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<http://www.people-press.org/2013/06/17/public-remains-opposed-to-arming-syrian-rebels/>

Public Remains Opposed to Arming Syrian Rebels

Six-in-Ten Say Opposition May Be No Better than Current Government

6/17/2013

Overview

Broad majorities continue to oppose the U.S. and its allies sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria. Last Thursday's announcement that the U.S. would aid the

Most Still Oppose Arming Anti-Government Groups in Syria

U.S. and its allies sending arms to anti- govt groups in Syria	Mar 2012	Dec 2012	June 2013
	%	%	%
Favor	29	24	20
Oppose	63	65	70
Don't know	9	11	9
	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 12-16, 2013.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

rebels has not increased public support for action, and majorities of all partisan groups are opposed.

Overall, 70% oppose the U.S. and its allies sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria; just 20% favor this. Opinion is little changed from December of last year (24% favor) and support is down slightly from March, 2012 (29% favor).

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted June 12-16 among 1,512 adults, finds a major factor in overall attitudes about Syria is the impression

In Syrian Conflict, Most See U.S. Military as Too Overcommitted to Get Involved

<i>Statements about conflict in Syria ...</i>	Agree %	Disagree %	DK %
U.S. military already too overcommitted	68	27	4=100
Syrian opposition groups may be no better than current govt	60	25	15=100
Important U.S. support people opposing authoritarian regimes	53	36	11=100
U.S. has moral obligation to do what it can to stop violence	49	46	4=100

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that the U.S. military is already stretched thin. About two-thirds (68%) say the U.S. is too overcommitted to get involved in another conflict, and just 27% disagree. The public also has questions about the opposition groups in Syria: 60% say that they may be no better than the current government.

At the same time, the public does not reject a key argument for involvement in Syria: by a 53%-36% margin, most agree that it is important for the U.S. to support people who oppose authoritarian regimes.

The public is divided over whether the U.S. has a moral obligation to do what it can to stop the violence in Syria: 49% agree, 46% disagree.

Most Republicans and Democrats Oppose Arming Rebels

There is very little partisan divide in attitudes about the conflict in Syria. Majorities of independents (74%), Republicans (71%) and Democrats (66%) oppose the U.S. and its allies sending arms and military supplies to anti-government groups in Syria.

Nearly identical majorities of Democrats (69%), independents (69%) and Republicans (68%)

Partisans Oppose Arming Rebels; Concerned About Overcommitted U.S. Military

<i>U.S. and its allies sending arms to anti- govt groups in Syria</i>	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Favor	20	20	25	18
Oppose	70	71	66	74
Don't know	9	10	9	8
	100	100	100	100

<i>% agree</i>				
U.S. military already too overcommitted	68	68	69	69
Syrian opposition groups may be no better than current govt	60	64	52	66
Important U.S. support people opposing authoritarian regimes	53	55	56	51
U.S. has moral obligation to do what it can to stop violence	49	49	58	42

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also believe that U.S. military forces are too overcommitted to get involved in another conflict.

Independents (66%) and Republicans (64%) are most concerned that the opposition groups in Syria may be no better than the current government, but 52% of Democrats also agree with this statement.

By a 58%-38% margin, more Democrats agree than disagree that the U.S. has a moral obligation to do what it can to stop the violence in Syria. Republicans are split with 49% saying the U.S. has a moral obligation to do what it can to stop the violence, and 48% saying it does not have this responsibility. Most independents (53%) disagree that the U.S. has a moral obligation to stop the violence in Syria.

The survey, conducted from Wednesday, June 12 through Sunday, June 16, found no significant trend in opinion about Syria over the course of the five nights of fieldwork. In the first two nights of interviewing 69% opposed arming Syrian rebels, in the final three nights of fieldwork 71% were opposed.

Low Public Interest in Syria News

Even amidst developments on the ground in Syria and the announcement of U.S. plans to aid anti-government groups there, the public continues to pay very little

Limited Interest in Syria News

% following news about Syria very closely



PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 13-16, 2013 Omnibus.

—attention to news about Syria. In a separate survey conducted Thursday through Sunday, just 15% say they are following news about charges that Syria has used chemical weapons against anti-government groups very closely, far fewer than are following other stories such as the government's collection of communication information (35%) and news about the national economy (30%). In fact, 33% say they are following news about Syria not at all closely.

Partisans express similarly low levels of interest in the conflict in Syria. Just 12% of Democrats, 14% of Republicans and 17% of independents say they are following charges that Syria used chemical weapons very closely.

Those Who Favor Arming Rebels Also Have Concerns

The 20% of the public that favors arming anti-government groups in Syria also expresses concerns about the U.S.

Those Who Favor Arming Rebels Also Say Military Overcommitted

	Among those who ...	
	Favor arming rebels	Oppose arming rebels
% agree	%	%
U.S. military already too overcommitted	56	75
Syrian opposition groups may be no better than current govt	55	65
Important U.S. support people opposing authoritarian regimes	76	48
U.S. has moral obligation to do what it can to stop violence	75	41
N=	334	1,032

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 12-16, 2013.

getting involved. More than half (56%) of those who favor arming rebels agree with the statement that U.S. military forces are too overcommitted to get involved in another conflict, and 55% agree that the opposition groups in Syria may be no better than the current government. However, far larger majorities agree that it is important for the U.S. to support people who oppose authoritarian regimes (76%) and that the U.S. has a moral obligation to do what it can to stop the violence in Syria (75%).

To a lesser extent, those who oppose arming the rebels are sympathetic to some arguments for greater U.S. involvement in Syria. About half of those who oppose arming rebels (48%) agree that it is important for the U.S. to support people who oppose authoritarian regimes; 41% say the U.S. has a moral obligation to do what it can to stop the violence in Syria.

Most of the analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted June 12-16, 2013 among a national sample of 1,512 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (758 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 754 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 394 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. 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. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2012 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. 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:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,512	2.9 percentage points
Republicans	388	5.8 percentage points
Democrats	487	5.2 percentage points
Independents	575	4.8 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

Some of the analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted June 13-16, 2013 among a national sample of 1,004 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (501 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 503 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 256 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Braun Research under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. 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. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

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Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,004	3.7 percentage points
Republicans	238	7.6 percentage points
Democrats	297	6.8 percentage points
Independents	357	6.2 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.