



The 2015 Arab Opinion Index: ISIL and Syria Results in Brief

Press Advisory

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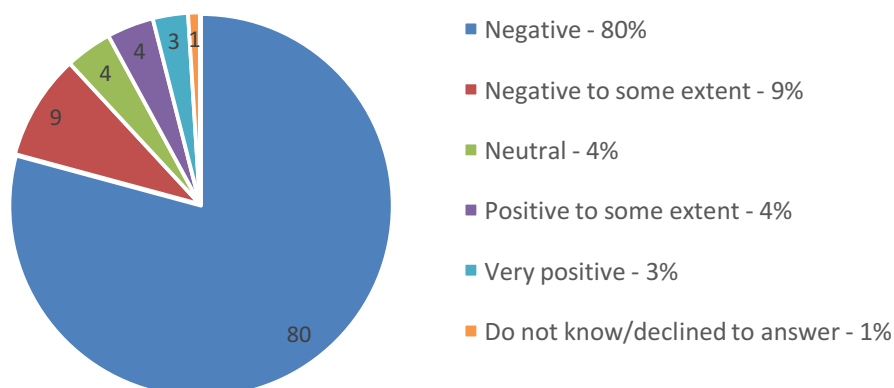
Today the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies released the findings of its 2015 Arab Opinion Index (AOI) which were based on 18,311 face-to-face interviews conducted in 12 different Arab countries including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Together, they represent 90% of the population of the Arab League. Each of the country-specific samples were conducted using a randomized, self-weighted, multi-stage cluster method, providing margins of error of between 2% and 3%.

The Arab Opinion Index, is the largest public opinion poll of its kind in the Arab region. The latest survey, conducted between May and September 2015, affords scholars and policy makers the opportunity to understand how the Arab citizenry views the most pressing issues which face it today, including the growth of radical extremism and, in particular, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and potential solutions to the Syrian crisis. This year's Arab Opinion Index marks the fourth consecutive year that The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies has conducted its yearly survey of Arab public opinion, allowing comparisons between current results and those obtained in earlier AOI polls since its launch in 2011.

Responses to the 2015 questions show that the Arab world as a whole is overwhelmingly opposed to ISIL, with 89% of respondents offering that they have negative views of the group, compared to only 7% of Arabs who view the extremist organization positively. Equally, the results of the survey show no significant correlation between support for ISIL and religiosity: favorable views of ISIL are equally prevalent among respondents who are "very religious" and those who are "not religious", and also equally prevalent amongst opponents and supporters of the separation of religion and state. In other words, support for radical extremist organizations in the Arab world, where it exists, is rooted in political grievances within the Arab region and its conflicts, and not in religious ideology.

Respondents' answers to the question "In general, do you have a positive or negative view of ISIL?"

(% of respondents reported that they were aware of ISIL)



Comparing respondents general view of ISIL by different variables (Cross tabulated)

Respondents view of ISIL	Respondents' self-reporting of their religiosity		
	Very religious	Religious to some extent	Not religious
Very positive	4	2	3
Positive to some extent	5	3	5
Neutral	5	3	4
Negative to some extent	11	8	9
Negative	75	84	79
Total	100	100	100

Respondents view of ISIL	Respondents' agreement/disagreement with the statement: "Religious practices are private affairs and should be separated from public (social and political) life"	
	Agree	Disagree
Positive	6	6
Negative	91	89
Neutral	3	4
Total	100	100

Respondents view of ISIL	Respondents' agreement/disagreement with the statement: "In order to meet the demands of the modern-day economy, banks should be allowed to charge interest"	
	Agree	Disagree
Positive	6	6
Negative	90	90
Neutral	4	4
Total	100	100

Respondents view of ISIL	Respondents' agreement/disagreement with the statement: "It would be better for my home country if religion were separated from politics."	
	Agree	Disagree
Positive	5	7
Negative	91	89
Neutral	4	4
Total	100	100

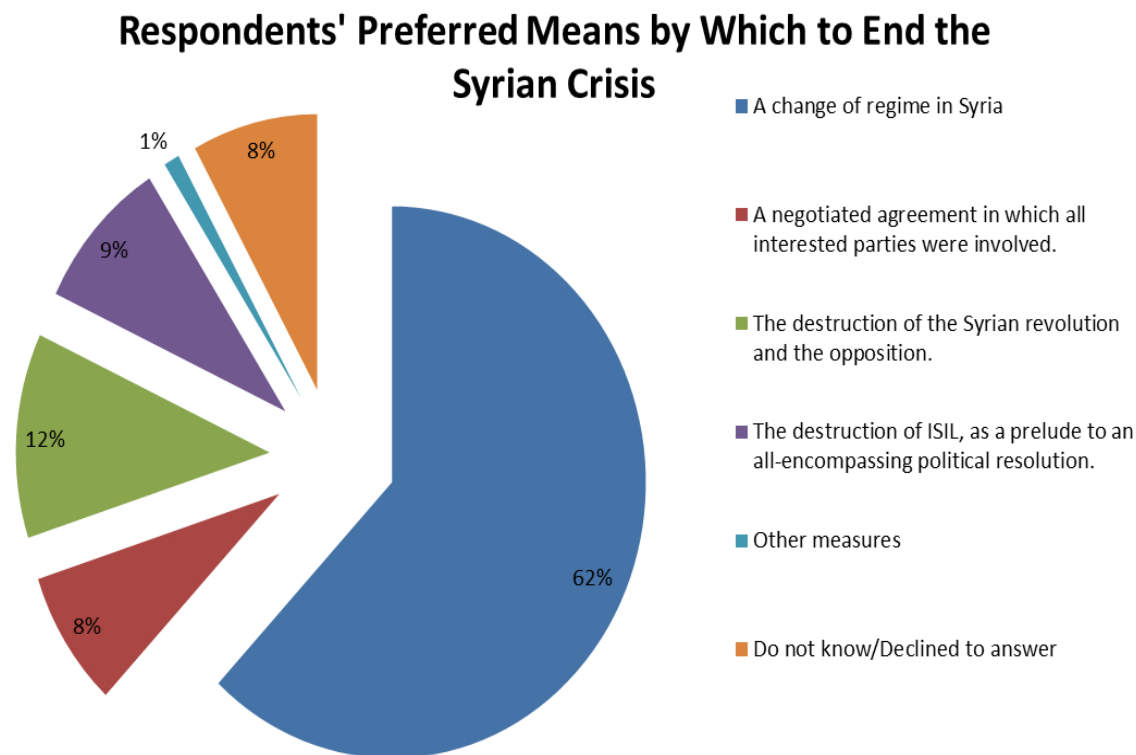
One of the over-arching political grievances in the Arab world over the past five years has been the continued suffering of the Syrian people. In fact, “sectarian tensions in Iraq and Syria” were cited by more than one fifth of respondents as a main factor which contributed to the rise of ISIL.

Results show that no consensus exists among the Arab people over the best measures by which to combat ISIL and armed terrorist groups in general. This reflects both the complexity of the issue and the sophisticated attitudes of the Arab public towards it. Respondents cited different measures as the most important in combatting ISIL, including: supporting democratic transition in the region (28%); resolving the Palestinian cause (18%); ending foreign intervention (14%); intensifying the military campaign against ISIL (14%); and solving the Syrian crisis in line with the aspirations of the Syrian people (12%) would effectively end the threat of terrorism.

Respondents’ suggested measures as the most important in combatting ISIL and armed terrorist groups in general

	Most important measure	Second most important measure	Average
Supporting democratic transition in the region	28	7	18
Resolving the Palestinian cause	18	14	16
Intensifying the military campaign against ISIL	14	13	13
Ending foreign intervention	14	24	19
Solving the Syrian crisis in line with the aspirations of the Syrian people	12	13	12
Revising Islamic texts form the extremist ideas	8	17	12
Changing of the sectarian policies by the Iraqi government with policies based on citizenship	2	10	6
There is so second measure	--	2	1
Other	0.2	0.3	0.2
Do not know/declined to answer	4	--	2
Total	100	100	100

In line with previous polls within the Arab Opinion Index, this year's results show that a majority (62%) of the Arab public views a change in the Syrian regime as the ideal means by which to end the Syrian crisis. In other words, and comparing these findings to previous opinion polls, the Arab public at large remains sympathetic to the aims and objectives of the Syrian revolution.



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