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**– 115 –**

**The Civic Orientations of Arab Publics:  
Selected Findings from the Arab Barometer**

**Mark Tessler**



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All correspondence should be addressed to:

Editor-in-Chief

**Emirates Lecture Series**

ECSSR

P.O. Box 4567

Abu Dhabi

United Arab Emirates

Tel: +971-2-4044541

Fax: +971-2-4044542

E-mail: [pubdis@ecssr.ae](mailto:pubdis@ecssr.ae)

Website: <http://www.ecssr.ae>

## *Introduction*

This paper uses public opinion data collected as part of the Arab Barometer Survey Project to report on the political and social conceptions and preferences held by ordinary citizens in the Arab world. It begins by providing background information about the Arab Barometer, a unique multi-country project that conducts nationally representative surveys of attitudes, values and behavior patterns and then makes these data available for use by others. Following this introduction, selected survey findings relating to two broad subjects will be presented and discussed. The first topic concerns the views that men and women hold about the way their country should be governed, and particularly their judgments about democracy and about the role that Islam should play in the political life of their country. The second topic concerns respondents' personal engagement in the public and political life of their societies, including, among other things, their participation in civic associations and their views about whether their fellow citizens are trustworthy.

## *The Arab Barometer*

The Arab Barometer Survey Project (AB) strives to create a resource of public opinion data that will serve both the

scholarly and policy-making communities and be useful to these communities both in and outside the Arab world. AB data are of value to academicians and policy makers who are interested in measuring, mapping and explaining within countries, cross-nationally and over time the normative and behavioral orientations of ordinary men and women in the Arab world. AB surveys devote particular attention to views about politics and governance, about religion and its political role, about other countries and international affairs, and about the status of women and gender relations. AB surveys also ask respondents about the extent and nature of their personal engagement in the political and civic life of the countries of which they are citizens.

To date, all of these issues and concerns have been explored in depth in three waves of AB surveys, making this project the most comprehensive and timely public opinion dataset on the Arab region. The first wave, conducted in 2006–2007, with one survey added in 2009, was carried out in seven countries. The second wave, initiated in late 2010 and completed in the fall 2011, was carried out in ten countries. The third wave of surveys, carried out primarily in 2013, with a few surveys conducted in late 2012 or early 2014, was carried out in 12 countries. All in all, as shown in Table 1, the AB has carried out 29 surveys in 14 different countries and interviewed more than 35,000 respondents. Table 1 lists

the countries included in each of the three waves and gives the sample size and time of each survey. The number of participating countries, which has expanded with each wave and hopefully will expand further when the fourth wave is carried out, is determined by the availability of funding and by local conditions, including the need for government approval in some instances, that make it possible to conduct a nationally representative survey.

**Table 1**  
**Three Waves of Arab Barometer Surveys**

Country	Wave One	Wave Two	Wave Three
<b>Algeria</b>	N=1300 May/June 2006	N=1216 April/May 2011	N=1220 Mar/Apr 2013
<b>Bahrain</b>	N=500 Jan/Feb 2009		
<b>Egypt</b>		N=1219 June/July 2011	N=1196 Mar/Apr 2013
<b>Iraq</b>		N=1234 Feb/March 2011	N=1215 June 2013
<b>Jordan</b>	N=1143 June 2006	N=1188 December 2010	N=1795 December 2012
<b>Kuwait</b>			N=1000 Feb/March 2014
<b>Lebanon</b>	N=1195 October 2007	N=1387 Nov/Dec 2010	N=1200 June 2013
<b>Libya</b>			N=1247 April/May 2014
<b>Morocco</b>	N=1277 Nov/Dec 2006		N=1196 May/June 2013
<b>Palestine</b>	N=1270 May 2006	N=1200 December 2010	N=1200 December 2012
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>		N=1404 Jan–March 2011	
<b>Sudan</b>		N=1538 December 2010	N=1200 April/May 2013
<b>Tunisia</b>		N=1196 Sept/Oct 2011	N=1196 February 2013
<b>Yemen</b>	N=717 October 2007	N=1200 February 2011	N=1200 Nov/Dec 2013
<b>14 countries</b>	7 surveys, N=7,402	10 surveys N=12,782	12 surveys, N=14,868

The AB is governed by a Steering Committee composed of Arab and American scholars, with important aspects of administration and methodological oversight located at the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan. A team that provides supplementary methodological support has been established in the United States. The AB works closely with the Arab Reform Initiative and to a significant extent operates under its region-wide umbrella. The AB is also a member of the Global Barometer, a loose confederation of five independent but cooperating regional barometer survey projects. In addition to the AB, the Global Barometer is composed of barometers in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and East Asia. Thus, although focused on Arab countries, the AB is also part of a worldwide network that facilitates the sharing of information and insight and makes possible cross-regional comparisons.

The AB works closely in each country it surveys with local scholars or others with experience in public opinion research. Many of these individuals are university professors in a social science discipline, although commercial firms have been engaged when appropriate local social scientists are not available. Before initiating each wave of surveys, representatives of many of the in-country teams meet for the purpose of designing or updating the survey instrument to be used in that wave.

Figure 1 shows participants in the two-day meeting in Amman, Jordan at which the instrument used in the second wave was drafted. Thus, although some questions that have proved to be useful in past surveys in the Arab world or elsewhere have been “borrowed” for inclusion in AB surveys, the AB instrument itself is the product of deliberations involving participants from many Arab countries. Once drafted, the instrument is pre-tested in many of the countries before being finalized, and in some instances a few questions are added to base the module for use in particular countries. In the third wave, the base instrument contained items, including items with multiple parts, that solicit responses to more than 200 questions.

**Figure 1**  
**Arab Barometer Team Leaders Meeting in Amman**



AB surveys are conducted through face-to-face interviews with probability-based and nationally representative samples of ordinary citizens aged 18 and older. In most instances, multi-stage area-probability sampling has been used to select respondents. In a smaller number of instances, samples or sampling frames have been provided by national statistical bureaus. Each local team is required to submit a sampling plan that is reviewed and if necessary modified by specialists in the Arab world and the United States, with the lead role in this assessment played by CSS in Jordan. CSS also frequently sends specialists to work with the in-country team both on implementation of the sample design and on the training of interviewers. Figure 2 shows a training session in Tunisia in 2013 that was led by CSS specialists who came to Tunis from Jordan. Finally, upon completion of each survey, the resulting dataset is subjected to quality control measures that assess the representativeness of the sample, undertake weighting if necessary, and check and if necessary correct for interviewer falsification. Thus, despite the inevitability of some imperfections, as in all survey research, it is fair to say that the AB is characterized by very rigorous quality control procedures and has produced public opinion data of unusually high quality. In recognition of the quality and value of the Arab Barometer, the first wave of the AB was awarded in 2009 the American Political Science Association's prize for the best publically available dataset in comparative politics.

**Figure 2**

**Arab Barometer Coordinators from Jordan Working  
with Local Team in Tunisia**



Further information about the AB is available on the Barometer's website (<http://arabbarometer.org>). The website has sections in both English and Arabic and contains not only additional information about methodology, in-country partners and other background material; it also contains a number of country reports and articles. Most important, perhaps, the data collected through AB surveys are available for downloading in SPSS format. Individuals who are interested in acquiring the data for scholarly, public policy, or perhaps teaching purposes are invited to visit the website and download the data, which are also available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research based at the

University of Michigan in the United States. Although the website contains a substantial amount of information in both Arabic and English, it is still in development and there are plans at the time of this writing for a significant expansion.

Finally, the AB's outreach and dissemination activities should be mentioned. Vehicles through which findings from AB surveys are disseminated include public presentations, press releases, and reports made available through the AB website. A particularly important part of this effort is the Barometer's cooperation with the Arab Reform Initiative and the use of AB data in construction of ARI's Arab Democracy Index, which is designed to monitor democratic developments across the region. Dissemination and outreach efforts also include major conferences to which both opinion leaders and a broader public are invited. Examples include a 2008 workshop convened by the Norwegian Center for Democracy Support and attended by political party leaders from six Arab countries; a 2012 conference in Cairo organized in cooperation with ARI; and a 2013 conference in Doha sponsored and hosted by Qatar University. Planned for early 2015 is an AB-ARI conference to be held in Tunis. Yet additional efforts, especially since completion of the second wave of AB surveys, have involved the use of social media, including the Middle East Channel, a foreign policy website widely read by American government officials, and

the Monkey Cage blog of the *Washington Post*. Press articles based on AB findings have appeared during the last year in Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon and elsewhere.

### *Arab Attitudes toward Governance*

Many of the questions in AB surveys ask respondents for their views about the way countries like theirs should be governed. Prominent among the topics investigated are perceptions and preferences related to democracy and to the role that Islam should play in political affairs, what is sometimes called “political Islam.” Table 2 lists some, although not all, of the items about these two topics contained in the Arab Barometer interview schedule. In presenting findings about responses to these questions, and to others discussed later in this report, the paper will for the most part present distributions based on pooled analyses of the nine countries included in the second and third waves of AB surveys. These countries, as shown in Table 1, are Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. A focus on these countries will make it possible to assess aggregate changes over the critical two-year period that begins at the end of 2010 and encompasses regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and important developments in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere that, at least potentially, have influenced the region in ways not seen for many decades. In instances where it is instructive to do so, findings from individual countries as well as the pooled analyses will be presented.

**Table 2**  
**Some of the Survey Items Pertaining to Democracy**  
**and to Political Islam**

To what extent do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements
<i>Democracy</i>
<b>1. Under a democratic system, the country’s economic performance is weak.</b>
<b>2. Democratic systems are not effective at maintaining order and stability.</b>
<b>3. A democratic system may have problems, yet it is better than other political systems.</b>
<i>Political Islam</i>
<b>1. Religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should not interfere in voters’ decisions in elections.</b>
<b>2. [Your country] would be better off if religious people hold public positions in the state.</b>
<b>3. Religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should have influence over government decisions.</b>
<b>4. Religious practices are private and should be separated from social and political life.</b>

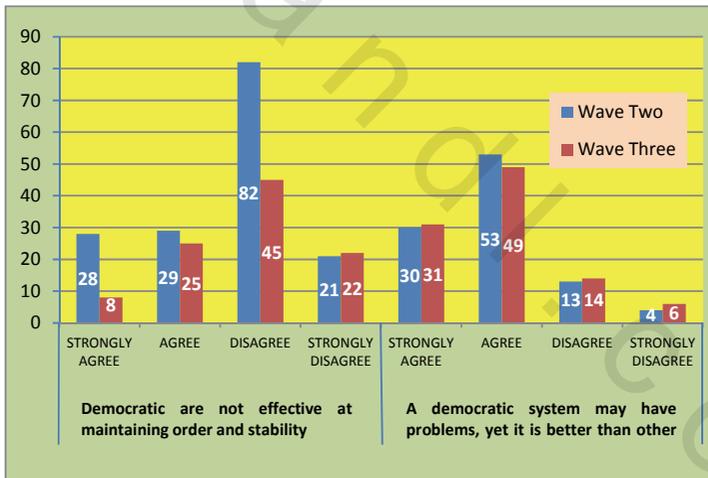
## *Democracy*

Figure 3 shows the distribution of pooled responses by respondents from the nine countries included in Waves 2 and 3 to two of the questions about democracy listed in Table 2. Distributions are presented for each wave so that responses in 2010–2011 can be compared to responses in 2012–2013. The questions ask about agreement or disagreement with the propositions that (1) democratic systems are not effective at maintaining order and stability; and (2) although a democratic system may have problems, it is better than any other political system. The table shows that overwhelming majorities of citizens have a positive attitude toward democracy. Almost 70 percent disagree or disagree strongly that democracies are not good at maintaining order and stability, with less than 10 percent strongly agreeing with this statement. Further, 80 percent or more agree or agree strongly that, whatever its limitations, democracy is still better than any other political system. Only about 5 percent strongly disagree with this proposition.

It is also significant that response distributions from the two AB waves are almost identical. Given the turmoil and sometimes violence that marked the years between Wave 2 and Wave 3 – years when democratic transitions, or at least experiments in democratization, were proving to be difficult in a number of Arab countries – it is notable that there was

not a significant diminution, at least in the aggregate, in support for democracy. At the time of the Wave 3 surveys, most of which were conducted in 2013, political transitions and efforts at democratization in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Iraq were producing results that at best were uncertain. Yet, taking the region as a whole, it appears that these difficulties did not lead to a reduction in support for democracy among ordinary men and women.

**Figure 3**  
**Arab Attitudes toward Democracy in Wave Two and**  
**Wave Three Surveys\***



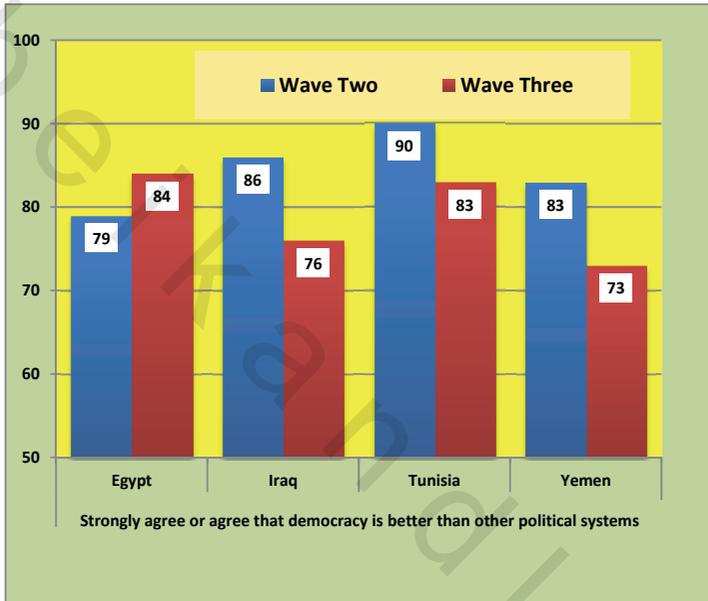
\* Pooled analysis: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen

These findings emerge from pooled analyses based on the nine countries included in AB Waves 2 and 3—Algeria,

Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. And to the extent these countries encompass the diversity of the Arab world, with the notable exception of the Arabian Gulf, they point to tendencies that may be applicable across much of the region. But, as shown in Figure 4, there is some departure from this general pattern in a number of the countries that experienced the greatest change between 2011 and 2013, particularly in Tunisia, Yemen and Iraq. Figure 4 presents responses to the item that asks whether democracy, whatever its drawbacks, is still the best political system, and it shows declines from seven to ten percentage points in the proportion who agree or agree strongly with this statement. This diminution does not signal a major loss of faith in democracy, since more than 70 percent in Iraq and Yemen and more than 80 percent in Tunisia told interviewers in 2013 that democracy is the best political system. But it does suggest that events in the three countries had at least some impact on views about governance. Interestingly, Egypt, which is also included in Figure 4, differs from the pattern observed in Tunisia, Yemen and Iraq. Even though the country's democratic transition was proving to be problematic and divisive when the Wave 3 AB survey was conducted in March and April 2013, there was actually a higher level of support for democracy than there had been when the Wave 2 survey was conducted in summer 2011. Libya is not included in the analysis since only a Wave 3 AB survey was carried out in that country.

**Figure 4**

**Egyptian, Iraqi, Tunisian and Yemeni Attitudes toward Democracy in Wave Two and Wave Three Surveys**



Figures 3 and 4 suggest three conclusions about Arab attitudes toward democracy. First, support for democracy is very high in absolute terms. Very substantial majorities do not think democracy is inherently problematic and do think it is the best political system. Second, while this is also the case in countries that have experienced significant political change and whose democratic transitions have proved to be difficult, the experience of these countries does appear to have reduced at least somewhat the extent

to which citizens have a positive view of democracy. While democracy remains the preferred political formula of most citizens, the proportion was smaller in 2013 than it had been in 2011 in Tunisia, Yemen and Iraq. Third, this reduction in support is not the case in every country that experienced a complicated and troublesome democratic transition between 2011 and 2013. Most notably, this is not the case in Egypt. Nor, significantly, it is not the case in countries that did not themselves experience political change but rather witnessed from a distance the complicated and often problem-ridden transitions taking place elsewhere in the region.

In concluding this account of attitudes toward democracy, it is worth calling attention to the diversity, and to an extent the imprecision, in the way that democracy is understood by the respondents to AB surveys. This diversity and imprecision are not unique to the Arab world. Even in countries that have long been governed by democratic regimes, citizens vary in the extent to which they are cognizant of the elements that constitute democratic governance—not only majority rule and free and fair elections but also minority rights, the protection of controversial speech, and a wide range of personal and political freedoms.

In the AB surveys, respondents were read a statement saying that there is a difference of opinion among people

regarding the most important features of democracy and then asked to identify from a list of six attributes the one they considered to be most important. In both Wave 2 and Wave 3, about half chose a political attribute, such as equality of political rights for all citizens or the opportunity to change the government through elections; and about half selected an attribute relating to economic performance, such as narrowing the gap between rich and poor or eliminating financial and administrative corruption. Among those who chose a political attribute, procedural and rights-based features were selected by an approximately equal number of respondents.

The AB survey did not probe this definitional and conceptual issue more deeply, but responses to the question that was asked do suggest two conclusions. First, as elsewhere, citizens differ in their understanding of democracy, or at least of its most important characteristics. Thus, respondents who expressed views about the desirability and/or limitations of democratic governance were not necessarily thinking about democracy in entirely the same way.

Second, diversity and imprecision notwithstanding, there appears to be an underlying assumption about what democracy involves and why it deserves support. This is the notion of accountability—the view that democracy is a political system that requires leaders in one way or another

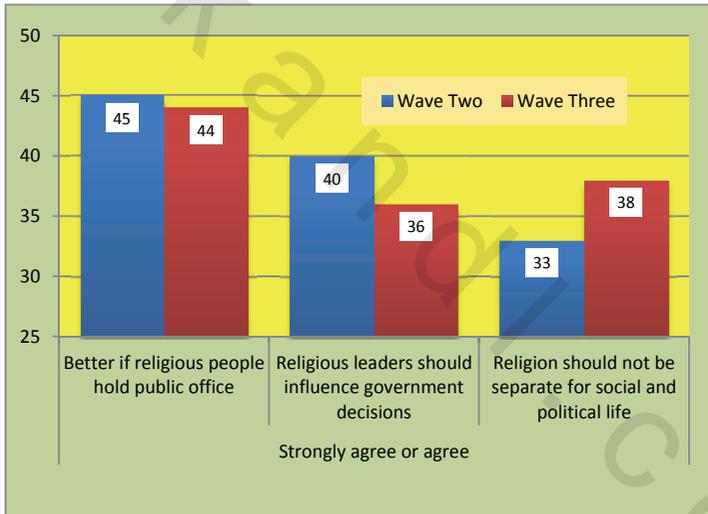
to listen to the people they rule and be responsive to the latter's priorities and needs. This is perhaps an oversimplified understanding of what democracy is and does, or an understanding that is at least incomplete, but it suggests that most people do have something reasonable and coherent in mind when they respond to AB questions that call for judgments about democracy.

### *Islam*

Figure 5 presents findings from pooled analyses of responses to three of the questions listed in Table 2 that ask about the role Islam should play in political affairs. As above, the pooled analyses are based on data from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. Figure 5 shows the proportions in Wave 2 and Wave 3 who agree or agree strongly and who disagree or disagree strongly that (1) the country would be better off if religious people hold public positions in the state; (2) religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should have influence over government decisions; and (3) religious practices are private and should be separated from social and political life. Although the percentage distributions are not identical for the three items, the table shows that each item reveals a substantial division of opinion about the political role to be played by Islam; that in each case a majority, often a slight majority, prefers that Islam *not* play

a significant role in political life; and that the distributions of views are broadly similar in Wave 2 and Wave 3. Thus, for example, in Wave 2 and Wave 3, respectively, only 40 percent and 36 percent agree or agree strongly that religious leaders should have influence over government decisions.

**Figure 5**  
**Arab Attitudes toward Political Islam in Wave Two**  
**and Wave Three Surveys\***



\* Pooled analysis: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen

Figures 6 and 7 supplement the pooled analyses and compare views about political Islam in two particular countries, Egypt and Tunisia, over the 15–20 months

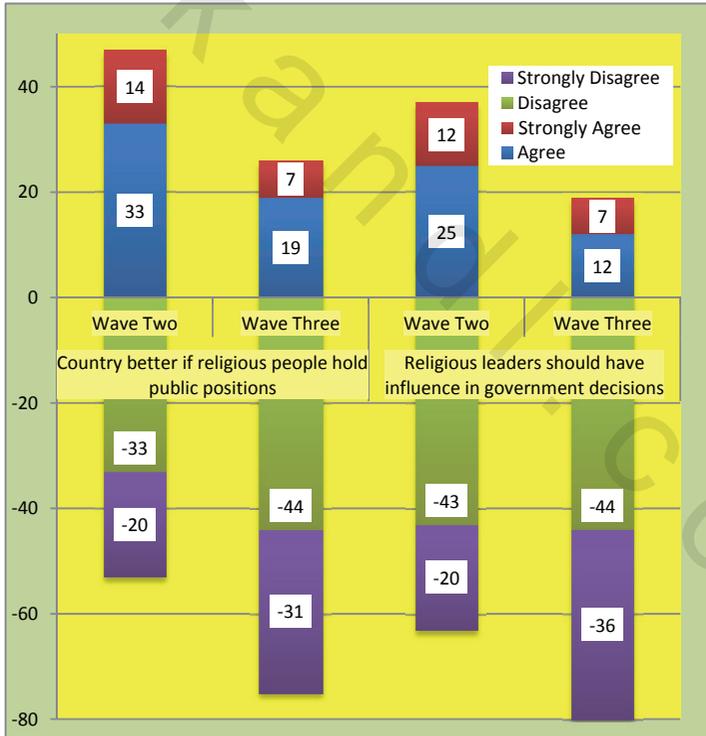
between Waves 2 and 3. These countries merit a closer look because, in each case, a government led by an Islamist political party came to power in free elections shortly after the conduct of the Wave 2 survey and was still in power when the Wave 3 survey was conducted. The analyses thus shed light on whether and how the experience of more than a year of life under an Islamist-led government modified the way people think about the role that Islam should play in government and political affairs.

In Egypt, the Wave 2 survey was conducted in June and July 2011 and the Wave 3 survey was conducted in March and April 2013. The parliamentary election won by the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party was completed in January 2012 and the final round of the presidential election won by the Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi took place in June 2012. Figure 6 shows the distributions of Egyptian responses from the two AB waves to the question about whether the country would be better off if religious people hold public positions and the question about whether religious leaders should have influence over government decisions. It shows that on both items there was a marked decrease in support for political Islam. Fewer people either agreed or agreed strongly with either proposition, and many more respondents, by margins of 16 percentage points in one instance and 11 percentage points in the other, strongly disagreed. Overall, the percentage strongly agreeing or

agreeing that it would be better if religious people hold public office declined from 47 percent to 26 percent, and the percentage strongly agreeing or agreeing that religious leaders should exercise political influence declined from 37 percent to 19 percent.

**Figure 6**

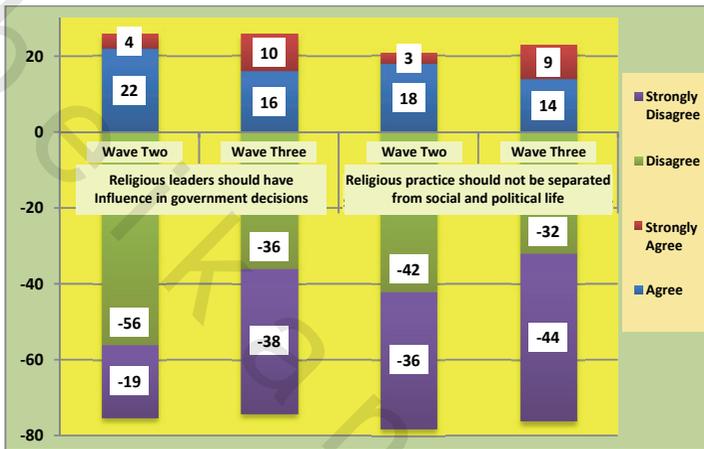
**Egyptian Attitudes toward Political Islam in Wave Two and Wave Three Surveys**



In Tunisia, the Wave 2 survey was conducted in September and October 2011 and the Wave 3 survey was conducted in February 2013. The parliamentary election won by the Islamist al-Nahda party took place in late October 2011 and the government it led came to power before the end of the year. Figure 7 shows the distributions of Tunisian responses from the two AB waves to the questions about whether religious leaders should have influence over government decisions and about whether religious practices are private and should be separated from social and political life. In contrast to Egypt, responses do not show an overall decline in support for political Islam but rather increasingly polarized views on the subject. On both items, the proportion of respondents who either strongly agree or agree with the position supportive of political Islam was almost identical in 2011 and 2013, ranging from 21 percent to 26 percent. By contrast, the proportion that strongly agrees and the proportion that strongly disagrees with the position supportive of political Islam increased while the proportion that merely agrees and the proportion that merely disagrees with the position supportive of political Islam decreased.

**Figure 7**

**Tunisian Attitudes toward Political Islam in Wave Two and Wave Three Surveys**



Figures 6 and 7 strongly suggest that life under an Islamist government had an impact on the way that Egyptians and Tunisians think about the place that Islam should occupy in the political life of their countries. The experience with Islamist governance was not the same in Egypt and Tunisia, and the character and structure of the two governments differed as well. Nevertheless, both fell from power in 2013 as a result of intensifying public discontent and pressures coming from forces associated with the pre-Arab Spring regime. During 2012 and a good part of 2013, however, citizens in both countries did get a taste of life under a government run or led by Islamists and this

experience did, in the ways shown in Figures 6 and 7, have an impact on their judgments about the role that Islam should play in political affairs.

A question that emerges about those who favor political Islam is whether this predisposition makes them less likely to support democracy. Figure 8 shows that this is not the case. Based on a pooled analysis of data from the nine countries in the second and third waves of AB surveys, and presenting findings separately for each wave, the figure compares the extent of support for democracy among respondents who do and respondents who do not support political Islam. Dichotomized responses to the question that asks whether religious leaders should have influence over government decisions are used to categorize respondents with respect to support for political Islam, and dichotomized responses to the question that asks whether democracy, while it may have problems, is better than any other political system are used to categorize respondents with respect to support for democracy.

The figure shows that those who have a positive attitude toward political Islam, meaning that they agree or agree strongly that religious leaders should have influence over government decisions, are just as likely to agree or agree strongly that democracy is the best political system as are those who disagree or disagree strongly that religious leaders should have influence over the decisions of government.

Based on these dichotomized measures, 82 percent of Wave 2 respondents who favor political Islam support democracy, which is only 2 points less than the percent of Wave 2 respondents who do not favor political Islam. The difference is slightly larger among Wave 3 respondents, but even among those who favor political Islam the proportion who say that democracy is the best political system is 76 percent. Thus, there is support for democracy among the overwhelming majority of men and women who believe Islam should play a role in political life, and this differs only slightly from the degree of support for democracy among those who do not favor political Islam.

**Figure 8**

**Support for Democracy by Support for Political Islam  
in Wave Two and Wave Three Surveys\***

	Religious leaders should have influence over government decisions			
A democratic system may have problems, yet it is better than other political systems	Strongly Agree/ Agree		Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	
Strongly Agree/ Agree Column percent	Supports democracy and Political Islam <u>Wave 2</u> <u>Wave 3</u> 82        76		Supports democracy but Not Political Islam <u>Wave 2</u> <u>Wave 3</u> 84        83	
Disagree/ Strongly Disagree Column percent	Not Support democracy but Supports Political Islam <u>Wave 2</u> <u>Wave 3</u> 18        24		Not Support democracy and Not Support Political Islam <u>Wave 2</u> <u>Wave 3</u> 16        17	

\* Pooled analysis: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen

As shown in Figure 8, the juxtaposition of these dichotomized measures of attitudes toward political Islam and attitudes toward democracy yields four political system preference categories. These categories and the proportion of Wave 2 and Wave 3 respondents in each are as follows, with the first figure representing the Wave 2 proportion and the second figure representing the Wave 3 proportion: Favorable attitude toward both political Islam and democracy, 33 percent and 27 percent; Unfavorable attitude toward political Islam and favorable attitude toward democracy, 51 percent and 53 percent; Favorable attitude toward political Islam and unfavorable attitude toward democracy, 7 percent and 9 percent; Unfavorable attitude toward both political Islam and democracy, 9 percent and 11 percent. These percentages indicate that approximately half of all respondents in both waves favor a democratic system in which Islam does not play an important political role, and that a substantial majority of the remaining respondents favors a democratic system in which Islam does play an important political role. The distribution across these four political system preference categories is not the same among the nine countries included in the pooled analyses, however, and the distribution for each individual country is shown in Table 3.

Although a detailed discussion of political system preferences in specific countries is beyond the scope of the present report, it may be noted that in no country was there a meaningful increase in support for a political system that is

democratic and in which Islam plays a political role; and that in three countries, Egypt, Yemen and Iraq, there was a significant *decline* between Wave 2 and Wave 3 in support for a political system that is democratic and assigns an influential place to Islam. In Egypt, there was a shift toward support for a democratic system that does not assign a place to Islam, which was the political system preference of 70 percent of the respondents at the time of the Wave 3 survey. In Iraq, the shift in preferences is reflected in increased support for a political system that is not democratic.

**Table 3**  
**Political System Preference by Country by Wave**

	Supports democracy and Political Islam		Supports democracy but Not Political Islam		Not Support democracy but Supports Political Islam		Not Support democracy and Not Support Political Islam	
	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3
<b>Algeria</b>	20	20	65	60	7	14	8	6
<b>Egypt</b>	27	15	52	70	10	3	11	12
<b>Iraq</b>	44	30	43	46	4	10	9	14
<b>Jordan</b>	36	38	45	43	9	9	10	10
<b>Lebanon</b>	12	7	70	78	2	2	16	13
<b>Palestine</b>	35	31	50	50	6	9	9	10
<b>Sudan</b>	46	37	36	42	11	11	7	10
<b>Tunisia</b>	22	23	67	60	3	4	8	13
<b>Yemen</b>	52	36	31	37	10	14	7	13
<b>All</b>	33	27	51	53	7	9	9	11

A final comparison of the views held by those who do support and those who do not support a political system in which Islam plays an important role considers attitudes toward gender equality and toward the interpretation of Islamic prescriptions. Findings are shown in Table 4. The table uses two items from a larger battery in the AB interview schedule to assess attitudes toward gender equality. Respondents were asked whether they agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly that (1) A university education is more important for a boy than a girl; and (2) On the whole, men make better political leaders than women. The battery pertaining to interpretations of Islam began with the following introductory statement: Islamic jurists and religious scholars often differ in their interpretations of certain issues in Islam. To what extent you agree or disagree with each interpretation given below. The two statements from this battery used in Table 4 are: (1) in a Muslim country, non-Muslims should enjoy fewer political rights than Muslims; and (2) in Islam, women should wear modest clothes but do not need to wear the hijab.

Table 4 shows that most respondents do not agree or agree strongly that a university education is more important for a boy than a girl. In Wave 2, 73 percent of all respondents held this view, as did 78 percent of the Wave 3 respondents. By contrast, only 26 percent in Wave 2 and 34 percent in

Wave 3 consider men and women to be equally qualified for political leadership. These item-specific differences are similar to those found in responses to other questions in the AB gender equality battery, items that are not included in the table. In general, there is broad support in both AB waves for equality between men and women in the social and economic arena and limited support in the political arena. Table 4 also shows, in response to both questions, that individuals with a positive attitude toward political Islam are somewhat less likely to support gender equality. The difference between these individuals and those who do not support political Islam is 10 percentage points in Wave 2. In Wave 3, it is 11 percentage points in one instance and 14 percentage points in the other.

Turning to interpretations of Islam, Table 4 shows that most respondents agree or agree strongly with an interpretation of Islam that may be termed “progressive,” or perhaps “modern,” as opposed to “literal” or “restrictive.” In Wave 2, 74 percent of all respondents reject the proposition that non-Muslims in a Muslim country should have political rights inferior to those of Muslims, and 64 percent reject an interpretation of Islam that requires women to wear the hijab. In Wave 3, these progressive interpretations are embraced, respectively, by 70 percent and 62 percent of all respondents. By

substantial margins – 17 percent in Wave 2 and 19 percent in Wave 3 – respondents with a positive attitude toward political Islam are less likely to endorse a progressive interpretation of Islam in relation to the rights of non-Muslim citizens of a Muslim country. Differences are much smaller in relation to the question about the hijab. By margins of 4 percent in Wave 2 and 9 percent in Wave 3, respondents with a favorable attitude toward political Islam are less likely to agree or agree strongly that Islam does not require a woman to wear the hijab.

The political and social orientations of individuals who do and of individuals who do not support political Islam sometimes differ significantly and sometimes differ relatively little. These differences are not of sufficient magnitude and consistency to justify the conclusion that the two categories of respondents inhabit entirely different normative domains. At the same time, differences are not entirely absent and at least some are substantial. Thus, it is the case that supporters and opponents of political Islam are united by shared perceptions and preferences in some areas but also that they are divided in others by conflicting views about the character of the society in which they would prefer to live.

**Table 4****Attitudes toward Gender Equality and Interpretations of Islam in Wave Two and Wave Three\***

	Religious leaders should have influence over government decisions					
	All Respondents		Strongly Agree/ Agree (Favors Political Islam)		Disagree/ Strongly Disagree (Not Favor Political Islam)	
	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 2	Wave 3
<i>Gender Equality</i>						
A university education is more important for a boy than a girl (% disagree/strongly disagree)	73	78	67	71	77	82
On the whole, men make better political leaders than women (% disagree/strongly disagree)	26	34	20	25	30	39
<i>Interpretation of Islam</i>						
In a Muslim country, non-Muslims should enjoy less political rights than Muslims (% disagree/strongly disagree)	74	70	64	58	81	77
In Islam, women should wear modest clothes but do not need to wear the hijab (% agree/strongly agree)	64	62	62	57	66	66

\* Pooled analysis: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen

### *Political Engagement and Assessment*

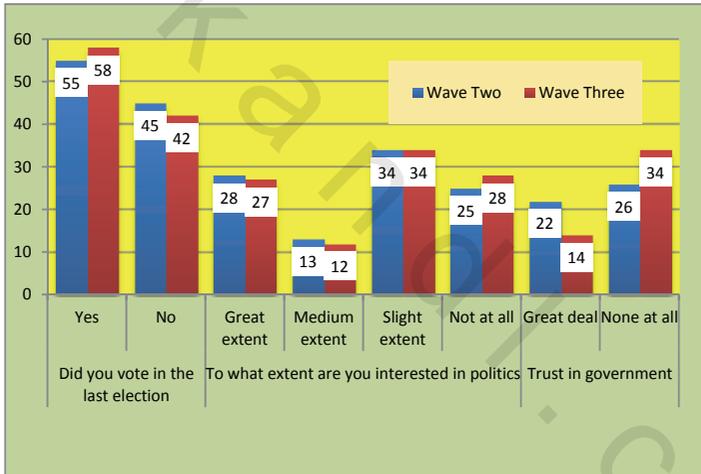
In addition to providing information about Arab attitudes toward aspects of governance, the Arab Barometer surveys also ask many questions about respondents' personal engagement in political and civic life and about his or her assessment of the country's political affairs. These questions ask about elements of what is sometimes described as a "political culture orientation." Research on democracy and democratic transitions emphasizes the importance of these citizen orientations, arguing that successful and sustained democratization requires a population characterized by a participatory or "civic" political culture.

Many questions were asked about these matters, and among these are items that ask whether the respondent voted in the last parliamentary election, whether he or she is interested in politics, and whether and to what extent he or she trusts the government. Figure 9 presents findings about these three topics based on pooled analyses of Wave 2 and Wave 3 data from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen, the nine countries included in both waves of AB surveys. Findings for each wave are presented separately. Among the items pertaining to personal civic engagement are questions that ask about membership in a local organization or civic association, that ask whether most people are trustworthy,

and whether politics is too complicated for ordinary citizens to understand. Figure 10 presents findings about these topics based on the same pooled analyses of Wave 2 and Wave 3 data, and findings for each wave are again presented separately.

**Figure 9**

**Extent of National Political Engagement in Wave Two and Wave Three Surveys\***



\* Pooled analysis: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

Figure 9 shows that slightly more than have of the respondents reported voting in the last parliamentary election: 55 percent in Wave 2 and 58 percent in Wave 3. This is the high mark in aggregate political engagement

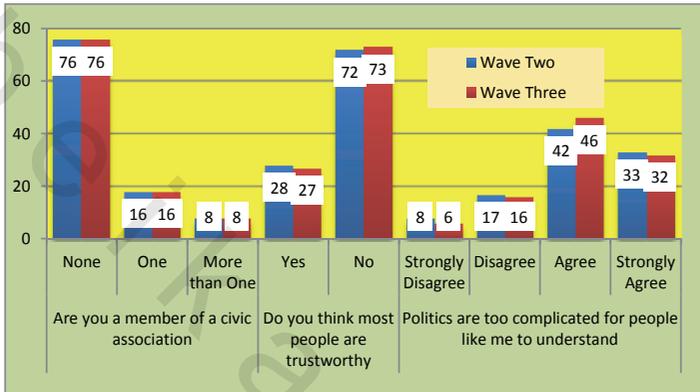
since findings about political interest and trust in government show a positive connection to political life among smaller proportions of respondents. It is interesting that voter turnout did not increase between Wave 2 and Wave 3, although, of course, not every country had an election during this period and so Wave 2 respondents and Wave 3 respondents are in some cases reporting votes in the same election. It is more notable, and surprising given the events of this period, that political interest did not increase between 2011 and 2013. In Wave 2, 28 percent of the respondents said they are very interested in politics and another 13 percent said they are interested. The figures in Wave 3 are 27 percent and 12 percent, respectively. Thus, in both waves, about three-fifths of the respondents said they are only slightly or not at all interested in politics. Positive assessments are lowest of all with respect to trust in government. Only 22 percent of the Wave 2 respondents expressed a great deal of trust in the government of their country, and only 14 percent of the Wave 3 respondents did so. Larger proportions, 26 percent in Wave 2 and 34 percent in Wave 3, expressed no trust at all in the government. More detailed findings about trust in government are presented later in this paper.

Figure 10 shows that levels are low on all three items pertaining to personal civic engagement, ranging between 22 percent and 28 percent of all respondents and being virtually identical in Wave 2 and Wave 3. More

specifically, only 8 percent are members of more than one civic association and only 16 percent are members of at least one association; only 28 percent in Wave 2 and 27 percent in Wave 3 believe most people are trustworthy; and only 17 percent in Wave 2 and 16 percent in Wave 3 disagree that politics are too complicated for people like them to understand, and only 8 percent and 6 percent disagree strongly.

As noted, these political culture orientations are important for democracy and good governance and, accordingly, low levels of personal civic engagement diminish the prospects for successful and sustained democratization. Membership in civic organizations, which include social clubs, professional associations, unions, charitable and self-help groups and sporting societies, are key elements of the collective social capital that contributes to cooperation and societal harmony. Interpersonal trust, which civic engagement tends to foster, is essential if people are to have confidence in a political system that vests ultimate power in the collective will of ordinary citizens. And viewing politics as too complicated to understand is an indication of low political efficacy, which distances people from their government and encourages deference to political leaders regardless of whether or not they are acting in accordance with the interests and will of the people.

**Figure 10**  
**Extent of Personal Civic Engagement in Wave Two**  
**and Wave Three Surveys\***



\* Pooled analysis: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

The findings presented in Figures 9 and 10, which are based on pooled analyses of data from nine different and quite dissimilar countries, provide a valuable overview of political cultural orientations in the Arab world during the critical period from 2011 through 2013. Although the nine countries are only a subset of Arab states, they include monarchies and republics, states that are more politically open and less politically open, larger and smaller states, more homogeneous and more heterogeneous societies, and states in all geographic regions except the Arab Gulf. Thus, to the extent these countries reflect the diversity of the Arab world, with the exception of the Gulf, they offer an overview that may be broadly applicable.

At the same time, as valuable as may be the broad picture provided by an overview, this picture may not describe the situation in every individual country, and indeed there may also be important variations across the different population categories *within* a country. Although a full examination of these possibilities is beyond the scope of the present report, some “drilling down” will be undertaken as a point of departure and to illustrate the kinds of analyses that interested parties who acquire the AB data may wish to pursue. Focusing in each case on trust in government, three questions will be considered. First, which countries have experienced the most change between Wave 2 and Wave 3? Second, taking a closer look at Yemen for illustrative purposes, to what extent has trust in government changed in similar or different ways among men and women and among better and less well-educated individuals? And third, what circumstances or experiences tend to increase or decrease trust in government?

The findings about trust in government presented in Figure 9 showed only the proportions with a great deal of trust and no trust at all. The figure does not show the proportions with a “medium level” of trust or only a “limited amount” of trust. Figure 11, which looks at Algeria, Yemen, Egypt and Tunisia, the four countries with the biggest change in political trust between 2011 and

2013, uses a dichotomous measure that combines high and some trust into one category and little and no trust at all into another. The proportions for all nine countries in Wave 2 are 50.1 percent for a high or medium level of trust and 49.9 percent for limited or no trust at all. The proportions in Wave 3 are 45.3 percent and 54.7 percent, respectively. In comparison to the aggregate decline in high or medium trust, taken together, of 4.8 percent between Wave 2 and Wave 3 for all countries, Figure 11 shows that high or medium trust taken together increased 44 percent in Algeria, increased 13 percent in Yemen, decreased 60 percent in Tunisia and decreased 35 percent in Tunisia.

The large decreases in Egypt and Tunisia are consistent with the political system preference findings reported earlier and they are undoubtedly explained by the turbulent events and Islamist government failures that characterized the years between Wave 2 and Wave 3 in the two countries. The increases in Yemen and especially Algeria are harder to explain.

A plausible explanation in the Algeria case is that trust in government was unusually low in 2011, a time when other countries seemed to be initiating democratic transitions and leaving Algeria behind; and that it was unusually high in 2013, a time when democratic experiments elsewhere

not only seemed to be failing but also giving rise to unrest and uncertainty, leading Algerians to attach greater value to the continuity and stability the government was providing, or at least was perceived to be providing. Given the country’s bitter experience with prolonged civil violence during the 1990s, concern for security and stability is particularly pronounced in Algeria.

**Figure 11**  
**Percentage of Algerians, Yemenis, Egyptians and Tunisians with High or Some Trust in Government in Wave Two and Wave 3 Surveys**

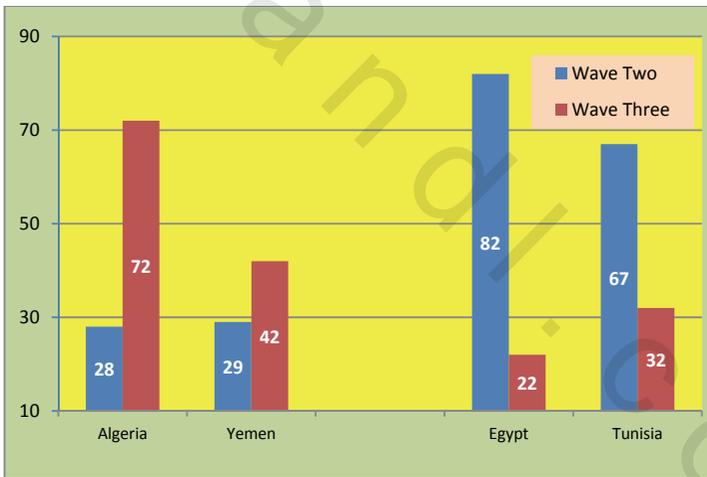


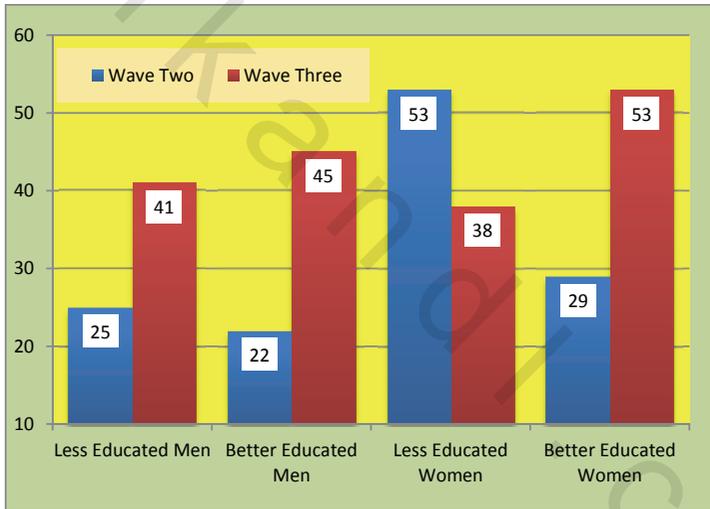
Figure 12 takes a closer look at Yemen and compares changes in trust in government between Wave 2 and Wave 3 for four different segments of the population: less well-educated men, better educated men, less well-educated

women, and better educated women. It shows that there were large increases among individuals in every demographic category except less well-educated women, and that among the latter there was a significant *decrease* in trust of the government. It is only possible to speculate about the demographic dynamics that explain these findings from Yemen. Overall, in contrast to Egypt and Tunisia, trust was probably relatively low in 2011 because the old regime was still in power at the time of the Wave 2 survey, and trust was probably much higher in 2013 because the country's political transition, although not without difficulties, seemed to be moving forward at the time of the Wave 3 survey. The reasons that the pattern is different among less well-educated women in a matter for further reflection and research. But regardless of the reason, the analysis presented in Figure 12 indicates the utility of disaggregating the data and investigating whether and how attitudes and orientations vary across the different segments of a society. Such disaggregation makes more complete the mapping of attitudes and attitude change and identifies where additional research is most needed and most likely to be productive.

A final aspect of this closer look at trust in government concerns some of the factors that account for variance—factors that increase or decrease the likelihood that an individual will trust the government of his or her country. This account is offered in part for illustrative purposes, in

order to conclude this report of findings from Arab Barometer surveys with an example of the kind of deeper analyses that move from description to explanation and that may be undertaken with AB data.

**Figure 12**  
**Proportion of Yemenis with High or Some Trust in Government by Demographic Category in Wave Two and Wave Three Surveys**



Among the factors that may increase trust in government and a state's various political institutions is the performance of the government in the economic arena. Also important, potentially, is whether people consider their government to be democratic and, accordingly, accountable to ordinary citizens like themselves. These

propositions may be expressed as the following testable hypotheses:

**H1.** The greater the degree to which citizens believe their country's economic situation is good, the greater the extent to which they will trust the government.

**H2.** The greater the degree to which citizens believe their country's political system is democratic, the greater the extent to which they will trust the government.

Although these hypotheses are somewhat intuitive, it is only by empirical analysis that it can be determined whether they do indeed have explanatory power and help to explain why some citizens have more trust in government and other citizens have less. Toward this end, a simplified OLS regression analysis has been carried out with Wave 3 data. Judgments of the country's economic situation is measured by a question that asks respondents whether they judge the economic situation of the country to be very good, good, bad or very bad. Judgments about the degree to which the political system is democratic is measured by a question that asks respondents to use a scale ranging from 0 to 10 to situate their country between the poles of not democratic at all and democratic to the

greatest extent. The regression analysis, shown in Table 5, is based on pooled Wave 3 data from the surveys in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. Sex and age are included as control variables.

**Table 5**  
**Regression Analysis with Trust in Government as**  
**Dependent Variable with Wave Three Data\***

	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Significance (p)
<b>Constant</b>	3.294	.063	.000
<b>The economic situation in our country is good</b>	.472	.012	.000
<b>Our country is very democratic (0-10 scale)</b>	.108	.004	.000
Female	.037	.019	.049
Older	.003	.001	.000

\* Pooled analysis: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen

Table 5 shows that both hypotheses are confirmed with a high degree of statistical significance. The very low probability values, approaching 0, make it extremely unlikely that the positive relationships between trust in

government on the one hand and judgments about either the economy or democracy on the other could have occurred by chance. The multivariate analysis also shows that the impact of each variable on trust in government is independent of the impact of the other variable, and the inclusion of control variables further reduces the chance that relationships are spurious and an artifact of other factors. Thus, although this illustrative example remains somewhat simplified, with hypotheses that are not entirely non-obvious and with only a limited number of control variables, it is nonetheless instructive that trust in government appears to depend heavily on the judgments citizens make about the broader economic and political environment within which they reside.

It should also be reported that the OLS analysis was replicated in each of the nine countries that were surveyed in Wave 3 of the Arab Barometer, and that both hypotheses were confirmed with a high degree of statistical significance in every instance. The consistency of these findings, coupled with the diversity of the nine countries, make it very likely that the two hypotheses have explanatory power throughout the broader Arab world.

## *Conclusion*

The findings from Arab Barometer surveys presented in this paper provide a broad and generally representative overview of the civic orientations held by ordinary men and women in the Arab world. This is only a partial overview, of course. The paper does not include findings from the first wave of AB surveys or from countries that were included in either Wave 2 or Wave 3 but not both. It also does not present findings about many of the topics covered in AB surveys, or even consider all of the items that ask about the topics that are covered. Finally, with only a few exceptions, it presents findings based on pooled analyses rather than individual countries and is limited to univariate or bivariate descriptions rather than multivariate analyses aimed at accounting for variance.

Nevertheless, the paper does cover a wide range of issues that are highly relevant to the Arab world at the present time and it does go beyond pooled analyses and description when this is instructive or illustrative. Equally important, the paper frequently offers brief assessments of the reasons and/or implications associated with particular findings, and in this way it encourages further reflection and future research on the part of others. Finally, toward this end and perhaps most important, it calls attention to the availability of the unique resource that Arab Barometer data represent. Both through the Barometer's website and

through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan, interested parties may acquire the AB data in SPSS format. The author hopes that many will be motivated to do so and to use these data to expand and enrich our understanding of the nature, distribution, determinants and consequences of the attitudes, values, and behavior patterns of Arab publics.

Plans for the fourth wave of AB surveys are in the planning stage at the time of this writing. Depending on local conditions and the availability of adequate funding, the fourth wave will continue to expand the number and geographic scope of the countries that are surveyed. Among the priorities for this wave, for which some funding has already been obtained, will be the inclusion of members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**MARK TESSLER** is Samuel J. Eldersveld Collegiate Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, where he has also served as the University's Vice-Provost. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of 13 books. These include: *Public Opinion in the Middle East: Survey Research and the Political Orientations of Ordinary Citizens* (2011); and his new book, supported by a Carnegie Islamic Scholar award, *Islam and the Search for a Political Formula: How Ordinary Citizens in the Muslim Middle East Think about Islam's Place in Political Life*.

Prof. Tessler is co-founder and co-director of the Arab Barometer Survey Project. Developed and governed in cooperation with scholars and institutions in various Arab countries, the Arab Barometer has conducted 29 nationally representative surveys in 14 countries since 2006. The Barometer investigates attitudes and values pertaining to governance, democracy, Islam, gender relations and other dimensions of civic life. Prof. Tessler has also conducted research and written extensively on the Israel–Palestine conflict. He is the author of *A History of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict* (2009, 2nd edition), the first edition of which was named a “Notable Book of Year” by the *New York Times*.

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