



# THE IRAN DEAL POLL

## LA Jewish Journal Survey

### New poll: U.S. Jews support Iran deal, despite misgivings

by Steven M. Cohen

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By a wide margin, American Jews support the recently concluded agreement with Iran to restrict its nuclear program, and a clear majority of Jews wants Congress to approve the deal. In fact, as compared with Americans generally, Jews are *more* supportive of the “Iran deal,” in large part because Jews are more liberal and more Democratic in their identities. It turns out that liberals (Jewish or not) support the deal far more than conservatives (Jewish or not), just as most Democrats are in favor, while most Republicans are opposed.

These results emerge from the new [LA Jewish Journal Survey](#) conducted under my direction by Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS), between July 16-20, a few days after the agreement had been announced. SSRS interviewed 501 Jews for the Jewish survey, and for the national survey, 522 respondents by phone (almost a third of which were cellphones). The margin of error is 6 percent for the Jewish survey and 5.2 percent for the national survey (consisting of 505 non-Jews and 17 Jews).

The LA Jewish Journal Survey asked respondents’ views on “an agreement ... reached in which the United States and other countries would lift major economic sanctions against Iran, in exchange for Iran restricting its nuclear program in a way that makes it harder for it to produce nuclear weapons.” Almost half – 49 percent of American Jews – voiced support, and 31 percent opposed. Jews differ from the national population. Of all respondents in our national survey, only 28 percent support the deal, 24 percent oppose and the rest (48 percent) “don’t know enough to say.”

Similarly, asked whether Congress should “vote to approve or oppose the deal,” Jews lean heavily toward approval, 53 percent for versus 35 percent against. These margins contrast with the near-even split among the nation generally (41 percent for versus 38 percent against, with 21 percent undecided).

As a group, Jews hold these supportive views of the agreement, notwithstanding their mixed views regarding its outcomes. Asked whether “this agreement would prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons over the next 10 years or so,” only 42 percent are somewhat confident or very confident, while 54 percent are not so confident or not confident at all. A slim plurality believes the agreement will lead to more rather than less stability in the Middle East (46 percent versus 41 percent), but a wider margin believes the deal will make Israel more endangered (49 percent) rather than safer (33 percent), almost the same as in the U.S. survey (48 percent versus 32 percent respectively).

**The bottom line: American Jews, more than Americans generally, tend to support the Iran deal and they want Congress to approve it**

A slim majority of Jews want Congress to approve the deal, yet nearly half believe the agreement will make Israel more endangered. How is this possible?

It turns out that among those who see Israel as safer, almost all voice approval. Among those who are not sure how Israel will be affected, the vast majority wants Congress to approve. And among those who feel Israel is more endangered, a full 20 percent still support the deal. Arithmetically, it all adds up, even though support for the Iran deal is, indeed, closely related to perceptions of how the deal will affect Israel's security.

But even with their misgivings, Jews overwhelmingly think that, in retrospect, the idea of the U.S. conducting negotiations with Iran was a good one (59 percent) rather than a bad one (19 percent).

Opinions among Jews and the country generally are sharply divided along ideological and partisan lines, with even sharper polarization among Jews than among non-Jews.

Among Jewish liberals (self-defined), those favoring congressional approval outnumber opponents 72 percent to 18 percent. For conservative Jews, the numbers are reversed: 8 percent for approval and 81 percent opposed. Similarly, Jewish Democrats divide 70 percent-20 percent in favor of congressional approval, while the Republicans divide 77 percent-15 percent in opposition.

We asked respondents their views of President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The two leaders are about equally popular among American Jews and Americans in general. However, people tend to disagree in their assessments; many who favor one of them tend to disfavor the other.

Given these contrasts, it should come as no surprise that positive views of Obama are associated with approval of the Iran deal: Those who very favorably view Obama seek congressional approval 93 percent to 4 percent. The opposite is true about Netanyahu: His admirers oppose the deal, and his detractors heavily oppose it. Among those seeing him as very favorable, only 22 percent want Congress to approve the deal, while 73 percent seek rejection.

Approval of the Iran deal rises with increased confidence in its effectiveness, greater belief in its ability to promote more stability in the Middle East, and wider conviction that it makes Israel safer rather than more endangered.

Of those who think it makes Israel safer, 98 percent want Congress to approve. Of those who see Israel as more endangered by the deal, only 20 percent seek congressional approval. The “swing votes” are the “don’t knows” about the impact on Israel: They break 66-8 percent in favor of congressional approval.

Indeed, connection to Israel does play a major role in influencing views on the Iran deal with those more connected to Israel less supportive of the deal. However, even the pro-Israel segment of the Jewish population comes down in favor of the deal. Among those who have never been to Israel, support for congressional approval wins 58-30 percent. But it also wins, albeit more narrowly, among those who have visited Israel: 48 percent to 44 percent. In fact, among those who say that they are “very attached” emotionally to Israel, 51 percent want Congress to approve the deal, versus 38 percent who oppose such action.

Another question asked about the degree of sympathy with Israel in its dispute with the Palestinians. Among those with the highest level of sympathy (“a lot”), support for congressional approval very narrowly exceeds opposition, 47 percent to 44 percent.

Of some political import is the fact that more younger adult Jews seek congressional approval than their elders — 59 percent-25 percent for those younger than 40, versus 51 percent-40 percent among those 65 and older. The highly educated (also more politically active and influential) strongly favor congressional approval (61 percent to 31 percent) as compared with those without a college degree who tend to oppose (39 percent for approval and 48 percent against).

The bottom line: American Jews, more than Americans generally, tend to support the Iran deal and they want Congress to approve it. Their support certainly co-exists with considerable hesitations and qualifications. Their views on the Iran deal are highly differentiated by political camp. On one side are liberals, Democrats and Obama admirers; on the other, conservatives, Republicans and Netanyahu admirers. Even the most pro-Israel support the deal, albeit far more narrowly than those who are less passionately connected with Israel.

The true and deeper divide in American Jewry is not about the Iran deal per se. This issue is merely the latest place to witness the ongoing and maybe growing divide between the liberal and conservative wings of American Jewry. As with many views and behaviors related to Israel and being Jewish, American Jews’ political identities serve as a major basis for social differentiation. Which is a fancy way of saying: Liberals and conservatives — especially Jewish liberals and conservatives — see and experience the world, including Iran, very differently.

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