

Americans Continue to Say the US Should Stay Impartial in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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As Israel's strongest ally, top trading partner, and [largest supplier of military aid](#), the United States has been deeply embroiled in what is now considered one of the [deadliest and most destructive conflicts](#) in recent history: the Israel-Hamas war. Uploaded to social media, raw footage and firsthand accounts of the war have greatly resonated with and elicited strong emotions in Americans, sparking protests across major cities and college campuses in the United States.

A February 16–18, 2024 Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Ipsos survey reveals that most Americans still prefer the United States remain impartial when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but a growing number are choosing sides. Attitudes toward the conflict have become more polarized between partisan groups and within the Democratic base, in particular.

Key Findings

- The share of Americans that prefer the United States remain neutral in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (56%) has declined by eight percentage points since September 2023 (64%) but remains considerable.
- A majority of Republicans now say the United States should take Israel's side (56%) in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while majorities of Democrats (62%) and Independents (60%) continue to say the United States shouldn't take either side.
- Five in 10 Americans (53%) support placing restrictions on US military aid to Israel so that it cannot use that aid toward military operations against Palestinians.

- Americans are now 14 percentage points less likely to say the US security relationship with Israel strengthens US national security (50%, down from 64%).
- Democrats and Independents are evenly divided on the value of the US-Israeli security relationship (47% and 46%, respectively, say strengthen), while the majority of Republicans continue to say it benefits the United States (64%), though to a lesser degree than previously recorded (76%).

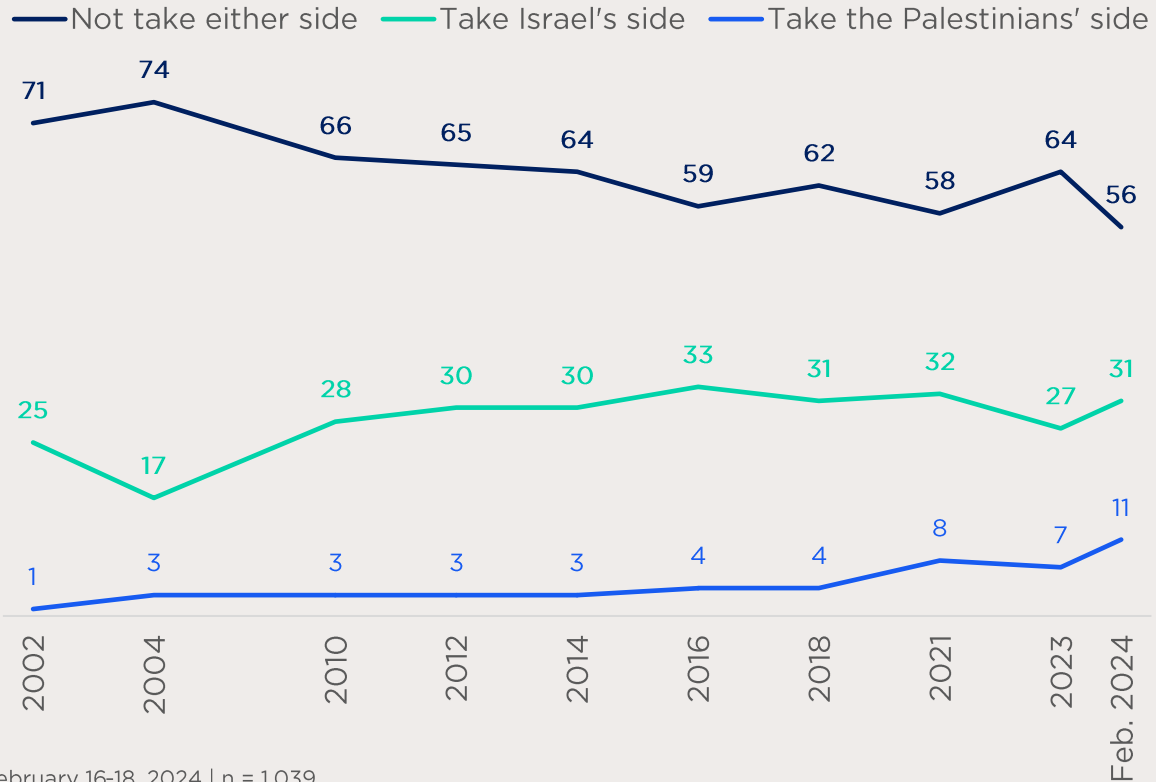
Americans Prefer the US Take Neither Side, though Partisan Differences Growing

As the conflict between Israel and Hamas enters its sixth month, Americans still prefer that the United States not take a side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (56%), though this represents a decline of eight percentage points since September 2023. The percentage of Americans that say the United States shouldn't take either side in the conflict is at the lowest level recorded since the Council started asking this question in 2002.

Meanwhile, the share of the overall public that thinks the United States should take Israel's side in the conflict has grown by four percentage points (31%, up from 27%) and across all partisan affiliations. The share of Americans that sides with the Palestinians has similarly increased by four percentage points over the same period (11%, up from 7%), though only among Democrats and Independents.

Preferred Side in Middle East Conflict

In the Middle East conflict, do you think the United States should take Israel's side, take the Palestinians' side, or not take either side? (%)



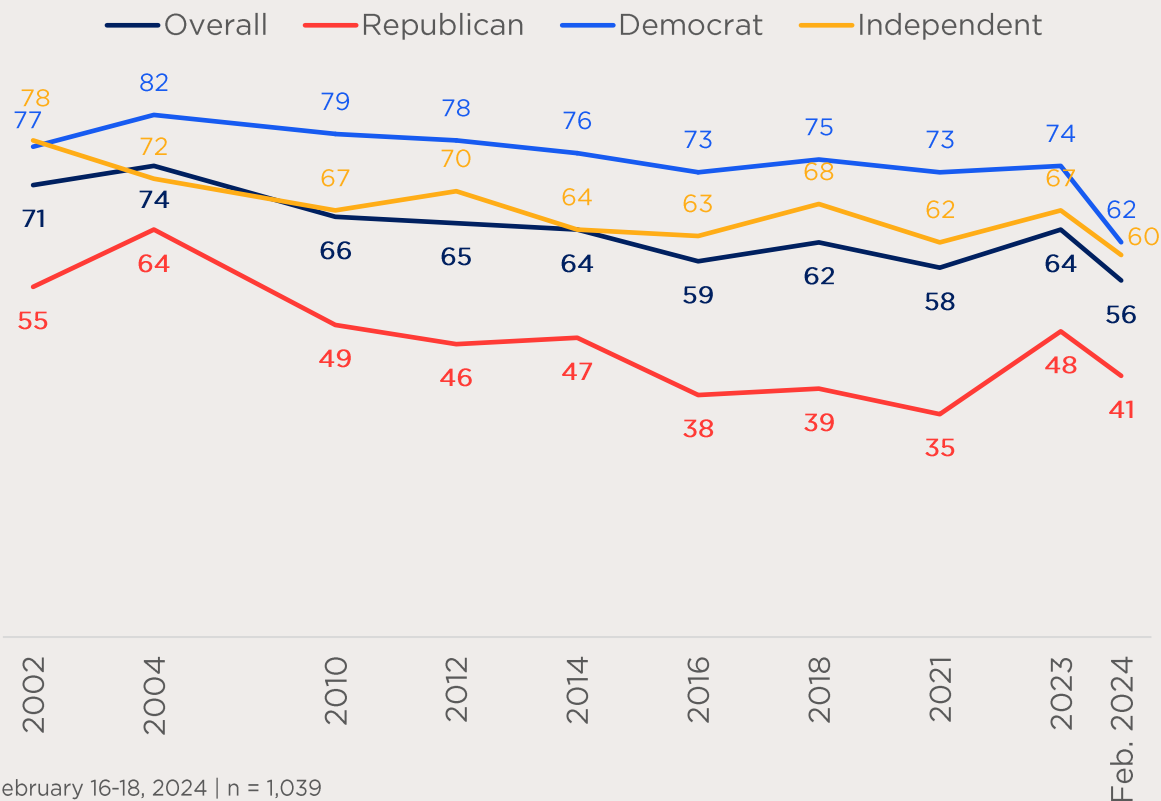
February 16-18, 2024 | n = 1,039

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While a majority of Democrats (62%) continue to say that the United States should not take either side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this represents a decline of 12 percentage points from September 2023. Similarly, while a majority of Independents also prefer the United States to not take a side (60%), this reflects a decline of 7 points over the same period.

Preference for Not Taking Either Side in Conflict

In the Middle East conflict, do you think the United States should take Israel's side, take the Palestinians' side, or not take either side? Not take either side (%)



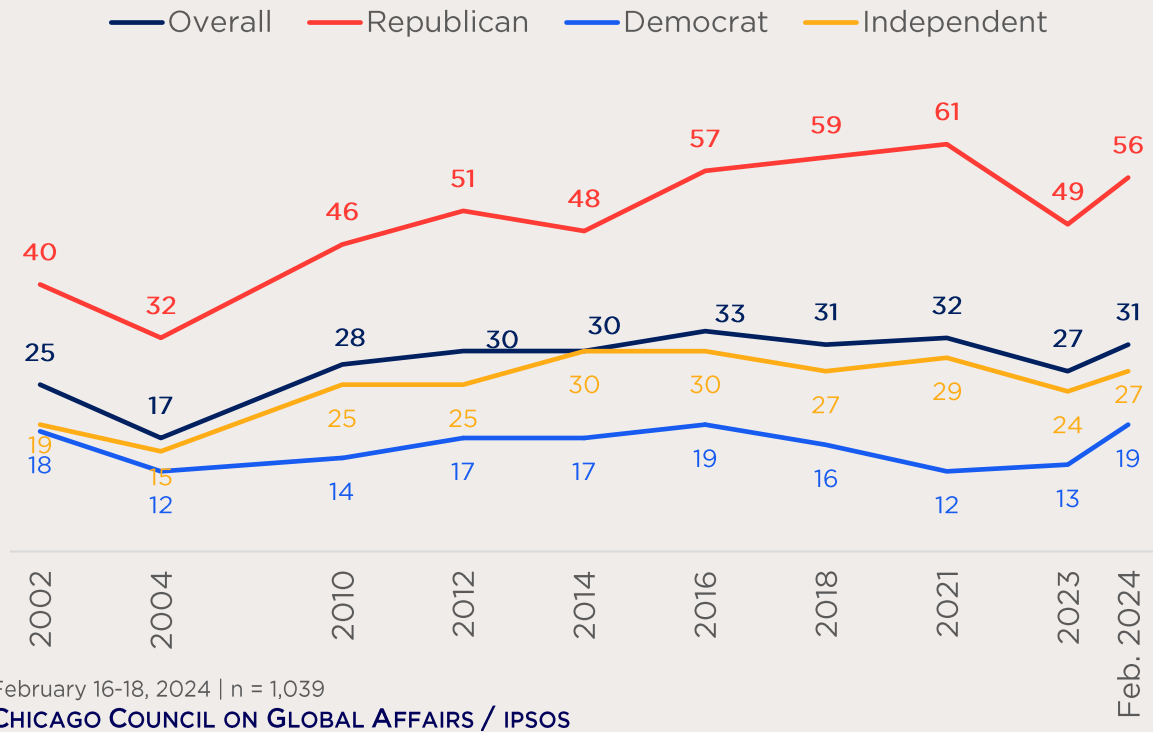
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The share of Republicans that say the United States shouldn't take either side in the conflict also declined by seven percentage points (41%, down from 48%). Instead, the majority of Republicans now say the United States should side with Israel (56%, up from 49%). This marks return to the Republican sentiments recorded in Council surveys conducted between 2016 and 2021.

Preference for Taking Israel's Side in Conflict

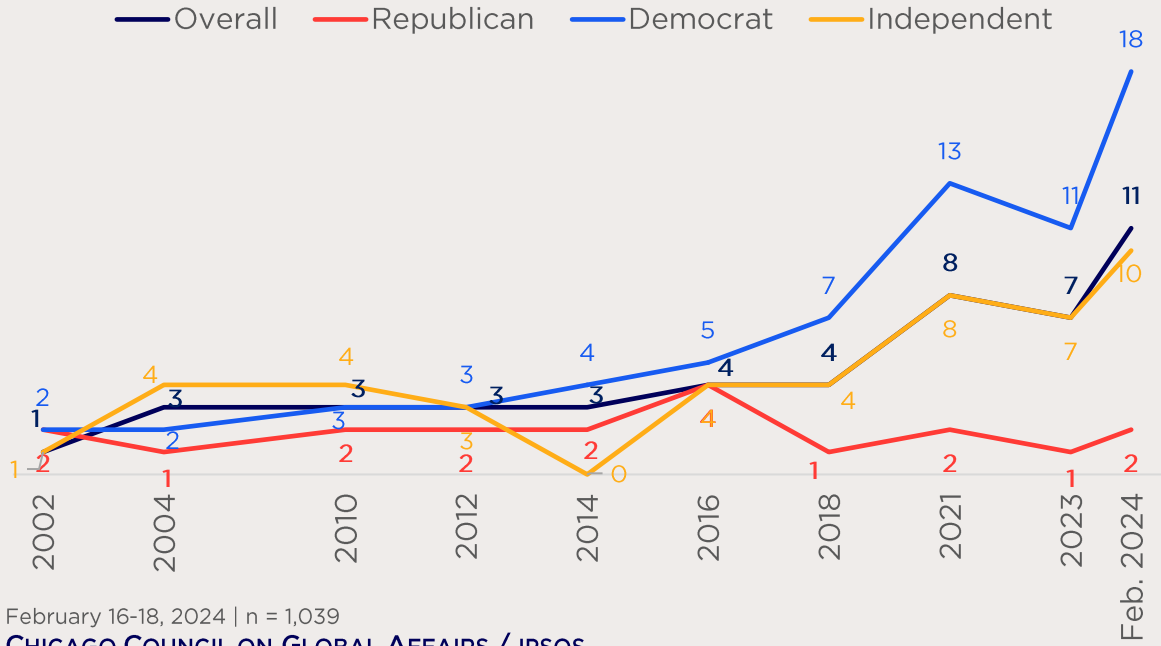
In the Middle East conflict, do you think the United States should take Israel's side, take the Palestinians' side, or not take either side? Take Israel's side (%)



Democrats, on the other hand, are now as likely to say the United States should side with Israel (19%, up from 13%) as they are to say the United States should side with the Palestinians (18%, up from 11%), highlighting a [rift between the progressive and moderate wings of the Democratic Party leadership](#). Independents have also grown marginally more supportive of the Palestinian side (10%—the highest level recorded yet for Independents—up from 7%), though they come down in favor of Israelis over Palestinians (27%). Just 2 percent of Republicans say the United States should take the Palestinians' side.

Preference for Taking the Palestinians' Side in Conflict

In the Middle East conflict, do you think the United States should take Israel's side, take the Palestinians' side, or not take either side? **Take the Palestinians' side (%)**

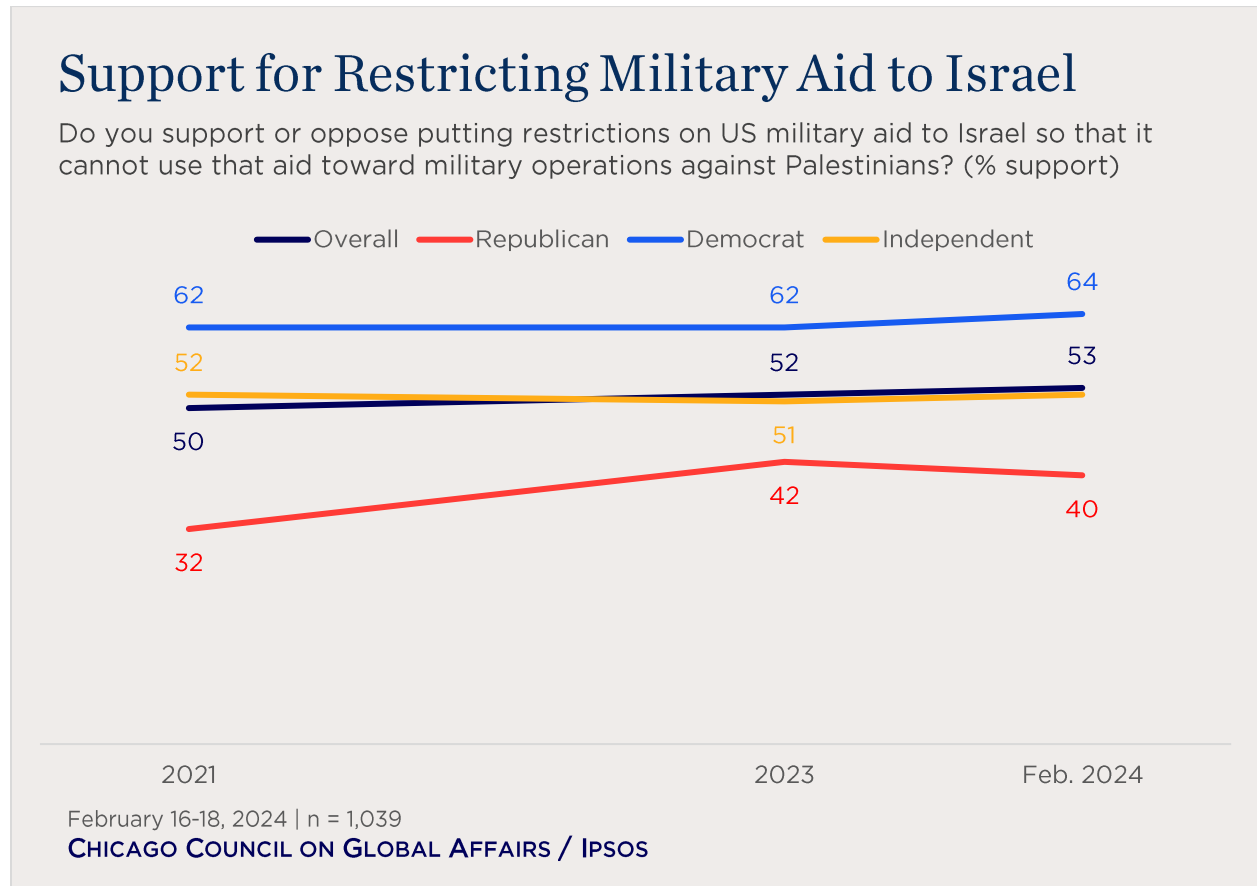


These partisan differences reflect, in part, the differing composition of the Democratic Party. Polling by the Council and other organizations has found that [younger Americans](#) and [Americans of color](#) tend to side with the Palestinians more than Israel. This survey finds that while majorities among all subgroups want the United States to take neither side, those aged 18 to 34 are equally likely to choose Israel (17%) as they are the Palestinians (20%). Black Americans are also equally divided (15% siding with Israel vs. 16% siding with Palestinians). By contrast, those over the age of 34 and Hispanic Americans prefer that the United States side with Israel over the Palestinians (see Appendix Tables 1-4).

Democrats and Independents Support Restricting US Military Aid to Israel

Just over half of Americans support placing restrictions on US military aid sent to Israel so that it cannot use that aid toward military operations against Palestinians (53%). Despite the mounting humanitarian toll of the ongoing Israeli military operation in Gaza, the share of Americans that support restricting military aid to Israel has remained unchanged since 2021.

As in previous surveys, Democrats are the most likely to support military aid restrictions (64%), with a majority of Independents (52%) in agreement. By contrast, only four in 10 Republicans agree with this policy (40%, up from 32% when the Council first asked this question in 2021).

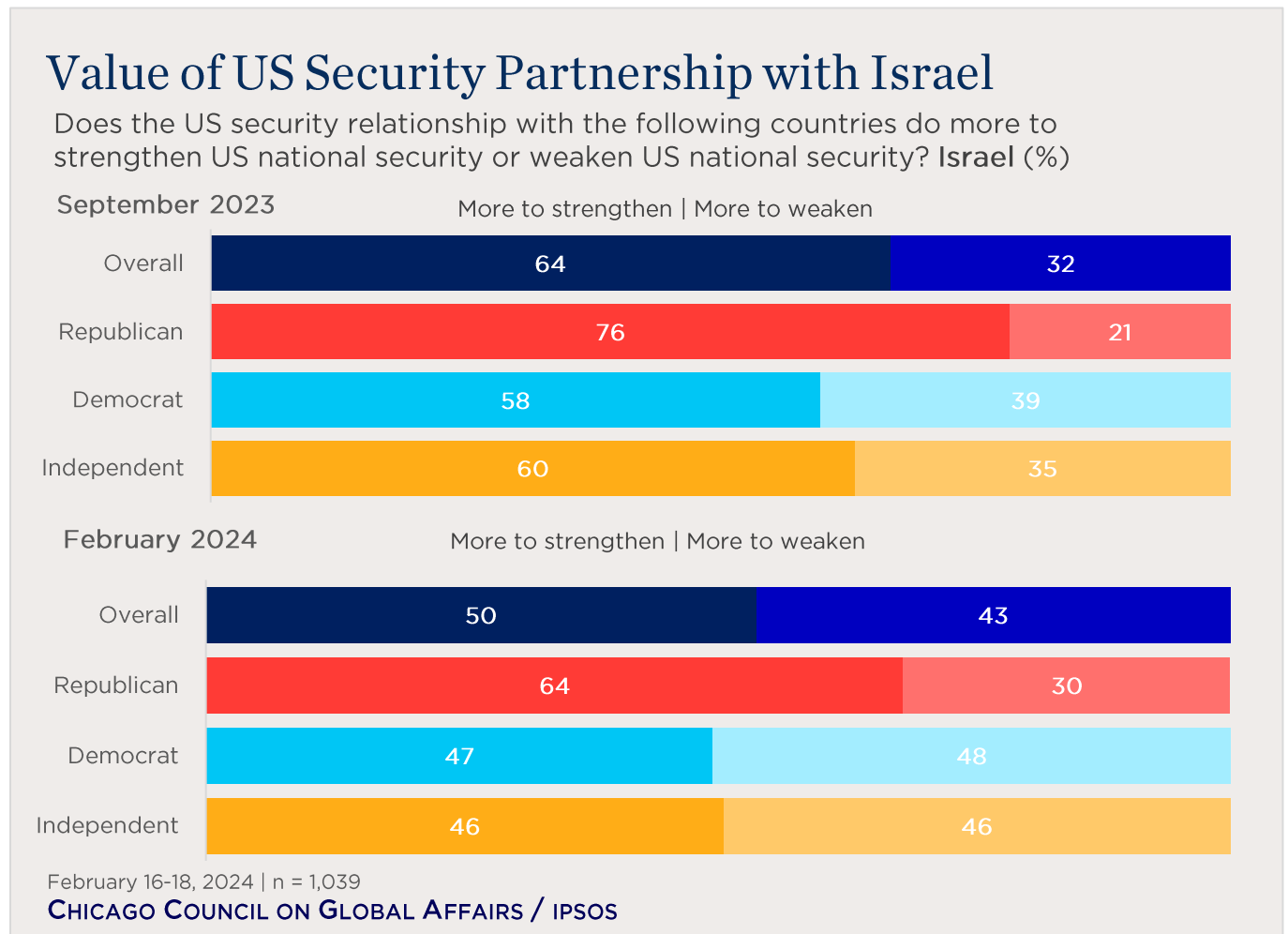


Across age and racial groups, majorities of Americans between 18 and 34 (56%) and between 35 to 49 (59%) support these restrictions while all other age groups are equally divided. Americans of color tend to resemble the overall average, with both majorities of Black and Hispanic Americans supporting restrictions on aid to Israel (see Appendix Tables 5-8).

Fewer Americans Now Say US-Israel Security Relationship Strengthens National Security

Maintaining a strong security relationship with Israel has been a [cornerstone of US foreign policy](#) since its founding in 1948 and remains of strategic importance to US interests in the Middle East today. Israel’s nearly six-month-long military assault on the Palestinian territories in retaliation for the [October 7 attack by Hamas](#) has, however, made some Americans question the value of the strategic relationship. As the recently-completed Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Ipsos survey shows, Americans are now less likely to view the

security relationship with Israel as strengthening US national security (50%, down from 64% in September 2023).



This shift has taken place across the partisan spectrum. Democrats are now evenly divided on whether the relationship strengthens (47%) or weakens (48%) US national security, as are Independents (46% each). This reflects a notable decline over the past six months: in September 2023, majorities of both Independents (60%) and Democrats (58%) say the security relationship as strengthening US national security. And while the majority of Republicans remain convinced of its benefits to US national security (64%), this reflects a decline of 12 percentage points from September.

In addition to partisan divisions, the data also show differences in attitudes toward the US-Israeli security relationship across age and racial groups. Americans under the age of 50 and African Americans are more likely to say this security relationship weakens rather than strengthens US national

security. By contrast, middle-aged and older Americans, white Americans, and Hispanic Americans are more likely to think the relationship does more to strengthen national security than weaken it (see Appendix Tables 9-12).

Conclusion

Months into the Israel-Hamas war, most Americans still think the United States should take neutral stance on the conflict, but more are choosing a side in the conflict than have in the past. Overall, Americans are also no more likely to support placing restrictions on military aid sent to Israel than they were in 2021. In this vein, the Biden administration's approach seems to align with sentiments shared by the public.

However, Americans of all political stripes are starting to question whether the United States' security relationship with Israel strengthens or weakens US national security. As the war continues and international calls for a ceasefire grow louder, the Washington's longstanding alliance with Israel is being placed under greater scrutiny. This is especially true among Democrats, who are divided on the benefits of the US-Israel security relationship to US national security, and who have similar proportions wanting the US to favor either Israel or the Palestinians.

Appendix

Table 1. Preferred Side in Middle East Conflict Across Age Groups (2024)				
	Age Categories			
Q230 - Feb 2024	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Take Israel's side	17	25	37	49
Take the Palestinians' side	20	10	6	4
Not take either side	58	64	53	46

Table 2. Preferred Side in Middle East Conflict Across Age Groups (2023)				
	Age Categories			
Q230 - Sep 2023	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Take Israel's side	19	22	29	38
Take the Palestinians' side	13	7	3	3
Not take either side	66	70	66	56

Table 3. Preferred Side in Middle East Conflict Across Racial Groups (2024)				
	Race			
Q230 - Feb 2024	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Take Israel's side	37	15	25	27
Take the Palestinians' side	9	16	8	21
Not take either side	53	65	62	51

Table 4. Preferred Side in Middle East Conflict Across Racial Groups (2023)				
	Race			
Q230 - Sep 2023	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Take Israel's side	31	17	22	20
Take the Palestinians' side	6	6	7	10
Not take either side	60	76	70	69

Table 5. Support for Restricting Military Aid to Israel Across Age Groups (2024)				
	Age Categories			
Q725B - Feb 2024	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Support	56	59	48	48
Oppose	37	38	46	47

Table 6. Support for Restricting Military Aid to Israel Across Age Groups (2023)				
	Age Categories			
Q725B - Sep 2023	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Support	56	53	50	48
Oppose	40	43	45	47

Table 7. Support for Restricting Military Aid to Israel Across Racial Groups (2024)				
	Race			
Q725B - Feb 2024	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Support	52	51	51	61
Oppose	43	42	39	38

Table 8. Support for Restricting Military Aid to Israel Across Racial Groups (2023)				
	Race			
Q725B - Sep 2023	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Support	51	54	50	58
Oppose	44	42	47	37

Table 9. Value of US-Israel Security Relationship Across Age Groups (2024)				
	Age Categories			
Q451S - Feb 2024	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Strengthens national security	37	44	54	70
Weakens national security	52	51	39	26

Table 10. Value of US-Israel Security Relationship Across Age Groups (2023)				
	Age Categories			
Q451S - Sep 2023	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Strengthens national security	54	61	69	70
Weakens national security	40	36	28	25

Table 11. Value of US-Israel Security Relationship Across Racial Groups (2024)				
	Race			
Q451S - Feb 2024	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Strengthens national security	53	41	49	47
Weakens national security	41	50	41	48

Table 12. Value of US-Israel Security Relationship Across Racial Groups (2023)				
	Race			
Q451S - Sep 2023	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Strengthens national security	65	60	64	59
Weakens national security	31	35	33	38

Methodology

This data comes from a joint Chicago Council on Global Affairs / Ipsos survey. It was conducted February 16-18, 2024 by Ipsos using its large-scale, nationwide, online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,039 adults 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is ± 3.2 percentage points including a design effect of 1.09. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups.

The data for the total sample were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race/ethnicity, education, Census region, metropolitan status, and household income using demographic benchmarks from the 2023 March Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS). Specific categories used were:

- Gender (Male, Female) by Age (18-29, 30-44, 45-59 and 60+)
- Race/Hispanic Ethnicity (White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Other, Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, 2+ Races, Non-Hispanic)
- Education (Less than High School, High School, Some College, Bachelor or higher)
- Census Region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West)
- Metropolitan status (Metro, non-Metro)
- Household Income (Under \$25,000, \$25,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$74,999, \$75,000-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$149,999, \$150,000+)

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