

Arab Barometer VI

Jordan Country Report

2021

Executive summary

Like most countries, Jordan has come under severe strain because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country implemented some of the strictest measures in the world and garnered laudable success in the initial response to the global pandemic. As that performance was difficult to sustain, COVID-19 infections and casualties gradually increased, concern about the pandemic rose and evaluations of the government response declined. Initially high trust and performance figures gave way to lower figures consistent with previous waves.

To shed light on how public opinion shifted during this period, Arab Barometer conducted three public opinion surveys in Jordan between September 2020 and March 2021 as part of its sixth wave. In the first survey in September 2020, a plurality of Jordanians said that the economy was the biggest challenge facing their country. Gradually, COVID-19 matched and then exceeded the economy as the biggest challenge facing the country as identified by the citizenry. Economic optimism is scant, particularly among the youth, leading many to consider migration despite global travel restrictions.

Satisfaction with government performance, particularly in the field of healthcare and education provision declined steeply across the survey period (September 2020 – March 2021) – as did evaluations of government performance overall and response to the pandemic. Perceptions of corruption were high and perceptions of anti-corruption efforts suffered during the survey period.

Ratings of the degree to which freedoms and civil liberties are guaranteed declined as the pandemic progressed. Meanwhile, Jordanians had the highest levels of support for putting in place restrictions because of COVID among the citizens of all the countries surveyed in the Arab Barometer sixth wave. Moreover, the status of women in Jordan was rendered more precarious because of the pandemic, as their workload increased both at work and at home, and their social protections declined.

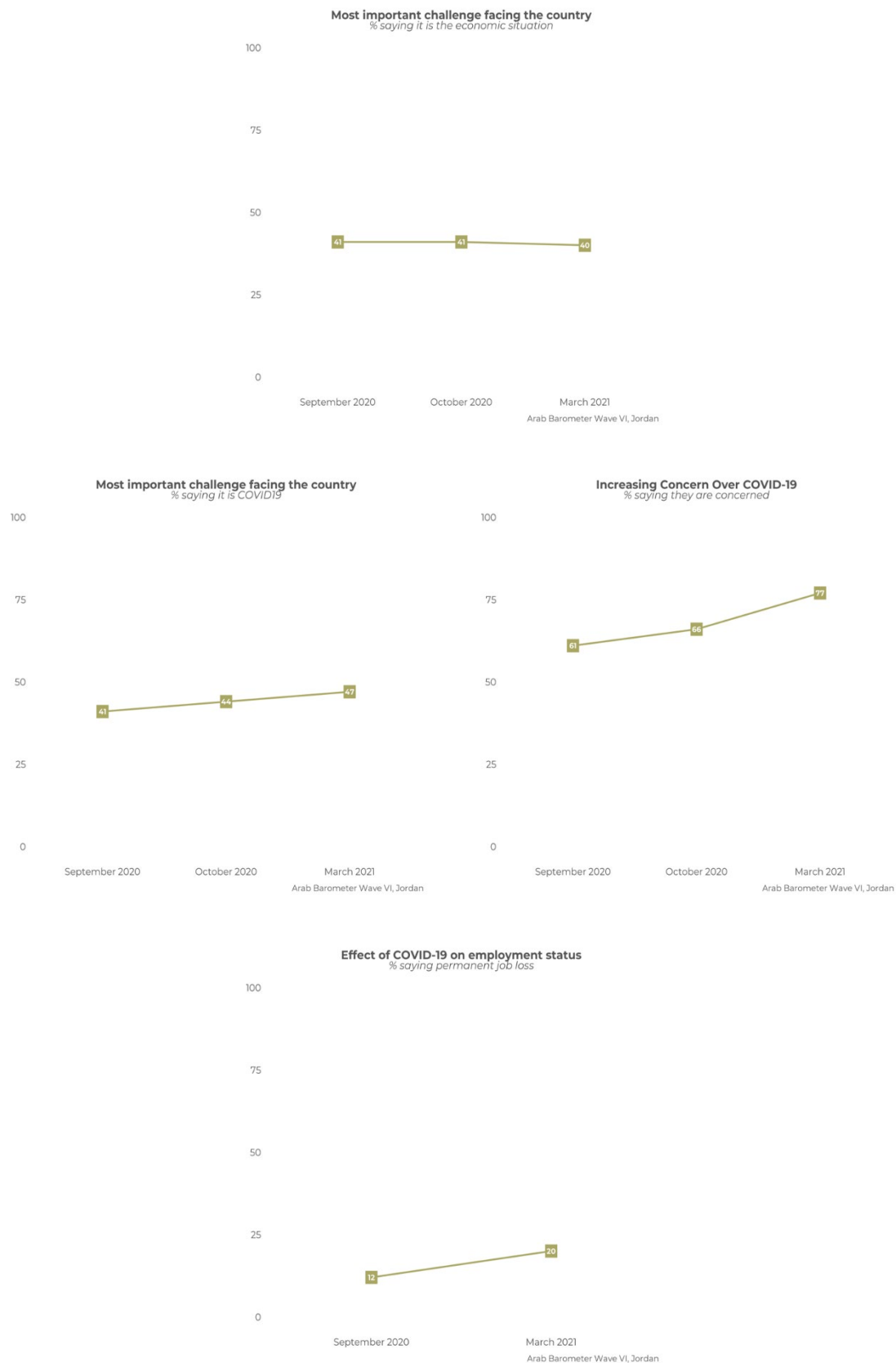
As far as relations with foreign powers go, opinion of the United States drastically improved after the administration turnover. Jordan was one of the few countries among the surveyed countries where favorability of the US exceeded that of China in the spring of 2021. As for other foreign powers, Turkey remains the most popular foreign power in Jordan, and Iran and Russia remain the least popular foreign powers in the country. There is minimal Jordanian support for the recent normalization agreements between other Arab countries and Israel.

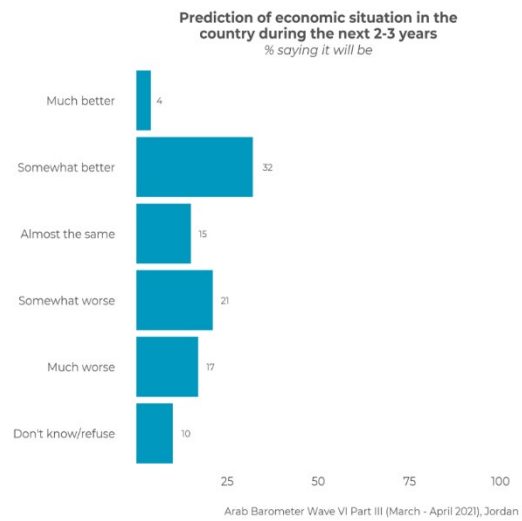
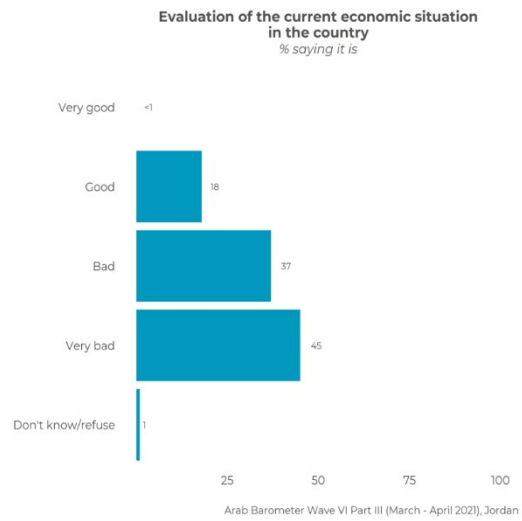
These are among the main findings of three nationally representative telephone surveys conducted in Jordan during the course of 2020-1. The sample was drawn through random digit dialing (RDD). Between September 2020 and March 2021, we interviewed 3,236 Jordanian citizens to track changes in their evaluations 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

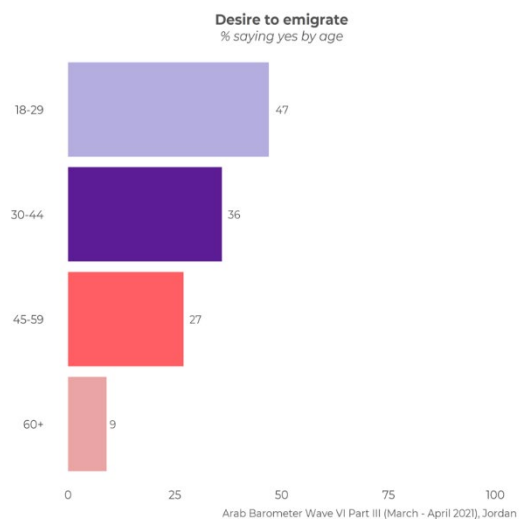
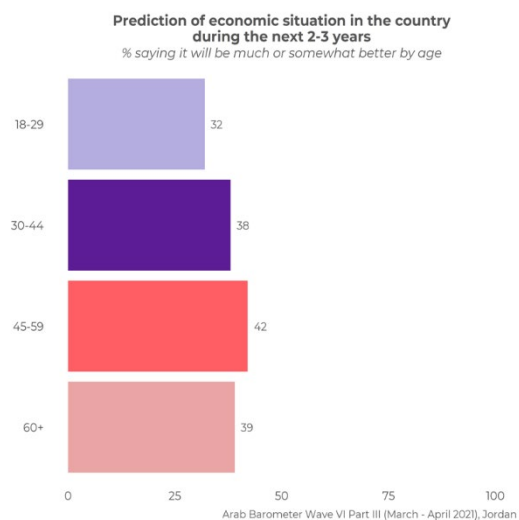
About AB6
How we did this.

Key Findings

- 1- Jordanians became more likely to see COVID-19 as the top challenge facing their country as the pandemic continued.** When our first sixth wave survey went into the field in September 2020, the economy and COVID-19 were both cited as the top problem facing Jordan. Concern regarding COVID-19 rose continuously throughout the survey period, perhaps reflecting Jordan's struggles to manage the pandemic situation on the one hand, and COVID-19's impact on employment. In March 2021, one-in-five Jordanians who said COVID-19 impacted their employment status said they lost their jobs permanently due to the pandemic. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority (four-in-five) of Jordanians evaluated their current economic situation poorly, and a minority (one-in-three) predicted economic relief in the next 2-3 years. Youth ages 18-29 were the least optimistic towards the economy in the near future, driving a substantial proportion - almost half - of them to consider emigrating.

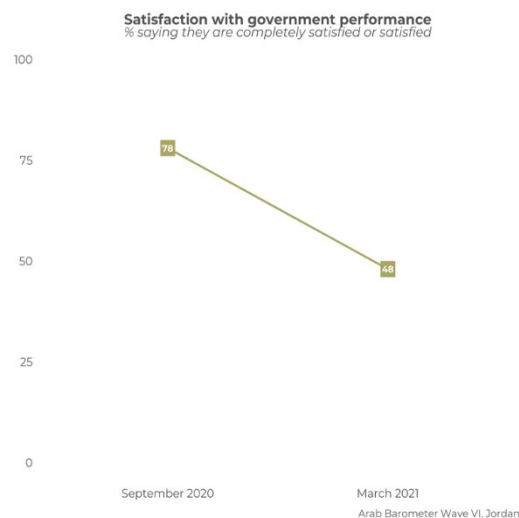
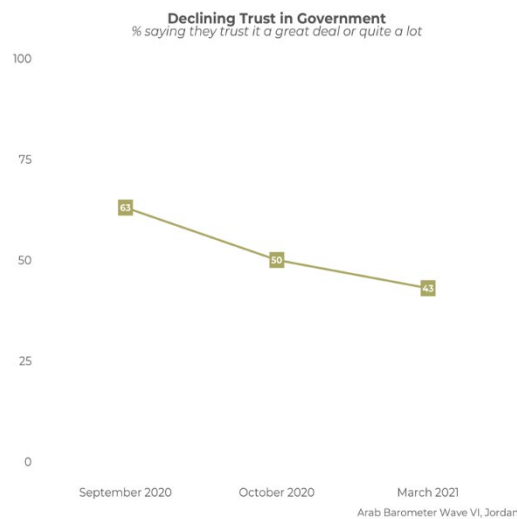


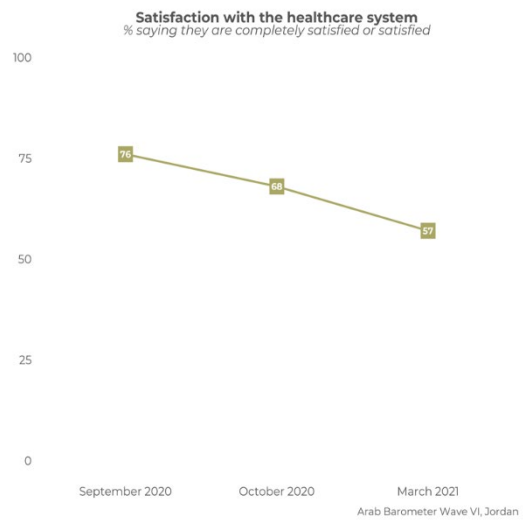
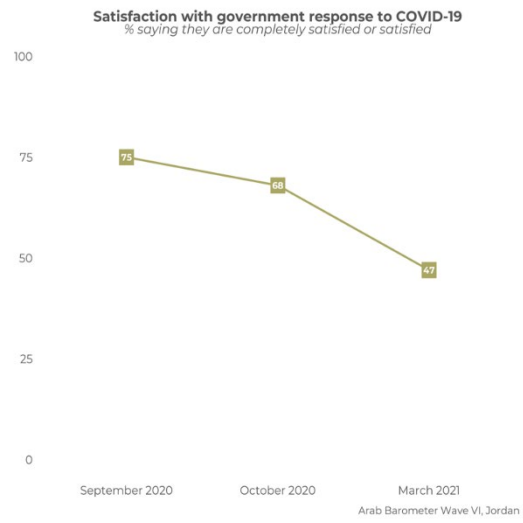


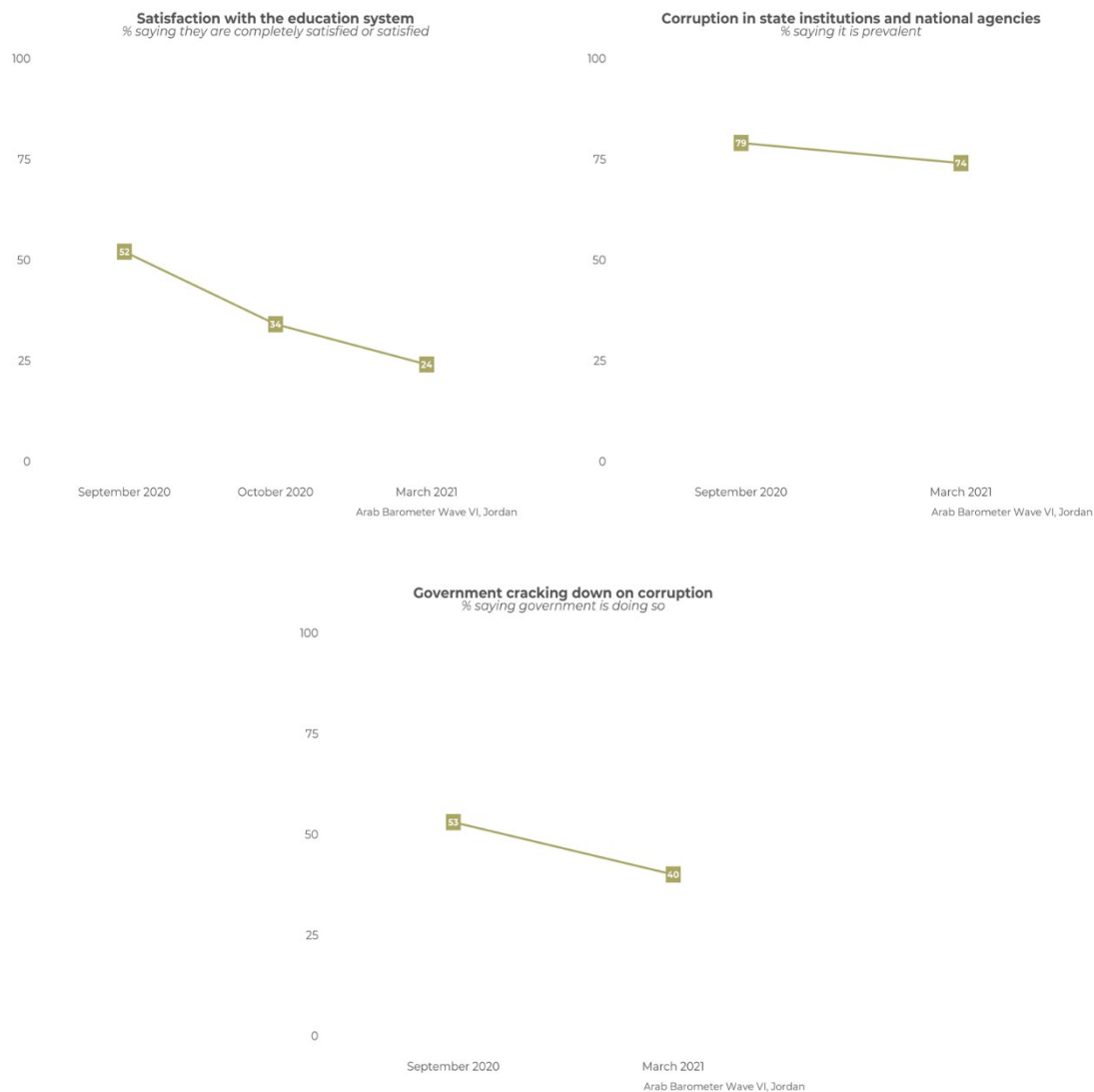


2- Trust in government and evaluations of government performance suffered notably during the pandemic. As the Jordanian government struggled to contain the spread of COVID-19 after September 2020, levels of trust and evaluations of its performance declined drastically. The level of trust in government declined from 63 percent in September 2020 to 43 percent in March 2021. Moreover, satisfaction with overall government performance plummeted from 78 percent in September 2020 to 48 percent in March 2021. Both trends indicate that Jordanians trusted their government and evaluated its performance favorably during the initial response to the pandemic. Given that that response could not be sustained, views of government suffered. The results from the surveys make this clear, with favorable views of the government's response to COVID-19 falling from 75 percent in September 2020 to 47 percent in

March 2021. Additionally, levels of satisfaction with the healthcare and education systems also declined noticeably during the survey period. Satisfaction with healthcare dropped from 76 percent to 57 percent while satisfaction with education dropped from 52 percent to 24 percent. Perceptions of corruption were relatively stable throughout the survey period (declining slightly from four-in-five to three-in-four saying it is prevalent in state institutions), but perceptions of anti-corruption efforts suffered as the proportion of those who say the government is working to stymie corruption fell from 53 percent in September of 2020 to 40 percent in March of 2021.

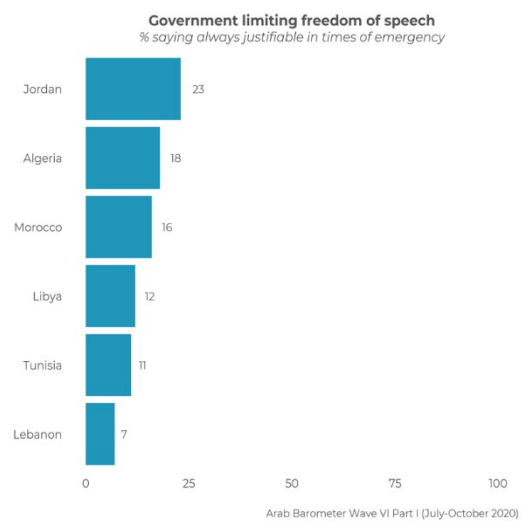
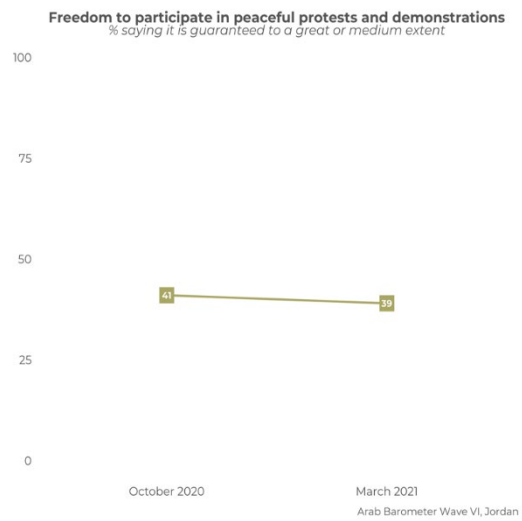
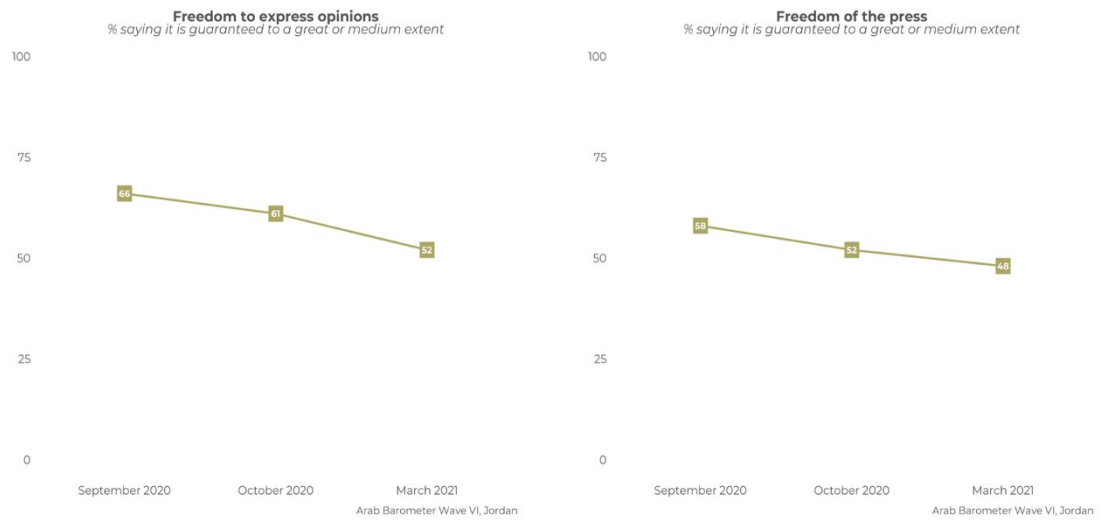


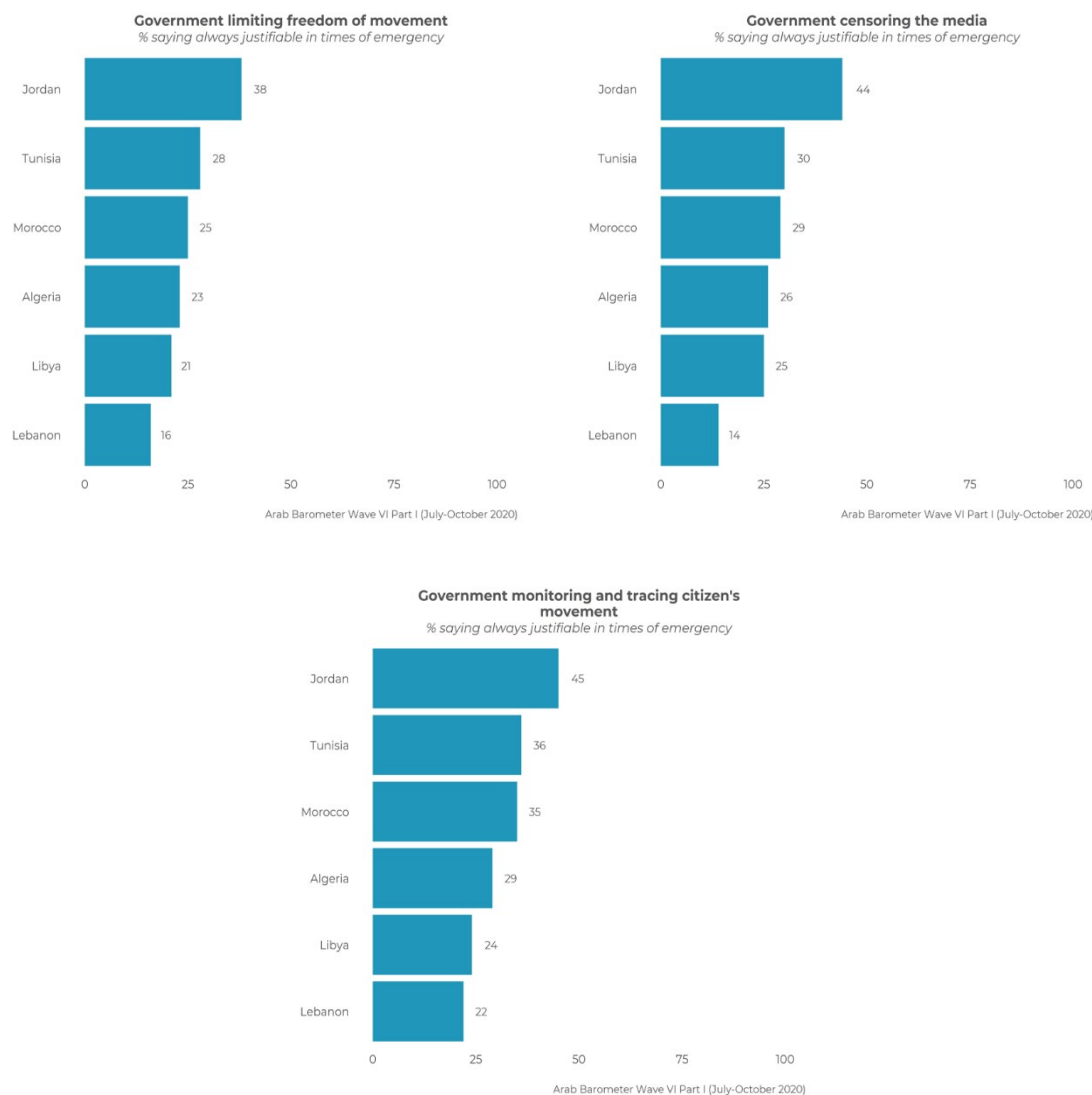




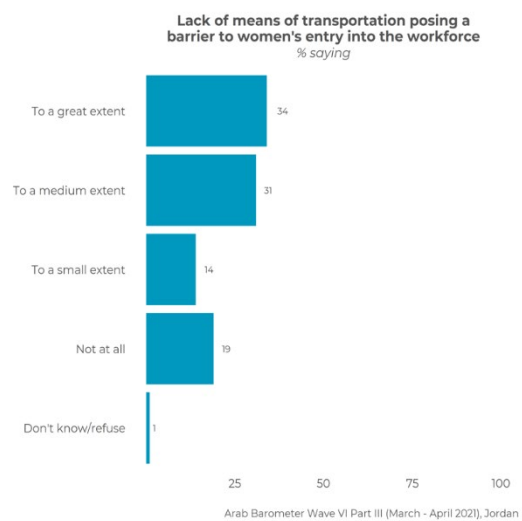
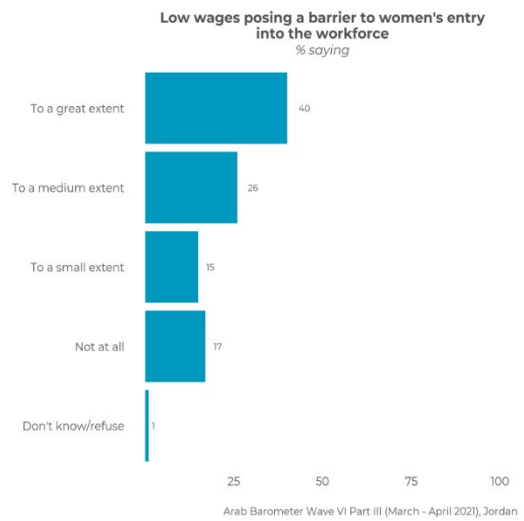
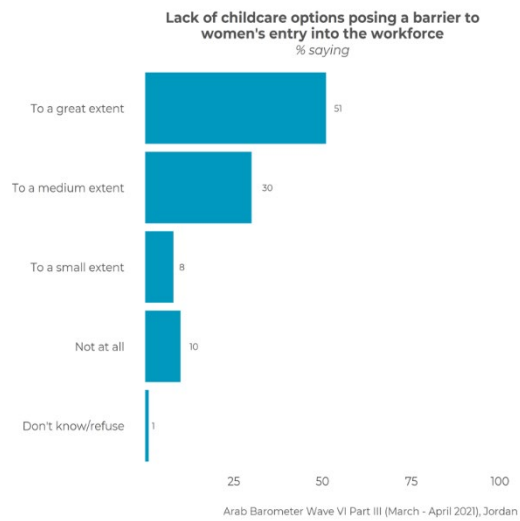
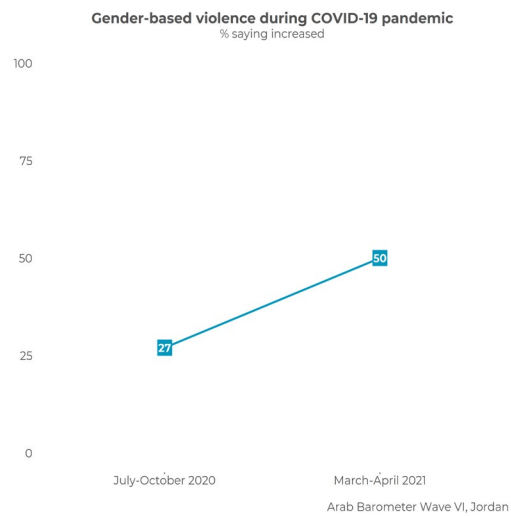
3- Perceptions of freedoms and civil liberties declined as the pandemic progressed. The Jordanian government took strong measures to combat COVID-19, limiting freedom of assembly, speech, and movement. Correspondingly, there was a widespread perception that these freedoms declined significantly during the survey period. By March 2021, minorities said freedom of the press (48 percent) and the freedom to demonstrate (39 percent) were guaranteed, and only a slim majority (52 percent) believed freedom of speech was guaranteed. Meanwhile, Jordanians had the highest levels of support for putting restrictions in place as a result of COVID among the citizens of all the countries surveyed in the Arab Barometer's sixth wave.

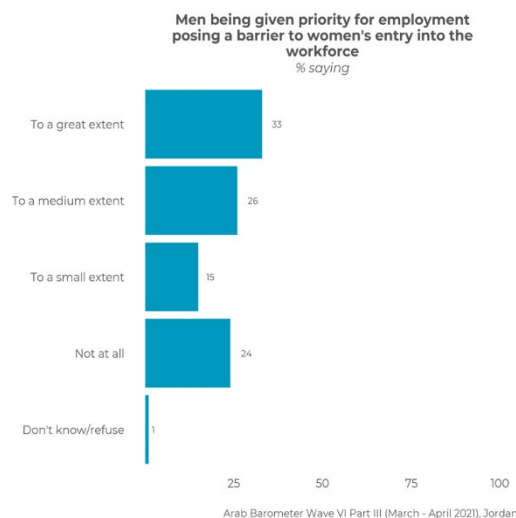
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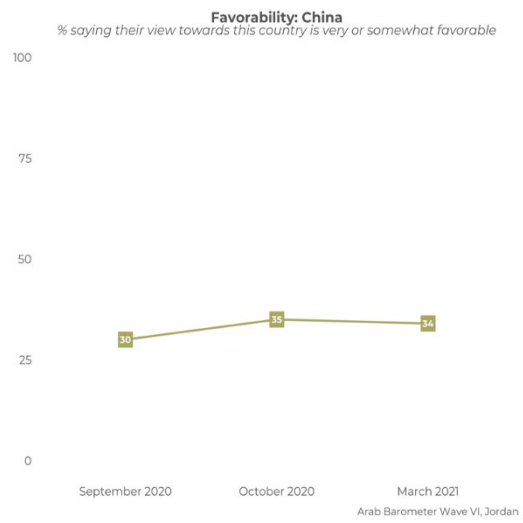
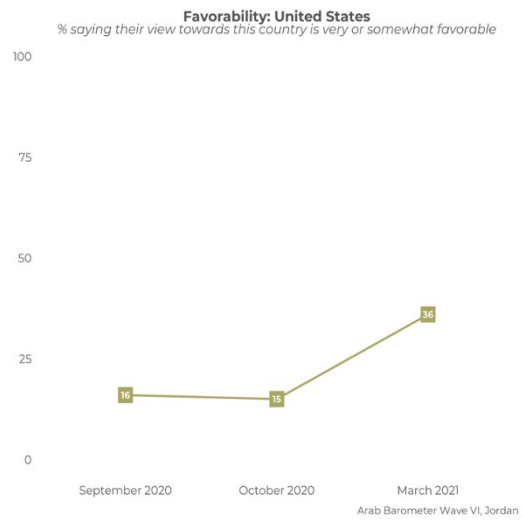


4- Women's status in Jordan was rendered more precarious as a result of the pandemic. Almost one-in-four Jordanians (45 percent) said gender-based violence increased as a result of the pandemic in September 2020. That figure rose to 50 percent in March 2021. As for obstacles to women joining the workplace, majorities of Jordanians listed lack of childcare (81 percent), low wages (66 percent), lack of transportation (65 percent) and men being given priority (59 percent) as the most substantial obstacles.

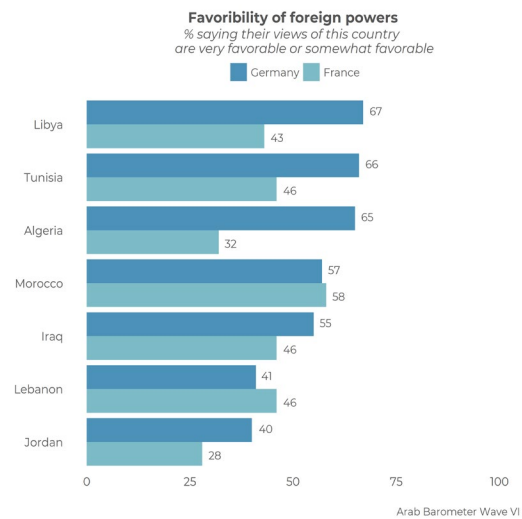
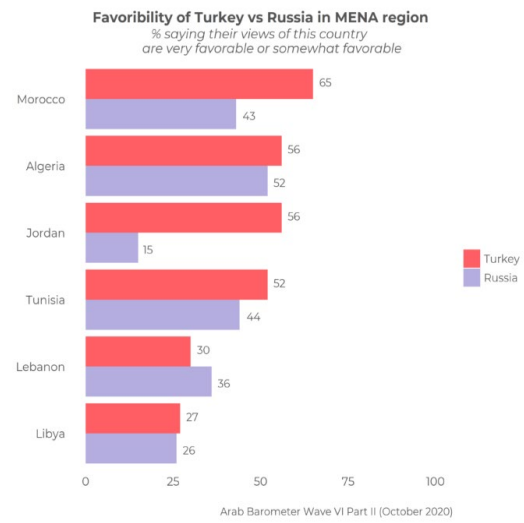
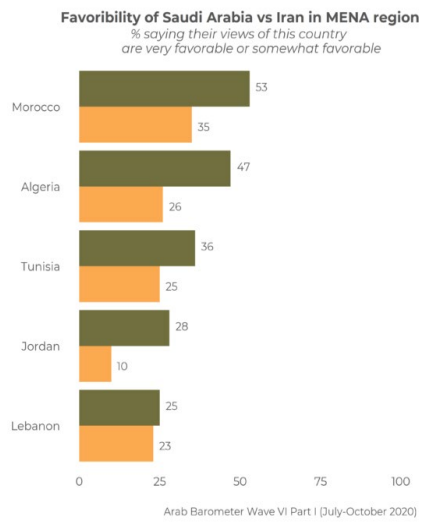


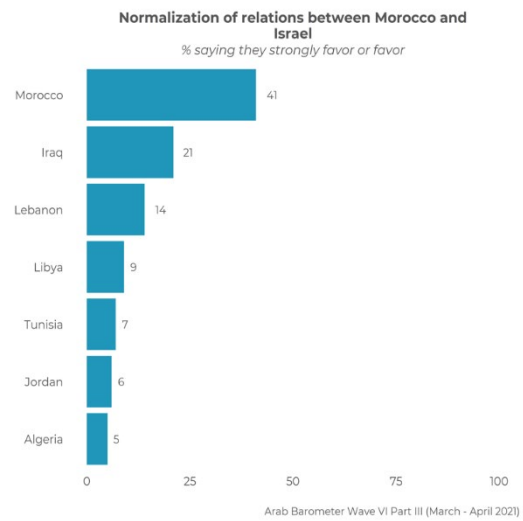
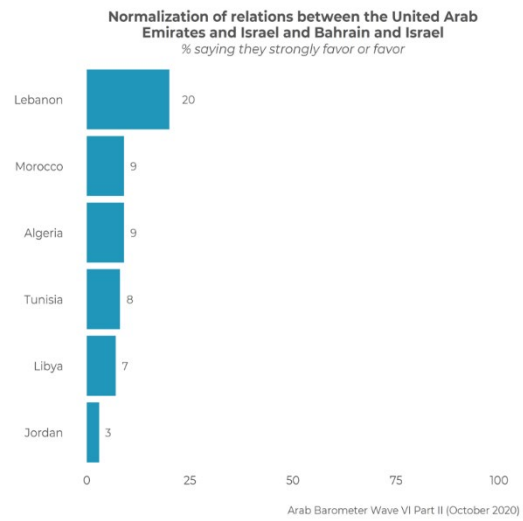


5- Opinion of the United States drastically improved after the administration transition. In the fall of 2020, one-in-six Jordanians held a favorable view of the United States, compared to three-in-ten Jordanians who held a favorable view of China. In March of 2021, a little more than a third of Jordanians held a favorable view of the United States, compared to a similar share of Jordanians who favored China. However, Jordan was one of the few countries among the surveyed countries where favorability of the US exceeded that of China, even if only slightly, in the spring of 2021 (the other being Morocco). As for other foreign powers, Jordanian favorability towards Iran (10 percent) and Russia (15 percent) was extremely low, which was the lowest among the countries surveyed. Favorability towards Saudi Arabia and France was slightly higher (28 percent for each). Ratings of Germany, though slightly higher than both the US and China (with 40 percent favorable), were also lower in Jordan than in any other surveyed country. The most popular foreign power in Jordan was Turkey, with more than half (56 percent) of Jordanians holding favorable views. Jordanian support for different normalization agreements with Israel was minimal, with no more than six percent favoring any of these agreements. This support level is among the lowest of the countries surveyed in the sixth wave.



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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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