

## Israel-Gaza: Canadians share sympathies with both sides in warzone, two-thirds call for ceasefire

*Political persuasions drive differing views of the war, Canada's response and media coverage*

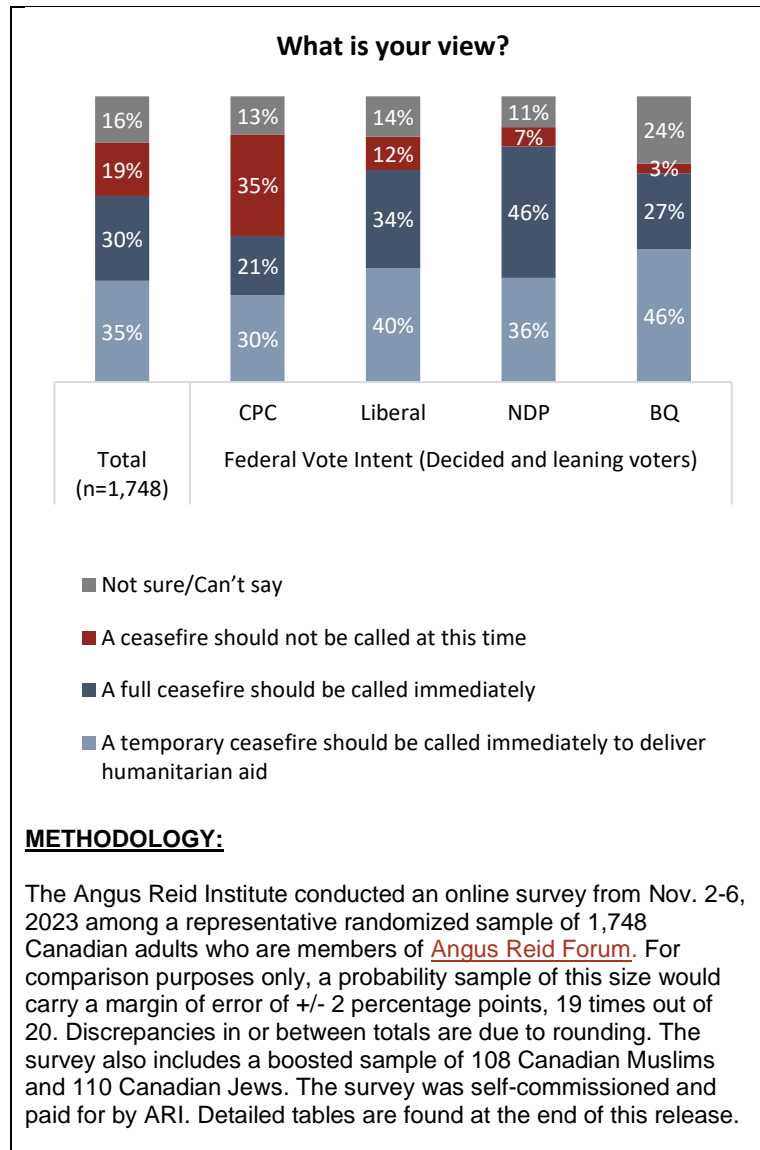
**November 7, 2023** – Much of the world has watched with a mixture of shock, horror, dismay, and grief over the last month, as the most recent wave of conflict between Israel and Gaza has caused the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. Despite calls for a ceasefire, the violence that began with an attack by Hamas-led terrorists on Israel has continued with a sustained air and ground offensive on Gaza by the Israeli military.

New data from the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians own responses reflecting the same spectrum of feelings and opinions that have been expressed internationally.

Asked how they view this conflict, 28 per cent of Canadians say their sympathies lie more with Israel. After the country was attacked on Oct. 7, [more than 1,400](#) people were killed, and a [reported 200 hostages](#) were taken by Hamas – the political and military organization which governs the Gaza Strip. In response, Israel launched airstrikes and a subsequent ground offensive, with reports of [more than 10,000](#) Palestinians being killed according to the Hamas-controlled Health Ministry in Gaza. One-in-five Canadians (18%) say their sympathies lie more with Palestinians, while a large group – three-in-ten (31%) – say that they feel equally sympathetic for both sides.

Nuance and division are evident across a varying number of issues surrounding this conflict. While 75 per cent say Gaza's governing organization Hamas is a terrorist group, nearly half (47%) say that supporting the Palestinian cause is not the same as supporting Hamas.

Further, four-in-five (78%) say Israel has the right to exist and to defend itself, but Canadians are also more likely to say that the Israeli response has been too heavy handed (45%) than not (36%). More than



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two-in-five (43%) say Israeli policy towards Gaza is a form of apartheid, outpacing those who disagree (27%) by a significant margin.

After the Canadian government abstained from voting on a resolution calling for a temporary ceasefire in late October, Canadians have organized [across the country](#) to call for just that. Most say a vote in support of pausing hostilities would have been appropriate, with two-thirds supporting either a temporary (35%) or a full (30%) ceasing of hostilities.

### More Key Findings:

- Canadians are twice as likely to say both the federal government and Justin Trudeau have been too in favour of Israel (26%) rather than too pro-Palestinian (15% and 17% respectively). In each case, more than one-in-five say the response from the government (23%) and Trudeau (22%) has struck the right balance.
- Views of the conflict divide along Canadian political lines. Likely Conservative voters are nearly four times as likely (48%) as those who would vote NDP (13%) to say their sympathies are with the Israelis in this conflict. NDP supporters are more than three times as likely (36%) as Conservative ones (11%) to say their sympathies are with the Palestinians. Those who would vote Liberal are most likely (36%) to say their sympathies are divided evenly between the two sides.
- One-in-nine Canadians (11%) say that their sympathies have changed since the conflict began, with most of this group (7%) saying that they are more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause now, while the rest (4%) lean more toward the Israelis.

### About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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**Part Five: The future: is lasting peace even possible?**

- **Division between support for temporary or permanent halt to conflict**
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**Part One: Where do Canadians' sympathies lie?**

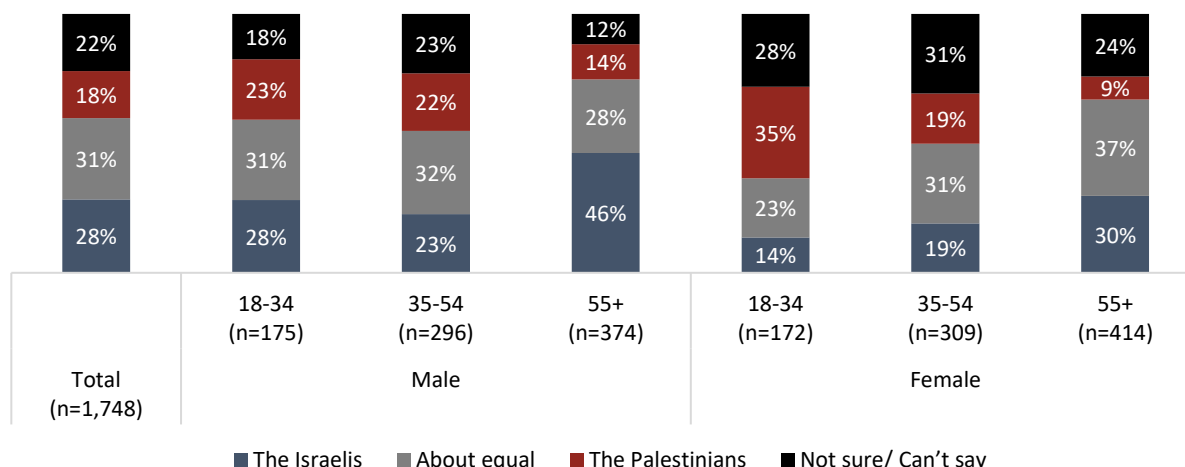
The conflict in Israel and Gaza has dominated the media landscape in the weeks since Oct. 7, when Hamas-led terrorists breached the Gaza Strip border fence and proceeded to kill 1,400 Israelis, mostly civilians, and reportedly kidnap 200 more. Israel's response has been an aerial and ground assault on Gaza with a goal of eliminating Hamas, the political and military organization which governs the Gaza strip. More than 10,000 people have died in Gaza since the conflict began, [according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza](#), which does not distinguish between Hamas fighters and civilians in its death counts. However, [more than half of the dead](#) in Gaza are women and children.

Four-in-five (80%) Canadians say they've been having conversations with their friends and families after the most recent wave of violence in the Israel-Palestine conflict, including two-in-five (41%) who say they've been following the news very closely and discussing it regularly. One-in-six (17%) say they've only been scanning headlines, while two per cent have heard nothing about it ([see detailed tables](#)).

Canadians are split over where their sympathies lie. The largest group – three-in-ten (31%) – say they have equal appreciation of both the Israeli and the Palestinian side in the conflict. Nearly as many (28%) say they have more sympathy for the Israelis, while one-in-five (18%) are more sympathetic to the Palestinians.

Women aged 18- to 34-years-old are the most likely demographic to say they sympathize more with the Palestinian side, while men older than 54 are the most likely to side with the Israelis. In all other age gender groups, the largest group say their sympathies are equally with both sides in the conflict:

**In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, do your sympathies rest more with...?**



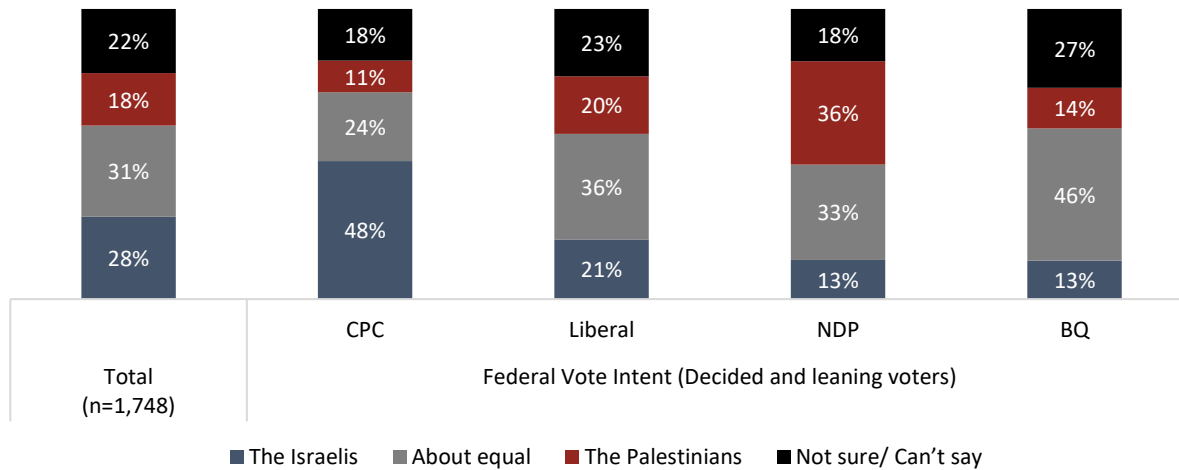
Half (48%) of those who say they would vote Conservative if an election were held today say they side with the Israelis in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Those who intend to vote NDP are the most likely to be on the other side, with more than one-third (36%) saying they side more with the Palestinians. A plurality

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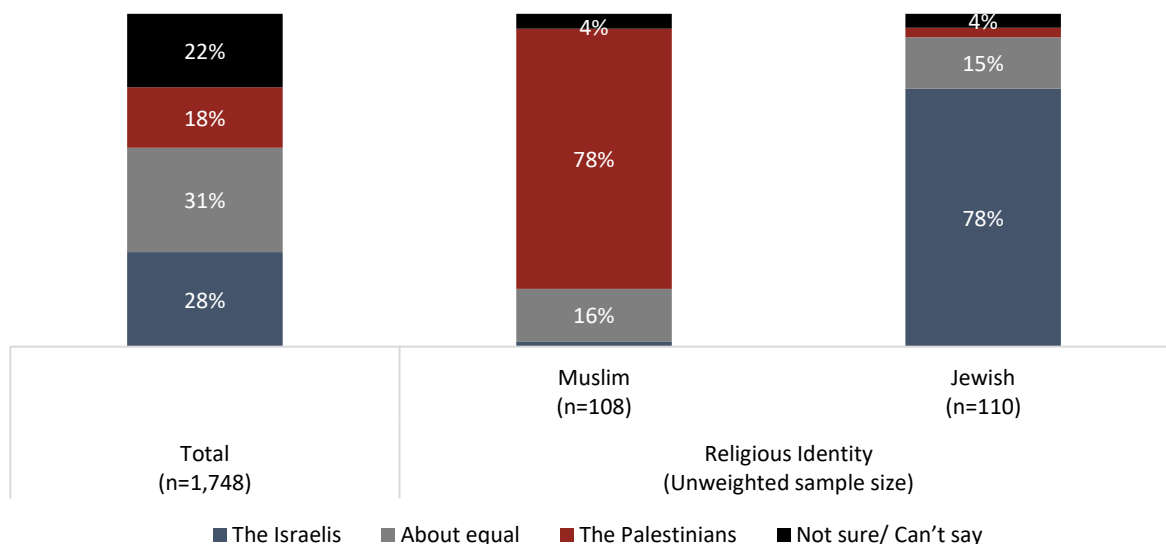
of likely Liberal (36%) and Bloc Québécois voters (46%) find themselves with equal sympathies for both sides:

**In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, do your sympathies rest more with...?**



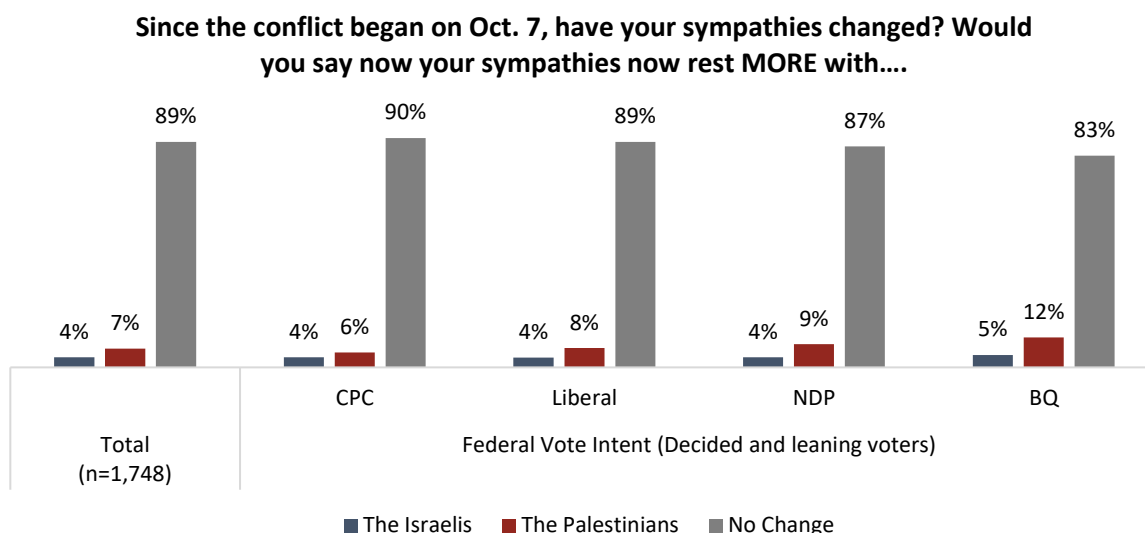
A subsample of Canadian Muslims and Jews better capture their perspectives on this conflict. Four-in-five (78%) Muslims say their sympathies lies with the Palestinians, while four-in-five (78%) Jews say theirs lie with the Israelis. Among both religious groups, one-in-six say they sympathize with both sides of the conflict:

**In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, do your sympathies rest more with...?**



*\*Please note, while helpful in adding context and information to this story, these subsamples of Canadian Jews and Muslims are not necessarily representative of each group in Canada nor weighted to appropriate demographic categories and should be reviewed with caution.*

One-in-ten (11%) Canadians say their opinions have changed in the weeks since the Oct. 7. Those whose assessments have shifted are more likely to say they are now more sympathetic to the Palestinians (7%) than the Israelis (4%). Those who say they would vote for the Bloc Québécois if an election were held today are the most likely to say their opinions have changed since Oct. 7. One-in-eight (12%) in that group say their sympathies are now more with Palestinians:



## Part Two: Assessing the government and media response

The Canadian government has faced both [support](#) and [criticism](#) for its response to the conflict. Canada was one of 14 countries to abstain from a UN vote calling for a [“humanitarian truce” in the Israel-Palestine “crisis”](#). It has also provided [\\$60 million in humanitarian aid](#) to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, [more than 400 Canadian citizens](#) remain trapped in Gaza, awaiting the chance to leave the country at the Rafah border crossing into Egypt, the only crossing open to foreign nationals who wish to flee Gaza. The Canadian government says it has no information as to when its citizens will be able to leave Gaza but has said the Israeli military has assured Canadians trapped will be able to leave in the coming days.

Ottawa has also been steadfast in its support of Israel’s [“right to defend itself”](#), while condemning Hamas. In the early weeks of the conflict, [Canada evacuated](#) more than 1,600 people from Israel, including Canadian citizens, permanent residents and eligible family members.

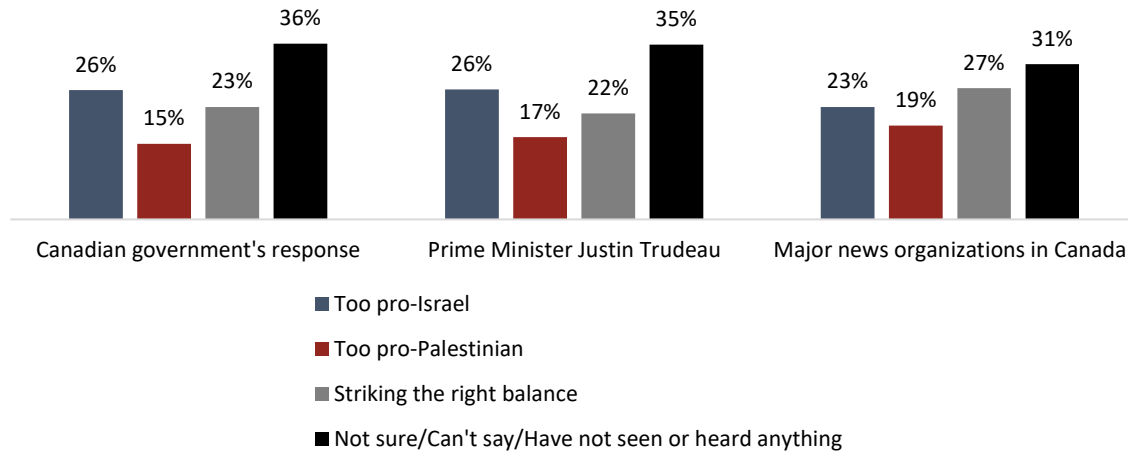
Canadians are divided in their assessment of the government and Trudeau’s response. One-quarter say both the government (26%) and Trudeau (26%) has been too pro-Israel. A similar sized group believe both Trudeau (22%) and the government (23%) have struck the right balance. One-in-six say Trudeau (17%) and the government (15%) have been too pro-Palestinian.

The media coverage draws split assessments from Canadians. One-quarter (27%) believe mainstream media organizations have struck the right balance in reporting both sides of the conflict. One-in-five (23%) say media coverage has sided too much with Israel while 19 per cent believe it has sided too much with Palestinians:

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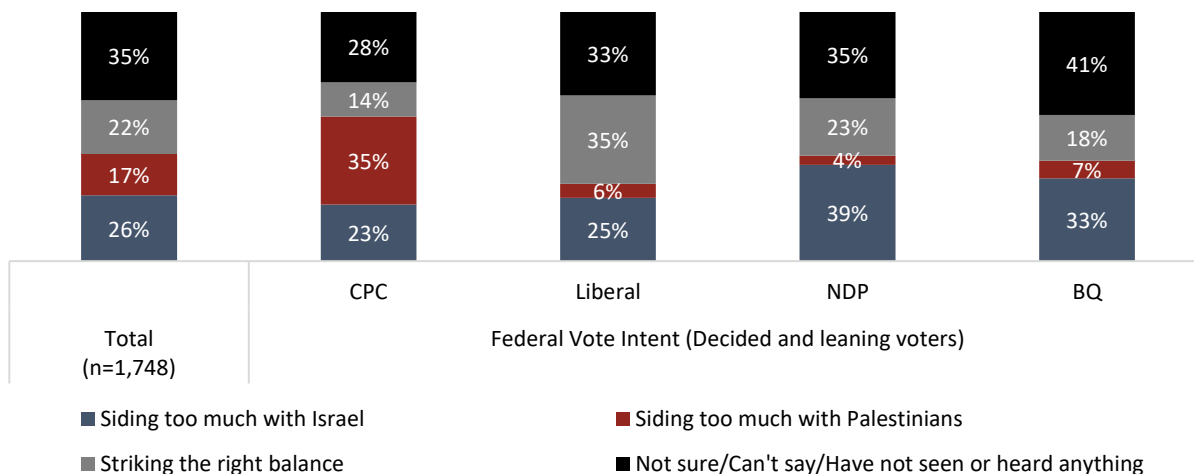
**Assessments of government and media coverage since the conflict began  
(All respondents, n=1,748)**



Canadians younger than 55 are more likely to believe Trudeau's response has been too pro-Israel. Men are twice as likely as women to believe instead it has been too pro-Palestinian. Notably, a larger proportion of women (41%) than men (25%) are unsure on the matter ([see detailed tables](#)).

One-third (35%) of those who say they would vote Conservative if an election were held in the near term say Trudeau has been too pro-Palestinian in his response to the conflict. Two-in-five (39%) likely NDP and one-quarter (25%) likely Liberal voters disagree, saying instead the Trudeau's response has been too pro-Israel. Those who would vote Liberal if an election were held are the most likely (35%) to say the prime minister has struck the right balance:

**Do you feel Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been:**



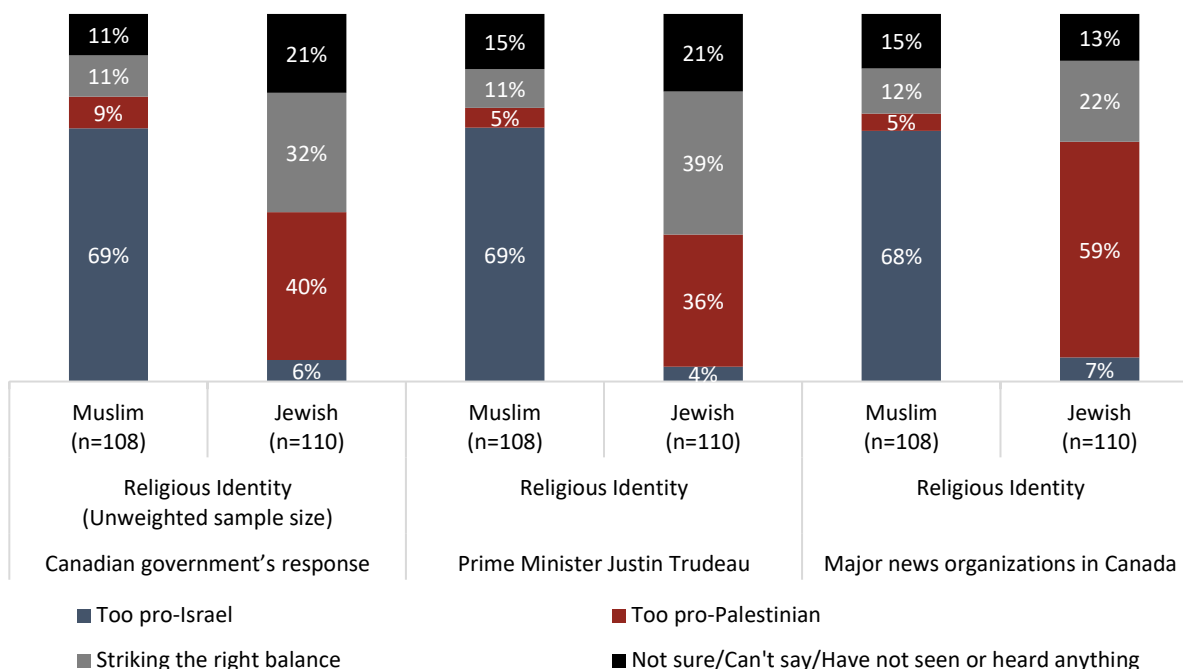
Canadian Muslims and Jews offer divergent assessments of the government and media response. More than two-thirds of Muslims believe major news organizations, Trudeau and the Canadian government have been siding too much with Israel during the conflict. Three-in-five Jews (59%) say Canadian media

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has been too pro-Palestinian, while they are more split in their assessments of the government and Trudeau:

**Assessments of government and media coverage since the conflict began**



**Part Three: Conflicting opinions**

**Vast majority say Israel has a right to defend itself**

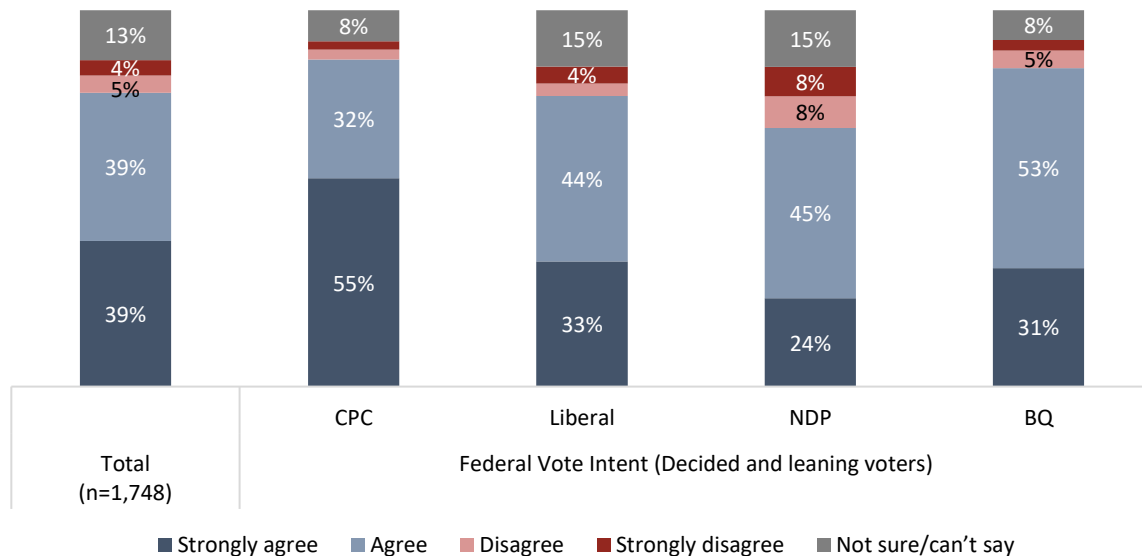
With little equivocation, the vast majority of Canadians (78%) agree that Israel has a right to exist and defend itself. Majorities of all demographics believe this, though agreement ranges from three-in-five (59%) among 18- to 34-year-old women to nearly all (92%) of men older than 54 ([see detailed tables](#)).

Among likely voters, a majority across the political spectrum also say Israel has the right to exist and defend itself. The majority is smallest among those who say they would vote NDP (69%):

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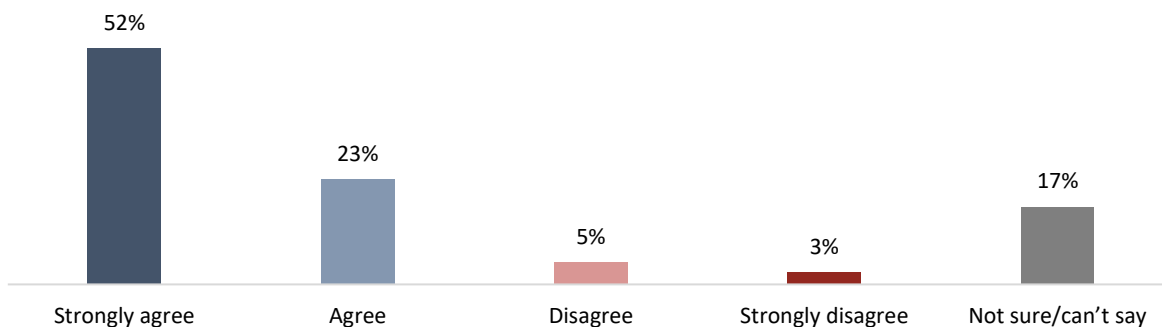
Agree vs. disagree -  
"Israel has the right to exist and defend itself"



**Hamas viewed as a terrorist group by most**

Three-quarters of Canadians (75%) also say Hamas is a terrorist organization. (Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization [by the Canadian government](#).) Younger Canadians, and women, are less likely to agree but still do so at a majority level ([see detailed tables](#)).

Agree vs. disagree -  
"Hamas is a terrorist organization"  
(All respondents, n=1,748)



**But more say Israel's response has been 'too heavy handed' than not**

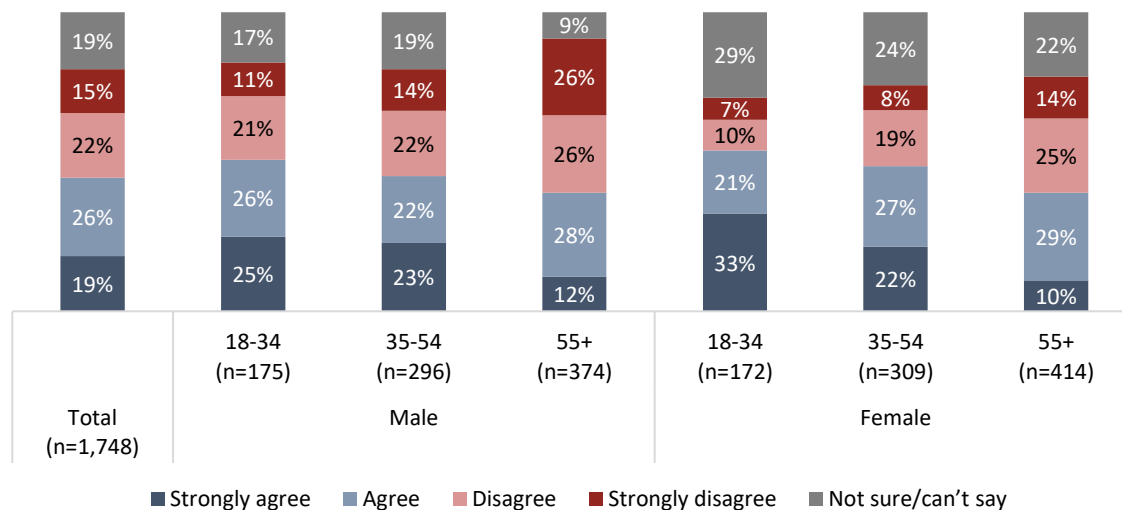
Canadians lean towards believing Israel's response to the Hamas Oct. 7 attack has been too heavy handed (45%) than not (36%). Half of men older than 54 (52%) disagree Israel's response has been too strong, while a majority of women aged 18- to 34-years-old are inclined to believe the response has been disproportionate:

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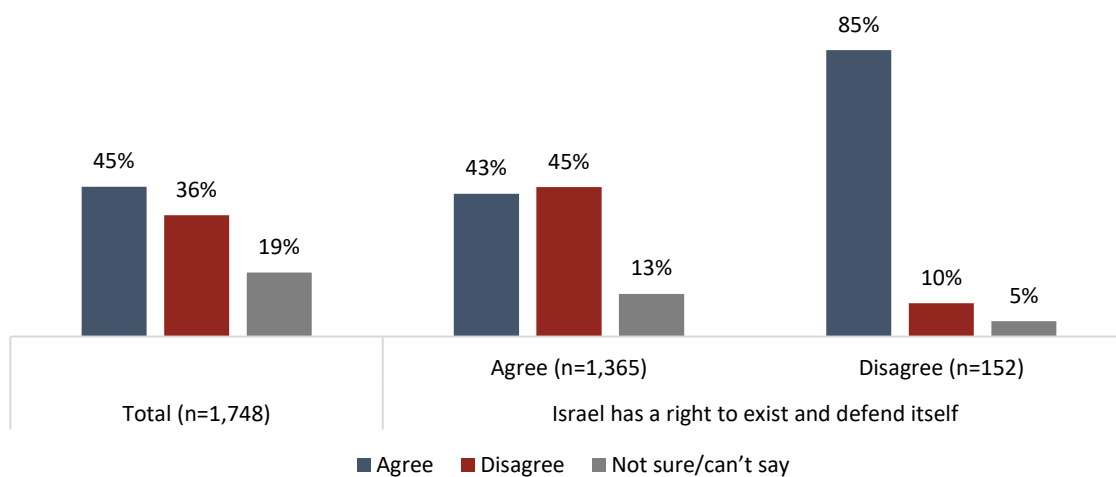


Agree vs. disagree -  
"Israel's response to the Hamas attack has been too heavy handed"



Even among those who feel that Israel's place in the middle east and right to defend itself is sacrosanct are divided evenly about the response:

Agree vs. disagree -  
"Israel's response to the Hamas attack has been too heavy handed"

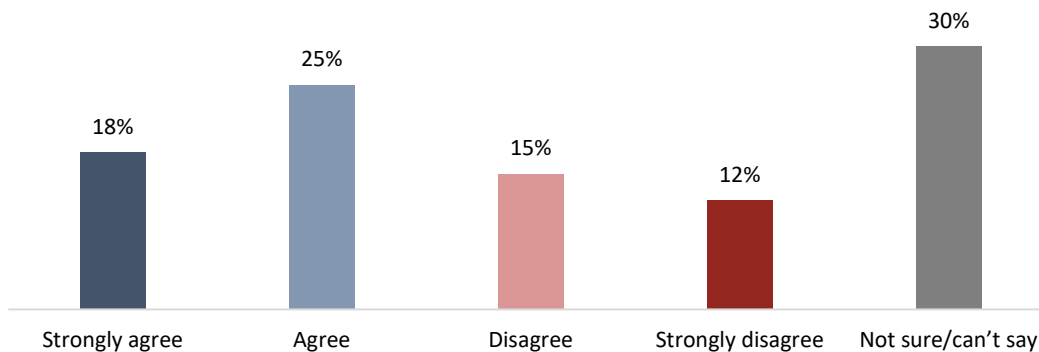


Meanwhile, Canadians are more likely to agree (43%) than not (27%) that Israel's policy towards Palestinians is a form of apartheid, an [allegation levelled](#) by some human rights organizations [including Amnesty International](#). Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter titled his 2006 book on the situation Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid, [to much criticism at the time](#). Those who would vote Conservative if an election were held soon are more likely (45%) to disagree with that categorization of Israel's policies than likely Liberal (22%), NDP (11%) or Bloc Québécois voters (13%, [see detailed tables](#)).

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**Agree vs. disagree -  
"Israel's policy towards Palestinians is a form of apartheid"  
(All respondents, n=1,748)**



**Part Four: Conflict, protest, and free speech**

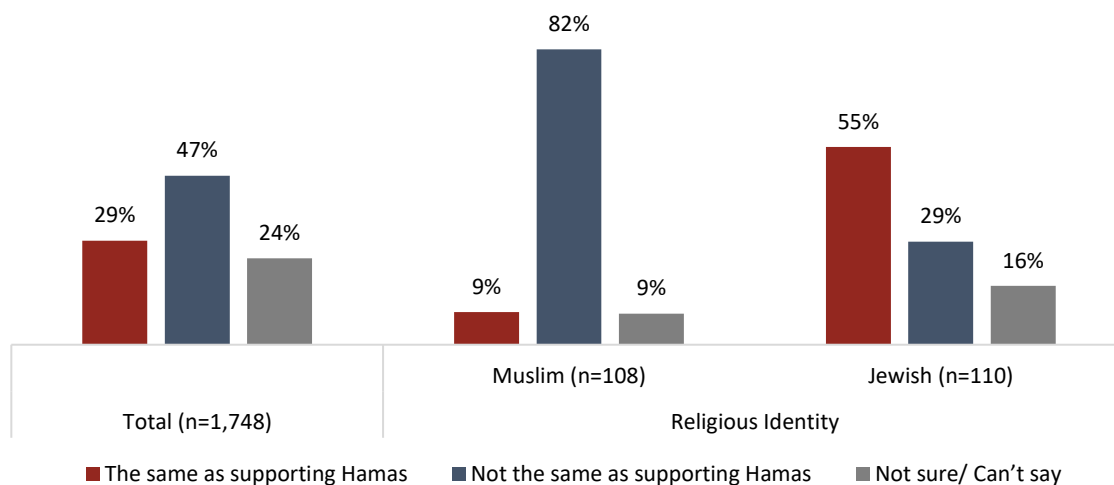
Much of the discourse surrounding this issue has been centred on who supports whom, with criticism being levelled on both sides by those who disagree with them, for perceived missteps and partisanship. In one high-profile incident, Ontario NDP MPP Sarah Jama was removed from the party's caucus and heavily criticized for a statement that centred on ending the "occupation of all Palestinian land" and that did not reference or condemn the Hamas attacks.

**Supporting Palestinians not seen by most as supporting Hamas**

For most (47%), voicing support for Palestine is not the same as supporting Hamas, but for a significant portion (29%) these are one in the same. Another one-quarter (24%) are not sure one way or the other.

There is a sharp divide on this issue between those who profess practicing Islam versus those who practice Judaism:

**In your opinion, protesting in support of Palestinians is...**



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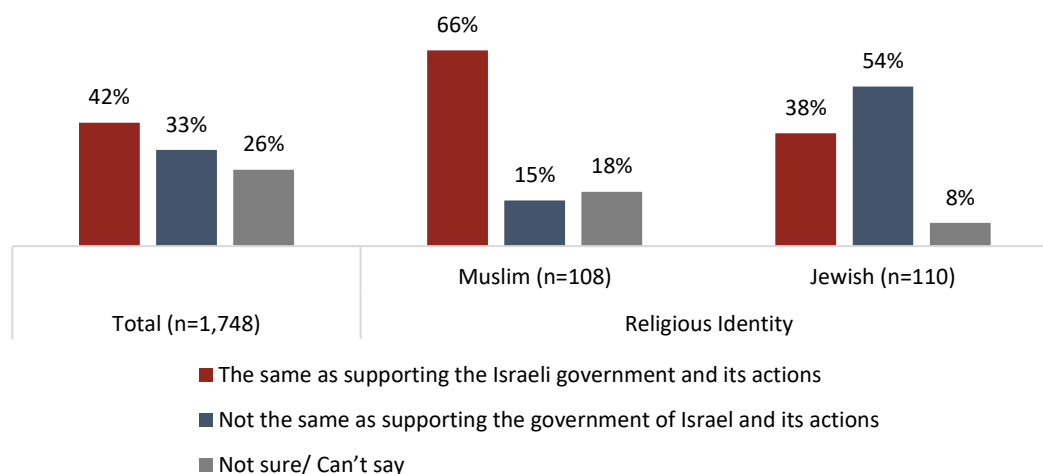
All age groups are more likely to say that it is unfair to equate support of Palestine with support of Hamas, but older men are most likely to say this is equivalent ([see detailed tables](#)).

**Protesting in support of Israel more likely to be viewed as supporting Israeli government**

Canadians are more likely to connect public support for Israelis with their current government than they are to equate Gazans with Hamas. In the former case, 42 per cent say that protesting in support of Israel is the same as supporting the Israeli government and its actions. One-in-three (33%) say this is a false dichotomy, while one-quarter are again, unsure.

Two-thirds of Canadian Muslims say demonstrating for Israel is the same as advocating for the government’s actions, while 37 per cent of Canadian Jews agree. The majority of this latter group disagree:

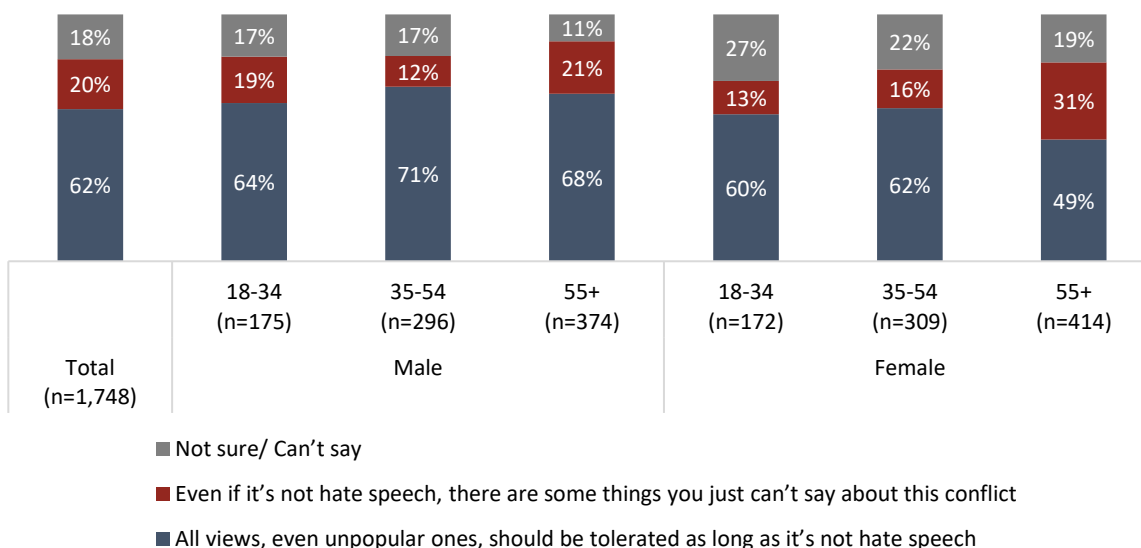
**And, in your opinion, protesting in support of Israel is...**



**Canadians push for more tolerance of expression**

Whichever side they find themselves on, many Canadians hold the view that unpopular or sensitive views, as long as they do not invoke hate speech, should be tolerated rather than punished. This is a relatively uniform view across all age and gender groups, though older Canadians are more likely to say that there are some things that should just not be said about the ongoing conflict:

Which of these two statements is closest to your view?



**Part Five: The future: is lasting peace even possible?**

**Division between support for temporary or permanent halt to conflict**

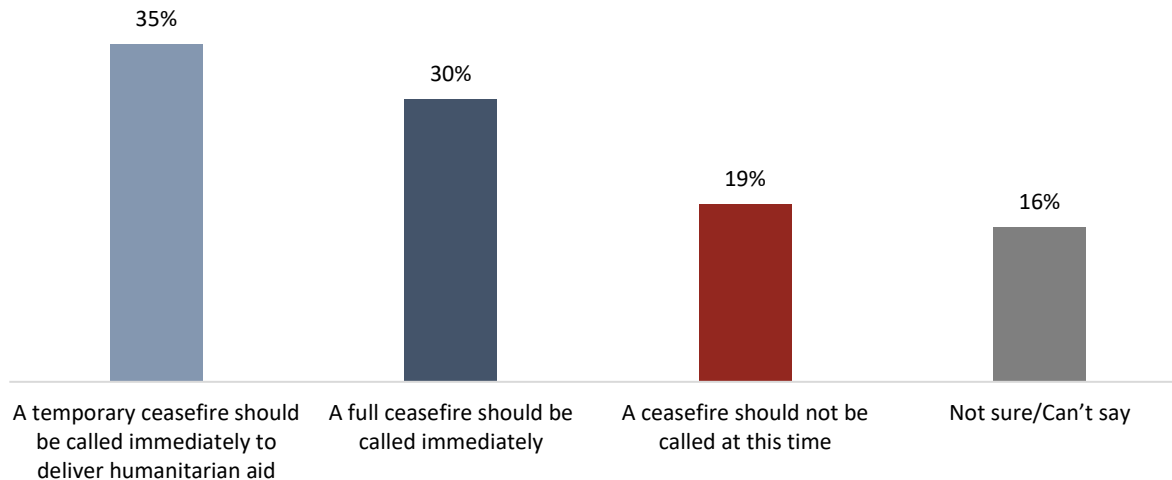
Protestors across Canada in recent days have called for a ceasefire in the conflict between Israel and Hamas. The Canadian government has called for a “humanitarian truce” after abstaining from the UN vote which called for exactly that. Israel has argued that a ceasing of its operations will allow for a re-strengthening of Hamas, while those in favour of a ceasefire say that innocent civilians are being starved and killed, unable to access medical services and other necessities.

A majority of Canadians (65%) believe a ceasefire should be called, while one-in-five (19%) do not support one. However, those in favour of a ceasefire find themselves split between believing only a temporary one is necessary (35%) and believing a full and lasting one should be called (30%):

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**What is your view?  
(All respondents, n=1,748)**



There is shared belief that a ceasefire should be called even among different groups of likely voters. Those who say they would vote Conservative are the most likely (35%) to believe a ceasefire should not be called, but still half (51%) support one. Support is higher among likely Liberal (74%), NDP (82%) and Bloc (73%) voters:

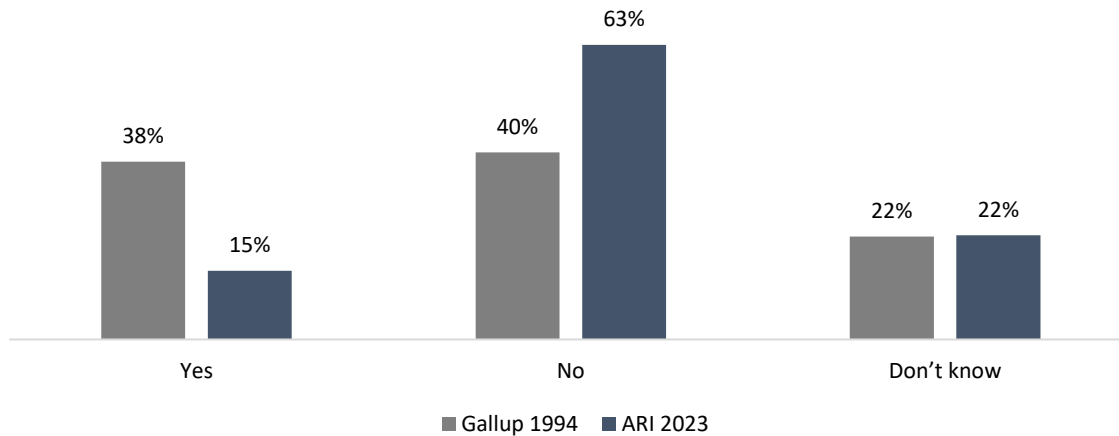
**Little hope for long-term peace**

As violence continues in Israel and Gaza, the ideal of peace between Israelis and Palestinians seems unlikely to a majority of Canadians. Approaching two-thirds (63%) believe there is no chance for a enduring peaceful resolution between the Israelis and Palestinians. One-in-six (15%) still hold out hope, but that represents a significant decline in optimism from almost 30 years ago, when Canadians were more divided in believing peace was possible (38%) and not (40%):

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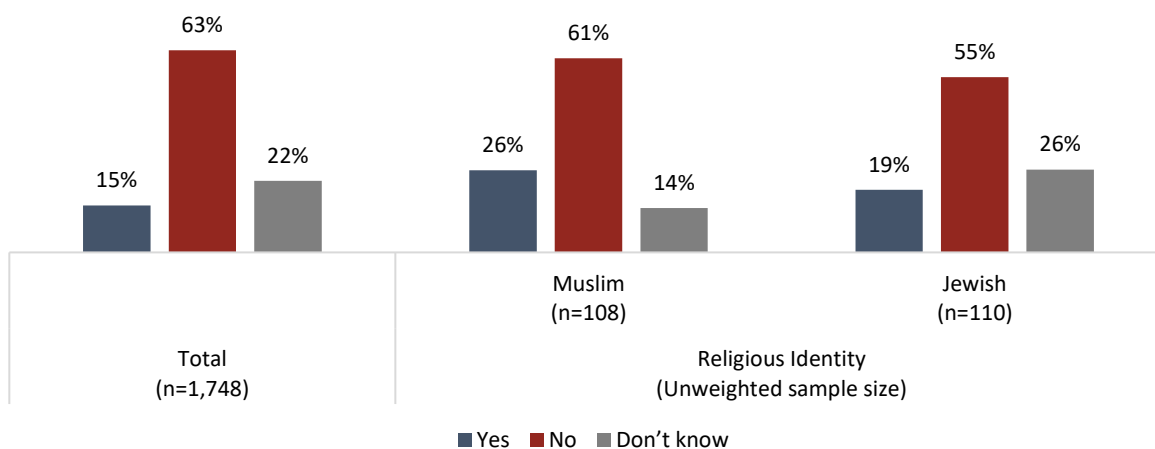
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**Ultimately, do you think there is a chance for lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians?**



Majorities of Canadian Jews (55%) and Muslims (61%) believe there is no chance for lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. However, both groups are slightly more optimistic (Muslims 26% yes, Jews 19%) than the general population (15%):

**Ultimately, do you think there is a chance for lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians?**



*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).*

*For detailed results by religious affiliation and other cross tabulations, [click here](#).*