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Iran Survey Findings *National Survey of Jewish Voters*

As American officials work with our allies to re-engage Iran and ensure it cannot develop nuclear weapons, a new national survey of Jewish voters shows that American Jews strongly support a return to diplomatic efforts.¹ This support is driven by several factors, including Jews' opposition to Trump's "maximum pressure" approach that involved withdrawing from the previous agreement that Obama reached with Iran and five other world powers, an aversion to falling into another Middle East war, and the belief that the Iranian threat can be countered by the core elements of a deal that entails inspections in exchange for sanctions relief.

Underlying Jewish attitudes on the Iran issue, as well as all other public policy debates, is the bitter polarization of American politics. Jewish voters sit firmly in the Democratic camp, and they remain hostile to positions and actions associated with Trump. They strongly support President Biden and give him very high job approval marks, even at a moment when his approval has slipped among the broader US population.

This memo highlights key findings from a survey of 800 Jewish registered voters, conducted October 13-19, 2021.

Key Findings

- **In an evenly divided and highly polarized political environment, Jewish voters overwhelmingly support Joe Biden and believe he is doing an excellent job.** Biden's 68 percent job approval among Jews is 24 points higher than his FiftyThreeEight average job approval among American voters during the time that the survey fielded. Biden also receives high marks on his handling of national security and relations with Iran (both at 66 percent approve).

¹ GBAO conducted a national survey of 800 Jewish registered voters, October 13-19, 2021. The survey methodology is detailed at the end of this memo.



- **Trump’s shadow looms over the political environment, further solidifying Jewish support for Biden and the Democratic camp.** When given a list of five potential threats to America’s future over the next five to ten years, Jews cite “domestic extremism and insurrection” as the most dangerous threat (43 percent), followed by climate change (27 percent), China (22 percent), Iran (6 percent), and Russia (2 percent). In other words, American Jews are more worried about the threat of insurrectionists than that of three major foreign adversaries combined. And while Biden enjoys strong approval from Jewish voters, his standing further improves when comparisons are made to Trump. That is, Biden’s 66 percent approval of handling Iran is exceeded by the 72 percent who say they trust him more than Trump on the issue of Iran (including 65 percent who say they trust Biden *much* more).
- **Iran is a low priority issue for Jewish voters, but they do want the United States to re-enter an agreement that addresses Iran’s nuclear program.** Only 3 percent of Jewish voters cite Iran as one of the top two issues that Biden and Congress should focus on. In fact, Iran is ranked as the lowest priority among 13 issues, while the top issues are voting rights (34 percent), climate change (30 percent), jobs and the economy (25 percent), and the pandemic (18 percent). But when asked whether they support the United States re-entering the nuclear agreement that Trump withdrew from, 69 percent of Jews said that they want the United States to re-enter the agreement.
- **Jews clearly express a strong preference for diplomacy over the use of force, and they want the United States to continue pursuing diplomacy even if we do not reach an agreement with Iran in the next six months.** Despite the difficult images and conventional wisdom attacking the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, 74 percent of Jewish voters support Biden’s decision to withdraw American troops. The aversion to war is underscored when Jews are asked what the United States should do if there is still no agreement with Iran in six months:

 - 65 percent want to continue pursuing diplomacy and work toward an agreement without resorting to military force or imposing new sanctions
 - 30 percent want to resume Trump’s “maximum pressure” policy that increases sanctions to try forcing them to accept our terms
 - 5 percent want to launch military strikes against Iran’s nuclear sites
- **The most convincing arguments for supporting a new agreement with Iran center on getting inspectors back into Iran’s facilities, avoiding war, and taking a different approach than Trump.** As we saw in polling conducted when the Obama Administration reached an agreement with Iran and five other countries in 2015, Jews highly value the presence of international inspectors at Iran’s nuclear sites, and they find it a very compelling reason for supporting an agreement with Iran. In this latest survey about US policy toward Iran, the strongest argument for re-entering an agreement highlights that the original agreement resulted in inspectors monitoring the sites and also emphasizes that Trump’s decision to pull out of the agreement cut off access to Iran’s nuclear sites (70 percent find this message convincing, including 51 percent very convincing). When not invoking Trump, a similar argument about “access to Iran’s nuclear sites in exchange for easing economic sanctions” is effective, but does not have the same intensity of support (70 percent convincing, including 38 percent very convincing).

Concluding Note

Iran does not appear on Jewish voters' radar right now. But as the issue unfolds, it is very clear that Jews remain firmly behind an agreement that resuscitates the core bargain of the 2015 agreement that eased sanctions in exchange for international inspectors at Iran's nuclear sites. Jews are wary of war, they support diplomacy and working with our allies, and they believe the original agreement was working. Furthermore, anything related to Trump is toxic for American Jews, and the fact that Trump withdrew from that agreement further strengthens Jewish support for re-entering an agreement with Iran and other countries.

The Biden Administration and Members of Congress have many substantive issues to consider when trying to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. As they deal with the many moving pieces surrounding American policy and the political landscape, there is clear evidence that Jewish voters strongly support a diplomatic approach to reach an agreement that gets inspectors back into Iran's nuclear facilities.

GAO designed the questionnaire for this national survey of American Jews. The survey was conducted October 13-19, 2021, and included interviews with 800 self-identified Jewish voters who are registered to vote. The survey is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The survey sample was drawn from a national voter file, consisting of all registered voters in the United States. Respondents with a likelihood of being Jewish based on their name or geography were contacted by text, and then took the survey on their phone or computer. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked whether they consider themselves Jewish, using the same question wording as the 2020 Pew Research Center's study, "Jewish Americans in 2020."