

Executive Summary

From August 5–17, 2019, Zogby Research Services conducted a national telephone survey of 400 Iranian Americans on behalf of PAAIA; this year’s survey results are presented below.

A few strands emerge from the responses that are worth highlighting. The tensions in both the wider U.S. society and between the United States and Iran are clearly being felt by the Iranian American community. Respondents share their concerns about discrimination and personal safety, opposition to the travel ban, and fears about a potential U.S. military conflict with Iran. When contemplating priorities and goals, the community advocates for deeper political participation within the United States, including electing Iranian Americans to office and increasing the capacity to influence policy.

A brief summary of the findings includes the following points:

- Connections between the Iranian American community and Iran are strong, with 41% communicating with family and friends in Iran at least several times a week. This communication has been transformed over the last decade, from reliance on phone calls to the utilization of a wide variety of services and apps like Skype, Telegram, and Whatsapp as well as social media networks to keep in touch.
- The experience of and concern about discrimination based on their ethnicity and country of origin remains high among Iranian Americans. More than six in 10 have either faced discrimination themselves or know another Iranian American who has had this experience. More than seven in 10 are concerned about increasing discrimination because of the current political climate in the United States. Worse still, 61% of respondents are concerned about their personal safety and the safety of other Iranian Americans.
- There is strong opposition to the travel ban, with 70% saying they or their family and friends have been impacted by it. The most frequently experienced impacts are preventing attendance at family events and gatherings for family emergencies (53%), preventing tourism (52%), and separating families or keeping them apart (44%).
- There is a strong desire for building political power and influence in the community. When asked about goals for their community’s civic or advocacy organization, the top choice is enhancing Iranian American participation in U.S. politics and increasing the influence of the community. Among issues affecting their community in the United States, Iranian Americans rank “helping Iranian Americans get elected to political office and increasing the community’s political influence” at the top.
- The U.S.-Iran relationship has become the most important issue for the community, rising above domestic issues facing Iranian Americans (like civil rights) as well as those facing all Americans (like jobs or health care). And foreign policy including the U.S.-Iran relationship is ranked first among issues the community will consider when voting in federal elections, outranking the economy and jobs, national security, education, and health care.
- Almost seven in 10 of the survey respondents say they will probably (19%) or definitely (50%) vote for the Democratic candidate for president in 2020, while 21% say they will probably or definitely vote for President Trump’s re-election. These numbers mirror the ratings of Trump’s handling of U.S.-Iran relations, with 22% saying it is excellent or good and 77% saying it is fair (9%) or poor (66%).
- Promoting human rights and democracy in Iran and lifting the U.S. trade embargo continue to be the issues related to U.S.-Iran relations of most importance to the community. Preventing a U.S. military strike ranks

third. Promoting regime change is the number one issue for Republican respondents but ranks near the bottom for Democrats.

- There is significant concern among Iranian Americans about a military conflict between the United States and Iran, with 64% saying they think it is more likely than not. Only 9% would support U.S. military strikes on Iran, and the opposition to or indecision about such an action is rooted in concern about potential civilian casualties (83%) and the belief that strikes will be ineffective and encourage Iran to develop nuclear weapons (63%).