



Public Opinion Surveys

Trends in Arab Public Opinion Towards Reform

January 2009

Abstract

The Arab public has a very good understanding of the concept of reform and a desire to see reform measures implemented in various different areas. The area most in need of reform, according to the respondents, is the economy, with political reform and tackling corruption given as the next most urgent issues to be addressed. The particular circumstances of each country were reflected in the respondents' answers. Public opinion was almost unanimous in recognising the importance of a range of different kinds of freedoms for democracy. However, its evaluation of the extent to which these freedoms are guaranteed in each country was modest, and was particularly negative concerning the extent to which freedoms relating to citizens' participation in the political process are guaranteed. The majority of respondents said they thought democracy would lead to increased stability, and that although reform of the economy was their priority, that political reform would improve the economic situation of their families. Public opinion's evaluation of the fairness of the legislative elections was modest, and its evaluation of the performance of the parliamentary councils was generally negative. While the respondents were generally supportive of the rights of women and religious minorities, the desire of the majority that there should be only one interpretation of Islam suggests that reforms affecting religious matters could meet with opposition.

Introduction

In recent years, the concept of reform has been the subject of much discussion in the Arab world; in the media, in politics, and by intellectual elites. However, reform is not a modern concept in the region. There have been various reformist agendas in the Arab world since the beginning of the nineteenth century, including those that gave rise to the modern Arab state.

There is much debate over what areas should have priority for undergoing reform, how reform measures should be applied, and even over the very definition of the concept of reform. The Arab Reform Initiative has carried out this survey to investigate the views of public opinion in some Arab societies on reform, both in a general sense, and in the specifically political, economic, social and cultural domains. Four countries were chosen to represent the different parts of the Arab region: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco. The investigation aims to give a realistic picture of these different domains and to highlight the areas that most need to undergo reform.

Until it becomes easier to investigate public opinion on matters of democratic freedoms, this survey is an indicator of the state of democracy and reform measures in the Arab region. It presents empirical information on society's vision of reform to aid the dialogue and debate on this subject.

Methodology and Sample

The survey was carried out in the four countries in 2007 in two phases, the first being an investigative survey of a small sample of respondents (50-80), and the second being the actual survey. The sample of respondents was selected to represent proportionately the urban and rural populations of the different administrative districts of each country, and was 50% male and 50% female.

Table 1 – The distribution of the respondents according to age category

Age category	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco
18-24	18	20	19	14
34-25	31	24	26	36
35-44	25	24	27	22
45+	26	32	28	28
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 2 –The distribution of respondents according to their level of education

	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco
Less than secondary education	34	56	40	51
Secondary education	36	23	27	8
Higher than secondary education	30	21	33	41
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 3 – The distribution of respondents according to their participation in the survey

Country	Completed survey		Refused		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
Jordan	1151	96	49	4	1200
Egypt	1183	99	17	1	1200
Lebanon	1200	100	0	0	1200
Morocco	1135	95	65	5	1200

2 - The concept of reform, priorities for reform, and the external factor

“Reform” is a formula used in the Arab world by various groups and elites with different and sometimes contradictory definitions of this concept. Despite the fact that it is the Arab citizen who is the primary goal of reform measures, the views of the Arab street on concepts, methods, and priorities for reform are unclear and have not been the object of study. Most dialogue on reform is based on the understanding of the Arab elite. Investigating the public’s understanding and awareness of reform will allow the political elite to discover the priorities for reform, and to design projects involving citizens in its implementation.

This part of the survey aims to explore public opinion’s understanding of and priorities for reform, as well as some of the obstacles on the path to reform, and how seriously the state takes the reform process. Public opinion’s evaluation of the external factor’s role was also measured.

The concept of reform

The majority of respondents in the four countries were able to define reform, meaning that the concept of reform is understood by the majority of citizens in these four countries. This shows that public opinion in these four countries is capable of contributing to the dialogue on reform,

and may also suggest that there is a general impression among the respondents that reform is needed in the Arab world.

Table 4 – Distribution of respondents according to whether or not they were able to give a definition of reform in the Arab region

	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Egypt
Unable to give a meaningful definition of reform	14	7	37	11
Able to give a meaningful definition of reform	86	93	63	89
Total	100	100	100	100

Analysis of the respondents' definitions of reform revealed that there are a number of factors that influenced their answers:

1. The issues that need to be resolved in each country before true reform can take place. This list includes general issues such as financial corruption, general freedoms, and the economic situation.
2. The issues affecting the daily lives of certain categories of society, which are decisive in shaping their future prospects both in the long and short term, for example, poverty, unemployment, and discrimination.
3. Political developments within a particular country. For example, the political divisions in Lebanon before and during the survey led some respondents to define reform as political structural reform to end the current state of political polarization and to prevent it from happening again.
4. The view that reform needs to encompass all areas and sectors, as many respondents made a link between reforms linked to the political order, democracy and the law, and issues connected with improving services and economic development.
5. The current dialogue on reform in the Arab world.
6. Challenges faced by these societies in the socio-cultural domain such as: eliminating illiteracy, improving education, and tackling crime. Equally, some definitions reflected public opinion's sensitivity towards social and cultural changes.

Based on the definitions given by the respondents, it is possible to speak of reform as having five dimensions, as shown in the table:

Table 5 - the respondents' definitions of reform

	Morocco	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon
Fighting financial and administrative corruption	18	16	4	39
Economic reform	15	23	47	18
Social and cultural reform	15	8	19	1
Political reform	15	11	4	31
Reform in all fields		24	13	4
Preserving security	-	2	-	-
Unable to give a meaningful definition of reform	37	16	11	7

Total	100	100	100	100
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Priorities for reform

The definitions of reform given reflect various understandings of this concept, and were influenced by the specific conditions of each country. The area considered to be most in need of reform is that of the economy, with around a quarter of respondents saying that economic reform is of the highest priority. Fighting corruption and political reform were also areas that many respondents ranked as being of priority for reform.

The particular conditions of each country played a role in the respondents' priorities, for example 15% of Egyptian respondents said that improving the conditions of the countryside was one of the most important areas for reform, and sectarianism and security as areas for reform were mentioned most often by Lebanese respondents, clearly reflecting Lebanon's internal political conditions and the weakness of the state.

Table 6 – The respondents' identification of the three areas they consider to be most in need of reform

	Lebanon	Jordan	Egypt
Economy	20	24	13
Political Reform	22	12	15
Fighting administrative and financial corruption	15	11	8
Education	5	10	6
Security	4	0.5	
Unemployment and living standards	4	19	14
Justice	4	1	2
Sectarianism	2	0	0
Public services	8	9	5
Social and moral issues	3	7	5
Overpopulation	-	-	3
Improving conditions in the countryside	-	-	15
Other	-	1	3
No answer	7	4	16

In addition to asking the respondents to define the concept of reform and to identify the areas most in need of reform, the survey also presented a list of specific problems, both regional and internal, faced by Arab societies to investigate which problems the respondents thought should most urgently be resolved. The ranking of these issues in order of their priority varied from country to country. However, the respondents in all four countries agreed that solving poverty was the highest priority, followed by unemployment. Again, the discrepancy in the responses reflects the specific political conditions of each country. The proportion of respondents who said that the consolidation of political reform was one of the most urgent problems was highest in Lebanon, in the shadow of the political divisions in that country. Meanwhile Jordanian public opinion's emphasis on the urgency of the Palestinian question reflects Jordan's proximity to and involvement with this issue.

Table 7 – Public opinion's views on which problems should be addressed by their governments as a priority

	Morocco	Lebanon	Jordan	Egypt
Poverty	49	27	51	44
Unemployment	28	25	23	43
Financial and administrative corruption	10	24	9	6
Consolidation of political reform	3	22	3	1
The Palestinian question	0.4	1	14	4
Iraq	-	0.1	0.3	0.5
I don't know + Refused to say	9	0.3	0.4	0.2
Total	100	100	100	100

The external factor in reform and openness to the rest of the world

The external factor influences most economic, political and social developments in each country. This factor has become more important with the economic conditions created by capitalism, which have led to increased links between the different regions of the world. In addition, the financial and military aid received by many countries, among them the Arab states, has also increased the influence of the external factor.

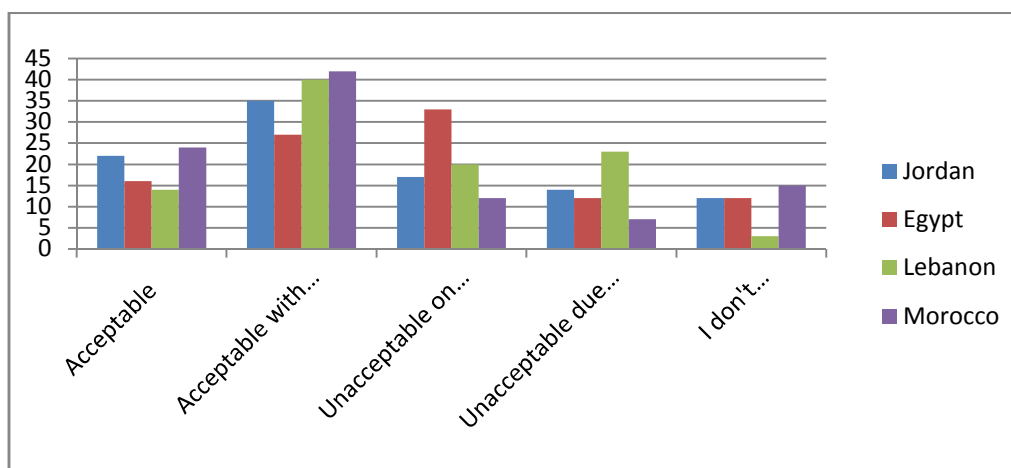
Since 11th September, western intervention in the region has increased, which has affected the issue of reform. The external factor may have a positive effect in encouraging reform, as was the case when Western Europe played an important role in East Europe's democratic shift. This success encouraged the Western countries to call for democratic reform in the Arab world in the nineties, in particular with the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995, which was concerned with Arab – European relations. Regardless of the motives behind them, there is no doubt that external demands for reform, particularly since September 11th and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have encouraged further dialogue on reform in the Arab world. The dialogue on reform in the Arab world now includes the role of the external factor in reform, and political groups have carried out much research into this. Any survey on the public's attitudes to reform therefore needs to include an investigation into public opinion's vision and evaluation of the external factor's influence, and to what extent this influence is considered as legitimate.

The survey found that public opinion varies from country to country in the extent to which it finds external demands for reform acceptable. The most opposition to external demands for reform came from among Lebanese and Egyptian respondents. In the case of Lebanon this may reflect the political division over the role of external actors in Lebanon's specific situation. In the case of Egypt, this could be due to the Egyptian public being influenced by the country's policy over the past 10 years of rejecting external demands for reform on the basis that these demands are motivated by a desire to interfere in the country's affairs and compromise its independence. Moroccan and Jordanian respondents were less opposed to external demands for reform. Though public opinion varied from country to country, the results show some general trends:

1. There is no unanimity in rejecting external demands for reform

2. A significant proportion of respondents emphasize the need for external demands for reform to have conditions, i.e. that they should not be made in an effort to serve the interests of these external forces.

Graph showing the extent to which public opinion finds external demands for reform acceptable



In contrast, the majority of public opinion – between 80% and 89% of respondents - believe that their countries should be more open to the external world or maintain their present level of openness to the external world. These results clearly show therefore that public opinion's position on external demands for reform is not linked to its position on openness to the external world in general.

Table 8 – The respondents' views on the openness of their countries to the external world

	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco
It should be more open to the external world	50	61	65	63
It should maintain the same level of openness to the external world	30	28	22	20
It should be less open to the external world	15	10	12	7
I don't know/Refused to say	5	1	1	10
Total	100	100	100	100

3 – Economic reform and redefining the role of the state

Economic reform is a fundamental part of reform programmes in the Arab world. Economic reform projects were adopted before other kinds of reform projects in the region, as a consequence of the economic pressures faced by most of the Arab countries during the 80s and the state of their financial institutions, which led many of these countries to restructure their economies taking into account the following considerations:

- That the public sector, which had become vast in many countries, was no longer compatible with economic growth

- That issues were being raised over the inadequacy and cost of state services in the fields of health, education and transport
- The economic ideology that had dominated the world since the end of the 70s: that of the state having a reduced role in the economy

Consequently, many Arab states reduced their role in the economy, changing their economic laws and expanding the private sector. These actions led many to observe that reform was being accomplished much more quickly in the area of economics than in other areas.

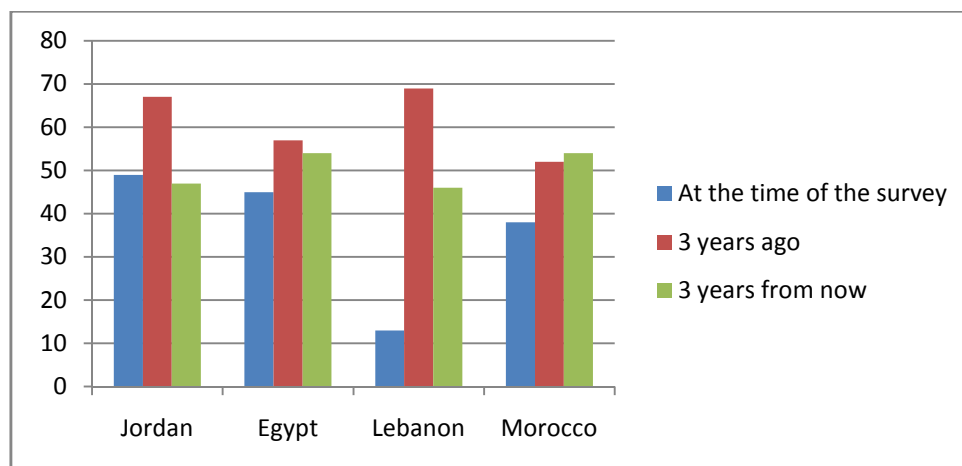
This survey investigated the views of public opinion on economic policies and the change in the state's role in the economy by asking the respondents to evaluate:

1. The economic situation of their country
2. The basic services offered by the government – school education, university education, health services and security
3. The main services offered by the private sector – school education, university education, health services, communications, banks, insurance, and the private transport sector

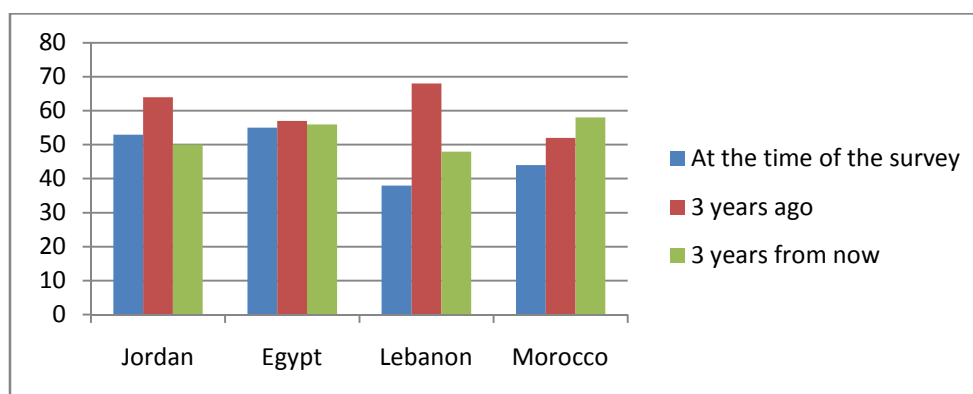
Evaluation of the economic situation

The respondents generally evaluated the economic situation in their country as being negative. The respondents' evaluation of the economic situation of their families was generally more positive, although again, the respondents said that since three years before the survey, the economic situation of their families had deteriorated. A comparison of the respondents' evaluations of the health and education services offered by the state and by the private sector shows that public opinion in Egypt, Lebanon, and especially Morocco considers the services offered by the private sector to be superior to those offered by the state. In Jordan however, public opinion's evaluations of the services offered by the private sector and those offered by the state were very similar, even nearly the same in the areas of school and university education.

Graph 2 – The respondents' evaluation of the economic situation in their countries



Graph 3 -The respondents' evaluation of the economic situation of their families



Government health and education services

Generally speaking, public opinion's evaluation of government services in education and health, both basic services that affect citizens' lives on a near-daily basis, ranged from positive in Egypt, Jordan and to some extent Lebanon, and negative, in Morocco.

Table 9 – Public opinion's evaluation of the level of government health and education services

	Jordan			Egypt			Lebanon			Morocco		
	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now
Government schools	65	54	67	61	51	64	51	51	58	36	54	50
Government health services	63	52	67	53	48	65	40	51	57	25	49	50
Government universities	69	56	67	65	50	65	55	52	57	37	54	49

Evaluation of government police services

Generally speaking, the police services were not affected by economic reform programmes, though there were some efforts to reduce the number of officers. As with the evaluations of government health and education services, satisfaction was highest in Jordan and Egypt, and lowest in Morocco, and evaluations of previous and future standards of the police services were also similar to those made of government health and education services in each country.

Public opinion's evaluations of the police services were based on how well the police carried out their duties, the extent to which they were present to guarantee security both nationally and in residential areas, and how they worked together with society both in general and at the local level.

Table 10 – Public opinion's evaluation of the level of the police services in their country, in general and in their residential areas

	Jordan			Egypt			Lebanon			Morocco		
	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now
Police services in general	80	56	73	74	44	72	52	52	59	38	48	53
Police services in residential areas	77	56	73	71	49	67	57	51	58	38	48	53

the respondent's residential area												
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Private sector health and education services

Table 11 - Public opinion's evaluation of private sector health and education services

	Jordan			Egypt			Lebanon			Morocco		
	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now
Private schools	72	55	69	77	50	71	75	55	63	68	49	65
Private hospitals and health clinics	76	53	71	79	49	72	72	54	62	68	49	66
Private universities	68	54	69	74	49	71	74	54	62	70	49	65

Private sector services in other areas

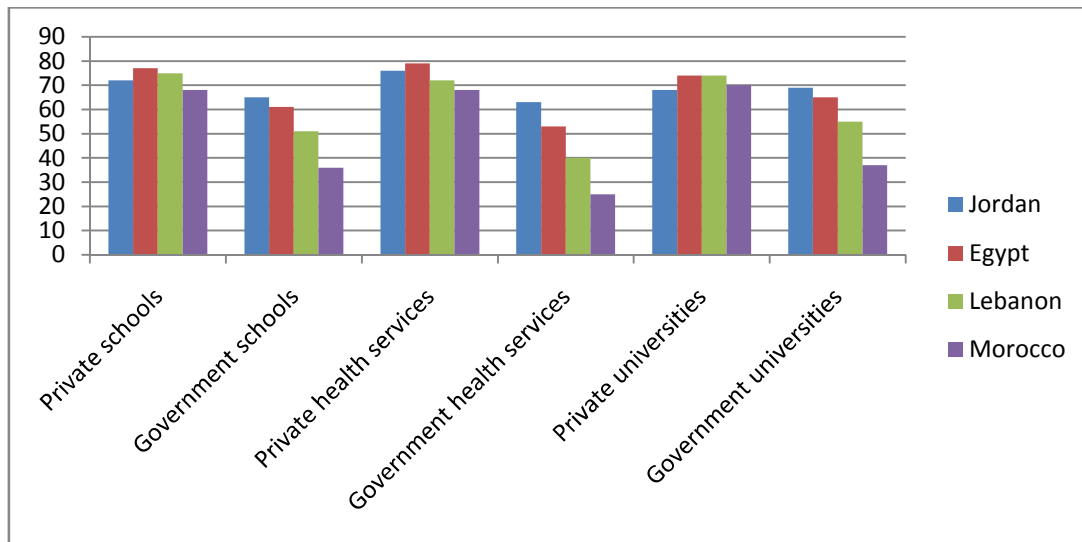
This part of the survey aims to show public opinion's evaluation of services offered by the private sector in a group of areas that affect the lives of citizens on a near daily basis: communication services, banking services, insurance and transport.

Public opinion's evaluation of the level of these services was generally positive, with the proportions of respondents in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon evaluating these services as good ranging from two thirds to three quarters of respondents. However, public opinion in Morocco was less positive in its evaluation of these services. Public opinion in every country rated private sector services in the areas of communications and banking as being better than in the areas of insurance and transport, as the table shows. Again, public opinion considers the level of these services to have improved over the past three years.

Table 12 - Public opinion's evaluation of some private sector services

	Jordan			Egypt			Lebanon			Morocco		
	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now
Communications companies	73	51	71	84	45	77	66	52	62	61	43	70
Banks	72	54	70	79	49	72	73	53	63	58	45	65
Insurance companies	68	53	68	77	50	71	62	53	62	49	45	61
Private sector transport	64	52	67	74	49	69	64	52	62	38	42	58

Graph 4 – Public opinion's evaluation of services offered by the state and the private sector in the fields of health and education



4 – Freedoms, the democratic bias, political reform, and the external factor

Democratic change and political reform have been at the forefront of the dialogue on reform, which is unsurprising given that most regimes in the Arab region are considered to be authoritarian or near authoritarian. What makes this dialogue more complicated is the fact that political regimes in the Arab world rely upon a complex social structure combining elements of traditional heritage and modernity. Analysis and study of the structure of political regimes have shown that these regimes rely upon inherited structures in the exercise of power, for example tribal, religious and sectarian structures. Meanwhile these same regimes rely upon modern security and military systems, founded in the context of building the modern state. In addition to the reliance of these regimes on a combination of traditional structures and modern institutions, these regimes often use a religious ideology to maintain popular support for them. These factors mean that the dialogue on democratization in the Arab world is particularly complex. Whilst the Third Wave succeeded in transforming many of the totalitarian states in East Europe into democracies, it did not succeed in the Arab world, the reasons for which are also the subject of much debate.

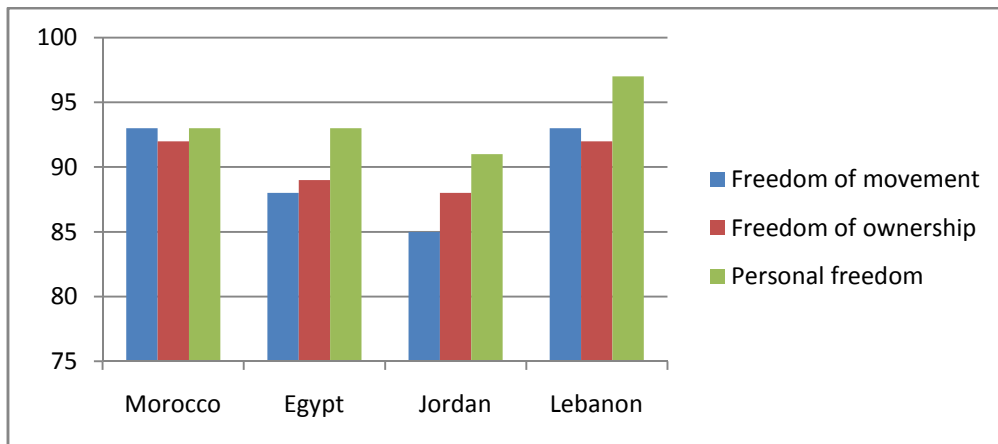
Perhaps one of the most important obstacles for the democratization process is the lack of serious will on the part of the Arab regimes to implement political reform. Another important obstacle, in the view of many, is the lack of a democratic culture on the Arab street. Another argument put forward to explain the failure of democratization is the fact that after the Arab states gained independence, democracy was not among the priorities of the national agendas, which instead focused on economic and social development, building state apparatuses, and preserving their newfound independence. Another more extreme view is that the Arab public lacks sufficient intellectual awareness of the concept of democracy.

In measuring public opinion's awareness and understanding of the essence of democracy, this study used fifteen indicators of democracy covering the following areas:

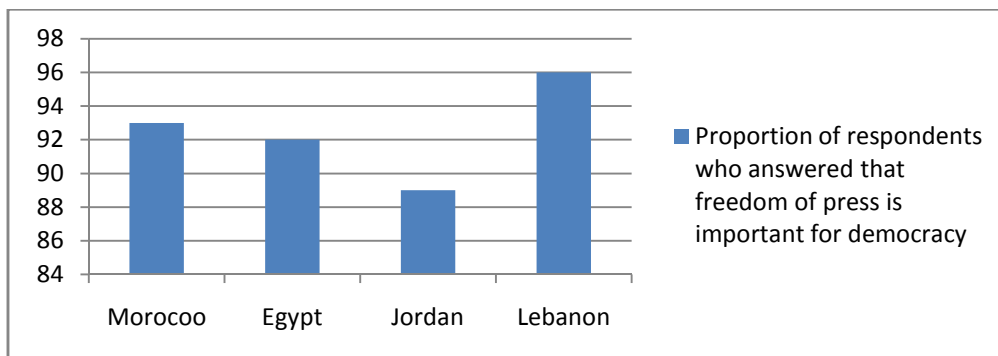
- Basic freedoms: these include personal freedom, freedom of transport, and freedom of ownership.
- Freedoms of opinion, belief and thought
- Freedom of press
- Freedom for political and civil organizations: this includes freedom to organize public gatherings, to found or belong to societies, civil organizations, or political parties

- Freedom to elect representative councils, both municipal and legislative
- Freedom to prosecute the government or one of its institutions

Graph 5 – Public opinion’s evaluation of which basic freedoms are important for democracy



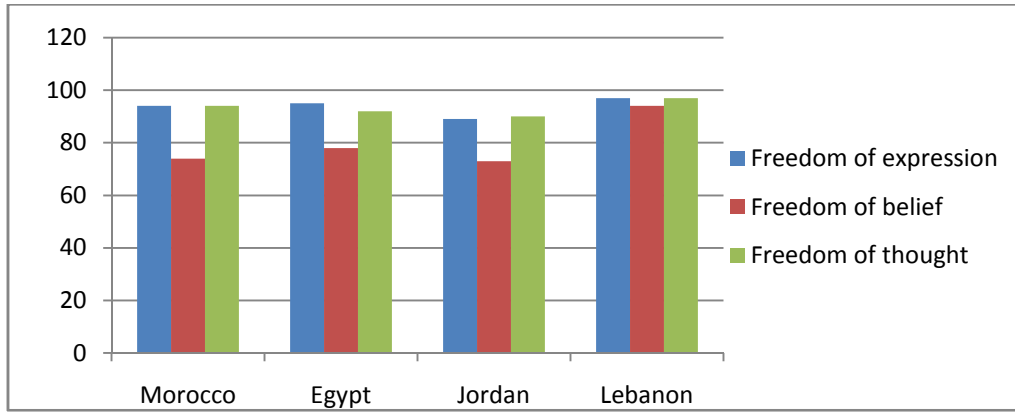
Graph 6 – The proportion of respondents who answered that freedom of press is important for democracy



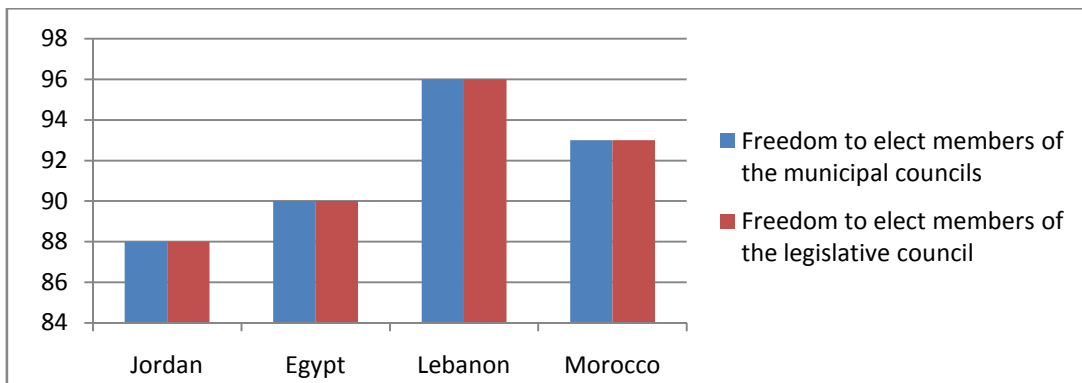
Public opinion in the four countries was near unanimous in its recognition of the three basic freedoms, freedom of press, and freedom of voting as being important for democracy. However, while respondents in the four countries generally agreed that freedom of expression and freedom of thought are important for democracy, their support for freedom of belief was notably less, with the exception of Lebanon where 94% of respondents said that this freedom was important for democracy.

In the other three countries, around three quarters of respondents said this freedom was important, creating a disparity between attitudes to freedom of thought and to freedom of belief. This may be explained by the ambiguity of the term “belief”, which could be understood as meaning religious, intellectual or political beliefs and therefore may have led some respondents to be more careful in their answers to this question. As for Lebanon, it is unsurprising in the context of the plurality of religions and sects in Lebanese society that a higher percentage of Lebanese respondents said that freedom of belief was important for democracy.

Graph 7 – Public opinion’s evaluation of the importance of freedom of opinion, thought and belief



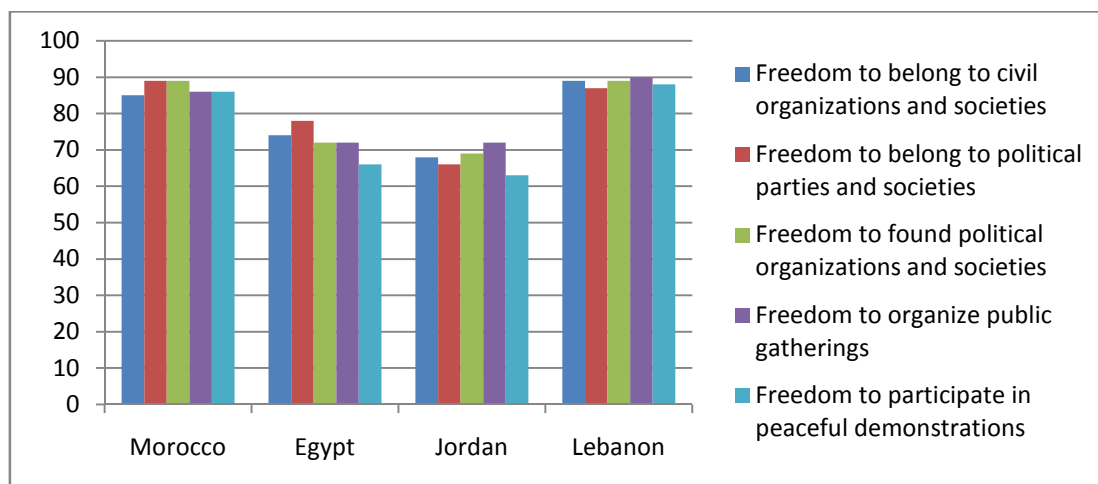
Graph 8 – Proportion of voters who consider that the freedom to vote in municipal and legislative elections is important for democracy



As for freedom for political and civil organizations, public opinion believes that freedoms in this area are also important for democracy, although it is noticeable that the proportion of respondents who said these freedoms are important was less than the proportion that considered the aforementioned freedoms (fundamental freedoms, freedom of press, freedom of thought and belief, freedom to vote) to be important for democracy.

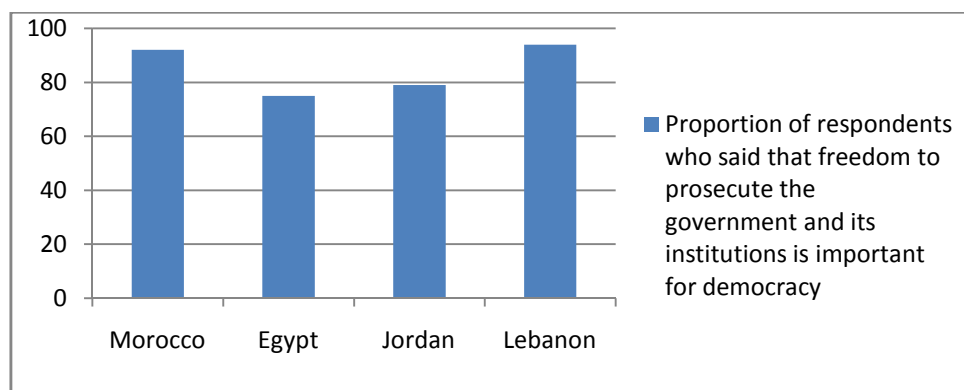
The results also showed that there was a discrepancy between public opinion in Morocco and Lebanon and public opinion in Egypt and Jordan, with public opinion in Morocco and Lebanon attributing greater importance to these freedoms. This may be explained by the fact that competition between political forces is older in Lebanon and Morocco than in Egypt and Jordan, and that civil organizations in Morocco and Lebanon are more prominent and effective than in many other countries of the region. In contrast, political parties and civil organizations still play only a marginal role in Egypt and Jordan. Therefore the particular conditions of each country were reflected in its public opinion's evaluation of the importance of these freedoms.

Graph 9



Whilst there is near unanimity in Morocco and Lebanon that the freedom to prosecute the government or one of its institutions is important for democracy, the proportion is around two thirds in Egypt and Jordan. This reflects the same discrepancy as the evaluations of the importance of freedom for political and civil organizations.

Graph 10 – Proportion of respondents who answered that freedom to prosecute the government and its institutions is important for democracy



Overall, these results show that citizens in each of the four countries have a good understanding of the meaning of democracy. The proportion of respondents who said that any one particular freedom was unimportant was small, with general agreement on the importance of all the above mentioned freedoms, and awareness of each one's link with democracy.

Public opinion's evaluation of the extent to which these democratic freedoms are guaranteed in their countries

This survey also investigated the opinions of citizens on the extent to which these democratic freedoms are guaranteed in their countries. This would also show to what extent the respondents considered their countries to be democratic overall.

In contrast to public opinion's near unanimity that these freedoms are important for democracy, its evaluation of the extent to which these freedoms are guaranteed in the four different countries was considerably lower. The respondents said that the basic freedoms are the freedoms most often guaranteed in their countries. Meanwhile the least guaranteed freedoms in the four countries are those connected with political participation and the citizens'

ability to criticize the government, which represents an essential challenge for the involvement of citizens in the political process. Nevertheless, respondents were optimistic in predicting that these freedoms would be guaranteed to a greater extent in the future. In evaluating the level of democracy in their countries, public opinion in all four countries said that there is still quite some way to go on the path to democracy.

Although the basic freedoms were the most often to be considered guaranteed, a proportion of respondents ranging from 20% to 35% said that they were not guaranteed, which is a large proportion given that private ownership is guaranteed by law in all four countries and there are no restrictions on ownership or transport rights. It is possible that some of the respondents who gave this answer were expressing the fact that they felt unable to exercise these freedoms, or were unable to due to socio-economic factors. Alternatively they may have been referring to the inexistence of a framework for the strengthening of these freedoms. Only Lebanese public opinion did not report an improvement in the safeguarding of these freedoms over the past three years, which may be accounted for by the political conditions of that country since 2005.

Table 13 – Public opinion’s views on the extent to which fundamental freedoms are safeguarded

	Jordan			Egypt			Lebanon			Morocco		
	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now
Personal freedom	77	72	80	78	71	82	76	53	80	65	61	74
Freedom of transport	78	71	81	72	66	78	74	57	79	76	70	80
Freedom of possession	80	74	82	74	69	79	78	60	81	78	73	82

As for freedoms of expression, thought, and belief, public opinion varied from country to country in its evaluation of the extent to which these freedoms are safeguarded. The proportion of Lebanese respondents that said these freedoms were guaranteed was higher than that of the respondents of other countries, reflecting the fact that Lebanese society is a mosaic of religions and sects and that this social structure is an apparatus that both safeguards freedom of belief and grants autonomy to many political forces, which then in turn increases the space for freedom of thought and opinion. Lebanese respondents also reported the most significant improvement in the guaranteeing of these freedoms over the past three years, which directly reflects the change in Lebanon’s political environment since 2005 and Syria’s withdrawal from the Lebanese political scene.

Table 14 – Public opinion’s views on the extent to which freedoms of press, thought, belief, and expression are safeguarded

	Jordan			Egypt			Lebanon			Morocco		
	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now
Freedom of press	59	51	70	63	50	76	65	38	74	50	41	67
Freedom of expression	58	49	69	56	47	72	62	36	73	58	41	67
Freedom of belief	60	55	70	57	50	66	77	53	80	48	41	58
Freedom of thought	75	69	80	75	68	80	75	49	80	63	58	73

The majority of public opinion said that freedom to elect legislative and municipal councils was guaranteed, especially in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco. The elections that took place in these three countries shortly before the survey probably played a role in this positive evaluation. Meanwhile, in the case of Lebanon, there was a discrepancy in the extent to which respondents felt that these two freedoms were safeguarded, with more than two thirds saying freedom to elect municipal councils was guaranteed, compared with only 57% who thought that freedom to elect members of the parliamentary council was safeguarded. This discrepancy is probably due to a critical view of the way that electoral districts are divided in Lebanon and also the political polarization that was a feature of the last Lebanese parliamentary elections. As with freedoms of expression, belief and thought, Lebanese respondents reported a big improvement in the extent to which the freedom to vote is guaranteed, again reflecting political developments in the country since 2005.

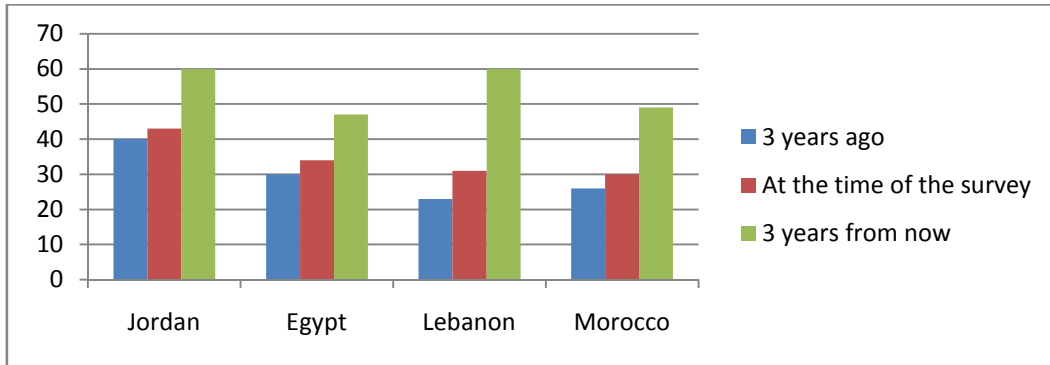
Table 15 – Public opinion’s views on the extent to which the freedom to elect the representative councils is guaranteed

	Jordan			Egypt			Lebanon			Morocco		
	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now	At the time of the survey	3 years ago	3 years from now
Freedom to elect members of the legislative council	79	74	82	72	63	77	57	36	72	69	63	76
Freedom to elect members of the municipal councils	78	73	81	73	63	78	68	42	76	69	63	76

With regards to freedoms relating to founding and participating in political and civil organizations, public opinion in Morocco, Egypt and Jordan said that these freedoms were less guaranteed than the above mentioned freedoms. Lebanon was again the exception, with more than two thirds of respondents saying that these freedoms were guaranteed. The fact that around half of respondents in Egypt, Morocco and Jordan agree that citizens are not free to be politically active represents an essential challenge for the involvement of citizens in their countries’ political processes.

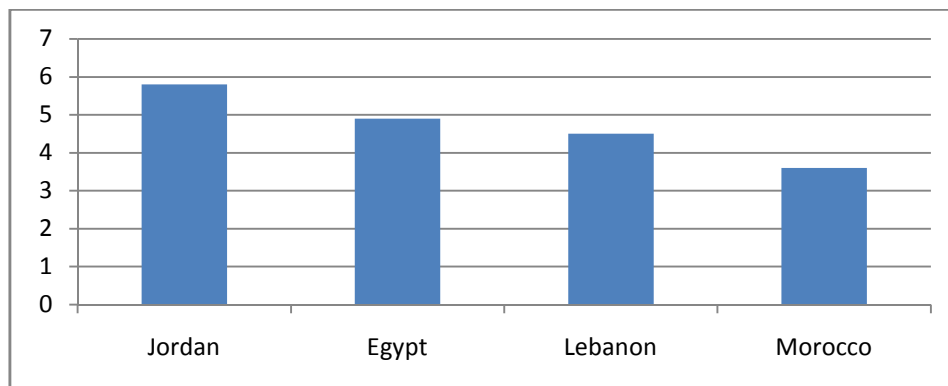
The freedom which is least guaranteed, according to public opinion, is the freedom to prosecute the government or one of its institutions, which reflects an incorrect and unbalanced relationship between the state and its citizens.

Graph 11 – The respondents’ views on the extent to which the freedom to prosecute the government or its institutions is guaranteed



The survey also asked respondents to evaluate their impression of the level of democracy in their countries, on a scale from 1 – 10, with 10 indicating that the country is fully democratic. Despite the fact that Morocco is one of the countries that has taken the most democratic reform measures, Moroccan public opinion was the most critical in its evaluation of the level of democracy. There are three possible explanatory factors for this: Firstly, that Moroccans may have higher expectations for democracy. Second, that democratic change at a political level is not yet universally recognized by citizens. Third, that Moroccan public opinion's low evaluation of the level of democracy is a consequence of progress at the legislative level not being matched by change in practice, a common phenomenon in many Arab countries.

Graph 12 – The respondents' evaluation of the level of democracy in their countries



Public opinion in the four countries shows that there are two main views held by the citizens in these countries on the subject of democracy in their countries: the first is that the level of democracy has not changed in the past three years; the second is that the level of democracy has improved.

5 – Obstacles to democracy: stability and the economic situation

The dialogue on political reform and democratization usually focuses on three fundamental challenges facing the democratization process, which are:

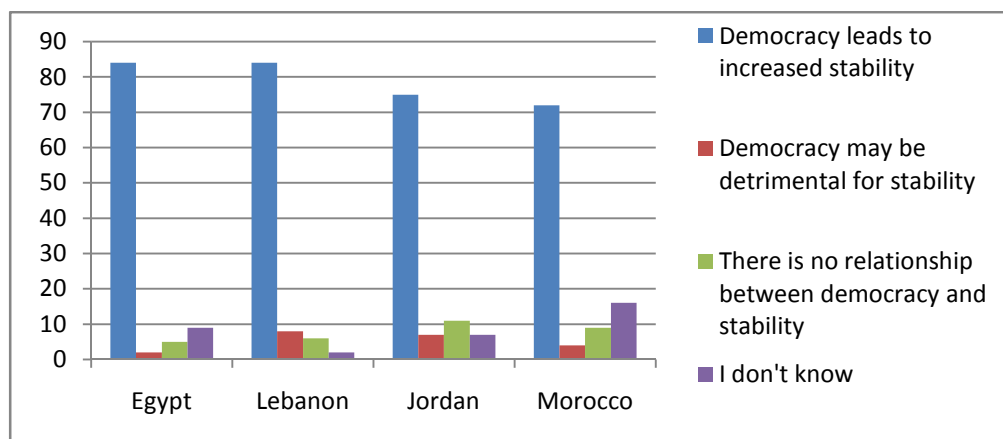
1. That democratic reforms could lead to instability or even a coup
2. That economic and social development and solving the immediate problems of citizens should take priority
3. The question of whether the peoples of the region are suited to and competent to practise full democracy

Democracy and Stability

The view that democratization is linked to the possibility of losing stability has become commonplace, particularly following Iraq's descent into sectarian violence. The political polarization in Lebanon since 2005 and the struggle between Palestinian factions following Palestinian elections have also been used to support this viewpoint, which was originally expressed by politicians but has reached the Arab street via the media. This survey investigated the extent to which public opinion is influenced by this viewpoint.

The majority of respondents said they believed that democracy leads to increased stability. Though the proportions of respondents who answered that democracy could be detrimental to stability were very small, the fact that they were highest among Lebanese and Jordanian respondents may be explained in the case of the former by the political instability in Lebanon and in the case of the latter by Jordan's proximity to the effects of instability in Iraq and Palestine.

Graph 13 – Respondents' views on the relationship between democracy and stability

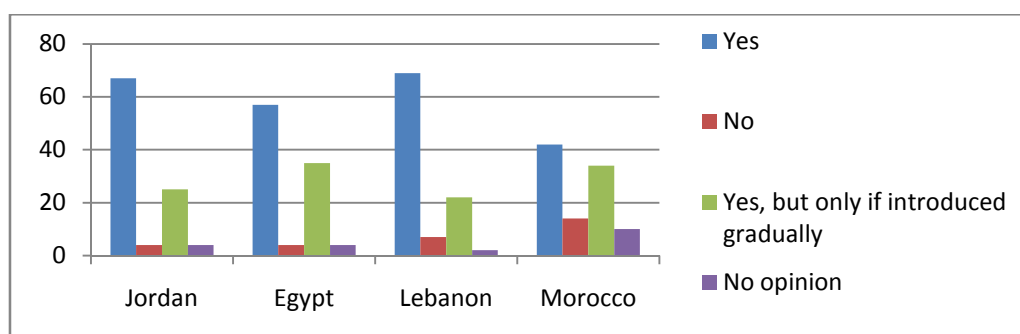


The essence of democratic change

The dialogue on democratic change includes debate on the extent to which the peoples of the region are receptive to the values of democracy, and this question was included in the survey.

Only a very small proportion of respondents said that the people of their countries were unsuited to democracy.

Graph 14 – The respondents' views on whether the people of their countries are suited to democracy or not



Democracy and economic priorities

In the context of the dialogue on political reform, some hold the view that political reform is not among the citizens' priorities, as they are more concerned with economic reform and development.

The results of the survey showed that while the citizens' priorities are economic issues, the majority of respondents think that the economic situations of their families would be positively affected by political reform.

It is clear that the evaluations made by Lebanese respondents were affected by Lebanon's political circumstances at the time of the survey.

Table17 – The relationship between political reform and the living standards of the respondents' families

	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco
Political reform will quickly lead to an improvement in the living standards of the family	37	38	0	24
Political reform will lead to an improvement in the living standards of the family in the long term	44	43	33	44
Political reform may be harmful to the living standards of the family	3	2	63	2
There is no relationship between political reform and living standards	10	8	1	16
I don't know/Refused to answer	6	9	1	14
Total	100	100	100	100

6 – Legislative authority

In most Arab countries, the constitution grants to the legislative authority a number of important roles, such as formulating laws and holding the executive authority to account. However, reform of the legislative authority does not enjoy the same interest as reform in other areas. The dialogue on reform tends to concentrate on the political regime in a general sense or on the executive authority. This may be due to the fact that in most Arab countries the legislative authority has been merely a compliant tool in the hands of the executive authority for long periods of time, with the sole purpose of conferring legitimacy to the executive authority.

Over the past sixty years, the Arab parliamentary councils, with the exception of Lebanon, have been unable to realize the principle of balancing political power with the executive authority and its institutions. Although most legislative councils are elected, they are determined to a large extent by the ruling powers, which formulate the election laws and manipulate the electoral process.

This survey investigated the views of public opinion on their elected representative councils by asking them to evaluate the following core issues:

1. The legislative elections held in their countries
2. The extent of citizens' participation in the last elections held in their county
3. The performance of parliamentary councils in carrying out their basic constitutional roles

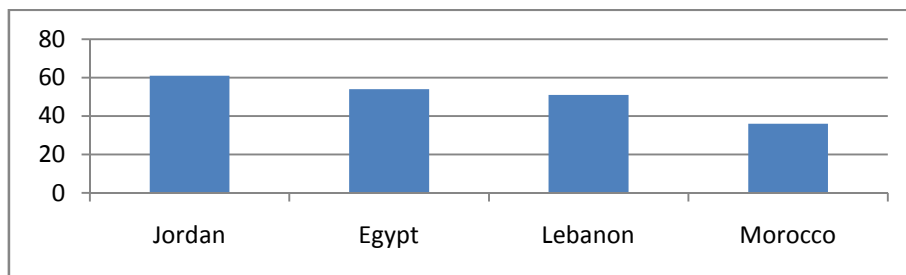
4. The councils' performance in representing the citizens

Public opinion's evaluation of legislative elections and participation in them

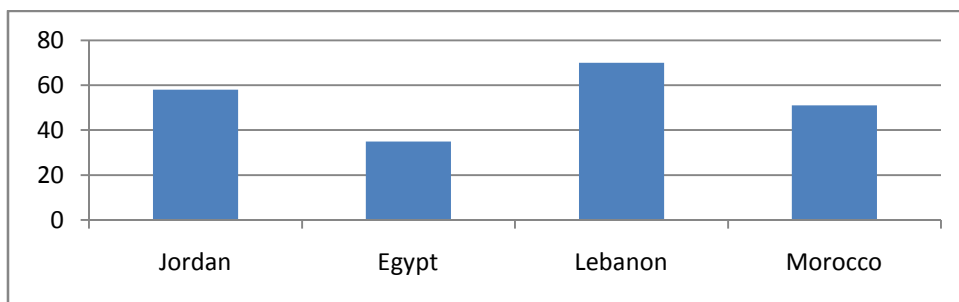
In the Arab countries, legislative elections are the most important elections, as local councils have only a limited role, and in presidential elections, there is usually no candidate other than the existing president. Legislative elections had taken place in each of the four countries in the period prior to the survey, and in all four countries these elections had taken place in an atmosphere of intensified dialogue on democracy and political reform, and increased external interest in promoting democracy.

Public opinion's evaluation of the fairness of the legislative elections was modest. Given the negative evaluations of the fairness of these legislative elections, the large number of respondents who said they had not voted was unsurprising. The reasons the respondents gave for not voting varied from country to country, but the most common reasons were the belief that voting was pointless, not being registered to vote, or being too busy to vote. The motives behind the respondents' decisions to vote for a particular candidate reflect the relative strength of the party system in each country.

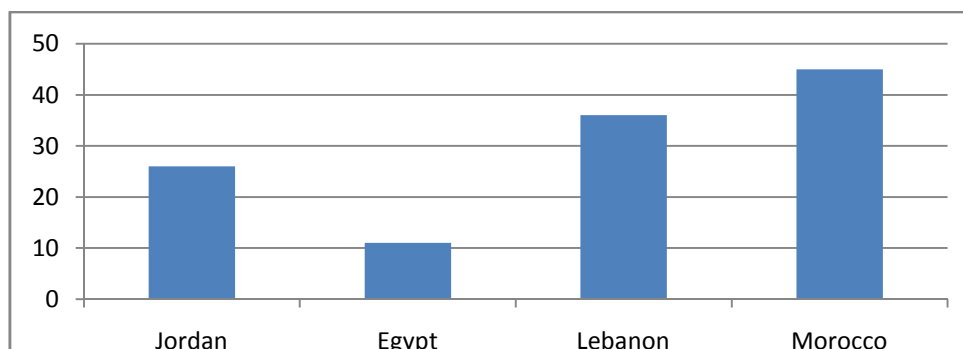
Graph 15 – Public opinion's evaluation of the fairness of parliamentary elections



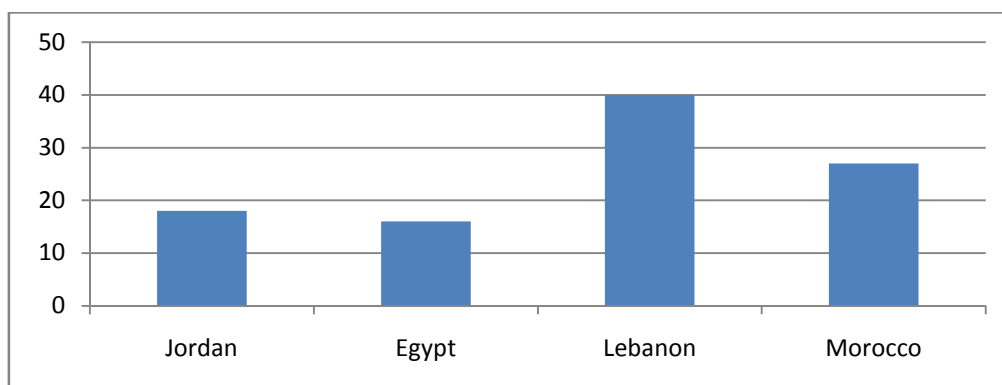
Graph 16 – The proportion of respondents that said they had voted in the parliamentary elections



Graph 17 – The proportion of respondents who answered that they did not vote because they thought it was pointless



Graph 18 – The proportion of respondents who answered that they did not vote because they were not registered



Respondents in Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco were asked how they had decided to vote for a particular candidate. The reasons they gave reflect the power of political parties and movements in the three countries. In Lebanon, society’s religious and sectarian divisions are expressed politically. Similarly, in Morocco, political movements and parties have a long history. In Jordan however, the ban on party life for more than three decades has seriously affected social receptivity to the idea of political parties, and has prevented parties from carrying out their work. As a consequence, the political affiliation of a candidate was much less significant for Jordanian voters. In contrast, the tribal affiliation of a candidate was much more important to Jordanian voters than to Moroccan and Lebanese voters.

Graph 19 – The proportion of respondents that voted for candidates on the basis of the services they were offering the people of the electoral district and on the basis that they belonged to a political party or movement supported by the respondent

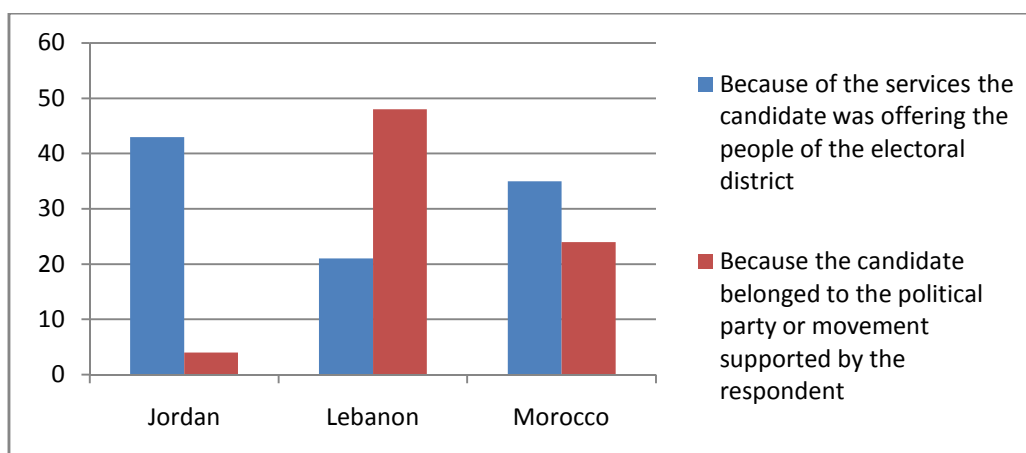


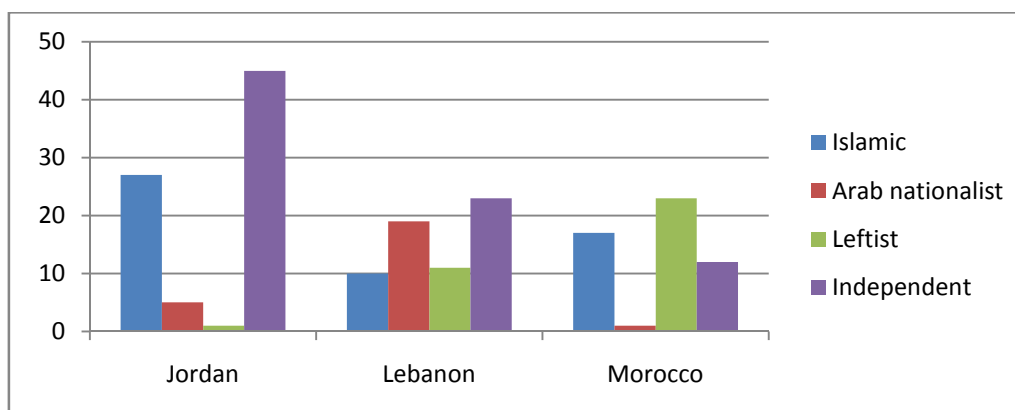
Table 18 – The basis upon which voters chose a candidate for parliamentary elections

	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco
Because of the services he was offering the people of the district	43	21	35
Because of his tribal link to the respondent	33	5	15
Because he belonged to a political party or	4	48	24

movement supported by the respondent			
Because he is a national celebrity	8	3	7
Because of his relationships with the government	4	-	1
Because he belongs to the opposition	1	4	3
Because he belongs to my religion/sect	4	7	1
Other	3	7	5
I don't know/Refused to say	-	5	9
Total	100		

There was also much variation from country to country in the intellectual trends of the candidates chosen by the voters. For example the proportions of respondents that voted for candidates belonging to the Islamic trend corresponded with the force of that trend in each of the three countries.

Graph 21 – The intellectual trends that the candidates voted for by the respondents belonged to, as defined by the respondents

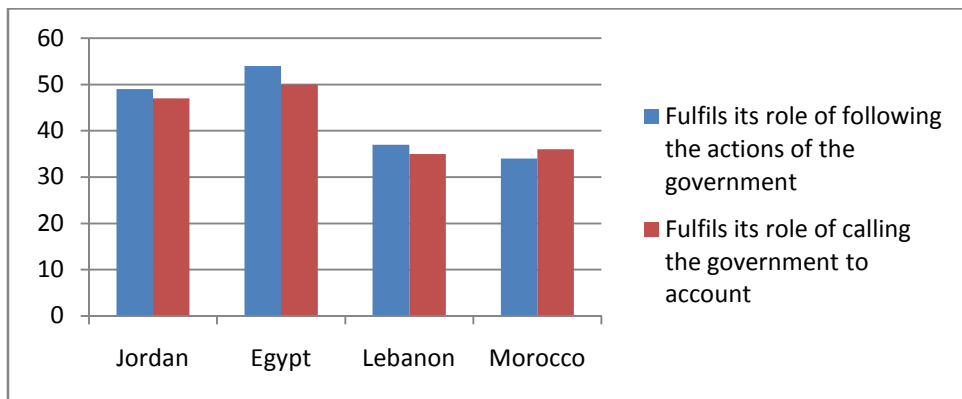


The survey also asked for public opinion's evaluation of the elected councils, an important element in the investigation of political reform in general and reform of these councils. This evaluation was divided into three parts:

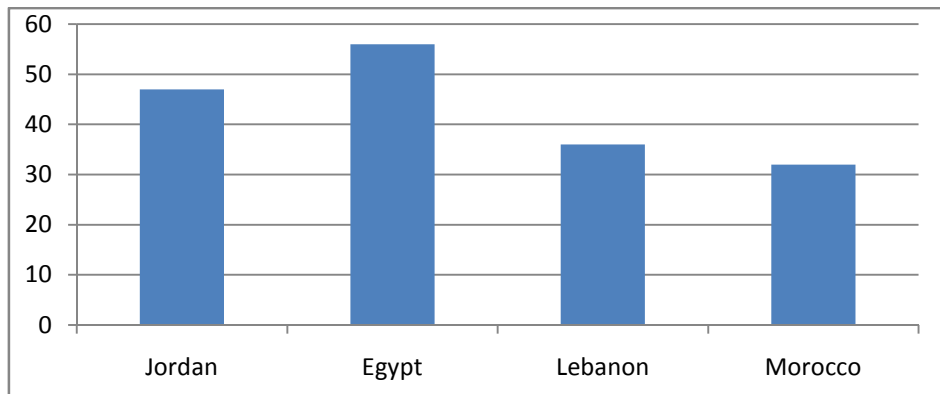
1. An evaluation of the councils' performance supervising the executive authority and holding the government to account
2. An evaluation of the councils' performance at the legislative level
3. An evaluation of the extent to which the councils represent the citizens, how far they liaise with citizens and are concerned with their problems

Public opinion was generally negative in its evaluation of the performance of the parliamentary council in each country. Egyptian respondents were the most positive, while Moroccan respondents gave the most negative evaluation.

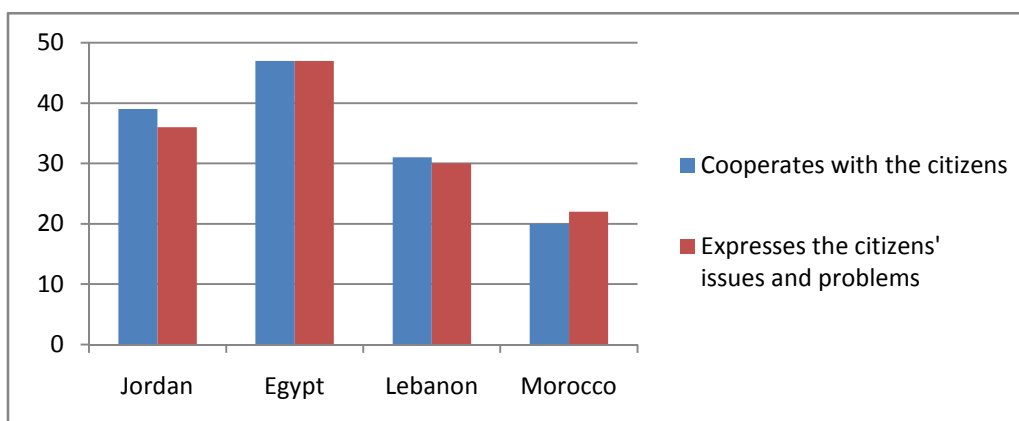
Graph 22 – The proportion of respondents who consider that the parliamentary council fulfils its role of calling the government to account



Graph 23 – The proportion of respondents who consider that the parliamentary council fulfils its legislative role



Graph 24 – Public opinion’s evaluation of the parliamentary council’s performance in representing and cooperating with the citizens



7 – The Media

The role and influence of the media in the Arab world has increased in an unprecedented fashion over the past two decades. It is possible to trace the development of the Arab media through three main phases:

1. 1940s -1970s: During this period the media was usually a tool in the hands of the state, although its credibility was severely compromised following the misrepresentation of the 1967 war. Meanwhile, the independent press was heavily censored. In Lebanon, the press enjoyed greater freedom and as a consequence many political trends expressed themselves through the Lebanese media.
2. 1970s – early 1990s: This phase saw a number of Arab publications move to the West, as a consequence of heavy censorship in the Arab states and the Lebanese civil war.
3. Mid 1990s – present: Advances in technology have transformed the function and the scope of the media. The most important developments have been the rise of the Internet, satellite dishes, and the reformulation of some media laws increasing the media’s freedom.

This survey investigated public opinion’s attitude towards the media by asking the respondents to evaluate the state owned and private national media (not transnational media) in four fundamental areas:

1. The extent to which the media’s reporting is considered to be scrupulous and fair
2. The extent to which the media is objective in examining different points of view
3. The role played by the media in expressing the citizens’ issues and problems
4. The role played by the media in spreading awareness.

Table 19 – Public opinion’s evaluation of state media

	At the time of the survey				3 years ago				3 years from now			
	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco
Fairness and scrupulousness	59	60	42	39	49	42	51	41	65	68	54	60
Examination of different points of view	60	58	43	41	49	41	52	40	66	69	54	60
Its role in spreading awareness	66	68	40	46	50	42	52	42	67	71	55	61
Expressing the citizens’ issues	62	56	41	38	49	41	51	40	66	69	54	60

Jordanian and Lebanese public opinion said there is no notable difference between government owned and privately owned media, while Egyptian and Moroccan public opinion considers privately owned media to be superior to the state media in all four areas.

Table 20 – Public opinion’s evaluation of privately owned media

	At the time of the survey				3 years ago				3 years from now			
	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco	Jordan	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco
Fairness and scrupulousness	59	74	40	59	50	46	58	48	67	74	58	67
Examination of different points of view	62	75	45	60	51	46	58	48	67	75	59	67
Its role in spreading awareness	61	74	51	62	51	46	57	48	68	75	60	67
Expressing the citizens’ issues	58	70	54	58	50	47	56	48	67	74	60	67

8 – Perspectives on some social, cultural and religious issues

This survey also measured public opinion on some socio-cultural issues: the status of women, parents' relationships with their sons and daughters and religious issues. This was to gain an idea of to what extent public opinion would be accepting of reform projects affecting these areas.

The status of women

Development and reform projects in the Arab world place much emphasis on increasing the role of women in society. Studies on the limited role played by women in Arab societies identify a number of obstacles to the transformation of this role, such as the inherited social and religious culture that limits the freedom of women, and a legal context that is discriminatory against them.

It is sometimes argued that public opinion in the Arab world is against the emancipation of women and that this is an important obstacle to transforming their role. This survey measured public opinion on three issues concerned with the status of women: women's basic rights, their legal rights, and their role in politics.

Table 21 – The percentage of respondents that support equality for women with men in some basic rights

	Jordan	Egypt	Morocco	Lebanon
Women have the same right to education as men	95	97	98	99
Women have the same right to work as men	87	89	93	97
Women have the right to travel alone	38	40	69	82
Women have the right to drive a car	87	-	94	95

The results showed that the respondents were generally very supportive of women having the same rights as men, apart from in the case of whether women should be allowed to travel alone. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that a well known *tafsir* says that a woman should not travel alone but must be accompanied by a *Mahram* or by her husband.

Table 22 – The percentage of respondents that support women's rights in matters of the law on personal status

	Jordan	Egypt	Morocco	Lebanon
The agreement of the first wife is a fundamental condition for a man being allowed to marry another woman	63	77	77	67
A woman has the right to refuse to marry a man chosen for her by her family	85	93	90	96
Men and women have equal rights over divorce	76	82	77	90

Table 23 – The percentage of respondents that supports women having equal rights to men in working in politics

	Jordan	Egypt	Morocco	Lebanon
Women have the same right to political action as men	72	65	87	91
Women have the same right as men to take on ministerial positions	68	58	83	89
Women have the same right as men to take on judicial positions	67	53	79	91
Women have the same right as men to take on the highest political position in the country (PM)	58	34	75	80

The relationship between parents and their sons and daughters

This is a socio-cultural issue of great importance in the Arab world. This survey showed that there is no general agreement among respondents on the ideal nature of this relationship, and there were some inconsistencies in the results. For example, the vast majority of respondents said that parents should not impose their views on their children; however, the majority of respondents also said that children should obey their parents even if they disagreed with them, reflecting a discrepancy between views in theory and in practice.

Table 24 – The extent to which the respondents agree with some statements regarding the relationship between parents and their sons and daughters

	Jordan	Egypt	Morocco	Lebanon
Parents should work to convince their sons and daughters through dialogue rather than by imposing their views	92	--	92	97
The law should protect sons and daughters whose parents are violent towards them	87	73	75	93
Sons and daughters have the right to disagree with the opinions of their parents	78	78	74	88
Sons and daughters have unjust rights	53		60	56
Sons and daughters should carry out their parents' wishes, even if they disagree	57		61	48
Sons and daughters should obey their parents even if they disagree with them	77	91	81	70
Parents have the right to hit their children	43	--	61	20

Religious issues

As far as religious issues were concerned, the majority of respondents were in favour of the principle of recognising religious minorities and giving them the same rights as the majority.

However, the majority of respondents also said they thought there should be only one understanding of Islam, showing that the practical application of reform in the area of religion could face difficulties.

Table 25 – The extent to which respondents agreed with statements on issues relating to religion

	Jordan	Morocco	Lebanon
Religious minorities have the right to practice their religion freely	83	86	93
Difference of religion or sect should not be a cause for doubt in anyone's patriotism	79	77	89
Religious scholars need to accept social and political views that are different from their own	80	79	93
Disagreement with some <i>tafsirs</i> does not make someone an unbeliever	81	81	89
Difference of opinion among scholars on religious judgements is a good thing	63	68	63
There must be one understanding of Islam that does not allow a multiplicity of interpretations	61	72	76
In Muslim society there should be various sects and interpretations available to citizens so they can choose the one that best suits them	68	50	58