

Arab Opinion Index 2022

The largest public opinion survey in the Arab world, covering the Arab public's economic and political conditions, attitudes toward democracy and religion, perceptions of external threats and the foreign policies of major international powers, and attitudes toward the Palestinian cause and US policies in Palestine and Israel.

The 2022 Arab Opinion Index (AOI) is the eighth in a series of public opinion surveys conducted across the Arab world by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, of which Arab Center Washington DC is an affiliate. The 2022 AOI is based on findings from face-to-face interviews conducted between June and December 2022 with 33,300 individual respondents in 14 Arab countries.



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The 2022 Arab Opinion Index

Main Results in Brief

The 2022 Arab Opinion Index is the eighth in a series of public opinion surveys conducted across the Arab world by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha, Qatar. The first survey was conducted in 2011, with others following in 2012–2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017–2018, and 2019–2020.

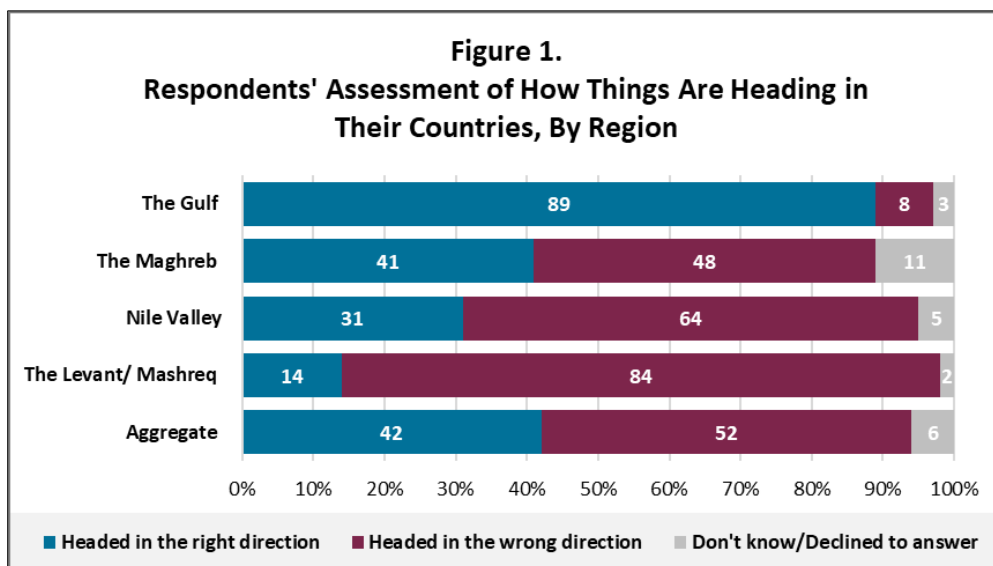
The 2022 Arab Opinion Index is based on findings from face-to-face interviews conducted between June and December 2022 with 33,300 individual respondents in 14 Arab countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Tunisia. Sampling followed a randomized, stratified, multi-stage, self-weighted clustered approach, giving an overall margin of error between +/- 2 % and 3% for the individual country samples. The overall samples guarantee probability proportional to size (PPS), ensuring fairness in the representation of various population segments. With an aggregate sample size of 33,300 respondents, the Arab Opinion Index remains the largest public opinion survey in the Arab world. Fieldwork was carried out by an overall team of 920 individuals, equally balanced by gender, who conducted 72,000 hours of face-to-face interviews. The team covered a total of 890,000 kilometers (approximately 553,000 miles) across the population clusters sampled.

The sections below provide selected highlights from the findings of the 2022 Arab Opinion Index. The results are presented according to countries surveyed and to the general average of each Arab region. For the purposes of comparison, the data of the countries surveyed are sometimes classified according to the geographical regions of the Arab world: The Arab Maghreb (including Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia), the Nile Valley (including Egypt and Sudan), the Arab Mashreq (including Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq), and the Gulf (including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar).

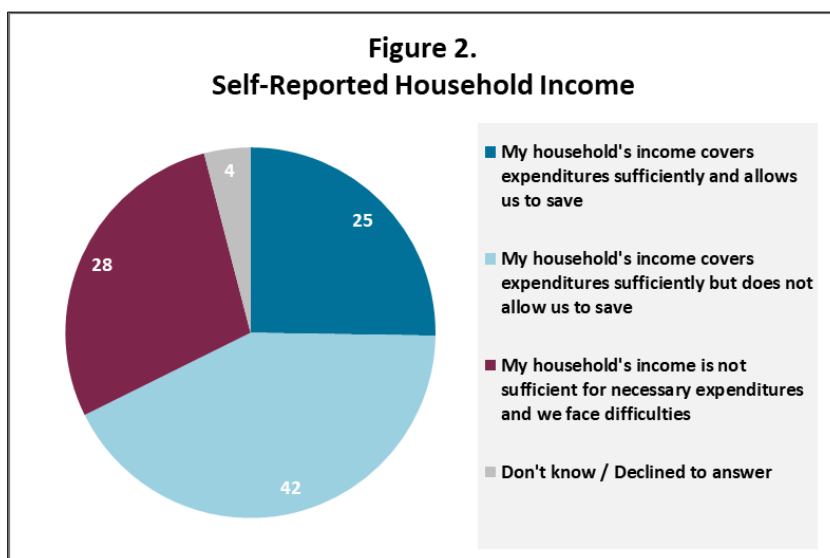
Section 1: Living Conditions of Arab Citizens

- 52% of citizens, a slight majority, believe that their countries are headed in the wrong direction, compared to 42% who say that they are headed in the right direction (see Figure 1). Of those who reported that things are headed in the wrong direction, 40% attributed this to economic reasons, 14% stated that it is due to unstable political conditions such as political confusion and the failure of the political system to function as it should, 9% blamed poor state management and policy, and 7% indicated a lack of stability as the main cause.
- Meanwhile, 83% of the respondents who answered that their countries are headed in the right direction provided reasons for their response: 19% stated that conditions in their

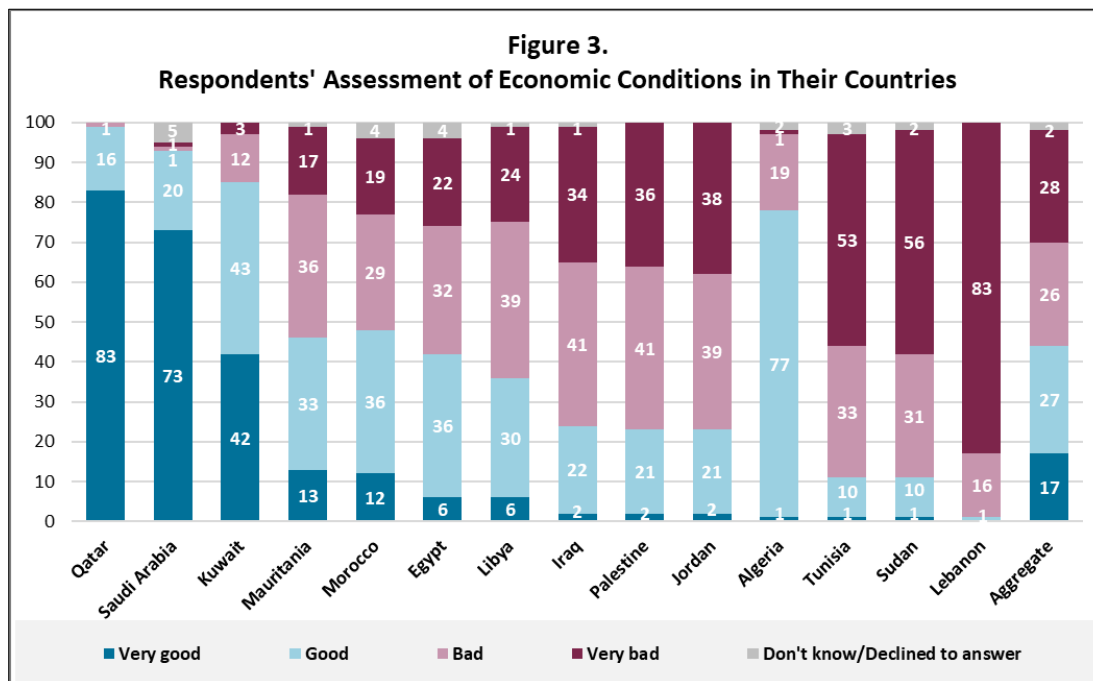
country had improved, 15% noted the level of security and safety, 13% cited good governance, 7% pointed to an improvement in the economic situation, 5% to political stability, and another 5% to a sense of optimism about the future.



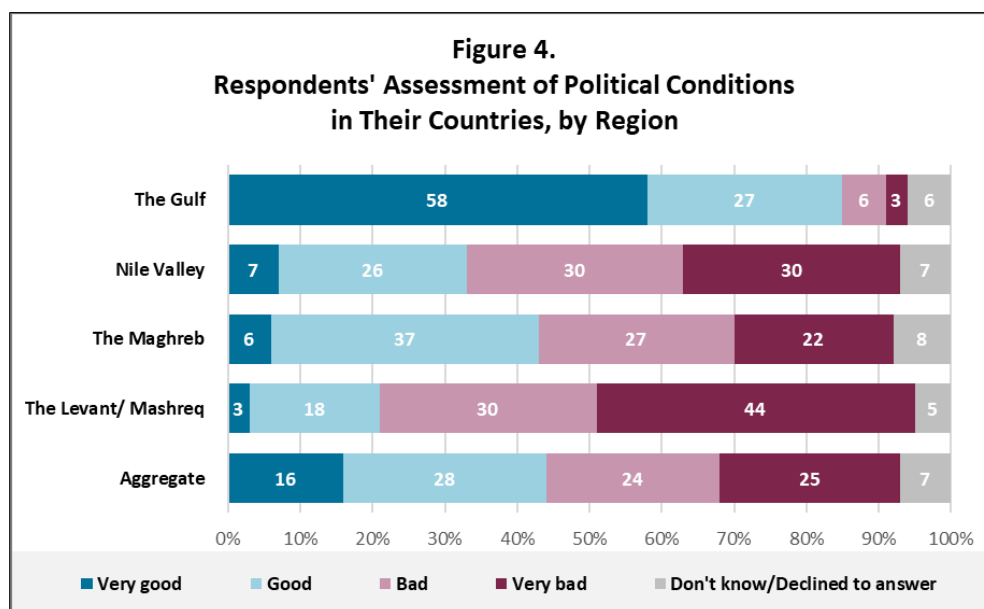
- Only 25% of respondents, mostly from the Gulf region, reported that their household income is high enough for them to save money beyond that sufficient to cover necessary expenditures. Another 42% reported that while their household income is sufficient to cover necessary expenditures, it is not enough to sustain savings. A full 28% of respondents reported that they live “in a state of need,” with household incomes not covering their necessary expenditures (see Figure 2). As expected, the most affluent households were concentrated in the Gulf region, while families in greatest need were concentrated in the Mashreq.



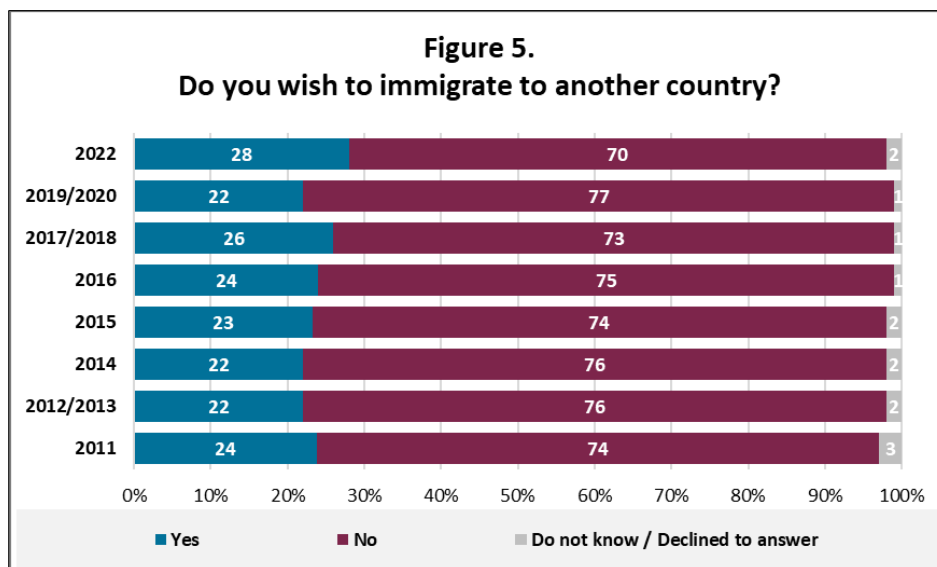
- 61% of respondents evaluated the level of security in their home countries positively (a level that is 8 points lower than that recorded in the 2019–2020 poll), while 38% rated it negatively.
- 44% of respondents evaluated their home countries' economic situations positively, compared to 54% who have a negative view of their countries' economies (see Figure 3). A majority of respondents in Arab countries, with the exception of the Gulf, evaluated the economic situation in their countries negatively, especially those living in the countries of the Mashreq.



- 44% of respondents evaluated the political situation in their countries as positive, while 49% evaluated it as negative (see Figure 4). Most respondents in the Gulf states evaluated the political situation positively. In the aggregate, respondents' evaluation of the political situation in their countries in 2022 was 4% less positive than in 2019–2020.

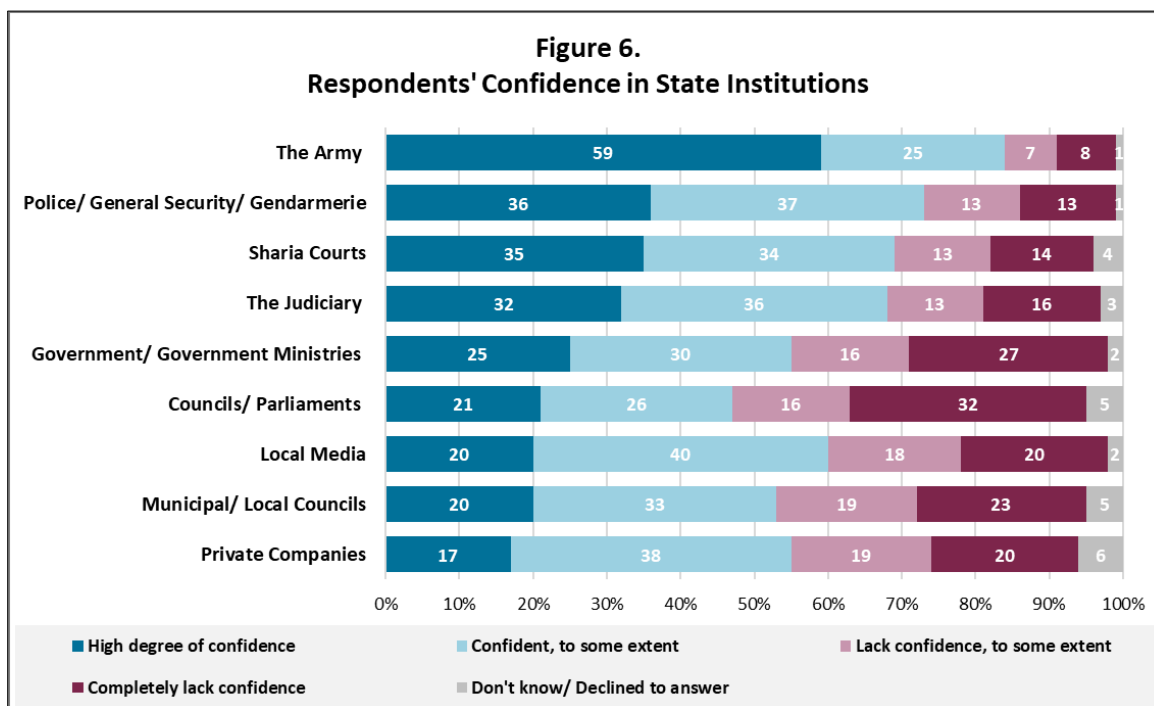


- When asked to identify the most pressing problems for their countries to tackle, 60% of respondents provided answers that focused on economic issues: unemployment, high prices, poor economic conditions, and poverty. Another 12% offered answers that centered on security, safety, and political stability, while 16% gave answers concerning governmental performance and policies, such as weak public services, financial and administrative corruption, governance and policies, and democratic transition. The most important problem facing the people of the region is that of high prices and a high cost of living, and the 2022 AOI recorded the highest proportion of respondents in the history of the index citing this as their main concern.
- As Figure 5 shows, 28% of Arabs want to immigrate to other countries. While a desire for economic improvement was most often cited as the incentive to leave one's country, 16% of respondents who wanted to immigrate said that their motive is education or continuing education and 11% cited political reasons and concerns over safety and security. This was highly dependent on subjective circumstances in the country surveyed; more than a third of respondents in Mashreq, Maghreb, and Nile Valley countries want to emigrate, compared to 6% in Gulf countries.

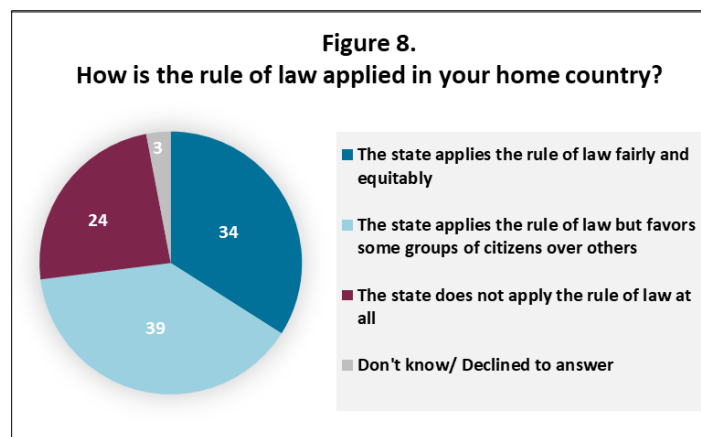
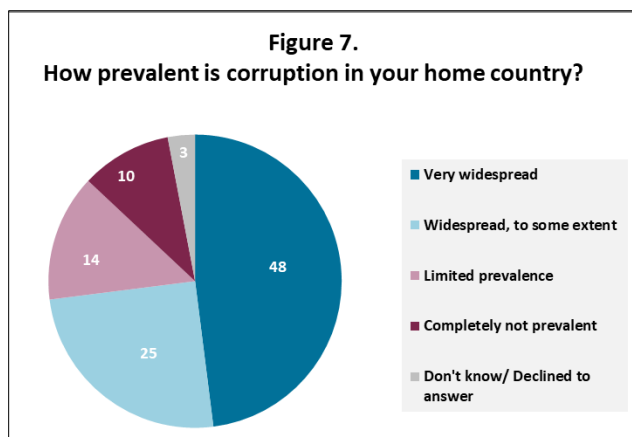


Section 2: Perceptions of State Institutions and Governmental Effectiveness

- Arab citizens' confidence in state institutions varies. Although confidence is especially high in military and public security institutions, confidence in judicial, executive, and legislative branches is low. Parliaments and legislative councils received the least amount of confidence, and public confidence in municipal councils and private sector companies was divided (see Figure 6).



- Arab public opinion is polarized when evaluating the performance of legislative councils and parliaments in Arab countries. More than half of respondents (57%) believe that these councils fulfill their role of monitoring the government, while 34% believe that they do not. It is important to note that positions on this issue vary by region; respondents in the Mashreq are the least likely to agree that legislative councils fulfill their role, while 55% of Maghrebi respondents think that they do.
- There is clear consensus among the Arab public that financial and administrative corruption is widespread in their countries. 87% believe that corruption exists in their home countries, compared to only 10% who believe that corruption is not prevalent at all (see Figure 7). The data also show that citizens' perceptions of the extent of corruption in their countries have not changed substantially over the course of the eight AOI polls that have been conducted since 2011. Respondents in Mashreq countries are most certain of the spread of corruption, while Gulf countries have the highest rates of citizens who do not believe that corruption is widespread.



- As seen in Figure 8, only 34% of the Arab public believe that the rule of law is applied equally among citizens, while 39% maintain that although the rule of law is applied in their home states, some groups are shown favorable treatment, and 24% expressed the opinion that the rule of law is not applied in their home countries at all. More than other regions, respondents from the Mashreq expressed the opinion that their state institutions do not apply the law equally, while respondents in the Gulf region largely considered that their governments do apply the law equally.

Section 3: The Arab Public's Attitudes toward Democracy

- Of the overall group of respondents, 34% defined democracy as the guarantee of political and civil freedoms, 20% viewed it as the guarantee of equality and justice among citizens, 14% focused on participation and the institutional aspects of a democratic system (e.g., circulation of power, separation and control between authorities), 6% saw it as the

guarantee of security and stability, and 5% defined it as the improvement of economic conditions. Poll results show an increase in the percentage of those who define democracy as participation and the institution of democratic governance, especially in countries such as Egypt, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, and Sudan.

- A majority of public opinion, a full 72%, supports a democratic system, compared to 19% who stand against such a system of governance. Despite similar rates of support for democracy throughout the Arab region, support was highest in the Mashreq and Maghreb regions.
- As shown in Figure 9, when asked to compare democracy to other systems (such as authoritarian regimes, theocracies, or representative democracies where electoral competition is limited to either Islamist or non-Islamist/secular political parties), 71% of Arabs stated that they believe that democracy is the most suitable system of governance for their home countries. In addition, a majority of Arabs surveyed disagreed with a set of statements that are commonly used in public discourse to discredit democracy (e.g., “Democracy is incompatible with Islam”). But they are divided on the statement that their society is not prepared to practice democracy, and on the statement, “Democracies are characterized by indecisiveness and discord” (see Figure 10).

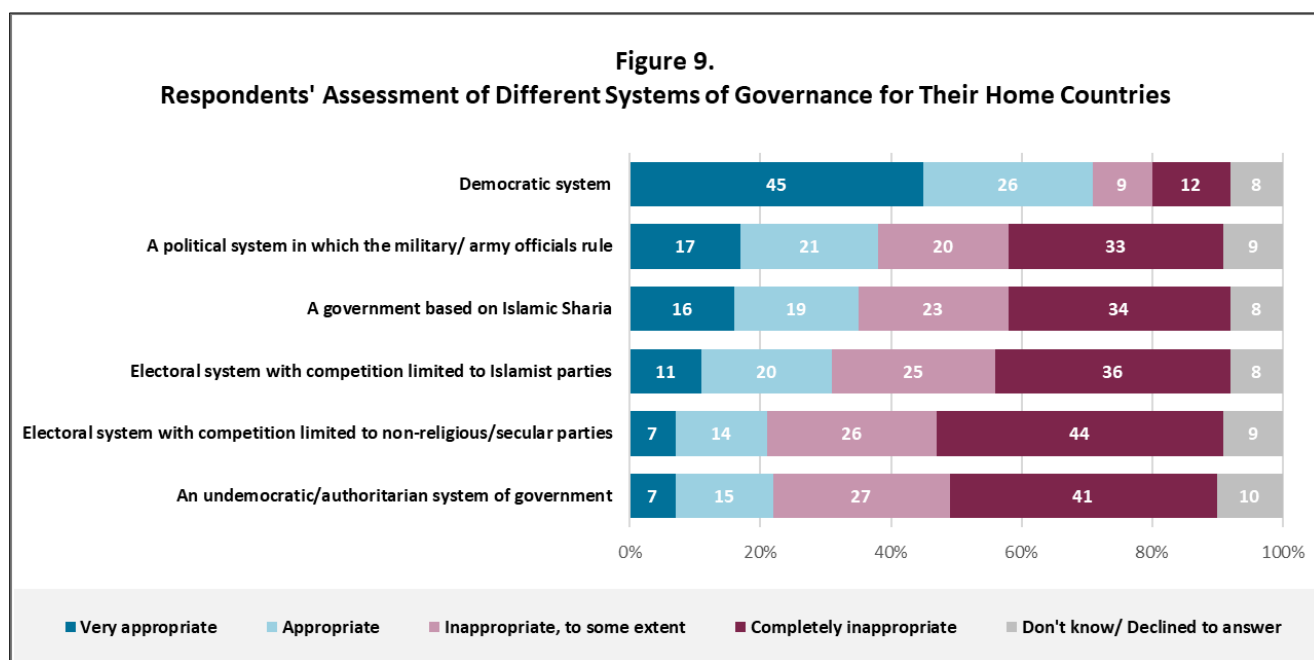
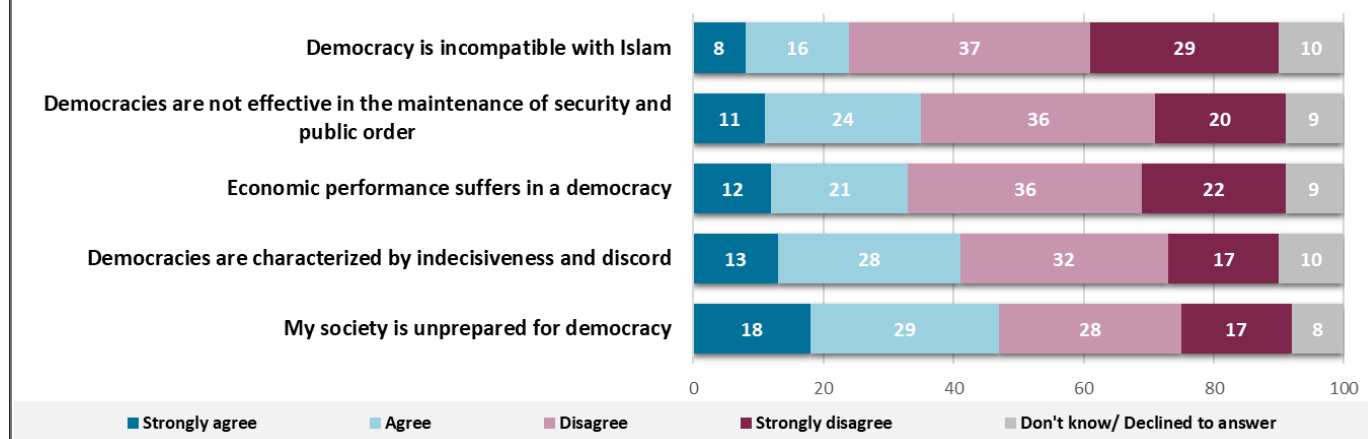
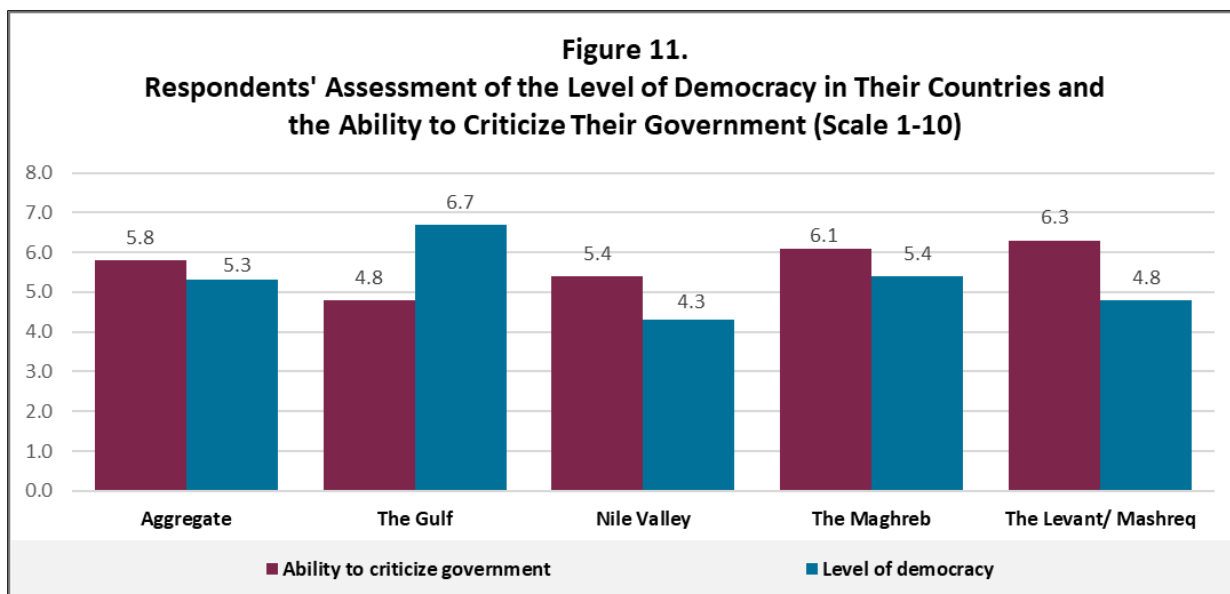


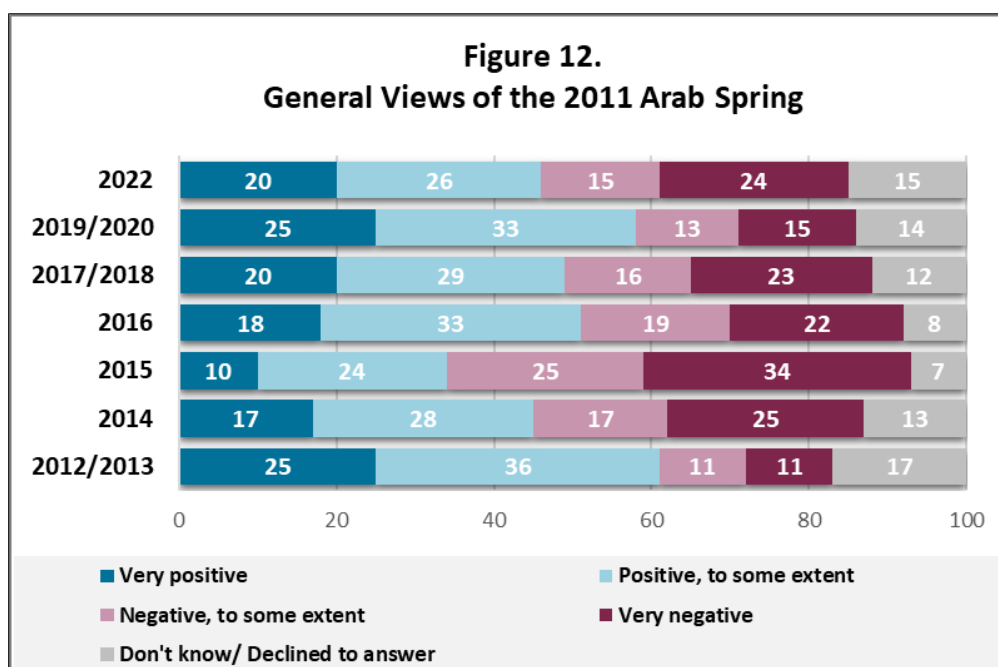
Figure 10.
Respondents' Agreement Level with a Set of Statements on Democracy



- A slight majority of Arab citizens (53%) said that they would accept an electoral victory that resulted in the rise to power of a political party with which they disagree, while 40% stated that they would be opposed to the ascendance of a political party with which they disagree. The highest rates of acceptance were recorded in the Nile Valley region and the Maghreb, and the lowest in the Gulf region.
- The consensus on support for democracy is accompanied by a negative evaluation of present levels of democracy in the Arab world. On average, respondents placed the level of democracy in the region at 5.3 on a scale from 1 to 10 (see Figure 11), which is lower than what was recorded in the 2019–2020 survey.
- Arab citizens' evaluation of their ability to criticize their countries' governments showed a limited ability to criticize governments, with an average score of 5.8 points out of 10 (see Figure 11). Respondents' perception of their ability to criticize their governments was highest in Lebanon, Iraq, and Morocco, and was lowest in Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and Egypt. Overall, the ability to criticize one's government is highest in the Mashreq and lowest in the Gulf.

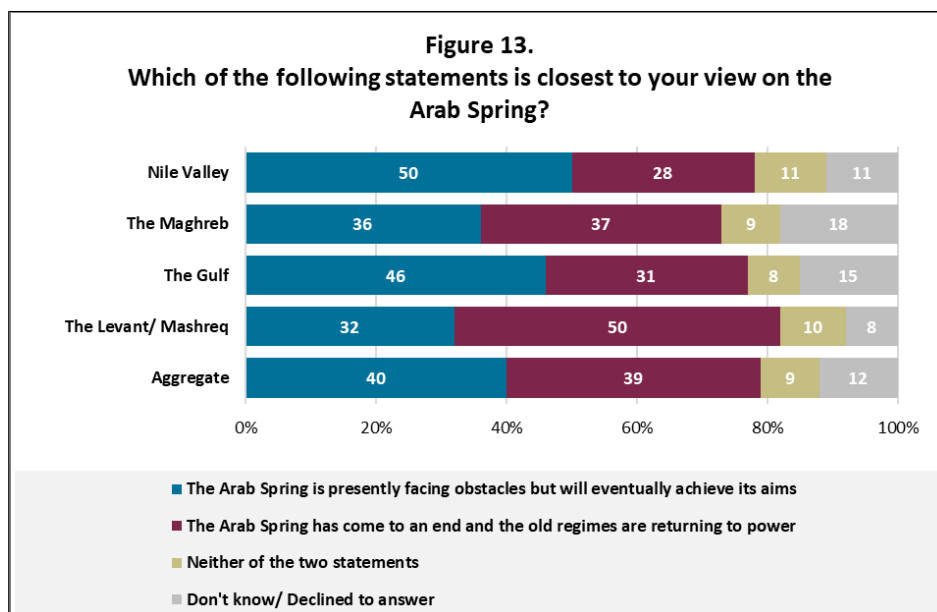


- In assessing citizens' views on the 2011 Arab uprisings, results show that 46% still consider the uprisings to have been positive, and 39% consider them to have been negative. The percentage of those who evaluated them positively in 2022 is 12% less than in 2019–2020 (see Figure 12).



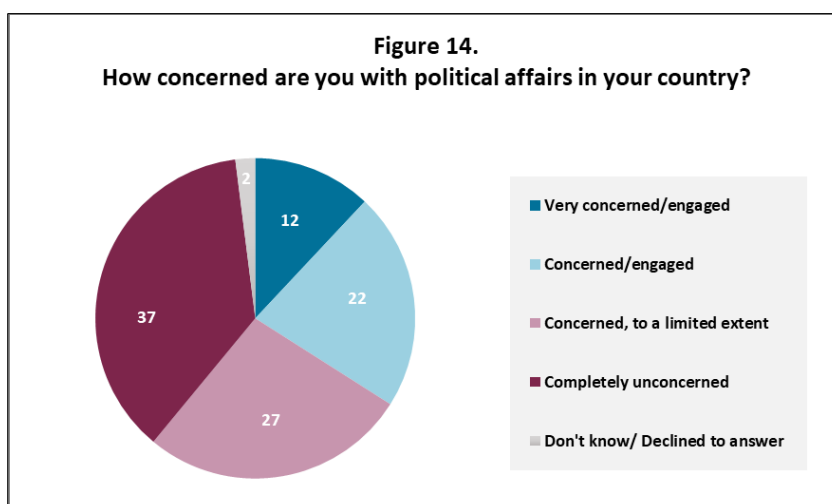
- When asked about the reasons that prompted people in 2011 to participate in the Arab uprisings and protest movements, 25% cited standing against corruption, 16% cited poor economic conditions, and 14% cited putting an end to dictatorships.

- The Arab public is divided in terms of its outlook regarding a future path for the Arab Spring. 40% of respondents maintained that the revolutions are temporarily faltering but will eventually achieve their goals. In contrast, 39% believe that the Arab Spring ended before the uprisings could achieve their aims and that former regimes have subsequently returned to power (see Figure 13).

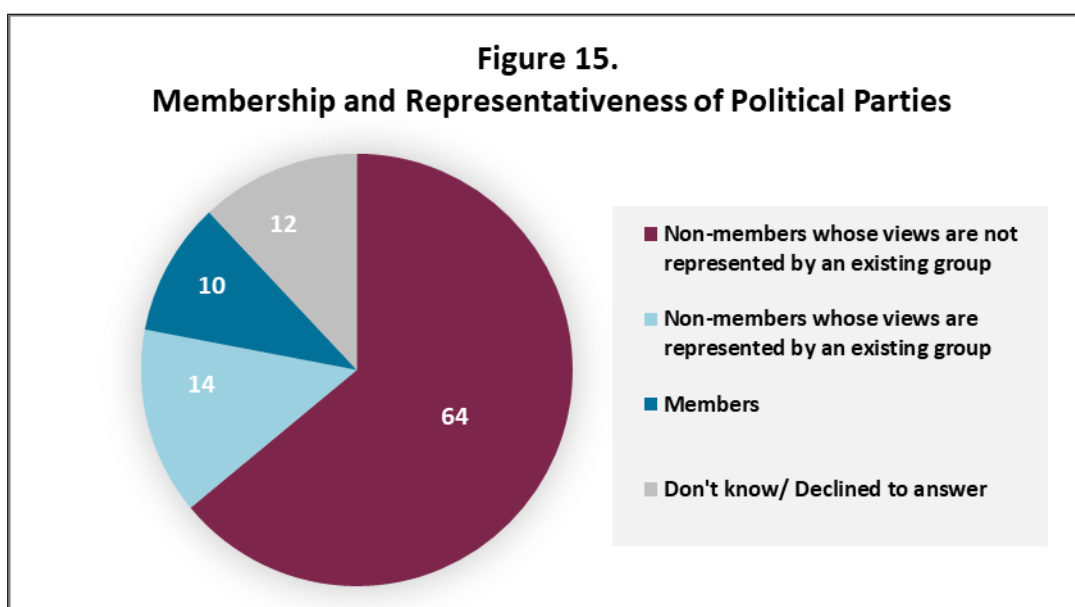


Section 4: Civic and Political Participation

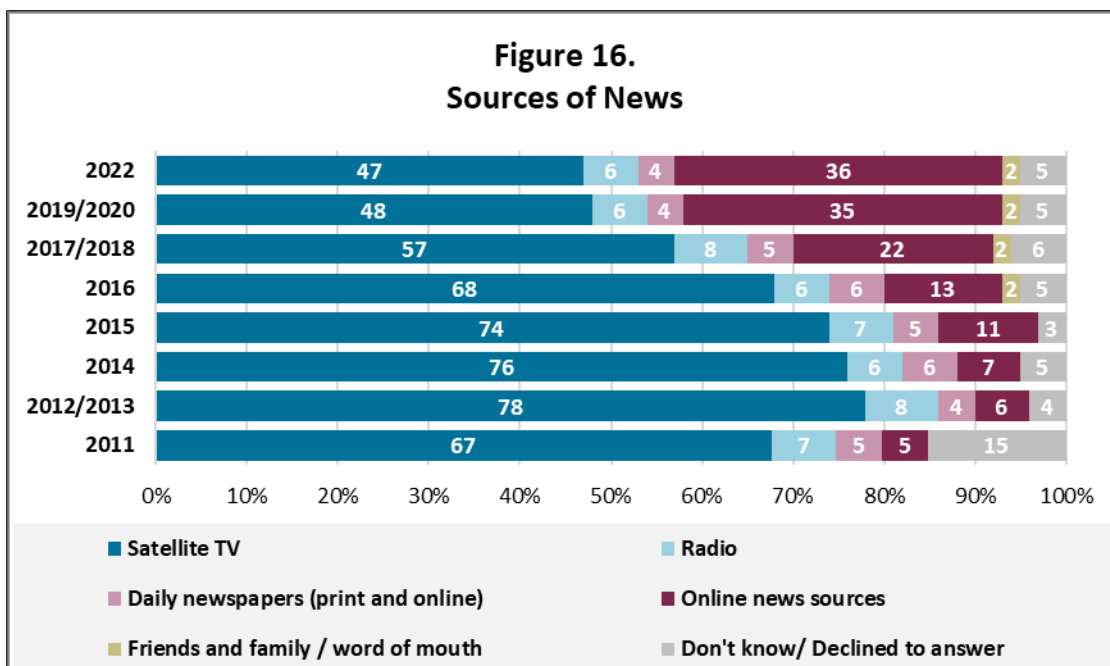
- Arab public opinion is divided in terms of interest in national political affairs (see Figure 14). It is worth noting that there is an 8% decrease in public interest in political affairs in the 2022 poll compared to 2019–2020.



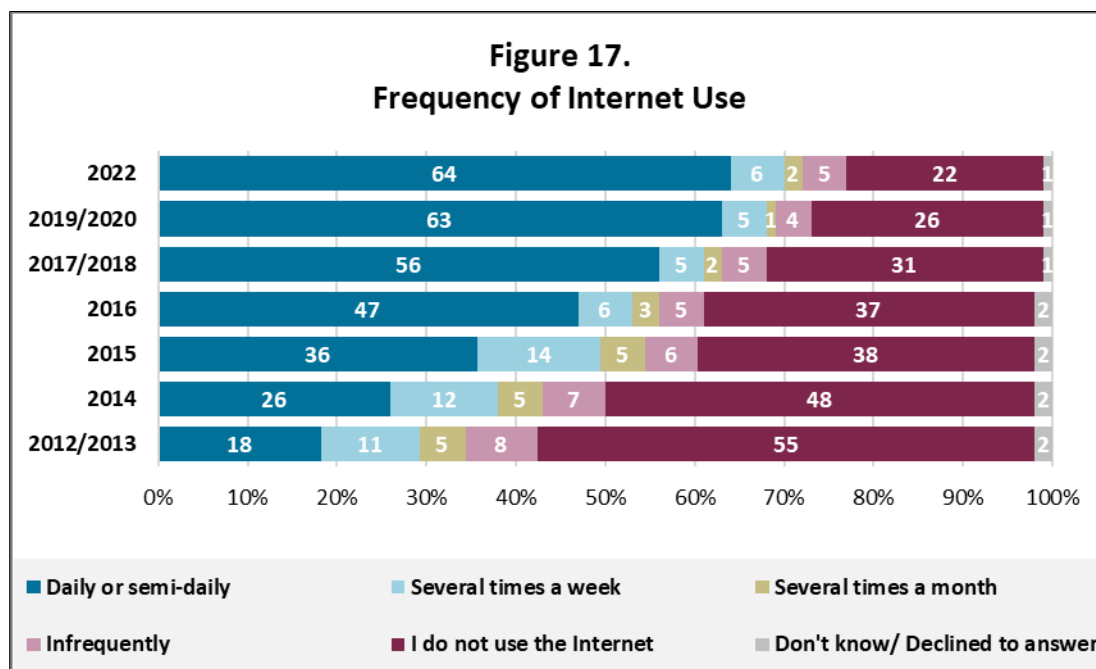
- Membership and other forms of participation in civil society and voluntary organizations remain extremely limited across the Arab region, with no more than 13% of respondents in a given country reporting that they are members of such groups. If one were to take into account the level of active participation in the activities of such groups, the level of effective participation would likely diminish even further. Affiliation to family associations and organizations is still higher than affiliation to civil, cultural, and voluntary associations.
- A majority of respondents (64%) have no affiliation with a political party, and do not feel that their views are represented by any existing political group or bloc (see Figure 15). However, a majority of respondents (51%) expressed their intention to vote in their country's next parliamentary elections, compared to 48% in 2019–2020. The highest recorded rate of intention to participate in elections (59%) came in the 2011 index.



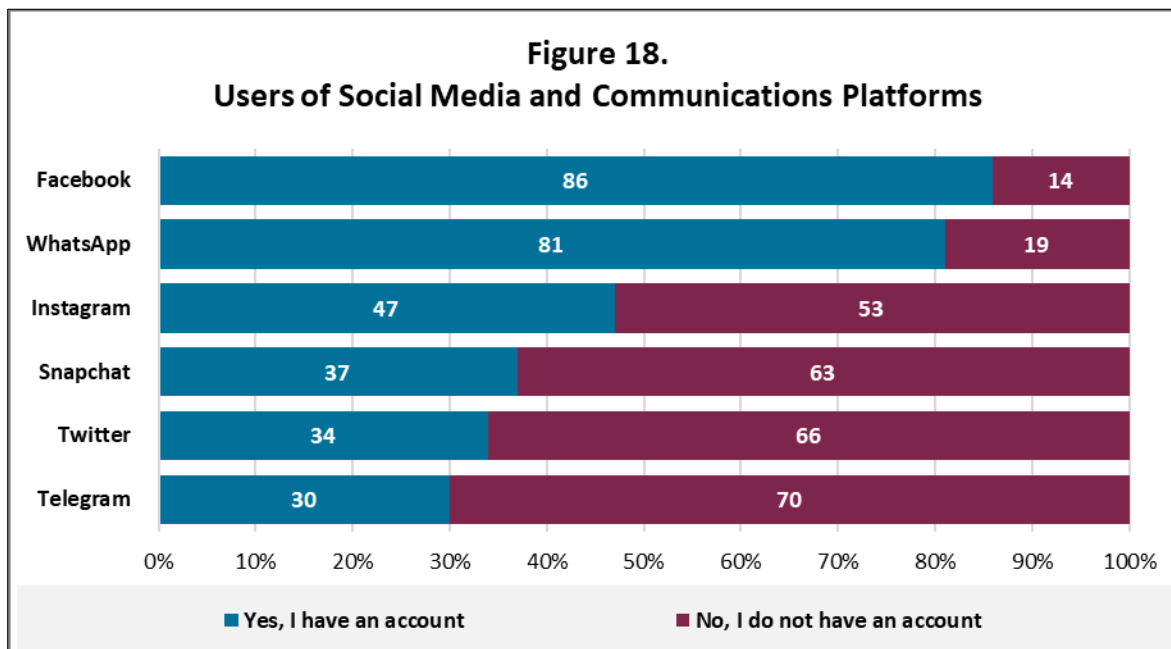
- The past eight AOI surveys have revealed fundamental shifts in the sources that Arab citizens rely on to obtain political news. A majority of citizens in the Arab region (47%) still rely on television for political news, followed by the internet (36%), radio (6%), and daily newspapers (4%). The percentage of respondents who said that they rely on the internet to follow political news is the highest percentage recorded in the history of the AOI, and has increased sevenfold since the first poll in 2011. In contrast, the percentage of those relying on television for political news has gradually declined over the years (see Figure 16).



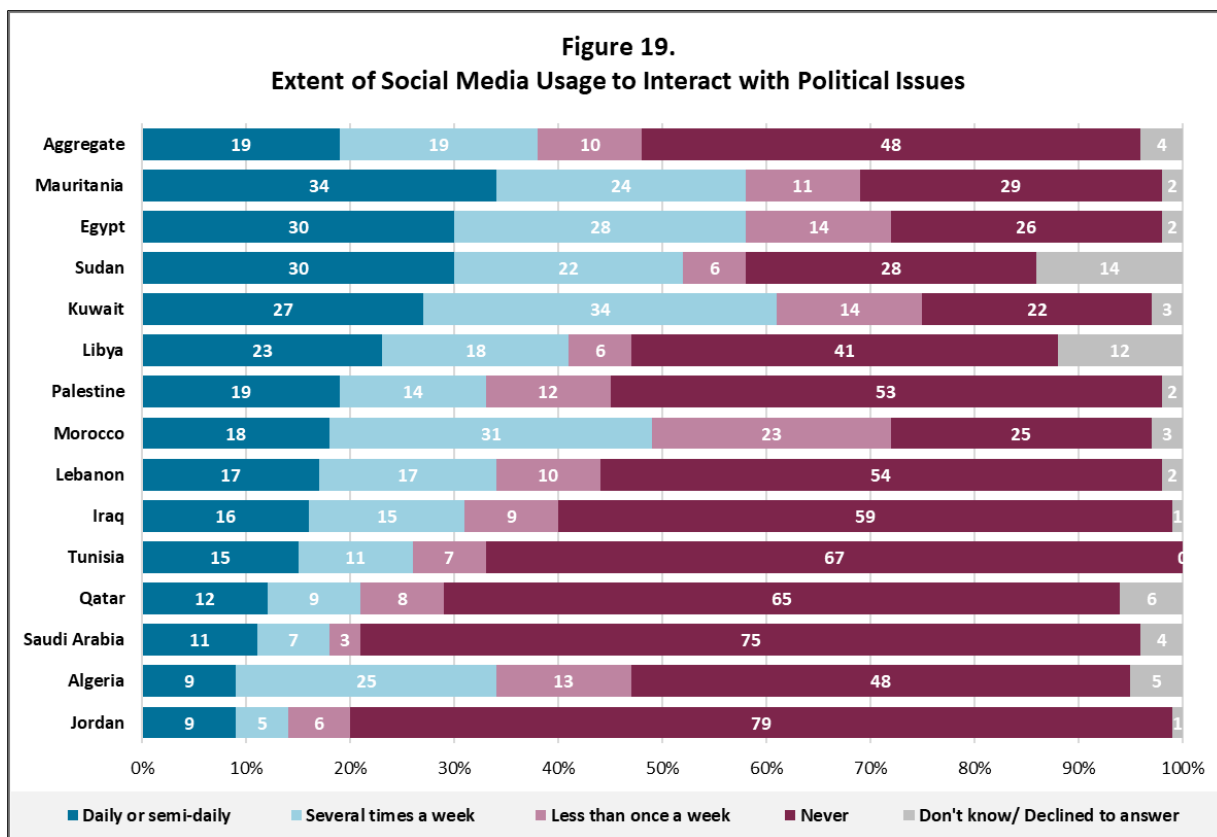
- Although 77% of respondents said that they use the internet to varying degrees, only 22% indicated that they do not use the internet at all. The 2022 poll thus demonstrates a continuous and statistically significant increase in the spread of internet use in the Arab region (see Figure 17).



- Internet users rely on mobile devices to access the internet, and 98% of internet users reported that they have accounts on social media applications and platforms.
- The vast majority of Arabs who use the internet also have an account on Facebook (86%), while 81% have an account on WhatsApp, 47% on Instagram, 37% on Snapchat, and 34% on Twitter (see Figure 18). Thus, a majority of respondents with social media accounts have accounts on Facebook, while less than half have accounts on Twitter, with the exception of the Gulf, where 77% of internet users have Twitter accounts.

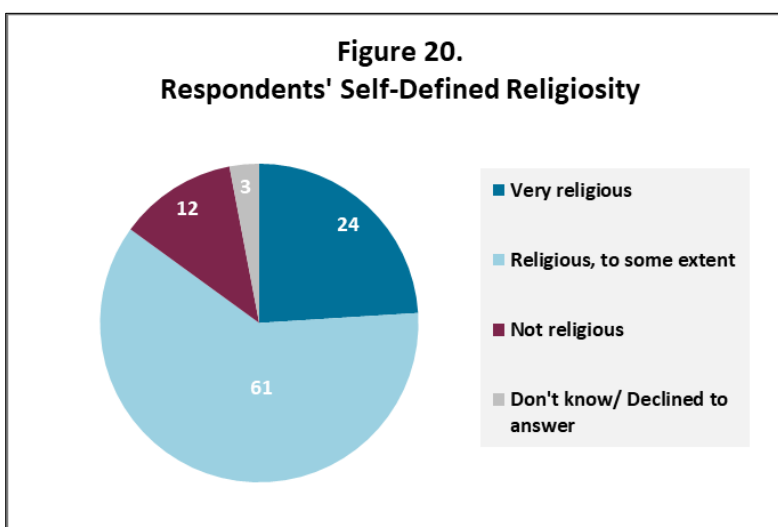


- Social media users are most likely to follow social topics, followed by political topics. Nearly 43% of social media users said that they trust the information and news circulated on social media, compared to 57% who do not. This indicates a decrease in trust in information and news circulated on social media compared to that found in the 2019–2020 survey.
- 75% of social media users in the Arab region obtain news and political information via social media, with 43% using it more than once a day. In terms of engagement, 51% express their views on political events via social media, with 22% using it for this purpose once or several times a day. Meanwhile, 48% interact with or participate in political issues on social media, compared to 48% who do not. The society that least uses social media to interact with political issues is Jordan (see Figure 19).

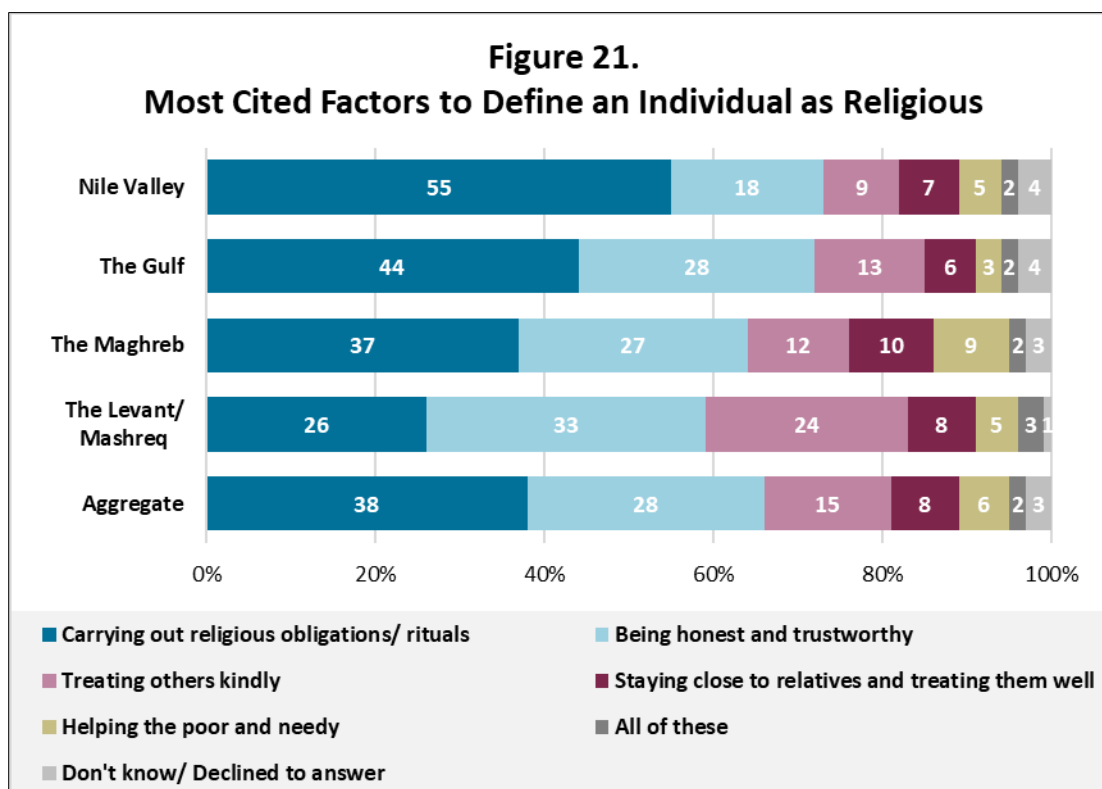


Section 5: Religion and Religiosity in the Public Sphere and Political Life

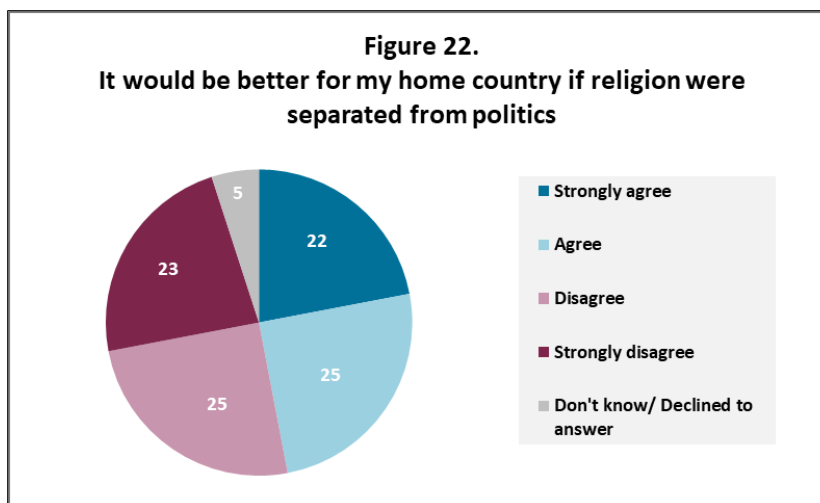
- Based on self-reporting, a majority of respondents (61%) described themselves as “religious to some extent.” Another 24% said that they are very religious and 12% said that they are not religious (see Figure 20). Longitudinal changes in self-defined levels of religiosity since the first AOI in 2011 have been minor.



- As shown in Figure 21, when asked to list attributes that define religiosity, most respondents provided answers that focused on individuals' morality and values (57%) rather than the observance of religious practices (38%). This value has not changed significantly since the AOI began.

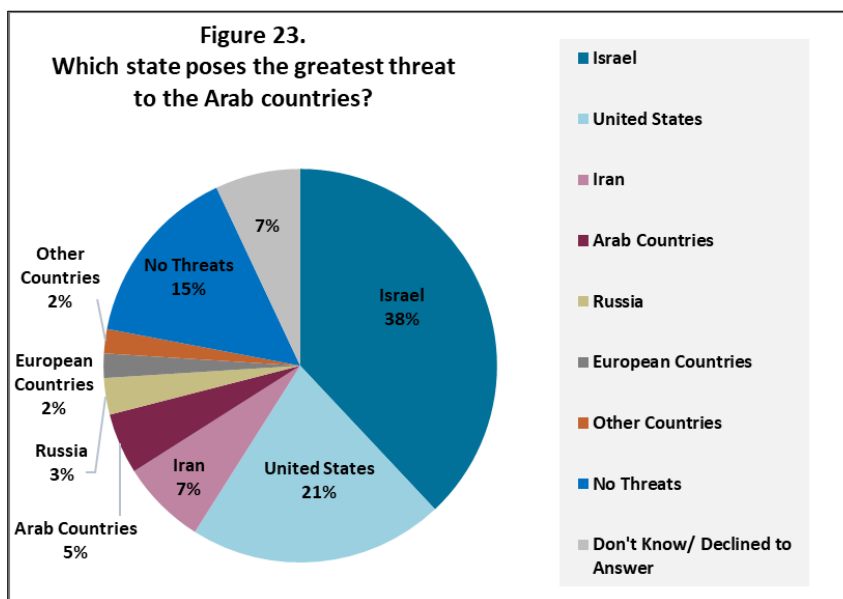


- A majority of respondents oppose edicts that pass negative judgement against members of other faiths or that declare followers of different interpretations of Islam to be apostates. They also disagree with the statement that non-religious people are inherently bad. And a majority (65%) also agree that no religious authority is entitled to declare that followers of other religions are infidels.
- When conducting social, political, and economic or business interactions, most respondents (59%) show no preference in dealing with religious or non-religious individuals, while 31% said that they prefer dealing with religious people and 9% said that they prefer dealing with non-religious people.
- Most Arabs oppose the involvement of clerics in voter choice or in governmental policy. Similarly, a majority are opposed to governments' deployment of religion to win support for their policies, or electoral candidates' use of it to win votes. At the same time, Arab public opinion is split nearly in half regarding attitudes toward the general separation of religion and state, with 47% supporting the principle of separating religion from political life and 48% opposing it (see Figure 22).

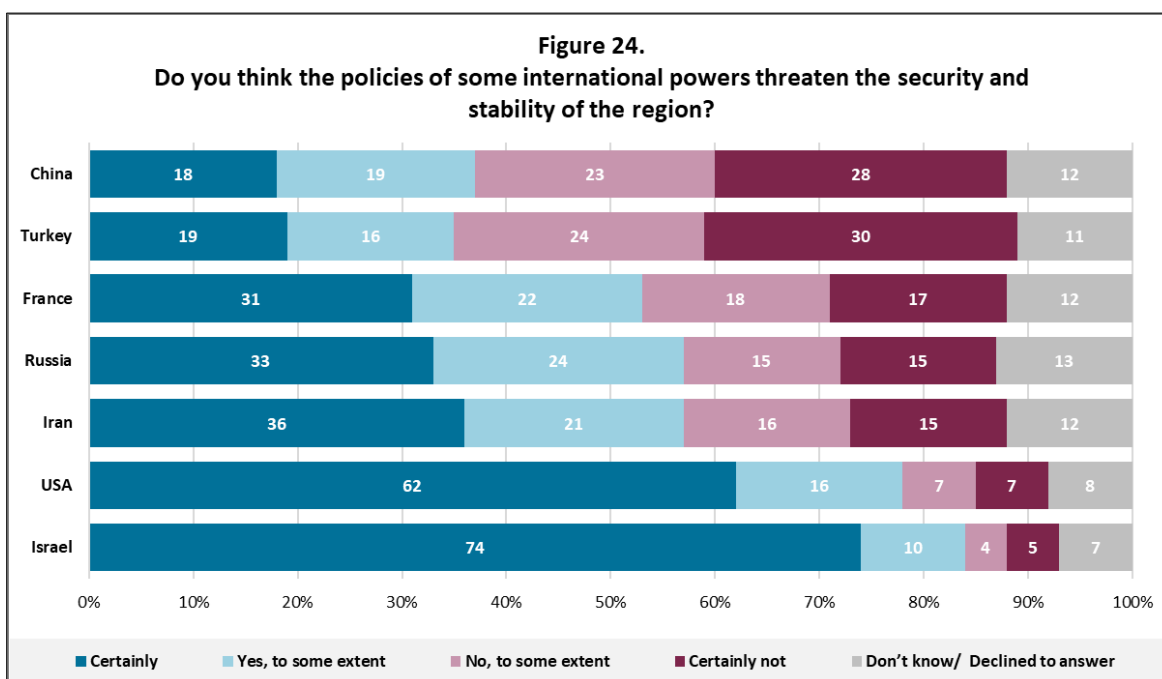


Section 6: Arab Public Opinion and Perceptions of External Threats

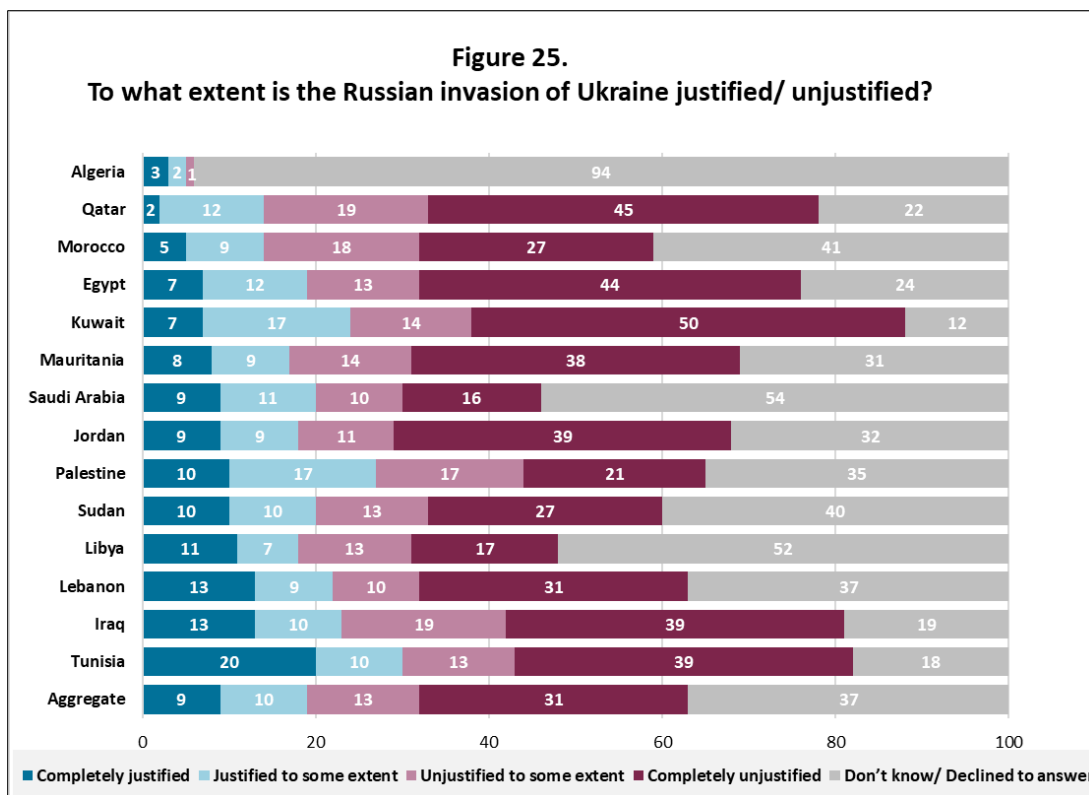
- A total of 80% of respondents supported the sentiment that the various Arab peoples form a single nation, in contrast to 17% who agreed with the statement that, “The Arab peoples are distinct nations, tied together by only tenuous links.”
- Respondents in the Arab region provided different answers when asked, in an open-ended question format, to name the country that poses the greatest threat to the security of the Arab world. A combined total of 59% of respondents consider Israel and the United States to be the two countries that most threaten the security of the Arab world, while Iran comes in third place, at 7% (see Figure 23).



When presented with a list of countries and asked whether each country poses a threat to the security and stability of the region, 84% of respondents said that Israel poses a threat and 78% said that the United States does. Meanwhile, 57% believe that Iranian policies threaten the security and stability of the region, 57% believe the same with regard to Russian policies, and 53% with regard to French policies. 35% of respondents said that Turkey's policies represent a source of threat to the security and stability of the Arab region, and 37% believe that China's policies threaten the security and stability of the region. It is thus clear that Israel is considered the greatest threat to the region (see Figure 24).

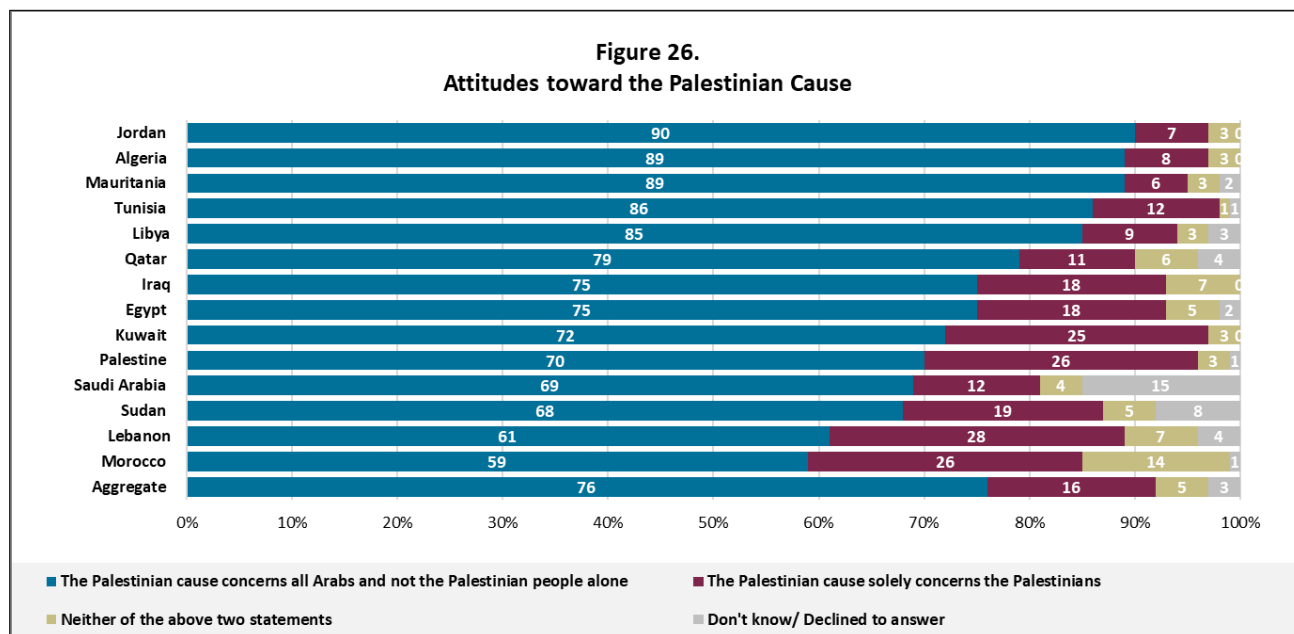


- When asked to name the country that poses the greatest threat to respondents' own countries, 28% said that Israel is the biggest threat to their country, while 13% pointed to the United States as the greatest threat, and 9% indicated that Iran is. Almost half of Iraqis believe that Iran is the main threat to the security of their country. Meanwhile, the largest bloc seeing Israel as the biggest threat to their respective countries is made up of Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, and Algeria.
- As seen in Figure 25, 44% of respondents agreed that Russia's war on Ukraine is unjustified, compared to 19% who said that it is, and 37% who said that they did not know or declined to answer. The majority of Kuwaiti, Qatari, Egyptian, Iraqi, Tunisian, and Jordanian respondents consider the war to be unjustified.

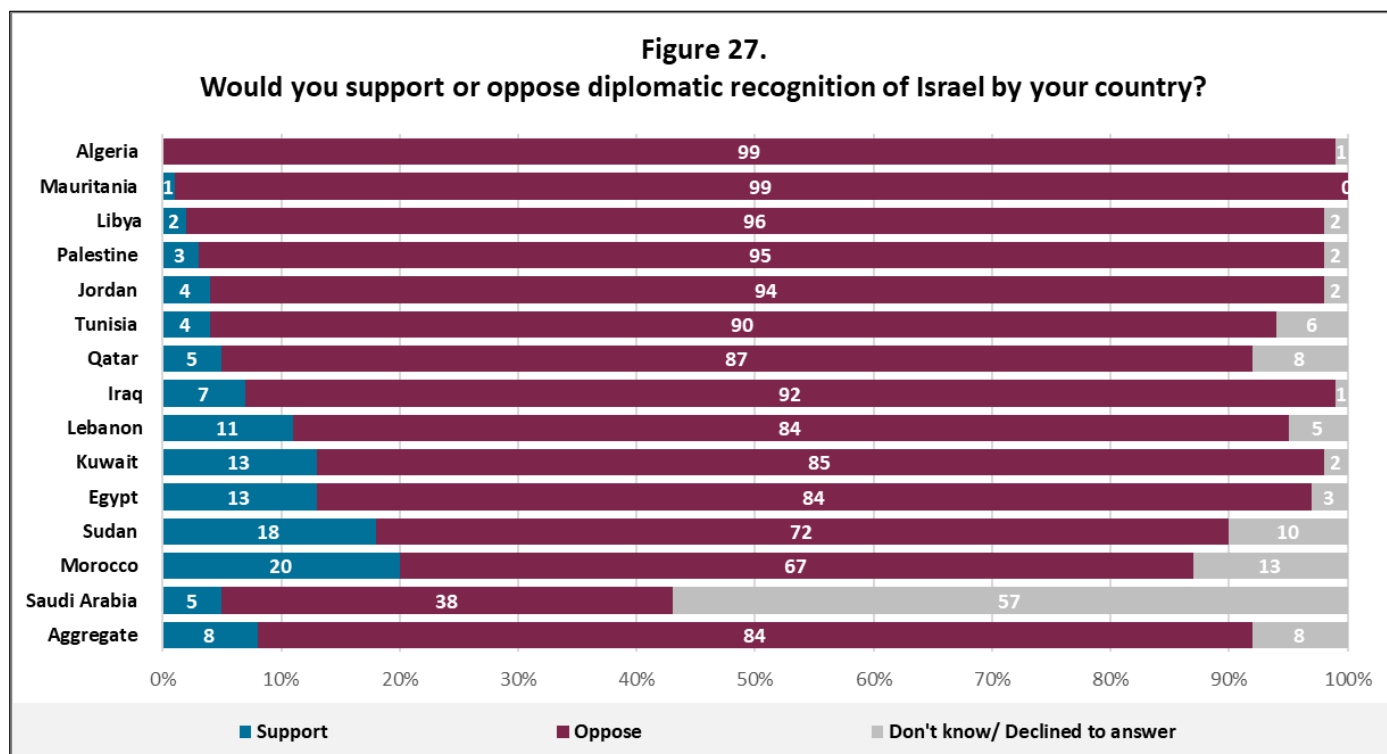


Section 7: Arab Public Opinion and Foreign Policies toward Palestine/Israel

- As shown in Figure 26, a full 76% of respondents agreed that the Palestinian cause concerns all Arabs, and not just the Palestinians alone. Respondents from Jordan, Algeria, and Mauritania recorded the highest level of accord with this sentiment.



- An overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) would disapprove of their countries' recognition of Israel, with only 8% accepting the prospect of formal diplomatic recognition (see Figure 27).
- As Figure 27 also shows, when looking at Arab public opinion by country regarding this issue, the highest rate of refusal to recognize Israel was found among respondents in Algeria and Mauritania at 99% each, followed by those in Libya at 96%, Palestine at 95%, Jordan at 94%, Iraq at 92%, and Tunisia at 90%. Refusal to recognize Israel is highest in the Mashreq region, followed by the Maghreb. In Morocco and Sudan specifically, more than two-thirds of respondents expressed their refusal to recognize Israel, while support for recognition was at 20% or less, with a notable chunk of respondents declining to answer or expressing a lack of opinion. It should also be noted that 57% of Saudi respondents did not express an opinion on the question, while 38% rejected recognition of Israel and 5% supported it.

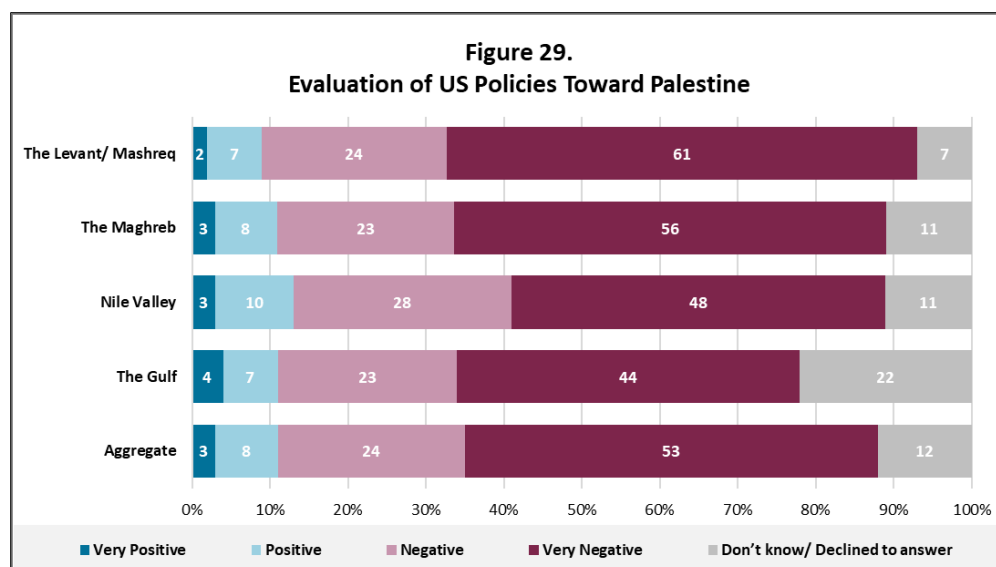


- In addition, one half of those who accepted recognition of Israel by their governments made their acceptance conditional on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. When respondents who opposed the establishment of diplomatic ties between their countries and Israel were asked to elaborate on the reasons behind their position, they cited Israel's colonial and expansionist policies, as well as its racism toward the Palestinians and its persistence in expropriating Palestinian land (see Figure 28).

Figure 28.
Reasons for Opposing Diplomatic Recognition of Israel

Reasons related to the occupation and Palestinian rights (colonizing Palestine, dispossession and oppression of Palestinians)	46.7
Reasons related to the Arab world (occupying Arab territory, racism toward Arabs, an enemy of Arabs)	17.9
A terrorist state/supports terrorism	7
Religious reasons to oppose Israel	5.1
Israel threatens regional security	3.6
Israel violates agreements and treaties	1.8
Israel does not exist	2.3
No reasons given	0.2
Opposed to the recognition of Israel	84.3
Approve of the recognition of Israel	7.5
Don't know/ Declined to answer	7.9

- Despite all the normalization agreements concluded between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, the percentage of respondents who said that they would support their countries' recognition of Israel increased by only two points compared to the results of the 2019–2020 index.
- When asked to evaluate US policy in Palestine, a vast majority (77%) of respondents evaluated US policy on Palestine negatively, compared to only 11% who evaluated it positively. There is a strong Palestinian consensus (92%) that US policy in Palestine is bad. While most regions assess US policy in Palestine negatively, the Mashreq provides the most negative assessment (see figure 29).



- When asked to evaluate the policies of regional and international powers toward Palestine, respondents were divided on Turkish policy, with 43% evaluating it positively and 41% negatively (see Figure 30). Meanwhile, most respondents (52%) viewed Iranian foreign policy toward Palestine as negative, compared to 31% who evaluated it positively. Among Palestinians, 42% evaluated Iranian foreign policy toward Palestine positively, and 41% rated it negatively. When considering Russian policy in Palestine, more than half of all respondents (58%) evaluated it negatively, compared to 23% who evaluated it positively. The majority of Palestinians believe that Russian policy in Palestine is negative. And 61% of respondents regarded French policy in Palestine as negative, compared to 21% who rated it positively. The majority of Palestinians believe that French policy in Palestine is negative.

