



Arab Barometer II

Lebanon Country Report

September 2012

Sami Atallah

Executive Director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies

Arab Barometer County Report: Lebanon

Sami Atallah, LCPS

September 5, 2012

As part of the Arab Barometer survey, this report examines the opinions and attitudes of Lebanese over political, economic, and social issues. The survey which was conducted by Statistics Lebanon interviewed 1,388 citizens between November 24th and December 6th, 2010 and then in April 2011. The survey tackled the following seven major issues: The overall condition in the country, views on democracy, citizenships and rights, religious values, role of women in society, public institutions and their efficiency, and Arab and international affairs.

The profile of the respondents is as follows. The national survey covered all six Muhafazats distributed in the following way: 16% in Beirut, 40% in Mount Lebanon, 16% in North Lebanon, 12% in the Bekaa, 6% in Nabatiyeh, and 10% in the South Lebanon. As for religious distribution, 59% of the respondents were Muslims and 41% were Christians. Moreover, 48.1% of the respondents were male and 51.9% were female. The average age group was 40 years old with 18 years being the lowest age and 89 the highest. For the analysis of the survey, this paper groups the respondents into four categories: 29.6% of the respondents were less than 30 years old, 34% were between the age of 30 and 45 years old, 25% between 46 and 63 years old, and 11.4% were above the age of 63 years old.

Table 1: Profile of respondents by age, education, and income

Age		Education		Income	
< 30	29.6%	Basic	46.2%	Low	28.8%
30 - 45	34.0%	Intermediate	41.3%	Low middle	39.8%
46 - 63	25.0%	High	12.5%	High middle	27%
>63	11.4%			High	3.7%

As for the education skills, the questionnaire had seven options starting from illiterate to Masters degree holders. For the purpose of analysis, we have grouped them into three categories: 46.2% of the respondents have basic education which include the illiterate, elementary, and intermediate schooling, 41.3% have intermediate education which include those with secondary schooling and vocational training, and 12.5% hold advanced education degrees which include those with Baccalaureate and Masters degrees.

The report also examines respondents with different income levels. Although the questionnaire does not ask for actual income levels, it does ask the extent the income covers the expenditure needs of the household. Based on the available options, four categories were formulated in the following way: 3.7% of the respondents were able to comfortably cover their spending needs and were able to save and hence are classified as high income, 27% of the respondents were able to

cover their expenditure needs without facing any major difficulties and are classified as high middle income, 39.8% could not cover their expenditure needs and face some problem in covering their spending needs and are classified as low middle income, and 28.8% could not cover their expenditure needs and they face major problem in covering their expenditure needs and are classified as the low income group.

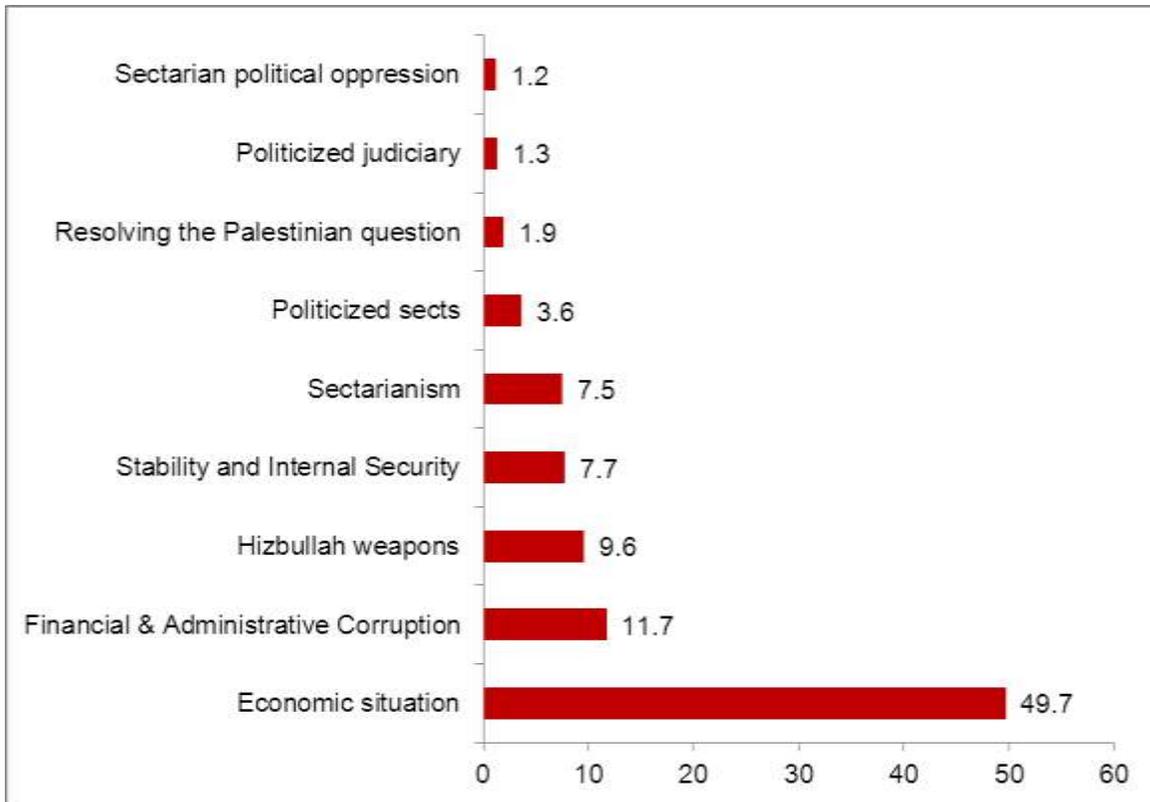
The report highlights the key issues in the survey. When the difference between groups is statistically significant (at the 95% level of confidence), the findings are reported. Also when available, the report compares the findings of 2010 to those with 2006.

Section 1: Overview

The first section of the report examines the major problems facing the country. In brief, the economy is the major challenge facing the country and many respondents do not think that the government is able to respond to this challenge. In addition to the economic problem, Lebanese do not trust each other and many of them do not feel secure. Across most of the questions, two additional findings emerge: the first is that there is no discrepancy by religious groups as both Muslims and Christians face the same concerns; the second is that the more salient differences is by socio-economic groups where most of the economic concerns fall disproportionately on the poor.

Out of 16 listed problems in the questionnaire, 49.7% of respondents considered the economic situation (poverty, unemployment, and price increases) to be the most important challenge facing the country followed by financial and administrative corruption (11.7%) and Hizbullah's weapons (9.6%).

Figure 1: The most important challenges facing Lebanon today (2010)

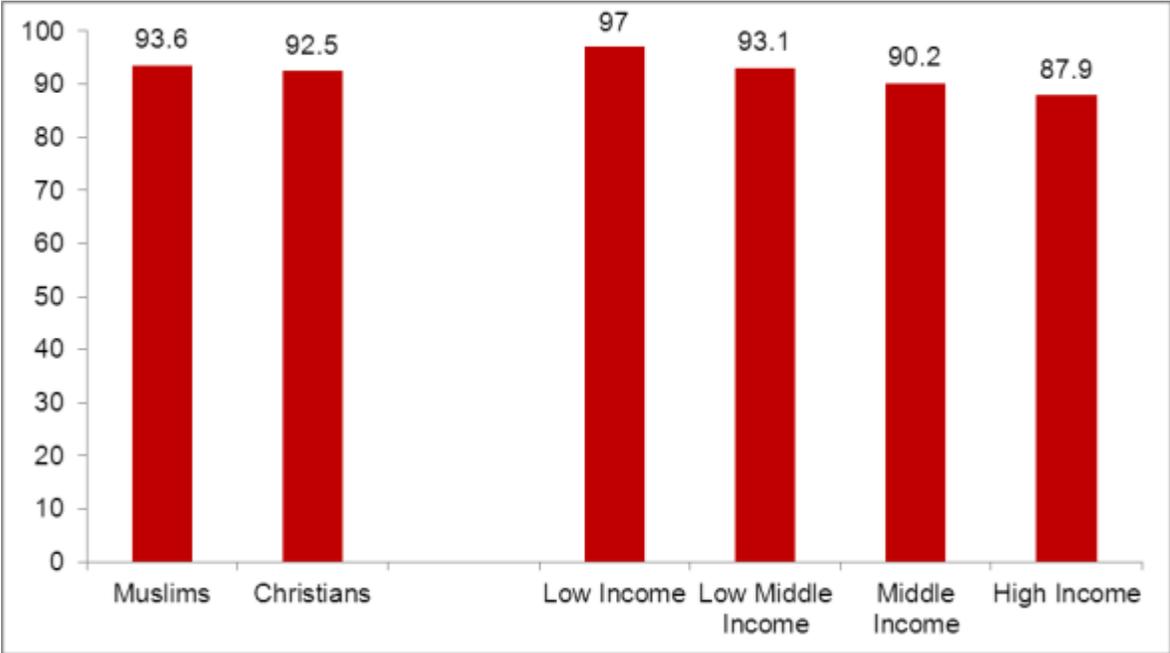


The economic challenge falls disproportionately on the elderly, those with basic education, and the poorer segments of society. More specifically, 62% of older people find the economic

situation to be the most important challenge compared to 45% of the youth. Furthermore, 56% of Lebanese with basic education also consider the economic situation to be their most pressing concern compared to only 37% of those with higher educational degrees. The difference is also striking by income class: whereas only 39% of high income respondents consider the economic situation to be the most pressing, 51% of the low-middle income and low income groups cite the economy to be the major problem. It is worthy to note that the economic challenge is perceived equally by both Muslims (50%) and Christians (48%).

When respondents were directly asked about the economy, 93% thought it was bad or very bad. Although this has dropped from the 96% in 2006, it remains awfully high. Although there is no difference across religious groups, poorer segments of society think that the economy is worse than richer ones: 87.9% of the high income group compared to 97% of low income group think that the economy is doing badly.

Figure 2: How would you evaluate the current economic situation in Lebanon?



Note: The answers combine those who said “bad” and “very bad”.

Not only the current assessment of the economy is bad, the future expectation looks dim. A total of 85% of respondents think that the economic situation during the next few years compared to the current situation will be worse (65%) or same as today (20%). Although respondents of both religious groups have the same expectations – 89% of Muslims and 84% of Christians, the expectation varies by income class. For instance, 74% of the high income group think that the situation will be the same or worse compared to 88% of low middle income and low income.

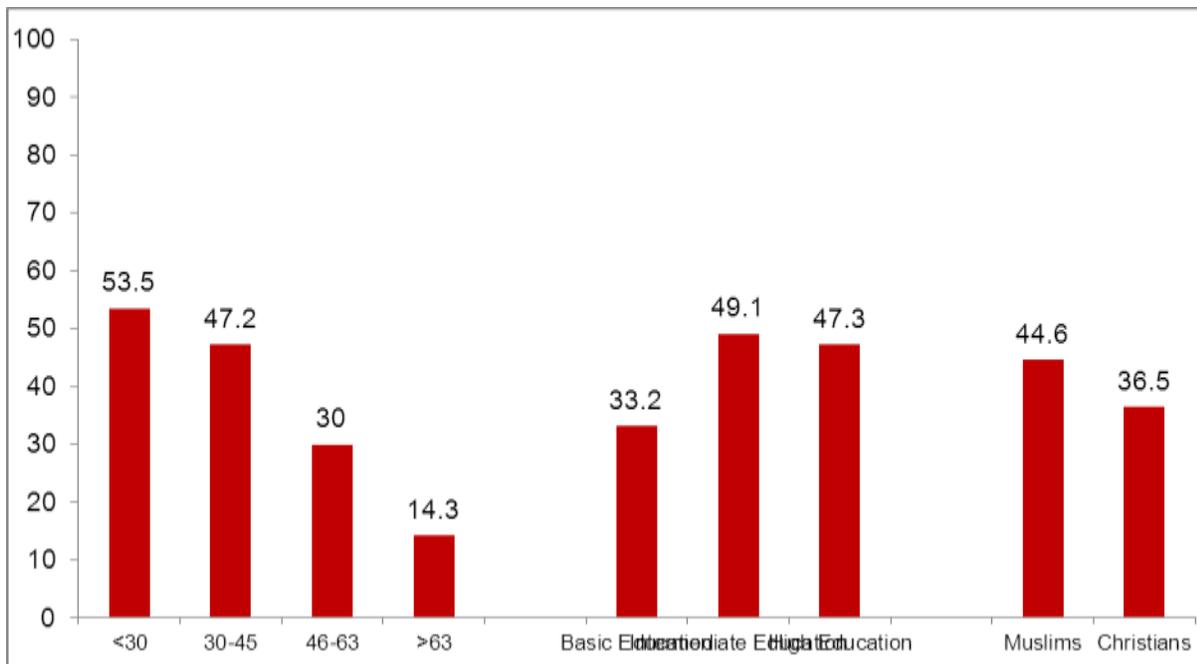
A major reason that contributed to this negative assessment is that 89% of Lebanese do not think that the government will be able to resolve the economic problem in the country within the next

five years. This pessimistic assessment is shared by religious groups, socio-economic status, gender, age, and educational levels.

In addition to the economic problems, the survey inquires about two other potential problems. The first is the level of trust among the Lebanese. According to the survey, 80% of the respondents do not think that people are trustworthy, a level equivalent to the 2006 level. The second problem facing the country is the feeling of insecurity. More specifically, 68% of Lebanese do not feel that their own personal as well as their family's safety and security are ensured.

A measure to assess whether the Lebanese plan to act on their frustration with their feet, the survey asks if respondents consider emigrating from Lebanon. Although 51% thought about emigrating in 2006, only 40% felt the same way in 2010. The drop may reflect the decrease in political polarization that the country witnessed between 2005 and 2008. The two groups who think most about emigration are the youths (53.5%), those with higher educational degrees (49.1% of those with intermediate degree and 47.3% of those with higher degrees compared to only 33.2% of those with basic education), and surprisingly Muslims (44.6% compared to 36.5% of Christians).

Figure 3: Do you think about emigrating from Lebanon?



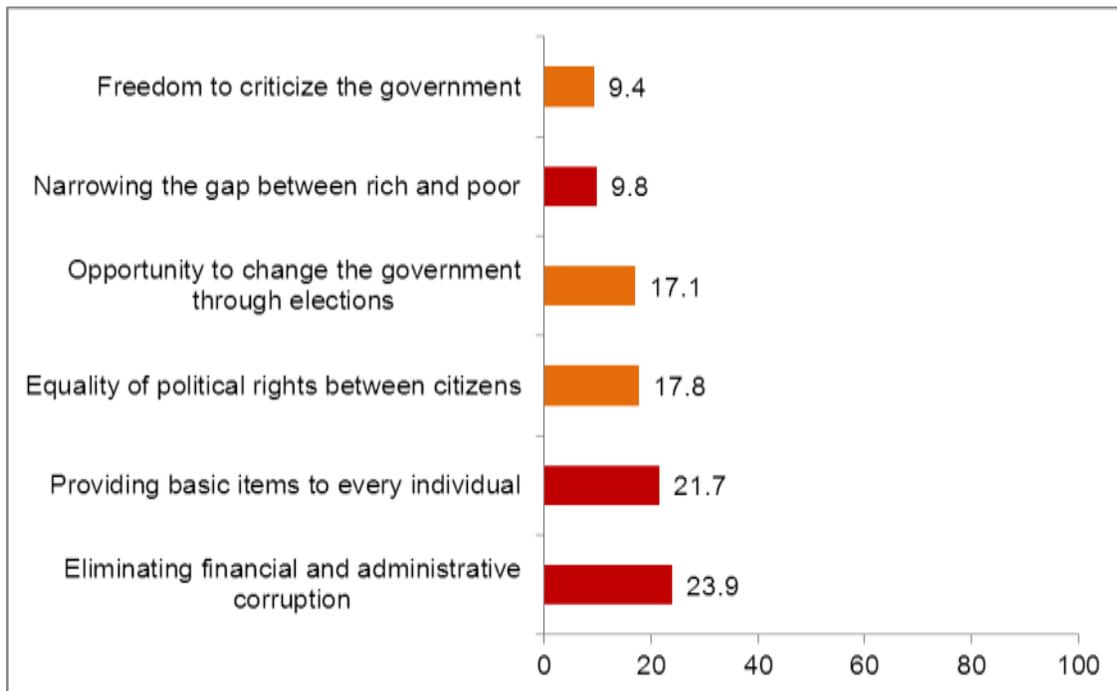
Note: The answers reflect those who said “Yes” either for economic reasons, political reasons, for economic and political reasons, and for lack of respect for citizens.

Section 2: Views on democracy

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how Lebanese view and understand democracy, its systems, features, and types. Overall, more Lebanese highlight the economic features of democracy over its political ones. There is a very strong support for democracy and most refuse to trade respect for human rights for security. Most Lebanese have high opinion of political systems that ensure public freedom, equality, and transparency. Lebanese believe that a parliamentary system in which all religious and secular parties compete in elections to be appropriate for the country. Socio-economic groups, not religious groups, seem to account for most of the variations in the answers.

When asked about the features of democracy, 55.4% of respondents have opted for its economic features compared to 44.6% for its political ones. More precisely, the total sum of 55.4% is broken into the following three categories: 23.9% thought that democracy is about eliminating financial and administrative corruption, 21.7% thought that democracy is about providing basic items to every individual, and 9.8% about narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. As for those who chose its political dimensions, their answers were divided in the following way: 17.8% thought it is about equality of political rights between citizens, 17.1% thought that democracy is about the opportunity to change the government through elections, and 9.4% about freedom to criticize the government.

Figure 4: Features of democracy

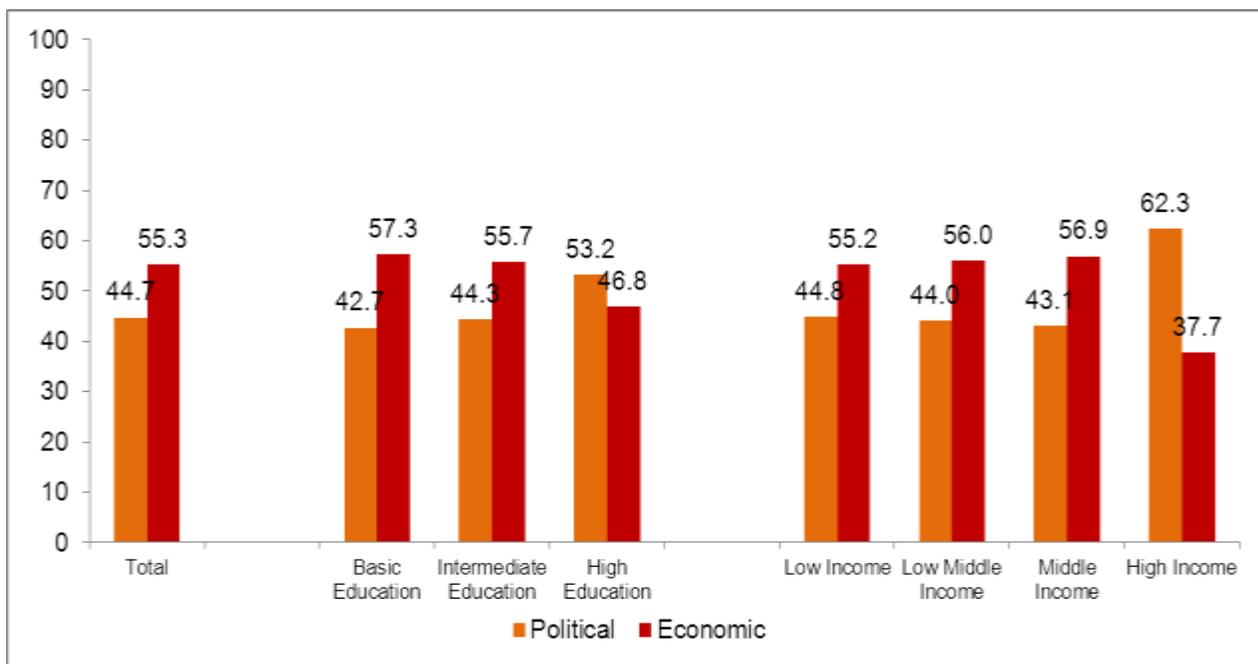


However, different groups perceive democracy in different ways. For instance, a majority of those with basic and intermediate education opted for the economic rather than its political features of democracy than those with high education levels. More precisely, 57.3% of those with basic education have selected the economic features of democracy compared to only 42.7% who opted for its political dimensions. The opposite holds true for those with high education

degrees: 53.2% prefer the political features of democracy compared to 46.8% who opted for its economic feature. In sum, as the education level increases, the economic dimension of democracy is overtaken by its political one.

A similar relationship is found with income: The poorer segments of society which include low income, lower middle income, and middle income have highlighted the economic features of democracy over its political one. More specifically, 55.2% of the low income group chose the economic dimensions of democracy versus 44.8% opted for its political ones. For those with high income, the relationship is reversed: 62.3% opted for its political features compared to only 37.7% for its economic features. As income increases, the economic feature of democracy is overtaken by its political features.

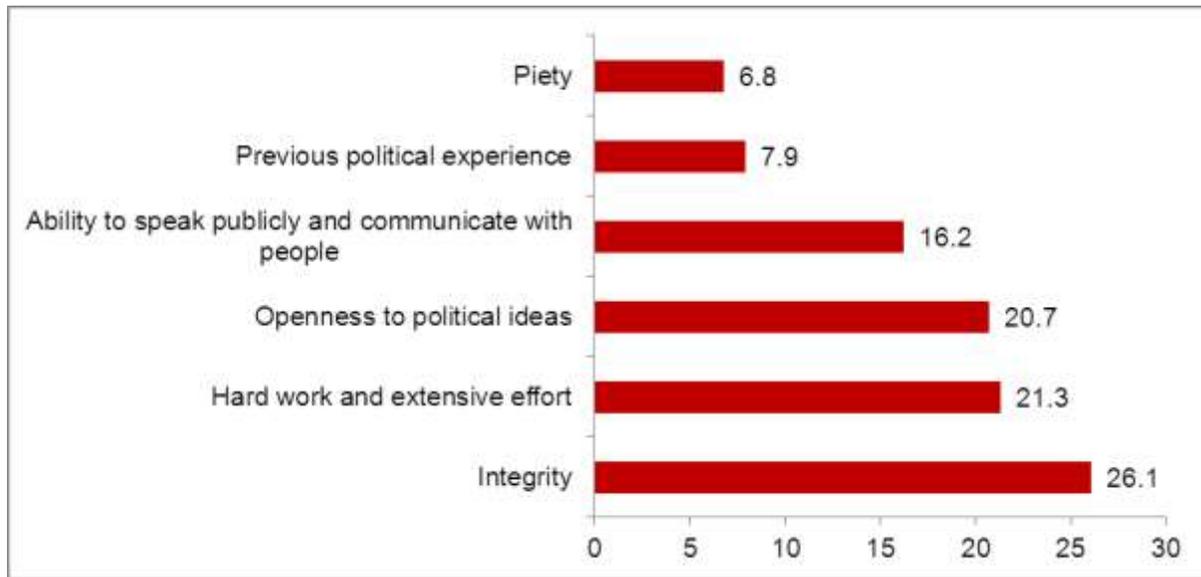
Figure 5: Features of democracy by education levels and socio-economic groups



Despite the political and economic features of democracy, 81% of the respondents agree that the “democratic system may have problems, yet it is better than other systems”. Only 32% agree that democratic systems “are not effective at maintaining order and stability”. It is interesting to note that more of the high income group (45%) agrees with the above statement compared to only 35% of the low income groups. Most Lebanese are not willing to trade human rights for security. In fact, 85% of the respondents do not think it is justified at all to sacrifice human rights for security. There is a strong consensus across all groups except for the high income group where the support for human rights drops to 80% compared to 92% of the low income groups.

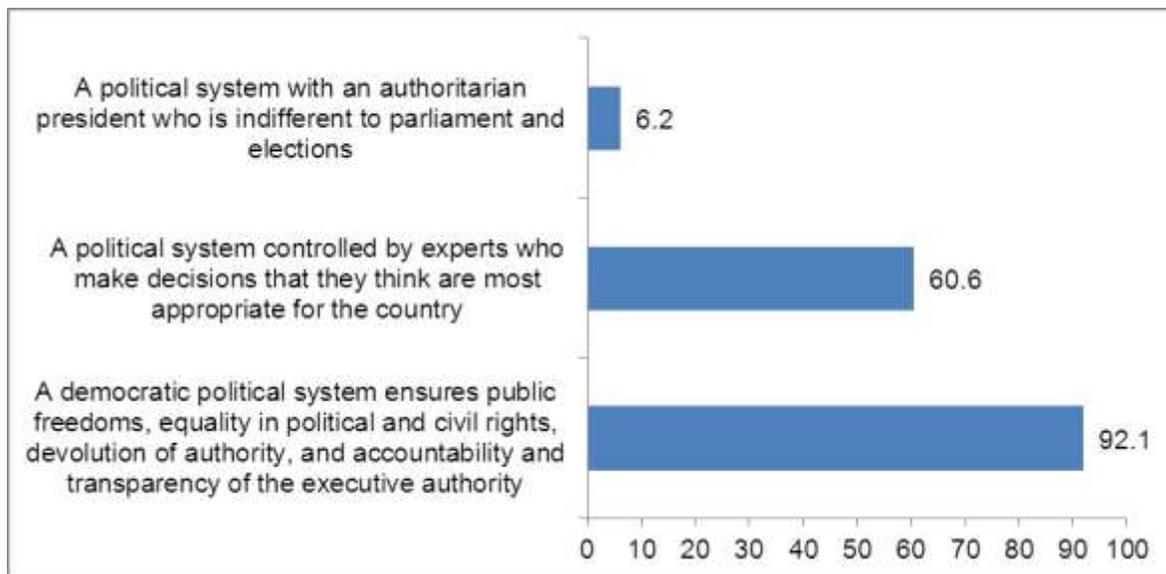
On the prerequisites for political leadership, 26.1% of the respondents consider integrity to be the most important characteristic followed by hard work and extensive effort, and openness to political ideas.

Figure 6: Characteristics for a person to be qualified for political leadership in the country



As for the different political systems, 92.1% think that a “democratic political system that ensures public freedoms, equality in political and civil rights, devolution of authority, and accountability and transparency of the executive authority” is good or very good. Moreover, 60.6% of the Lebanese think that a system “controlled by experts who make decisions that they think are most appropriate for the country” is good or very good. Only 6.2% think that a “political system with an authoritarian president who is indifferent to parliament and elections” is good or very good.

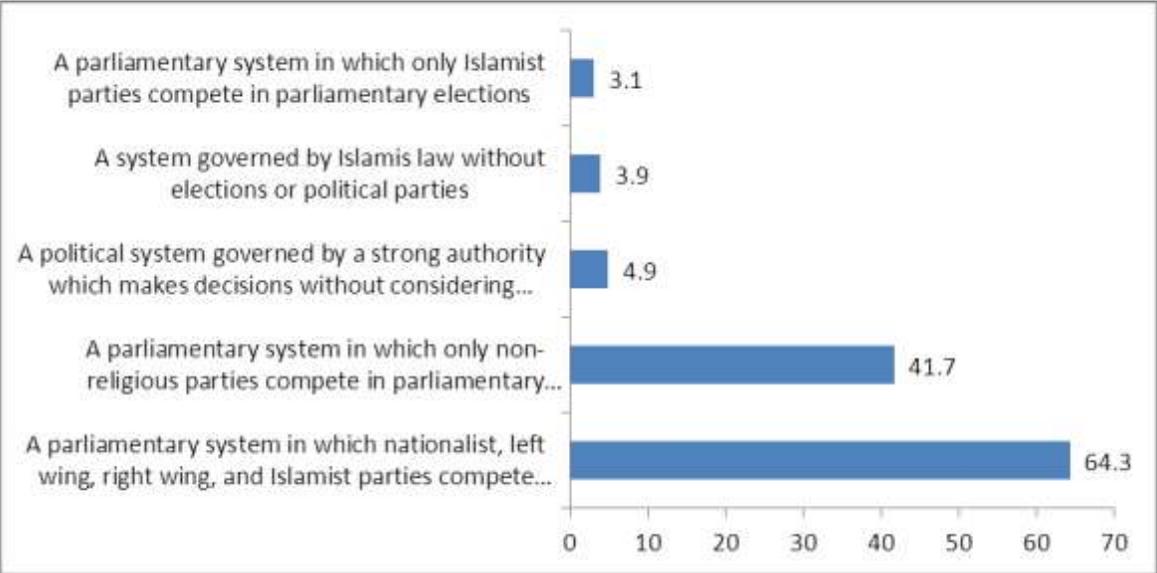
Figure 7: Opinions on the different political systems



Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “very good” and “good”.

When asked about the appropriateness of different political systems to Lebanon, 64.3% think that a “parliamentary system in which nationalist, left wing, right wing, and Islamist parties compete in parliamentary elections” is appropriate. In fact, 41.7% find a “parliamentary system in which only non-religious parties compete in parliamentary elections”. The remaining three political systems – where strong authority makes decision without taking into account electoral results, where only Islamist parties compete, and the system is governed by Islamic law - are supported by 12% of the respondents.

Figure 8: Appropriateness of the different political systems to Lebanon



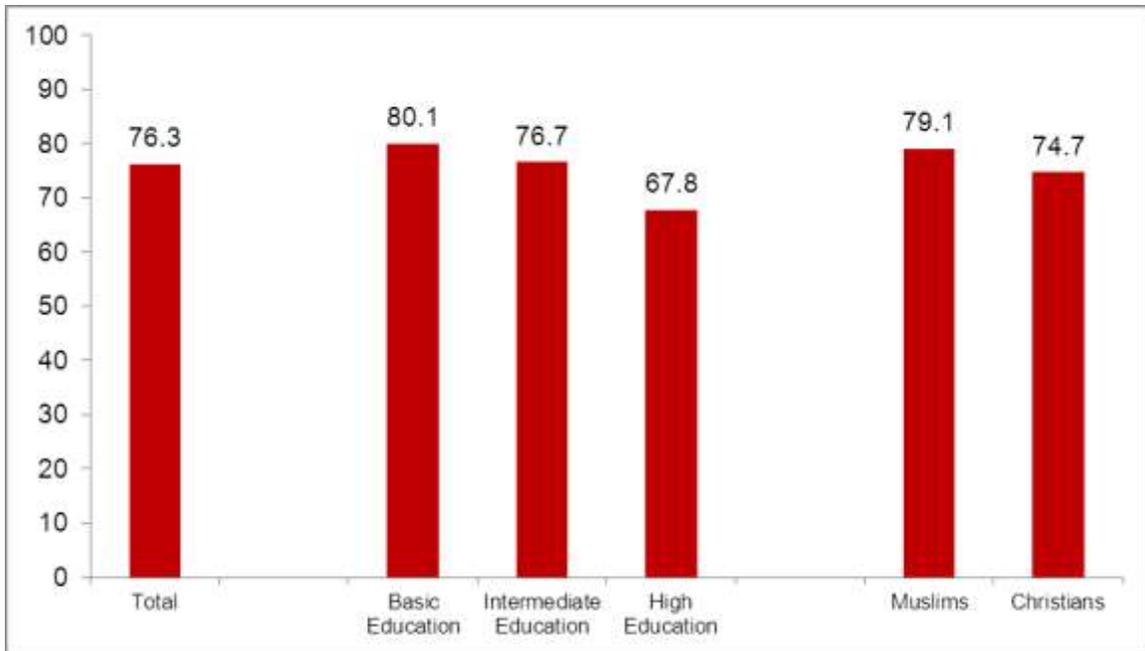
Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “very appropriate” and “appropriate”.

Section 3: Citizenship and rights

This section assesses the perception of citizenship and rights among Lebanese. In sum, most Lebanese do not feel that they are treated equally and most face difficulties in accessing services. Despite the fact that Lebanese participate in elections, less than half are interested in politics, only a fraction are members of political parties, and most do not engage in politics on regular basis. Television is the main source of political information and internet is rarely resorted to for political news. The findings differ mostly by age groups, religious groups, and education levels.

A key basis of citizenship is the feeling that citizens are equal. The survey results show that 76.3% of Lebanese do not think they are being treated equally. There is a variation by level of education and religion. For instance, 67.8% of those with higher education level feel that they are not treated equally compared to 76.7% of those with intermediate education and 80.1% of those with basic education. Also, there is a difference between religious groups: 79.1% of Muslims feel that they are not being treated equally compared to 74.7% of Christians.

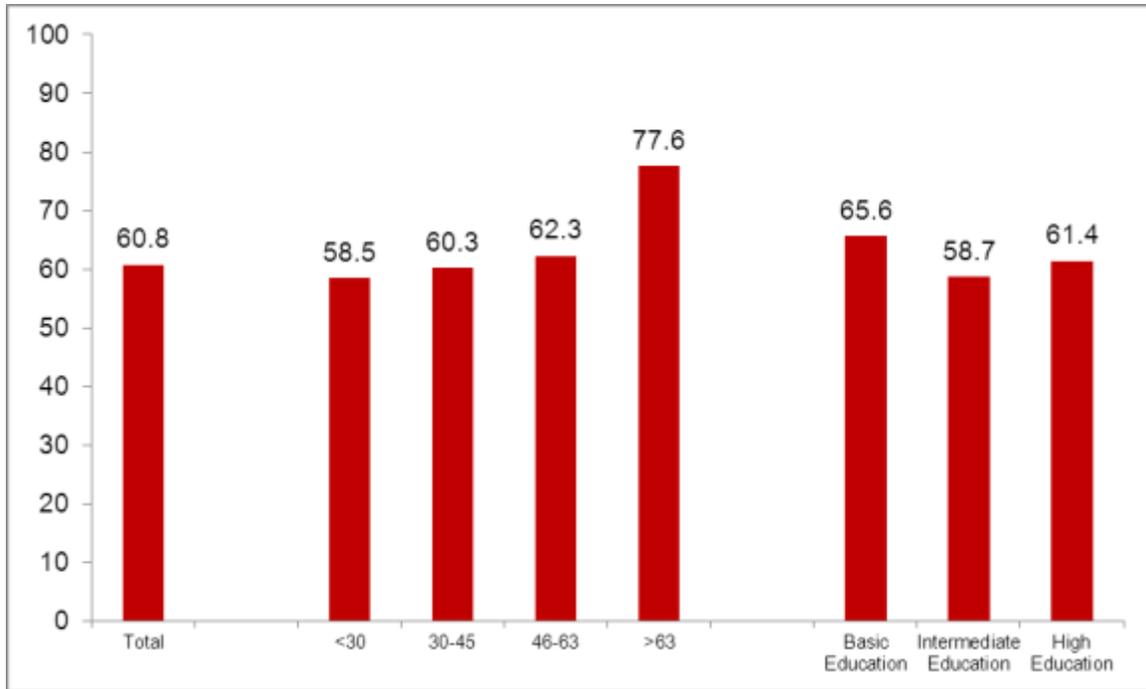
Figure 9: Extent that citizens feel that they are being treated equally to other citizens



Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “to a limited extent” and “Not at all”.

When asked about their ability to obtain certain services, 60.8% said that it is very difficult to “access to the concerned official to file a complaint when you feel that your rights have been violated”. The lack of accessibility fall disproportionately on the elderly where 77.6% find this difficulty compared to other age groups. Those with lower education seem to have more difficulty than those with higher degrees.

Figure 10: Access to the concerned official to file a complaint when you feel that your rights have been violated



Note: The answers above are those who responded “very difficult”.

Based on the survey, Lebanese have become less interested in politics over the years. Only 39% expressed interest in politics in 2010 compared to 59% in 2006. The two groups who have expressed most interest in politics are those between the age of 46 and 63 (48%) and Christians (42% compared to 36% of Muslims). As for their understanding of politics, 73% think that “politics is complicated that I cannot understand what is happening”.

The most common venue through which Lebanese follow political news is television. In fact, 61% follow the news on daily basis. What is surprising is that 55% of respondents do not follow political news through the daily press and 68% do not do so through the internet.

Participation in politics

Beside their interest in politics, the survey assesses Lebanese participation in political life. For one, 68% of the respondents voted in the last parliamentary elections that were held on June 9, 2009 compared to 62% in the 2006 elections. Those with high education degree have the same participation rate of 70% compared to 71% of those with basic education and both are higher than the 63% of those with intermediate education. Also, more men (70%) tend to vote than women (63%). The difference by income group is worthy to highlight as only 58% of the high income group voted compared to 71% of the low income group.

Despite the high participation rate in elections, Lebanese do not seem engaged in political life on a continuous basis. In fact, 83% never participated or attended a meeting to discuss subject or sign a petition compared to 67% in 2006. Moreover, most Lebanese are not active in any form of political or social clubs: 88% of the Lebanese are not members of political parties; 94% are not members of charitable associations, 95% are not members of professional associations/trade union, 94% are not members of youth/cultural/sports organizations, 95% are not members of family/tribal associations and 96% are not members of local development associations.

Most of the respondents have cynical views of political leaders as 91% disagree with the statement that “they are concerned with the needs of ordinary citizens” compared to 80% in 2006. As for reform, 83% think that “political reform must be implemented in stages (gradually) rather than immediately”.

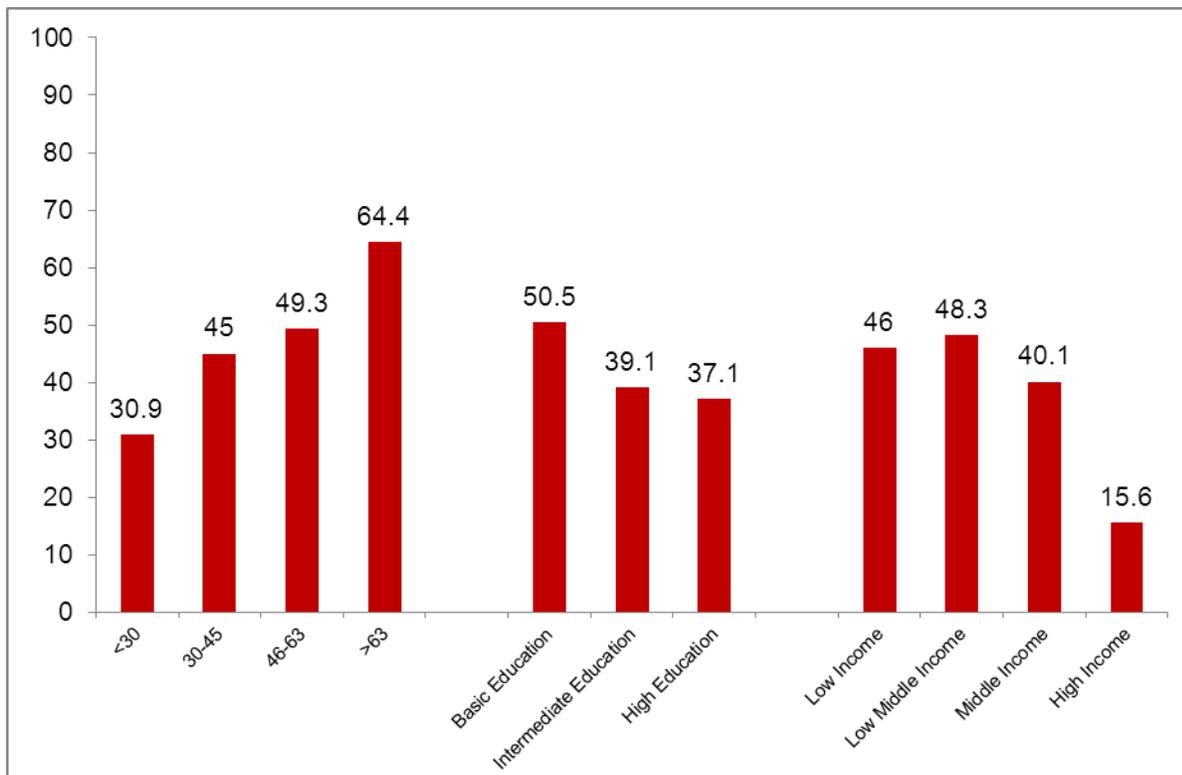
As for the use of internet as a source of information or participation, 66% of the respondents do not use internet. Of those who do (31% use it on daily, weekly, and monthly basis), only 50% of users resort to the internet to “find out about political activities taking place”, 28% of users use it to “express opinion about political issues”, and 35% to “find out about opposing political opinions”.

Section 4: Religious values

This section examines the role of religion, religious values in society, its effects on daily life, and its relationship with politics and democracy. In sum, most Lebanese consider themselves religious but their religious practices should be separated from the social and political life. On the impact of religion on economic and social issues, most Lebanese would buy lottery and believe that banks should charge interest rates. Women should dress modest clothes. Religious leaders should not influence government's decision or affect voters' decisions. The government and parliament should enact peoples' wishes and not Islamic law. There is a strong variation by age, religious groups, socio-economic status, and education levels.

Overall, 44% of Lebanese consider themselves religious, 44% somewhat religious, and 13% not religious. There is a strong relationship between those who consider themselves religious and age: the older you are the more likely you are religious. More precisely, 30.9% of the youth consider themselves religious compared to 64.4% of the elderly. There is a negative relationship between being religious and education: 50.5% of those with basic education claim to be religious versus 37.1% of those with high education degrees. The degree of religiosity differs by income: only 15.6% of high income group are religious compared to more than 40.1% for the other groups.

Figure 11: Generally speaking, would you describe yourself as religious?



Note: The answers above are those who responded “Yes”.

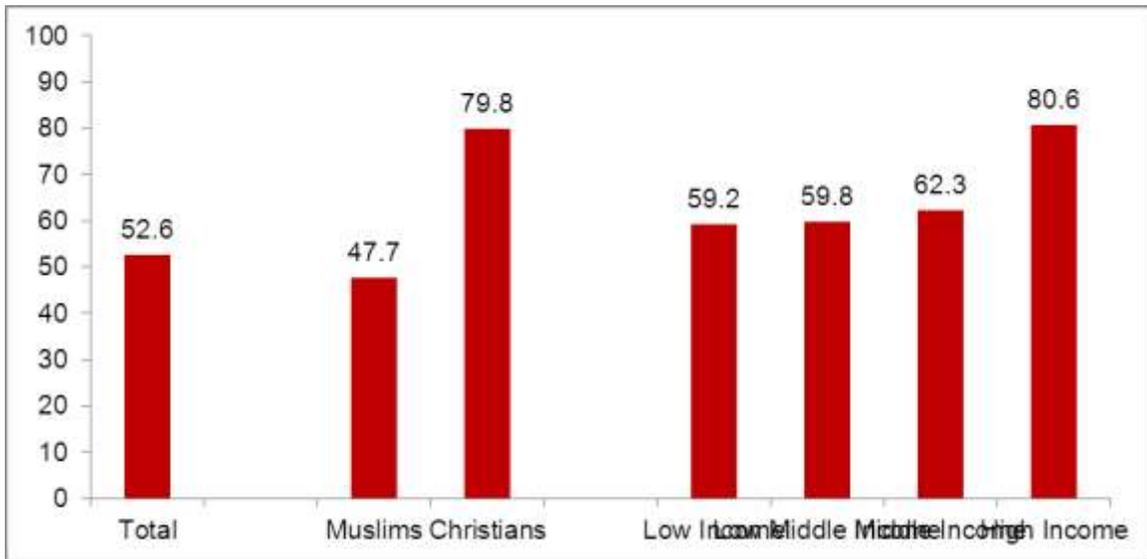
Despite the level of religiosity, 88% of the respondents agree that “religious practices are private and should be separated from social and political life. This support is higher than in 2006 where 82% believed in the separation. The variation is significant once we condition on the religion you believe in. In other words, 93% of Christians think that religious practices should be separated compared to 88% of Muslims.

Furthermore, 59% of the Lebanese disagree with the statement that democracy contradicts the teaching of Islam. Although both religious groups disagree, only 54% of Christians do not agree with this statement compared to 79% of Muslims. Most of them (88%) disagree that non-Muslims should enjoy less political rights than Muslims.

An alternative measure to assess people’s level of religiosity is through the attitudes towards economic and social issues. Buying lottery is one such issue. In fact, 67% would buy a lottery ticket. Although there is a difference by religious groups – 55% of Muslims would buy a lottery compared to 86% of Christians, the majority in both groups are willing to engage in such a transaction. Also there is a variation by age where 66% of the youth expressed willingness to buy lottery ticket compared to 78% of the elderly. Surprisingly, those with higher education tend to buy more lottery than others. For instance, 66% of those with basic education do so versus 70% of those with high education.

As for Lebanese attitudes towards interest rate, 52.6% think that banks should be allowed to charge interest rate”. The discrepancy in the responses is across religious, political, and socio-economy. For instance, 79.8% of Christians think that banks should be allowed to charge interest rate compared to 47.7% of Muslims. But the difference is not solely across religious groups but also by socio-economic status. In fact, 80.6% of high income groups agree to the statement compared to 59.2% of low income groups.

Figure 12: Banks should be allowed to charge interest rates



Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “strongly agree” and “agree”.

As for social issues, 72% of the respondents agree that “women should wear modest clothes without needing to wear hijab”. The variation is across religion: 71% of Muslims compared to 85% of Christians agree to this. However, there is also variation by income: 94% of the high income group agrees to this compared to 76% of the low income group with the middle class falling in between (78%).

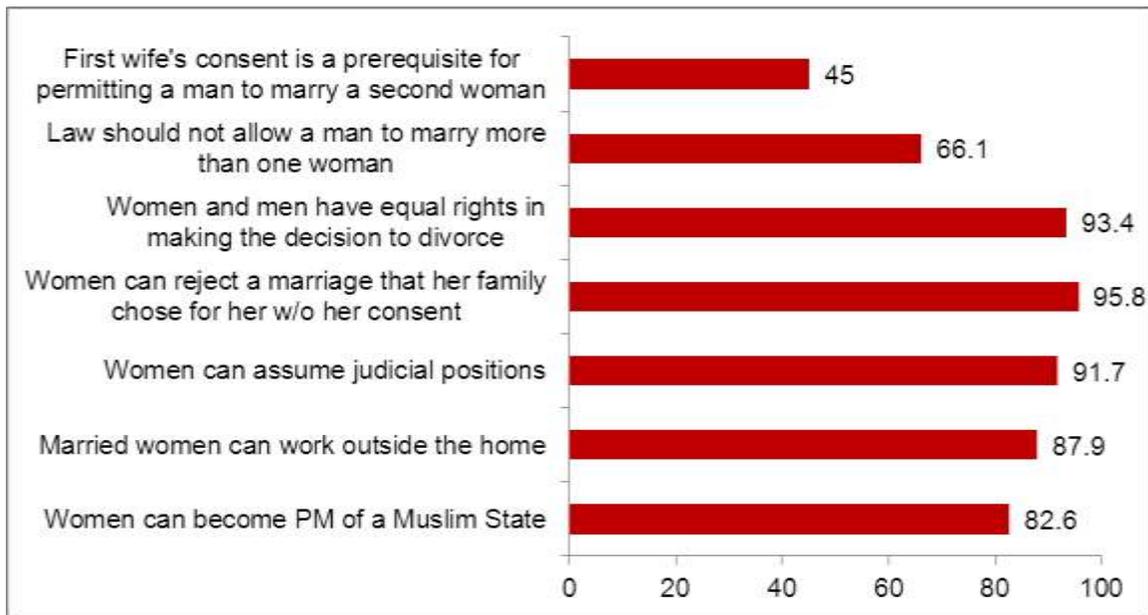
As for the role of religious leaders in politics, Lebanese seem adamant that they should not play a role. In fact, 85% do not think that “religious leaders (imams, preacher, priests) should have influence over government’s decisions. Furthermore, 92% think that “religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should not interfere in voters’ decisions in elections”.

As for the executive and legislative branches of the government, 76% think that “the government and the parliament should enact laws in accordance with the people’s wishes”. Only 24% think that the government and the parliament should enact laws in accordance with Islamic law”. Another 22% think that the government and parliament should enact laws with citizens’ wishes with regard to certain subjects and in accordance with Islamic law with regard to other subjects.

Section 5: Role of women in society

To assess the role of women in Lebanese society, the survey asked respondents a series of questions about the role and rights of women. There is a very strong support (above 80%) for women to play a political or judicial role, work outside home, and reject the partner she did not choose and to have equal rights as men to divorce. However, the agreement drops significantly (below 70%) on issues related to a law that prevents man to marry more than one woman and the need for the wife's consent as a prerequisite to marry another woman. Furthermore, there is a strong variation by gender and religions groups and to lesser extent by educational degree and age.

Figure 13: Status of women in society



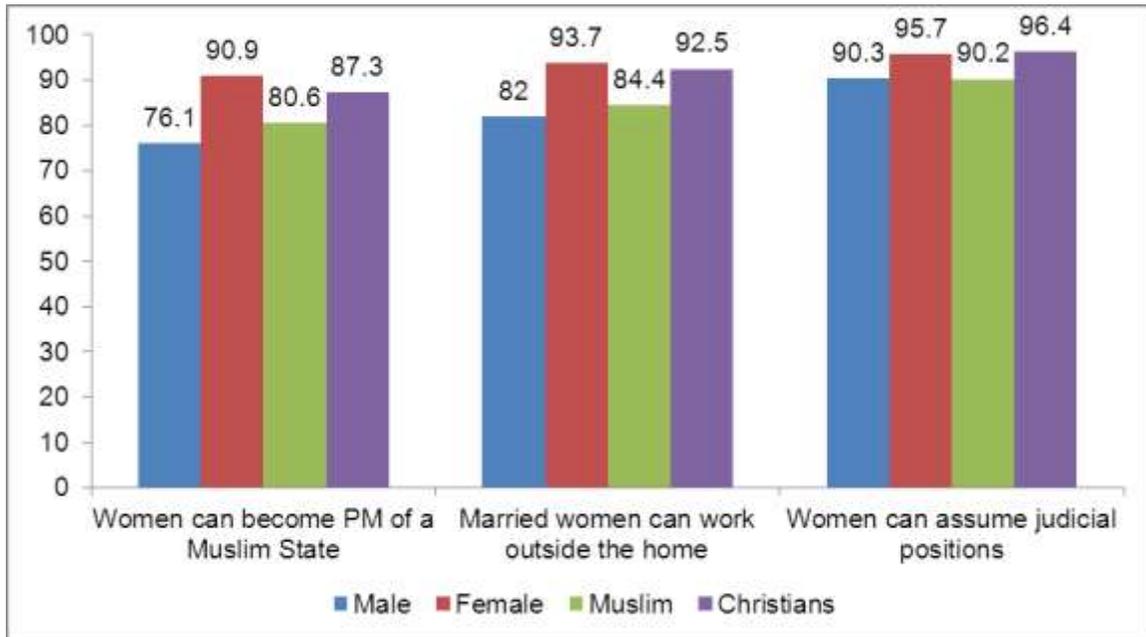
Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “strongly agree” and “agree”.

As for the role of women in society, the survey asks several questions. When asked if “a woman can become the prime minister or president of a Muslim state” 82.6% of the respondents agreed to that statement. Although the same percentage of respondents agreed to this statement in 2006, there is a significant variation by gender as only 76.1% of males agreed to this compared to 90.9% of females. It is worthy to note that the difference by religious group is insignificant.

Furthermore, 87.9% agree to the statement that “married woman can work outside the home”. There is a strong variation by education level, gender, and religious groups. More precisely, 93% of those with high education agree to this compared to 85% by those with basic education. Furthermore, 93.7% think that married woman can work outside the home compared to 82% of men. Also, 92.5% of Christians agree to this compared to 84.4% of Muslims.

Also, 91.7% of respondents think that “women can hold judicial position”. There is significant difference by age and gender. In fact, 97% of the elderly think that women can hold judicial position compared to 90% of the youth. Also, 95.7% of women compared to 90.3% of men agree to this. Furthermore, 96.4% of Christians compared to 90.2% of Muslims believe so.

Figure 13: Status of women in society by gender and religion



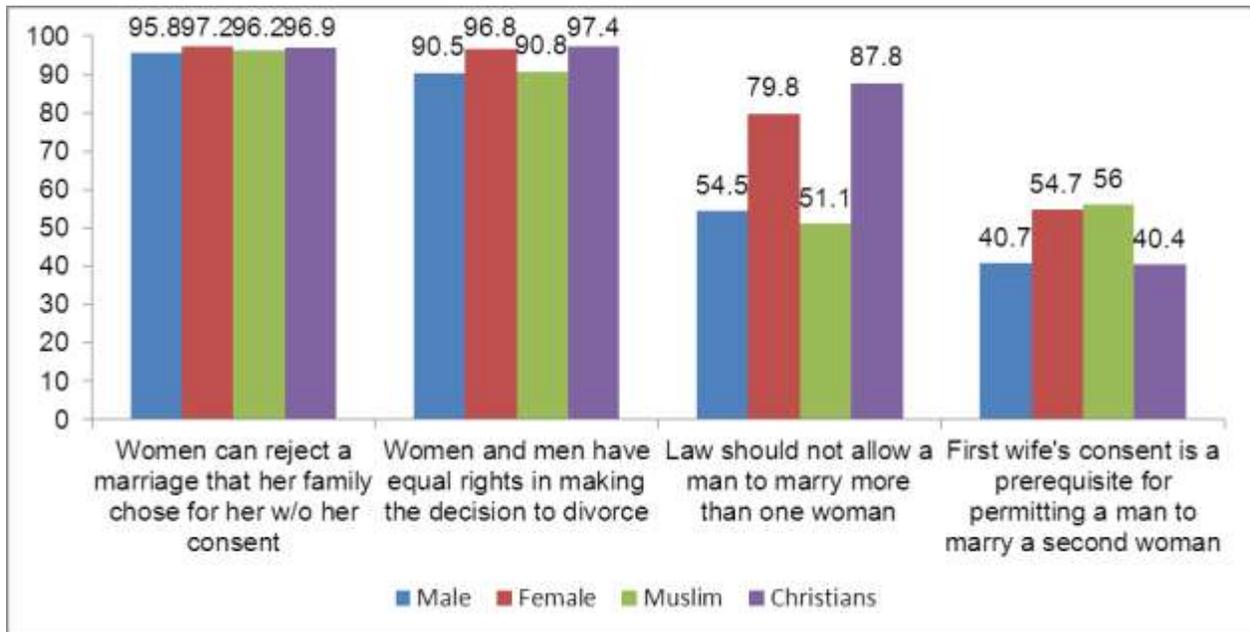
Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “strongly agree” and “agree”.

On a social level, women’s rights are also supported as 95.8% of respondents think that “women can reject a marriage that her family chose for her without her consent”. This is agreeable across gender and religious groups. On equality, 93.4% think that “women and men should have equal rights in making the decision to divorce”. More women are in favor than men as 96.8% of the former agree to the statement compared to 90.5% of men. There is also variation by religion where 97.4% of Christians agree to the statement compared to 90.8% of Muslims.

It is regarding the issues of marriage and divorce that there is a strong discrepancy and lack of consensus relative to the other issues discussed. For instance, 66.1% of the respondents think that the “law should not allow a man to marry more than one woman”. There is a strong difference by age, gender, and religious groups. For example, 61% of the youth agree compared to 73% of the elderly. Also more women (79.8%) agree with the statement compared to men (54.5%). In addition, 87.8% of Christians think that the law should not allow a man to marry more than one woman compared to 51.1% of Muslims.

As for the obtaining the approval of the first wife to marry a second woman, only 45% of the respondents agree to the fact that “the first wife’s consent is a prerequisite for permitting a man to marry a second woman”. The variation is by education degree, gender, and religion. For instance, only 45% of those with basic education agree to the statement compared to 56% of those with higher degrees. Also, more women (54.7%) agree to the statement compared to men (40.7%). Surprisingly, more Muslims (56%) than Christians (40.4%) support the statement.

Figure 14: Status of women in society by gender and religion



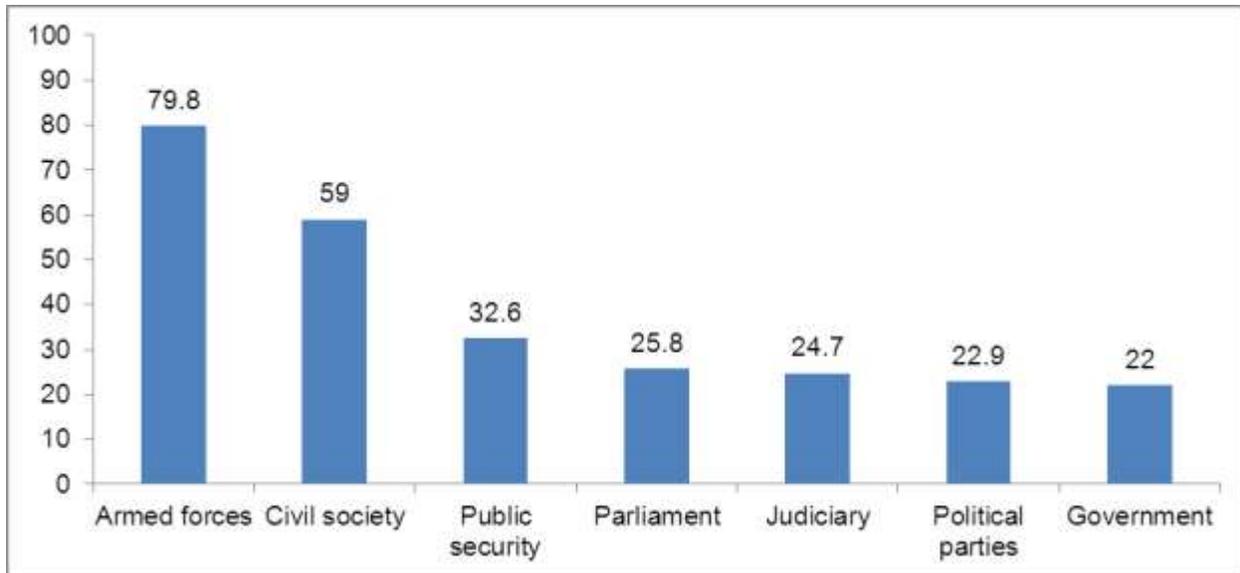
Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “strongly agree” and “agree”.

Section 6: Public institutions and confidence in its efficiency

This section assesses the perception of Lebanese of public institutions and their efficiencies. For one, the army is the most trusted institutions. Many Lebanese think that the government is doing a bad job in carrying its tasks or duties and most of them are unsatisfied with its performance. Furthermore, corruption seems to be rampant and employment through connections is extremely widespread.

Out of seven institutions, the army earns the highest level of trust among the Lebanese. More precisely, 79.8% of the Lebanese trust the army to a great or medium extent. This is followed by civil society with 59% and public security with 32.6%. However, it is striking that the judiciary, parliament, government, and political parties get no more than 26%.

Figure 15: Extent you trust public institutions



Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “trust to a great extent” and “trust it to a medium extent”.

The trust for the army differs by religion. Although both Christians and Muslims trust it, 84% of Christians compared to 91% of Muslims Trust the army institutions.

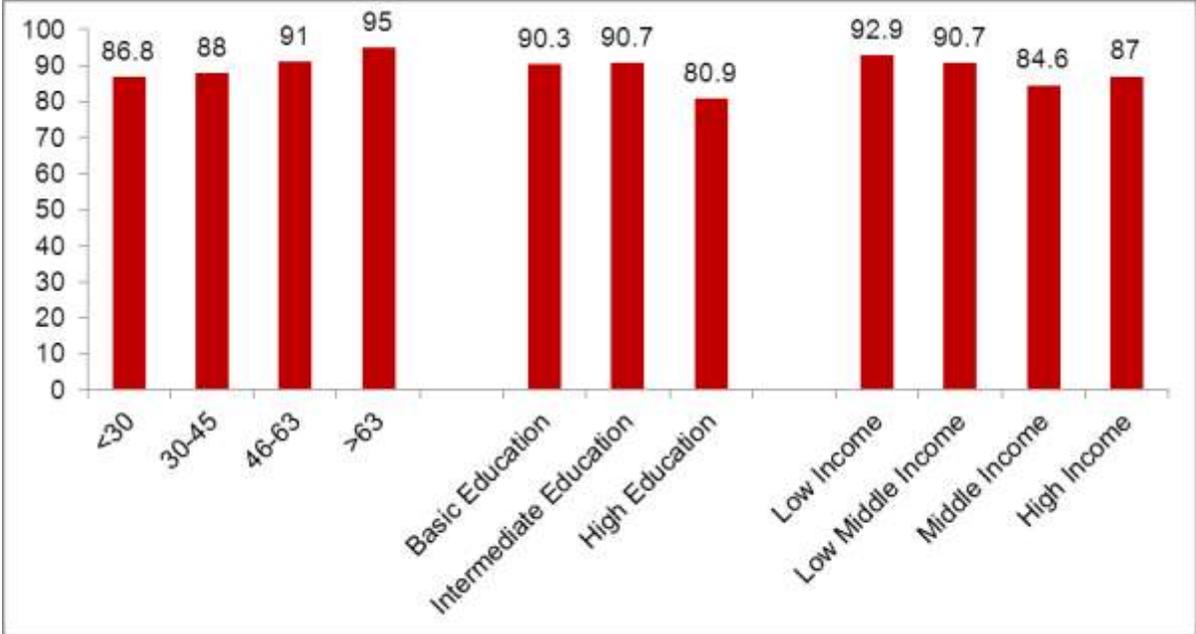
As for the performance of the government, 54% think that it is badly carrying out its tasks and duties and another 31% think it is neither good nor bad. This seems to hold well across religion, age, education level, gender, and income. Not only the government is performing badly, only 17% think that “the government does all it can to provide its citizens with all services”.

Furthermore, 91% of Lebanese are not satisfied with the government’s performance. In addition, 96% think that there is corruption within the state’s institutions and agencies. This seems to be consistent across age, gender, income level, education level, and religious groups.

Furthermore, 88% of Lebanese think that obtaining employment through connections is widespread. There is a significant variation by age, education level, and income. With age, the

perception of employment through connections is higher as 86.8% of the youth think so compared to 95% of the elderly. Although 80.9% of respondents with high education think connection is needed for employment, 90.3% of those with basic education think the same way. Also more men (92%) than women (87%) think connection for job employment is extremely widespread. Moreover, 92% of Christians compared to 87% of Muslims think that connection is extremely widespread. Although 87% of the high income group thinks that employment through connections is extremely widespread, 92.9% of the low income group thinks so.

Figure 16: Obtaining jobs through connections



Note: The answers above are those who responded “obtaining an employment through connections is extremely widespread”.

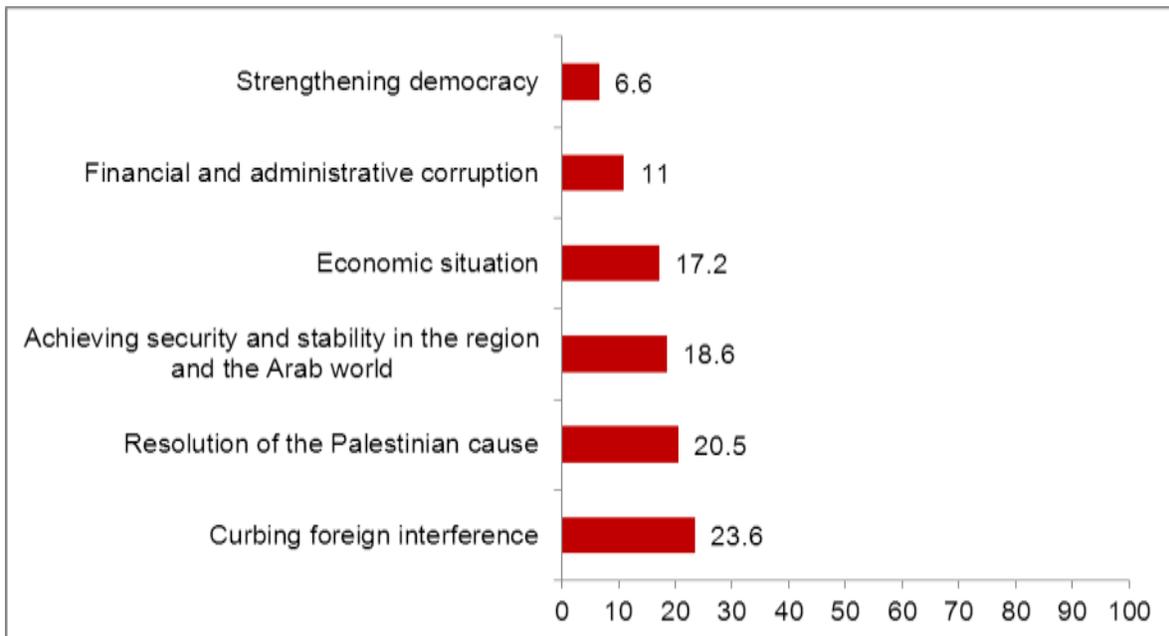
As for the municipal elections in 2009, 23% thought that the elections were completely free and fair while 71% did not.

Section 7: Arab and international affairs

This section focuses on how Lebanese view the Arab world, the US, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In sum, curbing foreign interference seems to be the most important challenge facing the Arab world. Half of the Lebanese do not think that armed operations against the US are justified. Most respondents think highly of the US people. Most Lebanese think that the Arab-Israeli conflict is an obstacle for reform. Less than half support the mutual recognition of Israel after the creation of a Palestinian state. More Lebanese think that the Arab world should not accept the existence of Israel as a Jewish state in the Arab world.

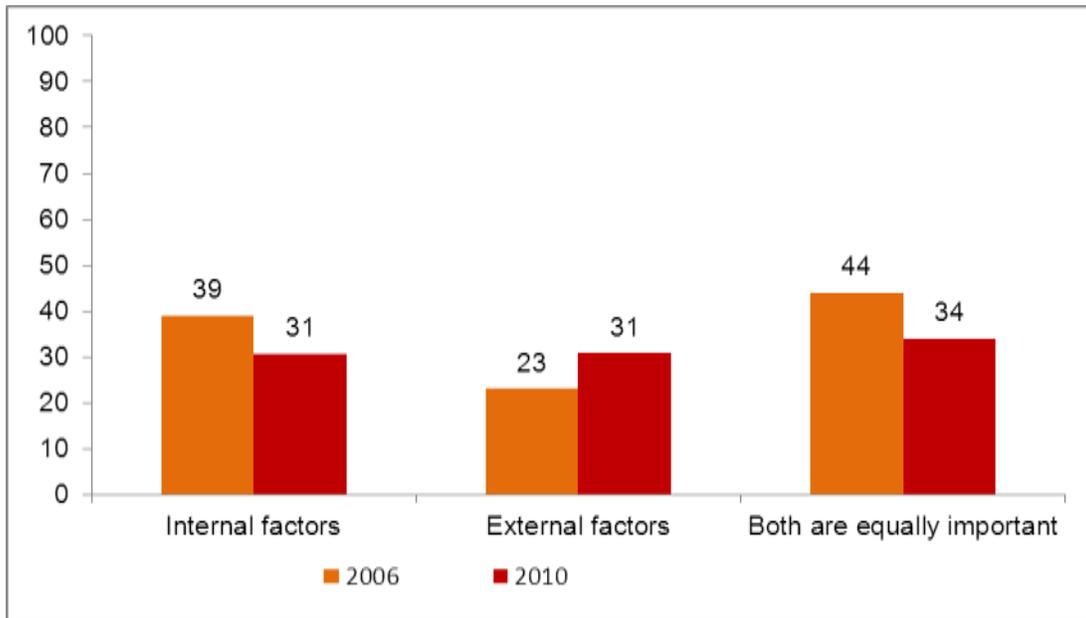
As for the most important challenge facing the Arab world, 23.6% of Lebanese rank curbing foreign interference to be the most important challenge followed by the resolution of the Palestinian cause (20.5%), achieving security and stability in the region (18.6%), and the economic situation (poverty, unemployment, and inflation 17.2%). It is noteworthy to mention that strengthening democracy was not ranked high despite its deficit in the Arab world.

Figure 17: Most important challenge facing the Arab world



As for the causes of the lack of development in the Arab world, 31% of Lebanese attribute it internal factors and 31% to external factors. Although both Muslims and Christians equally blame external factors, 39% of Christians attribute the problem to internal factors but only 26% of Muslims do the same. Although both rich and poor equally attribute the problems to internal factors, 36% of the poorest also blame external factors compared to 27% of the rich.

Figure 18: Causes of the lack of development in the Arab world

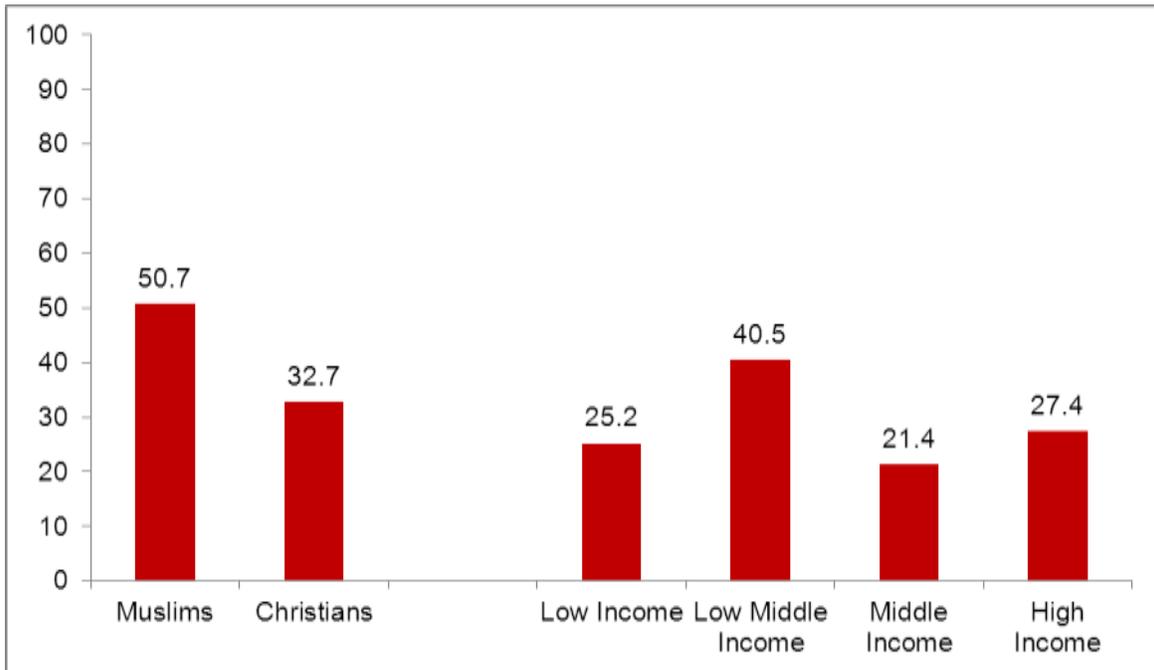


As for external demands for reform, 63% of Lebanese find them either acceptable or acceptable with conditions. However, there is significant variation depending on age and religion. For instance, 74% of the elderly find external demands acceptable, 68% of those with basic education agree to them, and 74% of Christians compared to 59% of Muslims find it acceptable. However, 93% of the respondents think agree to a great or to some extent that foreign interference is an obstacle to reform.

The relation with the US

With respect to the US interference in the region, 55% of respondents disagree with the statement that “that armed operations are justified against the US”. However, this has declined from 60% in 2006. There is a striking difference by religion and income. For instance, 32.7% of Christians agree with the statement compared to 50.7% of Muslims. Only 25.2% of low income group agrees with armed operations compared to 40.5% of those from low middle income group.

Figure 19: US interference in the region justified armed operations against the US everywhere



Note: The answers above are the sum of those who responded “strongly agree” and “agree”.

As for their perception of the American people, 73% of Lebanese think that Americans are good people. Furthermore, 92% of Christians think so compared to 76% of Muslims. However, there is a significant variation by income. Although 72% of high income earners think that Americans are good people, 83% of the lower middle income thinks so. Although 71% of Lebanese think that American and Western culture has positive aspects, this has declined from 80% in 2006.

Arab-Israeli conflict

The Arab-Israeli conflict has significant effects on Lebanon. For instance, 91% think that the conflict is an obstacle to political reform in Lebanon. Only 41% of Lebanese agree to have a mutual recognition of Israel as a state for the Jewish people and Palestine as a state for the Palestinian people after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and a permanent solution to all of the problems in the conflict with Israel including Jerusalem and the refugees. Also, there is a significant variation across age groups: The youth are least agreeable to the proposal (35%) whereas the elderly are the most agreeable (70%). The difference across religion is strong. Only 29% of Muslims are in favor of such a proposal compared to 71% of Christians.

In fact, 60% of the Lebanese believe that the Arab world should not accept the existence of Israel as a Jewish state in the Middle East. The discrepancy is significant across religion. For instance, 77% of Muslims compared to 48% of Christians think that the Arab world should not accept the existence of Israel. Furthermore, 77% of respondents think that in order to fight global terrorism, the Palestinian issue must be resolved.

Conclusion

In brief, the Arab barometer survey which was conducted before the Arab spring highlights key issues. For one, the economic situation remains to be the most important challenge facing the country. Two, Lebanese highly support democracy – albeit its economic feature over its political ones– and they value the freedom, transparency, and accountability associated with democracy. They strongly believe that the most appropriate democratic system in Lebanon is inclusive of all parties – religious and secular - that compete in elections.

Despite their strong belief in democracy and high participation rate in elections, Lebanese are not politically engaged. Most of them are not party members and have not participated in any major political meetings. Most of the Lebanese consider themselves religious but they strongly feel that the public and private practices of religion should be separated. They also believe that religious leaders must not play a role in politics, influence government decision or affect voting decisions. The government and parliament's laws and policies must be based on peoples' wishes rather than on Islamic law.

Furthermore, Lebanese strongly support women's rights in the political, judicial, and social rights. The support declines over issues regarding marriage and divorce. The army is the most trusted institution in the country. Furthermore, most do not think highly of the government's performance, think that corruption is rampant, and employment requires connections. On foreign influence, they feel that curbing foreign interference is the most important challenge. Most do not support the recognition of Israel.

Although religion in Lebanon is often considered to be most salient in explaining the divisions in the country, the survey shows that its importance is confined to women's role in society (which is also attributed to gender) and views on Arab and international affairs. In fact, the report highlights that many of discrepancies in attitudes and opinions are attributed to income groups, age, gender, and education. More precisely, low income groups are disproportionately affected by the economic situation. Their understanding of democracy is in line of its economic rather than political dimensions. They participate in elections more than their counterparts and are more keen on protecting human rights than their richer counterpart. Also, education levels seem to capture the difference in attitudes and behaviors. For instance, those with basic education are also affected disproportionately by the economic condition, are unequally treated, have less access to services, and connections are highly needed to get jobs.