

American Public Divided over US Approach to Israel's War in Gaza

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US President Joe Biden has warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against launching a military incursion into Rafah, urging him to consider the high concentration of Palestinian civilians at risk in Gaza's southernmost city. All the while, Biden continues to express his unconditional support for Israel's war effort and has dismissed the idea of [drawing any red lines](#) to limit the scale or scope of its military operations in Gaza. A Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Ipsos survey, fielded March 8-11, 2024, finds the American public divided over Israel's response to the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas. Overall, Americans are slightly more likely to say Israel has gone too far than say its military actions are justified.

Key Findings

- In contrast to many other foreign policy issues, a large number of Americans—25 percent or more—decline to give an opinion on each question about the Israel-Hamas war.
- Slightly more Americans think Israel has gone too far and its military actions in Gaza are not justified (32%) than think Israel is justified in defending its interests (27%)
- Four in 10 Americans say the United States should exert diplomatic pressure (14%) on Israel or restrict military aid (26%), but 23 percent say the United States should not pressure Israel at all.
 - In a February Council-Ipsos poll, a bare majority of Americans said they support restricting military aid to Israel so it cannot use that aid in military operations against the Palestinians (53%).
- Three in 10 Americans view Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu very or somewhat favorably (30%). This share has declined since September 2023, especially among Democrats (from 24% to 17%) and Independents (from 35% to 23%).

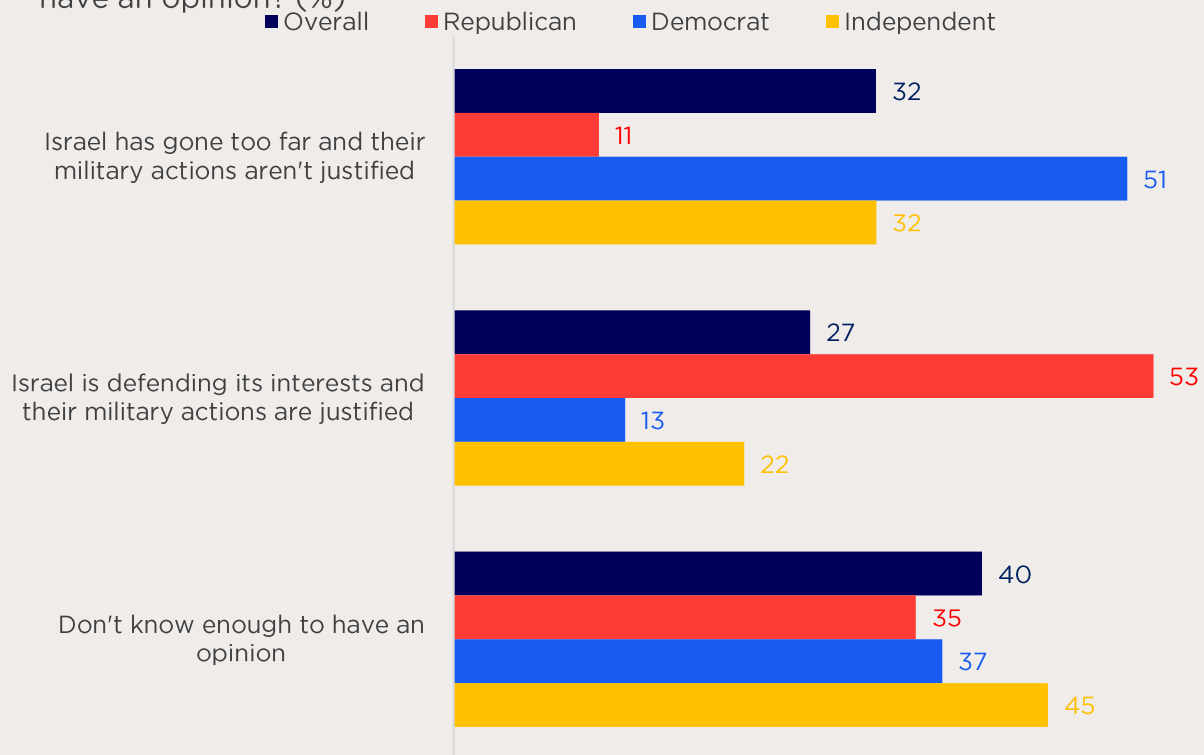
Slightly More Think Israel Has Gone Too Far Than Think Actions Are Justified

When asked about their views on the Israeli military action in Gaza, a plurality of Americans say they do not know enough to have formed an opinion (40%). This relatively large portion who decline to voice an opinion could be related to several variables: a [lack of details](#) on the conflict, the majority view that the United States [should not take a side](#) in the conflict, or the finding that Americans feel they need to be [extra careful](#) when discussing this issue. Among the rest of Americans who do offer their view, slightly more agree that “Israel has gone too far and their military actions are not justified” (32%) than agree that “Israel is defending its interests and their military actions are justified” (27%).

Across partisan lines, the bulk of Republicans who give their opinion say that Israel is justified in defending its interests (53%), while the bulk of Democrats say otherwise, that Israel is not justified and has gone too far (51%). Independents are most likely to say they don't know enough to form an opinion (45%) but lean toward saying Israel has gone too far (32%) over being justified in its actions (22%).

View of Israeli Military Action in Gaza

Thinking about the Israeli military action in Gaza, which statement best describes what you think...or do you not know enough about the situation to have an opinion? (%)

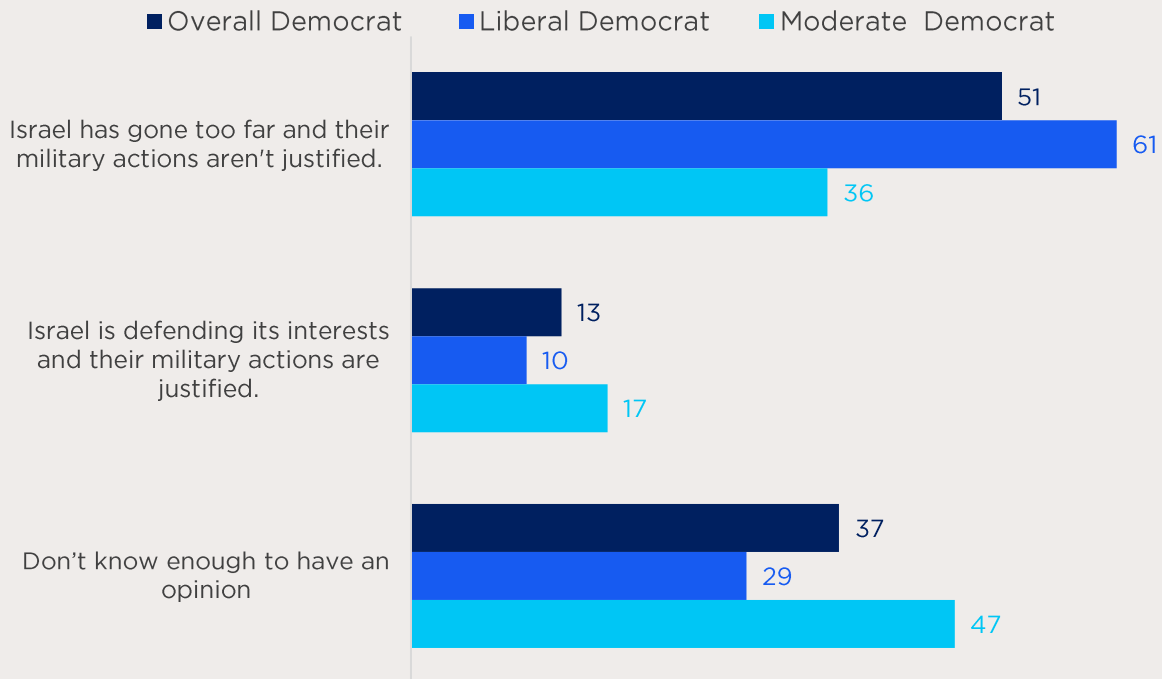


March 8-11, 2024 | n=1,024
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS/IPSOS

There are differences within partisan groupings as well, and particularly within the Democratic Party. For the purposes of this analysis, we grouped moderate and conservative Democrats together but refer to them simply as “moderates” (see methodology for more detail). Among self-described Democrats, those who are liberal are far more likely to say Israel has gone too far in its military operations (61%) than moderate Democrats (36%).

Democrats' Views of Israeli Military Action

Thinking about the Israeli military action in Gaza, which statement best describes what you think...or do you not know enough about the situation to have an opinion? (%)



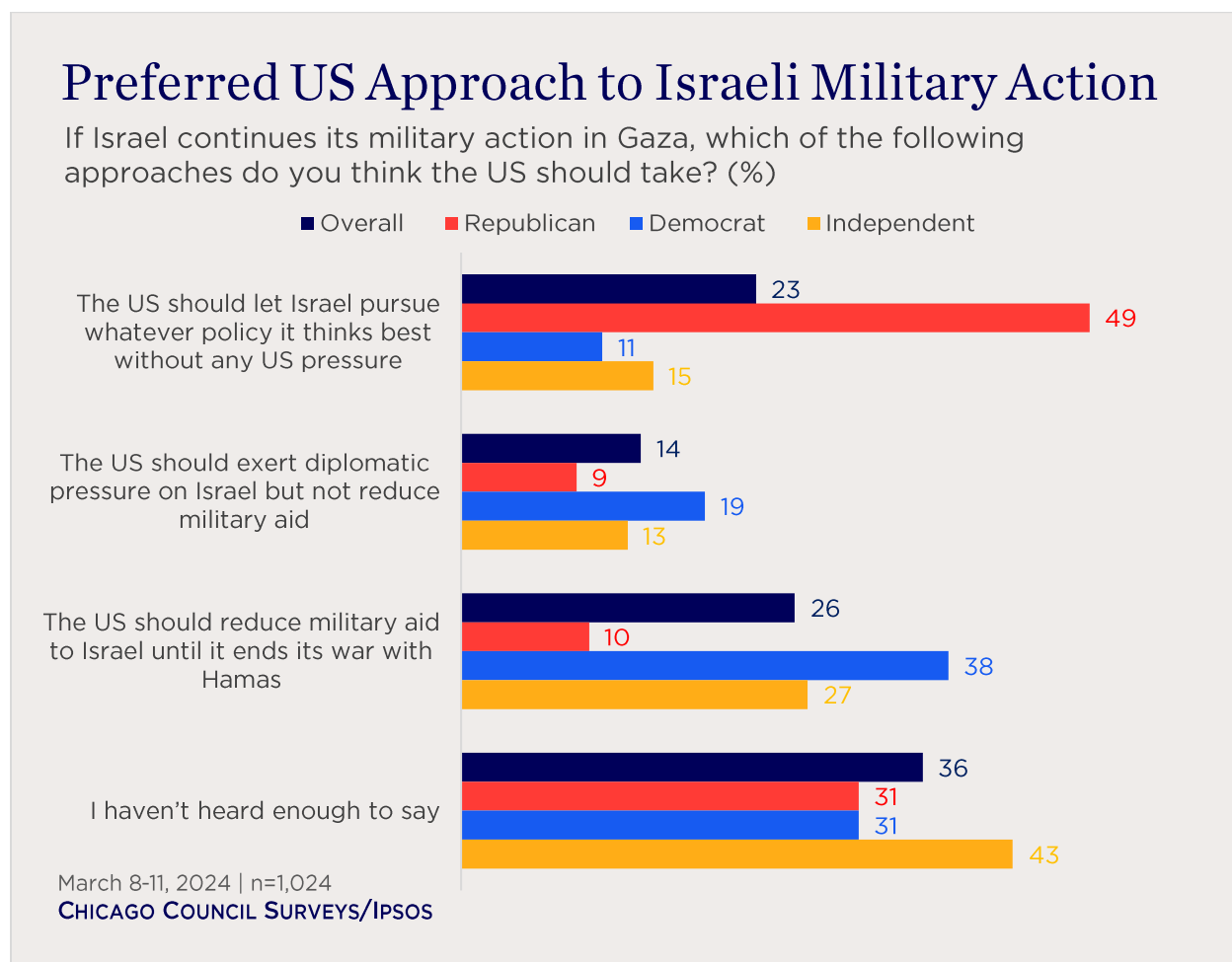
March 8-11, 2024 | n=304
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Among Republicans, two-thirds of those with a very favorable view of Donald Trump (“Trump Republicans”; see methodology for more details) say Israeli military operations are justified (65%). A plurality of “non-Trump Republicans,” who have only a somewhat favorable or unfavorable view of the former US president lean in the same direction (46% justified). Only 6 percent of Trump Republicans say Israel has gone too far, compared to the 15 percent of non-Trump Republicans (see Appendix Table 1).

Younger Americans, as well as African and Hispanic Americans, are more likely to say they don’t know enough about the situation to have an opinion. Among those who provide an opinion, more say Israel has gone too far in its military operations and is not justified. By contrast, white Americans are divided in their views, and older Americans are more likely to say Israel is justified in defending itself (see Appendix Tables 2 and 3).

Americans Tend to Support Some US Pressure If Israel Continues War

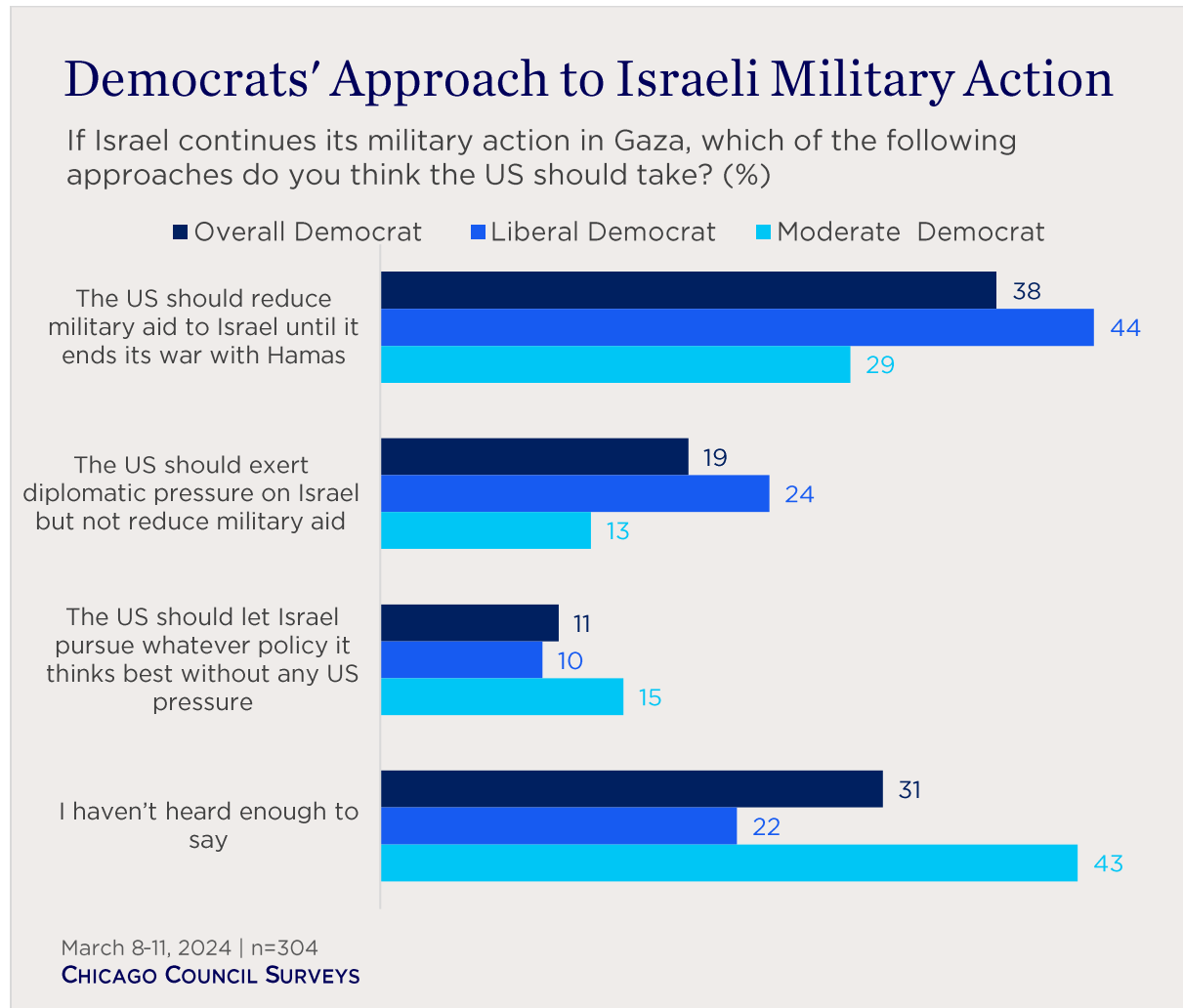
Americans who have heard enough about the conflict between Israel and Hamas to give their opinion tend to believe the United States should apply some sort of pressure if Israel continues its military operations in Gaza. A quarter say the United States should reduce military aid to Israel until it ends its war with Hamas (26%), and 14 percent say the United States should exert diplomatic pressure but not reduce military aid. Many, however, report not having heard enough to say (36%, including at least a third across partisan groupings). An additional one in four (23%) say the US should let Israel pursue whatever policy it thinks best without any US pressure.



Democrats generally prefer that the United States apply some form of pressure on Israel (57%), with a plurality (38%) saying the United States should reduce military aid to Israel and an additional 19 percent preferring diplomatic pressure alone. Only one in 10 Democrats say the US should let Israel pursue whatever policy it deems best with no external pressure (11%).

This preference for exerting pressure on Israel is even higher among liberal Democrats, either by reducing military aid (44%) or through diplomatic pressure alone (24%). Just 10 percent say the US should let Israel pursue whatever policy it

thinks is best without any US pressure. Moderate Democrats tend to say they haven't heard enough to form an opinion (43%), though of those who do give a response, a plurality support pressuring Israel by reducing military aid (29%). Fifteen percent of moderate Democrats say the United States should let Israel pursue whatever policy it chooses, and 13 percent say the United States should use diplomatic pressure but not reduce military aid.



Republicans are most likely to say the United States should let Israel decide its own policy options without US pressure (49%), though three in 10 say they haven't heard enough to form an opinion (31%). One in 10 say the United States should either exert diplomatic pressure (9%) or reduce military aid (10%). Trump Republicans are most likely to say the United States should not pressure Israel at all (61%), and while a plurality of non-Trump Republicans agrees, they do so at a lower level (41%). Only 12 percent of Trump Republicans say the United States should pressure Israel (3% diplomatic pressure, 9% military aid restrictions), compared to the quarter of non-Trump Republicans who support exerting diplomatic pressure (13%) or restricting military aid (12%) to Israel (see Appendix Table 4).

Younger Americans, as well as African and Hispanic Americans, are also more likely to say they haven't heard enough about the situation to give an opinion on this item too. However, those who do provide an opinion tend to say the United States should apply some pressure on Israel if it continues its military operations in Gaza, with more Generation Z, Millennials, and African Americans saying it should reduce military aid than just apply diplomatic pressure alone (see Appendix Tables 5 and 6).

[A February Council-Ipsos survey](#) posed a different question, directly asking whether Americans support or oppose placing restrictions on US military aid to Israel so it cannot use that aid toward military operations against Palestinians. In this formulation, a bare majority (53%) of Americans said they support restrictions, similar to views expressed in 2021. Majorities of Democrats (64%) and Independents (52%) favored restricting military aid along these lines, while a majority of Republicans (56%) opposed placing restrictions on military aid to Israel.

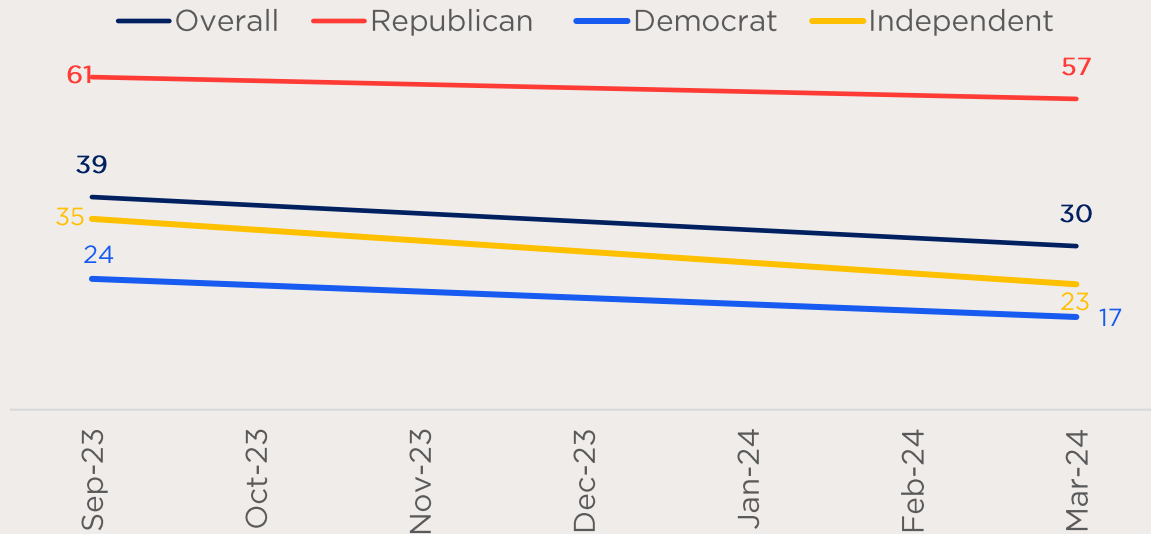
Among Democratic Party supporters, seven in 10 liberal Democrats (70%) said the United States should restrict military aid to Israel so it cannot use that aid on military operations against Palestinians (28% oppose). Moderate Democrats tended to lean the same way but were more divided (53% vs. 40% oppose) (see Appendix Table 7).

Republicans Rate Netanyahu Favorably, at Odds with Other Americans

When asked to give their opinion of Netanyahu, about twice as many Americans say they have an unfavorable (63%) view of him as say they have a favorable one (30%). Consistent with their less-conditional support for Israeli actions relative to Democrats and Independents in this survey, Republicans have a much more positive impression of Netanyahu. While down slightly from the 61 percent recorded in 2023, 57 percent of Republicans continue to rate Netanyahu favorably. By contrast, only a 23 percent of Independents and 17 percent of Democrats have a favorable view of him. There are no significant differences within partisan groupings in their views of the Israeli prime minister.

Favorability of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu

Do you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable view of the following world leaders? Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (% very + somewhat favorable)



March 8-11, 2024 | n=1,024
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Conclusion

As Biden gave his State of the Union address earlier this month, some progressive Democrats in the House chamber donned Palestinian keffiyehs and held up signs reading "[Lasting Ceasefire Now.](#)" Another Democrat wore a white badge emblazoned [with '153'](#), the number of days since hostages were taken by Hamas. More recently, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer—the highest ranking Jewish American in the US government—[strongly criticized Netanyahu's](#) approach to the conflict and called on Israel to hold new elections. These survey results help to demonstrate the Biden administration's difficult position in trying to reconcile the two wings of the Democratic Party. A renewed Israeli offensive into Rafah could push more Americans to take a position on the issue and present a serious challenge for the Biden campaign's attempts to recreate its winning 2020 coalition.

Appendix

Appendix Tables 1-3

Question 36N. Thinking about the Israeli military action in Gaza, which statement best describes what you think...or do you not know enough about the situation to have an opinion?

	Liberal Democrat	Moderate Democrat	Trump Republican	Non-Trump Republican
Israel is defending its interests, and their military actions are justified	10	17	65	46
Israel has gone too far, and their military actions aren't justified	61	36	6	15
Don't know enough to have an opinion	29	47	29	38

Table 2. Views of Israeli Military Action across Racial Groups (%)				
	White	Black or African American	Hispanic American	Other, Non-Hispanic
Israel is defending its interests, and their military actions are justified	33	10	22	22
Israel has gone too far, and their military actions aren't justified	32	30	26	50
Don't know enough to have an opinion	34	57	52	29

Table 3. Views of Israeli Military Action across Generations (%)					
	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer	Silent
Israel is defending its interests, and their military actions are justified	14	18	29	38	55
Israel has gone too far, and their military actions aren't justified	29	35	35	31	26
Don't know enough to have an opinion	54	46	35	29	18

Appendix Tables 4-6.

Question 36M. If Israel continues its military action in Gaza, which of the following approaches do you think the United States should take?

Table 4. Preferred US Approach to Israeli Military Action across Partisan Divides (%)				
	Liberal Democrat	Moderate Democrat	Trump Republican	Non-Trump Republican
The US should let Israel pursue whatever policy it thinks best without any US pressure	10	15	61	41
The US should exert diplomatic pressure on Israel but not reduce military aid	24	13	3	13
The US should reduce military aid to Israel until it ends its war with Hamas	44	29	9	12
I haven't heard enough to say	22	43	27	34

Table 5. Preferred US Approach to Israeli Military Action across Racial Groups (%)

	White	Black or African American	Hispanic American	Other, Non-Hispanic
The US should let Israel pursue whatever policy it thinks best without any US pressure	26	10	24	16
The US should exert diplomatic pressure on Israel but not reduce military aid	16	10	12	9
The US should reduce military aid to Israel until it ends its war with Hamas	25	28	19	40
I haven't heard enough to say	31	48	45	35

	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen x	Boomer	Silent
The US should let Israel pursue whatever policy it thinks best without any US pressure	15	17	23	29	53
The US should exert diplomatic pressure on Israel but not reduce military aid	6	10	16	22	13
The US should reduce military aid to Israel until it ends its war with Hamas	31	27	26	25	19
I haven't heard enough to say	46	46	34	23	16

Appendix Table 7.

Question 725B. Do you support or oppose putting restrictions on US military aid to Israel so that it cannot use that aid toward military operations against Palestinians?

	Overall Democrat	Liberal Democrat	Moderate Democrat
Support	67	70	53
Oppose	29	28	40

Methodology

This data comes from a joint Chicago Council on Global Affairs/Ipsos survey. It was conducted March 8-10, 2024, by Ipsos using its large-scale, nationwide, online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,024 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 1.12. 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+)

Partisan identification is based on how respondents answered a standard self-identification question: “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”

In this March survey, 59 percent of Democrats describe themselves as liberal—9 percent extremely liberal, 35 percent liberal, and 15 percent slightly liberal. The rest consider themselves to be moderate/middle of the road (36%), and a handful consider themselves some degree of conservative (4% slightly, 1% conservative, 0% extremely conservative).-For the purposes of this analysis, we grouped moderate and conservative together and refer to them as simply “moderates.”

Because a large majority of Republicans say they are conservative, we instead grouped Republican Party supporters on their views of former President Donald Trump. “Trump Republicans” are those with a very favorable view of Trump (43%) and “non-Trump Republicans” are those with a somewhat favorable (33%), somewhat unfavorable (9%), or very unfavorable (14%) view of the former president.

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