

Arab Barometer III

Iraq Public Opinion Survey Report - 2013/2014 November 2014

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1. Introduction

The Third wave of the Arab Barometer survey was conducted in Iraq from June 6 – July 17, 2013. This report examines the views of Iraqi citizens on issues of religion, economics, politics, satisfaction with the government and other institutions, trust, attitudes towards women, and their views of the United States. It also analyzes international relations in the Arab world and views of the Arab Spring. Additionally, this report highlights ethnic, educational, and gender differences when relevant.

A total of 1,215 respondents were interviewed across nine governorates; the sample was distributed according to the population size. Some of the governorates were not covered due to safety and security reasons. Table 1 shows the sample distribution.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Governorate	Percent
Al-Basrah	16.0
Babil (Babylon)	12.7
Ninawa (Nineveh)	14.6
Diyala	8.2
As-Sulaymaniyah	4.6
Erbil	5.2
Baghdad	23.4
Kirkuk	7.4
Al-Qadisiyyah	7.9
Total	100.0

The gender distribution of respondents is 51.5% male and 48.5% female. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to age group. As shown in the table, about 65% of the respondents are age 40 or under. The ethnic composition of the sample is as follows: 84.5% Arab, 13.9% Kurdish, 1.6% other.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Age	
Age Groups	Percent
18-29	42.4
30-39	22.3
40-49	18.3
50-59	11.7
60+	5.2
Total	100.0

Table 3: Ethnicity Distribution

Ethnicity	
	Percent
Arab	84.5
Kurdish	13.9
Assyrian	1.6
Total	100.0

The modal respondent possesses an elementary education (29.5%), with slightly fewer holding a preparatory/basic education (26.7%). Roughly two-thirds of the respondents hold an education level between elementary and secondary. Meanwhile, 12% of respondents hold a BA and 0.5% respondents possess an MA or above.

Table 4: Level of Education Distribution

Level of education	
	Percent
Illiterate/Literate	8.1
Elementary	29.5
Preparatory/Basic	26.7
Secondary	13.7
Mid-level diploma/professional or technical	10.0
BA	11.5
MA and above	.5
Total	100.0

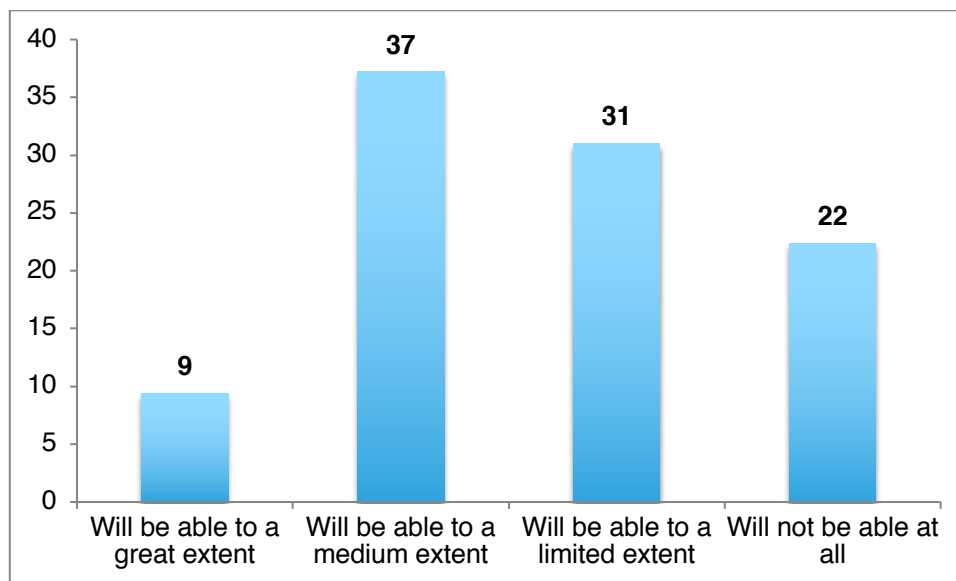
The average household income is 90,9870 dinars (about US\$782) per month. The 25th percentile of income in the sample is 500,000 dinars and the 75th percentile is 1,000,000. Only 5% of respondents report a monthly household income of less than 300,000 dinars (about US\$258). Sunnis report an average monthly income of roughly US\$840 compared to US\$726 for Shi'ites. Among Arabs, the average monthly income is US\$763 USD while it is US\$952 for Kurds.

2. Situation in Iraq

Generally Iraqis reported that security, safety, and economic prosperity were the most critical issues, especially given the ongoing turmoil in the region. The two most common responses to the most important challenges facing Iraq are the economic situation including poverty, unemployment and price increases (53%) and financial and administrative corruption (33%).¹ When asked about the second most important challenges facing the country, 37% of the respondents respond achieving stability and internal security while 31% say curbing foreign interferences.

Respondents are not overly optimistic on the government's capacity to solve these two issues in the coming five years. A plurality says that the government will be able to solve these issues to a medium extent (37%) whereas nearly as many say to a limited extent (31%). Only 9% say they will be able to do so to a great extent.

Figure 1: To what extent will the government be able to solve these two issues in the coming five years?



Iraq is often perceived as an extremely religious society. Nevertheless, only a small percentage of respondents (20.2%) said “Inshallah” – or “God willing” before giving their response to the question

¹ Note that 67% identified economic issues as being most important in 2011, while 25% had selected financial/administrative corruption

about the government being able to solve these challenges. Thus, given sectarian identification is a key element of Iraqi identity, the relatively low percentage to provide this response is worth noting.

Figure 2: Was the first answer of the respondent “In Sha-Allah”?

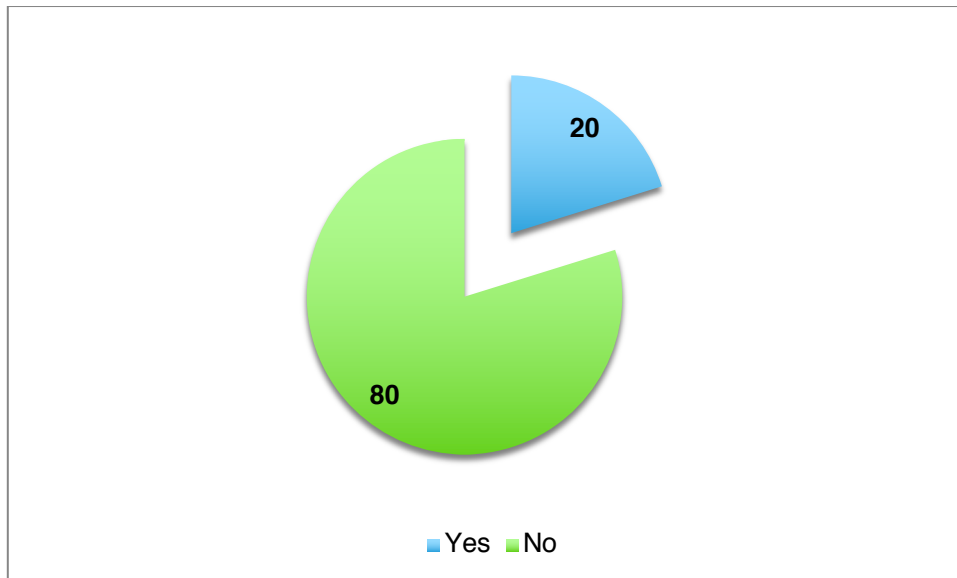
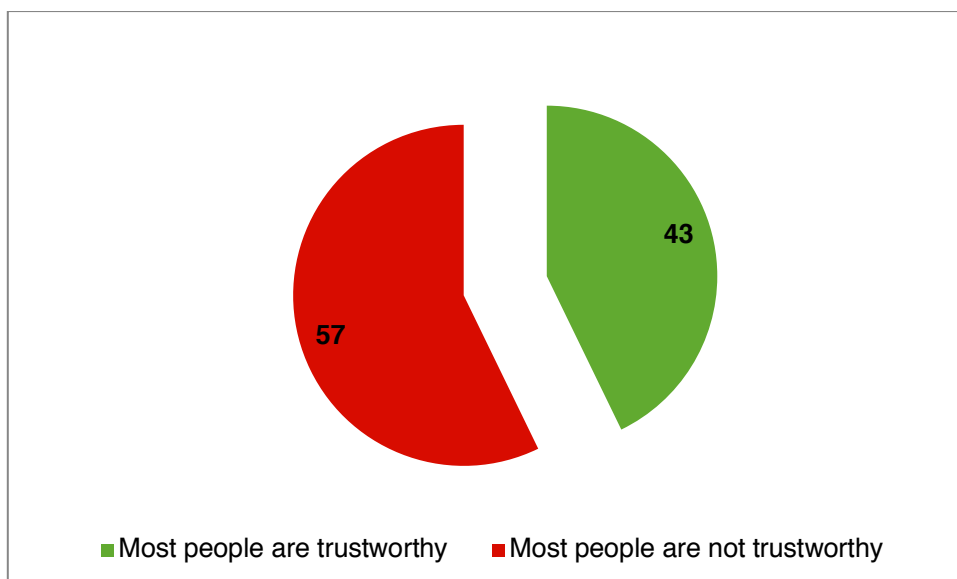


Figure 3 shows that generally speaking, most Iraqis (57%) think that the majority of people are trustworthy, although the gap between both responses is rather low. This could be due to the past sectarian nature of politics, where being a different religion or ethnicity to the power in place meant less personal security.

Figure 3: Are most people are trustworthy or not?



A similar trend exists when respondents were asked about whether they thought their family’s safety and security was ensured (figure 4). Most say that they feel that their personal safety is insured (47.0%) although a large percentage say that they do not feel safe (33.1%). Comparing the results by ethnicity, the survey reveals that Assyrians and Kurds are more likely to feel secure than Arabs (figure 5).

Figure 4: Personal security

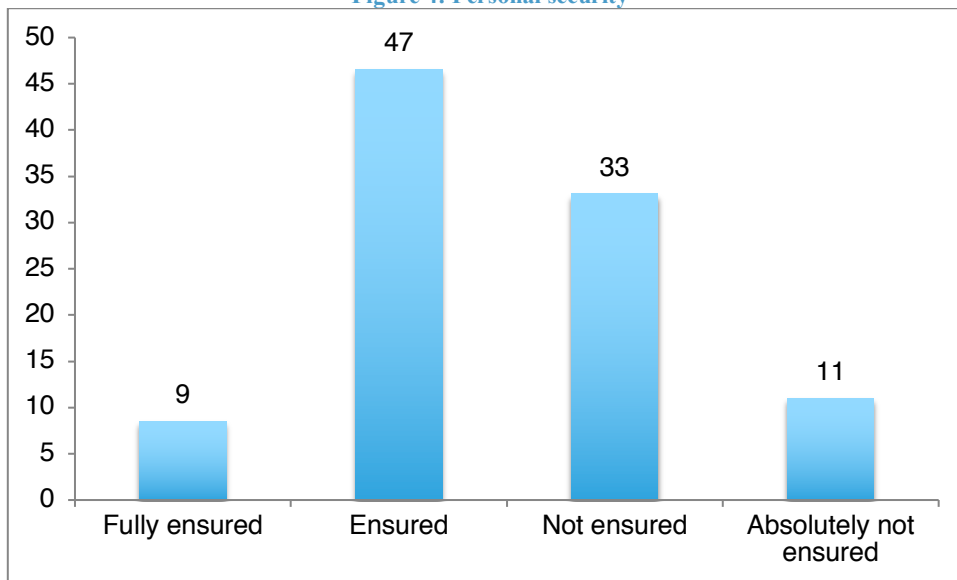
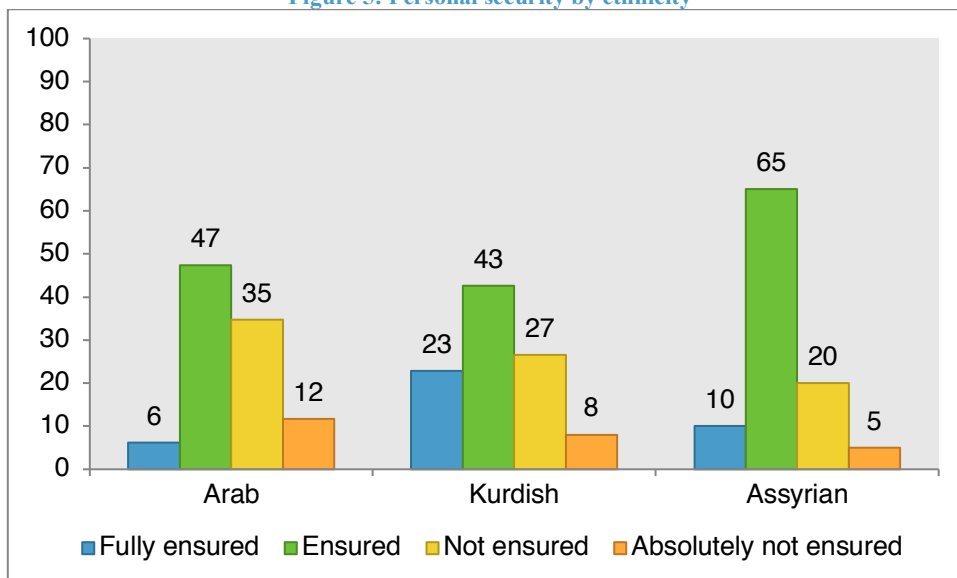
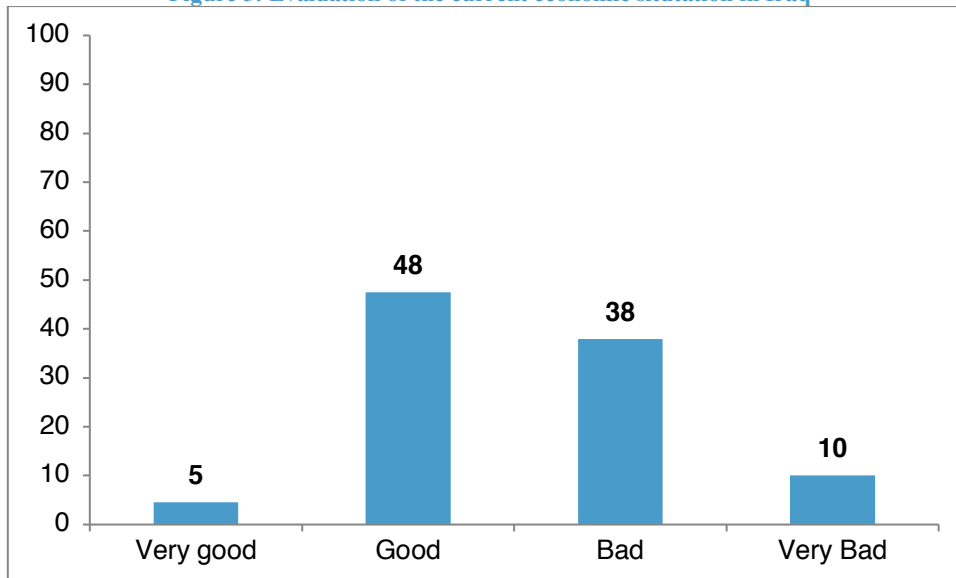


Figure 5: Personal security by ethnicity



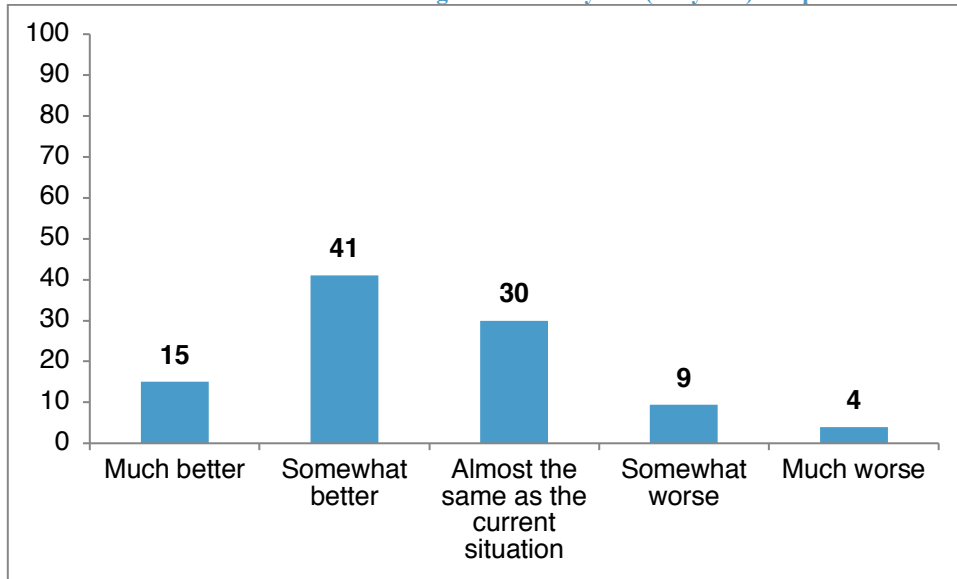
Iraqis are divided on the state of the economic situation in their country (figure 6). Roughly half say it is good or very good (52%) while the other half say it is bad to very bad (48%). Ratings differ by ethnic background; Assyrians are the most positive about the economic situation, followed by the Kurds and then Arabs.

Figure 5: Evaluation of the current economic situation in Iraq



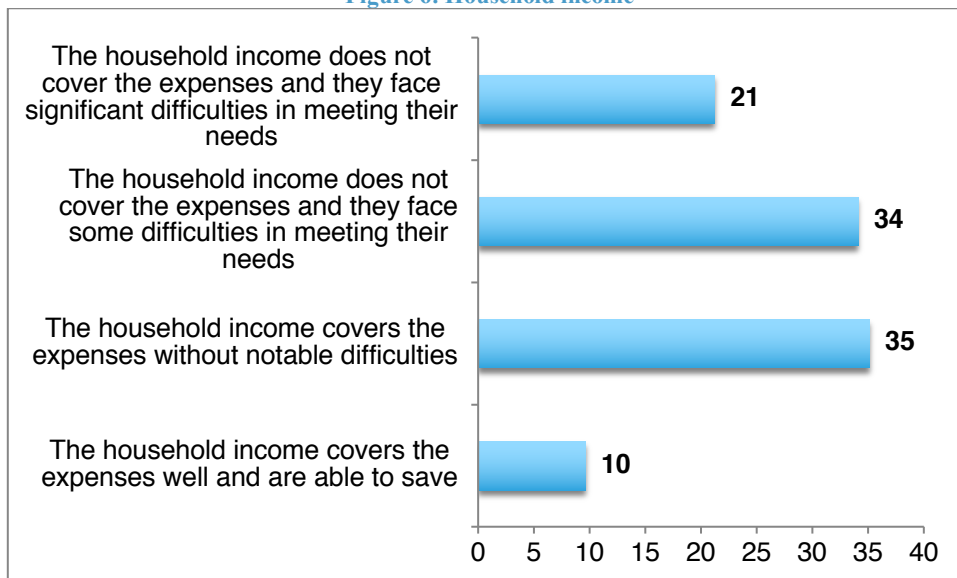
When asked what they think the economic situation in Iraq will be like during the next 3-5 years compared to the current situation, 41% of respondents say it will be somewhat better followed by 30% who say that it will be about the same (figure 7). While the economic situation is not overly positive, this result could be due in part to the high levels of corruption and the lack of diversification of the economy, which is still centered on oil.

Figure 7: What will the economic situation be like during the next few years (3-5 years) compared to the current situation?



The poor economic outcomes result in difficult circumstances for Iraqi households (figure 8). Although one-in-ten says that their income covers their needs and they can save, the majority of the respondents indicate they are unable to save money based on their income. Among these respondents, 35% answer say their household income covers their expenses without notable difficulties, but 34% say that they do face difficulties in meeting their needs and 21% that their household income does not cover their expenses and they face significant difficulties in meeting their needs. On the other hand, 87% of the respondents stated that they owned a home, while 12% stated that they are renting the house they are living in.

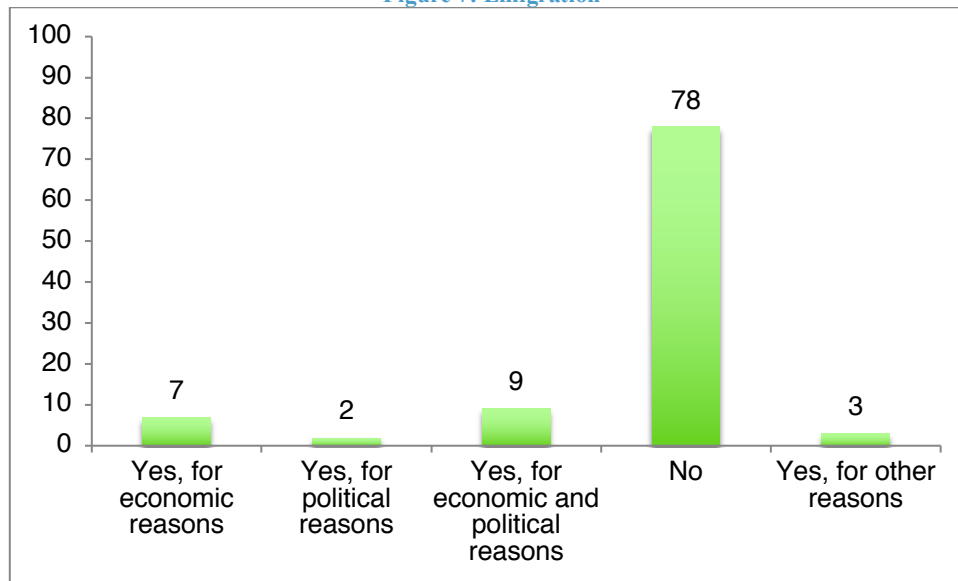
Figure 6: Household income



An overwhelming majority of families (96%) do not receive remittances from someone living abroad, nor do they think about emigrating from Iraq (78%) for economic or political reasons (figure 9). Together, these findings indicate that despite being in a poor financial state and believing that the

economy will not improve, Iraqis are committed to enduring the ongoing challenges and building their country.

Figure 7: Emigration

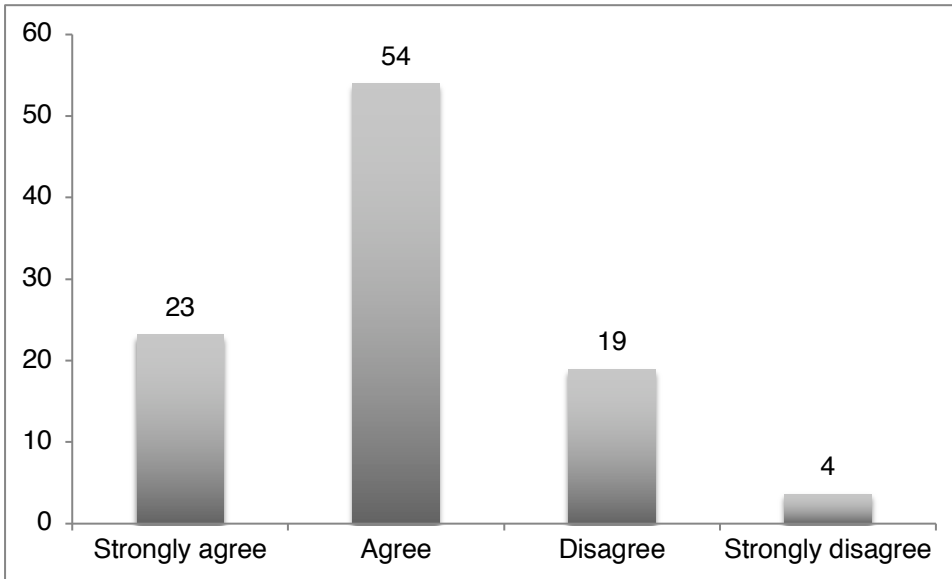


3. Democracy

In terms of what Iraqis believe to be the two most important features of democracy in Iraq, the most common responses are the opportunity to change the government through elections (32%) and eliminating financial and administrative corruption (29%). The choice of these two definitions are likely linked to the impact the Saddam Hussein regime had on the country, as well as the misgivings about the current government.

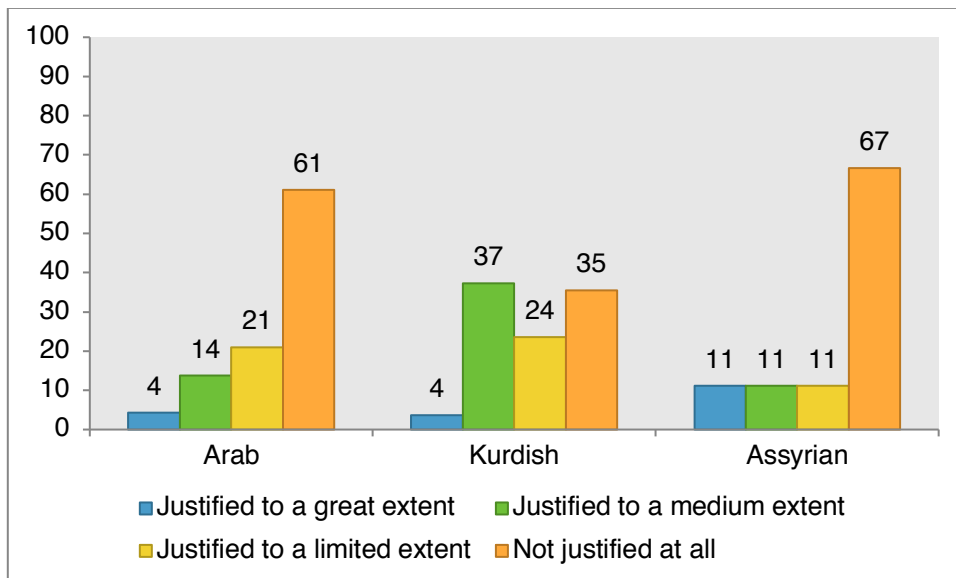
Despite the political challenges since the US invasion in 2003, a majority of the respondents (77%) agree or strongly agree that democracy, despite its problems, is better than other systems, with only 4% disagreeing strongly on the matter (figure 10).

Figure 8: Is a democratic system better than other systems?



Despite years of instability, the majority of Iraqis say that a lack of respect for human rights is not justified at all in order to maintain security in Iraq under any circumstances (58%). Interestingly, Kurds are the least likely ethnic group to hold this view (figure 11). This finding may be related to the instability of neighboring countries and the rise of the Islamic State, meaning Kurds are willing to pay a higher price for security than others.

Figure 9: To what extent is the lack of respect for human rights justified in order to maintain security in Iraq, by ethnicity



Additional, the survey asked to what extent respondents thought democracy is appropriate for Iraq. The answers were measured on a 0-10 scale where 0 stands for completely inappropriate and 10 is completely appropriate. The overall weighted average is 5.4. Secondly, they were asked to what extent Iraq is democratic, where 0 means completely undemocratic and 10 means democratic to the greatest extent. The weighted average is 5.6. For both items the majority of responses fall towards

the middle of the scale. The lack of decisiveness in the responses indicates that while democracy is widely desired, few Iraqis think it has been achieved and many worry that it may not function in a country like Iraq. These findings are similar to trends observed in the second wave of the Arab Barometer.

4. Politics and Media

When asked to what extent the respondents feel that they are being treated equally to other citizens in Iraq, 44% say to a medium extent, while 34% do so to a limited extent (figure 12). Although Shias and Kurds may feel that their rights and freedom have increased following the downfall of the Saddam dictatorship, Sunnis likely feel more vulnerable, as the Arab Barometer second wave Iraq country report also pointed out (figure 13).

Figure 10: To what extent are respondents being treated equally to other citizens?

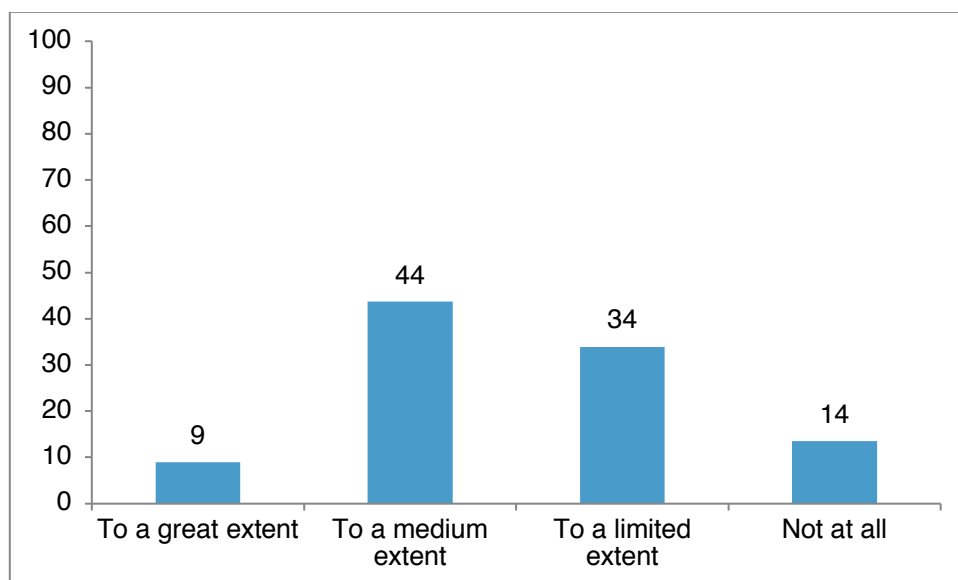
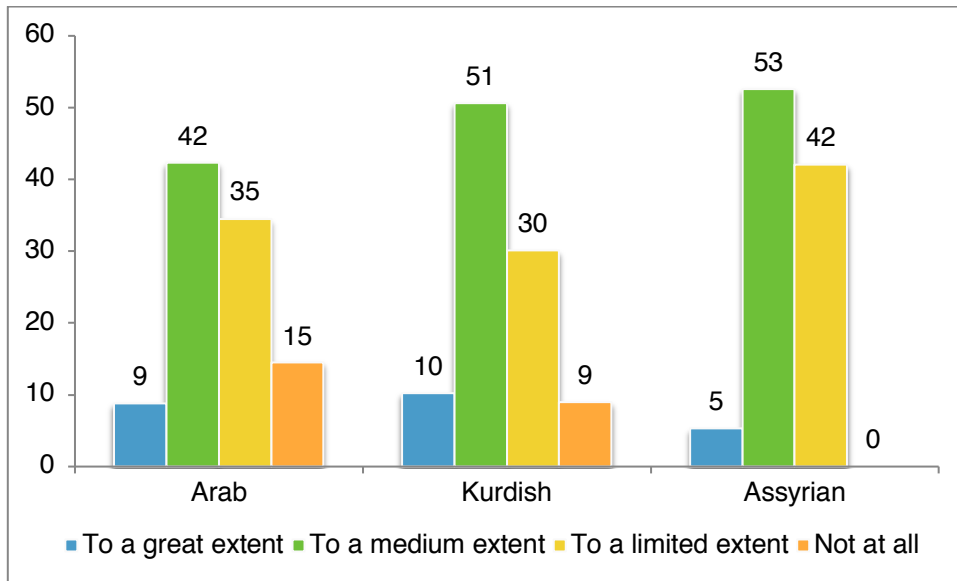


Figure 11: Treated equally, by ethnicity



Additionally, the survey asked, based on their experience, how difficult it is to obtain access to the concerned official to file a complaint when they felt that their rights had been violated (figure 14). The plurality has never tried (29%), but of those who have there are clear divisions. About one-quarter say easy (24%) and an equal percentage say difficult (25%). This suggests that depending on connections, or due to ethnic or religious similarities or differences, experiences could vary widely.

Figure 12: How easy or difficult is it to obtain access to the concerned official to file a complaint when the respondent feels that their rights have been violated?

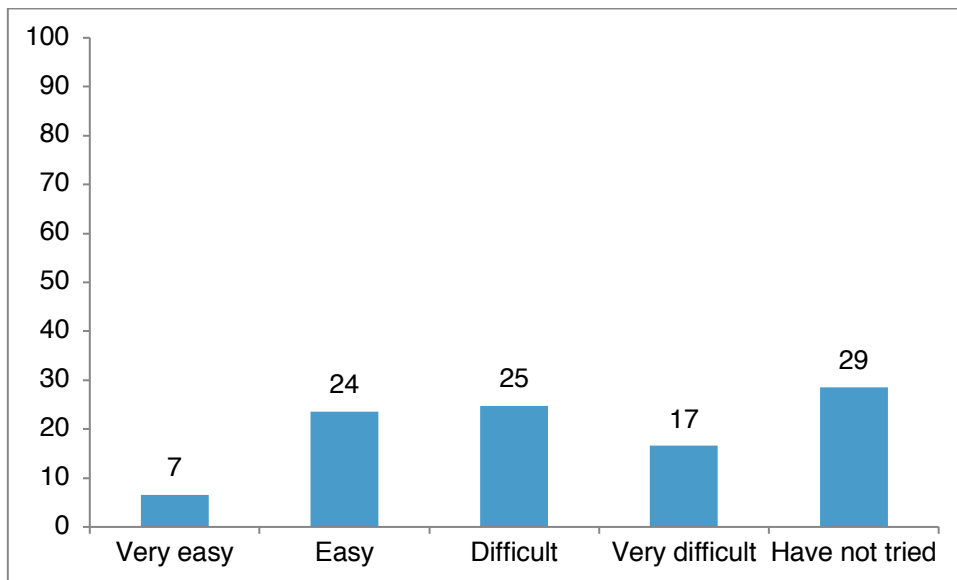


Figure 15 shows the interest of the respondents in politics. While many say that they were interested (33%) or very interested (10%), most state they were only slightly interested (41%). A possible explanation for low levels of interest could be due to the general sense that politics are too

complicated and cannot be understood (figure 16). Overall, a clear majority of respondents (74%) agree or strongly agree with this statement.

Figure 15: Interest in politics

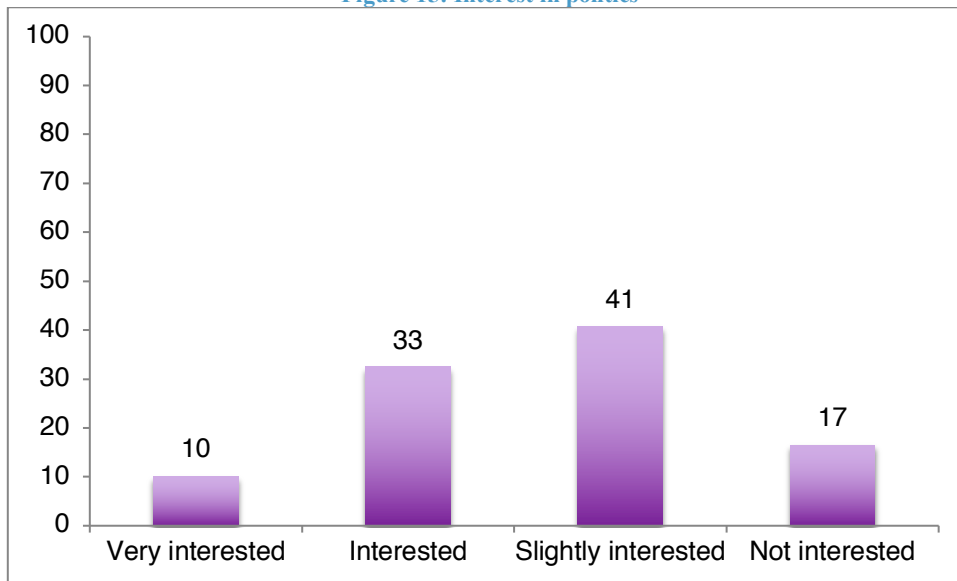
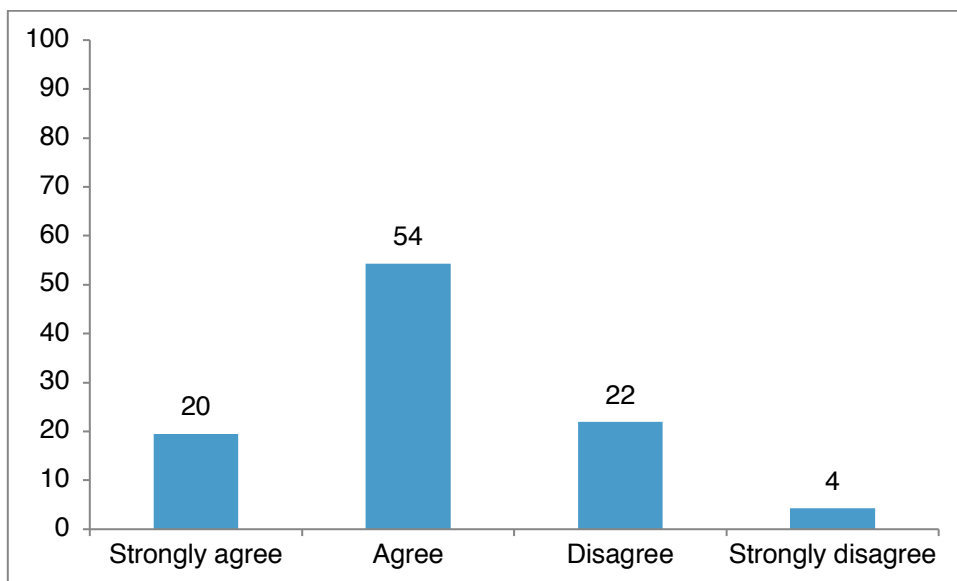


Figure 16: Are politics sometimes complicated?



The survey asks about the media citizens use media to follow political news, which provides some insight into the low levels of interest and concern about the complicated nature of politics. The primary means of following political news is television with 69% using it daily and just 1% not using it at all. The radio is the second most popular option, with most people listening to it a few or several times a week to follow political news. Meanwhile, 57% never follow the news through the daily press. The weekly press is followed even less, with 64% stating that they do not follow political news at all

using this medium. The internet is not a widespread source of political news with only 19% of respondents saying they follow political news on it.

Two-thirds of respondents (66%) indicate that they voted in the last parliamentary election in March 2010 (figure 17). However, when asked whether they attended a meeting to discuss a subject or sign a petition at any point in the past three years, 78% state that they have never participated in either (58%). This shows that although citizens vote at high levels, most are not actively engaged in other forms of political participation.

Figure 13: Voted in the last parliamentary elections?

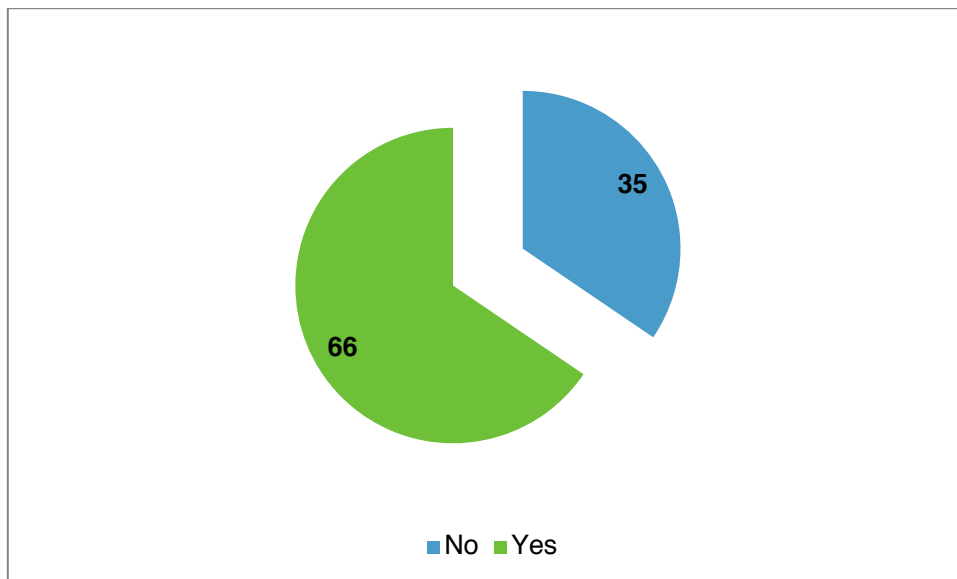
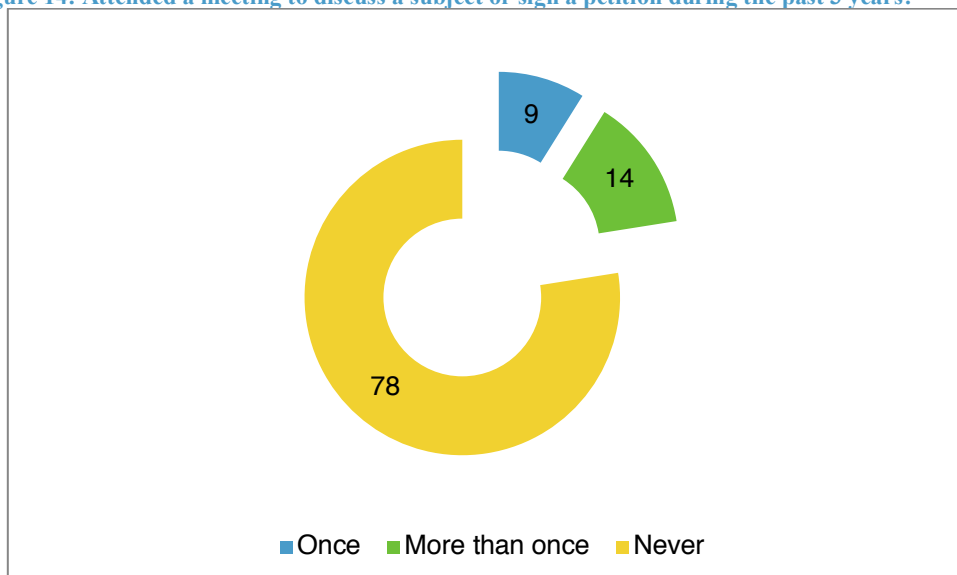


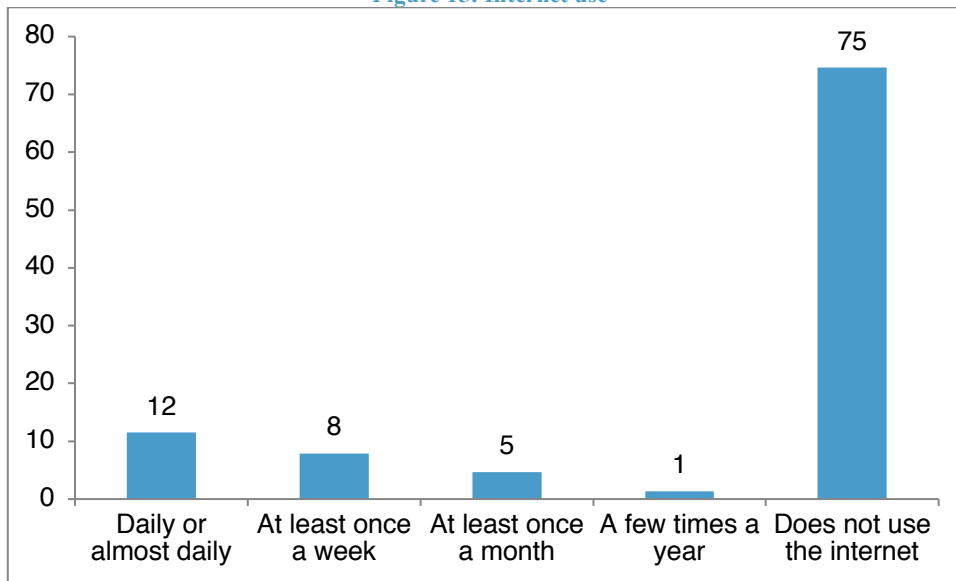
Figure 14: Attended a meeting to discuss a subject or sign a petition during the past 3 years?



The survey also included a number of questions about internet usage. The growing importance of the internet around the world makes it essential to understanding the role it plays in the Iraqi civic and political scene. When asked whether they used the internet, 12% of respondents say they use it daily

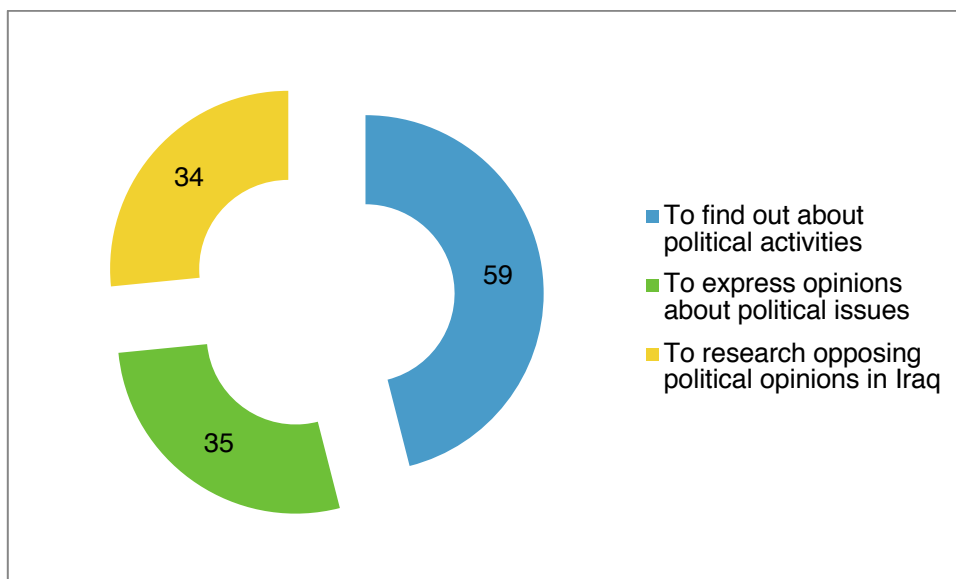
or almost daily, whereas 75% said they do not use the internet (figure 19). More educated respondents are more likely to use the internet, but nevertheless it is not widely used by the vast majority of people.

Figure 15: Internet use



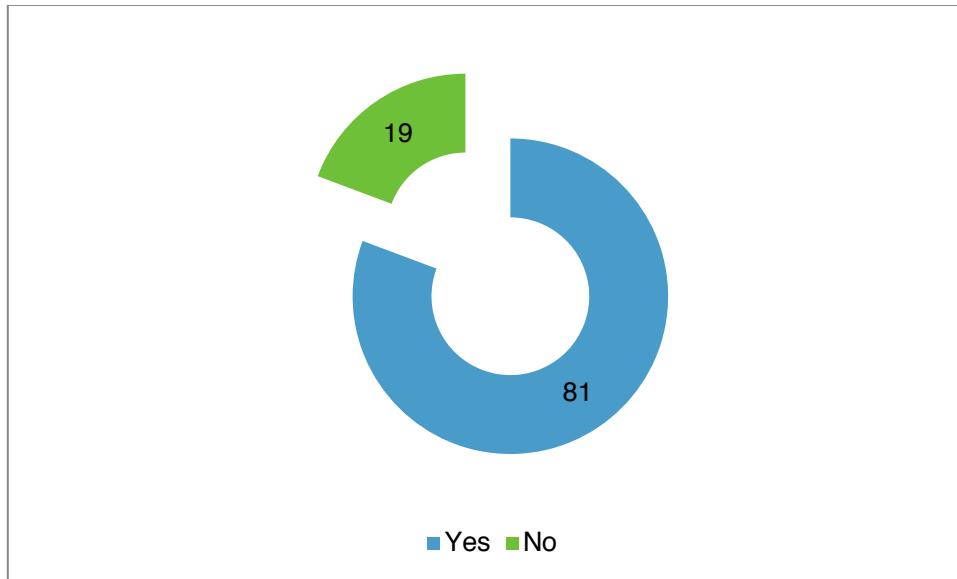
Among Iraqis who do use the internet, 59% of the participants say they use it in order to find out about political activities in Iraq compared with to 41% who do not (figure 20). On the other hand, only 35% of the respondents use the internet in order to express their opinion about political issues and 34% use it to find out about opposing political opinions in Iraq. A sizable minority does not use the internet for political means, implying that for many information on political activities or issues are dispensed through different ways. The use of internet to spread support during the Arab Spring over the region has not led to an increase of its use in Iraq either.

Figure 16: Respondents who use the internet for different political activities...



The vast majority of Iraqis (81%) believe that people nowadays are able to criticize the government without fear (figure 21).

Figure 17: Is it possible to criticize the government without fear?

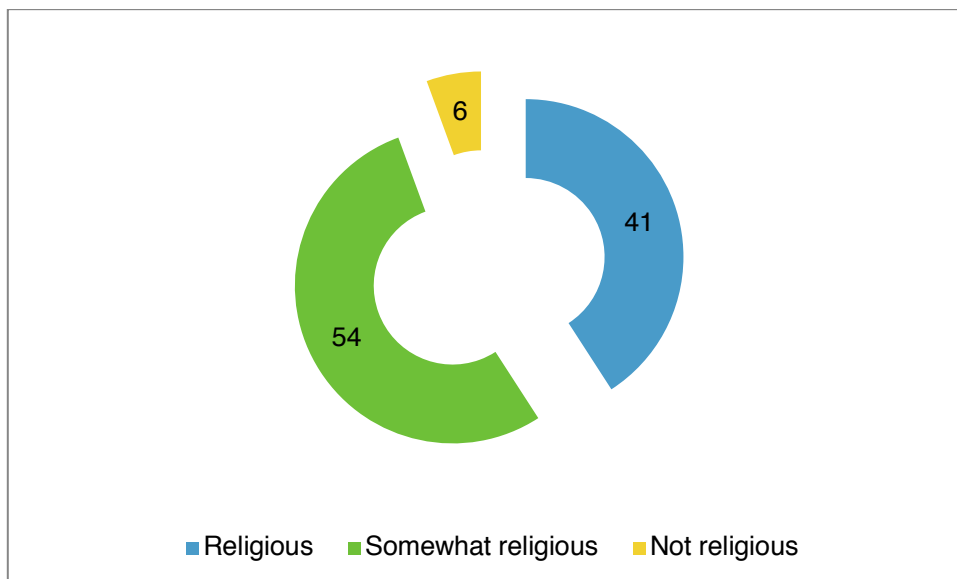


Despite discontent about the state of their country, the majority of Iraqis (68%) agree with the statement “political reform should be implemented in stages rather than immediately”.

5. Religion and Society

The survey also examines the role religion plays in private and public life (figure 22). When asked about their levels of personal piety, 54% describe themselves as somewhat religious, while 41% identify as religious and a just 6% as not religious. Religion thus plays a big role in the Iraqi identity.

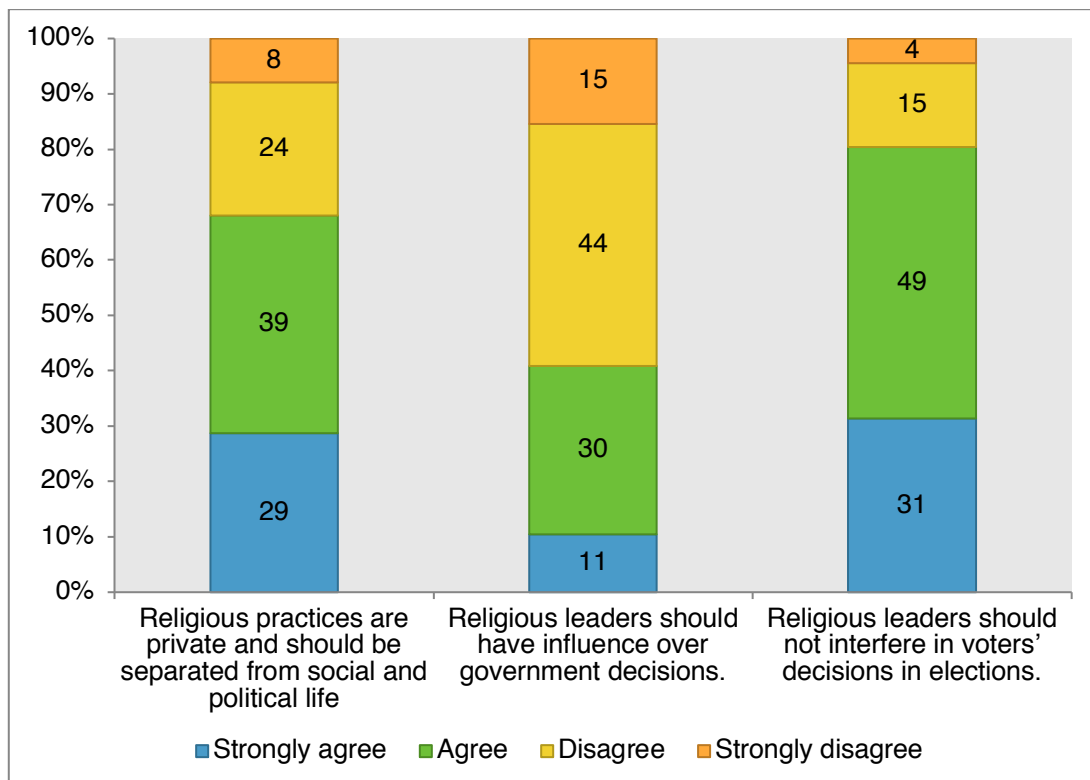
Figure 18: Levels of religiosity



In order to more fully understand the role religion plays in society, the survey examines the relationship between religion and the public sphere. The majority of Iraqis (68%) agree that religious practices are private and should be separated from social and political life (figure 23). It could be that the people who disagree with this statement are the same people who benefited from advantages in the previous regime. When asked about the impact of religious leaders, the following results show that most respondents believe that the two should be kept separate. Nearly six-in-ten (59%) disagree or strongly disagree that religious leaders should have influence over government decisions, compared to 41% who agree or strongly agree. Moreover, 80% of the participants agree or strongly agree that religious leaders should not interfere in voters' decisions in elections. The influence of sectarian politics on the population can explain these results. While Iraqis prefer to keep religion and politics separate in the social and civil society sphere, religion plays a significant role in the lives of individuals and their family units.

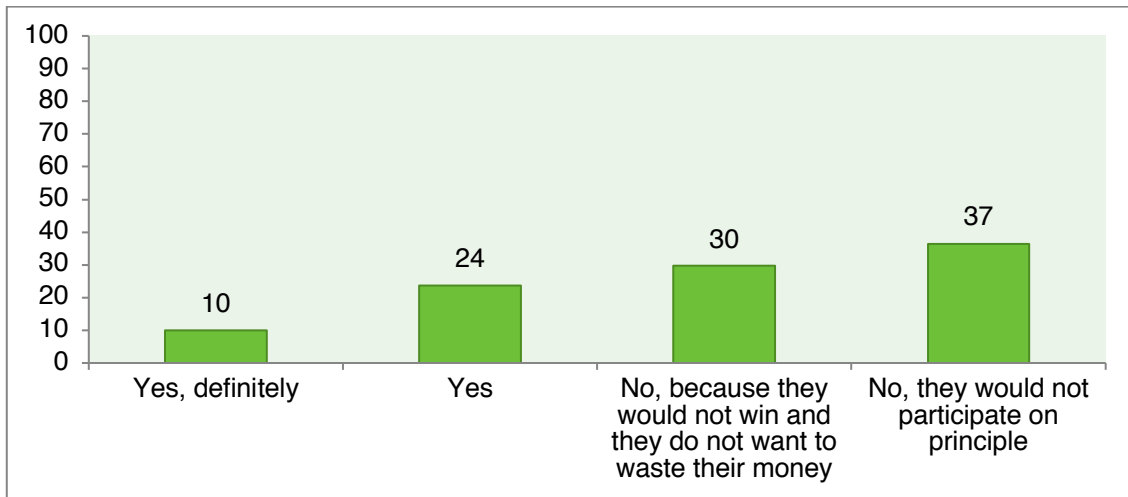
When asked whether non-Muslims should enjoy fewer political rights than Muslims in a Muslim country, half of respondents disagree while 29% strongly disagree (29%). This inter-religious tolerance is notable as Iraq is a predominately Muslim country with few non-Muslims.

Figure 19: Religion and the public sphere



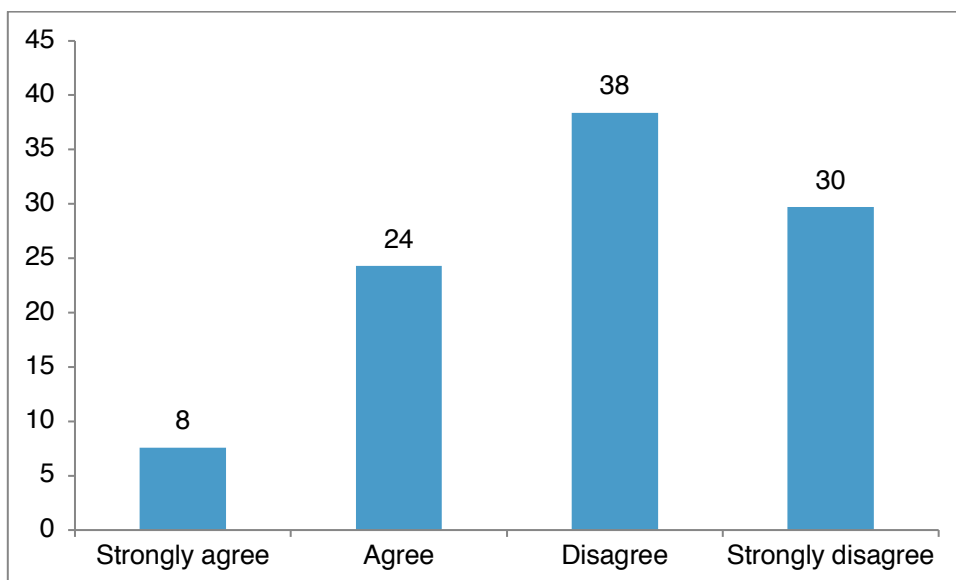
When Iraqis were asked whether they would buy a lottery ticket, most say no (figure 24). The plurality (37%) say they would not out of principle while three-in-ten say they would not want to waste the money. Only 10% of the respondents said they would definitely buy a ticket while nearly a quarter (24%) say yes. These findings show that gambling is not a dominant societal trait, either due to cultural factors or religious ones.

Figure 20: Would the respondent buy a lottery ticket?



How do Iraqis perceive the dress of women in their country? When asked on whether women should wear modest clothes but without needing to wear a hijab, a clear majority (68%) disagree with this statement (figure 25).

Figure 21: Women should wear modest clothes without needing to wear hijab



The importance religion plays in daily life is clear when examining the conditions under which a respondent would object to a person marrying a close family member (figure 26). Most (54%) say it

would be a great obstacle if the potential spouse did not pray. By comparison, only 3% say that it would not constitute an obstacle whatsoever. Kurds are by far the least likely to say not praying represents a great obstacle, suggesting that religiosity may play a lesser role among members of this ethnic group (figure 27).

Figure 22: To what extent does not praying an obstacle to accepting a son/daughter/sister/brother’s marriage?

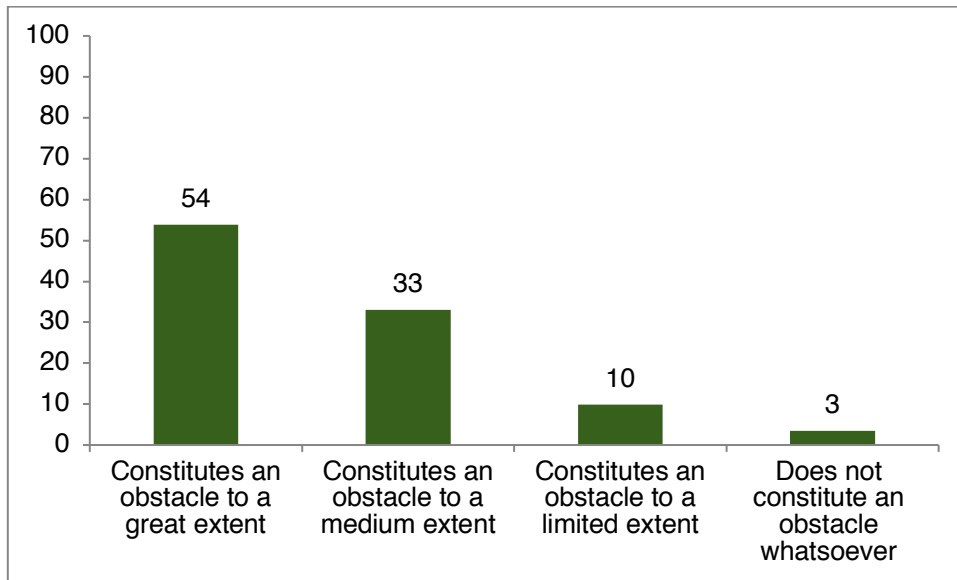
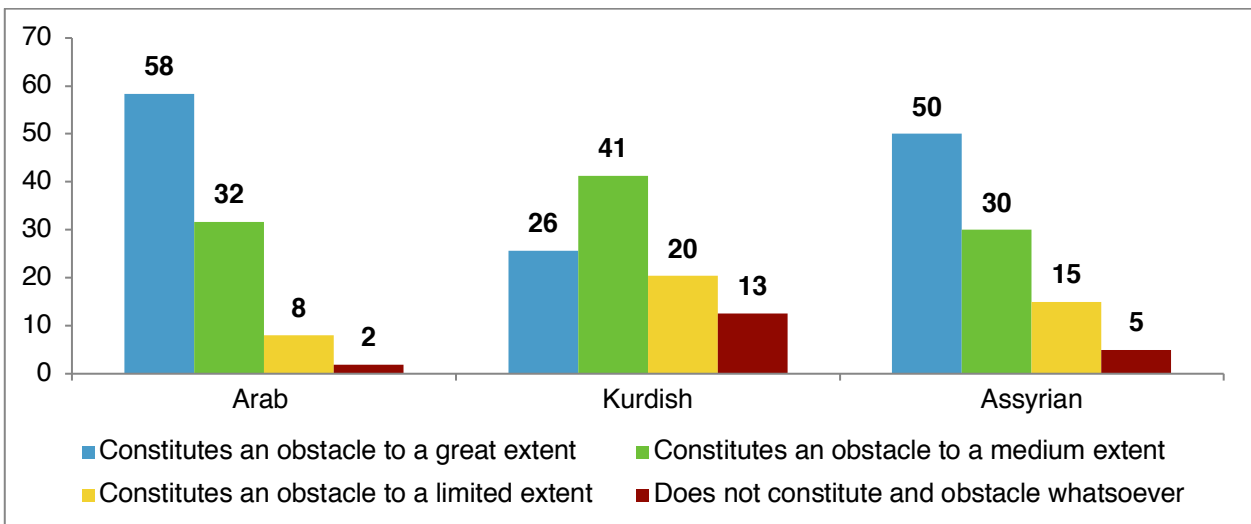


Figure 23: To what extent does not praying an obstacle to accepting a son/daughter/sister/brother’s marriage, by ethnicity

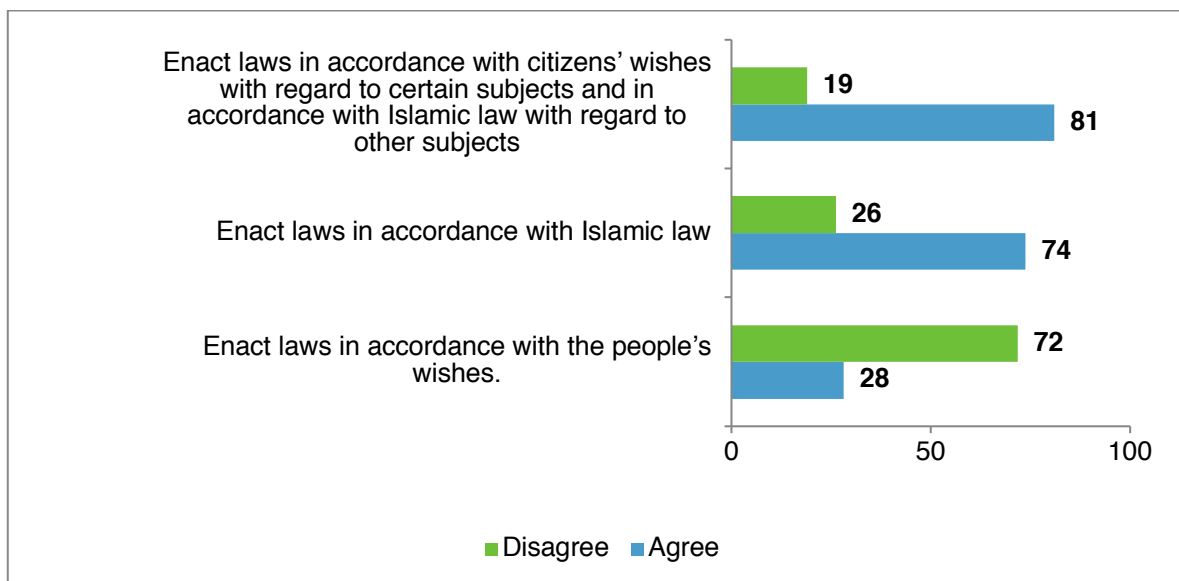


Iraqis are divided about whether democracy is a system that contradicts Islam. Overall, 51% say it does not. Thus, many Iraqis believe democracy can work effectively with the precepts of Islam, although many others do not.

Concerning the source of legislation, most Iraqis (72%) say that the government and parliament should enact laws according to the wishes of the people. At the same time, when asked whether the

government and parliament should enact laws in accordance with Islamic law, a total of 74% agree or agree strongly with the statement, compared to only 26% disagreeing or disagreeing strongly. Finally, when asked if government and the parliament should enact laws in accordance with citizens' wishes regarding certain subjects and in accordance with Islamic law with regard to others, 81% agree (figure 28). This finding suggests that many Iraqis do not see a contradiction between the people's wishes and Islamic law.

Figure 24: The government and parliament should...

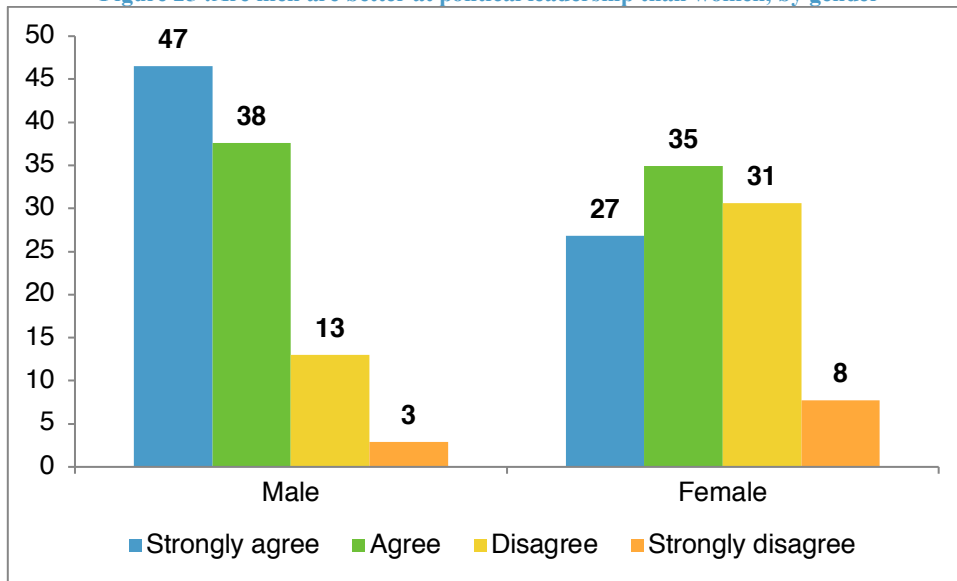


6. Attitudes towards Women

The survey also asked about attitudes toward the role of women in society. The majority (80%) of respondents (80%) agrees or strongly agrees that a married woman can work outside the home. This result is also found the second wave survey. Thus, women's economic participation appears to be viewed positively by Iraqis.

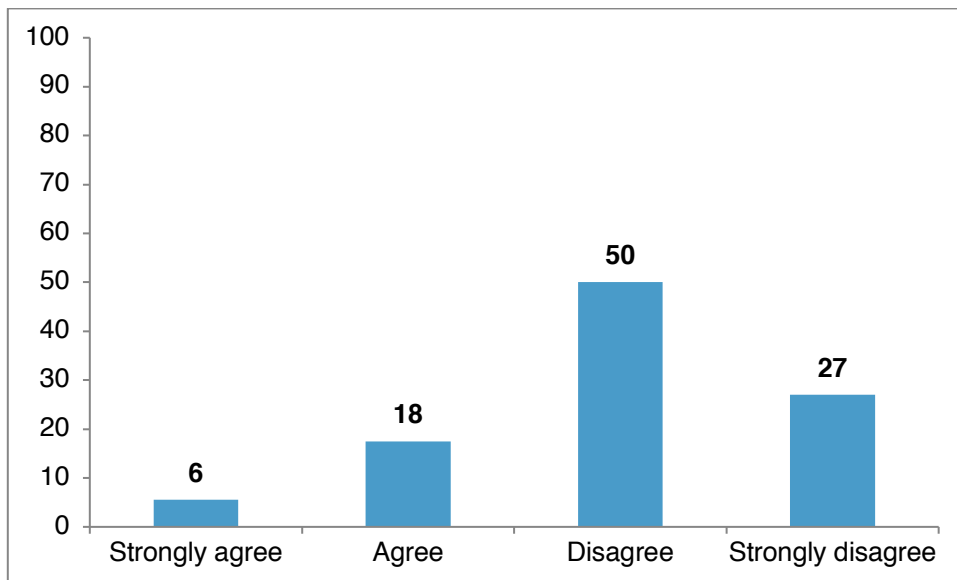
Yet, women's participation appears to be less accepted in the political sphere. Most Iraqis believe that men are better political leaders than women, including 37% of the respondents who strongly agree. By contrast, just 5% disagree strongly. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are significant differences in opinion by gender, with women more likely to disagree with this statement (figure 29).

Figure 25 :Are men are better at political leadership than women, by gender



However, Iraqis widely support women’s education. Fully half disagree that a university education for males is more important than university education for females, while another 27% disagree strongly (figure 30). This result follows logically in the belief that women are an important economic force to the country, as education gives them the keys to entering the economic sphere.

Figure 26 : Is university education for males is more important than university education for females?



7. Public Institutions and Political Attitudes

The survey included a number of questions to gauge levels of trust in institutions. Nearly half of Iraqis trust the government to a great or medium extent (47%), while 27% trust it to a limited extent and 26% had no trust in it at all. Trust in parliament is even lower (table 5). Just 25% trust it to a great

or medium extent, while 38% trust it to a limited extent and 36% do not trust it at all. Levels of trust in the Iraqi police (54%) and armed forces (64%) are higher. Civil society institutions, such as associations, clubs, and volunteer youth groups are trusted by about half of Iraqis (47%). Combined, these findings suggest that levels of political trust are not overly high, which is similar to the findings from the second wave survey in Iraq.

Table 5: Trust in institutions

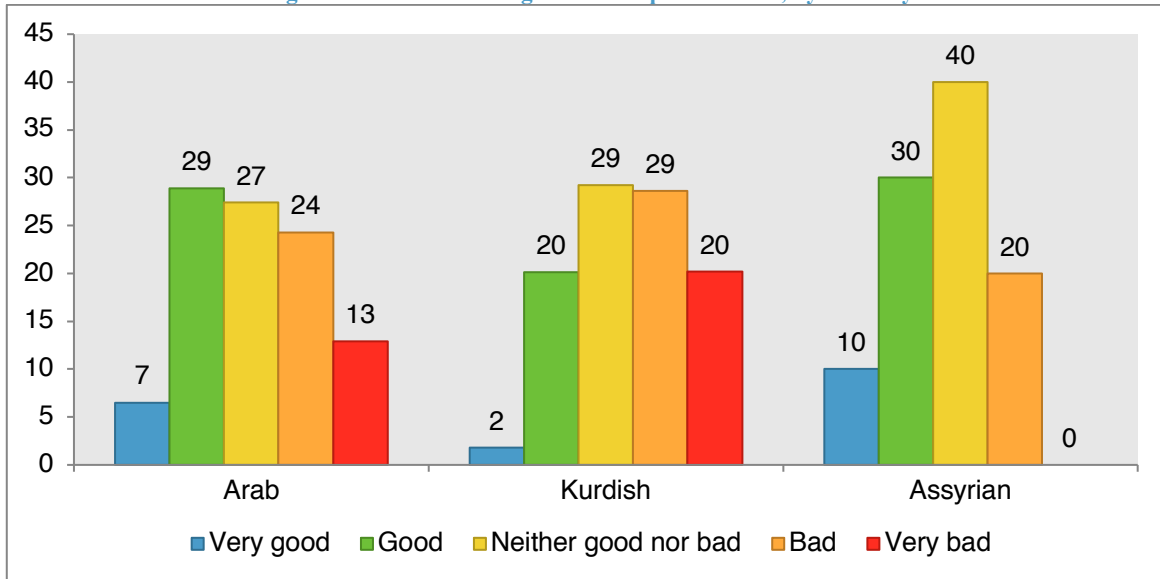
	Great Extent	Medium Extent	Limited extent	No trust at all
The Government	12	35	27	26
The Parliament	4	21	38	36
The Police	25	29	23	13
The Army	28	36	22	14
Civil Society institutions	10	37	36	17

On the whole, Iraqis appear to be moderately satisfied with government performance (figure 31). Although just 34% say its performance is good (28%) or very good (6%), a further 28% say it is neither good nor bad. Meanwhile, 39% say that it is bad (25%) or very bad (14%). Assyrians have the most positive views of the government performance with 40% saying it is good or very good (figure 32).

Figure 27: Evaluation of government performance



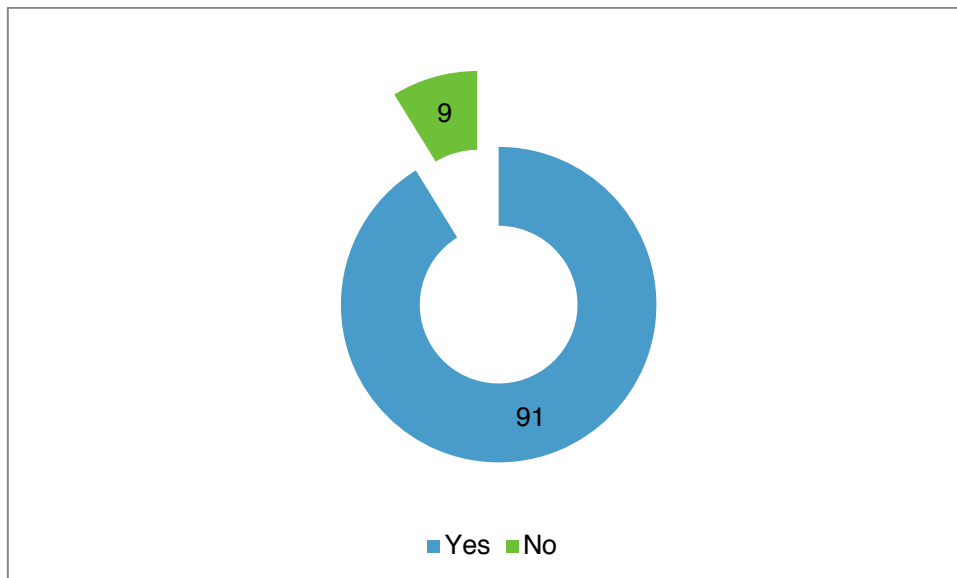
Figure 28: Evaluation of government performance, by ethnicity



Similarly, when asked to what extent the respondents were satisfied with the government’s performance on a scale from 0-10, with zero representing absolutely unsatisfied and 10 completely satisfied, the mean is answers were 5.1 out of 10.

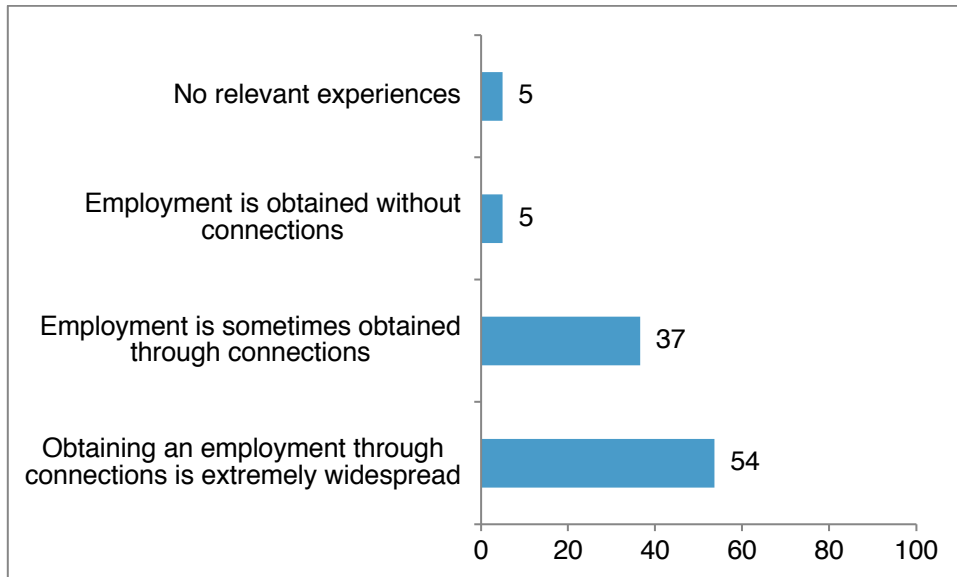
A key source of dissatisfaction with the government is likely high levels of corruption (figure 33). As shown in figure 33, nine-in-ten Iraqis (91%) say that there is corruption within state institutions. This preponderance of corruption is likely directly linked to the fact that the two most popular features of democracy as defined by Iraqis are eliminating corruption and the ability to change the government through elections.

Figure 29: Is there corruption within the state’s institutions and agencies?



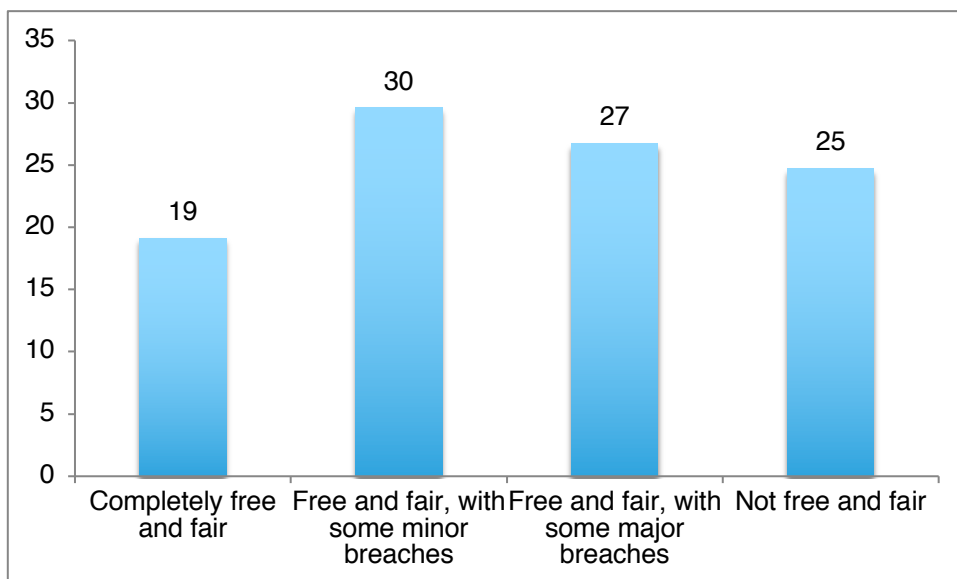
Following from the high levels of corruption, patronage is also extremely widespread (figure 34). More than half of Iraqis (54%) believe that obtaining government employment through connections is extremely widespread. A further 37% say that this happens sometimes. By contrast, just 5% say that employment is obtained without connections and is solely based on an applicant's qualifications.

Figure 30: Is employment obtained through connections?



Moreover, Iraqis also do not believe that the political process is fair. Over half (52%) of Iraqis predominantly state that the most recent elections were not free or fair or were generally free and fair but had major problems (figure 35). Three-in-ten say that the elections were free and fair but acknowledge there were some minor problems while just a 19% say that the elections were completely free and fair.

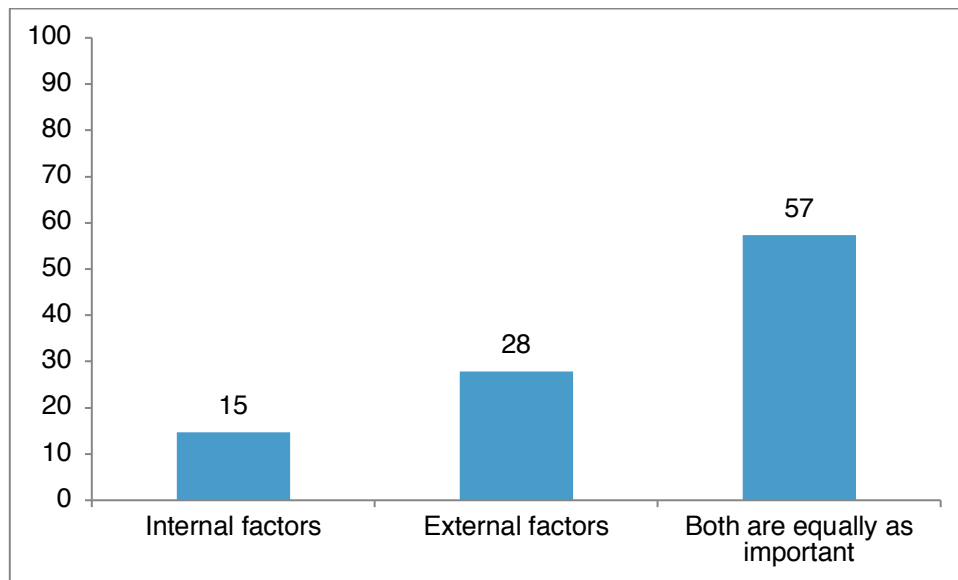
Figure 31: Evaluation of the last parliamentary elections March 2010



8. The Arab World and International Relations

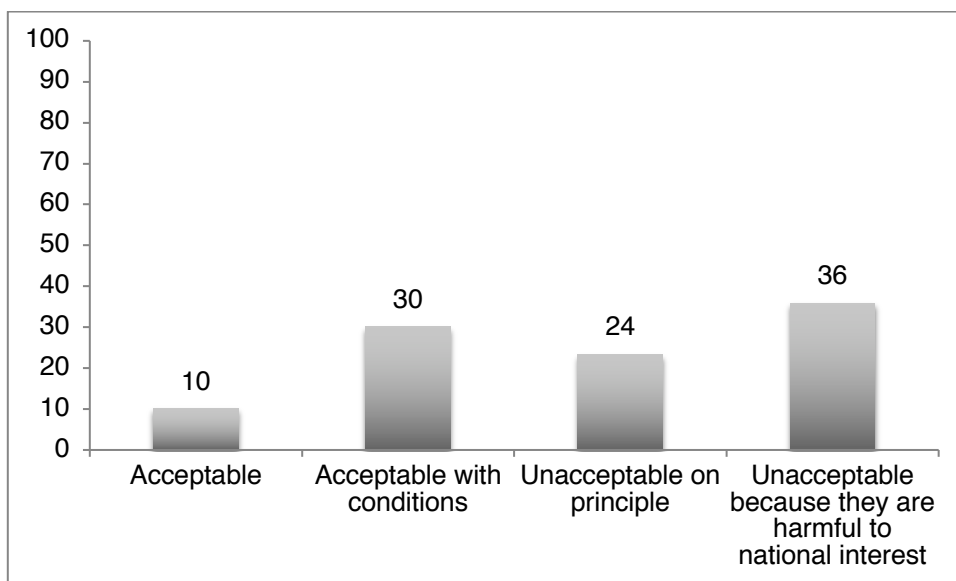
This section examines Iraqi opinion on international relations and issues related to the Arab world. The survey reveals that 57% of the Iraqis believe that lack of development in the Arab world is due primarily to a combination of internal and external factors (figure 36). More than a quarter (28%) attributes the Arab world's relative lack of development to external factors, likely reflecting the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Meanwhile, just 15% believe the lack of development is primarily due to internal factors.

Figure 32: Primary factors behind the Arab world's relative lack of development



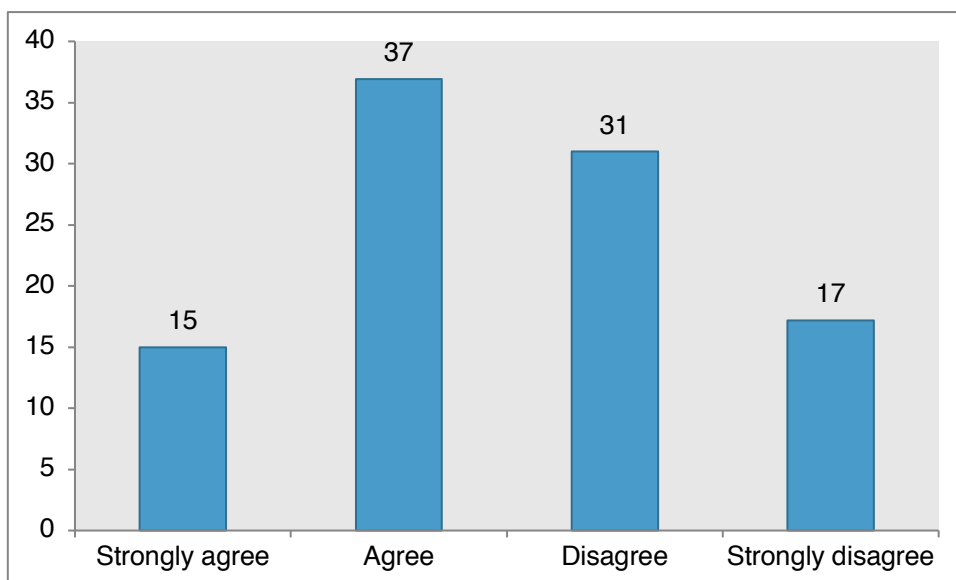
Likely reflecting their recent history, most Iraqis are opposed to external demands for reform. Six-in-ten say they are unacceptable either on principle (24%) or because they are harmful to national interests (36%). On the other hand, 30% say they are acceptable with conditions while one-in-ten says they are acceptable regardless of the circumstances.

Figure 33: Are the external demands for reform...



Not only are Iraqis opposed to external demands for reform, but most also believe that foreign interference is an obstacle to reform. Nearly two-thirds (63%) agree that interference is an obstacle to reform to a great extent while 28% agree to some extent. Just one-in-ten (9%) disagree or strongly disagree. However, Iraqis are divided on whether U.S. interference in the region justified armed operations against the U.S. everywhere. Just over half (53%) agree or strongly agree, which is a dramatic decline from the second wave (2011) when 70% of the respondents agreed or strongly agree with this statement.

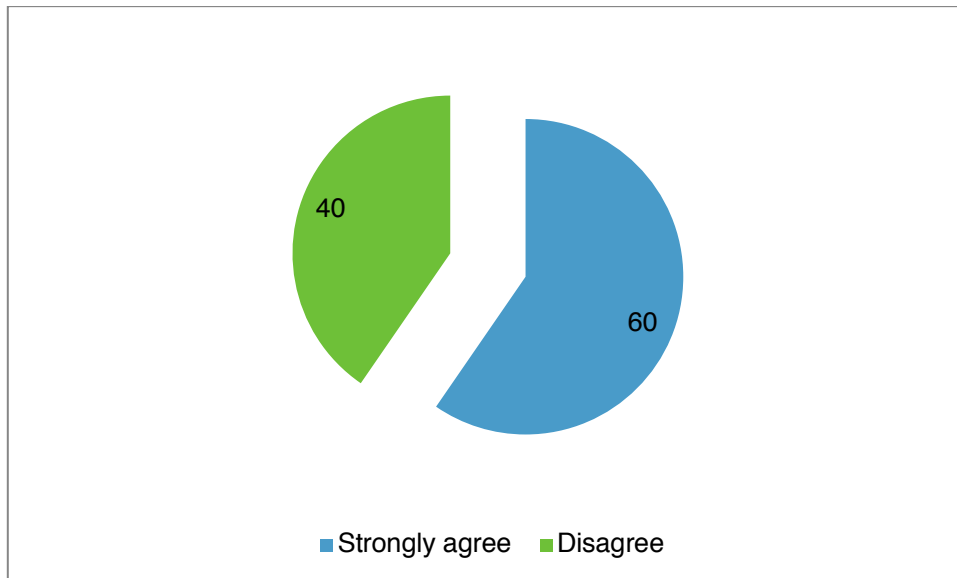
Figure 34: Does the United States' interference in the region justify armed operations against the United States everywhere?



Nevertheless, it appears that many Iraqis are able to distinguish between U.S. foreign policy and the American people. When asked whether they thought Americans were good people despite their

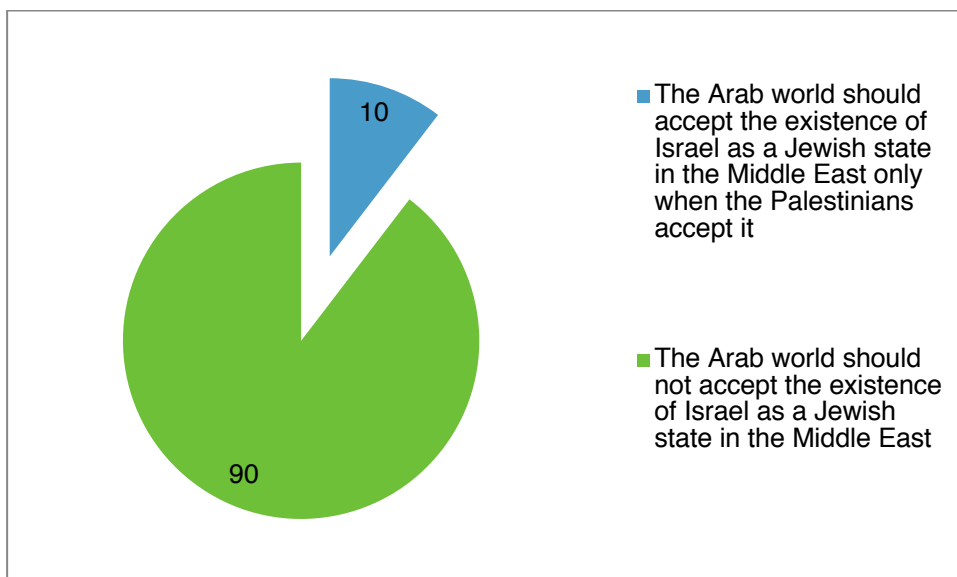
country's negative foreign policy, six-in-ten agree that Americans are by and large good people (figure 41).

Figure 35: Despite negative U.S. foreign policy, Americans are good people



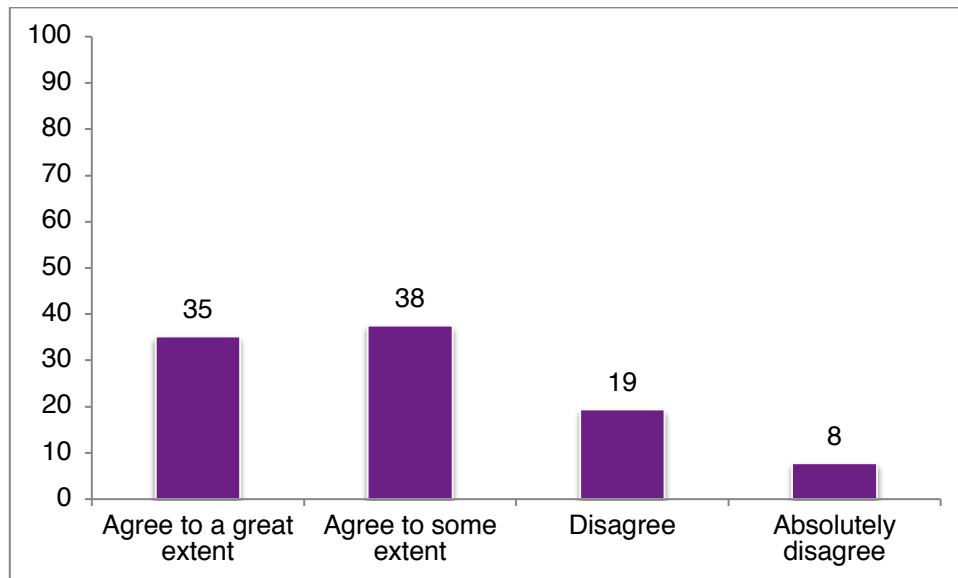
In regards to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, respondents were asked whether they thought that the Arab-Israeli conflict is an obstacle to political reform in Iraq. The majority (71%) of the respondents agree or strongly with the statement. Additionally, nine-in-ten say that the Arab world should not accept the existence of Israel as a Jewish state in the Middle East even if Palestinians accept it.

Figure 36: Should the Arab world accept the existence of Israel?



Many Iraqis link the conflict between Israel and Palestine to global terrorism. Nearly three-quarters (73%) agree to a great extent or a medium extent that in order to eliminate global terrorism this conflict must be resolved. Thus, the success of the peace process appears critical to tackling global terrorism in the eyes of Iraqis.

Figure 37: Does the in Palestine issue need to be solved order to eliminate global terrorism?



9. The Arab Spring

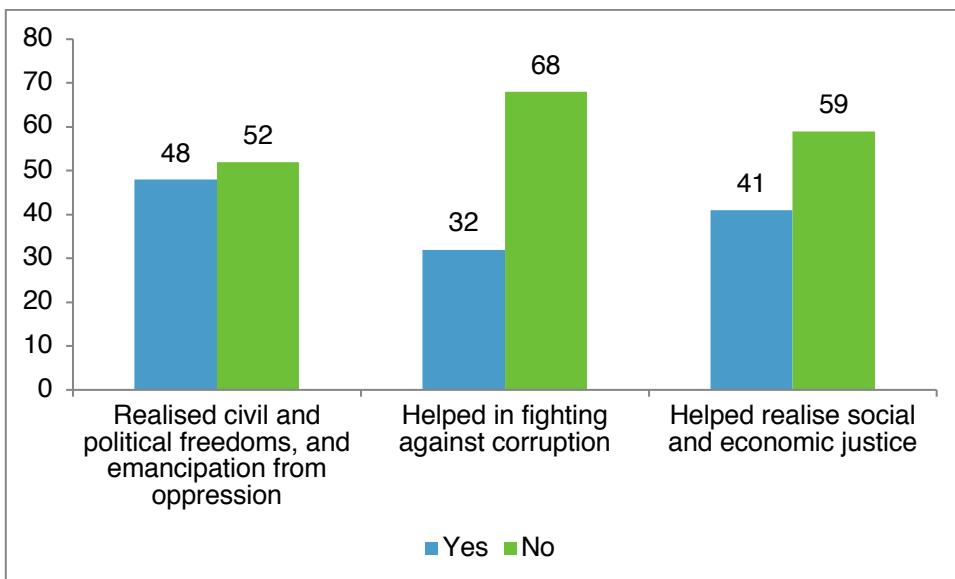
Very few Iraqis participated in the demonstrations associated with the so-called Arab Spring in 2011. Overall, 94% of Iraqis report that they did not participate in any associated demonstration or rallies (figure 44). When asked about the causes of the uprisings across the Arab world, they the three main reasons they highlight wanting to have civil and political freedoms and emancipation from oppression (45%), social and economic justice” (29%), and the betterment of the economic situation (28%).

Figure 38: Participated in some demonstrations and rallies in Iraq during the Arab Spring?



Despite these lofty aims, few Iraqis believe that the Arab uprisings have achieved their goals (figure 45). Just over half (52%) of the respondents say that it hasn't helped with civil and political freedoms and emancipation from oppression, 68% say that there has been no betterment of the economic situation, and 59% believe there has been no improvement in social and economic justice.

Figure 39: The Arab Spring has...



10. Conclusion

The key findings from this survey reveal that Iraqis generally embrace democracy and do not believe it is contradictory to Islam. However, Iraqis do not have a universal understanding of the concept of democracy. The most widespread definitions are the ability to change the government through elections, but many others say it is primarily the provision of needs for all or eliminating corruption. Yet, there is also a general apathy in terms of levels of participation of civil society or in following political developments. Additionally, Iraqis tend to be pessimistic about the economic future of their country and relatively few say it will improve over the next three-to-five years.

Iraqis are deeply religious, especially in regards to their personal lives. However, fewer see a role for religion in the public sphere. In fact, the majority says religion should be kept out of social and political life and most say religious leaders should *not* have influence on the decisions of voters in elections. Although politics are defined largely by sectarian identity, by and large Iraqis say that non-Muslims should enjoy the same rights as Muslims in their country.

Iraqi views of women's role are mixed and are similar to the results of previous waves of the Arab Barometer. Most Iraqis support women's participation in the economic sphere, but fewer believe women should have a significant role in politics. Additionally, most believe that women are required to wear the hijab, suggesting that the Iraqi society remains conservative on this social issue.

Foreign intervention, whether military or economic, is still viewed negatively, but attitudes towards the U.S. are mixed. Iraqis generally disagree with U.S. foreign policy, but believe that Americans are good people. This finding is likely a product of the 2003 U.S. invasion in Iraq, as well as the continuing support of the United States to Israel. Iraqis remain strongly opposed to Israel as a Jewish state in the Middle East and believe that this conflict is linked to global terrorism.

There is also important variation by ethnic group in Iraq. These differences reveal important divisions and must be taken seriously as the government attempts to rebuild the country's institutions and improve the quality of governance.