



# PAAIA

THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
ALLIANCE OF  
IRANIAN AMERICANS

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# 2023

# National Public Opinion Survey

of the Iranian American Community

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**ZOGBY**  
RESEARCH SERVICES



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# Executive Summary

From January 27 to February 7, 2023, **Zogby Research Services** conducted a national survey of 401 Iranian Americans on behalf of **Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA)**, a non-profit, non-partisan organization that serves the interests of Iranian Americans and represents the community before U.S. policymakers and the American public. The survey results are presented in this report.

Despite the Iranian government's attempts to create barriers to communication, the connections of Iranian Americans to their family and friends in Iran remain strong, with close familial ties and frequent communications that serve as a source of news about what is happening within the country. The level of engagement among Iranian Americans about current developments in Iran is high, with increased interest in U.S.-Iran relations. Respondents express heightened concern about the safety of their family and friends in Iran, and they expect their community's civic and advocacy organizations and the U.S. government to do more to advance democracy in Iran.

Regardless of political party affiliation, respondents are dissatisfied with President Biden's handling of U.S.-Iran relations, but there is no clear consensus about the path forward. Iranian Americans are split on whether a more comprehensive deal with Iran should be pursued or whether to reject the notion of deal-making altogether. And while they believe the recent protests will make a positive contribution to Iran's evolution, they are unsure about how the U.S. government could best support the protestors.

# Executive Summary



A brief summary of the findings includes the following points:

- Connections between the Iranian American community and family in Iran remain close. Almost half of survey respondents (**47%**) have an immediate family member in Iran, and only **6%** have no family there.
- Communication between Iranian Americans and their connections in Iran are robust, despite recent barriers created by the Iranian government that **80%** report are having a negative impact on their communications. **More than four in 10** communicate with family and friends in Iran at least several times a week, a stable percentage of respondents in close contact with relatives since 2019. The primary mode of communication is mobile communication apps like Telegram and WhatsApp (**76%**), while telephone calls continue to decline as a means of communication.
- A majority of Iranian Americans say that they or someone they are close to has experienced discrimination, and about **six in 10** are concerned about increasing discrimination against and the personal safety of Iranian Americans. And there is overwhelming concern about the personal safety of family and friends in Iran (**91%**).
- Iranian Americans are **twice as likely** to consider foreign policy issues involving U.S.-Iran relations and the internal affairs of Iran as most important than they are to point to domestic issues, either specific or not to the Iranian American community, as most important.
- There is a **growing expectation** that the primary goals of an Iranian American civic or advocacy organization should be **enhancing Iranian American participation in the U.S. political process** and increasing the influence of Iranian Americans, and influencing U.S. policy towards Iran.
- The importance of easing the issuance of immigration and tourist visas is significant for Iranian Americans. And an overwhelming **92%** support the outline of the proposed Temporary Family Visitation Act.
- General support for President Biden’s presidency is weak, not unlike it is for the rest of Americans, and split along party lines with Democrats more favorable than Republicans. **Notably, Democrats and Republicans are both overwhelmingly negative with respect to Biden’s handling of U.S.-Iran relations.**
- With respect to U.S.-Iran relations, **promotion of human rights and democracy continues to be the most important issue for Iranian Americans**, closely followed by regime change, which is up 16 points from 2020. These are the top two issues for both Democrats and Republicans, but have higher ratings among Democrats.
- There is a striking shift in opinion with regard to the prospect for deal-making with Iran. Iranian Americans are almost evenly split between wanting to make a more comprehensive deal (**41%**) and rejecting the notion of deal-making altogether (**38%**). A comprehensive deal is favored by more recent emigres, Republicans, younger respondents, and those without college degrees. More likely to say “no deal” are earlier emigres, Democrats, college-educated and older respondents. Support for returning to the JCPOA has been cut in half (**15%**) since 2020.
- **Nine in 10** Iranian Americans believe the recent protests will make a positive contribution to Iran’s socio-political evolution and are in favor of the U.S. government doing something to support the protestors. But there is no clear consensus on how best to accomplish this, with **supporting Internet access and banning Iran’s leadership and their families from moving to the U.S.** as the top two choices.
- Nasrin Sotoudeh, Reza Pahlavi, and Ali Karimi are the Iranian leaders with the **highest** net favorability, while President Raisi, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, and Maryam Rajavi have the **lowest**.
- Virtually all Iranian Americans follow news from Iran—and they utilize many sources to do so. Social media and personal connections in the U.S. and in Iran are the most noted sources.



## I. Connections and Communications with Iran

**Do you have any of the following family members in Iran? [Select all that apply.]**

	2023
Immediate family (parent, sibling, spouse, or child)	46%
Grandparent or grandchild	29%
Aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew	61%
Cousin or other extended/distant family member	67%
No family in Iran	5%
Not sure	1%

Direct familial ties between Iranian Americans and Iran are extremely common in the community. Most significantly, almost one-half of survey respondents (**46%**) have an immediate family member (i.e., parent, sibling, spouse, or child) in Iran. Two-thirds of survey respondents (**67%**) have a cousin or other extended family member in Iran, and more than six in 10 (**61%**) have an aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew. Almost three in 10 (**29%**) have a grandparent or grandchild in Iran. Just **6%** of respondents either do not have any family in Iran or are unsure of any family ties in Iran.

**How frequently do you communicate with your family and friends in Iran?**

	2023	2020	2019	2017	2015	2011
Daily	13%	15%	15%	8%	7%	5%
Several times a week	31%	26%	26%	17%	21%	24%
Several times a month	29%	27%	26%	30%	32%	33%
Several times a year	10%	9%	14%	16%	19%	22%
Less frequently*	8%	8%	10%	16%	16%	15%
Not at all*	9%	6%	10%	13%	5%	2%

Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

\* In 2011 & 2015 surveys, these options were "rarely" and "never."

The frequency of communication with family and friends in Iran remains quite similar to the rates found since 2019. **More than four in 10** respondents are in contact at least several times per week (**44%**), including **13%** who say they communicate daily. Almost three in 10 (**29%**) are in touch with family and friends in Iran several times a month, while **10%** say they communicate several times a year. Only **17%** are either infrequently in contact or do not communicate with family or friends at all.

Those Iranian American respondents who emigrated since 1990 are twice as likely to communicate at least several times a week (**60%**) than those who emigrated in 1990 or before (**31%**).



## How do you communicate with your family and friends in Iran? [Select all that apply.]

	2023	2020	2019	2017	2015	2011	2009
I write letters	7%	16%	12%	5%	2%	4%	7%
I send emails	30%	31%	41%	23%	44%	32%	40%
I call them	40%	50%	74%	66%	89%	72%	88%
Internet services (e.g. Skype)	56%	52%	66%	42%	49%	9%	4%
Mobile applications (e.g. Telegram, Whatsapp, etc.)	76%	60%	69%	43%	52%	-	-
Social media / networks	51%	48%	57%	42%	51%	25%	14%
Other	2%	2%	<1%	2%	1%	-	-

The current survey clearly shows the continuing trend of phone calls declining as a top mode of communication between Iranian Americans and their family and friends in Iran; **only 40% of respondents say they make calls**. The most common—and growing—mode of communication is mobile communication applications like Telegram and Whatsapp, which are **used by more than three-quarters of respondents (76%)**.

More than half of survey respondents also say they use Internet telephone and video chat services like Skype and Google Chat (**56%**), and social media and social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (**51%**). Three in 10 report staying in touch with family and friends in Iran using email (**30%**), and just **7%** write letters.

**In recent months the Iranian government created barriers to the Internet, slowing speeds, barring the use of some apps, and shutting down Internet access for periods of time and in certain regions. What impact, if any, have these restrictions had on your ability to communicate with family and friends in Iran?**

	2023
Very negative impact	47%
Somewhat negative impact	33%
<b>Total negative impact</b>	<b>80%</b>
Very little impact	10%
No impact at all	10%
<b>Total little or no impact</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Eight in 10 Iranian American respondents report a somewhat or very negative impact on their ability to communicate with family and friends in Iran** because of the Iranian government’s actions in recent months to create barriers to the Internet. Almost half (**47%**) say the government’s slowing of Internet speeds, barring of certain apps, and shutting down access altogether for periods or time or in certain areas has had a “very negative impact.” **Just 10% say it has had very little impact and another 10% that it has not impacted them at all.**



## From which of the following do you get your news about Iran? [Select all that apply.]

	2023
Western media (CNN, Fox, Washington Post, etc.)	44%
VOA Persian	32%
BBC Persian	42%
Iran International	45%
Manoto TV	35%
Social Media (Twitter, Instagram, etc.)	63%
Friends and family in Iran	53%
Friends and family in the U.S.	50%
Other	11%
I don't follow news from Iran	1%

Iranian Americans were asked how they get their news about Iran. Majorities point to social media like Twitter and Instagram (63%), and friends and family in Iran (53%) and the U.S. (50%). More than four in 10 respondents say they get their news about Iran from Iran International (45%), western media like CNN and the Washington Post (44%), and BBC Persian (42%). One-third get news from Iran on Manoto TV (35%) and VOA Persian (32%). Only 1% of survey respondents don't follow the news from Iran.

Among older respondents, at least a majority turns to all of these sources except Manoto TV and VOA Persian, while among younger respondents only social media and friends and family in Iran are used as news sources by a majority.



## II. Iranian American Experience

**Have you, or an Iranian American who is close to you, personally experienced discrimination in the past because of your ethnicity or country of origin?**

	2023	2020	2019	2016	2015
Yes	55%	60%	63%	48%	43%
No	42%	36%	33%	49%	54%
Not sure	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%

When asked if they themselves or another Iranian American they are close to has experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity or country of origin, **55%** of respondents in the current survey say yes. This continues a **slight but steady decline since a high of 63%** reported discrimination in 2019, and is slightly higher than the rate of those who said they had experienced discrimination in 2016 (**48%**) and 2015 (**43%**).

**Because of the current political circumstances in Iran and the tense relationship between the United States and Iran, how concerned are you about each of the following?**

	INCREASED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST IRANIAN AMERICANS	YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY & THE SAFETY OF OTHER IRANIAN AMERICANS	THE PERSONAL SAFETY OF FRIENDS & FAMILY IN IRAN
Very concerned	25%	21%	59%
Somewhat concerned	37%	36%	31%
Total Concerned	61%	57%	91%
Somewhat unconcerned	11%	16%	4%
Not concerned at all	28%	28%	5%
Total Unconcerned	39%	43%	9%

**More than nine in 10 Iranian American respondents (91%)** express concern about the personal safety of their **family and friends in Iran** because of the current political circumstances in Iran and the tense relationship between the United States and Iran, including **95%** who say they are “very concerned.” Domestically, about six in 10 respondents are also concerned about increased discrimination against Iranian Americans (**61%**) and their personal safety and the safety of other Iranian Americans (**57%**). More than one-quarter (**28%**) say they are “not concerned at all” when it comes to discrimination or safety in the United States.

While concern about the personal safety of family and friends in Iran is consistent across the board, with respect to domestic concerns, **younger respondents are more concerned than older respondents** about both increased discrimination against Iranian Americans (**age 18-34: 83% concerned vs. 55+: 39% concerned**) and their personal safety and the safety of other Iranian Americans (**age 18-34: 72% concerned vs. 55+: 40% concerned**).



## Which of the following issues is most important to you?

	2023	2019	2014	2013	2011
U.S. domestic issues involving Iranian Americans (e.g. civil rights/discrimination, immigration)	16%	22%	10%	21%	13%
Foreign policy issues involving U.S.-Iran relations	33%	39%	22%	40%	32%
Internal affairs of Iran (Iranian government, Iranian society, etc.)	32%	12%	13%	12%	11%
Issues that affect my life, family, and community and are not unique to Iranian Americans (healthcare, education, jobs, etc.)	16%	19%	49%	21%	31%
None of the above	2%	6%	4%	12%	7%
Not sure	1%	2%	2%	5%	6%

One-third of survey respondents (**33%**) select “foreign policy issues involving U.S.-Iran relations” as the most important issue to them, the same top choice as the 2019 survey when this question was last posed. However, equally important in the current survey is “internal affairs of Iran” (**32%**), **a jump of 20 points since 2019**. “U.S. domestic issues involving Iranian Americans” and “issues that affect life, family and community that are not unique to Iranian Americans” are both deemed most important by **16%** of the respondents.

Foreign policy issues are even more important among older respondents (**age 55+: 47%**), those who emigrated in 1990 or before (**40%**), and Democrats (**38%**).

## How do you describe your political ideology?

	2023
Progressive/very liberal	13%
Liberal	31%
Moderate	28%
Conservative	17%
Very Conservative	3%
Libertarian	5%
Other/not sure	3%

When asked to describe their political ideology, **31%** of the survey respondents say they are liberal, followed by **28%** who call themselves moderate and **17%** who say they are conservative. **13%** say they are progressive or very liberal, while 3% identify as very conservative and **5%** as libertarian.



## What would you expect to be the two main goals of an Iranian American civic or advocacy organization? [Select two.]

	2023	2020	2019
Enhance Iranian American participation in the U.S. political process and increase the influence of Iranian Americans	52%	42%	50%
Improve the image of Iranian Americans	17%	36%	39%
Protect the civil rights of Iranian Americans*	28%	35%	-
Advocate for domestic issues of importance for Iranian Americans in the United States	17%	30%	31%
Preserve and promote Iranian culture and heritage	32%	27%	28%
Influence U.S. policy towards Iran	43%	24%	36%
Other	-	2%	-
Not sure	1%	2%	8%

\* This option was added starting with the 2020 survey

**The main goals** for an Iranian American civic or advocacy organization most frequently selected by respondents in the current survey are: **“enhancing Iranian American participation in the U.S. political process and increasing the influence of Iranian Americans” (52%)** and **“influencing U.S. policy towards Iran” (43%)**. Both of these top choices are more significant expectations among survey respondents in 2023 than they were in 2020. “Influencing U.S. policy towards Iran” is up 19 points, and “enhancing participation in the U.S. political process” is up 10 points.

Enhancing participation in the U.S. political process is a higher priority for Republicans (57%) and Independents (60%) than it is for Democrats (46%). On the other hand, **Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say that influencing U.S. policy towards Iran should be a main goal for an Iranian American civic or advocacy organization (D: 52% vs. R: 36%)**. Influencing U.S. policy towards Iran is also a priority for older respondents (age 55+: 66%), those who emigrated in 1990 or before (59%), and college-educated respondents (51%).

The second tier of expectations for an Iranian American civic or advocacy organization is comprised of “preserving and promoting Iranian culture and heritage” (32%) and “protecting the civil rights of Iranian Americans” (28%). **Preserving Iranian heritage is a greater priority for younger respondents (age 18-34: 44%)** than it is for older respondents (age 55+: 22%)

Finally, “improving the image of Iranian Americans” and “advocating for issues of importance for Iranian Americans in the United States” are the least cited goals for an Iranian American civic or advocacy organization, each selected by 17% of respondents. **The significance of both of these possible goals for survey respondents has been halved since the 2020 survey.**



Of the following list of issues affecting Iranian Americans in the United States, which two are most important to you personally? [Select two.]

	2023	2020
Help Iranian Americans get elected to political office and increase political influence of the Iranian American community	31%	42%
Impact U.S. policy towards Iran	48%	-
Make immigration and tourist visas to family from Iran less difficult and burdensome	42%	41%
Ensure Iranian Americans have access to federal and state small business programs for minority-owned businesses	33%	35%
Ensure Iranian Americans are accurately counted in the U.S. Census & annual American population surveys**	-	34%
Have Nowruz (Iranian / Persian New Year) officially recognized in the United States	21%	19%
Have Farsi included on government language testing and translation services	12%	9%
None of the above	2%	6%
Not sure	<1%	8%

\* This option was added starting with the 2023 survey

\*\* This option was not included in the 2023 survey

When asked to identify the issues affecting Iranian Americans in the United States that are most important to them, almost one-half of respondents (48%) select “**impact U.S. policy towards Iran,**” followed by 42% who select “**make immigration and tourist visas to family from Iran less difficult and burdensome.**”

Impacting U.S. policy towards Iran is more important to older (age 55+: 62%) than to younger respondents (18-34: 38%), to those who emigrated before 1990 (58%) than since 1990 (38%), to Democrats (52%) and Independents (54%) than to Republicans (39%), and to college-educated (54%) than to non-college-educated respondents (32%). Easing the visa process for family from Iran is more important to younger (18-34: 57%) than older respondents (55+: 31%), to more recent emigres (52%) than to less recent (36%) and to Democrats (51%) than to Independents (36%) and Republicans (40%).

About one-third of respondents choose “ensure that Iranian Americans have access to federal and state small business programs for minority-owned businesses” (33%) and “help Iranian Americans get elected to political office and increase political influence of the Iranian American community” (31%). About one in five select getting official recognition of Nowruz (21%) and 12% select having Farsi included on government language testing and translation services.

# Analysis



**Temporary Family Visitation Act (TFVA):** Currently, tourist visas to foreign nationals to visit family members in the United States who are citizens and permanent residents are often denied because their strong family ties make US officials suspect that the relatives intend to immigrate, not just visit. There is proposed federal legislation (Temporary Family Visitation Act) that would make it easier for these foreign nationals to visit family members.

## Do you support or oppose this proposed legislation?

	2023
Strongly support	57%
Somewhat support	35%
<b>Total support</b>	<b>92%</b>
Somewhat oppose	4%
Strongly oppose	3%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>8%</b>

**There is overwhelming support (92%) among survey respondents for the proposed Temporary Family Visitation Act** that would make it easier for foreign nationals who have close family members in the United States who are citizens and permanent residents to visit. Fifty-seven percent (57%) say they strongly support this proposed legislation.

While overall support is consistent across all subgroups, **intensity of support is higher among Democrats (76% strongly + 21% somewhat support)** than it is among Republicans (40% strongly + 46% somewhat support).

## How do you rate the presidency of Joe Biden?

	2023
Excellent	8%
Good	34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42%</b>
Fair	30%
Poor	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56%</b>
Not sure	2%

Among Iranian American respondents, **42%** rate the Biden presidency either “excellent” (8%) or “good” (34%), while **a majority of 56% view it as “fair” (30%) or “poor” (26%).**

A majority of Democrats (53%) have a positive view of Biden’s presidency, while **only 29% of Republicans say it is either excellent (3%) or good (26%).**



## III. U.S.-Iran Relations

**How do you rate President Biden's handling of U.S.-Iran relations?  
(For surveys prior to 2023, this question asked about then-President Trump)**

	2023	2020	2019	2018	2017
Excellent	6%	17%	13%	15%	7%
Good	17%	14%	9%	7%	4%
Total	23%	31%	22%	22%	11%
Fair	28%	12%	9%	11%	7%
Poor	46%	54%	66%	61%	75%
Total	75%	66%	75%	72%	82%
Not sure	2%	3%	3%	6%	8%

Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

When asked about President Biden's handling of U.S.-Iran relations, three-quarters of Iranian American respondents (**75%**) **give the President negative ratings (fair: 28%, poor: 46%)**, while only **23%** give his handling of U.S.-Iran relations positive ratings (**excellent: 6%, good: 17%**).

Interestingly, unlike the responses to the previous question about the Biden presidency overall, here **political party affiliation makes no difference to the attitudes of respondents**. In fact, Democrats (**76%**) and Independents (**79%**) are slightly more likely to give negative ratings to Biden than Republicans are (**70%**).

**Biden's numbers are comparable to Trump's numbers in 2018 (positive: 22%) and 2019 (positive: 22%)**, and are slightly lower than the percentage of respondents who viewed President Trump's handling of U.S.-Iran relations as positive in 2020 (**31%**).



When it comes to U.S.-Iran relations, of the following list of issues, which two are most important to you?  
[Select two.]

	2023	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Promotion of human rights & democracy in Iran	51%	58%	54%	74%	63%	68%
Lifting the U.S. trade embargo with the hope of supporting economic growth in Iran*	31%	29%	38%	44%	50%	36%
Successful negotiation of a new nuclear agreement between the U.S. and Iran*	18%	27%	20%	15%	21%	21%
Promoting regime change in Iran	41%	25%	25%	37%	28%	22%
Preventing a U.S. military strike against Iran*	13%	23%	27%	-	-	-
Limiting Iran's role in supporting terrorist organizations or foreign military involvement	22%	22%	21%	14%	15%	9%
Keeping sanctions in place or tightening sanctions against Iran	17%	14%	8%	7%	8%	17%
Not sure	<1%	2%	3%	4%	4%	17%

\* The wording of these options has varied slightly in different survey years.

The top issue for Iranian Americans with respect to U.S.-Iran relations **continues to be** “promotion of human rights and democracy in Iran” (51%); this has been the top issue since the 2016 survey.

This is followed by “**promoting regime change in Iran**” which is considered one of the most important issues by 41% of respondents—**up 16 points from 2020**. “Lifting the U.S. trade embargo with the hope of supporting economic growth in Iran” (31%) and “limiting Iran’s role in supporting terrorist organizations or foreign military involvement” (22%) are next, at the same level of importance as in previous years.

The “successful negotiation of a new nuclear agreement between the U.S. and Iran” (18%) and “preventing a military strike against Iran” (13%) **both saw significant declines in importance** (by 9 and 10 points, respectively, since 2020). “Keeping sanctions in place or tightening sanctions” (17%) is also in this lower tier of importance for Iranian American respondents.

“Promotion of human rights and democracy” and “promoting regime change” are the two most important issues for respondents **regardless of political party affiliation**, though their ratings are higher among Democrats (60% and 49%, respectively) than among Republicans (44% and 38%, respectively). **Older respondents also consider these two issues more important** than younger respondents do (55+: 72% and 60% vs. 18-34: 38% and 26%).



## What should be the top two priorities for the U.S. government in dealing with Iran? [Select two.]

	2023	2020	2018	2017	2016
Advancing democracy and promoting personal and civil rights	47%	44%	58%	55%	56%
Allowing Americans to invest in Iran to improve the economy and create employment opportunities	30%	32%	45%	46%	52%
Enhancing and facilitating humanitarian trade with Iran*	23%	30%	-	-	-
Enhancing people-to-people ties through cultural diplomacy and educational exchanges	20%	28%	42%	37%	34%
Negotiating a new nuclear agreement between the U.S. and Iran**	16%	25%	17%	26%	7%
Giving greater support to our allies in the Middle East to counter Iran's regional ambitions	17%	13%	13%	8%	11%
Tightening economic sanctions against the Iranian government	24%	13%	13%	8%	17%
Supporting Iranian opposition groups and figures	1%	2%	4%	4%	17%
Not sure	2%	2%	4%	4%	18%

Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

\* In 2020, the option for “Enhancing and facilitating humanitarian trade with Iran” was added.

\*\* In 2016 and 2017, this option was “Seek new areas of cooperation with the Iranian government.”

The top two priorities for Iranian-American respondents with respect to the U.S. government in dealing with Iran **remain the same as they have been in past surveys**: “advancing democracy and promoting personal and civil rights” (47%) and “allowing Americans to invest in Iran to improve the economy and create employment opportunities” (30%). Older respondents are the most definitive about advancing democracy being a high priority, with 66% of those ages 55 and older identifying it as such compared to just 33% of those 18-34.

The second tier of priorities are “supporting Iranian opposition groups” (24%), “enhancing and facilitating humanitarian trade with Iran” (23%), and “enhancing people to people ties through cultural diplomacy and educational exchanges” (20%). **Supporting opposition groups rose from the bottom of the priority list in 2020 to being ranked third** in the current survey, up 11 points. On the other hand, humanitarian trade and cultural diplomacy both saw declines in their percentages—down 7-8 points.

About one in six respondents consider “tightening economic sanctions” (17%), “giving greater support to Middle East allies to counter Iran’s regional ambitions” (16%), and “negotiating a new nuclear agreement” (16%) to be top priorities for the U.S. government in dealing with Iran. **A new nuclear deal declined 9 points from 2020.**



## Which option regarding “deal-making” with Iran do you favor?

	2023	2020
Returning to the nuclear deal with Iran (i.e., JCPOA)	15%	29%
Making a more comprehensive deal that would address Iran's nuclear ambitions, its engagement in regional and international conflicts, and its human rights violations*	41%	47%
No deal	38%	24%
Not sure	5%	-

\*In 2020, the wording of this option was “Making a more comprehensive deal that would address Iran's nuclear ambitions and its engagement in regional conflicts.”

In a quite striking shift, **Iranian American respondents are now almost split** with respect to their opinion on the prospect for deal-making with Iran. Forty-one percent (41%) favor “making a more comprehensive deal that would address Iran's nuclear ambitions, its engagement in regional and international conflicts, and its human rights violations,” while **38% say simply “no deal.”** Advocating for a more comprehensive deal is down 6 points since 2020, while rejecting the idea of a deal is up 12 points. **Just 15% of respondents favor returning to the JCPOA**, a halving of the percentage who favored that option in 2020.

Looking at the responses by subgroup, while no group is interested in returning to the JCPOA, there are some differences in preference between a comprehensive deal and no deal. A comprehensive deal is preferred over no deal by newer immigrants (49% vs. 30%), Republicans (48% vs. 38%), and most significantly by those without college degrees (56% vs. 16%) and younger respondents (55% vs. 21%). No deal, on the other hand, is preferred over a comprehensive deal by immigrants from before 1991 (47% vs. 35%), Democrats (40% vs. 34%), college-educated respondents (46% vs. 36%), and most significantly by older respondents (58% vs. 25%).



**In your opinion, which of the following should the U.S. government be doing (if anything) to support the protesters in Iran? [Select up to two.]**

	2023
Expand funding and remove legal barriers to support Internet access in Iran	38%
Impose and tighten sanctions on human rights violators	29%
Ban Iran’s leadership and their families from getting visas to live in the U.S.	34%
Facilitate transfer of funds by Iranian Americans to their families in Iran	20%
Recognize and advocate for human rights defenders and political prisoners in Iran	27%
Expand and offer visas to Iranians fleeing persecution in Iran	17%
Expand funding for Farsi language broadcasts	5%
Engage and support Iranian opposition figures and activist	15%
I do not think the US government should get involved with the protest movement in Iran.	6%
Not sure	<1%

When asked what the U.S. government should be doing to support the protesters in Iran, **more than one-third** of Iranian American survey respondents say it should “expand funding and remove legal barriers to support Internet access in Iran” (38%) and “ban Iran’s leadership and their families from getting visas to live in the U.S.” (34%). **More than one-quarter** think the U.S. government should “impose and tighten sanctions on human rights violators” (29%) and “recognize and advocate for human rights defenders and political prisoners in Iran” (27%).

Other actions with less support include “facilitating the transfer of funds by Iranian Americans to their families in Iran” (20%), “expanding and offering visas to Iranians fleeing persecution in Iran” (17%), “engaging and supporting Iranian opposition figures and activists” (15%), and “expanding funding for Farsi language broadcasts” (5%).

**Only 6% of respondents think the U.S. should not get involved with the protest movement in Iran.**

Attitudes by subgroups are quite similar regarding U.S. government actions to support protesters in Iran.



## IV. Iran's Government and Leadership

### What type of government do you think would work best in Iran?

	2023	2018	2017	2014	2011
Islamic republic	7%	<1%	1%	2%	2%
Reformed Islamic republic	12%	5%	8%	7%	4%
Parliamentary democracy/Republic*	60%	68%	55%	69%	67%
Constitutional monarchy	12%	14%	11%	-	-
None of the above	7%	5%	16%	15%	16%
Not sure	3%	7%	9%	7%	11%

Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.  
 \*Prior to 2018, this option was “secular democracy.”

As in every previous survey stretching back more than a decade, **Iranian Americans continue to strongly believe that a parliamentary democracy/republic is the type of government that would work best in Iran**; it is favored by **60%** of this year’s survey respondents. About one in eight respondents prefer either a constitutional monarchy (**12%**) or a reformed Islamic republic (**12%**), and **7%** say an Islamic republic would be the best choice for Iran.

A parliamentary democracy/republic is the top choice of every subgroup, with some variation in intensity. While **76%** of those 55 and over and **72%** of Democrats choose this option, **48% of those ages 18-34 and 50% of Republicans** prefer a parliamentary democracy for Iran. **There are slightly higher levels of enthusiasm** for constitutional monarchy among Republicans (**18%**), those who emigrated before 1991 (**17%**), and older respondents (**17%**). A reformed Islamic Republic is considered the best option by almost one in five (**19%**) younger respondents, Republicans, and those who emigrated since 1990, and by a surprising **29%** of non-college educated respondents.



## In your opinion, which of the following approaches is most likely to move Iran toward a more democratic society?

	2023	2020	2019	2014
Grassroots democracy movement	49%	44%	40%	50%
Gradual reform through the political structure	17%	30%	35%	28%
Economic sanctions	13%	11%	8%	11%
Covert action / military attack	18%	10%	9%	5%
Not sure	4%	6%	8%	7%

Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

**A grassroots democratic movement remains the most favored approach** by Iranian Americans for moving Iran toward a more democratic society; about one-half (**49%**) of survey respondents select this option. There is a significant decline in the percentage of respondents who think gradual reform through the current political structure (**17%**) will be the approach most likely to move Iran toward democracy, down 13 points since 2020. The two least preferred options among survey respondents remain covert action or military attack (**notably, up 8 points to 18%**) and economic sanctions (**13%**). **Overall support for covert military action has doubled since 2019, while support for gradual reform is half of what it was in 2019.**

Across most subgroups, about half of respondents think a grassroots democratic movement is the most likely to lead to change, with the exception of Republicans, of whom only **32%** select this option (compared to **56%** of Democrats). An equal share of Republicans (**32%**) think covert action/military attack is most likely to move Iran toward a more democratic society, while **19%** select economic sanctions.

## Do you agree or disagree that the recent protests in Iran, despite the repressive response of the Iranian government, will make a positive contribution to Iran's socio-political evolution?

	2023
Strongly agree	51%
Somewhat agree	40%
<b>Total support</b>	<b>91%</b>
Somewhat disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	3%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>9%</b>

When asked about the recent protests in Iran and the repressive response of the Iranian government, **more than nine in 10 Iranian Americans agree that the protests will make a positive contribution to Iran's socio-political evolution**, including a majority (**51%**) who strongly agree.

While overall agreement is consistent across subgroups, **the intensity of agreement shows some variability** with the strongest agreement among older respondents (**55+: 69% strongly agree**), Democrats (**63%**), and those who emigrated before 1991 (**62%**).



## Of the following Iranian leaders, about which do you hold a favorable/unfavorable view?

	FAVORABLE VIEW?	UNFAVORABLE VIEW?	NET FAVORABILITY	FAMILIARITY INDEX
Ebrahim Raisi, president of Iran	5%	60%	-55%	65%
Mir-Hossein Mousavi, reformist politician and former prime minister	17%	53%	-36%	70%
Maryam Rajavi, leader of the People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK) and president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran	22%	68%	-46%	90%
Reza Pahlavi, Crown Prince and leader of the National Council of Iran	45%	25%	+20%	70%
Nasrin Sotoudeh, human rights lawyer and opposition figure within Iran	47%	21%	+26%	68%
Hamed Esmailion, social activist, author, and president and spokesman of The Association of Victims' Families of Flight PS752	44%	26%	+18%	70%
Masih Alinejad, journalist, author, and women's rights activist	40%	24%	+16%	64%
Shirin Ebadi, lawyer, a former judge and human rights activist	38%	19%	+19%	57%
Not sure	35%	15%	+20%	50%
None of the above	7%	7%	-	-

This question is new in 2023.

We asked Iranian Americans if they have a favorable or unfavorable view of a number of Iranian leaders.

**Those with the highest net favorability** (i.e., percentage who have a favorable view minus percentage who have an unfavorable view) are **Nasrin Sotoudeh (+26)**, **Reza Pahlavi (+20)**, and **Ali Karimi (+20)**, followed by Shirin Ebadi (+19), Hamed Esmailion (+18), and Masih Alinejad (+16). It is worth noting that **fewer than six in 10 respondents rate Karimi and Ebadi either positively or negatively**, indicating a lower level of familiarity among survey respondents.

**Net favorability is very negative for Mir-Hossein Mousavi (-36)**, **Maryam Rajavi (-46)**, and **Ebrahim Raisi (-55)**. Only **5%** of Iranian American respondents have a favorable view of President Raisi, the lowest favorability of all leaders in the survey, while **60%** hold an unfavorable view. **Respondents' familiarity with Rajavi is highest of all the leaders (90%)**, indicating that her negatives are "earned."



# Methodology

Zogby Research Services was commissioned by **Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA)** to conduct, in partnership with Zogby Analytics, a hybrid (online and live operator telephone) survey of 401 Iranian American adults. The survey was conducted between January 27 and February 7, 2023.

Telephone samples are randomly drawn from random telephone lists. Up to four calls are made to reach a sampled phone number, respondents that were not available but qualified to respond were allowed to set appointments to be recalled within the time frame of the field work. Additionally, internal and trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were randomly invited to participate in this interactive survey. Each invitation is password coded and secure so that one respondent can only access the survey one time.

Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books and exit polls, we use complex weighting techniques to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Weighted variables may include age, race, gender, region, party, education, and religion. Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 401 is +/- 4.9 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, the identical survey repeated will have results within the margin of error 95 times out of 100.

Subsets of the data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set. As a rule, we do not rely on the validity of very small subsets of the data especially sets smaller than 50-75 respondents. At that subset we can make estimations based on the data, but in these cases the data is more qualitative than quantitative. Additional factors can create error, such as question wording and question order.

## Demographics

	%
18-34	32%
35-44	16%
45-54	16%
55-64	18%
65+	18%
Male	52%
Female	48%
Income <\$50k	19%
Income \$50k-\$100k	33%
Income >\$100k	43%
East	23%
South	18%

	%
Central / Great Lakes	13%
West	45%
Married	63%
Single, never married	22%
Divorced / widowed / separated	13%
Civil union / domestic partnership	1%
Family moved to U.S. since 1990	45%
Family moved before 1990	52%
No college degree	26%
College degree or higher	74%
Muslim	27%
Baha'i	6%

	%
Jewish	6%
Zoroastrian	3%
Christian	9%
Agnostic	12%
Atheist	20%
Other religion	9%
Democrat	31%
Republican	24%
Independent / Unaffiliated / Minor	30%

