National public opinion survey of eligible voters in Iraq

In June 2021, EPIC’s field office conducted telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,068 eligible voters across Iraq. The selected sample size was 1,068 plus an additional 10 percent (107) cushion to account for unreachable respondents and those who did not wish to participate. The survey ended when responses reached the target figure of 1,068.

Using advanced survey software and Iraqi government data, the sample size was calculated to ensure a margin of error that does not exceed ±3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. According to the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) of Iraq’s Ministry of Planning, Iraq’s total population was estimated to be 39,127,900 as of 2019. EPIC also used data from the CSO to determine how Iraq’s population is distributed across the country’s 18 provinces.

The sample included a proportionate representation of Iraq’s 18 or provinces based on each province’s share of the national population. A near equal number of men and women were selected for interviews in each province based on the country’s male-to-female ratio of 1.01 (2020 estimate) as reported by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The primary objective of the survey was to measure how Iraqis of voting age perceive key actors and issues related to governance, demands for political and economic reforms, and the Tishreen protest movement that emerged in October 2019. The survey also measured public perceptions of the country’s electoral process and the political parties competing for votes, with an emphasis on the parliamentary elections held in 2018, and elections scheduled for October 2021.

The survey and its findings are part of a year-long endeavor by EPIC to study Iraq’s Tishreen movement and its prospects for power. You can read EPIC’s full report: The Long Game: Iraq’s “Tishreen” Movement and the Struggle for Reform here.

About EPIC

Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of peace and development in Iraq. Founded in 1998, EPIC is headquartered in Washington, DC, with a field office in Erbil. The Center has a long history of working directly with civil society leaders and communities across Iraq to support vulnerable populations, monitor human security, and inform public policy. EPIC’s ultimate vision is a safe and prosperous Iraq in which all citizens live free from want and fear, and with dignity. The Center is currently focused on supporting Iraqi efforts to improve governance and human rights, promote peace and recovery in conflict affected areas, and combat climate change while mitigating its impact on vulnerable populations.
Respondents by province

Respondents by community

- Other: 4.2%
- Prefer not to answer: 24.3%
- Afro-Iraqis: 0.0%
- Kakais: 0.8%
- Mandaean: 0.0%
- Yazidis: 0.3%
- Armenian Christians: 0.3%
- Chaldean Christians: 0.7%
- Assyrian Christians: 0.8%
- Shabaks: 1.0%
- Shia Turkmen: 0.8%
- Sunni Turkmen: 1.0%
- Fayli Kurds: 0.7%
- Sunni Kurds: 13.5%
- Shia Arab: 29.9%
- Sunni Arab: 21.5%
Respondents by occupation

Biggest problems facing Iraq today
Perceptions of protesters

Perceptions of protesters by province
Primary factor that sparked mass protests in October 2019

- Lack of jobs: 24.8%
- Lack of services: 17.2%
- Weak rule of law: 11.8%
- Foreign interference: 5.6%
- Demands for electoral reforms: 1.9%
- Corruption and mubahasa: 20.4%
- To stop the militias: 3.4%
- To stop foreign interference: 4.2%
- Other: 2.7%
- I don't know: 6.1%

Have you participated in a protest since October 2019?

- Yes: 31.8%
- No: 53.2%
- Prefer not to answer: 15.0%
Have you participated in a protest before October 2019?

- Yes. In 2018: 10.8%
- Yes. In 2016: 3.7%
- Yes. In 2015: 4.2%
- Yes. In 2011: 4.6%
- None of the above: 52.7%
- Prefer not to answer: 24.3%

Perceptions of protests impact

- On social conditions (e.g. reducing sectarianism, improving equality): 47.1%
- On politics (e.g. better election laws): 34.6%
- On economic conditions (e.g. more money for those in need): 23.3%
- Nowhere. They have had no measurable impact so far: 34.8%
Main obstacle facing protesters

- Gov't or militia violence: 43.2%
- Lack of experience: 10.3%
- Lack of clear goals: 7.4%
- Infiltration by militias: 13.5%
- Lack of resources: 1.2%
- Foreign interference: 3.7%
- Not enough support: 9.6%
- I don't know: 9.8%
- Other: 1.2%

Factors that can make protests more effective

- More support from other flags: 38.0%
- More international support: 16.2%
- Different protest methods: 3.5%
- A change in their messaging: 2.5%
- A change in their demands: 2.0%
- Improved or different leadership: 7.6%
- Better organization: 16.4%
- I don't know: 11.8%
- Other: 1.9%
Eligible voters' preferences

Traditional party candidates: 4.2%
Candidates supported by the current PM: 2.5%
Protesters/Tishreen candidates: 25.3%
Other candidates: 3.0%
Not planning to vote: 34.1%
Not sure: 30.7%

Likely winner (national) of the most seats in parliament in the next elections

Traditional party candidates: 32.9%
Candidates supported by the current PM: 4.6%
Protesters/Tishreen candidates: 13.3%
Not sure: 44.8%
Other candidates: 4.4%
Likely winner of the most parliamentary seats in your province in the next elections

Expected consequences if traditional parties win elections & form government
Expectated consequences if reformers win seats but fail to form government

- They will form effective political opposition: 28%
- They will have no effect: 27%
- They will become corrupt too: 16.9%
- The economy and services will get worse: 6.9%
- There will be gradual political reforms: 20.3%
- The economy and services will improve: 8.1%
- Other: 0.8%

Expectated consequences if protesters/Tishreen candidates win elections & form government

- I don't know: 30.6%
- The economy and services will get worse: 11.8%
- The economy and services will improve: 26.5%
- There will be less corruption and muhasasa: 30.6%
- Parties representing protesters will become corrupt...: 14.0%
- Militias will become weaker: 16.7%
- Militias and/or parties that lost will use violence to...: 25.2%
- Other: 1.4%
Mostly represented the will of the Iraqi people: 7.8%
Somewhat represented the will of the Iraqi people: 13.3%
Did not represent the will of the Iraqi people at all: 60.8%
Not sure: 18.1%

Will be free and fair: 4.4%
Will be somewhat free and fair: 18.9%
Won't be free or fair at all: 43.9%
Not sure: 32.8%
Which external power will have the most influence on the next election?

Perceptions of external influence

- **The United States**: 40% good, 60% harmful
- **Iran**: 12% good, 88% harmful
- **The UN**: 30% good, 70% harmful
Voters' choices in 2018

Other candidates: 3.7%
Prefer not to answer: 33.8%
Did not vote in 2018: 40.9%

Candidates supported by Abu Mazin: 0.2%
Candidates supported by the Nujaifs: 0.0%
Candidates supported by the Karboulis: 0.5%
Candidates supported by Allawi: 0.8%
Candidates supported by Abadi: 2.2%
Candidates supported by Sadr: 4.1%
Candidates supported by Fatah: 3.4%
Candidates supported by Gorran: 1.4%
Candidates supported by the PUK: 2.4%
Candidates supported by the KDP: 3.5%
Candidates supported by Maliki: 2.2%
Candidates supported by Hakim: 1.0%

Voter registration status/biometric card acquisition

Registered/acquired: 58.6%
Not registered/acquired: 26.7%
Not registered/acquired but planning to: 9.5%
Not registered/acquired and not planning to: 5.2%
Greatest obstacle to voting in the next election

- Difficulties with registration: 2.9%
- Inability to obtain the biometric card: 1.0%
- Distance to voting center: 3.0%
- Belief that voting makes no difference: 15.0%
- Expectation of fraud: 30.6%
- Fear of violence: 3.5%
- Lack of support for candidates: 15.9%
- COVID: 8.8%
- No obstacles: 17.6%
- Other: 1.7%