

At Least Majorities of Adults in Five Largest European Countries and U.S. Believe Western Countries Should Find Common Ground With Iran

Majorities in all six countries believe Iran is seeking to build its own nuclear weapons

New York, NY — September 9, 2009 — Earlier this summer, Iran re-elected Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in an election filled with controversy. Now, majorities of Spanish (55%), French (54%) and Italian (51%) adults as well as pluralities of British adults (46%), Germans (45%) and Americans (43%) believe that Western countries should find common issues that can be worked out with Iran while disagreeing on others. One-quarter of Italians (27%) and one in five Germans (21%) believe that Western countries should cut off all direct contact with the Iranian countries.

These are some of the findings of a **Financial Times/Harris Poll** conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,085 adults aged 16-64 within France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, and the United States and adults aged 18-64 in Italy between August 12 and 20, 2009.

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

Iran is suspected of building its own nuclear weapons. In response to this suspicion majorities of Spaniards (55%), almost half of Italians (47%), pluralities of Germans (44%) and French adults (42%) as well as 39% of Americans and over one-third (35%) of British adults all believe Western countries should approve tough new sanctions in response to this suspicion. And, almost three-quarters of Germans (72%), two-thirds of Americans (67%), three in five Italians (61%) and Spaniards (60%), half of French adults (53%) and almost half of Britons (48%) all believe that the suspicion is correct. Only between 5% and 10% in each country do not believe this assertion.

Among those who believe that Iran is seeking to build their own nuclear weapons, very strong majorities in each country (between 70% in Spain and 86% in Italy) believe Iran wants nuclear weapons in a desire to be a dominant power in the Middle East. Between 22% (in Italy) and 37% (in Great Britain) in the six countries believe Iran wants nuclear weapons because they have a fear of Israel which has nuclear weapons. In these six countries, between 24% (in Italy) and 39% (in Germany) believe a reason Iran wants nuclear weapons is a fear of the United States after the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan.

One thing that has been discussed is if Iran can develop its nuclear program for energy uses if it can give a verifiable guarantee that it will not acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons. This is something that provokes mixed feelings. Two in five Americans (40%) would oppose this idea while one-third would support it. Almost half of Germans (48%) and Spaniards (49%) oppose this idea while just over three in ten in each country support it (31% and 32% respectively). A plurality of Italians (44%) and French adults (42%) support allowing the development of a nuclear program in Iran for energy use while 39% of Italians and 36% of French oppose it. Three in ten British adults both oppose this idea (31%) and support it (30%) while 39% are not sure on this.

So what?

While there is a feeling among adults in these six countries that Western countries should find some common issues to work on with Iran, there is also a sense that new, tougher sanctions need to be applied to Iran because of the possibility that nuclear weapons are being developed. And, the question of nuclear weapon development is one that majorities in these six countries believe to be a fact. The only clear divide is whether to allow nuclear development for energy issues in Iran. Adults in these countries are wary regarding Iran and their move to join the nuclear ranks. At the moment they are willing to say just sanctions and let’s find common ground, but more saber rattling by Iran could be something that changes their feelings quickly.

**TABLE 1
IRAN ELECTION**

“On 12 June the Presidential Election in Iran saw Mahmoud Ahmadinejad re-elected amid a much-disputed re-election. What should Western Countries do now?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Find common issues that can be worked on together while disagreeing on others	46	54	51	55	45	43
Cut off all direct contact with the Iranian government	14	15	27	14	21	15
Ignore the dispute and deal with the government as normal	13	6	8	12	9	12
Not Sure	27	25	14	19	25	30

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 2
IRAN’S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS AND WESTERN RESPONSE**

“Iran is suspected of seeking to build its own nuclear weapons. What should Western countries do in response to this suspicion?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve tough new sanctions	35	42	47	55	44	39
Accept that there is nothing they can do and live with the likelihood Iran has nuclear weapons	17	10	12	11	16	10
Bomb Iran’s nuclear facilities	11	6	11	7	6	16
Do something else	14	15	17	14	19	14
Not sure	23	27	12	13	14	23

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 3
BELIEF THAT IRAN HAS NUCLEAR AMBITIONS

“And do you think the suspicion that Iran is seeking to build its own nuclear weapons is true?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	48	53	61	60	72	67
No	8	10	6	8	6	5
Not Sure	44	37	33	33	22	28

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 4
REASON FOR IRAN’S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS

“Why do you think Iran might want nuclear weapons?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. who think Iran is seeking to build its own nuclear weapons

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
A desire to be a dominant power in the Middle East	76	85	86	70	78	85
Fear of Israel which has nuclear weapons	37	31	22	28	31	36
Fear of the US after the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan	37	29	24	36	39	36
Other reason	9	12	7	5	11	12
Not sure	2	2	2	4	4	3

Note: Multiple responses allowed

TABLE 5
IRAN’S NUCLEAR PROGRAM FOR ENERGY USE

“Do you support or oppose allowing Iran to develop its nuclear program for energy uses if it can give a verifiable guarantee that it will not acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Oppose	31	36	39	49	48	40
Support	30	42	44	32	31	33
Not sure	39	22	17	19	21	27

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Methodology

This **FT/Harris Poll** was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,085 adults aged 16-64 within France (1,033), Germany (989), Great Britain (1,065), Spain (974) and the United States (1,035), and adults aged 18-64 in Italy (989) between August 12 and 20, 2009. Figures for age, sex, education, region and Internet usage were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult populations of the respective countries. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls and of the British Polling Council.

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By Regina A. Corso, Director, The Harris Poll, Harris Interactive

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