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Republicans and Democrats Grow Even Further Apart in Views of Israel, Palestinians

Netanyahu remains a deeply polarizing figure in the U.S.

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Republicans and Democrats Grow Even Further Apart in Views of Israel, Palestinians

Netanyahu remains a deeply polarizing figure in the U.S.

The partisan divide in Middle East sympathies, for Israel or the Palestinians, is now wider than at any point since 1978. Currently, 79% of Republicans say they sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians, compared with just 27% of Democrats.

Since 2001, the share of Republicans sympathizing more with Israel than the Palestinians has increased 29 percentage points, from 50% to 79%. Over the same period, the share of Democrats saying this has declined 11 points, from 38% to 27%.

The latest national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted Jan. 10-15 among 1,503 adults, finds that 42% say Donald Trump is “striking the right balance” in the situation in the Middle East, while 30% say he favors Israel too much (just 3% say Trump sides too much with the Palestinians; 25% do not offer an opinion).

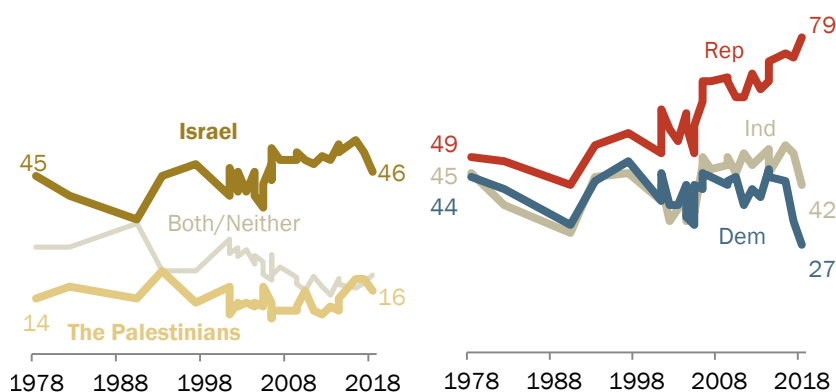
At a similar point in Barack Obama’s presidency, 47% of Americans said he had struck a proper balance in dealing with the Middle East; 21% said he sided too much with the Palestinians, while 7% said he favored Israel too much.

The survey finds that while Republicans and Democrats are deeply divided in views of Israel, so too do they differ markedly in opinions about Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister.

Partisan divide in Middle East sympathies now wider than at any point in the past four decades

In the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, who do you sympathize with more? (%)

Sympathize with Israel, by party (%)



Notes: 1978-1990 data from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. Both/Neither responses are volunteered. Don't know responses not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Nearly three times as many Republicans (52%) as Democrats (18%) have favorable impressions of Israel's leader.

About half of Americans say a two-state solution is possible in the Middle East: 49% say a way can be found for Israel and an independent Palestinian state "to coexist peacefully," while 39% say this is not possible. Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to say a two-state solution is possible (58% vs. 40%).

Republicans increasingly sympathize with Israel; Democrats are divided

When asked about the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, 46% of Americans say they sympathize more with the Israelis, 16% say they sympathize more with the Palestinians and about four-in-ten (38%) either volunteer that their sympathies are with both (5%), neither (14%) or that they do not know (19%). The overall balance of opinion has fluctuated only modestly since 1978, when 45% said they sympathized more with Israel, 14% with the Palestinians and 42% could not decide.

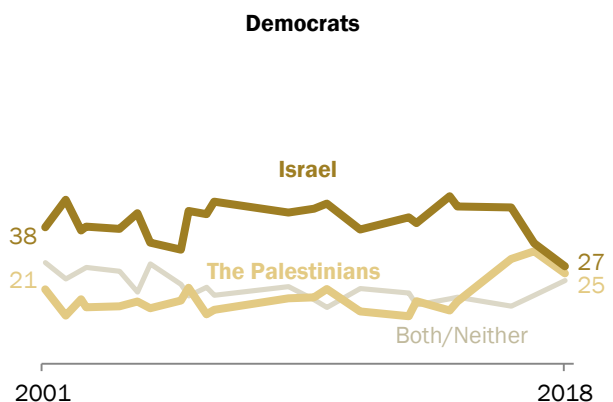
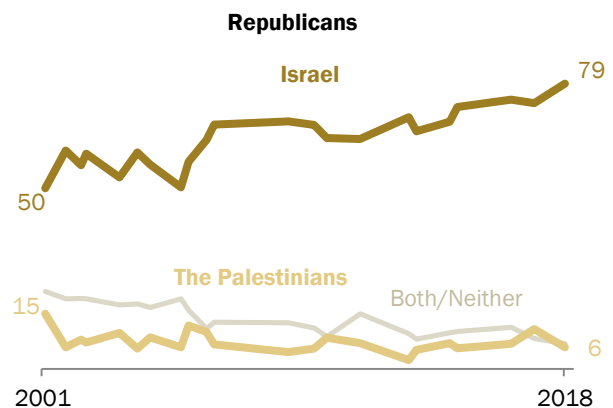
But the partisan divide has widened considerably, especially over the past two decades. The share of Republicans who sympathize with Israel has never been higher, dating back four decades.

Nearly eight-in-ten Republicans (79%) sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians, while just 6% sympathize more with the Palestinians; another 7% say they sympathize with both or neither, while 9% say they do not know.

As was the case last year, Democrats are divided in views of the Middle East conflict:

Democrats about as likely to sympathize with Palestinians as with Israel

In the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, which side do you sympathize with more? (%)



Notes: Both/Neither responses are volunteered. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Currently, 27% of Democrats say they sympathize more with Israel, while 25% say they sympathize more with the Palestinians; another 23% say they sympathize with neither or both sides and one-quarter (25%) say they don't know. Democrats also were divided last year, when 33% said they sympathized with Israel and 31% said the Palestinians. Since then, the share of Democrats saying they don't know has increased from 17% to 25% and the share saying they sympathize with both or neither has ticked up slightly from 19% to 23%.

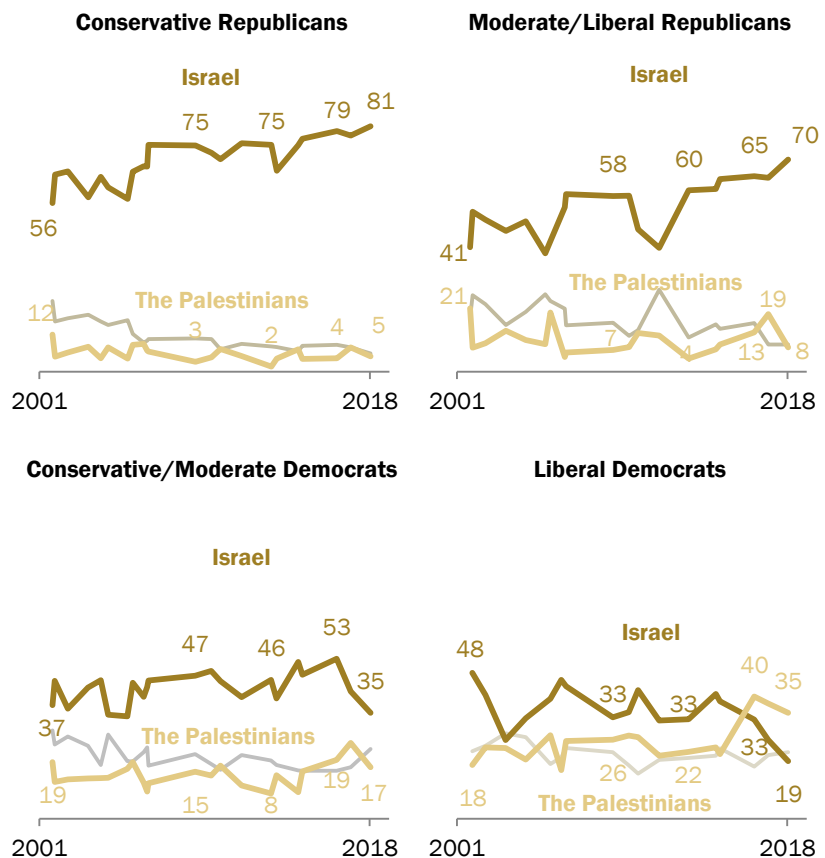
As recently as two years ago, in April 2016, Democrats were more likely to sympathize more with Israel (43%) than with the Palestinians (29%), with 16% saying they sympathized with both or neither.

Among Democrats, the decline over the last few years in those who say they sympathize more with Israel is seen both among liberals and among conservatives and moderates.

The share of liberal Democrats who sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians has declined from 33% to 19% since 2016. Currently, nearly twice as many liberal Democrats say they sympathize more with the Palestinians than with Israel (35% vs. 19%); 22% of liberal Democrats sympathize with both sides or neither side and 24% do not offer an opinion.

Nearly twice as many liberal Democrats sympathize more with the Palestinians than with Israel

% who say they sympathize more with ...



Notes: Both/Neither responses are volunteered. Don't know responses not shown. Small sample size (N=93) for Moderate/Liberal Republicans.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Moderate and conservative Democrats continue to sympathize more with Israel (35%) than the Palestinians (17%). However, the share of conservative and moderate Democrats who sympathize more with Israel has declined 18 percentage points since 2016 (from 53% to 35%).

There has been less change since 2016 among Republicans: Large majorities of both conservative Republicans (81%) and moderate and liberal Republicans (70%) continue to say they sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians.

As in the past, there are wide religious differences in Middle East sympathies. White evangelical Protestants continue to overwhelmingly sympathize with Israel: 78% say this, while just 5% sympathize more with the Palestinians.

Other religious groups sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians, though by much smaller margins. Religiously unaffiliated people are divided: 29% sympathize more with the Palestinians, 26% more with Israel and 24% say they side with both or neither.

Young people are more divided than older adults in

Wide religious differences in views of Israel and the Palestinians

% who say they sympathize more with ...

	Israel	The Palestinians	Neither/Both
Total	46	16	20
Men	50	17	19
Women	42	14	20
White	51	16	17
Black	42	12	18
Hispanic	33	13	30
18-29	32	23	19
30-49	42	15	24
50-64	56	12	19
65+	56	13	14
Postgraduate	39	22	26
College graduate	42	27	17
Some college	45	14	23
HS or less	51	9	17
White evang Prot	78	5	7
White mainline Prot	48	16	19
Black Prot	40	10	20
Catholic	43	12	23
Unaffiliated	26	29	24

Notes: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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where their sympathies lie in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. About a third of those under 30 (32%) say they sympathize more with Israel, compared with 23% who sympathize more with the Palestinians. Those in older age groups sympathize more with Israel by wide margins.

Nearly half of Democrats say Trump favors Israel too much

At this early point in his term, a plurality (42%) of Americans say that Trump is “striking the right balance” when it comes to Middle East policy. Three-in-ten (30%) say Trump favors Israel too much, while just 3% say Trump favors the Palestinians too much; 25% do not offer an opinion.

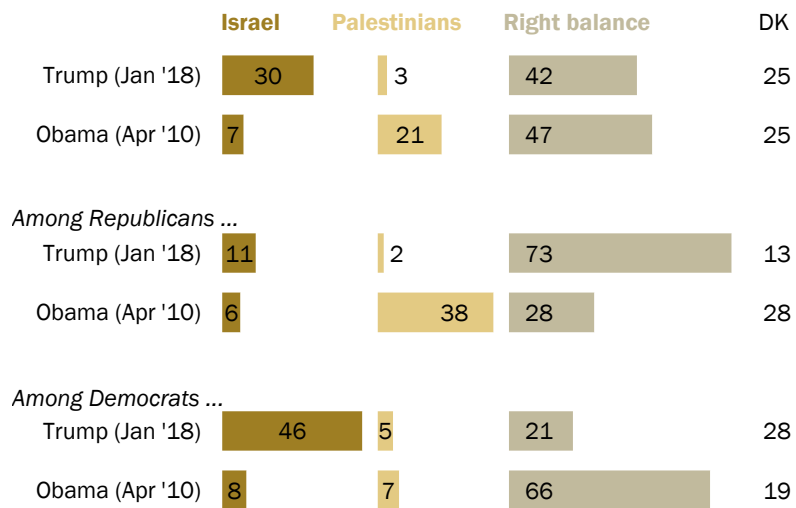
At a roughly comparable point in Obama’s presidency (April of his second year in office), 47% said he struck the right balance, while more said he favored the Palestinians (21%) than Israel (7%) too much.

Today, nearly half of Democrats (46%) say Trump favors Israel too much, while just 21% say he is striking the right balance. In 2010, more Republicans said Obama supported the Palestinians too much (38%) than said he struck the right balance.

Trump gets high marks from his own party for handling the Middle East (73% of Republicans say he is striking the right balance). Eight years ago, 66% of Democrats said the same about Obama.

Nearly as many say Trump is ‘striking right balance’ in Middle East as said that about Obama in 2010

Thinking about the situation in the Middle East these days, do you think the president is favoring Israel too much, favoring the Palestinians too much, or striking about the right balance? (%)



Note: Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Views of Netanyahu little changed

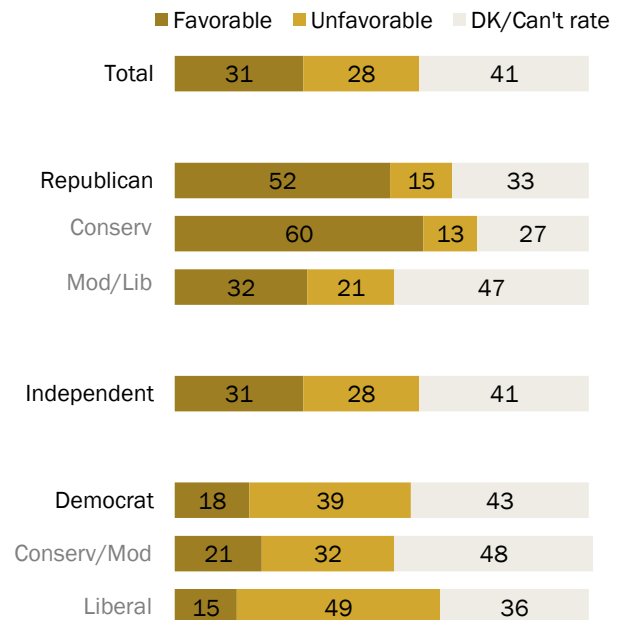
Opinions of Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, are basically unchanged from last year. About as many say they have a favorable view (31%) as an unfavorable opinion (28%) of Netanyahu; 41% express no opinion of Israel's prime minister.

Republicans, particularly conservative Republicans, have positive views of Netanyahu on balance. Six-in-ten conservative Republicans (60%) view Netanyahu favorably, while just 13% have an unfavorable opinion.

Democrats' views of Netanyahu are much more negative. And among liberal Democrats, more than three times as many have an unfavorable view of Netanyahu (49%) than a favorable opinion (15%).

Deep ideological differences in views of Benjamin Netanyahu

% who have a ___ view of Benjamin Netanyahu



Notes: Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Small sample size (N=93) for Moderate/Liberal Republicans. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Prospects for two-state solution in the Middle East

Americans continue to be divided in their views of whether or not a way can be found for Israel and an independent Palestinian state to coexist peacefully. About half (49%) say that it is possible, while about four-in-ten (39%) say it is not.

Views about prospects for a two-state solution are correlated with Middle East sympathies: Among those who sympathize more with Israel, 40% say a way can be found for Israel and an independent Palestinians state to coexist peacefully. Among those who sympathize more with the Palestinians, 64% say a two-state solution is possible.

Opinions on peaceful, two-state solution associated with Middle East sympathies

Can a way be found for Israel and an independent Palestinian state to coexist peacefully, or not?

	Yes %	No %	Depends/ DK %
Total	49	39	13=100
18-29	60	28	11=100
30-49	50	40	10=100
50-64	41	47	12=100
65+	44	38	18=100
Postgraduate	49	40	11=100
College graduate	52	39	9=100
Some college	49	37	14=100
HS or less	46	40	14=100
Republican	40	51	9=100
Independent	49	40	11=100
Democrat	58	31	11=100
<i>Sympathize more with ...</i>			
Israel (46%)	40	51	9=100
Palestinians (16%)	64	28	8=100

Notes: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Acknowledgements

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted January 10-15, 2018 among a national sample of 1,503 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (376 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,127 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 718 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers under the direction of Abt Associates. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2016 Census Bureau's American Community Survey one-year estimates and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2016 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,503	2.9 percentage points
Republicans	404	5.7 percentage points
Democrats	496	5.1 percentage points
Independents	514	5.0 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
JANUARY 2018 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
JANUARY 10-15, 2018
N=1,503**

QUESTIONS 1-2, 5-7, 11a, 12-16, 30 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 3-4, 9-10, 11b, 17-27, 29, 31-38

QUESTIONS 8, 11c-e, 28, 39a HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Q.39 Next, is your overall opinion of **[INSERT NAME; RANDOMIZE]** very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? How about **[NEXT NAME]? [IF NECESSARY: Just in general, is your overall opinion of [NAME] very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable?]** **[INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE."]**

	-----Favorable-----			-----Unfavorable-----			(VOL.)	(VOL.)
	Total	Very	Mostly	Total	Very	Mostly	Never heard of	Can't rate/Ref
b. Vladimir Putin								
Jan 10-15, 2018	16	3	13	68	36	32	6	10
Jan 4-9, 2017	19	3	16	69	36	33	6	7
Feb 18-22, 2015	12	2	10	70	41	29	10	8
c. Benjamin Netanyahu								
Jan 10-15, 2018	31	13	18	28	10	18	28	13
Jan 4-9, 2017	34	11	23	32	13	20	23	11
Mar 25-29, 2015	31	10	20	28	10	18	28	13
Feb 18-22, 2015	38	13	24	27	10	17	23	12

QUESTIONS 40-44, 49-50, 72-73 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS A1, A5, 46-48, 51-52, J23-J28, 57-71, 74-79

QUESTIONS A2-A4, 45, 53-56, J22, J29, A6-A8 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

On a different subject ...

Q.80 In the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, which side do you sympathize with more, Israel or the Palestinians?

	Israel	Palestinians	(VOL.) Both	(VOL.) Neither	(VOL.) DK/Ref
Jan 10-15, 2018	46	16	5	14	19
Jan 4-9, 2017	51	19	5	13	12
Apr 12-19, 2016	54	19	3	13	10
Jul 8-14, 2014	51	14	3	15	18
Apr 23-27, 2014	53	11	3	16	17
Mar 13-17, 2013	49	12	3	12	24
Dec 5-9, 2012	50	10	4	13	23
May 25-30, 2011	48	11	4	15	21
Apr 21-26, 2010	49	16	4	12	19
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	51	12	4	14	19
January 7-11, 2009	49	11	5	15	20
May, 2007	49	11	5	17	18

Q.80 CONTINUED...

	<u>Israel</u>	<u>Palestinians</u>	<u>(VOL.) Both</u>	<u>(VOL.) Neither</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
August, 2006	52	11	5	15	17
July, 2006	44	9	5	20	22
May, 2006	48	13	4	14	20
Late October, 2005	43	17	5	16	19
July, 2005	37	12	5	19	27
July, 2004	40	13	7	18	22
Late February, 2004	46	12	8	15	19
Mid-July, 2003	41	13	8	18	20
June, 2002	46	12	6	19	17
April, 2002	41	13	6	21	19
Mid-October, 2001	47	10	8	18	17
Early September, 2001	40	17	6	23	14
September, 1997	48	13	5	16	18
September, 1993	45	21	3	18	12
Chicago CFR: 1990	34	14	7	26	20
Chicago CFR: 1982	40	17	8	19	16
Chicago CFR: 1978 ¹	45	14	9	18	15

ASK ALL:

Q.81 Thinking about the situation in the Middle East these days, do you think Donald Trump is **[RANDOMIZE: favoring Israel too much; favoring the Palestinians too much]** or striking about the right balance?

	<u>Favoring Israel too much</u>	<u>Favoring the Palestinians too much</u>	<u>Striking about the right balance</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
Trump				
Jan 10-15, 2018	30	3	42	25
Obama				
Aug 20-24, 2014	13	22	49	16
Apr 23-27, 2014	9	22	45	24
Mar 13-17, 2013	9	21	41	29
May 25-30, 2011	6	21	50	24
Apr 21-26, 2010	7	21	47	25
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	7	16	51	26
Jun 10-14, 2009	6	17	65	14

ASK ALL:

Q.82 Do you think a way can be found for Israel and an independent Palestinian state to coexist peacefully with each other, or not?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>(VOL.) Depends</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
Jan 10-15, 2018	49	39	2	11
Jan 4-9, 2017	53	39	2	6
Apr 12-19, 2016	50	42	3	6
Aug 20-24, 2014	43	48	2	7
Apr 23-27, 2014	46	44	2	9
Spring 2013 (GA)	50	41	*	9

NO QUESTIONS 83-89

¹ In the 1978 Chicago Council on Foreign Relations survey conducted by the Gallup Organization, results are based on respondents who said they had "heard or read about the situation in the Middle East," which represented 87% of the public. As a context note, in both the 1978 and 1982 CCFR/Gallup surveys, this question followed a broader question: "In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with Israel or more with the Arab nations?" and in 1982, a question regarding "U.S. military aid and arms sales to Israel."

QUESTION 90 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
Jan 10-15, 2018	26	33	34	3	1	3	12	18
Nov 29-Dec 4, 2017	20	32	40	4	1	3	13	19
Oct 25-30, 2017	22	32	41	3	1	2	17	19
Jun 8-Jul 9, 2017	25	31	39	3	1	2	16	18
Apr 5-11, 2017	24	31	42	2	1	*	17	20
Feb 7-12, 2017	23	34	37	3	1	2	15	18
Jan 4-9, 2017	25	28	41	4	*	1	18	19
Yearly Totals								
2017	23.6	31.4	39.4	3.3	.6	1.7	15.8	18.7
2016	25.4	32.0	36.5	3.4	.5	2.2	14.6	17.0
2015	23.7	30.4	40.1	3.6	.4	1.8	16.4	17.3
2014	23.2	31.5	39.5	3.1	.7	2.0	16.2	16.5
2013	23.9	32.1	38.3	2.9	.5	2.2	16.0	16.0
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:

(GA)

Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project