

# Iranian Public Opinion, At the Start of the Raisi Administration

A public opinion study | September 2021



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The completion of this study was supported partially by funds from the IranPoll Opinion Research Support Fund in Memory of Professor Thomas Schelling.

Cover Image: Maryam Kimyab (Mehr News Agency)

## Introduction

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) has been conducting in-depth surveys of Iranian public opinion on nuclear policy, regional security, economics, domestic politics, and other topics since the summer of 2014. Each survey includes a combination of trend-line questions, some going as far back as 2006, and new questions written to assess and inform current policy debates.

This report covers findings from a survey fielded in late August and early September, shortly after Ebrahim Raisi was inaugurated as Iran's new president on August 5, 2021. It provides insights into Iranian public attitudes regarding a wide range of foreign and domestic policy issues as Raisi takes office, eight months after we released a similar survey of Iranian attitudes in the early days of American president Joe Biden's first term in office.

Much has changed, and much has stayed the same since February 2021. Biden had campaigned on a pledge to rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and lift sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, as a first step toward further negotiations, so Iranians were relatively positive in February about the prospects for reviving the nuclear deal and improving U.S.-Iranian relations.

It took about ten weeks for the new administration to begin indirect negotiations with Iran on a mutual return to full compliance with the JCPOA. The Iranian parliament had responded to Trump's maximum pressure campaign by passing a law specifying that if the Biden administration did not reverse that policy within weeks of taking office, Iran would exceed JCPOA-mandated limits on its nuclear program in more consequential ways and suspend special International Atomic Energy Agency access to Iran's nuclear sites that were called for by the JCPOA. The economic, political, and public health crises confronting the new Biden administration precluded it from moving that quickly. The Iranian government promised to rapidly reverse the steps it had taken after the United States reliably and verifiably returned to the JCPOA, but weeks were spent in chicken-and-egg arguments about sequencing before negotiations finally got underway in early April.

The talks in Vienna made slow, but significant progress as preparations for Iran's presidential election intensified. Members of the negotiating teams indicated that agreement had been reached by mid-June on some key issues, including the sequence of steps that Iran would take to resume fulfilling its JCPOA commitments and the corresponding sanctions relief it would get from the United States. Some important points of disagreement still needed to be resolved, though. Iran wanted reliable assurances that the United States would not withdraw again or take other steps to preclude Iran from receiving the promised benefits if it abided fully by its JCPOA obligations through October 2025, when the JCPOA specifies that many of Iran's special nuclear commitments would end and it would have the same rights and responsibilities as other non-nuclear weapon states party to the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The United States also wanted assurance from Iran that once the JCPOA had been restored, it would start follow-on negotiations to address additional U.S. concerns.

Iran's election process involves prospective candidates submitting their credentials for review by the Guardian Council, which determines who is qualified to run. Some popular political figures, including Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, did not apply to run; some, such as former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, were deemed unqualified, as expected; and some, such as former speaker of the parliament Ali Larijani, were unexpectedly blocked from running. There was much discussion inside and outside of Iran about the reasons for the Guardian Council's action, how election legitimacy and voter turnout would be affected, and what implications could be drawn about the political strength and independence of a new president elected through this tightly controlled process. Only four candidates for president remained in the race when the polls opened on June 18, voter turn-out was historically low, and as expected, Raisi won by a large margin.

Countries participating in the JCPOA negotiations hoped that Rouhani would be authorized to make concessions on the remaining sticking points so that a return agreement could be finalized before his successor was inaugurated in early August. Instead, the government of Iran announced that it was suspending negotiations until Raisi had taken office, filled key positions in his administration, and conducted its own policy review. Raisi's inaugural address declared that improving relations with other countries in the Middle East would be a top foreign policy priority. When he addressed the United Nations General Assembly in late September, he indicated that Iran would be ready to resume negotiations soon, but ten weeks into his first term, a date to do so has not yet been announced.

Like Biden, Raisi inherited a number of serious domestic economic, social, political, and public health problems. A fifth wave of covid-19 cases sparked by the delta variant started in late June and peaked in late August as vaccination rates in Iran began to rise sharply. Only about ten percent of Iranians had received their first dose when Raisi entered office, and frustration with Iran's public healthcare system was mounting. Iran's annual GDP growth rate moved back into positive territory at 1.7% for 2020, after having been below -6% the previous two years, but most Iranians were still experiencing severe economic hardship. Iran had also suffered serious water shortages in the summer of 2021, which caused power outages and protests in many locations.

To see where the Iranian public stands on this complex mix of foreign and domestic policy issues, we repeated many of the trend line questions that we have used for years. We also wrote a large number of new questions, some to set baselines for tracking public expectations and assessments of Raisi's performance on various challenges; some to probe attitudes on broad questions, such as trust in different types of political authorities; and some to explore new topics, such as water management and violence against women. We find that attitudes have grown more pessimistic since Biden took office on prospects for restoring the nuclear deal and improving relations with the United States. At the same time, though, the Iranian public seems rather optimistic about Raisi's ability to handle many of the other challenges facing Iran, even if the United States loses patience with Iran's approach to the JCPOA return negotiations and moves on to some type of Plan B.

## Methodology

The study is based on a probability sample nationally representative telephone survey. The fieldwork for this survey was conducted in September 2021 (August 30 – September 9, 2021), among a representative sample of about 1001 Iranians. The margin of error for is about +/- 3.1%.

The analysis provided in the report is based on the unweighted n=1001 sample and, unless specified otherwise, the results are based on the full sample.

The samples were RDD samples drawn from all landline telephones in Iran. The samples were stratified first by Iranian provinces and then in accordance to settlement size and type. All 31 Iranian provinces were represented in proportions similar to their actual populations, as were rural and urban areas. 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 of the interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). All interviews were monitored in real-time by call-center supervisors. Further details about the data collection methodology is available here: <https://www.iranpoll.com/method>.

The AAPOR2 contact rate of this survey was 81%. The AAPOR2 cooperation rate of the survey was 79%. The overall response rate of the survey based on AAPOR2 was 60%.

For details on methods used to check the quality of the data, see the Appendix to this report. Previous reports on Iranian public opinion done by CISSM in collaboration with IranPoll, along with the questionnaires and related articles, can be found at: [https://cisssm.umd.edu/research-impact/projects/security-cooperation-iran-challenges-and-opportunities#iran\\_surveys](https://cisssm.umd.edu/research-impact/projects/security-cooperation-iran-challenges-and-opportunities#iran_surveys)

# Summary of Findings

## Challenges Facing Iran

### President Raisi and Key Challenges (p. 11)

Though a large majority express satisfaction with Raisi becoming president, at least four in ten are dissatisfied with how the election was conducted and almost three in five want to see changes in Iran's election law. At the same time, Raisi himself is viewed positively by about three quarters, while the outgoing president Rouhani is viewed negatively by a similar number.

### Iran's Economy (p. 13)

Three quarters describe the economy as bad, and a majority call it very bad. Half ascribe this primarily to domestic economic mismanagement and corruption, while a quarter ascribe it more to the pandemic and another quarter more to sanctions. About two thirds think Iran should strive for self-sufficiency (as has been the case since 2017). Current economic attitudes do not translate into an entirely pessimistic outlook: a majority think that by three years from now ordinary Iranians will have better living conditions. On average, Iranians' ratings of the quality of their own lives have not slipped over the last six months.

### The Pandemic (p. 15)

There is more concern about Iran's performance against the pandemic than there was last fall: those who feel Iran has done as well as, or better than, similar countries are now a little over half, down from seven in ten in October. Under a fifth now rate Iran's public healthcare system's performance as very good, down from four in ten. There is little vaccine hesitancy in Iran: three quarters either would take a vaccine approved by Iran's health ministry, or had already taken at least one dose (three in ten) at the time of the survey. The World Health Organization reports that as of October 10, 2021, 30% of Iranian adults have received at least one dose, and 23% are fully vaccinated. The Iranian Ministry of Health gives higher figures of 81% with at least one dose and 42% fully vaccinated. When asked to say in their own words why they think Iran's vaccine campaign had not been faster, a majority blame domestic reasons; only a quarter blame sanctions or foreign countries. For the first time in years, more report seeing access to foreign-made medicines and equipment—over a quarter perceive an increase.

### Levels of Public Confidence in Raisi as Term Begins (p. 17)

Large majorities express confidence that Raisi can significantly lower inflation and unemployment, increase Iran's trade with other countries, control the pandemic and root out corruption. Three quarters are at least somewhat confident that he will fulfill his promises; four in five view him favorably.

## Iran's Global Relations

### Views of Other Countries (p. 18)

At this point, majorities view China and Russia positively, and in equal degrees—a little less than three in five. About three in five view France negatively, and these negative views have

increased slowly since 2019. Views of the United States are highly negative, and the majority with a negative view of Saudi Arabia is even larger.

### **Relations with China (p. 18)**

A majority now says that Iran should try more to strengthen its relations with Asian countries than with European countries. A clear majority again views China favorably; attitudes have recovered from a sharp drop after the pandemic started. About six in ten are aware of negotiations between Iran and China for a long-term economic agreement. Among those following the issue, six in ten say such an agreement would be in Iran's interest, but this positive attitude does not extend to granting China exclusivity in the oil sector. A plurality is concerned that China will eventually seek to influence Iran's foreign policies, but fewer expect this for Iran's domestic affairs.

### **Attitudes Toward the United States (p. 20)**

Over four in five Iranians view the United States unfavorably, and three quarters view it very unfavorably. Two thirds now see the Biden administration's policies toward Iran as hostile, while a quarter see them as neutral. Seven in ten perceive the United States as seeking to prevent humanitarian-related products from reaching Iran, slightly up since February. However, three in five believe the United States has already sanctioned Iran to the fullest degree possible and cannot worsen Iran's current conditions. At the same time, were the United States to take initiatives to ease tensions, this would be seen as meaningful by large majorities. Lifting sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran, or working to remove obstacles to Iran purchasing vaccines and their ingredients, are two of several possible actions that seven in ten or more say would be meaningful.

### **Attitudes Toward the Nuclear Deal (p. 23)**

Iranians' views are mixed regarding how likely it is that Iran and the United States will agree on how both would return to full compliance with the JCPOA, but if agreement is reached, two thirds doubt that the United States will meet its commitments under the deal. Confidence in the other P5+1 countries doing so, however, has increased significantly since Trump was in the White House, up from three in ten to nearly half.

Large majorities believe that if the United States and Iran do both begin fulfilling their JCPOA obligations, Iran's economy and foreign relations will improve. If the JCPOA is not restored, though, only around a third think Iran's economy and trade relations will worsen from what they are now. Another third thinks they will improve, even without the JCPOA.

A modest majority thinks Iran's negotiators should let the Europeans try to get more flexibility from the United States, without making more concessions themselves. Only about a quarter want Iran to show more flexibility to get the JCPOA restored soon. Even fewer say that Iran's new government should not try to get the deal restored.

Asked about two possible assurances that United States could offer, large majorities found each one meaningful: (1) a commitment to not interfere with a European system to facilitate legitimate trade with Iran, or (2) a JCPOA mechanism to monitor the compliance of each of the parties, as well as Iran. In the absence of any such assurances, about a quarter thinks Iran should formally withdraw; a third think Iran should hold to the status quo; and three in ten think Iran should gradually return toward full compliance.

## **Iran's Role in the Region**

### **Military and Diplomatic Choices (p. 29)**

Large majorities want to see Iran continue discussions with other Middle Eastern countries to de-escalate tensions, and almost half would like to see these expand. Regionally, a growing majority prefers that in general, Iran seek mutually acceptable solutions through negotiations; four in ten prefer that Iran seek to become the most powerful country in the region. Four in ten want Iran to encourage a diplomatic solution in Yemen, while another quarter want Iran not to be involved; only a quarter want Iran to aid a push for a Houthi victory. On Iraq, three in five have the impression that Iran provides weapons, advisors and some volunteers, but only one in six believe Iran is sending its own military forces. Over three in five want Iran to have some military involvement in Iraq, including personnel.

### **Attitudes toward Missiles and Military Forces (p. 31)**

Seven in ten call Iran's development of missiles very important; three in five look on it as a deterrent against attack. As to using Iran's own uniformed military, four in five think it justified to deploy the military against terrorist groups, or to protect Shi'a sites and pilgrims. A smaller majority (less than three in five) think it would be justified to use these forces to increase the costs to the United States for its presence in the region.

### **Expectations about Afghanistan (p. 33)**

Over three in five see the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan as good for Iran, though just a bare majority thinks it will be good for Iran's own security. Over seven in ten have a very unfavorable view of the Taliban. Three in five expect refugee flows from Afghanistan into Iran to increase; however, there is no similar expectation about drug traffic. A narrow plurality thinks Iran should now seek to increase its influence in Afghanistan, while four in ten disagree.

### **Views of Other Countries and Organizations in the Mideast (p. 34)**

Among a range of Middle Eastern actors, Saudi Arabia is viewed most unfavorably by Iranians. The Taliban's negative rating is almost as high. Only about half view Yemen's Houthis favorably, but two in three view Lebanon's Hizbollah favorably. The Popular Mobilization Forces of Iraq—a loosely knit federation of militias sponsored by the Iraqi government—is seen favorably by over three in five.

### **Images of the United States' Knowledge and Power in the Region (p. 35)**

Large majorities of Iranians perceive the United States as a major Middle East actor, with extensive foreknowledge of events and the capacity to shape them in many cases. In the strongest case of this attitude, almost two in three think the United States had prior knowledge of Saddam Hussein's 1980 invasion of Iran and could have helped Iran prevent it; nine in ten think that at least the United States had foreknowledge. In the least strong example, four in ten think the United States could have helped Iran prevent the 2017 terrorist attacks in Tehran; three quarters, though, think the United States had foreknowledge.



## **Social Issues in Iran**

### **Iranians' Sources of News; Social Media Networks (p. 37)**

Most Iranians do not appear to be passive consumers of state news outlets. While domestic television channels are Iranians' most widely used news source, the number of frequent viewers appears to have dropped dramatically in the past five years. Almost as many now use social media as well. About a quarter view satellite news channels. One in five follow BBC and Voice of America, with BBC getting the lion's share of this audience.

Where accuracy is concerned, half of Iranians assess domestic TV as accurate most of the time, while the other half do not. The public's ratings of social media's news accuracy are much lower than those for domestic TV; those for BCC and VOA are lower still.

A third say that the government should never close down social networks; another fifth say this should not take place unless there is already widespread unrest and violence. Four in ten are open to the government closing down social networks in a preemptive fashion.

### **Water Shortages and Climate Change (p. 40)**

Almost half have been personally affected a lot by 2021's water shortages, and another three in ten have been affected a little. Almost nine in ten are concerned that global climate change will harm them personally during their lifetimes. At the same time, though, three in five assign the main blame for water shortages to government mismanagement, and only a third see climate change as their primary cause. Though about three quarters of Iranians live in urban areas, a majority think that in the short term the government should allocate more water to farmers, even if this brings shortages to the cities; only a third support allocating more water to the cities if this is at farmers' expense.

### **Women's Situation and Human Rights (p. 42)**

While only a third have heard about an upcoming bill in the parliament tackling domestic violence against women, support is near-unanimous among those who have heard of it. Three quarters of those who have heard of the bill think that its passage would reduce domestic violence at least somewhat. On human rights in general, a majority believes that foreign sanctions related to human rights issues have had no effect on the human rights situation, while another third thinks they have hurt it.

## **Iran's Political Scene**

### **Political Figures' Favorability (p. 44)**

Of the eight figures asked about in this study, the new president Raisi is viewed favorably by the greatest number. In second place is Mohammad Ghalibaf, current Speaker in the Majlis, followed by former foreign minister under Rouhani, Javad Zarif. Least popular among figures evaluated is former president Rouhani, whose popularity began to rapidly sink after the nuclear deal faltered.

### **The June Presidential Election (p. 45)**

After June's presidential election, about three in five Iranians now think the election law and its processes should be changed. Those calling the Guardian Council—which vets and disqualifies candidates --“*very* fair and impartial” have dropped from one half to one quarter, compared to views after the 2017 presidential election. While three in five say the Council was at least somewhat fair, this is down from four in five in 2017. This dissatisfaction with how the election was run is independent, however, of views of the election outcome. While just a little over half were satisfied with the final list of candidates for president, seven in ten are satisfied with the result. Only a third believe that Raisi could have been beaten by another candidate, even if those disqualified had been permitted to run.

### **Trust in Authorities and the Constitutional System (p. 52)**

Asked about their trust in various local and national authorities, the highest score went to the regular military (Artesh), with nine in ten expressing some or a great deal of trust. The lowest level of trust went to local elected officials: respondents' own parliament member and their city or village councilors (six in ten for each). Trust in the Majlis as a whole, at three quarters, is somewhat higher than trust in the respondent's local member. The judiciary as a whole is also more trusted (eight in ten) than are local courts (seven in ten). Only about one in six believe that Iran's constitution and system of government will significantly change within the next decade.

### **Attitudes toward Demonstrations (p. 54)**

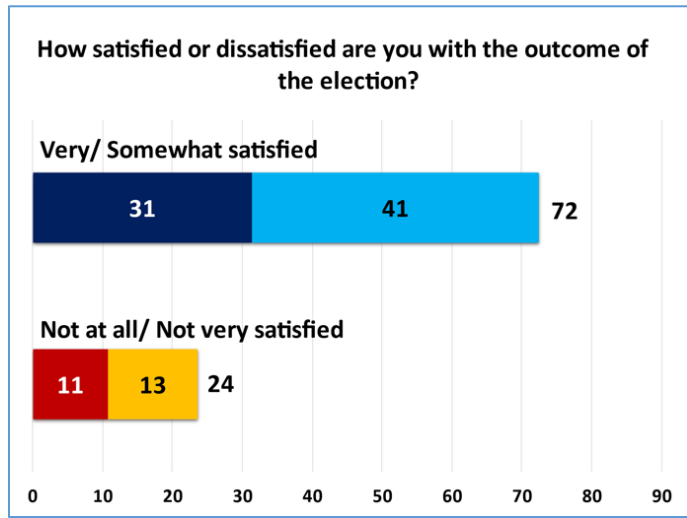
A little over half of Iranians perceive demonstrations and protests as having increased over the past ten years, both in frequency and geographic spread. Two thirds think the demonstrations' objectives have been mostly to demand that officials pay greater attention to people's problems; only one in ten perceive them as seeking to bring about change in Iran's system of government. Majorities think that over the coming five years, demonstrations will become less frequent and less widespread, while four in ten think they will either stay at present levels or grow.

# Challenges Facing Iran

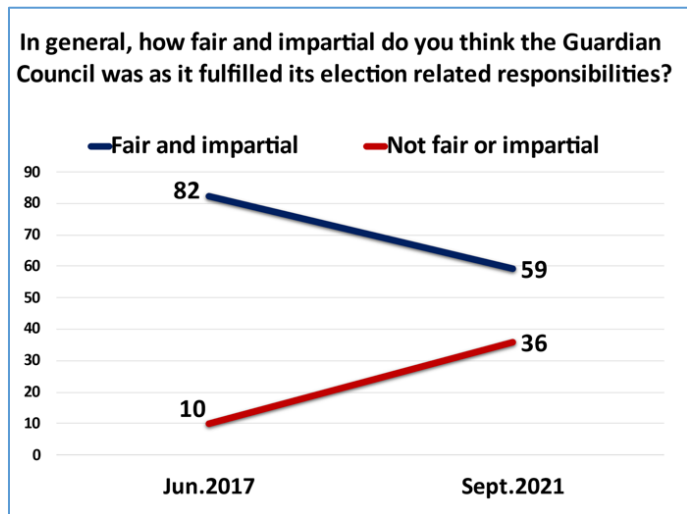
## President Raisi and Key Challenges

Though a large majority express satisfaction with Raisi becoming president, at least four in ten are dissatisfied with how the election was conducted and almost three in five want to see changes in Iran’s election law. At the same time, Raisi himself is viewed positively by about three quarters, while the outgoing president Rouhani is viewed negatively by a similar number.

At least four in ten are dissatisfied with how the June election was run; however, this attitude is independent of views of the election outcome. Asked “how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the outcome of the election?”, 72% are satisfied (31% very), while 24% are not. But asked “How satisfied were you with the final list of candidates for president?” a lesser 53% were satisfied (19% very), while 43% were not.



All respondents were asked: “In general, how fair and impartial do you think the Guardian Council was as it fulfilled its election-related responsibilities?” Fifty-nine percent said the Council was fair (very, 24%), while 36% said it was unfair (16%, not at all fair). This is a substantial decline from June 2017, after the previous presidential election. Then, 49% said the Council was very fair (25 points higher than in 2021), and only 10% said the Council was unfair (not very fair, 6%; not at all, 4%).



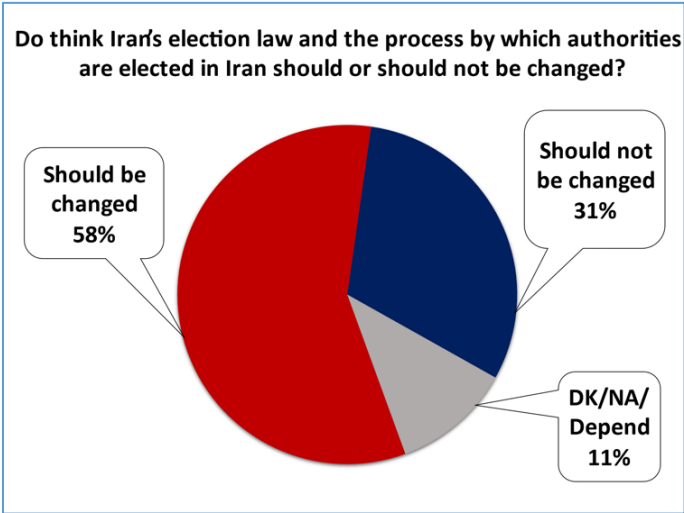
When asked whether they thought “Iran’s election law and the process by which authorities are elected in Iran should or should not be changed,” 58% said that it should, while almost a third disagreed (31%). (Note that this view was registered in a September survey, three months after the election.)

**For an extended analysis of Iranians’ views about June’s election process, see the section “Understanding the June Presidential Election,” below.**

That many more are comfortable with the election’s result than with how it was conducted may be due in part to the fact that the new president Raisi is seen favorably by a large majority, while the outgoing president Rouhani is unpopular with about as many.

Of the eight figures asked about in this study, the new president Raisi is viewed favorably by the greatest number—78% (45% very favorable). Views of Raisi have been high and very stable since a year ago (October 2020). There is no indication that ill feeling incurred during the election process has rubbed off on him.

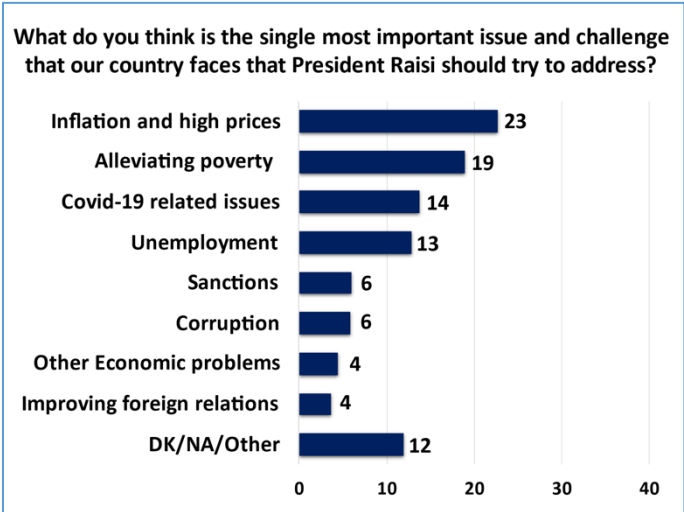
Least popular among figures asked about is ex-president Rouhani. His popularity had already sunk below majority levels by May 2019, but within this year it has dropped sharply, to 21% (5% very)--down from 36% in February. (See below for more on the favorability of political figures.)



**Challenges facing Raisi**

**Three in five view economic problems—inflation, unemployment and poverty--as the single most important challenge for the new president, but issues around the pandemic have grown in importance since February.**

All respondents were asked to say in their own words what they thought “is the single most important issue and challenge that...President Raisi should try to address.” Three in five—62% --talked about economic problems, not including sanctions. Twenty-four percent pointed to inflation and currency depreciation; 15% spoke of unemployment (13%) or housing (2%); and another 4% referenced economic problems in general. The pandemic (14%) was the second-most common problem raised; in February, only 1% named covid-19 when asked the same question. Nine percent brought up domestic mismanagement and corruption. Six percent named sanctions—to which could be added those calling for the country’s self-sufficiency (3%). Four percent saw improving foreign relations as the primary challenge.



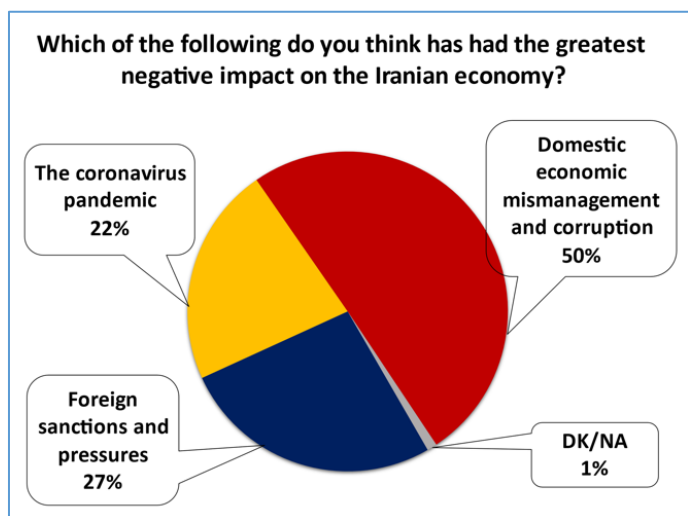
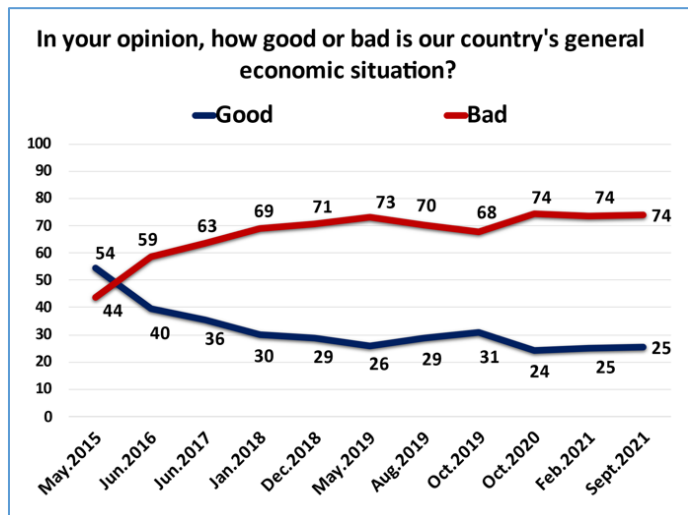
## Iran's Economy

Three quarters describe the economy as bad, and a majority call it very bad. Half ascribe this primarily to domestic economic mismanagement and corruption, while a quarter ascribe it more to the pandemic and another quarter more to sanctions. About two thirds think Iran should strive for self-sufficiency (as has been the case since 2017). Current economic attitudes do not translate into an entirely pessimistic outlook: a majority think that by three years from now ordinary Iranians will have better living conditions. On average, Iranians' ratings of the quality of their own lives have not slipped over the last six months.

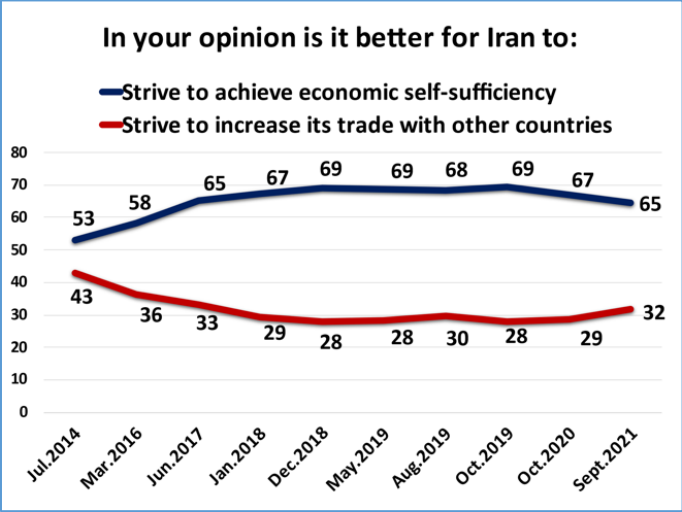
Iranians' view of the country's economy is sharply negative, but, nonetheless, these views has not worsened since October 2020. The same number describe it as "very bad" (54%; October, 53%) or "somewhat bad" (20%; October 21%) as did almost a year ago, though the same battery of economic sanctions have continued their work.

The idea that foreign sanctions and pressures are the economy's primary problem remains a minority view, shared by 34 percent (in a question where the pandemic is not offered as a factor). An increased majority of 63% think domestic mismanagement and corruption has had the greatest negative impact, up five points from February. When a different half sample was offered three possible factors—sanctions, mismanagement, and the pandemic—22% chose the pandemic, while 50% chose mismanagement and 27% chose sanctions—essentially unchanged from February.

Asked whether it would be better for Iran to strive to achieve economic self-sufficiency or to increase trade with other countries, about two in three (65%) opt for self-sufficiency, while 32% opt for trade (up slightly from 29% in February). These proportions are long-standing, and one has to look back to the inauguration of the JCPOA in 2016 to find a time when fewer than three in five opted for self-sufficiency.

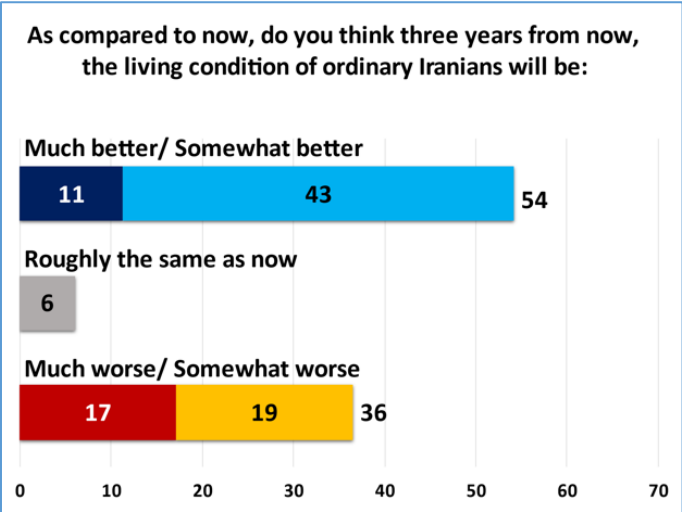


A majority think that by three years from now, ordinary Iranians will have better living conditions. Asked, “as compared to now, do you think three years from now, the living condition of ordinary Iranians will be much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, or much worse?”, 54% said conditions would be better, though only 11% thought they would be much better. Six percent volunteered that living conditions would be about the same, and 37% thought they would be worse (much worse, 17%).



**Sense of Well-Being**

To ask about Iranians’ sense of well-being, they were told to “imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you,” and asked: “On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?” The average response was 4.75 (in February: 4.7). Half (51%) chose a number from 4 to 6 (in February: 47%). Twenty-nine percent chose a number from 0 to 3 (in February: 30%); 20% chose a number from 7 to 10 (in February: 22%).



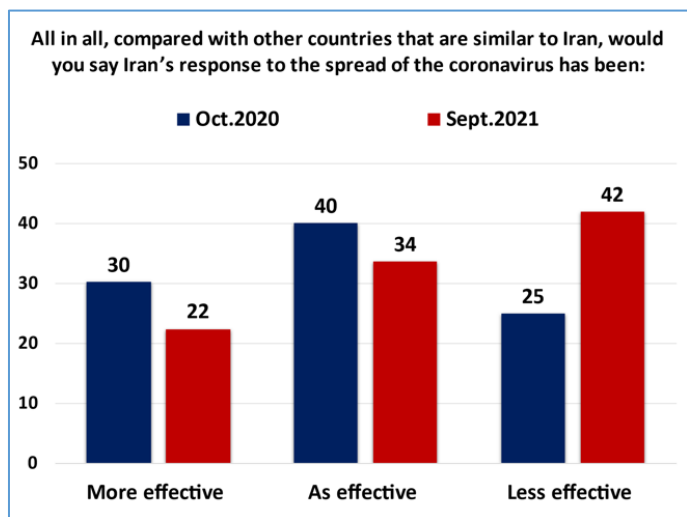
These results are what might be expected from other international data on life satisfaction. In the World Happiness Report for 2020, based on 2017-19 data, Iran is ranked in 118<sup>th</sup> place out of 153 countries, with a score of 4.6. Interestingly, its neighbors on the scale are also some of its geographic neighbors: Armenia (116<sup>th</sup> place), Georgia (117), and Jordan (119). (For comparison, the highest score is Finland at 7.8; the United States is in 18<sup>th</sup> place, with a score of 6.9.)

Respondents were also asked, using the same 0-to-10 scale, “On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?” The average response was 5.85 (February: 5.7). Fifty percent picked a number from 5 to 8 (February: 46%); 27% picked a number from 0 to 4 (February: 27%); and 16% picked 9 or 10 (February: 22%). Thus, those with modest positive expectations (the 5-8 range) have increased slightly, while those with very high expectations (the 9-10 range) have decreased.

## The Pandemic

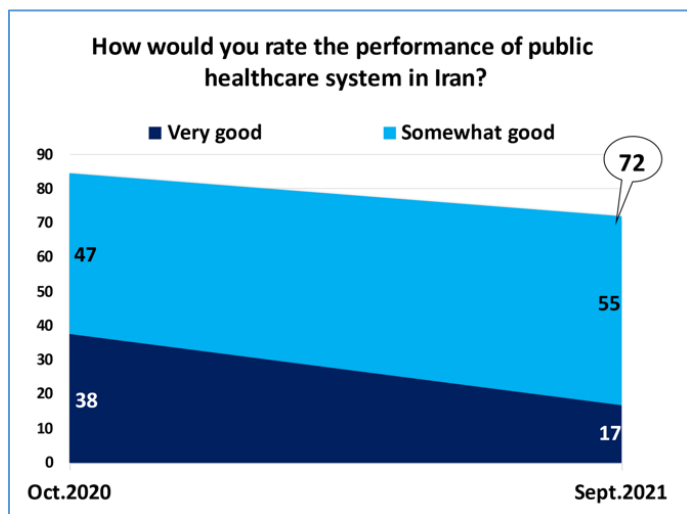
There is more concern about Iran’s performance against the pandemic than there was last fall: those who feel Iran has done as well as, or better than, similar countries are now a little over half, down from seven in ten in October. Under a fifth now rate Iran’s public healthcare system’s performance as very good, down from four in ten. There is little vaccine hesitancy in Iran: three quarters either would take a vaccine approved by Iran’s health ministry, or had already taken at least one dose (three in ten) at the time of the survey. The World Health Organization reports that as of October 10, 2021, 30% of Iranian adults have received at least one dose, and 23% are fully vaccinated. The Iranian Ministry of Health gives higher figures of 81% with at least one dose and 42% fully vaccinated. When asked to say in their own words why they think Iran’s vaccine campaign had not been faster, a majority blame domestic reasons; only a quarter blame sanctions or foreign countries. For the first time in years, more report seeing access to foreign-made medicines and equipment—over a quarter perceive an increase.

A modest majority still feels that in responding to the pandemic, Iran has done as well or better as similar countries, but fewer think so than did in October. Asked whether “all in all, compared to other countries that are similar to Iran, would you say Iran’s response to the spread of the coronavirus has been” more, less, or about as effective as similar countries, 56% feel Iran has been about as effective (34%) or more effective (22%) as similar countries—down from 70% in October. Forty-two percent now say Iran has been less effective, up from 25% in October. And when asked to say in their own words the most important issue facing Iran, 14% now name the pandemic—up from 1% in February.



Ratings of the public healthcare system have fallen, though a substantial majority is still positive. Seventy-two percent rated its performance as somewhat good (55%) or very good (17%). Those rating it as poor have risen from 15% to 28%.

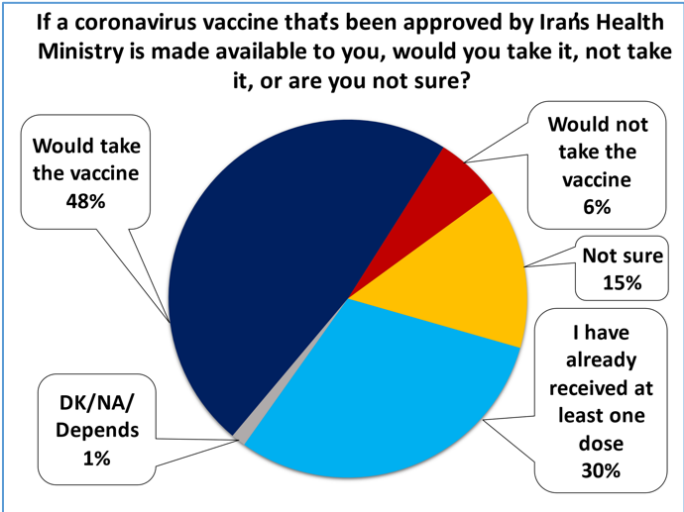
At the same time, there is little vaccine hesitancy in Iran, which raises the possibility that the pace of vaccine rollout is one factor in these lower ratings. Asked whether they would take “a vaccine that’s been approved by Iran’s Health Ministry” if it is made available to



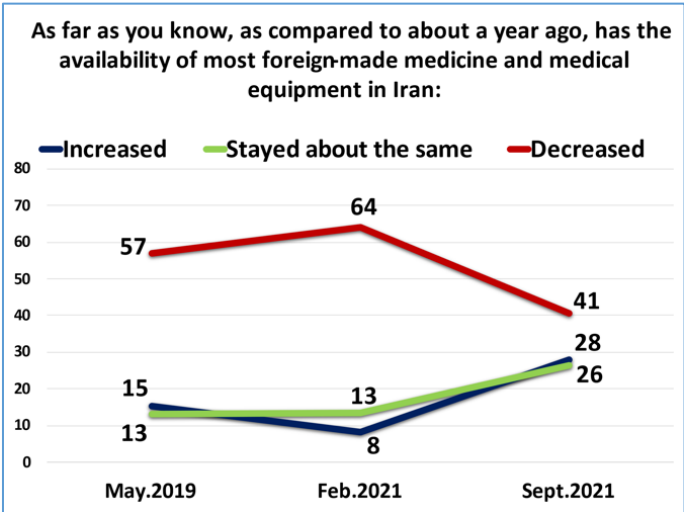


them, 48% said they would take it and, at the time of the survey, another 30% volunteered that they had already received at least one dose, making 78% who are positive about being vaccinated. Sixteen percent felt unsure whether they would take it; only 6% said they would not do so.

The World Health Organization reports that as of October 10, 2021, 30% of Iranian adults have received at least one dose, and 23% are fully vaccinated. The Iranian Ministry of Health gives higher figures of 81% with at least one dose and 42% fully vaccinated. Importation of Covid-19 vaccines accelerated soon after Raisi entered office, allowing Iran’s Ministry of Health to rapidly vaccinate the population. Perhaps due to increased availability of foreign made vaccines, more Iranians—about three in ten—now have the sense that “the availability of most foreign-made medicine and medical equipment in Iran” has increased compared to a year ago. This is a sudden difference from February, when only 8% had this perception. Since 2019 majorities have experienced that such goods were decreasing—64% thought so in February—but now a lower 41% perceive this as the case.



To understand Iranians’ views about the pandemic response in more depth, they were told that “the speed of vaccination against coronavirus in Iran has been slower than many other countries” and asked what they thought the primary reason was. Four in ten (39%) blamed official mismanagement and incompetence, including 5% who thought the budget for the purpose is insufficient. Fourteen percent pointed to some authorities’ preference for Iranian vaccines over foreign ones, including 6% who thought vaccines produced abroad were not being allowed into the country (at least in sufficient numbers). Combining these two types of responses, 53% blame domestic factors for the slow rollout. A quarter (27%) blamed sanctions against Iran, or said foreign countries were not selling their vaccines to Iran. Only 4% said the rollout was slow because people lacked trust in vaccines.

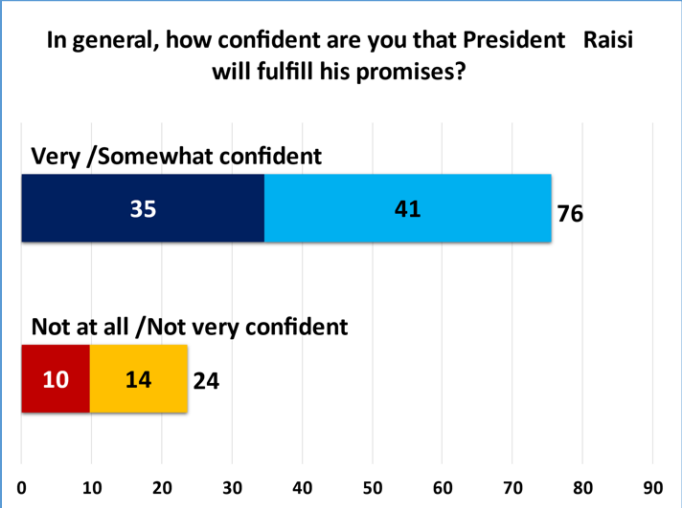




# Levels of Public Confidence in Raisi as Term Begins

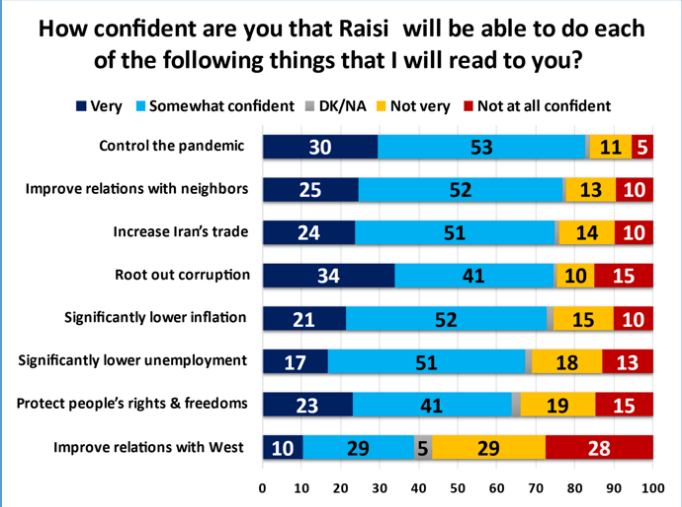
Large majorities express confidence that Raisi can significantly lower inflation and unemployment, increase Iran’s trade with other countries, control the pandemic and root out corruption. Three quarters are at least somewhat confident that he will fulfill his promises; four in five view him favorably.

As is often true when a new leader of any country enters office, there is optimism that President Raisi will fulfill his promises—76% say they are very confident (35%) or somewhat confident (41%) that he can do this.



Respondents were also reminded about specific challenges and asked, for each, how confident they were that Raisi can succeed. While large majorities were somewhat or very confident that he can handle each of the challenges named, in no case were over 35% very confident of this. The greatest number who expressed confidence was the 83% who said they think Raisi can control the pandemic (30%, very). The next highest was improving Iran’s relations with neighboring countries (77% confident, 25% very). Seventy-five percent were confident that Raisi can increase trade with other countries (24% very)—though, as we shall see, they were probably not thinking of trade with the West.

Seventy-four percent were confident that Raisi could succeed in what he ran on as his specialty, rooting out corruption, and here a higher 34% were very confident. On key domestic economic issues, confidence is slightly more muted. Seventy-three percent think Raisi can significantly lower inflation, but a lesser 21% are very confident of this; and 67% think he can significantly lower unemployment (very confident, 17%). On protecting people’s rights and freedoms, 64% are confident Raisi can do this (23% very), but here a third (35%) disagree.



The one issue on which a majority lack optimism is Raisi’s ability to “improve Iran’s relations with the West.” Only 39% think he can (10% very confident). A clear majority of 57% do not

express confidence, and 28% have no confidence at all. While some in this group are doubtless critical of Raisi's expected policy direction, others may have simply given up and are setting Raisi a low bar on Western relations.

## Iran's Global Relations

### Views of Other Countries

**At this point, majorities view China and Russia positively, and in equal degrees—a little less than three in five. About three in five view France negatively, and these negative views have increased slowly since 2019. Views of the United States are highly negative, and the majority with a negative view of Saudi Arabia is even larger.**

Asked about their views of Russia, 56% of Iranians are positive (very, 15%). The stability of this attitude is becoming marked. Favorable views of Russia have held to a 55-59% range since January 2016, with “very favorable” never exceeding 19%.

Fifty-seven percent now view China favorably, up considerably from October, when positive views had fallen to 40%. (In many countries, favorability toward China diminished last year as the pandemic's effects were increasingly felt.) Those with very favorable views of China have never exceeded 15%, from 2014 through now.

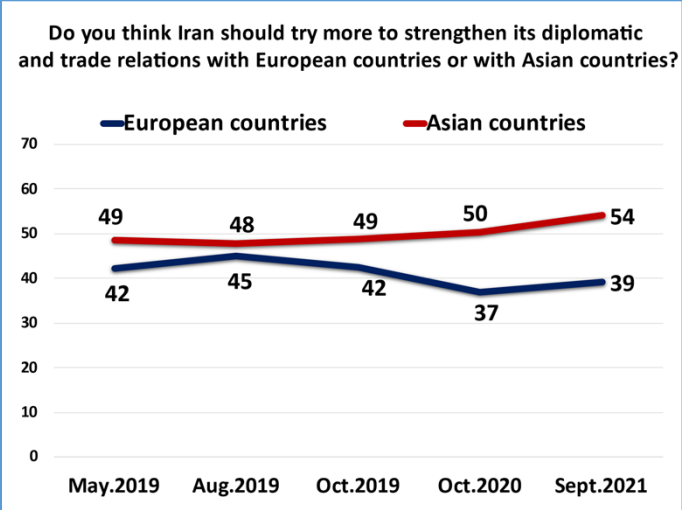
About three in five (59%) view France negatively, but 38% are favorable toward it. In January 2018—a time when Iranians expected French support for the JCPOA despite the Trump administration's opposition—57% viewed France favorably, and these levels have eroded gradually since.

Attitudes toward the United States (discussed in more detail in the next section) are unchanged since the Trump administration—currently 85% unfavorable, with 76% very unfavorable, essentially the same as in August 2019. Interestingly, Saudi Arabia is seen even more unfavorably by Iranians: 89% unfavorable (78% very). And while 14% of Iranians say they have favorable views of the United States, this is 10% in Saudi Arabia's case.

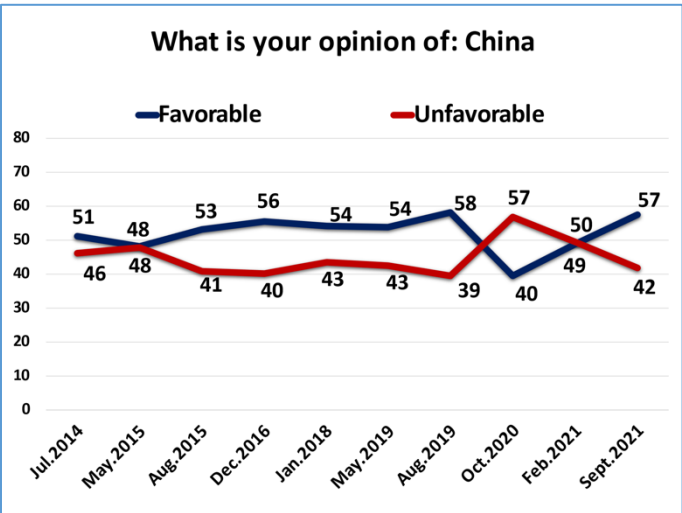
### Relations with China

**A majority now says that Iran should try more to strengthen its relations with Asian countries than with European countries. A clear majority again views China favorably; attitudes have recovered from a sharp drop after the pandemic started. About six in ten are aware of negotiations between Iran and China for a long-term economic agreement. Among those following the issue, six in ten say such an agreement would be in Iran's interest, but this positive attitude does not extend to granting China exclusivity in the oil sector. A plurality is concerned that China will eventually seek to influence Iran's foreign policies, but fewer expect this for Iran's domestic affairs.**

Disillusioned with the possibility of improved relations with the West, those who believe “Iran should try more to strengthen its relations with Asian countries” than with European countries are now a clear majority—54%, after remaining in the 48-50% range through 2019 and 2020. Thirty-nine percent say Iran should focus more on its relations with European countries.

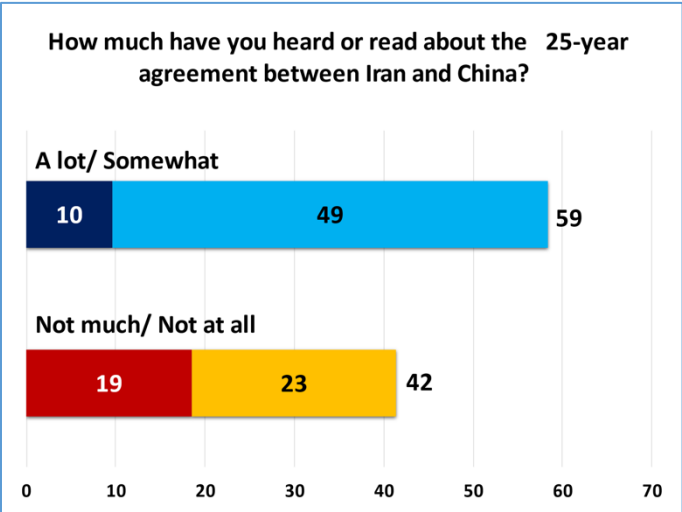


Fifty-seven percent now view China favorably, up considerably from October, when positive views had fallen to 40%. (In many countries, favorability toward China diminished last year as the pandemic’s effects were increasingly felt.)



A majority is aware of Iran and China’s negotiations on a large-scale trade and cooperation agreement, but awareness is about the same as last year: 58% have heard a lot (10%) or some (49%) about it, almost identical to levels in October, and 19% had heard a little (“not much”). The three quarters who had heard a little or more about it were asked: “Based on everything you have heard or read about this agreement, do you think it would or would not be in Iran’s interests?” Fifty-nine percent of those aware of it said it would be (29% definitely, 30% probably), while 29% thought it would not.

Those who thought the agreement *would* be in Iran’s interest were then asked:



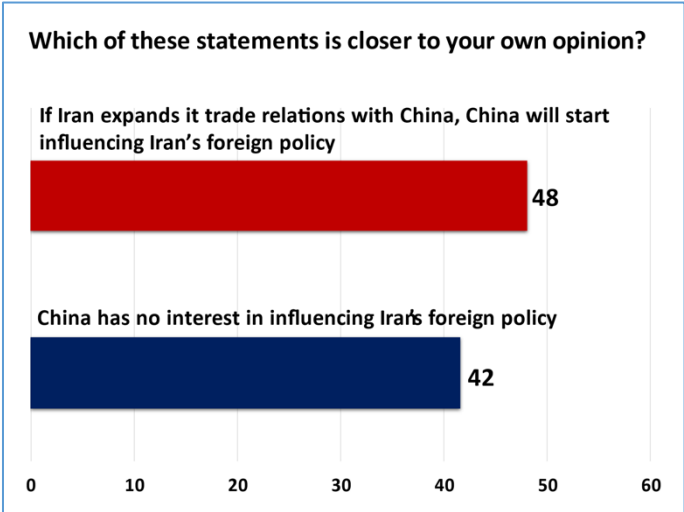
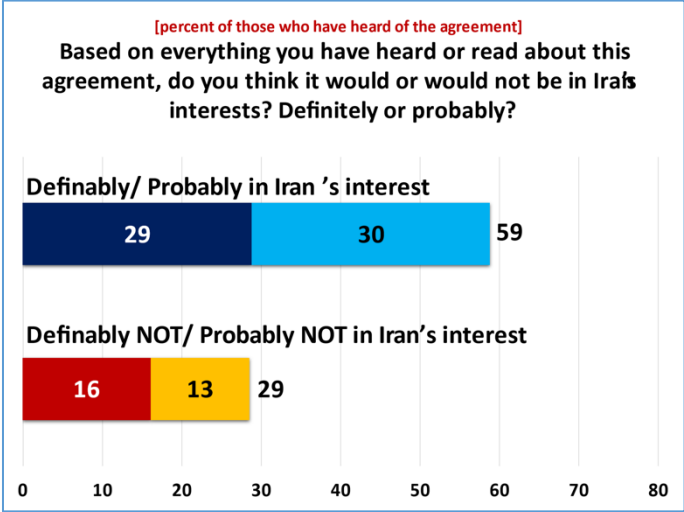
What if China requested an exclusive agreement in the oil sector? This would mean, for example, that Iran would accept only Chinese foreign investment in its oil fields from China for 25 years, but China would guarantee to make the needed investments in that sector for that period. Do you think this would or would not be in Iran’s interests?

At this point 52% of those asked said such an exclusivity arrangement would not be in Iran’s interests, while 42% said it would be. Thus supposing this exclusivity condition, those doubting the deal would rise to 60% of those who are aware of negotiations (29% initially, plus 31% under the exclusivity condition).

All respondents were asked to consider whether there would be other ramifications for Iran from a closer relationship with China. First, they were asked:

Some say that if Iran expands its trade relations with China, China will start intervening in Iran’s domestic affairs. Others say that China has no interest in intervening in Iran’s domestic affairs. Which of these statements is closer to your own position?

About half (49%) thought China would stay out of Iran’s domestic affairs, while 44% thought it would start intervening. Asked similarly whether China “will start influencing Iran’s foreign policy,” almost half (48%) thought it would, while 42% thought it had no interest in this.



### Attitudes Toward the United States

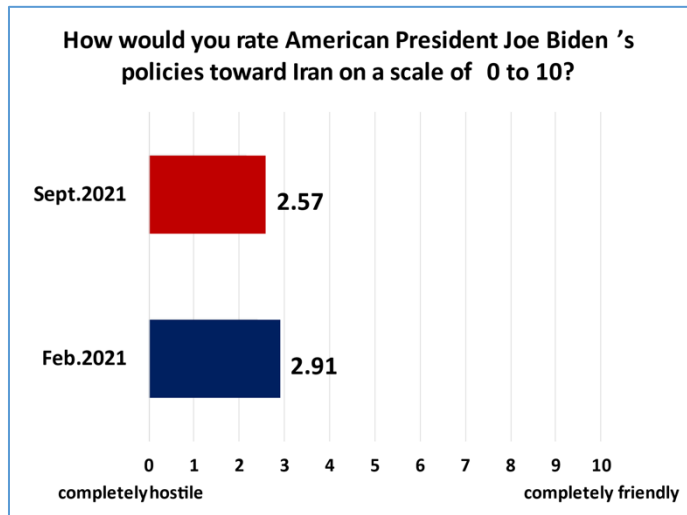
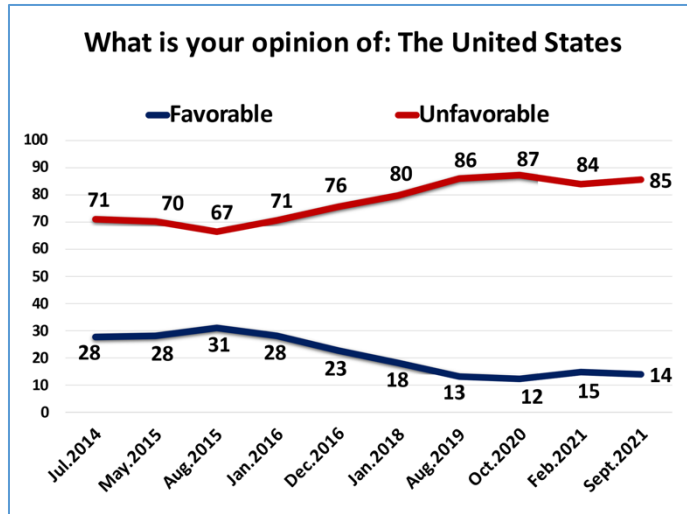
Over four in five Iranians view the United States unfavorably, and three quarters view it very unfavorably. Two thirds now see the Biden administration’s policies toward Iran as hostile, while a quarter see them as neutral. Seven in ten perceive the United States as seeking to prevent humanitarian-related products from reaching Iran, slightly up since February. However, three in five believe the United States has already sanctioned Iran to the fullest degree possible and cannot worsen Iran’s current conditions. At the same time, were the United States to take initiatives to ease tensions, this would be seen as meaningful by large majorities. Lifting sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran, or working to remove obstacles to Iran purchasing vaccines and their ingredients, are two of several possible actions that seven in ten or more say would be meaningful.

The low favorability of the United States is unchanged since the Trump administration—currently 85% unfavorable, with 76% very unfavorable, essentially the same as in August 2019. However, expectations of the Biden administration have grown more negative since February.

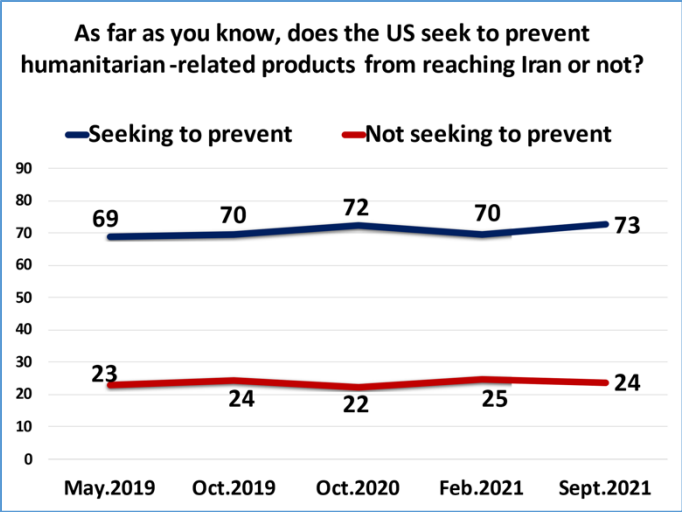
Respondents were asked: “How would you rate American President Joe Biden’s policies toward Iran on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means completely hostile, 5 means neither hostile nor friendly, and 10 means completely friendly?” The average response was 2.57, down from 2.91 in February.

Two thirds (67%) now see the Biden administration’s policies toward Iran as hostile, while a quarter (26%) see them as neutral and only 5% as friendly. In February, asked about their expectations, 52% expected these policies to be hostile, 28% neutral and 12% friendly. Thus, now only 31% expect U.S. policies toward Iran to be neutral or better, while in February this was 40%.

Since May 2019 these studies have periodically asked how the Iranian public perceives the United States’ policies regarding humanitarian goods reaching Iran, “such as medicines or spare parts needed for the safe operation of Iran’s civilian airplanes.” Seventy-three percent perceive that the United States is definitely (46%) or probably (27%) seeking to prevent humanitarian-related products from reaching Iran--essentially the same as in February--while 24% disagree.

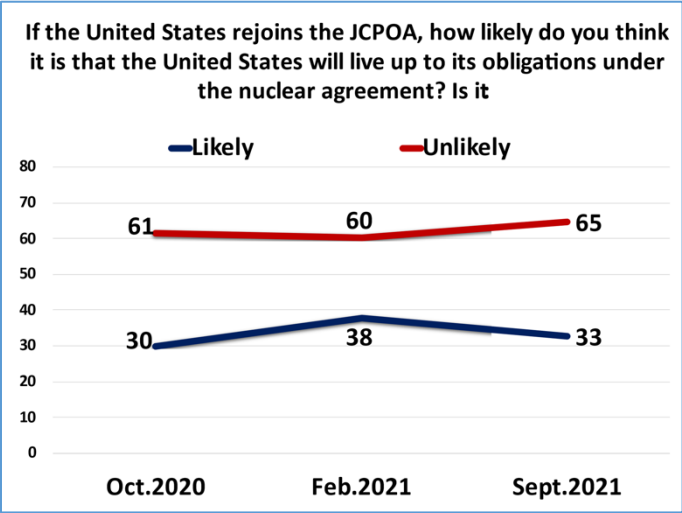


Three in five are inclined to think that the United States has no further means available to make Iran’s bad economic conditions even worse; over a third, though, believe it does. Sixty-one percent chose the statement, “The United States has already sanctioned Iran to the fullest degree possible and it cannot make Iran’s economic conditions more difficult than current conditions even if it tries,” while 37% chose “if the United States wants, it can increase its sanctions on Iran and that would greatly worsen Iran’s economy, even beyond the current difficult situation.” These views are essentially the same as when the question was asked before in October 2019.



About two thirds assume that the United States cannot be trusted to meet a commitment it makes toward Iran in any case. Asked whether “If the United States rejoins the JCPOA, how likely do you think it is that the United States will live up to its obligations under the nuclear agreement?” only a third (33%) think this is likely (very likely, 5%). Optimism was higher in February, when 38% thought this likely, but then also, only 5% thought it very likely.

At the same time, were the United States to take initiatives to ease tensions (whether on its own or reciprocally with Iran), very large majorities say this would be meaningful. Most notably, if the United States were to lift the sanctions on Iran’s central bank imposed by the Trump administration, 83% said this would be “very meaningful” (somewhat, 13%).



A completely symbolic step—to “condemn assassinations of Iranian scientists as violations of international law”—would be meaningful to three quarters (76%; very meaningful, 57%).

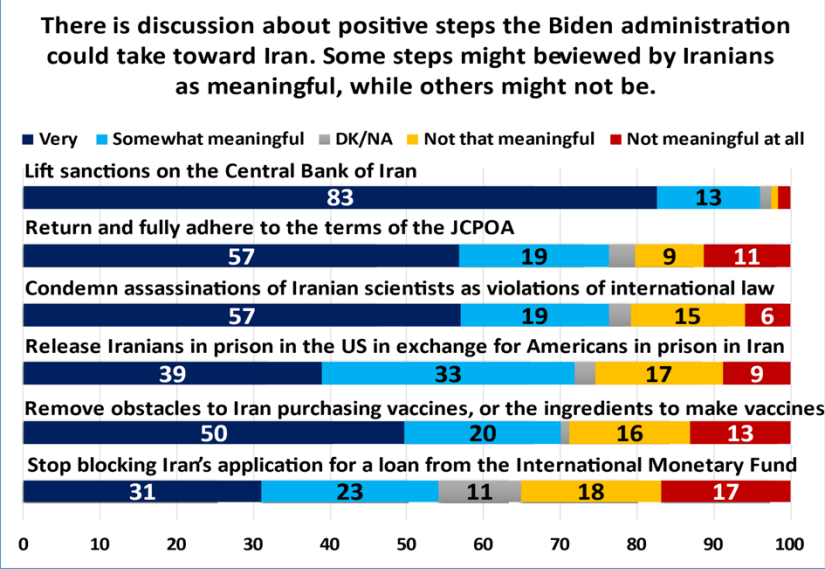
Interestingly, for the United States to “return and fully adhere to the terms of the JCPOA” was rated the same as the symbolic step—76%, and very meaningful to 57%. This is down from February, when 81% found it meaningful (65% very).



Consistent with the rising salience of the pandemic seen in other questions, if the United States would “Remove all obstacles to Iran purchasing vaccines, or the ingredients needed to make vaccines,” this would now be meaningful to 70% (very, 50%). In February a lesser 57% said this would be meaningful.

This study asked for the first time about the idea that the United States would “release

Iranians in prison in the United States in exchange for Americans in prison in Iran.” While this was meaningful to 72%, about one in four (39%) thought it very meaningful. A majority would find it meaningful if the United States would “stop blocking Iran’s application for a loan from the International Monetary Fund,” but this was the least interesting to Iranians of the ideas tested. A 54% majority called it meaningful, unchanged from February.



### Attitudes Toward the Nuclear Deal

**Iranians’ views are mixed regarding how likely it is that Iran and the United States will agree on how both would return to full compliance with the JCPOA, but if agreement is reached, two thirds doubt that the United States will meet its commitments under the deal. Confidence in the other P5+1 countries doing so, however, has increased significantly since Trump was in the White House, up from three in ten to nearly half.**

**Large majorities believe that if the United States and Iran do both begin fulfilling their JCPOA obligations, Iran’s economy and foreign relations will improve. If the JCPOA is not restored, though, only around a third think Iran’s economy and trade relations will worsen from what they are now. Another third thinks they will improve, even without the JCPOA.**

**A modest majority thinks Iran’s negotiators should let the Europeans try to get more flexibility from the United States, without making more concessions themselves. Only about a quarter want Iran to show more flexibility to get the JCPOA restored soon. Even fewer say that Iran’s new government should not try to get the deal restored.**

Half of Iranians (51%) currently think it is at least somewhat likely that “the United States and Iran will agree on how both will resume fulfilling all of their JCPOA commitments,” but only 6% suppose this is very likely. Forty-seven percent regard this outcome as unlikely (not at all likely, 20%).

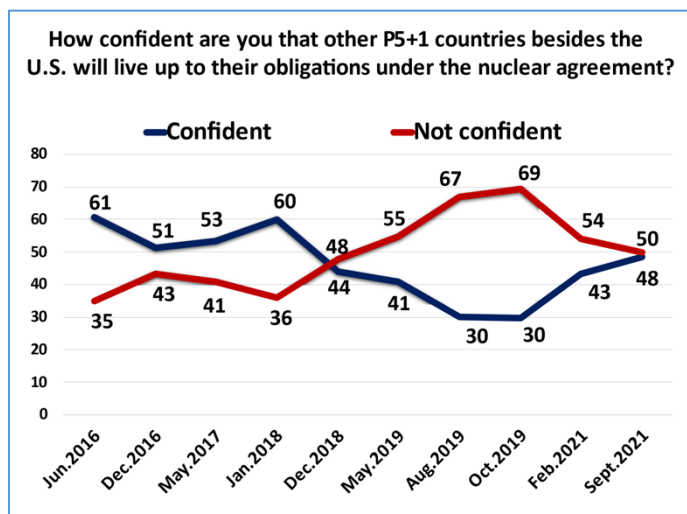
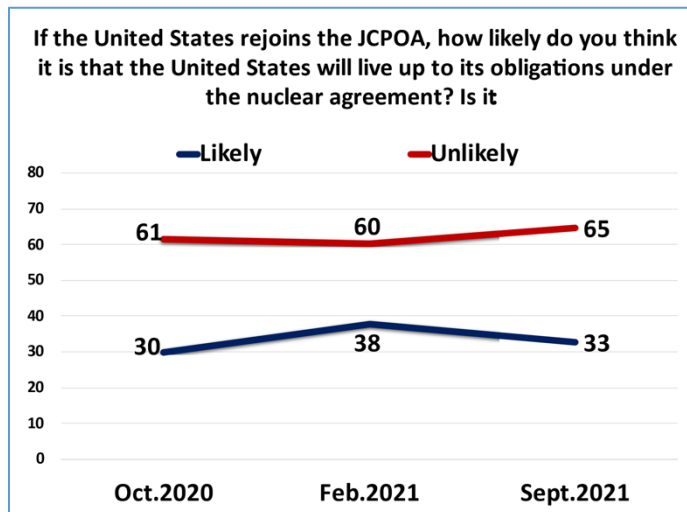
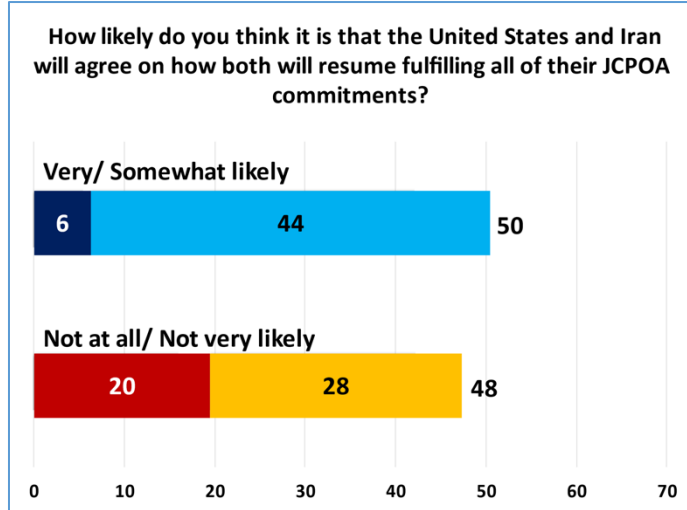
The expectation that the JCPOA will be restored is fading. In February Iranians were asked, “How likely do you think it is that the United States will return to the JCPOA under the presidency of Joe Biden?” Then almost three in five (58%) thought this likely.

Expectations about U.S. maintaining its obligations if it returns to the deal are also declining. Currently 65% see U.S. compliance as unlikely (very, 37%). Just a third (33%) think it likely that “If the United States rejoins the JCPOA...[it] will live up to its obligations under the nuclear agreement” (very likely, 5%). This is down from 38% in February.

At the same time, though, confidence in the remaining P5+1 countries fulfilling their parts in the deal has risen slightly, from 43% in February to 48% in September. Though 50% express lack of confidence, this is no longer a majority.

Iranians are now divided as to whether they approve of the JCPOA itself or not. At the beginning of the agreement (2015-16) seven in ten or more approved. Approval first dipped below 50% in May 2019—well after the United States had withdrawn, but when it was evident that the European parties to the deal were unable to take steps that would provide the promised benefits. Currently 48% approve of the deal (14% strongly), while 47% disapprove (27% strongly). (Raisi voters are slightly lower, with 44% approval.)

Large majorities think that if what they do not expect actually does come to pass—a revitalized JCPOA with the United States—that this would be good for Iran. Asked whether it would help to improve Iran’s economy “if Iran and the United States do agree to restore the JCPOA and both begin to fulfill their obligations,” four in five (80%) thought

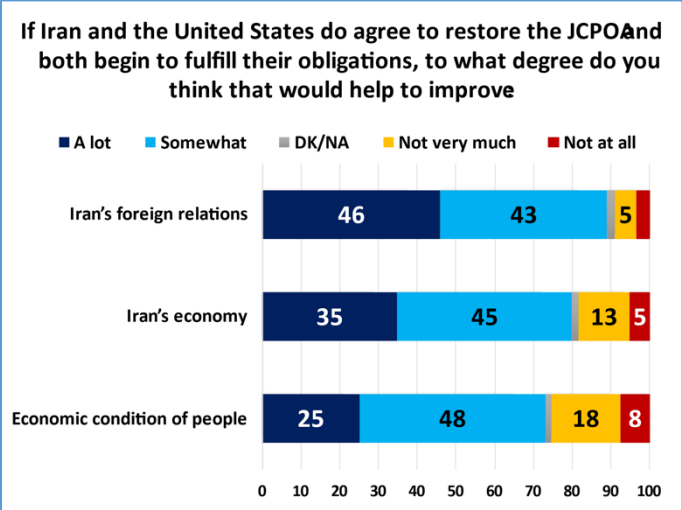




that it would (a lot, 35%). Three quarters thought this outcome would “improve the economic condition of ordinary Iranians” (73%, 25% a lot) and Iran’s relations with other countries (89%, 46% a lot). Thus, there is no ‘sour-grapes’ reaction accompanying Iranian’s widespread doubts that the JCPOA will actually revive: a consensus believes it would be positive.

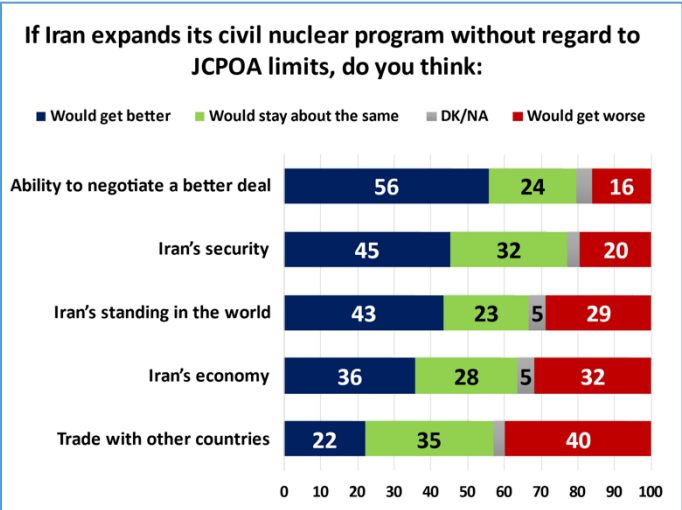
But this is not the future for which Iranians are preparing. To explore their attitudes toward the other path, the study asked:

I would like you to think about what might happen if, for whatever reason, the JCPOA is not restored and the Raisi administration continues to expand Iran’s civil nuclear program. For each of the following, please say whether you think the situation would get better, stay about the same, or get worse if Iran expands its civil nuclear program without regard to JCPOA limits.



If Iran goes it alone, 36% think Iran’s economy will get better, or stay the same (28%), while 32% think it will get worse. Likewise, 22% think Iran’s international trade will get better, or stay the same (35%), while 40% think it will get worse.

Those who can envision some non-economic benefits are more numerous. Forty-three percent think “Iran’s standing in the world” would get better without the JCPOA; 23% think it would stay the same, while 29% believe it would get worse. On Iran’s security, 45% envision an improvement and 32% say it would stay the same; only 20% think it would get worse. And curiously, a 56% majority think “Iran’s ability to negotiate a better deal with world powers” would get better minus the JCPOA; 24% think it would stay the same, and only 16% think it would get worse. Among Raisi voters, an even higher 64% think Iran would have more negotiating power without the JCPOA.



Though only 35% of the respondents say they voted for Raisi, they are a meaningful factor in these views of a non-JCPOA future. For each item, they are 8 to 17% more optimistic, thinking

that the situation would get better. Though 45% overall think Iran’s security would improve, 61% of Raisi voters think this.

**Attitudes toward Negotiations on JCPOA Revival**

Regarding negotiations about a reciprocal return to full compliance with JCPOA obligations, a modest majority thinks Iran should let the Europeans try to get more flexibility from the United States, while holding firm to its own position. Only about a quarter want Iran to show more flexibility.

Respondents were asked a question that reminded them of both countries’ current statuses with the agreement:

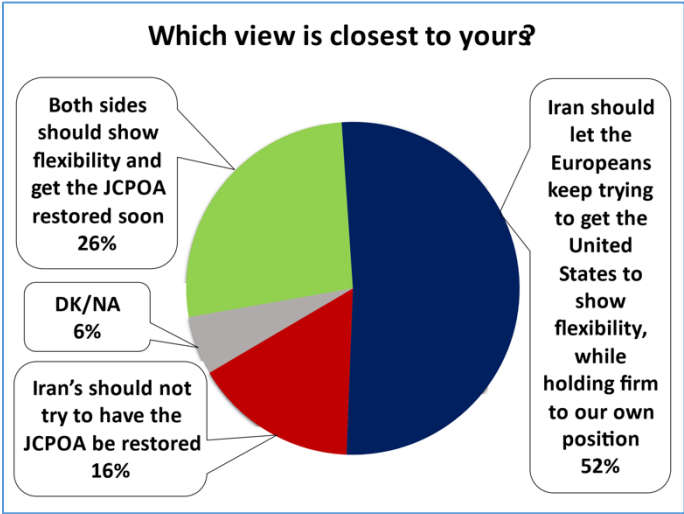
After the United States withdrew from the JCPOA and began reimposing sanctions on Iran, Iran started exceeding some JCPOA limits and reducing cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the international organization that monitors Iran’s nuclear activities. For the last few months, negotiators have been working on a plan for the United States and Iran to both return to full compliance with the JCPOA. They have agreed on many points, but there are still some disagreements. Which view is closest to yours?

- Both sides, including Iran, should show flexibility and get the JCPOA restored soon
- Iran should let the Europeans keep trying to get the United States to show flexibility, while holding firm to our own position
- Iran’s new government should not try to have the JCPOA be restored

A majority (52%) chose the option of simply letting the Europeans make efforts with the United States. About a quarter (27%) thought Iran should show more flexibility as well. Only 16% wanted to drop the JCPOA negotiations. (Raisi voters were not significantly different from the full sample.)

Skepticism about the value of making additional concessions in hopes of getting the JCPOA restored sooner is consistent with the lesson Iranians have drawn from their experience with the JCPOA so far.

Respondents have been asked periodically since January 2018:



Thinking about how the JCPOA has worked out so far, which view is closer to yours?

- The JCPOA experience shows that it is worthwhile for Iran to make concessions because through compromise Iran can negotiate mutually beneficial agreements with world powers.

- The JCPOA experience shows that it is not worthwhile for Iran to make concessions, because Iran cannot have confidence that if it makes a concession, world powers will honor their side of an agreement.

Currently, 73% believe it is not worthwhile for Iran to make concessions, and only a fifth (21%) believe otherwise. These views have been largely stable since 2018.

### **Possible Assurances**

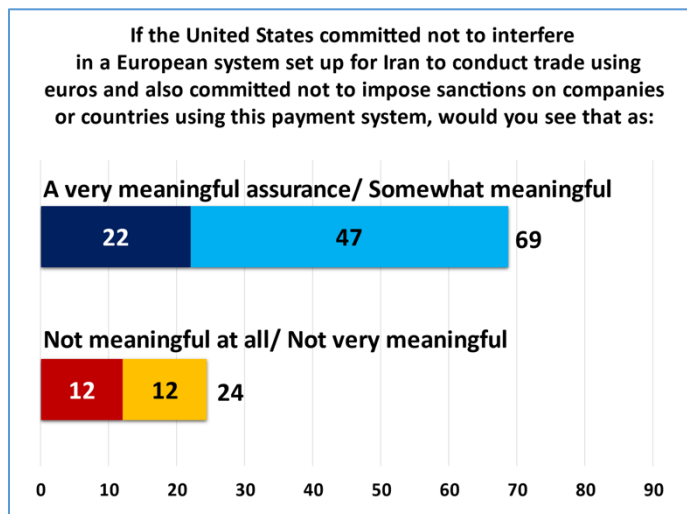
One reported sticking point in the negotiations in the first half of 2021 related to whether the United States could give assurances that the JCPOA would remain in place and be effective in the future. If this were possible, would a US move of this kind even have an impact on Iranians, or would they be dismissive? To find out, two forms of assurances were proposed to respondents, as follows:

One of Iran’s main demands in talks to restore the JCPOA has been for the United States to make meaningful assurances that Iran will get all the promised benefits of this agreement if Iran fulfills its own obligations.

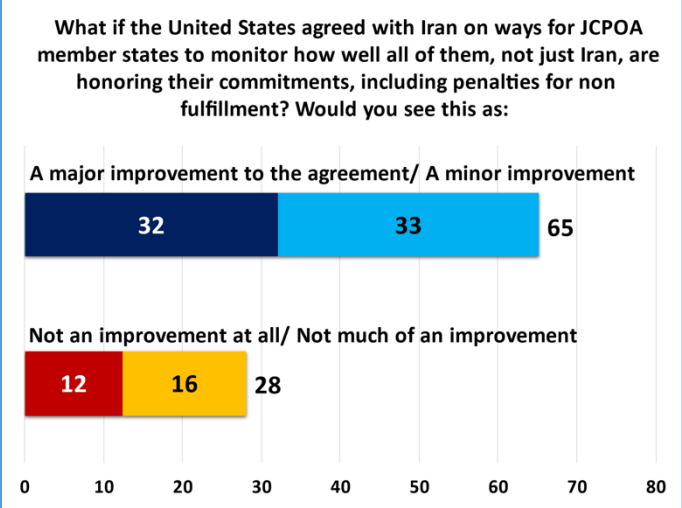
If the United States committed not to interfere in a European system set up for Iran to conduct trade using euros and also committed not to impose sanctions on companies or countries using this payment system, would you see that as a very meaningful assurance, somewhat meaningful, not very meaningful, or not meaningful at all?

About seven in ten (69%) saw the proposed assurance as meaningful (very, 22%). Only a quarter (24%) did not think it meaningful.

The second form of assurance the study proposed regarded monitoring compliance: “What if the United States agreed with Iran on ways for JCPOA member states to monitor how well all of them, not just Iran, are honoring their commitments, including penalties for non-fulfillment?” Respondents were then asked if this would improve the agreement or not.

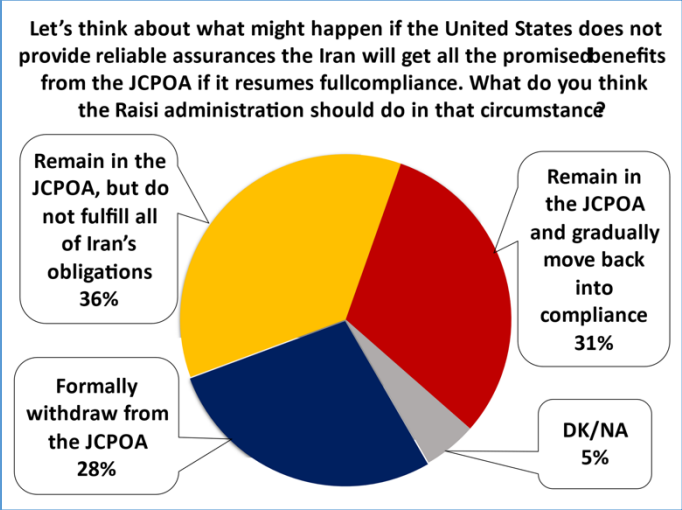


Interestingly, this proposal did slightly less well overall than the one above-- which would have some economic impact--but the monitoring proposal had a greater number endorsing it strongly. Sixty-five percent said the monitoring proposal would be a meaningful improvement, and 32% called it a *major* improvement, while only 22% called the trade-related proposal *very* meaningful (28% disagreed).



In the absence of such assurances, only about a quarter thinks Iran should formally withdraw while three in ten think Iran should gradually return toward full compliance. The largest number prefers the status quo. Respondents were asked to think about what might happen if the United States does not provide reliable assurances that Iran will get all the promised benefits from the JCPOA if it resumes full compliance. What do you think the Raisi administration should do in that circumstance?

The most common answer (36%) was to “remain in the JCPOA, but do not fulfill all of Iran’s obligations.” Interestingly, 31% wanted to remain “and gradually move back into compliance” even without assurances. A little over a quarter (28%) thought that in these circumstances the Raisi administration should formally withdraw from the agreement. (Raisi voters were not significantly different from the full sample.)



**Relations with the IAEA**

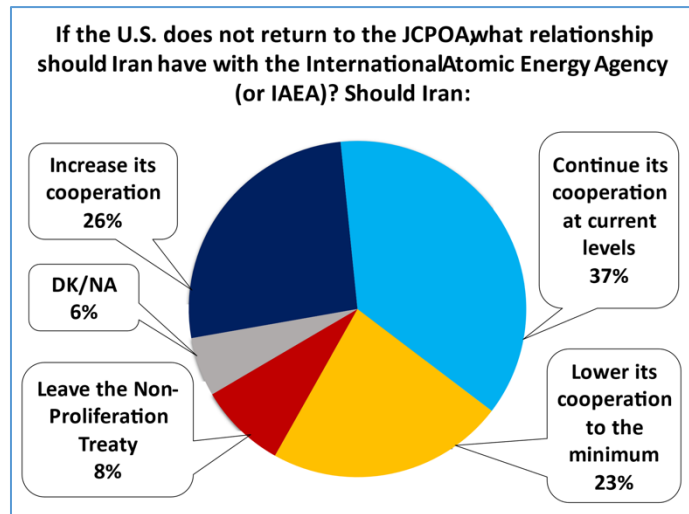
If the JCPOA is not restored, Iran will need to decide how to handle its relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency and its inspectors in-country. A three-in-five majority want these relations not to deteriorate further.

Respondents were asked “what relationship Iran should have with the IAEA” if the United States does not return to the JCPOA” and chose among four options:

- [Iran should] increase its cooperation somewhat, to prove to the world that Iran’s nuclear program is peaceful, regardless of what some other countries might say
- Continue its cooperation at current levels, providing inspectors some information but not all the access stated in the JCPOA

- Lower its cooperation to the minimum the Non-Proliferation Treaty requires of its member countries, in order to develop Iran’s nuclear program as before
- Leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty and stop cooperation with the IAEA

Sixty-three percent chose one of the first two options. A quarter (26%) wanted to increase Iran’s cooperation somewhat; and over a third (37%) wanted to continue its cooperation at current levels, which are below the access stated in the JCPOA. Only three in ten (31%) wanted to lower cooperation to the minimum required by the NPT; fewer than one in ten (8%) wanted to leave the NPT and terminate the IAEA’s access. (Raisi voters were not significantly different from the full sample.)



## Iran’s Role in the Region

### Military and Diplomatic Choices

**Large majorities want to see Iran continue discussions with other Middle Eastern countries to de-escalate tensions, and almost half would like to see these expand. Regionally, a growing majority prefers that in general, Iran seek mutually acceptable solutions through negotiations; four in ten prefer that Iran seek to become the most powerful country in the region. Four in ten want Iran to encourage a diplomatic solution in Yemen, while another quarter want Iran not to be involved; only a quarter want Iran to aid a push for a Houthi victory. On Iraq, three in five have the impression that Iran provides weapons, advisors and some volunteers, but only one in six believe Iran is sending its own military forces. Over three in five want Iran to have some military involvement in Iraq, including personnel.**

Respondents were told that “Iran has had diplomatic discussions with other Middle Eastern countries about de-escalating tensions in the region. The idea has been to develop common understandings, so that certain provocative actions are avoided by all parties.” A large majority of 83% want these talks to continue: within this majority, 48% said “they are worthwhile and should be expanded, and another 35% thought, “they should continue, but are not likely to do much.” Only one in ten (12%) thought “they are a waste of time and should be ended.”

Those who see negotiations as the best route for Iran to take with other countries in the region have grown from a plurality to a majority. Asked which is “the better approach for Iran to pursue in trying to solve the problems it is facing in the region,” 54% now say it should seek “to find mutually acceptable solutions with other countries through negotiations,” while 43% say it

should seek “to become the most powerful country in the region.” Those preferring negotiations have grown five points since January 2018, when they were at 49%.

Among the third of the sample who voted for Raisi, though, 55% say Iran should seek to become the most powerful country and 42% that it should seek mutually acceptable solutions.

**Yemen**

Some support for diplomatic engagement also appears when Iranians are asked about Yemen. Asked which was closest to their view, 67% said either that “Iran should use its influence in the region to encourage a diplomatic resolution to the conflict” (42%) or that it should “not get involved in Yemen’s domestic conflict” (25%, up from 20% in February). Only a quarter—24%--said “Iran should help the Houthis defeat their opponents,” down from 30% in February.

Raisi voters showed the same pattern, but less distinctly: 43% wanted a diplomatic resolution, 16% wanted no involvement, and 33% wanted to help the Houthis defeat their opponents.

Only about half of Iranians (49%) view the Houthis favorably, and 41% view them unfavorably—without significant change since 2018. However, Raisi voters are warmer toward the Houthis, with 63% favorable (very, 33%).

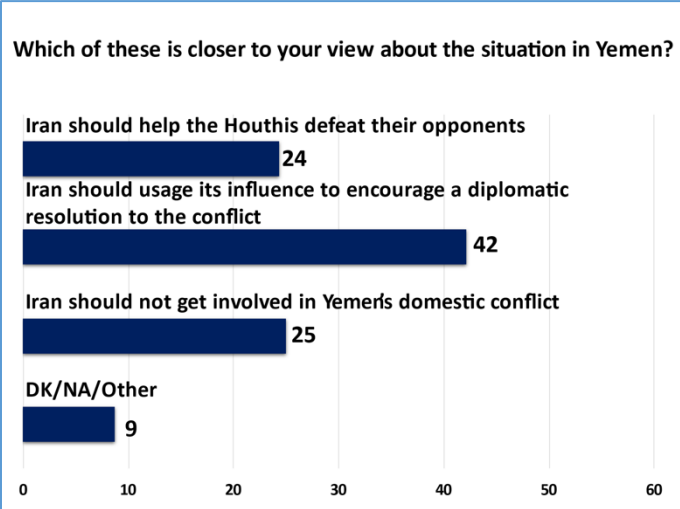
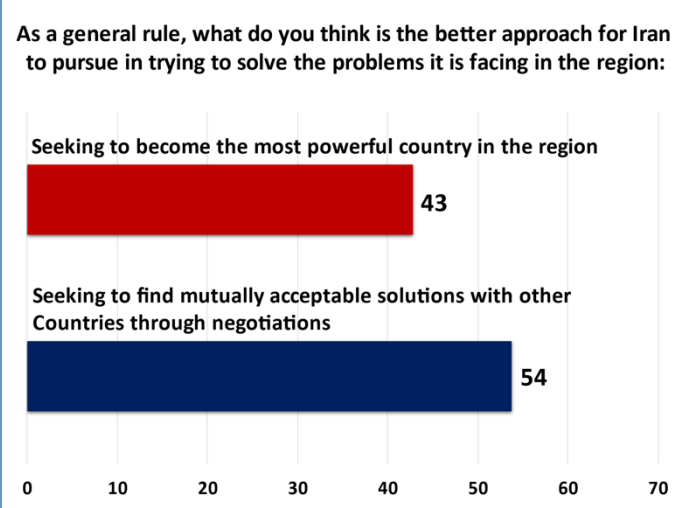
**Iraq**

Iran’s military activities in Iraq have been multi-sided and it has been an open question how much ordinary Iranians understand about them. This study asked respondents to characterize Iran’s level of involvement in Iraq and then to state their own preferences about it.

First, respondents were asked:

As you may know, Iran has had different levels of military involvement with Iraq over the last few years. Thinking about Iran’s current military involvement in Iraq, which of these four best describes your impression of that involvement?

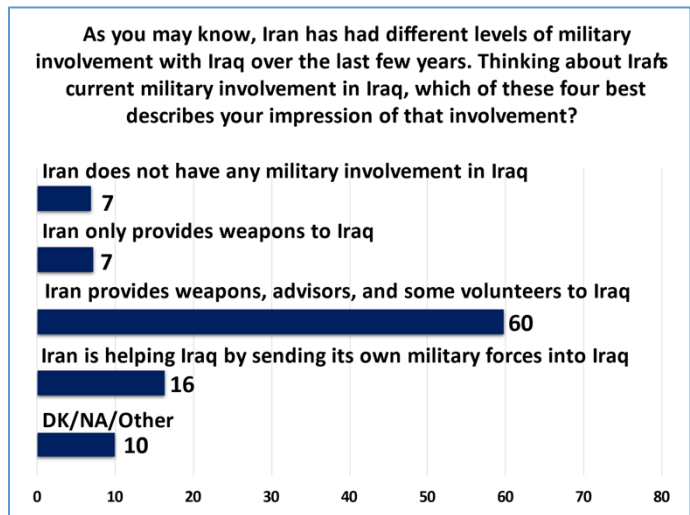
- Iran does not have any military involvement in Iraq
- Iran only provides weapons to Iraq
- Iran provides weapons, advisors, and some volunteers to Iraq



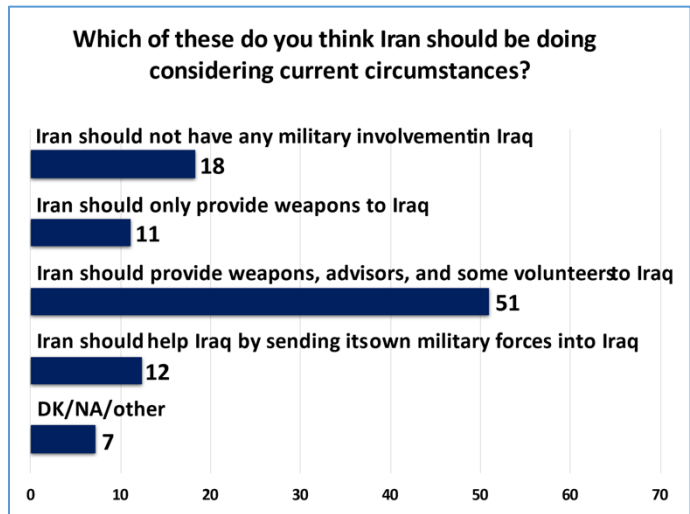


- Iran is helping Iraq by sending its own military forces into Iraq

Three quarters (76%) saw Iran’s involvement as fairly robust, with 60% saying Iran provides weapons, advisors and volunteers, and another 16% saying it sends its own military forces. Seven percent thought Iran only provides weapons, and another 7% said it has no military involvement.



Respondents were then offered these four options again and asked, “Which of these do you think Iran should be doing, considering current circumstances?” A majority of 63% supported either providing weapons, advisors and volunteers (51%), or sending Iran’s own forces (12%)—12 points lower than the public’s impressions of what Iran is doing, but still a clear majority for current perceived level of involvement. Eleven percent said Iran should only provide weapons, and almost a fifth (18%) said it should have no involvement.



Raisi voters’ impressions of Iran’s involvement were no different than those of the general public, but in their preferences, they were slightly more supportive of involvement: 55% for providing weapons, advisors and 18% for sending troops.

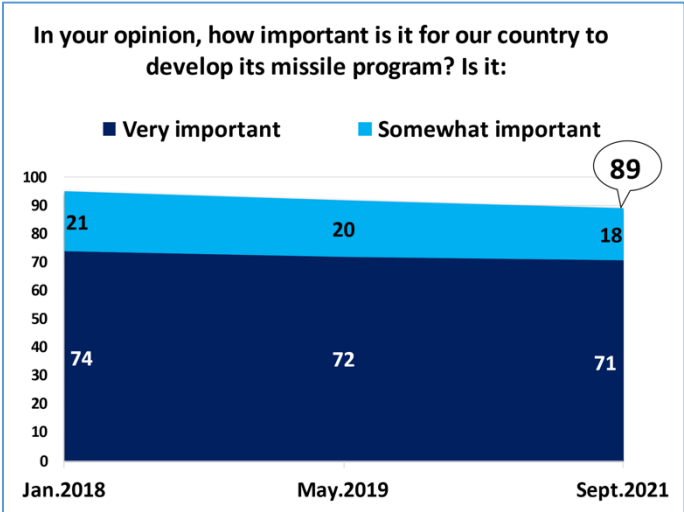
## Attitudes toward Missiles and Military Forces

Seven in ten call Iran’s development of missiles very important; three in five look on it as a deterrent against attack. As to using Iran’s own uniformed military, four in five think it justified to deploy the military against terrorist groups, or to protect Shi’a sites and pilgrims. A smaller majority (less than three in five) think it would be justified to use these forces to increase the costs to the United States for its presence in the region.

### Missiles

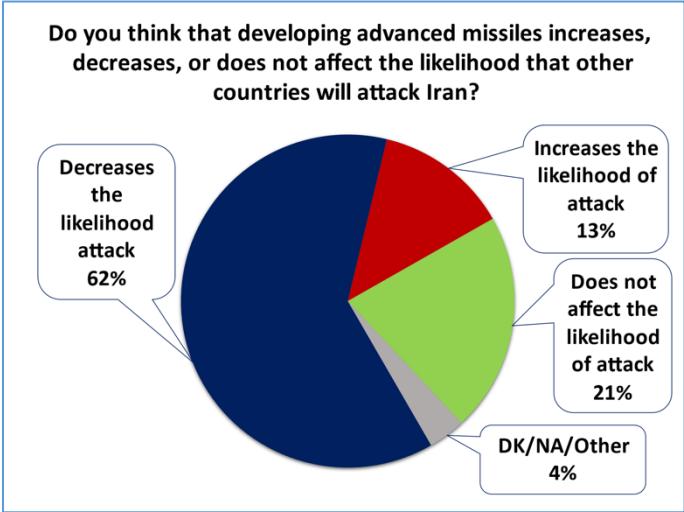
There is a large public consensus in favor of Iran developing its missile program, with 89% calling it important and 71% very important. It is still worth noting that since January 2018 this majority has diminished slightly, from 95% to 89%. (Among Raisi voters it is at 95%.)

When respondents are presented with arguments about whether the missile program is helping Iran’s security or hurting it instead, a stable three in five have viewed the program as positive. Respondents were asked:



Some say one of the reasons why no country has gone to war against Iran in the last thirty years is because Iran is deterring such attacks by developing advanced missiles.<sup>1</sup> Others say that pressure of some countries on Iran’s missile program is increasing, and if Iran continues developing advanced missiles, it is more likely that some countries like the US or Israel will attack Iran. Do you think that developing advanced missiles increases, decreases, or does not affect the likelihood that other countries will attack Iran?

Sixty-two percent said that developing missiles decreases the likelihood of attack, while only 13% say it increases the likelihood; 21% believe it has no effect. These numbers have been essentially the same since May 2019.



Possible Uses of Iran’s Regular Military  
 Since Iran’s military activities frequently involve the use of proxy forces, this study sought to learn how the public might view the use of Iran’s own regular military instead. Respondents were offered possible objectives and asked whether the use of the country’s own military forces to pursue them would be justified or not.

Four in five (83%) thought that “using Iran’s own military forces to protect Shi’a sites and pilgrims would justified (fully, 40%); only 14% thought it would be unjustified.

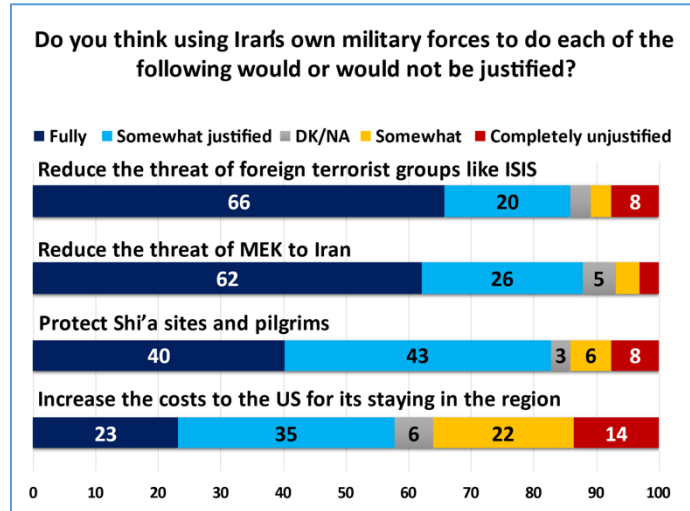
Even more—86%--thought using forces “to reduce the threat of foreign terrorist groups like ISIS to Iran” would be justified (fully, 66%). Eleven percent disagreed. More specifically, “reduc[ing] the threat of MEK [the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization] to Iran” by using the country’s own military forces was justified in the eyes of 88% (fully, 62%).

<sup>1</sup> Prior to Sept. 2021 it was asked: “Some say one of the reasons why no country has attacked Iran in the last thirty years is because Iran is deterring such attacks by developing advanced missiles...”



Distinctly fewer, but still a majority, thought that “using Iran’s own military forces to increase the costs to the US for its staying in the region” would be justified: 58% agreed with this (fully, 23%). However, over a third (36%) thought this would not be a justified use of Iran’s military.

Raisi voters were not significantly different from the full sample on any question regarding the use of Iran’s military forces.

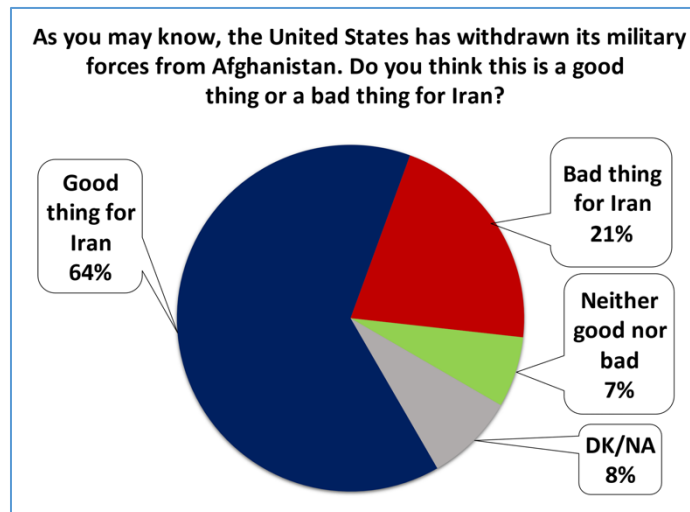


## Expectations about Afghanistan

**Over three in five see the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan as good for Iran, though just a bare majority thinks it will be good for Iran’s own security. Over seven in ten have a very unfavorable view of the Taliban. Three in five expect refugee flows from Afghanistan into Iran to increase; however, there is no similar expectation about drug traffic. A narrow plurality thinks Iran should now seek to increase its influence in Afghanistan, while four in ten disagree.**

Respondents were reminded that “the United States has withdrawn its military forces from Afghanistan” and asked whether they thought this was a good or bad thing for Iran. Sixty-four percent thought it was good, while 21% thought it was bad; 7% volunteered that it was neither. Raisi voters were more positive than the full sample, with 77% calling the U.S. departure a good thing.

Respondents were then asked more concretely about the possible effects on Iran, beginning with its security in the eastern part of the country. This time they were explicitly offered the option that the U.S. departure will make no difference. A bare majority (51%) thought the U.S. withdrawal would be good for security, while 31% thought it would make no difference. Only 13% thought it would be bad. Again, Raisi voters were more optimistic: 63% thought the U.S. leaving would be good for security Iran’s east, and 27% thought it would make no difference.



The Taliban is broadly disliked by the Iranian public, seven in ten of whom view it *very* unfavorably (72%; somewhat unfavorable, 16%). Consistent with this, three in five (62%) expect an increased inflow of Afghan refugees into Iran. A fifth (19%) expect this flow to stay about the same as it has been (will decrease, 15%). The public is more sanguine about what will happen to drug trafficking across the border: only 21% think it will increase, while twice as many (40%) think it will decrease (stay the same, 32%).

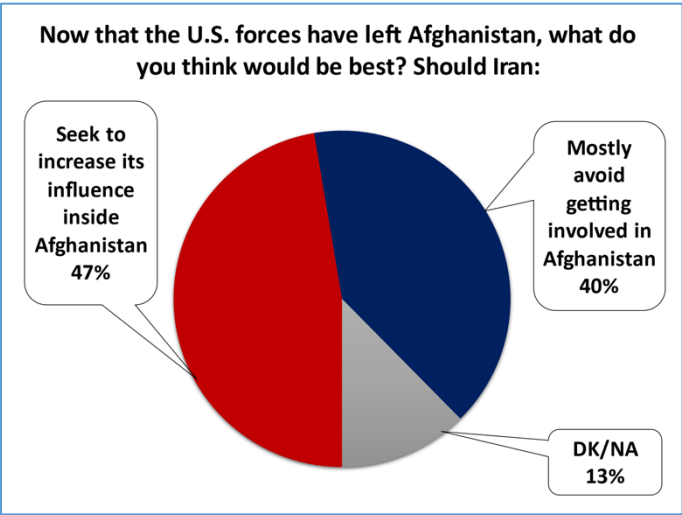
There is no majority view about what Iran should do now in its relations with Afghanistan. A little under half (47%) think it would be best for Iran to seek to increase its influence, while 40% prefer to “mostly avoid getting involved in Afghanistan.” Raisi voters, however, are different: 60% would seek to increase influence and only 29% want to avoid getting involved.

### Views of Other Countries and Organizations in the Mideast

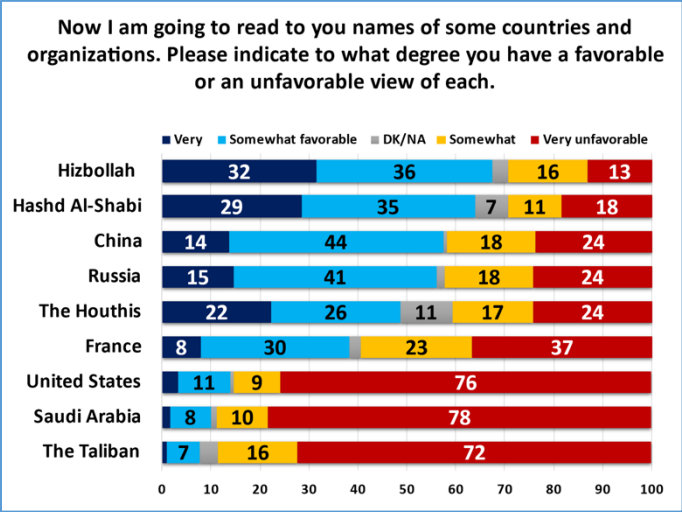
**Among a range of Middle Eastern actors, Saudi Arabia is viewed most unfavorably by Iranians. The Taliban’s negative rating is almost as high. Only about half view Yemen’s Houthis favorably, but two in three view Lebanon’s Hezbollah favorably. The Popular Mobilization Forces of Iraq—a loosely knit federation of militias sponsored by the Iraqi government—is seen favorably by over three in five.**

Since 2016 Iranians have held a consensus negative view of Saudi Arabia, currently at 78% *very* unfavorable and 10% somewhat unfavorable. It is the only country or group measured whose negative rating exceeds that of the United States (unfavorable 85% to Saudi Arabia’s 89%). As reported just above, views of the Taliban are close to this level.

Only about half of Iranians (49%) view the Houthis favorably, and 41% view them unfavorably—without significant change since 2018. However, Raisi voters are warmer toward the Houthis, with 63% favorable (very, 33%).



Lebanon’s Hizbollah are viewed favorably by two thirds (68%, 32% very). Three in ten (29%) are unfavorable (13% very). These views have been stable since 2018, but are lower by comparison with 2016, when three quarters were favorable (73%). Raisi voters are much more positive, with 86% favorable (51% very).



For the first time, this study asked Iranians how they feel about Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces, a federation of militias under the sponsorship of Iraq’s government. Over three in five were positive, with 64% favorable (very, 29%). Thirty percent were unfavorable (very, 18%). Again, Raisi voters were distinctly more positive, with 83% favorable (very, 40%).

### Images of the United States’ Knowledge and Power in the Region

Large majorities of Iranians perceive the United States as a major Middle East actor, with extensive foreknowledge of events and the capacity to shape them in many cases. In the strongest case of this attitude, almost two in three think the United States had prior knowledge of Saddam Hussein’s 1980 invasion of Iran and could have helped Iran prevent it; nine in ten think that at least the United States had foreknowledge. In the least strong example, four in ten think the United States could have helped Iran prevent the 2017 terrorist attacks in Tehran; three quarters, though, think the United States had foreknowledge.

An understanding of Iranians’ attitudes toward their country’s role in the Middle East would not be complete without exploring their attitudes toward the United States as a presence in the region. While Western observers have often noted an Iranian tendency to ascribe extensive powers to the United States, we do not know of any previous efforts to measure this tendency.

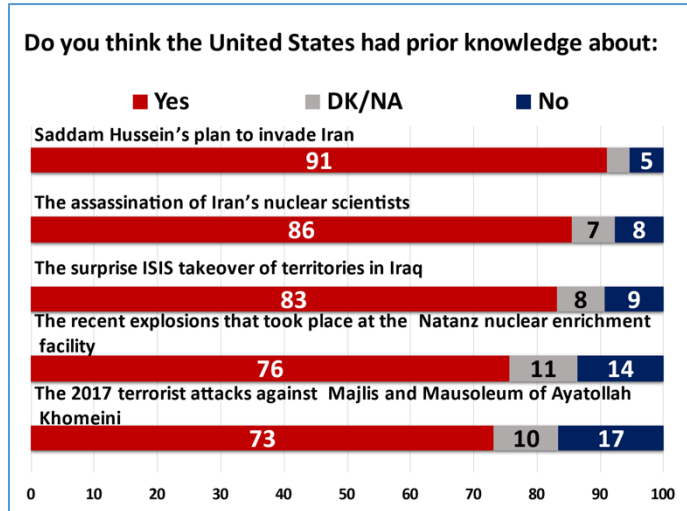
To probe this attitude, respondents were asked about five different events that “have taken place in Iran and other countries” (all within the Middle East). They were told: “Some think that the United States was not aware of these events until they happened. Others think that the United States did have prior knowledge about these events before they happened.” For each event, respondents were asked whether they thought the United States had prior knowledge of it. Only those who thought the United States *did* know were then asked whether the United States could have helped Iran (or, in one case, Iraq) prevent the event from taking place.

The five events asked about were, in order:

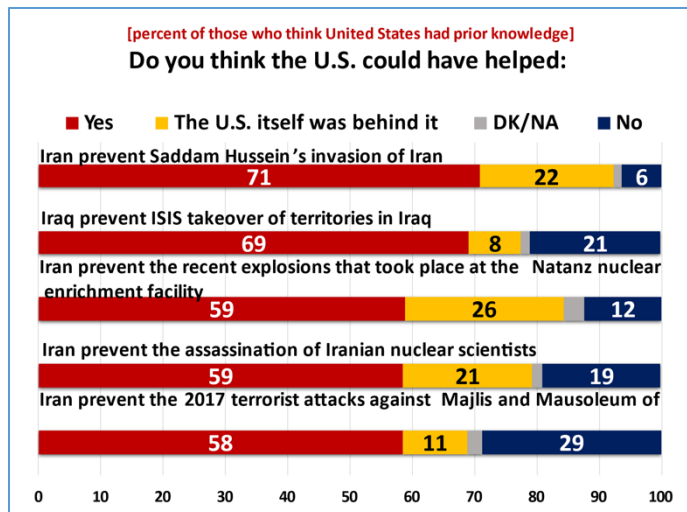
- The recent explosions that took place at the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility (July 2020)
- The assassination of Iran’s nuclear scientists

- The 2017 terrorist attacks in Tehran against the Parliament and the Mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini
- The surprise ISIS takeover of territories in Iraq
- Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Iran

Overall, a range of 73% to 91% believed that the United States knew about these events before they happened. Somewhat fewer, though still majorities of those asked, thought the United States could have helped to prevent them if it wanted to do so or was itself the mastermind. The smallest majority believing in U.S. prescience related to views on the 2017 terrorist attacks in Tehran against the Majlis and the Khomeini Mausoleum. Seventy-three percent thought the United States had prior knowledge of the attack (did not, 17%). Only those with this view were then asked, “Do you think the U.S. could have helped Iran prevent [the event]?” Fifty-eight percent—that is, 42% of the full sample-- thought the United States could have helped Iran to prevent it.



Seventy-six percent believed the United States had prior knowledge about the explosions at the Natanz nuclear facility in July 2020 (did not, 14%--a noteworthy 9% said they didn’t know). Forty-five percent of the full sample (59% of those asked) thought the United States could have helped Iran prevent the explosions, while another 19% of the full sample volunteered that the United States itself carried them out.



On ISIS, four in five (83%) thought the United States had prior knowledge of the “surprise ISIS takeover of territories in Iraq” (did not, 9%). A majority of the full sample, 57% (69% of those asked) believed the United States could have helped Iraq prevent this takeover.

For the assassination of Iran’s nuclear scientists, 86% believed the United States had prior knowledge; only 8% disagreed. Fifty percent of the full sample (59% of those asked) thought the United States could have prevented it, while another 18% volunteered that the United States was itself responsible.

Finally, the belief that the United States knew Saddam Hussein was going to invade Iran is virtually unanimous, at 91%. Sixty-five percent of the full sample (71% of those asked) said the United States could have helped Iran prevent it, and another 19% volunteered that the United States was itself behind the invasion.

In a few cases Raisi voters are more likely than the general public to believe in U.S. prescience, but this is not a pervasive pattern. Eighty-five percent of Raisi voters thought the United States knew in advance of the 2017 terrorist attack in Tehran (full sample, 73%) and 90% thought it knew in advance that ISIS would take over Iraqi territories (full sample, 83%). Otherwise, Raisi voters’ beliefs about U.S. pre-knowledge were no different from those of the public in general.

## Social Issues in Iran

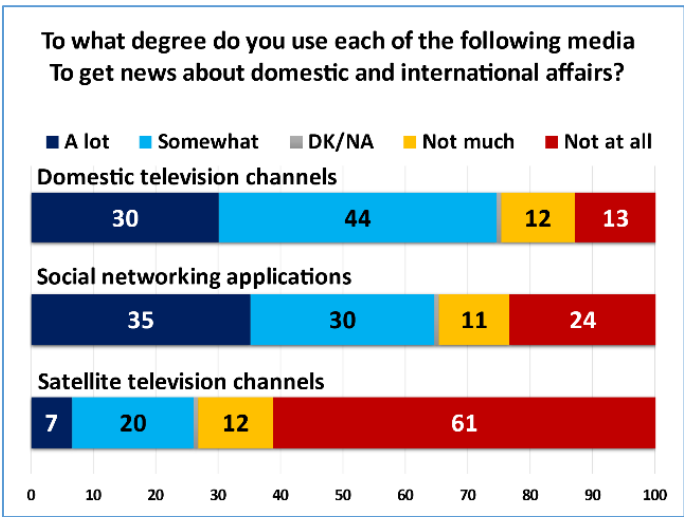
### Iranians’ Sources of News; Social Media Networks

**Most Iranians do not appear to be passive consumers of state news outlets. While domestic television channels are Iranians’ most widely used news source, the number of frequent viewers appears to have dropped dramatically in the past five years. Almost as many now use social media as well. About a quarter view satellite news channels. One in five follow BBC and Voice of America, with BBC getting the lion’s share of this audience.**

**Where accuracy is concerned, half of Iranians assess domestic TV as accurate most of the time, while the other half do not. The public’s ratings of social media’s news accuracy are much lower than those for domestic TV; those for BCC and VOA are lower still.**

**A third say that the government should never close down social networks; another fifth say this should not take place unless there is already widespread unrest and violence. Four in ten are open to the government closing down social networks in a preemptive fashion.**

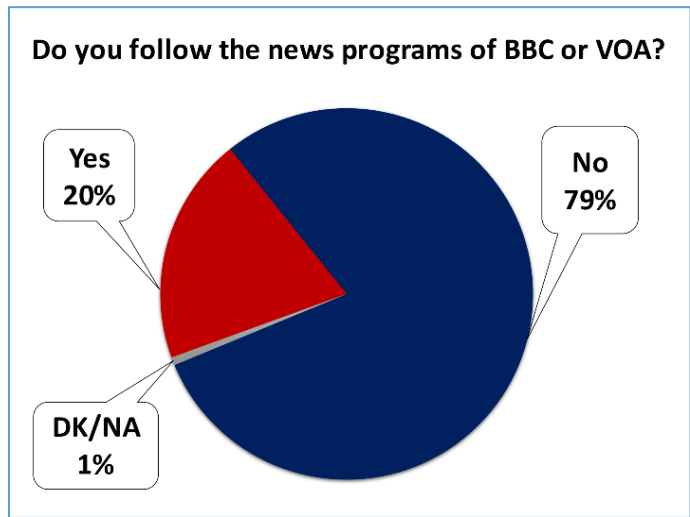
Respondents were asked about a range of media, “To what degree do you use each of the following...to get news about domestic and international affairs?” Three quarters (75%) said they use domestic television channels a lot (30%) or somewhat (44%). This is slightly lower than the 83% who said in January 2018 that they used domestic TV, but since that time viewership has been stable at around the 75% level. However, this may be quite different from five years ago. In 2016, answering a different question, 65% said they viewed domestic TV channels “every day” “to become informed about the news.”



About a quarter (26%; a lot, 6%) use satellite television channels to get news, and these numbers are basically unchanged since 2018. Three in five (61%) said they do not use this source at all.

“Social networking applications like Telegram, Instagram, and Whatsapp” are used by almost two thirds (65%; a lot, 35%), but interestingly, these media are not undergoing a rapid increase now. At the start of 2018, 66% used social networking applications, and in the last three and a half years there has been no significant change.

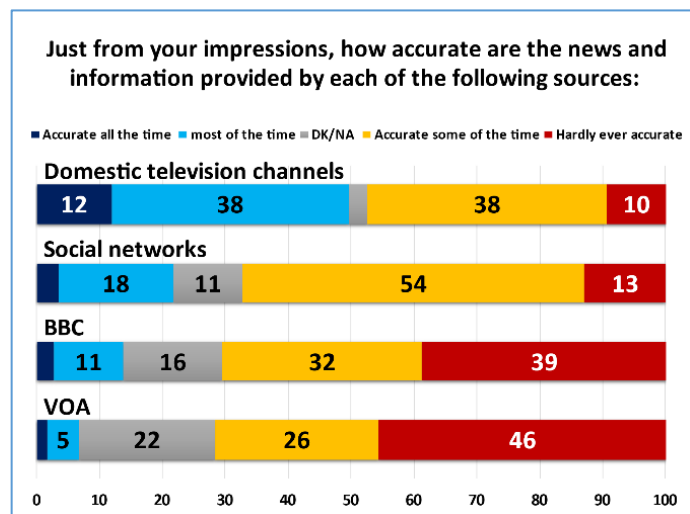
A fifth (20%) said they “follow the news programs of BBC or VOA,” while 80% said they did not. For the first time, the study then asked those who said they do follow these news programs: “Would you say you follow mostly BBC, mostly VOA, or that you follow both?” Three in five (61%) said they mostly follow BBC, while 38% said they either follow both equally (34%) or mostly follow VOA (4%).



All respondents were asked to evaluate news sources in terms of accuracy. No news source received a great deal of confidence. Domestic television channels ranked highest, with 50% saying they were accurate almost all the time (12%) or most of the time (38%), while 48% said they were accurate only some of the time (38%) or hardly ever (10%).

Social media networks were taken with more than a grain of salt, with only a fifth saying they are accurate most (18%) or almost all (4%) the time. Two thirds said they are accurate only some (54%) of the time or hardly ever (13%).

The public’s ratings of BBC and VOA are lower still. Fourteen percent said BBC was accurate most (11%) or almost all (3%) of the time; 7% said VOA was accurate most (5%) or almost all (2%) of the time. Seven in ten (71%) said BBC was only sometimes (32%) or hardly ever (39%) accurate; 72% said VOA was only sometimes (26%) or hardly ever (46%) accurate.





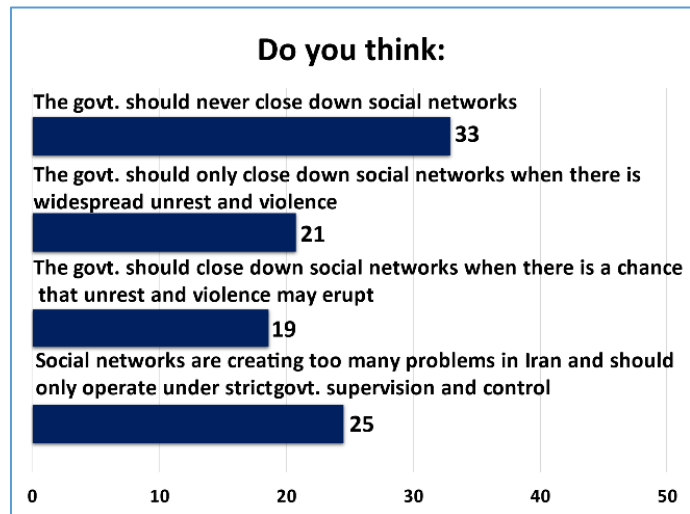
## ***Government Closings of Social Media***

In early 2018 and in November 2019 the government, faced with large-scale protests, closed down social media each time for a few days or more. To learn how Iran’s public views this practice, respondents were asked:

As you may know, on occasion Iran's government has closed down the Internet social networks like Telegram, Instagram, and Whatsapp, saying that this is necessary to avoid the spread of unrest and violence. How do you feel about this? Do you think:

- The government should never close down social networks
- The government should only close down social networks when there is widespread unrest and violence
- The government should close down social networks when there is a chance that unrest and violence may erupt
- Social networks are creating too many problems in Iran and should only operate under strict government supervision and control

A third (33%) said that government should never close down social networks. A fifth accepted a condition for this: 21% said the government should close them only “when there is widespread unrest and violence.” However, 43% were open to the government closing down social networks in a preemptive fashion: 19% said it should do so “when there is a chance that unrest and violence may erupt,” and a quarter (25%) said social networks should only operate under “strict government supervision and control.”



Raisi voters have distinct views on this issue; a majority of this group supported preemptive controls on social networks. Fifty-nine percent said either that government should close social networks down when there is a chance of unrest and violence (24%), or that they should be under strict government control (35%). Twenty-six percent of Raisi voters said social networks should only be closed down when there is widespread unrest and violence; just 11% said they should never be closed down.

## ***Policy Attitudes of the BBC/VOA Audience***

Those who follow BBC and VOA news programs often have views that are statistically different from the full sample, yet these views are rarely diametrically opposed. Differences of 10-20 points are typical. To begin with, a 61% majority of this audience view President Raisi favorably (25% very); however, three in five say they did not try to vote in the June election (61%), compared to 42% in the full sample. (Note: all percentages of the BBC/VOA audience in this subsection are of those who offered some response.)

While almost two in three in the full sample (65%) would prefer that the country strive for economic self-sufficiency, the BBC/VOA audience are statistically divided (51-49% in favor). They are similarly divided on having a major trade and cooperation agreement with China (51-49% positive, among those who had heard something about it); while in the full sample, a clear majority was favorable (59%).

On the nuclear issue, 73% of the BBC/VOA audience think it is important for Iran to develop its nuclear program (51% very); in the full sample, this majority is even higher. At the same time, a clear majority of the BBC/VOA audience approve of the JCPOA (56%), which is no longer true of the public in general (48%). As to how Iran should proceed in JCPOA negotiations, this audience has no majority view, though the most common answer (47%) is that the Europeans should try to persuade the United States while Iran holds to its position; this is similar to the full sample (52%). A slim majority of the BBC/VOA audience (52%) think the United States would not fulfill its obligations in any case if it returned to the JCPOA; in the full sample, this majority is larger (65%).

On regional issues, a 54% majority of the BBC/VOA audience see Iran's missile program as an effective deterrent, fewer than in the general public (62%). However, this audience is much more strongly in favor of Iran trying to resolve its regional problems through negotiations, with 75% taking this position (full sample: 54%). A majority of this audience (54%) supports Iranian military involvement in Iraq that includes some military personnel (full sample: 76%). And the BBC/VOA audience is clearly opposed to Iran getting involved in Afghanistan, with 62% against it, while the full sample seems uncertain (47% in favor, 40% against).

## Social Issues in Iran

### Water Shortages and Climate Change

**Almost half have been personally affected a lot by 2021's water shortages, and another three in ten have been affected a little. Almost nine in ten are concerned that global climate change will harm them personally during their lifetimes. At the same time, though, three in five assign the main blame for water shortages to government mismanagement, and only a third see climate change as their primary cause. Though about three quarters of Iranians live in urban areas, a majority think that in the short term the government should allocate more water to farmers, even if this brings shortages to the cities; only a third support allocating more water to the cities if this is at farmers' expense.**

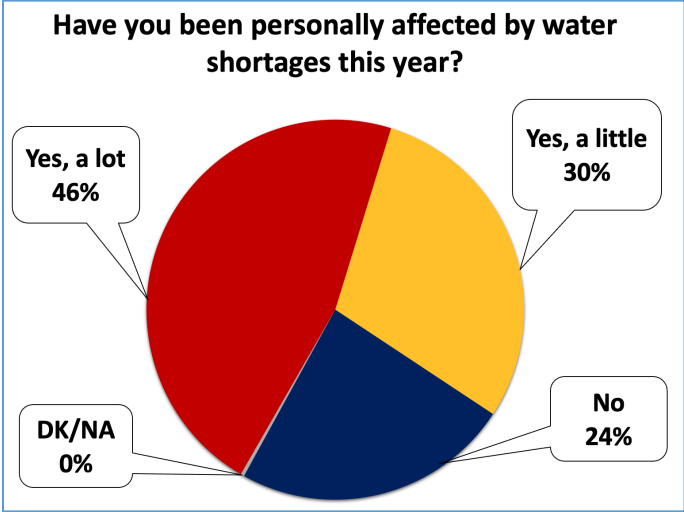
Most Iranians had personal experience with water shortages this year, with rural areas most affected. In September 2021, respondents were told that “as you may know, Iran has had some water shortages recently that affect farming and electricity production” and were asked if they had been personally affected by water shortages this year. A large majority (76%) said they had personally been affected by water shortages, with 46.5% reporting being affected “a lot” and 29% “a little.” Only 24% said they had not been affected by water shortages this year.

The minority of Iranians who live in rural areas (more than a fifth) were more likely to be affected by water shortages than Iranians living in urban areas: 65% of rural respondents said



they had been affected “a lot” by water shortages, compared with 45% of those living in settlements from under 100,000 or in the to -500,000; 34% of those living in cities between 500,000 and one million; and only 35% of those living in cities of over 1 million people.

Iranians continue to be concerned about the impacts of climate change on their lives. In September 2021, respondents were asked how concerned they were that global climate change will harm them personally at some point in their lifetimes. Three in five (62%) of respondents said they were “very concerned,” while 26% said they were “concerned.” Only 12% said they were “not too concerned” (6%) or “not at all concerned” (6%). These are essentially the same levels of concern as in January 2018. (Urban and rural dwellers showed no significant differences.)

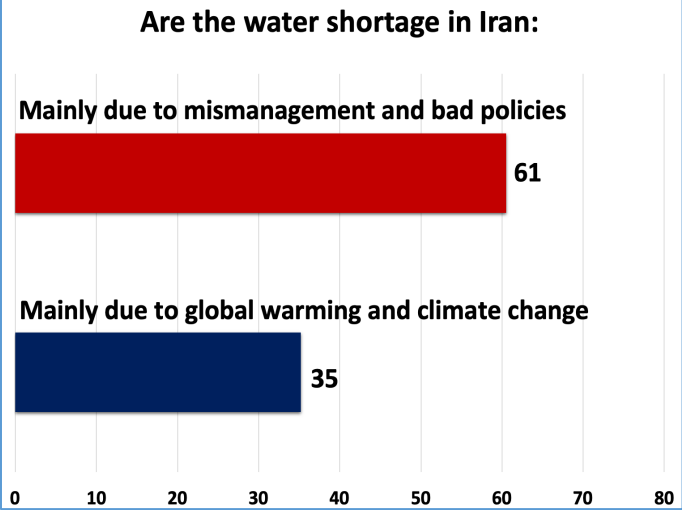


Although a majority of Iranians are concerned about climate change, they place the blame for water shortages largely on government mismanagement. In September 2021, respondents were told, “some people say that the water shortages in Iran are occurring in many countries as well and it is primarily due to global warming and climate change, while others say that the water shortages in Iran are mainly due to government mismanagement and bad policies.” They were then asked which opinion was closer to theirs. A 61% majority said water shortages were mainly due to mismanagement and bad policies, while 35% said they were mainly due to global warming and climate change. However, half of rural respondents thought climate change to blame for water shortages. Half (50%) of respondents living in rural areas said water shortages were mainly due to global warming and climate change, compared to 22-26% of those living in cities of 500,000 and up.

Interestingly, while Raisi voters were no different on this question, those who view Raisi *very* favorably were divided (48-48%), while all those less warm toward Raisi had majorities seeing government mismanagement as the main cause (in a range from 66 to 85%).

Despite water shortages, Iranians still think that the government should allocate more water to farmers, even if it means further shortages in urban areas.

Respondents were asked how the government should deal with problems caused by water shortages in the short term. A 52% majority said the government should “allocate more water to farmers so that they could remain in their farms and produce food, even if that would lead to a shortage of electricity and water for people in the cities,” while 33% said the government should “allocate less water to farmers so there is more water available for people in the cities and for production of electricity, even if that would lead to farmers leaving their farms and less food being produced.” Only 1.5% said the government should continue with its current allocation policy, while 14.3% declined to answer. Only those living in cities larger than one million showed majorities thinking the cities should be advantaged in the short term (61%). In cities of 500,000 to one million, about half (51%) supported more water for farmers; in cities smaller than that, this view was in the 60-65% range, and in rural areas it was 85%.



### Women’s Situation and Human Rights

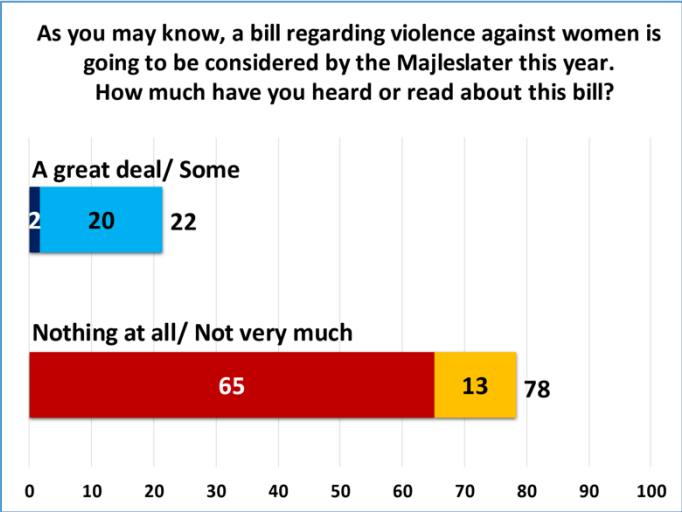
**While only a third have heard about an upcoming bill in the parliament tackling domestic violence against women, support is near-unanimous among those who have heard of it. Three quarters of those who have heard of the bill think that its passage would reduce domestic violence at least somewhat. On human rights in general, a majority believes that foreign sanctions related to human rights issues have had no effect on the human rights situation, while another third thinks they have hurt.**

On January 3, 2021, the Iranian government of Hassan Rouhani approved the Sexual Violence and Harassment of Women Bill. The bill is now awaiting approval by the Iranian parliament, the Majlis. The bill focuses on different types of violence and harassment against women. It would increase the penalties for intentional action that causes physical, emotional, and sexual harm to women. It would also create a national committee for protecting women’s dignity and security that would identify new forms of violence and offer recommendations to address them. Finally, it tasks the government with covering the medical expenses of victims of domestic violence. While many activists support this initiative, the bill has also faced pushback from some conservative groups and passing it through a majority conservative Majlis is seen as a significant step forward by many women’s rights groups in Iran.

When asked about the domestic violence bill, 35% of survey respondents say they have heard or read about it a great deal (2%), some (20%), or not very much (13%). A majority (65%) say they have not heard or read about the bill at all. Slightly more female respondents than male respondents were familiar with the bill – 38% of female respondents had heard about the bill

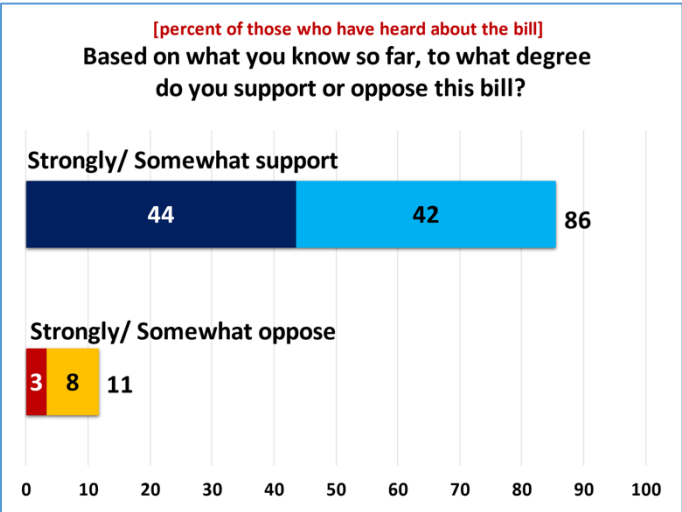
compared to 32% of male respondents, and 26% of female respondents had heard about it a great deal (2%) or some (23%), compared to just 17% of male respondents (1% a great deal, 16% some).

More educated respondents also reported greater familiarity with the bill. A majority of respondents with levels of education below a bachelor’s degree had not heard about the bill at all – 96% of illiterate respondents, 85% respondents with less than a high school diploma, 66% of those with a high school diploma, and 56% of those seeking a bachelor’s degree. On the other hand, a majority of those with a bachelor’s degree (51%) or a master’s or Ph.D. (62%) had heard or read something about the bill. (There were no significant differences by income.)



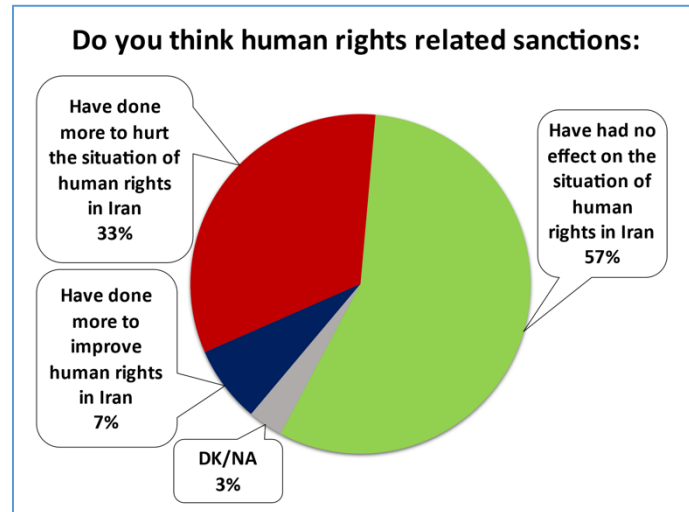
Among those who had heard of the bill, 86% supported it strongly (41%) or somewhat (45%). Support was quite similar between women and men among those who had heard of the bill. Eighty-six percent of men in this group supported it strongly (41%) or somewhat (45%), while 90% of the women supported it strongly (48%) or somewhat (42%). Among those who had heard of the bill, there were no significant variations in support of the bill by education or income.

Three quarters of those who had heard of the bill (76%) thought it would reduce violence against women significantly (15%) or somewhat (62%); 21% thought it would reduce violence against women only a little (12%) or not at all (9%).



When asked about the impact of sanctions on the human rights situation in Iran, a majority of 57% said sanctions have had no effect--up from 52% who thought the same in June 2017. Only 7% said sanctions have done more to improve human rights in Iran while a third (33%) said such sanctions have done more to hurt the situation of human rights in Iran

Interestingly, a greater share of female respondents said that sanctions have done more to hurt the human rights situation (41% of females compared to just 27% of males). A greater share of men said that sanctions have had no effect on human rights (65% of males compared to 52% of females). Similarly low numbers of male (8%) and female (7%) respondents believed sanctions had improved the human rights situation. (There were no significant differences on this question associated with education or income.)



## Iran’s Political Scene

### Political Figures’ Favorability

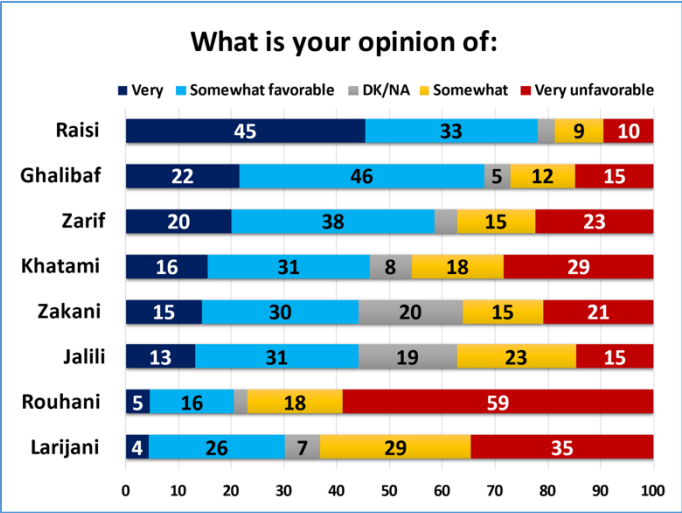
**Of the eight figures asked about in this study, the new president Raisi is viewed favorably by the greatest number. In second place is Mohammad Ghalibaf, current Speaker in the Majlis, followed by former foreign minister under Rouhani, Javad Zarif. Least popular among figures evaluated is former president Rouhani, whose popularity began to rapidly sink after the nuclear deal faltered.**

Of the eight figures asked about in this study, the new president Raisi is viewed favorably by the greatest number—78% (45% very favorable). Views of Raisi have been high and very stable since a year ago (October 2020). There is no indication that ill feeling incurred during the election process has rubbed off on him.

In second place is Mohammad Ghalibaf, Speaker in the Majlis since last year and a past mayor of Tehran, with 68% favorable (22% very). He did not seek to run in this year’s presidential election and is generally seen as a reliably Principlist figure.

The previous foreign minister under Rouhani, Zarif, also retains popularity with a majority—59% view him favorably (20% very), and these ratings have been stable since October, while Rouhani’s have continued to decline (see below).

Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, the reformist president of Iran from 1997 to 2005, is viewed favorably by 46%, virtually unchanged since February. Alireza Zakani, the current conservative mayor of Tehran, ran for president this year and made the Guardian Council’s final list (after having been disqualified in 2013 and 2017). Forty-four percent view him favorably (15% very). Even after his run for president and debate participation, 16% did not recognize his name in this study. Saeed Jalili, another conservative presidential candidate this year who made the list and a previous nuclear negotiator, has favorability much like Zakani’s (44%, 13% very favorable, but 12% did not recognize his name).



Ali Larijani, who was a long-time Speaker of the Majlis (2008-2020), ran for president and was disqualified by the Guardian Council. He has come out of the process in worse shape with the public than when he went in. Thirty percent view him favorably (4% very), down from February, when 38% viewed him favorably.

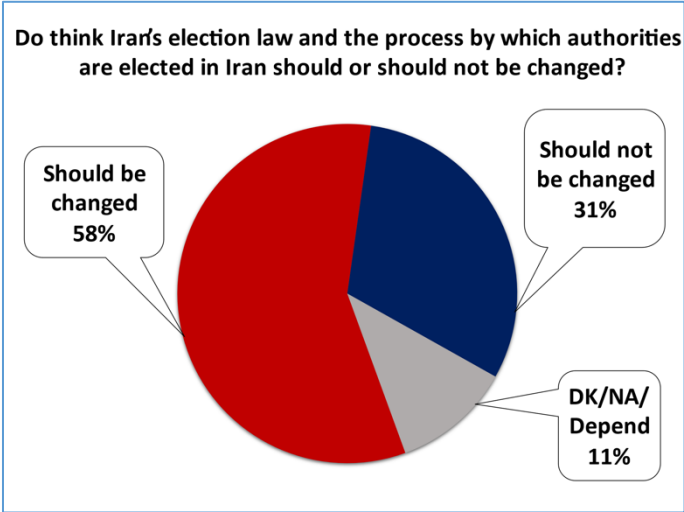
Least popular among figures asked about is ex-president Rouhani. His popularity had already sunk below majority levels by May 2019, but within this year it has dropped sharply, to 21% (5% very)--down from 36% in February.

### The June Presidential Election

After June’s presidential election, about three in five Iranians now think the election law and its processes should be changed. Those calling the Guardian Council—which vets and disqualifies candidates --“very fair and impartial” have dropped from one half to one quarter, compared to views after the 2017 presidential election. While three in five say the Council was at least somewhat fair, this is down from four in five in 2017. This dissatisfaction with how the election was run is independent, however, of views of the election outcome. While just a little over half were satisfied with the final list of candidates for president, seven in ten are satisfied with the result. Only a third believe that Raisi could have been beaten by another candidate, even if those disqualified had been permitted to run.

Asked in September—three months after the presidential election—whether they thought “Iran’s election law and the process by which authorities are elected in Iran should or should not be changed,” 58% said that it should, while almost a third disagreed (31%).

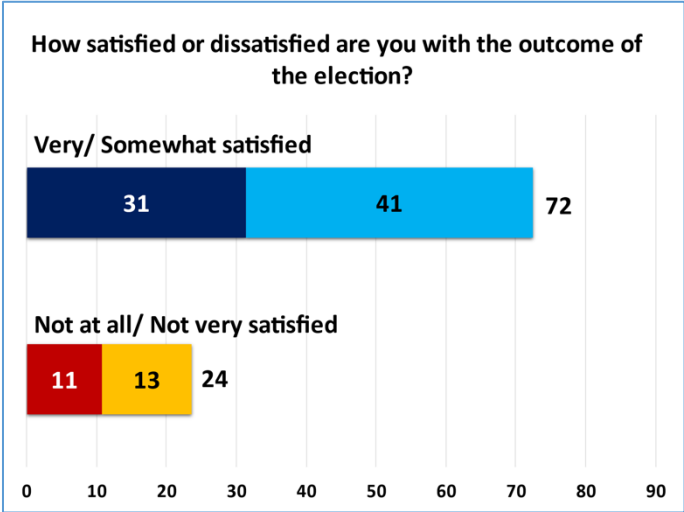
Those who thought election law should change were then asked, “If you could change one aspect...what would that be?” Among this group who wanted changes, almost half of them (46%) referenced the process of qualifying candidates that Iran’s constitution entrusts to the Guardian Council.



Many of those who wanted changes said that qualifying should be easier (19%); that there should be greater diversity in candidates (5%); that younger candidates should be allowed (3%--the Council had set an age limit); or that women candidates should be allowed (2%). Others said the law should ensure that disqualifications are not politically motivated (9%); some even thought qualification should be made more rigorous (8%). However, taken all together, almost half of those wanting changes in the law sought them in the part of the process of which the Guardian Council is the custodian.

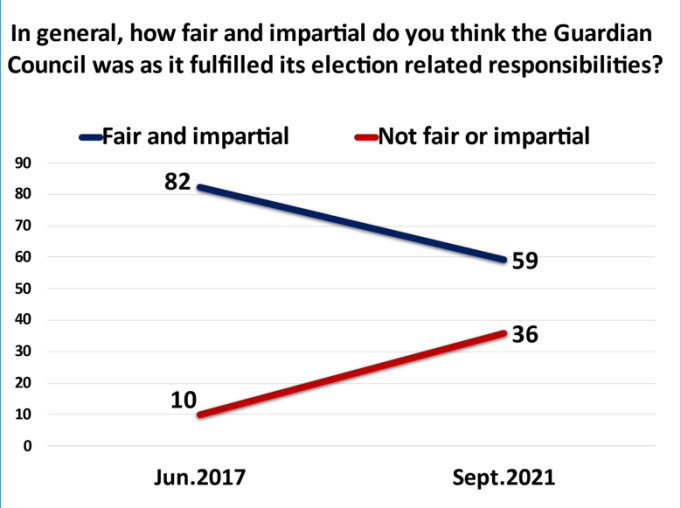
Half of those who wanted changes sought them in other areas: 22% wanted technical changes, including electronic voting, while 16% spoke of more transparency and more democratic features in general.

All respondents were asked: “In general, how fair and impartial do you think the Guardian Council was as it fulfilled its election-related responsibilities?” Twenty-four percent said the Council was very fair; 35%, somewhat fair; 20%, not very fair; and 16%, not at all fair. This is a substantial decline from June 2017, after the previous presidential election. In 2017 49% said the Council was very fair (25 points higher than in 2021), and only 10% said the Council was unfair (not very fair, 6%; not at all, 4%). But this year 36% said the Council was unfair (not at all fair, 16%).





This dissatisfaction with how the election was run is independent, however, of views of the election outcome. Asked “How satisfied were you with the final list of candidates for president?” 53% were satisfied (19% very), while 43% were not. But asked “how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the outcome of the election?”, 72% are satisfied (31% very), while 24% are not.



That many more are comfortable with the election’s result than with how it was conducted may be due in part to the fact that the new president Raisi is seen favorably by a large majority, while the outgoing president Rouhani is unpopular with about as many (see below).

**Election Results**

The electoral behavior reported by our sample accorded well, though not perfectly, with the election’s official results. The table below offers comparisons:

Sample’s self-reported behavior		Official results of 2021 presidential election	
Voted on election day	52.9%	Voted on election day	48.9%
Didn’t vote or can’t recall	47.1	Did not vote	51.1%
Of those who voted:		Of those who voted:	
Voted for Raisi	66.0	Voted for Raisi	62.9%
Voted for Rezaei	12.1	Voted for Rezaei	12.0
Voted for Hemmati	7.9	Voted for Hemmati	8.5
Voted for Hashemi	3.0	Voted for Hashemi	3.5
Cast an invalid ballot	8.9	Cast an invalid ballot	13.1
Don’t know/decline to answer	2.1		

The act of voting has socially desirable connotations in Iran and many other countries, and so to overreport having gone to the polls is a common phenomenon in most countries where elections are held<sup>2</sup>. In this case, the overreporting is 4.0%. Similarly, there a frequently observed tendency in many countries to overreport having voted for the election’s winner (here, Raisi), and the overreporting in this case is 3.1%.

For the three losing candidates who were still in the race by election day, the sample’s totals accord quite well with official results, within a half percent. For invalid ballots, underreporting

<sup>2</sup> For more on this issue read:  
 Pascal Sciarini, Andreas C. Goldberg, Turnout Bias in Postelection Surveys: Political Involvement, Survey Participation, and Vote Overreporting, *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*, Volume 4, Issue 1, March 2016, Pages 110–137.  
 Allyson L. Holbrook, Jon A. Krosnick, Social desirability bias in voter turnout reports: Tests using the item count technique, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 74, Issue 1, Spring 2010, Pages 37–67.

the casting of them is to be expected; the underreporting is either, 4.2%, or if non-responses are added to this category, 2.1%. Given that the margin of error of the survey as a whole is 3.1%, the survey offers as close match as practicable with official election results.

## ***How Iranians Navigated the Election Process***

### **Factors in the Low Turnout: Choice of Candidates**

Three weeks before the election, the Guardian Council disqualified several candidates from running, including the former president Ahmadinejad (who had been disqualified in 2017 as well) and former speaker of parliament Larijani. To try to understand how the Council's decision affected Iranians' choices, all respondents were asked the following question, offering four options:

As you may know, the Guardian Council reviews the qualifications of people who register to run for president, and those who are judged to be unqualified cannot be on the final list of candidates. Please pick which statement about the candidates who were deemed unqualified in the recent presidential election comes closest to describing your views:

- None of the candidates who were judged unqualified were ones I would have voted for
- While one candidate who was judged unqualified would have probably gotten my vote, there was someone among the final list of candidates that I liked as well
- One candidate who was judged unqualified would probably have gotten my vote and no one on the final list of candidates interested me
- None of the candidates who were judged unqualified *or* qualified interested me

Thirty-two percent said that none of the candidates that were judged unqualified would have gotten their vote (so presumably the Council's decisions did not matter much for their own choice). Another 29% said they were attracted to a candidate who was judged unqualified, but there was a qualified candidate "that I liked as well" --so these may have felt somewhat satisfied with the process. Sixteen percent said they lost the candidate they wanted through the Council's decision. Twenty percent said they were not interested by any candidate who had even registered *before* the Council's decision. While some of this last group may be simply tired of Iran's political class in general, others may have hoped for Zarif, Rouhani's foreign minister, or Ghalibaf, past mayor of Tehran, to run—neither of whom registered.

Taking the first two options together, 61% responded in ways suggesting they thought they could "work with" the Council's final list. Interestingly, this is much higher than those who finally went to the polls and cast a valid ballot for president. Ballots were cast by 48.5%, but just 42% cast valid ballots. Since the question's options do not press respondents to say how or whether they voted, it reveals a group of up to 20% who may have been put off by the available choices and demotivated from voting for president.

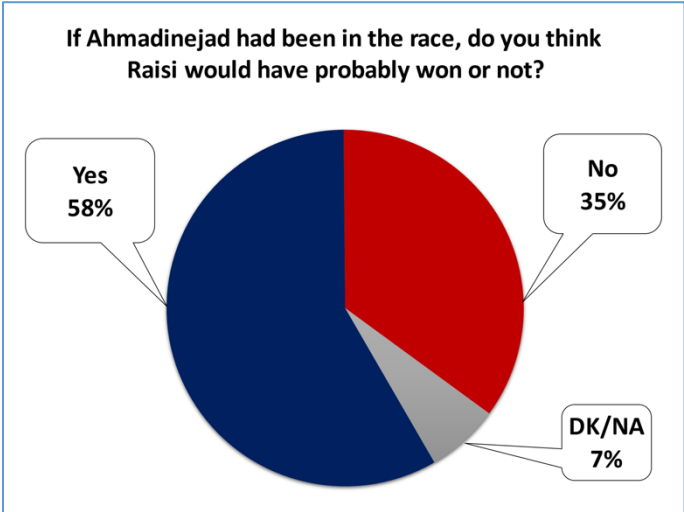
### **Expectations That Raisi Would Win**

A possible element when low turnout occurs in any election may be the lack of suspense, if many feel they know the probable winner. In order to measure this sentiment, the study asked about

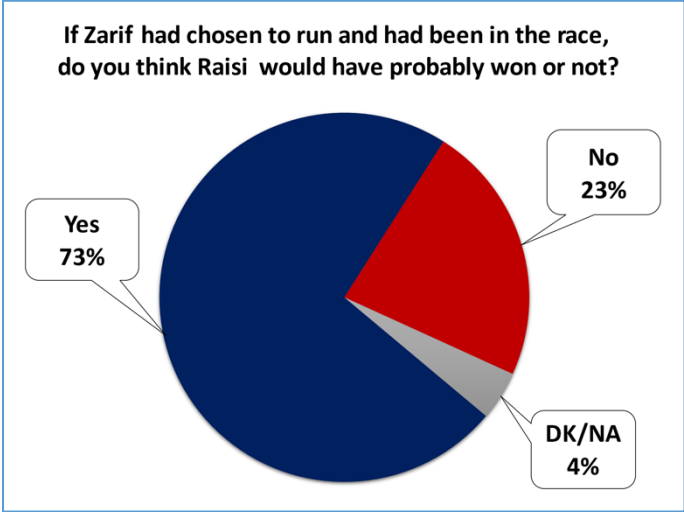
three disqualified or non-candidates and respondents' sense of what their chances *could* have been: Ahmadinejad, Zarif and Larijani.

Ahmadinejad was disqualified by the Guardian Council, and this was somewhat expected, as the Council had also disqualified him before the 2017 election. However, around a third of respondents (35%) thought that if Ahmadinejad had been in the race, Raisi probably would not have won (Raisi would still have won: 58%).

Zarif, the outgoing president's foreign minister, had said many times he would not run, and then had been embarrassed by leaked interviews meant for archival purposes that were frank about his relations with the IRGC Quds Force commander, General Qasem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a targeted American drone strike. He did not register as a candidate, and had said in advance that he would not. About a quarter (23%) thought that if Zarif had been in the race, Raisi probably would not have won (Raisi would still have won, 73%).



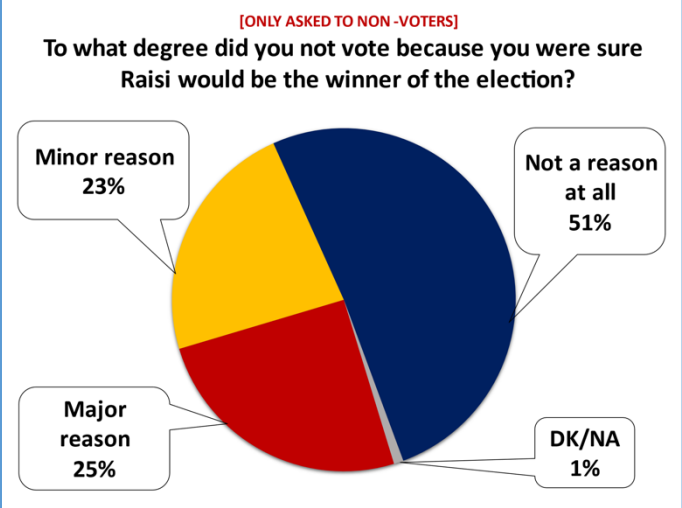
Finally, Larijani, a past speaker of Parliament and a long-time political figure, did register as a candidate and was disqualified by the Council, which came as a major surprise. Still, only 12% thought that if Larijani had been in the race Raisi probably would not have won (Raisi would still have won, 82%). Those respondents who did *not* vote were asked, in addition, the following: "Some people did not vote in this election because they were sure Raisi would be the winner of the election. To what degree was this a reason why you did not vote in the recent election?" About half of non-voters (51% of this group) said this was not a reason at all, while 23% said it was a minor reason and 25% a major reason.



Interpreting these findings, it appears that while much of the electorate wanted more candidates to choose from, Raisi’s considerable popularity led most to feel he had the greatest chance of being elected, even if he faced stronger competition. This is consistent with the findings that a while large majority of Iranians are satisfied with the election’s outcome, a much lesser majority are satisfied with how it was conducted.

**Other Factors in the Low Turnout**

Other factors should be considered that may have contributed to low turnout: concern about contracting the coronavirus; long lines or poor organization at some polling stations; or the fact that multiple elections were going on for different offices, on different ballots that were apparently color-coded and may have confused some at the polls. This study sought to probe each of these possibilities, as well as issues related to the choice of candidates.



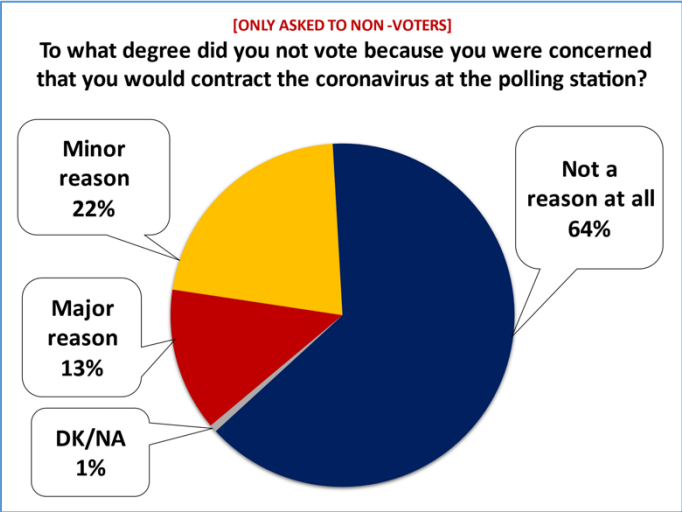
**Coronavirus Safety**

A plurality is critical of the precautions that were taken by the Interior and Health Ministries to ensure safe voting: 48% said these measures were insufficient (not sufficient at all, 18%); 45% were not so critical, but only 16% said these measures were fully sufficient.

Those respondents who said they did *not* vote were asked whether the coronavirus was a reason why they did not; 35% of non-voters said it was, though only 14% said it was a major reason. Most non-voters (64%) said the pandemic was not a reason at all for them.

Non-voters were also asked to say in their own words their primary reason for not voting: only 13% of them volunteered that they were concerned about contracting the virus at their polling station.

These findings suggest that coronavirus safety was a contributing factor to around a third of non-voters’ choices to stay away, but it does not appear to have been a major driver.



**Long Lines**

All who reported voting were asked: “As best you remember, how long did it take from the time you went to the polling station until you were able to cast your ballot?” Three fifths (62%) said it took less than half an hour; another 29% said it took from 30 minutes to an hour. Only 8%

reported a wait of over one hour. So a hypothesis of long lines and disorganized polling places can be dismissed as an explanation of low turnout.

### Voting for Multiple Offices

In Iran, the offices up for election are not all shown on a single ballot paper; there are multiple ballots for the voter to handle. We reminded those who voted of this in the following question:

As you may remember, in the recent election period, there were at least two elections conducted for different offices, and in many areas there were three or four on the same day. Some Iranian voters have indicated that this made the voting process difficult and confusing for the voters. How about you?

They were then asked whether they found the voting process to be “difficult and confusing” or “easy and clear.” Seventy percent called the process “easy and clear” (very, 37%), while 30% called it “difficult and confusing” (very, 8%). Thus it seems possible that some portion of spoiled ballots may have been due to simple voter error, but in an election that engendered many complaints, this was not a widespread one. In the open-ended question reported above, only 4% of those who wanted a change in election law mentioned ending the practice of holding multiple elections in a single day.

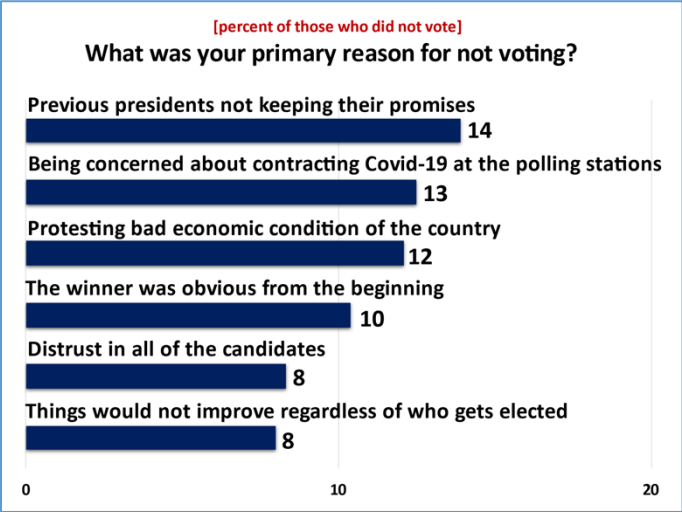
### Non-voters’ Own Explanations

The 47% who said they did not vote were asked to give their primary reason in their own words. The largest number of responses (from 38% of non-voters) expressed discontent with politicians in general. Previous presidents not keeping their promises (14%), distrust of all the candidates (8%), a belief that none of those running were really qualified (7%), or that things would not improve regardless of who gets elected (8%), were responses from this subgroup.

Another 22% of non-voters had political complaints, but these were related to the election process. Thus 10% said that the winner was obvious from the beginning; 6% cited the disqualifications explicitly; and 5% said people’s votes didn’t matter. Seventeen percent of non-voters offered medical reasons: that they were concerned about contracting covid-19 at the polling stations (13%), or that they were ill on election day (5%).

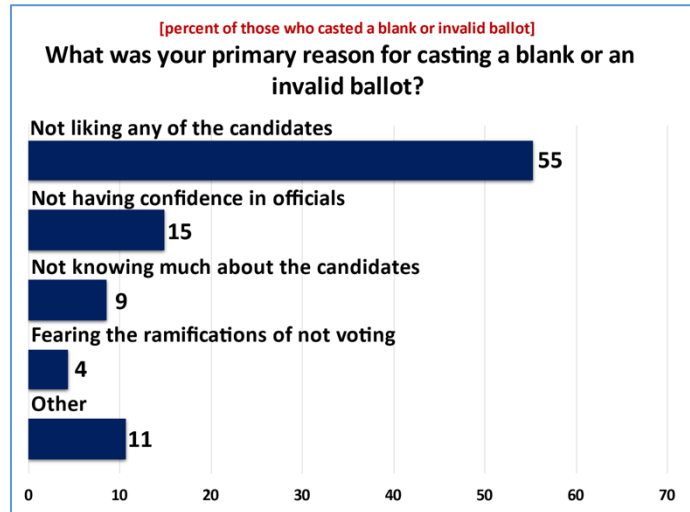
Finally, 12% of non-voters said they had abstained to protest the country’s bad economic conditions.

Overall, the remarks offered by non-voters clearly signal that three in five (60%) had distinctly political reasons to abstain from voting—reasons regarding either politicians as a class (38%) or the way the election process unfolded (22%).



### Those Who Cast Invalid Ballots

As mentioned above, 9% of voters in the sample said they had cast invalid ballots in the presidential race, and the official results show that 13% did. Respondents who said they had cast an invalid ballot were asked their primary reason for doing so. A majority of this group (55%) said they did not like any of the candidates. Another 15% evoked their lack of confidence in officials in general. Nine percent said they didn't know much about the candidates, and 4% said they were afraid of the ramifications of not voting (perhaps meaning that they felt they should simply show up at the polls).



Interestingly, in these open-ended questions, the respondents who cast invalid ballots were less likely to make strong, declarative political complaints than were those who reported not voting at all. Since news coverage outside Iran has at times painted those casting invalid ballots as the ones making a bold political statement, it is noteworthy that this designation may be more characteristic of the larger group of non-voters.

### Trust in Authorities and the Constitutional System

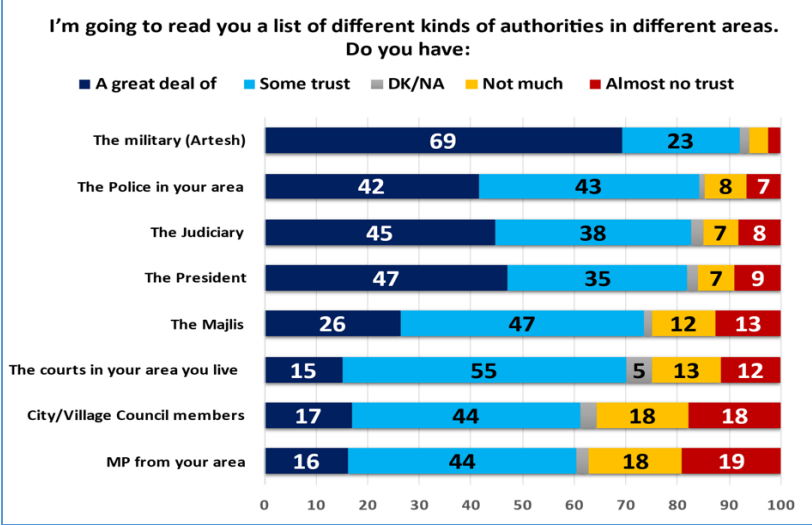
Asked about their trust in various local and national authorities, the highest score went to the regular military (Artesh), with nine in ten expressing some or a great deal of trust. The lowest level of trust went to local elected officials: respondents' own parliament member and their city or village councilors (six in ten for each). Trust in the Majlis as a whole, at three quarters, is somewhat higher than trust in the respondent's local member. The judiciary as a whole is also more trusted (eight in ten) than are local courts (seven in ten). Only about one in six believe that Iran's constitution and system of government will significantly change within the next decade.

As previous sections of this report indicate, complaints about authorities' actions or attitudes are not rare in Iran. But do these complaints signify a low level of trust in general? And do Iranians place more trust in local figures that they know, compared to figures at the national level? To probe these issues, the study posed a series of questions about people's trust in nine "different kinds of authorities in different areas," asking respondents to say "whether you have a great deal, some, not much, or almost no trust that they will do their best to take care of problems that affect



ordinary people.” Respondents were asked about local authorities (city or village councilors, their member of parliament, their local police and courts) and about national authorities and institutions.

The regular military (Artesh) received the highest level of trust: 92%, with 69% saying they trusted it a great deal. If we rank the remaining authorities by how many said they felt “a great deal of trust” for them, the best scores went to the president, the judiciary, and “the police in the area where you live.” All three of these are trusted at similar levels. The president was trusted by 82% (a great deal, 47%); the judiciary by 83% (a great deal 45%); and the local police by 84% (a great deal, 42%).



The Majlis (Parliament) receives trust that is down a notch from the president and judiciary: 74% expressed trust, and only 26% said they trust it a great deal.

Last come three local authorities, whose degrees of trust are all quite similar. “The current members of the City or Village Council of your area” were trusted by 61%, with 17% trusting them a great deal. The “member of the Majlis from your area” was also trusted by 61% (a great deal, 16%). “The courts in the area [where] you live” were trusted by a higher 70%, but only 15% trusted them a great deal.

***Stability of Iran’s Constitutional System***

How the Iranian public looks on its country’s political system as a whole is always a matter for controversy, which is all the more heated due to a justified sense that this topic is too sensitive for a measure of the public’s attitudes. Nonetheless, the question’s importance is such that this study made the attempt.

Surveys have a test that can be applied to solve this kind of problem. The sample was divided into two halves, A and B. A was asked the following question:

Now I will read to you some statements that some people believe and others do not. After I finish reading all of them, please tell me in how many of them do you believe?

SAMPLE A:

- President Raisi will be successful in fulfilling his promises
- Sanctions have hurt the livelihood of ordinary Iranians
- Iran will never run out of petroleum
- Iranian youth are more religious than the elderly

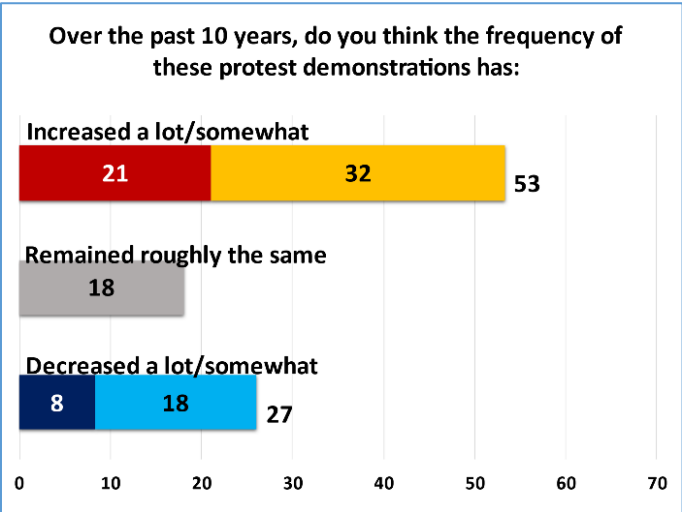
Sample B was asked the same question with one addition: “Iran’s constitution and system of government will significantly change in less than ten years.” No respondent in the B sample ever said explicitly that they believe such a change will take place. The percentage of this group in the sample is then calculated by a comparison between the two half-samples. This method indicates that about one in six--16%--believe there will be significant changes in the constitution and system of government in less than ten years.

**Attitudes toward Demonstrations**

**A little over half of Iranians perceive demonstrations and protests as having increased over the past ten years, both in frequency and geographic spread. Two thirds think the demonstrations’ objectives have been mostly to demand that officials pay greater attention to people’s problems; only one in ten perceive them as seeking to bring about change in Iran’s system of government. Majorities think that over the coming five years, demonstrations will become less frequent and less widespread, while four in ten think they will either stay at present levels or grow.**

When protest demonstrations occur in Iran, they are often discussed in the West and varying claims are made about their import. This study sought to probe the Iranian public’s own perceptions of protest demonstrations as a general phenomenon.

A majority of 53% said that over the past ten years the frequency of such demonstrations has increased, and a fifth (21%) said they have increased a lot. A quarter (26%) felt demonstrations have decreased over that time; 18% said they have remained roughly the same. (Raisi voters were 9 points less likely to perceive an increase (44%) and 9 points more likely to perceive a decrease (36%).



A similar slight majority of the public (51%) said that protest demonstrations have grown more widespread over the last decade (17%, a lot more widespread).

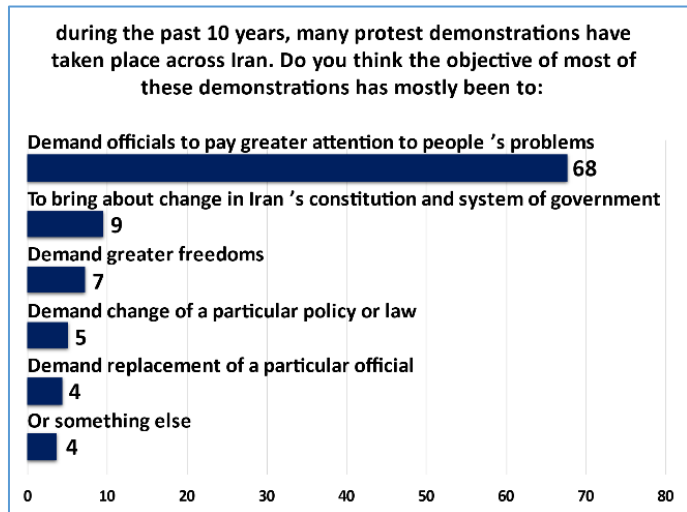
A quarter (26%) said they have become less widespread, and 20% thought they have remained about the same. Again, Raisi voters were less likely to perceive demonstrations as more widespread (41%).

Respondents were asked what they thought were the objectives of most of these demonstrations, and were given the following possibilities—to:

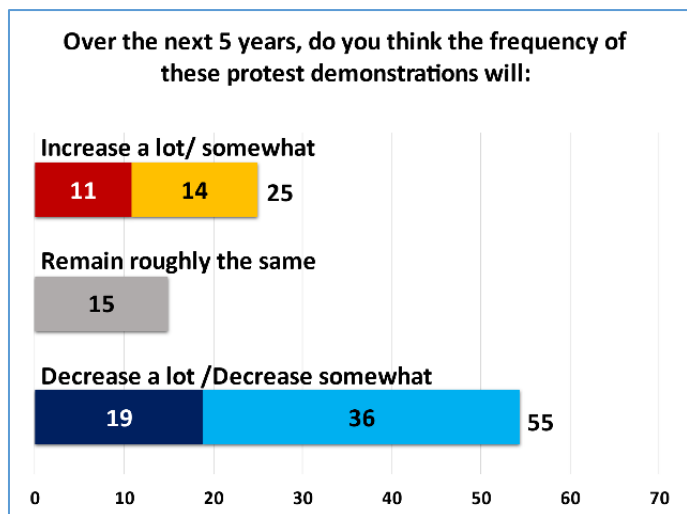
- Demand the change of a particular policy or law
- Demand officials pay greater attention to people’s problems
- Demand greater freedoms

- Demand replacement of a particular official
- Bring about change in Iran’s constitution and system of government
- Or something else

Fully two thirds (68%) of respondents said in their opinion the demonstrations’ objectives have mostly been to demand that officials pay greater attention to people’s problems; no other option was chosen by more than one in ten. Nine percent said the demonstrations’ objectives have been to bring about change in Iran’s constitution; 7% said they were intended to demand greater freedoms. Five percent said they were intended to demand change of a particular policy or law; 4% said they were to demand replacement of a given official. Interestingly, Raisi voters were no different than the public as a whole, so the 68% who said most demonstrations had the objective of getting officials to pay attention to people’s problems seem to represent a highly consensual view in Iran.



When asked how frequent they expected protest demonstrations to become over the next five years, modest majorities said they would become less frequent and less widespread. Fifty-four percent thought demonstrations would be less frequent (a lot, 19%), and 52% thought they would become less widespread. A quarter thought that demonstrations would increase and become more widespread (25% in each question); 15-19% expected them to stay about the same in frequency and breadth.



In the question of future demonstrations, as on other topics, Raisi voters were more sanguine about the future; seven in ten of this group thought demonstrations would decrease and become less widespread (73%).

## Appendix: Methodology

The study is based on a probability sample nationally representative telephone survey. Fieldwork was conducted in September 2021 (August 30 – September 9, 2021), among a representative sample of about 1001 Iranians. The margin of error for is about +/- 3.1%. The samples were RDD samples drawn from all landline telephones in Iran. The samples were stratified first by Iranian provinces and then in accordance to settlement size and type. All 31 Iranian provinces were represented in proportions similar to their actual populations, as were rural and urban areas.

Sept. 2021 survey	Census (% of Total Population)		Achieved Sample (% of Sample)		Difference	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Alborz	3.1	0.2	3.1	0.1	0.0	-0.1
Ardabil	1.1	0.5	1.0	0.4	-0.1	-0.1
Bushehr	1.0	0.4	1.1	0.4	0.1	0.0
Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.4	-0.1	0.0
East Azerbaijan	3.5	1.4	3.3	0.9	-0.2	-0.5
Fars	4.3	1.8	4.2	1.8	-0.1	0.0
Gilan	2.0	1.2	2.0	1.2	0.0	0.0
Golestan	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1	0.1	0.0
Hamedan	1.4	0.8	1.4	0.8	0.0	0.0
Hormozgan	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.0	-0.1	0.0
Ilam	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.0
Isfahan	5.6	0.8	5.7	0.8	0.1	0.0
Kerman	2.3	1.6	2.4	1.6	0.1	0.0
Kermanshah	1.8	0.6	1.8	0.6	0.0	0.0
Khuzestan	4.4	1.4	4.4	1.4	0.0	0.0
Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.0	0.0
Kurdistan	1.4	0.6	1.4	0.6	0.0	0.0
Lorestan	1.4	0.8	1.4	0.8	0.0	0.0
Markazi	1.4	0.4	1.4	0.4	0.0	0.0
Mazandaran	2.4	1.7	2.4	1.6	0.0	-0.1
North Khorasan	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.0	0.0
Qazvin	1.2	0.4	1.2	0.4	0.0	0.0
Qom	1.5	0.1	1.5	0.1	0.0	0.0
Razavi Khorasan	5.9	2.2	6.0	2.2	0.1	0.0
Semnan	0.7	0.2	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.0
Sistan and Baluchestan	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.2	0.0	-0.6
South Khorasan	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4	-0.1	0.0
Tehran	15.6	1.0	16.7	1.0	1.1	0.0
West Azerbaijan	2.7	1.4	3.0	1.9	0.3	0.5
Yazd	1.2	0.2	1.3	0.2	0.1	0.0
Zanjan	0.9	0.4	0.8	0.4	-0.1	0.0
Total	73.9	25.9	75.0	25.0	1.1	-0.9

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 of the interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). All interviews were monitored in real-time by call-center supervisors.

The AAPOR2 contact rate of this survey was 81%. The AAPOR2 cooperation rate of the survey was 79%. The overall response rate of the survey based on AAPOR2 was 60%.

The analysis provided in this report is based on the unweighted n=1001 sample and, unless specified otherwise, the results are based on the full sample.

**Data Quality Controls:**

The quality of the survey data collected by IranPoll was evaluated in several ways:

**First**, we compared the results of this survey with the most recent official census conducted by the Statistical Center of Iran in 2016. As the following tables illustrate some of the findings, in general there is close match between the figure of this survey and those published by the Statistical Center of Iran.

**Sex:**

Sept. 2021 survey	Sample	Census	Difference
Male	49.1	50.7	-1.6
Female	50.9	49.3	+1.6

**Age:**

Sept. 2021 survey	Sample	Census (% of 18+)	Difference
18 – 24	16.2	14.9	1.3
25 – 54	63.6	66.3	-2.7
55 +	20.2	18.8	1.4

**Ethnicity:**

Sept. 2021 survey	Sample	CIA Factbook	Difference
Persian	49.7	61	-2.0
Mazani/Gilak/Shomali	9.4		
Turk/Azeri	20.1	18	2.1
Kurd	8.3	10	-1.7
Lur	7.1	6	1.1
Arab	1.0	2	-1.0
Baluch	0.3	2	-1.7
Other	4.2	1	3.2

**Second**, we compared the results of this survey with some of the figures that have been published by other credible sources. For example, there was a close match between percentage of respondents who say they follow the news programs of BBC Persian and the viewership estimates that have been provided by BBC Persian itself:

Follow BBC Persian Satellite TV News:

Sept. 2021 survey	Sample		BBC Persian's Own Estimates
	%	Approx. Adult Population equivalent	
Yes	19.8	11.9 million	13 million
No	79.5		
DK/NA	0.7		

There was also a close match between the self-reported turnout in Iran's 2021 presidential election of the respondents and those released by Iran's Ministry of Interior. In this survey, as in most election related survey in other countries, we do see a slightly self-reported higher turnout than the actual outcome declared by Iran’s ministry of Interior:

Voted in the 2021 presidential election:

Sept. 2021 survey	Sample	Official Results	Difference
Yes	52.9	48.9	+4.0
No	46.3		
Don't know / Refused	0.8		

The electoral behavior reported by our sample also accorded well with the election’s official results. The table below offers comparisons:

Sample’s self-reported behavior		Official results of 2021 presidential election:	
Voted on election day	52.9%	Voted on election day	48.9%
Didn’t vote or can’t recall	47.1	Did not vote	51.1%
Of those who voted:		Of those who voted:	
Voted for Raisi	66.0	Voted for Raisi	62.9%
Voted for Rezaei	12.1	Voted for Rezaei	12.0
Voted for Hemmati	7.9	Voted for Hemmati	8.5
Voted for Hashemi	3.0	Voted for Hashemi	3.5
Cast an invalid ballot	8.9	Cast an invalid ballot	13.1
Don’t know/decline to answer	2.1		

The act of voting has socially desirable connotations in Iran and most other countries, and so to overreport having gone to the polls is a common phenomenon in most countries where elections are held. In this case, the overreporting is 4.0%. Similarly, there is a frequently observed



tendency in most countries to overreport having voted for the election's winner (here, Raisi), and the overreporting in this case is 3.1%.<sup>3</sup>

For the three losing candidates who were still in the race by election day, the sample's totals accord quite well with official results. For invalid ballots, underreporting the casting of them is to be expected; the underreporting is either 4.2%, or if non-responses are added to this category, 2.1%. Given that the margin of error of the survey as a whole is 3.1%, the survey offers a close match to official election results.

**Next**, we checked for data falsification using Kuriakose & Robbins' "Percent Match" technique.<sup>4</sup> The technique is grounded in a tested assertion that in a 100+ variable survey of more than 100 respondents, fewer than 5% of the respondents should have provided identical answers on more than 85% of the questions. Please note that this survey had 158 variables and 1001 respondents. The Percent Match technique produced a normal distribution, with zero interviews with a maximum percent match of 85%, and less than 2% with a maximum percent match of over 70%. These results very strongly suggest that the likelihood of data falsification in this survey is statistically close to zero.

**Then**, in another attempt to check for falsification and other irregularities, we evaluated the interview length of each respondent and the time each respondent took to answer each question and compared it to the overall average interview length and the average time it took to answer each question. This exercise did not expose any particular irregularity. As expected, in this survey no interview took less than 32 minutes to complete, most interviews as well as individual questions took a similar time to complete, and longer interviews correlated with factors such as age, education, language barriers, and place of the residence of the respondents, such that respondents who were older, less educated, spoke a language other than Farsi, and/or lived in rural areas took longer to answer each question and complete the survey than others:

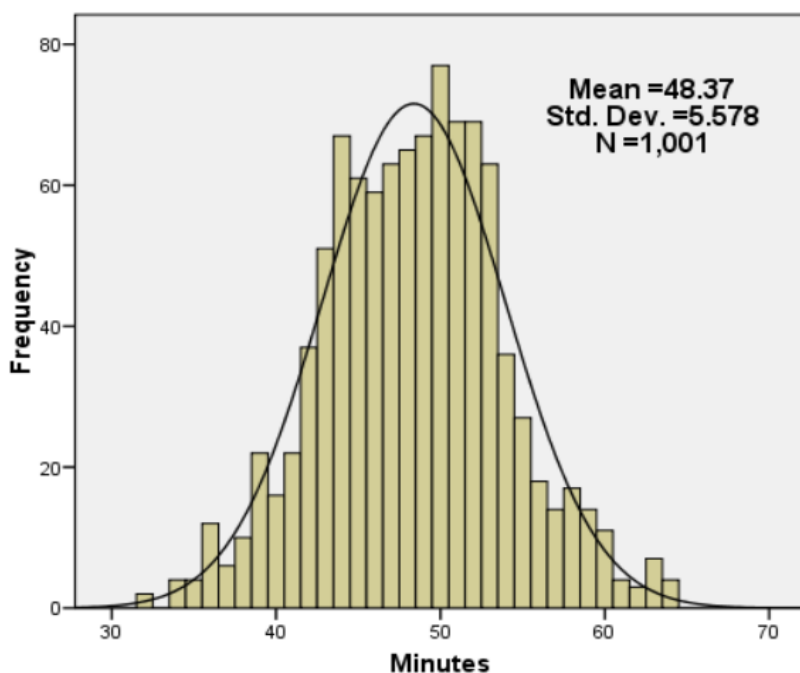
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<sup>3</sup> For more on over-reporting in favor of voting and voting for the winning candidate, read:

- Pascal Sciarini, Andreas C. Goldberg, Turnout Bias in Postelection Surveys: Political Involvement, Survey Participation, and Vote Overreporting, *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*, Volume 4, Issue 1, March 2016, Pages 110–137.
- Allyson L. Holbrook, Jon A. Krosnick, Social desirability bias in voter turnout reports: Tests using the item count technique, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 74, Issue 1, Spring 2010, Pages 37–67.
- Atkeson, L.R. "Sure, I Voted for the Winner!" Overreport of the Primary Vote for the Party Nominee in the National Election Studies. *Political Behavior* 21, 197–215 (1999).

<sup>4</sup>For more information regarding this method, see: Kuriakose, N., & Robbins, M. (2016). Don't get duped: Fraud through duplication in public opinion surveys. *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, 32, 283-291.

## Histogram



**Finally**, 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 in this survey, only 3.1% of the respondents provided answers that are systematically and fully in line with stated positions of the Iranian government, and 96.9% of the respondents provided at least one response that is strongly at odds with positions articulated in Iranian state-owned news media.