

# **ARAB BAROMETER SURVEY PROJECT**

## **JORDAN REPORT**

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## Arab Barometer: Jordan Country Report

The Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan undertook a survey of public opinion in Jordan which was also implemented in Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, and Kuwait in cooperation with the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor and Princeton University along with research centers and societies in each country. The poll was completed between 8 – 16 June, 2006 and included a sample of 1200 residences. The response rate was 95.4%, as 55 households refused to take part. Thus, 1145 completed forms were distributed throughout the governorates of Jordan in the proportions shown in chart 1.

Table 1:

Governorate	Frequency	Proportion
Amman	468	40.9
Irbid	204	17.8
Zarqa	177	15.5
Balqaa	76	6.6
Mafraq	48	4.2
Kerak	44	3.8
Jerash	32	2.8
Ajloun	25	2.2
Aqaba	22	1.9
Maan	19	1.6
Tafila	16	1.4
Madeba	15	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1145</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This project aims to create a database of opinions held in the Arab world concerning politics, society, religion, and culture. Additionally, this project aims to measure positions in the Arab world towards a number of specific issues, such as international relations, economics and quality of life, confidence in civil institutions, civil and political participation, stances towards democracy and other forms of government, as well as other questions.

This report contains five sections; Views of Democracy Focus on Citizenship, the Place of Religion in Public and Private Life, Views of Public Institutions and Confidence in their Efficiency, and International and Arab Affairs. The summary will be followed by an appendix which presents the responses to selected questions from the survey.

### 1. Views of Democracy

The survey presented four aspects of democracy, two of which focused on politics (the opportunity to change the government through elections, the freedom to criticize the government) and two of which focused on social or economic factors (closing the gap between rich and poor, provide basic needs such as food, housing, and clothing to all citizens). The survey found that the social/economic aspects of democracy were the most important in Jordan, with 61.7% choosing one of these two aspects.

Specifically, 33.5% chose, "providing basic needs such as food, housing, and clothing" and 28.2% chose the most important aspect of democracy to be closing the gap between rich and poor. The remainder chose either the freedom to criticize the government or the opportunity to change the government through elections.

When Jordanians were asked to rank the second most important aspect of democracy, the majority, 72.4%, again chose the social/economic aspects. Of Jordanians, 39.2% chose closing the gap between rich and poor and 33.5% chose providing basic needs to all citizens as the second most important aspect. In terms of political aspects, 15.2% chose the freedom to criticize the government and 10.9% chose elections.

The results reveal that the majority of Jordanians support the democratic system. Indeed, 73.5% agreed with the statement that "The democratic system has its problems, but it is better than any other" and only 12.3% disagreed. Confirming these results, 52.2% opposed the statement that "The democratic system is not good at preserving order" while 30% agreed. The results also show that 38.8% of Jordanians believe that disrespecting human rights for the sake of security is "not ever justified" whereas 12% said that it is "justified to a large degree". This shows that three times as many Jordanians categorically reject the idea of encroaching on human rights for the sake of security than strongly support this principle. Some 40.0% of Jordanians are teetering between acceptance and rejection of the principle, with 23.0% saying that such action is justified to a moderate degree and 17.0% saying that is justified a little. The variation across responses depends on the graveness of threats to security and the perception thereof, and, alternately, the efficacy of public information campaigns in favor of greater human rights.

On the question regarding the best forms of government, Jordanian public opinion is consistent with earlier responses which favor democracy. The results show that 81.0% of Jordanians believe that democracy is the best form of government with only 5.8% opposing this position. Meanwhile, an authoritarian system of government received large disapproval, with only 21.2% in support and 63.0% saying that this form of government would be "bad or very bad" for the government of the country. Furthermore, the survey asked Jordanians about the appropriateness of various systems of government found in the Middle East. According to 45.8% of Jordanians a parliamentary system in which a variety of parties compete in elections would be "appropriate or very appropriate", 14.4% said it would be appropriate to a certain degree, and 14.5% said that it is not appropriate at all.

## **2. The Focus of Citizenship**

The concept of citizenship includes a number of civil and political practices that allow for communication between the people and the government. Furthermore, civil participation is bolstered by interest in politics. In this light, 58.0% of Jordanians are interested in politics to varying degrees. It is striking, however, that a large portion (40.0%) said that they are not at all interested in politics. Of those interested in politics, 8.4% described themselves as "very interested", 20.3% described themselves as "interested" and 29.2% described themselves as interested to a small degree. Interest in politics is reflected in participation in the last elections. In this regard, 56.3% reported participating in the last round of parliamentary elections before the survey, which took place in June 2003. Of Jordanians who were age 18 or greater at

the time of the elections, 41.4% did not participate. The results also show that a majority of Jordanians (77.1%) did not participate in any meetings or events related to campaigning. This indicates that the political process is very weak in Jordanian, with citizens perhaps prioritizing other concerns above politics. At the same time, 20.3% did participate in meetings or other events related to the campaign.

Despite the low rates of participation in campaign events, the survey found that non-electoral participation is much weaker than electoral participation. The survey found that 85.1% of Jordanians had not attended or participated in a public meeting to learn more about a topic that was not a political issue. Only 12.9% participated in such meetings once or more than once in the three years preceding the survey. When asked about participation in demonstrations or signing petitions, the majority responded that they never participated in these activities (87.6%), while 6.6% participated in these activities only once in the years before the survey and 4.5% more than once.

In terms of the relationship between citizens and public government institutions, Jordanians found it easy to obtain many of the services of the state. In this regard, 86.9% of Jordanians found it "easy" or "very easy" to obtain personal documents such as a birth certificate, passport, or identity card and only 7.9% found these services harder than that. Likewise, in terms of registering a child in a government school, 72.2% found this to be "easy" or "very easy", 7.8% found it "hard" and 18% did not try. The General Security Services were viewed as very effective in Jordan, with 72.9% describing them as effective and 7.8% describing them otherwise, and 18.2% did not seek their help.

Responses were somewhat different in regard to seeking treatment in a government hospital or clinic. Although the majority of Jordanians, 62.2%, considered obtaining this service to be "easy" or "very easy", access to this service is not the same as access to the services listed above. Indeed, 20.2% found it hard to obtain government health services, and 10.9% found it very difficult and 6% did not try. Additionally, 37% found it difficult to register an official complaint if they felt their rights had been violated, specifically 19% described it as hard and 18% described it as very hard, while 23% made no attempt to register a complaint.

### **3. The Place of Religion in Public and Private Life**

Although the majority of Jordanians describe themselves as religious, they have some reservations concerning the role of religion in political life. In this regard, 68.0% of Jordanians opposed the idea that men of religion should influence voters during elections. In terms of the role of men of religion in public life and on government decisions, that study found that 34.9% felt that they should have no influence and 7.6% strongly opposed any influence. On the other hand, 34.3% agreed that men of religion should have influence on government policy and 9.4% strongly agreed. In addition to this, 46.6% disagreed with the state taking public religious positions and 40.6% agreed.

In response to questions on the connection between Islam and democracy, the results found that a majority of Jordanians, 60.3%, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea that the system of democracy is opposed to the teachings of Islam. Likewise, 56.6% of Jordanians disagreed with the idea that non-Muslims should have

fewer rights than Muslims in a Muslim country, while, at the same time, 30.9% agreed. Furthermore, the majority of Jordanians, 76.1%, considered banks to be in violation of the teachings of Islam. The results also showed that the majority of Jordanians have no problem with co-education at the University level. Additionally, 61% of Jordanians agreed that women should wear modest clothing, even without wearing the hijab, and 33% disagreed.

In regards to religious practices, 52.1% of Jordanians feel that there should be a separation between religious life and social/economic life and 35.5% feel that there should be no separation. From another angle, 63.0% agreed with the statement "The government should create laws in accordance with the wishes of the people." The data indicates that there is a modernizing movement in Jordan, in which citizens see a separation between religion and economic, social, and political life. However, religion still retains influence in regards to issues related to women and marriage.

Religion has a large influence on issues related to marriage. According to 54.3% of Jordanians, "non-prayer" in a potential partner is an obstacle "to a large degree" in agreeing to the marriage of a daughter, sister, son or brother. Only 11.8% said that this would not be an obstacle at all to this decision. A similar pattern is observed in regards to the question of "fasting" in the decision to agree to a marriage. In other words, religious factors are very important in the decision to marry. Social issues have a lesser impact on the decision to marry than religious. The survey found that 31.4% believed that poverty would be a significant obstacle to the decision to marry, while 23.2% said that it would not be an obstacle at all. However, "unemployment" trumps both religious and social concerns in terms of importance. A clear majority of 81% said that this would be an "obstacle to a large degree" to a decision to allow a marriage.

The survey asked whether respondents believed that a woman could be the president or prime minister of a Muslim country. A majority of Jordanians, 64.3% agreed that a woman should be able to hold these positions, while 33% opposed the idea of a female president or prime minister. Despite these supportive findings, 76.7% backed the idea that men are better political leaders than women. There was no problem with the idea of married women working outside of the home, with 81.1% agreeing with this idea and 17.6% opposing. The results were similar in terms of support for the idea that the ability to find work must be equal between men and women. Furthermore, 78.8% supported the idea that men and women must receive equal pay for equal work. However, in response to the question of women traveling outside of Jordan alone, 65.3% of Jordanians disagreed or strongly disagreed and 32.8% supported this.

#### **4. Views of Public Institutions and Confidence in their Efficiency**

The results revealed that there are differing levels of confidence among citizens in certain important public institutions. The following responses are organized according to the number of people who are "confident to a large degree" in the stated institutions: General Security forces earned 56.0%, followed by the courts at 40%, then the Prime Minister at 27%, and the Parliament at 19%, finally political parties with 10 percent. A significant proportion of citizens lacked knowledge about political

parties, some 22.0%, and this is reflected in the low level of influence of parties in public life.

Institution	Large degree of confidence	Moderate degree of confidence	Small degree of confidence	Not confident at all	Don't know	Refuse to answer	Total
Prime Minister	27	38	13	14	8	0.5	100
The Courts	40	36	10	6	7	0.5	100
Parliament (2003)	19	37	15	21	7	0.4	100
General Security (Police)	56	31	5	3	4	1	100
Political Parties	10	20	12	36	22	1	100

Perhaps the source of the high level of confidence in General Security is related to the fact that GS deals with citizens' issues directly and furthermore, Jordanians' perception of security in their neighborhoods is among the highest level internationally. Public institutions related to representing citizens, such as parliament and political parties, received the lowest levels of public confidence. Indeed, 36.0% of Jordanians said that they are not confident at all in the political parties and 21.0% felt the same way about the parliament. The Prime Minister is perhaps perceived the best out of all representative institutions, with only 14.0% maintaining no confidence at all in the institution.

The government receives support based on expectations. Indeed, 59.0% supported the statement that "The government provides appropriate conditions for citizens to improve their lives through their efforts" and 32.2% did not support this statement. Similarly, 47.0% confirmed that the government takes the views of citizens seriously and 44.0% differed from this view. Views of the statement, "political leaders are interested in the needs of citizens" were very close; 43.1% supported this and 46.6% opposed.

## 5. Arab World Issues and International Affairs

There are a number of issues that are important in Jordan and the entire Arab World, all of which deal with this region of the world, such as the causes behind the delayed development of the Arab World, the effectiveness of the Arab League, the penetration of Western and American culture, and terrorism. The plurality of Jordanians, 40%, attributes the lack of development in the Arab World compared to other parts of the world to internal and external sources together. At the same time 27.1% point to internal factors only, 22.8% point to external factors and 10.0% had no opinion. It is surprising that more people attribute the delayed development of the Arab World to internal factors rather than external.

Jordanians have a negative view of the effectiveness of the Arab League in fostering and advancing cooperative Arab initiatives. Indeed, only 5.7% believe that the League is effective to a large degree, while 27.0% held that the League is not effective at all.

On the issue of terrorism, the vast majority of Jordanians believe that the 2005 bombings of hotels in the Amman area were terrorism. Indeed, 94.8% held this view. Similarly, 87.6% believed that the bombings of tourist hotels in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt were terrorist acts compared to only 4.5% who felt that these attacks were not terrorism. There was a difference in the stance of Jordanians towards the 2005 London Tube Bombings, with 66.2% describing them as terrorism, while 14.0% said that they were not terrorism. Furthermore, 10.1% said that they had not heard of them and 9.1% said that they didn't know. The results were similar for the Madrid Train Bombing, with 64.4% considering it to be a terrorist act, 13.8% believed it was not terrorism, and 12.0% said that they had not heard of it. Similarly, 68.7% said that bombings in Morocco were terrorist acts, 5.7% said not terrorist, and 15.9% had not heard of them.

Nearly 50.0% of Jordanians agreed or strongly agreed that the U.S. presence in the region justifies armed attacks against the U.S. everywhere and 34.0% disagreed or disagreed strongly.

**Appendix: Selected Results of the Arab Barometer Survey, Jordan.**

1. Views of Democracy

a. If you have to choose one, what is the most important feature of democracy?

The ability to change governments through elections	18.7
Freedom to criticize those in positions of power	18.9
Reducing the gap between rich and poor	28.2
Providing basic needs, such as food, housing, and clothing to all individuals	33.5
Other	0.7

b. What is the second most important?

The ability to change governments through elections	10.9
Freedom to criticize those in positions of power	15.2
Reducing the gap between rich and poor	39.2
Providing basic needs, such as food, housing, and clothing to all individuals	33.2
Other	1.4

232) Do you agree or oppose the following statement: Democracy may have its problems but it is better than any other form of government.

Agree Strongly	26.6
Agree	46.9
Disagree	10.5
Disagree Strongly	10.8
Other	14.2

234) To which degree to you believe it is justified to disrespect human rights in Jordan for security?

To a large degree	12.2
To a moderate degree	22.9
To a small degree	17.4
Not justified	38.8
Other	8.6

246.1) What is the appropriate political system for Jordan: A Parliamentary system where various parties compete against one another through elections

Very appropriate	16.0
Appropriate	29.8
Appropriate to a certain extent	14.4
Not appropriate at all	14.5
Other	25.4



255.1) What is the importance of the following in terms of an individual being qualified for being in the country's political leadership: Previous political experience

Very important	55.1
Important	34.3
Not important	4.2
Not important at all	2.0
Other	4.5

255.2) What is the importance of the following in terms of an individual being qualified for being in the country's political leadership: Openness to political ideas

Very important	50.7
Important	36.4
Not important	5.5
Not important at all	1.3
Don't know	6.0

255.3) What is the importance of the following in terms of an individual being qualified for being in the country's political leadership: Great work and effort

Very important	58.5
Important	30.4
Not important	5.5
Not important at all	0.8
Don't know	4.8

255.4) What is the importance of the following in terms of an individual being qualified for being in the country's political leadership: The ability to speak and communicate with the people

Very important	58.7
Important	30.1
Not important	4.9
Not important at all	1.1
Don't know	4.1

### **Focus of Citizenship**

207) Did you participate in the last parliamentary elections which took place

Yes	56.3
No	41.4
I did not have the right to vote	2.3

215) In general, what is your interest in politics

Very interested	8.4
Interested	20.3
Interested a little	29.2
Not interested	40.0
Other	2.1

230.1) There are a range of activities usually carried out by citizens. In the pass three years did you attend or participate in a meeting to discuss an issue or sign a petition

One time	6.8
More than once	6.1
I did not participate at all	85.1
Other	1.9

507.2) Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Politicians are interested in the needs of the average citizen

Strongly Agree	8.8
Agree	34.3
Disagree	33.5
Strongly Disagree	13.1
Don't know	1.3

507.5) Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: In some cases, politics is so complicated I can't understand what is going on

Strongly Agree	26.3
Agree	45.8
Disagree	13.8
Strongly disagree	3.5
Don't know	10.7

213.1) I will ask you some questions about some services. Based on actual experiences, how difficult or easy is to access certain personal documents (birth certificate, passport, identity card)

Very easy	45.1
Easy	41.8
Difficult	7.3
Very difficult	1.7
I haven't tried	3.3
I don't know	0.8

213.5) I will ask you some questions about some services. Based on actual experience, how easy or difficult is it to file a complaint if you feel your rights have been infringed

Very easy	15.3
Easy	22.0
Difficult	19.0
Very difficult	18.0
I haven't tried	23.0
I don't know	2.7

### **The Place of Religion in Public and Private Life**

302) What is your primary social or geographic group

Family/Clan/Tribe	30.0
City/Village/Camp in which you live	1.4
Governorate in which you now live	0.9

Jordan generally	32.5
The Arab Homeland	5.7
The Islamic World	28.0
Other	1.5

401.3) To what extent do you think the following statements are appropriate:

Religious leaders have an impact on political decisions

Agree strongly	9.4
Agree	34.3
Disagree	34.9
Disagree strongly	7.6
I don't know	13.8

401.4) To what extent do think the following statements are appropriate: Religious practices are practices that must be separated from economic and social life

Agree strongly	19.5
Agree	32.6
Disagree	26.1
Disagree strongly	9.4
I don't know	12.4

502.1) To what extent are the following statements impediments to the marriage of your son, daughter, brother or sister: Non-prayer

A large impediment	54.3
A moderate impediment	25.1
A small impediment	8.0
Not an impediment at all	11.8
Other	8.0

502.6) To what extent are the following statements impediments to the marriage of your son, daughter, brother or sister: Unemployment

A large impediment	81.0
A moderate impediment	12.7
A small impediment	2.7
Not an impediment at all	3.1
Other	0.6

504.1) Different religious scholars disagree in their interpretations of some issues in Islam, we would like to know your interpretation: The democratic system is incompatible with Islam

Agree strongly	6.9
Agree	19.5
Disagree	43.4
Disagree strongly	16.9
Don't know	13.9

504.2) Different religious scholars disagree in their interpretations of some issues in Islam, we would like to know your interpretation: Political rights for non-Muslims should be less than rights of Muslims in a Muslim country

Agree strongly	5.9
Agree	25.0
Disagree	41.6
Disagree strongly	15.0
Don't know	12.5

504.6) Different religious scholars disagree in their interpretations of some issues in Islam, we would like to know your interpretation: Women must dress modestly without the need to wear the veil

Agree strongly	21.0
Agree	40.4
Disagree	20.3
Disagree strongly	12.2
Other	6.1

505.1) It is possible for a woman to be the president or prime minister of a Muslim nation

Agree strongly	26.0
Agree	38.3
Disagree	22.7
Disagree strongly	10.3
Other	2.7

505.5) Men and women must receive equal opportunities for the same work

Agree strongly	22.4
Agree	44.2
Disagree	25.0
Disagree strongly	6.4
Other	2.0

### **Views of public institutions and confidence in their efficiency**

201.1) I will name several institutions, I want you tell me your degree of confidence in each of these institutions: the Prime Minister

A high level of confidence	27.0
A moderate level of confidence	38.4
A small level of confidence	12.5
Not confident at all	13.5
Don't know	8.6

201.3) I will name several institutions, I want you tell me your degree of confidence in each of these institutions: The Parliament

A high level of confidence	19.3
A moderate level of confidence	36.7
A small level of confidence	15.3
Not confident at all	21.1

Don't know	7.6
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201.5) I will name several institutions, I want you tell me your degree of confidence in each of these institutions: Political parties

A high level of confidence	9.6
A moderate level of confidence	19.9
A small level of confidence	12.1
Not confident at all	35.5
Don't know	22.9

211) In general, how do you assess the freeness and fairness of the last parliamentary election

Absolute freedom and integrity	29.5
Free and fair with some problems and interference (secondary)	23.9
Free and faith with some problems and interference (core)	9.2
Not free or fair	10.4
Don't know	27.0

219) In general, do you feel that government policies have an impact on your daily life

A very positive impact	2.5
A positive impact	21.3
An impact that is not positive or negative	39.9
A negative impact	21.0
A very negative impact	5.5
Other	9.7

507.4) Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: The government provides appropriate conditions for citizens to improve their lives through their efforts

Agree strongly	13.3
Agree	45.8
Disagree	24.6
Disagree strongly	7.6
Don't know	8.7

### **Arab World Issues and International Affairs**

601) Some people believe that the lack of development in the Arab World compared to other areas is the result of internal or external factors, what do you think is more important

Internal factors	27.1
External factors	22.8
They are both of the same importance	40.0
Don't know	10.1

602) To what degree do you think the Arab League has been effective in advancing and strengthening joint Arab initiatives

To a large degree	5.7
To a moderate degree	26.7
To a small degree	22.9
Not effective at all	26.6
Don't know	18.0

608) Among the many aspects of Western and American culture, there are some positive aspects

Agree	45.9
Disagree	35.0
Don't know	19.1

603.1) How would you characterize the bombing of Hotels in Amman, terrorism or not terrorism?

Terrorism	94.8
Not terrorism	1.9
Other	3.3

603.1) How would you characterize the bombing of Hotels in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, terrorism or not terrorism?

Terrorism	78.6
Not terrorism	4.5
Other	7.5

603.4) How would you characterize the bombings in Madrid, terrorism or not terrorism

Terrorism	64.4
Not terrorism	13.8
Other	12.0
Have not heard of it	9.8

604) Do you agree or disagree with this statement: "The US presence in the region justifies attacks against the US everywhere"

Agree Strongly	18.2
Agree	31.0
Disagree	24.8
Disagree Strongly	8.7
Don't know	17.4

605) Do you agree or disagree that it is justified to use violence against Iraqi civilians under the pre-text of resisting the American occupation

Agree strongly	5.6
Agree	12.2
Disagree	44.9
Disagree strongly	24.7
Don't know	--