

American Public Attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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This probabilistic Internet survey was fielded by GFK
among a nationally representative sample of 1008 Americans, November 14-19, 2014.

Full Report Available Online

www.brookings.edu/israelipalopinionpoll

Key Findings

This report is divided into two sections: “Issues” and “Issue Importance.” The first section reviews some of the findings on key issues facing American foreign policy toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The second section identifies segments of the American public who care the most about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and probes their positions on key policy issues, with the assumption that issue-ranking matters most for policy-making; the more people care about an issue, the more their voices are heard by policy-makers.

Survey Methodology

The sample was drawn from a larger standing panel called the KnowledgePanel that is managed by the research company GfK. Though these surveys take place online, this panel is not derived from an “opt-in” by which any online user can volunteer a respondent. Instead, panelists are recruited through a scientific process of selection using two methods: a random selection of residential addresses using the United States Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in GfK’s KnowledgePanel. Those who agree to participate but who do not have Internet access are provided a laptop computer and Internet service. A representative sample is then chosen for a specific survey. Once that sample completes a survey, the demographic breakdown of the sample is compared to the U.S. census. Any variations from the census are adjusted by weighting.

The study was fielded over November 14-November 19, 2014 with a sample of 1008 American adults. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1%; with the design effect also taken into account, the margin of error is plus or minus 3.4%. Findings were weighted to census data.

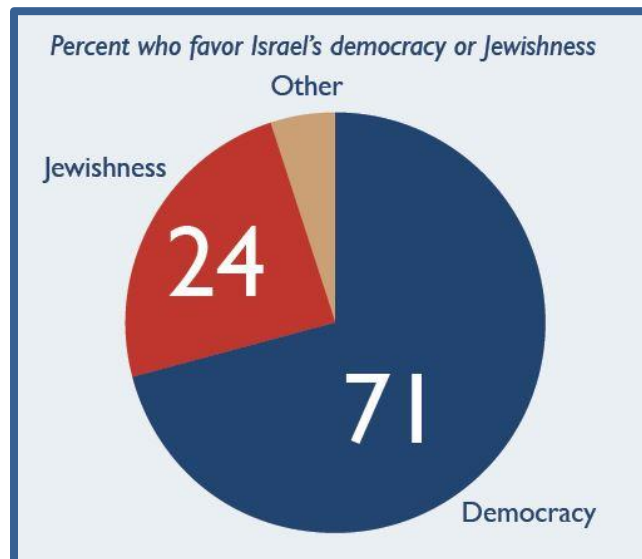
Issues

Two States, One State, Annexation, Status Quo

The percentage of Americans who want the U.S. government to push for a two-state solution remains constant at 39% from last year; but the percentage of those who want the United States to push for one state with equal citizenship has increased from 24% to 34%. Among those who support two states, two-thirds would support one state if two states are not possible.



If a two-state solution is not possible, 71% of Americans (84% of Democrats, 60% of Republicans) favor a single democratic state with Arabs and Jews as equal over a one in which Israel's Jewish majority is sustained and Palestinians will not have equal citizenship.



Should the United States Lean Toward One Side?

Sixty-four percent of Americans want the United States to not lean toward Israel nor the Palestinians, 31% want it to lean toward Israel, and 4% toward Palestinians. But there is a dramatic difference between Republicans and Democrats: Among Democrats, 77% say neither side, 17% say Israel, and 6% say Palestinians; Among Republicans, 51% say Israel, 46% say neither, and 2% say Palestinians.

Degree of Support for UN Resolution on Palestinian Statehood

If Palestinians ask for UN endorsement of a Palestinian state, only 27% of Americans want the United States to oppose it, 45% recommend abstaining, and 25% want the United States to vote in favor.

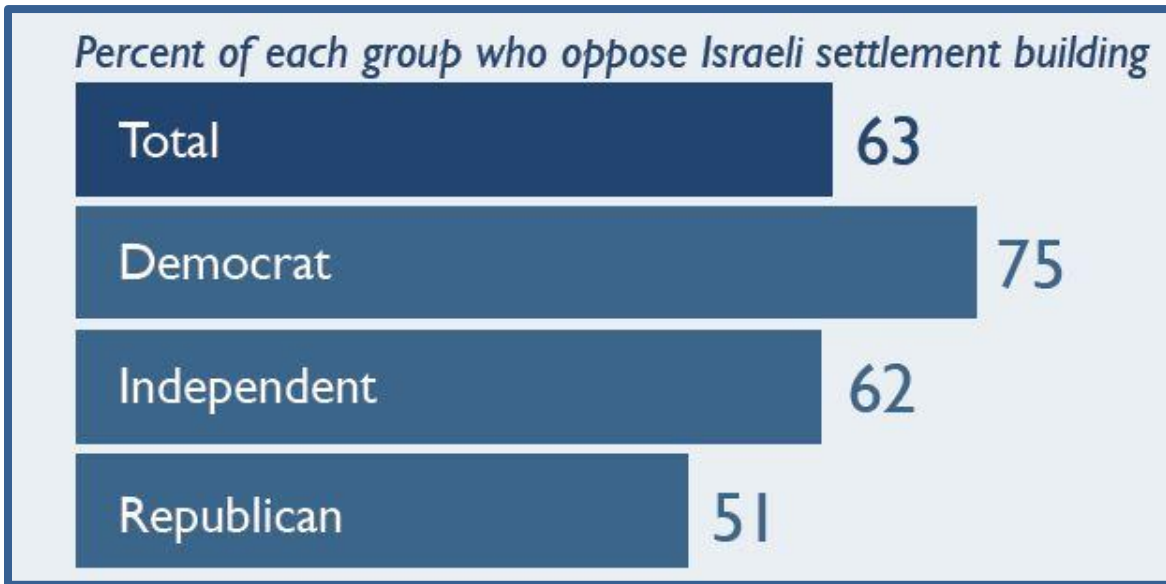


Only 15% of Democrats recommend opposing, 36% recommend supporting, and 46% recommend abstaining, while 46% of Republicans recommend opposing, 19% recommend supporting, and 33% recommend abstaining.



Israeli Settlements

Sixty-three percent of Americans oppose Israeli settlement building, while 34% support it. However, there is a significant difference among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents: 75% of Democrats oppose, compared to 62% of Independents, and 51% of Republicans.



Despite American public opposition to settlements, most do not support imposing sanctions or doing something harsher than making statements. Overall, 61% say do nothing or limit opposition to statements, while 39% support imposing sanctions or other measures.

The Israeli government has continued to build settlements arguing that they have the right to so, or that these are not obstacles to peace. How do you believe the United States should react to the new settlements?

61%

LIMIT ACTION

39%

IMPOSE SANCTIONS

Issue Importance

Priority of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Nearly six in ten Americans rank the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one of the top five issues for U.S. national interests, while one in five rate it as one of the top three issues or the top issue. Overall, Republicans rank Israeli-Palestinian conflict higher in their priorities than Democrats and Independents.



Among those who rank this issue as being among the top three issues, a majority (55%) want the United States to lean toward Israel—much more than among those who rank it among the top five issues (37%) or who don't rank it among the top five issues (15%). However, this varies dramatically by party. Among Democrats who rank the issue among the top three for the United States, the majority (57%) want the United States to lean toward neither side, while 30% favor leaning toward Israel, and 14% toward the Palestinians.



Among those who prioritize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, support is higher for vetoing a U.N. resolution endorsing Palestinian statehood (44 percent), though a majority (52 percent) wants the United States to either support such a resolution or to abstain.

U.S. VOTE FOR PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD



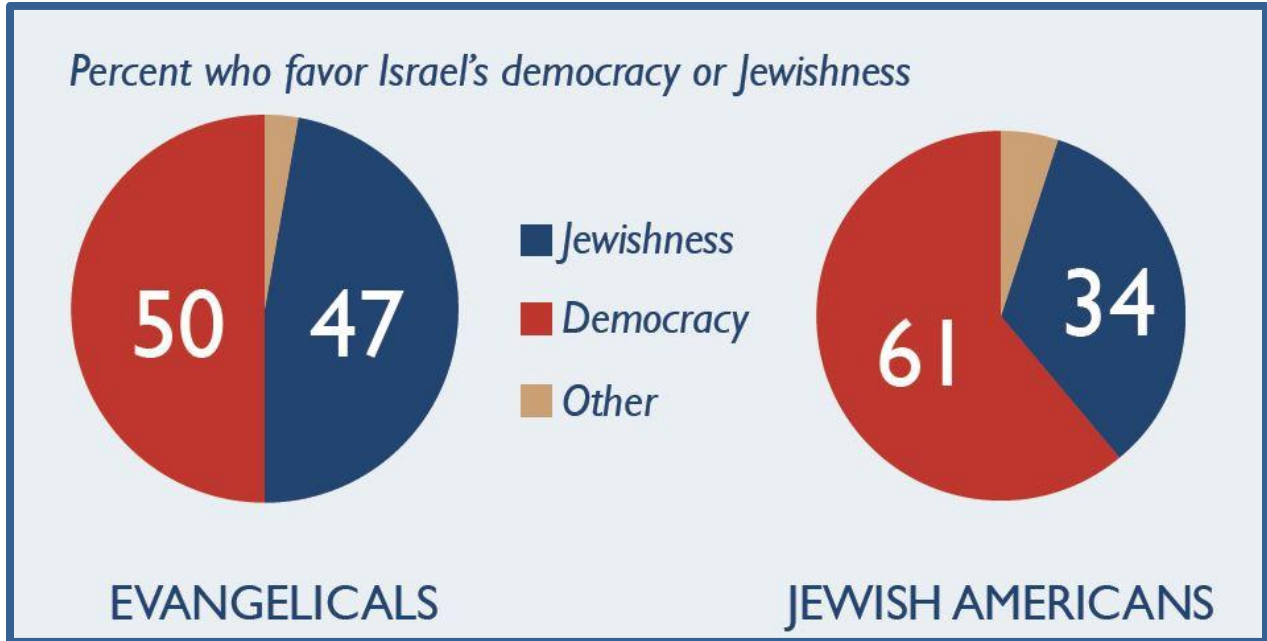
But party differences are significant.

Those who rate the Israeli-Palestinian issue as their highest or one of their three most important issues still favor Israel's democracy over Jewishness but by a smaller ratio. There is a significant party divide on this issue: Among Republicans who make the conflict such a high priority, 54 percent put more emphasis on Israel's Jewishness as compared to one in three Democrats.

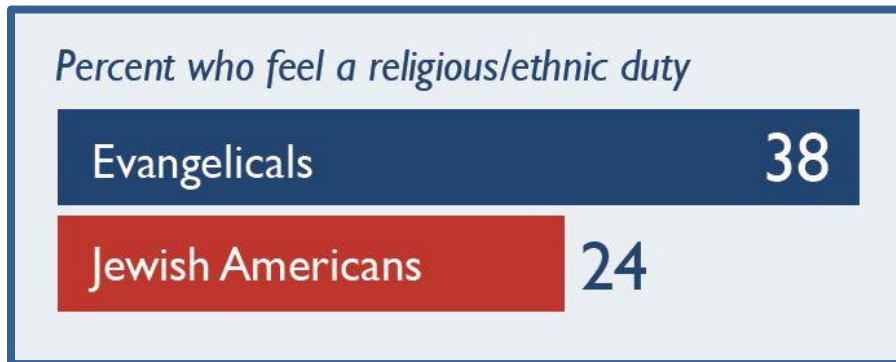


Jewish Americans and Evangelicals/Born Again Christians

While most Americans emphasize Israel’s democracy over its Jewishness, among Evangelicals views are divided. Among the limited sample of Jewish Americans (close to 5% of the total sample), a majority emphasizes Israel’s democracy over its Jewishness.



These differences may be explained by differing reasoning among those who want the United States to lean toward Israel: 38% of Evangelicals who want the United States to lean toward Israel say their reason is religious/ethnic duty (compared with 28% for shared values and 32% for serving U.S. interests). Among Jewish Americans who want the United States to lean toward Israel, only 24% say they feel ethnic/religious duty.



*Human Rights is the Most Common Prism
Through Which Americans View Conflict*



Asked what their highest concern is in the Arab-Israeli issue the highest number, 31%, say human rights, while 24% say they are most concerned about U.S. interests, while 14% say they are most concerned about Israeli interests.

Americans rate human rights very high in terms of their priorities for U.S. foreign policy. Fifty three percent say that human rights is the single most or one of the three most important issues as compared with 27% for international law and 21% for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Those who rank human rights as a high priority tend to also rank the Palestinian-Israeli conflict higher in their priorities than those who do not prioritize human rights.

Americans who rank human rights higher in their priorities tend to be more prepared to recommend sanctions or tougher action against Israeli settlements than the rest of the population and tend to be more favorable to the United States voting in favor of a UN resolution endorsing a Palestinian state. They also tend to be more favorable toward a U.S. vote supporting a UN resolution endorsing a Palestinian state.