

Iranian Public Opinion on the Nuclear Agreement

A public opinion study | September 2015



Ebrahim Mohseni, Nancy Gallagher & Clay Ramsay



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL &
SECURITY STUDIES AT MARYLAND

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM)

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy conducts research, education, and outreach about how powerful trends associated with globalization are affecting international security. It focuses on strategies to increase international cooperation, especially where powerful technologies—with both beneficial and dangerous uses—are becoming widely available to states and non-state actors. To learn more about CISSM, visit www.cissm.umd.edu.

The Program for Public Consultation

The Program for Public Consultation (PPC) seeks to improve democratic governance by helping governments consult their citizenry on the key public policy issues the government faces. Unlike standard polls, in public consultations respondents are presented information that helps simulate the issues and tradeoffs faced by policymakers. PPC has been established to develop the methods and theory of public consultation and to conduct public consultations. PPC (formerly as the Program on International Policy Attitudes) has extensive experience conducting surveys in nations all over the world, especially in the Muslim world, has played a central role in the international polls for the BBC World Service, and manages WorldPublicOpinion.org, a cooperative program of public opinion research centers around the world.

IranPoll.com

IranPoll.com is an independent full-service opinion research and consultancy company headquartered in Toronto, Canada, focusing exclusively on Iran. A division of People Analytics Inc., IranPoll.com relies on its vast survey capacity to conduct and collect polling data from Iran using various modes of data collection, including a national probability sample omnibus telephone (CATI) survey that it runs every month. Building on the in-depth local knowledge of its team of experts, IranPoll.com solely relies on methods that could be objectively verified and independently replicated. Complementing its extensive field capacity, IranPoll.com is the developer of VoxIran.com, which is to date the single most comprehensive databank of Iranian opinion polls containing more than 3,000 diverse questions on 280 topics and subtopics from 185 probability sample surveys conducted from 2006 to 2015 in Iran. Through its exclusive access to VoxIran, IranPoll.com provides its clients with evidence-based consultancy on issues relating to Iran and the Iranian people.

Introduction

On July 14, 2015, the United States, the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany, and Iran announced that they had agreed on a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to resolve international concerns about Iran's nuclear program and ensure that it will be exclusively peaceful. The UN Security Council unanimously endorsed the agreement six days later. It is currently being reviewed by the U.S. Congress and by Iran's parliament, the Majlis, to determine whether their respective presidents will be able to carry out the commitments that their negotiators made.

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), in conjunction with the Program for Public Consultation (PPC), has been conducting a series of studies of American and Iranian public opinion to shed light on how actual and perceived public attitudes might be affecting the negotiation, ratification, and implementation of the JCPOA. This includes studies of U.S. attitudes at critical points during the negotiations and the congressional review which are available at <http://www.cissm.umd.edu>.

CISSM has also conducted two studies of Iranian public opinion with the University of Tehran Center for Public Opinion Research (UTCPOR). The July 2014 study focused on what types of limitations and transparency measures the Iranian public could be willing to place on their nuclear program in return for sanctions relief. The May 2015 study assessed Iranian public attitudes towards elements of a deal on which negotiators had reached agreement in Lausanne, Switzerland, as well as their assumptions regarding other aspects of a final deal and their expectations regarding benefits and risks of reaching an agreement.

The current study was conducted shortly after the JCPOA was released and approved by the U.N. Security Council. It asks many of the same questions from previous surveys to see how attitudes and expectations have changed since the nuclear deal was achieved. It also explores the relationship between Iranians' assumptions about the terms of the deal, their expectations about its benefits and risks, and their attitudes toward their current political leaders, the United States, and the other countries in the negotiations. These assumptions, expectations, and attitudes set the context in which Iranian leaders will decide whether or not to approve the deal. They may affect how quickly and fully Iranian officials carry out the steps that they have promised to take after the JCPOA has been adopted. They are also likely to influence how Iranian policymakers and the public respond to whatever actions the United States takes as it reviews the JCPOA and reassesses its policies towards Iran.

This study was designed, managed, and analyzed by the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), in conjunction with the Program for Public Consultation, both of which are at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland. The data was collected by IranPoll.com, an independent Toronto-based polling company, by calling into Iran from Canada.

Methodology

The survey was fielded by IranPoll.com between August 8 and August 18, 2015. The overall sample size is n=1,000, giving a sampling margin of error of +/- 3.2%.

The sample was an RDD sample drawn from all landline telephones line in Iran. The sample was 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.

All calls were made from Toronto, Canada, into Iran. 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. The contact rate, defined as the proportion of respondents who were reached and ultimately agreed to be interviewed relative to the number of respondents attempted, was 67%. The completion rate was 85%.

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

Summary of Findings

1. Iran - P5+1 Nuclear Agreement (page 5)

Vast majorities of Iranians approve of the nuclear agreement that was reached between Iran and the P5+1 countries in Vienna, whereas only a fifth disapprove of it. While about a third sees the agreement as mostly a victory for Iran, over four in ten see it as beneficial for both Iran and the P5+1, though Iran is perceived to have made fewer concessions. Iranians overwhelmingly approve of the performance of their negotiators. A majority of Iranians are optimistic that both the UN Security Council and the United States are likely to act in good faith and remove sanctions as the deal requires. Nevertheless, three in four continue to believe that the Majlis (Iran's parliament) should be able to prevent the agreement from taking effect if it finds the terms to be at odds with Iran's national interests. Also, almost all Iranians continue to believe that it is very important for Iran to develop its nuclear program.

2. Views of Rouhani (page 7)

As a result of the nuclear agreement, a large majority says it now has a better opinion of President Hassan Rouhani. As Iran's parliamentary elections near, three in five Iranians now want Rouhani's supporters to win, while only about one in five favor his critics. President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Javad Zarif's already high approval ratings have risen even more since the agreement was reached while their opponents' popularity has declined slightly.

3. Misperceptions about the Nuclear Agreement (page 9)

While Iranians have a positive view of the nuclear agreement, they also underestimate the scope and extent of the commitments Iran has made under the deal. Substantial majorities incorrectly believe that according to the agreement:

- all U.S. sanctions, not just nuclear-related ones—will be lifted eventually;
- the sanctions on Iran will start to be lifted either before or at the same time as Iran takes most of the steps it has agreed to take under the deal;
- Iran has not agreed to any limitations on its nuclear research and development activities;
- the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) cannot inspect Iranian military sites under any conditions.

Those who hold these misperceptions are far more supportive of the deal than those who don't. Among those who don't hold these misperceptions, support is lower, but generally half or more still approve of the deal. Also, Rouhani supporters are more likely to hold these misperceptions than critics.

4. High Expectations about Positive Effects of the Deal (page 12)

Iranians express high expectations that the nuclear deal will have significant positive effects in the near term. Growing majorities say that as a result of the deal they expect to see, within a year, better access to foreign medicines and medical equipment, significantly more foreign investment, a significant drop in Iran's unemployment rate, and tangible improvement in living standards. Almost three in five Iranians now think that the economic conditions in Iran are getting better. Half of Iranians now think that rather than aiming to achieve self-sufficiency, Iran should strive to increase its trade with other countries—up from four in ten a year ago.

5. Iran's Relations with the United States in the Wake of the Deal (page 14)

A majority of Iranians believes that relations with the United States will improve after the nuclear deal. Several trend questions show strong shifts on views of the United States. A majority no longer believes that Iran's nuclear concessions will likely lead the United States to use pressure to extract more concessions on other issues. Majorities approve of Iran and the United States collaborating with each other to help the government of Iraq and counter ISIS. Large majorities continue to say that they have an unfavorable view of the United States, but a growing number believe that Iran and the United States should strive to mitigate conflicts between the two countries.

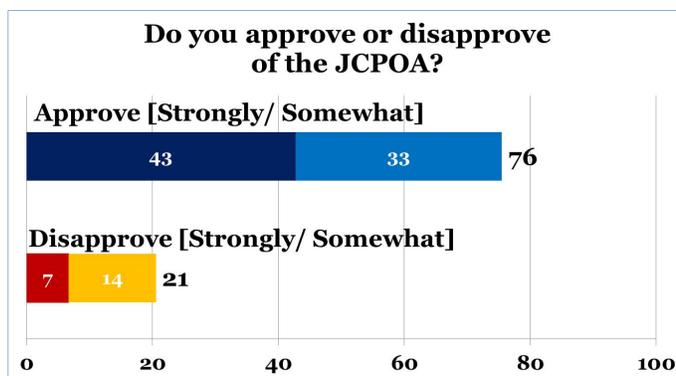
6. Changing Views of Other Countries and Economic Relations (page 17)

Iranians show warming attitudes toward the P5+1 countries as a whole and toward Europe. A plurality now says that it trusts the P5+1 countries, and large majorities say they expect relations with Europe to improve. Iranians also believe that as a result of the agreement, other countries view their country with more respect. Views of all P5+1 countries have become a bit more favorable and majorities now have favorable attitudes toward Germany, Russia, and China. Iranians are also showing increasing openness to economic relations with other countries.

1. Iran - P5+1 Nuclear Agreement

Vast majorities of Iranians approve of the nuclear agreement that was reached between Iran and the P5+1 countries in Vienna, whereas only a fifth disapprove of it. While about a third sees the agreement as mostly a victory for Iran, over four in ten see it as beneficial for both Iran and the P5+1, though Iran is perceived to have made fewer concessions. Iranians overwhelmingly approve of the performance of their negotiators. A majority of Iranians are optimistic that both the UN Security Council and the United States are likely to act in good faith and remove sanctions as the deal requires. Nevertheless, three in four continue to believe that the Majlis (Iran’s parliament) should be able to prevent the agreement from taking effect if it finds the terms to be at odds with Iran’s national interests. Also, almost all Iranians continue to believe that it is very important for Iran to develop its nuclear program.

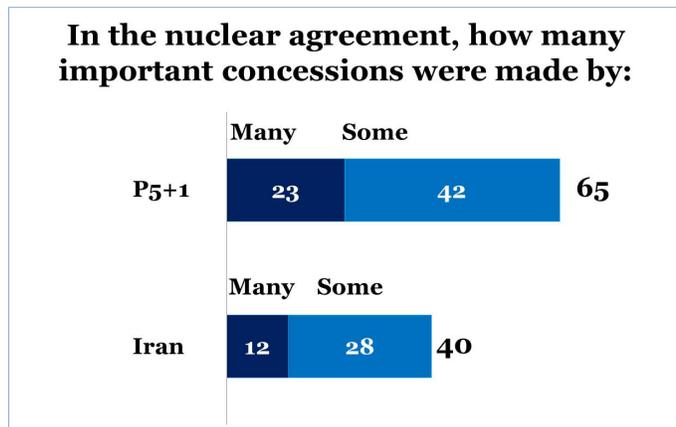
Overwhelming majorities of Iranians approve of the nuclear agreement that was reached between Iran and the P5+1 countries in Vienna. When asked whether they approve of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), 76% of respondents said that they do (43% strongly), while only 20% said that they disapprove of it.



Most Iranians see the agreement as either mutually beneficial for Iran and the P5+1 countries (43%) or as “mostly a victory” for Iran (37%). Less than a fifth (18%) regard the agreement as “mostly a loss” for Iran.

Iran is perceived to have made fewer concessions than the P5+1. While two-thirds believe the P5+1 made many (23%) or some (42%) important concessions to the P5+1, only four in ten believe that Iran made many (12%) or some (28%) important concessions to the P5+1.

Thus, it is not surprising that Iran’s negotiators get high marks. When asked, “Thinking about Iran’s representatives who negotiated with the P5+1 countries, how well or badly do you think they performed?” eight in ten (82%) of Iranians said that Iranian negotiators performed well (42% very) during the negotiations, and only 14% said that they performed badly.



Iranians are now even more optimistic than they were in May that the UN Security Council and the United States will act in good faith and remove their sanctions and restrictions on Iran as the deal requires. Nine in ten expect the UN

Security Council to lift its sanctions on Iran in accordance with the deal. A smaller majority (66%) thought it very (20%) or somewhat (46%) likely that the United States would do the same, up from 60% in May 2015. A significant minority (33%) disagreed on that point, though only 6% said the United States was “not likely at all” to lift any sanctions.

Asked, “Is it your impression that the United States has or has not agreed to refrain from imposing new sanctions on Iran to replace the ones it is required to remove under the agreement?” six in ten thought the United States has agreed, while 27% thought that it has not.

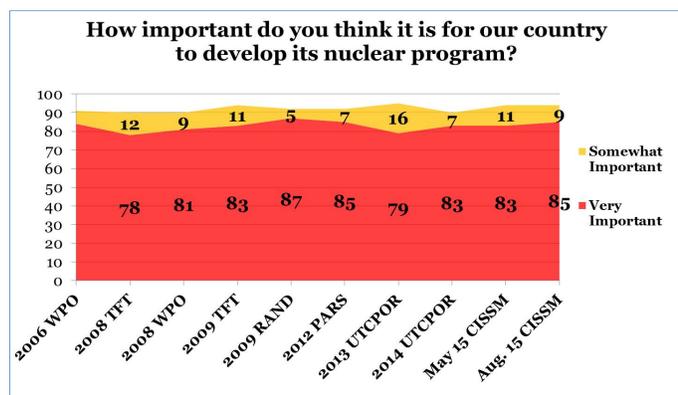
Iranian beliefs have also shifted about how the United States will react as other countries engage in nuclear cooperation with Iran to build new nuclear reactors and supply Iran with nuclear fuel. Respondents were asked:

As you may know, according to the agreement, other countries would be permitted to cooperate with Iran on building new nuclear reactors and supplying Iran with nuclear fuel. In your opinion, is it more likely that the United States will accept other countries cooperating with Iran in this way, or that the United States will try to impede such cooperation?

The response was divided, with half (49%) of Iranians thinking that the United States would accept other countries cooperating with Iran in this way, and 47% thinking that the United States was likely to be obstructive. Expectations of U.S. interference were down 21 points from May 2015 when 68% expected that the United States would try to impede nuclear cooperation with Iran.

Despite their strong endorsement of the nuclear agreement, Iranians continue to believe that it is appropriate for their parliament to have a role in reviewing the JCPOA. Asked, “If the Majlis arrives at the conclusion that the deal between our country and P5+1 countries is at odds with our country’s national interests, should the Majlis be able to prevent such an agreement from taking place or not?” three in four (77%) said the Majlis should be able to block it (down from 81% in May 2015), and only 16% said it should not have that power.

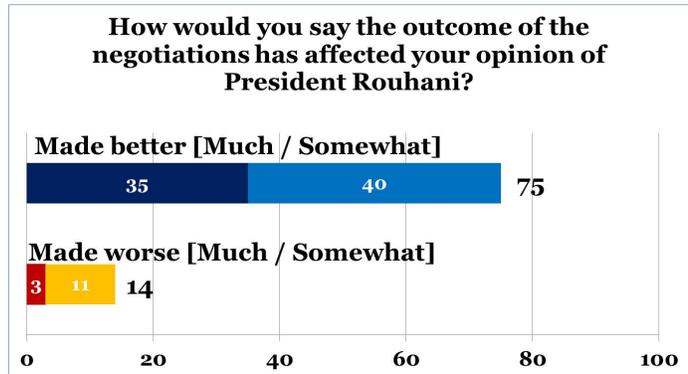
Strong support for the JCPOA does not reflect any loss of public support for Iran’s nuclear program. More than eight in ten (85%) believe it is very important for Iran to develop its nuclear program, and another 9% believe it is somewhat important. Similar questions have been asked since 2006 and have consistently shown very high support (about 8 in 10).



2. Views of Rouhani

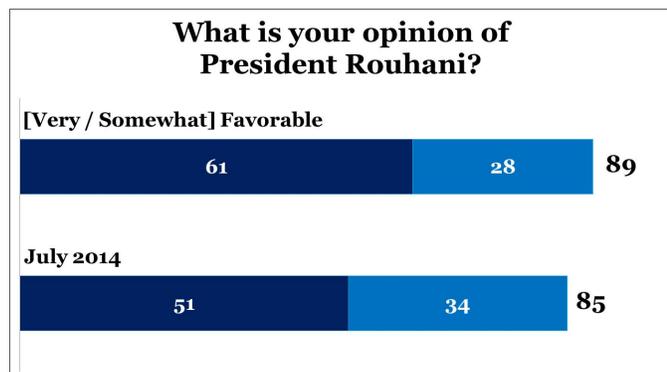
As a result of the nuclear agreement, a large majority says it now has a better opinion of President Hassan Rouhani. As Iran’s parliamentary elections near, three in five Iranians now want Rouhani’s supporters to win, while only about one in five favor his critics. President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Javad Zarif’s already high approval ratings have risen even more since the agreement was reached while their opponents’ popularity has declined slightly.

As a result of the deal, a large majority says its opinion of President Rouhani has improved. Asked “How would you say the outcome of the negotiations has affected your opinion of President Rouhani?” three in four (75%) say the deal has made their opinion of President Rouhani much (35%) or somewhat (40%) better, and only 14% says it negatively affected their opinion.



When Iranians were asked to think ahead to the February 2016 parliamentary elections, they preferred a strong result for President Rouhani’s supporters by a three-to-one margin. Sixty percent said they preferred most of the Majlis to be composed of Rouhani supporters (up from 50% in May 2015), while 22% preferred it to be mostly composed of his critics.

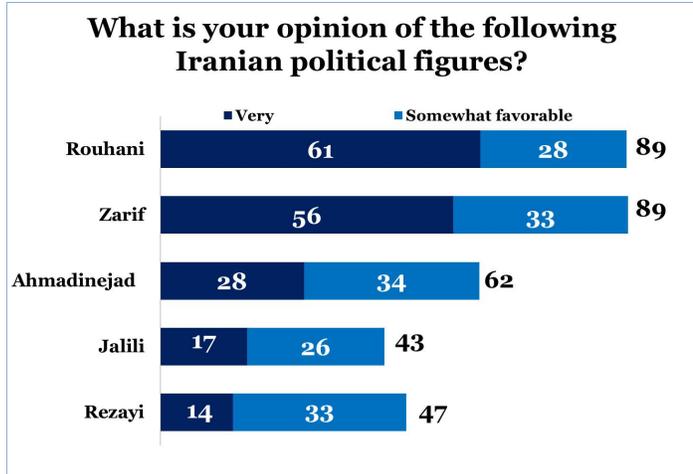
President Rouhani’s overall approval rating has also improved significantly. A large majority (61%) now has a very favorable view of President Rouhani (up from 51% in July 2014). Another 28% say they have somewhat favorable opinions, and only 9% express negative feelings toward him.



Favorable attitudes toward Foreign Minister Zarif, who negotiated the agreement, have also increased dramatically. Fifty-six percent of Iranians now have a very favorable opinion of Zarif, up from 40% in July 2014. Another 33% say they view Zarif somewhat favorably and only 5% say they have an unfavorable view. Unfavorable views of Zarif have fallen from 16% to 5% since July 2014.

As favorability ratings for Rouhani and Zarif have risen, those of their political opponents have dropped. Former Iranian President Ahmadinejad’s favorability rating has decreased 6 points since July 2014, from 67% to 61%; 35% presently express unfavorable feelings toward him.

A plurality (43%) have positive views of Saeed Jalili, who competed against Rouhani in the recent presidential election and was Iran’s chief negotiator prior to Zarif, while 28% have unfavorable views, and 23% say they do not recognize his name. Mohsen Rezayi, another Iranian figure who competed against Rouhani, is viewed favorably by a plurality (47%) of Iranians (14% very), while 36% view him negatively.



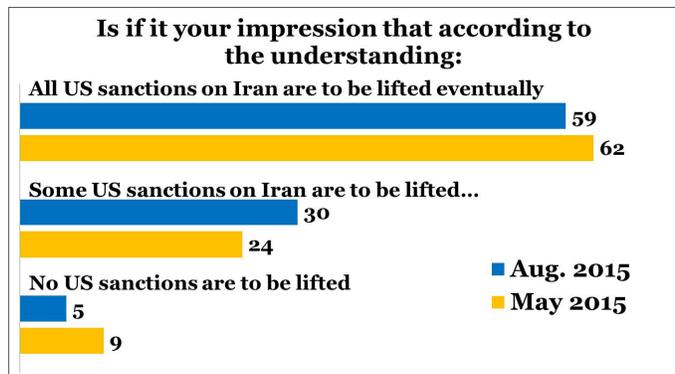
3. Misperceptions about the Nuclear Agreement

While Iranians have a positive view of the nuclear agreement, they also underestimate the scope and extent of the commitments Iran has made under the deal. Substantial majorities incorrectly believe that according to the agreement:

- all U.S. sanctions, not just nuclear-related ones—will be lifted eventually;
- the sanctions on Iran will start to be lifted either before or at the same time as Iran takes most of the steps it has agreed to take under the deal;
- Iran has not agreed to any limitations on its nuclear research and development activities;
- the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) cannot inspect Iranian military sites under any conditions.

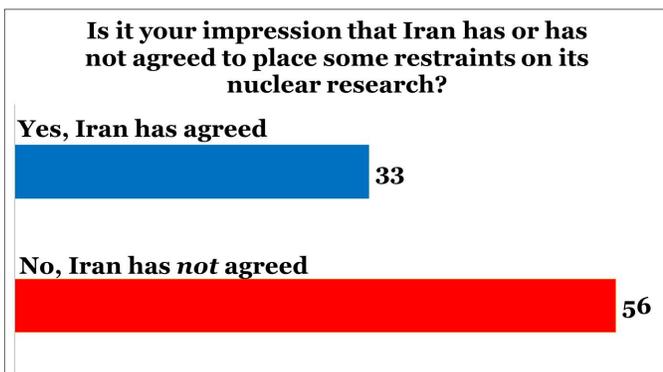
Those who hold these misperceptions are far more supportive of the deal than those who don't. Among those who don't hold these misperceptions, support is lower, but generally half or more still approve of the deal. Also, Rouhani supporters are more likely to hold these misperceptions than critics.

In addition to Iranians' positive view of the deal, including their perception that Iran made fewer concessions than the P5+1, they also hold important misperceptions on several key aspects of the nuclear agreement. Contrary to the terms of the JCPOA, a majority (59%) of Iranians believe that all U.S. sanctions—not just those related to Iran's nuclear program—are to be eventually lifted. Only three in ten correctly believe that some U.S. sanctions will be lifted, but that other U.S. sanctions will continue. A small minority (5%) believes that no U.S. sanctions will be lifted.



Iranians are also generally misinformed about the JCPOA's implementation sequence. Three in four (77%) believed that the lifting of sanctions will start before (33%) or at the same time (44%) as Iran takes most of the steps it has agreed to under the agreement. Only 16% of Iranians correctly believed that the sanctions will not be lifted until Iran verifiably completes most of its commitments under the deal.

Many Iranians also seem to be unaware that the JCPOA imposes restrictions on Iran's nuclear research and development. Asked, "Is it your impression that



according to the agreement Iran has or has not agreed to place some restraints on its nuclear research?” a majority (56%) believed that Iran has not agreed to place restraints on its nuclear program, while 33% said that it has.

Finally, a large majority (61%) of Iranians believed that under the agreement, the IAEA cannot inspect Iranian military sites under any conditions. Only a quarter (25%) correctly believed that the agreement allows the IAEA to perform inspections on military sites under certain circumstances. Seven percent of respondents believed the agreement allows the IAEA to inspect military sites whenever it thinks it is necessary.



Effect of Assumptions on Support for the Agreement. Iranians’ beliefs about the terms of the JCPOA are strongly predictive of their degree of support, or lack thereof, for the nuclear agreement. In general, those who have misperceptions about the agreement are substantially more likely to support it than those who appear to be more informed.

Those who think sanctions on Iran will start to be lifted before or while it fulfills its commitments are much more likely to support the deal than those who correctly believe that the sanctions won’t be lifted until the IAEA verifies that Iran has fulfilled most of its nuclear commitments. Ninety percent of those who think the sanctions will be lifted before Iran takes its steps, and 85% of those who think they will be removed at the same time as Iran’s steps, support the agreement; only three in ten (30%) of those who know that sanctions won’t be lifted until after Iran takes its steps approve of the deal.

Likewise, support for the JCPOA is substantially higher among those who think that it calls for all U.S. sanctions on Iran to be eventually lifted. Ninety-three percent of those who believe this support the agreement, while only a bare majority (51%) of those who know that some U.S. sanctions unrelated to Iran’s nuclear program will remain in place approve of it.

Support for the nuclear deal is also strongly correlated with perceptions about whether Iran has agreed to restrain its nuclear research and development activities. Nine in ten of those who think that Iran has not agreed to any limitations on its nuclear research approve of the agreement, while those who correctly believe that Iran has accepted some constraints are divided, with 50% approving the deal and 47% disapproving it.

Perceptions of the IAEA’s inspection and access privileges under the terms of the agreement are also strongly predictive of support for the deal. Ninety-two percent of those who think the IAEA cannot inspect military sites under any conditions, 51% of those who think (correctly) that the IAEA can perform limited inspections on military sites under specific conditions, and only 39% of those who think the agreement allows the IAEA to inspect military sites whenever it thinks it is necessary approve of the nuclear agreement.

Misperceptions Highest Among Rouhani Supporters. Iranians who want Rouhani's supporters to win control of the Majlis have significantly higher misperceptions about the nuclear deal, compared to those who want Rouhani's critics to win:

- Of those who want Rouhani's supporters to win most of the Majlis seats, 82% believe incorrectly that sanctions on Iran will begin to be lifted before or at the same time as Iran fulfills most of its commitments under the deal; of those who want Rouhani's critics to win, a lesser 67% believe this.
- Of those who want Rouhani's supporters to win, two-thirds (66%) believe incorrectly that all U.S. sanctions are to be lifted eventually as part of the deal; on the other side, a lesser 42% believe this.
- Of those who want Rouhani's supporters to win, 63% incorrectly believe that Iran has not agreed to restrain its nuclear research activities under the deal; on the other side, a minority (46%) believes this.
- Of those who want Rouhani's supporters to win, two-thirds (68%) incorrectly believe that under the deal the IAEA cannot inspect Iranian military sites, regardless of the circumstances; of those who want Rouhani's critics to win, a lesser 42% believe this.

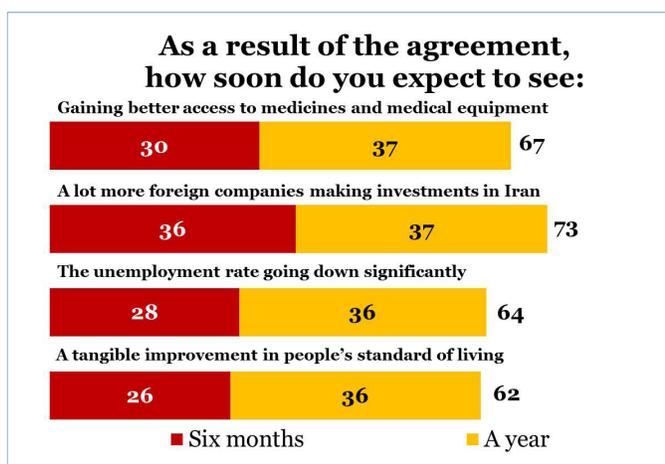
News Sources and Varying Perceptions. Interestingly, Iranians' sources of news are significantly correlated with their perceptions on these issues. As compared to those who do not follow the news programs of BBC or Voice of America (VOA) on satellite television, those who do follow BBC or VOA are more likely to think the deal has more favorable conditions for Iran than is really the case. But this may reflect an optimistic predisposition about the deal among those inclined to consume news from abroad rather than incorrect information being conveyed by international media.

- Those who said they follow the BBC or VOA news programs were significantly more likely to think that as part of the deal, all U.S. sanctions would be lifted than were those who do not watch these programs. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents who watch BBC or VOA believed that all U.S. sanctions would be lifted, while a lesser 56% of those who do not watch them had that impression.
- Just 11% of those who follow the BBC or VOA news programs knew that the lifting of sanctions is contingent on Iran fulfilling most of its commitments under the deal; a higher 18% of those who do not follow these programs knew this.
- Sixty-one percent of those who follow the BBC or VOA news programs believed that Iran has not agreed to place some limitations on its nuclear research activities, but a lesser 54% of those who do not follow BBC or VOA had this perception.

4. High Expectations about Positive Effects of the Deal

Iranians express high expectations that the nuclear deal will have significant positive effects in the near term. Growing majorities say that as a result of the deal they expect to see, within a year, better access to foreign medicines and medical equipment, significantly more foreign investment, a significant drop in Iran’s unemployment rate, and tangible improvement in living standards. Almost three in five Iranians now think that the economic conditions in Iran are getting better. Half of Iranians now think that rather than aiming to achieve self-sufficiency, Iran should strive to increase its trade with other countries—up from four in ten a year ago.

Iranians have high, and perhaps unrealistic, expectations about the positive effects of the agreement, and these expectations seem to be growing. The survey asked respondents how long it would take to see certain changes in the country, now that an agreement has been reached:



- A substantial majority (67%) expected to see Iranians gaining greater access to foreign-made medicines and medical equipment in a year or less (up from 61% in May 2015). Thirty percent said six months or less; 26% thought two years or more.
- A larger majority (73%) expected to see “a lot more foreign companies making investments in Iran” in a year or less (up from 62% in May 2015). Thirty-six percent said six months or less; 18% thought this would take two years or more.
- Over three in five (63%) expected to see “the unemployment rate going down significantly” in a year or less (up from 52% in May 2015). Twenty-eight percent said six months or less; about a quarter (26%) thought this would take two years or more.
- Finally, 63% of Iranians expected to see “tangible improvement in people’s standard of living” in a year or less (up from 55% in May 2015). Twenty-six percent said six months or less; 29% thought this would take two years or more.

Attitudes about how rapidly a nuclear deal will lead to change in Iran are strongly related to support for the deal. Those who believe it will bring about swift economic improvements in Iran, are substantially more likely to approve of the deal, by 7 to 34 points. In the most vivid example, while 87% of those who expect “tangible improvement in people’s standard of living” within six months approve of the JCPOA, only 53% of those who think this will take more than two years support it.

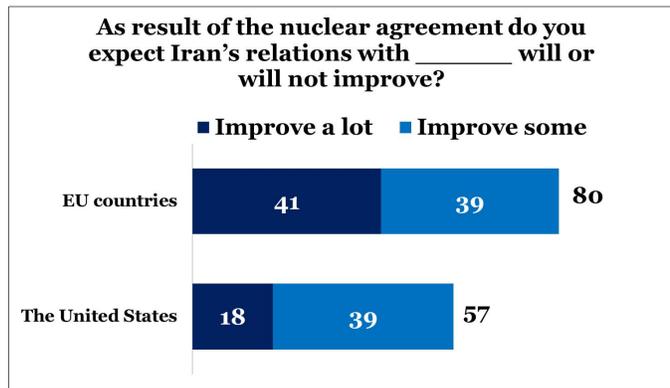
As in the May 2015 study, President Rouhani's supporters tend to have higher expectations about the nuclear deal, compared to critics of the president. For instance, of those who want Rouhani's allies to win most of the Majlis seats, two-thirds (67%) expect to see "the unemployment rate going down significantly" within a year or less after the agreement; among Rouhani's critics, 55% expect this.

Since the agreement was announced, Iranians have also expressed greater optimism and higher expectations regarding the Iranian economy. For the first time since at least 2013, a majority (57%) of Iranians thinks that the economic conditions in Iran are getting better (up from 49% in May 2015). Only three in ten (29%) think that they are getting worse, while 9% see them as unchanged.

5. Iran’s Relations with the United States in the Wake of the Deal

A majority of Iranians believes that relations with the United States will improve after the nuclear deal. Several trend questions show strong shifts on views of the United States. A majority no longer believes that Iran’s nuclear concessions will likely lead the United States to use pressure to extract more concessions on other issues. Majorities approve of Iran and the United States collaborating with each other to help the government of Iraq and counter ISIS. Large majorities continue to say that they have an unfavorable view of the United States, but a growing number believe that Iran and the United States should strive to mitigate conflicts between the two countries.

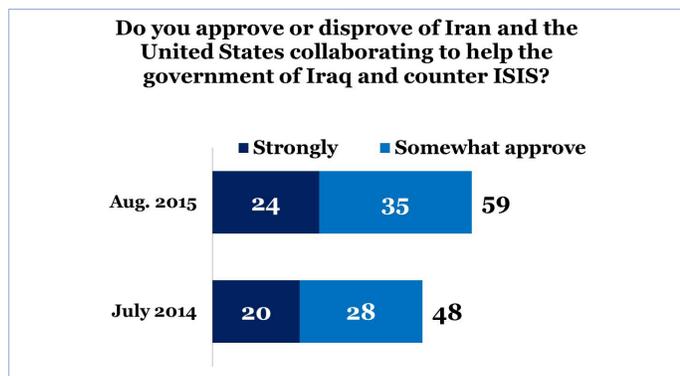
Majorities of Iranians believe that the nuclear deal will result in better relations between Iran and the United States. Fifty-seven percent believe that as a result of the nuclear agreement, they expect Iran’s relations with the United States to improve a lot (18%) or some (39%), while 39% believe the deal will improve the relations between Iran and the United States just a little (18%) or not at all (21%).



A growing majority of Iranians also believes that Iran and the United States must strive to resolve their differences. Asked, “To what degree are you of the opinion that Iran and the United States should strive to mitigate the conflict and the differences between the two countries?” 47% said Iran and the United States should strive for this “a lot” (up from 38% in May 2015), 32% said “somewhat,” and only 20% said “not much” or “not at all.”

Since the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, there has been much discussion in the United States as to whether the United States and Iran should coordinate their help to the Iraqi government. As in July 2014, Iranian respondents were asked the following question:

As you may know, ISIS has brought under its control large sections of Iraq’s territory. Iran and the United States have both declared that they will support the legitimate government of Iraq in order to preserve Iraq’s territorial integrity and counter ISIS. To what degree would you approve or disapprove Iran and the United States collaborating with one another to help the legitimate government of Iraq and counter ISIS?



In July 2014, Iranians were roughly divided on this question. This survey, however, finds that a majority of Iranians (59%) approve of Iran and the United States collaborating to help the Iraqi government counter ISIS (24% strongly), while only 38% disapprove.

Since the JCPOA was agreed, the proportion of Iranians who think that it is possible to find common ground between the Muslim world and the West has slightly increased. Respondents were offered a choice between two positions about relations between Islamic civilization and Western civilization:

—Islamic and Western religious and social traditions are incompatible with each other, and conflict between the two is inevitable; or

—Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants, so it is possible to find common ground.

Respondents were asked which position was closer to their own. Six in ten Iranians identified with the position that it is possible to find common ground between the Islamic world and the West (59%, up from 55% in May 2015). Less than a third (30%) picked the position that conflict between Islamic and Western traditions is inevitable (down from 35% in May). When the same question was asked by WorldPublicOpinion.org in February 2008, 64% indicated that it was possible to find common ground, only 12% chose the position that conflict is inevitable, while 24% said that they don't know.

A substantial shift has also occurred in how Iranians think the United States will behave now that Iran has made some significant concessions in the nuclear agreement. As in July 2014 and May 2015, Iranians were asked to ponder how the United States would respond if it gained some of what it wanted from Iran. This time, the question read:

As you may know, our country has many problems and differences with the United States, including with respect to the nuclear issue. Now that Iran has provided concessions on the nuclear issue in return for the lifting of sanctions, do you think this is:

—More likely to make the United States more accommodating in other areas of contention,

—More likely to make the United States rely on pressures and sanctions to extract concessions from Iran in other areas as well,

—Or is it your opinion that Iran's concession on the nuclear issue will not have much of an effect on other issues between the two countries?

Only about a quarter (27%) of respondents believed that the United States would likely use diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions to extract concessions from Iran outside the nuclear field. This represents a substantial drop of 24 points, from 51% in a similar question asked in May, before the agreement was concluded. Another 30% said that Iran's concessions are more likely to lead the United States to be more accommodating—up from 18% in May. And 32% thought it would make no difference either way—up from 22% in May.

Despite these shifts, Iranians continue to have strong negative feelings toward the United States—though these negative feelings have softened slightly since the agreement. Sixty-seven percent of Iranians have an unfavorable view of the United States today, and a majority (52%) has very unfavorable views. Thirty-one percent has a favorable view (very 9%). This is only marginally less negative than in May 2015 (70% unfavorable vs. 28% favorable).

6. Changing Views of Other Countries and Economic Relations

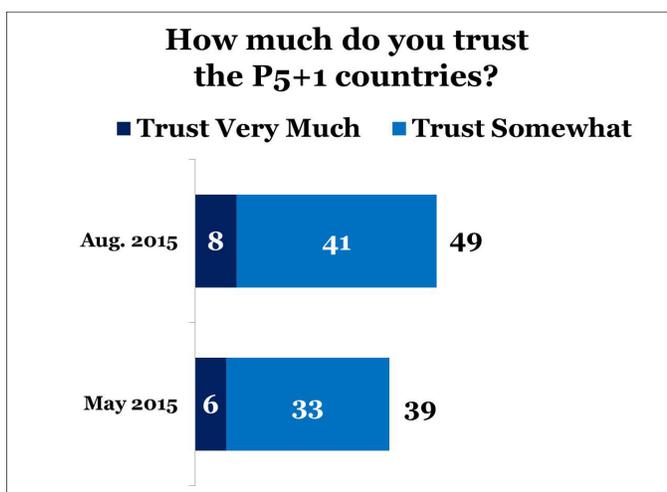
Iranians show warming attitudes toward the P5+1 countries as a whole and toward Europe. A plurality now says that it trusts the P5+1 countries, and large majorities say they expect relations with Europe to improve. Iranians also believe that as a result of the agreement, other countries view their country with more respect. Views of all P5+1 countries have become a bit more favorable and majorities now have favorable attitudes toward Germany, Russia, and China. Iranians are also showing increasing openness to economic relations with other countries.

Since the agreement, Iranian attitudes toward European and P5+1 countries have warmed. An overwhelming majority (90%) of Iranians expected that as a result of the deal, Iran’s relations with European countries will improve “a lot” (41%) or some (39%). Less than a fifth (18%) believed that the deal will have little or no impact on Iran’s relations with European countries.

Iranians also express more confidence in the P5+1 than before the deal. A plurality (49%) said that they trust the P5+1 “very much” (8%) or somewhat (41%)—up from 39% in May 2015. Nevertheless, 46% of Iranians continued to express distrust of the P5+1.

Iranians also believe that as a result of the deal, other countries view Iran with greater respect. Asked:

Now I would like to ask you a question in regards to how other countries view Iran as a result of the achieved nuclear agreement. Do you think other countries now and as a result of the achieved nuclear agreement, view Iran with: much more respect, somewhat more respect, with somewhat less respect, much less respect, or do you think the nuclear agreement has not affected how other countries view Iran?



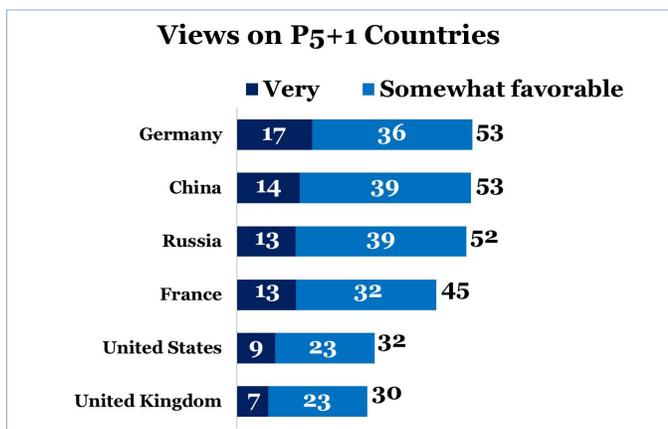
Seventy-seven percent said as a result of the agreement other countries view Iran with “much more” (36%) or “somewhat more” (41%) respect, while 17% believed that the deal has diminished other countries’ respect for Iran.

When views of the P5+1 are disaggregated and Iranians are asked about individual countries, noticeable shifts appear in Iranian attitudes. Favorable views of the United Kingdom—long one of the most distrusted nations in the Iranian worldview, on a par with the United States—have crept up from 28% to 30% since May 2015, and negative feelings toward the United Kingdom have decreased from 69% to 65%. And as reported in the preceding section, favorable views of the United States have also increased slightly.

Views of France show this pattern as well. A plurality of Iranians remained negative in their feelings, with 49% viewing France unfavorably, yet this is down 6 points since May 2015. Forty-five percent said they view France favorably (very 13%), up from 41%.

A majority now has favorable views toward Germany. Fifty-three percent view Germany favorably (17% very)—up from 48% in May 2015—and 40% unfavorably (23% very).

Attitudes toward China and Russia have also improved recently. Fifty-three percent of Iranians view China favorably (14% very), while 40% view it unfavorably (22% very). The minority that views China very favorably has grown from 9% to 14% since May 2015. Views of Russia have improved the most since the agreement, with 52% currently having a favorable view (13% very)—up 9 points—and 44% having an unfavorable view (27% very).



Iranians’ attitudes about being economically engaged with the world seem to be changing. Since the survey question was first asked in 2006, Iranians consistently prioritized achieving economic self-sufficiency over economic integration with the rest of the world. But when asked in this survey whether Iran should primarily “strive to achieve economic self-sufficiency” or “strive to increase mutual economic trade with other countries,” half the respondents said Iran should strive to increase its trade (50%, up from 43% in July 2014), while 48% maintained that it was more important for Iran to strive to achieve economic self-sufficiency (down from 53% in July 2014).