

# Egypt Five Years after the Uprisings

Findings from the Arab Barometer

**EGYPT WAVE 4 COUNTRY REPORT**

July 20, 2017  
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## Overview

The fourth wave of the Arab Barometer was conducted from April 15-23, nearly five years after the Arab uprisings. Three years after President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi came to power in 2013, Egypt's political and economic situation remains bleak. Since the coup, levels of repression in Egypt have surpassed those seen even before the 2011 uprisings. According to a number of estimates, as many as 40,000 political dissidents have been detained since 2013.<sup>1</sup> The regime has forcibly disappeared citizens with impunity, released execution orders for senior members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and used sexual violence against prisoners. Recently, President el-Sisi signed a controversial NGO law passed by Parliament that allows the government to monitor organizational access to foreign funding and limit the delivery of social services. Mismanagement of several other political crises has begun undermining the government's popularity.

Despite these challenges, Egyptians' assessment of the country's economic situation has improved since 2013. Roughly a third (30 percent) of Egyptians say the economy is good or very good—23 points higher than in 2013 during the last months of President Mohamed Morsi's government (7 percent). More than half (58 percent) say the economic situation is much better or somewhat better than it was five years earlier, before the uprisings. However, Egyptians say high levels of corruption remain and most report trouble meeting their financial obligations. Nearly 90 percent say the economy is among one of the two most important challenges facing the country.

A recent rise in terror attacks has been a serious cause for concern among the Egyptian public. Over 90 percent of Egyptians say they are worried or very worried about a terrorist attack. Similarly, nearly 90 percent are worried or very worried about being harassed or threatened in the street. Despite these concerns, Egyptians appear confident that President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government has been more effective at providing security than President Morsi's government. Egyptians report feeling dramatically more secure compared to the Arab Barometer third wave survey carried out in the last months of Mohamed Morsi's presidency in 2013 (nearly 80 percent in 2016 compared to 20 percent in 2013).

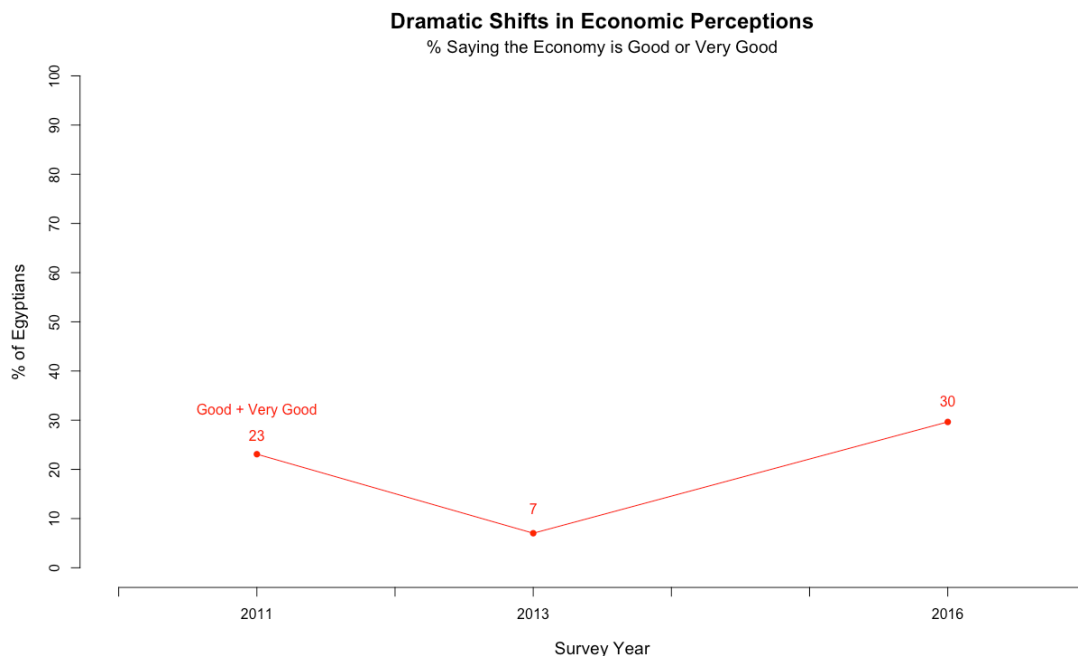
A large majority of Egyptians want stronger relations with Saudi Arabia (84 percent). Fewer Egyptians are interested in strengthening ties with other countries: Russia (50 percent), the European Union (33 percent), and the United States (32 percent). Egyptians are less enthusiastic about strengthening relations with Turkey (19 percent) and Iran (8 percent). Most Egyptians (51 percent) say that the influence of the United States has been somewhat or very negative on the development of democracy in Egypt. When asked "What policy do you think would be the most positive thing that the US could do in your country?", a majority of Egyptians (62 percent) say the US should not get involved.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/06/egypts-political-prisoners>

## The Economy

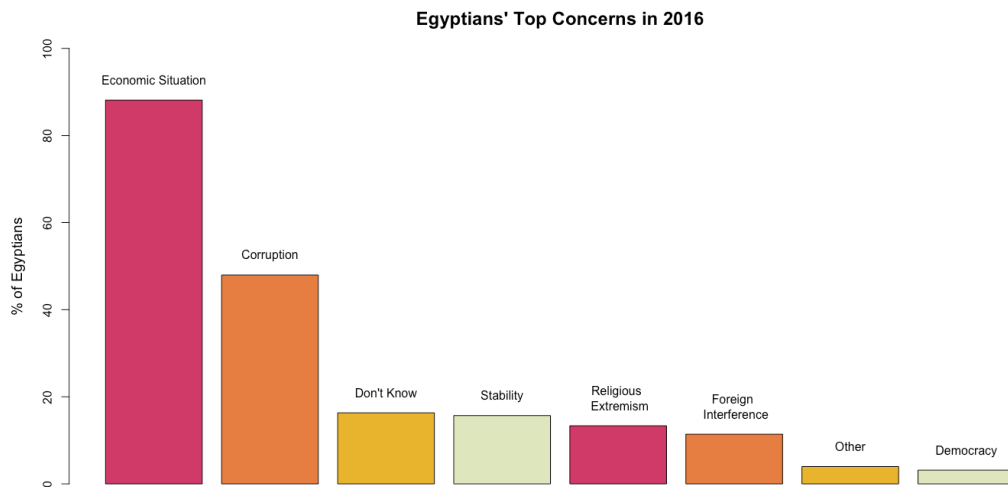
The economic situation in Egypt remains bleak, although more citizens rate the economy as good or very good than at the time of the 2011 Revolution. Roughly a third (30 percent) say the economy is good or very good, which is 23 points higher than in 2013 during the last months of President Mohamed Morsi's government (7 percent). Moreover, more than half (58 percent) believe the economic situation is much better or somewhat better than it was five years ago, before the uprisings.



Despite low ratings of the state of the national economy, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) say that their household economic situation is good or very good. This optimism is also reflected in attitudes toward the future: 46 percent of Egyptians say the next three to five years will be much better or somewhat better, compared to 27 percent in 2013. However, roughly 16 percent say it will be about the same, with 20 percent saying it will be worse or much worse.

Egyptians are generally dissatisfied with the government's performance on a range of basic services. Citizens are most pleased with the job the government is doing to ensure the country's security – three-quarters (76%) say the government is doing a good or very good job in this area. Meanwhile, fewer than 30 percent of Egyptians say that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the government's management of the economy (29 percent), creation of employment opportunities (13 percent), narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor (14 percent), and keeping prices down (9 percent).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, 88 percent of citizens say the economy is among one of the two most important challenges facing the country. Meanwhile, 48 percent of Egyptians include corruption in one of their top two concerns. Less than 20 percent of Egyptians include religious extremism, foreign interference, and stability as one of their top two concerns. Only 3 percent say democracy is one of the two most important challenges.



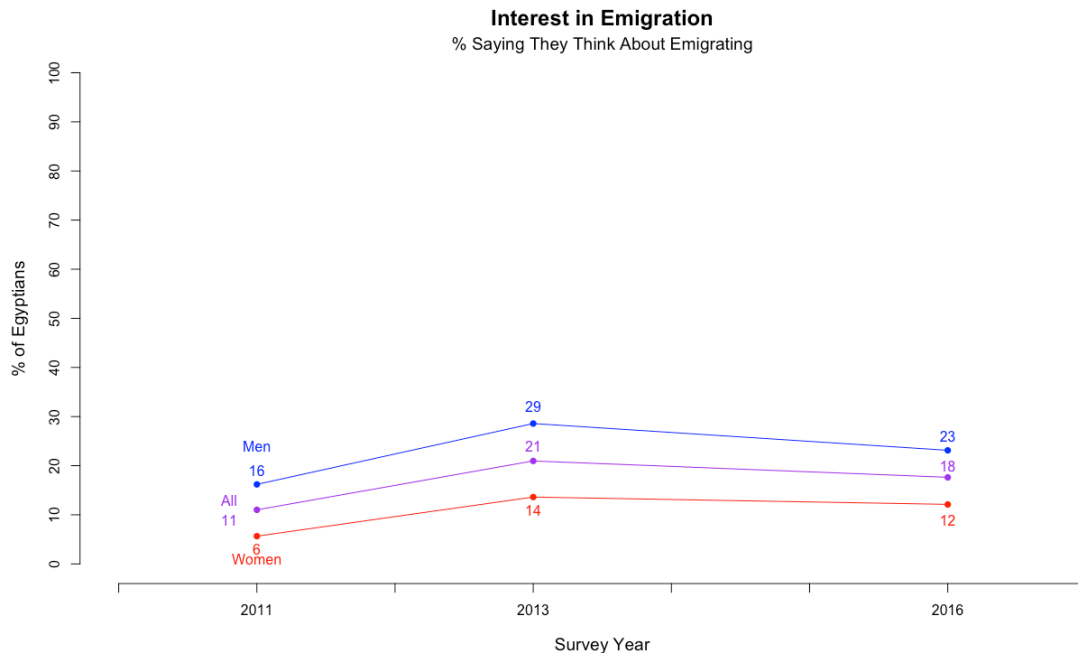
When asked about household income, it is clear that most Egyptians are struggling financially. Just 4 percent say they are able to save funds each month while 28 percent say they are able to cover their expenses without notable difficulties. However, 43 percent report facing some difficulties, and 24 percent face significant difficulties in covering their monthly expenses.

Despite repeated government promises to root out corruption, citizens' perceptions on this issue have not changed much since 2013: 84 percent of Egyptians say they agree that there is corruption within state agencies and institutions to a large or medium extent compared with 88 percent in 2013. Moreover, two-thirds (67 percent) say that obtaining employment through connections (*wasta*) is extremely widespread in Egypt. Meanwhile, only half (51 percent) say that the government is working to crack down on corruption and root out bribes to a large or medium extent. Notably, despite the lack of perceived progress on the issue, Egyptians are now 24 points more likely to say the government is working to tackle corruption compared with 2013 (27 percent).

## Emigration

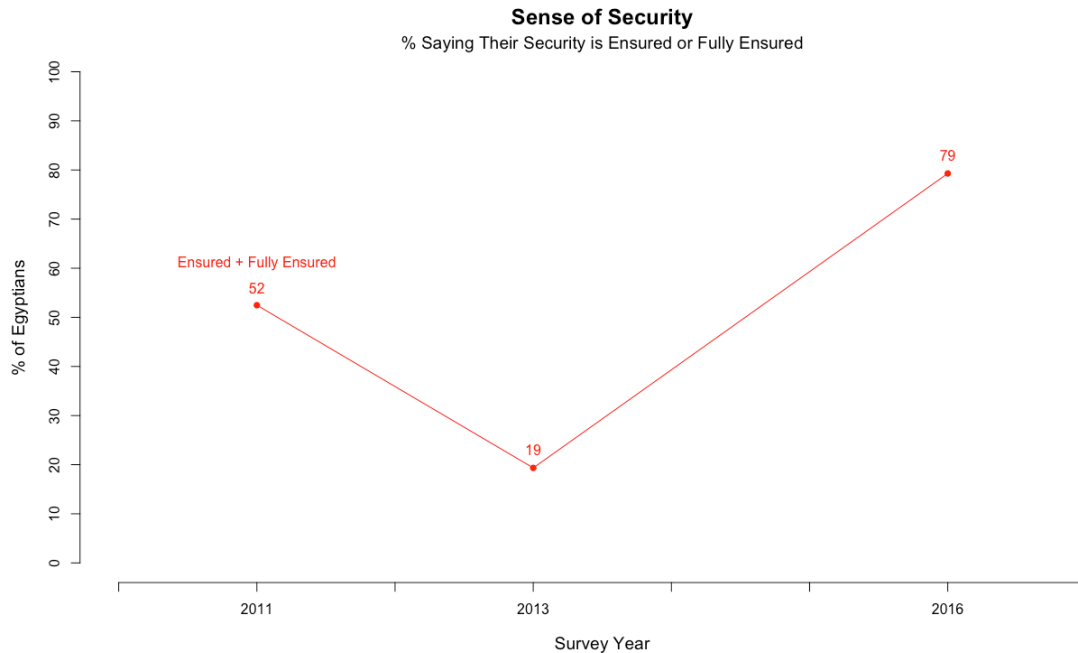
Nearly a fifth of Egyptians (18 percent) say they think about emigrating, which is a slight decrease from 2013 (21 percent). Younger Egyptians are more likely to say they think about emigrating: 27 percent of Egyptians aged 18-25 and 21 percent of Egyptians aged 26-35 say they think about emigrating, compared to those in the 36-45 (15 percent), 46-55 (9 percent), and 55+ (6 percent) age groups. Men are roughly

twice as likely to report they think about emigrating. Of those who do think about emigrating, 78 percent do so for economic reasons, 1 percent do so for political reasons, and 15 percent do so for both economic and political reasons. Among potential émigrés, the most commonly considered destination is a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country. Half of these respondents (49 percent) think about emigrating to a GCC country, including 25 percent to Saudi Arabia alone. Less common preferred destinations include Europe (22 percent), a non-GCC Arab country (10 percent), or the United States or Canada (8 percent).



## Security

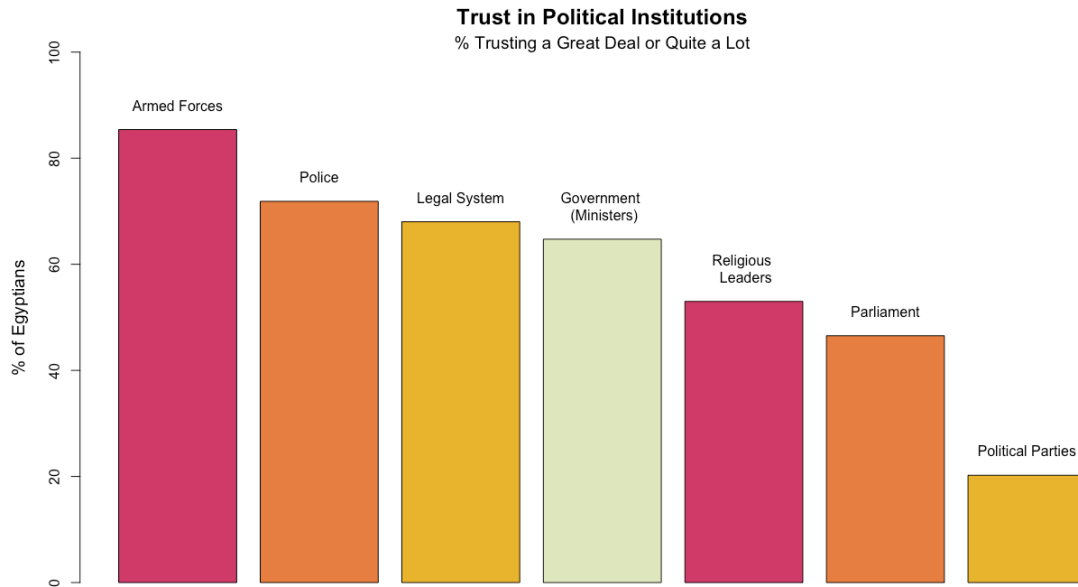
Despite a spate of recent terrorist attacks, 79 percent of Egyptians say their security is ensured or fully ensured: a four-fold increase since 2013 in the last months of Mohamed Morsi's presidency. Despite this increase in citizen perceptions of security, other measures present a more complicated picture. Roughly 92 percent of Egyptians say they are worried or very worried about a terrorist attack. Similarly, 86 percent of Egyptians are worried or very worried about being harassed or threatened in the street. Thus, although Egyptians remain concerned about security, they appear confident that President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government has been more effective at providing security than President Morsi's government.



### Trust in Institutions

There is broad variation in levels of trust across a range of institutions in Egypt. A clear majority of citizens trust the armed forces (85 percent) and the police (72 percent), while roughly two-thirds trust the legal system (68 percent) and the government (65 percent). Meanwhile, about half say the same about religious leaders (53 percent) and Parliament (47 percent). However, few Egyptians trust political parties (20 percent).

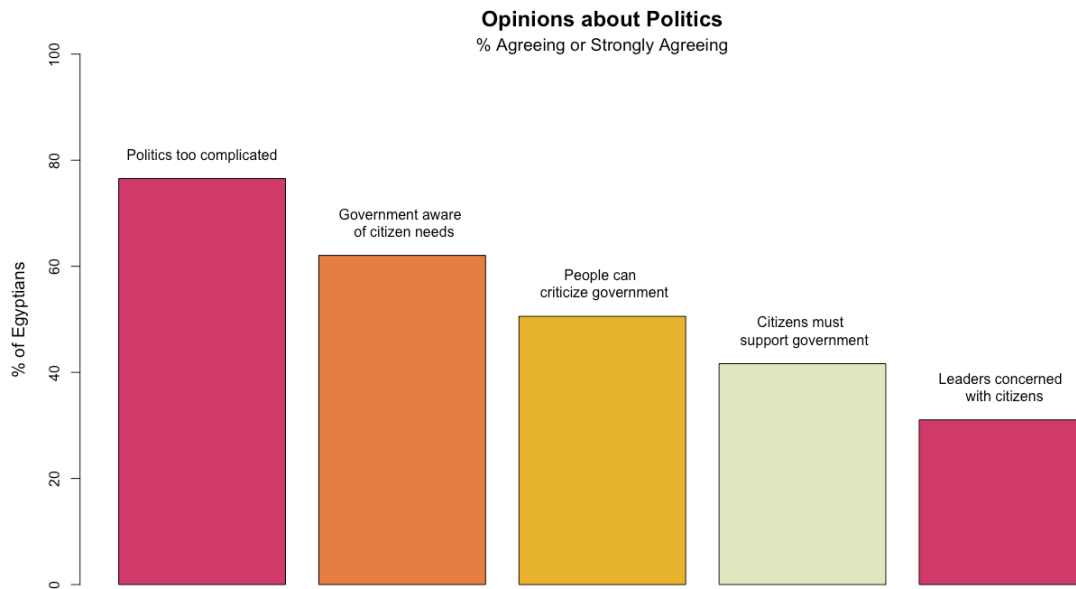
At the individual level, trust tends to be relatively low: only 29 percent of Egyptians think people are generally trustworthy, compared with 72 percent who do not. Citizens also have a low level of trust in politicians: when asked to rank politicians' honesty on a 7-point scale (7 as the most honest), two-thirds of Egyptians (68 percent) rated them a 4 or lower. When asked to do the same for other citizens of their country, 52 percent of Egyptians rated fellow citizens a 4 or lower.



Egyptians are generally split on whether or not they believe the government treats them equally to other citizens: 49 percent say they are treated equally to a great or medium extent. Nearly a third (28 percent) say they are not treated equally at all. Similarly, citizens are divided on the degree to which the government is undertaking serious reforms and making changes to its institutions and agencies. About two-thirds (63 percent) say the government is currently doing so while 34 percent say the government is not.

## Politics

Despite the expansion of political freedoms in the months after the uprisings in 2011, Egyptians remain divided in their opinions about politics. Most Egyptians (53 percent) disagree or strongly disagree with the idea that citizens must support the government's decisions even if she or he disagrees with it (42 percent agree or strongly agree). Egyptians report varying levels of both internal and external efficacy. Most Egyptians (77 percent) think politics is too complicated to understand. Interestingly, though 62 percent of Egyptians believe government employees are aware of citizen needs, only 31 percent believe political leaders are concerned with the needs of ordinary citizens.



## Poverty

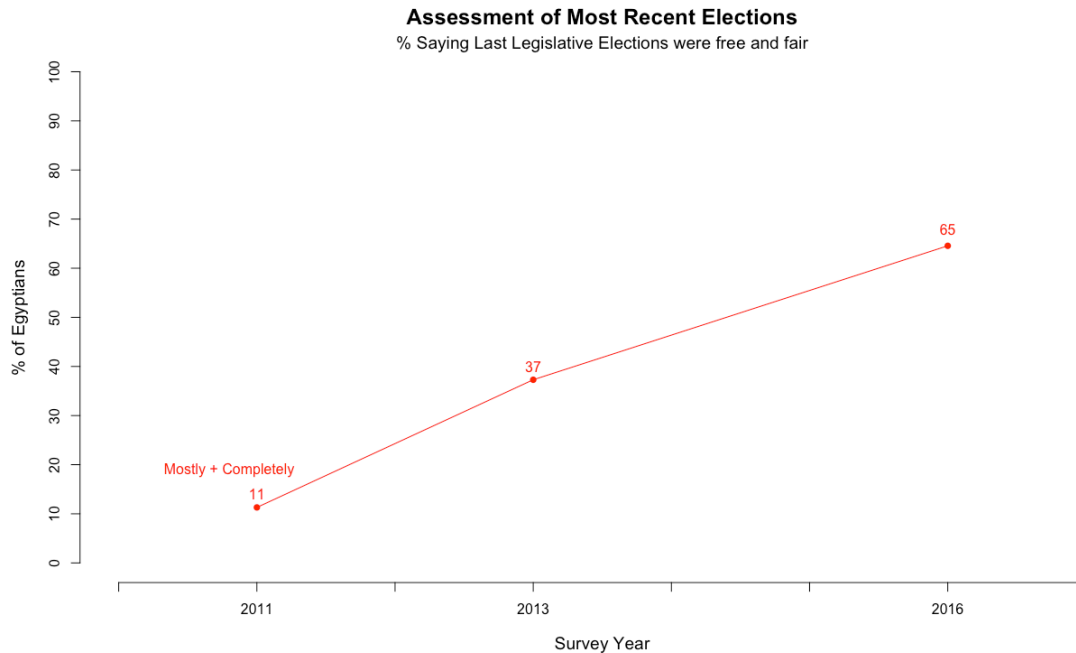
Egyptians report high levels of interest in helping the poor, even at personal cost. An overwhelming majority of Egyptians (88 percent) say they would help the poor at large (20 percent) or small (68 percent) cost to themselves. The primary motivation for doing so relates to religious reasons, with nearly two-thirds (63 percent) citing this reason. The rest have a desire to help the poor because they do not want to see people suffer (20 percent), they want to improve their country or community (7 percent), or they want to make the less fortunate happy (9 percent). Overall, Egyptians believe that religious institutions are a better way to help the poor than through state programs. Just 9 percent of Egyptians say it is best to assist the poor is through an increase social spending via taxes, whereas 76 percent think that *sadaqa*, or private charity, is the best way to reduce poverty.

## Elections

The fourth wave of the Arab Barometer was conducted in 2016, after a presidential election in May 2014 and a parliamentary election held from October to December 2015. Among those surveyed, 53 percent reported voting in the parliamentary election. Only 7 percent of Egyptians attended a campaign event or rally. Egyptians reported high levels of confidence in the electoral process. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of Egyptians said that the elections were completely free and fair (45 percent) or free and fair with minor problems (20 percent). Less than 10 percent of respondents said the election was free and fair with major problems, though 13 percent said the election was not free and fair at all. These figures are a sizeable increase from 2013, when only a third (37 percent) of Egyptians felt that parliamentary elections held from 2011 to 2012 were either completely free and fair



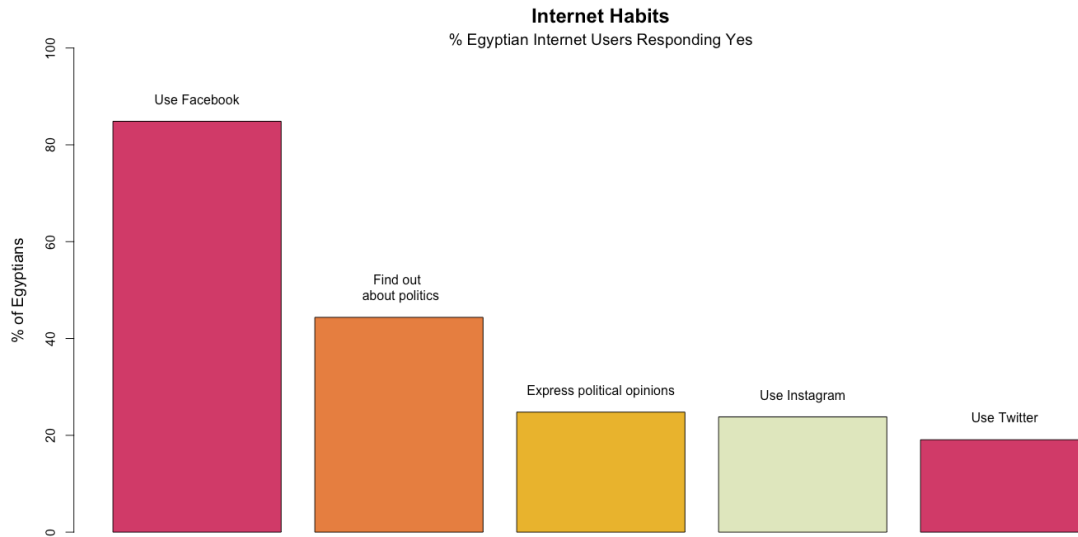
or free and fair with minor problems. Meanwhile, in 2011, just 11 percent said the 2010 parliamentary elections, which were carried out in the last months of President Mubarak's rule, were free and fair.



## Media

Few Egyptians are interested in politics, with just 27 percent saying they are interested or very interested. By comparison, 32 percent say they are somewhat interested while the plurality (40 percent) say they are not interested at all. Though the percentage of Egyptians who follow political developments is relatively small, citizens are more likely follow the news through television than daily newspapers. Overall, 46 percent of Egyptians watch television for political news, while just 9 percent follow political news through the daily press. Almost half of all Egyptians (46 percent) rarely or never watch television for political news, and 87 percent rarely or never read daily newspapers for political news.

Internet usage varies widely in Egypt: only 36 percent of Egyptians use the internet overall. Ten percent of Egyptians say they are online "almost all day," though 23 percent report being online daily (15 percent) or weekly (8 percent), but nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of Egyptians do not use the internet. Of those who do use the internet, 44 percent use it to find out about political activities and 22 percent use it to express an opinion about political issues. Most Egyptian internet users are active on Facebook (85 percent), though Twitter and Instagram users are fewer (19 percent and 24 percent, respectively).

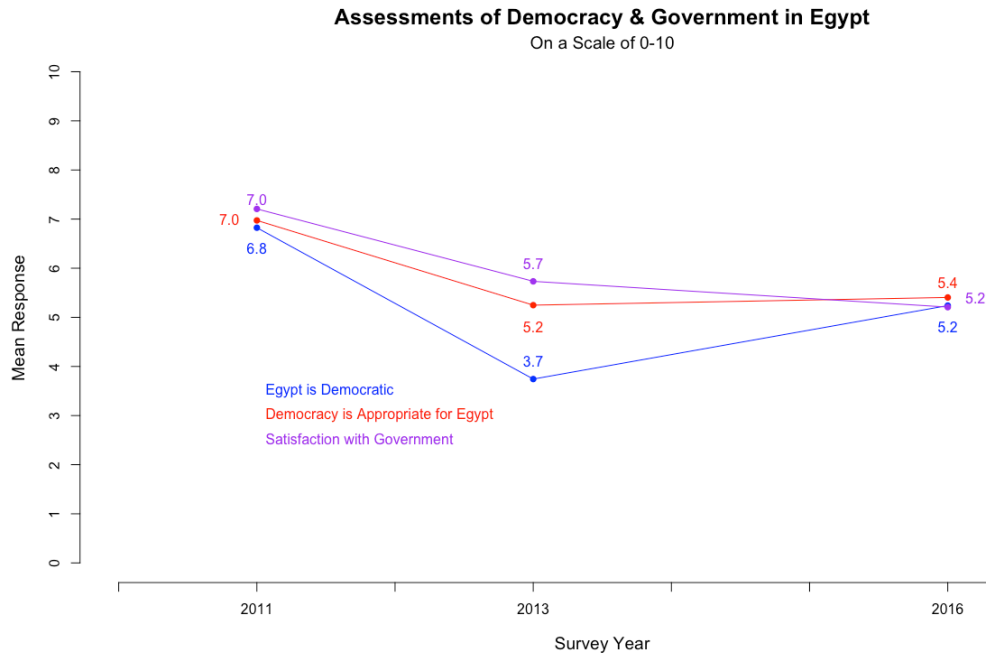


## Democracy

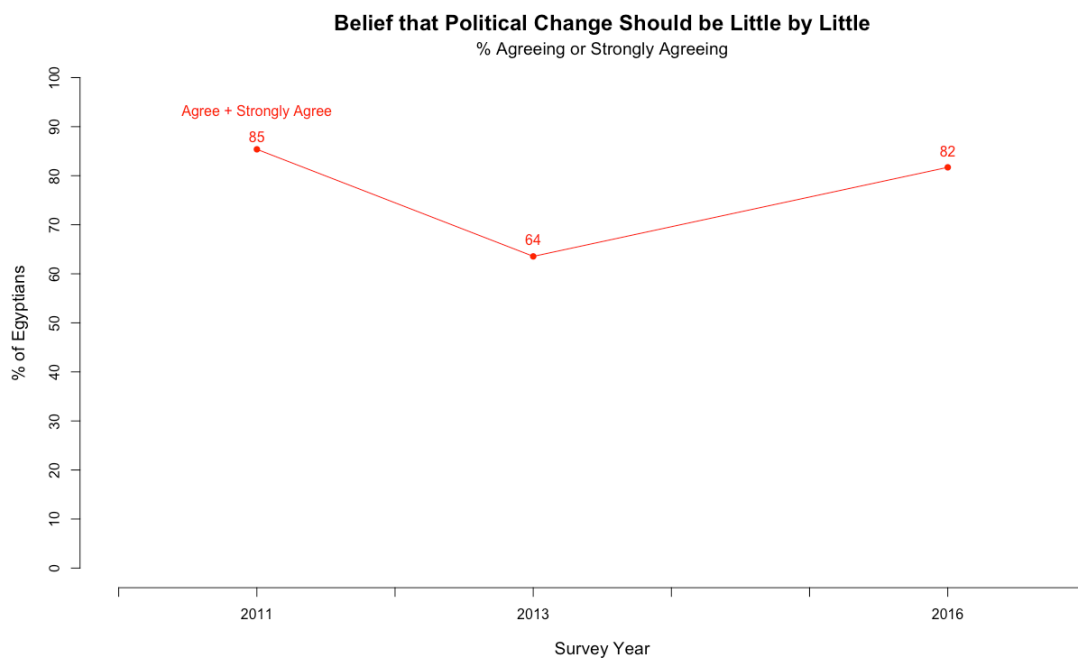
Few Egyptians belong to organizations or formal groups (6 percent) or political parties (1 percent). Only 3 percent of Egyptians report having attended a meeting to discuss a subject or sign a petition in the last three years. Similarly, only 3 percent report having participated in a protest, march, or sit-in.

On a 10-point scale, Egyptians are more likely to believe that Egypt is democratic than they did in 2013. Satisfaction with government and the extent to which Egyptians think democracy is appropriate for Egypt have changed little since 2013.

Despite the political upheavals the country has experienced since 2011, a majority (53 percent) of Egyptians believe that “Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government”. Meanwhile, 21 percent of Egyptians believe that “under some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable” and 19 percent believe that “for people like me, it does not matter what kind of government we have.”



In 2016, the vast majority (82 percent) of Egyptians say that political reform should be introduced little by little instead of all at once. This percentage is 18 points greater than in 2013 (64 percent) when the survey was carried out in the final months of President Morsi's government. However, it is virtually unchanged from 2011 (85 percent), when the survey was carried out six months after the fall of President Mubarak.



When asked to identify the essential characteristics of a democracy from among four statements, most Egyptians focus on economic definitions. Nearly half (45 percent) choose the statement: “the government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor” while 18 percent say “government does not waste any public money”. Fewer focus on the two political definitions: just 19 percent choose “people choose the government leaders in free and fair elections” while 13 percent say “people are free to express their political views openly”. When presented with another set of statements, 58 percent say “basic necessities, like food, clothes and shelter, are provided for all”, followed by “the government provides people with quality public services” (24 percent), “the legislature has oversight over the government” (8 percent) and “people are free to organize political groups” (6 percent).

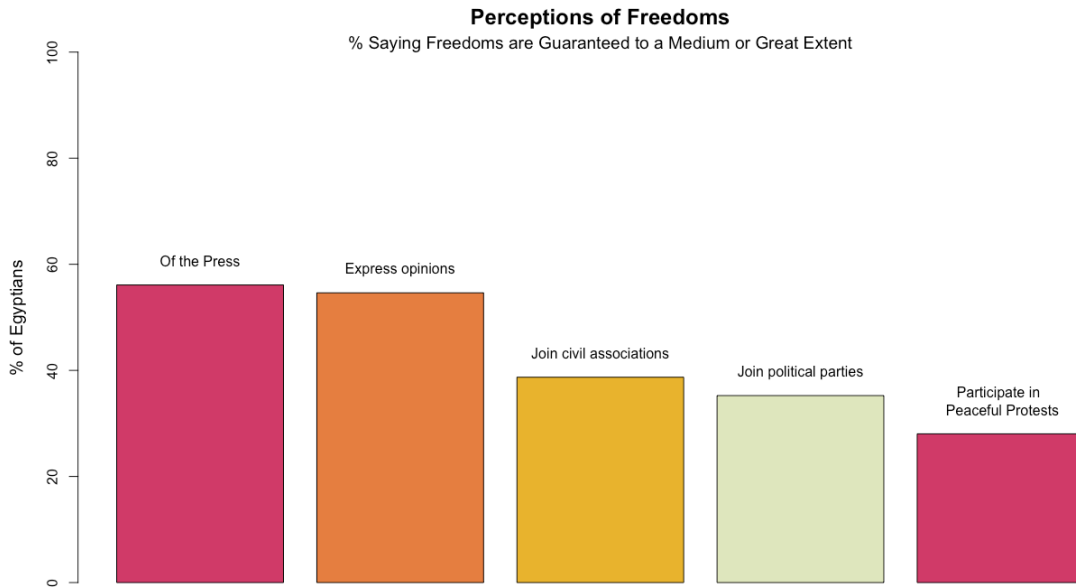
Egyptians are far from united in support of a single type of political system in the abstract. The greatest support is for liberal democracy, described as a “parliamentary system in which nationalist, left wing, right wing, and Islamist parties compete in parliamentary elections” which 39 percent say is suitable or very suitable. However, relative to 2013, support for liberal democracy has fallen by 30 points (69 percent in 2013).

Despite tepid support for liberal democracy, few Egyptians prefer another system. Only 7 percent find a “parliamentary system in which only Islamist parties compete in parliamentary elections” suitable or very suitable while just 9 percent say the same about “a parliamentary system in which only non-religious parties compete in parliamentary elections”. Similarly, only 9 percent support “a system governed by Islamic law in which there are no political parties or elections”. Meanwhile, support for a system where the “government that provides for the needs of its citizens without giving them the right to participate in the political process” is suitable or very suitable to just 15 percent.

## **Civil Liberties**

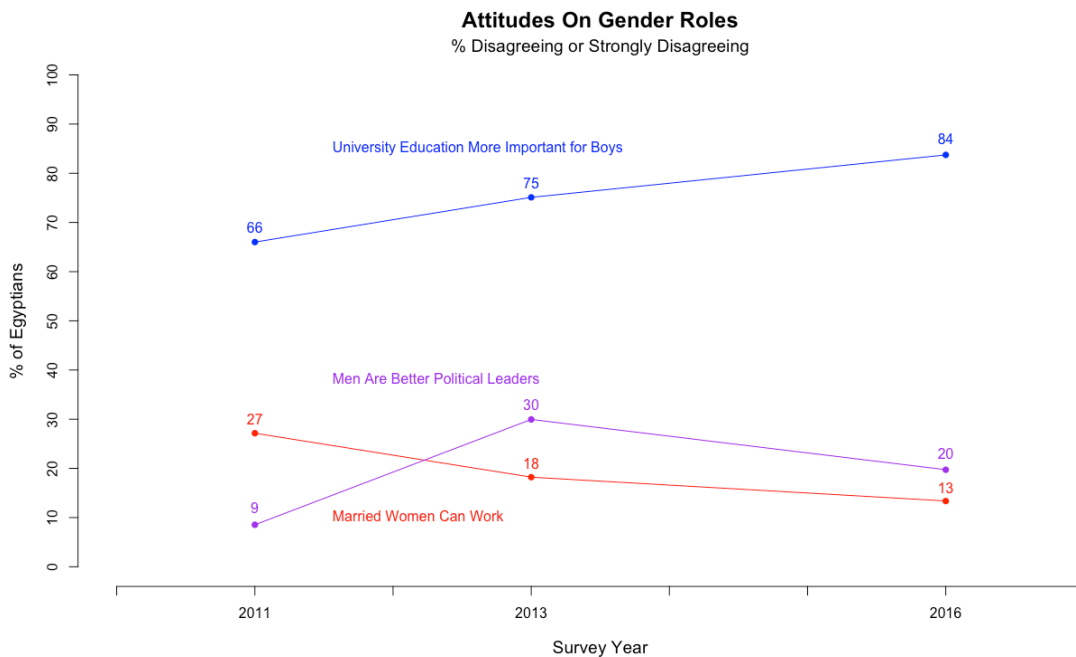
Despite concerns about the state of media freedoms in Egypt, a slim majority of Egyptians believe that freedom of the press (56 percent) and the freedom to express opinions (55 percent) are guaranteed to a medium or great extent. Fewer Egyptians say other basic freedoms are guaranteed, however, including freedom to join civil associations (39 percent), join political parties (35 percent), or participate in peaceful protests (28 percent).

A majority (57 percent) also believe that government-sanctioned human rights violations have been committed. Only about a quarter (28 percent) find human rights violations completely or somewhat justifiable in the name of promoting security and stability. About half (49 percent) believe these violations are not justifiable at all.

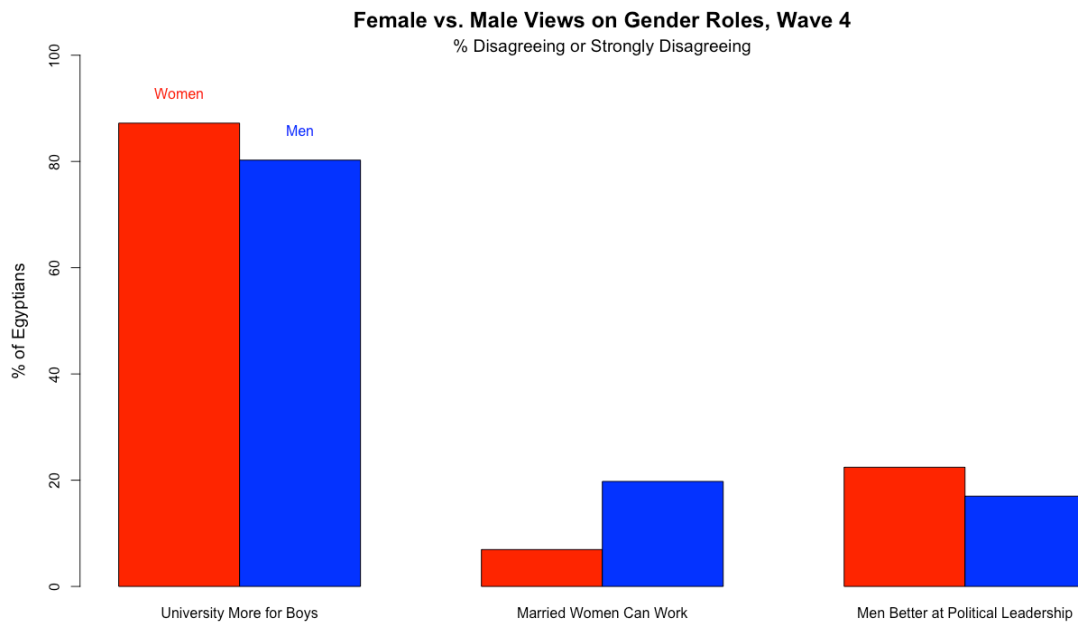


## Culture and Religion

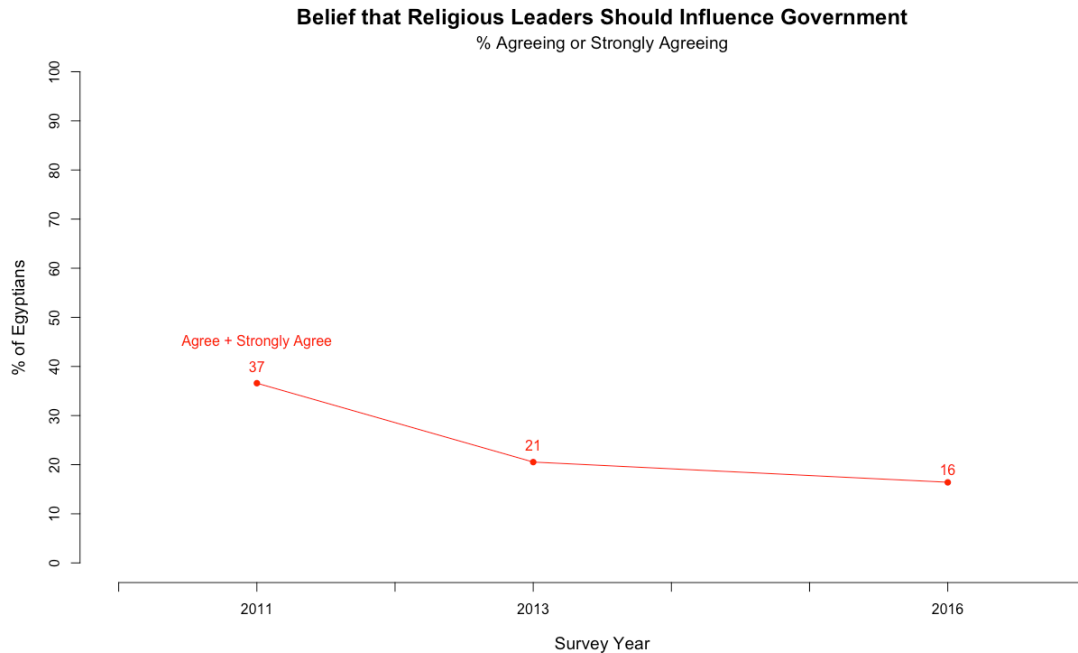
Most Egyptians (61 percent) agree or strongly agree that a woman can become president or prime minister of a Muslim country, though 79 percent agree or strongly agree that men are better at political leadership (compared to 66 percent in 2013). Similarly, 72 percent agree or strongly agree that husbands should have final say in all decisions concerning the family.



On education, only 15 percent agree or strongly agree that university education for males is more important than university education for females, a decrease from 22 percent in 2013. Similarly, 86 percent of Egyptians agree or strongly agree that a married woman can work outside the home if she wants to (compared to 84 percent in 2013). On inheritance, 96 percent of Egyptians agree or strongly agree that women and men should have equal inheritance rights (though respondents may have interpreted this question to mean equal access to the inheritance rights afforded to them under traditional interpretations of Islamic law, where men inherit twice as much as women).



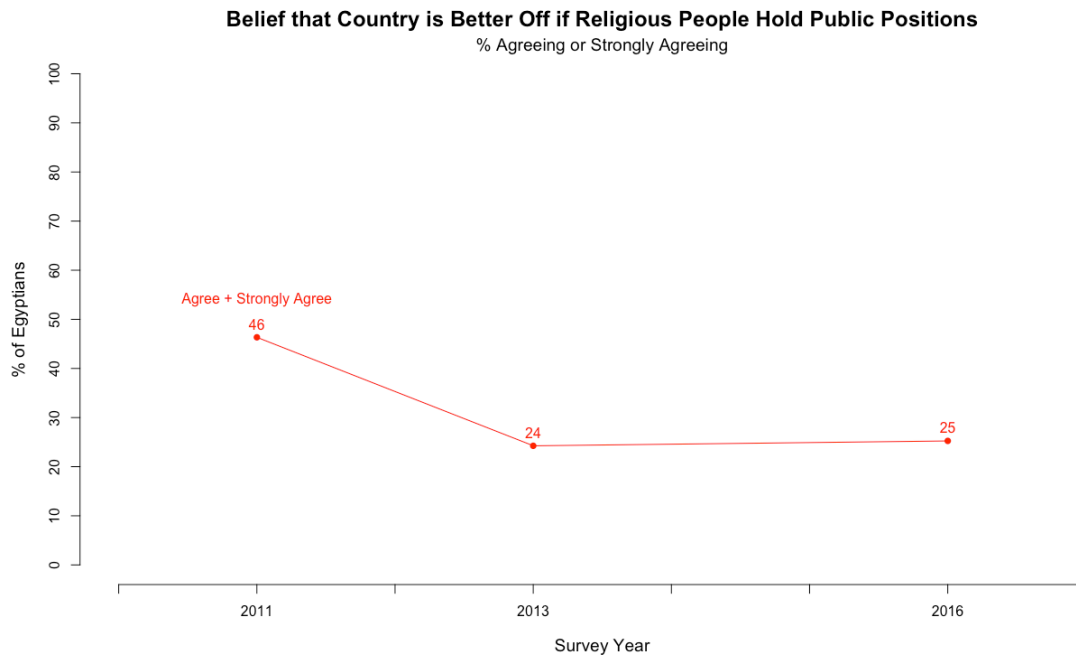
Half of all Egyptians (50 percent) believe that laws should be based equally on shariah and the will of the people. By comparison, in 2013, 68 percent of Egyptians agreed or strongly agreed that “the government and parliament should enact laws in accordance with citizens’ wishes with regard to certain subjects and in accordance with Islamic law with regard to other subjects.” Meanwhile, in 2016, over a third (34 percent) think laws should be based mostly or entirely on the shariah, and 12 percent think laws should be based mostly or entirely on the will of the people. Support for shariah has declined considerably since 2013, when 70 percent of Egyptians agreed or strongly agreed that the government and parliament should enact laws in accordance with Islamic law. Also, in 2013, 55 percent of Egyptians agreed or strongly agreed that “the government and parliament should enact laws in accordance with the people’s wishes”.



Support for political Islam in Egypt remains low. For example, few Egyptians support giving religious leaders influence over decisions of government (16 percent) and few say it would be better if more religious people held public office (25 percent). These findings are relatively similar to 2013, but significant lower than in 2011. It appears that having lived under a government led by the Freedom and Justice Party, which was closely linked with the Muslim Brotherhood, led Egyptians to lose confidence in political Islam.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For additional discussion of this trend, see Robbins, Michael. 2015. "After the Arab Spring: People Still Want Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 26(4): 80-89.



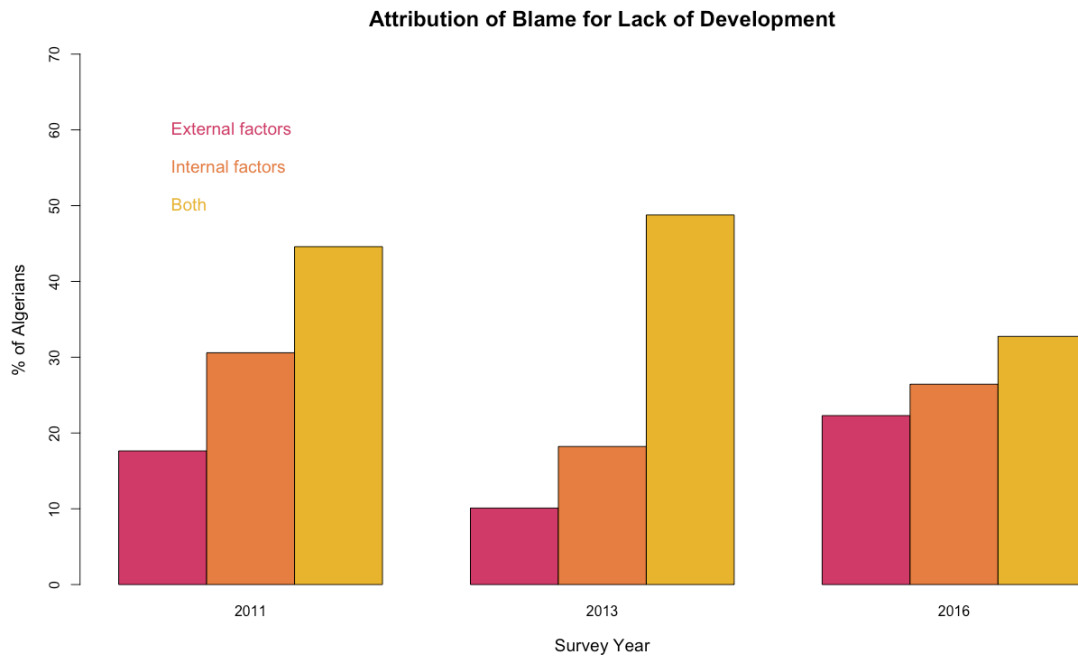
## International Relations

A majority of Egyptians want relations with Saudi Arabia to become stronger (84 percent), but fewer Egyptians are enthusiastic about stronger relations with other countries. Overall, 50 percent want relations with Russia to become stronger, compared to 33 percent with the EU and 32 percent with the United States. Egyptians are even less enthusiastic about stronger relations with Turkey (19 percent) and Iran (8 percent). Respondents were also asked about the influence of other countries on the development of democracy in Egypt. A majority of Egyptians (51 percent) say that the influence of the United States has been somewhat or very negative on the development of democracy in Egypt. In comparison, fewer Egyptians say that the influence of the European Union (31 percent), Russia (20 percent), and neighboring countries (13 percent) has been somewhat or very negative.

When asked “What policy do you think would be the most positive thing that the US could do in your country?”, a majority of Egyptians (62 percent) say the US should not get involved. In contrast, few Egyptians say the US should resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict (15 percent), promote economic development (8 percent), promote democracy (4 percent), and promote women’s rights (2 percent). Meanwhile, a majority of Egyptians (58 percent) find that demands for reform from abroad are unacceptable in principle or unacceptable due to their harm to national interests.

When asked about the primary reasons for their country’s lack of development, a third (33 percent) of Egyptians blame both internal and external factors equally, compared to 26 percent who blame internal factors and 22 percent who blame external factors. This represents a change from 2013, when Egyptians were less likely to blame external factors (10 percent in 2013).





Nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of Egyptians think Western interference is an obstacle to reform in Egypt. However, 44 percent of Egyptians think Americans are good people, compared to 28 percent who disagree. Similarly, 49 percent of Egyptians say that American and Western culture have positive aspects, compared to 28 percent who disagree. Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of Egyptians think that it is very or somewhat good that the world is becoming more connected. On sectarianism, 77 percent of Egyptians are concerned with sectarian divisions spreading throughout the region. Egyptians are divided on the viability of the two-state solution: 45 percent support it, and 43 percent oppose it. A majority of Egyptians (60 percent) think that Israel poses the greatest threat to the country's stability.

### Select Demographics

Among the 43 percent of Egyptians who report that they work, 27 percent work in the public sector and 73 percent work in the private sector. Among those who do not work (57 percent), 10 percent are retirees, 65 percent are housewives, 16 percent are students, and 8 percent are unemployed.

When asked about their household possessions, 46 percent of Egyptians report owning a computer and 11 percent report owning a car. A majority (57 percent) own a non-smart mobile phone and over a third (34 percent) have an Internet-compatible smartphone.

Egyptians continue to identify as religious in large numbers: 36 percent say they are religious, 60 percent say they are somewhat religious, and 3 percent say they are not religious.