

Iranian Public Opinion on the Nuclear Negotiations

A public opinion study | June 2015



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Unveiling Iran

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The Program for Public Consultation (PPC) seeks to improve democratic governance by helping governments consult their citizenry on the key public policy issues the government faces. Unlike standard polls, in public consultations respondents are presented information that helps simulate the issues and tradeoffs faced by policymakers. PPC has been established to develop the methods and theory of public consultation and to conduct public consultations. PPC is a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland.

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IranPoll.com is an independent full-service opinion research and consultancy company headquartered in Toronto, Canada, focusing exclusively on Iran. A subsidiary of People Analytics Inc., IranPoll.com relies on its vast survey capacity to conduct and collect polling data from Iran using various modes of data collection, including a national probability sample omnibus telephone (CATI) survey that it runs every month. Building on the in-depth local knowledge of its team of experts, IranPoll.com solely relies on methods that could be objectively verified and independently replicated. Complementing its extensive field capacity, IranPoll.com is the developer of VoxIran.com, which is to date the single most comprehensive databank of Iranian opinion polls containing more than 3,000 diverse questions on 280 topics and subtopics from 185 probability sample surveys conducted from 2006 to 2015 in Iran. Through its exclusive access to VoxIran, IranPoll.com provides its clients with evidence-based consultancy on issues relating to Iran and the Iranian people.

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Introduction

As the marathon negotiation between Iran and the P5+1 countries (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) nears its third self-imposed deadline on June 30, many around the world wonder if this round of negotiations is going to resolve all remaining issues, and if so, whether the officials involved are going to be able to sell the deal they have worked out back in their own capitals. As to whether or not a deal will be reached, diplomats from Iran as well as the P5+1 countries have consistently been cautiously optimistic. While all sides indicate that they are committed to reaching a deal by the June 30 deadline, recent reports suggest that gaps remain between concrete positions on the main elements of a deal.

And as negotiators struggle with various elements of the deal outside their capitals, there is significant controversy inside the capitals on what would constitute a “good deal.” The U.S. Congress has passed legislation giving Congress at least a month to review the details of any agreement reached before President Obama could waive any congressionally imposed sanctions on Iran. Lawmakers and officials in Tehran have been pressing their case that any deal that would not result in speedy termination of sanctions or would open Iran’s sensitive non-nuclear military and security installations to Iran-specific inspections is unacceptable.

To better understand the domestic political environments that constrain how much negotiating room the key players have, the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) has conducted several studies of American and Iranian public opinion on the nuclear negotiations. Its first study of American public opinion, “Americans on Negotiations with Iran,” was conducted in collaboration with the Program for Public Consultation in July 2014, followed by another study which was released on March 3, 2015. Both of these reports are available at www.cissm.umd.edu.

CISSM also conducted a study of Iranian public opinion on the nuclear negotiations in collaboration with the University of Tehran Center for Public Opinion Research (UTCPOR) in July 2014, focusing mostly on the steps Iran would be willing to take in return for removal of unilateral and multilateral sanctions, and published the results of that study on September 17, 2014. The current study was conducted after Iran and the P5+1 reached an understanding regarding the main elements of the final deal in Lausanne, Switzerland. It seeks to illuminate the specific views and preferences of Iranian citizens regarding the ongoing nuclear negotiations, their support for a deal along the lines of the framework understanding, their assumptions regarding the elements of the final deal, and their expectations from a deal. This study also explores a broad range of Iranian political preferences and attitudes that shape the context in which the nuclear negotiations are occurring.

How the Study Was Conducted

Besides its timely topic and significance, this study is also unique in that its data has been collected by two independent survey research organizations; one located inside Iran and the other located outside Iran. As before, UTCPOR was used to conduct most of the interviews of this study, calling respondents from their centralized call-center located in Tehran. This time around, however, CISSM also hired IranPoll.com, an independent Toronto-based opinion

research firm, to conduct a portion of the study's interviews by calling into Iran from Canada. CISSM then cross-validated the results obtained from these two independent survey organizations and confirmed inter-agency reliability on every variable.

Response Verification

Concerned with the possibility that respondents might have systematically held back their own true opinions and, instead, provided answers in line with positions articulated in Iranian state-owned news media, CISSM conducted an analysis to see what proportion of the sample systematically provided responses that were in line with the stated positions of the Iranian government. The analysis found that only 9% of the respondents provided answers that are systematically and fully in line with stated positions of the Iranian government, and 91% of the respondents provided at least one response that is directly at odds with positions articulated in Iranian state-owned news media.

Methodology

This study was designed, managed, and analyzed jointly by Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) and the University of Tehran Center for Public Opinion research (UTCPOR). For cross-validation purposes, CISSM also hired IranPoll.com, an independent Toronto-based polling company, to independently execute 15% of the survey calling into Iran from outside of Iran. The rest of the survey data was collected using UTCPOR's call center in Tehran.

UTCPOR conducted its interviews between May 12 and May 28, 2015, and IranPoll.com conducted its interviews between May 23 and May 28, 2015. The overall sample size is $n=1009$ ($n=150$ from Toronto and 859 from Tehran), and the sampling margin of error is about $\pm 3.2\%$.

The entire sample ($n=1009$) was stratified first by Iranian provinces and then in accordance to settlement size and type, using area codes and telephone exchanges for landline telephones in Iran. Then $n=150$ of the sample, which was randomly extracted from the overall sample, was given to IranPoll.com to execute and the remaining was given to UTCPOR. Random Digit Dialing (RDD) was used to reach random households. When a residence was reached, an adult was randomly selected from within that household using the random table technique. An initial attempt and three callbacks were made in an effort to complete an interview with the randomly selected respondents. All 31 Iranian provinces were represented in the completed sample in proportions similar to their actual populations, as were rural and urban areas. This interviewing protocol was employed both by the Iran- and the Canada-based call centers.

The contact rate of UTCPOR, defined as the proportion of respondents who were reached and ultimately agreed to be interviewed relative to the number of respondents attempted, was 74%. The completion rate was 86%. IranPoll.com's contact rate was 69% and its completion rate was 83%. Thus the overall contact rate of this study was 73.3% and the completion rate was 85.6%.

All of the interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) in the two centralized call centers. All interviews were monitored in real-time by call center supervisors and have been recorded. The population parameters of the survey match those of census data quite closely. The data collected by IranPoll.com and UTCPOR were cross-verified and no out of the ordinary variation was observed.

Summary of Findings

1. Iran's Nuclear Program (page 8)

Overwhelming majorities of Iranians continue to say that it is very important for Iran to have a nuclear program. The nuclear program is seen as one of Iran's greatest achievements. A large majority continues to see the program as driven purely by peaceful goals, though one in five see it as being an effort to pursue nuclear weapons. This support for Iran's nuclear program appears to be driven by a combination of symbolic and economic considerations. However, while a majority sees the program as being an important way for Iran to stand up to the West, serving Iran's future energy and medical needs is seen as more important.

2. Views on Nuclear Weapons (page 10)

A large and growing majority of Iranians express opposition to nuclear weapons in various ways. Two thirds now say that producing nuclear weapons is contrary to Islam. Eight in ten approve of the NPT goal of eliminating nuclear weapons and establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East. Consistent with these views, Iranians express opposition to chemical weapons, with nine in ten approving of Iran's decision, during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, to not use chemical weapons in response to Iraq's use of them.

3. Iran - P5+1 Nuclear Deal (page 12)

Given information about the nuclear deal being negotiated between Iran and the P5+1, a substantial majority favors it and only one in six oppose it. A quarter, though, are undecided or equivocal. Nearly three in four are optimistic that Iran and the P5+1 will arrive at a deal in regard to Iran's nuclear program. Three in four think the Majlis (Iran's Parliament) should have a say on a nuclear deal.

4. The Potential Removal of Sanctions (page 16)

The support for Iran pursuing a deal with the P5+1 appears to rest to some extent on the assumption—held by a large majority—that all sanctions on Iran would be lifted as part of the deal, and there is optimism that the sanctions would in fact be lifted. Approximately half of respondents say Iran should not agree to a deal unless the U.S. lifts all of its sanctions, while nearly as many say Iran should be ready to make a deal even if the U.S. retains some sanctions, provided all UN and EU sanctions are lifted. Among those who believe that all U.S. sanctions would be lifted, support for a deal is nearly two thirds, while among those who assume that the U.S. will retain some sanctions, support is a bare majority. The removal of UN sanctions is seen as more important than the removal of U.S. sanctions.

5. Expectations About Positive Effects of a Deal (page 19)

Iranians express high expectations that a nuclear deal would result in significant positive effects in the near term. Majorities say they would expect to see, within a year, better access to foreign medicines and medical equipment, significantly more foreign investment, and tangible improvement in living standards.

6. The Sanctions and Iran's Economy (page 21)

The sanctions on Iran are overwhelmingly perceived as having a negative impact on the country's economy and on the lives of ordinary people. However, views of the economy are

fairly sanguine and have been improving. Also, the impact of the sanctions is seen as limited and a lesser factor affecting the economy as compared to domestic mismanagement and corruption.

7. Views of Rouhani (page 23)

As Iran's parliamentary elections near, Iran's President Rouhani is clearly one of the strongest political figures in Iran. Half would prefer to see Rouhani supporters win in the February 2016 parliamentary elections, while one quarter favors his critics. However, Rouhani supporters have high expectations that a deal removing all U.S. sanctions and bringing rapid economic change is going to take place. If a deal is reached that does not meet these expectations, Rouhani could be left politically vulnerable.

In a hypothetical presidential match-up, Rouhani currently does better than former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by two to one. Large majorities say Rouhani has been at least somewhat successful in improving the economic situation, improving Iran's relations with European countries, and reducing sanctions. Three in four Iranians say that if the negotiations were to fail to produce a final agreement, they would only or mostly blame the P5+1 countries.

8. Relations with the U.S. (page 26)

Views of the United States, especially the U.S. government, continue to be quite negative. Only four in ten believe that U.S. leaders genuinely believe that Iran is trying to acquire nuclear weapons. Asked why the U.S. is imposing sanctions on Iran, the most common answers portray the U.S. as seeking to confront and dominate Iran; very few mention concerns about nuclear weapons. However, a slight majority has a positive view of the American people.

If Iran and the P5+1 reach a deal, a large majority believes that the U.S. will still impede other countries from cooperating with Iran, and a slight majority believes that Iran making concessions on the nuclear issue will likely lead the U.S. to seek more concessions. Just one in six believe that concessions would be likely to lead to greater accommodation; however, this number is higher than a year ago.

Large majorities favor various confidence-building measures between Iran and the U.S., including greater trade, which is more widely supported than a year ago. People-to-people confidence-building measures are especially popular. A majority thinks that it is possible for Islam and the West to find common ground.

9. Views of P5+1 Countries (page 30)

Two thirds say they do not trust the P5+1 countries—however, the minority expressing trust has increased since fall 2014. Views of specific countries vary: large majorities have negative views of the UK and the U.S.; modest majorities have unfavorable views of Russia and France, while views are divided on Germany and China.

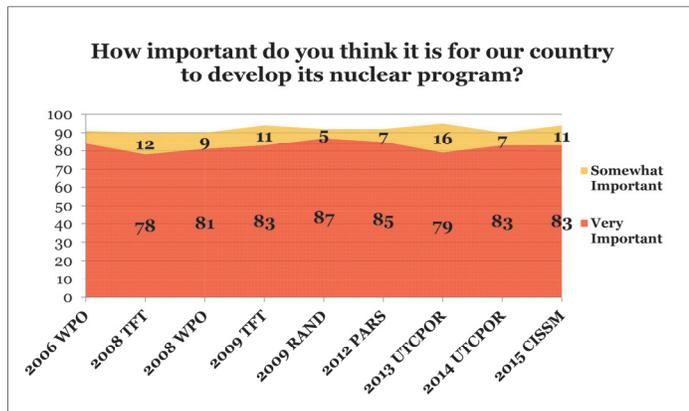
10. Views of Regional Actors (page 32)

A very large majority has an unfavorable view of Saudi Arabia—even slightly more negative than views of the U.S. A slight majority now has an unfavorable view of Turkey, which was not the case a year ago. Large majorities continue to view Syria and Iraq favorably.

1. Iran’s Nuclear Program

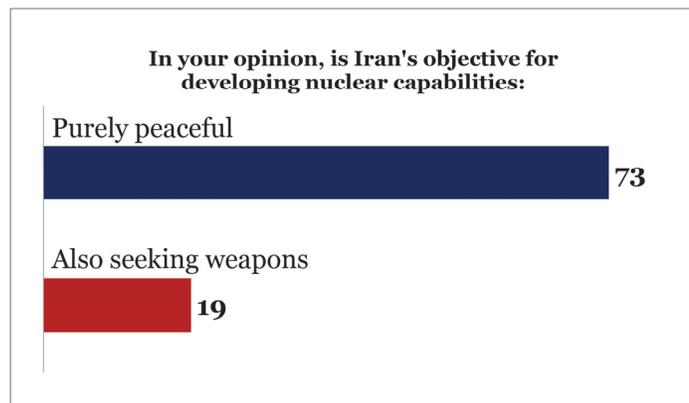
Overwhelming majorities of Iranians continue to say that it is very important for Iran to have a nuclear program. The nuclear program is seen as one of Iran’s greatest achievements. A large majority continues to see the program as driven purely by peaceful goals, though one in five see it as being an effort to pursue nuclear weapons. This support for Iran’s nuclear program appears to be driven by a combination of symbolic and economic considerations. However, while a majority sees the program as being an important way for Iran to stand up to the West, serving Iran’s future energy and medical needs is seen as more important.

The consensus among Iranians regarding Iran’s nuclear program remains stable. Asked, “In your opinion, how important is it for our country to develop its nuclear program?” four in five (83%) called it very important and another 11% said it was somewhat important. Similar questions have been asked since 2006 and have consistently shown the same high level of support (about 8 in 10).



When Iranians are asked in an open-ended question to say in their own words what they think has been Iran’s “most important achievement” in recent years, the country’s nuclear program is their most common answer. Forty percent cited the nuclear program—far more than talked about either advances in medicine, science, or technology (11%) or increases in security and military power (12%). Another 11% mentioned economic, cultural, or social progress; 6% mentioned Iran’s greater prominence in regional or world affairs. This same question was asked by UTCPOR in October 2014, and the results were similar—44% cited the nuclear program.

A large majority continues to see the program as driven purely by peaceful goals, though one in five see it as being an effort to pursue nuclear weapons. Respondents were asked whether “Iran’s objective for developing nuclear capabilities” is “for purely peaceful purposes, such



as energy or medical needs,” or “is it also seeking to attain the needed capabilities to be able to develop nuclear weapons?” Seventy-three percent said they thought the program was purely for peaceful purposes; one in five (19%) thought Iran is also seeking a weapons capability. In a July 2014 UTCPOR poll, a question that also offered a third option (“Iran is pursuing both objectives simultaneously”) got a similar overall result: 69% said the program was purely peaceful, while 18% said Iran had both objectives in view (only nuclear weapons: 4%).

In order to probe further the roots of public support for the nuclear program, respondents were asked a series of three questions. First they were asked: “Some say Iran should develop its nuclear program because it helps meet Iran's energy and medical needs. How important do you think this reason is?” Seven in ten (70%) rated this reason very important.

Next, respondents were offered a different reason for the nuclear program that was grounded in defiance of the West: “Some say Iran should develop its nuclear program because it shows that Iran will not surrender to Western governments and forego its rights. How important do you think this reason is?” A lesser majority of 60% described this reason as very important.

Finally, respondents were asked: “Of these two reasons, which do you think is more important?” A clear majority of 58% chose energy and medical needs, while 38% chose demonstrating Iran’s independence.

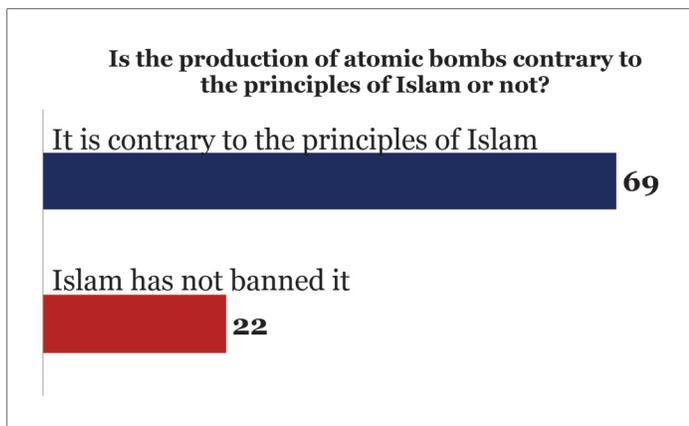
An open-ended question was used as well asking respondents to say in their own words why they believe “that it is important for our country to develop its nuclear program.” A majority (52%) spoke of concrete needs for medical technology and electricity, and to further economic development in general. Almost a third (29%) spoke of symbolic reasons including raising Iran’s prestige, especially in science and technology; or simply because Iran has the right to a nuclear program. The implicitly security related concern to deter other countries from attacking Iran was mentioned by just 4%.

2. Views on Nuclear Weapons

A large and growing majority of Iranians express opposition to nuclear weapons in various ways. Two thirds now say that producing nuclear weapons is contrary to Islam. Eight in ten approve of the NPT goal of eliminating nuclear weapons and establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East. Consistent with these views, Iranians express opposition to chemical weapons, with nine in ten approving of Iran’s decision, during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, to not use chemical weapons in response to Iraq’s use of them.

Two thirds of the Iranian public (69%) believes that producing nuclear weapons is contrary to the principles of Islam, and this majority has grown over the years. When asked, “As far as you know, is the production of atomic bombs contrary to the principles of Islam or not?” 69% said, “Yes, it is contrary to Islam.” About one in five (22%) said, “No, Islam has not banned it.” Fewer than 2% volunteered that Islam has no specific opinion on the subject. Further, fully three quarters (75%) say, “Iranian policymakers should take religious teachings into account when they make decisions.”

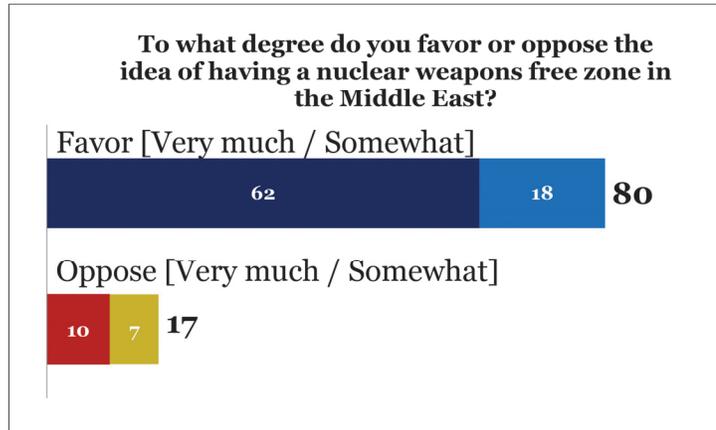
This and similar questions have been asked in Iran since 2008, and the majorities saying that producing nuclear weapons is contrary to Islam have risen. In 2008, the majority was 58% (WorldPublicOpinion.org), and as recently as October 2014, it was 65% (UTCPOR)—slightly below the current 69%. Since October, those saying Islam has not banned the production of nuclear weapons has remained low, moving from 25% to 22%.



A majority of Iranians say they have some knowledge of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Fifty-eight percent say they have heard a lot (17%) or some (42%) about the treaty, while 39% have not heard much (16%) or are completely unfamiliar with it (23%)—a level of awareness unchanged from mid-2014.

More significantly, 81% favor “the goal of eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons, which is stated in the...NPT.” This support for the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons has grown steadily and consistently over the last decade. In 2006, 68% favored it; in 2008, 72% (WorldPublicOpinion.org). In 2014, support reached 74% in July and 76% in October (UTCPOR), and has now risen to 81%.

Support for the idea of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East is also high and on the upswing. Told that such a zone “would include both Islamic countries and Israel,” and would require countries not to have nuclear weapons, in the current poll, 80% favored it (62% strongly), with 17% opposed. This is up from nine years ago when 71% favored it (50% strongly, WorldPublicOpinion.org).

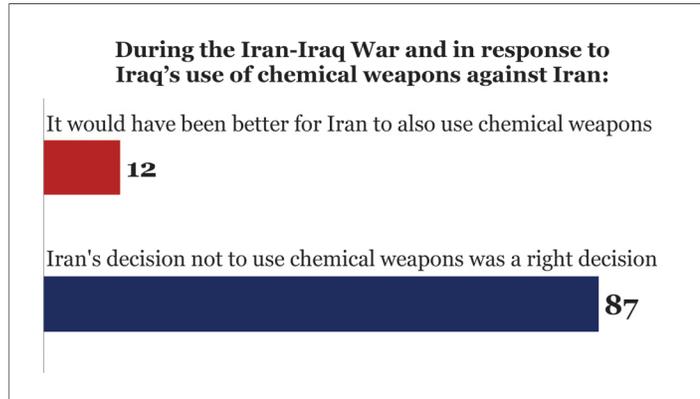


To probe more deeply into Iranians’ stated opposition to having nuclear weapons, respondents were asked to reevaluate Iran’s choice not to use chemical weapons in response to Iraq’s use of such weapons during the Iran-Iraq War. Respondents were reminded that:

As you may know, during the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam repeatedly made use of chemical weapons against Iran, but Iran decided not to retaliate in kind and thus did not use chemical weapons against Iraq.

And asked:

In your opinion, would it have been better for Iran to retaliate in kind at that time and use chemical weapons against Iraq, or was Iran's decision not to use chemical weapons against Iraq a right decision?



A near unanimous 87% endorsed Iran’s decision to not reply in kind to Saddam Hussein’s use of chemical weapons. Only 12% said Iran should have retaliated in kind.

3. Iran - P5+1 Nuclear Deal

Given information about the nuclear deal being negotiated between Iran and the P5+1, a substantial majority favors it and only one in six oppose it. A quarter, though, are undecided or equivocal. Nearly three in four are optimistic that Iran and the P5+1 will arrive at a deal in regard to Iran's nuclear program. Three in four think the Majlis (Iran's Parliament) should have a say on a nuclear deal.

Respondents were presented key points of the understanding reached in Lausanne, Switzerland, before being asked to provide their view. They were first reminded of the negotiations and that a preliminary understanding had been reached:

As you may know, Iran and the P5+1 have been negotiating over Iran's nuclear program. Recently they reached an understanding on some of the key terms of a deal, though there are still specifics that need to be worked out.

It was clarified to respondents that the points they were about to hear were those that are described similarly by all the negotiating parties:

Both sides have made statements regarding the elements of this understanding. In some cases, the statements made by both sides were at variance, and each side has rejected some of the interpretations of the other side regarding the elements of this understanding.

Now, setting aside the statements and the interpretations provided by each side, I would like to tell you some important aspects of this understanding that both sides agree on.

Respondents were first told the obligations that Iran would have to fulfill, and then the obligations that the P5+1 would have to fulfill.

According to this understanding, Iran will:

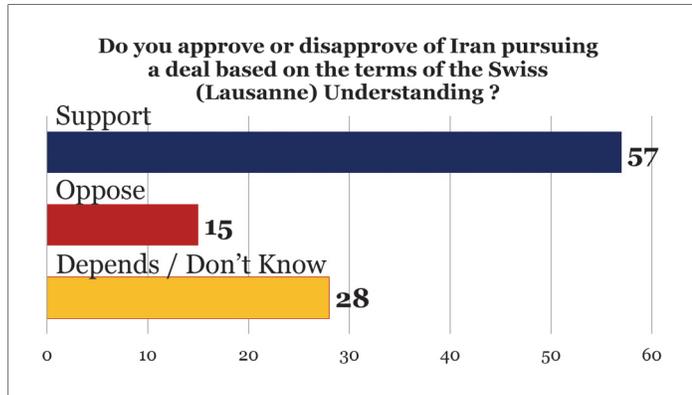
- limit its uranium enrichment to the level needed for the production of nuclear energy for a number of years;
- reduce the number and limit the quality of its operating enrichment centrifuges for a number of years;
- limit its research and development on centrifuges for a number of years;
- accept more extensive inspections of nuclear sites by the IAEA for an extended number of years;

and in return the P5+1 will

- accept Iran enriching uranium to the limited extent agreed upon for a number of years and then to a greater extent later

- cooperate with Iran on building new nuclear reactors and supply Iran with nuclear fuel
- lift economic sanctions on Iran

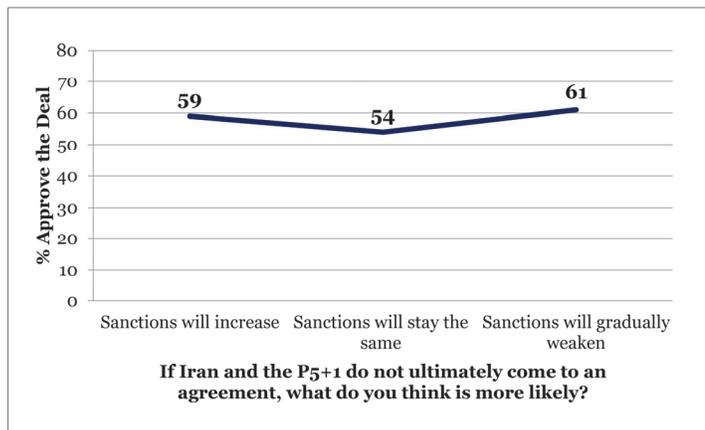
After this information respondents were asked: “Now, do you approve or disapprove of Iran pursuing a deal based on these terms?” A majority (57%) approved of Iran pursuing the deal; only 15% disapproved. However, another 17% were equivocal, and 11% said they did not know.



Who Favors and Who Opposes a Deal?

There were no significant differences in the level of support for a deal by gender, education, or economic status. Also, supporters of pursuing a deal outnumber opponents in virtually all demographic groups, and in most attitudinal groups.

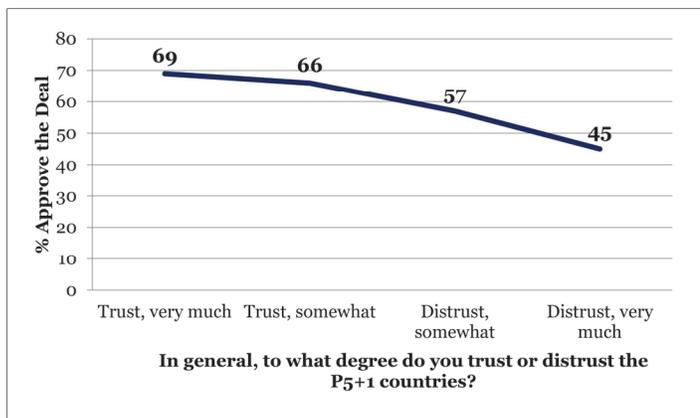
Notably, those who think foreign sanctions have the greatest negative impact on the Iranian economy support pursuing a deal at the *same* majority levels as those who think domestic economic mismanagement and corruption has the greater impact. Likewise, those who think that if there is no deal, sanctions will increase, support pursuing a deal at the same majority levels as those who think that absent a deal, sanctions are likely to gradually weaken.



Support for the deal is more widespread among the young, among internet users, and among those who would like to see Rouhani’s supporters make significant gains in the February 2016 parliamentary elections.

Attitudes about the value of Iran’s nuclear programs are a strong predictor of support. Among the majority who said that meeting Iran’s energy and medical needs is the most important reason for the nuclear program, 65% approved of pursuing a deal. But among the minority who said that the most important reason was to show “that Iran will not surrender to Western governments and forego its rights,” less than half (48%) approved of pursuing a deal.

Other strong predictors of support are the degree of trust in the P5+1 countries, as well as confidence that the P5+1 will follow through on their end of the bargain in the event of a deal. Those most confident in the P5+1 countries on these two questions are 24 to 32 points more likely to support pursuing a deal.



Most differences between demographic groups were small. By age, those under 26 were the most supportive group at 64%, compared to 52% of those over 45 who supported the deal. Those who use the internet once a week or more were, at 61%, more supportive than those who never use the internet (53%).

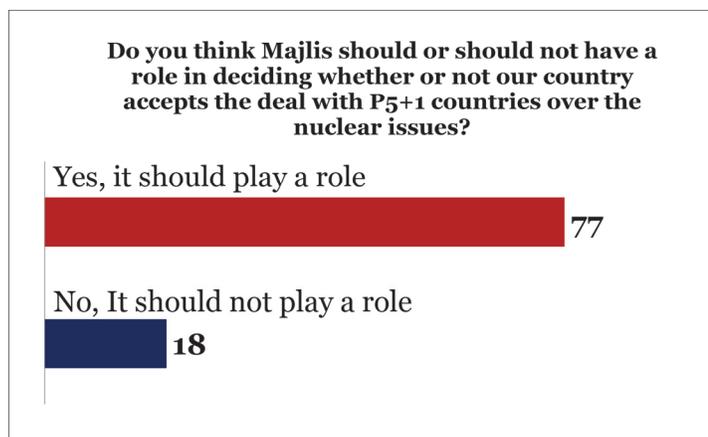
Among those who want Rouhani’s allies to win the coming parliamentary elections, 62% were supportive, while among those who want critics of Rouhani to win, a lesser majority (55%) were supportive.

Optimism that a Deal Will Be Made

A clear majority of Iranians think that an agreement on the nuclear program agreeable to both sides is more likely than not. Asked, “How likely do you think it is that the current talks between Iran and the P5+1 countries...will eventually result in a deal that is agreeable to both sides?” seven in ten (70%) thought this is likely, though most said “somewhat likely” (49%). About a quarter (28%) thought it was not very likely (17%) or not likely at all (11%). The wording of this question is comparable to one asked in Iran by Gallup: “How hopeful are you that the current talks...will eventually reach an agreement agreeable to both sides?” which in November 2014 found 70% “hopeful” (somewhat hopeful, 48%).

Role of the Iranian Parliament

Most Iranians feel that it is appropriate for the Iranian parliament, the Majlis, to have a role in the decision whether or not to accept a deal. Three in four (77%) said the Majlis should play a role in “deciding whether or not our country accepts the deal with the P5+1 countries over nuclear issues”; only 18% thought it should not.



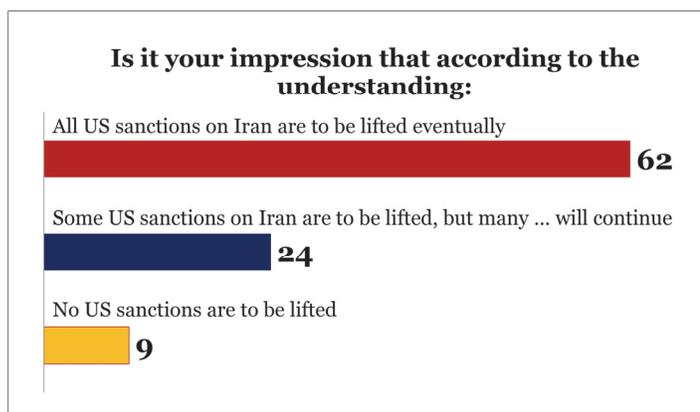
Asked further about the prospect of the parliament “arriv[ing] at the conclusion that the deal...is at odds with our country’s national interests,” four in five (81%) said that in that event, the Majlis should be able to prevent such an agreement. It should be noted that the U.S. public has generally answered questions about the role of Congress similarly. Such replies are partly driven by an understanding that in any constitutional setup, more than one branch of government is supposed to be involved in making important decisions in order to build national consensus.

4. The Potential Removal of Sanctions

The support for Iran pursuing a deal with the P5+1 appears to rest to some extent on the assumption—held by a large majority—that all sanctions on Iran would be lifted as part of the deal, and there is optimism that the sanctions would in fact be lifted. Approximately half of respondents say Iran should not agree to a deal unless the U.S. lifts all of its sanctions, while nearly as many say Iran should be ready to make a deal even if the U.S. retains some sanctions, provided all UN and EU sanctions are lifted. Among those who believe that all U.S. sanctions would be lifted, support for a deal is nearly two thirds, while among those who assume that the U.S. will retain some sanctions, support is a bare majority. The removal of UN sanctions is seen as more important than the removal of U.S. sanctions.

In order to probe for preconceptions in the Iranian public about what would happen if Iran makes a deal with the P5+1, respondents were asked for their impressions of what the understanding says regarding the future lifting of sanctions on Iran.

Contrary to the U.S. position in the negotiations, six in ten (62%) respondents said their impression was that “all U.S. sanctions on Iran are to be lifted eventually.” Only a quarter (24%) said, “some U.S. sanctions on Iran are to be lifted, but many U.S. sanctions are not covered by the agreement and will continue.” A small minority (9%) had the impression that “no U.S. sanctions are to be lifted.”



It is noteworthy that respondents’ sources of information have little effect on their perceptions of this issue. Those who said that they seek news on the internet daily or at least once a week were no more likely to know that only some U.S. sanctions would be lifted than were those who watch state television daily.

There is considerable optimism that in the event of an agreement, the P5+1 countries will follow through and lift sanctions. Sixty percent thought it very (13%) or somewhat (47%) likely that if a deal is reached, “the U.S. will lift sanctions in accordance with the requirements of the deal.” A significant minority (37%) disagreed, though only 11% said this was “not likely at all.” Expectations that the UN Security Council would follow through were even higher at 83% (very likely, 25%).

Approximately half of respondents say that Iran should not agree to a deal unless the U.S. lifts all of its sanctions. Respondents were told:

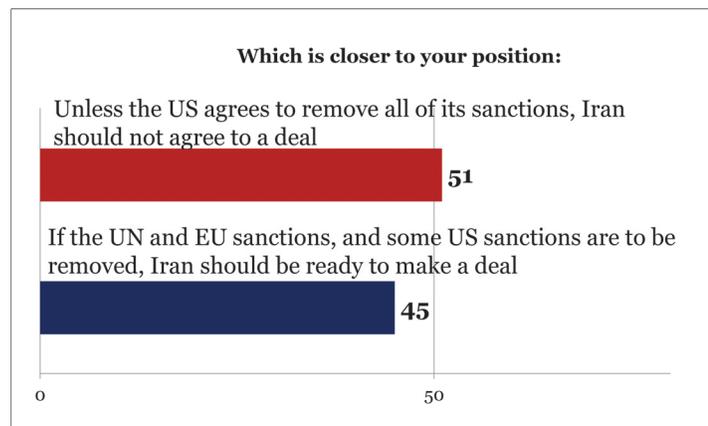
As you may know, some of the sanctions that the U.S. has imposed on Iran are not solely related to the nuclear issue, but related to other issues that the U.S. has with Iran. The U.S. says it will lift the nuclear-related sanctions, but it will keep these other sanctions in place even if there is a deal.

They were then asked which was closer to their position:

—Unless the U.S. agrees to remove all of its sanctions, Iran should not agree to a deal; or

—While Iran should seek to get as many U.S. sanctions lifted as possible, if the UN and EU sanctions, and some U.S. sanctions are to be removed, Iran should be ready to make a deal.

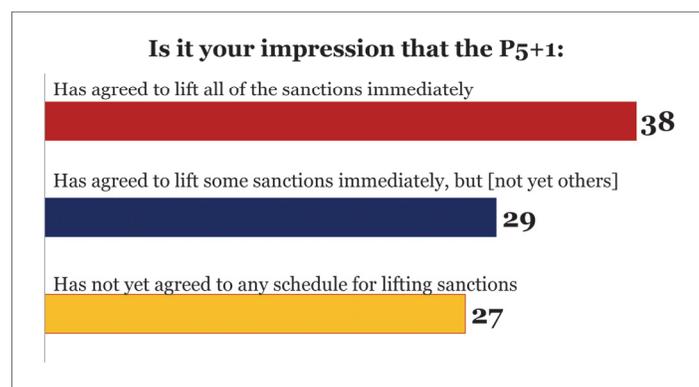
A bare majority (51%) chose the first, more unbending negotiating position; but the gap was rather narrow, with 45% saying Iran should be ready to make a deal without complete removal of all U.S. sanctions, provided that all UN and EU sanctions would be lifted.



Assumptions about whether all U.S. sanctions would be lifted are highly related to support for a deal. Among respondents who had the impression that “all sanctions on Iran are to be lifted eventually,” approval of pursuing a deal was 64%. Among those who believed, consistent with the U.S. position, that not all U.S. sanctions would be lifted, approval was substantially lower at 51%.

Respondents were also asked whether the P5+1 countries have already agreed on the timing to start removing broader international sanctions in the event of a deal.

There was no dominant view on this question. Thirty-eight percent had the impression that the P5+1 have agreed to lift all the sanctions “immediately”; 29%, that “some sanctions would be lifted immediately, but the timing for others has not been finalized”; and 27% thought that no schedule has yet been agreed upon.



The removal of UN sanctions is seen as more important than the removal of U.S. sanctions. Asked “which was of more importance and priority,” a clear majority—59%—said it is more important to bring about the lifting of UN Security Council sanctions. Fewer than one in three (28%) ranked the lifting of U.S. sanctions first.

5. Expectations About Positive Effects of a Deal

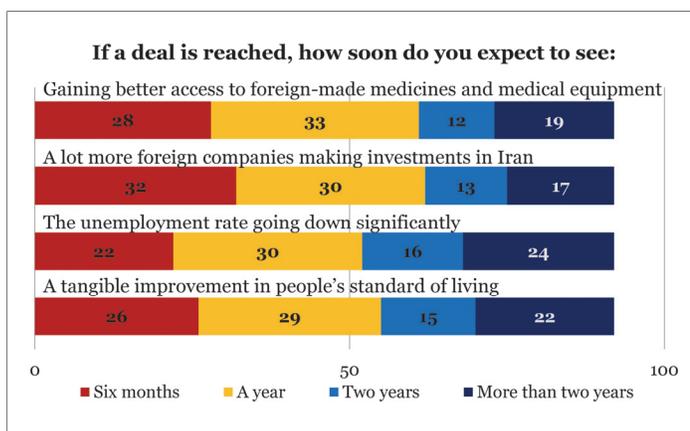
Iranians express high expectations that a nuclear deal would result in significant positive effects in the near term. Majorities say they would expect to see, within a year, better access to foreign medicines and medical equipment, significantly more foreign investment, and tangible improvement in living standards.

To gain a more concrete picture of Iranian expectations if an agreement is made, respondents were asked a series of questions that began: “Assuming that the P5+1 and Iran do come to such a deal, I would like to know how long you think it will take before you see certain changes as a result of the deal.” They were then asked about possible developments in the economy and in their quality of life, and how much time they thought each would take. They were offered four options: six months, about a year, about two years, and more than two years.

A substantial majority—61%—thought they would see Iranians gaining greater access to foreign-made medicines and medical equipment in a year or less (six months: 28%). Thirty percent thought this would take two years or more.

A similar number—62%—thought they would see “a lot more foreign companies making investments in Iran” in a year or less (six months: 32%). Again, 30% thought this would take two years or more.

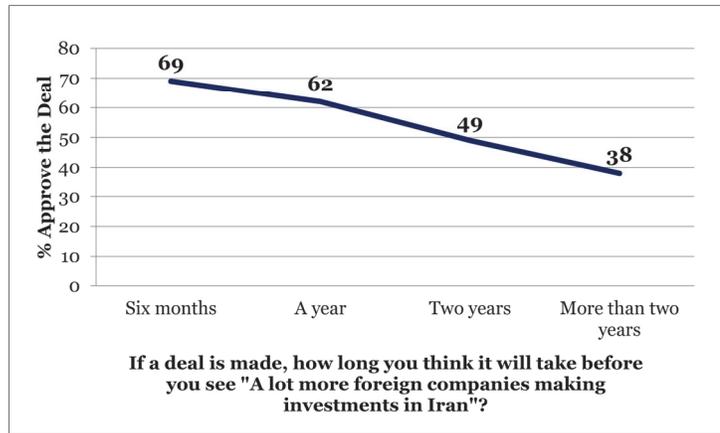
A slightly lesser 55% thought they would see “a tangible improvement in people’s standard of living” in a year or less (six months: 26%). Over a third (37%) thought this would take two years or more.



Hopes were most restrained on the issue of unemployment. Still, 52% thought they would see “the unemployment rate going down significantly” in a year or less after a deal (six months: 22%). Forty percent thought this would take two years or more.

Rouhani’s supporters tend to have higher expectations about the nuclear deal compared to those who are more critical of the president. For instance, of those who want Rouhani’s allies to win Majlis seats, two thirds (66%) believe incorrectly that following a deal, all U.S. sanctions are to be eventually lifted; among Rouhani’s critics, though, a lesser 54% believe this.

As would be expected, attitudes about how rapidly a nuclear deal would bring about change in Iran are strongly related to views about pursuing a deal. Those who believe that, if a deal occurs, the economic improvements in Iran will be swift, are more likely to approve of pursuing a deal by 23 to 31 points. For instance, among those who assume that a deal would be followed within six months by “a lot more foreign companies making investments in Iran,” 69% approve, while among those who think this would take more than two years, only 38% approve.



6. The Sanctions and Iran's Economy

The sanctions on Iran are overwhelmingly perceived as having a negative impact on the country's economy and on the lives of ordinary people. However, views of the economy are fairly sanguine and have been improving. Also, the impact of the sanctions is seen as limited and a lesser factor affecting the economy as compared to domestic mismanagement and corruption.

The great majority of Iranians see the nuclear-related sanctions as having hurt their country's economy significantly. Respondents were asked:

As you may know, Iran is currently under sanctions for activities relating to nuclear enrichment. In your opinion, to what degree have these sanctions had a negative impact on our country's economy?

Seventy-eight percent said the sanctions have had a negative impact (great impact, 41%). Only 18% said they have had little (11%) or no (6%) negative impact. When the same question was asked in October 2014, responses were nearly identical; earlier, in July 2014, they were slightly higher, with 85% seeing a negative impact (great impact, 51%).

An even larger majority see sanctions as having a negative impact on Iranians in their daily lives. Eighty-five percent said, "the lives of ordinary people" have felt a great (51%) or some (34%) negative impact from the sanctions. Still, this level is down slightly from July 2014, when 91% said there has been a negative impact (great impact: 61%). The difference may reflect in part the Rouhani administration's relative success in slowing the rate of inflation.

Iranians' views of their economy remain—despite their criticisms—more positive than negative, and in the last twelve months more have sensed improvement. A modest 54% majority called the "country's general economic situation" somewhat good (43%) or very good (11%), while 44% called it bad (very bad, 21%). Asked to assess whether "the economic conditions in Iran, as a whole, are getting better or getting worse," almost half (49%) said they were getting better—up from 32% when Gallup asked the same question in May 2014. In the current poll, 37% said conditions were getting worse, down from 46% in Gallup's May 2014 poll.

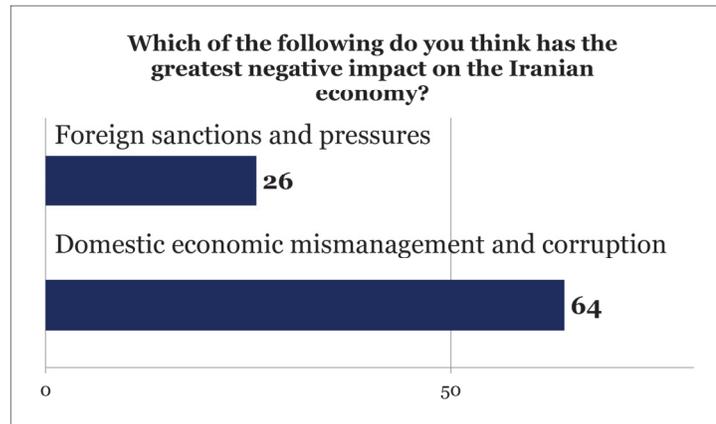
While most Iranians view the international sanctions as a significant hindrance on the economy, they do not think sanctions are having a negative impact on the economy that is greater negative impact than Iran's domestic economic mismanagement and corruption. Respondents were asked:

Which of the following do you think has the greatest negative impact on the Iranian economy?

—Foreign sanctions and pressures

—Domestic economic mismanagement and corruption

Nearly two in three (64%) saw domestic mismanagement and corruption as having the greatest negative impact; only 26% thought the same of sanctions. In this vein, responding in their own words to an open-ended question—“What is the most important challenge that our country should currently address?”—a majority (58%) raised domestic issues related to the economy: unemployment (33%), inflation (11%) and other economic problems (15%). Only 9% brought up international sanctions and other foreign pressures.



If the negotiations fail to produce a nuclear deal, Iranians are unsure what would happen next with the sanctions. More thought it likely that sanctions on Iran would be increased (38%) than thought these sanctions would “gradually weaken” (25%), while a third—32%—thought sanctions would stay about the same.

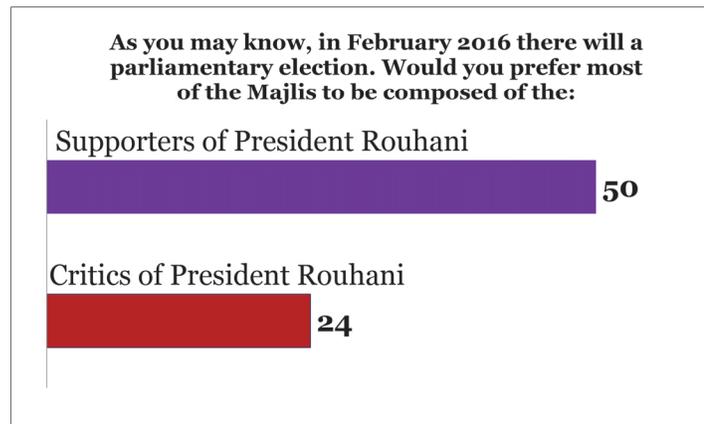
7. Views of Rouhani

As Iran’s parliamentary elections near, Iran’s President Rouhani is clearly one of the strongest political figures in Iran. Half would prefer to see Rouhani supporters win in the February 2016 parliamentary elections, while one quarter favors his critics. However, Rouhani supporters have high expectations that a deal removing all U.S. sanctions and bringing rapid economic change is going to take place. If a deal is reached that does not meet these expectations, Rouhani could be left politically vulnerable.

In a hypothetical presidential match-up, Rouhani currently does better than former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by two to one. Large majorities say Rouhani has been at least somewhat successful in improving the economic situation, improving Iran’s relations with European countries, and reducing sanctions. Three in four Iranians say that if the negotiations were to fail to produce a final agreement, they would only or mostly blame the P5+1 countries.

When Iranians are asked to think ahead to the February 2016 parliamentary elections, they are inclined to prefer a strong result for President Rouhani’s supporters by a two-to-one margin. Fifty percent said they would “prefer most of the Majlis to be composed of the supporters of President Rouhani,” compared to 24% who preferred it to be mostly composed of his critics.

However, it is important to note that those who want Rouhani’s supporters to win have significantly higher, and in some cases mistaken, expectations about the nuclear deal compared to those who want Rouhani’s critics to win—expectations that may be hard to fulfill. If these expectations are not fulfilled, disappointment would likely be greater in Rouhani’s own camp than outside it, which could create a significant political vulnerability for Rouhani:



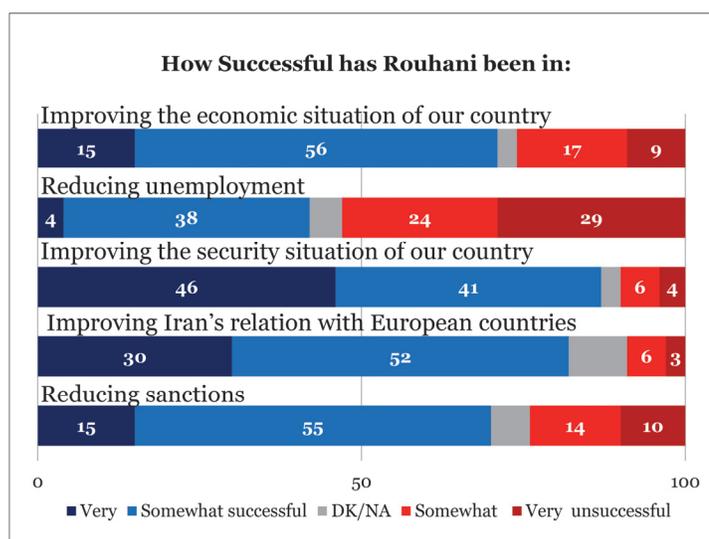
- Of those who want Rouhani’s supporters to win Majlis seats, 42% believe incorrectly that the P5+1 has already agreed that in the event of a deal it would lift all of its sanctions immediately; of those who want Rouhani’s critics to win, a lesser 31% believe this.

- Of those who want Rouhani’s supporters to win, two-thirds (66%) believe incorrectly that all U.S. sanctions are to be lifted eventually as part of a deal; on the other side, a lesser 54% believe this.
- When asked in a series of questions how rapidly they would expect economic changes to follow a deal, Rouhani’s supporters were 7-11 points more likely to say “in six months” than were those who want his critics to win.
- Further, of those who want Rouhani’s supporters to win, over a third (35%) say they would “blame our country’s officials if these negotiations were to fail to produce a final agreement” a lot, or somewhat—more than those who want Rouhani’s critics to win (20%).

Despite these risks—and without dominating the political landscape—Rouhani nonetheless currently has an unmatched degree of support when compared to potential rivals. Respondents gave spontaneous answers to the question, “If you had to recommend one person as a presidential candidate for the 2017 presidential election, who would that person be?” without being prompted with names. In this setting, 25% named Rouhani, followed by ex-president Ahmadinejad at 9%, Tehran mayor Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf at 6%, ex-president Mohammad Khatami at 4%, and ex-president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani at 3%. Seven other figures were named, including former challenger Mir-Hossein Mousavi, but each by fewer than 2% of respondents.

In a follow-on question, Rouhani was matched against the second most-named political figure, Ahmadinejad. Voters were asked to assume that “it is now 2017” and that the presidential campaign had resolved into a duel between Rouhani and Ahmadinejad. In that hypothetical case, 53% said they would vote for Rouhani and only 27% for Ahmadinejad.

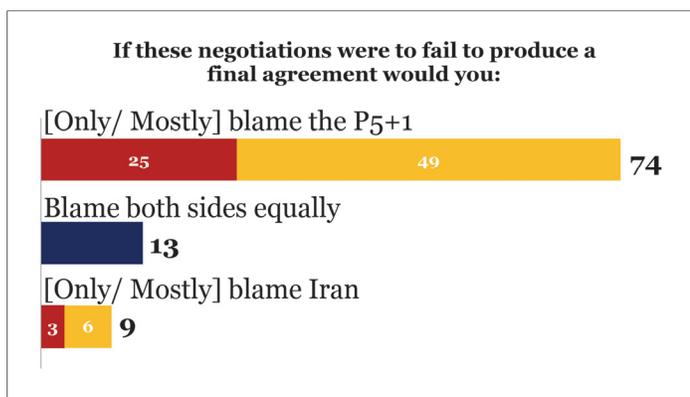
President Rouhani has been in office for almost two years and now has a record the Iranian public can assess. Overall, they seem to regard him as having made a good start in many areas, without having yet really won any laurels. Seven in ten (71%) said he has been at least somewhat successful in “improving the economic situation of our country,” though only 15% would say he has been very successful; 26% regarded him as unsuccessful (very, 9%). Iranians were more impressed with his record in “improving Iran’s relations with European countries,” with 82% calling this successful (very, 30%). In actually reducing the sanctions on Iran, 70% felt he has been at least somewhat successful (very, 15%), while 25% disagreed. And on Iran’s security, Rouhani is seen as a good guardian: a striking 86% thought he has succeeded in “improving the security situation of our country” (46% very).



This might be because Iran is situated in a region in turmoil, but has not experienced significant attacks on its soil, despite repeated threats from armed extremist groups.

Iranians are critical of parts of Rouhani’s economic performance, with a majority (53%) saying that he has not been successful in reducing unemployment (29% very unsuccessful), while 42% gave him some credit for this (very successful, 4%). Sixty-four percent felt he has been at least somewhat successful in increasing civil liberties, though only 13% said he has been very successful (21% unsuccessful; very, 7%).

If the nuclear negotiations were to fall through, Iranians would not blame the Iranian government for the failure. Asked who they would blame, “if these negotiations were to fail to produce a final agreement,” three quarters (74%) of respondents said they would blame just the P5+1 (25%), or mostly blame them (49%). Only 9% said they would blame only Iran (3%) or mostly blame Iran (6%). And, though respondents were offered the option of blaming both sides equally, only 13% thought they would.



8. Relations with the U.S.

Views of the United States, especially the U.S. government, continue to be quite negative. Only four in ten believe that U.S. leaders genuinely believe that Iran is trying to acquire nuclear weapons. Asked why the U.S. is imposing sanctions on Iran, the most common answers portray the U.S. as seeking to confront and dominate Iran; very few mention concerns about nuclear weapons. However, a slight majority has a positive view of the American people.

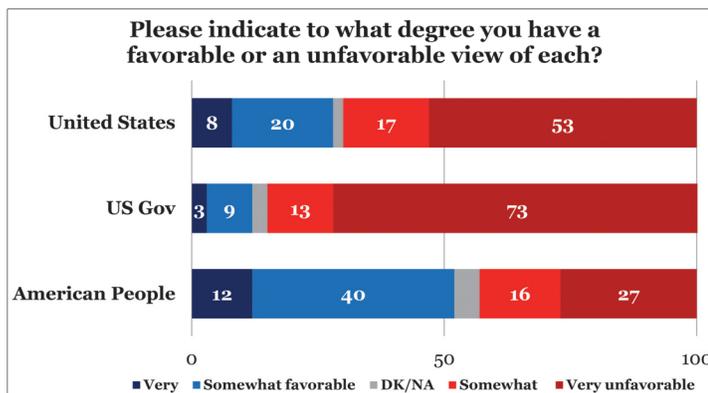
If Iran and the P5+1 reach a deal, a large majority believes that the U.S. will still impede other countries from cooperating with Iran, and a slight majority believes that Iran making concessions on the nuclear issue will likely lead the U.S. to seek more concessions. Just one in six believe that concessions would be likely to lead to greater accommodation; however, this number is higher than a year ago.

Large majorities favor various confidence-building measures between Iran and the U.S., including greater trade, which is more widely supported than a year ago. People-to-people confidence-building measures are especially popular. A majority thinks that it is possible for Islam and the West to find common ground.

Seventy percent of Iranians have an unfavorable view of the United States, and a majority (53%) has very unfavorable views. Twenty-eight percent have a favorable view (very, 8%). This is just marginally less negative than in October 2014 (75% unfavorable).

Views of the U.S. government are more negative yet, at 86%, including three in four Iranians (73%) with a very unfavorable view. This is virtually identical to the same question polled in July 2014.

Many Iranians question whether the ostensible motivations of U.S. diplomacy are genuine in regard to Iran's nuclear program. Only four in ten Iranians (39%) think that most U.S. leaders believe that Iran is trying to acquire nuclear weapons. More (47%) think they do not believe this, with 8% volunteering that U.S. leaders are divided in their views on the subject.



So then, what do Iranians think is the primary motive behind U.S. efforts to impose sanctions on Iran? In response to an open-ended question, only 16% thought the motive for sanctions was to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons. The most common answers (49%) portrayed the U.S. as seeking to confront and dominate Iran, but in ways that did not refer to its nuclear program—rather, to control Iran’s natural resources, constrain its independence and efforts to advance, meddle with its political order, and sow dissatisfaction and unrest. Another 10% talked about U.S. motives as global and hegemonic, or as focused on the Middle Eastern region, without mentioning Iran at all.

It should be noted, though, that Iranians separate this highly negative image of the U.S. government from their views of the American people. A 52% majority has a favorable view of the American people, while only 42% have an unfavorable view.

Iranians’ negative views of the U.S. government are in evidence when they think about how the U.S. would operate after a nuclear agreement was reached. Respondents were asked:

If Iran and the P5+1 do reach a deal, and based on that agreement other countries would be permitted to cooperate with Iran on building new nuclear reactors and supplying Iran with nuclear fuel, in your opinion is it more likely that the US will accept other countries cooperating with Iran in this way or that the US will try to impede such cooperation?

A full two-thirds (68%) assumed that the U.S. would obstruct Iran’s other bilateral relations (very likely, 32%). Only 28% thought the U.S. would accept this development (very likely, 7%).

A slight majority (51%) believes that if Iran makes concessions on the nuclear issue, it will lead the U.S. to seek more concessions. Iranians were asked a complex question that asked them to ponder how the U.S. would respond if it gained some of what it wanted from Iran:

As you may know, our country has many problems and differences with the United States, including with respect to the nuclear issue. In your opinion, if Iran were to provide concessions on the nuclear issue in return for the lifting of sanctions, is that:

—likely to make the United States more accommodating in other areas of contention;

—likely to make the United States rely on pressures and sanctions to extract concessions from Iran in other areas as well;

—or is it your opinion that Iran’s concession on the nuclear issue would not have much of an effect on other issues between the two countries?

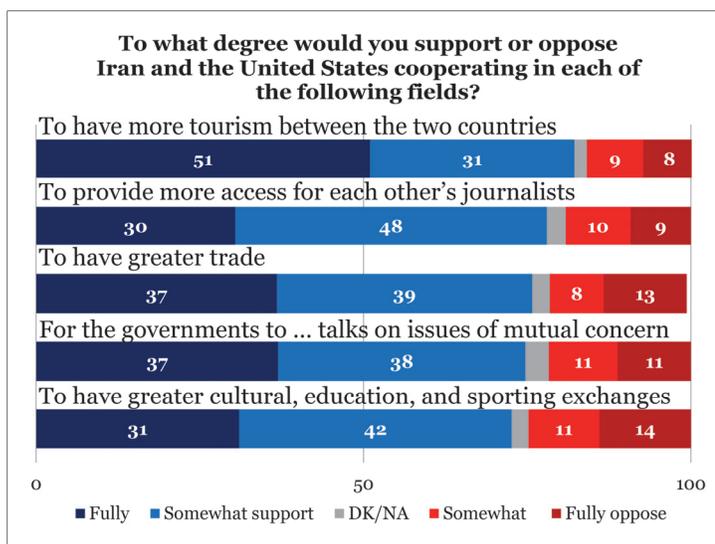
A little over half felt that the likely outcome was that the U.S. would use the same tools as before to extract concessions from Iran outside of the nuclear field. Only 18% thought that

Iran making concessions would lead the U.S. to be more accommodating. Another 22% thought it would make no difference either way.

Compared to when this same question was asked in July 2014, these attitudes have softened. The percent of Iranians that believes that the U.S. would likely re-use sanctions in other areas has declined from 58% to 51%. The percent that believes it would make no difference to relations has gone up from 13% to 22%. The percent that believes the U.S. would likely become more accommodating in other areas, though, is statistically unchanged.

Consistent with the majority’s openness toward the American people, large majorities support confidence-building steps, especially people-to-people programs, which could increase understanding between Iran and the U.S. These questions have been asked since 2006 and have shown majority support throughout. Responses in the current study were either distinctly higher than in July 2014, or were statistically the same.

- Three-quarters (75%) would support the two governments’ conducting “direct talks on issues of mutual concern.” This is up 9 points from 66% support when asked in July 2014.
- A similar 76% would support greater trade between Iran and the U.S. This is up 7 points, from 69% in July 2014.
- Four in five (82%) would support a program “to have more Americans and Iranians visit each other’s countries as tourists”—statistically the same as the 80% found in July.
- Seventy-eight percent would support a program in which Iran and the U.S. would provide more access for each other’s journalists—quite similar to the 81% found in July.
- Seventy-three percent would support “greater cultural, education, and sporting exchanges” between the two countries (75% in July).



As a broader principle, a majority thinks that it is possible for Islam to find common ground with the West, but this majority may be eroding. Respondents were offered a choice between two positions about the relations between Islamic civilization and Western civilization:

—Islamic and Western religious and social traditions are incompatible with each other, and conflict between the two is inevitable; or

—Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants, so it is possible to find common ground.

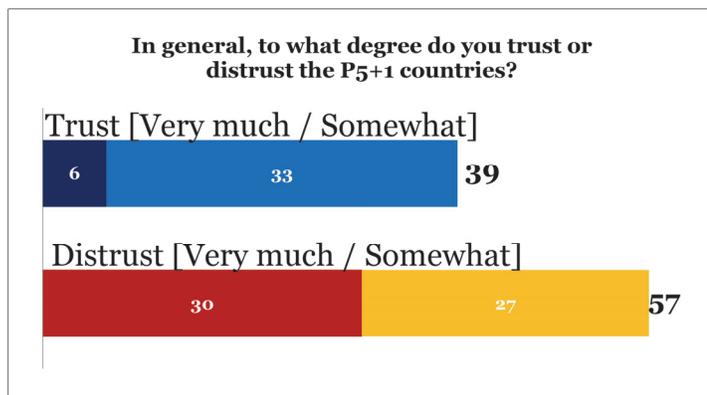
Respondents were asked which position was closer to their own. A 55% majority chose the second position, that it is possible to find common ground. This is down from 58% in July 2014. About a third (35%) chose the position that conflict is inevitable—up from 30% in July. When the same question was asked by WorldPublicOpinion.org in February 2008, 64% indicated that it was possible to find common ground, only 12% chose the position that conflict is inevitable, and 24% said that they don't know.

9. Views of P5+1 Countries

Two thirds say they do not trust the P5+1 countries—however, the minority expressing trust has increased since fall 2014. Views of specific countries vary: large majorities have negative views of the UK and the U.S.; modest majorities have unfavorable views of Russia and France, while views are divided on Germany and China.

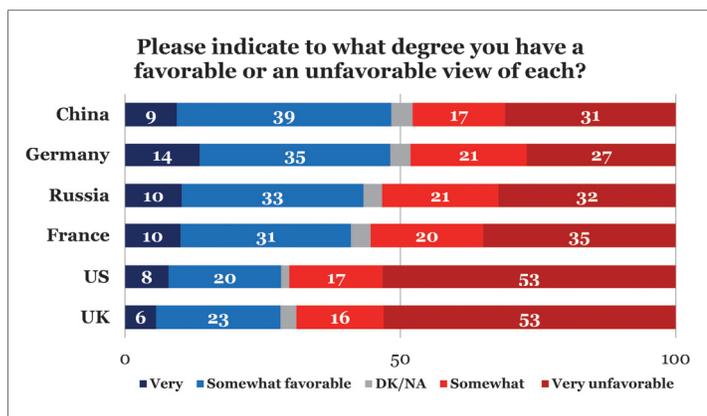
Although distrust of Iran’s negotiating partners, the P5+1 countries, is still prevalent, there has been a shift since October 2014. In October, more than three in five—62%—said that they distrusted the P5+1 somewhat (30%) or very much (32%). Attitudes in July 2014 were similar. In the current study, though, distrust has moderated somewhat to 57%. Thirty-nine percent said they trust the P5+1 somewhat (33%) or very much (6%)—up 7 points since October.

When views of the P5+1 are disaggregated and Iranians are asked about individual countries, signs of a mild thaw appear in Iranian attitudes toward some countries. Favorable views of the United Kingdom—long one of the most distrusted nations in the Iranian worldview, on a par with the U.S.—have crept up from 24% to 28% since July (unfavorable, 69%; very unfavorable, 53%). And as reported in the preceding section, favorable views of the U.S. have also increased slightly.



Views of France seem to show this pattern as well. While Iranians remain negative, with 55% viewing France unfavorably, this is down 4 points since October. Forty-one percent said they view France favorably (very, 10%), up from 37%.

Attitudes toward Germany are now divided, after having been negative last year. Forty-nine percent in the current study were favorable (14%, very) and 48% unfavorable (27%, very). Favorable views have risen 5 points since October.



Attitudes toward China are also divided, unchanged since October 2014. Those holding stronger views,

however, tend toward the negative. Forty-eight percent of Iranians view China favorably (9%, very) while 48% view China unfavorably (31%, very). The minority that views China very unfavorably has grown from 25% to 31% since July 2014.

Views of Russia, interestingly, have turned negative within the last year, and currently 53% have an unfavorable view (32%, very), while 43% are positive (10%, very). In both July and October 2014, the balance was slightly positive (October: 51% to 47%), but negative views of Russia have increased 6 points since October.

The Iranian public's views of Japan (a country not asked about in earlier polling) are unusually sunny. Three in five (61%) look favorably on Japan (25%, very), with 36% looking unfavorably (25%, very).

10. Views of Regional Actors

A very large majority has an unfavorable view of Saudi Arabia—even slightly more negative than views of the U.S. A slight majority now has an unfavorable view of Turkey, which was not the case a year ago. Large majorities continue to view Syria and Iraq favorably.

A 71% majority of respondents have an unfavorable view of Saudi Arabia, and 59% view it very unfavorably. This is, strikingly worse than Iranians' views of the U.S., in that a smaller percent (53%) see the U.S. *very* unfavorably.

Positive views of Turkey have dropped 9 points since July 2014, from 56% to the current 45%. Negative views have risen 10 points, from 42% to 52%, and the percent with a very unfavorable view of Turkey has grown from 24% to 35%. The different positions the two countries hold regarding the Syrian conflict may be partly responsible for this shift.

Positive views of Syria are held by three in four and are unchanged since July 2014. Seventy-seven percent view Syria favorably (31%, very), and only 21% view it unfavorably (9%, very).

Two thirds have a positive attitude toward Iraq, and this view has strengthened slightly. Sixty-seven percent have a favorable view of Iraq (33%, very), up from 63% in July, while 32% have an unfavorable view (17%, very), down from 36% in July.