

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In April 2014, the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA) commissioned George Mason University to conduct its sixth scientific national public opinion survey of Iranian Americans to gather accurate attitudinal and demographic information about the Iranian American community. The 2014 survey follows similar surveys previously commissioned by PAAIA. The survey's margin of error is +/- 5%, consistent with previous surveys.

### PAAIA 2014 SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

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The results of the 2014 PAAIA survey indicate that Iranian Americans continue to retain close ties to the people of Iran. **Eighty-two percent (82%)** of the respondents stated that they still have family living in Iran. **Forty-one percent (41%)** said they have a sibling there, and **sixty-five percent (65%)** stated they have aunts, uncles, and/or cousins who live there. A total of **fifty-one percent (51%)** indicated that they communicate with family members in Iran at least several times per month. A smaller but still substantial **twenty-eight percent (28%)** stated that they travel to Iran at least once every two to three years.

Overall, Iranian Americans find issues that affect their daily lives and are not specific to the Iranian American community to be most important to them. However, this is closely followed by issues that impact them as Iranian Americans (U.S.-Iran relations, internal developments in Iran, and domestic issues involving Iranian Americans). When asked about issues of importance to them as Iranian Americans, an overwhelming **seventy-eight percent (78%)** said they believe it is important to facilitate greater understanding between the peoples of the United States and Iran. A similar number believe it is important to ensure that the image of Iranian Americans accurately reflects their values and accomplishments. A **sixty percent (60%)** majority believe it is important to help Iranian Americans get elected to political office and increase the political influence of Iranian Americans in the U.S.

Iranian Americans want to see change in Iran. More than **two-thirds** believe that Iran should be a secular democracy. In contrast, only **nine percent (9%)** believe that any form of an "Islamic Republic" would work well in the country. From a list of seven issues relating to U.S.-Iran relations, the largest number of respondents, **sixty-seven percent (67%)**, cited the promotion of human rights and democracy as the most important. Promoting regime change in Iran came in second, chosen by **thirty percent (30%)**.

While Iranian Americans want to see a democratic Iran that respects human rights, they differ on how this can be achieved. **Forty-nine percent (49%)** said that diplomatic negotiations with Iran would be in the best interests of the United States, while **forty-six percent (46%)** said the same about "promoting human rights and democracy." Only **six percent (6%)** said that military action against Iran would be in America's best interest.

An overwhelming majority of Iranian Americans—**eighty-three percent (83%)**—said they strongly or somewhat support the establishment of a U.S. Interests Section in Iran that would provide consular services and issue U.S. visas. This is in keeping with the fact that **fifty-eight**



**percent (58%)** said they have traveled to Iran at least once and with the continued close ties they maintain with family and friends living there.

A majority of those surveyed, **fifty-two percent (52%)**, said they approved of President Obama's handling of Iran's nuclear program. **Forty percent (40%)** said that they approved or strongly approved of the initial agreement between the P5+1 and Iran.



**83% supported the establishment of a U.S. Interest Section in Iran**

Nearly two-thirds of Iranian Americans surveyed, **sixty-two percent (62%)**, would support the removal of sanctions on Iran if the Iranian regime reached a permanent agreement with the U.S. and the international community concerning its nuclear program. In the event nuclear negotiations with Iran fail, **sixty-six percent (66%)** would favor continued diplomatic overtures, while **thirteen percent (13%)** would support military strikes. **Fifty-one percent (51%)** would support a policy of containment. Nearly **half (49%)** of Iranian Americans would oppose the passage of additional sanctions if negotiations with Iran fail, while **thirty-four percent (34%)** would support such measures.

Iranian Americans are divided in their assessment of the 2013 election of Hassan Rouhani as Iran's president. A majority—**fifty-four percent (54%)**—said that they believe Rouhani's election will improve Iran's relations with the United States and the European Union. **Thirty-one percent (31%)** believe his election will improve human rights in Iran, while **thirty-eight percent (38%)** believe the situation will remain unchanged. When asked whether they have felt more comfortable traveling to Iran since Rouhani's election, a plurality—**thirty percent (30%)**—said that the election has made no difference in this regard, while **twenty percent (20%)** said they feel more comfortable about going back to Iran and an equal percentage said they do not. **Twenty-five percent (25%)** said they do not travel to Iran.