



IRI Iraq Index

The December 2011 survey of the southern region, which includes the provinces of Basra, Maysan, Muthanna, Dhi-Qar and Qadisiya, tested Iraqis' opinions on key issues related to both 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 [Central region in September 2011](#), the [Northern Triangle in April 2011](#) and the [Kurdistan region in December 2010](#). Prior to the Kurdistan region poll, IRI initiated a series of nationwide surveys, the most recent of which was conducted in [October 2010](#).

Economic Mood and General Indicators

The economic mood in the southern region was largely positive throughout four of the five provinces. Respondents in Maysan and Muthanna were the most positively inclined when asked to describe the current economic situation in Iraq, with 73 percent in Maysan and 70 percent in Muthanna saying that the situation was either very good or somewhat good and only 26 percent and 30 percent respectively saying that it was either very bad or somewhat bad. Majorities in both Basra (64 percent) and Qadisiya (53 percent) also reported favorable outlooks on Iraq's economic situation. Notably, however, respondents in Dhi-Qar appeared to be more pessimistic, with a 55 percent majority saying that the economic situation was very or somewhat bad.

These results are in contrast to those found of these provinces in the October 2010 national poll. Responses that the economic situation was either very good or somewhat good in October 2010 were well below the September 2011 results in Muthanna (39 percent versus 70 percent), Maysan (49 percent versus 73 percent), Basra (45 percent versus 64 percent) and Qadisiya (47 percent versus 53 percent). Only in Dhi-Qar did respondents had a more positive view of the economy in October 2010 than in December 2011 (54 percent versus 45 percent) with a majority expressing this view.

When respondents were asked about their own household economic situations, majorities or pluralities in four of the five provinces said that their household's financial situation was doing better than the previous year, again reflecting an overall positive economic outlook in the region.

In Basra, 51 percent reported a better financial situation, 26 percent reported worse; in Maysan, 64 percent said better, 12 percent worse; in Muthanna, 58 percent better, 18 percent worse; and in Dhi-Qar, 57 percent better and 31 percent worse. Qadisiya was the only the province not to yield a clear majority that felt that its household situation had improved: 39 percent of respondents there said the situation had gotten better, 31 percent found it had gotten worse and 31 percent said it was the same as the previous year.

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The provinces were more divided vis-à-vis views of the country's progress on the whole. When asked whether or not Iraq is heading in the right direction, majorities in both Maysan (76 percent) and Muthanna (58 percent) said that the country is heading in the right direction, while majorities in Basra (51 percent) and Dhi-Qar (67 percent) indicated that the country is heading in the wrong direction. In Qadisiya, a 46 percent plurality said Iraq is heading in the wrong direction, 38 percent said right direction and 14 percent did not know.

These results are more positive than the October 2010 poll results. In October 2010, only Maysan had a plurality (76 percent versus 49 percent) indicating the country was heading in the right direction. In fact, the only province not showing a positive improvement over October 2010 is Dhi-Qar whose right direction responses fell from 38 percent to 33 percent.

Basic Services and Security

The southern region survey found that respondents viewed water and electricity as the most significant problems facing the country as a whole. Majorities or pluralities in all five provinces supported this trend, 41 percent in Basra, 55 percent in Maysan, 63 percent in Muthanna, 52 percent in Dhi-Qar and 40 percent in Qadisiya 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 Basra, 61 percent said that security had gotten better while 23 percent reported that it had gotten worse. In Maysan, a striking 90 percent of respondents said better, six percent worse. Among Muthanna respondents, 80 percent said better, 12 percent said worse. In Dhi-Qar, 68 percent responded that security was better, 27 percent that it was worse; and in Qadisiya, 69 percent said better and 19 percent said worse.

When asked about the single biggest problem facing their province, as opposed to the country as a whole, pluralities found the biggest problem to be electricity. Maysan (60 percent) was the province most concerned about electricity, followed by Muthanna (52 percent). In Basra, 48 percent of respondents said electricity was the biggest problem, as did 42 percent of Qadisiya respondents and 40 percent of respondents in Dhi-Qar.

Provincial Councils and Federalism

When asked whether their parliamentarians were listening to the needs of the people, majorities in every province answered negatively: Basra – 77 percent, Maysan – 54 percent, Muthanna – 53 percent, Dhi-Qar – 70 percent and Qadisiya – 66 percent. On the other hand, 56 percent of respondents in Maysan agreed that parliamentarians were listening to the needs of the people. When asked a similar question with regards to their provincial councils, majorities or pluralities in four of the five provinces again answered negatively, with the exception of Maysan, in which the majority agreed that their provincial council was listening to the needs of the people.

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There was a split amongst the provinces with regards to preference for strong provincial versus federal governments. When asked if they would prefer a strong provincial council or a strong federal government, majorities in Basra (66 percent), Maysan (51 percent), and Muthanna (67 percent) said that they would prefer stronger provincial councils. However, in Dhi-Qar (57 percent) and Qadisiya (77 percent), majorities reported preferring 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, four of the five provinces were in agreement. Maysan (73 percent), Muthanna (83 percent), Dhi-Qar (55 percent) and Qadisiya (78 percent) all agreed that most of the country's oil revenues should go to the central government. Basra was the only province in which 54 percent of those surveyed disagreed with the statement.

Despite some provinces preference for a strong central government, the majority of southern region Iraqis surveyed agreed with their provincial councils' managing of basic services and, furthermore, were largely optimistic that the councils would improve conditions in the coming year. In all five provinces, majorities agreed that their provincial councils, not the central government, should handle basic services like water, sewage, electricity, garbage collection and road maintenance.

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, with the exception Maysan, responded that it was not likely. In Basra, 69 percent of respondents answered the question negatively, as did 52 percent in Muthanna, 61 percent in Dhi-Qar and 63 percent in Qadisiya, suggesting a notable dissatisfaction with the performance of provincial councils in improving employment. Respondents in Maysan appeared more hopeful, with 67 percent finding it likely that their provincial council would improve job conditions.

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