

An aerial photograph of a densely populated city, likely in the Middle East, with numerous multi-story buildings and a winding road. A large, semi-transparent red maple leaf is overlaid on the bottom right corner of the image.

FOCUS
CANADA

2025 FALL
SERIES

Canadian public opinion about the

Conflict in the Middle East

**Environics
Institute**
For Survey Research

Environics Institute

For Survey Research

The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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FOCUS CANADA

As part of its Focus Canada public opinion research program (launched in 1976), the Environics Institute updated its research on Canadian pride. The survey is based on telephone interviews conducted (via landline and cellphones) with 2,000 Canadians between May 5 and 18, 2025. A sample of this size drawn from the population produces results accurate to within plus or minus 2.2 percentage points in 19 out of 20 samples.

For more information about this research, contact [Dr. Keith Neuman](#).

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Background

It is now almost two years since the horrendous Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023, which was soon met with a punishing invasion of Gaza by Israeli forces that continues to this day. Despite mounting international pressure, there is yet to be agreement on a cease-fire or return of the remaining Israeli hostages. Canada has not been a major player in the conflict but the federal government has signaled its support for a peaceful resolution, and in late September announced its formal recognition of the Palestinian State (along with specific conditions). Meanwhile, this conflict continues to stoke repercussions in Canada in the form of hate-motivated incidents directed at Jews, Muslims and Arabs, as well as staged protests.

In September, the Environics Institute for Survey Research conducted a new national survey to document how Canadians view this conflict, and how this has changed over time. This survey is part of the Institute's ongoing Focus Canada research program, which was launched in 1976 to measure Canadian public opinion on important issues over time as a matter of public record.

This survey included four questions to provide a current snapshot of public opinion, updating previous Focus Canada surveys dating back to the early 1980s that reveal how opinions have changed over time. This latest survey was based on telephone interviews conducted (via landline and cellphones) with a representative sample of 2,004 Canadians (ages 18 and over), between September 8 and 21, 2025. A sample of this size drawn from the population produces results accurate to within plus or minus 2.2 percentage points in 19 out of 20 samples. All results are expressed as percentages.

Executive Summary

The war between Israel and Hamas is approaching its second anniversary, with no clear prospect of resolution or peace. Over much of this period Canada adopted a principled but cautious position on the conflict. But as the devastation in Gaza has intensified over time, the federal government has taken a stronger position, leading to a formal recognition of the Palestinian state in concert with several other western allies. This conflict continues to make its presence felt in Canada, in the form of hate-motivated actions directed at Jews, Muslims and Arabs, protest events and controversy over public commentary in support of one side or the other.

This latest survey of public opinion reveals that Canadians continue to be more likely than not to adopt a neutral position on this conflict in the Middle East. But as the war has dragged on and the devastation in Gaza and its people has intensified, public sentiment has shifted decidedly toward sympathizing with the Palestinians over the Israelis. As well, an increasing number of Canadians are expressing approval of their government's position on this conflict as striking the right balance between the two sides. Notably, these latest shifts in public opinion are evident across the country, rather than limited to specific segments of the population.

Key findings from the survey include the following:

- As in June 2024, a small majority of Canadians today do not take sides in this conflict, expressing either neutrality (46%) or no opinion (8%). But over the past 15 months there has been a significant shift in public sentiment with an increasing proportion now expressing sympathy with the Palestinians (32%), more than twice the number who say they support the Israelis in this conflict (15%). A pro-Palestinian position continues to be most prominent among younger Canadians, but this gap has narrowed and for the first time support for Palestinians outweighs support for Israelis in all age cohorts.
- A strong plurality (40%) of Canadians now believe their country's foreign policy in the Middle East strikes the right balance, up from 27 percent who expressed this view in 2024 (when a plurality could not offer any opinion on this question). Those who disagree are twice as likely to say Canada's foreign policy is too pro-Israeli (20%) than favouring the Palestinians (10%). Opinions are shaped by Canadians' sympathies toward either side in this conflict, but rising confidence in the government's position is reflected in all segments in the population.
- The ongoing conflict in Gaza has taken its toll on how Canadians view the State of Israel. The public is more likely to consider Israel to be a friend (31%) rather than an enemy (20%) of Canada, but opinions are more divided than in 2013 (when the balance was 56% friend versus 7% enemy). As was the case more than a decade ago, Israel is more likely to be seen as a friend of Canada by men, Canadians ages 60 plus, and those who support the federal Conservative Party.
- One in four (24%) Canadians say they have been closely following the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, the same proportion who reported this in June 2024.

Following the conflict in Gaza

One in four Canadians are closely following the current conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, compared with just over one-third who are paying little or not attention. These results are essentially unchanged from June 2024 (8 months into the conflict).

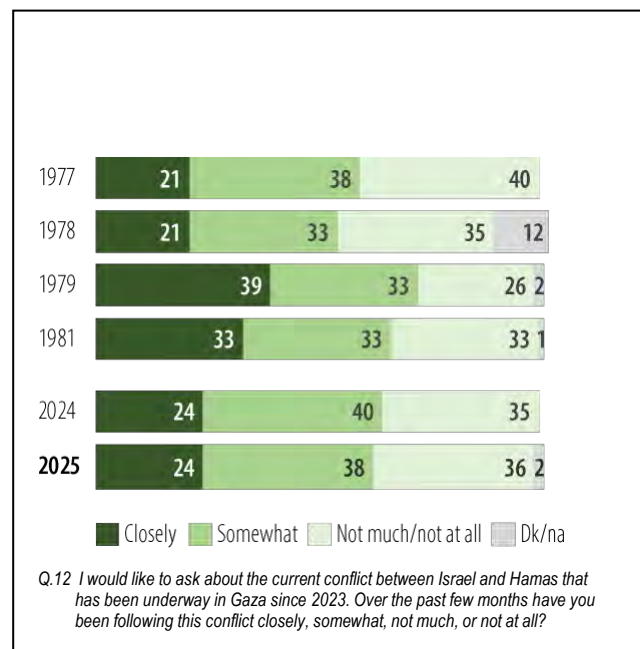
The war in Gaza has attracted ongoing media coverage over the almost two years since it broke out in October 2023. This encompasses news reporting of the conflict itself, as well as statements by governments and other actors, as well as high profile events (e.g., protests) both internationally and within Canada.

The survey asked Canadians how closely they have been following the current conflict between Israel and Hamas over the past few months. One in four (24%) say they have been following this conflict closely, with close to four in ten (38%) indicating they are following it somewhat. Just over one-third of Canadians say they are following this conflict not much (21%) or not at all (15%).

These results are essentially unchanged from when this question was posed to Canadians in June 2024 (8 months following the initial outbreak of hostilities).

As well, public attention given to this current conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is generally comparable to what Canadians reported on Focus Canada more than four decades ago (1977 – 1981). Over this earlier period, between 21 and 39 percent of Canadians reported to be closely following relations between Israel and the Arab countries, compared to between 26 and 40 percent who were paying little or no attention.¹

In 2025, close attention to the Israel-Hamas conflict is most widely reported by Canadians 60 years of age and older (33%) and those with a university degree (31%), with this response least evident among residents of Quebec (15%), Manitoba and Saskatchewan (18%), as well as among Canadians ages 18 to 29 (18%).



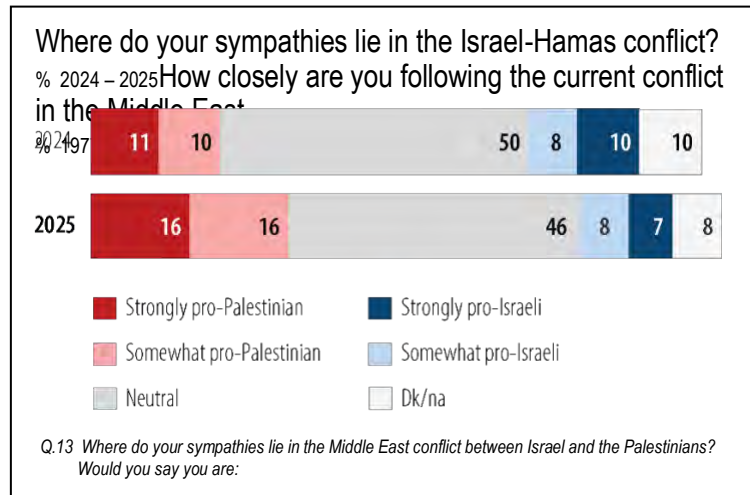
¹ In the previous surveys, the question asked about relations between Israel and the Arab countries.

Middle East sympathies

A small majority of Canadians continue to not take sides in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. But since June 2024 there has been a significant rise in public sympathy for Palestinians, and this proportion is now more than double the number who support Israelis.

With most Canadians following the Israel-Hamas war at least somewhat, do they sympathize with one side or the other and how has this changed over the past 15 months as the war has deepened?

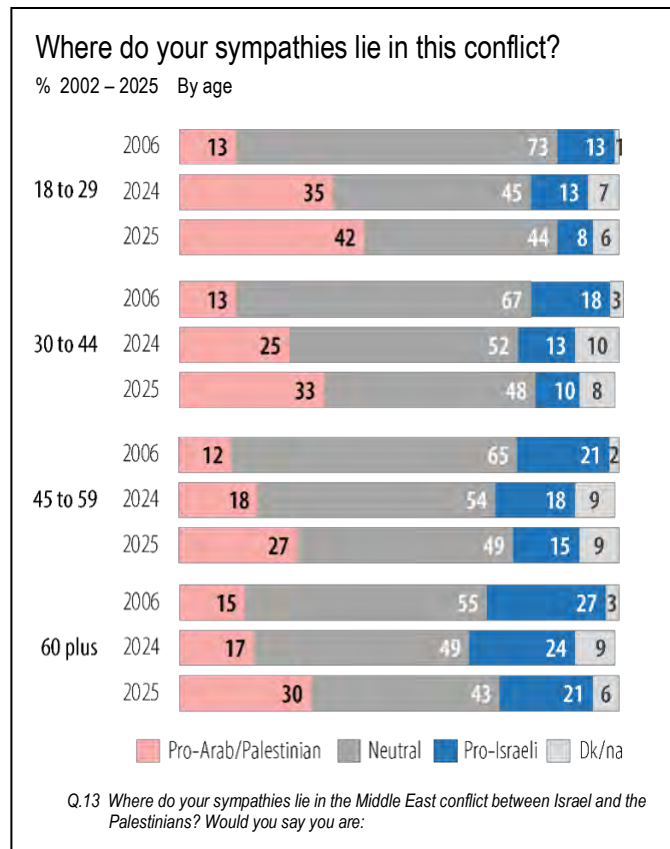
As was the case last June, a small majority of Canadians do not pick a side and say they are neutral (46%) or have no opinion (8%). But among the rest, there has been a significant shift in support, with an increasing proportion reporting they are very (16%) or somewhat (16%) pro-Palestinian, an increase of 11 percentage points. Fewer than half as many now say they are very (8%) or somewhat (7%) pro-Israeli (down 3 points).



This latest rise in Canadian public support for Palestinians in the current conflict has taken place across most of the population, but most significantly in Atlantic Canada (30%, up 14 points) and British Columbia (37%, up 21), as well as among women (37%, up 14).

This pro-Palestinian position continues to be most prominent among Canadians ages 18 to 29 (42%) and least so among those 60 plus (30%), but this gap has narrowed over the past 15 months. For the first time, support for Palestinians outweighs support for Israelis in all age cohorts.

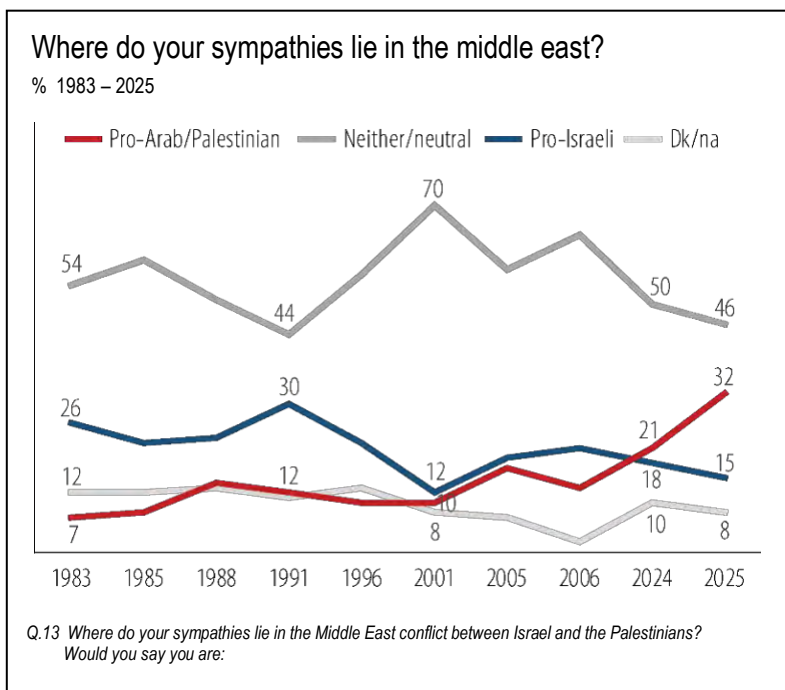
Support for the Israeli side is most apt to be voiced by Canadians 60 plus (21%) and those who support the federal Conservative Party (33%) (the only identifiable group to favour Israelis over Palestinians). Support for Israelis is considerably weaker among supporters of the federal Liberals (8%) and NDP (3%).



As would be expected, Canadians who express strong views about this conflict are the ones most likely to be paying attention. It is being followed closely by half of those who are pro-Israeli (54%) or pro-Palestinian (50%), compared with half as many (27%) who somewhat support either side, and only one in ten who are neutral (10%) or have no opinion (11%).

Focus Canada has been tracking Canadians' sympathies in the Middle East since the early 1980s, providing a valuable historical perspective on how opinions have evolved over time.²

The latest survey shows public sympathy for the Palestinians (or Arabs) is now at the highest level recorded (since 1983). The proportion expressing support for Israel has fluctuated over a narrow range (between 12% and 18%) over the past two decades, and lower than levels recorded in the 1980s and 90s.



Perhaps most notably, the proportion of Canadians who remain neutral about this ongoing conflict has declined sharply over recent years, reverting to the level recorded in 1991 (when the public was more than twice as likely to sympathize with Israel as with Arabs).

US Public Opinion about the Middle East conflict

A recently-published public opinion survey conducted by the New York Times and Siena College shows a comparable shift in public sentiment towards the two sides in the ongoing Middle East conflict.

More than one-third (35%) of Americans now side with the Palestinians (up 15 percentage points from late 2023, shortly after the outbreak of war), essentially the same as the proportion who support the Israelis (34%, down 13). Three in ten (31%) continue to say they support both sides equally or have no opinion (down 2).

The New York Times describes the findings as *“a major deterioration in support for a staunch American ally that . . . is an unusually large shift in public opinion in this hyper-politicized era, when public opinion has tended to move incrementally over long periods unless affected by cataclysmic events, such a war.”* This latest shift in public sentiment is most pronounced among Democratic voters.

The [Times/Siena Poll](#) was conducted by telephone with a representative sample of 1,313 registered American voters from September 22 to 27, 2025 (in English and Spanish).

² In the surveys conducted between 1983 and 2006, the question asked if sympathies were “pro-Israel” or pro-Arab.”

Canada's Middle East policy

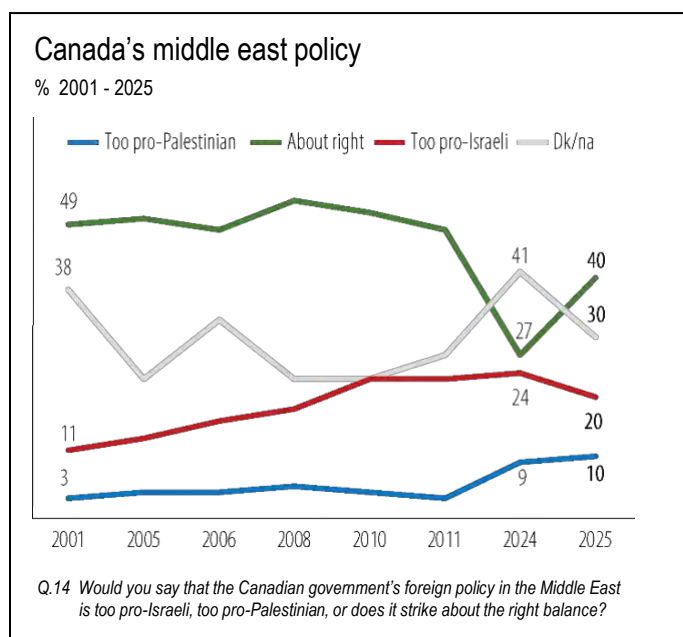
A strong plurality of Canadians now believe Canada's Middle East policy strikes the right balance, reflecting a noticeable increase since June 2024. One in five say Canada is too pro-Israeli, compared with one in ten who believe it is too pro-Palestinian.

For most of the past two decades, Canadians have tended to judge their country's foreign policy in the Middle East as appropriately balanced in its approach. This changed dramatically following the outbreak of the current war between Israel and Hamas in October 2023, and in mid-2024 there was considerable uncertainty among Canadians about their government's position. Now, 15 months later with a new Prime Minister and the government taking a more definitive position on this continuing conflict, public opinion has shifted yet again.

The current survey reveals that four in ten (40%) of Canadians now say their country's Middle East foreign policy strikes the right balance. This is up markedly from the 27 percent who expressed this view in June 2024, although not back to the levels recorded between 2001 and 2011.

Among those who do not agree with this assessment, one in five (20%) believe that Canada's policy in the Middle East is too pro-Israeli (down 4 from June 2024) with half as many taking the opposite position – that the policy is too pro-Palestinian (10%, up 1). Three in ten (30%, down 11) have no opinion to offer on this question.

Public confidence in the government's Middle East policy since June 2024 has increased noticeably across the population, and is now the plurality view in almost all identifiable groups.

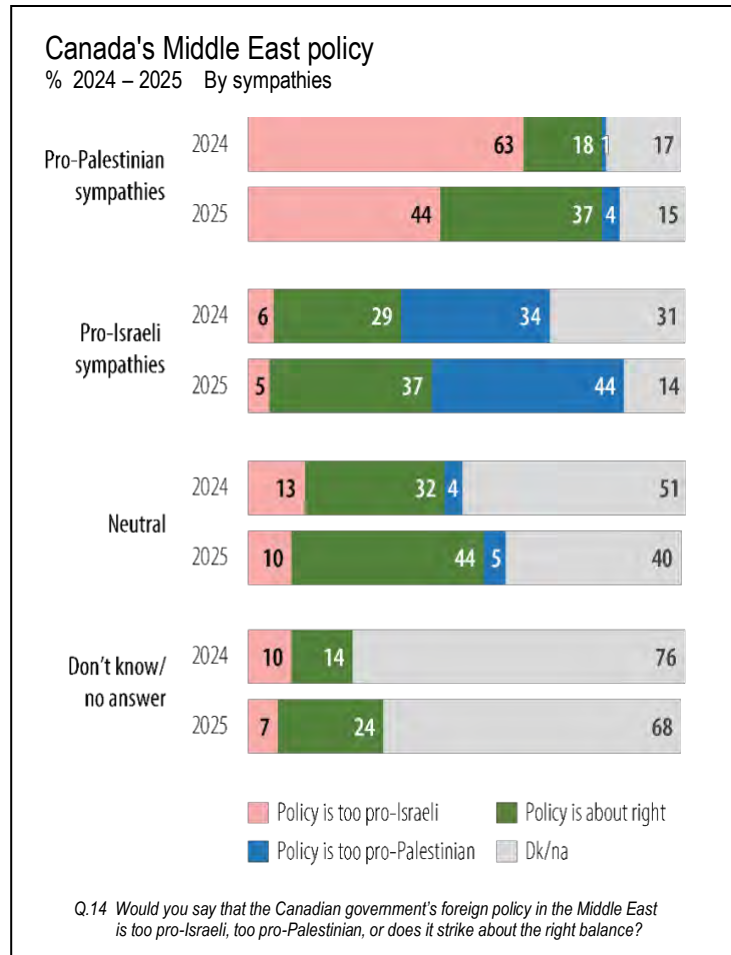


Age. As before, opinions vary somewhat by age with Canadians 60 and older most likely to endorse the government's position (51%, up 15 points), and least apt to say it is too pro-Israeli (15%, down 3). In comparison, a smaller proportion of Canadians 18 to 29 endorse the government's policy, but they have become more supportive than 15 months ago (28%, up 11); they are also now less likely to say the policy is too pro-Israeli (25%, down 7).

Federal party support. Opinions on this question also differ somewhat by federal political party support. Endorsement of the government's Middle East policy is most widespread among Canadians who would vote for the federal Liberal Party (52%) or Bloc Québécois (50%), compared with those who support the federal Conservative Party (32%) or NDP (35%). Conservative voters are most likely to be the ones to say Canada is too pro-Palestinian (24%), while a (bare) plurality of NDP voters believe the government is too pro-Israeli (37%).

Middle East sympathies. Predictably, public opinion of Canada’s Middle East policy is strongly shaped by personal sympathies toward the two sides in the current conflict. Those who support one side are among those most likely to believe the federal government is favouring the other side. However, not everyone with a clear preference on this conflict feels the same way, and the rising confidence in the government’s Middle East policy is reflected in all groups.

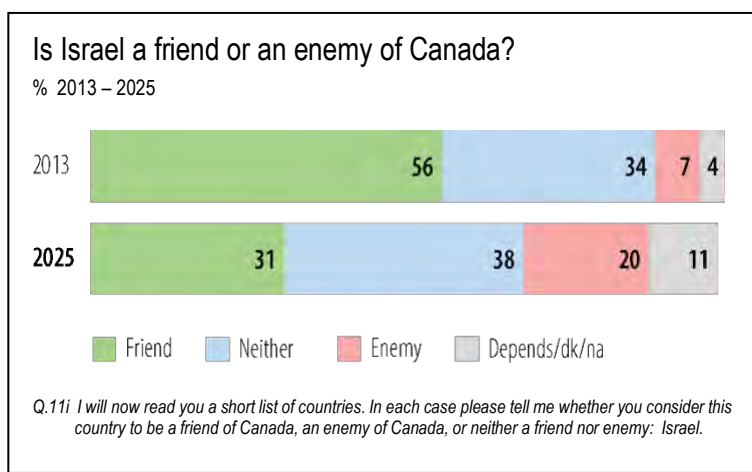
- Among the 32 percent of Canadians who sympathize with the Palestinians, a plurality (44%) now say the country’s foreign policy is too pro-Israeli (down 19 points from 2024), accompanied by an equivalent jump in the number who believe it strikes the right balance (37%, up 19).
- Among the 15 percent who sympathize with the Israelis, an increasing plurality say the country’s foreign policy is too pro-Palestinian (44%, up 10), but there is also an equivalent rise in the number who believe the policy strikes the right balance (37%, up 12).
- Among the 46 percent Canadians who express neutrality in this conflict, more than four in ten (44%, up 12) believe Canada’s Middle East policy strikes the right balance, with fewer in this group now unsure or offer no opinion (40%, down 11).



Israel as a friend or enemy of Canada

Canadians are more likely to consider Israel to be a friend rather than an enemy of their own country, but opinions are more divided than in 2013 due to the ongoing conflict. A plurality continue to see Israel as neither friend nor enemy.

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has had an impact on how Canadians view Israel in relation to their own country. Today, just three in ten (31%) consider Israel to be a friend of Canada, down from 56 percent who expressed this view in 2013.^{3, 4} One in five (20%) now believe Israel to be an enemy of their country (up 13 percentage points), while close to four in ten (38%) say that Israel is neither a friend nor an enemy (down 4).



This shift in public sentiment toward Israel as a friend or enemy of Canada is apparent across the population.⁵ Opinions vary most noticeably by age, gender and federal political party affiliation. Israel continues to be likely seen as a friend by men, Canadians ages 60 plus and supporters of the federal Conservative Party. Identifying Israel as an enemy is most evident among Canadians 18 to 29 and Bloc Québécois voters.

Canadians' opinion on this question are closely linked to how they view the two sides in the ongoing conflict. Among those who sympathize with the Israelis, two-thirds (67%) name Israel as a friend of Canada, with most of the remainder considering it to be neither a friend nor enemy (25%). Among those who sympathize with the Palestinians, only one in six (15%) say Israel as a friend, with the balance divided between those who say enemy (39%) or neither (38%). Canadians who identify as neutral in this conflict more closely reflect the national sentiment on this question, with the balance in favour of friend (30%) over enemy (14%), and a plurality indicating neither (46%).

³ This survey question asks participants to identify each of a number of countries as a friend or enemy of Canada. The results for the other countries will be published in a separate report.

⁴ The 2013 results for the question on Israel are drawn from a survey conducted by the Environics Institute as part of the Trudeau Foundation's 2013 National Conference.

⁵ On both surveys, this question was presented to only half of the full survey sample, in order to reduce the overall survey length. A smaller sample size limits the scope for analysis by population subgroups.