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NEW POLL: American Jewish Support for Iran Deal Exceeds Support Among General Population

WASHINGTON—American Jewish support for an agreement with Iran exceeds support for the deal among the general US population, according to a new poll.

American Jews express strong support for a final agreement with Iran that increases inspections in exchange for economic sanctions relief. Fifty-nine percent say they would support such a deal, compared to 53 percent of American adults in an April CNN poll that asked the same question.

The question comes from a poll of American Jewish attitudes on the US' Middle East policy, released today by J Street, just weeks ahead of the June 30 deadline for negotiations.

When provided further details about a final agreement Jewish support grows further. A striking 78 percent of American Jews would back an agreement that imposes intrusive inspections of Iran and caps its enrichment of uranium at a level far below what is necessary to make a nuclear weapon in exchange for phased relief from US and international sanctions.

“When it comes to the best way to keep Iran from getting a nuclear bomb, these results make clear that American Jews overwhelmingly support the president’s diplomatic efforts,” said J Street President Jeremy Ben-Ami. “The numbers just go to show—once again— that pundits and presumed communal representatives are flat-out wrong in assuming American Jews are hawkish on Iran or US policy in the Middle East in general.”

American Jews are clearly paying attention to Iran negotiations —with 66 percent professing to have a “great deal” or “some” information—but they do not see it as a high priority issue. Only 6 percent rank Iran as one of the top two priorities on which they believe President Obama and Congress should focus, placing it at the bottom of a list of 11 issues. The economy (45 percent) is the top priority, followed by ISIS (29 percent). Israel ranks 9th, as 7 percent cite it as one of their top 2 issues.

Overall, President Obama’s approval rating remains higher among American Jews than among Americans in general. Fifty-six percent approve of the way he is handling his job as president, compared to 45 percent of the general population, according to the Real Clear Politics’ calculation from the same period during which the poll was conducted.

“President Obama has often said that he has Israel’s back, and it is clear that American Jews have his back if he reaches an agreement with Iran,” said Jim Gerstein, partner at GBA Strategies, who conducted the poll. “Jews support Obama’s efforts to reach an agreement with Iran, and they approve of the job he is doing as President of the United States.”

American Jews believe that President Obama's policy disagreements with Prime Minister Netanyahu do not call into question the President's support for Israel. Fifty-seven percent of people agree that such criticism is "appropriate" versus 43 percent claim that the President has "gone too far."

"If the president reaches an historic deal that keeps a nuclear bomb out of Iran's hands, he is still likely to face serious attempts by the Israeli government and others purporting to speak for the community to rally opposition to it in Congress," said Ben-Ami. "The president and the Congress should know that American Jews broadly will line up behind this deal."

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Support for a two-state solution

- Seventy-two percent support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- In two separate questions, 67 percent believe it is both (1) necessary to strengthen Israel's security and its Jewish and democratic character and (2) an important security interest for the United States.

Support for US engagement in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict

- Eighty-four percent believe that the United States should play an active role in helping the parties to resolve the conflict
- Seventy percent would support US engagement even if it meant stating US disagreements with both the Israelis and Arabs and 69 percent would support the US pressuring both parties to make the compromises.

2016 elections

- In a head-to-head race between Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton and presumed Republican front-runner Jeb Bush, Clinton beats Bush by 68-30 with 2 percent undecided.
- The favorable rating for the Democratic Party (46) is more than twice as much as that of the Republican Party (20).

METHODOLOGY

GBA Strategies designed the questionnaire for this national survey of American Jewish adults. The survey was conducted May 31-June 3, 2015 and includes 1,000 self-identified Jews. The survey is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. GBA Strategies contracted the research company Mountain West Research Center to administer the survey by email invitation to its web-based panel, which is regularly updated and consists of nearly 900,000 Americans.

Respondents were screened at the beginning of the survey when they were first asked for their religion and then, if they did not identify themselves as Jewish by religion, they were asked again if they considered themselves Jewish.