

More Americans Believe United States Should Dedicate Resources to the International Criminal Court (ICC)

And Broad Public Support for Defining Sexual Violence as a War Crime

Public Release Date: June 8th, 2016



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Washington, DC –The latest survey of over 1,000 US adults conducted on behalf of the American Bar Association’s International Criminal Court (ICC) Project shows no major shifts in American knowledge concerning the ICC and its work overall. However, when looking at questions individually, more Americans report support for ICC and their mission. Additionally, there is broad American support for a recent ICC ruling on sexual assault as a war crime.

Knowledge and Awareness of the ICC

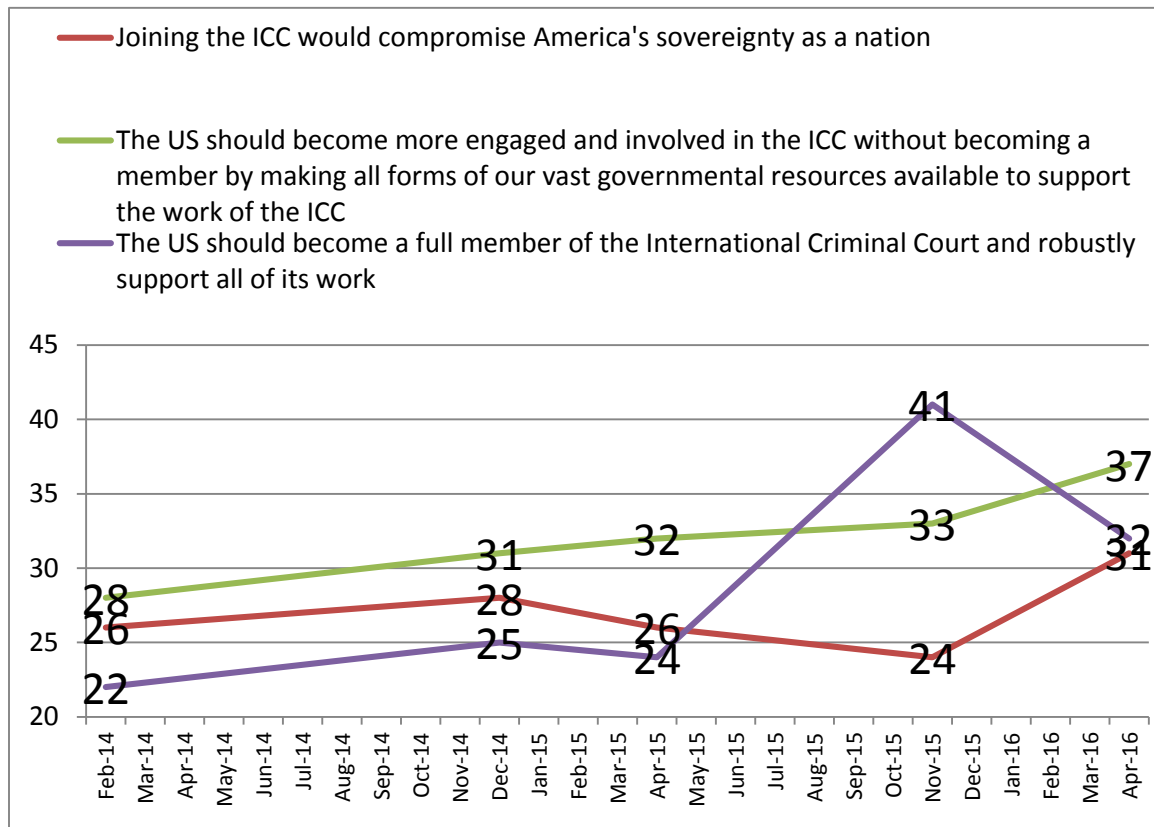
Six in ten Americans report knowing “nothing at all” about the ICC when asked, and 15% of US adults report knowing “a fair amount” or “a great deal” about the Court. This self-reported lack of knowledge is fairly consistent across demographic groups, with younger people more likely to indicate they know more about the ICC. Just under six in ten (59%) indicate that they ‘don’t know’ if the United States is a current member of the ICC. This halves to under a third (28%) among those individuals who report knowing at least a little bit about the ICC.

Perceptions of the Court and US Membership

The fifth wave of the research finds that there has been a slow but steady trend over the past two and a half years towards supporting an increasing US involvement in the ICC. Between the current and most recent wave, there is a significant rise in support for the United States dedicating more resources to the ICC without becoming a full member.

Furthermore, just over one in three (32%) agree that the “US should become a full member of the International Criminal Court and robustly support all of its work” now. During the first wave, only about a quarter of Americans (22%) reported agreeing with this statement. In comparison, the percent of Americans who agree that “joining the ICC would compromise America's sovereignty as a nation” has risen several points since the last wave in November 2015.

While these findings are *indicative only* and should be treated with caution, they do suggest the possibility of a slow shift in American attitudes on this issue.



Despite their lack of familiarity with the ICC,¹ Americans remain very supportive of the idea of the United States being involved with international institutions that have a direct impact on human rights and provide justice for those who commit mass atrocities. Nearly seven in ten Americans (68%) agree that “it is important for the United States to participate in international organizations that support human rights and that hold individuals accountable for mass atrocities.”

An increasing number of Americans (57%) believe that the United States should “dedicate...resources (Financial, military, intelligence, etc), up from just over one half of Americans (52%) in November 2015.

While many Americans want the United States to dedicate additional resources to the ICC, some are concerned about the exposure that the United States would be subjected to. Just over a quarter (26%) express concern that “joining international organizations concerned with human rights and holding individuals accountable for mass atrocities is a risk to the US because it could hurt our autonomy”. Among those who are familiar with the ICC, this number is even higher at 40%.

When it comes down to the line, less than half of Americans (44%) believe that the United States should join the ICC. Younger Americans (ages 18-34) are more likely than older Americans to believe that the United States should join the ICC. Among Americans aware of the ICC, there is more support for membership, with just under two-thirds believing that the United States should become a full member (63%).

¹ The ICC was subsequently defined for respondents as follows: The International Criminal Court (ICC) is the world’s only permanent international tribunal created by a treaty for the purpose of investigating and prosecuting war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity (mass atrocities). Currently, 123 countries are members of the International Criminal Court. The United States formally announced in 2002 that it would not become a member of the International Criminal Court for a multitude of reasons, including questions about the court’s jurisdiction and structure.



Sexual Assault and Rape as a War Crime

This wave of the survey asked three questions focusing on the recent ruling of the ICC's defining sexual assault and rape as a war crime, punishing leaders for crimes committed by their subordinates with the leader's knowledge, and whether an all-female judicial panel had an effect on a recent ruling of the court.

The first survey question broadly discusses whether sexual assault and rape should be considered war crimes by the ICC. Just under three-quarters (74%) of Americans agree with the ICC considering these acts to be war crimes. Similar numbers of men and women agree (73% and 75%, respectively). Among those who believe that the United States should be more involved in the ICC, this number rises even further (88%).

The recent trial of Congolese Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba is the focus of the second question. Bemba was found guilty of commanding a militia that committed rape, mass murder, and pillaging. When Bemba became aware of the sexual assault and rape, he did punish his subordinates to ensure it didn't happen again. Over three-quarters (77%) agree that the ICC should be able to hold leaders accountable for failing to punish the criminal behavior of their subordinates. For those who want the United States to join the ICC, this issue is even more clear, with over nine in ten agreeing with the ICC (92%).

The Bemba case was presided over by three female judges. The third question focused on whether this had an impact on the result of the Bemba case and women in the judiciary generally. Relating specifically to the Bemba case, under one half (46%) believe that the fact that all three judges were women likely had an impact on the outcome of the case. Seven of the ICC's 18 judges are women. One half (51%) of Americans believe that this is a good example of female empowerment and a similar number believe that the United States should support the ICC because it is aligned with American values (52%). Less than half of Americans (46%) believe that the United States Supreme Court should be at least as gender-balanced as the ICC.



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These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of the American Bar Association from April 22-25, 2016. The previous waves of the study were conducted from November 16-18, April 2-6, , 2015; and February 21-24, December 4-8, 2014. For these surveys, Ipsos undertook online surveys of 1,006, 1,003; 1,005; 1,005; and 1,004 adults, respectively. Weighting then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the U.S. adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls because they are based on samples drawn from opt-in online panels, not on random samples that mirror the population within a statistical probability ratio. The credibility interval for a sample size of 1,006 is ± 3.5 percentage points. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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