



الباروميتر العربي  
ARAB BAROMETER

# Arab Barometer V

## Libya Country Report



2019

## Executive summary

Libya is a country divided by warring military forces. These divisions and ongoing civil conflict have led to many challenges that differ from a number of countries across MENA. Although Libyans say that economic conditions are dismal, unlike in most other countries, other concerns predominate. For example, two-thirds of Libyans are more concerned about aspects linked to the civil war such as internal stability, foreign interference, or other political issues.

Libyans have virtually no trust in political institutions in their country. Fewer than one-in-ten have confidence in the government, parliament, or political parties. Trust is higher in security forces, with a majority trusting the army and nearly half trusting the police. Nevertheless, these percentages are lower than in most countries in MENA. As a result, these findings suggest that rebuilding Libya will require major reforms to the political institutions in the country.

A key problem remains corruption. Amidst all the other challenges, there is a near universal belief that government institutions are corrupt while only a minority believe that the authorities are making meaningful attempts to address this problem. Notably, few Libyans report paying bribes for basic services and there is higher trust in local officials, suggesting that corruption at the national level is the primary concern of most Libyans.

Despite the problems that followed from the country's political transition, a clear majority of Libyans still say democracy is always preferable while a minority attribute the country's challenges to such a system. In part, this is due to the fact that few in Libya believe their country is democratic, meaning that few attribute their current predicament to this political system.

Few Libyans want a significant role for religious leaders in politics, but this does not mean citizens favor an entirely secular system. Although most want a balance between the will of the people and traditional Islamic law, a quarter say that the law should be based entirely on the sharia.

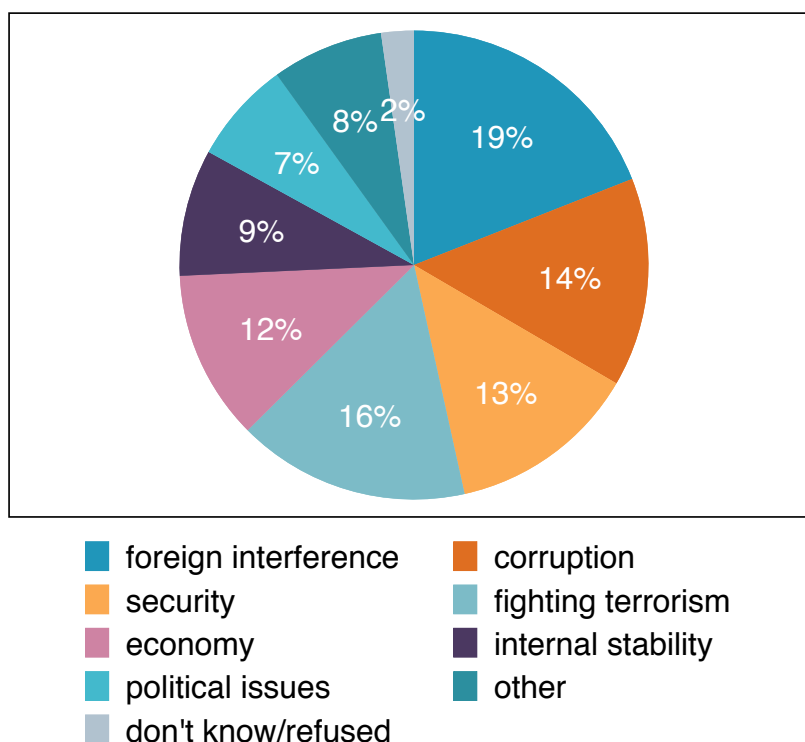
Libya is increasingly falling into the Saudi-led regional bloc, with Libyans being far more supportive of closer relations with Saudi Arabia than Qatar or Turkey. Additionally, citizens have turned away from Western countries like the U.S. instead looking for better relations with China or Russia among global powers.

These are among the key findings from a nationally representative public opinion survey conducted in Libya by the Arab Barometer from 19 January - 13 April 2019. The survey conducted 1,962 face-to-face interviews in the respondent's place of residence has a margin of error of  $\pm 3$  percent and had a cooperation rate of 76.2 percent.

## Economic Conditions

Amidst the challenges from the ongoing conflict, just two-in-ten Libyans (21%) say that economic conditions are good. This represents a sharp decline from 2014 (-19 points), when four-in-ten held this view. Despite this low rating, relatively few (12 percent) say that the economy is the country's greatest challenge. Instead, the greatest concerns for Libyans related directly to the ongoing conflict including foreign interference (19 percent) and combating terrorism (16 percent). Meanwhile, 14 percent list corruption, 13 percent the country's security, and 9 percent internal stability.

### What is the most important challenge facing your country today? *% saying this is the most important challenge.*



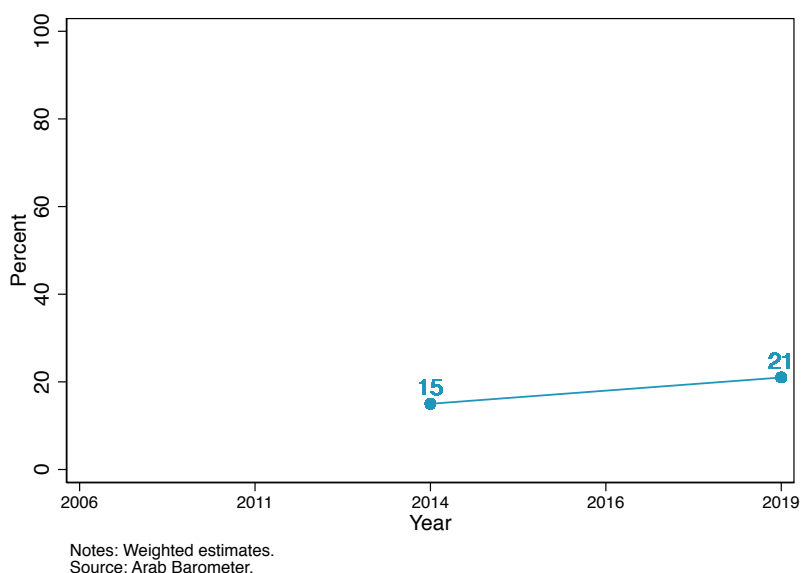
Note: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Despite the ongoing conflict, Libyans remain optimistic about the future. Six-in-ten say they expect the economy to improve in the coming years, which is only a slight (-6 point) decrease from 2014. In part, this optimism may reflect hopes that the civil conflict will end and stability will bring greater progress on solutions to the country's myriad challenges.

## Migration

Despite the ongoing conflict, only one-in-five (21 percent) of Libyans have considered migrating. However, this is a 40 percent increase from the level in 2014 (+6 points). As in other countries across MENA, those who are younger and better educated are significantly more likely to think about migrating, indicating Libya may be at risk for a brain drain. For example, roughly a third (31 percent) of those ages 18-29 want to migrate while 28 percent of those with a university education say the same.

### Have you ever thought about emigrating from your country? *% saying they thought about emigrating.*



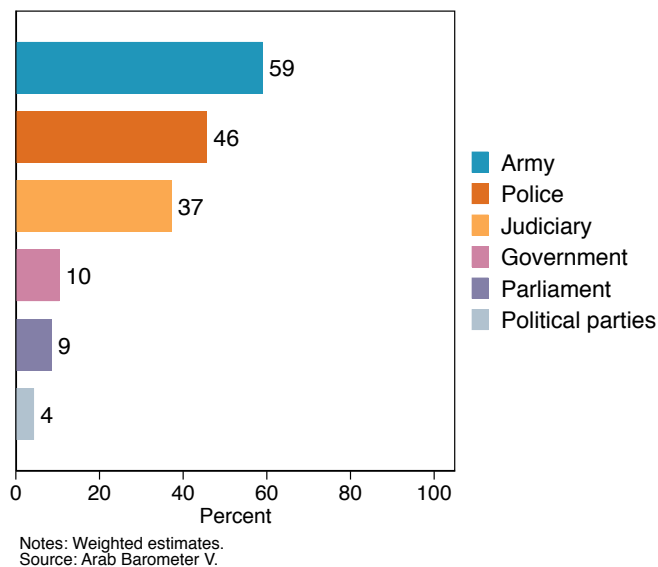
The primary reason Libyans consider emigrating is for economic reasons (35 percent), followed by security concerns (27 percent), educational opportunities (14 percent), political reasons (8 percent), and corruption (7 percent). Overall, Europe is the most widely preferred destination (38 percent), followed by a non-GCC country in the Middle East or Africa (24 percent), North America (18 percent) or a GCC country (10 percent). Among those who are considering emigrating, a third would do so even if they lacked the necessary papers.

## Government Trust & Performance

Trust in political institutions remains extremely low across Libya. Only one-in-ten trust the government, which is down from 17 percent in 2014. Similarly, only 9 percent say they trust parliament, which is similar to the percentage in 2014 (13 percent). Meanwhile, just 4 percent have confidence in political parties.

### Trust in Institutions

% saying they have some or great trust



Trust in institutions designed to ensure law and order are somewhat higher, as is common across MENA. Nearly four-in-ten (37 percent) have confidence in the judiciary, while 46 percent trust the police, and six-in-ten (59 percent) say the same about the army. Trust in the armed forces is highest in the country's east (79 percent), followed by the central (63 percent) and south (58 percent) regions. Half or fewer trust the armed forces in Tripoli or the country's western regions.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the ongoing conflict, ratings of government performance are also very low. Just one-in-ten (12 percent) rate the government as a 6 or above on a scale of 0 to 10, which is effectively unchanged since 2014. Notably, satisfaction is highest in the country's east (21 percent).

Although Libyans are not satisfied with the government's performance, one third (34 percent) do believe that the government is doing all it can to provide citizens with basic services under the conditions found in the country. However, just 18 percent think that political leaders care about their needs. By comparison, confidence in civil society organizations is much higher, with six-in-ten saying that CSOs do all they can to provide services to the country's citizens.

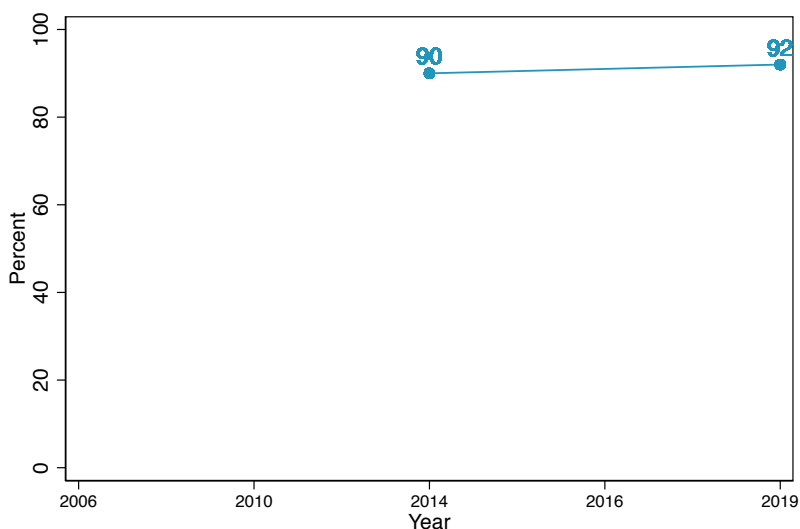
## Corruption

Libyans believe that corruption is pervasive, with 92 percent saying it is present in government agencies to a large or medium extent, which is unchanged from

2014. However, only three-in-ten (31 percent) say that the government is working to crack down on corruption, although this represents a 10-point increase from the level in 2014. Libyans living in the East (44 percent) and in Tripoli (36 percent) are most likely to say that the government is working to address this scourge.

### To what extent do you think that there is corruption within the national state agencies and institutions in your country?

*% saying to a large or medium extent*



Notes: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer.

Libyans also perceive corruption to be widespread at the local level, although not to the same extent as at the national level. Six-in-ten say that most or nearly all officials at the local level are corrupt. However, there is not a widespread perception that it is necessary to pay bribes (*rashwa*) to receive better educational (28 percent) or health services (29 percent). Instead, it appears that most Libyans believe corruption is taking place at higher levels of government.

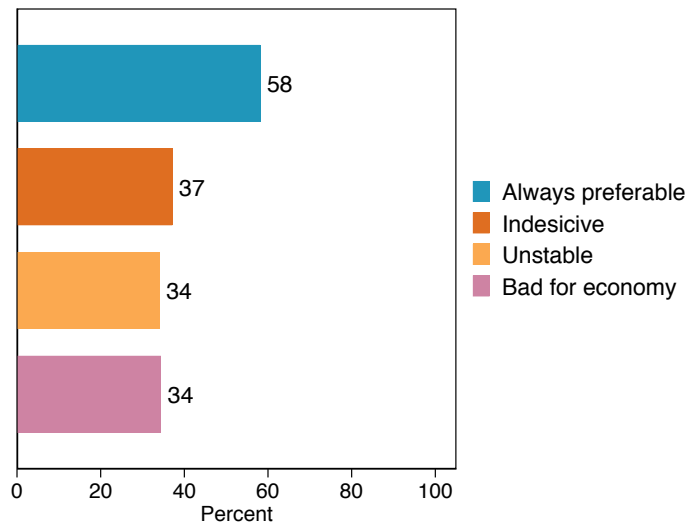
## Political Preferences

Despite the challenges the country has faced since the fall of Gaddafi, most Libyans remain committed to democracy. Overall, roughly six-in-ten (58 percent) say that democracy is always preferable over any other type of government, compared with 15 percent who say a non-democratic government may be preferable and 17 percent who say it doesn't matter what kind of government Libya has. Notably, Libyans 40 and older are somewhat more supportive of democracy than those who are younger (+7 points).

However, while supportive of democracy, few Libyans define this concept in terms of free and fair elections. Instead, 38 percent say democracy's most essential characteristic is that the government ensures job opportunities for all while 34 percent say it is when the government ensures law and order. By comparison, only 10 percent say it is either a system with free and fair multi-party elections or a media that is free to criticize the government.

When asked to rate the degree to which their country is democratic, only one-in-ten (11 percent) says it is closer to being a democracy than an authoritarian country. In fact, fully 42 percent say that their country is a complete dictatorship compared with 3 percent who say it is a complete democracy. Since 2014, the perception that Libya is closer to being a democracy has fallen by 9 points. Meanwhile, a minority (40 percent) of Libyans believe that democracy is suitable for their country, although this level is unchanged since 2014. Notably, those who are ages 50 and older are most likely to say that democracy is suitable, perhaps reflecting their long experience of life under the Gaddafi regime.

### Views of Democracy *% saying democracy is...*



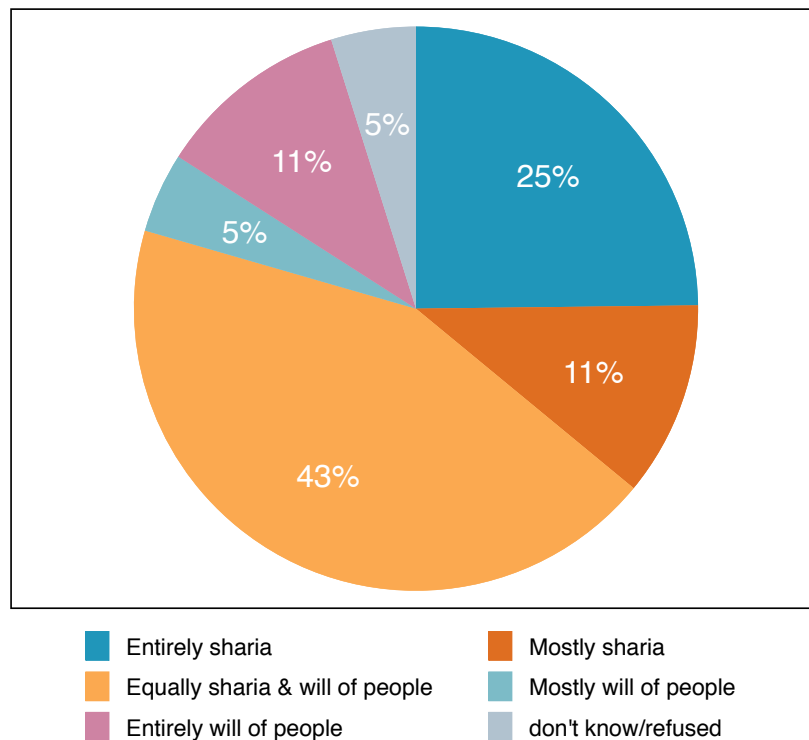
Notes: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Critics often assert that democracy is associated with a number of problems. However, only a minority of Libyans hold such a view. For example, only a third (34 percent) of Libyans say that economic performance is weak in a democracy, compared with 37 percent who say democracy is indecisive, and 34 percent who say it is unable to maintain stability. All of these levels are effectively unchanged since 2014. However Libyans with a university degree are more likely to hold such views, suggesting that many of the country's elites may have significant concerns about a democratic system.

## Religion and Politics

Few Libyans see a significant role for religion in politics. Only a quarter say that the country would be better off if more religious individuals were in government, which is unchanged since 2014. Similarly, only 29 percent say religious leaders should have influence over decisions of government. Notably, Libyans of all ages and levels of education are about equally likely to hold such a view. However, only 58 percent say that religion is a private matter that should be completely separate from public life, suggesting a substantial minority does not want a complete separation of the two.

**Support for the Sharia**  
*% saying the country's laws should be...*



Note: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Additionally, most Libyans see a role for Islamic law in their country. A quarter say that Libya's laws should be based entirely on the sharia, while 11 percent say it should mostly be based on the sharia. Meanwhile, a plurality (43 percent) say the nation's laws should be based equally on the sharia and the will of the people, while 16 percent say they should be based mostly or entirely on the will of the people. Older Libyans and men are more likely to favor laws that are based entirely or mostly on the sharia.

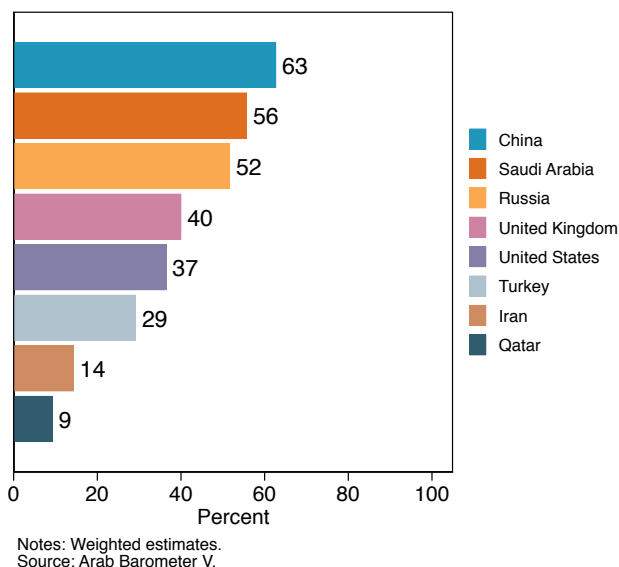


When asked what government under sharia law encompasses, slightly more than half of Libyan Muslims (53 percent) say it is a government that is free of corruption while three-in-ten say it is one that provides basic services like health care and education to its citizens. Only 9 percent say it is one that enforces physical punishment for criminals while 5 percent say it is one that restricts the role of women in public life. Thus, when Libyans say they want a government under the sharia, it appears most are hoping for a government that provides for the people and does not misappropriate funds.

## International Relations

In the years following the onset of Libya's civil conflict, views of international actors have shifted dramatically. For example, a desire for closer relations with the United States has declined dramatically, falling from 59 percent in 2014 to just 37 percent in 2019. Due to this drop, the U.S. is the least popular of global power in Libyans, as roughly half (52 percent) prefer stronger economic relations with Russia and 63 percent saying the same about China.

**International Relations**  
*% saying international relations should become stronger with...*



Among regional powers, Libyans are strongly supportive of the Saudi bloc. A majority (56 percent) want closer economic relations with Saudi Arabia, compared with just one-in-ten (9 percent) who say the same about Qatar. Additionally, compared with other MENA publics, relatively few Libyans want stronger relations with Turkey (29 percent). This level represents a decline of 21 points since 2014, likely reflecting Turkey's opposition to Egypt and its ally Saudi Arabia in its

foreign policy toward MENA. Meanwhile, only 14 percent want closer relations with Iran.

Despite the country's challenges, the desire for foreign aid is relatively limited. Moreover, Libyans prefer aid from non-Western countries over that from the U.S. or Europe. Only three-in-ten want foreign aid from the U.S. to increase, compared with 35 percent from the E.U. Meanwhile, four-in-ten (39 percent) want more aid from Russia and 45 percent from both Saudi Arabia and China. In part, this may be because seven-in-ten Libyans (69 percent) believe the primary motivation behind Western countries providing aid is to gain influence over their country.



## About Arab Barometer

The Arab Barometer is a nonpartisan research network that provides insights into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of ordinary citizens across the Arab world.

We have been conducting rigorous, and nationally representative face-to-face public opinion surveys on probability samples of the adult populations across the Arab world since 2006. The margin of error is  $\pm 3$  percent.

The Arab Barometer is the largest repository of publicly available data on the views of men and women in the MENA region. Our findings give a voice to the needs and concerns of Arab publics.



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