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NATIONAL PRIORITIES, GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL REFORM IN JORDAN:

NATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION POLL #6

Released December 2008

Sample size:

**1,000 individuals, 18 years of age or older,
50 percent men and 50 percent women**

**Randomly selected from 100 locations
throughout the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

Number of field researchers: 50

The poll was conducted between August 9 and 13, 2008

The margin of error is ± 2.5 percent at 95 percent confidence level

The fieldwork for this poll was conducted by:

MIDDLE EAST MARKETING AND RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

**NATIONAL PRIORITIES, GOVERNANCE
AND POLITICAL REFORM IN JORDAN:**

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FINDINGS

Introduction

This is the 12th public opinion poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and Middle East Marketing and Research Consultants (MEMRC) examining Jordanians' attitudes on national priorities, political reform, electoral politics and local governance. IRI-MEMRC's in-depth survey research includes five nationwide polls, four series of municipal-level polls, and the first ever exit polls conducted in Jordan during the July 2007 municipal elections and the November 2007 parliamentary elections. The first 10 polls were released in cooperation with the Jordan Center for Social Research.

Starting with the first survey conducted in July 2005, IRI-MEMRC polling in Jordan has sought to gauge the perceptions of Jordanians on their priorities and concerns, democratic processes, voter attitudes and electoral culture, political life and governance for the benefit of decision-makers, elected officials and the general public.

As these polls have appeared at regular intervals over the past three years, crucial benchmarks and trends have been established in order to highlight important shifts and milestones in public opinion which can help decision-makers formulate public policies.

In addition to identifying Jordanians' priority concerns and gauging their attitudes on governance and the political process, this IRI-MEMRC poll delves deeper into the findings of the previous five national polls which show that the two most important top-of-mind issues for Jordanians are 1) rising cost of living and 2) unemployment.

Besides being relevant to decision-makers and the public at large, the information gathered in this poll will be helpful for Jordanian political parties and other nongovernmental actors in crafting platforms, messages and slogans.

Methodology

- Sample size is 1,000 individuals, 18 years of age or older, 50 percent men and 50 percent women.
- A stratified two stage cluster sample based on the 2004 Housing and Population Census for the selection of 100 clusters across the Kingdom. The Nyman allocation approach was used to distribute the sample of clusters among governorates.
- Ten households were drawn (with replacement allowing for non-contacts) from each cluster using a random start and a systematic procedure of selection to ensure representation of different parts of the cluster in sample and to reduce intra-class correlation.
- Researchers conducted one in-person interview per household, selected using the Kish method.
- Interviewers were provided with building maps identifying households selected for interview.
- The margin of error is \pm 2.5 percent at 95 percent confidence level.
- Number of field researchers: 50
- The poll was conducted August 9-13, 2008.

Summary of Findings

- For the first time since IRI began polling in July 2005, more Jordanians say their country is going in the wrong direction than in the right direction. This finding may reflect Jordanians' increased worries about their personal economic situation due to the rising cost of living.
- Nearly two-thirds of Jordanians say that the rising cost of living is the most important problem facing their country, the largest percentage in IRI polling to date. Unemployment and poverty remain distant second- and third-place issues of concern.
- When asked to assess their economic situation, an overwhelming majority of Jordanians paint a gloomy picture of current economic conditions, describe a downward trend in their economic fortunes during the past 12 months, and express pessimism that the situation will change for the better in the next 12 months.
- Moreover, Jordanians express low satisfaction rates across an array of quality of life indicators such as standard of living, jobs, future financial security, their children's future and the state of the nation.
- In an effort to make ends meet, a majority of Jordanians have reduced their spending, cut down on basic needs, bought on credit or dipped into their savings, all signs of reduced economic livelihood. Almost two-thirds of respondents say they have sought assistance from either family or state-run welfare and charity programs.
- In these times of economic distress, fewer Jordanians feel they have the right to speak their minds about their government's policies. Almost one-half of respondents say that the freedom to publicly criticize the government is not guaranteed in Jordan, a significant increase over IRI's fifth national public opinion poll, released in October 2007.
- Jordanians feel less inclined to trust their elected representatives. More than half of respondents say they are unsatisfied with the performance of the current parliament elected in November 2007; a small minority say they are satisfied. Three-quarters say that the parliament has not achieved anything worthy of recognition.
- Public awareness of the recent amendments to the Public Assembly Law, a key parameter of the citizen's right of assembly in Jordan, is low. This could be connected to a lack of interest in public policy in general or the workings of the parliament in specific, or a failure by the media and government to raise awareness and understanding of the significance of the amendments.
- If parliamentary elections were held today, the vast majority of Jordanians would continue to vote for independent candidates (those who are not aligned with any political party). Intention to vote for political party candidates in general continues to decline, as does support for the opposition Islamic Action Front in particular.
- With regard to tackling unemployment, although many Jordanians are aware of the three main vocational training and employment programs run by the government, few have bothered to apply.

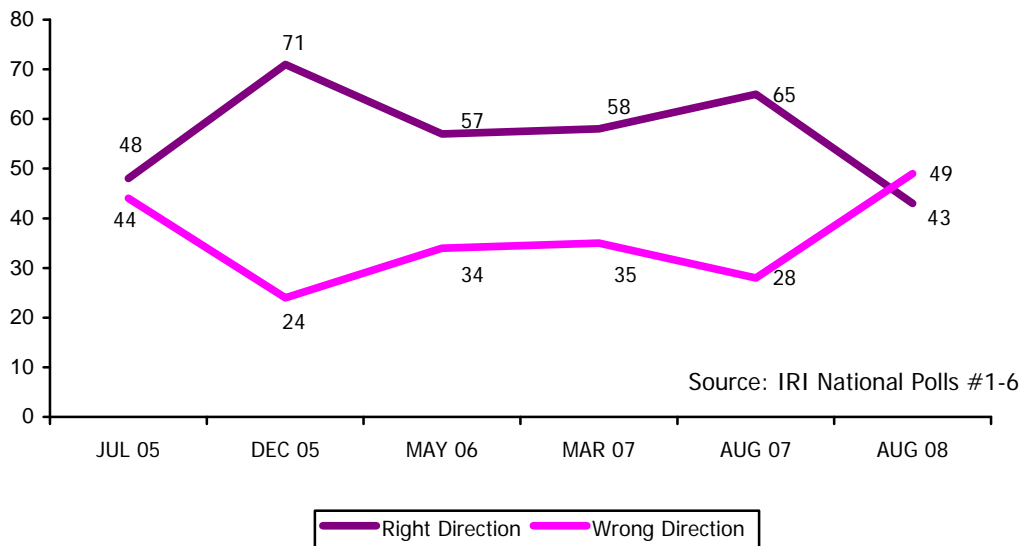
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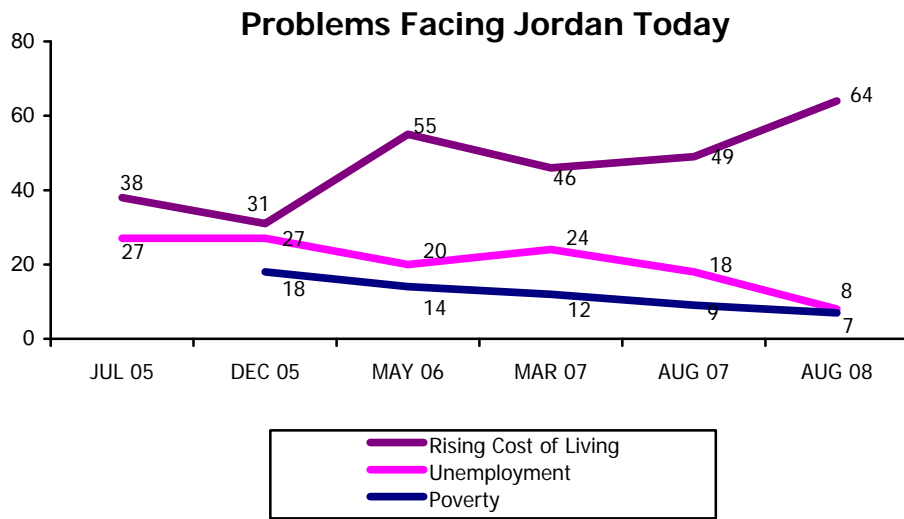
MAIN FINDINGS

General

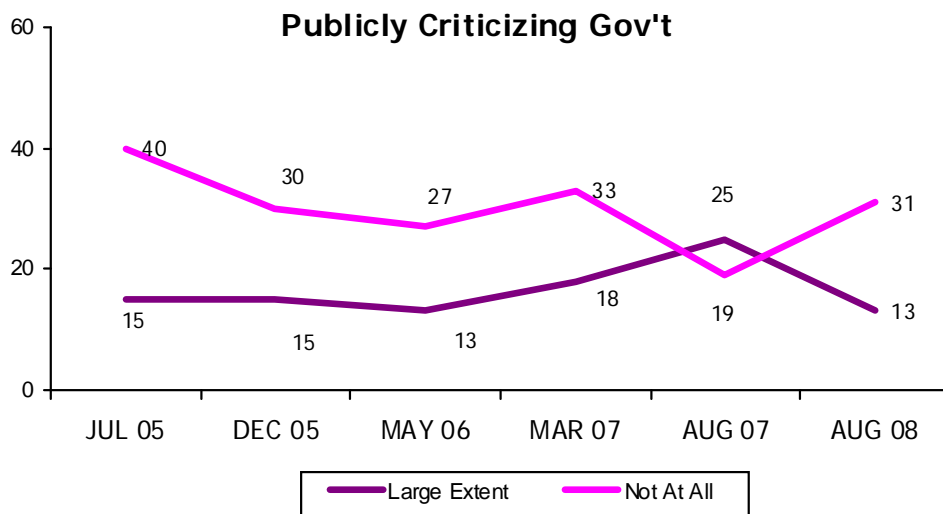
- Forty-nine percent of Jordanians believes their country is going in the wrong direction versus 43 percent who believes things are going in the right direction. This is the first time since IRI began polling in 2005 that more Jordanians see things in the country going in the wrong direction than in the right direction.
- Since IRI's last poll in August 2007, there has been a 22 percentage point drop in the number of Jordanians who feel their country is going in the right direction. (See graph below)



- As has been the case over the past three years, the issue of rising prices/rising cost of living remains the most important problem facing Jordanians today.
- Sixty-four percent of respondents now say the rising cost of living is the most important problem facing the country, an increase of 26 percentage points since IRI's first poll in July 2005. Two-thirds of Jordanians now feel the brunt of increasing prices. (See graph on the next page)



- Distantly following the rising cost of living, eight percent of Jordanians believe unemployment to be the most important problem facing the country and seven percent believe it is poverty. These have been recurring issues of concern in previous opinion polls (March 2007, May 2006 and December 2005).
- Thirteen percent of Jordanians think that the freedom to publicly criticize the government's policies and decisions is guaranteed to a great extent, a drop of 12 percentage points from August 2007. Another 33 percent think that it is somewhat guaranteed, no change from the last poll. Almost one in three Jordanians or 31 percent of respondents say that the freedom to publicly criticize the government is not at all guaranteed, a significant increase of 12 percentage points from August 2007. (See graph below)



Parliament's Approval Ratings

- Approval ratings for Parliament are low with barely four percent saying they are very satisfied and 28 percent saying they are somewhat satisfied with the current parliament's performance. An absolute majority of 57 percent of Jordanians says that they are not very satisfied and not at all satisfied with the parliament's performance.
- An overwhelming majority of Jordanians or 78 percent says that the current parliament has not achieved anything worthy of recognition.

The New Public Assembly Law

The Jordanian Parliament recently adopted several amendments to the Public Assembly Law.

- Eighty-three percent of Jordanians say that they have not read or heard anything about the recent amendments to this law.
- Only one percent of respondents say that they have heard or read a lot about these amendments.
- However, when respondents were read the text of the four amendments and asked how important each amendment was to the freedom of assembly in Jordan, between 25 percent and 40 percent of respondents said they were important. When asked whether each amendment would foster political reform in Jordan, between 24 percent and 32 percent of respondents said that they would promote reform.
- The four amendments read as follows:

The first amendment to the Public Assembly Law relates to the permit application and approval process. The application deadline for a permit to hold assemblies or demonstrations was reduced from three to two days ahead of the planned date of the event. The responsible administrative governor is now obliged by the law to authorize or deny such requests within 24 hours instead of 48 hours and if the governor fails to issue such a permit within 24 hours, the application will be deemed granted.

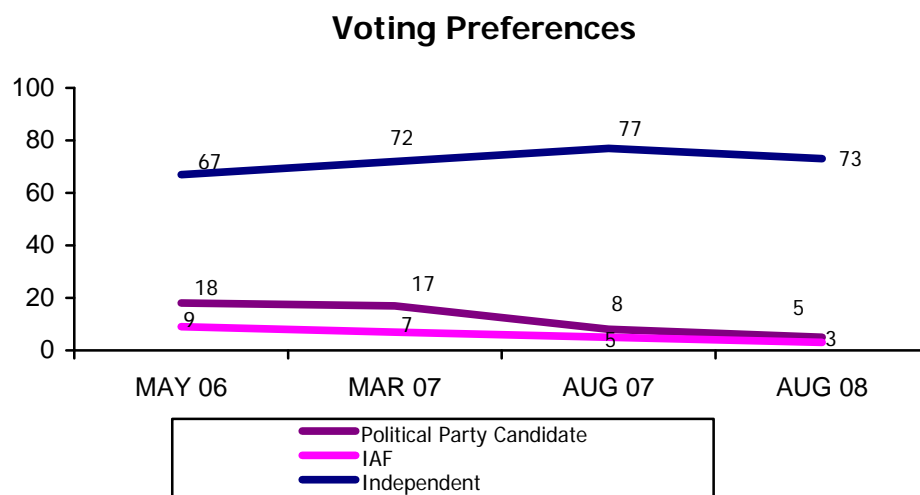
The second amendment gives the responsible administrative governor the authority to break up a meeting or disband a demonstration in the event that he/she determines such a meeting/demonstration will put at risk the lives of citizens, private and public property and public safety.

The third amendment states that organizers of either meetings or demonstrations are no longer held liable/responsible for any disorderly actions by a few of the participants.

The fourth amendment excludes political parties, election campaigns, unions and professional associations, charitable societies, companies, chambers of commerce and industry, municipalities and clubs from obtaining a permit for their "regular meetings" provided such meetings are within the objectives of such entities and the laws governing its work and activities.

Voter Attitudes and Electoral Culture

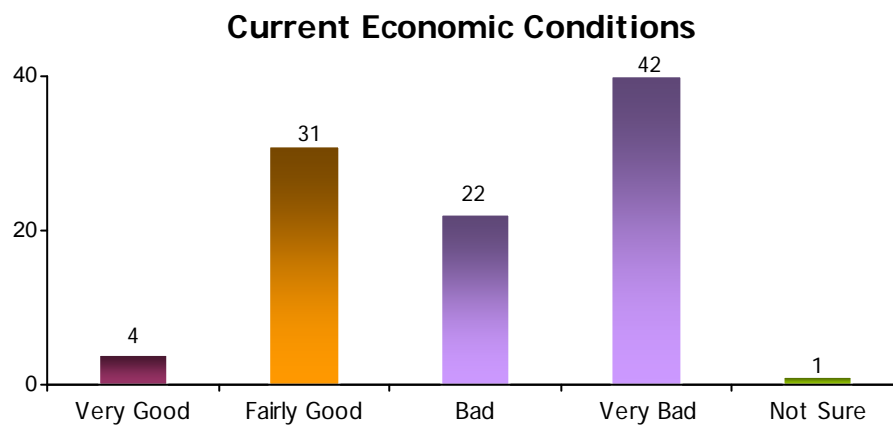
- Fifty-four percent of respondents say that they voted in the November 2007 parliamentary elections versus 45 percent who say they did not.
- Fifty-one percent of those who voted say they would vote for the same candidate again versus 25 percent who would not, 20 percent who are not sure.
- Thirty-nine percent of those who would vote again for their candidate would do so because their elected candidate has extended services to all.
- Nineteen percent would do so because he/she is from same tribe/family/neighborhood.
- Sixteen percent would do so because he/she is qualified and trustworthy.
- Fourteen percent would do so because of his/her honesty and integrity.
- Five percent would do so because he/she is a personal acquaintance.
- Three percent would do so because their candidate is cultured and educated.
- And three percent would do so because their candidate is a religious person.
- Those who would not vote for their candidate again (25 percent) would not do so because their candidate:
 - did not render services (44 percent);
 - did not keep his/her campaign promises (29 percent);
 - did not deserve his/her seat (11 percent); and
 - abused his/her position for personal interest (six percent).
- If parliamentary elections were held in the near future, 73 percent say that they would vote for an independent candidate, a drop of four percentage points from August 2007.
- Five percent would vote for a political party candidate or a drop of three percentage points from August 2007. (See graph below)



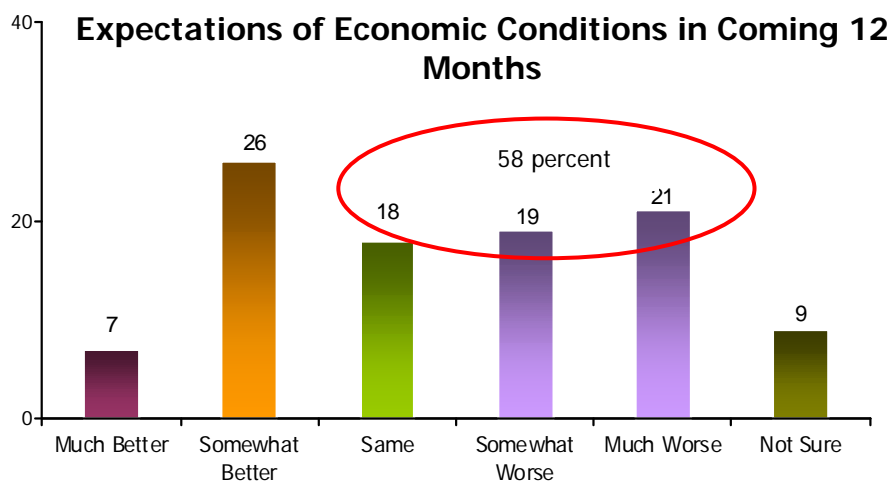
- Three percent would vote for an Islamic Action Front (IAF) candidate, a drop of two percentage points from the August 2007 national poll and November 2007 parliamentary exit poll. This is a significant drop of six percentage points from May 2006 in the support for the IAF. The likelihood of voting for an IAF candidate has declined over the past 25 months from nine percent to a little more than three percent.

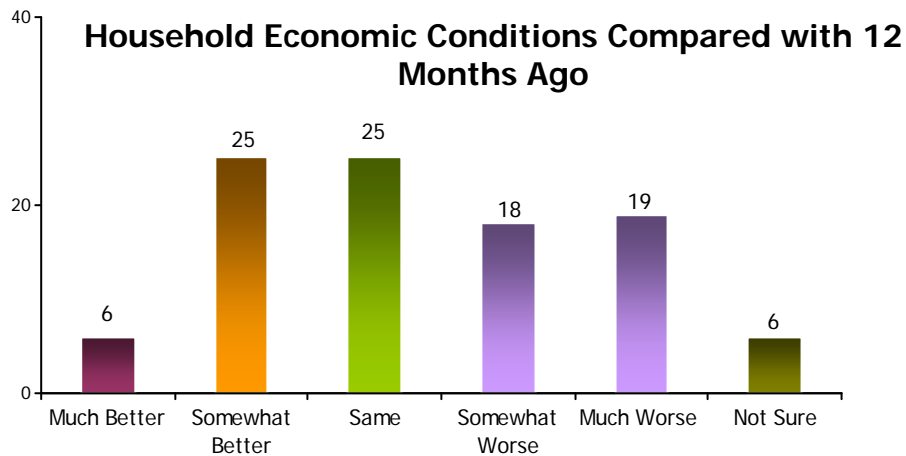
Economic Conditions

- When asked to describe the current economic conditions in Jordan, only four percent of respondents say it is very good; 31 percent say it is somewhat good.
- In contrast, 64 percent describes current economic conditions as bad or very bad.
- Of this 64 percent, 42 percent of Jordanians describe the economic situation as very bad. A majority of these respondents say that the bad situation is due to rising prices and cost of living in general (51 percent), followed by low income (19 percent), unemployment (nine percent), poverty (six percent) and rising fuel prices (five percent). (See graph below)



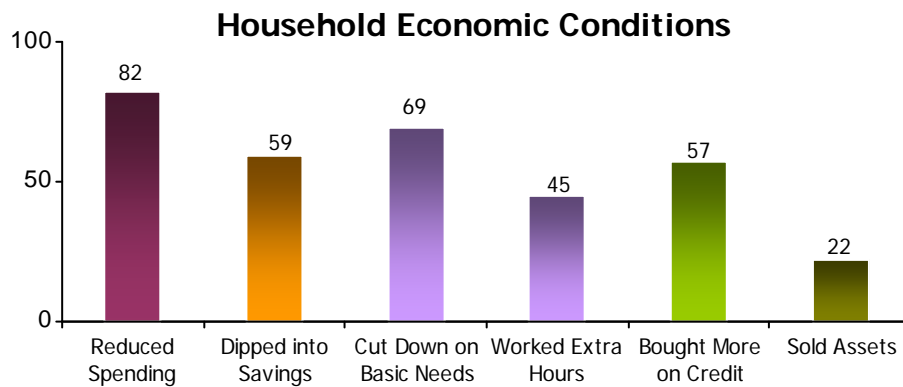
- With regard to Jordanians' expectations on how the economy will do over the next 12 months, seven percent say it will become much better, with another 26 percent predicting it will become somewhat better, a total of 33 percent who have an optimistic outlook on the future.
- Eighteen percent say the economic situation will remain about the same. Forty percent say economic conditions will get somewhat worse or very much worse over the next 12 months. Overall, 58 percent of Jordanians have a pessimistic outlook on the future. (See graphs below and on the next page)



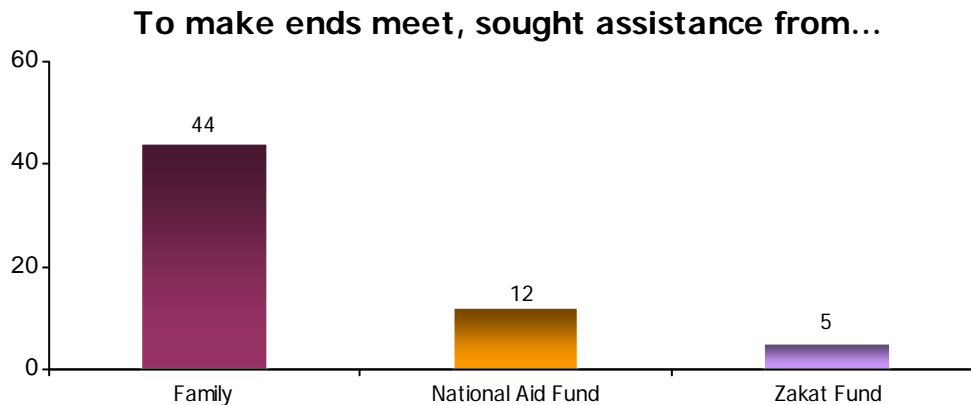


- When Jordanians compare their current household economic situation with one year ago, the findings are similar. Thirty-one percent say their household economic conditions improved or somewhat improved, (six percent much improved and 25 percent somewhat improved). Twenty-five percent say conditions remained about the same, and 37 percent say their conditions worsened or very much worsened over the past 12 months. This represents a combined 62 percent who have not seen much improvement in their families' economic situation over the past year.
- Comparing respondents' feelings about their economic situation, four percent describe their current economic conditions as very good, seven percent have high expectations that the economic situation in Jordan will improve in the next 12 months and six percent say their personal economic situation has improved in the past 12 months.
- Similarly, 31 percent describe the current economic conditions in Jordan as somewhat good, 26 percent believe that Jordan's economic situation will somewhat improve and 25 percent replied that their family's economic conditions have somewhat improved over the past 12 months.
- However, cross tabulations of the data show that those four percent who describe the economic situation in Jordan as very good drops to just two percent when respondents are also asked whether the economic situation in Jordan will become much better in the next 12 months, and drops further to one percent when they are also asked whether their family's economic situation has become much better over the past 12 months.
- A similar trend can be seen when the 31 percent who describe the economic conditions in Jordan as somewhat good drops to just 12 percent when respondents are also asked whether the economic conditions in Jordan will become somewhat better in the coming year, and remains at 12 percent when they are also asked whether their family's economic situation has become somewhat better over the past year.
- When Jordanians are asked what they have had to do to meet family expenses over the past 12 months due to the rising cost of living:
 - Eighty-two percent say they reduced their spending;

- Sixty-nine percent say they cut down on basic needs;
- Fifty-nine percent say they dipped into their savings;
- Fifty-seven percent say they bought more on credit;
- Forty-five percent say they worked overtime or looked for a part-time job; and
- Twenty-two percent say they sold some sort of personal asset.



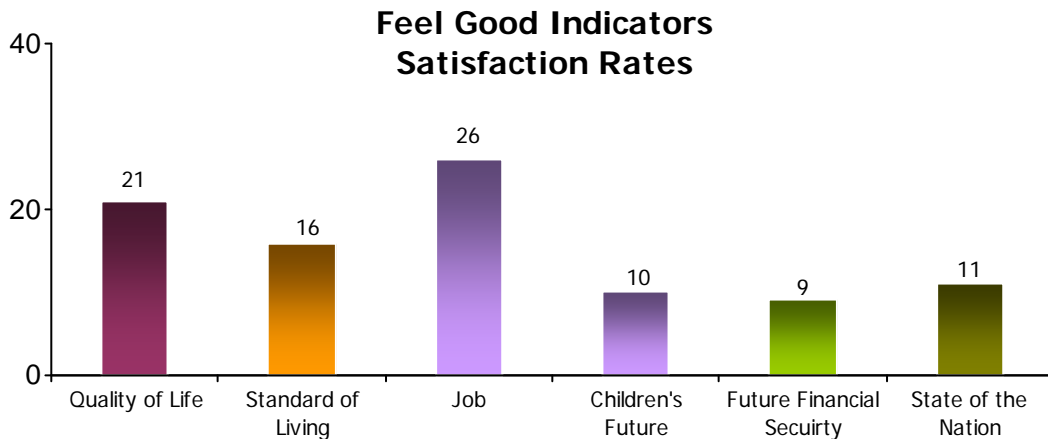
- A more distressing finding is that 61 percent of Jordanians say that they have had to ask for help from either family (44 percent) or governmental assistance programs like the National Aid Fund (12 percent) and the Zakat Fund (five percent) due to the rising cost of living. (See graph below)



Feel Good Indicators

- Only 21 percent of respondents feel good about the quality of their lives overall versus 39 percent who do not.
- Only 16 percent feel good about their general standard of living versus 42 percent who do not (the 16 percent tallies closely with the percent of those who have positive expectations about the next 12 months and who felt their situation improved over the past 12 months, see above.)
- Of those who have a job, only 26 percent feel good about their current job versus 33 percent who do not.
- Only 11 percent feel good about the state of the nation versus 54 percent who do not.

- Only 10 percent (of those who have children) feel good about their children's future versus 46 percent who do not.
- Only nine percent feel good about their future financial security versus 55 percent who do not. (See graph below)



Employment

- Thirty-nine percent of respondents say they currently work (of which 84 percent are men and only 16 percent are women). Sixty-one percent say they do not currently work (of which 28 percent are male and 72 percent are females).
- Twenty-three percent are looking for a job or a new job (68 percent of whom are men). Seventeen percent of those looking for job were offered employment but declined it during the past 12 months for the following reasons:
 - Low salary (72 percent);
 - Long hours (60 percent);
 - Inconvenient hours (62 percent);
 - Location of the job (54 percent);
 - Working conditions (55 percent);
 - Nature of the job (36 percent);
 - No medical insurance offered (36 percent); and
 - No social security offered (25 percent).
- Forty-nine percent of respondents have heard of the National Training and Employment Company (sponsored and operated by the Armed Forces which offers vocational training for youth aged 18 -30). However, only five percent of those who are aware of this program have applied.
- Sixty-five percent of respondents have heard of the Vocational Training Institution (sponsored and operated by the Ministry of Labor which offers vocational training for youth aged 15-18). Only seven percent of those who are aware of the program have applied.

- Thirty-seven percent of respondents have heard of the National Training and Employment Project (sponsored and operated by the Ministry of Labor in cooperation with private and public sector companies which offers training and employment services for Jordanians aged 18 - 36). Only three percent of those who are aware of the program have applied.