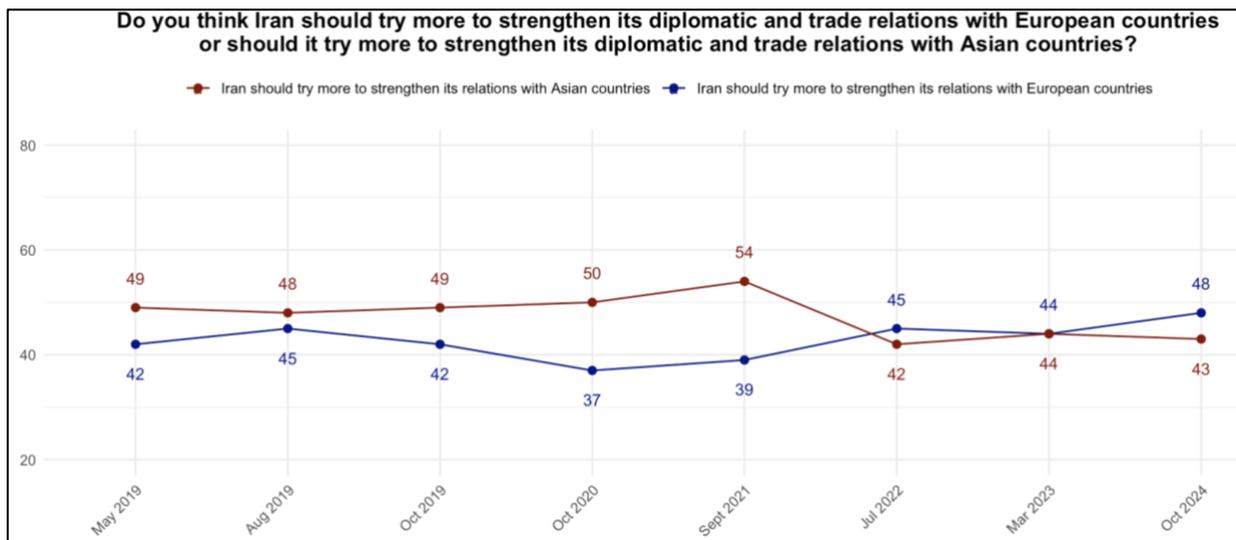
“Standing up for Iran’s rights” has always gained a majority. In October 2024, 58% preferred this style, while 39% preferred a focus on negotiation and finding common ground with other countries. Over the last decade the numbers preferring a president who will stand up for Iran’s rights have stayed within a 52-62% range, while those who prefer a negotiation-oriented president have stayed within a 34-39% range.

Desire to try solving Iran’s problems through greater self-sufficiency has declined gradually since 2018, such that now fewer than half think this is the best idea. Asked “is it better for Iran to strive to achieve self-sufficiency, or to strive to increase its trade with other countries?”, only 46% now prefer the first path, down from 69% in 2019. A slight majority (52%) want to seek increased trade, up from 28% in 2019.

The surveys have also regularly asked (since 2019) whether:

Iran should try more to strengthen its diplomatic and trade relations with European countries such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, or should it try more to strengthen its diplomatic and trade relations with Asian countries like Russia, China, and India?

After President Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, there was a boomlet of interest in trade with Asia, cresting at 54% in 2021. By 2023 this had settled down and there was no public preference; 44% each chose Europe or Asia. In October 2024 a slight plurality (48%) favored orienting more toward European relations, while 43% favored orienting more toward Asian relations.

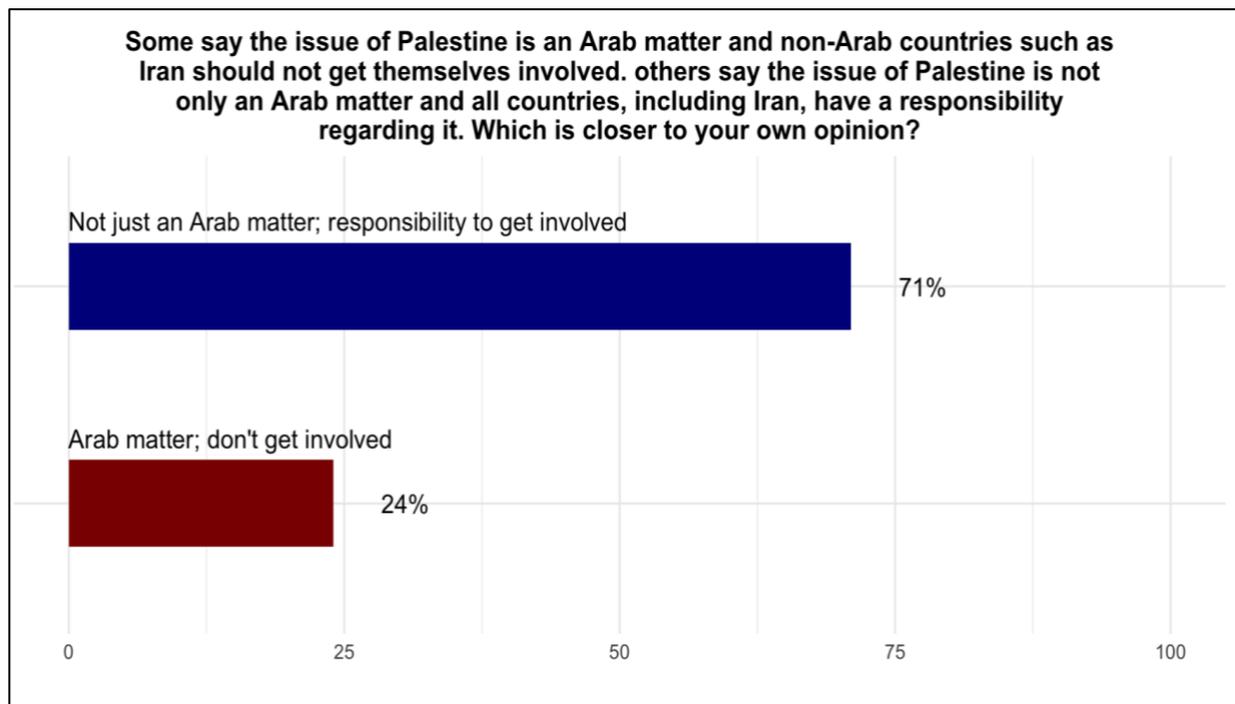


7. The War in Gaza and Relations with Israel

Over four in five have some knowledge of the war in Gaza, and seven in ten think that all countries, including Iran, have a responsibility toward it. Large majorities perceive that Iran provides the Palestinians some aid of various types—political, military, financial and humanitarian—but only four in ten think Iran provides a lot. Fewer than four in ten think Iran should provide a lot, except for food and medicine. A majority feels sure that the United States is the prime decision maker between itself and Israel; yet, between Iran and Hamas, a majority feels that ultimately Hamas makes its own decisions.

Two-thirds say Iran should not recognize Israel; one quarter think it should, as a route to sanctions relief. Three in five think Iran should support a one-state solution that would include the right of return for Palestinian refugees. A fifth think Iran should support a two-state solution, with Israeli and Palestinian states; a tenth support a single state but with no right of return.

The war in Gaza has received wide attention in Iran, with 84% saying in March 2024 that they were following it at least somewhat (a lot, 34%). To gauge how involved Iranians felt, this study asked how respondents viewed the claim that Iran was fairly remote from the Palestinian question: “Some say the issue of Palestine is an Arab matter and non-Arab countries such as Iran should not get themselves involved.” Only a quarter (24%) agreed. Seventy-one percent thought that “The issue of Palestine is not only an Arab matter and all countries, including Iran, have a responsibility regarding it.”



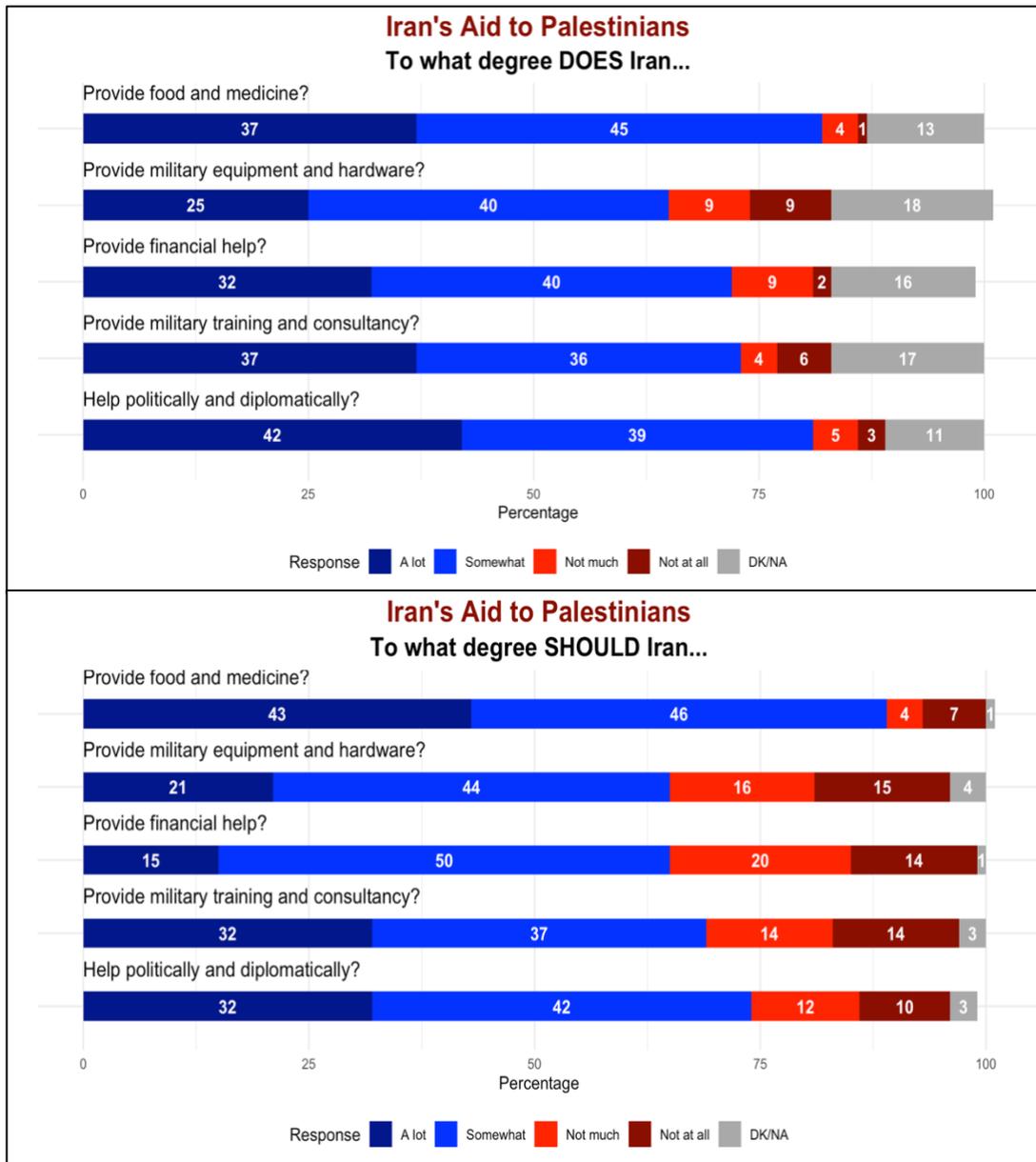
Perceptions and Preferences on Giving Assistance

The study probed how much assistance of various types Iranians perceived their country was giving to the Palestinians, and how much they thought should go to the Palestinians. The Iranians who supported giving substantial humanitarian aid were more numerous than those who thought this was already happening. For each other type of aid tested, a significant number thought that Iran was providing more aid than they would support.

Respondents were asked about five aspects of aid: “As far as you know, to what degree does Iran help the Palestinians in the following ways:”

- political and diplomatic;
- food and medicine;
- financial;
- military training and consulting; and
- and military equipment and hardware.

For each, respondents said whether they thought Iran helped the Palestinians a lot, somewhat, not much, or not at all.



Strikingly, there was no category for which a majority of Iranians thought Iran did help the Palestinians “a lot,” nor was there a category for which a majority thought Iran *should* help them “a lot.” **Food and medicine** was the category with the greatest consensus and a desire for the government to provide more help. Eighty-two percent thought Iran was helping in this way at least somewhat (“a lot”, 37%), but even more, 89%, thought Iran *should* do so, and 43% thought Iran should provide a lot of food and medicine.

On **political and diplomatic** help, four-fifths (81%) perceived Iran as helping (a lot, 42%), but a slightly smaller majority thought Iran should do so—75%, with only 32% saying Iran should help a lot.

Seventy-three percent thought Iran helped the Palestinians by providing **military training and consulting**, and 37% thought Iran provided a lot. Interestingly, a slightly lesser 70% thought Iran should be doing this, and just 32% thought it should be providing a lot.

Seventy-two percent thought Iran offered **financial help** to the Palestinians at least somewhat, and 32% thought Iran offered a lot. But a distinctly lower 65% thought Iran should do this, and only 15% thought it should offer a lot. A third, 34%, thought Iran should provide either not much financial help, or none at all.

Finally, on **military equipment and hardware**, about two-thirds (65%) thought Iran was helping in this way (a lot, 25%). In this case, views on what Iran should do were in the same proportion: 65% thought Iran should help in this way and 21% thought it should help a lot. Three in ten (31%) thought Iran should do only a little or nothing in this regard.

As would be expected, those who thought that all countries, including Iran, have a responsibility regarding the war in Gaza were substantially more supportive of Iran giving various types of assistance than were those who said the war was an Arab matter and Iran should not get involved. Surprisingly, though, a third or more of those preferred non-involvement as a general principle said that Iran should provide at least some of each form of assistance. At the high end of the spectrum, 67% of those favoring non-involvement said that Iran should help by providing food and medicine, while 97% of those who felt a sense of responsibility took this position. At the low end, 33-35% of those favoring non-involvement thought Iran should provide some financial aid, military equipment, and military training, while 77-83% of those who felt responsible said Iran should provide at least some of those forms of assistance. Those who voted in the 2024 parliamentary election were also substantially more supportive of providing assistance than were those who did not vote, but a majority of non-voters still favored giving some assistance. The gap was largest for military training (85% of voters vs. 57% of non-voters) and equipment (81% of voters and 53% of non-voters), and smallest for food and medicine (95% of voters and 85% of non-voters).

Perceptions of U.S. and Iranian Decision-Making Power over Aid Recipients

This lack of majority interest in providing “a lot” to the Palestinians across various categories may be related to a sense that Iran has limited influence over Hamas. Between Iran and Hamas, a majority feels that Hamas is the prime decision-maker, yet a majority feels sure that the United States calls the shots between itself and Israel. In October 2024 respondents were asked two questions, one of which read:

As you may know, Iran and Hamas generally function as allies. Which of the following statements do you think best describes their relationship as it related to the war in Gaza?

- Iran makes the important decisions and Hamas mostly follows them even if it disagrees
- While Iran and Hamas make the important decisions together, Iran mostly has the final say
- While Iran and Hamas make the important decisions together, Hamas mostly has the final say
- Hamas makes the important decisions and Iran mostly supports them even if it disagrees

Respondents were asked the same question about the United States and Israel—the names were changed, but the rest of the language was identical.

Half (50%) say that Hamas essentially makes its own decisions, with 17% saying Hamas “mostly has the final say” and 33% that “Hamas makes the important decisions.” About a third (35%) thought that “Iran mostly has the final say” (23%) or even that “Iran makes the important decisions and Hamas mostly follows them even if it disagrees” (12%).

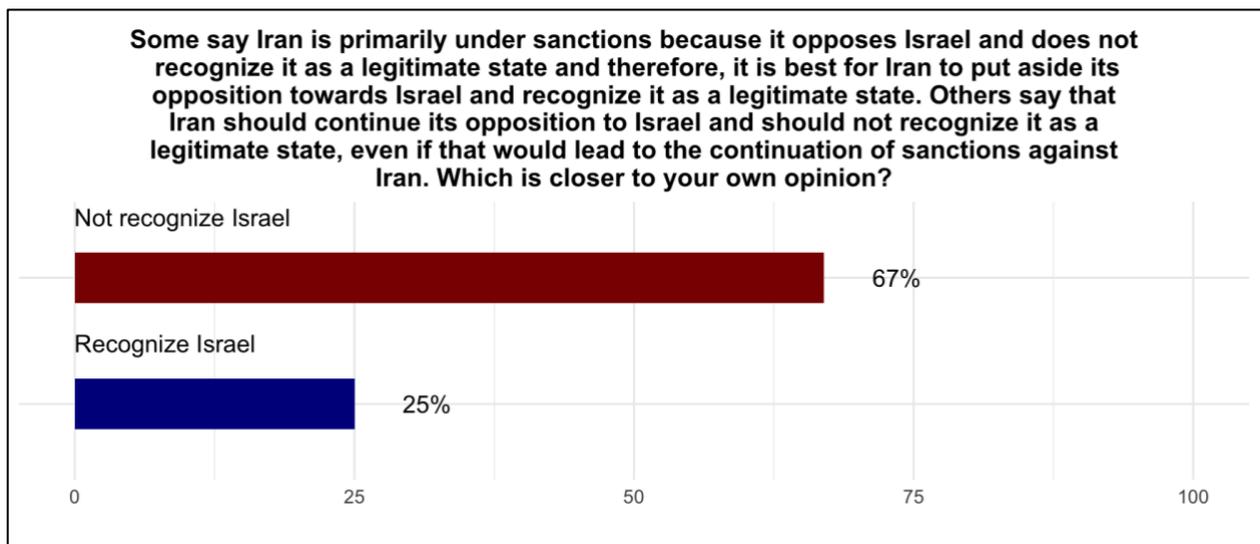
When asked about the United States and Israel, however, a majority were sure the United States was in charge. Only a third (34%) thought Israel mostly has the final say (7%) or makes the important decisions (27%). Sixty-two percent thought “the United States mostly has the final say” (39%) or makes the final decisions (23%). It is also worth noting that while 15% didn’t know or gave another answer about the Iran-Hamas patron-client relationship—suggesting, rightly enough, that this is a hard question—only 4% didn’t know or gave another answer about the U.S.- Israel patron-client relationship, suggesting that they perceived this as easier to determine

General Views on the Israeli-Palestinian Issue

While a majority thought Iran should not recognize Israel, a quarter of Iranians thought it should when asked in March 2024. This study posed a question that argued the sanctions regime against Iran was partly due to its official position on Israel:

Some say Iran is primarily under sanctions because it opposes Israel and does not recognize it as a legitimate state and therefore, it is best for Iran to put aside its opposition towards Israel and recognize it as a legitimate state. Others say that Iran should continue its opposition to Israel and should not recognize it as a legitimate state, even if that would lead to the continuation of sanctions against Iran. Which is closer to your own opinion?

Two thirds (67%) said that Iran should not recognize Israel, but a quarter (25%) said Iran should. When we asked respondents in 2017 whether they would approve of Iran recognizing Israel in return for a lifting of all sanctions, 66% disapproved, while 30% said then that this might be acceptable.

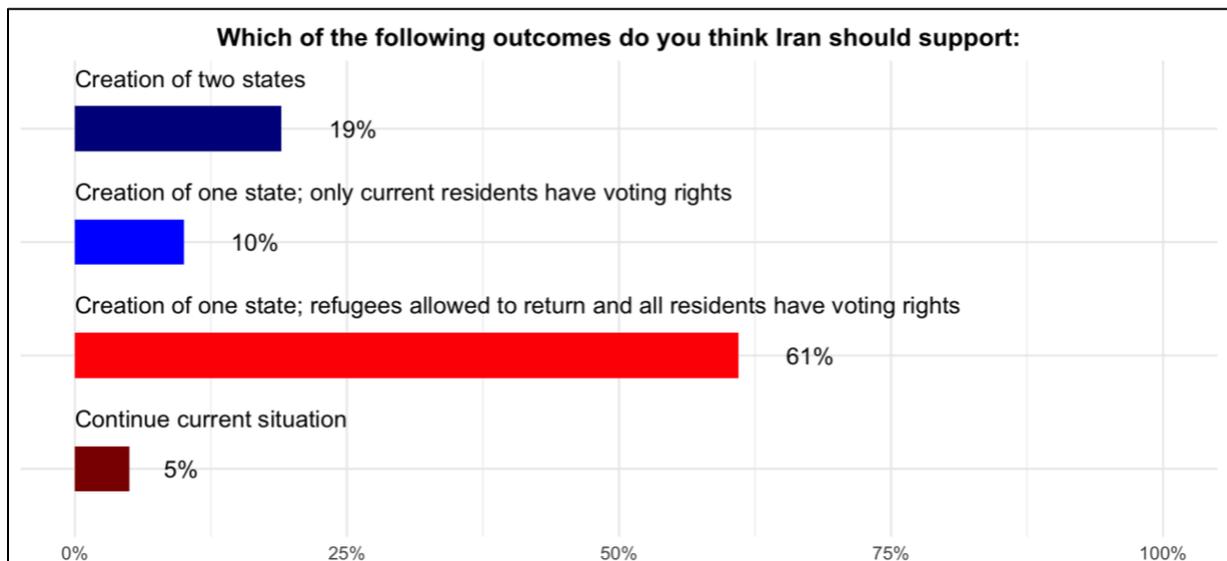


Although the question connected sanctions to non-recognition of Israel, economic attitudes were less powerful predictors of Iranians' willingness to recognize Israel than political attitudes were. Those who say that sanctions have a great negative effect were only slightly more favorable toward recognizing Israel than the full sample (29% versus 25%). Those who say Iran's economic conditions are very bad were only 13 points higher on recognition than the full sample (38% versus 25%). Those who voted in the 2024 parliamentary election were much more opposed to recognizing Israel than the sample as a whole (9% versus 25%). By contrast, those who think Iranians are generally afraid to voice their political opinion were much more favorable toward recognition than the full sample (53% versus 25%).

Respondents were offered four alternative outcomes to the Israeli-Palestinian issue and asked which outcome they thought Iran should support:

- Creation of two states in that region, one for the Jewish population and another for the Palestinians
- Creation of one country in that region where only the current residents would have equal rights and equal vote, regardless of their religion
- Creation of one country in that region that would allow all Palestinian refugees to return and in which all residents would have equal rights and equal vote, regardless of their religion
- Continuation of the current situation between Palestinians and Israelis

Three in five (61%) said Iran should support a one-state solution that would include the right of return for Palestinian refugees. The next most popular outcome (19%) was the two-state solution long proposed by the United States, European countries and others. Ten percent supported a one-state solution that would not involve any right of return for Palestinian refugees but would give all current residents, regardless of their religion, equal rights and voting power. Finally, 5% preferred a continuation of the current situation, at least when compared to the other proposed outcomes. Only 7% declined to answer this complex question.



8. Attitudes toward Afghanistan, the Taliban, and Afghan Refugees in Iran

In March 2024, 6 in 10 had a negative view of Afghanistan, but only a third of Iranians held very unfavorable views toward the country as a whole.

Iranian attitudes toward the Taliban have been much more negative. Six months after the Taliban regained power in August 2022, nearly 9 in 10 Iranians held a very unfavorable view of them. While a majority opposed Iran working toward diplomatic relations with the Taliban government in March 2023, a third said they would support it. Majorities were also supportive of dialogue with the Taliban to resolve water disputes and address other issues. Almost two-thirds supported offering places in Iranian universities to Afghan women seeking to pursue their education.

Two in three express negative views about Iran's sizeable number of workers who are Afghan refugees, seeing them as taking jobs from Iranians, while one-third view them as simply doing undesirable jobs Iranians will not perform. At the same time, seven in ten support educating Afghan children in Iran's public school system.

Intermarriages between Iranians and Afghans are a related social issue, one in which Iranians' views are entangled with their views of gender. Majorities think there should be some governmental review before such marriages are permitted—but more would allow an Iranian man leeway than would allow it for an Iranian woman. Similarly, for Iranian birth certificates for the children of these unions, a majority would support these if the man in the couple were Iranian—but not if the woman in the couple were Iranian.

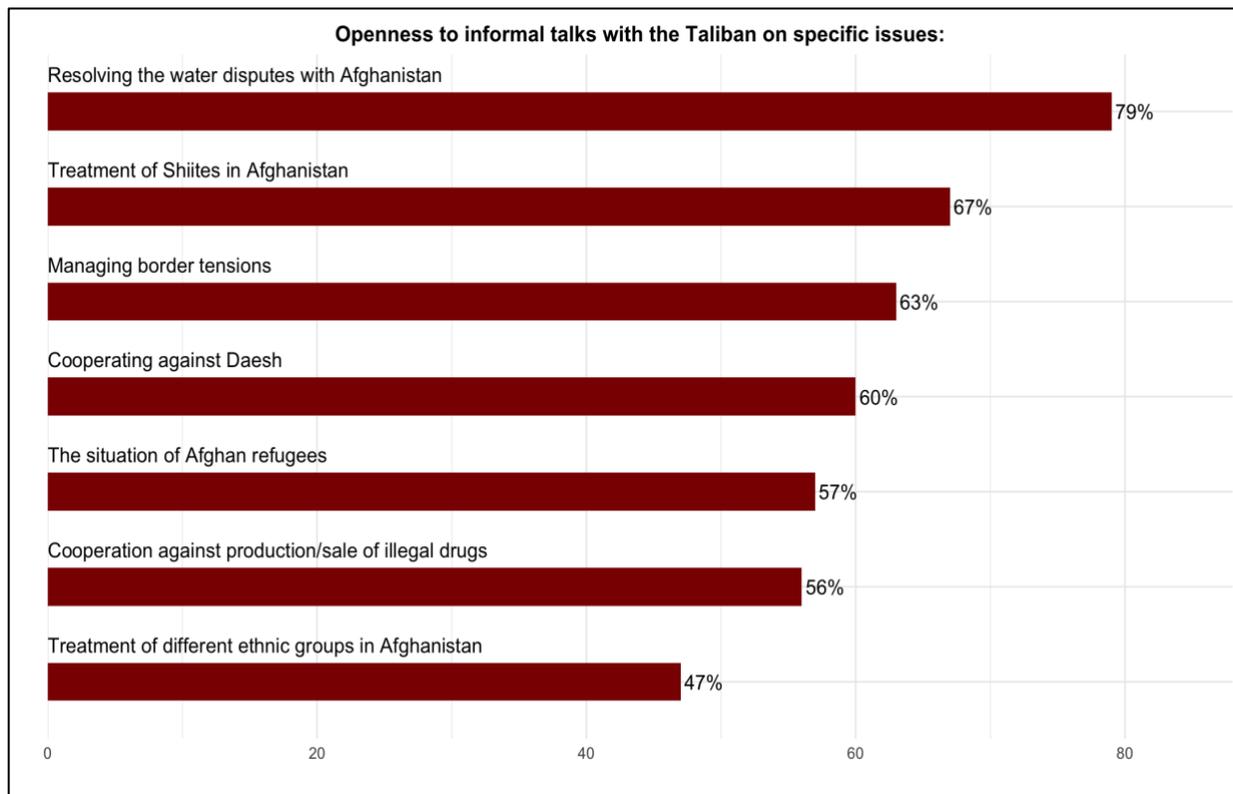
When simply asked how they feel about Afghanistan in March 2024, 64% viewed it unfavorably (34% very unfavorable), and only 35% were favorable. Asked whether Iran should work toward diplomatic relations with the Taliban government, attitudes were very much in line with the prior question: 61% opposed the idea (36% strongly), while 32% would support it.

In 2023, an overwhelming 93% of Iranians had an unfavorable view of the Taliban, and 87% were *very* unfavorable—up from 72% in 2021. Even so, majorities were open to discussions with the Afghan government on specific issues.

Respondents were offered a list of seven issues and reminded that “while Iran and Afghanistan do not currently have full diplomatic relations, the [governments] do discuss and cooperate on certain issues.” For each issue, they were asked the degree to which they supported “talks and cooperation.” Majorities saw merit in six out of the seven issues, rejecting discussions on only one.

Most widely supported was resolving water disputes. Four in five (79%) supported such talks, with a 52% majority supporting them strongly. Two-thirds (67%) supported talks on the treatment of Shiites in Afghanistan (strongly, 40%). Over three in five (63%) wanted talks on managing border tensions. Fifty-seven percent supported talks on the situation of Afghan refugees. Fifty-six percent supported “cooperating against the production and sale of illegal drugs,” though interestingly, of the 41% opposed, most opposed it strongly (33% of the full sample).

The one issue for discussions that did not have majority support was “treatment of different ethnic groups in Afghanistan.” This divided respondents, with 47% in favor and 46% against.



Over three in five Iranians thought Iran should invite Afghan women who wish to pursue their education to come study in Iranian universities. Reminded that “the Taliban government in Afghanistan is preventing women from studying in Afghanistan’s universities,” 64% favored Iran inviting them to study in Iran (26% strongly). Only 32% were opposed.

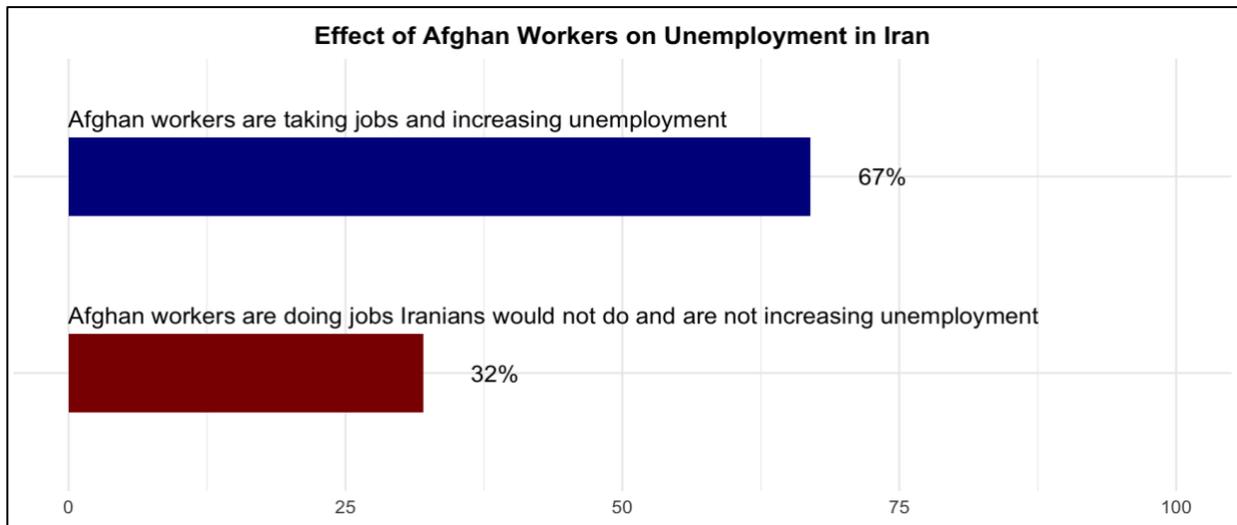
Iranian Views of Afghan Refugees

Iran harbors a large Afghan refugee population, estimated at around 6 million people in a country of around 86 million.⁶ A two-thirds majority express negative views about Afghans in the workforce. In March 2024 respondents heard two statements and were asked to choose between them:

- Afghan workers are taking jobs from Iranians and increasing unemployment among Iranians
- or
- Afghan workers are doing jobs that most Iranians would not do and for this reason they are not increasing unemployment among Iranians

⁶ <https://www.etemadonline.com/tiny/news-706655>

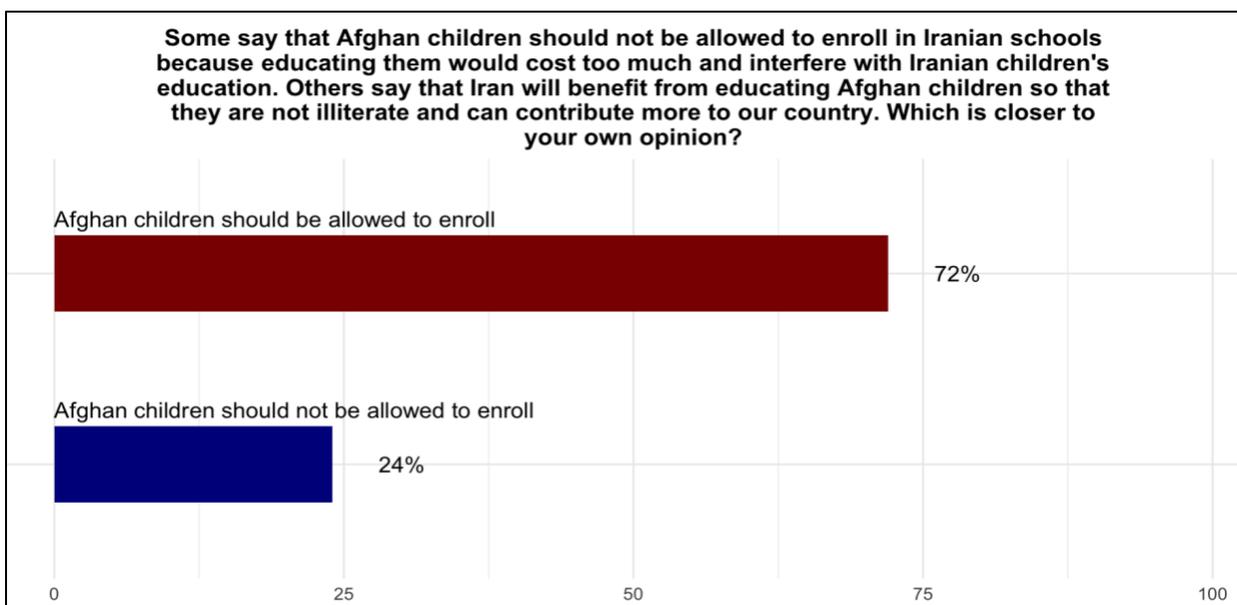
Sixty-seven percent said that Afghan workers are increasing Iranians' unemployment, while 32% thought they were not, because they were taking the most undesirable jobs.



Attitudes toward the refugees' children are much warmer. Respondents heard two arguments about enrolling Afghan children in Iran's public school system:

Some say that Afghan children should not be allowed to enroll in Iranian schools because educating them would cost too much and interfere with Iranian children's education. Others say that Iran will benefit from educating Afghan children so that they are not illiterate and can contribute more to our country.

Seventy-two percent said Afghan children should be allowed to enroll; only 24% said this should not be allowed.

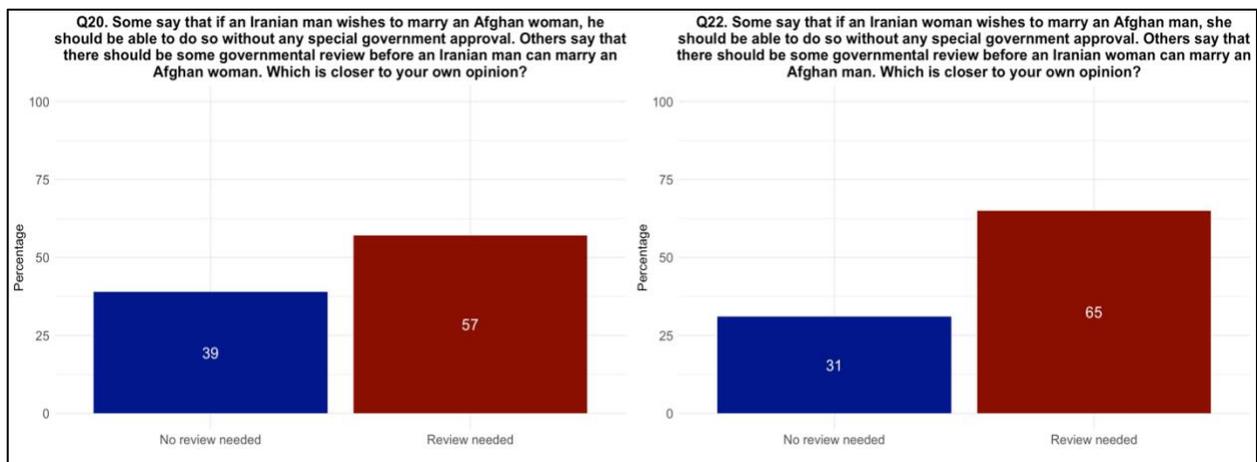


Intermarriages between Iranians and Afghans is a related social issue, one in which Iranians’ views are entangled with their views of gender. Majorities think there should be some governmental review before such marriages are permitted—but more would allow an Iranian man leeway than would allow it for an Iranian woman.

Respondents were divided into two half-samples. One half-sample was asked:

Some say that if an Iranian man wishes to marry an Afghan woman, he should be able to do so without any special government approval. Others say that there should be some governmental review before an Iranian man can marry an Afghan woman. Which is closer to your own opinion?

The other half-sample heard the same question, except it was about an “Afghan man [who] wishes to marry an Iranian woman.”



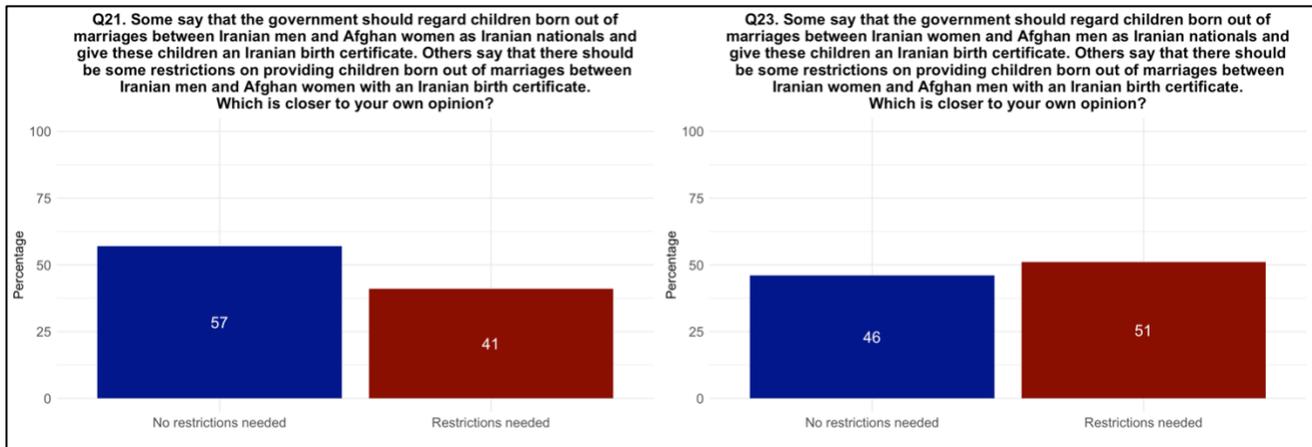
When the male in the couple was Iranian, 57% think there should be some governmental review, while 39% think he should simply be able to marry. But when the female in the couple was Iranian, a higher 65% think there should be some governmental review, while 31% think this unnecessary.

The pattern is similar on the issue of whether to grant Iranian birth certificates for the children of these unions. A majority would support providing such children Iranian birth certificates if the man in the couple were Iranian—but not if the woman in the couple were Iranian. One half-sample was asked:

Some say that the government should regard children born out of marriages between Iranian men and Afghan women as Iranian nationals and give these children an Iranian birth certificate. Others say that there should be some restrictions on providing children born out of marriages between Iranian men and Afghan women with an Iranian birth certificate.

The other half-sample heard the same question, but about “children born out of marriages between Afghan men and Iranian women.”

A majority of 57% support providing birth certificates when the male in the couple was Iranian; 41% say there should be some restrictions. However, when the male was Afghan and the female was Iranian, a 51% majority say there should be some restrictions on providing birth certificates, while 46% support giving them.



9. Regional Security

A quarter of Iranians now say that if they could change only one thing about Iran, they would make it more “safe and secure,” almost twice as many as prioritized security six months earlier. While a majority thinks that Iran should increase its role in the Middle East further, this is down from five years ago. The majority that disagrees with calls for the government to spend less money in places like Syria and Iraq was nearly identical in March 2024 to what it had been in January 2018, before then-President Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and began his “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign. Attitudes toward Saudi Arabia have thawed somewhat, though a majority still is unfavorable toward it. Among non-state actors in the Middle East, majorities of Iranians were favorable toward Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis as of March 2024.

Support for Iran’s missile program remains nearly unanimous, and a large and growing majority disagrees with calls to spend less money on developing missiles. A majority still opposes Iran pursuing nuclear weapons, but the number of supporters has increased since the war in Gaza began. Seven in ten believe that violations of Iranian waters or airspace should be punished, rather than Iran attempting to avoid escalation, a somewhat more cautious stance than before.

Fear for Iran’s security has increased sharply since Israel and Iran escalated direct attacks on each other’s territory; 25% now say that making their country more “safe and secure” is their top priority compared with 14% in March 2024.

The majority that says Iran should seek to increase its role in the Middle East is up again, after dropping significantly six months earlier. Two-thirds of Iranians wanted a bigger regional role in 2016 and 2019, but barely half (51%) held that view in March 2024. The number has rebounded to 56%, with 26% content to maintain Iran’s regional role at current levels and 15%

who want it to decrease involvement. In 2019 two-thirds (66%) wanted Iran's role to increase, 18% wanted it to stay the same, and 11% wanted it to decrease.

The majority that disagrees with calls for the government to spend less money in places like Syria and Iraq was nearly identical in March 2024 to its level in January 2018, before Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and began his “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign. Asked about demands and complaints made during recent protests, 54% did not agree that “the government should spend less money in places like Syria and Iraq,” while 44% did. In early 2018, a lesser 51% disagreed with this complaint, 42% agreed with it, and 7% did not know, compared to 2% in 2024.

Views of Other Regional Actors

There is a significant thaw in Iranians' views of Saudi Arabia. Those who viewed the kingdom very unfavorably in March 2024 were down 19 points compared to 2021: 62%, from 2021's 81%. A fifth (21%) viewed Saudi Arabia positively, the most since 2015. Presumably, the rapprochement facilitated by China in 2023 has been a factor in this.

Majorities looked favorably in March 2024 on the three non-state actors asked about: Hezbollah of Lebanon, Hamas, and the Houthis in Yemen. Seventy percent were positive about Hezbollah (very: 36%) while a quarter (27%) were unfavorable. Hamas was next with 62% favorable (29% very), but, a full third (33%) were unfavorable (very, 19%). The Houthis were less popular than Hamas, with 56% favorable (very, 23%) and 34% unfavorable (very, 23%). Nonetheless, the Houthis were more popular by 6 points than they were in 2021.

Support for Iran's Missile and Nuclear Programs

Support for Iran's missile program is near-unanimous. In March 2024, 74% called it very important and another 18% said it is somewhat important. This may partially explain the willingness to spend money on it, despite dire economic circumstances. When asked whether they agreed or not with “complaints and demands” voiced during past protests, demands for the military to “spend much less money on developing missiles” got even less support in March 2024 than they did in 2018. Then, 26% agreed and 65% disagreed (40% strongly). In March 2024, only 17% agreed and 70% disagreed (45% strongly).

Support for Iran's nuclear program remained comparably high in March 2024; 88% considered its development very (73%) or somewhat (14%) important. Overall support for Iran's nuclear program was in the low 90s from 2009 through 2018, before slipping slightly into the mid-80s for a few years.

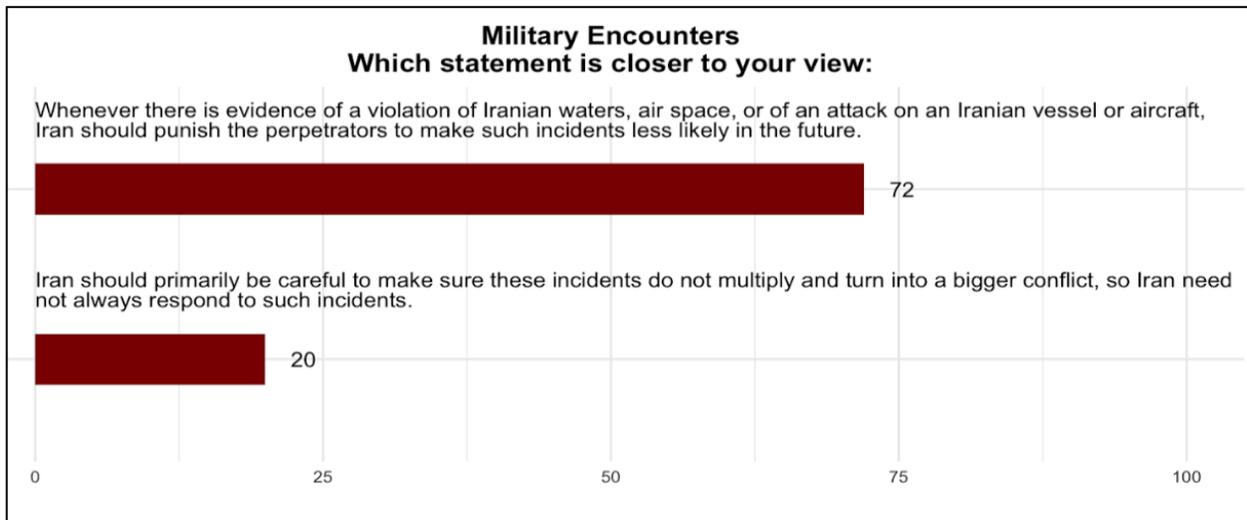
In October, for the first time, those wanting Iran to have a purely peaceful nuclear program fell below a majority. Those wanting both nuclear weapons and nuclear power have increased by 9 points since March 2023. Currently, 47% say they only want to develop nuclear power, while 45% say that they would prefer for Iran to develop both atomic bombs and nuclear power—a statistical tie. (For more on Iran's nuclear program, see sections 10 and 11.)

Response to Military Provocations

Seven in ten support responding forcefully to any perceived violation of Iranian waters or airspace to deter such incursions. Respondents were reminded in October 2024 that “there have been numerous military incidents in past months involving Iran, Israel, the United States, and the Persian Gulf countries” and were asked to choose between two statements:

- Whenever there is evidence of a violation of Iranian waters, air space, or of an attack on an Iranian vessel or aircraft, Iran should punish the perpetrators to make such incidents less likely in the future.
- or
- Iran should primarily be careful to make sure these incidents do not multiply and turn into a bigger conflict, so Iran need not always respond to such incidents.

Seventy-two percent prefer a forceful response in such cases, while 20% think Iran need not always respond. The percentage favoring a tit-for-tat response versus turning the other cheek has changed very little since we first asked this question during the Rouhani administration (77% versus 19% in 2019). Support for this position is now 5 points lower, and those now volunteering “it depends” has risen from 1 to 7% since 2021. Still, the stability of this finding suggests the political difficulty in Iran of not offering some response, however measured, to violations of Iranian sovereignty.



10. Iran’s Nuclear Program

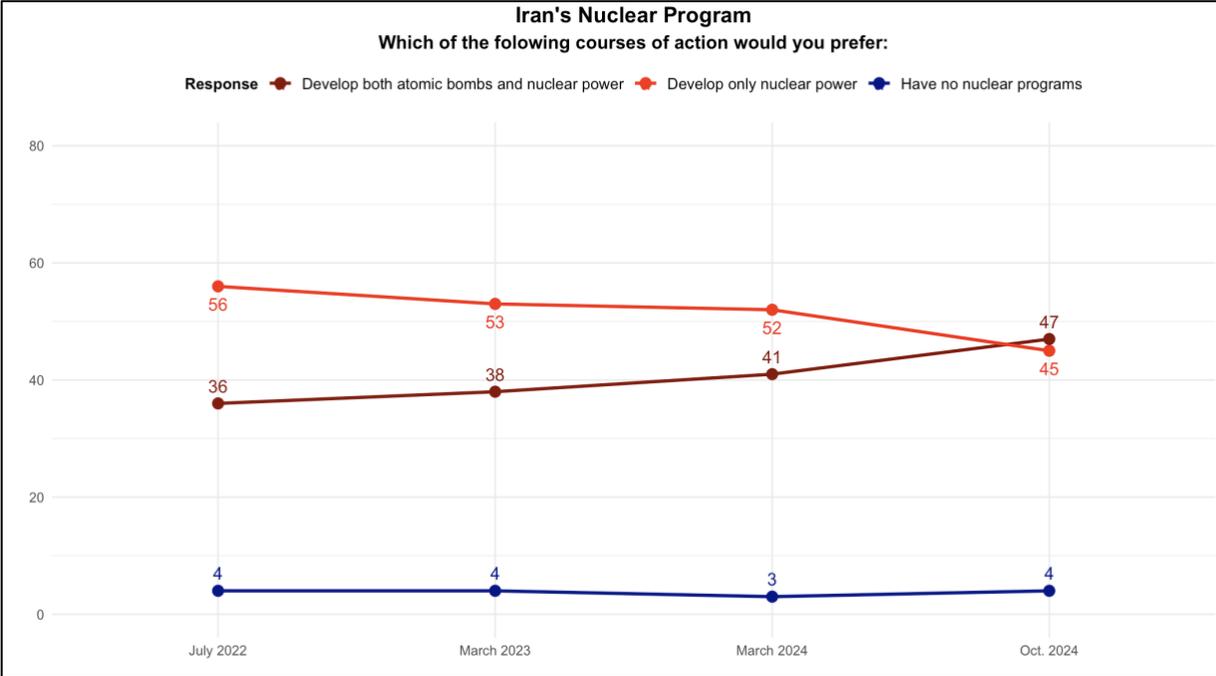
For the first time since 2008, the Iranian public is divided about whether to develop both atomic bombs and nuclear power, or to develop nuclear power alone. Support for developing nuclear weapons rose slightly after the war in Gaza began, but in March 2024 a majority still rejected nuclear weapons. Those who prefer having both atomic weapons and nuclear energy rose again in October after Israel and Iran intensified their attacks on each other, such that there is now no majority against development of nuclear weapons.

Among those who favored an Iranian atomic bomb in March 2024, about two in three said they want nuclear weapons to deter threats from other countries, including those with nuclear arms. Most Iranians said then that the influence of the Gaza war either did not affect their nuclear views or made them more favorable toward the idea of developing a nuclear weapon. As in the past, two-thirds supported a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.

While a majority still said in 2023 that developing nuclear weapons is against Islam’s teachings (without being reminded that this is the official position), this majority had eroded significantly since 2014. Awareness of Iran’s membership in the Non-Proliferation Treaty is also much lower than in the past. After being reminded that Iran has made a legal commitment not to acquire nuclear weapons, only four in ten were willing in March 2024 to leave the NPT if their leaders decided Iran should develop nuclear weapons.

If Iran’s leaders decided to make nuclear weapons, a large and growing majority said their country would succeed, even though about two-thirds expected that the United States and other countries would take actions to stop Iran, military and otherwise. If the United States were to conduct an attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities, four in five would want to rebuild them; three in five would also want to expand Iran’s nuclear activities.

For the first time since 2008, the Iranian public is divided about whether to develop both atomic bombs and nuclear power, or to develop nuclear power alone. The question asks respondents about three courses of action. In October 2024, 47% preferred that Iran “develop both atomic bombs and nuclear power”; 45% preferred Iran develop only nuclear power; and 4% preferred that the country have no nuclear programs. Adding the latter two categories together, 49% oppose developing atomic bombs, while 47% support it – a statistical tie. Sixty percent of Jalili voters think Iran should have nuclear weapons, while only 40% of Pezeshkian voters agree.



Of those 45 and up, 51% want to only develop nuclear power, but among those 34 and younger, only 38-41% feel this way. Fifty-six percent of those under 25 want both atomic bombs and nuclear power. There has been significant movement among the oldest group in a short period: in March 2024 63% of those 55 and older wanted nuclear power only, but it appears that by October this attitude had dropped 12 points.

In March 2024, those who wanted a nuclear weapon were asked to say why in their own words. A third (32%) of this subgroup said it was to prevent others from attacking Iran. Another 20% argued that countries who are nuclear powers are threatening Iran (up 6 points from July 2022). Another 16% said this would increase defense capabilities (9%) or increase Iran's security (7%). Thus, fully two-thirds (68%) of this group—28% of the full sample—perceived nuclear weapons as a deterrent that would make Iran safer.

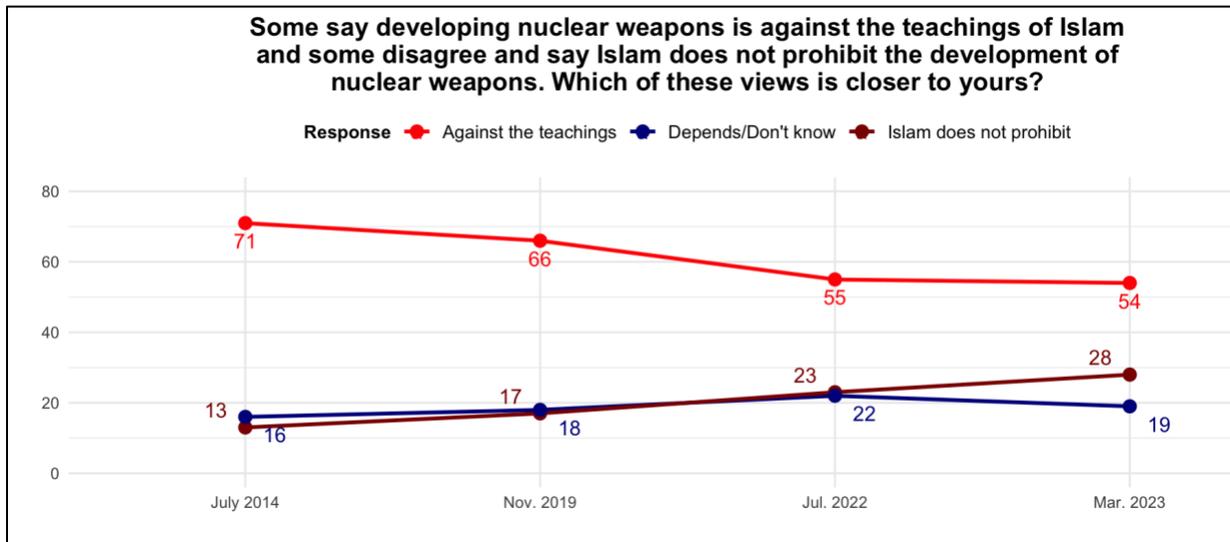
About a fifth of the subgroup who want atomic bombs cited political rivalry among states as their primary reason: 13% said because other countries have it, and 7% said that this would show Iran's power. Most of the remainder named reasons more internal to Iran, saying that it would be good for stability (4%) or would help Iran become more advanced (2%).

Continued strong support for a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East provides further evidence that regional security dynamics play a large role in Iranian nuclear preferences. In 2023 respondents were asked: "Do you favor or oppose the idea of having a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East that would include both Islamic countries and Israel?" Sixty-eight percent were in favor (47% strongly) and 25% opposed (12% strongly). This support has been largely stable since the question was first asked in 2006.

Changeability of Views on Nuclear Weapons

The percentage of respondents wanting Iran to have nuclear weapons has grown by 10 points since 2022 after having been stable since 2009. The shift from 2022 to 2023 was not statistically significant: support for nuclear weapons rose only from 36% to 37.5%, while the preference for nuclear power alone dropped 2% and no nuclear programs fell 1%. Support for nuclear weapons rose from 38 to 41% in March 2024, but a majority (52%) still wanted Iran to have a purely peaceful nuclear program and another 3% wanted no nuclear programs at all. Support for nuclear weapons rose by another 5 points in October 2024, while those rejecting them declined seven points. What explains this continuity and change?

The official position of the Islamic Republic has long been that nuclear weapons are contrary to Islam. Then-Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini first officially conveyed this Fatwa to the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2005, and it has been repeatedly reiterated by Ayatollah Khamenei since he assumed that position. When asked about this in 2023—without being reminded of the official position—the percentage who said that "development of nuclear weapons is against the teachings of Islam," was 54%. Seventy-one percent said this in 2014, a time when the Fatwa was frequently repeated publicly as negotiations on the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) were underway. Two-thirds still gave this response in 2019, then it dropped to 55% in 2022. In 2023, 28% said, "Islam does not prohibit the development of nuclear weapons," up from 13% in 2014. Nineteen percent either declined to answer (13%) or made a different response (6%). This is much higher than the DK/NA responses for most other questions in this survey, but about the same for this question in earlier surveys.

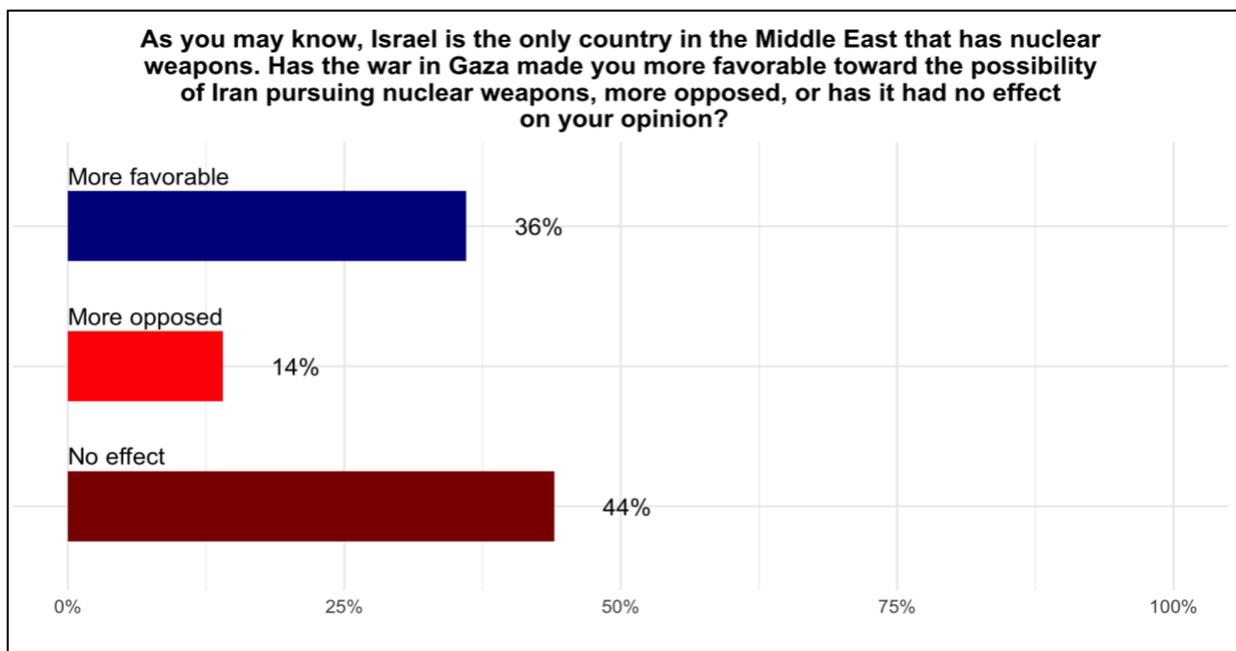


Not surprisingly, the young were the least likely to have internalized the country’s official position that nuclear weapons are contrary to Islam. Forty-four percent said this is true, 35% said it is not, and a high 21% were unsure. Majorities of all other age groups agreed in 2023 that nuclear weapons are contrary to Islam.

Iran has been a non-nuclear weapon state member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty since it was opened for signature in 1968. Knowledge of Iran’s legal commitment not to acquire nuclear weapons has also been eroding. In March 2024 just under half—47%—said they knew this when the NPT was briefly described to them, compared with 55% in 2019 and 69% in 2006. 2024 was the first time that a majority (52%) said they were *not* aware that Iran has agreed to the conditions of the NPT.

Knowledge of the commitment was largely limited to older and more educated individuals. Sixty-one percent of those under 25 were not aware, as were 54-55% of those 25 to 44. Only a bare majority (51%) of those 45 and older *did* know that Iran has agreed to the conditions of the NPT. Knowledge of the NPT increases steadily with education: under 40% for those without any secondary education, in the mid-40s for high-school graduates, in the mid-50s for those with associate and bachelor’s degrees, and in the low-60s for those with graduate degrees.

Israel has not joined the NPT and is the only country in the Middle East that currently has nuclear weapons. Some Israeli officials have made comments about dropping them on Gaza. Therefore, in March 2024 we tried to assess the war’s effects on Iranian nuclear attitudes. Forty-four percent of respondents said it had not affected their opinion, while 36% said that the war had made them more favorable toward pursuing nuclear weapons, and 14% said it made them more opposed.

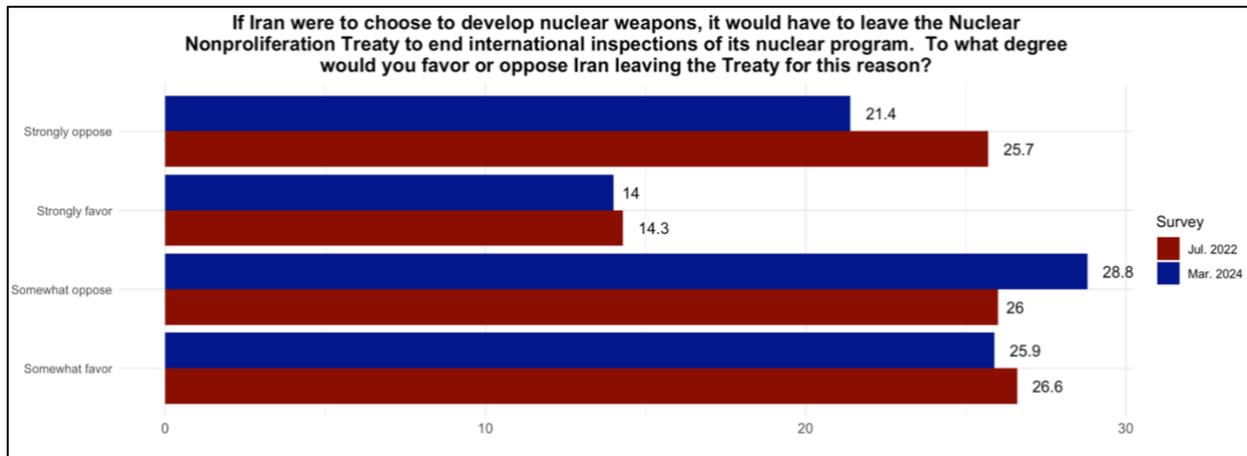


Deeper analysis indicated that the war in Gaza intensified existing pro- and anti-nuclear preferences, while increasing openness toward developing nuclear weapons among some who only wanted a peaceful nuclear program. Not surprisingly, fifty-five percent of those who wanted to develop atomic bombs in March 2024 said that the Gaza war had made them favor the idea more, while another 39% said it had not affected their views. Among those who want no nuclear program, 50% said the Gaza war has made them more opposed to a bomb and 41% said it has had no effect. The war’s effects on those who favored having a purely peaceful program was more complicated: 50% said the Gaza war had not affected their views, but 26% said it made them more favorable to a nuclear weapon and a lesser 21% said they were now more opposed.

The observed trends clearly show that additional major security threats or military action against Iran could convince a significant proportion of Iranians to support their country’s pursuit of nuclear weapons. If the Gaza war got about a quarter of the majority of Iranians who had preferred a purely peaceful program in March 2024 to think more favorably about nuclear weapons, that would be 13% of the full sample who were open to changing their stance. After that data was collected, Israel killed several Iranian generals by attacking an Iranian embassy compound in Syria, Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks on Israeli territory, then Israel assassinated Hama’s leader in Tehran and Hezbollah’s leader in Lebanon. In response, Iran launched a second missile attack against Israel on October 1, and Iranians were nervously awaiting Israel’s response when the October survey was fielded. Those preferring only nuclear power dropped by almost 8%, with 5% moving into the pro-nuclear weapons camp and another 2% volunteering “it depends,” a negligible response in previous waves. It would be no surprise if popular support for Iranian nuclear weapons has risen even more after Israel launched a major attack in late October that destroyed numerous Iranian air defense batteries, a drone factory, and missile production facilities, among other targets.

If Iran were to choose to develop nuclear weapons, it would have to withdraw from the NPT to end international inspections of its nuclear program. After respondents were reminded of this in

March 2024, only four in ten said they would be willing to leave the treaty for that reason. Forty percent say they would be willing to leave (14% strongly). Half (50%) opposed the idea (21% strongly); 10% did not know. The one significant change on this question compared with 2022 was a 5 point drop in the percentage who strongly opposed ending Iran’s legal obligation not to acquire nuclear weapons.



Those who favor developing both atomic bombs and nuclear power were clearly willing to leave the NPT to this end, 73 to 18%. Those who wanted only nuclear power definitely opposed such a step in equally large numbers, 75 to 18%. This suggests that if Iran really came to the point of leaving the NPT, it could create a significant political divide within the country. (Among the small group who wanted no nuclear program, 94% opposed leaving the NPT.)

Expected Consequences if Iran Were to Develop Nuclear Weapons

In March 2024, Iran’s public expressed considerable confidence that if Iran did choose to “withdraw from the NPT in order to develop nuclear weapons,” Iran would succeed.

Respondents were asked to choose the most likely of three scenarios—that the United States and some other countries:

- would take various military and non-military actions against Iran and ultimately prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons;

or

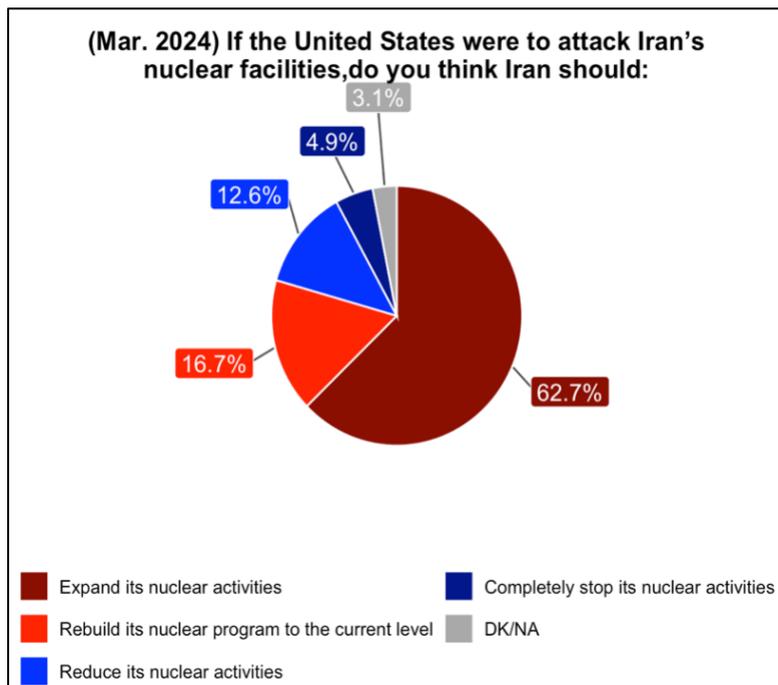
- [they] would take various military and non-military actions against Iran, but be unable to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons;

or

- No country would take any serious military actions against Iran and Iran would be able to develop nuclear weapons.

A majority (52%) thought the middle option was most likely, expecting that Iran would succeed against military resistance from other powers. Another 29% were even more optimistic, saying that there would be no serious military actions against Iran. Only 12% thought that military and non-military actions by other powers would prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

If the United States were to conduct an attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities, four in five would want to rebuild them. Three in five (63%) would want to expand Iran’s nuclear activities, while an



additional 17% would want to rebuild the nuclear program to the current level, making 80% in all. Only 18% would want to reduce Iran’s nuclear activities (13%) or completely stop them (5%). These March 2024 responses are virtually identical to 2019, when the question was first asked. We would expect similar responses if Israel attacked Iran’s nuclear facilities without the United States’ overt involvement given the widespread perception in October 2024 that the United States either makes such important decisions and Israel follows directions (23%) or the two countries make important decisions together but the United States has the final say (49%).

11. Negotiated Constraints on Iran’s Nuclear Program

As of March 2024, more still approved than disapproved of the JCPOA, even though there had been no talks about the United States and Iran returning to full compliance for a year and a half. Acknowledgement of sanctions’ negative impact, especially on ordinary people, was almost unanimous, but Iranians still attributed their country’s economic problems more to internal mismanagement and corruption than to external sanctions. Three quarters thought that a full restoration of the JCPOA would help Iran’s economy.

A growing majority in 2023 expected there would be no restoration of the JCPOA. A majority thought it best to let the Europeans seek some flexibility from the United States, rather than Iran showing more flexibility on its own side. Yet, seven in ten were upset to see the negotiations suspended by Western powers in response to the Iranian government’s actions against protesters. If the negotiations were to end without agreement, Iranians felt they would allocate more blame to the P5+1, but less than one in five would give them the full blame. Three in ten would blame both sides equally.

By October 2024, the focus of diplomatic efforts had shifted from restoring full compliance with the JCPOA to negotiating more limited constraints on Iran’s nuclear program in return for partial sanctions relief. Asked to consider hypothetical future agreements, a bare majority reject a possible confidence-building measure in which Iran would resume allowing the IAEA fuller access while the United States and Europe would let Iran recover its frozen money held in foreign countries. However, three in five would support a deal in

which Iran would accept limitations and greater transparency in its nuclear program, and in return would gain the ability to sell its oil abroad with full access to the proceeds. A majority thinks such a deal between the United States and Iran is unlikely. If it came about, only a third think the United States would fulfill its side of the agreement.

Since 2015 these studies have measured a general approval rating of the JCPOA. Over that time approval has dropped from 76% at the beginning to 47% in March 2024. Nonetheless, slightly more approved than disapproved of the agreement: 44% disapproved and 9% declined to answer.

In March 2024, 61% thought “domestic economic mismanagement and corruption” had a worse impact on the economy than “foreign sanctions and pressures.” Even so, almost nine in ten (88%--up 10 points since 2021) agreed that the reimposed sanctions that accompanied the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA have had a negative impact on the economy; a 54% majority called it a great negative impact. In 2023, respondents were also asked “to what degree have these sanctions had a negative impact on the lives of ordinary people?” A practically unanimous 94% said they have had great (64%) or some (30%) negative impact.

Furthermore, in March 2024 almost three in four (73%) expected Iran’s economy would improve, either a lot (29%) or somewhat (44%) if “Iran and the United States do agree to restore the JCPOA, and both begin to fulfill their obligations.” Already in 2023, though, hope for a restoration of the JCPOA had dimmed. Asked “How likely do you think it is that the United States and Iran will agree on how both will resume fulfilling all of their JCPOA commitments?” 58% thought it unlikely (not at all likely, 29%). Only 37% thought it likely, down from 43% in summer 2022.

Despite their pessimism about JCPOA restoration, most Iranians saw enough value in the negotiations that they were disturbed when the Western countries put them on hold in response to the suppression of the Fall 2022 protests. Reminded of this in 2023 and asked whether the suspension made them “happy” or “upset”, 72% said it upset them (very, 38%). Only 12% said this made them happy.

Only one in five Iranians said that their government should relax its demands to get the JCPOA restored. In 2023, respondents were reminded that “after the United States withdrew from the JCPOA and began reimposing sanctions on Iran, Iran started exceeding some JCPOA limits and reducing cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency,” and were offered three options. Twenty-one percent chose the view that “Both sides, including Iran, should show flexibility and get the JCPOA restored soon.” A majority (54%) thought “Iran should let the Europeans keep trying to get the United States to show flexibility, while holding firm to our own position.” Only 16% said that “Iran’s new government should not try to have the JCPOA restored.” These attitudes were very similar to views in 2021.

Asked how they would react if “these negotiations were to fail to produce a final agreement,” 17% would give the P5+1 countries the full blame, and another 40% would “mostly” blame them, while only 7% would mostly or wholly blame Iran. About 29% said they would blame both sides equally.

By October 2024, the focus of diplomatic efforts had shifted from restoring full compliance with the JCPOA to negotiating more limited constraints on Iran’s nuclear program and sanctions relief. Respondents were presented with two ways in which, hypothetically, such arrangements

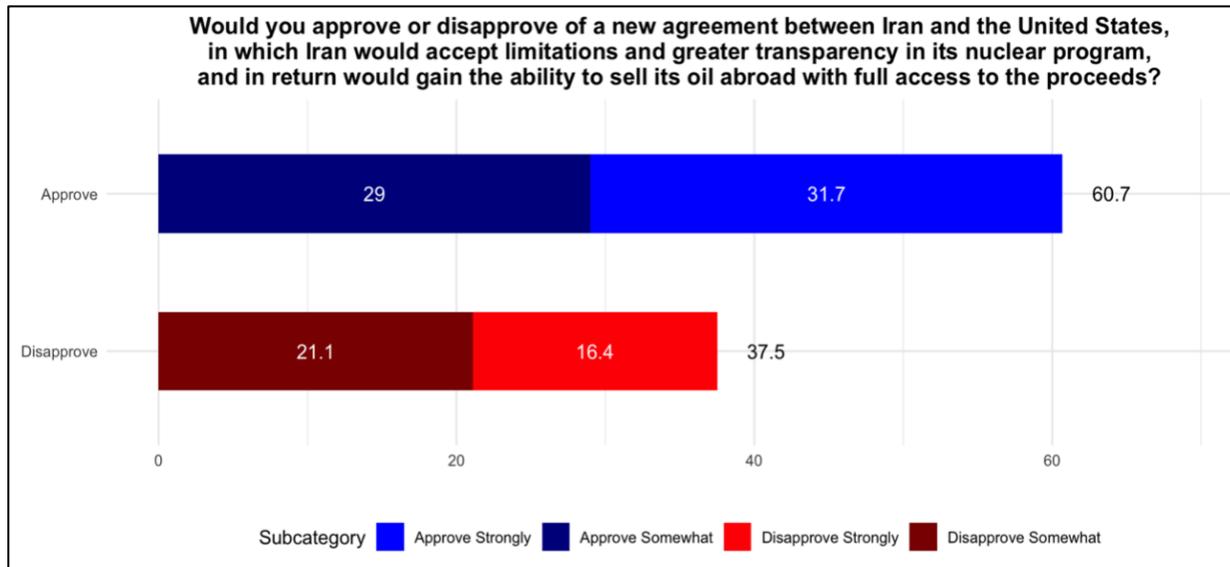
might work. In the first, the emphasis was on confidence-building measures which could be calibrated and initially quite modest. Respondents heard:

One way to end the stalemate that happened between Iran and the United States after the United States pulled out of the JCPOA and Iran stopped implementing some elements of the JCPOA would be for both sides to take smaller steps to build confidence in each other. For example, Iran would resume allowing the IAEA fuller access to confirm that Iran’s nuclear program is purely peaceful, while the United States and Europe would let Iran recover its frozen money held in foreign countries. Would you approve or disapprove of this exchange?

A bare majority of 52% disapprove of this exchange (24% strongly), while 44% approve (18% strongly). A much larger number of Iranians approve of a more robust approach, as follows:

Would you approve or disapprove of a new agreement between Iran and the United States, in which Iran would accept limitations and greater transparency in its nuclear program, and in return would gain the ability to sell its oil abroad with full access to the proceeds?

Three in five (61%) approved of the second approach (32% strongly). Thirty-eight percent disapproved (16% strongly). This suggests there would be majority support for international constraints on the nuclear program, as long as this meant an end to sanctions on Iran’s petroleum—but that half-measures short of this goal would be resisted.



Respondents were asked next whether they thought “Iran and the United States could reach such a new agreement over the next few years.” A majority did not. Fifty-five percent called it unlikely (very 26%), while 44% called it likely (very, only 5%).

More importantly, there is little faith such an agreement would persist if reached. Asked “If such a new agreement did come about, how likely is it that the US would fulfil its side of the

agreement?”, about two-thirds (65%) said this was unlikely (29%, very) and only 34% thought it likely (very, 5%). Iranians who expected Trump to win the upcoming presidential election were slightly more optimistic (36%) than those who thought Harris would (30%). Thirty-five percent of Pezeshkian voters expressed some hope, while only 14% of Jalili supporters did.

12. International Trade and Views of China, Russia, Germany and Britain

In October 2024 for the first time, a majority preferred the goal of increased international trade over that of economic self-sufficiency. A slight plurality preferred to do more to increase trade with Western, rather than Eastern partners—a shift from their earlier preference for increasing trade with Asia.

A growing majority was negative toward Russia by March 2024, while a small majority was positive toward China. Choice of terms to describe Iran’s relationship with China in 2023 were almost identical to those applied to Russia: slightly over 1 in 10 called both countries “allies,” while about a third called them “friends,” and 3 in 10 picked a neutral description. In 2023 a slight majority had an unfavorable view of Germany, and a large majority felt negatively about Britain.

Two years after Iran and China signed a 25-year trade agreement in 2021, over three in five thought this cooperation was in Iran’s interest, while only three in ten were worried by China’s recent expansion of ties with Saudi Arabia.

Since 2014 these surveys have regularly asked Iranians whether they think it is “better for Iran to strive to achieve economic self-sufficiency or strive to increase its trade with other countries.” Self-sufficiency had been consistently favored, sometimes by two to one.

In March 2024 opinion was divided for the first time: 48% opted for self-sufficiency, while 49% opted for increasing international trade. Six months later in October, 52% opted for international trade, and those preferring self-sufficiency were down to 46%.

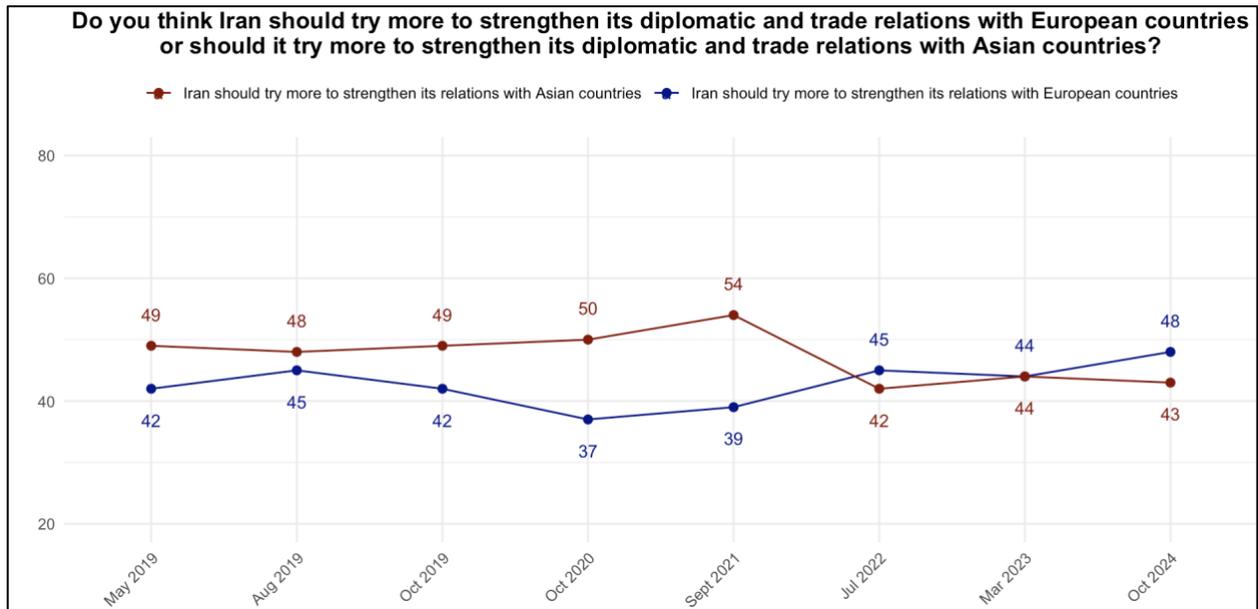
This is part of an evolution in public attitudes since 2019, when 69% favored self-sufficiency after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA. As recently as 2023 there was a 52% majority favoring self-sufficiency.

The surveys have also regularly asked (since 2019) whether:

Iran should try more to strengthen its diplomatic and trade relations with European countries such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, or should it try more to strengthen its diplomatic and trade relations with Asian countries like Russia, China, and India?

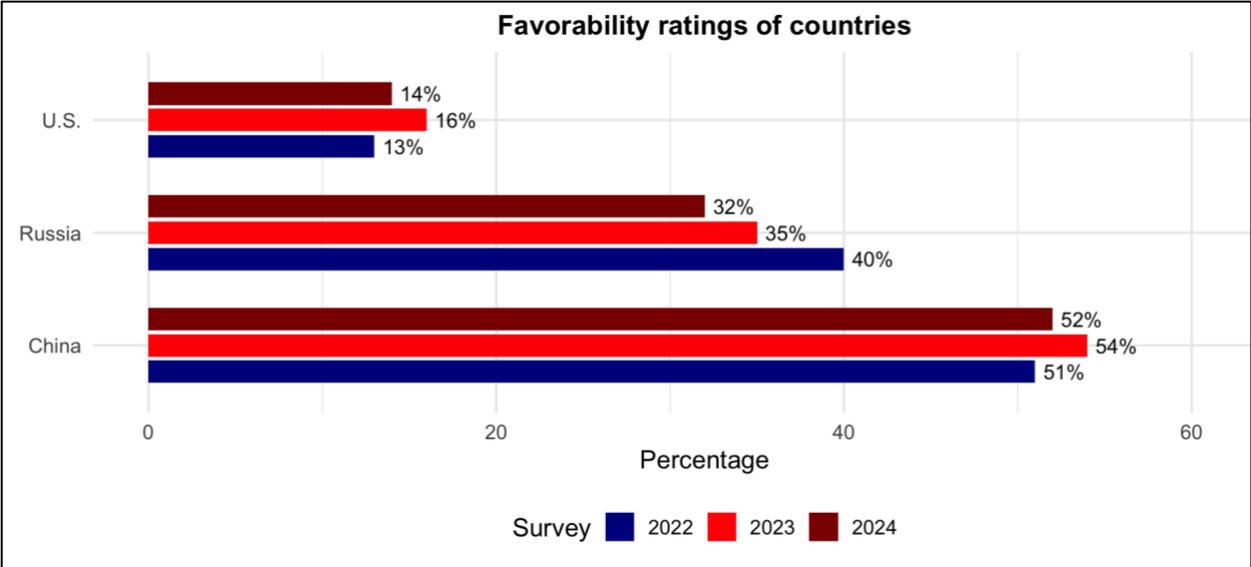
After President Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, interest in trade with Asia increased, cresting at 54% in 2021. By 2022 this had settled down. In 2023 there was no public preference; 44% each chose Europe or Asia. But when asked in October

2024, 48% preferred European countries and 43% preferred Asian countries—a slight plurality leaning toward Europe.

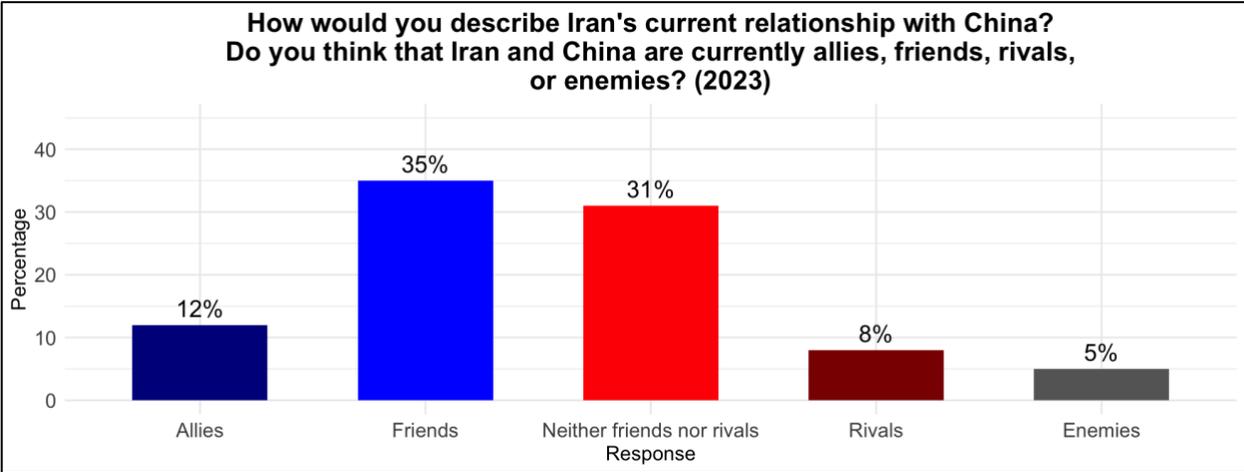


Still, in 2023 none of the European countries asked about were very popular. A slight majority (52%) had an unfavorable view of Germany, up from 46% in 2022. Negative attitudes toward Britain remained quite stable at 79% unfavorable (very, 61%).

Views of Russia and China have diverged sharply. In January 2018, 59% had a favorable view of Russia, while 54% saw China in favorable terms. Attitudes towards Russia steadily declined after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine; 67% held negative views in March 2024, while only 32% were positive. After dropping briefly in 2020 due to China’s association with the covid pandemic, Iranian attitudes grew much more favorable. In March 2024 52% had a favorable view (very, 11%), while 47% were unfavorable, which is a sunny reading in the Iranian context. Favorable views remained in majority territory from September 2021 into March 2024. (For comparison, favorable views of the United States remained in the 13-16% range.)



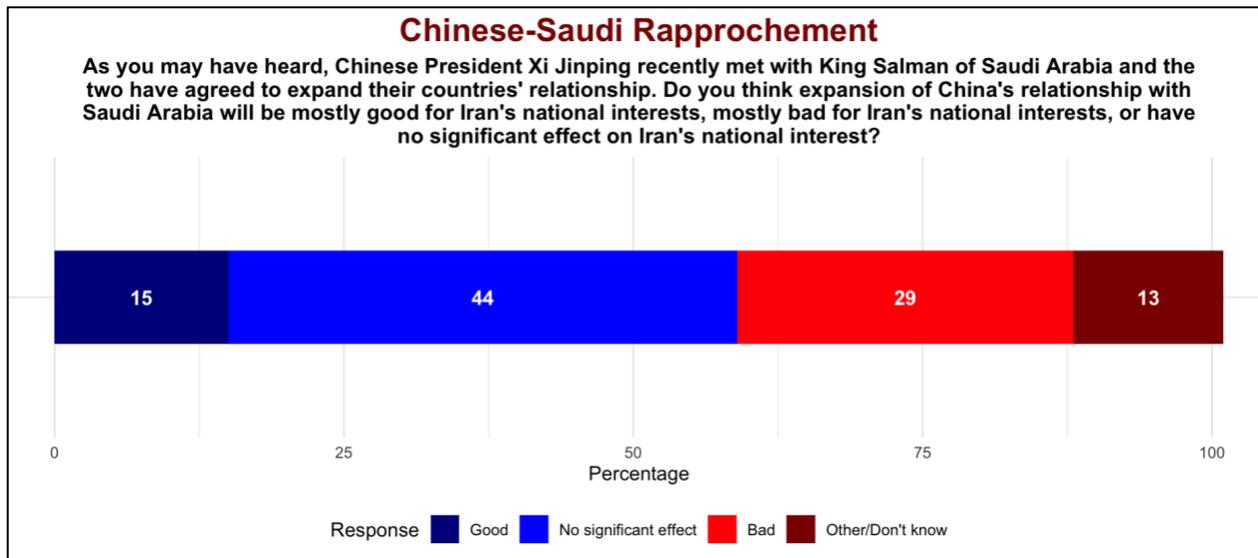
In 2023 almost half described China as a friendly or allied country. Respondents were asked to describe Iran’s relationship with China, and almost half—47%--said they were either friends (35%) or allies (12%). Another 31% said they were neither friends nor rivals. Only 13% characterized China and Iran as rivals (8%) or enemies (5%). Iranians gave nearly identical answers when asked about Iran’s strategic relationship with Russia, despite the more negative popular views of that country.



In 2023 respondents were reminded that “Iran and China are currently working on a large-scale agreement for increasing the trade and other cooperation between the two countries over the next twenty-five years.” A majority (58%) had heard something about this, and 63% of those who knew about it felt it would be in Iran’s interest (definitely, 30%). Opinions have grown more positive since the initiative began in 2020, when 56% thought it would be good for Iran.

Only three in ten were worried by China’s expansion of ties with Saudi Arabia in 2023. Told that “Chinese President Xi Jinping recently met with King Salman of Saudi Arabia and the two have agreed to expand their countries’ relationship,” just 29% said this was bad for Iran’s

national interests. The most common response (44%) was that it would have no significant effect on Iran's interests, while another 15% thought it would be a good thing.



The fielding of the 2023 survey took place just before China brokered a restoration of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, it is noteworthy that this is an area of activity in which public confidence in Raisi was still considerable before his death. Almost three in four (73%) were confident in spring 2024 that Raisi could improve relations with neighboring countries.

13. The War in Ukraine as of 2023

In 2023, four in five would have preferred that Iran not get itself involved in the war in Ukraine, but the public was divided on arms sales to Russia, and there was no majority view about what Iran was in fact doing. A slim plurality thought selling drones to Russia was in Iran's national interest, while almost four in ten disagreed. A slight majority were willing to sell weapons to Russia, at least under some conditions. Offered a hypothetical bargain in which Iran would stop selling Russian weapons in exchange for partial relaxation of sanctions on oil sales, a slim plurality approved.

Fewer than one in ten blamed Ukraine itself for the war. About a third blamed Russia, while a third blamed the United States, Western countries, or Europe. A quarter appeared unsure—more than in 2022. Favorability toward Ukraine had dropped to four in ten, while favorability toward Russia was slightly lower than toward Ukraine. A majority remained unreceptive to the Russian argument that Russia was acting in self-defense against U.S. and NATO influence in Ukraine.

In 2023 a majority (59%) had heard or read a lot or somewhat about the war in Ukraine—about as many as were following it a few months after the February 2022 invasion. Those who said they had heard nothing (19%) were not asked the questions that followed.

Respondents were asked to say in their own words, “Who or what do you blame most for the start of the war in Ukraine?” Fewer than one in ten blamed Ukraine itself for the war (Ukraine 6%, President Zelensky 2%). About a third blamed Russia (Russia 28%, Putin 4%). A third blamed the United States (22%), Western countries (2%), NATO (3%) or Europe (4%; the U.K., 2%). A quarter (24%) appeared unsure, either not replying or giving some other answer. Interestingly, this was more non-replies than in 2022 (19%), which suggests that the news many followed had gotten less clear, rather than more—though normally, time would have provided people with a greater basis to make up their minds.

Majorities did not have a favorable view of either Ukraine or Russia. Fifty-seven percent viewed Ukraine unfavorably (very, 26%), up 9 points since summer 2022. Sixty-three percent viewed Russia unfavorably (very, 36%), up 6 points. [Note: when the question on Russia was repeated in 2024, unfavourability was up to 67% (very, 40%).]

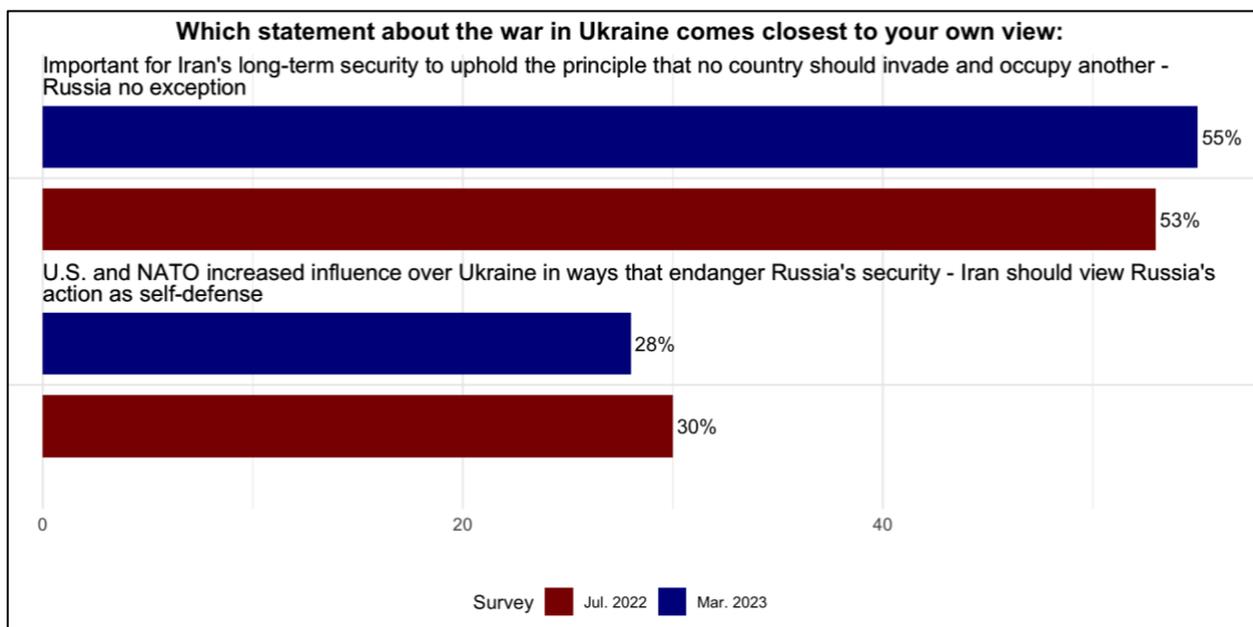
In 2023, a majority remained unreceptive to the Russian argument that Russia was acting in self-defense against U.S. and NATO influence in Ukraine. Respondents were asked to choose between two statements:

- It is extremely important for Iran’s long- term security to uphold the principle that no country should invade and occupy another. This principle applies equally to any country, and Russia is no exception.

or

- The United States and NATO have been increasing their influence over Ukraine in ways that endanger Russia’s security in the long run. Iran should view Russia’s military action as a form of self-defense.

As in summer 2022, a majority (53%) selected the no-territorial-aggression principle over the argument that the war is a matter of self-defense for Russia (30%). Eighteen percent declined to answer.



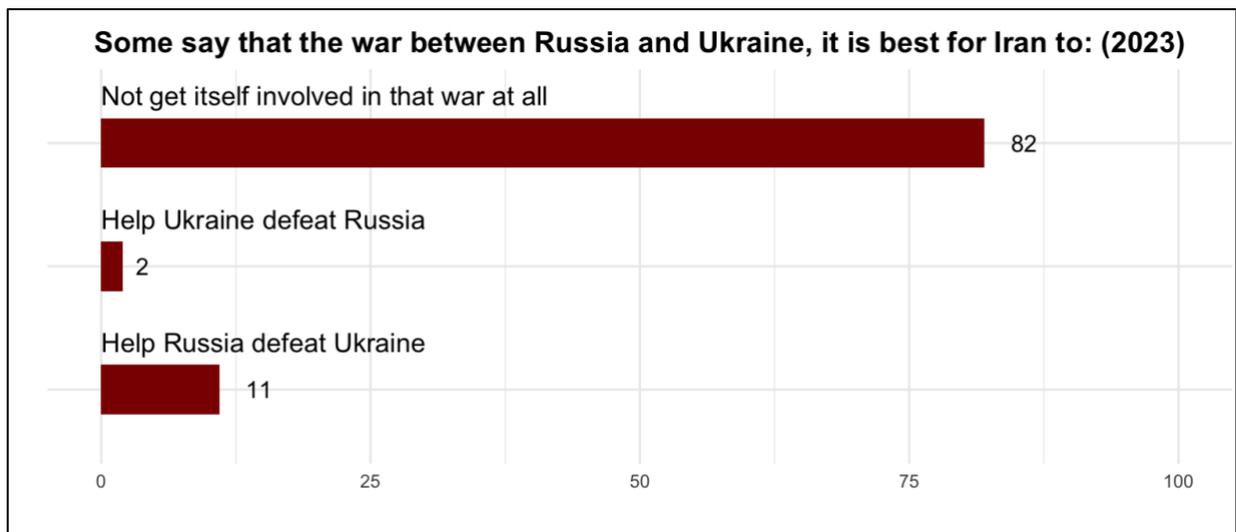
As in summer 2022, a slim plurality still preferred in 2023 that Iran “do more to oppose the war in Ukraine.” Respondents were offered two statements:

- It is unfortunately true that the war in Ukraine is killing many civilians and forcing others to leave their homes. But since Iran is not directly threatened and also since it is not clear who is to blame for the war, Iran should not take a position on this war.
- or
- Iran should do more to oppose the war in Ukraine, not only because it is causing the death of many civilians and forcing many to leave their homes, but also because Iran has always opposed the aggression of great powers against smaller countries.

A 45% plurality chose the second statement—that Iran should oppose great-power aggression in this case—while 39% chose the first, that Iran should not take a position.

At the same time, a very large majority preferred that Iran not get itself directly involved in the war in Ukraine. Respondents were offered three broad courses of action:

Some say that in the war between Ukraine and Russia, it is best for Iran to help Russia defeat Ukraine, some say it is best for Iran to help Ukraine defeat Russia, while others say Iran should not get itself involved in that war at all. What do you think Iran should do?



Eighty-two percent said Iran should not get involved at all. Only one in ten (11%) said it is best for Iran to help Russia to defeat Ukraine, while only 2% wanted to get involved in Ukraine’s side.

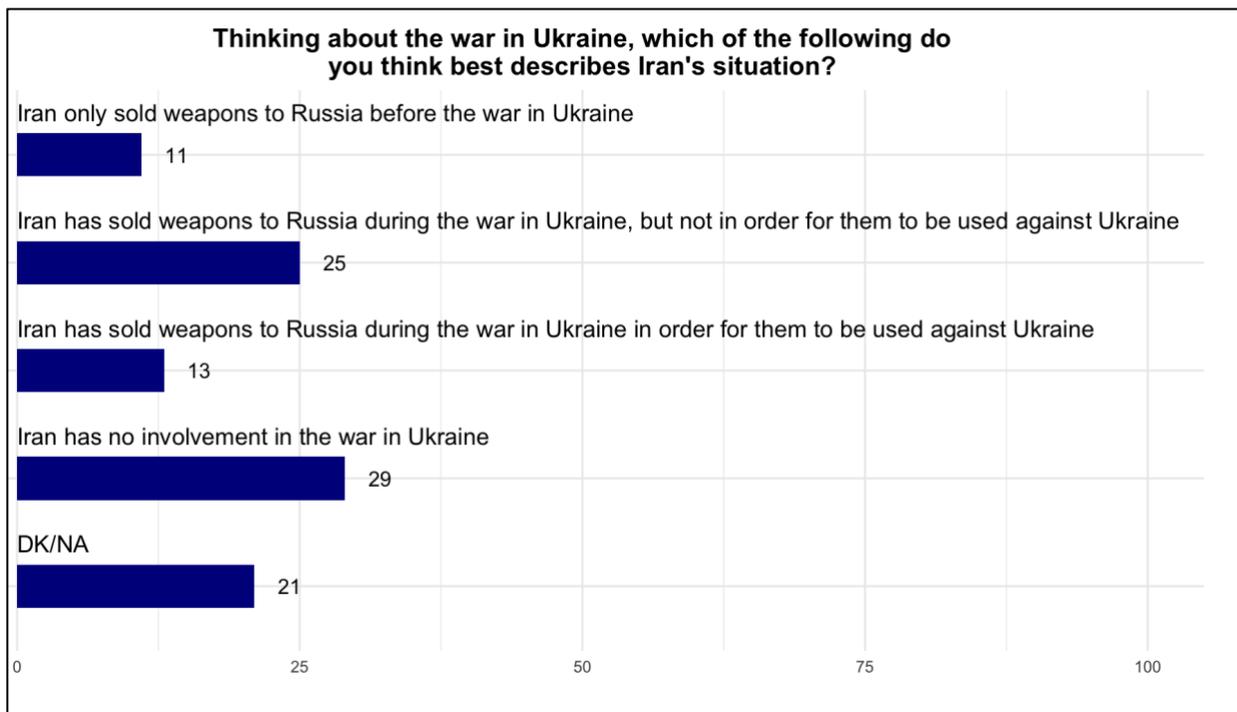
Iranian Arms Sales to Russia

At the same time, there was no majority in favor of curtailing arms sales to Russia. Respondents were reminded that:

There are reports of drone sales by Iran to Russia—drones that Russia has since used in waging the war in Ukraine. Iran’s position is that these sales were all made before the war began and no weapons have been sold to Russia to be used in the war in Ukraine. Ukraine’s position is that the drone sales to Russia are ongoing.

They were then asked whether these sales’ effects were good or bad for Iran’s national interest. Forty-four percent thought they were good, 37% thought they were bad and 19% did not answer.

There was no majority view about what Iran was in fact doing. Respondents were asked “which of the following do you think best describes Iran’s situation?” and given four choices. The most common answer—from just 29%--was that “Iran has no involvement in the war in Ukraine.” Twenty-five percent thought that “Iran has sold weapons to Russia during the war in Ukraine, but not in order for them to be used against Ukraine.” Thirteen percent thought that “Iran has sold weapons to Russia during the war in Ukraine in order for them to be used against Ukraine.” And 11% thought that “Iran only sold weapons to Russia before the war in Ukraine.” Tellingly (as in the previous question), 21% did not give an answer.



Respondents were asked what “Iran should be doing considering current circumstances,” and again given four choices. The most common answer (37%) was that Iran should have no involvement in the war. Twenty-four percent wanted to “sell weapons to Russia, but only on the condition that they not be used in Ukraine.” Another 25% said “Iran should sell weapons to Russia with no conditions.” Only 4% said “Iran should actively assist Russia with weapons that will help win the war against Ukraine.” Taken together, majorities both oppose doing anything that helps Russia in the Ukraine war (61% chose the first or second option) and support arms sales to Russia (53%, if those who do not want the weapons used in Ukraine are joined with those picking the third or fourth option.)

When respondents were offered an alternative source of income, the seeming majority for arms sales came unglued. They were told:

The United States wants Iran to stop selling weapons of any kind to Russia. If the United States offered to relax some sanctions on Iran so that it could earn the same amount by selling oil while stopping any arms trade with Russia, would you approve or disapprove of that agreement?

Forty-eight percent, a slim plurality, approved (19% strongly); 43% disapproved (23% strongly).

