

Arab Barometer VI

Algeria Country Report

2021

Executive Summary

A year after the Hirak protests in Algeria began in March 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic caused them to grind to a halt in March 2020. Frustration with the government did not dematerialize with the inability to safely protest, however; but attention shifted elsewhere. The sixth wave of the Arab Barometer in Algeria was conducted over three surveys from mid-August to early September, mid-October, and late-March to mid-April, capturing the shifts in public attitudes during this period.

The concerns of ordinary citizens changed over the course of the pandemic. In summer 2020, most Algerians said COVID-19 was a bigger challenge than the economic situation, but by spring concern about the economy overtook concern about COVID-19. In all surveys, corruption remained a distant third compared with these two predominant challenges. When asked what the government should do to improve the economy, most Algerians wanted to see a greater focus on job creation.

Algeria and Russia signed a deal for a shipment of Russia's COVID-19 vaccine in December 2020. Despite initial concerns about COVID-19, Algerians still expressed high levels of vaccine hesitancy in March and April. Perhaps due to greater familiarity with the Sputnik vaccine, most of those planning on being inoculated said they would prefer a vaccine from Russia, opposed to the United States, the United Kingdom, or China.

However, it's also possible that the preference for a Russian vaccine stems from Algerians having more favorable views of Russia than they do of the U.S. Algerians favor Russia over the United States, but the favorability of both countries pales in comparison to China. Notably, as in most countries surveyed, views of the U.S. were significantly higher in spring 2021 than in fall of 2020, which largely appears due to more favorable views of the Biden administration compared with the Trump administration. Meanwhile, over the same period, China's popularity remained effectively constant.

The decline in concern over COVID-19 coincided with the decline in Algerians' overall satisfaction with their government. This decline is driven by those who say they can afford their monthly expenses compared to those who say they cannot. There was nearly a 25 percent gap between these two demographics

in August and September. By March and April, the levels of satisfaction reported by those who can cover their monthly expenses dropped to nearly the same as those who cannot cover their monthly expenses. There is a similar pattern when comparing Algerians ages 18-29 (lower initially) to Algerians ages 30 and up (higher initially). Still, the percent of Algerians saying they are satisfied or completely satisfied with their government's overall performance hovers around 50 percent in the latest survey for all demographic breakdowns.

Falling satisfaction with the government and the Hirak demonstrations may suggest Algerians are open to a new form of government, but results from the Arab Barometer survey indicate somewhat mixed support. Even though 64 percent of Algerians say democracy is always preferable to any other type of government, Algerians also want a strong leader who bends the rules if necessary and can ensure law and order.

In summer 2020, about seven-in-ten Algerians said the freedom to peacefully protest, express an opinion, and for the media to criticize the government were guaranteed to a medium or great extent. However, these percentages declined over the months that followed. By spring 2021, the number of Algerians holding these views fell dramatically even before President Abdelmadjid Tebboune outlawed unauthorized protests in May 2021.

The results also reveal that Algerians' desire for political change does not appear to prioritize women. Of the countries surveyed, Algeria had the lowest level of agreement with the statement "A woman can be president or prime minister or a Muslim country." Further, Algeria was the only country surveyed where fewer women agreed with the statement than men. Overall, Algeria consistently had among the strongest patriarchal views regarding gender norms among all countries surveyed.

These are among the main findings of three nationally representative telephone surveys conducted in Algeria during the course of 2020-1. The sample was drawn through random digit dialing (RDD). Between July 2020 and March 2021, we interviewed 3,205 Algerian citizens to track changes in their evaluations of their conditions over time during the pandemic. The margin of error of these reported results is ± 3 percentage points. The surveys are part of Arab Barometer's sixth wave which was carried out in seven MENA

countries. Arab Barometer's sixth wave is the only publicly available survey that captures the changing sentiments of citizens across MENA during the unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional information about the surveys can be found in the links below.

About AB6

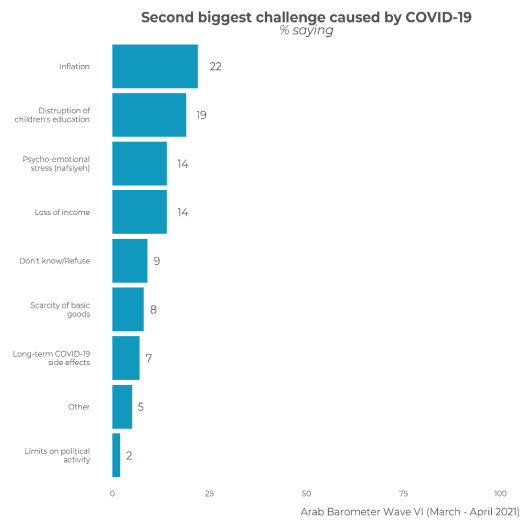
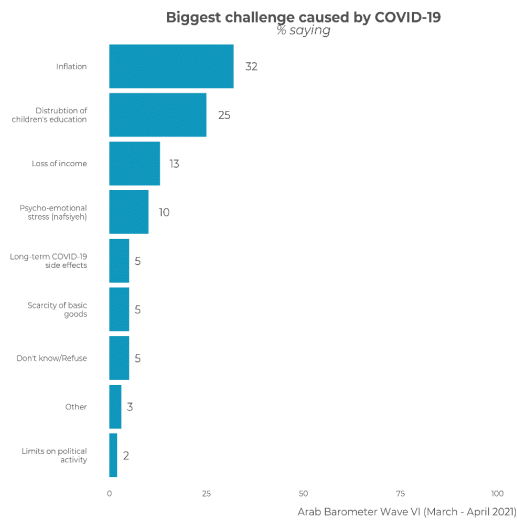
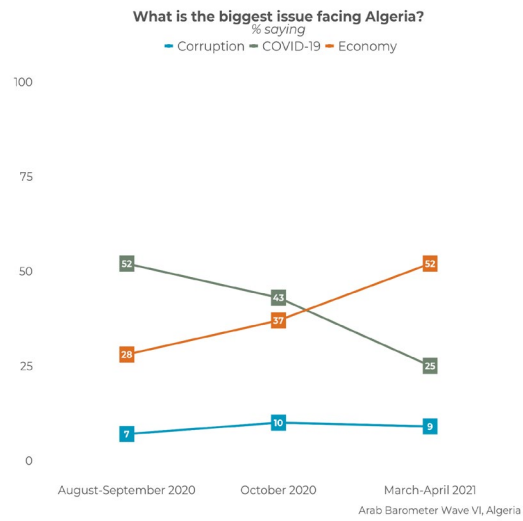
How we did this.

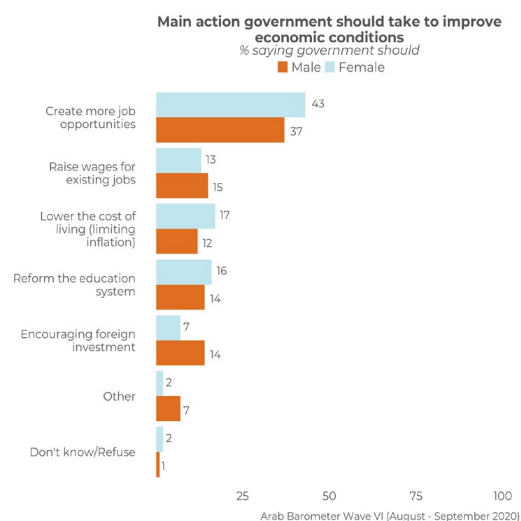
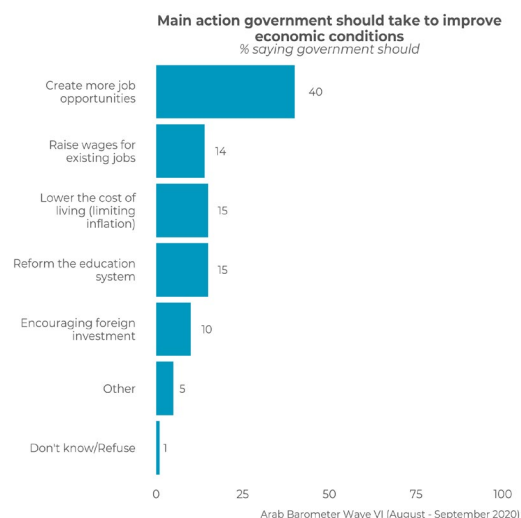
Domestic Issues

Unsurprisingly, most Algerians said COVID-19 was the number one issue facing the country. The economy came second, at least in the later summer of 2020. By spring of 2021, however, the two concerns had swapped places almost exactly. In summer 2020, 52 percent of Algerians said the pandemic was the most pressing issue while 28 percent said the economy. By spring 2021, 52 percent of Algerians said the economy was the most pressing issue and only 25 percent said it was the pandemic.

The entanglement of the effects of COVID-19 and issues with the economy can be clearly seen when Algerians are asked what the top two challenges they've faced with the spread of the coronavirus. The increasing cost of living is listed as the number one challenge by 32 percent of Algerians and the number two challenge by 22 percent of Algerians, which is the highest percentage for the number one and number two challenges. Even with the spread of COVID-19, the underlying focus remains on the economy.

Algerians consistently say the government should improve the economy by creating more jobs. Improving education tends to come in second. We see gender differences particularly with respect to job creation and foreign direct investment. Women are more likely to say the government should create more jobs, while men are more likely to say the government should encourage foreign investment.





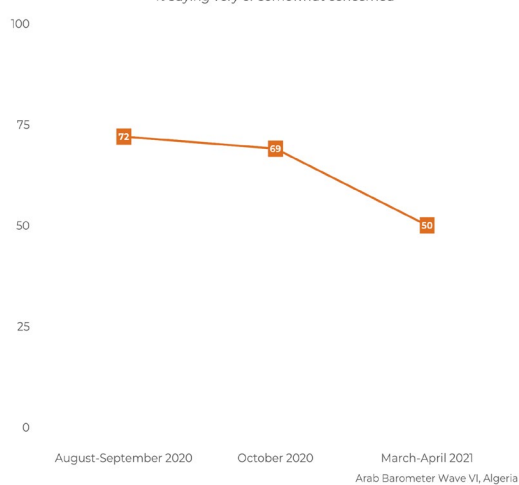
COVID-19

Levels of concern regarding the spread of COVID-19 has dropped. In late summer 2020, 72 percent of Algerians said they were somewhat or very concerned about the spread of the coronavirus. This level dropped to 50 percent of Algerians in spring of 2021. As fewer Algerians worried about the pandemic spreading, most of those who were still concerned about the spread were specifically concerned about a loved one becoming ill or dying (43 percent in spring 2021 compared to 32 percent in September 2020). Notably, although 30 percent of Algerians listed other citizens not following government rules as their number one reason for being concerned about

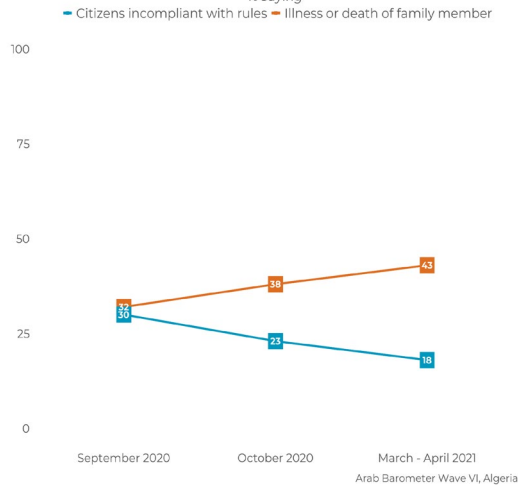
COVID-19 spread in summer 2020, this number dropped to 18 percent by March and April 2021.

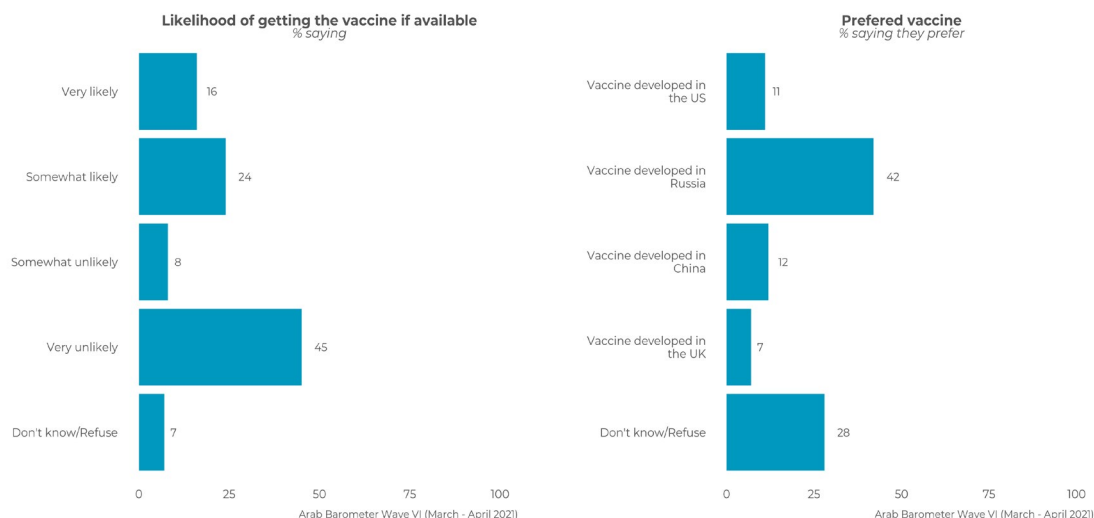
Despite the spread of COVID-19 being the first or second most important issue facing Algerians, many express hesitations at receiving a vaccine even at no cost. Only 40 percent of Algerians not yet vaccinated said they were somewhat or very likely to take a free vaccine if they were offered one. This is among the lowest in the region. Given a choice of vaccines, 34 percent of Algerians who reported being very or somewhat likely to take a free vaccine said they would prefer a Russian vaccine compared to 12 percent who said they preferred an American or Chinese, and only 6 percent who said British.

Extent of concern about COVID-19 spreading over the next 6 months
% saying very or somewhat concerned



Reasons for concern about the spread of COVID-19
% saying



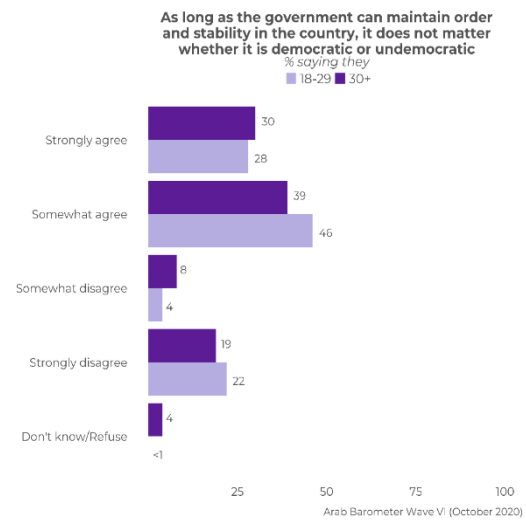
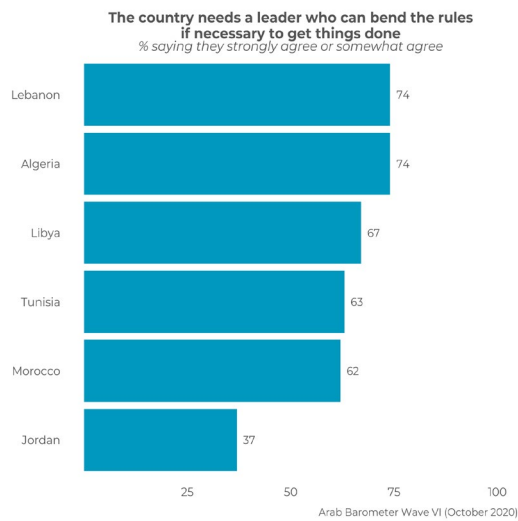
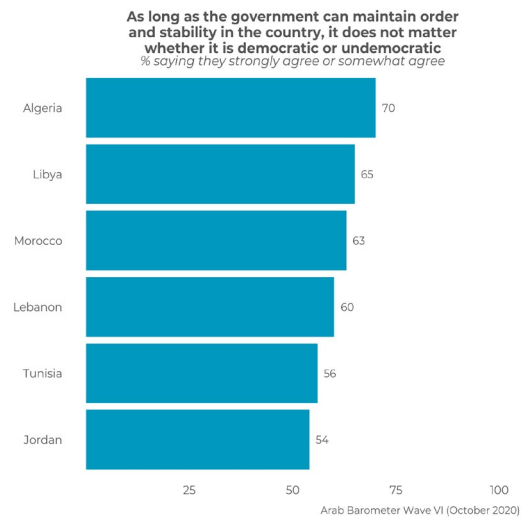
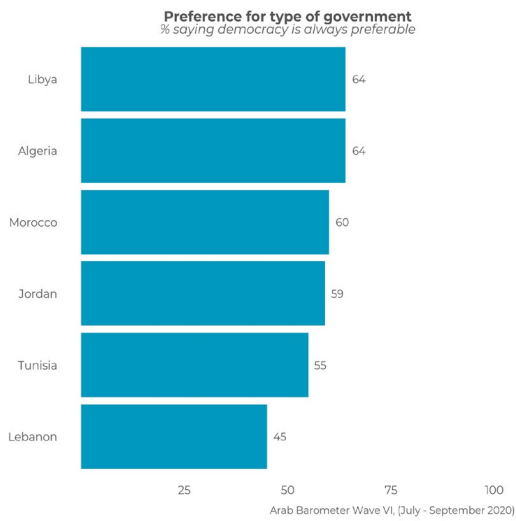


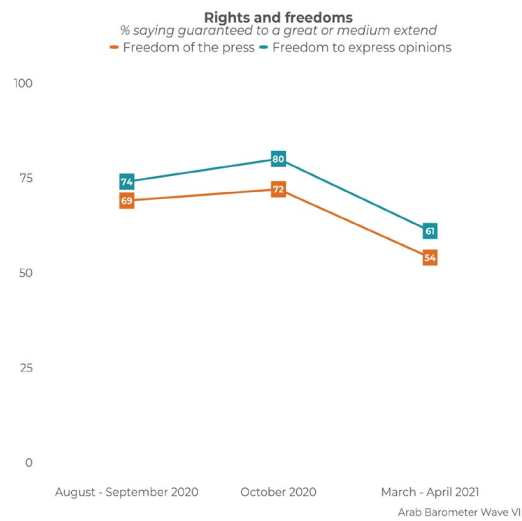
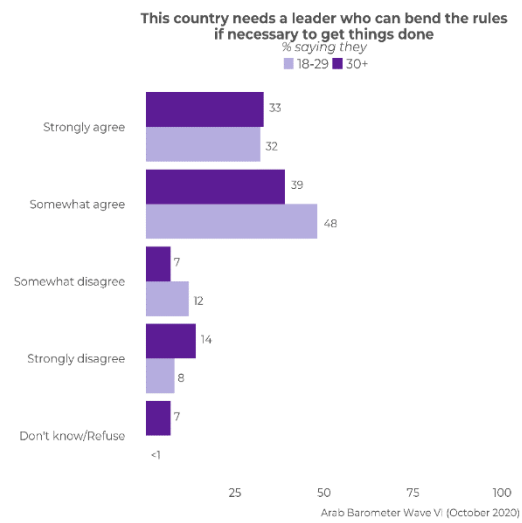
Democracy

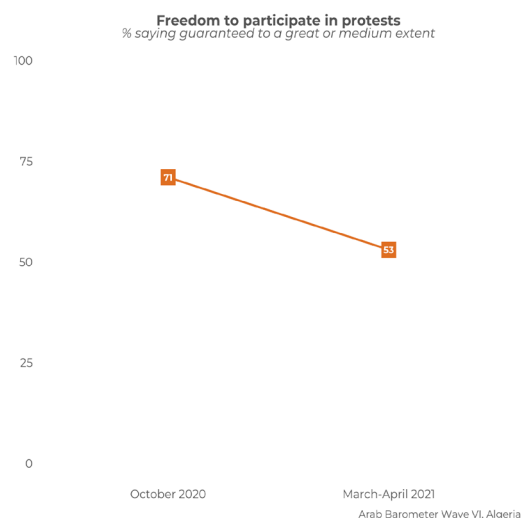
Algeria is tied with Libya for having the largest share of citizens (64%) who said democracy is always the preferable type of government among countries surveyed. Yet, Algeria also has the largest share of citizens who somewhat or strongly agreed with the “As long as the government can maintain order and stability in the country, it does not matter whether it is democratic or undemocratic” (70%). Furthermore, Algeria and Lebanon also tied for the largest share of citizens who somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement “This country needs a leader who can bend the rules if necessary to get things done” (74%). In Algeria, there does not seem to be much division along generational lines, either. If anything, Algerians 18-29 are more likely to take an agreeable stance towards the statements than those over 30. In sum, Algerians seem to think democracy is good, but a strong, competent government is best.

Certain rights are often thought of as indicators of democracy; particularly the freedom of speech, the right of the media to criticize the government, and the right to protest. There was a sharp decline in the percent of Algerians who somewhat or strongly agreed these freedoms were guaranteed from October to Spring 2021.

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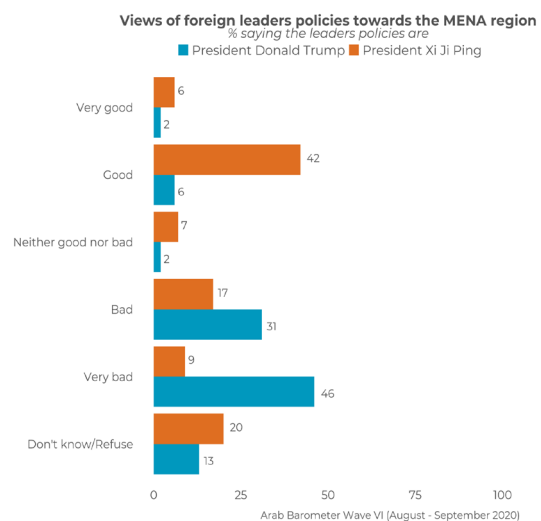
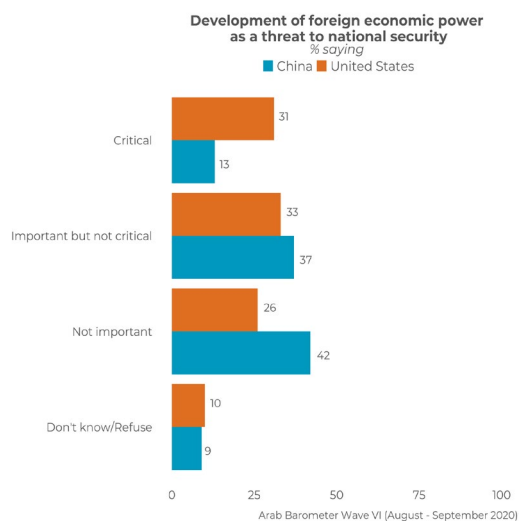
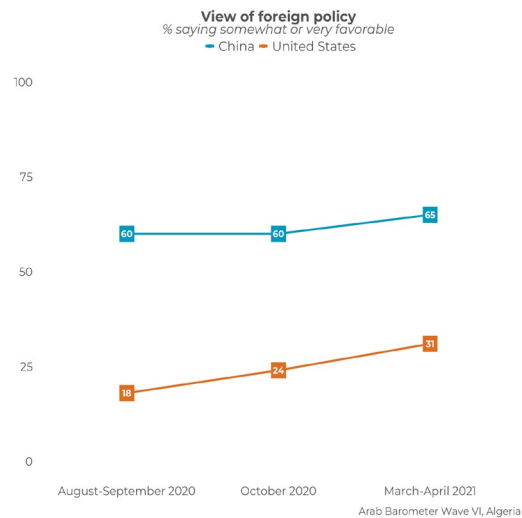
Foreign Powers

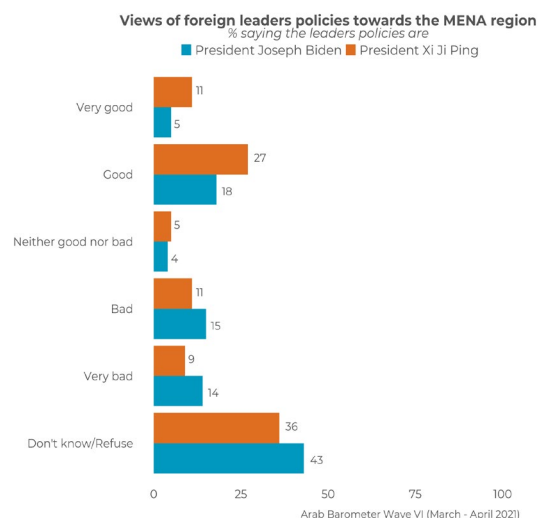
Of the foreign powers we asked about, Algerians have the most favorable view of China, with at least six-in-ten Algerians (60 percent, 60 percent, 65 percent, for each survey in order) saying they have a favorable or somewhat favorable view of Chinese foreign policy in each survey conducted by Arab Barometer. Favorable views of the United States increased from 18 percent to 31 percent between summer 2020 and spring 2021, which was a trend also seen in most other countries surveyed.

When we asked about threats to Algerian stability, the economic rise of the United States was generally deemed of more critical importance than the economic rise of China. Only 13 percent of Algerians said China's economic rise was a critical threat, while 42 percent of Algerians considered it to be not important. On the contrary, 31 percent of Algerians said the United States is a critical threat economically while 26 percent said it was not important.

Part of Algerians' poor view of the United States can be attributed to former President Donald Trump. Only eight percent of Algerians said they thought President Trump's foreign policies had been good or very good for the Arab region. After President Biden took office, 23 percent of Algerians said his policies are good or very good for the Arab region.

During the same period Chinese President Jinping Xi's approval dipped somewhat from 47 percent to 39 percent of Algerians saying his policies were good or very good for the Arab region.





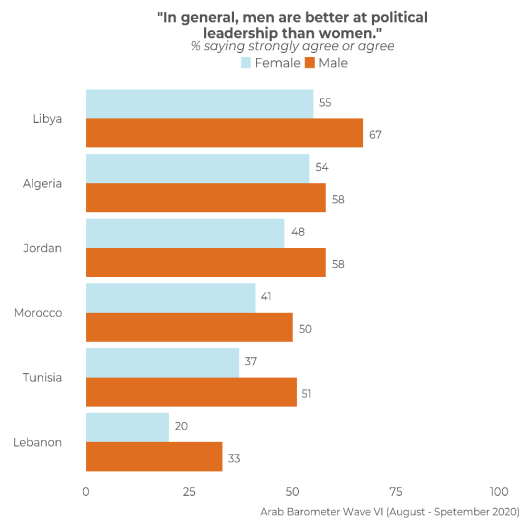
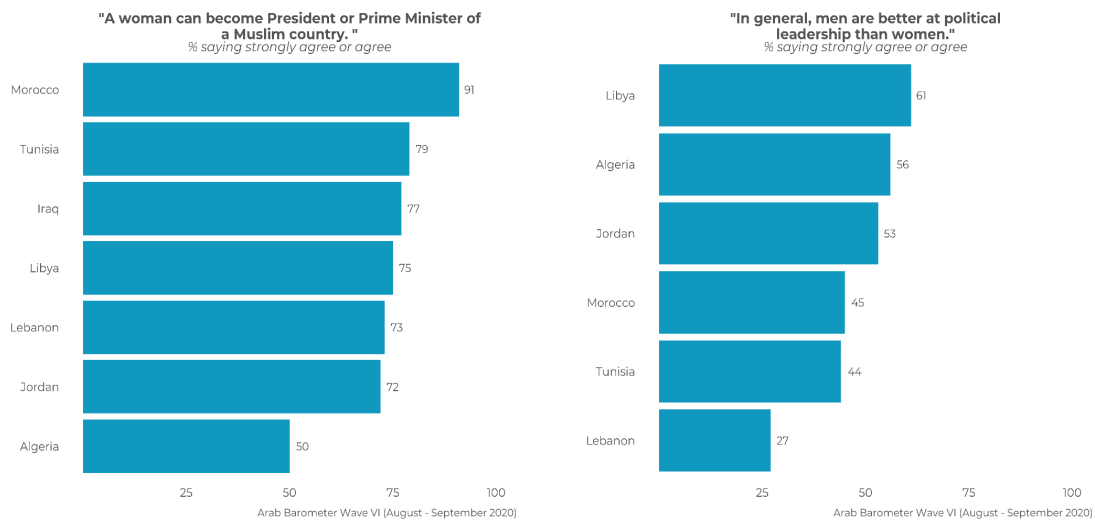
Gender Issues

Algerians have among the most unequal gender views of the countries surveyed. Only half of Algerians agree with the statement "A woman can become President or Prime Minister of a Muslim country." This is the lowest level of agreement of any of the countries surveyed.

Algerians have the second highest rate of agreement (56 percent) with the statement "In general, men are better at political leadership than women." Algerian men are roughly similar to the average for men in the region (58 percent); but among women in the region, Algerian women are the second most likely to agree with the statement (54 percent).

Algerians are tied for first (24 percent) with the most citizens agreeing with the statement "A university education is more important for males than females." The question of education also brings a gender divide not seen in other questions. While 29 percent of Algerian men say they agree or strongly agree with the statement, only 18 percent of Algerian women agree.

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ABOUT ARAB BAROMETER

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

We have been conducting rigorous, and nationally representative public opinion surveys on probability samples of the adult populations across the Arab world since 2006 across 15 countries.

We are the longest-standing and 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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