

# BROOKINGS

## COMMENTARY

# Fewer than 1 in 5 Americans back US takeover of Gaza

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**A**fter weeks of a shaky ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Israel's renewal of its large-scale military assault in the strip has [revived](#) questions about the war's ultimate aims, beyond the release of the Israeli hostages, and [energized](#) talk of the possible removal of Gaza's Palestinians, now in the name of implementing President Donald Trump's ideas.

Trump's Gaza [plan \(https://www.brookings.edu/articles/americas-annexation-of-gaza-wont-happen/\)](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/americas-annexation-of-gaza-wont-happen/), which was announced during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's White House visit last month, proposed a U.S. takeover of the Gaza Strip after displacing its population to other countries and generated negative reactions at [home](#) and [abroad](#). Contrary to [polls](#), the president [suggested](#) that all Palestinians would want to leave; at the same time, he also said that displacement would be permanent, not merely temporary, awaiting reconstruction. Negative reactions to the president's ideas have not dampened Trump's support for his plan, despite that the suggested destinations for the displaced Palestinians, Egypt and Jordan, both adamantly [rejected](#) the proposal. Now there are reports that the administration, together with Israel, is [considering](#) moving Gazans into Syria, which has been weak and unstable after the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime, and where Israel has an increasing [military presence](#).

To measure the popularity of Trump's ideas among the American public, we asked

 several related questions in our latest round of the University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll. The [survey](#) was fielded by SSRS on its Opinion Panel Omnibus platform

from March 7-9, 2025, among a sample of 1,004 respondents. The margin of error is +/-3.7% at the 95% confidence level. The data were weighted to represent the target population of U.S. adults ages 18 or older.

We did not provide any context to the respondents about such ideas' international legality/illegality or their practicality. We simply probed the respondents' support or opposition to them. Here are three key takeaways.

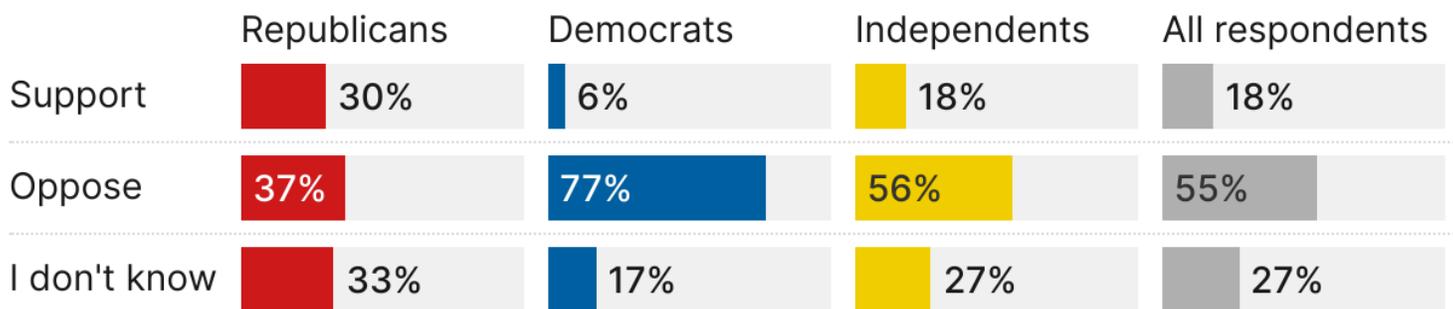
## How Americans feel about Trump's plan

First, when asked if they supported or opposed an American takeover of Gaza, 55% of Americans said they opposed such a move, including 77% of Democrats and 37% of Republicans, while 18% said they supported it, including 6% of Democrats and 30% of Republicans; 27% of respondents said they didn't know.

FIGURE 1

### 18% of respondents support an American takeover of Gaza

**Question:** Do you support or oppose the United States taking over the Gaza Strip?



**Source:** University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll



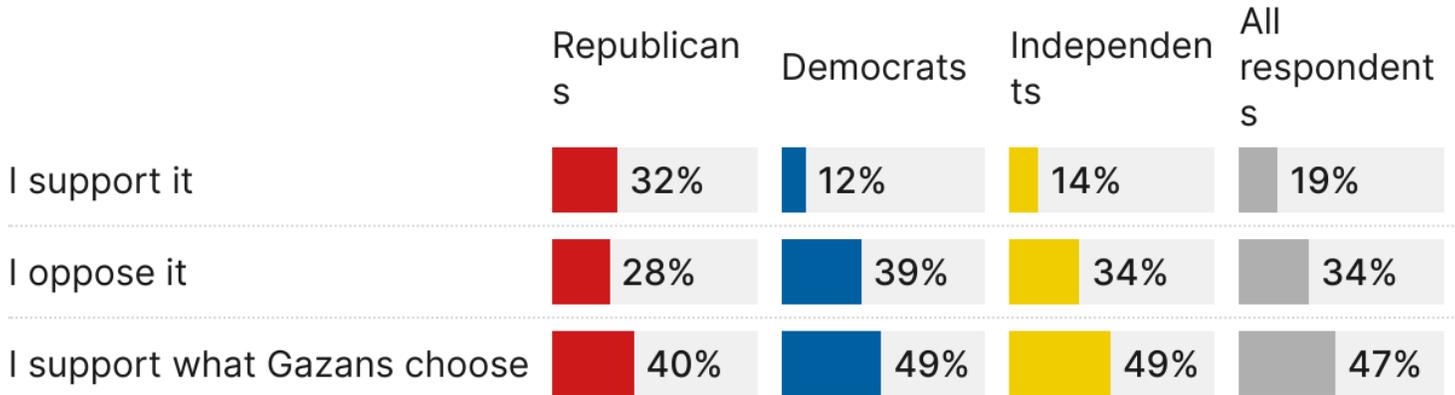
Second, only 19% of respondents said they supported displacing the people of Gaza to other countries, including 32% of Republicans and 12% of Democrats, while 34% opposed the move, including 28% of Republicans and 39% of Democrats. At the same time, a plurality, 47%, said they would back whatever the people of Gaza choose, including 40% of Republicans and 49% of Democrats. In this context, one recent [poll](#)

found that the overwhelming majority of Gazans, 92%, said they wanted to stay in the devastated strip.

FIGURE 2

## 19% of respondents support possible displacement of Gazans to other countries

**Question:** Which one of the following is closest to your view about the possible displacement of the over two million people of Gaza to other countries:



**Source:** University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll



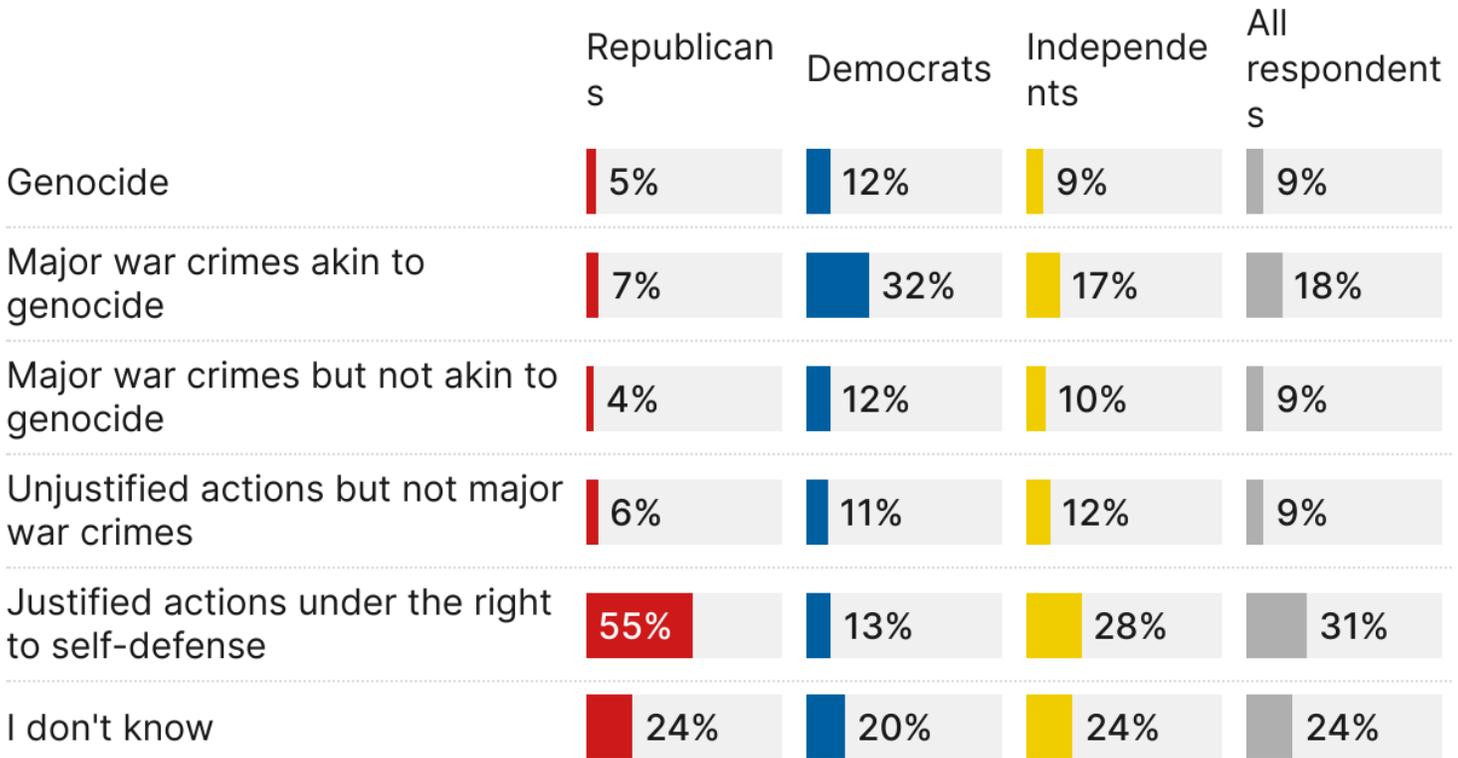
Third, there is a pronounced partisan divide in the way Americans judged Israeli actions in Gaza: While a majority of Democrats, 56%, said Israeli actions constituted at least major war crimes, including 12% who said they constituted genocide, 32% said they are major war crimes “akin to genocide,” and 12% said they are major war crimes but not akin to genocide. At the same time, a majority of Republicans, 61%, said Israeli actions did not constitute major war crimes, including 55% who said they were justified actions under the right of self-defense, and 6% who said they were unjustified actions but not major war crimes.

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FIGURE 3

## Deep partisan divide on Israeli actions in Gaza

**Question:** How would you define Israel's military actions in Gaza over the past year and a half?



**Source:** University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll



There was also a pronounced difference by age: Americans under 30 years of age were more likely to say Israeli actions constituted at least major war crimes, compared to those who are 30 or older. A majority of Americans, 54%, who are under the age of 30 said Israeli actions constituted at least major war crimes (including 17% who said they were genocide, 24% who said “akin to genocide,” and 13% who said major war crimes but not akin to genocide); while 24% said they were not major war crimes (including 10% who said they were unjustified actions but not major war crimes, and 14% who said they were justified actions under the right to self-defense); 24% said they didn’t know.

In contrast, 44% of Americans who are 30 years of age and over said the Israeli actions did not constitute major war crimes, (including 9% who said they were

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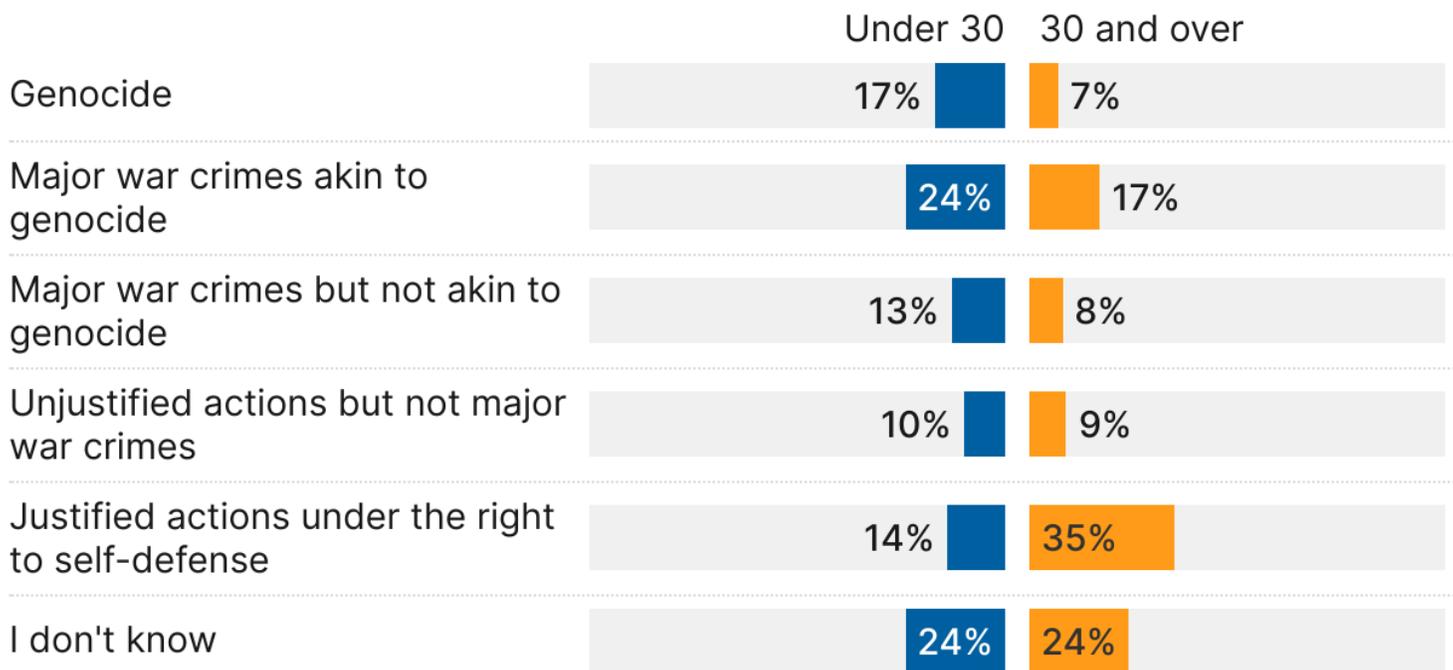
unjustified but not major war crimes, and 35% who said they were justified actions under the right to self-defense); 24% said they didn't know.

FIGURE 4

## Young Americans more likely to say Israeli actions in Gaza are war crimes

**Question:** How would you define Israel's military actions in Gaza over the past year and a half?

■ Under 30 ■ 30 and over



**Source:** University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll



While Democrats under 30 years old were the most likely to find that Israeli actions constituted at least “major war crimes” (75%), Republicans who were 30 years old and over were the most likely to say that Israeli actions did not constitute major war crimes (63%).

The fact that most Democrats view Israeli actions in Gaza as at least constituting major war crimes may help explain other recent polls, especially Gallup’s early March [poll](#) which found that a majority of Democrats, 59%, now sympathize more with the Opt-Out Signal Honored with the Israelis, 21%, in a reversal from 2001, when 51% of

Democrats sympathized more with Israelis and 16% of Democrats sympathized more with Palestinians.

## Concluding thoughts

Given the already [obliterated](#) [Gaza Strip](#), the resumption of the Israeli assault in Gaza promises further destruction. Trump and his advisors have cited the strip's devastation and uninhabitability as arguments to push for the population's displacement into other countries. The far right's consolidation within the Israeli government, illustrated by the [return](#) of former Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who had [advocated](#) removing Gazans from the strip long before he was a minister—and before the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023—means the option will almost surely be more prominently thrust into the policy conversation. The fact that Trump has put himself on record as favoring this move will certainly encourage and embolden its advocates in Israel and the United States, especially since the promise of a stable political outcome will remain elusive in any foreseeable future.

Critics of Trump's statements have [pointed out](#) (<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/trumps-proposal-to-take-over-gaza-would-put-americans-at-risk-of-prosecution/>) that ethnic cleansing or any forced displacement of people from territories in which they lawfully exist [constitutes](#) crimes against humanity under [international law](#). And Arab states, including Egypt and Jordan, the two U.S. allies Trump suggested as recipients of refugees, have adamantly opposed such a move, and offered, together with other Arab states, an alternative [plan](#) for reconstructing Gaza for its own people. Their positions are unlikely to change given that they view such Palestinian displacement as strategically and politically dangerous, even aside from the legal and moral imperatives. And of course, there is no conceivable legal basis for an American takeover of Gaza.

This broad context was not shared with our poll respondents as we aimed to make the questions as neutral as possible. As the policy debate heats up on these issues in the coming weeks and months, public views could shift. But for now, it is clear that Trump's ideas on the displacement of Gazans and on American control of Gaza are not ● Opt-Out Signal Honored than one in every five Americans backing them.

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