

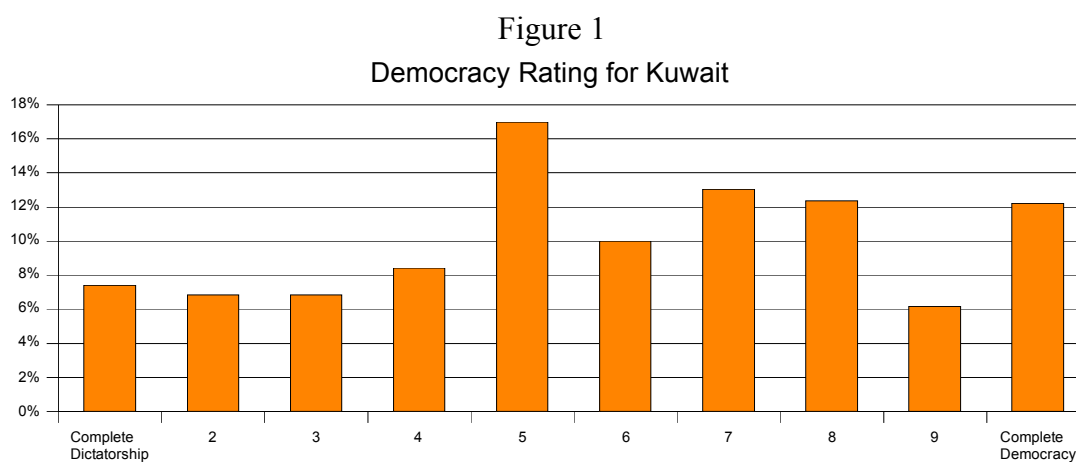
Principal Findings from the Arab Barometer for Kuwait

(1) Views Toward Democracy

Evidence from the Arab Barometer indicates that Kuwaitis are strongly supportive of democracy. When asked if, despite its problems, democracy is still the best system of governance, the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed. Overall, 36.5% of respondents stated that they strongly agreed while 52.0% stated that they agreed with this statement.

Additionally, respondents were generally unlikely to support statements that were critical of democracy. For example, only 27.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that in a democracy the economy runs badly. Similarly, only 32.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that democracies are not good at maintaining order. However, nearly half (45.3%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that democracies are indecisive and have too much quibbling.

On the whole, respondents were divided over how democratic they believed the Kuwaiti political system to be. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being a complete democracy, the modal response (17%) was 5 while the mean response was 5.9. Overall, 46.2% of respondents rated the system as being closer to a complete dictatorship and a complete democracy. Additionally, 7.1% of respondents believed that Kuwait was a complete dictatorship while 12.2% believed it was a complete democracy. The full distribution of responses can be seen in figure 1.



Overall, respondents were not favorable to the concept of violating human rights in the name of security. Only 9.3% claimed that this practice was completely justified while 22.9% stated it was somewhat justified. On the other hand, 24.1% said it was not very justified while 43.7% stated it was not justifiable at all.

(2) Political Participation and Citizenship

Overall, interest in politics is relatively low in Kuwait. The majority of respondents stated that they had little (41.0%) or no (13.2%) interest in politics. Only 11.5% of respondents stated that they were very interested while the remaining 34.3% said that they were interested. One possible explanation for this relatively low interest are the low levels of internal efficacy that many respondents revealed. In

fact, an overwhelming majority (86.0%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that sometimes politics is so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on. Of the remainder, only 3.3% strongly disagreed with this statement.

Participation in the political process is shown to be somewhat low. Despite a wave of excitement surrounding the June 2006 election, Kuwait's first election with female suffrage, only 23.8% of respondents stated that they voted in the election. Surprisingly, a significantly higher share of respondents (34.9%) stated that had attended a campaign or rally during the election period. Approximately the same percentage of respondents (35.1%) said that they had attended a protest march or demonstration over the previous three years, with 15.7% of all respondents stating they had done so multiple times. Additionally, 40.4% of respondents claimed that they had joined together with others to draw attention to an issue or signed a petition over the previous three years with approximately half of these individuals stating that they had done so more than once.

Interestingly, rates of participation do not appear to vary by levels of education. Rather, voting rates and rates of participation in election activities are almost identical for university-educated individuals and individuals with a secondary education or less. However, some variation exists in rates of participation by employment sector. Among individuals employed in the public sector, 27.1% voted in the 2006 elections compared to only 20.0% of those employed in the private sector. However, rates of participation in campaign activities were nearly identical for individuals employed in the public and private sectors.

Perceptions of the ease of obtaining services varied highly by the specific services in question. For example, the vast majority (85.9%) stated that obtaining an identity document was easy (49.6%) or very easy (36.3%). Meanwhile, only 1.1% of respondents claimed it was very difficult while the remaining 13.0% stated it was difficult. On the issue of ease of filing a complaint when one's rights had been violated, public perceptions differed greatly. Only 3.6% stated that this process was very easy while 25.9% claimed it was easy. On the other hand, the plurality (39.4%) of respondents stated it was difficult while a slightly smaller number (34.8%) believed it was very difficult.

(3) Religiosity and the Role of Religion in Public Life

When asked which identity best describes them, the majority (51.1%) of respondents stated that they were above all a Kuwaiti. The next highest response was that above all respondents are Muslim (45.5%) while only 3.4% said that above all they were Arab.

While many respondents stated their primary identity was religious, attitudes toward the role of religious leaders in the political process were generally negative. Overall, less than half of respondents (41.1%) agreed with the statement that religious leaders should influence the decisions of government with only 6.8% of all respondents strongly agreeing. The plurality (43.6%) disagreed while 15.3% disagreed strongly.

Despite a general desire to have men of religion remain outside the political process, the vast majority of respondents (81.2%) believed that Islam is compatible with democracy. Only 6.8% strongly agreed with the statement that the two are incompatible while a further 13.6% agreed. The majority of all respondents (55.5%) disagreed while the remaining 24.7% disagreed strongly. Moreover, the vast majority of respondents (79.2%) were in agreement with the statement that laws should only be made in accordance with the *shari'a*, with 30.4% agreeing strongly and 48.9% agreeing. Only 4.0% disagreed strongly while 16.7% disagreed.

However, a majority of respondents (63.7%) also agreed with the statement that all laws should be made in accordance with the wishes of the people, with 23.2% of all respondents strongly agreeing and 40.5% agreeing. 31.5% disagreed while only 4.8% disagreed strongly. The fact that a large majority of respondents agree that laws should be based on the *shari'a* and should be made in accordance with the wishes of the people lends further support to the finding that Kuwaitis perceive Islam and democracy to be fully compatible.

As might be expected, the belief that Islam and democracy are compatible varies by the preferred political system of Kuwaitis. Individuals who are supportive of a parliamentary democracy that includes all types of parties are very likely to believe that Islam and democracy are compatible as seen in figure 2. Meanwhile, those individuals who are supportive of a system governed by *shari'a* without political parties or elections are much more likely to believe that Islam and democracy are incompatible as can be seen in figure 3.

Figure 2

Distribution of respondents stating that Islam and Democracy are Compatible among those who State that a Parliamentary Democracy is Suitable for Kuwait

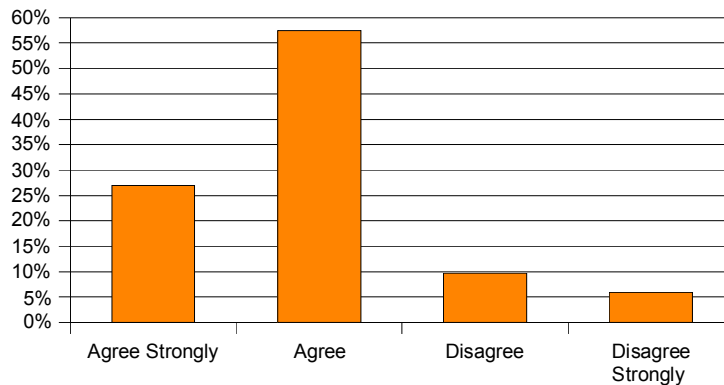
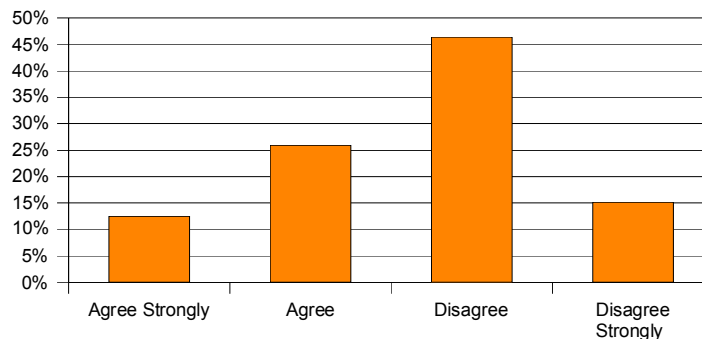


Figure 3

Distribution of respondents stating that Islam and Democracy are Compatible among those who state that a Political System Governed by Sharia without Parties or Elections is Suitable for Kuwait



A slight majority of Kuwaitis (54.0%) believe that religious practice is a private matter and should be separated from socio-political life. Among these respondents, approximately a third agree strongly while the remaining two-thirds agree. Overall, 29.7% disagree that religion is a private matter while 16.3% disagree strongly.

Interestingly, views about the role of religion in public life does not vary significantly with education or personal religiosity as can be seen in figures 4 and 5. However, as expected, views of religion in public life do vary with attitudes toward the appropriateness that the *shari'a* should be the only source of law. As can be seen in figure 6, individuals who believe that *shari'a* should be the only source of law are likely to disagree with the statement that religion is a private matter while those who believe that the *shari'a* should not be the only source of law are likely to believe that religion is in fact a private matter.

Figure 4

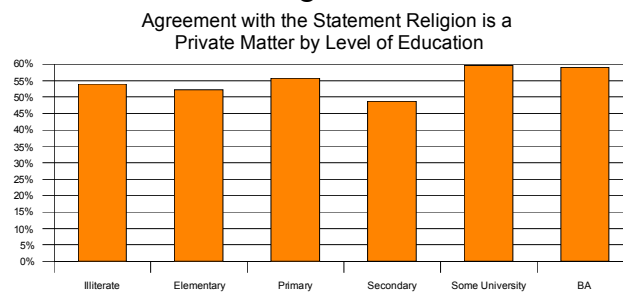


Figure 5

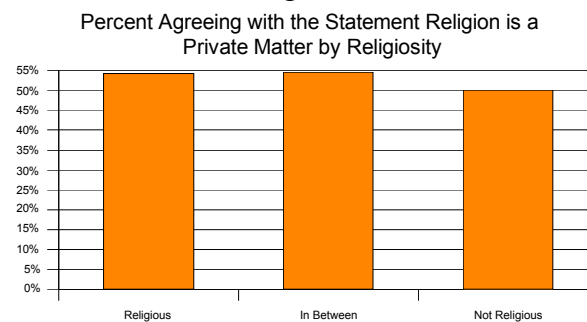
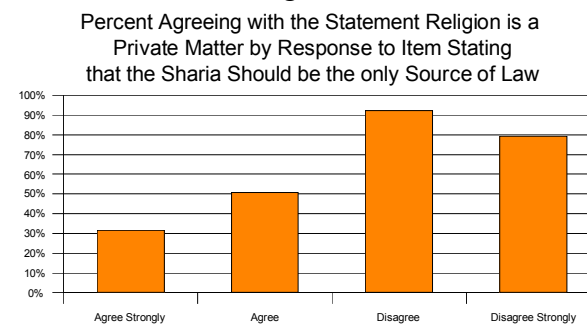


Figure 6



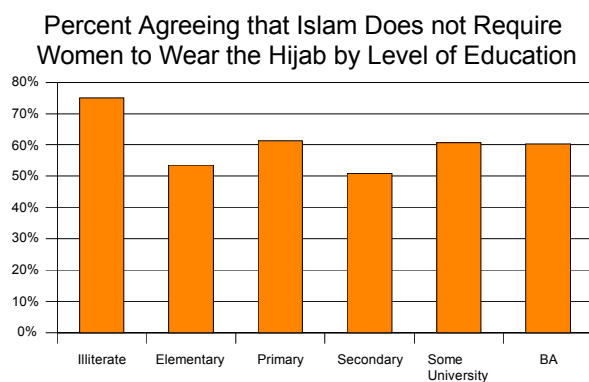
Surprisingly, stated levels of personal religiosity appear to be somewhat lower in Kuwait than in other societies surveyed. In fact, only 13.4% of the sample considered themselves religious. However, only 6.1% stated that they were not religious while over three-quarters of respondents stated that they were “in between”. However, virtually all respondents (97.7%) stated that they prayed. Additionally, the majority of respondents stated that they either read the Quran everyday (17.4%) or several times a week (37.3%). Meanwhile, 33.6% of respondents said they read the Quran sometimes while only 11.6% said that they rarely read the Quran.

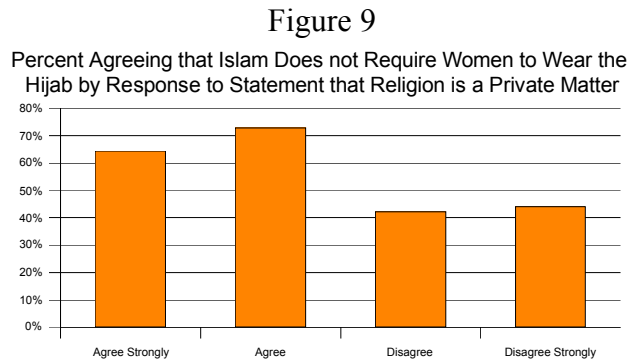
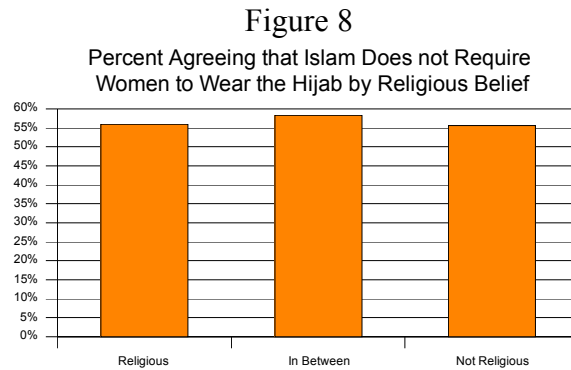
Indirect measures of personal religiosity reveal a somewhat different picture, suggesting that personal religiosity is very high. When asked about important characteristics to consider in potential spouses for their children, the vast majority (82.0%) stated that whether or not they prayed was very important while a further 9.9% said it was somewhat important. Only 6.9% said it was a little important and 1.1% said it was not important. The results were similar to whether or not the potential spouse fasted during Ramadan with 80.9% of respondents stating it was very important and 14.1% stating it was somewhat important.

While personal religiosity appears to be very high in Kuwait, interpretations of what exactly Islam means varies within society. For example, when asked if Islam does not require women to wear the *hijab*, 15.2% agreed strongly while 42.3% agreed. However, 26.6% disagreed while 15.9% disagreed strongly. Additionally, the majority (63.0%) of Kuwaitis state that Islam permits male and female university students to attend classes together, with 27.5% agreeing strongly and 35.5% agreeing. Meanwhile, 27.1% disagreed while only 9.9% disagreed strongly. However, nearly three-quarters of respondents stated that Islam requires the rights of a non-Muslim to be inferior to those of a Muslim, with 34.3% agreeing strongly and 41.5% agreeing. 21.1% disagree while only 3.1% disagreed strongly.

Overall, level of education appears to have a relatively minor effect on respondents' beliefs about whether Islam requires women to wear the *hijab* (figure 7). Similarly, an individual's stated religious belief had no significant effect (figure 8). However, respondents' attitudes toward whether religion is a private matter have significant explanatory power on whether or not they believe Islam requires women to wear the *hijab*. As can be seen in figure 9, those individuals who believe that religion is a private matter are significantly more likely to state that Islam does not require women to wear the *hijab*.

Figure 7





(4) Views towards Public Institutions

Trust in public institutions was relatively high in Kuwait compared to other Arab countries. For example, when asked about their trust in parliament, only 12.7% stated that they had a great deal of trust although the plurality (34.9%) said that they had quite a lot of trust. Nearly a third (32.4%) of respondents said that they did not have very much trust while a fifth of respondents stated that they had no trust at all. Trusts in the courts was significantly higher with 34.8% of respondents stating they had a great deal of trust and 43.0% having quite a lot of trust. Nearly a fifth of respondents (18.1%) stated that they did not have very much trust while only 4.2% said they had no trust at all in the courts.

Kuwaitis were somewhat divided on the overall freeness and fairness of the parliamentary elections of June 2006. While only 12.8% stated that they were completely free and fair, 33.0% stated that they were free and fair but with minor problems. On the other hand, 32.3% believed that they were free and fair but with major problems while 21.9% said they were not free or fair.

Kuwaitis are also divided on the effect of government policies on their lives, but overall a slight majority believes that government policies have a positive impact. While only 8.4% stated that government policies have a large positive impact on their daily lives, a third of respondents believed that they have a positive impact. One-quarter of respondents stated that government policies have no effect on their lives while 30.0% stated that they have a negative impact and only 2.9% believed they have a large negative impact. As might be expected, there appears to be a direct correlation between perceptions of economic conditions in Kuwait and perceptions of the impact of government policies as seen in table 1.

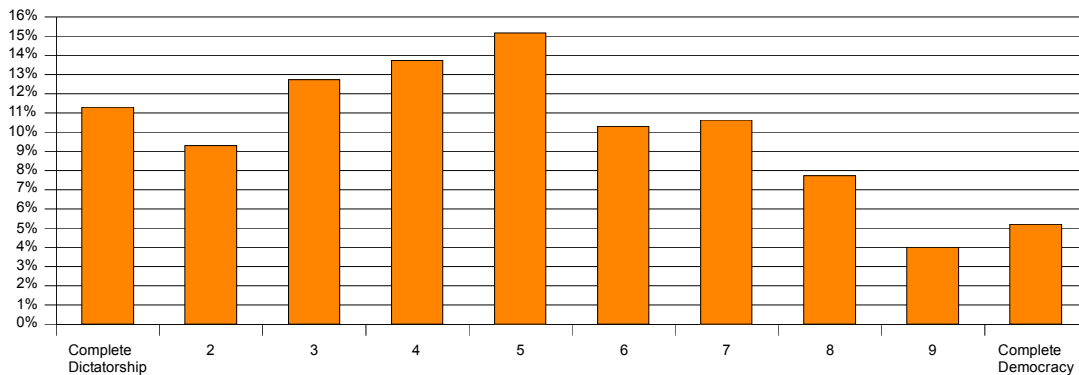
Table 1

Percent of respondents stating that government policies have a positive impact on their life by ratings of economic conditions in Kuwait							
Economic Conditions in Kuwait				Economic Conditions for the Family			
Very Good	Good	Bad	Very Bad	Very Good	Good	Bad	Very Bad
50.0%	44.0%	14.8%	NA	31.3%	47.8%	22.2%	NA

A majority of Kuwaitis are satisfied with the overall performance of the current government. On a scale of 1 (completely satisfied) to 10 (completely unsatisfied), the mean response was 4.7 and the modal response was 5. Overall, 12.7% of respondents were completely satisfied compared to 5.3% who were completely unsatisfied. The full distribution can be seen in figure 10.

Figure 10

Satisfaction with Government Performance



Ordinary citizens generally believe that government officials are knowledgeable about their needs. Overall, 17.2% strongly agree with this statement while the plurality (42.6%) agree with this statement. 34.7% disagreed with the statement while only 5.5% disagreed strongly. However, while most respondents believe that officials are knowledgeable about their needs, fewer believed that political leaders cared about their needs. In fact, only 8.2% strongly agreed while 34.1% agreed. The plurality (46.1%) disagreed and 11.6% disagreed strongly.

Nevertheless, a majority (57.6%) of ordinary Kuwaitis still believed that the government created conditions under which they are able to prosper through their own efforts, with 12.4% agreeing strongly and 45.2% agreeing. 35.1% disagreed while 7.3% disagreed strongly.

(5) International Affairs

Respondents were told that some observers claim that the Arab world lags behind other world regions and were asked which factors they believed accounted for this outcome. While the plurality (45.9%) stated that both internal and external factors were equally important, 44.4% stated that internal or domestic factors were the primary cause and only 9.8% said that external or international factors were the primary cause. This finding strongly suggests that a large majority of respondents believe that internal reform is necessary to close this gap.

Overall, very few respondents believed that the Arab League has been successful at promoting Arab unity, with only 4.0% saying it had been very successful and 15.9% saying it had been successful. A

further 26.6% said it had not been very successful while the majority (53.4%) said it had not been successful at all.

Overall, anti-Americanism appears to be relatively low in Kuwait. Unlike many other societies in the region, the majority of Kuwaitis believe that US democracy promotion in the region has been successful. A slight majority (50.7%) agree that it has been successful while 11.4% strongly agree. On the other hand, 26.4% disagree with this statement while 11.5% disagree strongly. Moreover, the vast majority of Kuwaitis appear to have a positive view of American citizens as 83.3% of respondents agreed with the statement that despite negative US foreign policies, most ordinary Americans are good people.

Attitudes towards the US and Western culture were somewhat positive. Overall, the vast majority of Kuwaitis (91.3%) stated that Western culture had some positive attributes. However, a slight majority also believed that exposure to US and Western culture had harmful effects on Kuwaiti society. In fact, a plurality (41.5%) agreed with this statement while 15.4% agreed strongly. 39.1% disagreed and only 4.0% disagreed strongly. Interestingly, belief about the harmful effects about do not appear to vary by education as seen in figure 11. However, it appears that individuals who are not religious or who believe that religion is not a private matter are more likely to believe that Western culture is harmful to Kuwait as can be seen in figures 12 and 13.

Figure 11

Percent Agreeing that Western Culture is Harmful to Kuwait by Level of Education

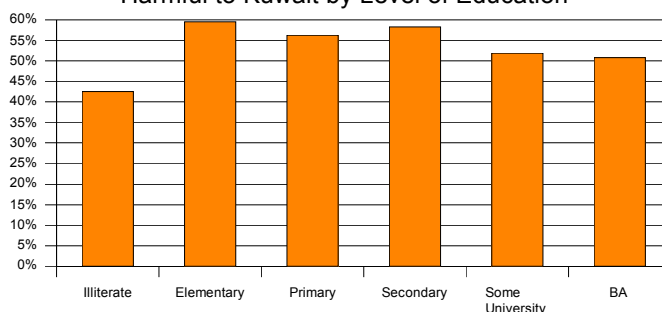


Figure 12

Percent Agreeing that Western Culture is Harmful to Kuwait by Personal Religiosity

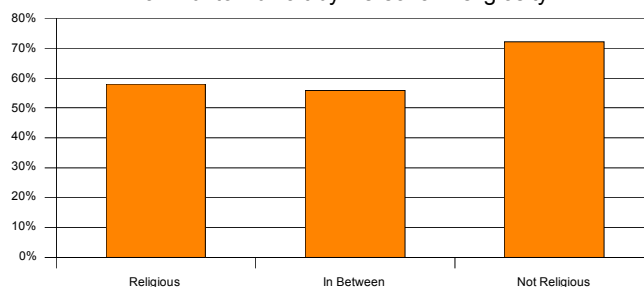
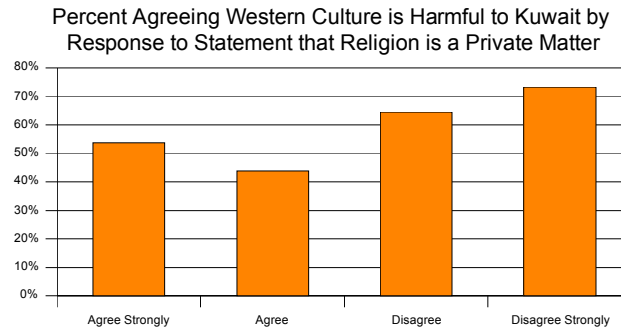


Figure 13



Almost all Kuwaitis characterized recent attacks on civilians in the Arab world as being terrorist. For example, 97.9% stated that the Amman hotel bombings of November, 2005 were terrorist acts. Similarly, 95.7% stated that the recent hotel bombings in the Egyptian towns of Dahab and Sharm al-Sheikh were terrorist acts and 94.4% stated that the Casablanca bombings of May, 2003 were terrorist acts. Attitudes were similar for attacks in Western countries. For example, 95.4% stated that the London bombings of July, 2005 were terrorist acts and 94.9% said that the Madrid bombings of March, 2004 were terrorist acts.

While there was widespread agreement that these events were terrorist acts, Kuwaitis were much more likely to be tolerant of armed operations against US interests in response to US actions in the region. In fact, 27.0% of respondents agreed strongly that such actions were justified while the plurality (31.5%) agreed. Meanwhile, 25.5% disagreed and 16.1% disagreed strongly. However, the vast majority of respondents believed that attacking civilians in Iraq was not justified in order to resist American occupation. Only 3.0% of respondents agreed strongly and 7.9% agreed that such actions were justified. On the other hand, 41.8% disagreed and 47.4% disagreed strongly that such actions were justified.