

Executive Summary

Attitudes among Jordanians toward Participation in the Upcoming Parliamentary Elections

(The 16th Parliament)

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This survey study aims at identifying the attitudes among Jordanians toward participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections (the 16th Parliament) in November. The study seeks to measure citizens' desire and willingness to take part in the elections as well as their causes and motives to participate or lack thereof. The study also aims at detecting the influence of political money (vote-buying) on the process, attitudes toward young and women candidates and the level of being acquainted with the current provisional election law.

The sample population was made of 1208 individuals broken by geographic (across governorates), demographic (gender), and education level and age group considerations. The study falls into two parts; the first covers the objectives and methodology of the study while the second introduces the main outcomes.

The most noticeable key outcomes of the study can be summarized in the following themes or pillars:

I: The desire and willingness to participate:

The study shows that 63.1% of Jordanians wish to take part in the upcoming parliamentary elections (voter turnout)– a proportion that supersedes its counterpart during the previous elections. Observers attribute such a high projected turn out to the intense media campaign the government has launched to urge citizens to register and take part in the parliamentary elections *inter alia* the administrative and technical measures and assurances at multiple official levels that the elections will be “free and fair” so as not to repeat the scenario of the previous parliamentary elections.

The percentage varies within governorates as Amman ranks first among the governorates with the least proportion of projected turnout (56.7%), compared to 46.7% in the previous elections – indicating thus an increase in the potential voter turnout inside the capital, Amman.

Aqaba ranks second with the least desire to be involved (58.3%), followed by Zarqa (59%) which had the least voter turnout in the previous elections (43%); in other words, the figure indicates an “assumed improvement” in the overall mood in the governorate to take part in the elections.

In light of the opinion poll outcomes, governorates with the most desire to take part in the upcoming parliamentary elections can be ranked in the following order: Ajloun, Madaba, Ma'an, Karak, Tafileh, Mafraq, Balqa, Irbid, Jerash, Zarqa, Aqaba and Amman.

Certain governorates (Ajloun, Madaba, Ma'an, Karak and Tafileh) demonstrate higher percentages of projected turnout (ranging between 76.7 and 71.1%). The

second group of governorates that ranks second includes Mafrq, Balqa, Irbid and Jerash with percentages ranging between 62.7 and 66.7%. Zarqa, Aqaba and Amman make the third and last group of governorates with the least desire to be involved with percentages ranging between 56.5 and 59%.

Despite the fact that crowded governorates like Amman, Zarqa and Irbid often rank last in terms of the desire to be involved, indicators of the outcomes of the current opinion poll show that the percentage of those who desire to take part in the upcoming elections is more than the voter turnout achieved in these very governorates during the former parliamentary elections.

The key political indication of such outcomes is manifested in the fact that the opinion poll has been conducted following the decision made by the Muslim Brotherhood Group – the leading political party that forms the opposition, to boycott the parliamentary elections. It also comes in the wake of the repercussions such a decision would have on voter turnout in these major cities – an assumption counteracted by the outcomes of the current opinion poll and its surveyed sample.

When it comes to analyzing these ratios, there is no indicator that can clearly explain such discrepancy. In as much as this discrepancy seems to be not that wide, it can be likewise said that cities where the “tribal factor” is a prominent drive for voting tend to promise larger projected voter turnout (Ajloun, Mada, Ma’an, Karak, Tafileh and Mafrq) vis-à-vis a lower turnout in densely populated cities like Amman and Zarqa where the tribal factor is not that significant.

Despite a very simple increase in favor of males, there seems to be no significant difference gender-wise in the desire among males and females to be involved in the upcoming parliamentary elections. In other words, gender difference is not a significant and influential variable in the desire to be involved.

In terms of education levels, the indicator seems to be irregular; the highest percentage was among holders of graduate degrees (73.1%) while the segment that ranked second was the illiterates (71.9%). In other words, the education level is not a factor that clearly influences people’s desire to be involved in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

As for age group considerations, it seems that the coming of age steadily prompts people to become more involved in the elections in a regular fashion. 76.3% of people who are above 60 tend to participate in the elections followed by 68.1% of those who fall within the 51-60 age group. Only 58.7% of the 18-30 age group tend to participate in the elections – making this age cohort rank last among the other groups.

The irony is that those who attained the age of 18 this year were the direct target of the media campaign the government has launched during the voter registration period. Out of its keenness on expanding the base of those who can become

involved in the election process, the government opened voter registration centers on university campuses to prompt this particular age group to become registered voters. However, the current outcomes indicate that this particular age cohort remains the group with the least desire to become involved.

Observers attribute the poor turnout among the youth and its higher counterpart among the elderly to the prevalent frustration, disappointment and lack of belief in bringing about change through the parliament (lower house). Such a phenomenon has reached advanced stages during the recent years as opinion polls indicate. Older people – as a result of their experience brought by their age, tend to set lower expectations than those among their younger counterparts. They (elderly) have more restrictive social relationships that compel them to become involved in the elections.

II: Causes for being involved:

Outcomes of the survey indicate that the constitutional consideration that pertains to the belief in the institution of the parliament spearheads (93.4%) the causes that prompt part of the sample population to be involved. Such a ratio reflects the debate in the media about the former parliament before being dissolved as well as the talk about the privileges, benefits of the members of parliament (MPs) and the level of popular confidence in the Lower House. This high percentage might imply a sense of recognizing the significance of this constitutional institution as opinion polls during the recent years indicated a noticeable drop in Jordanians' level of confidence in the parliamentary institution.

The belief in the fact that one's vote (My Vote) will make a difference in delineating the formation of the upcoming parliament is ranked as the second cause that prompts participation (91.1%) among the sample population in favor of being involved. This segment of the population ranked the candidates who would address their ambitions and desires as the third cause (78%) for being involved.

The conviction or belief that the elections will be free and fair was ranked as the fourth cause (70.4%) that prompts the sample population in favor of being involved. The significance of this cause lies in the media and political debate that has been going on recently with reference to the fairness of the previous parliamentary elections – allegations and claims of large-scale election fraud increased during the same period. The fact that only 44.2% of the total sample population believe that the elections will be fair shows that the question of election integrity and fairness will haunt the upcoming parliamentary elections until it is held.

The ideological dimension (Candidates who adopt a political ideology I believe in) ranks lower on the significance scale as 55.3% of sample population in favor of being involved in the elections.

Social factors, tribal affiliations and personal relationships rank last among the causes that prompt the pro-elections sample population to become involved. 46.9% of those indicated tribal considerations while 45.2% emphasized the need to vote for one of their relatives and only 31.4% indicated that they would be voting on the basis of their relatives' recommendation to vote for a particular candidate whereas 26.4% said they would be taking their friends' recommendation to go for a certain candidate.

Relatively speaking, the order of the aforementioned causes does not change when broken by governorate. "The conviction or belief in the need to have a lower house in Jordan" still ranks first followed by the belief that one's vote would make a difference in the making of the upcoming parliament. The same applies to the other causes as "voting for a candidate that addresses my ambitions and desires" ranked third followed by the ideological, tribal and social considerations.

It is noted however that there are non-crucial differences when it comes to the weight the tribal considerations have when broken by governorate as follows: Ma'an (65.2%), Karak (62.8%), Madaba (55.9%), Ajloun (54.3%), Aqaba (53.6%), Mafraq (52.5%), Balqa (51.7%) and Jerash (51.4%). Weight given to this factor drops below the 50% mark in other more populated governorates: Irbid (46.2%), Amman (40%) and Zarqa (27.8%). Tafileh stands out as an exception with 43.8% -- a percentage that is difficult to explain objectively when it comes to the tribal factor in this governorate.

The gender variable does not indicate clearly marked differences; it can be hence said that both males and females behave almost similarly when it comes to the weight of the causes that prompt them to become involved in the parliamentary elections.

III: Candidate Profile:

When it comes to the candidate profile, the sample population in favor of taking part in the upcoming elections ranks the causes in the following order:

- I. Active in public life (95.9%)
- II. Provides services to his/ her constituents (94.7%)
- III. Social dimensions – "he/ she is from my area" (73%)
- IV. Tribal considerations "from my tribe" (50.1%)
- V. Former government official (43.4%)
- VI. A politician (33.4%)
- VII. A veteran (32.9%)
- VIII. Party member (9.1%)

The key remark about the candidate profile component is manifested in the importance of the service-based dimension and clearly absent confidence in party candidates; tribal and social dimensions rank top among considerations pertaining to candidate profile.

IV: Causes for not being involved (voter apathy):

The outcomes of the survey reveal four causes that prompt sample population not to take part in the upcoming elections. Lack of confidence in current candidates spearheads these causes with 72.8% -- that reflects an overall public attitude *in apriori* (made in advance) since we are still witnessing the ramifications of the candidate registration period which is yet to come; in other words, the overall picture has not matured or become clear yet.

The lack of a conviction or belief that the upcoming parliamentary elections would be free and fair is ranked second by 48.1% of the sample population who are not in favor of being involved whereas 41.1% of them justified their desire to refrain from taking part by lack of a belief of the significance of a lower house of parliament in Jordan. 26.1% of the population not in favor of being involved claimed that they do not have time to be part of the process.

Within the same context, no considerable or crucial differences seem to surface when broken by governorate, gender, education level or age group.

V: Influence of political money (vote buying)

The outcomes of the survey indicate that a high percentage (66.4%) of eligible voters find that political money has a very huge influence on voter decisions vis-à-vis 21.4% and 12% who find such influence to be mild or non-existent respectively.

It is common knowledge that the new election law incriminates selling one's vote in return for money; the law also stipulates hindering the spread of such a phenomenon. During its recently launched campaign, the government sought to emphasize that the "vote-buying phenomenon" should be combated; however, the overall belief maintains – as the study highlights, that the phenomenon remains influential and existent.

VI: Electing young and female candidates:

The survey outcomes show that a high percentage (63%) of eligible voters would like to vote for a female candidate, 71.5% would like to vote for a young candidate while only 1.7% said that voting for a young or older candidate would basically be the same for them.

VII: knowledge about the provisional election law:

The outcomes of the study reveal a "grey area" among the ample population views when it comes to the election law. 68.5% of the sample indicated that they have not read the election law while 5.2% said that they have not sufficiently read the law; in

other words, the majority of Jordanians have not become sufficiently acquainted with the 2010 election law.

With reference to whether or not the Law was appropriate to the nature of the political and social life in the country, 55.7% of the population indicated that they do not know, 9.5% found it to be very appropriate while 26.6% found it to be somehow appropriate and 8.2% thought that the law is inappropriate.

The grey area is also discernable in citizen attitudes toward government administrative procedures as 36% of the sample said they were not clear, 36.2% said they do not know whether or not the procedures were clear while 20.4% found these procedures to be somehow clear.