

Iranian Public Opinion Soon After the Twelve-Day War

A Public Opinion Study | December 2025



Israeli attack on Sharan oil depot, Iran



Iranian missile attack on Haifa, Israel

Nancy W. Gallagher, Ebrahim Mohseni & Clay Ramsay

Photo credits: Majid Asgaripour/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via REUTERS (left); REUTERS/Rami Shlush (right)



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL &
SECURITY STUDIES AT MARYLAND

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) at the University of Maryland’s School of Public Policy conducts research, education, and outreach about how powerful trends associated with globalization are affecting international security. It focuses on strategies to increase international cooperation, especially where powerful technologies—with both beneficial and dangerous uses—are becoming widely available to states and non-state actors. To learn more about CISSM, visit www.cissm.umd.edu.

Methodology: The authors are responsible for survey design and analysis. This report is based on a probability sample nationally representative telephone survey fielded between September 13 and October 13, 2025, among a sample of 1,000 Iranians. The margin of error is +/-3.1%.

The samples were RDD samples drawn from all landline telephones in Iran. 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 a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). All interviews were monitored in real-time by call-center supervisors.

The AAPOR1 contact rate of the survey was 77%, the cooperation rate was 65%, and the overall response rate of AAPOR1 was 50%.

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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Previous CISSM reports on Iranian public opinion, questionnaires, and related publications are at: https://cissm.umd.edu/researchimpact/projects/security-cooperation-iran-challenges-and-opportunities#iran_surveys

Cover Images: “Iranian flags fly as fire and smoke from an Israeli attack on Sharan Oil depot rise, following Israeli strikes on Iran, in Tehran, Iran, June 15, 2025.” *WANA (West Asia News Agency) via Reuters*. June 15, 2025. <https://www.reutersconnect.com/item/fire-rages-at-tehrans-shahrain-oil-depot-after-israeli-attack> (LEFT); “Smoke and fire rise at an impacted facility site following a missile attack from Iran on Israel, in Haifa, June 15, 2025.” *Reuters*. June 15, 2025. <https://www.reutersconnect.com/item/missiles-attack-from-iran-on-israel> (RIGHT)

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 probes the attitudes of Iranians in late September and early October 2025, a few months after the June 2025 Twelve-Day War with Israel and the United States. The report is written in the past tense, as it describes how respondents dealt with the questions offered, many of which were retrospective when they were asked.

During data collection, Iranians' attention was turned toward their country's external security much more than in previous CISSM polls. This survey found notable signs of the "rally-round-the-flag effect" that many observers were commenting on at that time, including very positive appraisals of some aspects of their government's and military's performance during the war. Favorability ratings for Pezeshkian remained close to when he first took office a year earlier. Attitudes toward the regime were not significantly more negative soon after the war than they had been before it, contrary to some speculation.

There were significant indications of post-war anxiety and stress. For example, half did not perceive the war as over, expecting it to reignite in a few weeks. This group was significantly more critical of Iran's air defense efforts; more likely to see Iran as highly vulnerable to new U.S. sanctions; and less likely to trust authorities of the Islamic Republic. Two thirds of this group thought that "most government officials do not care what people like me think."

The findings include multiple indicators of political and economic discontent, but these measures were largely unchanged from the previous year. For example, seven in ten viewed the economy as "bad" or "very bad," about the same level as in 2024. Three in five said that domestic mismanagement and corruption were a larger problem for the economy than sanctions, a public judgment in place for many years.

Much of the report covers attitudes towards Iran's nuclear program in the context of broader views on national security. Three-quarters held that President Trump used negotiations with Iran to buy time while Israel prepared for war, and that the United States encouraged, or directed, Israel to attack Iran. Large majorities maintained that their military fought back successfully during the Twelve-Day War when no other country provided meaningful assistance. Support for Iran's missile program hit a record high, and for the first time, a slim majority of Iranians favored having a nuclear deterrent, not just a peaceful nuclear program.

Attitudes regarding the possibilities of more military strikes, tougher sanctions, and further negotiations with the United States indicated both continued resistance to coercion, and some openness to compromise if given credible reassurance. Shortly after extensive destruction of nuclear facilities, a majority wanted to respond by expanding Iran's nuclear program, while few preferred to reduce or stop all nuclear activities. Three-quarters predicted that if Iran were to

withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the United States and other countries would not be able to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons regardless of whatever military and non-military methods they tried. Iranians were split regarding whether additional sanctions could significantly worsen already difficult economic conditions, but only one quarter favored making concessions to prevent reimposition of U.N. sanctions, which occurred while this survey was in the field.

Large numbers were open to negotiations if they received credible assurances that Iran would not be attacked again and gained confidence that the United States really wanted to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. The public wanted such a future nuclear agreement to include sanctions relief resulting in a clear and tangible improvement in general living conditions, plus a commitment not to interfere in Iran's internal affairs. Majorities were willing to consider a new set of limits and transparency arrangements like those in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and were divided on whether ending support for groups like Hamas and Hezbollah could be entertained. Other demands that the Trump administration has made, like permanently ending uranium enrichment and limiting the range of Iranian missiles, remained categorically unacceptable after the Twelve-Day War, much as they were before it.

Summary of Findings

1. The Twelve-Day War (p. 8)

Majorities in Iran did not see the Twelve-Day War in June as a defeat but instead said that their country was able to defend itself effectively and withstand the attacks. Nine in ten said the IRGC's effort to punish Israeli attacks by firing missiles into Israel was successful. Over four in five thought Iran's government succeeded in preventing food and fuel shortages during the war.

2. Beliefs About the War's Causes (p. 9)

The view that Israel began the war with the intention of provoking regime change in Iran was by far the most popular explanation of the war, with more than four in five accepting it.

3. The U.S. Role and Relationship with Israel (p. 10)

Over four in five saw the United States as causal in starting the war, believing that without U.S. encouragement, Israel would not have attacked. This reflects Iranians' general attitude about the U.S.-Israel relationship. Half thought that the United States and Israel make important decisions together, with the United States mostly getting the final say, and another quarter even thought that the United States makes the important decisions and Israel mostly follows them even if it disagrees. Three-quarters believed that the United States used negotiations to buy time while Israel and the United States prepared for war.

4. Performance of Iranian Side During War (p. 12)

In October, Iranians were generally positive about most aspects of government performance during the war. Over four in five thought Iran's government succeeded in preventing food and fuel shortages during the war and applauded the IRGC's punishing missile attacks on Israel. Almost as many considered the intelligence and security services efforts at least somewhat successful. Assessments of air defense efforts were mixed.

5. Reasons for Ceasefire (p. 13)

Large majorities maintained that the ceasefire happened relatively quickly because Iran imposed high costs on Israel, could have closed the Strait of Hormuz if the war continued, and convinced Israel and the United States that the war was not achieving their objectives. A bare majority thought neighboring countries played an important role, while about a third said that Israel and the United States accomplished their war aims.

6. Perceptions of Whether Peace is Stable (p. 13)

In October, Iranians had widely varying expectations about how long the current peace would last. A slight majority said it was at least somewhat likely that war would reignite in the next few weeks. An additional one in ten thought this might happen in the next twelve months. A little over a third thought resumption of the war unlikely, at least within the next twelve months.

7. *Economic Effects of the War (p. 15)*

The war did not seem to impact the public's negative view of the economy one way or the other. Seven in ten said the general economic situation is bad, and four in ten called it very bad. As in the past, when asked to compare, three in five saw domestic mismanagement and corruption as a stronger negative factor than sanctions. Despite widespread worries that war might re-ignite, the number who named that prospect or sanctions as the top problem facing their country was dwarfed by those who cited some internal economic challenge.

8. *Sanctions (p. 17)*

As in the past, when asked to compare, three in five saw domestic mismanagement and corruption as a stronger negative factor than sanctions. While about half thought that possible new sanctions from the United States could greatly worsen Iran's economy, the other half thought the United States has already sanctioned Iran to the fullest degree possible anyway.

Only one in five favored accepting EU demands to prevent reimposition of United Nations sanctions, which occurred while the survey was in the field. Three-quarters thought Iran should first receive assurances that its nuclear program would not be attacked again before considering accepting EU demands.

9. *Political and Social Conditions After the War (p. 18)*

Attitudes toward President Pezeshkian were as positive three months after the war (October) as they were in the honeymoon period right after he took office. Almost two-thirds regarded him favorably, and majorities remained confident he could advance most aspects of his agenda. Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, was viewed favorably by three in five, up slightly from 2024.

As in the past, about half said that most government officials do not care what people like them think, but a majority did not hold that view in October. Roughly half expressed trust in the authorities of the Islamic Republic, with slightly more saying so when the question was asked directly than indirectly.

Those who thought policymakers should take religious teachings into account "a lot" have fallen below four in ten, but three-quarters still wanted religious teachings to be considered at least somewhat. The growing majority who said that women who do not observe hijab should not be confronted reached almost two-thirds.

10. *Views of Iran's Greatest Challenges and Desire for Change (p. 24)*

Six in ten viewed the economy, or aspects of it, as Iran's greatest challenge, even after the war experience. A plurality of Iranians still prioritized economic improvement over other types of change, but a quarter wanted greater national security above all else.

11. Attitudes Toward Iran's Security (p. 25)

Iranian attitudes on security hardened further after the Twelve-Day War. Seven in ten thought Iran must become much better armed, because the war showed it cannot depend on international norms against aggression. Only a quarter said that the war showed Iran cannot defend itself against major aggression and should make difficult concessions. China and Russia's lack of interest in doing more to help Iran during the war came as no surprise to the great majority.

A majority thought that when Israel struck some of Iran's air defenses in October 2024, Iran should have responded militarily instead of showing restraint. A growing majority—four in five—said Iran should punish the perpetrators whenever there is evidence of a violation of Iran's territory. Those who maintain that it is very important to develop Iran's missile program grew to four in five.

12. Iran's Nuclear Program (p. 27)

For the first time, a slim majority wanted to “develop both atomic bombs and nuclear power.” After the U.S. bombing of Iranian nuclear facilities, four in five wanted to rebuild the program, with a majority wanting to expand it beyond pre-attack levels. Public perceptions of how long it would take for Iran to acquire nuclear weapons if its leaders decided to do so increased slightly, but two-thirds saw it as taking two years or less. Three in five expected the United States and other countries to take military action against Iran if it withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) but thought this could not prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

At the same time, seven in ten favored the idea of Iran becoming a founding member of a nuclear consortium for the Middle East and North Africa, in which “All member states would reject nuclear weapons, share enrichment and research facilities, and jointly verify members are using nuclear technology solely for peaceful purposes.”

13. Negotiations on Nuclear Issues (p. 32)

The public viewed the nuclear negotiations that took place with the Trump administration before the war quite negatively, with three in four saying Trump used negotiations to buy time while Israel and the United States prepared for war. Half maintained that Iran should not resume these negotiations until it becomes confident that the United States really seeks a mutually beneficial agreement; an additional three in ten required credible assurances that Iran would not be attacked again.

The public was open to some options for future negotiation with the United States. A majority thought that a new set of requirements, like those in the 2015 Nuclear Deal, that would expire in a given number of years, could be acceptable. Half also saw ending support for Hamas, Hezbollah, and other groups as negotiable depending on circumstances. Majorities saw as unacceptable permanent limits on the nuclear program, a permanent end to uranium enrichment, or reducing the range of ballistic missiles. Over seven in ten considered sanctions relief that

results in clear improvement of living conditions, and a step-for-step structure to ensure that Iran gets benefits in return for concessions as necessary components of an acceptable deal.

14. Climate Change and the Environment (p. 38)

The size of the majority that views climate change as a serious problem has grown considerably in the last fifteen years, but the perception that most scientists thought the problem is urgent and that action against it is possible has fallen to about one-half. The other half perceived either that there is no scientific consensus or that it runs the other way. Growing majorities (seven in ten) expected unchecked climate change to strongly affect Iran's food prices, likelihood of natural disasters, and water resources.

Three in five were personally affected by water shortages in 2025. Almost half preferred the government to allocate more water to farmers, even at the cost of electricity shortages, but this preference was declining. Three in five still preferred that the government prioritize the environment when there is a conflict with economic growth. Awareness of international agreements on climate change, such as the Paris Agreement, has declined. However, three in five continued to approve of Iran taking steps against climate change, despite the costs involved.

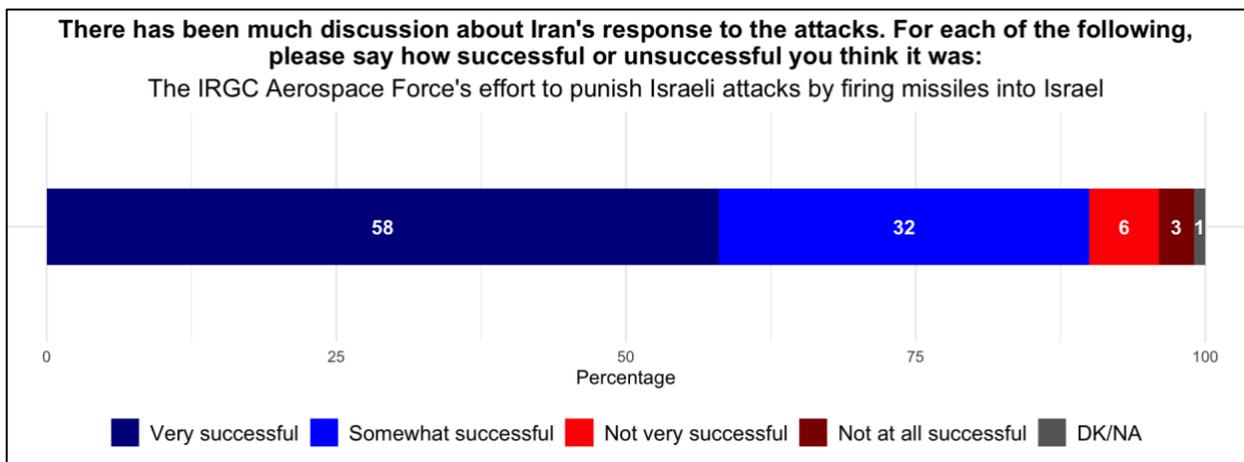
15. Iranians Evaluate Their Own Well-Being (p. 42)

There was no indication in October that collectively, Iranians had grown more discouraged about their individual lives. On a scale of 0 to 10, only one in five gave their life a rating of 3 or below, fewer than the three in ten who did so in 2021. A clear majority saw themselves as being in the middle of the well-being scale. When considering their personal expectations for five years from now, three in four had expectations that were middling to good, more than in 2021.

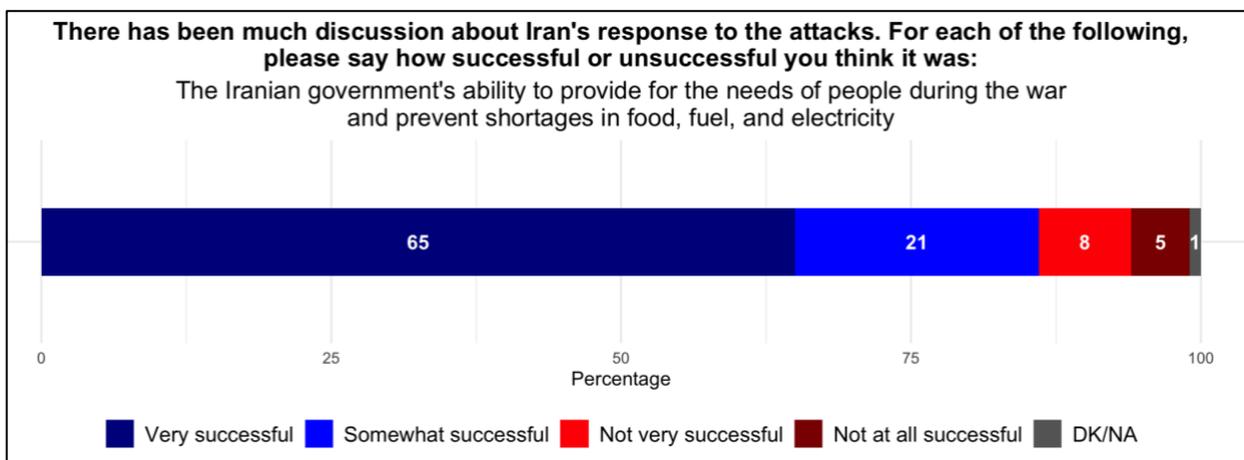
1. The Twelve-Day War

Majorities in Iran did not see the Twelve-Day War in June as a defeat but instead said that their country was able to defend itself effectively and withstand the attacks. Nine in ten said the IRGC's effort to punish Israeli attacks by firing missiles into Israel was successful. Over four in five thought Iran's government succeeded in preventing food and fuel shortages during the war.

Three months after the Twelve-Day War, majorities in the Iranian public look on it primarily as a successful test of the country's self-defense and resilience. Asked what degree of success they saw in the efforts of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to punish Israeli attacks by firing missiles into Israel, 58% called it very successful and another 32% somewhat successful (not very, 6%; not at all, 3%).



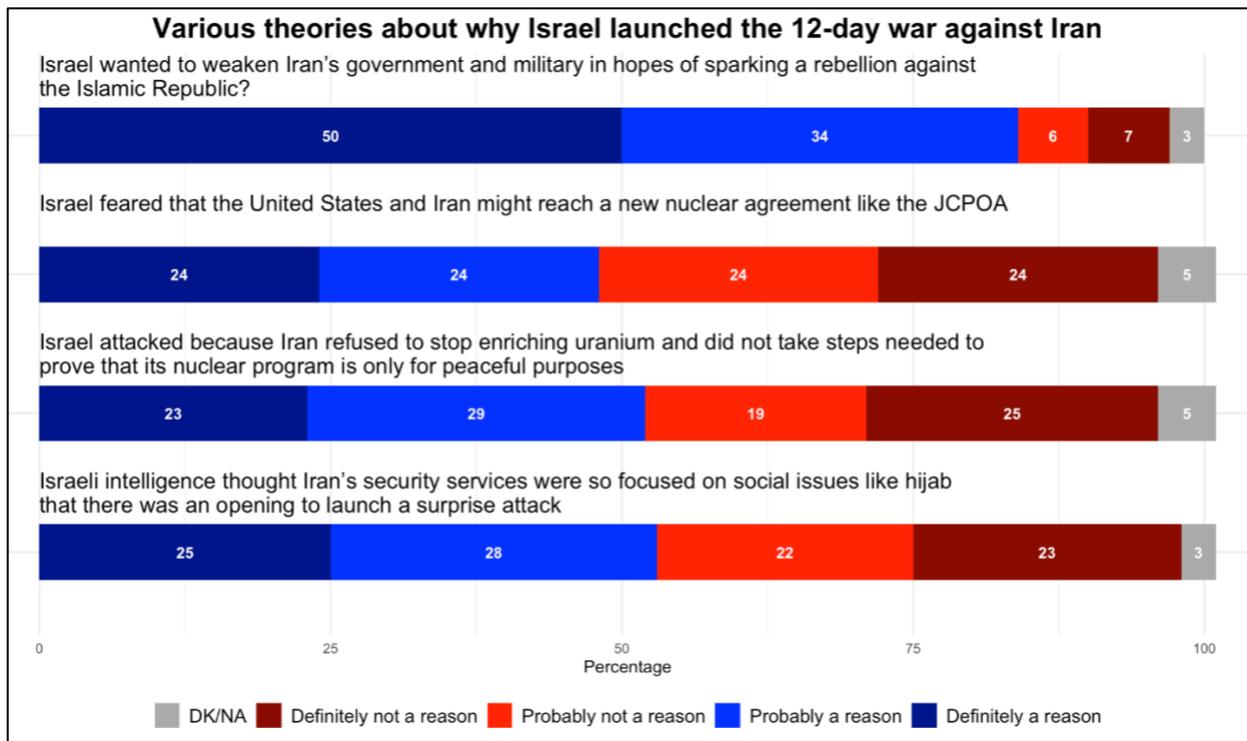
Over four in five were positive about the performance of Iran's government in keeping civilian life going during the war. Sixty-five percent said the government was very successful in "provid[ing] for the needs of the people during the war and prevent[ing] shortages in food, fuel and electricity," and another 21% that it was somewhat successful.



2. Beliefs about the War's Causes

The view that Israel began the war intending to provoke regime change in Iran was by far the most popular explanation of the war, with more than four in five accepting it.

Nearly all respondents (84%) thought that Israel was attempting to spark a rebellion within Iran when it began the war (which did not come to pass). Respondents were offered four “theories about why Israel launched the Twelve-Day War.” The idea that “Israel wanted to weaken Iran’s government and military in hopes of sparking a rebellion against the Islamic Republic” was by far the most popular, with 50% thinking this was a reason, and 34% that it was probably a reason. Other theories got levels of assent that were easily 30 points lower.

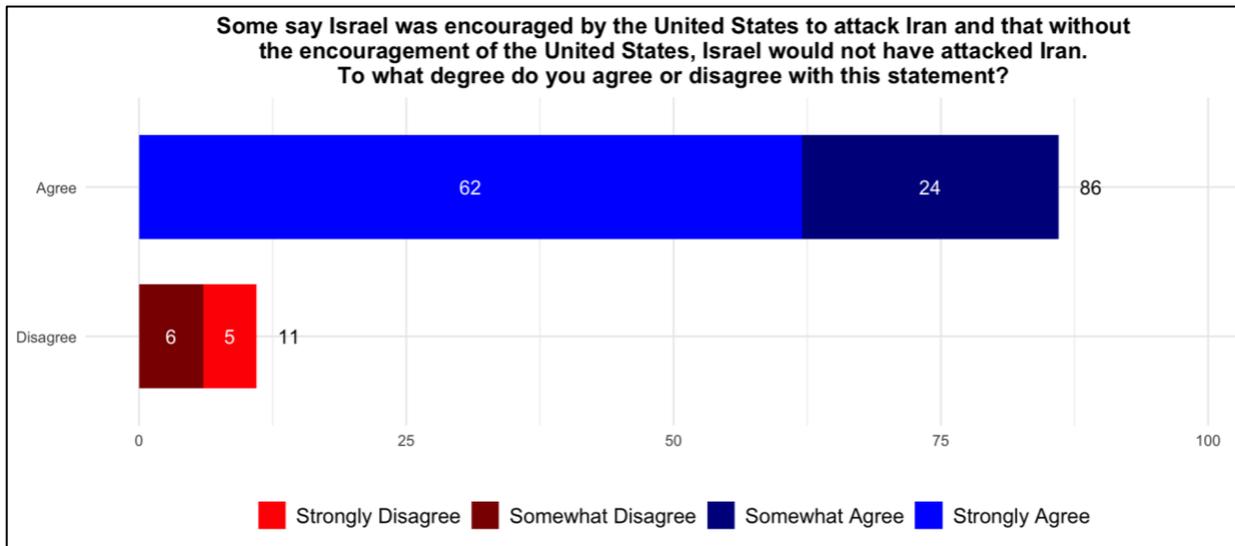


A majority (53%) found some merit in the idea that “Israeli intelligence thought Iran’s security services were so focused on social issues like hijab that there was an opening to launch a surprise attack” (25% definitely a reason, 28% probably). The nuclear explanation, that “Israel attacked because Iran refused to stop enriching uranium and did not take steps needed to prove that its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes” — likely the theory with most credence in the West—was given some causal weight by 51% (23% definitely a reason, 29% probably). The possible reason that seemed least plausible is that “Israel feared that the United States and Iran might reach a new nuclear agreement like the JCPOA” — with just 48% accepting it (24% definitely a reason, 24% probably).

3. The U.S. Role and Relationship with Israel

Over four in five saw the United States as causal in starting the war, believing that without U.S. encouragement, Israel would not have attacked. This reflected Iranians' general attitude about the U.S.-Israel relationship. Half thought that the United States and Israel make important decisions together, with the United States mostly getting the final say, and another quarter even thought that the United States makes the important decisions and Israel mostly follows them even if it disagrees. Three-quarters believed that the United States used negotiations to buy time while Israel and the United States prepared for war.

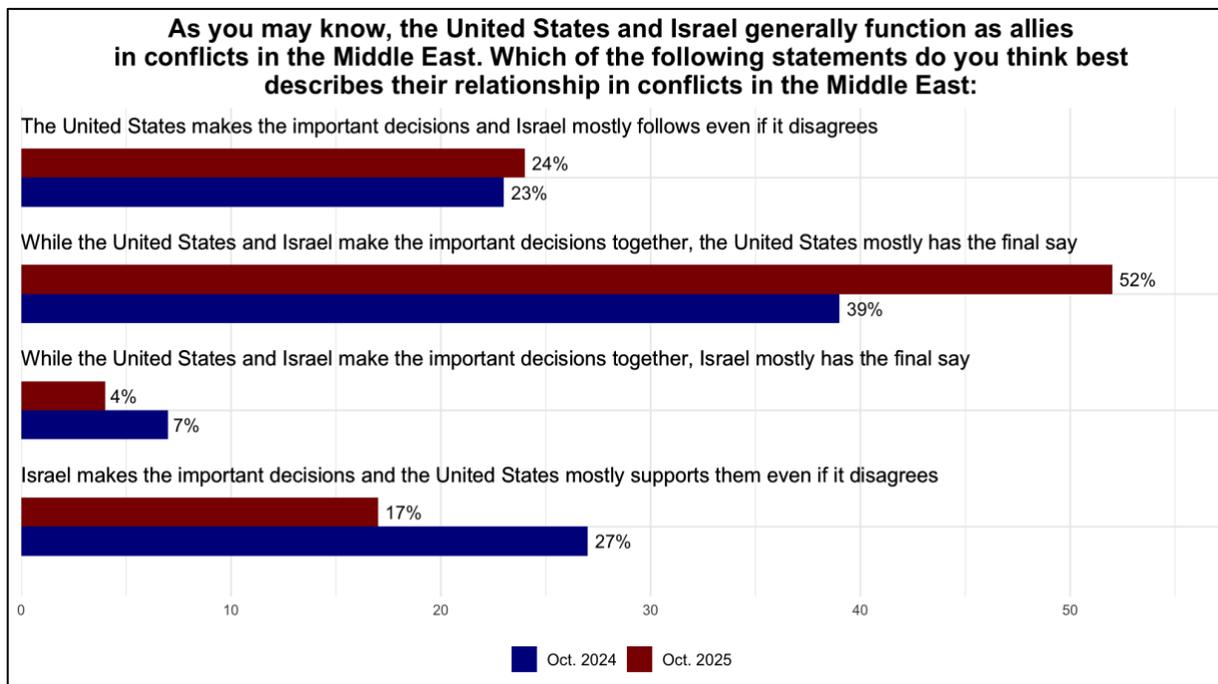
A near unanimous 86% agreed (62% strongly) that “Israel was encouraged by the United States to attack Iran and ...without the encouragement of the United States, Israel would not have attacked Iran.” Only 12% disagreed. This view was consistent with most respondents' picture of how the U.S-Israel relationship works.



Respondents were asked, “As you may know, the United States and Israel generally function as allies in conflicts in the Middle East. Which of the following statements do you think best describes their relationship in conflicts in the Middle East?” and then given four choices, as follows:

- The United States makes the important decisions, and Israel mostly follows them, even if it disagrees
- While the United States and Israel make the important decisions together, the United States mostly has the final say
- While the United States and Israel make the important decisions together, Israel mostly has the final say
- Israel makes the important decisions, and the United States mostly supports them even if it disagrees

A 52% majority chose the second option, that while the countries make the important decisions together, the United States mostly has the final say. Next most popular (24%) was that the important decisions are made by the United States, and Israel mostly follows them even if it disagrees. Thus, 76% of respondents believed that the United States steers the relationship. Only 21% said either that Israel makes the important decisions and the United States mostly supports them even if it disagrees (17%), or that they make the important decisions together, but Israel mostly has the final say.



This question was asked earlier in October 2024, not about “conflicts in the Middle East,” but about “the war in Gaza.” At that time, for a more delimited subject, a lesser majority assumed U.S. dominance in the U.S.-Israel relationship. Sixty-two percent thought either that “the United States mostly has the final say” (39%) or that it “makes the important decisions” (23%)—14 points lower than for Middle East conflicts generally.

This view of the US-Israeli relationship helps explain Iranian skepticism that Israel launched the attack to prevent the United States from achieving its negotiating objectives. Seventy-three percent of respondents who rejected the idea of Israel attacking to derail a new deal strongly agreed with the idea that Israel would not have attacked without U.S. encouragement. Only 52% of those who considered this a plausible Israeli motive took that position.

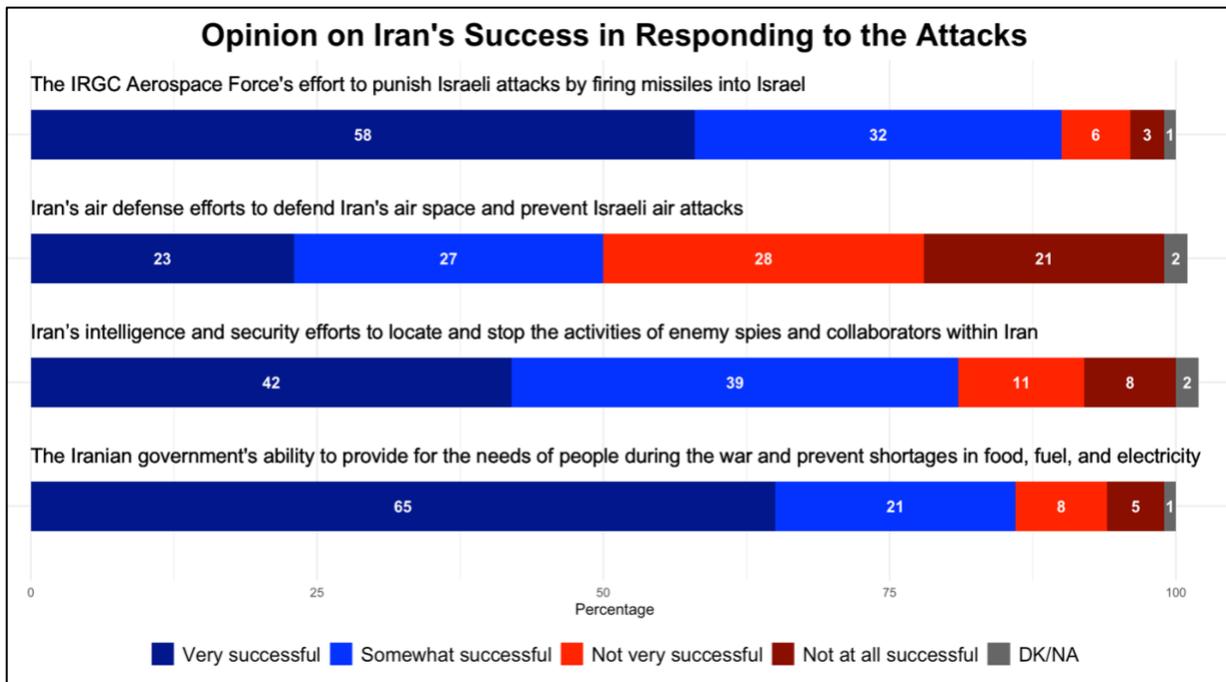
There was also great cynicism about the Trump administration’s motives for conducting nuclear discussions with Iran before the attack occurred. Seventy-five percent endorsed the option that “Trump used negotiations to buy time while Israel and the United States prepared for war,” while

only 21% aligned with the alternative statement, that “Trump genuinely wanted to negotiate and reach a new nuclear agreement with Iran.”



4. Performance of Iranian Side During War

In October, Iranians were generally positive about most aspects of government performance during the war. Over four in five thought Iran’s government succeeded in preventing food and fuel shortages during the war and applaud the IRGC’s punishing missile attacks on Israel. Almost as many considered the intelligence and security services efforts at least somewhat successful. Assessments of air defense efforts were mixed.



Sixty-five percent said the government was very successful in “provid[ing] for the needs of the people during the war and prevent[ing] shortages in food, fuel and electricity,” and another 21% that it was somewhat successful. Fifty-eight percent judged the IRGC Aerospace Force’s effort to punish Israel by firing missiles at it to have been “very successful,” while another 32% saw it as somewhat successful. Forty-two percent viewed “Iran’s intelligence and security efforts to locate and stop the activities of enemy spies and collaborators within Iran” as very successful, and another 21% were mildly positive. There was more skepticism about “Iran’s air defense efforts to defend Iran’s airspace and prevent Israeli air attacks,” with half (49%) calling these successful and just as many unsuccessful.

5. Reasons for Ceasefire

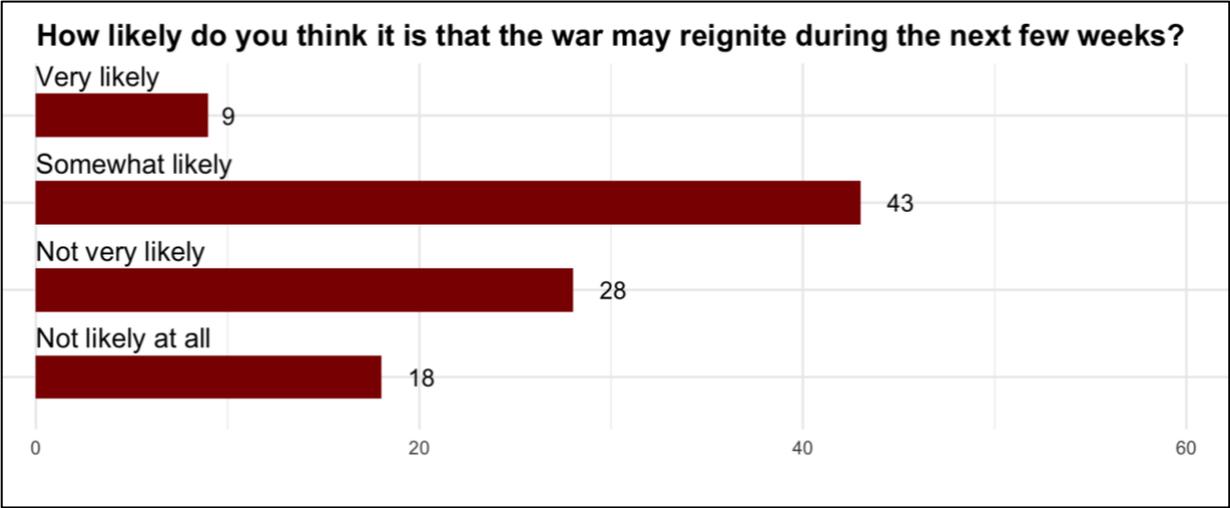
Large majorities maintained that the ceasefire happened relatively quickly because Iran imposed high costs on Israel, could have closed the Strait of Hormuz if the war continued, and convinced Israel and the United States that the war was not achieving their objectives. A bare majority thought neighboring countries played an important role, while about a third said that Israel and the United States accomplished their war aims.

When asked to consider why the United States called for a ceasefire after twelve days of war, the most popular explanation, endorsed by 84%, involved “the cost Iran was imposing...by firing missiles into Israel was too great” (definitely a reason, 53%). Nearly as many (81%) believed that a ceasefire occurred relatively quickly because Iran had the “option of closing the Strait of Hormuz” and other countries wanted to avoid this (81%; 39% definitely a reason). Seventy-five percent agreed that the United States and Israel “realized they could not achieve their objectives through war”; 44% said this was definitely a reason, while only 23% disagreed.

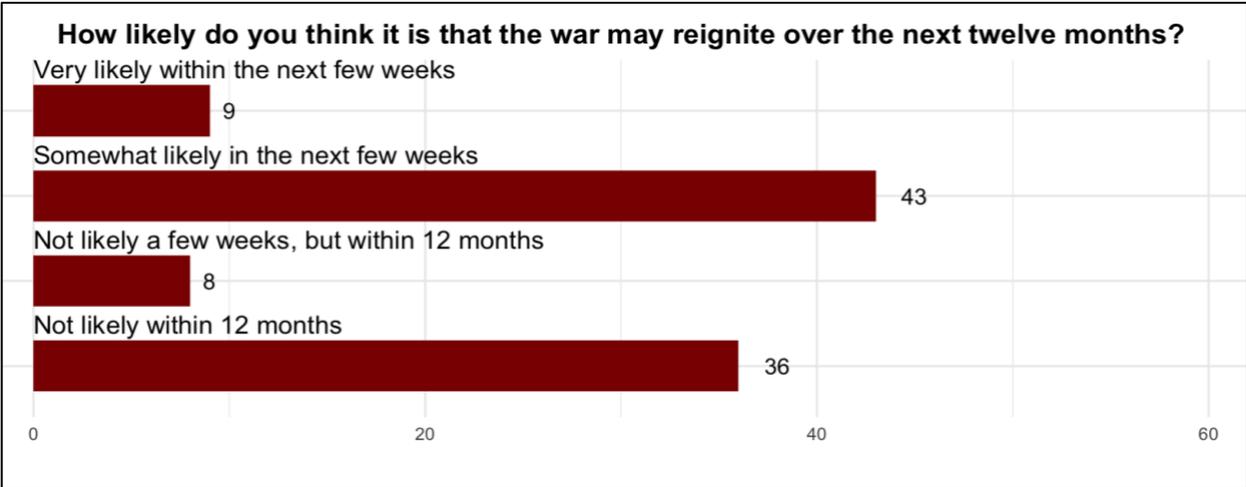
Iranians were less inclined to think that “neighboring countries...work[ing] together to urge a ceasefire” had a meaningful impact (51%, with 46% disagreeing). Three in five (60%) rejected the idea that the war stopped because “Israel and the United States achieved all their war goals, so they did not need to continue the war”; only 37% thought this was a reason.

6. Perceptions of Whether the Peace is Stable

In October, Iranians had widely varying expectations about how long the current peace would last. A slight majority said it was at least somewhat likely that war would reignite in the next few weeks. An additional one in ten thought this might happen in the next twelve months. A little over a third thought resumption of the war unlikely, at least within the next twelve months.



Over the period of polling (mid-September to mid-October), all respondents were asked, “How likely do you think it is that the war may reignite during the next few weeks?” Fifty-one percent thought it was very (9%) or somewhat (43%) likely. However, 46% thought it was not very likely (28%) or not likely at all (18%). Those who thought it unlikely were then asked: “How likely do you think it is that the war may reignite over the next twelve months?” Of this group, 18% (that is, 8% of the full sample) thought a resumption was likely in this time frame; so overall, 59% thought the war could pick up again fairly soon. The remaining 36% of the full sample thought a resumption unlikely within the next twelve months.



When the attitudes of those who expected war again *in the next few weeks* are compared with the attitudes of all the others, the first group was understandably less sanguine, and the second group more confident. Fifty-five percent of the first group felt that air defense efforts during the war were not successful, but 56% of the second group felt that they were at least somewhat successful. In the first group (who expected war would resume soon), 56% did not see the efforts of neighboring countries as having contributed to a ceasefire, and only 41% saw Russia as either a friend or an ally. But in the second group (who do not expect renewed war), 64% did

view neighbors' efforts as a reason the ceasefire took place, and 51% saw Russia as a friend or ally. Hence, those who expected early resumption of war were more likely to see Iran as isolated, while those who did not expect this saw Iran as having some relationships with effective benefits.

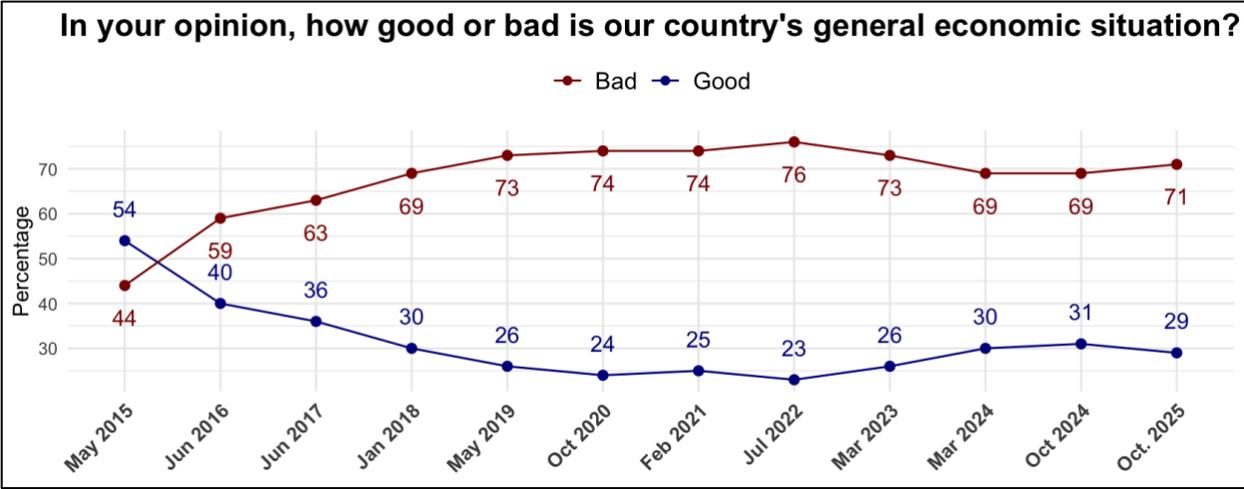
Consistent with this, those expecting a quick return to war saw Iran as more vulnerable to possible new US sanctions than did the rest of the respondents. Fifty-nine percent of the first group thought that "If the United States wants, it can increase its sanctions on Iran and that would greatly worsen Iran's economy, even beyond the current difficult situation." In the second group (who did not expect a quick return to war) 58% thought instead that "The United States has already sanctioned Iran to the fullest degree possible and it cannot make Iran's economic conditions more difficult than current conditions even if it tries." (See section 8 for a full discussion of this question.)

Finally, those who expected war might soon resume were somewhat less likely to trust government officials than were those who did not. Asked how much they agreed with the statement "I trust the authorities of the Islamic Republic," 56% of the first group said they did not trust them, but 64% of the second group said they did. Similarly, asked to choose between two statements—"most government officials care what people like me think," or most do not care—65% of the first group said most government officials do not care, but 55% of the second group said they do care.

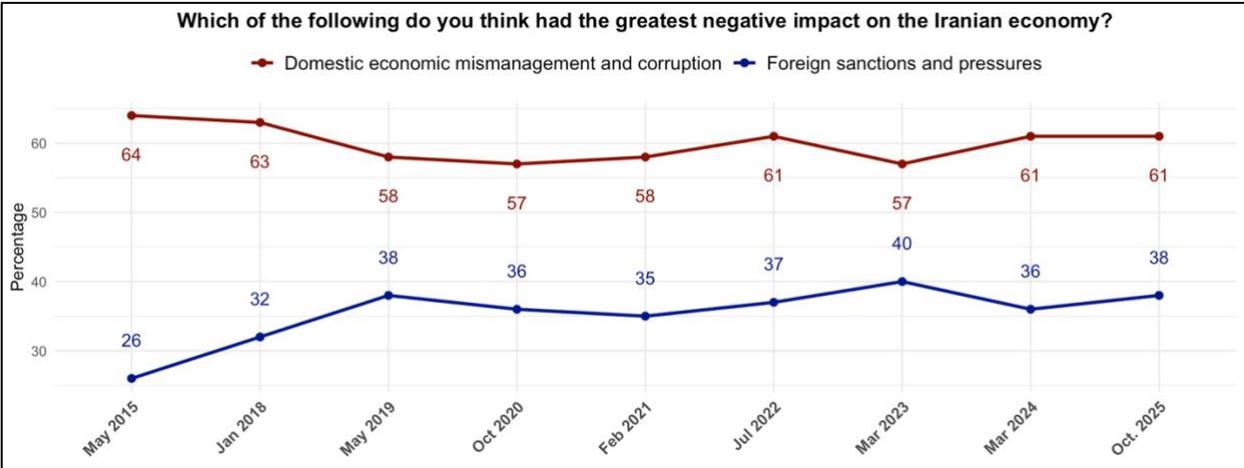
7. Economic Effects of the War

The war seems not to have impacted the public's negative view of the economy one way or the other. Seven in ten said the general economic situation is bad, and four in ten called it very bad. As in the past, when asked to compare, three in five saw domestic mismanagement and corruption as a stronger negative factor than sanctions. Despite widespread worries that war might re-ignite, the number who named that prospect or sanctions as the top problem facing their country were dwarfed by those who cited some internal economic challenge.

There was remarkably little sign in October that the Twelve-Day War affected the already low economic confidence among Iranians. Respondents were asked (as they have been for many years in this series): "How good or bad is our country's economic situation?" Seventy-one percent described it as bad, and 41% called it very bad. Twenty-nine percent called it good, but only 5% called it very good. These results are very similar to October 2024, the only variation being a 3-point drop in those calling the economy very bad and a 5-point rise in those calling it somewhat bad.



When asked whether foreign sanctions and pressures, or domestic economic mismanagement and corruption, had the greatest negative impact on the economy, 61% picked domestic causes, and only 38% picked sanctions. This finding has been very stable since 2019, the year after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA.



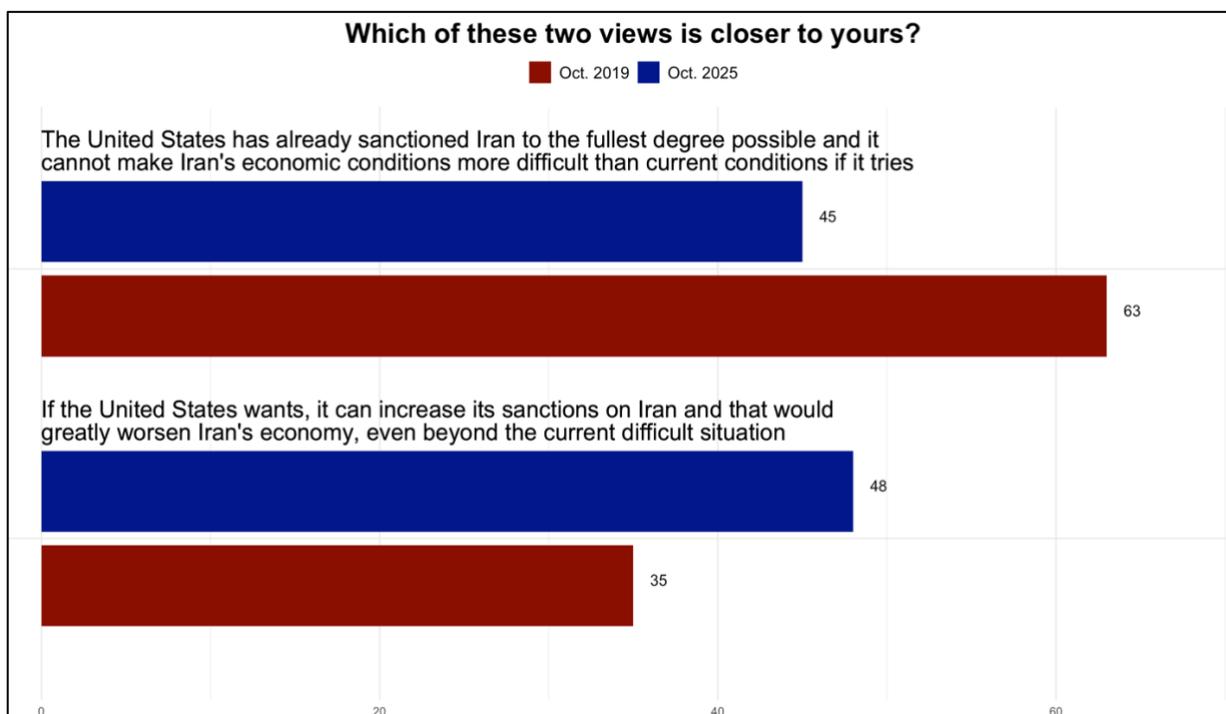
When asked in the current study to name Iran’s greatest challenge in their own words, 59% identified a cluster of domestic economic issues: inflation (27%), poverty (12%), unemployment (6%), housing problems (1%), or just the economy in general (13%). Related issues connected to officialdom (19%) were also commonly cited: mismanagement (8%), shortages, including water (4%), economic and administrative corruption (4%), and the incompetence of officials (2%). Issues that originate from abroad—named by 14%—included sanctions (10%), Iran’s foreign relations (3%), and the threat of war (surprisingly, only 2%). Finally, 3% named social and cultural issues, and 2% discrimination and injustice.

8. Sanctions

As in the past, when asked to compare, three in five saw domestic mismanagement and corruption as a stronger negative factor than sanctions. While about half thought that possible new sanctions from the United States could greatly worsen Iran’s economy, the other half thought the United States had already sanctioned Iran to the fullest degree possible anyway.

Only one in five favored accepting EU demands to prevent reimposition of United Nations sanctions, which occurred while the survey was in the field. Three-quarters thought Iran should first receive assurances that its nuclear program would not be attacked again before considering accepting EU demands.

Nine in ten (88%) said “current U.S. sanctions” have negatively impacted Iran’s economy (great impact, 56%), and only 12% said they have had little or no impact. Compared to two and a half years ago (March 2023), those calling it a “great impact” were up by five points, but otherwise opinion showed little change. At the same time, only 38% said sanctions have had a greater impact than domestic mismanagement and corruption (61%), a view stable since 2019.



Considering U.S. threats of new, additional sanctions, we asked respondents to choose between two statements assessing this possibility. Almost half (48%) thought that “If the United States wants, it can increase its sanctions on Iran, and that would greatly worsen Iran's economy, even beyond the current difficult situation.” Nearly as many (45%) thought instead that “The United States has already sanctioned Iran to the fullest degree possible and it cannot make Iran’s economic conditions more difficult than current conditions even if it tries.” (This question was last asked in 2019, when Iran was settling in with the renewed U.S. sanctions that accompanied

its withdrawal from the JCPOA. At that time, a higher 63% thought the United States could not worsen Iran’s economy further, while 35% thought that it could.)

While this survey was in the field, the European signatories to the JCPOA were discussing a snapback of U.N. Security Council sanctions. However, few favored accepting EU demands to prevent the reimposition of United Nations sanctions. Respondents were reminded of the French, German, and British requirements—that Iran should resume talks with the United States, restore full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and disclose its movements of heavily enriched uranium at the time of the war, if it wished to avoid snapback. Asked to choose between two statements, only 22% chose, “Economic conditions in Iran are so bad that we should meet these three demands to avoid the reimposition of UN sanctions.” Instead, 73% chose: “Since Iran’s territory was attacked and its nuclear facilities damaged, it should not meet these three demands without assurances that its nuclear program won’t be attacked again.”

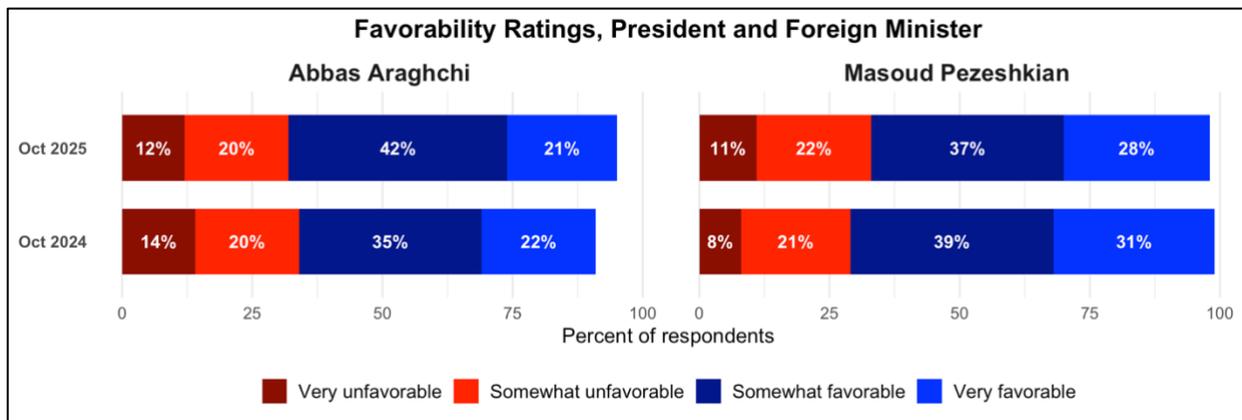
9. Political and Social Conditions after the War

Attitudes toward President Pezeshkian were as positive three months after the war (October) as they were in the honeymoon period right after he took office. Almost two-thirds regarded him favorably, and majorities remained confident in his ability to advance most aspects of his agenda. Iran’s foreign minister, Araghchi, was viewed favorably by three in five, up slightly from 2024.

As in the past, about half said that most government officials do not care what people like them think, but a majority did not hold that view in October. Roughly half expressed trust in the authorities of the Islamic Republic, with slightly more saying so when the question was asked directly than indirectly.

Those who thought policymakers should take religious teachings into account “a lot” were below four in ten in October, but three-quarters still wanted religious teachings to be considered at least somewhat. The growing majority who said that women who do not observe hijab should not be confronted reached almost two-thirds.

Perhaps despite the Twelve Day War or perhaps because of it, 65% of respondents viewed President Pezeshkian favorably in October 2025 (very, 28%). This was only four points below Pezeshkian’s rating twelve months before. Seventy percent also expressed confidence that Pezeshkian will be “an honest and trustworthy president” (25% very confident), while 30% lacked confidence—unchanged from twelve months earlier. His foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, who led ill-fated negotiations with the United States in June, did not suffer for it: his favorability rose from 57 to 62%.

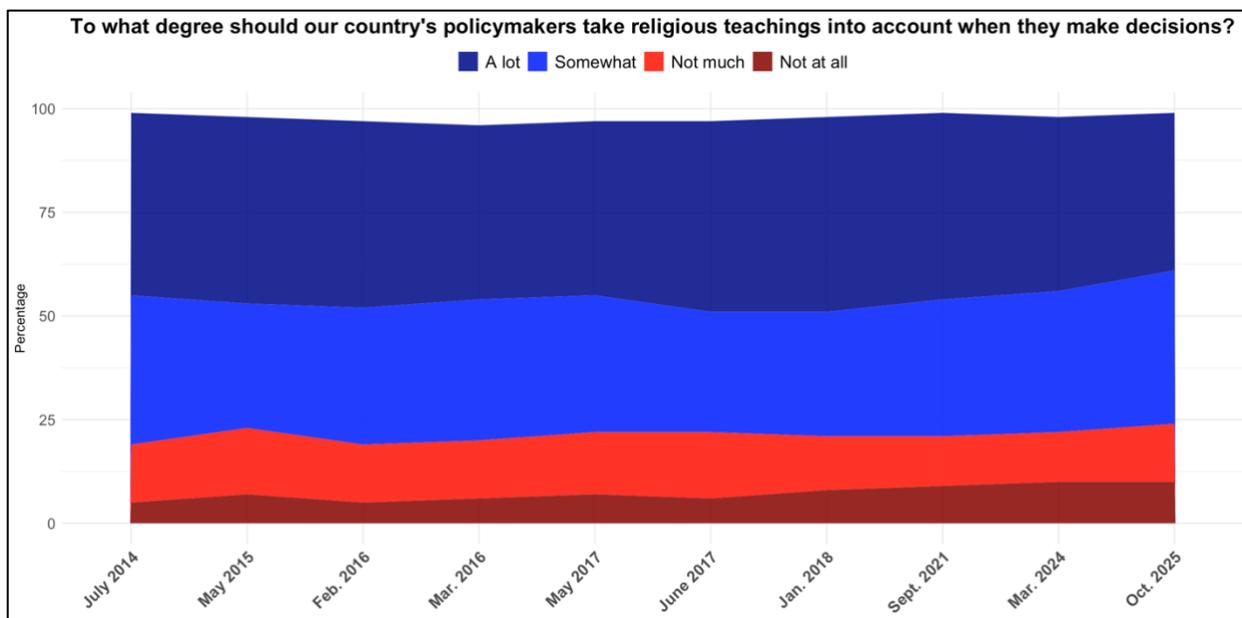


Other well-known political figures had suffered little, if at all, by October with the public. Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Parliament since 2020, was viewed favorably by 56% (13% very), compared to 55% twelve months earlier. Ali Larijani, a long-time figure currently the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, was viewed favorably by 43% (8% very), up from 32% in March 2024. Mohammad Javad Zarif, who was Rouhani’s foreign minister and negotiator with Western powers, was viewed favorably by slightly under half (49%, 11% very), five points down from 2024—a drop which might be related to the majority’s fatigue with negotiations with the West (see sections 11 and 13 below).

When respondents were asked about President Pezeshkian’s agenda in detail, majorities still had some confidence that Pezeshkian can improve relations with Iran’s neighbors (73%, 20% very confident), increase Iran’s foreign trade (59%, 15% very), and tackle corruption (53%, 10% very). Only minorities seemed confident that he could significantly lower inflation (41%) or improve relations with the West (30%), but this was also true in 2024. None of these measures of confidence decreased by more than four points.

There were some indications of a late-summer rally-round-the-flag effect on political perceptions. Positive perceptions of the government’s ability to meet people’s needs during the war may explain a mild uptick in attitudes toward government officials during this period. Forty-nine percent said in October that “government officials don’t care what people like me think,” down from 54% in March 2024. While those who said officials do care remained the same (38%), those who gave other answers or did not reply inched up to 13%. Taken together, the not-negatives reached 51%.

A similar 52% said they agreed with the statement, “I trust the authorities of the Islamic Republic.” When asked the same thing indirectly through two list experiments, which allow people to affirm or reject a statement in an unidentifiable way, by simply saying the number of statements they agree with from a list, those agreeing were 44.1% and 46.5%, respectively. This suggests that the reluctance *not* to express trust in the authorities accounts for 5-8 points of the difference between the direct and indirect queries.



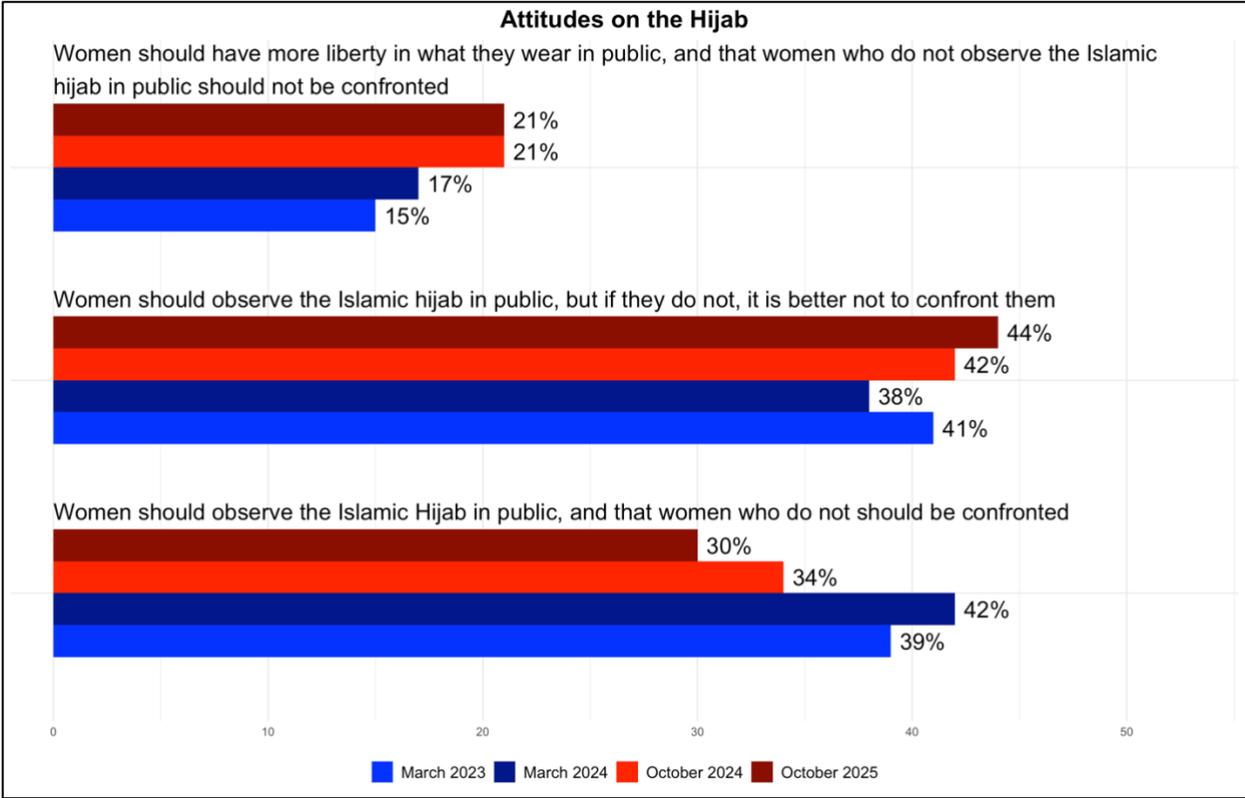
Public support for strict adherence to conservative religious values in public life has declined. Since 2014, this survey series has asked the Iranian public: “In your opinion, to what degree should our country’s policymakers take religious teachings into account when they make decisions?” In this October study, 38% said policymakers should do so a lot, 37% said they should do so somewhat, 14% picked “not much,” and 10% said “not at all.” Thus, three-quarters (75%) considered it appropriate for religious teachings to have some influence on policy. Over the past eleven years, though, the greatest number saying that religious teachings should have a lot of influence on policy was 47% in 2018; the current 38% is the lowest recorded. Among those who professed trust in the authorities of the Islamic Republic, 57% thought policymakers should take religious teachings into account “a lot”; of those who did not express trust, only 17% thought it should be done “a lot”.

Comparing Iran to 35 other countries where Pew conducted a study of “religious nationalism” shows that the Iranian public’s desire for religion to influence policy is not significantly higher or lower than that in other middle-income countries. When Pew asked how much influence the dominant religious text(s) a country should have on national laws, the distribution of opinions in Nigeria regarding the Bible and, to a lesser extent, the Quran resembled that in Iran. Other majority-Muslim countries had much higher percentages saying that the Quran should have “a great deal” of influence: Bangladesh (82%), Malaysia (62%), and Indonesia (59%). High-income countries generally had lower levels of religiosity than middle-income countries, with the United States as an outlier: 23% of Americans said that the Bible should have a great deal of influence on national laws, while Canada, the most similar high-income country on this question, had only 10% who said this.¹

¹ Silver, Laura, Jonathan Evans, Maria Smerkovich, Sneha Gubbala, Manolo Corichi, and William Miner. *Comparing Levels of Religious Nationalism Around the World*. Pew Research Center, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.58094/H04A-YS12>.

Over the last two years in Iran, the majority view that women should not be confronted over the issue of hijab has consolidated. Starting in March 2023 (near the end of the protest wave of 2022-23), this series has asked about women wearing hijab in public in the following way:

Some say 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. Others say that while women should observe the Islamic hijab in public, if they do not, it is better not to confront them. Yet others say that women should observe the Islamic hijab in public, and that those who do not should be confronted. Which of the three is closer to your own opinion?



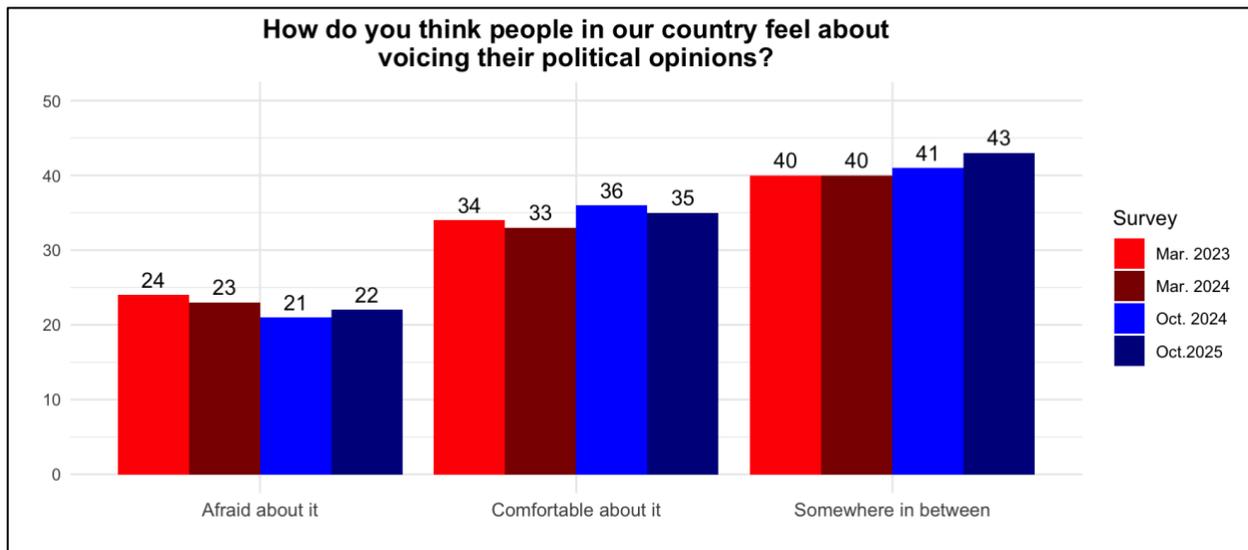
Currently, 21% said women should have more liberty in what they wear and should not be confronted. Forty-four percent said that while women should observe hijab, if they do not, it is better not to confront them—thus, 65% in all thought women should not be confronted over this issue, up from 55% in March 2024. Thirty percent said that women who do not observe hijab in public should be confronted—a twelve-point decline from 42% in March 2024. Only those who wanted policymakers to take religious teachings into account “a lot” tended to favor confronting women with incorrect hijab—64% of that group felt that way. Among those who wanted the teachings taken into account “somewhat,” only 15% wanted women without proper hijab to be confronted.

A modest majority also thought that security services’ focus on social issues like hijab was perceived as an opening by Israeli intelligence. Respondents were asked to evaluate multiple reasons why Israel might have chosen to start the Twelve Day War—among them, that “Israeli

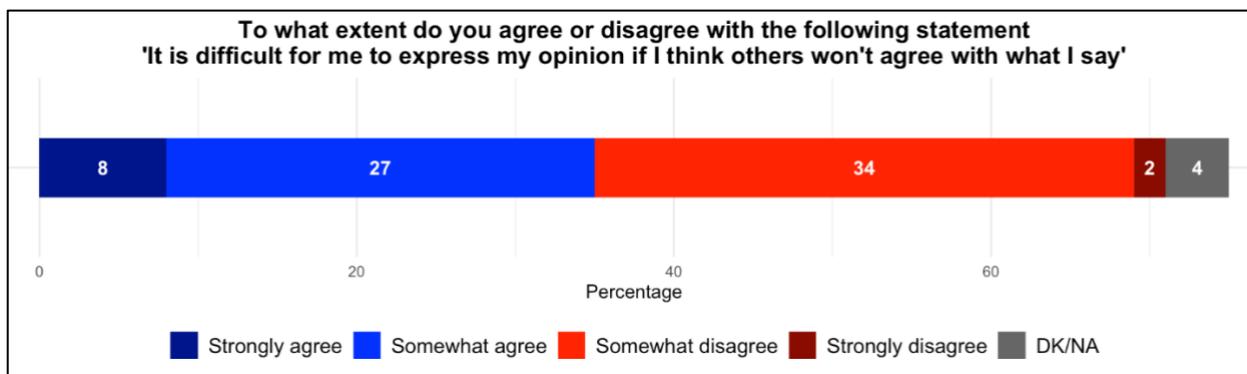
intelligence thought Iran’s security services were so focused on social issues like hijab that there was an opening to launch a surprise attack.” Fifty-three percent saw this as definitely (25%) or probably (28%) a reason for Israel’s decision; 44% disagreed.

These responses are somewhat related to the respondents’ own conservatism, or lack thereof. Among those who thought Israel perceived Iran’s security services as distracted, 30% thought women should have more liberty in their dress, and only 22% thought women with incorrect hijab should be confronted. However, among those who thought this was *not* a reason why Israel attacked, just 11% thought women should have more liberty in their dress, while 42% thought those with incorrect hijab should be confronted. Similarly, among those who thought this was a reason for Israel’s attack, only 24% wanted policymakers to take religious teachings into account “a lot”, while among those who thought it was not a reason, 57% wanted them to do so.

These studies also explore Iranians’ sense of comfort or anxiety about expressing opinions on controversial political and social issues. On four occasions, we have asked: “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?” In the current study, 22% maintained that Iranians are generally afraid to voice political opinions; 35% asserted that they are comfortable about it; and 43% assessed that they are somewhere in between. Since spring 2023, these attitudes have shown almost no variation.



In another effort to get at the same thing, respondents were later asked a new question: “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘It is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won't agree with what I say.’” Sixty-one percent disagreed that this is true of them (34% strongly), while 35% agreed (but only 8% strongly). These findings, taken together, suggest that some reluctance and discomfort were present in October, but it seems hard to view it as a strong mass phenomenon.



The 22% who believed that most Iranians are afraid to voice their opinions were far more critical of the political system; their views resembled the Western media’s general profile of Iranians in anecdotal reports. To give examples from questions in this section, among those who thought most Iranians are afraid to voice their opinions, fully 89% viewed Ghalibaf unfavorably and 47% felt negatively about Pezeshkian. Eighty-two percent of this group said that government officials do not care what people like them think, and a mere 6% said they trust the authorities of the Islamic Republic. A scant 2% wanted policymakers to take religious teachings into account “a lot,” while 58% insisted that women should be free to wear what they want in public.

On questions relevant to the war, those who thought most Iranians are afraid to voice their opinions were closer to other Iranians than they were on political and social questions. Fifty-four percent of this group expressed confidence that President Pezeshkian is trustworthy, only 11 points behind the full sample. A striking 70% of this group said that during the war, the government managed to provide for the people’s needs at least somewhat. A full 60% majority of this group thought that after the war, Iran should either rebuild its nuclear program to the previous level or should expand its nuclear activities.

Given the oppositional attitudes expressed by those who assumed that other Iranians are afraid to voice such controversial opinions, it would be reasonable to expect those respondents to say that they themselves do *not* find it difficult to express their opinion if they feel others won’t agree. However, this was not the case: there was no statistical difference. Thus, those who said most are comfortable; those who said most are afraid; and those who said most are in between *all* had majorities around 61% feeling uninhibited in expressing their opinions.

The new question asking whether respondents have difficulty personally expressing unpopular opinions is not a powerful indicator of oppositional attitudes in the same way that the question about other Iranians consistently is.² Those who agreed at least somewhat that expressing unpopular opinions is difficult were not statistically different from the sample as a whole regarding views on religion in politics, hijab requirements, or trust in government. They were

² Gallagher, Nancy, Ebrahim Mohseni, and Clay Ramsay. *The Raisi Period: Iranian Public Attitudes on Domestic Issues*. June 2024. Security Cooperation with Iran: Challenges and Opportunities. Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, 2024. <https://spp.umd.edu/research-impact/publications/raisi-period-iranian-public-attitudes-domestic-issues>.

slightly more likely to say that officials care what people like them think (42% versus 38%) but less likely to hold a very favorable view of Pezeshkian (22% versus 29%).

10. Views of Iran's Greatest Challenges and Desire for Change

Six in ten viewed the economy, or aspects of it, as Iran's greatest challenge, even after the war experience. A plurality of Iranians still prioritized economic improvement over other types of change, but a quarter wanted greater national security above all else.

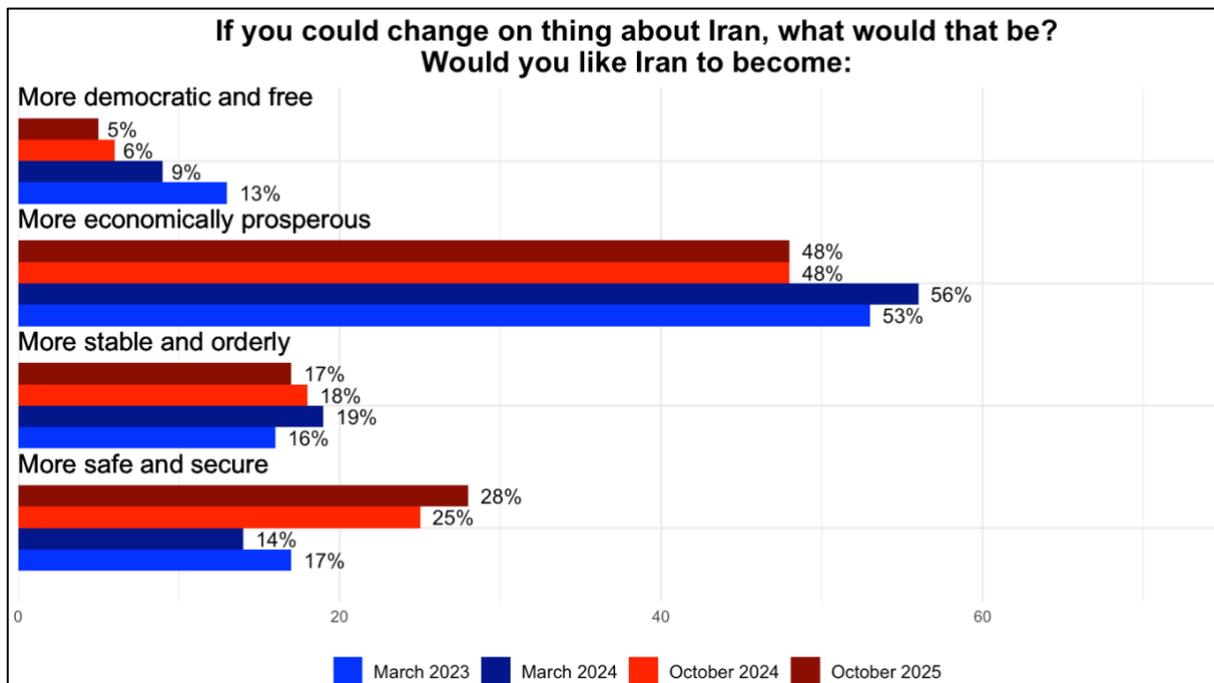
When asked to name Iran's greatest challenge in their own words, 59% named a cluster of domestic economic issues: inflation (27%), poverty (12%), unemployment (6%), housing problems (1%), or just the economy in general (13%). Issues connected to officialdom (19%) were also commonly cited: mismanagement (8%), shortages, including water (4%), economic and administrative corruption (4%), and the incompetence of officials (2%).

Issues that originate from abroad were named by 14%; these included sanctions (10%), and Iran's foreign relations (3%). Curiously, only 2% specified the threat of war. Finally, 3% named social and cultural issues, and 2% discrimination and injustice.

Although the public's desire for a more prosperous Iran continued to be very prominent, its dominance over other desires was less pronounced than it was before Israel and Iran started striking each other's territory. Respondents were asked, "If you could change one thing about Iran, what would that be? Would you like Iran to become—" and offered four choices:

- More democratic and free
- More economically prosperous
- More stable and orderly
- More safe and secure

Forty-eight percent chose "more economically prosperous," while 28% chose "more safe and secure." Seventeen percent chose "more stable and orderly," and only 5% chose the "more democratic and free" response option. (This does not mean that only 5% actually wanted Iran to be more democratic and free, but it does mean that other, severely felt needs were taking precedence.) Since March 2024, those choosing "more economically prosperous" declined by 8 points, and those choosing "more safe and secure" grew by 14 points—which may be an indication not only of the Twelve Day War, but of the tensions and attacks stemming from the Gaza War. Those choosing "more democratic and free" dropped four points in the same period (those choosing "more stable and orderly" varied little).



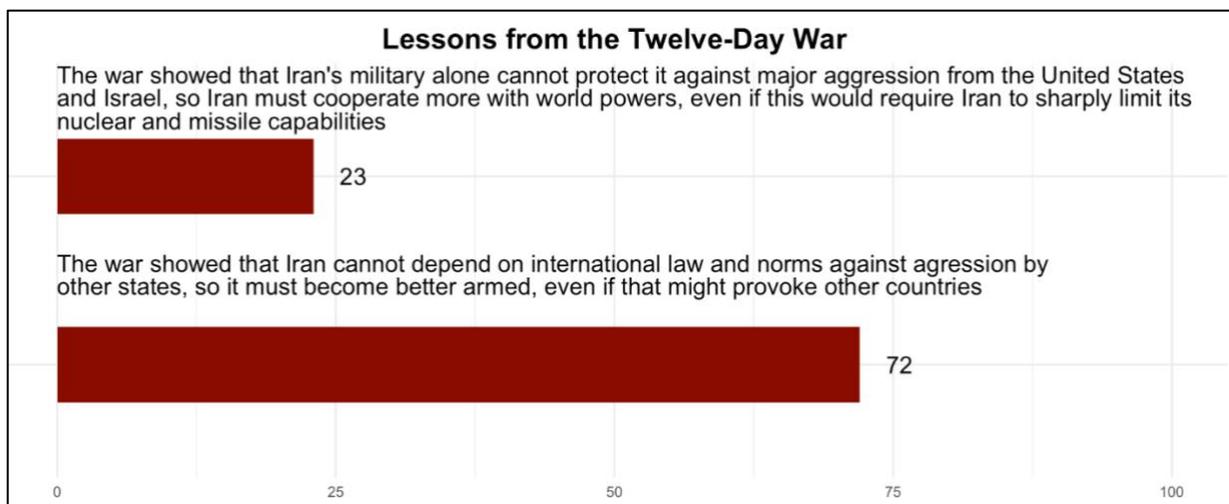
11. Attitudes Toward Iran’s Security

Iranian attitudes on security hardened further after the Twelve-Day War. Seven in ten thought Iran must become much better armed, because the war showed it cannot depend on international norms against aggression. Only a quarter said that the war showed Iran cannot defend itself against major aggression and should make difficult concessions. China and Russia’s lack of interest in doing more to help Iran during the war came as no surprise to the great majority.

A majority thought that in October 2024, when Israel struck some of Iran’s air defenses, Iran should have responded militarily then, instead of showing restraint. A growing majority—up to four in five—said Iran should punish the perpetrators whenever there is evidence of a violation of Iran’s territory. Those who maintained it is very important to develop Iran’s missile program grew to four in five.

Three-quarters viewed the Twelve-Day War as a sign that Iran must become militarily stronger. Respondents were asked to choose between two statements:

- The war showed that Iran cannot depend on international law and norms against aggression by other states, so it must become much better armed, even if that might provoke other countries.
- The war showed that Iran’s military alone cannot protect it against major aggression from the United States and Israel, so Iran must cooperate more with world powers, even if this would require Iran to sharply limit its nuclear and missile capabilities.



Seven in ten (72%) chose the first option, that Iran must become much better armed. Only 23% chose the second, that Iran must cooperate more.

Complementary to this was a widespread sense that Iran is alone in providing for its security. Asked, “During the recent war, what was your reaction when Russia and China did not show more interest in helping Iran?” only 19% were surprised. The remainder (80%) either expected this (39%) or had no expectation either way (41%). Only 14% said they viewed China as an ally, and only 12% said they viewed Russia as one. A larger 38% said China is a friend (Russia, 31%), while 35% saw China as neither a friend nor a rival (Russia, 38%).

A majority perceived the government’s decision not to respond to a military attack from Israel soon after Pezeshkian took office as a mistake. Respondents were asked:

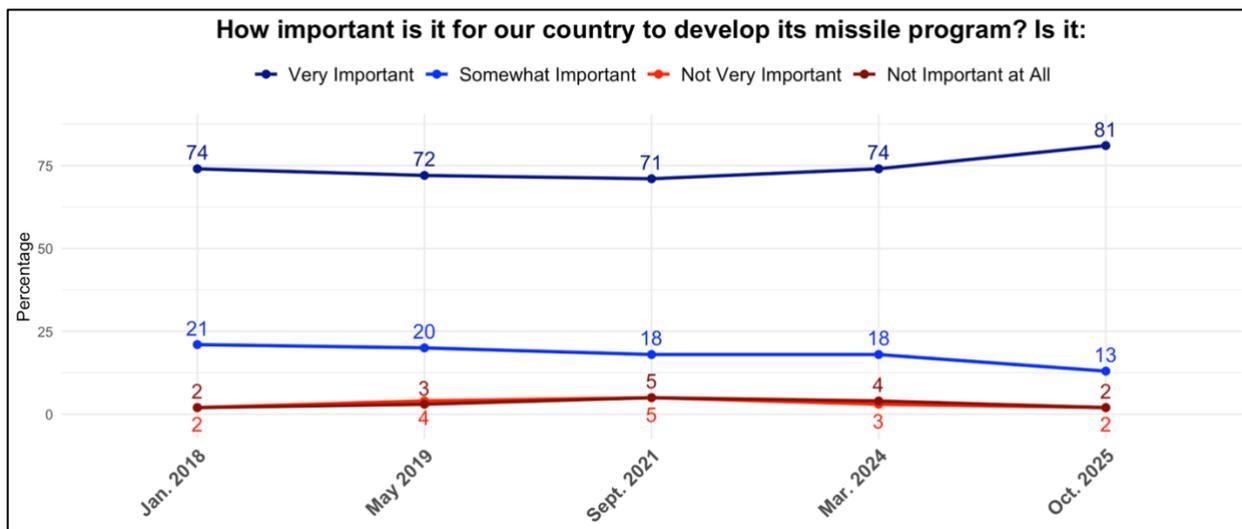
As you may know, before the recent war, Israel attacked Iran in October 2024 and destroyed some of Iran’s air defense capabilities. Back then, Iran chose not to respond immediately to the attacks. Some say this was a mistake, making Iran look weak and inviting a more significant attack. Others say it was the right thing to do because it showed Iran is not seeking a war, while Israel is the clear aggressor. Which comes closest to your view?

Fifty-five percent said that not responding was a mistake, while 42% held that it was the right thing to do.

When the same problem was posed in general, a far larger majority favored a punitive response. This series has frequently offered the following two statements to Iranians:

- Whenever there is evidence of a violation of Iranian waters, airspace, or of an attack on an Iranian vessel or aircraft, Iran should punish the perpetrators to make such incidents less likely in the future.
- 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-nine percent preferred a punitive response—the highest number over the last six years. Only 19% preferred caution.



Consistent with all these findings, support for Iran’s missile program was the highest recorded over the last seven years. Four in five (81%) said it is “very important for our country to develop its missile program,” and another 13% called it somewhat important.

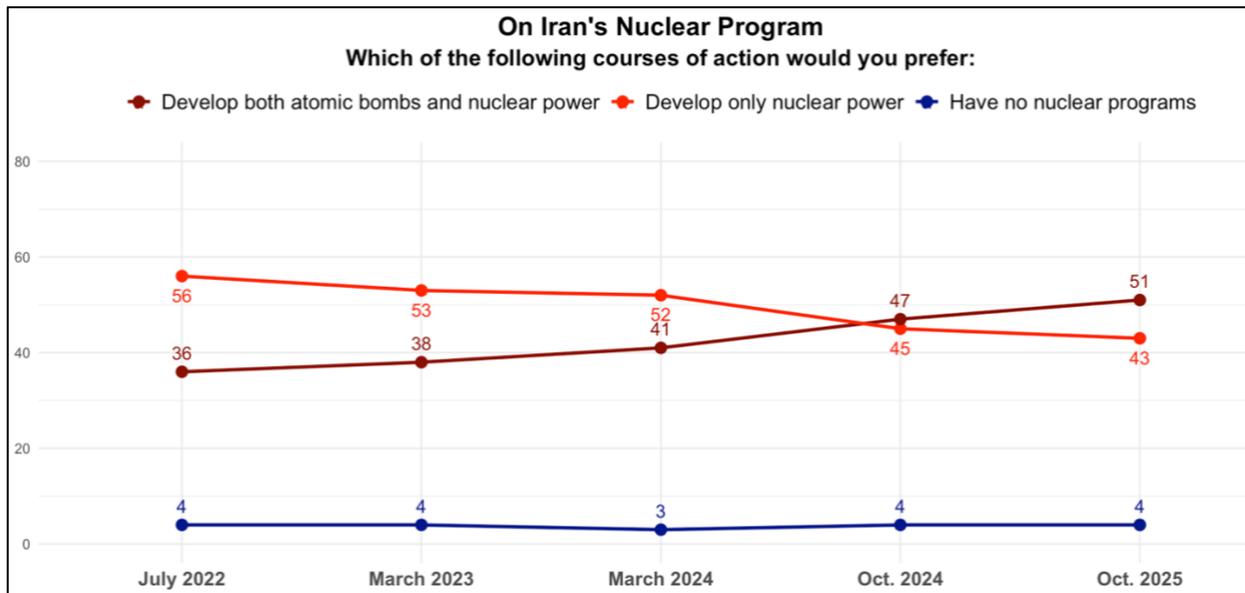
12. Iran’s Nuclear Program

For the first time, a slim majority wanted to “develop both atomic bombs and nuclear power.” After the U.S. bombing of Iranian nuclear facilities, four in five wanted to rebuild the program, with a majority wanting to expand it beyond pre-attack levels. Public perceptions of how long it would take for Iran to acquire nuclear weapons if its leaders decided to do so increased slightly, but two-thirds saw it as taking two years or less. Three in five expected the United States and other countries to take military action against Iran if it withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty but thought this could not prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

At the same time, seven in ten favored the idea of Iran becoming a founding member of a nuclear consortium for the Middle East and North Africa, in which “All member states would reject nuclear weapons, share enrichment and research facilities, and jointly verify members are using nuclear technology solely for peaceful purposes.”

Public support for Iran’s nuclear program remained very strong: 73% called it “very important,” and another 18% deemed it somewhat important. There was a less pronounced rise in support for Iran’s nuclear program after the Twelve-Day War than for its missile program: in March 2024, 74% said the nuclear program was “very important,” while 14% called it somewhat important.

While overall support for Iran’s nuclear program has not changed significantly over the past decade, there has been a noticeable shift in the type of nuclear program respondents prefer. The number of people who wanted to “develop both atomic bombs and nuclear power,” which was only 36% as recently as 2022, went above 50% for the first time. In July 2022, 56% wanted to develop only nuclear power; this view declined 13 points to 43%. Those who wanted no nuclear programs remained stable at 4%.

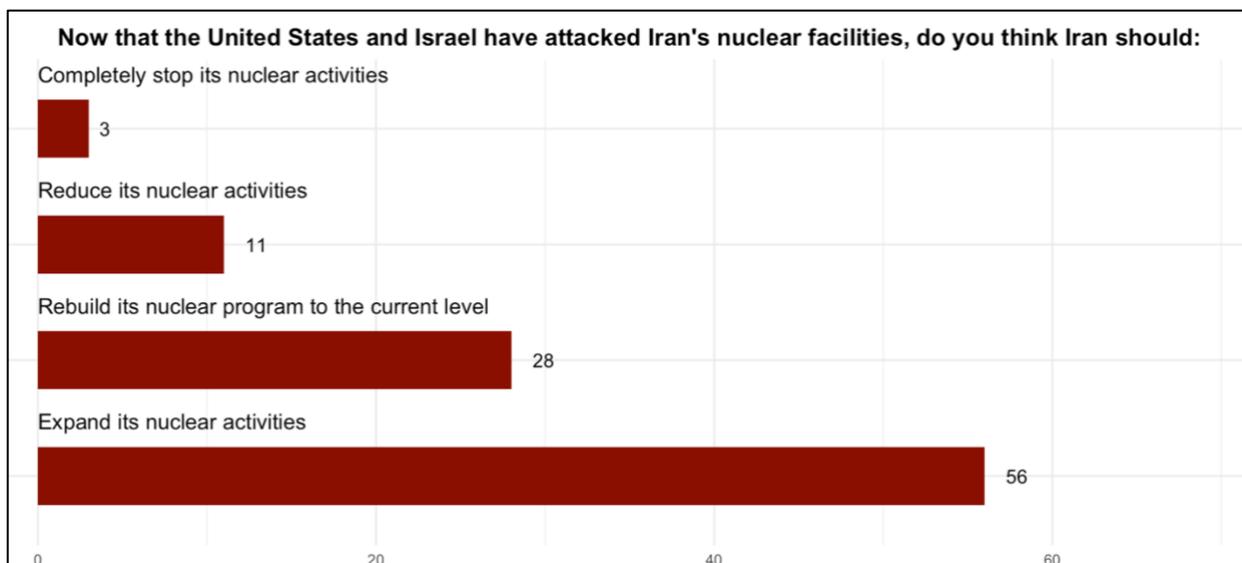


It is noteworthy that answers to this question were very stable from 2009, the first time we posed it, through March 2023, before rising as Iranians felt more directly threatened by another country in the region that has nuclear arms. Iranian public support for nuclear weapons increased slightly by March 2024 when the Gaza war was in full swing. It then jumped 6 points in October 2024, after Israel and Iran had exchanged strikes on each other’s territory. In the twelve months since October 2024, the popular preference for nuclear weapons grew another 4 points from 47 to 51%. As indicated below, though, this trend might be reversible if Iran formed a nuclear consortium with neighboring countries or concluded a new JCPOA-style agreement with the United States.

In the past, this series asked a hypothetical question: “If the United States were to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities, do you think Iran should—” and then offered four options. This time, the same question was asked with the change: “Now that the United States and Israel have attacked Iran’s nuclear facilities...”

The options were to:

- expand its nuclear activities
- rebuild its nuclear program to the current level
- reduce its nuclear activities
- completely stop its nuclear activities



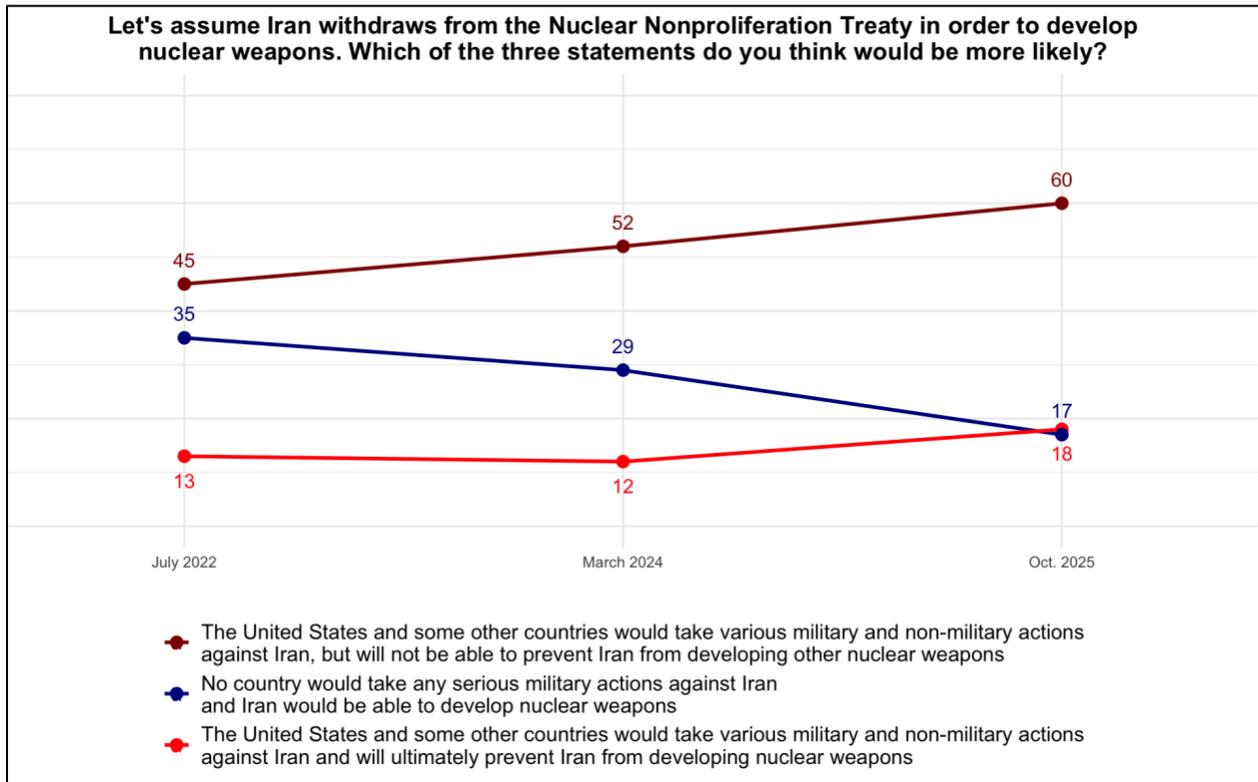
Fifty-six percent said that Iran should expand its nuclear activities, and another 28% that it should rebuild them to the current level, making 84% in support of a rebuilt program. When this was asked as a hypothetical question in October 2024, 80% said they would support rebuilding the program after a U.S. attack.

Asked, “If Iran were to decide to develop nuclear weapons, how long do you think it would take to acquire them?” 67% thought it could be done in two years or less. Four in ten (39%) thought it could be done more quickly (18%, less than six months; 21%, six months to a year). The most common answer (28%) was one to two years. Seven percent said two to three years; another 7%, more than three years; but only 4% said “never.” Compared to when the question was asked in July 2022, those saying less than six months dropped six points, and those saying one to two years grew 11 points; these two differences may show the effects of the war on Iranians’ assessments, but the other answers have barely changed.

Three in five expected the United States and other countries to take military action against Iran if it withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty but thought this could not prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The question was posed to Iranians this way: “Let’s assume Iran withdraws from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in order to develop nuclear weapons. Here are three statements about how the rest of the United States and some other countries would then react—”

- The United States and some other countries would take various military and non-military actions against Iran and will ultimately prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons
- The United States and some other countries would take various military and non-military actions against Iran, but will not be able to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons

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



Sixty percent expected that military actions against Iran would take place in that circumstance and that Iran would develop nuclear weapons nonetheless—a number that has grown steadily since 2022 (up 15 points). Only 18% thought that there would be military action from the United States and that it would succeed.

When asked simply how important it is for Iran to develop its nuclear program, 73% called it very important and an additional 18% somewhat important.

For many years, the Supreme Leader Khamenei’s position has been that nuclear weapons are counter to Islam and thus prohibited. But when respondents were not reminded that this position is official, many thought otherwise. This study asked: “Some say developing nuclear weapons is against the teachings of Islam, and some disagree and say Islam does not prohibit the development of nuclear weapons. Which of these views is closer to yours?” Slightly fewer than half (47%) said nuclear weapons were against Islamic teachings, while 37% thought this was not the case.

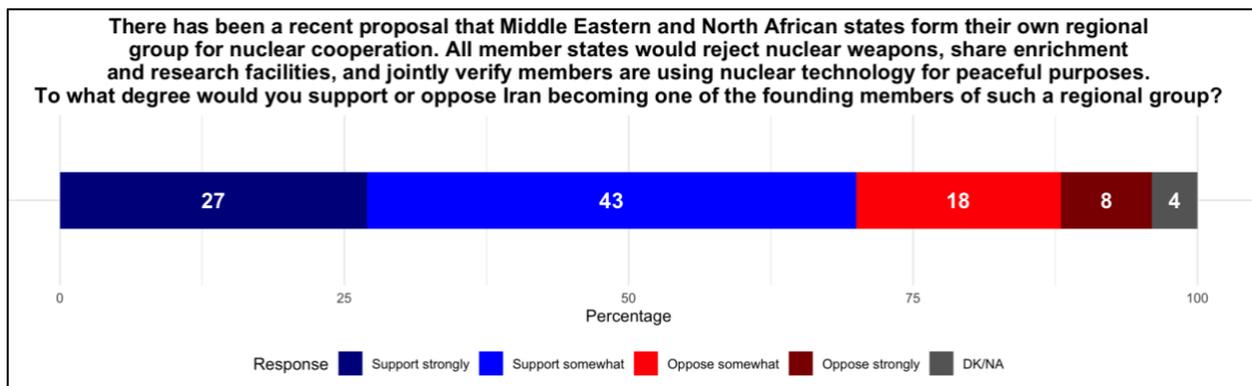
These studies have asked the question with this wording since 2014, and the view that nuclear weapons are against Islamic teachings has declined continuously. In 2014, when negotiations on the JCPOA had just begun, 71% said nuclear weapons were un-Islamic. By 2023, this was 54%, and in October 2025 it was 47%. Unsurprisingly, a 55% majority of those who wanted Iran to develop an atomic bomb as well as nuclear power did not think Islam prohibits this. Among

those who wanted nuclear power only, 61% did think Islam prohibits developing nuclear weapons.

Among those who, in another question, said they wanted policymakers to take religious teachings into account “a lot”, 61% believed that developing nuclear weapons is not against the teachings of Islam (thus, they believed contrary to the Supreme Leader’s *fatwa* on the subject). But among those who wanted these teachings taken into account “somewhat”, only 26% believed this; among those who said, “not much”, only 19%; and among those who said, “not at all”, only 11%. Thus, all those who preferred a less religiously oriented approach to policy were in fact much more in accord with the Supreme Leader’s judgment regarding nuclear weapons.

Earlier in 2025, some diplomatic discussions raised the idea of Iran becoming part of a consortium for peaceful nuclear development with other countries in the region. Iran proposed an arrangement whereby it would enrich uranium for commercial use by neighboring Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates under oversight by those countries and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).³ The United States countered by suggesting that Iran end enrichment on its soil and get nuclear fuel from a regional consortium with U.S. involvement.⁴ To test how the Iranian public might respond to a plan of this type, we described it in general terms that tracked with a proposal advanced by former foreign minister Javad Zarif:⁵

There has been a recent proposal that Middle Eastern and North African states form their own regional group for nuclear cooperation. All member states would reject nuclear weapons, share enrichment and research facilities, and jointly verify members are using nuclear technology solely for peaceful purposes. To what degree would you support or oppose Iran becoming one of the founding members of such a regional group?



³ Fassihi, Farnaz. “Iran Proposes Novel Path to Nuclear Deal With U.S.” World. *The New York Times*, May 13, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/13/world/middleeast/iran-us-nuclear-talks.html>.

⁴ Sanger, David E., Farnaz Fassihi, and Maggie Haberman. “U.S. Sends Iran Proposal on Nuclear Deal, Amid Reports of Uranium Enrichment Ramp-Up.” U.S. *The New York Times*, May 31, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/31/us/politics/iran-nuclear.html>.

⁵ Zarif, Javad. “In This Time of Rancour, Fear and War, Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation in the Middle East Is Still Possible.” Opinion. *The Guardian*, July 31, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jul/31/iran-nuclear-middle-east-war-israel>.

Interestingly, respondents' reception of this proposal was fairly warm, with 70% supporting it, though only 27% did so strongly. Opposition came from only a quarter (18% somewhat opposed, 8% very). Eighty-seven percent of Iranians who wanted a purely peaceful nuclear program supported this type of arrangement (37% strongly), while 56% of those who expressed support for an Iranian nuclear weapon endorsed it (19% strongly).

13. Negotiations on Nuclear Issues

The public viewed the nuclear negotiations that took place with the Trump administration before the war quite negatively, with three in four saying Trump used negotiations to buy time while Israel and the United States prepared for war. Half maintained that Iran should not resume these negotiations until it becomes confident that the United States really seeks a mutually beneficial agreement; an additional three in ten required credible assurances that Iran won't be attacked again.

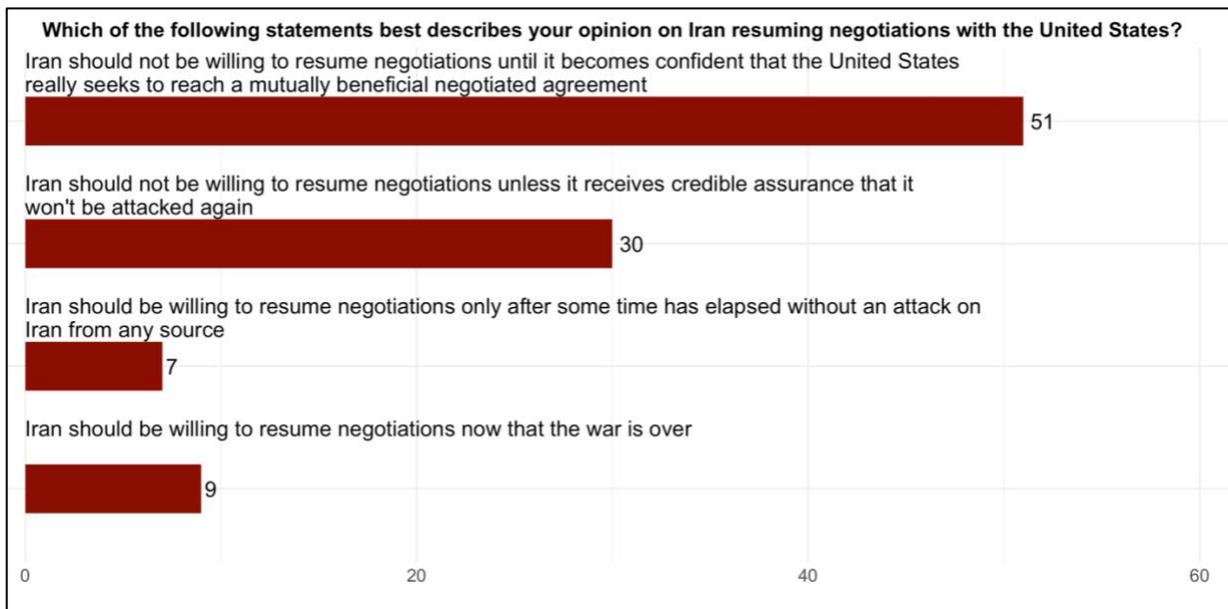
The public was open to some options for future negotiation with the United States. A majority thought that a new set of requirements, like those in the JCPOA, that would expire in a given number of years, could be acceptable. Half also saw ending support for Hamas, Hezbollah, and other groups as negotiable depending on circumstances. Majorities saw as unacceptable permanent limits on the nuclear program, a permanent end to uranium enrichment, or reducing the range of ballistic missiles. Over seven in ten considered sanctions relief that results in clear improvement of living conditions, and a step-for-step structure to ensure that Iran gets benefits in return for concessions as necessary components of an acceptable deal.

The experience of seeing the Pezeshkian government in negotiations with the United States that were broken off when Israel began the Twelve-Day War, soured the Iranian public on negotiations. Asked to think "about Iran's negotiations with the United States before the recent war," three in four (75%) thought that "Trump used negotiations to buy time while Israel and the United States prepared for the war." Only 21% thought "Trump genuinely wanted to negotiate and reach a new nuclear agreement with Iran."

Comparatively speaking, Iranians were less sure that the nuclear factor motivated Israel to start the war. The possibility that "Israel feared that the United States and Iran might reach a new nuclear agreement like the JCPOA" was seen as at least a probable reason for the attack by only 48%, while another 48% disagreed, which seems consistent with Iranians' much stronger belief that the U.S. negotiations were only a ruse. Alternatively, a slight majority (51%) thought it at least probable that "Israel attacked because Iran refused to stop enriching uranium and did not take steps needed to prove that its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes"; 48% thought this was probably not a reason. In either question, those who saw Israel as motivated by the nuclear file were only about half.

Soon after the war, the inclination to resume (or start new unconditional) negotiations with the United States was low. Respondents were posed four alternatives “for the best position for Iran to take on negotiating with the United States”:

- Iran should be willing to resume negotiations now that the war is over
- Iran should be willing to resume negotiations only after some time has elapsed without an attack on Iran from any source
- Iran should not be willing to resume negotiations unless it receives credible assurance that it won’t be attacked again
- Iran should not be willing to resume negotiations until it becomes confident that the United States really seeks to reach a mutually beneficial negotiated agreement



Only 9% thought that with the war over, Iran should be willing to resume negotiations unconditionally. About the same number (7%) thought Iran should be willing to resume after some time has elapsed with no attack from any source. Beyond that, only three in ten (30%) thought it sufficient to receive credible assurance of no further attacks. Fifty-one percent said that only when Iran was confident the United States was seeking an agreement that would be mutually beneficial, should Iran be willing to resume.

Consistent with this, a majority view future cooperation with the IAEA as something subject to conditions. The Iranian Parliament, respondents were reminded, “has voted to halt international inspectors’ access to Iran’s nuclear sites until Iran’s Supreme National Security Council gains confidence that Iran’s nuclear facilities and scientists would not be in danger and Iran’s rights under the NPT would be respected.” (Since passage, only a few interactions approved by the SNSC have taken place.) Respondents heard opposing arguments about this legislation:

- Some say this is an appropriate response, because the IAEA may have provided information that helped Israel and the US attack Iran’s nuclear facilities.
- Others say this is unwise, because the more doubts other countries have about Iran’s nuclear program, the more justification Israel and the US will claim to attack again.

After hearing arguments, two in three (67%) favored the law (27% strongly), and only 27% opposed it (12% strongly). Of those who in another question wanted Iran to develop an atomic bomb as well as nuclear power, 83% favored the law, compared with 54% among those who wanted nuclear power only.

Public Perspectives on Future Negotiations

Respondents were asked hypothetically about resuming talks with the United States and to “imagine negotiations between Iran and the U.S. were to take place in the future.” Given a series of possible U.S. demands, they were asked for each whether “in return for the lifting of sanctions on Iran,” the demand would be acceptable, unacceptable, or “could be acceptable depending on other conditions of the agreement.”

The best-received U.S. demand was for “a new set of limits and transparency requirements on Iran’s nuclear program similar to those in the JCPOA, that would expire in a given number of years.” Only 21% said this was unacceptable. A different 21% said it *was* acceptable, while a 56% majority thought it could be acceptable depending on other conditions. So, a large majority (77%) would at least be open to negotiations toward a goal of creating an agreement with parameters rather like those of the JCPOA.

Six out of ten respondents who expressed support for Iran having nuclear weapons also expressed openness toward a JCPOA-type agreement. Forty-eight percent said that could be acceptable depending on the circumstances, while another 14% simply called it “acceptable.” Only 36% deemed it completely unacceptable. This could indicate that some number of Iranians who previously only wanted a peaceful nuclear program are voicing support for a weapons program now in an effort to gain bargaining leverage and get sanctions relief without giving up their right to enrich. It could also be suggested that if security conditions improved and Iran received meaningful reassurance that no nuclear-armed nation would initiate an attack against it, then fewer Iranians would see the need to have a nuclear deterrent.



Openness to a JCPOA-style agreement was dependent on including an end date to concessions that Iran would agree to make. Respondents heard a second possible U.S. demand of “making permanent those limits and transparency requirements on Iran’s nuclear program.” They rejected this, with a 57% majority calling it unacceptable. Only 7% found it acceptable, while 33% thought it negotiable.

Where Iran’s “support for groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah of Lebanon” was concerned, half the public was receptive to ending support as part of a larger agreement. Fifteen percent found the demand acceptable, and about a third (34%) saw it as negotiable—49% in all—while 47% said dropping this support was unacceptable.

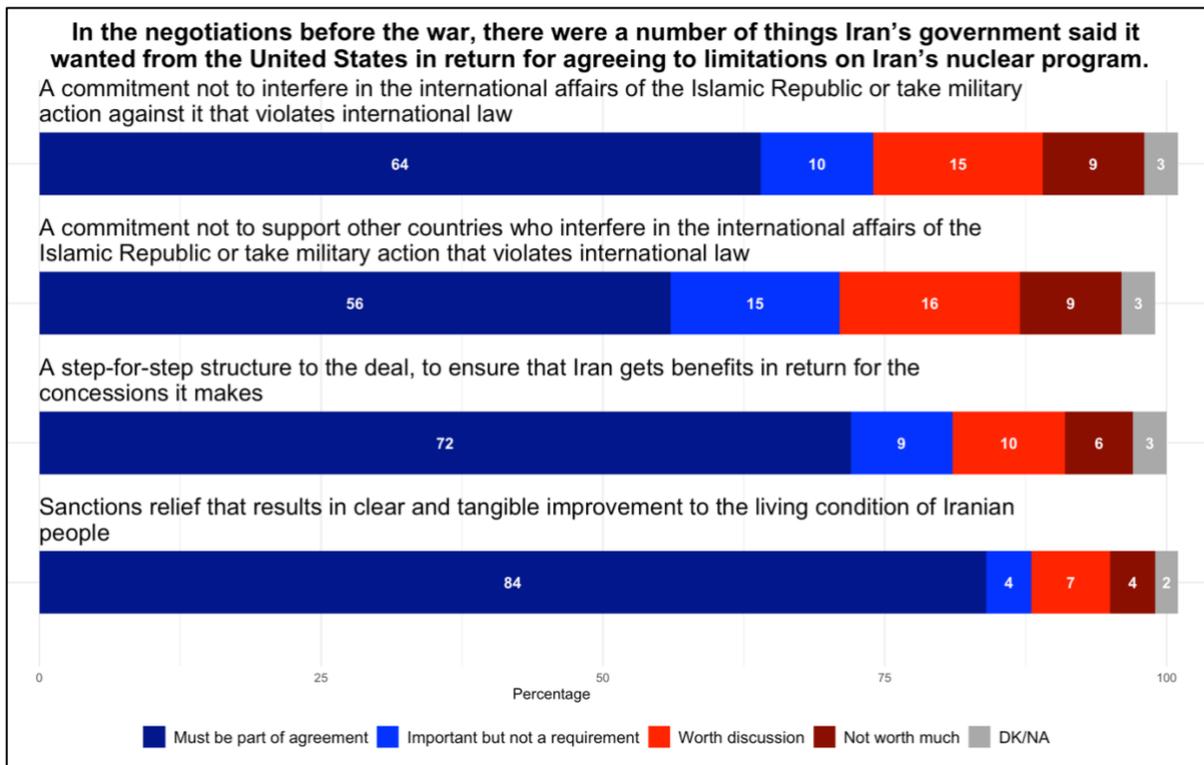
The idea of “permanently ending uranium enrichment in Iran,” so prominent in Western thinking on the issue, showed no traction with the Iranian public. Three in four (75%) called it unacceptable, and only 4% acceptable; 20% viewed it as negotiable.

Proponents of enlarging the scope of negotiations with Iran frequently speak of including its missile program. When respondents were asked about a demand of “reducing the range of Iranian ballistic missiles, which is currently above 2000km, to about 500km,” only 2% found it acceptable, and 83% called it unacceptable; 12% thought it was negotiable. It is perhaps only to be expected that after the experience of the Twelve-Day War, public support for the missile program was very high.

Respondents were directed next to demands Iran’s government has made in past negotiations. They first heard:

As you may know, in the negotiations before the war, there were a number of things Iran’s government said that it wanted from the United States in return for agreeing to limitations on Iran’s nuclear program. I will read you some of them. Please say for each whether, if Iran enters negotiations with the United States in the future, would you see it as a requirement that must be in the agreement for Iran to be willing to make concessions in exchange, important, but not a requirement; worth discussion; or not worth much.

Majorities saw all of the four demands tested as a requirement in any agreement. The largest majority felt this way about “sanctions relief that results in clear and tangible improvement in the living conditions of the Iranian people,” with 83% saying it must be part of an agreement. Four percent called it important but not a requirement; 7% called it worth discussion; and 4% said it was not worth much. (Apparently, strong sanctions can be a double-edged sword: if there is to be sanctions relief, it must be correspondingly strong, or the public will not be interested in making significant concessions in exchange.)



Allied to this was the demand for “a step-for-step structure to the deal, to ensure that Iran gets benefits in return for the concessions that it makes.” Seventy-two percent said this must be part of the agreement, showing again wariness that the United States might not live up to its side of the bargain and the concern for tangible results. Nine percent said this was important but not a requirement; 10% called it worth discussion; and 6% said it was not worth much.

Almost two in three (64%) saw “a commitment not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic or take military action against it that violates international law” as something

that must be part of an agreement. Ten percent saw it as important, but not a requirement; 15%, as worth discussion; and 9% as not worth much.

Finally, 56% saw a similar commitment aimed at U.S. relationships with allied or partner countries as a requirement: “A commitment not to support other countries who interfere in the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic or take military action that violates international law.” Fifteen percent saw this as important, but not a requirement; 16%, as worth discussion; and 9% said it was not worth much.

Finally, whatever kind of agreement might eventually come to pass, Iranians’ confidence that the United States would follow the agreement was quite low. Seventy-one percent were not confident that “if Iran and the United States were to reach an agreement, the United States would live up to its side of the agreement?”, and 46% were “not confident at all.” Only 27% expressed confidence (very, 4%).

Negotiations on Middle Eastern Issues

A slim majority saw merit in the Arab League proposal on the Gaza War that was current at the time of polling in October. It was presented to respondents this way:

Arab League countries have proposed an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, withdrawal of Israeli troops, more humanitarian aid, and reconstruction overseen by a Palestinian governing committee in return for Hamas to disarm and relinquish power over Gaza.

Fifty-one percent saw this as a good proposal (very good, 19%), while 43% saw it as a bad proposal (very bad, 24%).

More broadly, a majority still supported “diplomatic discussions with other Middle Eastern countries about de-escalating tensions in the region,” though a lack of enthusiasm was notable. Told that “the idea has been to develop common understandings, so that certain provocative actions are avoided by all parties,” 36% said the discussions “are worthwhile and should be expanded,” while another 39% said “they should continue but are not likely to do much.” Thus, three-quarters (75%) were in favor of at least continuing this line of diplomatic effort. Only 19% thought “they are a waste of time and should be ended.”

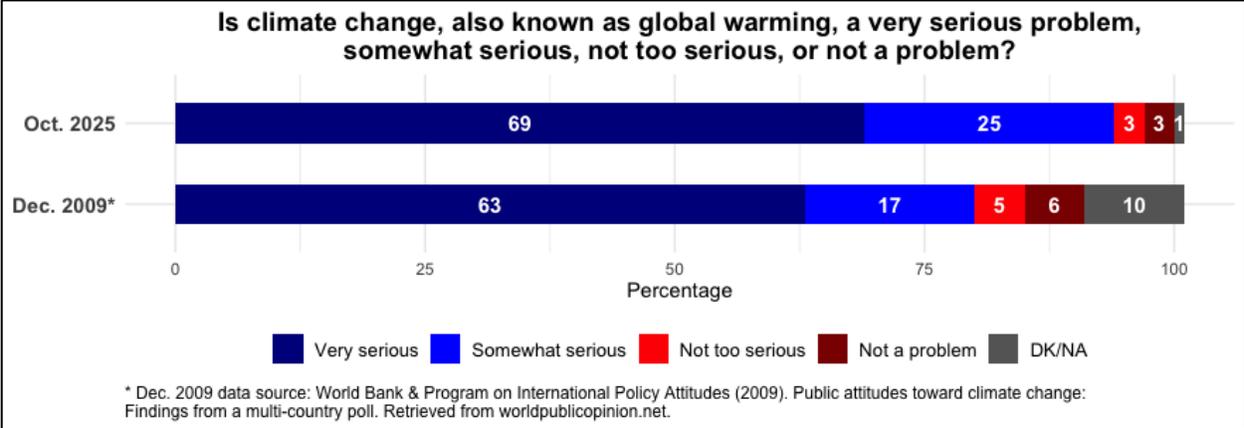
This support, while real, has eroded since 2021, when the question was last asked. At that time, 47% supported expanding such talks—11 points higher than now. Thirty-five percent thought they should continue, though they were unlikely to do much, and only 13% then thought they should be ended.

14. Climate Change and the Environment

The size of the majority that views climate change as a serious problem has grown considerably in the last fifteen years, but the perception that most scientists think the problem is urgent and that action against it is possible has fallen to about one-half. The other half perceived either that there is no scientific consensus or that it runs the other way. Growing majorities (seven in ten) expected unchecked climate change to strongly affect Iran’s food prices, likelihood of natural disasters, and water resources.

Three in five were personally affected by water shortages in 2025. Almost half preferred the government to allocate more water to farmers during emergencies, even at the cost of electricity shortages, but this preference was declining. Three in five still preferred that the government prioritize the environment when there is a conflict with economic growth. Awareness of international agreements on climate change, such as the Paris Agreement, has declined. However, three in five continued to approve of Iran taking steps against climate change, despite the costs involved.

Seven in ten Iranians (69%) viewed “climate change, also known as global warming,” as a very serious problem, and another 25% saw it as somewhat serious. Only 6% viewed it as “not too serious” (3%) or “not a problem” (3%). Thus, at the popular level, there was practically no market for denying the existence of climate change.

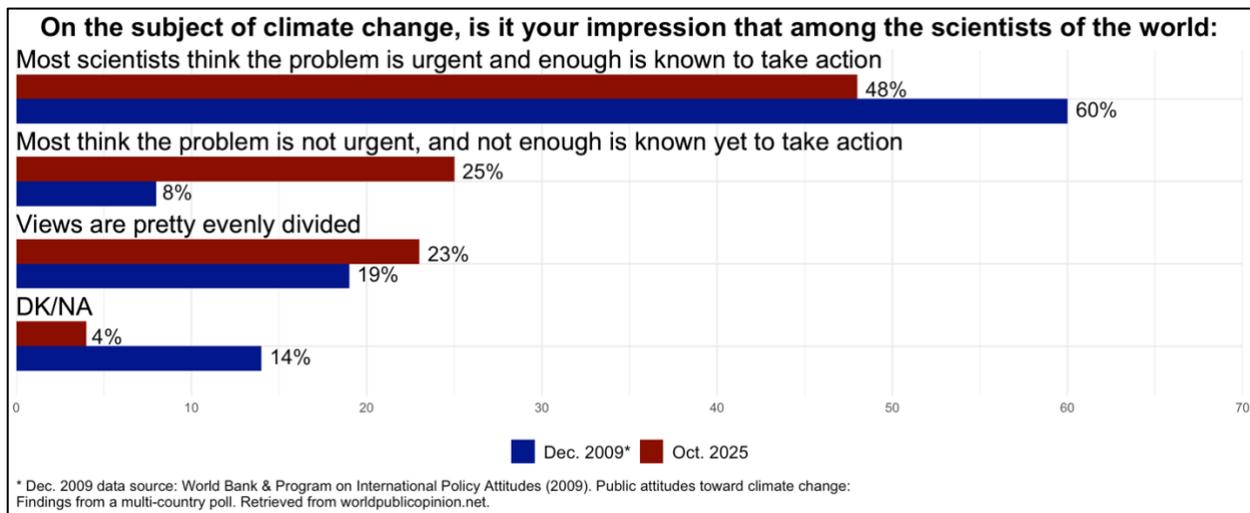


However, the Iranian public was unclear whether there is a scientific consensus in the world on climate change. Respondents were asked:

On the subject of climate change, is it your impression that among the scientists of the world:

- Most scientists think the problem is urgent, and enough is known to take action
- Most think the problem is not urgent, and not enough is known yet to take action, or
- Views are pretty evenly divided

Forty-eight percent thought that most scientists saw the problem as urgent; 25% thought most scientists saw it as not urgent; and 23% thought their views were divided.

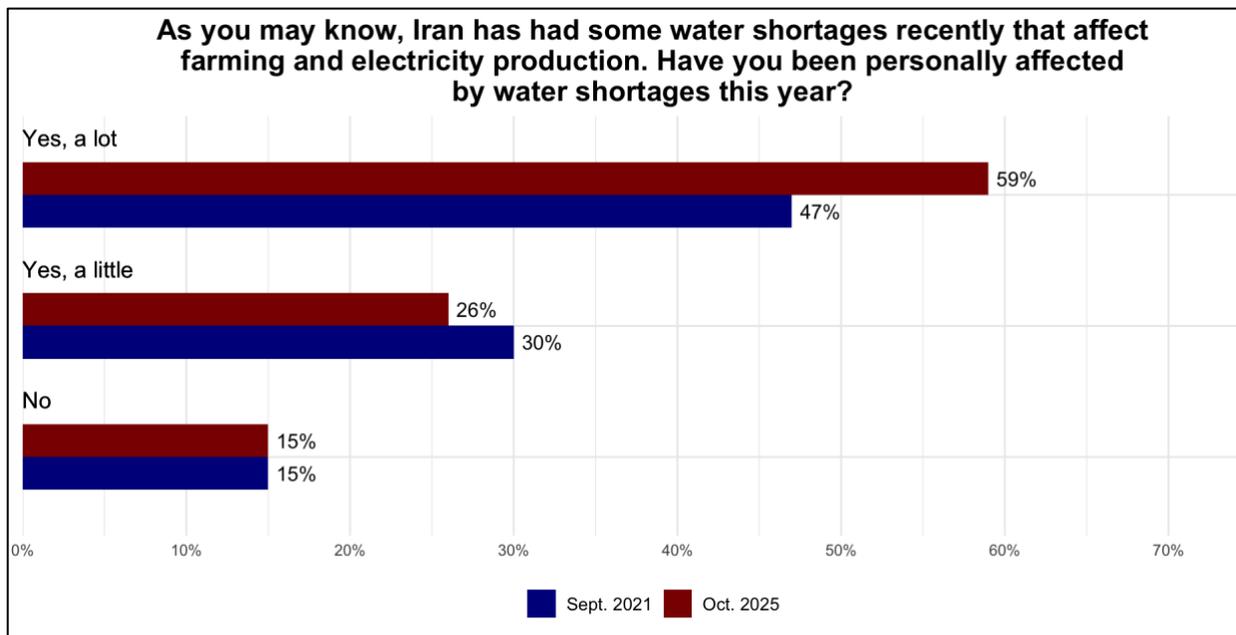


Both questions were asked in a 2009 World Bank international survey of 15 countries, including Iran. Since 2009, the number of Iranians viewing climate change as a serious problem has gone from 80 to 93%. Yet the number who thought there is a scientific consensus on climate change has dropped from 60 to 48%.

Seven in ten expected climate change, “if left unchecked worldwide,” to impact life in Iran very significantly. Almost unanimously (96%), Iranians expected effects on food prices (a lot, 70%-13 points higher than in 2009). “The likelihood of natural disasters, like droughts or floods,” was expected to increase by 96% as well, with a similar increase since 2009. And for “rainfall and available water resources”—currently a recognized crisis in Iran—95% expected effects from climate change (a lot, 75%, up from 67% in 2009).

Water Shortages and the Environment

Three in five (59%) reported that in 2025, water shortages “that affect farming and electricity production” had affected them personally—up from 47% who reported this for the year 2021. Twenty-six percent said they had been affected a little; only 15% said they had been unaffected.

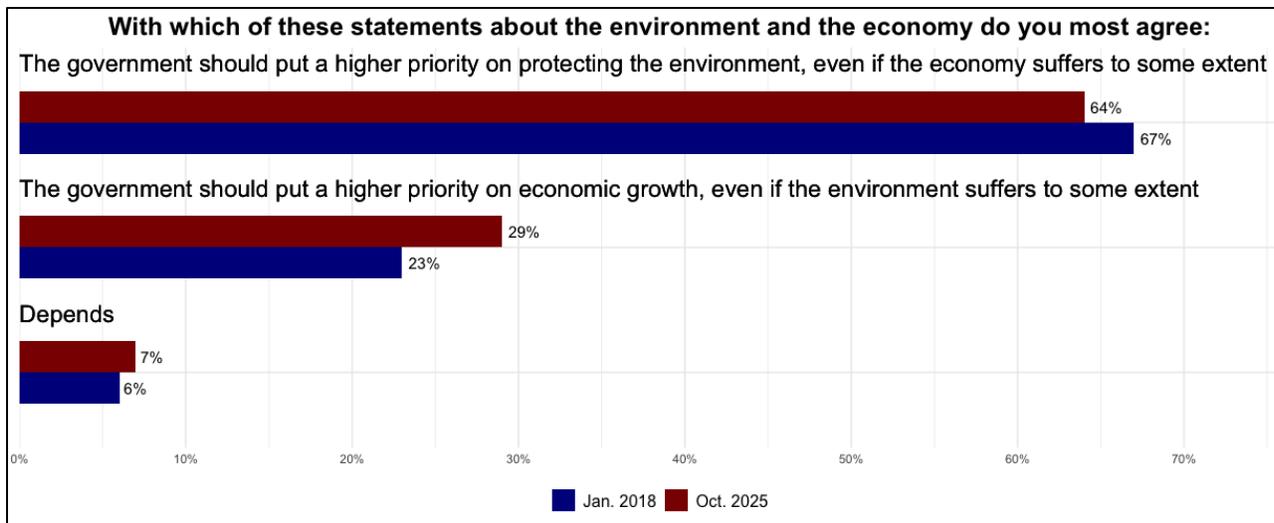


All respondents were asked a complex question about what water policy the government should follow:

How do you think the government should deal with problems caused by water shortages in the short term? Should it allocate less water to farmers so there is more water available for people in the cities and for production of electricity even if that would lead to farmers leaving their farms and less food being produced? Or should it allocate more water to farmers so that they could remain in their farms and produce food, even if that would lead to a shortage of electricity and water for people in the cities?

Almost half (48%) preferred that the government allocate more water to farms, while 36% preferred the government allocate more for urban use; 4% volunteered that they thought current allocations should remain in place. Opinion has shifted very slightly (4 points) toward the urban side of the argument.

Three in five still preferred that the government prioritize the environment when there is a conflict with economic growth. Respondents were asked to choose between two statements: that “the government should put a higher priority on protecting the environment, even if the economy suffers to some extent”; or the reverse. Sixty-four percent said the government should prioritize environmental protection (2018: 67%) while 29% would prioritize the economy (2018: 23%).



Paris Agreement

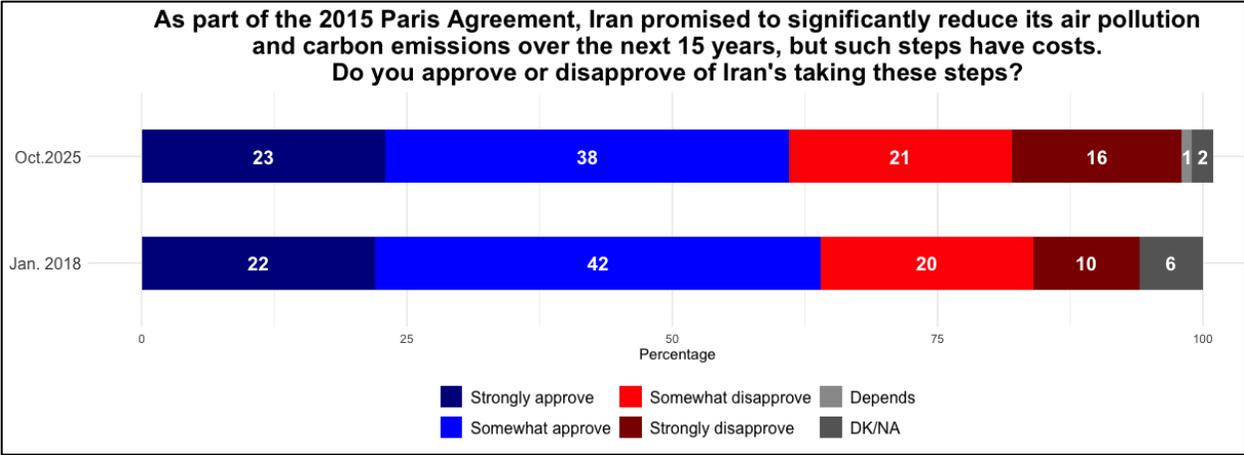
Knowledge of the 2015 Paris Agreement and other international accords on climate change, while never high, has declined somewhat. Respondents were asked “As you may know, Iran and most other countries around the world made an agreement to cut their air pollution in order to reduce climate change. Have you heard about this agreement before?” (The Farsi term corresponding to the English “air pollution” has a wider application in Iran and so was used in this question instead of greenhouse gases to make the topic accessible to the greatest number.) Only 18% said yes; 82% said no. When last asked in 2018, 24% said yes, so awareness of these agreements has diminished.

Nonetheless, when Iran’s role in the Paris Agreement was explained, three in five approved. They heard the following:

As part of the 2015 Paris Agreement, Iran promised to significantly reduce its air pollution and carbon emissions over the next 15 years, but such steps have costs. Some people approve of Iran taking these steps because they will lead to better air quality in Iran and will reduce global climate change. Others do not approve of Iran taking these steps, because they believe the costs are significant and only wealthier countries who have caused most of the climate change should be required to take such steps. Do you approve or disapprove of Iran’s taking these steps? Strongly or somewhat?

Sixty-one percent approved of Iran taking steps in coordination with the Paris Agreement (23% strongly), despite the strong counterargument, while 37% disapproved.

Support may have been slightly below its 2018 level, but the question wording from 2018 had to be changed, so the comparison is inexact. In the 2018 survey, it was possible to tell Iranians that “Iran has promised to significantly reduce its air pollution over the next 15 years if it gets some financial assistance to develop cleaner technology.” By 2025, there was no likelihood that Iran would receive such assistance, and so the phrase was dropped.



Among Iranians, there is far less belief than there was in 2009 that clear action from Iran on climate change could act as an example to motivate other countries. Asked, “Do you think that if our country takes steps to deal with the problem of climate change, other countries would then be more willing to act, or do you think it wouldn’t make much difference?” a 53% majority thought it would make little difference (other countries more willing, 42%). But back in 2009, three in four Iranians (73%) thought that climate-conscious steps by Iran could encourage other countries to act as well; only 19% thought otherwise.

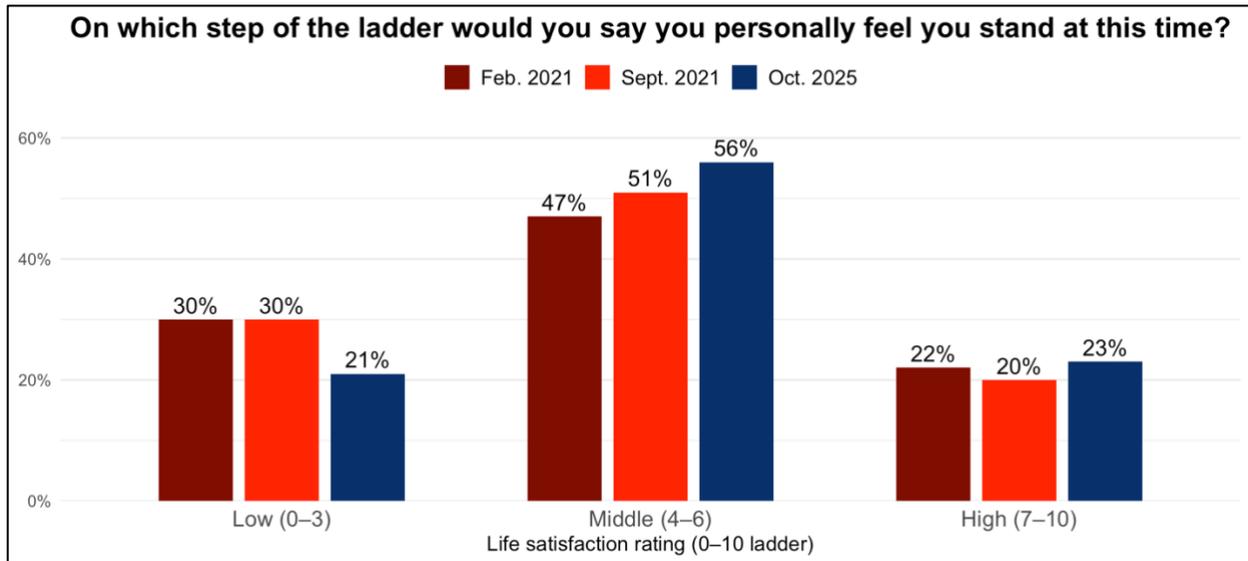
15. Iranians Evaluate Their Own Well-Being

There was no indication in October that collectively, Iranians had grown more discouraged about their individual lives. On a scale of 0 to 10, only one in five gave their life a rating of 3 or below, fewer than the three in ten who did so in 2021. A clear majority saw themselves as being in the middle of the well-being scale. When considering their personal expectations for five years from now, three in four had expectations that were middling to good, more than in 2021.

This study sought to gauge whether most Iranians are losing hope about their individual lives—a narrative that is widely broadcast by media outside Iran. Respondents were told to “imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you,” and asked: “On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?” The average response was 5.0. A majority (56%) chose a number from 4 to 6. Twenty-one percent chose a number from 0 to 3; 23% chose a number from 7 to 10.

Respondents in October were at least as positive about their lives as respondents were in September 2021, when these questions were last asked. The average rating of their current lives was 4.75 then, about eighteen months into the covid pandemic and shortly after Ebrahim Raisi had taken office. In this study, the average rating was 5.0. The median rating both then and now was 5.0. Those who gave their lives a number between 4 and 6 rose from 51 to 56%, while those

who gave their lives a number between 0 and 3 fell from 29 to 21%. Those rating their lives between 7 and 10 have increased from 20 to 23%.



Respondents were also asked, using the same 0-to-10 scale, “On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?” The average response was 6.21 (September 2021: 5.85). Sixty percent picked a number from 5 to 8 (September 2021: 50%); 19% picked a number from 0 to 4 (September 2021: 27%); and 17% picked 9 or 10 (September 2021: 16%).

Those with modest positive expectations for the future (the 5-8 range) increased by 10 points since September 2021, while those with very high expectations (the 9-10 range) were stable, and those with low expectations decreased by 8 points.

The general direction of this study’s data is confirmed by the current ratings of the World Happiness Report.⁶ Iran is currently rated 99th out of 147 countries; in 2020, it was rated 118th out of 153 countries. Iran’s happiness ratings are not unusual for its region. If we compare Iran to its immediate neighbors, Azerbaijan is in 106th place; Armenia, 87th; Türkiye, 94th; Iraq, 101st; Kuwait, 30th; Pakistan, 109th; and Afghanistan, 147th.⁷

⁶ “World Happiness Report Data Table,” *World Happiness Report*, <https://data.worldhappiness.report/table>

⁷ Data was not available for Turkmenistan.