

**SURVEY FINDINGS:
SYRIA 2010 PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY**

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Table of Contents

- Executive Summary 3
- 1. Introduction 4
- 2. Background 4
- 3. Methodology 4
 - 3.1. Survey methods 4
 - 3.2. Analytic methods 5
- 4. Results 5
 - 4.1. Communications and access to information 5
 - 4.1.1. Background on communications and access to information 5
 - 4.1.2. Survey findings on communications and access to information ... 9
 - 4.2. Personal situation 10
 - 4.3. Political and economic situation 15
 - 4.3.1. Background on political and economic situation 15
 - 4.3.2. Survey findings on political and economic situation 16
 - 4.4. Government performance 23
 - 4.5. Corruption 25
- 5. Conclusion 29
- Appendix 31

Executive Summary

In 2010 the Democracy Council conducted an extensive, in-person survey to determine Syrians' views on governance, corruption, and their personal situations. Collected between January 16 and February 6, the survey provides data from 1046 adults, who were asked about corruption, democracy and human rights, politics and economics, and their personal and family situations. Data on access to, and use of, media and communications were also collected.

This report presents an analysis of the Democracy Council's survey results, with four key findings. First, a majority believes that the political and economic condition of Syria is poor, and worse than it was five years ago. Second, a majority has little faith in the government's ability to confront the country's problems. Third, a substantial majority believes that corruption is widespread. And, fourth, a substantial majority believes that the State of Emergency should be lifted.

A subgroup analysis of survey results found interesting differences across age and sex. Syrian women were significantly more optimistic about their personal circumstances, and significantly less critical of the performance of their government. Syrians over 40 were significantly more pessimistic about their personal circumstances, and significantly more critical of the performance of their government.

1. Introduction

Little is known about how Syrians perceive their government institutions and their political and economic situations. The Democracy Council set out to capture Syrians' views by conducting a survey of Syrian citizens. The survey was the first of its kind (only government-approved surveys are allowed under Syrian law) and so faced some limitations from data-collection security concerns. In spite of these obstacles, a cadre of field staff was able to collect in-person surveys from 1046 Syrian adults, over a three-week period (January 16 to February 6, 2010). Attempts were made to ensure proportional representation by province, age group, sex, education level, and religion. Pepperdine University was asked to conduct an independent analysis of the survey responses and prepare a report on the results. This report summarizes the analytic methods used for analyzing the survey data and presents findings.

2. Background

Syria is a one-party state of about 21 million people. The country has been under the control of the Syrian Ba'ath Party since 1963, when the Ba'athists seized power in a military coup. Ba'ath Party control of Syria was further consolidated in a second coup, orchestrated by Hafez al-Assad, the Minister of Defense, in 1970. Assad—who ruled as president thirty years and was succeeded at his death by his son, Bashar al-Assad, in 2000—centralized control of the country in the executive branch of government, which remains entirely controlled by the Ba'ath Party.¹ With the exception of a yearlong period of liberalization (the “Damascus Spring”) at the beginning of his presidency, Bashar al-Assad has, for the most part, continued his father's policies.

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey methods

All respondents are Syrians over 18. Results described in this report reflect the responses of 1046 Syrian nationals who were residing in Syria at the time of data collection.

In-person surveys were conducted in Arabic by trained data collectors. Data-collection field staff were trained by a professional statistician via Skype seminars. Sixty data collectors were hired, organized by province, according to population. Due to sensitivities surrounding data collection in Syria, field staff were required to strictly adhere to an oral script.

¹ Marshall, Monty G. and Keith Jagers. 2008. “Polity IV Country Report 2008: Syria.” Fairfax, VA: Center for Systemic Peace. systemicpeace.org/polity/Syria2008.pdf (accessed April 18, 2010).

This survey was not approved by the Syrian government. Any data collected outside of the auspices of the Syrian government is prohibited under Syrian law. Concerns for the safety of data collectors and survey respondents meant that a truly nationally representative sample based on random selection was not possible. Data collectors were trained how to select respondents, with the aim of collecting data representative of the Syrian population (with respect to region, rural/urban, sex, age, religion, and education).

3.2. Analytic methods

Post-fact statistical adjustments to the collected data use a series of constructed survey weights. The primary purpose of the weights is to improve the generalizability of the survey findings. This entails “upweighting” cases that, for whatever reason, are underrepresented in the sample, and “downweighting” cases that are overrepresented in the sample. Table 1 provides a description of the survey sample. As an example, women are underrepresented in the sample: the Syrian *male:female* sex ratio is 1.05:1, while in the survey sample the sex ratio is 2.22:1. Survey weights allows for correction of these discrepancies. Weights are calculated based on the demographic characteristics of the survey sample, compared with those of the Syrian population.

The variables used to generate the post-fact weights were age, sex, and province. All statistics provided in the main body of the report are adjusted using the constructed weights. In the Appendix, we provide three sets of results for each survey question: (1) Weighted responses, and (2) unweighted responses.

4. Results

This section presents selected survey questions² and response statistics, with interpretation and background information when appropriate. We present the survey results in five sections: (1) Communications and access to information, (2) personal situation, (3) political and economic situation, (4) government performance, and (5) corruption.

4.1. Communications and access to information

4.1.1. Background on communications and access to information

Reporters Sans Frontières compiles a Press Freedom Index,³ based on a survey that covers violations of journalists’ freedoms and the harms they suffer, self-censorship of the media, financial pressures, countries’ legal

² We have edited for clarity the English translation of the survey instrument. The original phrasing is provided in an Appendix.

³ Reporters Sans Frontières. 2009. “Press Freedom Index 2009.” Paris: Reporters Sans Frontières. en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2009,1001.html (accessed April 20, 2010).

frameworks, and violations of the “free flow” of internet information.⁴ Syria has consistently performed very poorly, with 2009 its worst showing to date, at 165th out of 175 countries rated (see Table 2).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Survey Sample.

Gender	
Male	69.0%
Female	31.0%
Age	
18–24	21.1%
25–39	56.6%
40–54	19.1%
55+	3.2%
Religion	
Muslim	76.4%
Christian	11.4%
Other	12.2%
Education	
No Education	3.6%
First or Secondary	15.8%
High School	35.3%
College or Bachelor Degree	38.4%
Graduate Degree	7.0%
Respondent Location	
Al Hasakah	13.3%
Aleppo	19.0%
Ar Raqqah	2.4%
As Suwayda	3.9%
Damascus	31.2%
Dar’a	1.0%
Dayr az Zaw	3.0%
Hama	2.1%
Homs	3.2%
Idlib	7.7%
Latakia	7.4%
Rif Damascus	5.5%
Sample Size	1046

⁴ Reporters Sans Frontières. 2009. “Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2009—How the index was compiled.” Paris: Reporters Sans Frontières. en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/note_methodo_en.pdf (accessed April 20, 2010).

Table 2. Syria in Press Freedom Index, 2002–2009.

Year	Rank	Rank from the bottom
2002	126	8
2003	155	11
2004	155	12
2005	145	22
2006	153	15
2007	154	15
2008	159	14
2009	165	10

Source: Reporters Sans Frontières 2010

According to the Freedom House 2009 survey of press freedom, Syria is ranked 178th out of 195 and is considered “not free”⁵ (see Table 3). Freedom House expressed concern about media accessibility, because of restrictive laws, and cited Syria as a country of “long standing concern.” Bloggers and journalists faced harsh repercussions for expressing divisive views.⁶

Table 3. Syria in Survey of Press Freedom, 2002–2009.

Year	Rank	Rank from the bottom
2002	78	b
2003	80	b
2004	80	19
2005	83	15
2006	84	14
2007	83	16
2008	83	16
2009	83	17

Source: Freedom House 2010

^a Scores of 76–100 are considered “not free.”

^b No rank available.

In 2006, Reporters Sans Frontières ranked Syria among the thirteen worst “enemies of the Internet,”⁷ and described it as the harshest country to cyber-dissidents in the Middle East.⁸ In 2009, the Committee to Protect Jour-

⁵ Freedom House. 2009. “Freedom of the Press 2009 table of global press freedom rankings.” Washington: Freedom House. freedom-house.org/uploads/fop/2009/FreedomofthePress2009_tables.pdf (accessed April 20, 2010).

⁶ Karlekar, Karin Deutsch. 2008. “Press Freedom in 2008: Restrictive laws and physical attacks fuel further declines.” Washington: Freedom House, p. 7. freedom-house.org/uploads/fop/2009/FreedomofthePress2009_OverviewEssay.pdf (accessed April 20, 2010).

⁷ Reporters Sans Frontières. 2006. “List of the 13 internet enemies.” Paris: Reporters Sans Frontières. rsf.org/article.php3id_article=19603 (accessed April 20, 2010).

⁸ Reporters Sans Frontières. 2007. “Syria—Annual Report 2007.” Paris: Reporters Sans Frontières. rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20777 (accessed April 20, 2010).

nalists ranked Syria as one of the worst countries for bloggers.⁹ Many popular websites, including YouTube, Amazon, and Facebook, are banned.

We do not know of any reliable estimates of the number of Syrians who have access to the internet. In 2007, 17 percent of Syrians used the internet, but Syria is experiencing rapid growth in internet usage (far exceeding the global growth rate)¹⁰, so current usage would be significantly higher. Most users go online at internet cafes or with dial-up service at home; even those with home access go to cafes because they believe the government monitors their home use. Broadband services are very expensive and difficult to subscribe to.

A study by a consortium of North American information-freedom organizations found that the Syrian government not only heavily controls the internet, but the ruling Ba'ath party owns most of Syria's media outlets.¹¹ State-owned Syrian Telecom (STE) owns all telecommunications infrastructure including fixed-line services. Efforts have been made to expand telecommunications to rural areas. It is among the most regulated internet markets in the Middle East.¹²

In contrast to the internet, satellite television is relatively easy to access, with many channels available.¹³ Syria Satellite TV is operated by the Ministry of Information (but those with access to satellite dishes can view programming from around the Arab world); its programming is varied and includes sports, scripted shows, news, and music.

Respondents were asked to name their favorite television program, actor, and singer, in free-response questions. More than 200 TV programs were named, illustrating the diversity of programming available to Syrians, with both Syrian and pan-Arabic programs in the top ranks. The most-named programs received 8.3%, 6.8%, 5.2%, and 3.2% of the mentions, respectively, suggesting that no program has a commanding hold of the Syrian viewership. These most-named programs consist of a historical soap opera set in Damascus (*Bab Al-Harra*), which is among the most popular programs across the Arab world; a freewheeling political-debate program on Al Jazeera (*Al-Itijah Al-Makass*); a Syrian satirical comedy (*Beka'a Douwa'a*); and a quiz show (*Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?*). Only one non-Arabic program received more than one percent of the mentions.

⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists. 2009. "10 worst countries to be a blogger." New York: Committee to Protect Journalists. cpj.org/reports/2009/04/10 (accessed April 20, 2010).

¹⁰ Open Net Initiative. 2009. "Internet filtering in Syria." open-net.net/sites/opennet.net/files/ONI_Syria_2009.pdf (accessed April 20, 2010).

¹¹ Open Net Initiative. 2009. "Internet filtering in Syria." open-net.net/sites/opennet.net/files/ONI_Syria_2009.pdf (accessed April 20, 2010).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ It is common for Syrians to share a satellite dish. For example, a satellite dish owned by one unit in a building is often shared to provide satellite access for the whole building.

The most-favored actor and singer questions each elicited more than 150 mentions, with the top performers receiving substantially larger shares than the top TV program. Both lists of performers reflect the vibrancy of Syrian performing arts and the wide appeal of performers from diverse backgrounds across the Arab world. The most-named actors received 11.2%, 4.7%, and 4.0% of the mentions, respectively (all of the top ten mentions are men). They are a 46-year old Syrian TV and film actor (and star of the most-named TV program), Bassam Kousa; an iconic Syrian Kurdish movie star (“the Anthony Quinn of the Arabs”), Khaled Taja (70); and another Syrian star of the most-named TV program, Samer Al-Masri (40).

The most-named singers received 14.7%, 5.7%, and 4.9% of the mentions, respectively (four of the top five mentions are women). They are a Lebanese Christian woman, Nouhad Fairuz (74), one of the most-popular living singers in the Arab world; a Syrian Christian, George Wassouf (48); and an Egyptian woman, Umm Kulthum, widely regarded as one of the greatest female singers in Arab history, who died in 1975.

4.1.2. Survey findings on communications and access to information

Table 4 describes the percentage of respondents who have access to various forms of media and communications. A large share (87.9%) of respondents reported having a home phone, and a similar number (86.8%) reported having a cell phone. A majority (60.5%) reported having access to the internet either at home or at work. Finally, an overwhelming percentage of respondents (97.0%) reported having satellite TV access at home.

Table 4. Survey Respondents’ Access to Media and Communications.

Form of Media/Communications	Yes	No
Home Telephone	87.9%	12.1%
Cell Phone	86.8%	13.2%
Internet Access (at home or work)	60.5%	39.6%
Satellite Television	97.0%	3.0%

Note: Values over 100% due to rounding error

Table 5 describes how regularly the survey respondents read the newspaper and watch the news on satellite television. A majority of the respondents reported that they read newspapers, but only a minority reported reading one on a regular basis. 19.3% reported almost-daily readership, 21.4% reported

reading newspapers once or more weekly, 30.4% reported rarely reading a newspaper, and a sizable percentage, 28.9%, reported never reading a newspaper. A sizable percentage (45.7%) of respondents reported that they watch satellite news on a daily basis, 22.9% watched one or more times per week, 20.1% rarely watched satellite news, and 11.3% never watched satellite news.

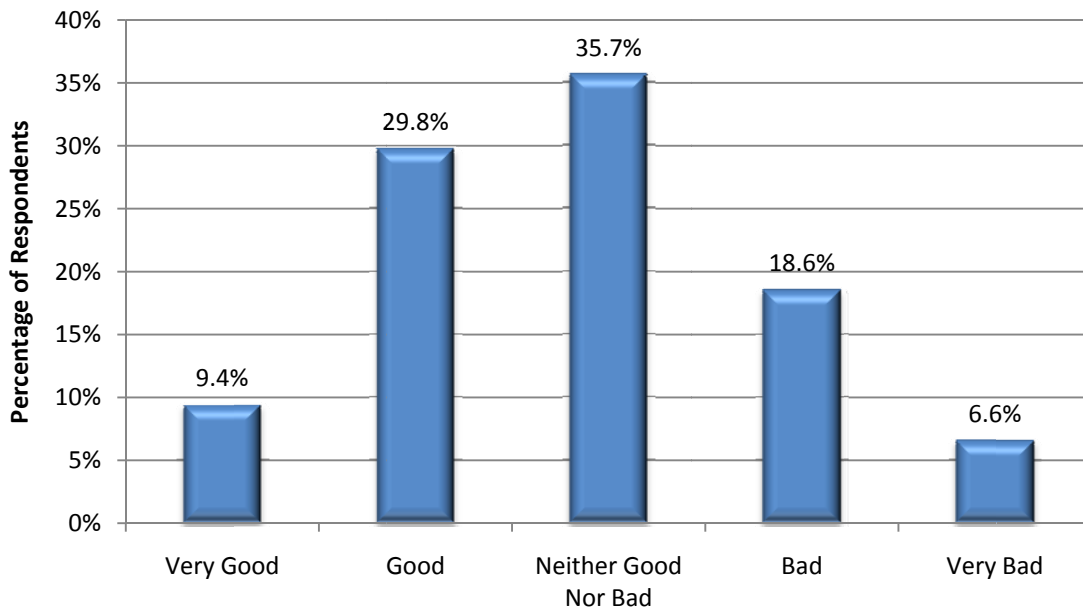
Table 5. Frequency of Survey Respondents' Consumption of News via Daily Newspapers and Satellite Television.

Frequency	Daily Newspapers	Satellite Television
Almost Every Day	19.3%	45.7%
Once or More Weekly	21.4%	22.9%
Rarely	30.4%	20.1%
Never	28.9%	11.3%

4.2. Personal situation

Figure 1 describes respondents' appraisals of their personal and family situation. 39.2% gave a positive appraisal, 35.7% considered their situation to be neither good nor bad, and 25.2% gave a negative appraisal.

Figure 1. How do you appraise, in general, your personal and your family's situation today? Is it good or bad?

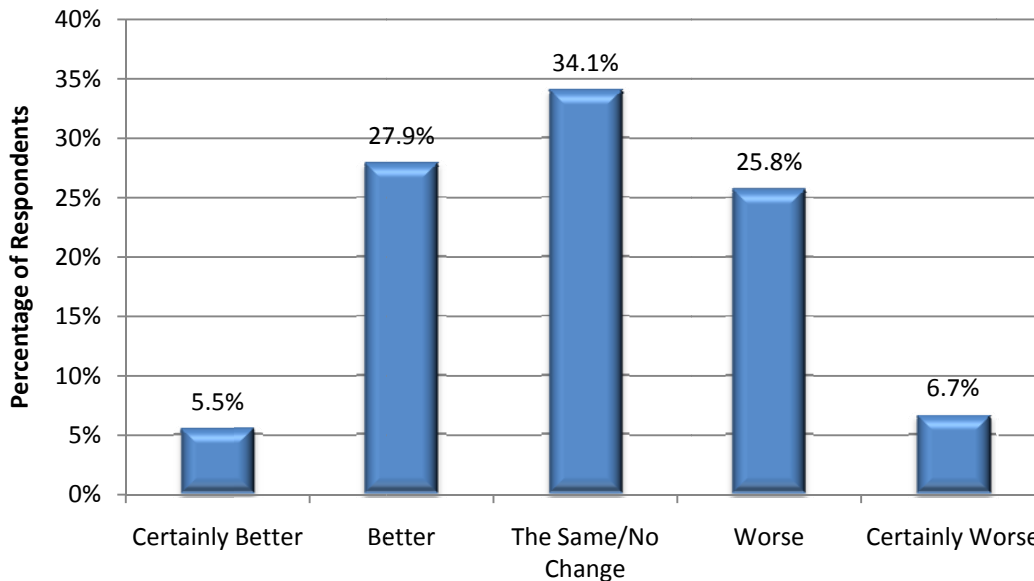


Note: n = 1036. 99.0% of survey participants responded to this question.

Figure 2 describes respondents' appraisals of whether their personal and family situation is better or worse compared with five years ago. 33.4%

thought their personal situation had improved, 34.1% thought it had stayed the same, and 32.5% thought that their personal situation had deteriorated over the past five years.

Figure 2. Do you feel that your personal and family’s situation is better or worse than it was five years ago?



Note: $n = 1035$. 98.9% of survey participants responded to this question.

Figure 3 describes respondents’ assessment of whether their personal and family situation is likely to improve in future. 38.5% responded that they expected their personal situation would improve, 22.6% thought it would remain the same, and 25.1% thought that their personal situation would likely deteriorate in future. A sizable percentage of respondents refused to answer this question: 12% responded “no comment” and a further 1.5% ignored the question.

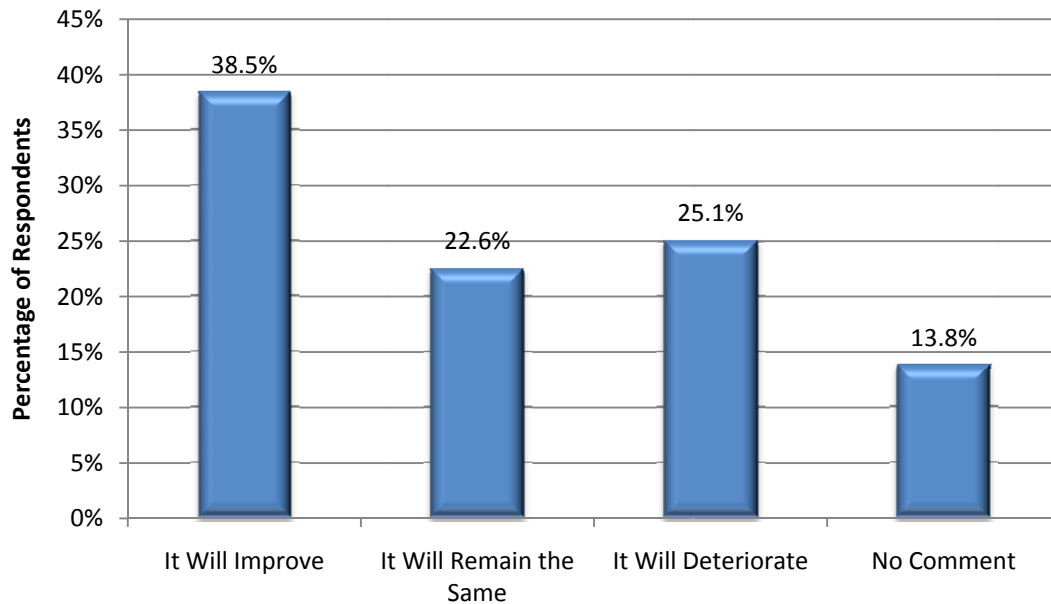
Logistic regressions were estimated to test for any subgroup differences in perceptions of personal situations. A binary variable *pessimistic* was coded to reflect differences across respondents’ views of their future personal situation. This variable was then regressed against respondents’ sex, age, and religion.

Summary of differences:

Sex

There were significant differences by sex. Women were significantly *less* pessimistic about their personal situation than men ($p=0.00$).

Figure 3. What about the future? Would you expect any improvement in your personal and family’s situation, or is it going to deteriorate?



Note: n = 1030. 98.5% of survey participants responded to this question. 12% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 1.8% ignored the question.

Age

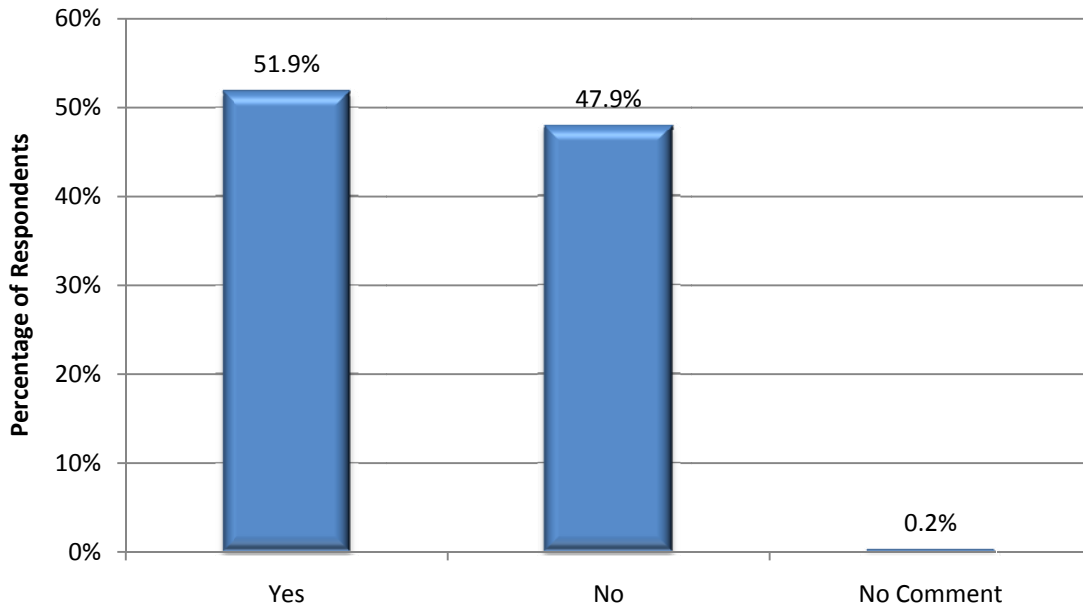
There were significant differences by age. Syrians over 40 were significantly *more* pessimistic about their personal situation than Syrians under 40 ($p=0.03$).

Religion

There were *no* meaningful differences by religion ($p=0.83$).

Figure 4 describes respondents’ interest in emigrating. A majority (51.9%) reported that their circumstance encourage them to emigrate.

Figure 4. Do life, work, or other circumstances encourage you to emigrate?



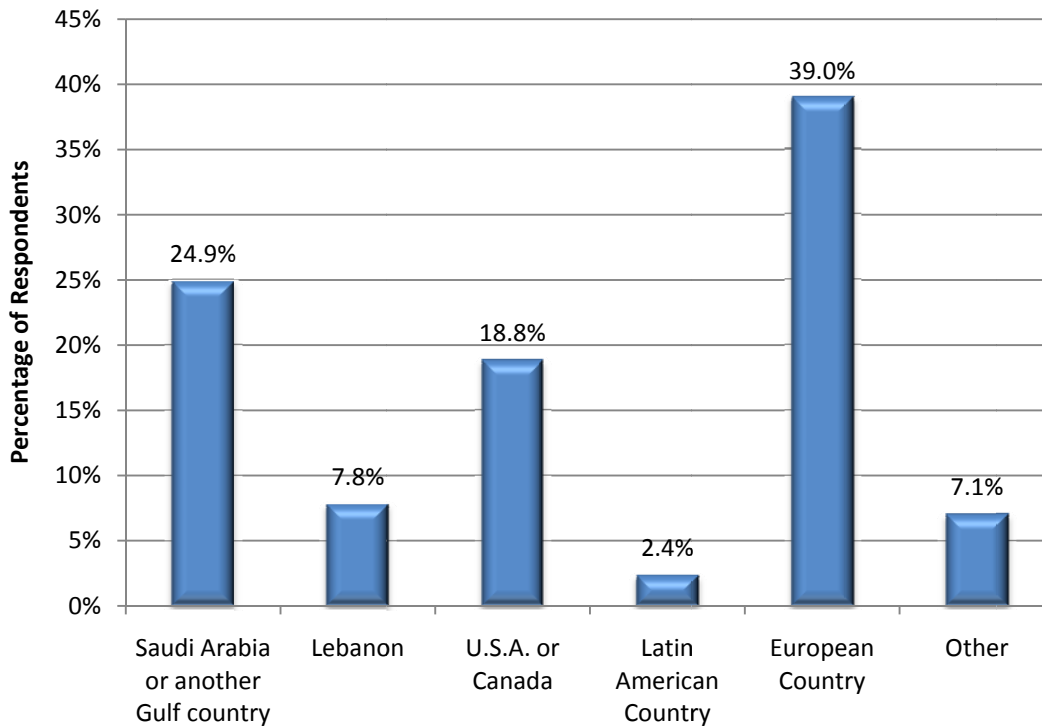
Note: n = 1023. 97.8% of survey participants responded to this question.

Figure 5 describes the country or region that Syrians are most interested in traveling to. The most desired destination was Europe (39%), followed by Saudi Arabia or another Gulf country (24.9%), the United States (18.8%), and Lebanon (7.8%).

Figure 6 describes the respondents' reported participation in unions, clubs,¹⁴ charitable organizations, or cultural activities. Civic engagement is low, with only 13.2% of respondents reporting active participation in a civic group. 19.3% reported that they participated sometimes, 21.7% reported that they rarely participated, and 45.8% reported no civic engagement. There is a strong relationship between educational attainment and civic engagement, with more-educated respondents (bachelor or graduate degree) reporting significantly higher levels of participation.

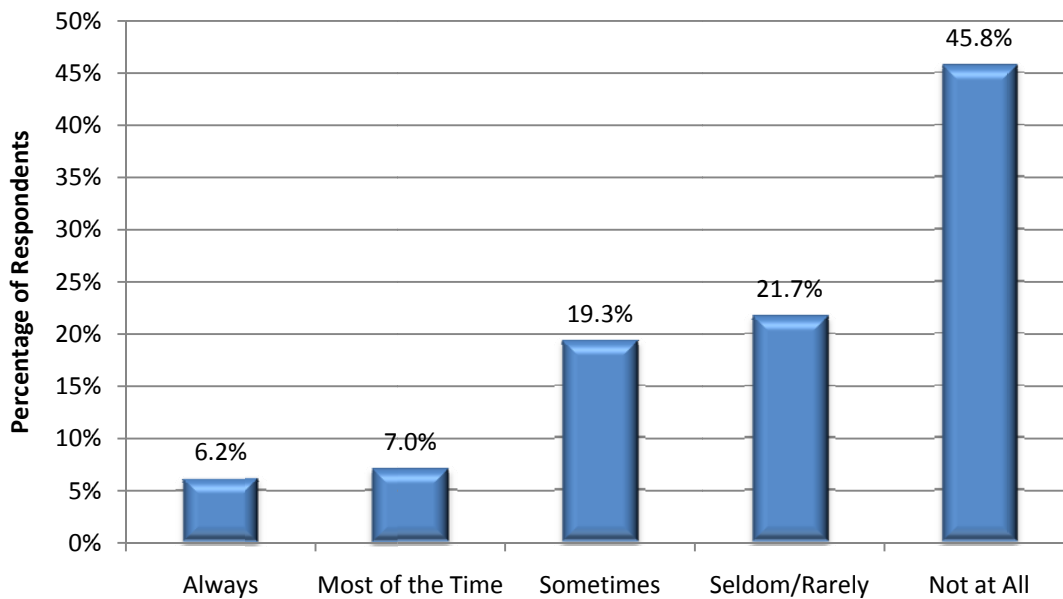
¹⁴ The English version of the Arabic text reads "syndicate," which refers to a club or professional association.

Figure 5. Which country do you most wish to travel to?



Note: n = 999. 95.5% of survey participants responded to this question. Values reported here are population-weighted results.

Figure 6. Do you participate in unions, clubs, professional organizations, charitable organizations, or cultural activities?



Note: n = 1036. 99.0% of survey participants responded to this question. Values reported here are population-weighted results.

4.3. Political and economic situation

4.3.1. Background on political and economic situation

Although Syria is, formally, a multiparty republic, continuous one-party control of the government has been justified for nearly half a century by the State of Emergency declared shortly after the Ba’athist seizure of power in 1963. The State of Emergency, which is still in effect, grants the government expansive powers: Critics insist that the emergency laws “undercut human rights guarantees,” “[allow] arbitrary detention and arrest of suspects deemed a threat to public security,” “[permit] the unrestricted monitoring and searching of people and places,” and “[allow] the criminalization of acts without vetted and legally developed legislation.”¹⁵ The emergency laws not only provide the government with control over the lives of Syria’s citizens, they also allow the state to control all the country’s media outlets.

An evaluation of political freedom in Syria is provided by the Polity IV Project,¹⁶ which codifies countries’ governmental characteristics. On a scale of –10 to 10, countries that score between –10 and –6 are classified as autocracies, –5 to 0 as closed anocracies, 1 to 5 as open anocracies, and 6 to 10 as democracies.¹⁷ The most recent Polity data for Syria (circa 2008) yield an overall polity score of –7, or highly authoritarian.¹⁸

GDP per capita has steadily increased since 1998 (see Table 6), but these gains accrued mostly to the top income bracket and wealth inequality is increasing.¹⁹ A recent survey in Damascus found that 70 percent of respondents believed their financial situation had “deteriorated seriously” in the previous two years.²⁰ Changes in poverty differ strongly by region.²¹

Table 6. GDP Per Capita, 1998–2008 (2008 \$).

1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
968	987	1170	1244	1238	1248	1322	1475	1705	2019	2682

Source: World Bank, 2010.

¹⁵ al-Bunni, Akram. 2008. “Syria’s crisis of expression.” *Arab Insight*, **2**(1):99–100.

¹⁶ Marshall and Jagers, op. cit.

¹⁷ Marshall, Monty G. and Benjamin R. Cole. 2009. “Global Report 2009: Conflict, governance, and state stability.” Fairfax, VA: Center for Systemic Peace. systemic-peace.org/Global%20Report%202009.pdf (accessed April 20, 2010).

¹⁸ Marshall and Jagers, 2008. op. cit.

¹⁹ no author. 2008. “Syria: Wealth gap widening as inflation hits poor.” IRIN. February 7. damascus.usembassy.gov/media/pdf/econcommercial-pdf/syria-_wealth_gap_widening_as_inflation_hits_poor.pdf (accessed April 23, 2010).

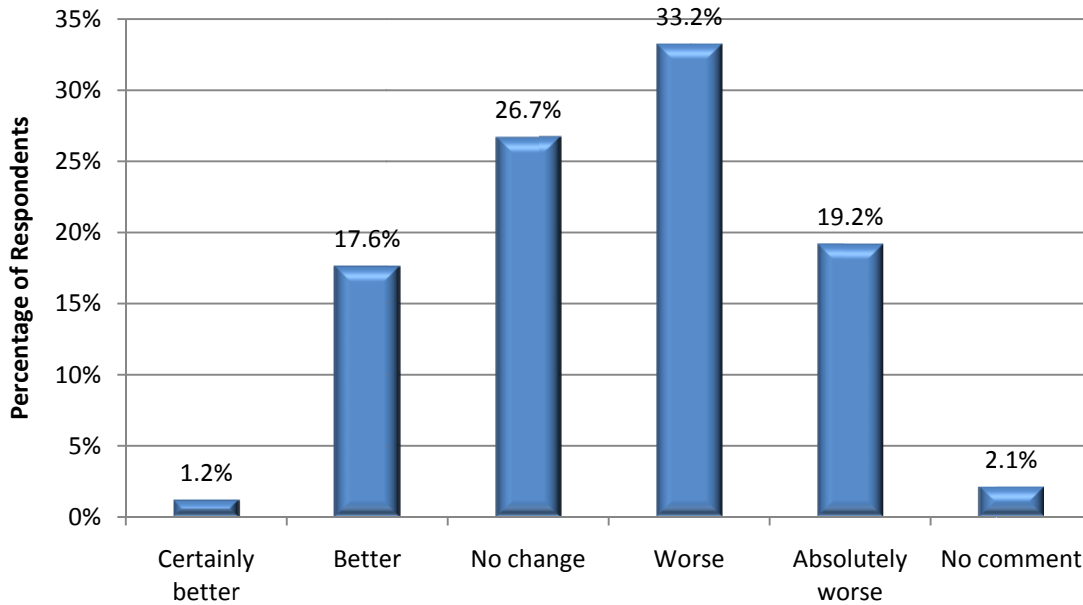
²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ El Laithy, Heba and Khalid Abu-Ismael. 2005. “Poverty in Syria: 1996–2004: Diagnosis and pro-poor policy considerations.” New York: United Nations Development Programme.

4.3.2. Survey findings on political and economic situation

Figure 7 describes respondents' assessments of whether the political and economic situation in Syria has improved over the last five years. A minority (18.8%) felt that the country's political and economic situation has improved, 26.7% felt no change, and a majority (52.4%) felt that the situation has deteriorated. A small number (2.1%) refused to comment on this issue.

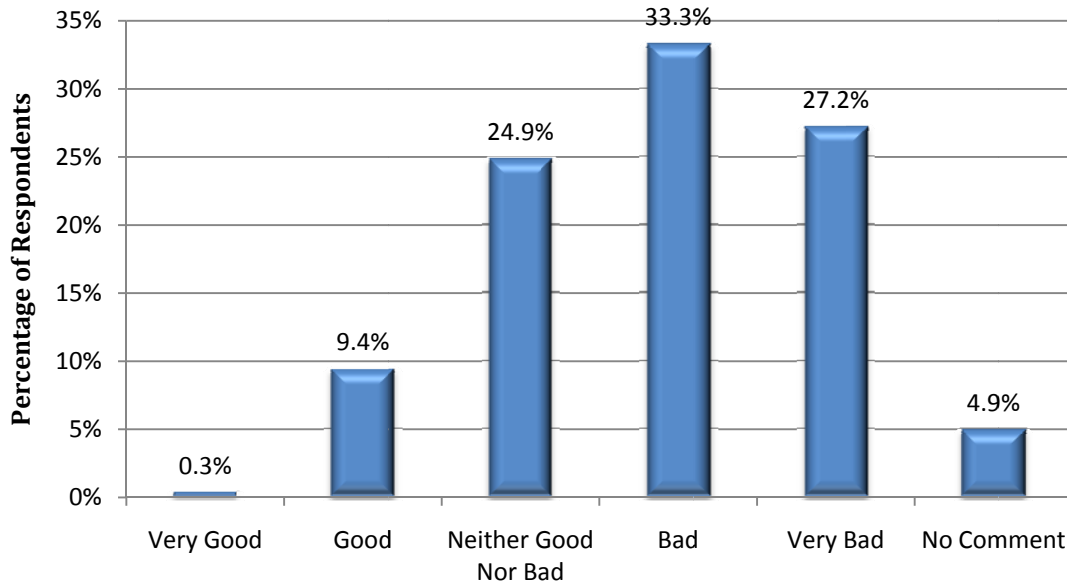
Figure 7. Do you feel that the political and economic situation in the country today is better or worse than it was five years ago?



Note: n = 1033. 97.1% of survey participants responded to this question. 2% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 1.2% ignored the question.

Figure 8 describes respondents' assessments of whether the economic and political situation in Syria today. A minority (9.7%) felt that the country was in a good political and economic situation, 24.9% felt that it was neither good nor bad, and a majority (60.5%) felt that the economic and political situation was bad. 4.9% of respondents refused to comment on this issue.

Figure 8. In general, how would you assess the economic and political situation in the country today?



Note: n = 1033. 98.8% of survey participants responded to this question. 4.9% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 1.2% ignored the question.

Figure 9 describes respondents’ assessments of their expectations for the future of Syria. A minority (17%) felt that the country’s situation would improve in the future, 28.1% expected no change, and a majority (47.4%) expected the situation to deteriorate. There was some resistance to responding to this question: 7.5% responded “no comment” and a further 1.6% ignored the question. Women were more than twice as likely as men to respond “no comment.”

Logistic regressions were estimated to test for any subgroup differences in expectations for the future of Syria’s political and economic situation. A binary variable *pessimistic* was coded to reflect differences across respondents’ expectations of Syria’s political and economic future. This variable was then regressed against respondent’s sex, age, and religion.

Summary of differences:

Sex

There were significant differences by sex. Women were significantly *less* pessimistic about the future of Syria’s economic and political situation than men (p=0.00).

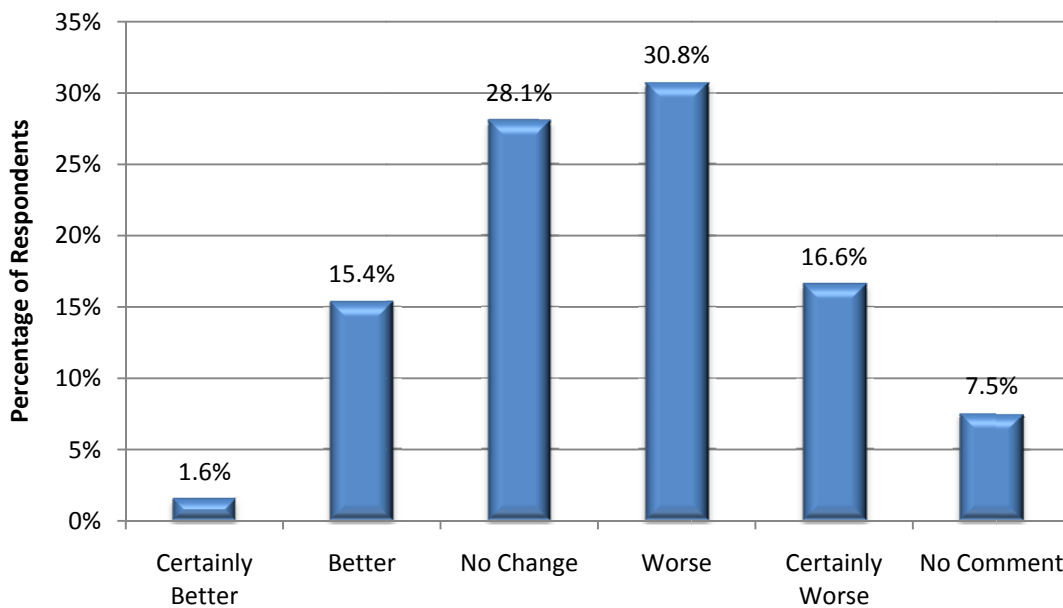
Age

There were significant differences by age. Syrians who were over 40 years old were significantly *more* pessimistic about the future of Syria's economic and political situation than Syrians who were under 40 years old ($p=0.07$).

Religion

There were *no* meaningful differences by religion ($p=0.78$).

Figure 9. What about this situation in the future? Is the country heading for better or for worse?



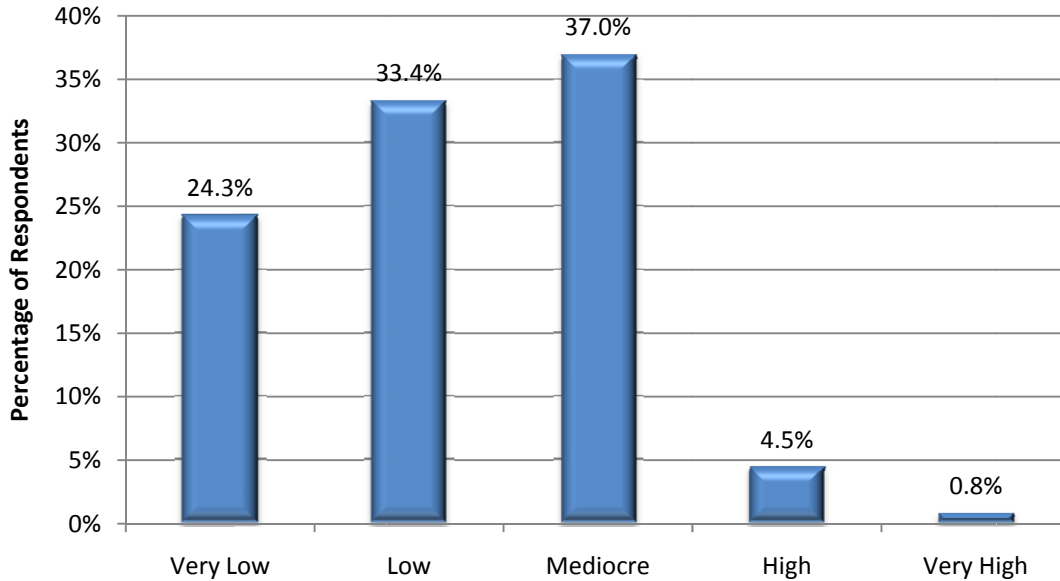
Note: n = 1029. 98.4% of survey participants responded to this question. 6.5% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 1.6% ignored the question

Figure 10 describes respondents' evaluation of the Syrian government's public education system. The majority of respondents gave a poor rating to the education system, with only 5.3% giving a positive rating. 24.3% of the respondents rated the government education system as very poor, 33.4% rated it poor, and 37% mediocre. More than 98 percent of primary and secondary schools are public,²² centralized under the Ministry of Education. Intergovernmental organizations generally view Syria as having made substantial progress in providing access to basic education, narrowing the gender gap, and

²² Mullis, I.V.S., et al., eds. 2008. *TIMSS 2007 Encyclopedia: A Guide to Mathematics and Science Education Around the World*. Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center.

reducing illiteracy. Nonetheless, the share of the student-age population that is enrolled in school is only 65 percent, 119th in the world.²³

Figure 10. How do you evaluate the public education system in our country—what level is it at?

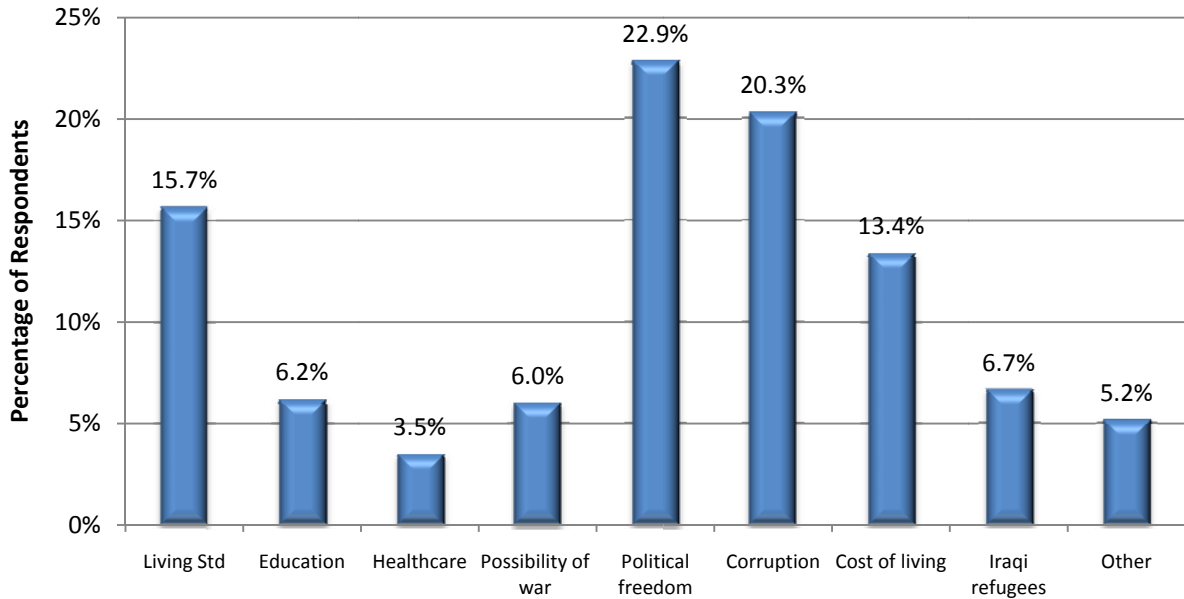


Note: n = 1021. 97.6% of survey participants responded to this question.

Figure 11 summarizes respondents' assessments of the most critical issue facing Syria today. Syrians regarded the absence of political freedom to be the most pressing critical issue facing the country (reported as the most critical issue by 22.9%). The second-most commonly reported critical issue was the prevalence of corruption (20.3%).

²³ United Nations. "United Nations in Syria." un.org.sy/forms/pages/viewPage.php?id=30. (accessed April 20, 2010).

Figure 11. If you were to define the most critical issue the country is facing today, what would you say?



Note: n = 989. 94.6% of survey participants responded to this question.

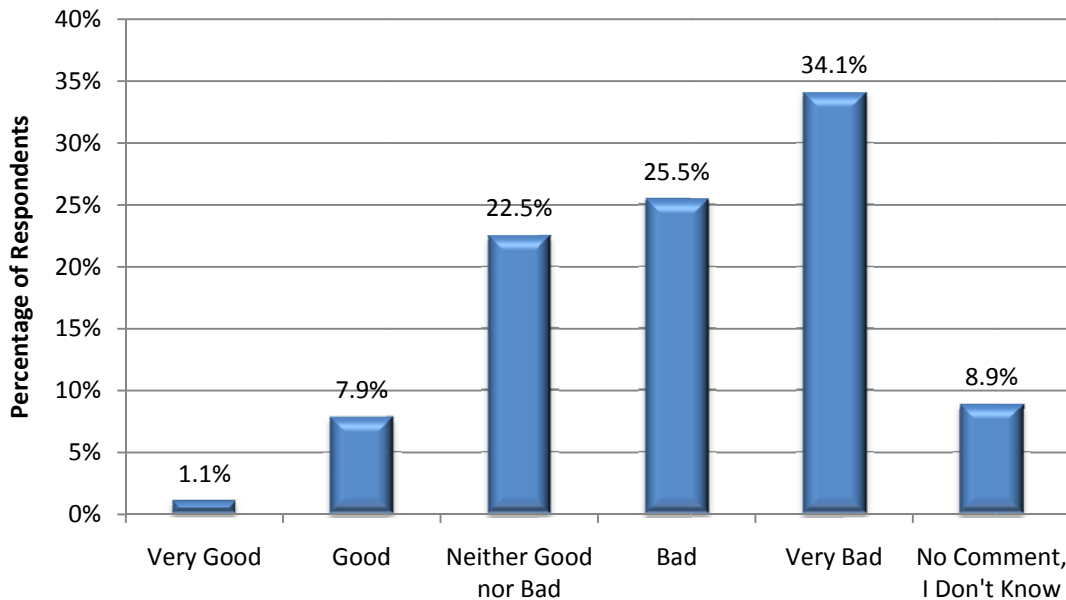
Figure 12 describes respondents' ratings of Syrian democracy and human rights. A majority (59.6%) gave Syria a poor rating, 22.5% were neutral, and 9% gave a positive rating. There was some resistance to responding to this question: 8.9% responded "no comment" and a further 3.2% ignored this question. Women were three times as likely as men to respond "no comment."

Figure 13 shows that the majority of Syrians (62.5%) have read or heard of the Damascus Declaration. The 2005 "Damascus Declaration" called for greater freedom of speech and an end to the State of Emergency in place since 1963. Under this law, the constitution can be superseded by the President at any time.²⁴ 274 activists, intellectuals, and reformers signed the Damascus Declaration and soon thereafter created the National Council of the Damascus Declaration; many of the people involved were arrested between 2006 and 2008.²⁵

²⁴ Sharp, Jeremy. 2009. "Syria: Background and U.S. Relations." Washington: Congressional Research Service.

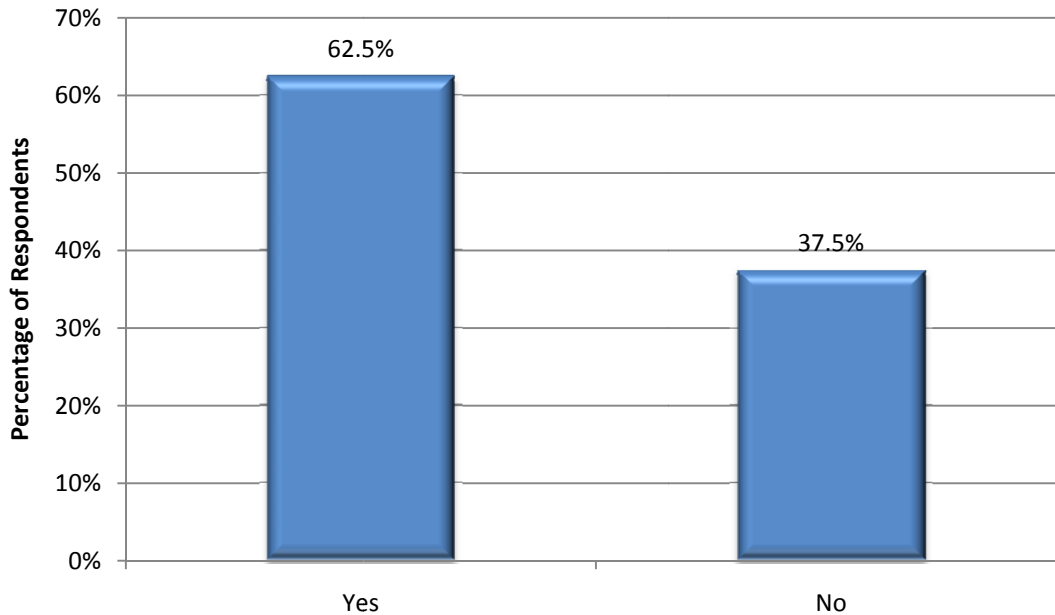
²⁵ Ibid.

Figure 12. How do you judge democracy and human rights in Syria?



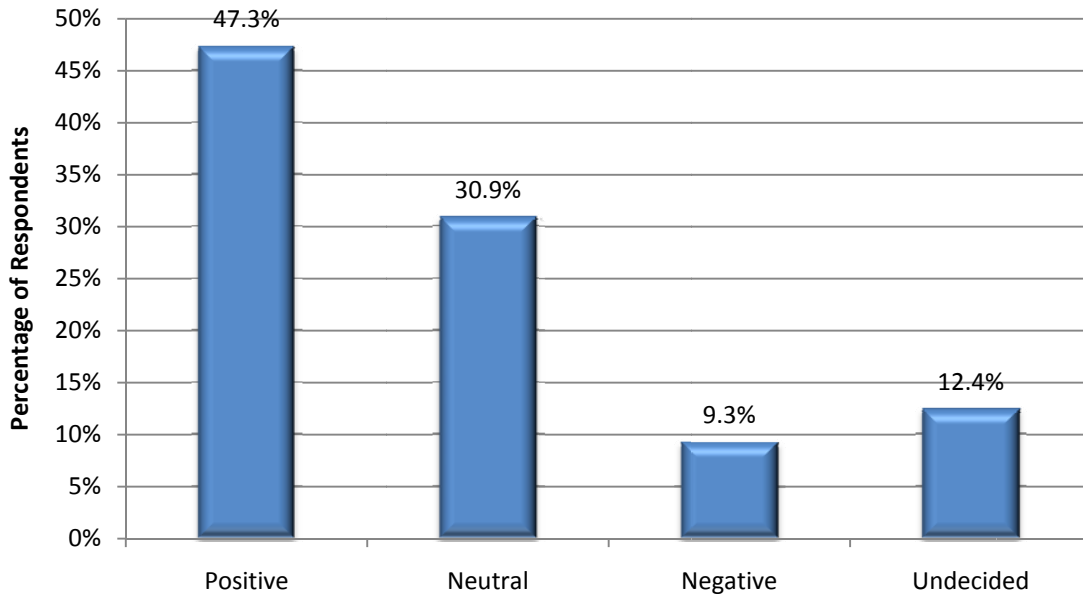
Note: n = 1013. 90.2% of survey participants responded to this question. 6.7% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 3.2% ignored the question.

Figure 13. Have you read the "Damascus Declaration" or heard about it?



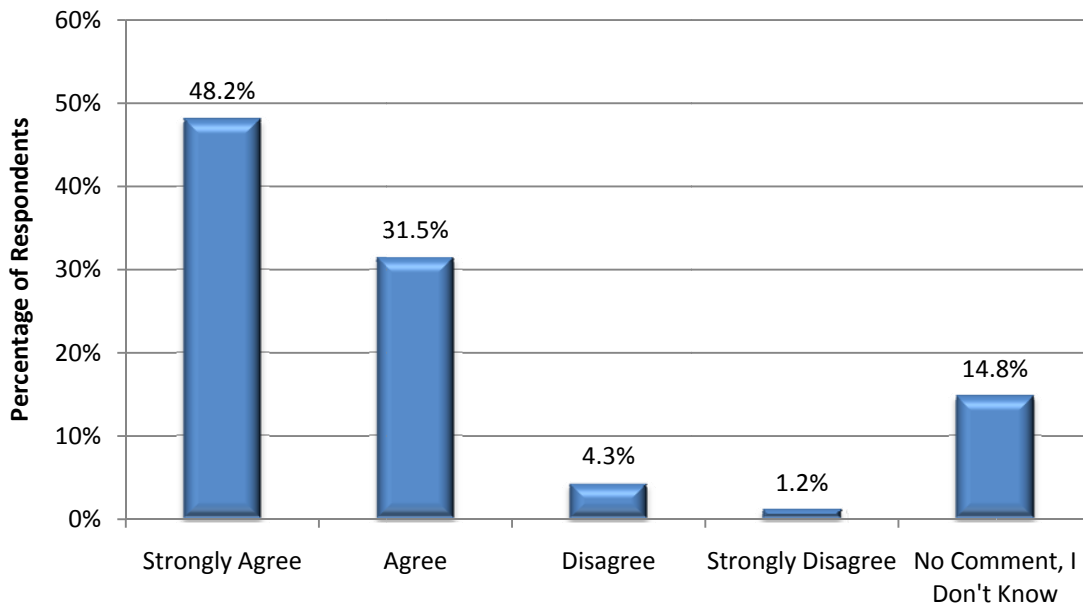
Note: n = 1028. 98.3% of survey participants responded to this question.

Figure 14. If yes, what is your opinion concerning the "Damascus Declaration?"



Note: n = 723. This calculation was limited to those respondents who reported having knowledge of the Damascus Declaration.

Figure 15. Do you agree or disagree that "martial law" should be lifted in Syria?



Note: n = 1008. 85.9% of survey participants responded to this question. 10.4% responded with "no comment" to this question, an additional 3.6% ignored the question.

Figure 14 describes the opinions of respondents who were familiar with the Damascus Declaration: 47.3% regarded the Damascus Declaration positively, 30.9% were neutral, 9.3% regarded it negatively, and 12.4% were undecided.

Syria has been under martial law since 1963. Figure 15 describes the opinions of respondents regarding the lifting of martial law: 79.7% of respondents agreed that martial law should be lifted while 5.5% thought that it should be maintained. There was some resistance to responding to this question: 14.8% responded “no comment” and a further 3.6% ignored this question. Women were more than twice as likely as men to respond “no comment.”

Logistic regressions were estimated to test for any subgroup differences in preferences regarding the lifting of martial law. A binary variable *lifted* was coded to reflect differences in preferences for lifting martial law. This variable was then regressed against respondents’ sex, age, and religion.

Summary of differences:

Sex

There were significant differences by sex. Women were significantly *less* likely to respond that martial law should be lifted ($p=0.00$).

Age

There were *no* meaningful differences by age ($p=0.50$).

Religion

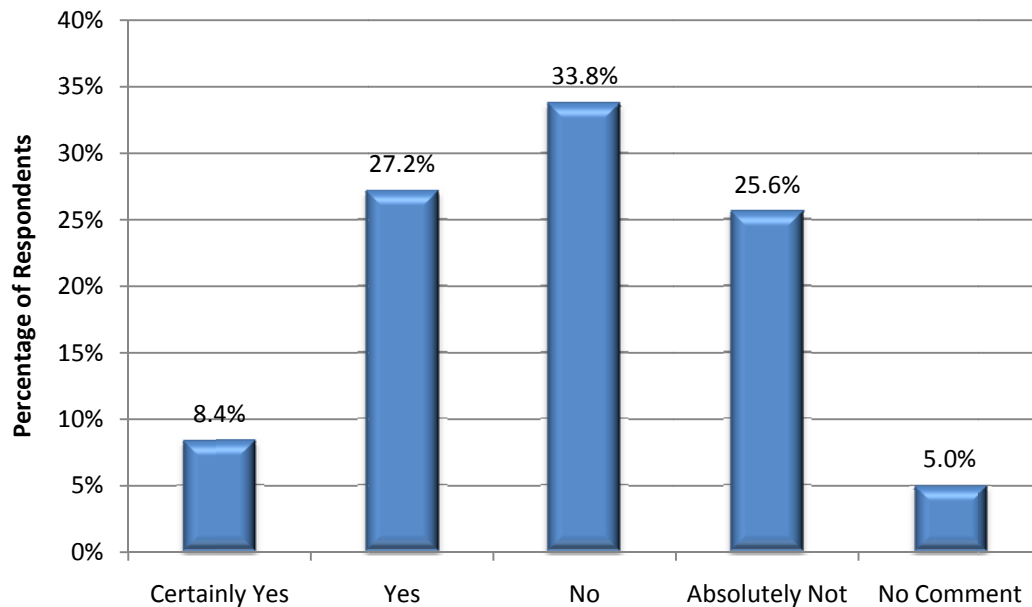
There were *no* meaningful differences by religion ($p=0.15$).

4.4. Government performance

Respondents reported having little confidence in their government. Figure 16 describes respondents’ assessments of whether the government is capable of solving the problems that the country is confronting. The majority (59.4%) did not believe the government was capable of solving the country’s problems, while 35.6% responded that they consider the government capable of resolving the country’s problems. 5% responded “no comment” and a further 3% ignored the question.

Figure 17 describes respondents’ assessments of the performance of the Syrian government. A small minority (7.3%) gave their government institutions a positive review, 40.2% regarded them as mediocre, and the majority (52.7%) regarded them as poor.

Figure 16. Do you believe that the government is capable of solving the problems that the country is confronting?



Note: n = 1015. 97.0% of survey participants responded to this question. 4.9% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 3% ignored the question.

Logistic regressions were estimated to test for any subgroup differences in respondents’ beliefs that the Syrian government is capable of solving the problems the country is confronting. A binary variable *capable* was coded to reflect differences in respondents’ beliefs regarding the capabilities of the Syrian government. This variable was then regressed against respondents’ sex, age, and religion.

Summary of differences:

Sex

There were significant differences by sex. Women were significantly *more* likely to respond that the Syrian government can solve the problems the country is facing (p=0.00).

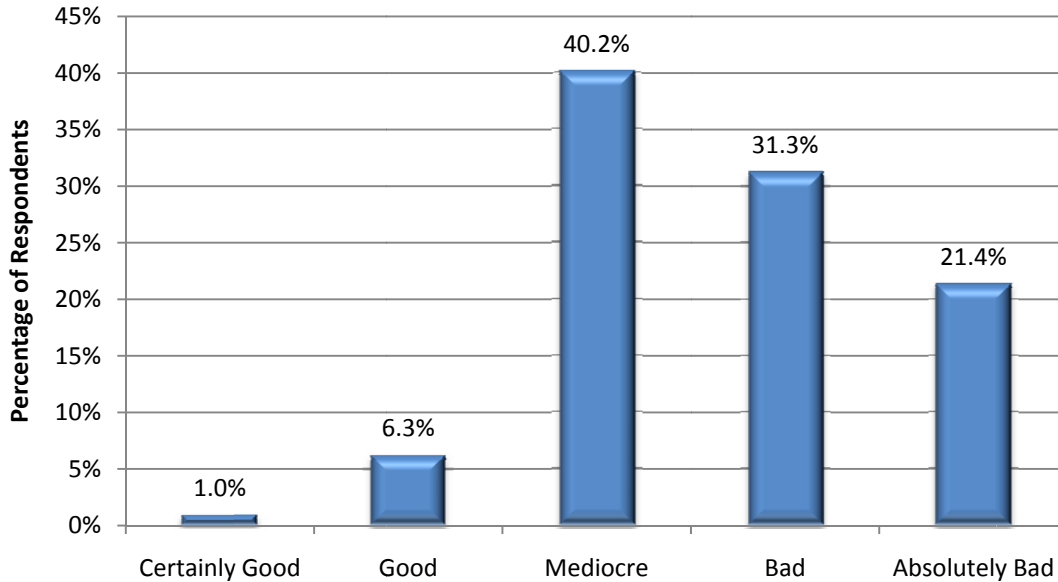
Age

There were significant differences by age. Syrians over 40 were *less* likely to report that the Syrian government can solve the problems the country is facing (p=0.04).

Religion

There were significant differences by religion. Christians were *less* likely to report that government can solve problems ($p=0.08$).

Figure 17. How do you find the performance of the government’s institutions in general?

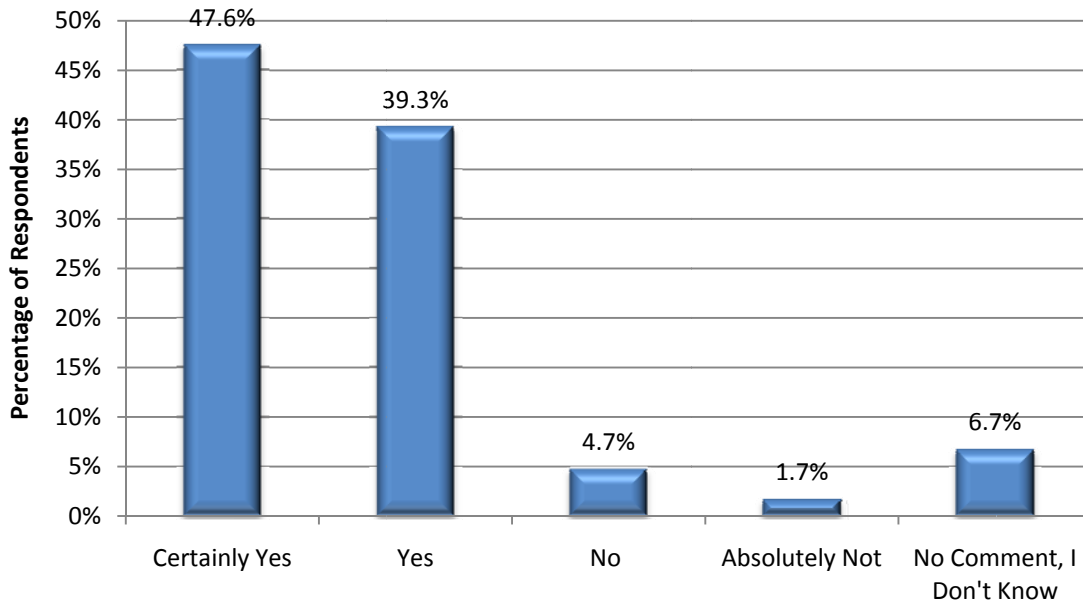


Note: n = 984. 94.1% of survey participants responded to this question.

4.5. Corruption

Syrians consider corruption to be widespread in their government ministries and public administration. Figure 18 shows that a majority (87%) considered corruption to be widespread, while only 6.4% did not consider the ministries or public administration to be corrupt. 6.7% responded “no comment” to this question, and an additional 1.8% ignored the question. Women were twice as likely to respond “no comment.”

Figure 18. Do you believe the corruption is spread in the government ministries and public administrations throughout the country?



Note: $n = 969$. 92.6% of survey participants responded to this question. 5.5% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 1.8% ignored the question.

Logistic regressions were estimated to test for any subgroup differences in respondents’ assessments of whether corruption is widespread. A binary variable *corrupt* was coded to reflect differences in respondents’ beliefs that corruption is widespread. This variable was then regressed against respondents’ sex, age, and religion.

Summary of differences:

Sex

There were significant differences by sex. Women were significantly *less* likely to respond that corruption is widespread ($p=0.00$).

Age

There were no significant differences by age ($p=0.69$).

Religion

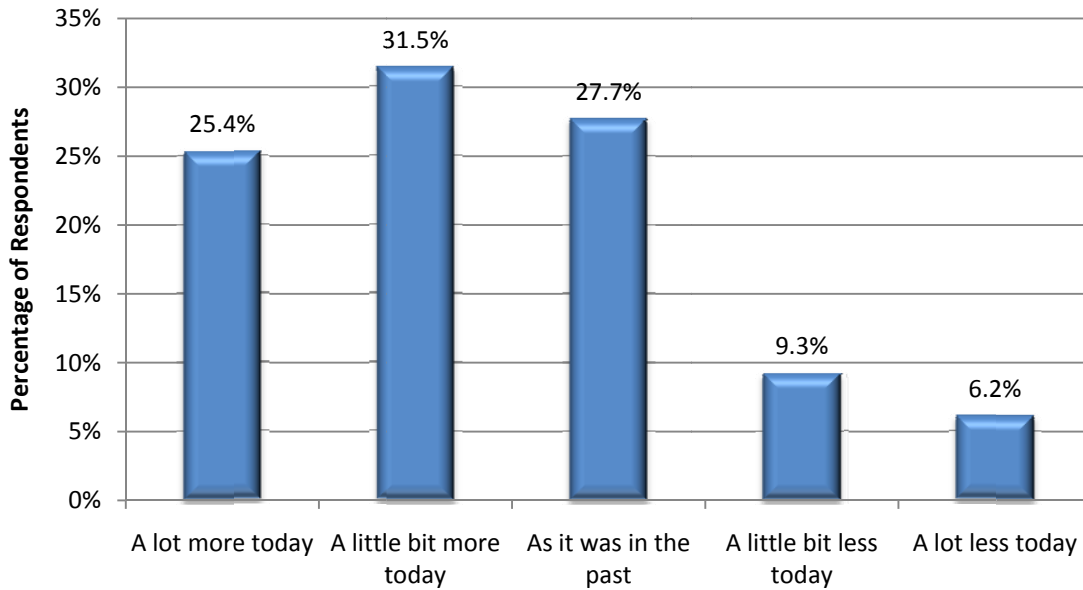
There were no significant differences by religion ($p=0.85$).

Figure 19 describes respondents’ opinions of current corruption compared with corruption in the past. A majority (56.9%) believes that corruption

has increased compared with past levels, 27.7% that it has remained constant, and 15.5% that it has decreased.

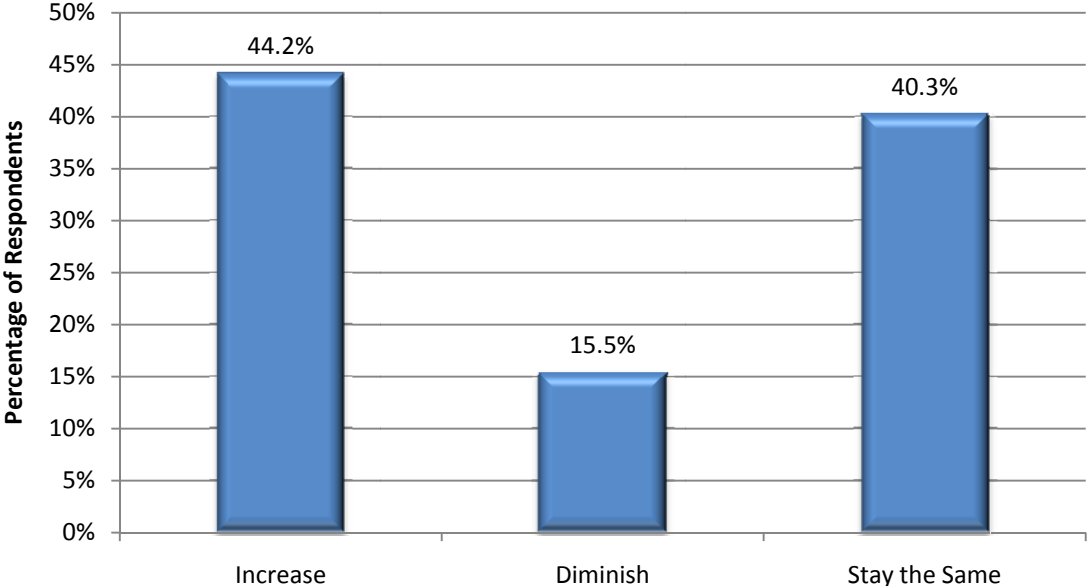
Figure 20 describes respondents' beliefs concerning corruption in the future: 44.2% believe that corruption will likely increase, 15.5% that it will likely decrease, and 40.3% that it will likely remain the same.

Figure 19. If you believe that corruption exists, in your opinion, is there more or less than in the past?



Note: n = 1009. 96.5% of survey participants responded to this question.

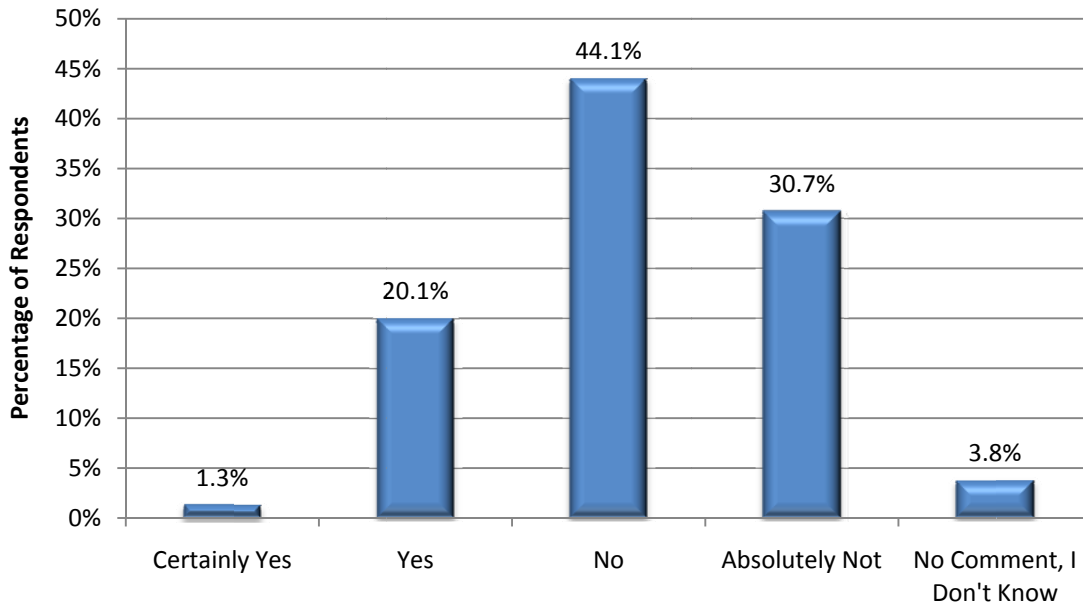
Figure 20. If you believe that corruption exists, in your opinion, is it going to increase, diminish, or remain the same in the future?



Note: n = 1004. 96.0% of survey participants responded to this question.

Figure 21 describes respondents' perceptions of the average citizen's ability to get by in Syria without government connections (*wasta*). The majority (73.8%) believes that a simple citizen would not have access to government employment if he or she did not have connections, while 21.4% believe it is possible to secure public-sector employment without special connections.

Figure 21. Do you think that a simple citizen can get a job or government position without an intermediary or connections (*wasta*)?



Note: n = 1018. 94.1% of survey participants responded to this question. 3.3% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 2.7% ignored the question

5. Conclusion

The survey reveals a Syrian public that is deeply pessimistic about the capacity, performance, and legitimacy of its government. Nearly 90 percent of respondents believe that corruption has spread throughout the government ministries and administration. Furthermore, most doubt that the government is up to the task of confronting the country’s problems. A vast majority considers the performance of government institutions to be mediocre at best; for example, over 90 percent evaluate the public-education system as either mediocre or poor.

Syrians report a surprising ability to access the media and communications technologies. With the majority able to access most forms of mass media and communications, only government censorship and state ownership of local media prevent the free flow of information.

The survey also reveals a curious disparity in beliefs about the country’s political and economic situation compared to personal and family situations. While a majority or plurality insists that Syria’s political and economic situation is bad (60.5%), worse than in 2005 (52.4%), and likely to get worse in the future (47.4%), this pessimism did not hold for their own affairs. Indeed, a majority reports that their personal and family situations were good or neutral

(74.9%), either better than or the same as they were in 2005 (67.5%), and likely to either improve or stay the same in the future (61.1%). While many answer that their family and personal situations are bad (25.2%) and worse than they were in 2005 (32.5%), it is interesting that most have a relatively positive view of their personal situations at the same time as they view dimly the country's political and economic fortunes.

Finally, there is a predominant belief that the country ought to undergo at least some degree of liberalization. A majority cites the state of democracy and human rights in Syria as bad or very bad (59.6%), and a plurality (22.9%) cites the absence of political freedom to be the country's most significant problem. In what might be seen as a small success for Syria's opposition movements, a majority (62.5%) has heard of the "Damascus Declaration"—a tract criticizing Bashar al-Assad's government as an "authoritarian, totalitarian, and cliquish regime"²⁶ and advocating peaceful, gradual regime change—and, of those, a plurality (47.3%) has a positive view of it. In a finding that can be seen only as a reflection of desire for greater political and personal freedoms, a significant majority (79.7%) believes that the State of Emergency should be lifted, ending nearly half a century of martial law.

²⁶ Wright, Robin B. 2008. *Dreams and Shadows: The Future of the Middle East*. New York: Penguin Press, p. 233.

Appendix

Table A1. Gender

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
Gender?	Male	52.4%	68.6%
	Female	47.6%	31.4%
	Sample size	1046	1046

Note: 100% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1046).

Table A2. Age

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
What is your age?	Average	33.5	33.1
	Median	29	29
	Sample size	1046	1046

Note: 100% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1046).

Table A3. Religion

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
How do you define your religion?	Muslim	76.9%	76.0%
	Christian	11.8%	11.4%
	Other	11.3%	12.6%
	Sample size	1046	1046

Note: 100% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1046).

Table A4. Education

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
What is your highest level of education?	First or secondary level	17.7%	15.8%
	High school	37.5%	34.1%
	College or Bachelor's Degree	36.1%	39.3%
	University Graduate Masters or PhD	5.0%	7.1%
	No education level	3.7%	3.7%
	Sample size	1045	1045

Note: 99.9% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1045).

Table A5. Home Phone

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you have a home phone?	Yes	87.9%	90.5%
	No	12.1%	9.5%
	Sample size	1044	1044

Note: 99.8% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1044).

Table A6. Newspapers

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you read the daily newspapers?	Almost every day	19.7%	23.2%
	Once or more weekly	22.4%	21.0%
	Rarely	29.5%	27.1%
	I do not read the daily newspaper	28.4%	28.7%
	Sample size	1042	1042

Note: 99.6% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1042).

Table A7. Satellite

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you own a satellite dish at home?	Yes	97.0%	97.3%
	No	3.0%	2.7%
	Sample size	1045	1045

Note: 99.9% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1045).

Table A8. Internet

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you have an internet line at home or at work?	Yes	60.5%	64.0%
	No	39.5%	36.0%
	Sample size	1044	1044

Note: 99.8% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1044).

Table A9. Cell Phone

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you have a cell phone?	Yes	86.8%	90.0%
	No	13.2%	10.0%
	Sample size	1045	1045

Note: 99.9% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1045).

Table A10. News on Satellite

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you watch the news on the satellite dish?	Almost every day	45.7%	50.4%
	Once or more weekly	22.9%	23.4%
	Rarely	20.1%	16.6%
	I do not watch the news on satellites channels	11.3%	9.7%
	Sample size	1045	1045

Note: 99.9% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1045).

Table A11. Favorite News Networks

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
If you watch the news on satellite television, which is your favorite network?	Al-Manar	5.3%	5.1%
	Al-Souria	9.8%	9.7%
	Al-Jazeera	39.4%	36.4%
	CNN	3.6%	3.5%
	Al-Arabia	24.5%	24.3%
	Barada TV Network	8.9%	10.3%
	Other	8.5%	7.6%
	Sample size	959	959

Note: This calculation was limited to those respondents who report having watched satellite news.

Table A12. Participation in Organization and Cultural Activities

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you usually participate in unions, clubs, charitable organizations or cultural activities?	Always	6.2%	5.1%
	Most of the time	7.0%	9.0%
	Sometimes	19.3%	22.4%
	Seldom/Rarely	21.7%	22.4%
	None at all	45.8%	41.1%
	Sample size	1036	1036

Note: 99.0% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1036).

Table A13. Evaluation of Government Public Education

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
How do you evaluate the government public education system in our country—what level is it at?	Very low	24.3%	25.0%
	Low	33.4%	33.9%
	Mediocre	37.0%	33.7%
	High	4.5%	6.1%
	Very high	0.8%	0.7%
	Sample size	1021	1021

Note: 97.6% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1021).

Table A14. Assessment of Current Personal and Family Situation

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
How do you appraise, in general, your personal and your family's situation today? Is it good or bad?	Very good	9.4%	6.9%
	Good	29.8%	29.7%
	Neither good nor bad	35.7%	37.3%
	Bad	18.6%	20.0%
	Very bad	6.6%	6.2%
	Sample size	1036	1036

Note: 99.0% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1036).

Table A15. Assessment of Current Political and Economical Situation

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you feel that the political and economical situation in the country today is better or worse than it was five years ago?	Certainly better	1.2%	1.7%
	Better	17.6%	14.3%
	No change	26.7%	24.0%
	Worse	33.2%	40.2%
	Absolutely worse	19.2%	18.0%
	No comment	2.1%	1.7%
	Sample size	1033	103

Note: 97.1% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1033); 2% responded with "no comment" to this question, an additional 1.2% ignored the question.

Table A16. Expectations of Political and Economic Situation in the Future

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
What about this situation in the future? Is the country heading for better or for worse?	Certainly better	1.6%	2.1%
	Better	15.4%	16.1%
	No change	28.1%	23.5%
	Worse	30.8%	34.6%
	Absolutely worse	16.6%	17.0%
	No comment	7.5%	6.6%
	Sample size	1029	1029

Note: 98.4% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1029); 6.5% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 1.6% ignored the question.

Table A17. Assessment of Personal and Family Situation Compared to Five Years Ago

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you feel that your personal and family’s situation is better or worse then it was five years ago?	Certainly better	5.5%	4.5%
	Better	27.9%	26.3%
	The same/No change	34.1%	30.5%
	Worse	25.8%	31.1%
	Absolutely worse	6.7%	7.5%
	Sample size	1035	1035

Note: 98.9% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1035).

Table A18. Expectations of Family and Personal Situation in the Future

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
What about the future? Would you expect any improvement in your personal and family’s situation, or it is going to deteriorate?	It will improve	38.5%	33.8%
	Remain the same	22.6%	26.9%
	It will deteriorate	25.1%	27.1%
	No comment	13.8%	12.2%
	Sample size	1030	1030

Note: 98.5% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1030); 12% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 1.8% ignored the question.

Table A19. Assessment of Economic and Political Situation Today

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
In general, how would you assess the economical and political situation in the country today?	Very good	0.3%	0.7%
	Good	9.4%	10.2%
	Neither good nor bad	24.9%	21.2%
	Bad	33.3%	35.4%
	Very bad	27.2%	28.4%
	No comment	4.9%	4.2%

Table A20. Most Critical Situation Facing the Country

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
If you could define the most critical issue that the country is facing today, what would you say?	Life style is poor	15.7%	18.8%
	Education level is low	6.2%	5.8%
	Health services are indecent	3.5%	2.2%
	War possibility between Syria and a surrounding country	6.0%	5.7%
	Absence of public political freedom in the country	22.9%	25.2%
	Prevalence of corruption	20.3%	19.5%
	Rise in living cost especially alimentary products	13.4%	12.5%
	Iraqi refugees	6.7%	4.7%
	Other	5.2%	5.0%

Table A21. Government's Ability to Solve Problems

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you believe that the government is capable of solving the problems that the country is confronting?	Certainly yes	8.4%	7.1%
	Yes	27.2%	29.0%
	No	33.8%	35.4%
	Absolutely not	25.6%	26.5%
	No comment	5.0%	5.0%
	Sample size	1015	1015

Note: 97.0% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1015); 4.9% responded with "no comment" to this question, an additional 3% ignored the question.

Table A22. Assessment of Performance of Governmental Institutions

Question	Response	Weighted	Unweighted
How do you find the performance of the government's institutions in general?	Certainly good	1.0%	1.2%
	Good	6.3%	7.4%
	Mediocre	40.2%	31.2%
	Bad	31.3%	36.3%
	Absolutely bad	21.4%	23.9%
	Sample size	984	984

Note: 94.1% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 984).

Table A23. Assessment of Encouragement to Emigrate

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do life, work, or other circumstances encourage you to emigrate?	Yes	51.9%	55.1%
	No	47.9%	44.9%
	Sample size	1023	1023

Note: 97.8% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1023).

Table A24. Assessment of Citizens' Abilities To Get Jobs/Positions Without Intermediaries

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you think that a simple citizen can get a job or a government position without an intermediary (connections)?	Certainly yes	1.3%	1.9%
	Yes	20.1%	18.1%
	No	44.1%	41.0%
	Absolutely not	30.7%	35.8%
	No comment	3.8%	3.3%
	Sample size	1018	1018

Note: 94.1% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1018); 3.3% responded with "no comment" to this question, an additional 2.7% ignored the question.

Table A25. Assessment of Traveling Desires

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Which country do you most wish to travel to?	Saudi Arabia or another Gulf country	24.9%	26.0%
	Lebanon	7.8%	6.1%
	USA or Canada	18.8%	19.7%
	A country in Latin America	2.4%	3.5%
	A European country	39.0%	38.9%
	Other	7.1%	5.9%
	Sample size	999	999

Note: 95.5% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 999).

Table A26. Assessment of Government Corruption

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you believe that corruption is spread in the government ministries and public administrations throughout the country?	Certainly yes	47.6%	48.6%
	Yes	39.3%	40.4%
	No	4.7%	3.3%
	Absolutely not	1.7%	2.0%
	No comment	6.7%	5.6%
	Sample size	1027	1027

Note: 98.2% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1027); 5.6% responded with "no comment" to this question, an additional 1.8% ignored the question.

Table A27. Assessment of Current Corruption Compared with Corruption in the Past

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
If you believe that corruption exists, in your opinion, is there more or less than in the past?	A lot more today	25.4%	26.1%
	A little bit more today	31.5%	34.7%
	As it was in the past	27.7%	24.4%
	A little bit less today	9.3%	9.9%
	A lot less today	6.2%	5.0%
	Sample size	1009	1009

Note: 96.5% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1009).

Table A28. Expectation Concerning Government Corruption in the Future

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
If you believe that corruption exists, in your opinion, is it going to increase, diminish, or remain the same in the future?	Increase	44.2%	54.7%
	Diminish	15.5%	14.9%
	Stay the same	40.3%	30.4%
	Sample size	1004	1004

Note: 96.0% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1004).

Table A29. Assessment of Democracy and Human Rights

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
How do you judge democracy and human rights in Syria?	Very good	1.1%	1.6%
	Good	7.9%	7.7%
	Neither good or bad	22.5%	18.2%
	Bad	25.5%	28.3%
	Very bad	34.1%	37.3%
	No comment	8.9%	6.9%
	Sample size	1013	1013

Note: 90.2% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1013); 6.7% responded with “no comment” to this question, an additional 3.2% ignored the question.

Table A30. Respondents' Knowledge of the "Damascus Declaration"

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Have you read the "Damascus Declaration" or heard about it?	Yes	62.5%	66.9%
	No	37.5%	33.0%
	Sample size	1028	1028

Note: 98.3% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1028).

Table A31. Respondents' Opinions Concerning the "Damascus Declaration"

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
If yes, what is your opinion concerning the "Damascus Declaration?"	Positive	47.3%	46.8%
	Neutral	30.9%	33.1%
	Negative	9.3%	10.5%
	Undecided	12.4%	9.7%
	Sample size	723	723

Note: This calculation was limited to those respondents who reported having knowledge of the Damascus Declaration.

Table A32. Respondents' Opinions Concerning Lifting Syrian "Martial Law"

Question	Measure	Weighted	Unweighted
Do you agree or disagree that "martial law" should be lifted in Syria?	Strongly agree	48.2%	51.1%
	Agree	31.5%	32.4%
	Disagree	4.3%	4.6%
	Strongly disagree	1.2%	1.1%
	No comment	14.8%	10.8%
	Sample size	1008	1008

Note: 85.9% of survey participants responded to this question (n = 1008); 10.4% responded with "no comment" to this question, an additional 3.6% ignored the question.