



CRITICAL ISSUES POLL

Americans Want Iran War to End Now Even with Goals Unachieved

Only 1 in 5 Back Using Force to Prevent Iran Nukes

University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll

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Most Americans want the war with Iran to end now. They want any unachieved objectives only through non-military means. And only one in five Americans back using force to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Furthermore, one in four Americans say the war initiated by the US and Israel is legal according to US law, while one in five say it's legal under international law.

Half of Democrats and one third of independents say the US is responsible for some reparations to Iran. Only 15% of Americans say the US is winning the war, while six out of ten Americans say the war has been more negative than positive for US interests.

These are some of the findings in the latest [University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll](#), fielded with Ipsos among a sample of 1,019 US adults, July 17-20, 2026, with a margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points.

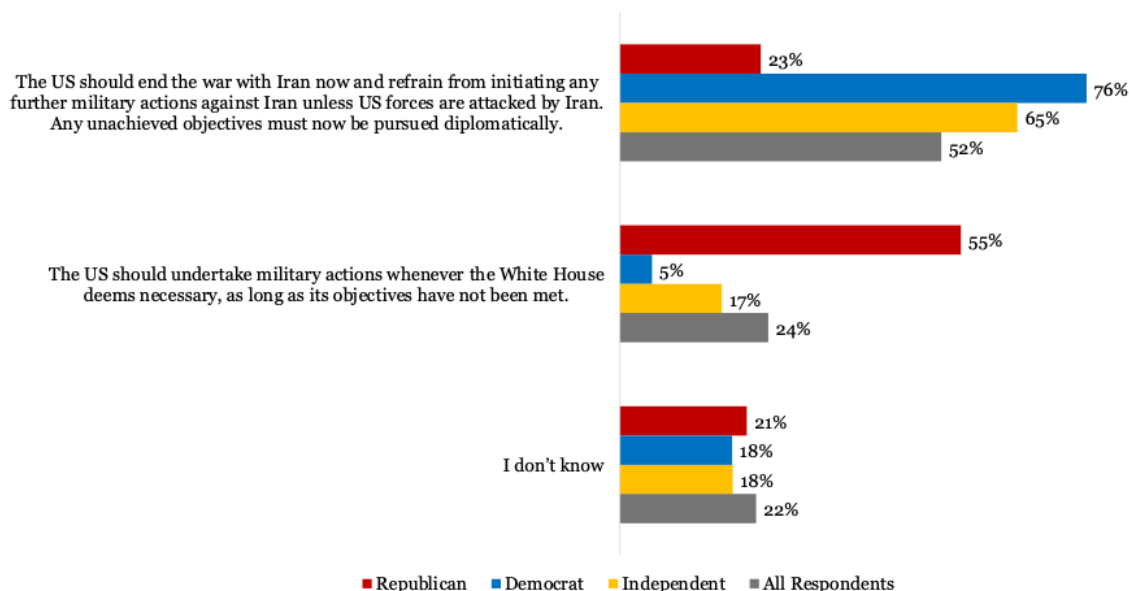
Here are some key takeaways:

Americans Want War to End Now, Even Without Achieving Objectives

Fifty-two percent of all respondents – including 76% of Democrats, 65% of independents, and 23% of Republicans – say that the US should end the war with Iran now and refrain from initiating any further military actions against Iran unless US forces are attacked by Iran. Any unachieved objectives must now be pursued diplomatically. In contrast, 24% of all respondents – including 55% of Republicans, 17% of independents, and 5% of Democrats – say the US should undertake military actions whenever the White House deems necessary, as long as its objectives have not been met. Twenty-two percent of respondents say they don’t know.

Note that the question about ending the war didn’t identify any particular objectives, since the administration has articulated different objectives over time, but referred comprehensively to “any unachieved objectives.”

Q. As you may know, fighting between the US and Iran has been renewed recently, possibly risking further military escalation. Which of the following is closer to your view?



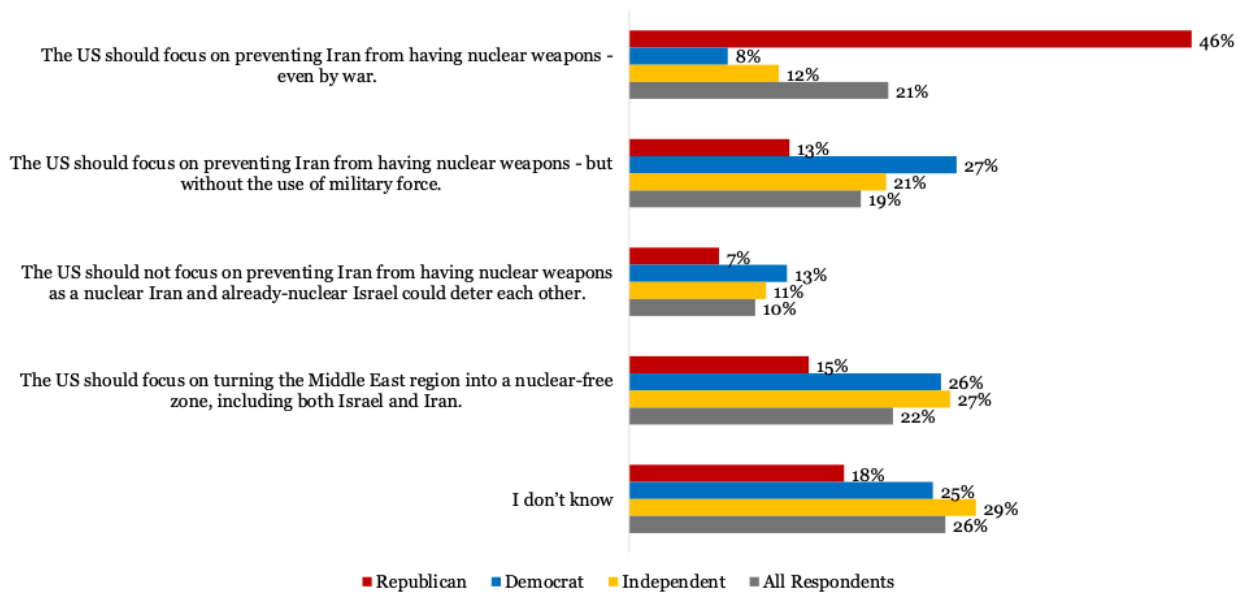
Source: University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll with Ipsos fielded July 17 to July 19, 2026 among 1,019 U.S. adults with a margin of error +/- 3.4 percentage points

Americans Don’t Want to Use Force to Prevent Iran Nukes

Only one in five Americans – including 46% of Republicans, 12% of independents, and 8% of Democrats – say the US should focus on preventing Iran from having nuclear weapons “even by war.” In contrast, 19% – including 27% of Democrats, 21% of independents, and 13% of Republicans – say the US should focus on preventing Iran from having nuclear weapons “without the use of military force.”

Notably, 22% of respondents – including 27% of independents, 26% of Democrats, and 15% of Republicans – say the US should focus instead on turning the Middle East region into a nuclear-free zone, including both Israel and Iran. At the same time, 10% – including 13% of Democrats, 11% of independents, and 7% of Republicans – say the US should not focus on preventing Iran from having nuclear weapons as a nuclear Iran and already-nuclear Israel could deter each other. One out of four respondents say they don't know.

Q. Israel is known to have nuclear weapons while many believe that Iran may be trying to develop such weapons. Which of the following is closer to your view?



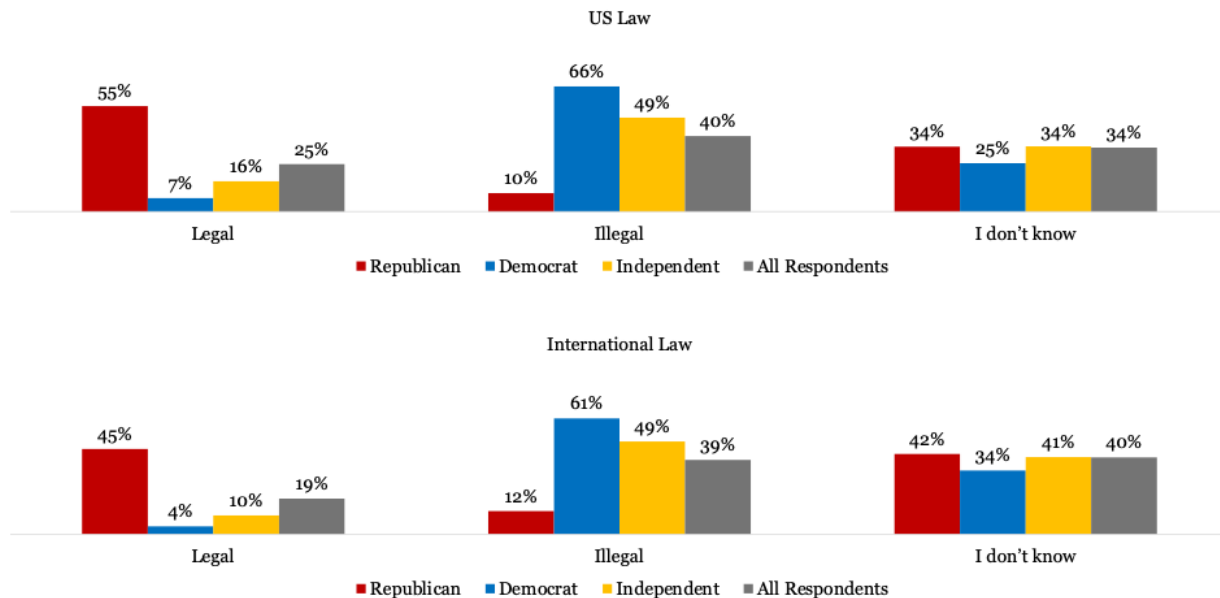
Source: University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll with Ipsos fielded July 17 to July 19, 2026 among 1,019 U.S. adults with a margin of error +/- 3.4 percentage points

Pluralities Say War Is Illegal According to Both US and International Law

Only one out of four Americans say the war with Iran is legal under US law, including 55% of Republicans, 16% of independents, and 7% of Democrats. In contrast, 40% say the war is illegal, including 66% of Democrats, 49% of independents, and 10% of Republicans. A third of Americans say they don't know.

An even smaller percentage of Americans, 19%, say the war is legal according to international law, including 45% of Republicans, 10% of independents, and 4% of Democrats. In contrast, 39% say the war is illegal according to international law, including 61% of Democrats, 49% of independents, and 12% of Republicans. Forty percent of all respondents say they don't know.

Q. Do you believe that the war initiated by the US and Israel on Iran on February 28, 2026, was legal or illegal?



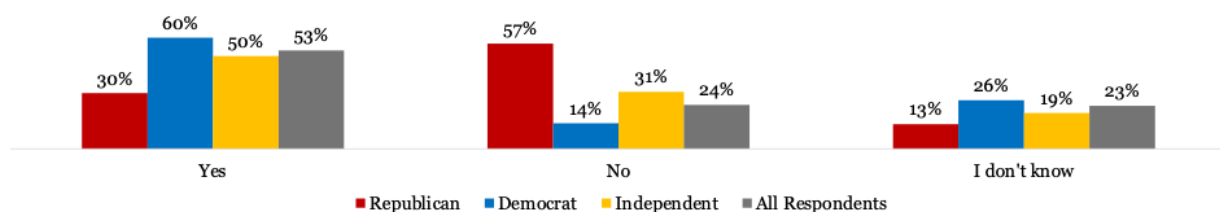
Source: University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll with Ipsos fielded July 17 to July 19, 2026 among 1,019 U.S. adults with a margin of error +/- 3.4 percentage points

A Majority of Americans Who Believe the War Is Illegal Say the US Should Be Responsible for Some Reparations to Iran

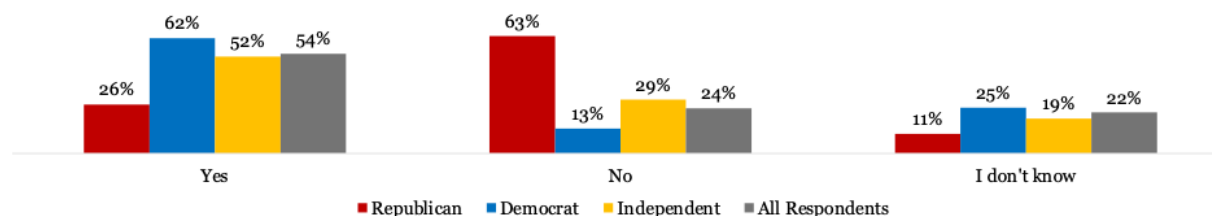
Among Americans who say the war on Iran is illegal according to either US or international law, a majority of respondents (53-54%) say the United States should be responsible in some way for reparations to Iran for damage caused by the war, while 24% say the US should not be responsible and 22-23% say they don't know. In contrast with Democrats and independents, majorities of Republicans who say the US war is illegal under either US or international law say the US should not be responsible for reparations.

Q. Should the United States be responsible in some way for reparations to Iran for damage caused by the war?

Among those who said the war is illegal under US law



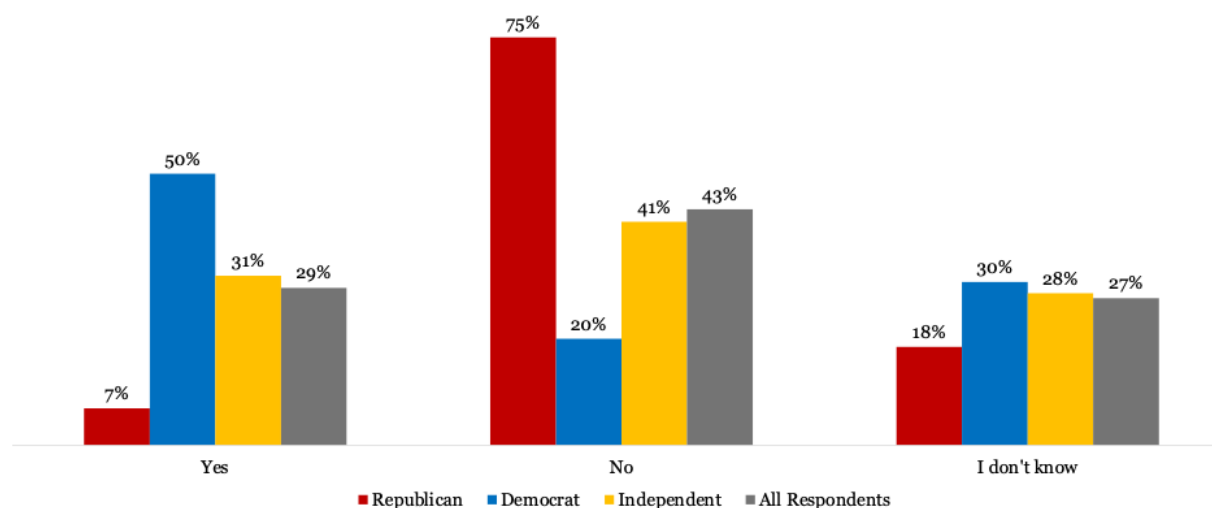
Among those who said the war is illegal under international law



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Among all Americans, including those who say the war is legal, 29% say the US should be responsible for reparations, including 50% of Democrats, 31% of independents, and 7% of Republicans. At the same time, 43% say the US should not be responsible for reparations, including 75% of Republicans, 41% of independents, and 20% of Democrats. More than one in four Americans say they don't know.

Q. Should the United States be responsible in some way for reparations to Iran for damage caused by the war?



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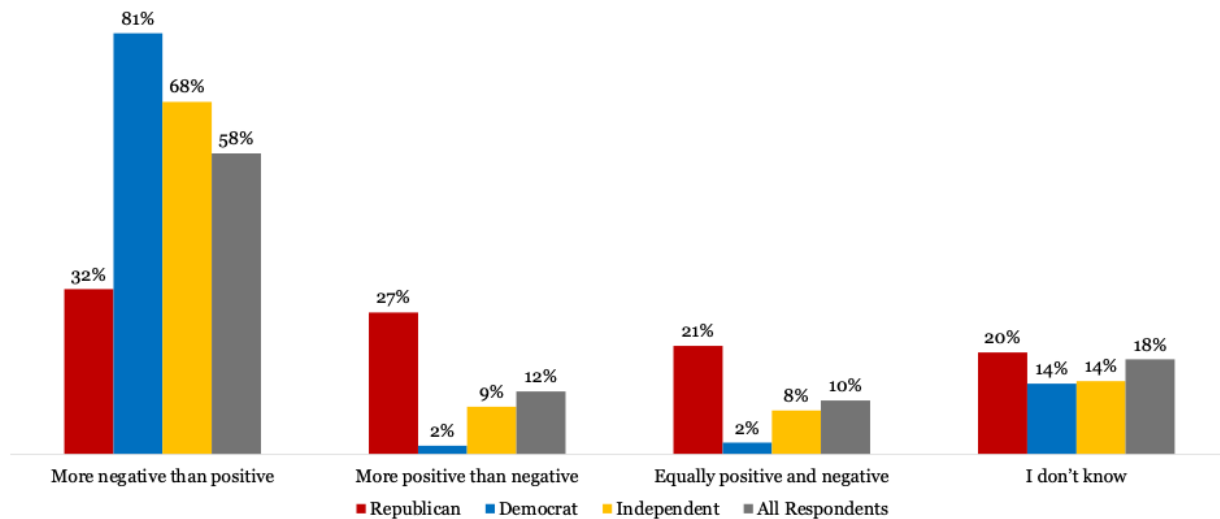
Americans Say War Has Negatively Impacted American Interests

Fifty-eight percent of Americans say the Iran war has impacted American interests more negatively than positively, including 81% of Democrats, 68% of independents, and 32% of Republicans. In contrast, 12% of Americans – including 27% of Republicans, 9% of

independents, and 2% of Democrats – say the war’s impact has been more positive than negative.

Notably, more Republicans, 32%, say the war’s impact has been more negative than say the impact has been more positive, 27%.

Q. In your opinion, what has been the overall impact of the war on Iran so far on American interests, at home and abroad?

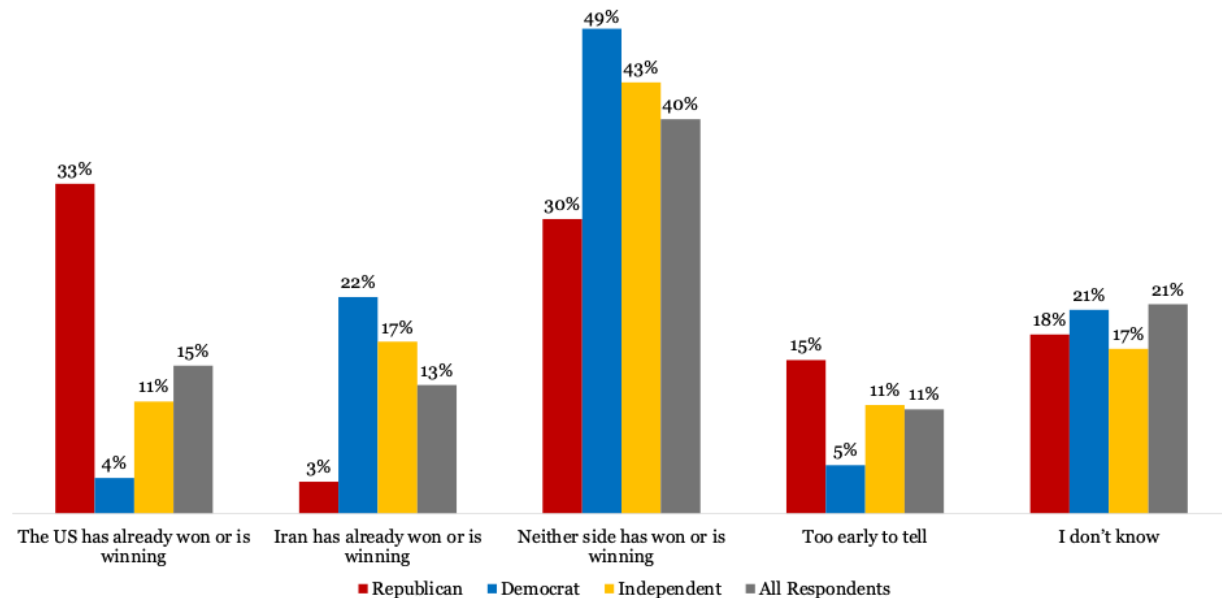


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Few Americans Believe the US Has Won or Is Winning the War

Few Americans believe that either the US or Iran is winning the war: Only 15% of Americans say the US has already won or is winning the Iran war, including 33% of Republicans, 11% of independents, and 4% of Democrats; while 13% say Iran is winning the war, including 22% of Democrats, 17% of independents, and 3% of Republicans. A plurality, 40%, say neither the US nor Iran is winning, including 49% of Democrats, 43% of independents, and 30% of Republicans. One out of five Americans say they don't know.

Q. In your opinion, what has been the outcome of the war that the US and Israel initiated on Iran on February 28, 2026?



Source: University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll with Ipsos fielded July 17 to July 19, 2026 among 1,019 U.S. adults with a margin of error +/- 3.4 percentage points

Conclusion

The latest poll reinforces findings by our previous polls as well as many others documenting continued American public disapproval of the war initiated by the US and Israel on Iran, dissatisfaction with the outcome so far, and pessimism about its future impact. But three findings are striking in this round of polling:

The first is that the public's preference for the war to end now is divorced from any objectives the Trump administration has used as a justification. The public wants the war to end now even without achieving any unachieved objectives, preferring that these now be pursued without war. None of the justifications for war are landing.

The second striking finding is related: While the public seems to see the aim of preventing Iran from having nuclear weapons to be worthy, Americans don't want the US to use force in pursuing it, preferring other means, including the pursuit of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East that includes both Israel and Iran, as well as other states in the region.

This finding is notable in that the nuclear issue has been framed in our public discourse as justifying the use of force, if necessary, with [President Trump](#) echoing the [Prime Minister of Israel](#) in claiming that Iran would use such weapons if it acquired them. But that does not appear to have swayed much of the public in favor of military action.

Finally, the public's openness to US reparations to Iran is striking: Three out of ten Americans say the US should be responsible for some reparations to Iran, including half of Democrats, as well as majorities of those who say the war is illegal according to either US or international law. This goes beyond dissatisfaction with the consequences for US interests, reflecting that the war has also offended many Americans' sense of values.