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Majority of U.S. Public Says Trump's Approach on Iran Has Raised Chances of a Major Conflict

Slightly more see Iran strike as right decision than wrong decision

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How we did this

This report focuses on understanding how the U.S. public is reacting to how the Trump administration is dealing with Iran following the U.S. airstrike that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

For this report, we surveyed 1,504 U.S. adults by telephone in January 2020. The surveys were conducted in both English and Spanish over the phone under the direction of Abt Associates. Respondents to this survey were randomly selected via a combination of landline and cell phone random-digit-dial samples. To ensure that the results of this survey reflects a balanced cross section of the nation, the data are weighted to match the U.S. adult population by gender, age, education, race and ethnicity and other categories.

For more information on how we conducted this report, see its methodology section.

Majority of U.S. Public Says Trump's Approach on Iran Has Raised Chances of a Major Conflict

Slightly more see Iran strike as right decision than wrong decision

By a narrow 48% to 43% margin, Americans view the U.S. airstrike that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani as the right decision. However, a majority (54%) says the Trump administration's approach toward Iran has increased the likelihood of a major military conflict between the United States and Iran. Just 17% say the administration's approach has decreased chances for a major conflict with Iran, while 26% say it has not made much difference.

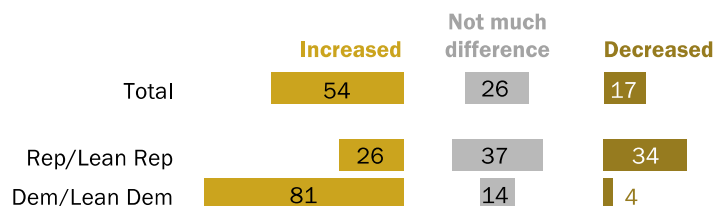
In assessing the impact of the administration's policies on U.S. security, 44% say its approach has made the U.S. less safe, while a larger share says either it has made the U.S. safer (28%) or has not made much difference (26%).

The latest national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted Jan. 8-13 on cell phones and landlines among 1,504 adults, finds that only about a quarter of Americans (23%) say they have a great deal of trust in what the Trump administration says on Iran, while another 22% say they trust the administration a fair amount. A 53% majority say they have not too much trust (18%) or no trust at all (35%) in the administration's statements on Iran.

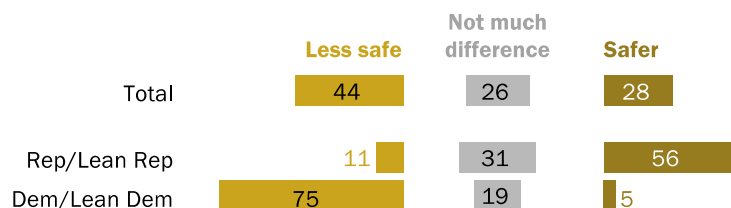
These views are not substantially different from previous evaluations of President Donald Trump's personal credibility. For example, [about a year ago](#), 58% of the public said they trusted what Trump says less than what previous presidents said; just 26% said they trusted his statements

Majority of Americans say Trump's approach on Iran has increased likelihood of a 'major military conflict'

% who say the Trump administration's approach toward Iran has ___ the likelihood of a major military conflict between the U.S. and Iran



% who say the Trump administration's approach toward Iran has made the U.S. ...



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 8-13, 2020.

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more than those of his predecessors, while 14% said they trusted his statements about the same as past presidents.

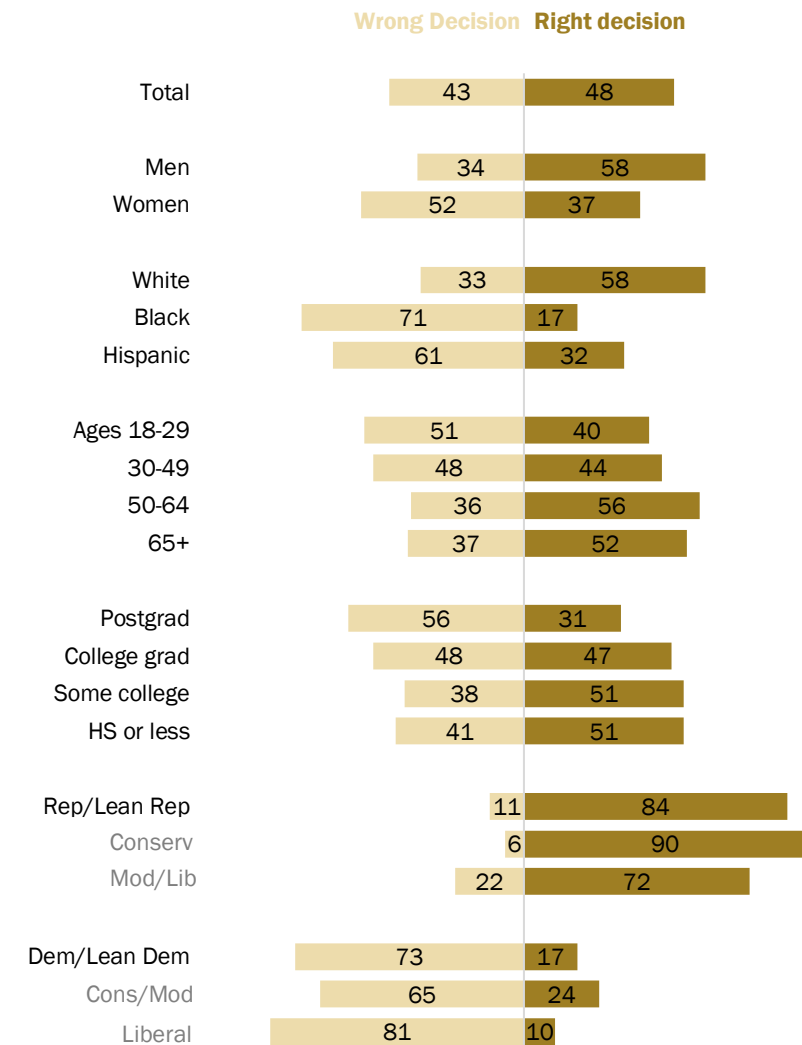
As with public views of virtually all of Trump's policies and decisions – and Trump himself – opinions about the U.S. airstrike against Iran and its impact are divided along partisan lines.

However, while Republicans overwhelmingly support the decision to conduct the airstrike that killed Soleimani, they express more mixed views of how Trump's approach toward Iran has affected prospects for war with Iran and U.S. security. By contrast, Democrats largely express negative views of the impact of the airstrike on both the likelihood for conflict with Iran and on U.S. security.

Only about a third of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (34%) say the administration's approach toward Iran has decreased the likelihood of a major military clash with Iran; 26% say it has increased likelihood of such a conflict, and 37% say it has not made much difference.

Wide partisan, demographic differences in views of U.S. decision to conduct airstrike that killed Soleimani

% who say U.S. decision to conduct the airstrike that killed Iranian Gen. Soleimani was the ...



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

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 8-13, 2020.

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A sizable majority of Democrats (81%) say the administration's approach toward Iran has increased the likelihood of a major military conflict between the U.S. and Iran.

While 56% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say Trump's approach toward Iran has made the U.S. safer, a much larger majority of Democrats and Democratic leaners (75%) say it has made the U.S. less safe.

However, Republicans and Republican leaners have rallied behind the decision to conduct the airstrike that killed Soleimani: 84% say it was the right decision, while 11% say it was the wrong decision. Democrats view the decision to conduct the airstrike as wrong, but by a less substantial margin (73% to 17%).

Notably, among the roughly one-quarter of Republicans who say the Trump administration's approach to Iran has raised chances of a military conflict, most (65%) say the decision to conduct the airstrike was the right one. Only about a third of Republicans (31%) who say Trump's approach has raised the likelihood of a military conflict with Iran say it was the wrong decision.

Women, young adults are especially likely to say Trump's approach toward Iran could lead to major military conflict with Iran

There are sizable age and gender differences in views of the U.S. airstrike that killed Soleimani.

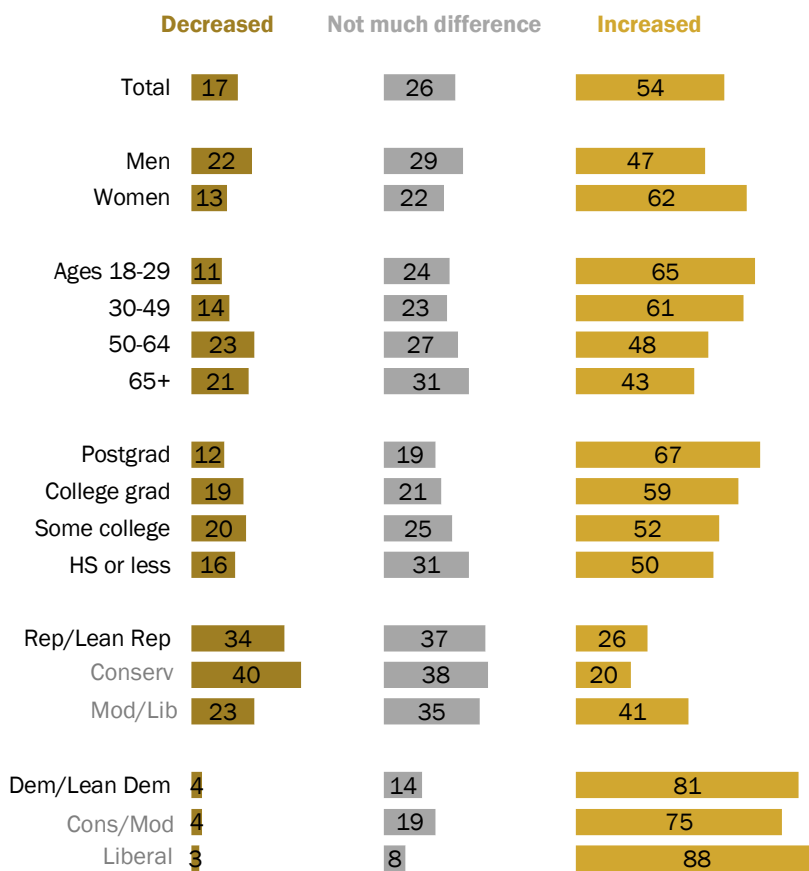
Women are nearly 20 percentage points less likely than men to say the decision to conduct the airstrike was the right one (37% vs. 58%). And adults under 30 are the only age group in which significantly more view the airstrike as wrong (51%) than right (40%).

These differences extend to views of the Trump administration's overall approach toward Iran. A majority of women (62%) say the administration's approach to Iran has increased the likelihood of a major military conflict; about half of men (47%) say the same.

While majorities of adults ages 18 to 29 (65%) and 30 to 49 (61%) say the administration's approach has raised the likelihood of a major conflict with Iran, a smaller share of those ages 50 and older (46%) express this view.

Nearly two-thirds of young adults say Trump's approach on Iran has raised chances of major conflict

% who say Trump administration's approach to Iran has ___ the likelihood of a major military conflict with Iran



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 8-13, 2020.

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Few Americans have great deal of trust in what Trump administration says about the situation in Iran

Overall, more Americans say they have little or no trust in what the Trump administration says about the situation in Iran (53%) than say they have a great deal or fair amount of trust (45%) in the administration's statements.

Republicans and Republican-leaning independents express much greater trust than Democrats and Democratic leaners in the Trump administration's statements on Iran. But there are wide differences in trust in the administration between those who identify as Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party.

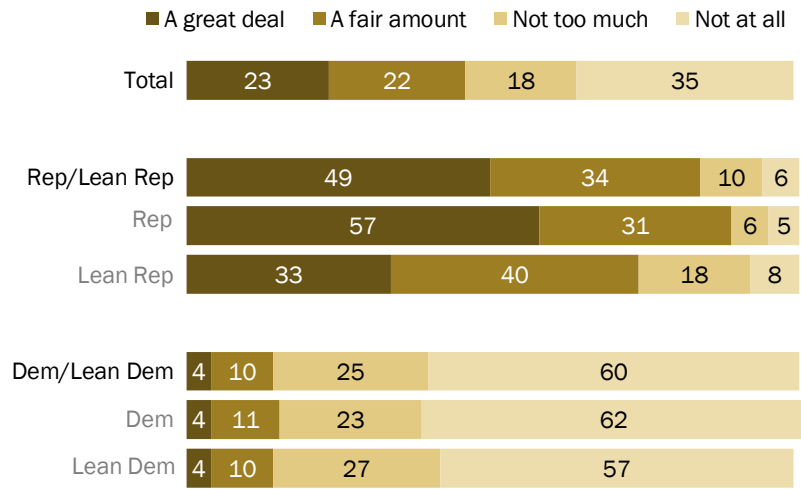
Among Republican identifiers, 57% have a great deal of trust in what the administration says on Iran; among Republican-leaning independents, who constitute about a third of Republicans and Republican leaners, just 33% have a great deal of trust in the administration's statements on Iran.

Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents both are largely distrustful of the administration's statements on Iran; comparable majorities of each (62% and 57%, respectively) say they have no trust at all in what the administration says about the situation in Iran.

Among independents overall, including those who do not lean toward either party, 60% say they have little or no trust in what the Trump administration says about Iran, including 36% who have no trust in their statements. Nearly four-in-ten (38%) have at least a fair amount of trust in the

Just a third of Republican-leaning independents have a great deal of trust in what administration says on Iran

% who say they trust what the Trump administration says about the situation with Iran ...



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 8-13, 2020.

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administration's statements on the situation in Iran. (For more on political independents, see ["Political Independents: Who They Are, What They Think."](#))

Acknowledgments

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 8-13, 2020, among a national sample of 1,504 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (301 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,203 were interviewed on a cellphone, including 839 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers under the direction of Abt Associates. A combination of landline and cellphone random-digit-dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International LLC. 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. The weighting procedure corrected for the different sampling rates. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>.

The combined landline and cellphone sample is weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity, and region to parameters from the Census Bureau's 2018 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, cellphone only, or both landline and cellphone), based on extrapolations from the 2018 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cellphones 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 January 8-13, 2020

Group	Unweighted sample size	Weighted %	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1504		3.0 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	696	42	4.3 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	660	45	4.5 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 2020 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
JANUARY 8-13, 2020
N=1,504**

QUESTIONS 1-5, 10, 15-16, 25-26, 30-31, 35, 40-42, 45-48, 50-51, 53, 60 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTIONS 6-9, 11-14, 17-24, 27-29, 32-34, 36-39, 43-44, 49, 52, 54-59, 61-62

ASK ALL

Q.63 How much, if anything, have you read or heard about the U.S. airstrike that killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and the current situation with Iran? Have you heard **[READ]**:

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing at all</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Jan 8-13, 2020	69	27	3	*

ASK ALL

Q.64 All in all, do you think the U.S. decision to conduct an airstrike that killed Iranian General Soleimani was the right decision or the wrong decision?

	<u>Right decision</u>	<u>Wrong decision</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Jan 8-13, 2020	48	43	9

ROTATE Q.65 AND Q.66 BY FORM. ASK Q.65 FIRST IF FORM=1, ASK Q.66 FIRST IF FORM=2.

Q.65 All in all, do you think the Trump administration's approach toward Iran has made the United States **[READ AND RANDOMIZE WITH "HASN'T IT MADE MUCH DIFFERENCE" LAST]**?

	<u>Safer</u>	<u>Less safe</u>	<u>Hasn't it made much difference</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Jan 8-13, 2020	28	44	26	2

ROTATE Q.65 AND Q.66 BY FORM. ASK Q.65 FIRST IF FORM=1, ASK Q.66 FIRST IF FORM=2.

Q.66 All in all, do you think the Trump administration's approach toward Iran has **[RANDOMIZE: increased/decreased]** the likelihood of a major military conflict between the U.S. and Iran **[RANDOMIZE: decreased/increased]** the likelihood of a major military conflict between the U.S. and Iran, or not made much difference?

	<u>Increased</u>	<u>Decreased</u>	<u>Not made much difference</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Jan 8-13, 2020	54	17	26	2

ASK ALL:

Q.67 How much do you trust what the Trump administration says about the situation with Iran? **[READ IN ORDER]**

	<u>A great deal</u>	<u>A fair amount</u>	<u>Not too much</u>	<u>Not at all</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Jan 8-13, 2020	23	22	18	35	2

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?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>No preference</u>	<u>Other party</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>
Jan 8-13, 2020	27	27	39	3	1	2	15	18
Sep 5-16, 2019	26	29	39	2	1	2	15	18
July 10-15, 2019	28	30	36	3	1	2	15	17
Mar 20-25, 2019	26	30	37	3	1	3	14	19
Jan 9-14, 2019	25	31	40	2	1	2	16	18
Yearly Totals								
2019	26.4	30.2	37.9	2.5	1.0	2.1	15.1	18.0
2018	25.7	30.8	37.6	3.0	.8	2.0	14.7	18.3
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	--	--	--	--	--