



PRESS RELEASE

Americans support the decision to withdraw from Afghanistan

A majority say that the costs of the war were not worth it

Washington, DC, September 3, 2021– Just one in three Americans say the war in Afghanistan was worth fighting, and a majority support the decision to withdraw U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan. At the same time, a majority disapprove of the Biden Administration’s handling of the withdrawal and believe the administration was unprepared for the events that transpired along with the withdrawal, such as the collapse of the Afghan army and the Taliban’s quick takeover.

Detailed findings:

Overall, 64% of Americans support the decision to withdraw U.S. combat troops from Afghanistan. However, this masks deeper divisions across partisan lines – 81% of Democrats support the decision to leave, compared to 43% of Republicans.

- Republicans opposed to the withdrawal are more open to extending the conflict, with 55% saying that they would be willing to have U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan for “as long as it takes,” in contrast with the 32% of Democrats who say the same.

Yet just 43% of Americans approve of how Biden handled the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces. At the same time, a majority agree that the administration was unprepared for the fallout of the withdrawal, such as the rapid encroachment of the Taliban.

- Again, partisans are split around the administration’s handling of the withdrawal – 70% of Democrats approve, compared to 11% of Republicans.

There is strong bipartisan support for evacuating some Afghans, with the highest level of support for those who aided the U.S. and allied forces (81% of Republicans and 86% of Democrats support this).

- However, there is slightly less support for evacuating those who are in imminent danger from the Taliban (73% support) and even less for those who are not in imminent danger but hope to seek asylum in the U.S. (47% support).

Overall, 63% of Americans say that the benefits of fighting the war in Afghanistan were not worth the costs to the U.S.

- Americans are split on the merits of the U.S.’s involvement in Afghanistan, with 26% saying that the U.S. should never have gotten involved in the first place.

Veterans and active duty military members’ views on the withdrawal vary somewhat. While a majority of veterans and active duty military members support the decision to withdraw, active duty personnel are slightly more in favor than veterans (65% of active duty service members support withdrawal versus 56% of veterans).

- 42% of veterans say that the war in Afghanistan was “worth it”, versus 34% of active duty personnel.





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Annotated Questionnaire

VETERAN1. Did you ever serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Yes	8	9	6	9
No	92	91	94	91

VETERAN2. Are you now in the U.S. Armed Forces?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Yes	17	26	15	13
No	83	74	85	87

Q1. How familiar, if at all, are you with the following topics

America's involvement in Afghanistan over the last 20 years

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total familiar	72	79	70	69
Very familiar	25	30	22	25
Somewhat familiar	46	49	47	44
Heard of, a little familiar	21	17	23	21
Have not heard of	2	2	2	3
Don't know	5	2	5	6

The U.S. withdrawal of combat forces from Afghanistan

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total familiar	71	77	72	68
Very familiar	31	36	28	30
Somewhat familiar	41	41	44	38
Heard of, a little familiar	20	20	22	20
Have not heard of	3	2	2	5
Don't know	5	2	4	7





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The Taliban taking power in Afghanistan

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total familiar	73	79	71	72
Very familiar	30	37	25	31
Somewhat familiar	43	42	46	41
Heard of, a little familiar	20	18	23	19
Have not heard of	2	1	2	3
Don't know	4	2	4	6

Ongoing efforts to evacuate remaining Americans and certain Afghans from Afghanistan

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total familiar	70	76	70	68
Very familiar	29	34	27	27
Somewhat familiar	42	42	43	41
Heard of, a little familiar	22	21	24	21
Have not heard of	3	2	2	4
Don't know	4	2	4	6

Q270A. Do you support or oppose the decision to withdraw U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan by August 31st, 2021?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total support	64	43	81	65
Total oppose	34	57	18	33
Strongly Support	24	10	33	25
Somewhat support	41	32	48	40
Somewhat oppose	23	32	14	23
Strongly oppose	12	25	4	10

Q270B. How much longer would you be willing to have large numbers of U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan?

Base: Oppose withdrawal

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Less than one year	21	16	27	24
One to two years	20	21	23	19
Three to five years	11	7	15	13
Six to ten years	2	2	2	1
As long as it takes	46	55	32	42



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WITHDRAWAL1. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the Biden Administration's handling of the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total approve	43	11	70	42
Total disapprove	56	89	29	57
Strongly approve	12	2	23	10
Somewhat approve	31	9	47	32
Somewhat disapprove	22	16	21	26
Strongly disapprove	34	72	8	31

WITHDRAWAL2. How prepared or unprepared do you believe the Biden Administration' was with the following aspects of the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan?

Removing Afghans who had provided support (such as acting as interpreters) to U.S. and allied forces from the country

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total prepared	18	9	29	15
Total unprepared	71	85	63	70
Very prepared	3	1	5	2
Somewhat prepared	15	8	23	13
Somewhat unprepared	23	11	35	22
Very unprepared	48	75	28	47
Not sure	10	6	8	14

Removing U.S. military personnel from the country

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total prepared	35	15	55	32
Total unprepared	56	81	38	56
Very prepared	8	2	14	8
Somewhat prepared	26	12	40	24
Somewhat unprepared	23	17	25	25
Very unprepared	33	64	13	31
Not sure	8	4	7	11



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Removing non-military U.S. government personnel from the country

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total prepared	24	8	38	22
Total unprepared	67	87	54	65
Very prepared	5	1	7	5
Somewhat prepared	19	7	31	17
Somewhat unprepared	24	13	33	25
Very unprepared	43	74	21	40
Not sure	9	4	8	12

Removing all other U.S. citizens from the country

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total prepared	21	7	34	21
Total unprepared	69	88	57	65
Very prepared	4	2	6	3
Somewhat prepared	18	4	28	18
Somewhat unprepared	25	13	36	24
Very unprepared	44	75	21	42
Not sure	9	5	8	13

The inability of the Afghan National Army to fight/resist the Taliban

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total prepared	14	7	23	10
Total unprepared	74	85	67	74
Very prepared	3	2	4	2
Somewhat prepared	11	5	19	8
Somewhat unprepared	23	15	30	23
Very unprepared	51	70	37	51
Not sure	11	7	9	15





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Rapid Taliban military advances throughout the country

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total prepared	15	7	24	12
Total unprepared	74	87	66	74
Very prepared	4	2	7	2
Somewhat prepared	11	5	18	9
Somewhat unprepared	22	10	32	21
Very unprepared	53	77	34	53
Not sure	10	6	9	14

POLICY. Regardless of your thoughts on withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from the country, how successful do you believe the U.S. and its allies were in achieving the following policy goals during the War in Afghanistan?

Eliminating the threat from terrorists operating **within** Afghanistan

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total successful	33	33	38	29
Total unsuccessful	54	58	51	56
Very successful	8	8	10	6
Somewhat successful	25	25	28	22
Somewhat unsuccessful	26	26	24	28
Very unsuccessful	28	32	26	28
Not sure	12	9	11	15

Apprehending or killing those responsible for the September 11th terroristic attacks within Afghanistan

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total successful	66	73	69	59
Total unsuccessful	22	21	20	24
Very successful	24	26	27	22
Somewhat successful	41	47	42	38
Somewhat unsuccessful	14	12	13	15
Very unsuccessful	8	8	7	9
Not sure	11	7	10	16





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Properly training and arming the Afghan military to independently defend Afghanistan *without U.S. and allied support*

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total successful	24	24	29	19
Total unsuccessful	64	67	61	66
Very successful	5	4	8	3
Somewhat successful	19	20	21	16
Somewhat unsuccessful	28	31	28	28
Very unsuccessful	36	36	33	38
Not sure	11	8	10	14

Providing the resources for the Afghan government to function a strong, stable government *without U.S. and allied support*

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total successful	24	25	30	20
Total unsuccessful	62	66	59	64
Very successful	6	6	10	4
Somewhat successful	18	18	20	16
Somewhat unsuccessful	26	27	27	25
Very unsuccessful	36	38	32	39
Not sure	12	9	10	15

Eliminating the threat from terrorists operating **outside** Afghanistan

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total successful	35	38	39	29
Total unsuccessful	50	52	46	54
Very successful	6	7	8	4
Somewhat successful	28	31	31	24
Somewhat unsuccessful	28	27	29	29
Very unsuccessful	22	25	18	24
Not sure	14	10	14	17





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Q271A. All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the War in Afghanistan was worth fighting, or not?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Was worth it	35	48	28	33
Was not worth it	63	51	70	66

Q271B. Which comes closer to your view about U.S. military operations in Afghanistan?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
The U.S. was right to remove the Taliban from power in 2001 and stay in Afghanistan to help stabilize the country	35	49	27	31
The U.S. was right to remove the Taliban from power in 2001 but then should have left Afghanistan soon after that	37	34	41	36
The U.S. should never have gotten involved in Afghanistan in the first place	26	16	30	31

REFUGEE. Do you support or oppose evacuating the following groups from Afghanistan and relocating them to the U.S.?

Afghans who had provided support (such as acting as interpreters) to U.S. and allied forces from the country

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total support	81	81	86	77
Total oppose	9	12	7	9
Strongly Support	51	43	61	49
Somewhat support	30	38	25	29
Somewhat oppose	6	7	5	6
Strongly oppose	4	6	2	3
Not sure	9	6	7	12





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Afghans who worked for U.S.-based or international non-governmental organizations

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total support	72	71	80	67
Total oppose	16	20	12	16
Strongly Support	38	29	48	37
Somewhat support	34	42	32	31
Somewhat oppose	11	13	9	11
Strongly oppose	5	8	3	5
Not sure	11	8	8	15

Afghans who worked on U.S. funded infrastructure projects within the country

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total support	69	67	77	64
Total oppose	18	25	13	18
Strongly Support	32	25	41	30
Somewhat support	37	42	37	34
Somewhat oppose	12	16	10	11
Strongly oppose	6	9	3	7
Not sure	12	7	9	16

Afghans who are in imminent physical danger from the Taliban

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total support	73	70	79	70
Total oppose	16	23	12	15
Strongly Support	41	33	49	40
Somewhat support	32	37	30	30
Somewhat oppose	10	15	9	9
Strongly oppose	6	8	3	6
Not sure	10	7	9	14





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Afghans who are not in imminent physical danger from the Taliban, but wish to seek asylum in the U.S.

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total support	47	36	59	45
Total oppose	41	55	31	39
Strongly Support	14	6	20	14
Somewhat support	33	29	39	31
Somewhat oppose	26	31	23	24
Strongly oppose	15	24	8	15
Not sure	11	8	10	14

Q273. How much of a threat do you believe the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan poses to American national security?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total Threat	84	94	81	81
Critical threat	38	57	30	33
Somewhat of a threat	46	37	52	49
Not much of a threat	12	5	16	13
Not a threat at all	2	1	1	4

TALIBAN RELATIONS. What type of diplomatic relationship should the U.S. have with the Taliban-led government?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
The U.S. should have no formal diplomatic relations with the Taliban	26	42	19	22
The U.S. should have limited diplomatic relations with the Taliban	43	36	50	41
The U.S. should have full diplomatic relations with the Taliban	6	4	6	8
Not sure	24	18	24	28





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AFGHAN POLICY. When the Taliban previously controlled Afghanistan from 1996 through 2001, they allowed Osama Bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network to operate freely within the country.

If the Taliban were to again allow terrorist networks who oppose the United States to operate freely within Afghanistan, would you favor or oppose the United States taking the following actions?

U.S. air strikes against Taliban forces and facilities

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total favor	63	77	59	57
Total oppose	20	10	24	23
Strongly favor	38	54	29	35
Somewhat favor	25	22	30	22
Somewhat oppose	12	5	15	14
Strongly oppose	8	5	9	9
Not sure	16	12	16	19

Limited attacks by U.S. ground troops against Taliban forces

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total favor	49	60	49	43
Total oppose	31	25	32	35
Strongly favor	22	31	18	18
Somewhat favor	28	29	30	25
Somewhat oppose	17	13	19	20
Strongly oppose	14	12	12	16
Not sure	18	14	19	20

Large-scale attacks by U.S. ground troops against Taliban forces and facilities

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total favor	43	60	41	35
Total oppose	38	28	43	43
Strongly favor	20	31	17	15
Somewhat favor	23	28	24	20
Somewhat oppose	20	16	23	21
Strongly oppose	18	12	20	23
Not sure	17	12	16	21





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Assassination of individual Taliban leaders

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total favor	59	73	54	55
Total oppose	20	11	25	22
Strongly favor	36	51	28	34
Somewhat favor	23	23	26	22
Somewhat oppose	12	7	16	12
Strongly oppose	8	4	9	11
Not sure	19	14	20	21

Selling arms and resources to anti-Taliban forces within Afghanistan

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total favor	39	45	40	34
Total oppose	42	42	41	45
Strongly favor	13	17	13	10
Somewhat favor	26	27	27	24
Somewhat oppose	23	21	23	24
Strongly oppose	20	20	18	21
Not sure	18	13	18	20

Providing economic and humanitarian assistance to anti-Taliban forces within Afghanistan

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total favor	63	64	69	58
Total oppose	20	22	17	21
Strongly favor	27	26	30	26
Somewhat favor	36	38	39	33
Somewhat oppose	11	11	11	12
Strongly oppose	8	11	6	9
Not sure	16	13	13	20





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Enforcing economic sanctions against countries who provide military or economic assistance to the Taliban

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total favor	76	83	77	71
Total oppose	9	5	11	11
Strongly favor	53	64	49	49
Somewhat favor	23	18	27	22
Somewhat oppose	6	3	7	6
Strongly oppose	4	2	4	5
Not sure	13	11	11	16

Enforcing economic sanctions against the Taliban

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Total favor	77	85	78	72
Total oppose	8	5	8	10
Strongly favor	57	68	53	54
Somewhat favor	20	17	26	18
Somewhat oppose	5	3	5	5
Strongly oppose	3	2	2	5
Not sure	14	10	14	17

QINFLUENCE1. What impact do you think the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan will have on U.S. influence around the world?

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
A positive impact	7	3	12	6
A negative impact	53	71	41	51
No impact at all	12	9	14	12
Not sure	27	17	32	31





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QINFLUENCE2. Do you think the positive/ impact on the U.S. influence around the world will be temporary or long-lasting?

Base: Withdrawal Impactful

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Temporary impact	46	41	41	59
Long-lasting	33	47	35	26
Not sure	20	12	24	15

QINFLUENCE2. Do you think the /negative impact on the U.S. influence around the world will be temporary or long-lasting?

Base: Withdrawal Impactful

	All	Republican	Democrat	Indep/Other
Temporary impact	28	15	45	29
Long-lasting	58	71	43	56
Not sure	14	13	12	15





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About the Study

This Chicago Council on Global Affairs and Ipsos poll was conducted August 23 to August 26, 2021 by Ipsos using the probability-based KnowledgePanel®. This poll is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 1,924 general population adults age 18 or older with oversamples of Veterans, active duty military, and young adults age 18 to 24.

The survey was conducted using KnowledgePanel, the largest and most well-established online probability-based panel that is representative of the adult US population. Our recruitment process employs a scientifically developed addressed-based sampling methodology using the latest Delivery Sequence File of the USPS – a database with full coverage of all delivery points in the US. Households invited to join the panel are randomly selected from all available households in the U.S. Persons in the sampled households are invited to join and participate in the panel. Those selected who do not already have internet access are provided a tablet and internet connection at no cost to the panel member. Those who join the panel and who are selected to participate in a survey are sent a unique password-protected log-in used to complete surveys online. As a result of our recruitment and sampling methodologies, samples from KnowledgePanel cover all households regardless of their phone or internet status and findings can be reported with a margin of sampling error and projected to the general population.

The study was conducted in both English and Spanish. The data were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race/ethnicity, education, Census region, metropolitan status, household income, and party identification. The demographic benchmarks came from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) from the US Census Bureau, except for metropolitan status which came from the 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS). The weighting variables and categories were as follows:

- Gender (Male, Female) by Age (18–24, 25-29, 30–44, 45–59, and 60+)
- Race/Hispanic Ethnicity (White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Other or 2+ Races Non-Hispanic, Hispanic)
- Education (Less than High School grad, High School grad, Some College, Bachelor and beyond)
- Census Region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West)
- Metropolitan status (Metro, non-Metro)
- Household Income (Under \$25,000, \$25,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$74,999, \$75,000-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$149,999, \$150,000+)
- Language proficiency (English proficient, Bilingual, Spanish proficient, Non-Hispanic, not asked)
- Veteran/Active duty military status (Yes, No)

The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, for results based on the entire sample of adults. The margin of sampling error takes into account the design effect, which was 1.29. The margin of sampling error is higher and varies for results based on sub-samples. In our reporting of the findings, percentage points are rounded off to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given table column may total slightly higher or lower than 100%. In questions that permit multiple responses, columns may total substantially more than 100%, depending on the number of different responses offered by each respondent.





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