

ARAB BAROMETER SURVEY PROJECT

YEMEN REPORT

The Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan supervised a project to measure Arab public opinion in the Republic of Yemen in cooperation with Interaction in Development. In addition to Yemen, this poll was carried out in Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Kuwait with cooperation of the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor and Princeton University. Additionally, the project was completed in partnership with organizations and research centers in each of the aforementioned countries. The poll was carried out in the months of November-December in 2007 and surveyed 1,200 residences.

Overall, Yemeni public opinion appears to be quite supportive of democracy, with 63% of respondents agreeing with the following statement: “Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of governance.” Meanwhile, only 17% of respondents disagreed with this statement. Additionally, 44.2% of Yemenis believe that the violation of human rights to promote stability is never justified while 9.4% state that it is highly justifiable. Of the remaining respondents, 14.7% stated that the violation of human rights in the name of security was only justifiable to a small extent and the remaining 13.0% stated it was somewhat justifiable. Likely, the size of each of these responses varies based on the perception of the security situation in the country and would increase or decrease based on changes of this nature.

Most Yemenis state that their most preferred system of government is one that is democratic. In fact, according to the results of the survey, 72.1% supported this point of view. At the same time, only 12.8% of respondents stated they did not support a democratic system. In terms of support for an authoritarian system, only 8.1% of respondents stated support for this type of system while 71.6% opposed such a system for Yemen. When asked about the systems of government present in other countries in the Middle East, most Yemenis stated that they would prefer a parliamentary system where all types of parties including leftists and Islamists could compete. In fact, 47.4% stated that they believed this type of system would be highly suitable for Yemen and 12.4% believed it would be suitable. Only 16.6% stated that this system would not be suitable at all for Yemen.

2.

It is known that the notions of citizenship and participation are what connect citizens and the state. The basic understanding of the rights and duties of citizens is very important in giving form to the public sphere and public participation. In terms of overall levels of political interest, 33.4% of Yemenis state that they are interested in politics, with 8.2% stating they are very interested and 25.2% stating they are interested. Meanwhile, 31.6% say they have only a small interest in politics and 26.7% say that they are not interested. Nevertheless, 55.2% of respondents indicated that they had participated in the last national parliamentary election that took place in 2003. Only 39.3% stated that they chose to not participate in the election, which includes some respondents who were not of legal age (18) at the time of the election. While participation in the election was relatively high, the majority of Yemenis (66.0%) indicated that they did not take part in a rally during the election campaign.

While elections and election campaigns are an important element of political participation, participation can also take place in other forms. For instance, when asked if they had joined together to sign a petition or draw attention to an issue within the last three years, 56.6% of respondents indicated that they had not. Among those who had attended such an event, 22.0% indicated that they had done so more than once during this time while the remaining 14.6% stated they had done so only once. However, only 27.6% of Yemenis stated that they had taken place in a demonstration or a protest within the previous three years.

As for relations between citizens and government institutions, the majority of Yemenis indicated that they had experience with many types of services provided by the government. When asked how easy it was to receive an identity document such as a birth certificate or an identification card, 61.4% said it was easy or very easy with 25.5% stating it was difficult or very difficult. As for registering a child in school, 80.9% stated it was easy or very easy while only 8.0% viewed it as hard and 8.2% had never tried.

The results showed important differences in regards to the ease of obtaining medical care from a government hospital. Only 50% of respondents considered it easy or very easy while 43.5% stated it was hard or very hard. The number of people saying that it was easy to get help from the police was even lower, with only 29.8% of respondents stating it was easy or very easy. Meanwhile, 42.7% of Yemenis stated it was hard or very hard and the remaining 23.4% said they had never tried to get help from the police. Furthermore, the majority (52.2%) of Yemenis stated that it was difficult or very difficult to access individuals or institutions to file a complaint when one's rights had been violated. Only 14.7% of respondents believed that it was easy or very easy while 24.1% said that they had never attempted to file such a complaint.

3. The Role of Religion in Public and Private Life

The data collected from the Arab Barometer suggests that Yemenis tend to believe that religion should play a prominent role in public life as 48.5% agree that men of religion should have influence on government decisions. Nevertheless, a sizeable minority (35.1%) disagree with this statement. However, only 34.5% stated that it would be better for Yemen if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office while 49.4% indicated that they disagreed.

In regards to the role of religion itself in public life, 36.2% of respondents indicated that they believed that there should be a separation between religion and social and economic life. On the other hand, 44.4% believed that the two should not be separated. However, when asked about what should be the source of law, 50.0% of respondents agreed that the government should make laws according to the wishes of the people.

Although many Yemenis appear to believe in some separation between religion and social and economic life and that law should come from sources other than religion, religion plays a very significant role in the private lives of Yemenis. When asked about

what characteristics they would look for in the spouse of their son or daughter, 83.6% of respondents indicated that that the fact that he or she “did not pray” would be an important consideration. Only 2.2% of the sample said that this characteristic was not important.

To put it in perspective, only 18.3% of respondents indicated that level of poverty of a potential spouse for their children would be an important consideration while 35.8% said that this characteristic would be unimportant. However, 68.7% of individuals indicated that unemployment would be an important consideration while only 4.0% stated it would not be an important consideration for a potential spouse for a son or daughter.

While there is some debate if democracy is compatible with Islam, the majority of Yemenis (57.3%) believe that the two are compatible. Additionally, nearly half of respondents (49.3%) believed that the rights of non-Muslims should not be less than those of Muslims in Islamic countries, although 28.7% believed that they should be. Meanwhile, the majority of Yemenis (66.4%) believe that Islamic teach forbids that banks charge interest on loans but 48.2% believe that it is acceptable for men and women to attend classes at university together. Of the remainder, 39.9% believe it is unacceptable. Additionally, only 28.7% of respondents believe that women are required to dress modestly but are not required to wear the *hijab*. The large majority (62.7%) believe that Islam requires women to wear the *hijab*.

Overall, Yemenis tend to see a somewhat limited role for women in society. The majority (63.4%) disagree with the statement that a woman can be president or prime minister in a Muslim country while only 31.6% believe that it was acceptable. Similarly, 81.0% agreed that, on the whole, men make better political leaders than women. However, the majority of respondents (68.6%) believed that it was permissible for women to work outside of the house and only 28.3% disagreed with this statement. Moreover, 70.5% of respondents indicated that men and women should be paid equally for the same work, but only 49.0% believed that men and women should have the same job opportunities while 44.3% disagreed. Additionally, 85.4% of respondents believed that a women should not be allowed to travel outside the country by herself while only 11.6% believed this was permissible.

4. View on Public Institutions

This section examines the views of the Yemeni public on numerous important public institutions in society. In the first set of questions, respondents were asked to state their degree of confidence in a number of such institutions. As for the prime minister, only 10.3% stated that they had a great deal of trust. Similarly, only 5.8% stated that they had a great deal of trust in parliament which was the same percentage saying they had a great deal of trust in political parties. Trust in the courts was even lower at 5.4%, but trust in police was slightly higher at 9.6%.

When asked if the government creates conditions which allows individuals to prosper through their own efforts, only 33.7% of respondents agreed compared to 59.1% who

said the government did not. Moreover, 59.1% of respondents indicated that the government did not take the opinions of citizens seriously while 25.7% believed that it did. Although 57.3% of Yemenis believe that the government is knowledgeable about the needs of the people, the majority (62.4%) said that political leaders do not care about the needs of the people.

Overall, this section examined the relations between Yemeni citizens and government institutions and demonstrates that an effort needs to be made to increase the effectiveness of and public trust in these institutions.

5. Issues related to the Arab world and International Affairs

There are a number of important issues which effect Yemen and relate to the Arab world as well as world affairs. For example, there are important issues regarding perceptions about the fate of the Arab League, issues related to American and Western culture, and perceptions of what is terrorism. Of respondents, 31.8% believed that the reason for the underdevelopment of the Arab world compared to other regions was solely because of internal factors. On the other hand, 29.2% believed it was due to both internal and external factors while 11.6% stated it was solely due to external factors and 24.1% said they did not know why. Thus, overall, the percentage of Yemenis who believe that this outcome is due to internal factors is substantially greater than those who believe it is due to external factors.

In terms of attitudes toward the success of Arab cooperation and the efforts of the Arab League, the picture is quite negative. In fact, only 4.7% of respondents stated that the Arab League had been very successful while 31.6% believe it has not been successful at all.

In terms of their opinion towards terrorism, most Yemenis are aware of the explosions in Aden (the U.S.S. Cole) and the attacks in the Hadramawt in Eastern Yemen (against the French tanker). As for attacks in other countries, 61.6% described the hotel attacks in Amman as terrorist attacks while 17.3% stated that they were not terrorist attacks. Additionally, 58.0% describe the bombings of tourist hotels in Sharm al-Sheikh as terrorist attacks while 13.1% said that they were not terrorist attacks. Regarding the attacks on the metro and buses in London, 45.6% described them as terrorist while 15.8% said that they were not terrorist attacks. As for the Madrid train attacks, 42.6% believed they were terrorist attacks and 14.2% said they were not terrorist attacks while 23.9% were unaware of this event. As for the Casablanca bombings in 2003, 47.5% described them as terrorist while 9.1% said they were not terrorist and 24.9% said they were unaware of the attack. However, when asked if U.S. involvement in the region justifies attacks against Americans everywhere, 73.5% agreed with this statement.

Summary Findings

Arab Barometer Opinion Poll – Yemen

1) Democracy:

232-4: To what extent do you agree/ disagree with the following statements?: Democracy may have its problems but is better than any other form of government

Strongly Agree:	22.9
Agree:	40.1
Disagree:	12.5
Strongly Disagree	5.2
Don't Know/Can't Choose	19.3

234: To what degree would you agree that the violation of human rights in Jordan is justifiable in the name of promoting security and stability?

Completely Justified	9.4
Somewhat Justified	13.1
Not Very Justified	14.7
Not Justified at All	44.2
Don't Know/Can't Choose	18.7

246-1: I'm going to describe various types of political systems that exist in the Middle East and ask what you think about each as a way of governing Jordan. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing Jordan?: Parliamentary system in which nationalist, left-wing, and Islamic political parties all compete in elections.

Very Suitable	22.8
Suitable	24.6
Somewhat Suitable	12.4
Not Suitable at All	16.6
Don't Know/Can't Choose	23.6

255-1: People sometimes talk about the factors that make a person qualified for national leadership. On this card are listed some of the qualifications to which different people would give priority. Please state how important you consider each of these factors: Previous political experience.

Very Important	51.8
Important	32.3
Unimportant	4.9
Not Important at All	1.6
Don't Know/Can't Choose	8.5

255-2: People sometimes talk about the factors that make a person qualified for national leadership. On this card are listed some of the qualifications to which different people would give priority. Please state which one of these you, yourself, consider the most important: Openness to diverse political ideas.

Very Important	39.4
Important	41.2
Unimportant	4.9
Not Important at All	1.6
Don't Know/Can't Choose	8.5

255-3: People sometimes talk about the factors that make a person qualified for national leadership. On this card are listed some of the qualifications to which different people would give priority. Please state which one of these you, yourself, consider the most important. Hardworking.

Very Important	60.6
Important	25.9
Unimportant	3.6
Not Important at All	1.5
Don't Know/Can't Choose	7.4

255-4: People sometimes talk about the factors that make a person qualified for national leadership. On this card are listed some of the qualifications to which different people would give priority. Please state which one of these you, yourself, consider the most important. Effective speaker/ Ease in communicating with people.

Very Important	54.1
Unimportant	28.2
Unimportant	6.1
Not Important at All	1.5
Don't Know/Can't Choose	8.6

2. Concept of Citizenship

207: Did you participate in the parliamentary elections in 2003?

Yes	55.2
No	39.3
Don't Know/Can't Choose	5.6

215: Generally speaking, how interested would you say you are in politics?

Very Interested	8.2
Interested	25.2

A Little Interest	31.6
Not Interested	26.7
Don't Know/Can't Choose	8.3

230-1: Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these please tell me whether you, personally, have ever done each of these things in the past three years: Join together with others to draw attention to an issue or sign a petition.

Once:	14.6
More than Once:	22.0
Never:	56.6
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	6.8

507-2: Do you agree/disagree with the following statements: Our political leaders care about ordinary citizens.

Strongly Agree:	8.5
Agree:	15.1
Disagree:	38.2
Strongly Disagree:	24.2
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	10.9

507-5: Do you agree/disagree with the following statements: Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on.

Strongly Agree:	16.4
Agree:	42.6
Disagree:	14.7
Strongly Disagree:	6.1
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	15.8

213-1: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain the following administrative or social services from the government?: An identity document (such as birth certificate, driver's license, or passport).

Very Easy:	12.9
Easy:	48.5
Difficult:	18.6
Very Difficult:	6.9
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	12.7

213-5: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain the following administrative or social services from the government?: Access to individuals or institutions to file a complaint when your rights are violated.

Very Easy:	3.0
Easy:	11.7
Difficult:	23.4
Very Difficult:	28.8
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	30.9

3. The Role of Faith in Public Life

401-3: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?: Men of religion should have influence over the decisions of government.

Strongly Agree:	10.7
Agree:	37.8
Disagree:	28.8
Strongly Disagree:	6.3
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	13.2

401-4: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?: Religious practice is a private matter and should be separated from socio-political life.

Strongly Agree:	12.2
Agree:	24.0
Disagree:	28.2
Strongly Disagree:	16.2
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	15.5

502-1: When you consider what a suitable spouse is for your son or daughter, would you say that each of the following is very important, somewhat important, or not important?: S/he doesn't pray.

Very Important:	83.6
Important:	9.1
Unimportant:	3.3
Not Important at All:	2.2
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	1.8

502-6: When you consider what a suitable spouse is for your son or daughter, would you say that each of the following is very important, somewhat important, or not important? Unemployed.

Very Important:	68.7
Important:	14.6
Unimportant:	11.4
Not Important at All:	4.0
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	1.3

504-1: Today as in the past, Muslim scholars and jurists sometimes disagree about the proper interpretation of Islam in response to present-day issues. For each of the statements listed below, please indicate whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly with the interpretation of Islam that is presented. Democracy is a Western form of government that is not compatible with Islam.

Strongly Agree:	9.6
Agree:	10.8
Disagree:	45.1
Strongly Disagree:	12.2
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	18.3

504-2: Today as in the past, Muslim scholars and jurists sometimes disagree about the proper interpretation of Islam in response to present-day issues. For each of the statements listed below, please indicate whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly with the interpretation of Islam that is presented. Islam requires that in a Muslim country the political rights of non-Muslims should be inferior to those of Muslims.

Strongly Agree:	6.7
Agree:	22.0
Disagree:	40.3
Strongly Disagree:	9.0
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	22.1

504-6: Today as in the past, Muslim scholars and jurists sometimes disagree about the proper interpretation of Islam in response to present-day issues. For each of the statements listed below, please indicate whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly with the interpretation of Islam that is presented. In Islam a woman should dress modestly, but Islam does not require that she wear a *hijab*.

Strongly Agree:	10.8
Agree:	17.9
Disagree:	27.6
Strongly Disagree:	35.1
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	8.6

505-1: The following questions are your personal opinions about the principles that should determine the behavior and situation of women in our society. For each of the statements listed below, please indicate whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly. A woman can be a president or prime minister of a Muslim country.

Strongly Agree:	10.0
Agree:	21.6
Disagree:	31.8
Strongly Disagree:	31.6

Don't Know/Can't Choose: 5.0

505-5: The following questions are your personal opinions about the principles that should determine the behavior and situation of women in our society. For each of the statements listed below, please indicate whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly. Men and women should have equal job opportunities and wages.

Strongly Agree:	14.0
Agree:	30.3
Disagree:	39.8
Strongly Disagree:	9.5
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	6.4

4. Views of Public Institutions and Confidence in Institutions

201-1: I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust you have in them. Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all?: Prime minister.

A Great Deal of Trust:	10.3
Quite a Lot of Trust:	22.0
Not Very Much Trust:	20.7
None at All:	32.1
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	10.9

201-3: I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust you have in them. Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all?: Parliament.

A Great Deal of Trust:	5.8
Quite a Lot of Trust:	21.2
Not Very Much Trust:	25.0
None at All:	35.5
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	8.4

201-5: I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust you have in them. Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all?: Political Parties.

A Great Deal of Trust:	5.8
Quite a Lot of Trust:	15.3
Not Very Much Trust:	19.4
None at All:	43.7
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	10.7

211: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in June 2003? Was it:

Completely Free and Fair:	11.4
Free and Fair but with Minor Problems:	21.6
Free and Fair but with Major Problems:	12.4
Not Free and Fair:	22.9
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	26.8

219: How much impact do you feel government policies have on your daily life?

Have a Large Positive Impact:	6.5
Have a Positive Impact:	17.3
Do Not Have a Positive or Negative Impact:	22.5
Have a Negative Impact:	27.7
Have a Large Negative Impact:	8.0
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	18.1

5. Issues Regarding the Arab World and International Affairs

601: Some people have said that the Arab world lags behind other regions. Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

Internal/Domestic Factors:	31.8
External/International Factors	11.6
Both are Equally Important:	29.2
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	24.1

602: Do you agree that the Arab League has been effective in promoting Arab unity on a wide range of important issues?

Very Successful:	4.7
Somewhat Successful:	12.8
Not Very Successful:	26.2
Not at All Successful:	31.6
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	21.5

608: Do you agree with the following statement: "The culture of US and other Western countries has many positive attributes"?

Agree:	35.7
Disagree:	23.9
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	36.5

603-1: Do you think the following operations are terrorist operations or not?: Amman hotel explosions.

Terrorist:	61.6
Not Terrorist:	17.3
Have Not Heard of Them:	12.9
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	4.0

603-2: Do you think the following operations are terrorist operations or not?: Egyptian explosions (Sharm al Sheikh/ Dahab)

Terrorist:	58.0
Not Terrorist:	13.1
Have Not Heard of Them:	11.9
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	17.0

603-4: Do you think the following operations are terrorist operations or not?: Madrid (train) attacks.

Terrorist:	42.6
Not Terrorist:	14.2
Have Not Heard of Them:	23.9
Don't Know/Can't Choose:	15.1