

# Arab Barometer IX

## Lebanon & the Regional Conflict



April 2026

## Lebanon before the war

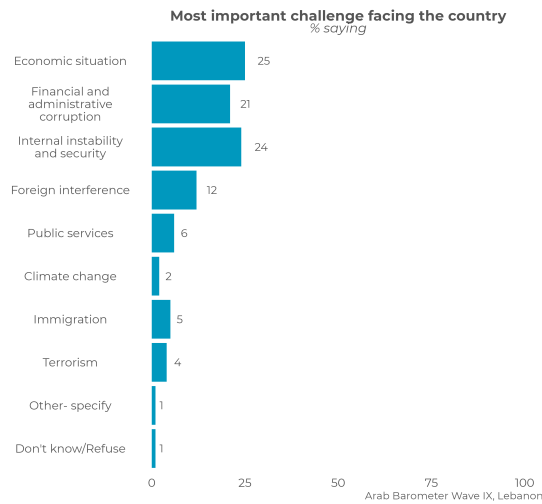
Before Israel's recent airstrikes and ground invasion in southern Lebanon as part of the widening regional war centered on Iran and its proxies, Lebanon was already in a condition of profound structural weakness. A recent survey of 1,200 randomly selected Lebanese citizens conducted by Arab Barometer in partnership with the Middle East Consultation Group of the Munich Security Conference provides key insights into conditions shortly before these recent events. The November 2025 survey presents a picture of a country that remained deeply pessimistic about the economy, distrustful of political institutions, and frustrated by corruption and state failure.

Yet it also revealed a limited but important shift: for the first time in many years, Lebanese citizens exhibited greater hope. Compared with a survey conducted in spring of 2024, which was conducted before Israel's major military campaign that severely weakened Hezbollah, the 2025 survey finds Lebanese were willing to place some confidence in state institutions and the future of their country. The Israeli attacks and ground incursions into Lebanon in March 2026 have displaced hundreds of thousands and turned a substantial share of the country into an active evacuation zone come within this framework. Depending on the exact extent of the current conflict, it is possible that these minor gains will face a major setback.

Beyond Israel's incursions, Lebanon has faced a number of other recent crises. In 2019, Lebanon faced one of the worst economic collapses in modern history. Political stagnation and the entrenched sectarian system resulted in a period where Lebanon lacked a president for more than two years from October 2022 to January 2025. At the same time, Lebanon faced significant challenges from the Syrian crisis next door with well over a million refugees being hosted in the country.

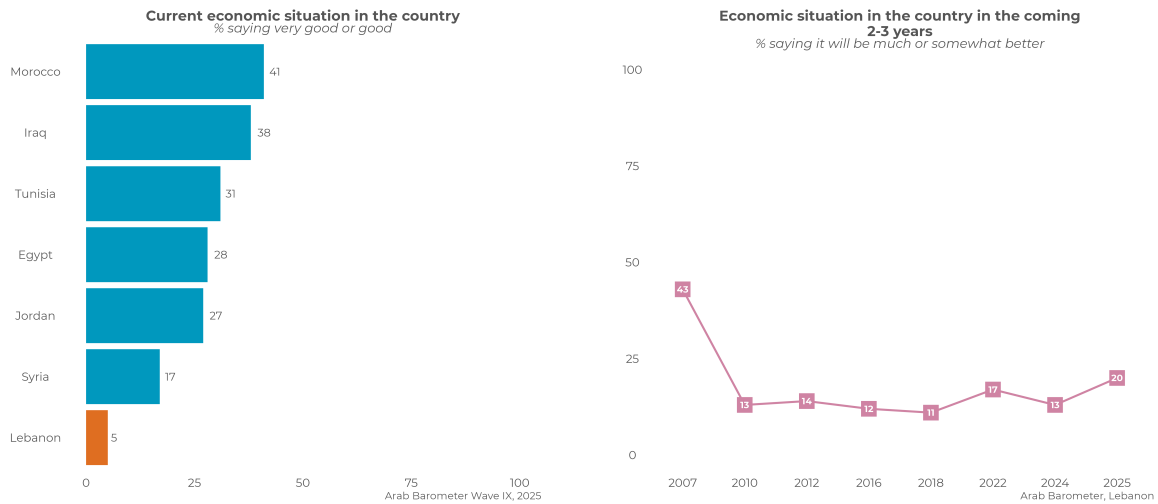
## A changing tide?

The multidimensional nature of the domestic crisis is clearly visible in the 2025 survey. In it, Lebanese respondents do not identify a single overriding national problem so much as a cluster of interlocking failures: the economy (25 percent), corruption (21 percent), and internal instability (24 percent) were all seen as central challenges with a roughly equal percentage pointing to each. This pattern suggests that citizens are deeply concerned about multiple major challenges, which highlights the broad and underlying nature of the national crisis. Despite modest improvements in some areas, the core public diagnosis had not fundamentally changed: Lebanon's crisis remains systemic rather than sectoral.

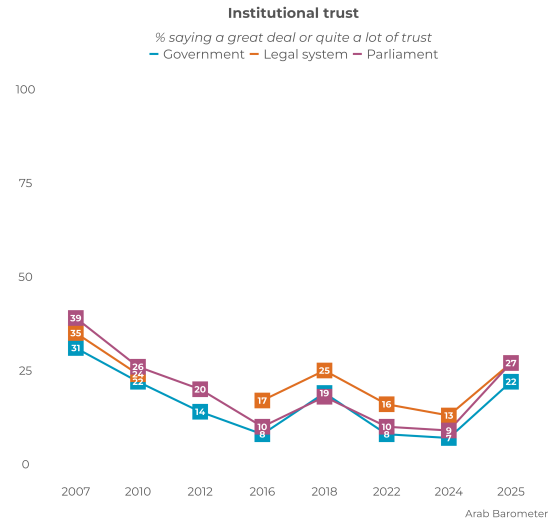


Take the economy. Among eight countries surveyed in the Arab region in the fall of 2025, Lebanese see their economy as the bleakest. Just five percent rate it as good or very good, which is less than even Syria and well below countries such as Morocco, Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan. Lebanese are also not optimistic about the future of their economy with only 20 percent saying they expected the economy to be much or somewhat better in the next few years. This level is by far the lowest in any country surveyed by Arab Barometer in 2025. The results reflect not only the ongoing crisis, but also concern of many citizens about the government’s ability to address the underlying challenges of unemployment, rising prices, and cost of housing. Yet, despite the low number, Lebanese were notably more optimistic compared with the spring 2024 survey when only 13 percent expressed optimism about the economy, which was in line with the level observed for most of the decade of the 2010s. This greater hope will likely vanish as the expansion of the regional war threatens the country’s economic future.

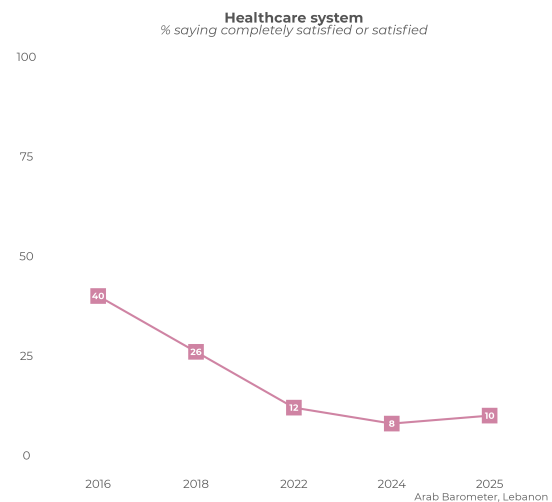
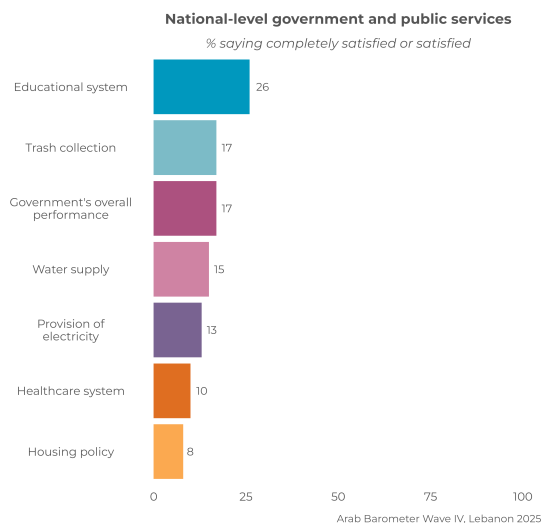
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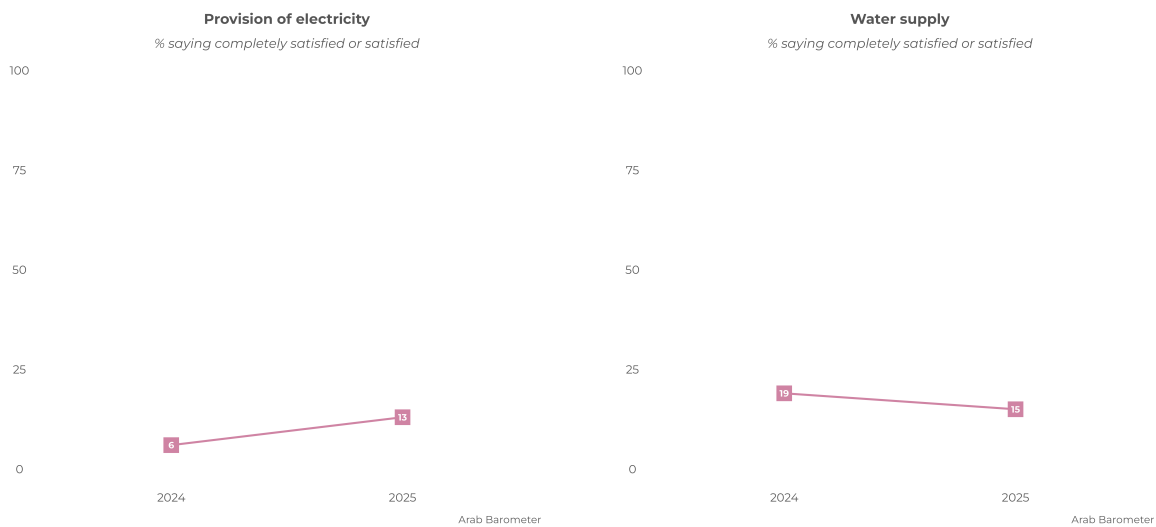
Turning to views of government institutions, this paradox is largely repeated. Levels of trust in government (22 percent), parliament (27 percent), and the judiciary system (27 percent) remain very low in absolute terms, particularly compared to other countries in the Arab region. For each institution, Lebanese exhibit among the lowest levels of confidence in any country surveyed. Yet, these levels of trust also represent a vast improvement since 2024. Trust in government was up by 15 points, trust in parliament by 18 points, and trust in the courts by 14 points. Satisfaction with overall government performance also rose by 13 points from just four percent in early 2024 to 17 percent in late 2025. Although far from exhibiting broad satisfaction with the system, these findings suggest that hope in their country was on the upswing. The weakening of Hezbollah as a political and military actor created an opening that allowed for political progress, including appointing a new president and a government that presented itself as reform oriented. Although the government was struggling to implement the necessary reforms, the Lebanese public was beginning to respond to these changes and the hope of political stabilization and the possibility of forward progress toward meaningful reforms.



The gap between sentiment toward the government and its actual performance was especially stark in service delivery. Despite the rise in overall institutional ratings, views of service provision remain low overall. Just 26 percent said they were satisfied with the educational system, compared with 10 percent for health-care, 17 percent for trash collection, 12 percent for electricity, and 15 percent for water. However, unlike ratings for the government overall, there was no corresponding increase in perceptions of services. Ratings of education was unchanged since 2024, while the difference for healthcare fell within the survey margin of error. Although ratings of electricity provision and trash collection increased by six points, ratings of the water supply fell by four points.

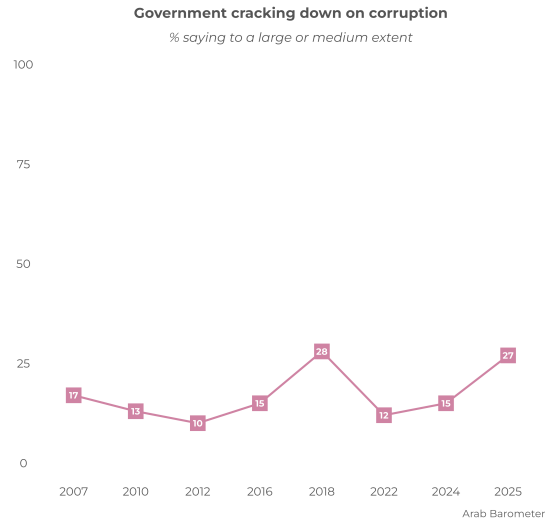
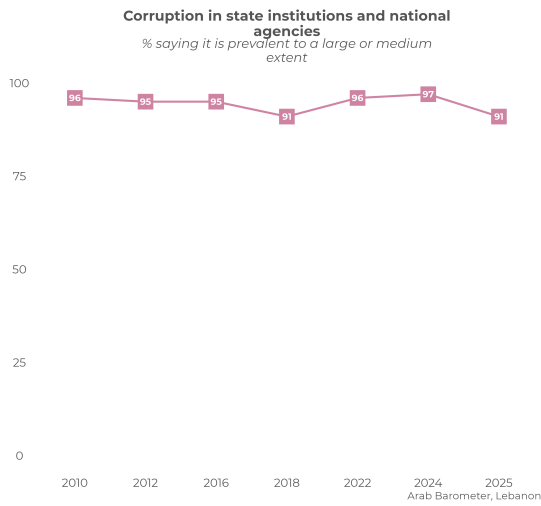


In other words, the government’s standing improved even while the ratings of service provision, the most direct way citizens encounter the state in their daily lives remain unchanged. This result suggests that the uptick in confidence rested less on tangible gains than on modestly renewed hope. The renewed conflict now threatens to erase these limited gains, particularly with the mass displacement that is now taking place highlighting the state’s inability to ensure the country’s safety and stability.

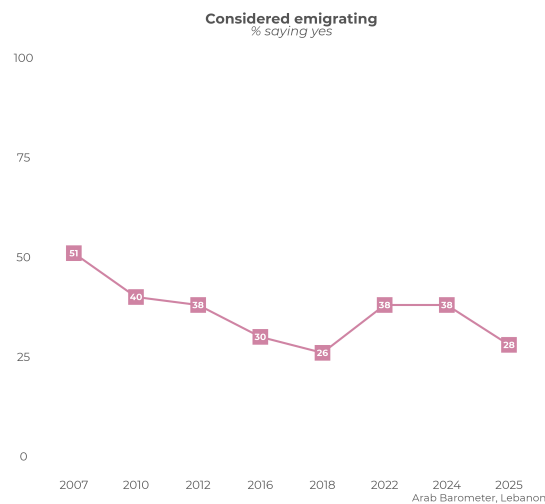


A similar pattern is found for levels of corruption. Nearly all Lebanese say corruption remains a pervasive problem with 91 percent saying it pervades national institutions to a large or medium extent. Yet, this level is actually a slight improvement from the 97 percent who said the same in early 2024. Moreover, although only 27 percent of Lebanese say the government is working to crack down on corruption to a large or medium extent, representing the lowest level in any Arab country surveyed, there is a much more widespread belief that the government is trying to tackle this problem than before. Compared with spring 2024, the percentage had increased from 15 percent to 27 percent by November 2025.

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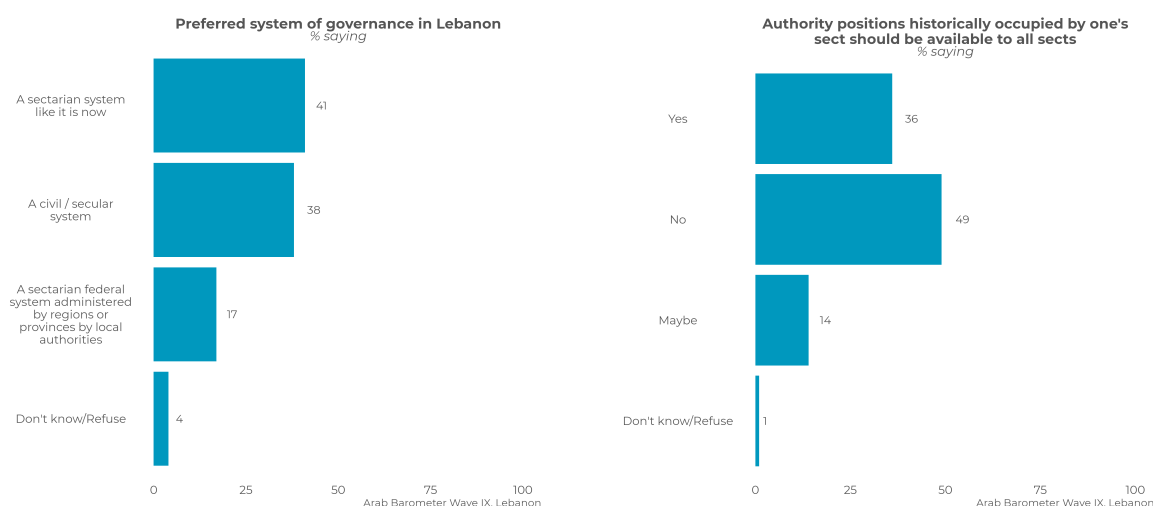


Migration attitudes again point to growing hope in the country. In November 2025, 28 percent of Lebanese said they had considered leaving their homeland, which is similar to the level found in most other countries surveyed across the region. However, this level had fallen by 10 points from 2024, suggesting a growing hope in the country’s future. It meant that fewer people saw departure as the only imaginable option. This change is perhaps the clearest indicator that the late 2025 sentiment, while still bleak overall, was beginning to change. The return to conflict, including mass displacement, physical insecurity, and the economic challenges is likely to renew the logic of exit for many Lebanese, especially younger and more educated citizens.

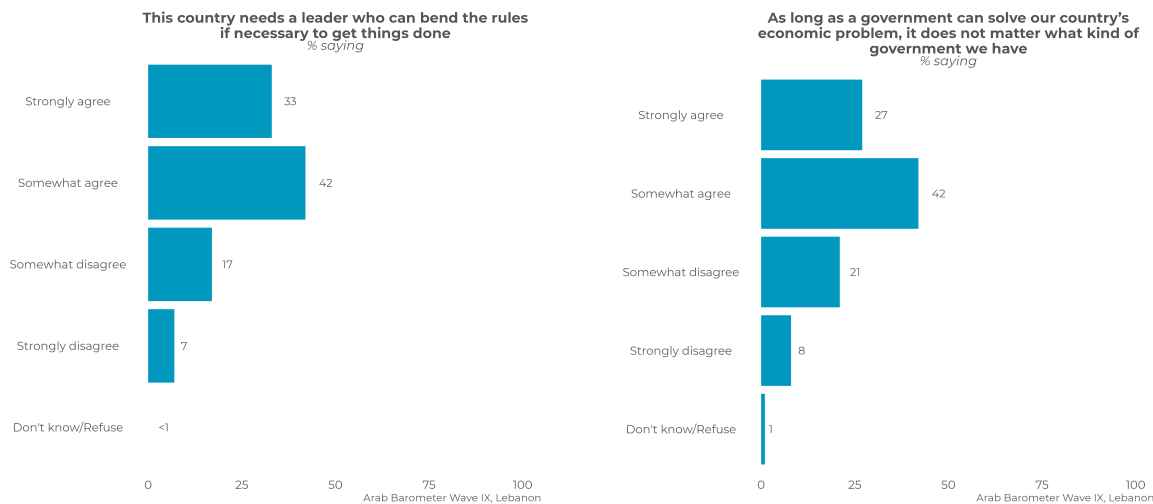


## Much left to do

While Lebanese citizens reported increased institutional trust and hope from of the country's changing political landscape, most still wanted more. When asked about the speed of reform, a majority (57 percent) said they favored reforms to take place all at once compared with 40 percent who wanted reforms to happen little by little. Yet, despite a desire for change, any reform process would be contentious as there was not a unified vision for the country's future. Citizens were closely divided over what that new order should look like. Public opinion was split between support for a sectarian power-sharing system (41 percent), like the one that has existed since the Taif agreement ended the civil war in 1989 and a civil, non-sectarian system (38 percent), which some believe might help break the political deadlock. Meanwhile, 17 percent favor a federal system that takes into account sectarian identities.



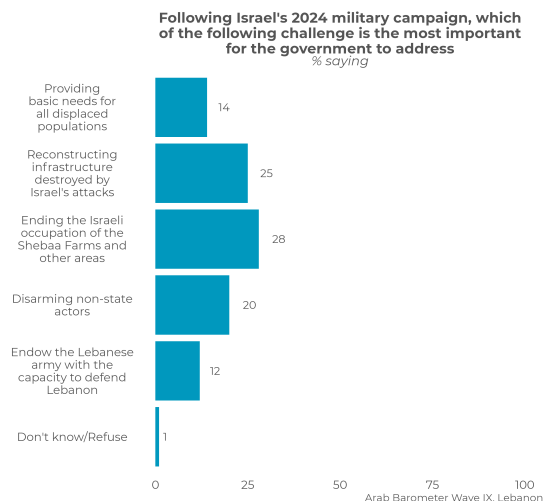
The challenge of reform is further highlighted by the fact that citizens are somewhat reluctant to make positions of authority that have historically been reserved for their own sect open to members of all sects. About half (49 percent) say they would not be comfortable with this change compared with 36 who said they would be and 14 percent who said maybe. These results underscore that while Lebanon wants reform, this demand is constrained by a fear of what change might bring. Citizens wanted the system to function differently, but many were unwilling to risk the communal protections on which they believed their security depended.



Ultimately, what citizens want is a bold leader who can lead them into this future. In multiple survey questions, citizens expressed a desire for decisive leadership. Three-quarters supported a leader who bends the rules if necessary to achieve results while 70 percent say it doesn't matter what kind of government they have so long as it can solve their economic problems. Additionally, two-thirds say it doesn't matter if their country is democratic or not so long as the government can maintain stability and order. These results point to a government that achieves outcomes and improves the lives of citizens by breaking through the political impasse that has long plagued Lebanon.

## A new political path?

The fact that Lebanese do not fully agree on the nature of the country's political future, political change is less of a concern than economic progress. When asked what the government should prioritize, about half (49 percent) of respondents said the major focus of reform should be the economic system, while only 12 percent prioritized political reform first. This result suggests that the public's central demand was for better jobs, prices, services, and economic conditions before it would turn to political change. A government that delivered economic improvements would likely be better able to tackle the challenges of political reform.



The recent spread of the broader regional conflict to Lebanon is only likely to exacerbate these ongoing challenges. When asked in late 2025 what was the most important single action for the government to take in the aftermath of Israel's 2024 military campaign, the most common response was ending the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory (28 percent) followed by rebuilding infrastructure (25 percent), disarming non-state actors (such as Hezbollah) (20 percent), providing services to those who were displaced (14 percent), and increasing the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces (12 percent). The renewed Israeli attacks on Lebanon serve to exacerbate these challenges for the government, likely undermining the progress that Lebanese citizens perceived had taken place.

## Lebanon's current reality

Overall, the survey's results and the renewed conflict imply that Lebanon's leaders remain trapped. The government faces a public demand for results but remains constrained by Lebanon's fragmented political system and challenging security situation. It is squeezed between external assault and internal incapacity. The unresolved role of Hezbollah continues to deprive the Lebanese state of a monopoly over decisions of war and peace, while Israeli military operations are making ordinary civilian life increasingly ungovernable across broad parts of the country. This leaves the government in Beirut in a position of strategic weakness: it can call for de-escalation, and it can seek diplomatic relief, but it cannot reliably alter the military facts on its own soil.

Lebanon's predicament, then, is not simply that it is once again at war. It is more complicated. The invasion has struck at a moment when there were tentative signs that the country may be turning the corner. The November 2025 survey showed that citizens still saw the economy, corruption, and instability as the core problems; but it also showed that optimism was ticking up and had rebounded from rock-bottom levels. It also showed that Lebanese wanted major change but remained divided over the shape of that change, and that they prioritized practical economic rescue over political abstraction. The current war collapses those tensions into a harsher reality: the long-standing crisis of governance has once again shifted into a crisis of national survival in the minds of Lebanese citizens.

This paints a sobering picture for Lebanon's future. The state is being squeezed by Israeli military force, political fragmentation and Hezbollah's autonomous armed role, and the challenge of rebuilding from state collapse. The limited gains in institutional confidence recorded in late 2025 might have served as the very beginning of the country's recovery, but a return to conflict is likely to snuff out this nascent hope. Even if the fighting stops soon, Lebanon is likely to emerge weaker, poorer, with citizens questioning if any hope remains for their country's future.



## About Arab Barometer

Arab Barometer is the leading and most influential research network on public opinion in the Middle East and North Africa. We are nonprofit and nonpartisan, hosted at Princeton University and the University of Michigan.

Founded in 2006, we are the longest-standing research network that conducts rigorous and nationally representative public opinion surveys in the Arab world. We disseminate the findings through analyses and reports to deepen public conversations and facilitate data-driven solutions to the pressing problems facing ordinary citizens across MENA.

Our public opinion surveys give ordinary citizens a stronger voice, and our analysis, highlighting key demographic differences and changing trends, help comprehend MENA citizens' shifting views, attitudes, and behaviors.



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