



IRI Iraq Index

The September 2011 survey of the Central Region, which includes the provinces of Baghdad, Wasit, Babil, Karbala and Najaf, tested Iraqis' opinions on key issues related to local and national levels of governance. This survey is part of a series of regional polls that IRI has conducted in Iraq, the most recent of which tested opinion in the Northern Triangle in [April 2011](#) and the Kurdistan region in [December 2010](#). Prior to the Kurdistan region poll, IRI conducted a series of nationwide surveys, the most recent of which was completed in [October 2010](#).

Economic Mood and General Indicators

The economic mood in the Central Region was fairly divided throughout the five provinces. Respondents in both Najaf and Wasit were evenly split when asked to describe the current economic situation in Iraq, with 51 percent in Najaf and 52 percent in Wasit noting the economic situation was either very bad or somewhat bad. Majorities in Babil (59 percent) and Karbala (59 percent) reported a positive outlook on Iraq's economic situation. Respondents in Baghdad are more pessimistic, with 61 percent saying that the economic situation was very bad or somewhat bad.

The September 2011 results from the Central Region differ greatly from the findings from these provinces from one year earlier, in the October 2010 national poll. In October 2010, respondents in these provinces were generally optimistic about the economic situation in Iraq with 81 percent in Karbala, 68 percent in Babil and 63 percent in Najaf responding that the situation was very good or somewhat good. Respondents' confidence in the economic situation declined substantially in the September 2011 survey, with 59 percent in both Babil and Karbala, and 49 percent in Najaf, describing the situation as very bad or somewhat bad. Respondents in Baghdad remained consistent in both polls with 61 percent stating the economic situation was very bad or somewhat bad.

Despite these responses, when respondents were asked about their own household economic situations, majorities or pluralities in all five provinces said that their household's financial situation was doing better or staying the same than the previous year: Najaf – 42 percent better, 26 percent the same; Karbala – 46 percent better, 29 percent the same; Babil – 52 percent better, 28 percent the same; Wasit – 49 percent better, 26 percent the same; and Baghdad – 37 percent better, 38 percent the same.

Respondents were negatively inclined in their views of the country's progress on the whole. When asked whether or not Iraq as a whole is headed in the right direction, of the five provinces surveyed, only Karbala answered positively, with a 48 percent plurality responding that Iraq was headed in the right direction. The other provinces yielded pluralities indicating that the country is headed in the wrong direction: Najaf – 48 percent wrong direction, 40 percent right direction; Babil – 44 percent wrong direction, 41 percent right direction; Wasit – 56 percent wrong direction, 33 percent right direction; and Baghdad – 62 percent wrong direction, 28 percent right direction.

(more)

IRI Index – Page Two

Baghdad attitudes towards the direction of the country were consistent with October 2010 results. However, in the October 2010 survey a significant majority of respondents in Karbala (70 percent) and Babil (58 percent) felt the country was headed in the right direction.

Basic Services and Security

Unlike the 2010 Northern Triangle survey in which a plurality of respondents viewed security as the biggest problem facing the country as a whole, the Central Region survey found that respondents viewed water and electricity as the most significant problems. Majorities or pluralities in all five provinces supported this trend, as 37 percent in Najaf, 39 percent in Karbala, 56 percent in Babil, 53 percent in Wasit and 34 percent in Baghdad all responded that water and electricity represented the biggest problem in Iraq.

Progress was indicated across all five provinces when respondents were asked whether security in Iraq had gotten better or worse over the last year. In Najaf, 69 percent said that security had gotten better while 25 percent reported that it had gotten worse. In Karbala, 55 percent of respondents said better, 29 percent worse. Among Babil respondents, 62 percent said better, 28 percent said worse. In Wasit, 59 percent responded that security was better, 24 percent that it was worse; and in Baghdad, 64 percent said better and 17 percent said worse. In October 2010, 65 percent of Iraqis said that security had improved in the country over the past year, while 20 percent said that security had deteriorated.

When asked about the single biggest problem facing their province, as opposed to the country as a whole, pluralities throughout the Central Region found the biggest problem to be electricity. Approximately 64 percent of respondents in Karbala were most concerned about electricity, followed by Wasit, at 50 percent. In Babil, 49 percent of respondents said electricity was the biggest problem of their province, as did 42 percent of Najaf respondents and 32 percent in Baghdad.

Next, the survey asked respondents who they thought was responsible for the situation regarding various issues in their provinces. In all provinces, except Karbala, majorities placed responsibility for electricity, security and education with the prime minister of Iraq. Among all the provinces, Baghdad was particularly inclined to hold the prime minister responsible, with 61 percent listing him as responsible for electricity, 80 percent for security and 52 percent for education.

Provinces were largely divided on whom to hold responsible for the issues of unemployment and government corruption. Wages and salaries were seen as the responsibility of the Iraqi parliament by a plurality in every province, while services like water, sewage, etc. were seen as the responsibility of the provincial councils in the five provinces.

(more)

IRI Index – Page Three

Government Responsiveness and Federalism

When asked whether their parliamentarians were listening to the needs of the people, majorities in every province surveyed answered negatively: Najaf – 52 percent, Karbala – 54 percent, Babil – 60 percent, Wasit – 56 percent and Baghdad – 74 percent. When asked a similar question with regards to their provincial councils, majorities in every province again answered negatively.

Continuing a trend identified through earlier IRI polling, when asked if they would prefer a strong provincial council or a strong federal government, majorities in all provinces except Babil preferred a strong federal government. In Babil, however, 61 percent reported preferring a stronger provincial government. Babil's exception to the trend is a notable shift from October 2010, when the majority of those surveyed in the province said they preferred a stronger federal government.

When asked if they agreed with the statement that most of Iraq's oil revenues should go to the central government not the provinces, strong majorities or pluralities in every province answered in the affirmative: 67 percent in Najaf, 91 percent in Karbala, 43 percent in Babil, 75 percent in Wasit and 72 percent in Baghdad all agreed that most of the country's oil revenues should go to the central government.

Despite their preference for a strong central government, in all five provinces majorities agreed with their provincial councils' managing of basic services like water, sewage, electricity, garbage collection and road maintenance. Furthermore, respondents were largely optimistic that the councils would improve conditions in the coming year.

Additionally, majorities in the five provinces felt that their provincial councils were likely to improve conditions in their respective provinces in terms of both basic services and security, but not in terms of jobs. When asked about the likelihood of the respondent's provincial council improving job conditions, majorities across the five provinces responded that it was not likely. In Najaf, 67 percent of respondents answered the question negatively, as did 58 percent in Karbala, 57 percent in Babil, 57 percent in Wasit and 66 percent in Baghdad, suggesting a notable dissatisfaction with the performance of provincial councils in this particular arena.

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