

AMERICAN ATTITUDES
Toward the
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

July 27, 2016



Executive Summary

Overall, nearly half (49%) of Americans view Israelis favorably, and nearly half (49%) view Palestinians unfavorably. Despite this, American voters believe that Israelis and Palestinians deserve equal rights by a margin of 65% to 14%.

There is a strong partisan divide on U.S. policy toward Israel, both in perceptions of whether current policy favors Israelis or Palestinians, and in how the next administration should handle U.S. policy in the region. Republicans are more likely to perceive current policies as favoring the Palestinians, and more likely to believe the next administration should favor the Israelis in forming policy. At the same time, Democrats are more likely to perceive current policy as favoring the Israelis while believing the next administration should attempt to strike a balance between the two.

The partisan divide continues with Democrats more likely to oppose the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and to view boycotts as a legitimate way to counter settlement policy. Pluralities of both parties agree that the U.S. spends too much on military aid to Israel.

Of note is the high rate of respondents indicating they are not familiar enough with the topic to offer an opinion, especially among younger Americans (18-29) and Independents. Majorities of these groups declined to offer opinions on topics ranging from the current U.S. policy toward Israel and Palestine, the use of the term occupation to describe Israeli activity in the West Bank, and settlement expansion. The high response rate of uncertainty indicates that unlike during the 1990s, when the Peace Process was underway and in the headlines, there is a lack of focus and uncertainty on some key issues.

Methodology

Zogby Analytics was commissioned by Zogby Research Services to conduct an online survey of 1503 adults in the US.

Using trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were 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 1503 is +/- 2.6 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.

I. American Attitudes Toward Israelis and Palestinians

For each of the following, please tell us if your attitude regarding them is favorable, unfavorable, or are you not familiar enough to make a judgment.

Group	Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
Israelis	Favorable	49	43	68	37	28	69
	Unfavorable	21	23	17	24	32	16
Palestinians	Favorable	20	26	13	18	24	17
	Unfavorable	49	37	70	39	35	66
Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu	Favorable	38	29	58	26	18	62
	Unfavorable	27	33	20	26	34	20
Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas	Favorable	12	17	9	10	17	10
	Unfavorable	46	39	63	35	30	64

- Overall, nearly half (49%) of Americans view Israelis favorably, and nearly half (49%) view Palestinians unfavorably.
- Republican regard for Palestinians and Israelis mirrors itself, with 70% regarding Palestinians unfavorably, and 68% regarding Israelis favorably.
- Only 29% of Democrats view Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu favorably, whereas 58% of republicans view him favorably.
- Republicans and Older Americans share similar favorability ratings across the board, the two groups are the most likely to view Israelis and PM Netanyahu favorably compared to other subgroups and most likely to view Palestinians and President Abbas unfavorably.

Do you agree or disagree that Israelis and Palestinians are equal people entitled to equal rights?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
Agree	65	71	64	59	58	78
Disagree	14	11	20	13	15	12
Not Familiar	20	18	16	28	27	10

- Despite overall negative favorability ratings towards Palestinians, a strong majority or each subsection polled agreed that Israelis and Palestinians are equal people entitled to equal rights.
- Older Americans are the most likely to agree that Israelis and Palestinians are entitled to equal rights.

II. U.S. Policy Toward the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In handling the Israeli-Palestinian situation how would you describe the current policy of the U.S. toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
Current U.S. Policy favors the Israelis	29	35	27	24	20	37
Current U.S. policy favors the Palestinians	16	7	28	13	10	29
Current U.S. policy strikes a balance between the Israelis and Palestinians	13	13	15	10	15	12
Not Sure	42	45	30	52	55	23

- A plurality of Americans and a majority of Independents and Younger Americans (18-29) are not sure how to describe the current U.S. policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Democrats and Older Americans are the most likely to view current U.S. policy as favoring the Israelis.
- **Republicans are the only group in which an equal number of respondents believe U.S. policy favors the Israelis, as believes favors the Palestinians.**

How do you feel the next administration should conduct policy toward the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
Favor the Israelis	26	16	47	14	13	39
Favor the Palestinians	6	7	4	5	10	1
Strike a balance between the Israelis and Palestinians	34	41	27	33	26	42
Not sure	35	36	22	48	51	18

- A plurality of Democrats (41%) believe the next administration should strike a balance between the Israelis and Palestinians.
- **Republicans were the only group in which a plurality (47%) of respondents said that the next administration's policies should favor the Israelis.**
- A majority of Younger Americans was not sure how the next administration should conduct policy.

Generally speaking, whom do you blame for the breakdown in the Middle East Peace Process?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
The Israelis are most at fault	8	12	4	8	13	6
The Palestinians are most at fault	22	11	40	16	9	41
Both Israelis and Palestinians are equally at fault	36	42	32	34	28	36
Not Sure	34	35	24	43	49	17

- 40% of Republicans and 41% of Older Americans believe Palestinians are most at fault for the breakdown in the Middle East Peace Process.
- **A plurality of Democrats (42%) holds the Israelis and Palestinians equally at fault for the breakdown in negotiations.**
- Younger Americans are least likely to believe Palestinians are most at fault for the breakdown of the peace process.

III. U.S. Aid to Israel

During the past 10 years, U.S. military assistance programs for Israel have amounted to over \$35 billion. The Obama Administration is ready to sign an agreement with Israel agreeing to slightly more than the same amount for the next 10 years. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is holding out for \$50 billion hoping that Congress and the next president will be more willing to give the amount he is requesting. In your opinion the U.S. should:

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
Be willing to increase aid to the \$50 billion level	15	11	25	7	11	23
Hold the line, the amount the administration is offering is just right	22	24	23	17	17	25
The amount we are giving already is too much	39	40	34	44	40	36
Not familiar	25	26	18	32	32	16

- **Overall, Americans feel that we spend too much on military assistance programs for Israel.**
- Independents are most likely to feel that we are already giving too much to military assistance programs for Israel.

- One-quarter of Republicans believe the U.S. government should be willing to increase aid to the \$50 billion level, the highest of any subgroup. 40% of Democrats believe we are giving too much already.

IV. Occupation

The United States and most nations across the world have long referred to Israel's control over the territories of the West Bank as an occupation. Some say that the use of that word is prejudicial against Israel and should not be used. In your opinion, should we continue to refer to Israeli control of the West Bank as an occupation or should we not use that word?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
The U.S. should continue to refer to Israel's control over the territories of the West Bank as an occupation.	24	30	22	19	15	28
The U.S. should not refer to Israel's control over the territories of the West Bank as an occupation.	30	23	44	22	25	42
Not familiar	46	47	34	59	59	30

- Americans are split on whether or not the U.S. should refer to Israeli control of the West Bank as an occupation, with a plurality saying they are not familiar enough with the subject.
- **Republicans and Older Americans are the only subgroups in which a plurality believes the U.S. should not refer to Israel's control over the territories of the West Bank as an occupation.**
- A strong majority of Independents and Younger Americans are not familiar enough with the subject to have an opinion on the use of the term occupation.

V. Views On Settlements

Since 1967 every U.S. President has asked Israel to stop constructing settlements for its population in the areas of the West Bank since it makes it more difficult to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Israel maintains that it has a right to do so and has resettled over 600,000 of its people in these areas. With which of the following statements do you most agree?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
U.S. policy is correct and we should continue to oppose Israel's settlement policy	33	43	29	27	28	40
The Israelis are right to build housing for their people in the West Bank and we should support them	25	18	36	21	18	34
Not familiar	42	40	35	53	55	26

- A plurality of Americans and a majority of Independents and Younger Americans are not familiar enough with the issue of settlements to have an opinion.
- Democrats are most likely to agree with current U.S. policy, with 43% saying the U.S. should continue to oppose Israel's settlement policy.
- Older Americans are the only other subgroup in which the largest percentage believes the U.S. should continue to oppose the continued construction of settlements.
- **Republicans are most likely than any other subgroup to believe that Israelis are right to build housing for their people in the West Bank and we should support them.**

The U.S. has consistently pressed Israel to stop constructing settlements and yet Israel persists in this practice. In your opinion, if Israel continues to build settlements, should the U.S. get tough with Israel or should we take no action on this matter?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
The U.S. should get tough with Israel and attempt to stop expansion.	32	42	25	26	25	34
The U.S. should take no action and allow settlements to grow	33	24	48	28	28	43
Not familiar	36	34	27	47	47	23

- Overall, Americans are evenly split on whether the U.S. should get tough if Israel continues to expand settlements.
- **Democrats and Republicans mirror each other, with 42% of Democrats saying that the U.S. should get tough with Israel and attempt to stop the expansion of settlements, and 48% of Republicans saying the U.S. should take no action and allow settlements to grow.**
- A plurality of Independents, as well as Younger Americans, indicated that they were not familiar enough with the issue to provide an opinion on U.S. policy toward settlements.

VI. Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions

Some opponents of Israel's Settlements in the West Bank have called on governments, businesses, and organizations to peacefully boycott or impose sanction on Israel to show displeasure with this policy. In your opinion, is boycotting a legitimate form of protest to protest Israel's settlement policy?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
Boycotting is a legitimate form of protest	41	49	37	36	33	45
Boycotting is not a legitimate form of protest	22	14	35	18	16	31
Not familiar	37	37	28	46	51	24

- A plurality of Americans agrees that boycotting is a legitimate form of protest against settlement expansion, along with a majority of Younger Americans
- Nearly half (49%) of all Democrats find boycotting to be a legitimate form of protest against Israel's settlement policy.
- Republicans are split in their opinion on whether boycotting is a legitimate form of protest against Israel's settlement policy.

VII. Two-State Solution

Do you agree or disagree that there should be an independent Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+
Agree	47	53	48	41	43	58
Disagree	16	11	24	14	12	19
Not Familiar	36	37	28	45	44	22

- A plurality (47%) of all Americans believes there should be an independent Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution.
- A majority of Democrats (53%) and a majority of older Americans (58%) agree that an independent Palestinian state should be part of a two-state solution.
- A plurality of both Independents and Younger Americans are not familiar enough with the issue to offer an opinion.