

Canadians Believe Iran will Obtain and Use Nuclear Weapons; Majority Support Cutting Diplomatic Ties with Iranian Government

Please refer to the survey as: Abacus Data Poll

1,208 Canadians, 18 years of age and older, September 14-18, 2012.

Ottawa, ON – A new survey conducted by Abacus Data finds a large majority of Canadians (74%) believe that the Iranian government will likely develop nuclear weapons within the next five years and a majority believe (60%) they would use them against other countries. Nonetheless, Canadians were divided on whether Canada should take part in military actions to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons with a majority opposed to any ground invasion that involved Canadian troops.

Perceived Threat of Iran to Canada, Israel, and Europe

When asked to rate the level of threat the Iranian government posed to people living in Canada, Israel, and Europe, the perceived threat to Canada was considerably lower than that of Israel and Europe.

Overall, 14% of Canadians surveyed considered the threat of the Iranian government to Canada as high, with 32% considering it to be moderate and 53% considering it to be low or posing no threat at all.

In contrast, 66% of Canadians surveyed considered the threat to Israel posed by the Iranian government to be high with another 23% considering the threat level to be moderate.

When it came to Europe, threat perceptions were lower than Israel but higher than Canada. One in four respondents (25%) consider Iran's threat to Europe to be high while 47% considered it to be moderate.

Iran and Nuclear Weapons

A large majority of Canadians (74%) surveyed believed that the Iranian government is very likely or somewhat likely to develop nuclear weapons in the next five years. Fifteen percent said the chances were either somewhat unlikely, very unlikely, or that there was no chance at all.

When asked what the chances were that the Iranian government would use a nuclear weapon against another country, 60% said the chances were either very or somewhat likely while 28% believed it was unlikely that the Iranian government would use those weapons against another country.

Military Action to Prevent Iran from Developing Nuclear Weapons

Despite the fact that most Canadians believed the Iranian government would develop and use nuclear weapons, support for specific actions against Iran were varied.

Canadians surveyed overwhelmingly supported stricter economic sanctions (80% strongly/somewhat support) but support was less likely when it came to cyber warfare (52% support), bombing Iran's nuclear facilities (37%), and launching a ground invasion involving Canadian troops (25% support).

Moreover, although Canadians believed the Iranian government posed a high level of threat to Israel, only 22% believed that Canada should support any military action launched by Israel against Iran's nuclear facilities. Another 59% believed Canada should not get involved while 19% were unsure of what Canada should do.

Federal Government's Decision to Cut Off Diplomatic Ties with Iran

At the end of the sequence of questions, respondents were given information about the federal government's decision to close the Canadian embassy in Tehran and to expel Iranian diplomats from Canada. They were given the arguments put forward by Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird and those of critics of the decision.

Overall, six in ten respondents (64%) either strongly or somewhat supported the decision while 18% opposed the decision. Support was highest among Conservative Party supporters and among older Canadians.

Bottom Line

The results of this study indicate that when it comes to Iran, Canadians hold mixed views on the threat Iran poses to Canada and the world and what role Canada should play in preventing the development of nuclear weapons in Iran.

Most Canadians do see the Iran government as an immediate threat to Canada yet a large majority believe it is a major threat to Israel and a somewhat lesser threat to Europe.

What is clear from the research is that Canadians do believe that if left to their own devices, the Iranian government will develop nuclear weapons in the next five years and more shocking, 60% believe the current government is likely to use those weapons against another country.

Given that most Canadians do not think the Iranian government poses much of a threat to Canada, it is not surprising that only a small number support Canada assisting or joining military action in the region. Support for air strikes against Iran is higher than the use of ground troops but Canadians by and large are weary of any Canadian involvement in the region.

Although there is only tepid support for direct military action, a majority of Canadians do support stricter economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure. Most support the government's decision to end diplomatic ties with Iran.

If tension in the region increases and Canada is called upon to play a role, public opinion may shift. However, there is currently little appetite among Canadians for direct military involvement, especially since most Canadians believe the Iranian regime to be unpredictable and capability of using significant force against neighbouring countries and those it deems as threats.

Methodology

The survey was conducted online with 1,208 respondents in English and French using an internet survey programmed and collected by Abacus Data. A random sample of panelists from the Angus Reid Forum was invited to participate in the survey, a representative panel of over 150,000 Canadians. The survey was completed from September 14-18, 2012.

ABACUS DATA POLL

Since the online survey was not a random, probability based sample, a margin of error could not be calculated. The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association prohibits statements about margins of sampling error or population estimates with regard to most online panels.

The margin of error for a survey of 1,208 respondents using a probability sample is +/- 2.9%, 19 times out of 20.

The data was weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Canada's population according to age, gender, education level, and region.

These questions were posed as part of the Abacus Data monthly Omnibus survey. The earlier survey (n=2,099) referenced in this report was conducted from August 10-12, 2012 using a similar methodology. Details can be found on the Abacus Data website.

For more information about the poll's methodology or the results, please contact David Coletto, CEO at david@abacusdata.ca or at 613-232-2806.

Canadian Views on Iran: Issues and Diplomacy

A public opinion study of threat, nuclear proliferation, and key issues

September 21st, 2012

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1.0 Executive Summary

Abacus Data's survey of 1,208 Canadians found that Canadian public opinion divided across a range of issues involving the government of Iran, largely along lines of politics and age. Most striking was the finding that while a majority of Canadians feel that Iran will develop and use a nuclear bomb, there is a clear lack of appetite for direct military incursion into Iran.

1.1 Key Findings

Threat Assessment: While a majority (53%) of Canadians felt little to no threat against Canada from Iran, the picture of perceived threat was much different when Canadians were asked about the Iranian government and Israel, as a strong majority of Canadians (89%) felt that Iran posed a high or moderate threat to Israel. Similarly, a strong majority (72%) of Canadians felt that Europe was under some level of threat from the Iranian government. Conservative supporters and respondents over 60 were most likely to feel a threat from the Iranian government.

Nuclear Weapons: Overall, 74% of Canadians felt that nuclear development was either very or somewhat likely. When asked to consider the chances that the Iranian government would actually use a nuclear weapon against another country if they were able to develop one. Interestingly, a majority of respondents (60%) felt that such use would be very or somewhat likely. Once again, Conservative supporters and respondents over 60 were most likely to feel that Iran would deploy such weapons.

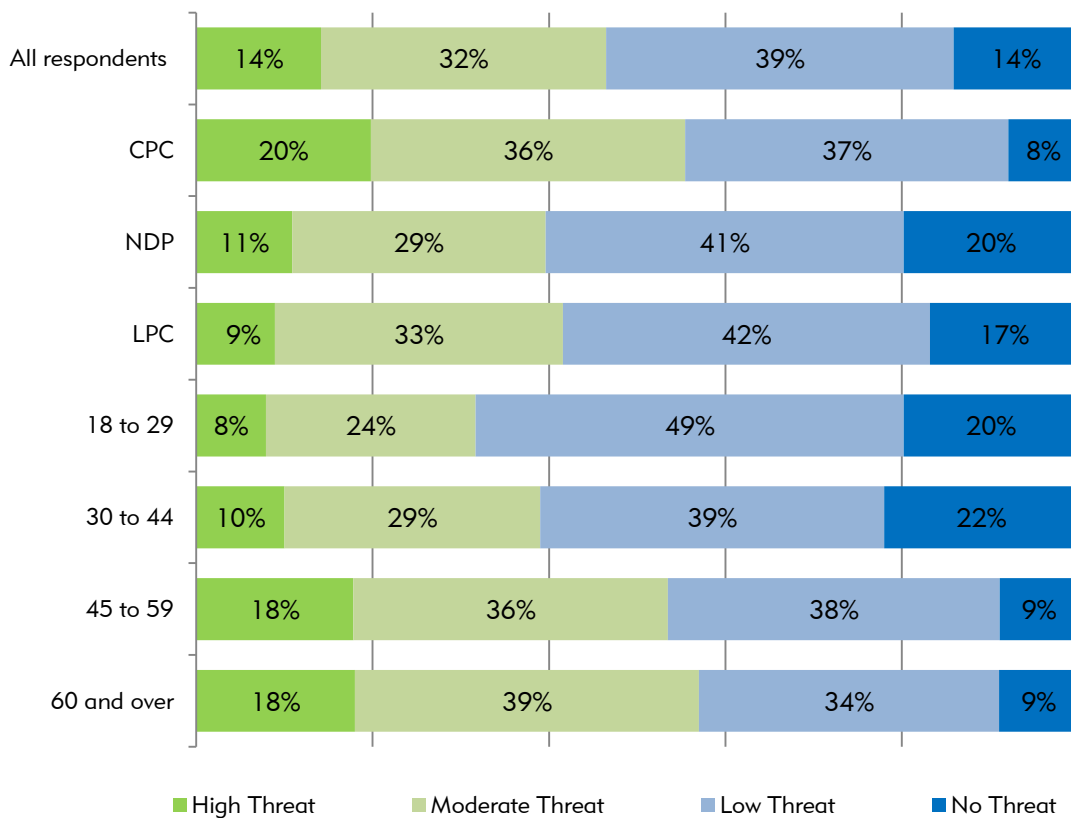
Military Action: While a majority of Canadians would be in favour of stricter economic sanctions (80%), and cyber warfare (52%), the support figures for both bombing (37%) and launching a ground invasion (25%) highlight the possible military fatigue that has resulted from the lengthy incursion into Afghanistan, or simply an unwillingness to become involved in another Middle-Eastern conflict.

Issue Positions: Overall, a majority (59%) of Canadians were opposed to involvement in an Israeli led counter-attack on Iran. In terms of support for cutting diplomatic ties with Iran, virtually all (84%) Conservative supporters backed the government's decision to some degree, and although a plurality of Liberal supporters and a slight majority of NDP supporters backed the decision, 'strongly support' responses were considerably lower.

2.0 Threat Assessment

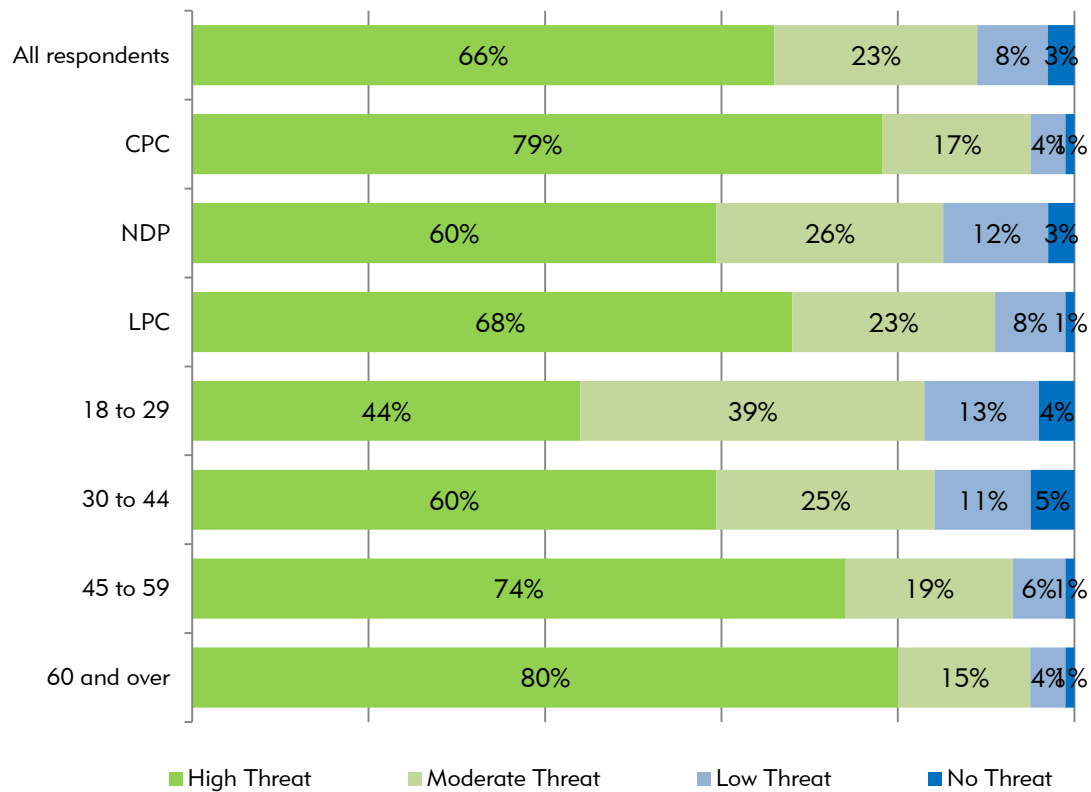
This section was designed to gauge the perceived levels of threat, if any, that Iran poses to the world both regionally and in terms of specific actions.

Figure 2.1 In your opinion, how much of a threat does the Iranian government pose to people living in Canada?



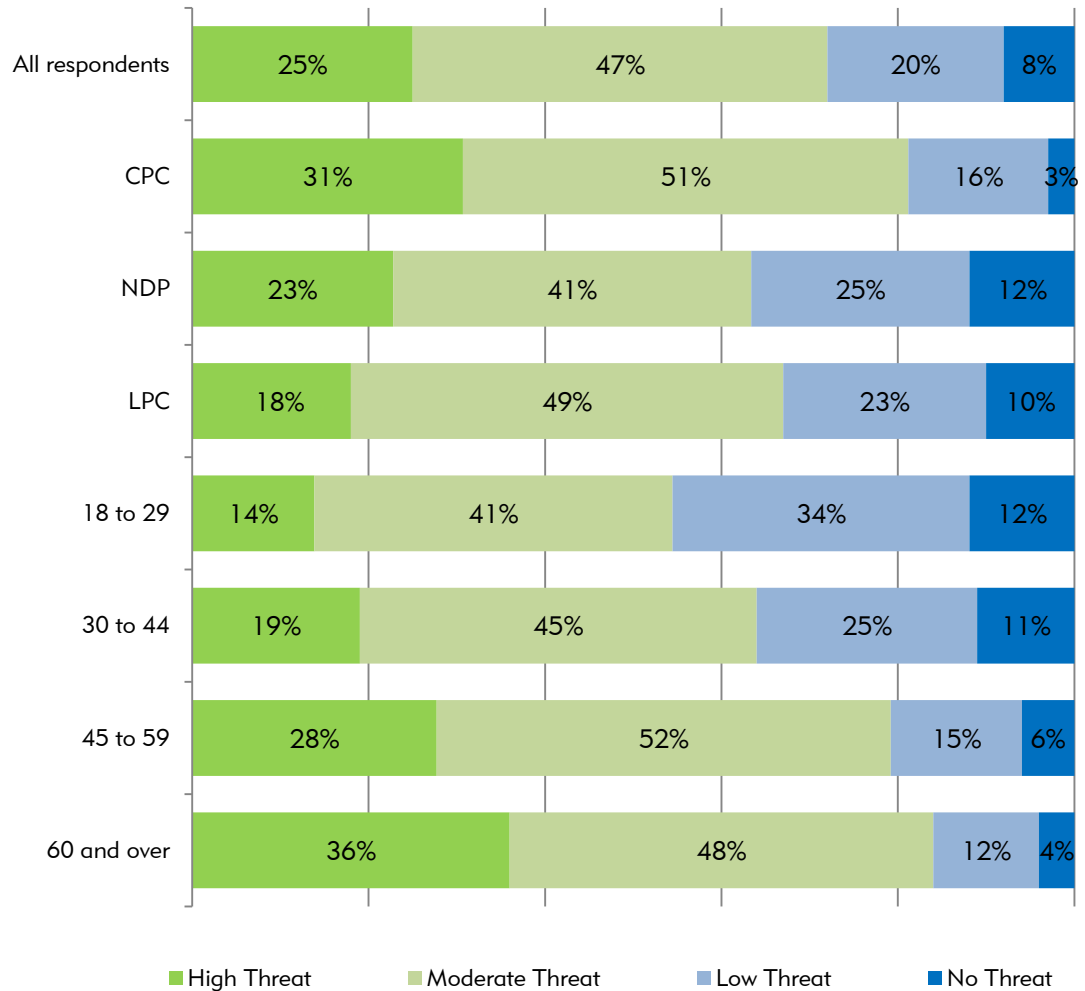
Overall, Canadians were virtually split when asked how much of a threat the Iranian government posed to them, though a majority (53%) felt little to no threat from Iran. However, self-identified Conservative voters and those over 60 were most likely to see the Iranian government as a threat, while Millennials (those aged 18-29) were least likely to be threatened.

Figure 2.2 In your opinion, how much of a threat does the Iranian government pose to people living in Israel?



The picture of perceived threat was much different when Canadians were asked about the Iranian government and Israel, as a strong majority of Canadians (89%) felt that Iran posed a high or moderate threat to Israel. Although levels of perceived threat differed between demographic subgroups, there remained a strong majority opinion that Israel was under some degree of threat from the Iranian government.

Figure 2.3 In your opinion, how much of a threat does the Iranian government pose to people living in Europe?



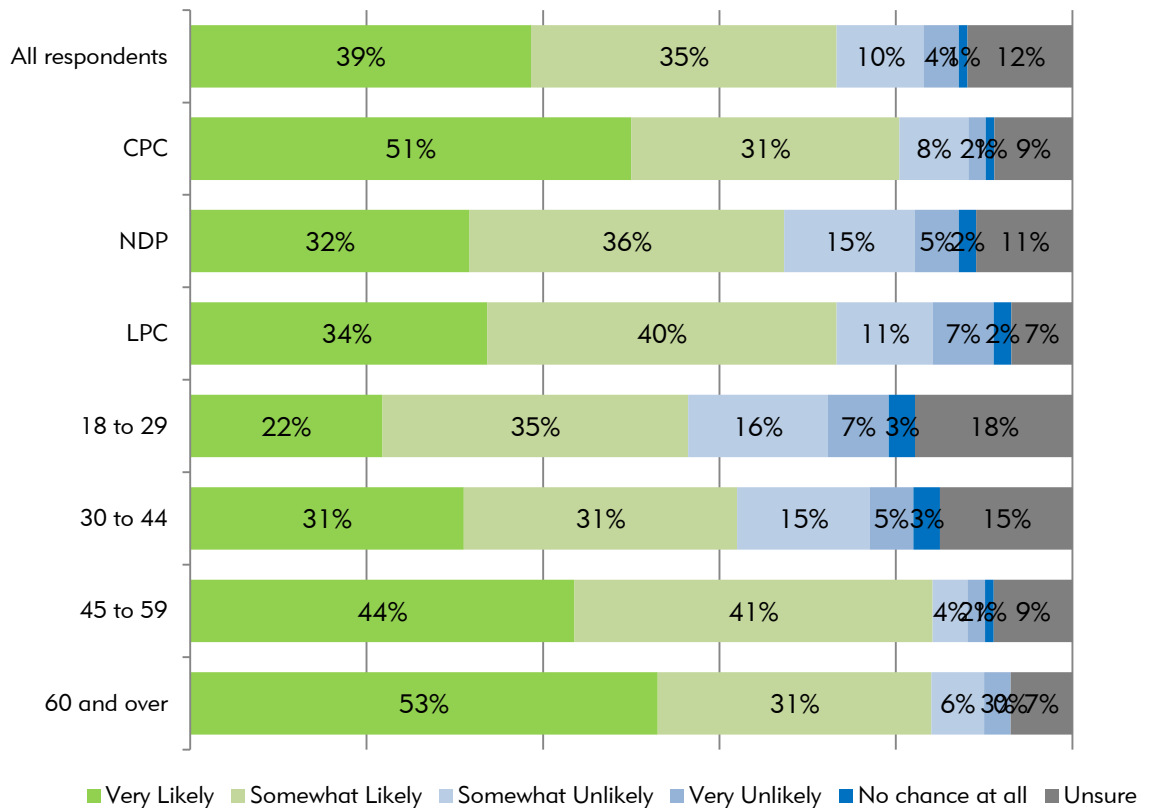
As was the case with Israel, a strong majority (72%) of Canadians felt that Europe was under some level of threat from the Iranian government. While large numbers of Canadians felt that Israel was under a high degree of threat, 'moderate' proved to be a much more popular descriptor of the perceived level of threat towards Europe. Once again, Conservative voters and Canadians over 60 were most likely to feel Europe was at risk, while Millennials and NDP supporters were least likely.

3.0 Iran and Nuclear Weapons

In this section, respondents were asked to consider and evaluate the possibility that Iran would develop and potentially use a nuclear weapon within the near future.

First, respondents were asked what they thought the likelihood was of the Iranian government developing a nuclear bomb within the next five years. Overall, 74% of Canadians felt that nuclear development was either very or somewhat likely. Similar sentiments were observed across all demographic subgroups, although Conservative supporters and respondents over 60 were most likely to feel that nuclear development was likely.

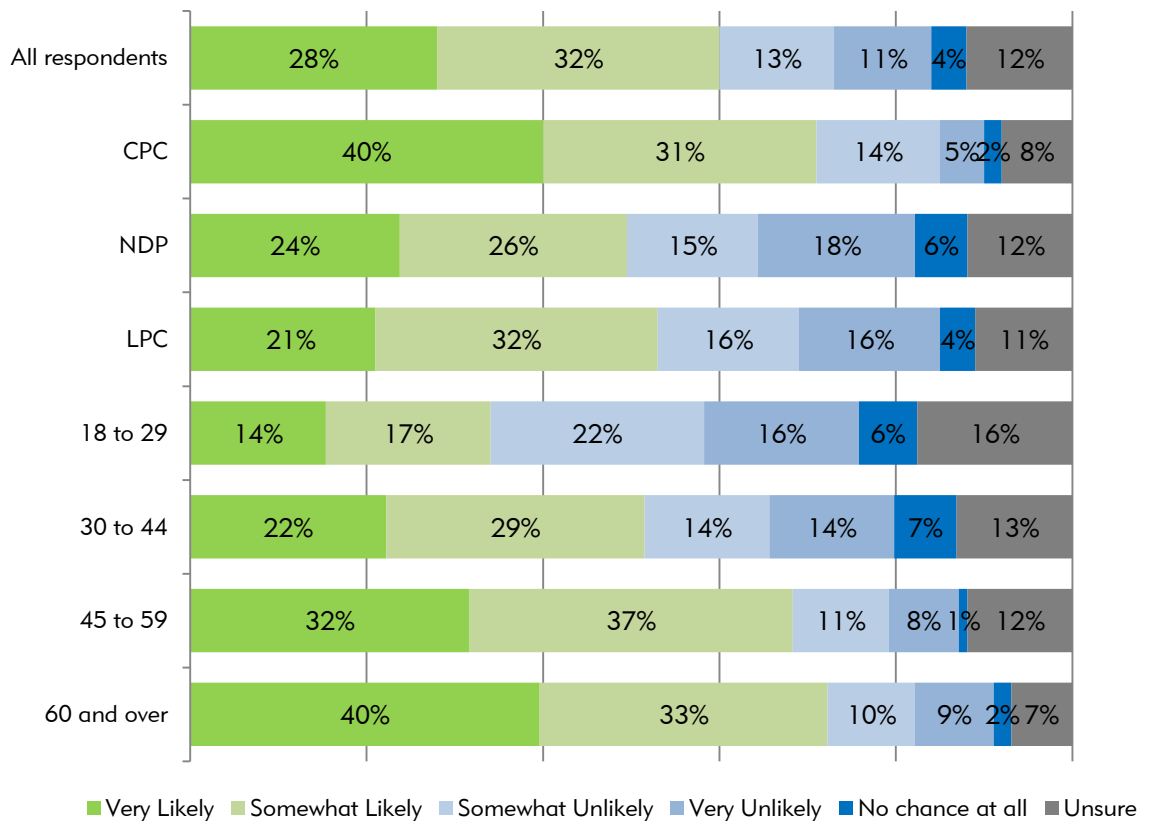
Figure 3.1 In your opinion what are the chances that the Iranian government will develop a nuclear weapon in the next five years?



Next, respondents were asked to consider the chances that the Iranian government would actually use a nuclear weapon against another country if they were able to develop one. Interestingly, a majority of respondents (60%) felt that such use would be very or somewhat likely.

Once again, Conservative supporters and respondents over 60 were most likely to feel that Iran would deploy such weapons. Of particular note was the finding that a plurality of Millennials (44%) felt that it was unlikely that Iran would actually use a nuclear weapon.

Figure 3.2 In your opinion, what are the chances that the Iranian government would use a nuclear weapon against another country?



4.0 Military Action

Despite the strong feelings of Canadians that Iran is developing and even poised to use nuclear weapons, there was a clearly observed lack of appetite for military intervention, particularly intervention involving Canadian troops on the ground.

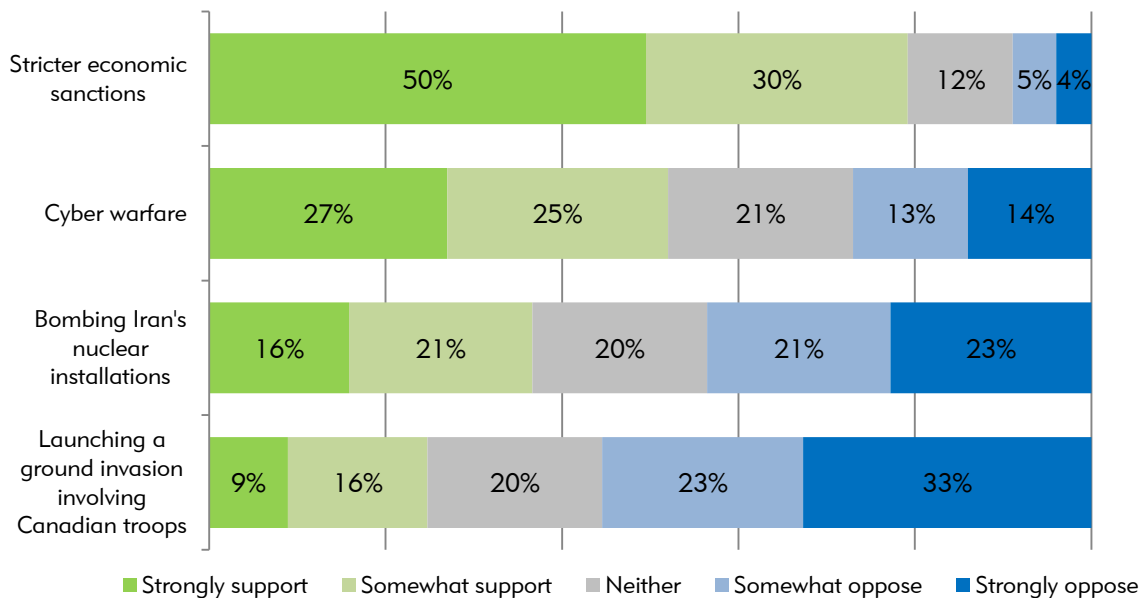
Below, table 4.1 breaks out responses to the question:

“In the event a number of countries, including Canada, decided to take action against Iran to stop it from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Would you support or oppose Canada from taking part or assisting in each of the following?”

While a majority of Canadians would be in favour of stricter economic sanctions (80%), and cyber warfare (52%), the low support figures for both bombing and launching a ground invasion highlight the possible military fatigue that has resulted from the lengthy incursion into Afghanistan.

Figure 4.1 Would you support or oppose Canada from taking part or assisting in each of the following?

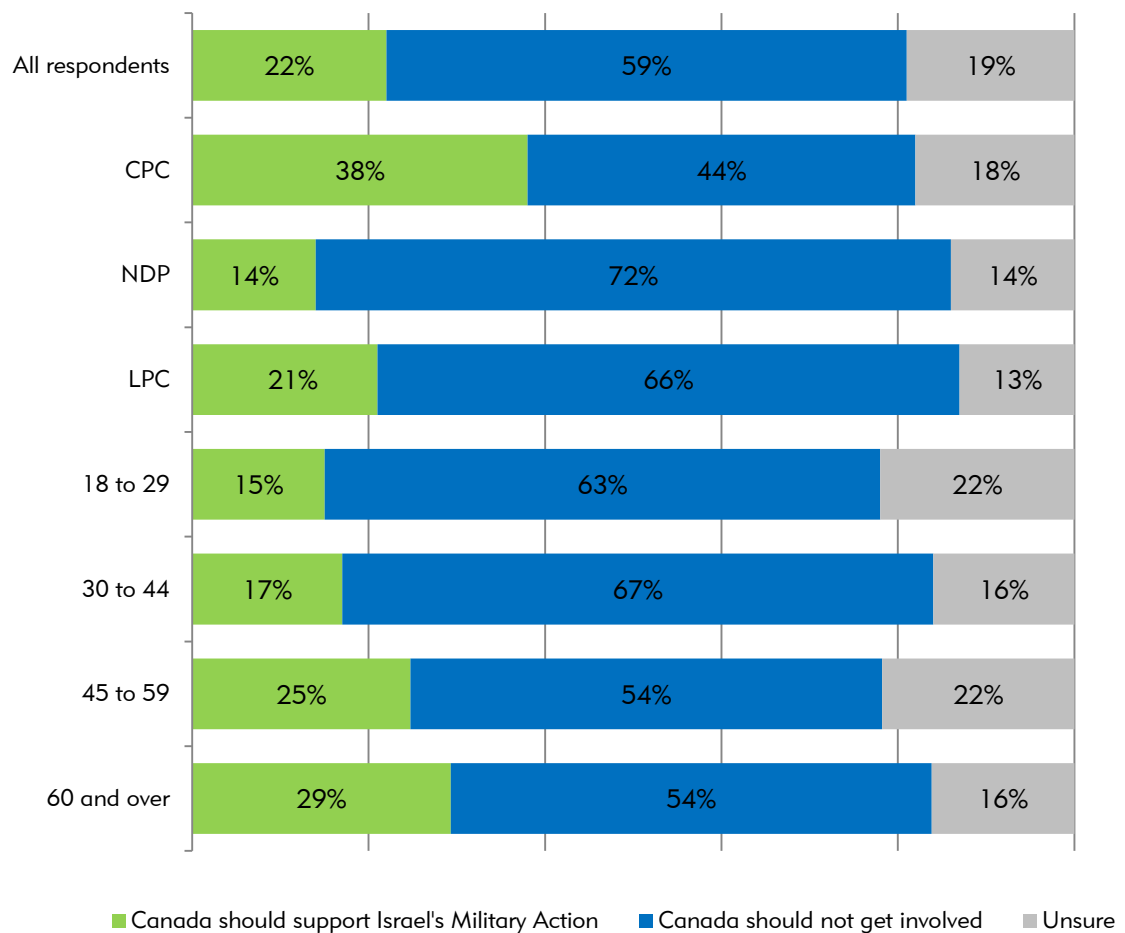


5.0 Issue Positions

Finally, respondents were asked to consider two scenarios; first, what Canada should do if Israel were to attack Iran, and second, whether they support the government’s decision to shut down diplomatic relations with Iran.

Overall, a majority (59%) of Canadians were opposed to involvement in an Israeli led counter-attack on Iran. Opposition was related to both political affiliation and age, with Conservative supporters and those over 60 most likely to favour involvement, and NDP supporters and Millennials least likely.

Figure 5.1 What should Canada do if Israel were to attack Iran in order to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons?

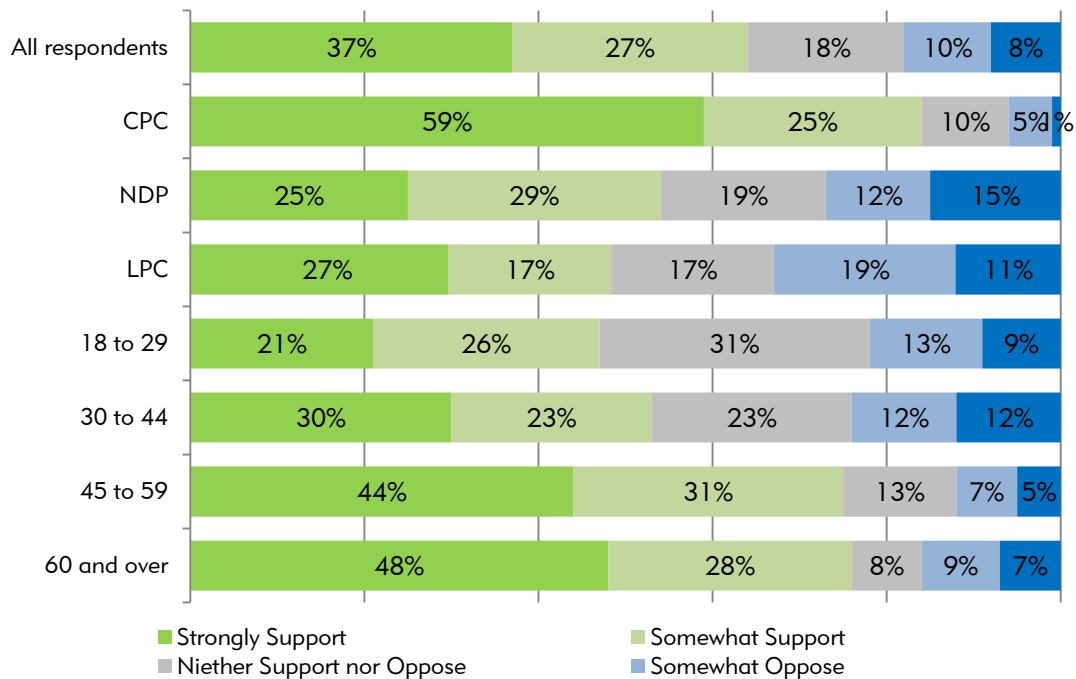


Next, respondents were shown the following statement:

“As you may know, the federal government recently cut off all diplomatic ties with Iran. This includes closing Canada’s embassy in Iran and expelling Iranian diplomats in Canada. In defending the decision, Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister cited Iran’s support for Syrian President Assad’s regime, its failure to comply with UN resolutions on its nuclear program and its threats against Israel. Critics argue that removing diplomats from Iran hurts intelligence gathering and diplomatic efforts in Iran.”

Following the statement, they were asked to what degree they supported or opposed the government’s decision to sever all diplomatic ties with Iran. Sentiment surrounding diplomatic involvement in Iran was strongly divided along partisan lines. Virtually all (84%) of Conservative supporters backed the government’s decision to some degree, and although a plurality of Liberal supports and a slight majority of NDP supporters backed the decision, ‘strongly support’ responses were considerably lower.

Figure 5.2 Do you support or oppose the government's decision to cut off all diplomatic ties with Iran?



6.0 Methodology

The purpose of public opinion research is to measure attitudes and behaviours of a study population within reliable and acceptable statistical margins of accuracy.

Survey Administration

The survey was conducted online with 1,208 respondents in English and French using an internet survey programmed and collected by Abacus Data. A random sample of panelists was invited to participate in the survey who are members of the Angus Reid Forum, a representative panel of over 150,000 Canadians. The survey was completed from September 14-18, 2012.

Steps were taken to ensure that the survey respondents were representative of the Canadian population over 18 years of age. Quotas were set to match the distribution of actual census data for age, gender, education, language, urban/rural, and province. Moreover, statistical weighting was applied to the data after the completion of the survey for age, gender, and region.

Respondents were informed of the purpose of the research, that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that all information provided would remain confidential. Furthermore, the survey was registered with the National Survey Registration System.

Sample Distribution

Since the online survey was not a random, probability based sample, a margin of error could not be calculated. The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association prohibits statements about margins of sampling error or population estimates with regard to most online panels.

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Region	Unweighted Count (All Respondents)	Weighted Count (All respondents)
Atlantic	120	87
Quebec	295	283
Ontario	397	469
Prairies	106	83
Alberta	135	132
British Columbia	155	163
Total	1,208	1,217