

ARAB BAROMETER SURVEY PROJECT

LEBANON REPORT

The Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan supervised a project to measure Arab public opinion in the Republic of Lebanon in cooperation with the Statistics Lebanon Establishment. In addition to Lebanon, this poll was carried out in Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, Palestine, and Kuwait with cooperation of the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor and Princeton University. Additionally, the project was completed in partnership with organizations and research centers in each of the aforementioned countries. The poll was carried out in the month of November in 2007 and surveyed 1,200 residences, as is shown in table 1.

The project aims to create clear base level data regarding politics, religion, culture and society in the Arab World. From another angle, this project aims to gauge the stances of Arabs regarding current issues such as standard of living, confidence in public institutions, civic participation, the place of religion in public and private life, perceptions of security, sources for obtaining news and information, opinion of democracy and different forms of government, stances regarding policies of the United States, differences in Arab perception between regions, perceptions of terrorism, and the relationship between security and human rights.

Table 1:

Governate	Number	Percent
Beirut	168	14.0
Mount Lebanon	432	36.0
North	240	20.0
Bekaa	180	15.0
South	97	8.1
Nabatiyya	83	6.9
Total	1200	100.0

The findings will be summarized in five sections; Views of Democracy, Views of Citizenship, The Place of Religion in Public and Private Life, Perception of Public Establishments, and Arab World Issues and International Affairs. The summary will be followed by an appendix detailing the response percentages to specific questions.

Views of Democracy

The survey asked a question aimed at gauging how respondents interpreted the meaning of a democratic system of government. Two possible interpretations focused on politics (Opportunity to change government through elections and the freedom to criticize individuals in positions of power), and two interpretations focused on economics and society (Closing the gap between rich and poor and providing basic necessities such as food, housing, and clothing to all citizens). In Lebanon, 47.5% of respondents interpreted democracy primarily in economic and social terms, with 27.7% describing the most important aspect of democracy as providing basic necessities and 19.8% describing the most important aspect as closing the gap between rich and poor. We found that 31.8% of Lebanese described the most important characteristic of democracy as the opportunity to change governments through elections and 14.8% considered the ability to criticize those in power as the most important aspect.

A similar pattern appeared in responses to the second most important aspect of democracy. We found that 57.8% of interviewees described the second most important aspect in terms of economics and society, with 34.9% specifying providing basic necessities for citizens and 22.9% choosing closing the gap between rich and poor. The remainder described the second most important aspects of democracy in primary political terms, with 20.5% describing this aspect as the freedom to criticize those in power and 15.6% describing it as the ability to change the government through elections.

The results show that the majority of Lebanese support the system of democracy, regardless of their interpretation. Indeed, 89% of Lebanese agreed with the statement “The democratic system has its problems, but it is better than any other system” and 7.9% disagreed.

As a confirmation of the position in support of democracy, 74.9% of Lebanese disagreed with the statement, “Non-Democratic regimes are better in maintaining order”. From the opposite position, 20.8% of those interviewed agreed with this view. Furthermore, 72.2% of Lebanese agreed that disrespecting human rights under the pretext of upholding security “is not an excuse at all” and 4.1% of interviewees said that such actions are justified to a large degree. It should be noted here that 19.9% of interviewees swung between agreeing and disagreeing with the concept of abusing human rights for the sake of security. Specifically, 10.4% believed to a moderate degree that security justifies disregarding human rights, and 9.5% believed this to a small degree. The variation on this issue relates to ones perception of the threat to security and the influence of public campaigns to sway opinion in either direction on the issue.

The results regarding preferences in terms of political systems are consistent with the earlier questions, which show positive views towards democracy in Lebanon. Indeed, 92.5% of Lebanese interviewees prefer a democratic system of governance, and 6.7% opposed such a system. Furthermore, only 4.4% supported an

authoritarian form of government in Lebanon, while 94.6% of Lebanese believe this organization of government to be bad or very bad.

In regards to the form of government that interviewees believed to be most suitable for Lebanon, most Lebanese supported a parliamentary system in which rightist, leftist, and religious parties compete against one another through elections. The results show that 67.3% consider this system to be appropriate or very appropriate, while 11.6% consider it somewhat appropriate and 17.9% held that it was not appropriate at all.

CITIZENSHIP

Citizens engage in a number of civil and political practices, which represent modes of communication between the individual and the state. It is important that these practices take place and develop in order for the government to understand the needs of citizens, their importance in public life, and the importance of various political issues. The survey found that 58.7% of Lebanese are interested in political issues to varying degrees. The distribution is as follows; 25.9% report being "Very interested," 32.8% reported being "Interested", 21.9% reported being "Interested to a small degree" and 19.1% of interviewees reported not being interested in politics at all. These levels of political interest are reflected in participation in the general elections. Of the interviewees, 61.9% reported participating in the 2005 Parliamentary Elections (the most recent elections at the time of the survey), and 35.3% of Lebanese over the age of 18 reported not taking part in the elections. According to the results, the majority of Lebanese, 74.5%, did not attend or participate in political activities which occurred during the elections. This is evidence of weak practical political participation on behalf of citizens, and probably relates to individual priorities. During this time, we also found that **22.4%** of Lebanese participated in some activity, such as participating in or attending a meeting, or other electoral events.

We found that the level of participation in non-election activities was much weaker than participation in electoral events. The results show that 67.4% of interviewees did not participate in or attend any meetings to discuss an issue or sign a petition. Furthermore, 18.7% participated in a meeting more than once, and 12.7% participated in a meeting one time only. Additionally, we found that 54.6% of interviewees did not participate in rallies or demonstrations, 30.3% participated more than once, and 14.5% participated one time only.

In terms of the relationship between citizens and general government institutions, the poll results show that Lebanese found it easier to access some state services and more difficult to access others. For example, 60.4% of interviewees reported that it was "Easy" or "Very Easy" to obtain personal documents like birth certificates, passports, or identity cards and 30.7% found this to be more difficult. As for registering children in government schools, 47.7% considered this to be "Easy" or "Very Easy" and 14.6% reported that it was "Difficult" or "Very Difficult" and 34.7% did not attempt to do so. In response to a question on how difficult or easy it is to

access public security services, 27.2% reported “Easy” or “Very Easy”, 39% reported “Difficult” or “Very Difficult” and 31.5% made no attempt.

The response was not very different in regards to access to services in government clinics or hospitals. Of interviewees, 24% found the process “Easy” or “Very Easy”, 45.8% found the process “Difficult” or “Very Difficult”, and 27.7% made no attempt. Finally, 55.4% of interviewees found it “Difficult” or “Very Difficult” to lodge a complaint if they felt their rights had been infringed, 10.7% found it “Easy” or “Very Easy” and 31.8% made not attempt.

THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE

We found large reservations among Lebanese over the role of religion in public life. Of interviewees, 76.2% opposed the idea that men of religion should have an impact on their vote. Regarding the role of men of religion in public life and their influence on government decisions, the survey found that 35.9% disagreed that they have an impact, and 45.3% strongly disagreed that they have an impact in this area. From the opposite angle, 14.3% agreed that men of religion have an impact in public life and government decisions and 3.1% strongly agreed. Additionally, 86% opposed that public religious positions be given in the state and 12.2% agreed.

In response to questions on the links between Islam and democracy, 56.5% of Lebanese disagreed or strongly disagreed that the democratic system is incompatible with the teachings of Islam. Furthermore, 82.4% disagreed with the idea that the political rights of non-Muslims must be less than the rights of Muslims in a Muslim country and 11.8% agreed. Meanwhile, 50.7% of Lebanese considered banks that charge interest to be against the teachings of Islam. They survey also found that the majority of Lebanese have no problem with coeducation in universities. In response to a question on whether women should wear modest clothing with the veil, 79% agreed and 17.8% disagreed.

Focusing on religious activities, 81.7% of Lebanese expressed a preference that there be a separation between religious activities and economic and social life, with 16.7% opposing this. In terms of politics, 72% agreed with the statement “The government and the parliament should make laws according to the wishes of the people.”

The poll results show that the Lebanese clearly prefer that there be a separation between religion and economic, political, and social life in Lebanon. The preference is also revealed in the treatment of religion in terms of marriage issues. Of interviewees, 47.7% said that non-prayer is not an obstacle in agreeing to the marriage of a son, daughter, sister or brother and 17.7% said that this was a large obstacle. Responses regarding fasting were similar. We found that 33.2% of interviewees did not consider poverty to be an obstacle in agreeing to marriage and 21.8% considered this to be a large obstacle. The most important factor affecting agreement to a marriage was employment, with 88% considering unemployment a large obstacle to agreeing to a marriage.

The poll results also showed that Lebanese society has a very positive perspective on women in positions of power. Indeed, 79.4% of Lebanese agreed that a woman should be able to hold the position of prime minister or president, while 17.6% disagreed. Despite this, however, we found that 52% of Lebanese supported the position that men give better political leadership than women. There was little opposition to married women working outside the house, with 88.2% agreeing and 11.4% disagreeing with this position. Likewise, the majority of Lebanese believe women must have the right to obtain equal work to men and 88.6% supporting the idea that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work. Regarding women traveling alone outside of Lebanon, 69.1% supported this idea and 29.9% opposed it.

PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The survey results show differing levels of confidence in important national institutions. The following results are arranged according to the percent of people expressing a “High Degree” of confidence in the specified institutions. Public security comes in at the top with 16.3%, followed by the Prime Minister with 12.4 percent. These institutions are followed by the judiciary at 9.9% and political parties with 5.8 percent. In general, levels of confidence are visibly weak among the majority of Lebanese. It is striking that the institutions linked to political representation, like political parties, have the lowest amount of public confidence, with 59.7% of Lebanese placing no trust in political parties at all.

Many Lebanese, indeed 81.2% opposed the statement that “The Government works to create good conditions for citizens and improve their lives through service”, only 16.5% agreed. Similarly, 80.1% believe that the government does not take the views of citizens seriously, with 16.2% believing the opposite. Despite this, 43.3% believe that government officials are fully aware of the needs of citizens and 51.7% opposed this. As for the statement “Political leaders are interested in the needs of citizens”, 79.7% of Lebanese opposed this and 17.6% were in support.

ARAB WORLD ISSUES AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

There are a number of issues, which are important to both Lebanon and the Arab World, and all of these issues deal with this region in the world. These include the reasons for the slow development of the Arab world, the effectiveness of the Arab League, Western and American culture, and terrorism. The results

The results show that 43.8% believe that the Arab World is less developed than other parts of the world, with two important causes for this being internal and external factors together. At the time of the survey, 28.8% pointed to solely internal factors and 23.4% attributed this to external factors and 3.5% said they did not know. It is notable that more people attribute the slow development of the Arab World to internal rather than external factors.

The Lebanese have a very negative outlook in regards to the efficacy of the Arab League in fostering and strengthening joint Arab initiatives, with 1.7% believing the organization

has been successful to a large degree and 62.8% believing the organization has not been successful at all.

In regards to the issue of terrorism, the majority of Lebanese (94.5%) believe that the 2006 attacks on hotels in Amman was a terrorist act and 94.1% believe that the attack on tourist hotels in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt was also a terrorist act. Only 1.8% of interviewees did not believe that these were terrorist acts. There was no difference in regards to the 2005 London Bombings, with 93.8% describing the act as terrorist and 1.5% considering the act not terrorist. Likewise in the case of the Madrid Bombings, 93% considered the act terrorism and 1.7% believed the attacks were not terrorism. Furthermore, 89% consider the attacks in Morocco to be terrorism with 1.3% believing that they were not terrorism.

The majority of Lebanese did not think that armed attacks against the United States were justified because the country's negative presence in the region, with 60.2% disagreeing that attacks were justified and 35.4% believing that attacks are justified.

SUPPLEMENT: The Results of the Arab Barometer Survey – Lebanon

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	31.8%
Freedom to criticize those in positions of power	14.8%
Reducing the gap between rich and poor	19.8%
Providing basic needs, such as food, housing, and clothing to all individuals	27.7%

b. What is the second most important?

The ability to change governments through elections	15.6%
Freedom to criticize those in positions of power	20.7%
Reducing the gap between rich and poor	22.9%
Providing basic needs, such as food, housing, and clothing to all individuals	34.9%

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	46.9%
Agree	42.1%
Disagree	6.8%
Disagree Strongly	1.1%

Other	3.2%
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234) To which degree do you believe it is justified to disrespect human rights in Lebanon for security?

To a large degree	4.1%
To a moderate degree	10.4%
To a small degree	9.5%
Not justified	72.2%
Other	3.9%

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

Very appropriate	36.5%
Appropriate	30.8%
Appropriate to a certain extent	11.6%
Not appropriate at all	17.9%
Other	3.2%

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	64.3%
Important	27.2%
Not important	5.5%
Not important at all	2.3%

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	77.0%
Important	20.3%
Not important	1.3%
Not important at all	0.5%
Don't know	0.6%

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	82.2%
Important	14.3%
Not important	1.3%

Not important at all	0.7%
Don't know	0.7%

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	75.0%
Important	18.8%
Not important	3.8%
Not important at all	1.1%
Don't know	0.8%

FOCUS of CITIZENSHIP

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

Yes	61.9%
No	35.3%
Other	2.8%

215) In general, what is your interest in politics

Very interested	25.9%
Interested	32.8%
Interested a little	21.9%
Not interested	19.1%

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

One time	12.7%
More than once	18.7%
I did not participate at all	67.4%
Other	1.2%

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

Strongly Agree	5.3%
Agree	12.3%
Disagree	35.6%

Strongly Disagree	44.1%
Don't know	1.5%

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	52.0%
Agree	28.9%
Disagree	9.5%
Strongly disagree	6.4%
Don't know	2.4%

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	19.8%
Easy	40.6%
Difficult	20.3%
Very difficult	10.4%
I haven't tried	8.7%
I don't know	0.1%

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	1.9%
Easy	8.8%
Difficult	18.8%
Very difficult	36.6%
I haven't tried	31.8%
I don't know	1.6%

The place and role of religion in public and private life

302) What is your primary social or geographic group

Family/Clan/Tribe	44.8%
City/Village/Camp in which you live	1.8%
Governorate in which you now live	1.2%
Lebanon generally	47.2%
Other	5.0%

401.3) To what extent do you think the following statements are appropriate:
Religious leaders have an impact on political decisions

Agree strongly	3.0%
Agree	14.3%
Disagree	35.9%
Disagree strongly	45.3%
I don't know	1.2%

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	53.6%
Agree	28.1%
Disagree	11.8%
Disagree strongly	4.9%
I don't know	1.1%

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	17.7%
A moderate impediment	15.3%
A small impediment	19.2%
Not an impediment at all	47.7%

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

A large impediment	88.0%
A moderate impediment	5.3%
A small impediment	1.3%
Not an impediment at all	5.0%

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	11.3%
Agree	14.2%
Disagree	32.9%
Disagree strongly	23.6%
Don't know	16.7%

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	4.1%
Agree	7.7%
Disagree	39.3%
Disagree strongly	43.1%
Don't know	5.3%

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	38.2%
Agree	40.8%
Disagree	11.0%
Disagree strongly	6.8%
Other	3.3%

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

Agree strongly	44.1%
Agree	35.3%
Disagree	11.8%
Disagree strongly	5.8%

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

Agree strongly	48.3%
Agree	33.8%
Disagree	15.2%
Disagree strongly	2.3%

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	14.9%
A moderate level of confidence	16.2%

A small level of confidence	10.8%
Not confident at all	55.8%
Don't know	1.4%

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	12.4%
A moderate level of confidence	26.8%
A small level of confidence	16.6%
Not confident at all	41.6%
Don't know	1.7%

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	5.8%
A moderate level of confidence	15.4%
A small level of confidence	15.4%
Not confident at all	59.7%
Don't know	--

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

Absolute freedom and integrity	28.3%
Free and fair with some problems and interference (secondary)	27.5%
Free and faith with some problems and interference (core)	10.8%
Not free or fair	18.4%
Don't know	12.6%

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

A very positive impact	3.5%
A positive impact	8.5%
An impact that is not positive or negative	19.3%
A negative impact	41.3%
A very negative impact	24.3%
Other	2.1%

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	5.5%
Agree	11.0%
Disagree	36.6%
Disagree strongly	44.6%
Don't know	1.4%

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	28.8%
External factors	23.4%
They are both of the same importance	43.8%
Don't know	3.5%

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

To a large degree	1.7%
To a moderate degree	11.2%
To a small degree	16.2%
Not effective at all	62.8%
Don't know	7.5%

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

Agree	80.1%
Disagree	13.0%
Don't know	6.1%

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

Terrorism	94.5%
Not terrorism	1.6%
Other	3.9%

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

Terrorism	93.0%
Not terrorism	1.7%
Other	5.3%

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

Agree Strongly	13.1%
Agree	22.3%
Disagree	32.1%
Disagree Strongly	28.1%
Don't know	3.8%

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	2.6%
Agree	6.8%
Disagree	35.2%
Disagree strongly	54.0%
Don't know	1.3%