

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In February of 2013, the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA) commissioned George Mason University to conduct its fifth scientific national public opinion survey of Iranian Americans to gather accurate attitudinal and demographic information about the Iranian American community. The 2013 survey follows similar surveys previously commissioned by PAAIA. The surveys are an integral component of better understanding the Iranian American community and having its voice heard through the availability of ongoing, accurate scientific data. The survey's margin of error is +/- 5%, consistent with previous surveys.

### PAAIA 2013 SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

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The results of the 2013 PAAIA survey indicate that Iranian Americans continue to retain close ties to family and friends in Iran. A majority of Iranian Americans have family in Iran. **Thirty two percent (32%)** of those surveyed stated that they have a parent living in Iran, while **forty-four percent (44%)** said they have a sibling in the country. A total of **sixty-six percent (66%)** indicated that they communicate with family or friends in Iran at least several times a month. Moreover, **seventy percent (70%)** said that they very closely or somewhat closely follow news from Iran.

**Fifty-two percent (52%)** of Iranian Americans believe that internal developments in Iran and the state of U.S.-Iran relations are core issues for them. These issues correlate with and are at the heart of domestic issues involving Iranian Americans in the United States (e.g. civil rights, the impact of sanctions or immigration), which **twenty-one percent (21%)** of the respondents cited as being most important to them. In contrast, another **twenty-one percent (21%)** chose issues that affect their life, family and community and that are not unique to Iranian Americans..

Iranian Americans want to see change in Iran. The survey indicates that from among a list of seven issues relating to U.S.-Iran relations, the greatest number of Iranian Americans, **fifty-six percent (56%)**, cited the promotion of human rights and democracy as the most important, followed by **thirty-one percent (31%)** who chose promotion of regime change.

While Iranian Americans want to see a democratic Iran that respects human rights, they differ on how this can be achieved. **Forty-two percent (42%)** believe either the promotion of regime change or the promotion of human rights and democracy would be in America's best interest, while **thirty-five percent (35%)** cite diplomatic negotiations or establishing diplomatic relations. Only **three percent (3%)** of Iranian Americans favor a military option against Iran.

When asked about potential U.S. strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities, a total of **sixty-four percent (64%)** of Iranian Americans said they were opposed to such strikes, while **eleven percent (11%)** said they would support them and **seventeen percent (17%)** might support them in some circumstances. **Nine percent (9%)** were not sure. **Forty-nine percent (49%)** were concerned that U.S. hostilities with Iran have the potential for increasing discrimination against Iranian Americans.

Iranian Americans are divided over President Obama's overall handling of Iran. While **sixty-three percent (63%)** voted for him in the 2012 presidential election, **fifty-three percent (53%)** rated his overall handling of Iran as "excellent" or "good," while **forty-seven percent (47%)** rated it as "fair" or "poor." A larger majority, **fifty-nine percent (59%)**, said they approved of the president's handling of Iran's nuclear program. When asked whether they believe the Obama administration's efforts to counter Iran's nuclear program will be successful, opinion was mixed, with **forty percent (40%)** saying yes and **thirty-two percent (32%)** no, while **twenty-nine**



**percent (29%)** were unsure. A large majority of Iranian Americans surveyed, **sixty-eight percent (68%)**, would support the removal of sanctions on Iran if the Iranian regime reached an agreement with the U.S. and the international community concerning its nuclear program. **Thirty-nine percent (39%)** said that the sanctions have had an impact on them and/or their family members.

Despite an expressed desire for a democratic Iran, there is very little support among Iranian Americans for any opposition groups or figures. Only **fifteen percent (15%)** of Iranian Americans surveyed support any such opposition groups or figures. This result, however, should not be interpreted to mean that there is significant support for the current Iranian regime. In fact, in the 2011 PAAIA survey, **sixty-seven percent (67%)** of Iranian Americans stated that they would like Iran to be secular and democratic. Only **two percent (2%)** said that Iran should continue to be an Islamic republic.

