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IRI Iraq Index: December 2010 Survey of Iraqi Kurdistan Region Public Opinion

Basic Services and Security

The December 2010 survey of the Kurdistan region tested Iraqis' opinions regarding a range of issues, with the intent of helping improve government's understanding of the issues that concern citizens.

In IRI's most recent nationwide survey, conducted in [October 2010](#), Iraqis showed mixed feelings regarding Iraq's future, with 57 percent of respondents describing Iraq as headed in the wrong direction. Although responses from the Kurdistan region in the October poll tracked with national sentiment as a whole, they demonstrated a more optimistic view in regards to basic services such as electricity, water and sewage.

However, in this survey of the Kurdistan region, the responses indicate a significant increase in concern and desire for improved basic services. When asked, what in your opinion is the biggest problem facing the region as a whole, basic services such as water and electricity ranked third with 34 percent out of a list of eight choices, with government corruption at 39 percent and unemployment at 48 percent. When asked which service issues had gotten better or worse over the last year, 27 percent of respondents said electricity had become somewhat or much worse, a 19 percent increase from the October 2010 national survey. When asked in an open ended question what practical advice the respondent could give to improve public services in the area, provide more electricity/generators finished second, only one percentage point behind improve road/traffic flow/checkpoints.

Regarding security—the main nationwide concern in IRI's October 2010 nationwide poll—respondents were asked what is the largest and second largest problem facing the region, only six percent responded that security was the first or second biggest problem, placing it last in the list of eight choices. This reflects an increased confidence from the October poll, in which 18 percent of the Kurdistan region listed security as the single

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biggest problem. It also stands in stark contrast to national responses in both the [December 2009](#) IRI poll, in which 43 percent responded that security was the biggest problem, and the October 2010 poll, in which security ranked first with 36 percent.

Kurdish Optimism

There is a general optimism expressed by respondents about their situation and region not seen anywhere else in Iraq. When asked whether their household financial situation had gotten better or worse over the past year, respondents in all three provinces had significant majorities choosing better over worse: Duhok - 62 percent better 19 percent worse; Erbil - 53 percent better 28 percent worse; Sulaymaniyah - 54 percent better 21 percent worse.

This economic optimism held true for the future as well, with 48 percent of respondents in Erbil expecting their household financial situation to improve versus 13 percent expecting it to worsen, and 52 percent in Sulaymaniyah expected improvement versus 11 percent expecting a worsening situation. In Duhok, 41 percent of respondents believe their financial situation will improve versus eight percent expecting a worsening situation.

When asked whether the region as a whole is going in the right direction or wrong direction, the numbers stayed very positive. In Duhok, 67 percent responded right direction, 22 percent responded wrong direction. In Erbil, 55 percent responded right direction, 38 percent wrong direction. And in Sulaymaniyah, 52 percent responded right direction 43 percent wrong direction.

Again, this regional optimism contrasts a national pessimism as indicated by the October 2010 national poll, in which 63 percent of the Kurdistan region said that they thought the country of Iraq was going in the wrong direction, while only 33 percent said that it was going in the right direction.

Government Responsiveness and Corruption

When asked if they thought their representatives in the Kurdistan Regional Parliament were listening to the needs of the people, the results were mixed. While 50 percent in Duhok responded yes, 32 percent responded negatively. In Sulaymaniyah, 62 percent said that the parliament is not listening to the needs of the people. The response was statistically tied in Erbil.

Although many respondents believe the Kurdistan region's parliament is unresponsive to the needs of citizens, the majority are optimistic about the performance of their provincial council and regional government. When asked how likely it is that the provincial council

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or regional government would improve conditions, 80 percent in Erbil, 65 percent in Duhok and 74 percent in Sulaymaniyah believe conditions would improve. Respondents also overwhelmingly support their provincial councils to handle basic services instead of the regional government.

Government corruption was the second biggest problem cited, behind unemployment but before basic services. In Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, 27 percent of the respondents admitted to having to do a favor, give a gift or pay a bribe to a government official in order to get services or documents that should be provided for free, a revealing finding given the sensitivity that the question poses for Iraqis. When asked a similar, but less personal, question, 83 percent of all respondents said that bribes and kick-backs are a significant problem in the Kurdistan region. However, when asked whether or not the respondents believed the Kurdistan Regional Government was making progress in ending corruption, the results reflected optimism with 52 percent answering yes in Duhok, 60 percent in Erbil and 56 percent in Sulaymaniyah.

Other Findings

When asked if they would prefer that politics be based on religion or on secularism, respondents overwhelmingly chose religion: 87 percent in Erbil, 80 percent in Sulaymaniyah and 58 percent in Duhok. These numbers are consistent with results from the Kurdistan region found in IRI's October 2010 national poll, and are significantly higher than the national average.

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