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## **IRI Iraq Index**

The April 2011 survey of the Northern Triangle, which includes the provinces of Ninawa, Salahhadin, Kirkuk, Diyala and Anbar, tested Iraqis' opinions on key questions related to local level governance. This survey is part of a series of regional polls IRI has conducted in Iraq, the most recent of which tested opinion in the Kurdistan region in [December 2010](#). Prior to the Kurdistan region poll, IRI conducted a series of nationwide surveys, the most recent of which was conducted in [October 2010](#).

### *Economic Mood and General Indicators*

The economic mood in the five provinces of the Northern Triangle is fairly optimistic. Diyala (58 percent), Ninawa (59 percent) and Salahhadin (54 percent) all had clear majorities answer very good or somewhat good when asked to describe the current economic situation in Iraq. Kirkuk, with 49 percent responding very good or somewhat good, was more mixed but again still relatively positive. Only Anbar, with 22 percent of participants responding positively and 75 percent responding very bad or somewhat bad, showed a pessimistic outlook for the country's economy.

This favorable feeling about the economy was reinforced across four of the five provinces. When respondents were asked about their own household economic situations, clear majorities or pluralities said that their household's financial situation was doing better than the previous year: Ninawa – 61 percent better, 20 percent worse; Kirkuk – 44 percent better, 11 percent worse; Salahhadin – 41 percent better, 22 percent worse; and Diyala – 47 percent better, 42 percent worse.

Again, only Anbar responded negatively, with 25 percent responding better and 38 percent worse. One possible reason for the economic pessimism in Anbar is the ongoing conflict between provincial and federal authorities over the development of the Akkaz natural gas field. The federal government has been aggressively attempting to control the development of this field, blocking attempts by the Anbar provincial council to funnel development funds into the local economy.

This positive mood about the economy did not carry over on the question of whether Iraq is headed in the right direction. Of the five provinces, only Diyala responded

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positively, with 60 percent responding that Iraq was headed in the right direction. The other provinces indicated the country was headed in the wrong direction: Anbar – 86 percent wrong direction, 10 percent right direction; Kirkuk – 57 percent wrong direction, 33 percent right direction; Salahhadin – 45 percent wrong direction, 35 percent right direction; and Ninawa – 47 percent wrong direction, 44 percent right direction. Diyala's relative optimism may be attributable to a decline in violence that occurred more recently compared to the rest of Iraq.

### *Basic Services and Security*

Unlike the December 2010 Kurdistan region survey, in which the delivery of basic services was viewed as the biggest priority in the country as a whole, the plurality of respondents in the Northern Triangle survey (40 percent) ranked security as the single biggest problem facing the country as a whole. This is, however, an improvement from the IRI October 2010 national survey, in which 47 percent of respondents in the provinces of Anbar, Salahhadin and Diyala, and 63 percent in Ninawa and Kirkuk, listed security as the biggest problem.

When respondents were asked whether security in Iraq had gotten better or worse over the last year, there was progress in all the provinces except Anbar. Ninety percent of Diyala residents said that security had either become much better or somewhat better compared to only four percent who said somewhat worse or much worse. Seventy percent of Ninawa responded somewhat better or much better while 18 percent said somewhat worse or much worse. Forty-eight percent of Salahhadin answered positively while only 19 percent responded somewhat worse or much worse. Kirkuk's sentiment was more evenly split, with 33 percent responding positively, 28 percent negatively and 39 percent saying the situation had stayed the same.

Anbar was the only province viewing security progress negatively, with 47 percent of respondents saying security in Iraq had gotten somewhat worse or much worse while only 40 percent believed it had improved. This marks a significant downturn from previous IRI surveys. In [June 2010](#), 77 percent of Anbar residents said that the security situation had become better as opposed to only 23 percent who said that it had become worse; in October 2010, 66 percent said better to 24 percent who responded worse. This is a troubling indicator of a worsening security situation in Anbar.

When asked what is the single biggest problem facing their province, as opposed to the country as a whole, respondents were split among basic services, security, unemployment and other issues. The province most concerned about basic services was Kirkuk, with 54 percent. Residents of Anbar were the least concerned about basic services, out of the provinces surveyed. Only 25 percent of residents cited basic services as the single biggest problem there, while 37 percent of Anbar listed security.

Next, the survey asked respondents who they thought was responsible for the situation in their provinces. In all provinces, except Diyala, a plurality placed responsibility for

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electricity, security, unemployment and government corruption with Prime Minister Maliki. Kirkuk was particularly inclined to hold the Prime Minister responsible, with 85 percent listing him as responsible for electricity, 78 percent for security and 62 percent for government corruption. Wages and salaries were seen as the responsibility of the Iraqi parliament by a plurality in every province, while services like water, sewage, etc. were seen as the responsibility of the provincial councils in four of the five provinces.

#### *Provincial Councils and Federalism*

When asked whether their parliamentarians were listening to the needs of the people, every province surveyed except Salahhadin answered negatively: Kirkuk – 73 percent, Anbar – 70 percent, Diyala – 68 percent and Ninawa – 56 percent. Salahhadin was the only province to answer positively, with 55 percent. When asked a similar question with regards to their provincial councils, majorities in every province except Salahhadin answered negatively. Salahhadin was statistically split on the question, with 48 percent responding that the provincial council did not listen to the needs of the people and 45 percent responding that it did.

In this survey Iraqis continued the trend identified in earlier IRI polling of preferring a strong central government to a decentralized one, with some important exceptions. When asked if they would prefer a strong provincial council or a strong federal government, 52 percent said a strong federal government, with 41 percent preferring a strong provincial council. This preference toward a strong central government was a decline, however, from the October 2010 poll, in which the five provinces preferred a strong central government by 61 percent.

When asked if they agreed with the statement that most of Iraq's oil revenues should go to the central government, not the provinces, strong majorities in every province except Salahhadin answered in the affirmative. Yet, when asked if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the central government's performance managing oil revenues, strong majorities answered negatively. Anbar exemplifies this contradiction, 64 percent in favor the central government getting most oil revenues, but 92 percent are dissatisfied with the central government's handling of those revenues.

Despite their preference for a strong central government, Iraqis felt strongly that the provincial councils should manage basic services, and furthermore were largely optimistic that the councils would improve conditions in the coming year. When asked if they support their provincial council handling basic services like water, sewage, electricity, garbage collection and road maintenance rather than the central government, large majorities responded in favor of the provincial councils: 93 percent in Salahhaddin, 81 percent in Anbar, 70 percent in Kirkuk and 64 percent in Ninawa. Likewise, when asked if it is likely that their provincial council will improve conditions in terms of basic services, jobs and security, majorities in Salahhadin, Anbar, Kirkuk and Ninawa responded that it was likely.

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The province of Diyala proved the exception, preferring the central government to handle basic services by 54 percent. When asked if they felt their provincial council would improve conditions in the province, 64 percent of Diyala residents responded not likely, and only 35 percent responded likely. When asked later in the survey how important it was that elections be held for local councils this year, 78 percent of Diyala residents responded very important, by far the most emphatic of the provinces surveyed, reinforcing a deep dissatisfaction with the performance of the provincial government there.

### *Article 140 and the Status of Kirkuk*

In response to a question on how likely it is for tensions between Arabs and Kurds in the disputed territories to turn violent in the next year, majorities in every province except Kirkuk answered very likely or somewhat likely. In Kirkuk, however, 69 percent of respondents answered not very likely or not at all likely. As was first identified by IRI in its [December 2009](#) poll, these sentiments transcend ethnicity or sect, with comparable majorities among Kurds, Sunnis and Shia responding similarly.

IRI asked residents of Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salahhadin if they supported implementing Article 140 from the Iraqi constitution in their province. Article 140 is the article of the Iraqi constitution that allows provinces to vote to become, or join, semi-autonomous regions such as the Kurdistan region. Diyala and Salahhadin, both with small Kurdish and Turkmen populations, opposed implementation by large margins: 64 percent and 65 percent against, respectively. Kirkuk and Ninawa, with large Kurdish and Turkmen populations, both supported the implementation of Article 140: 49 percent in favor, 38 percent opposed in Kirkuk and 50 percent in favor and 33 percent opposed in Ninawa.

IRI asked a series of questions on whether respondents would respect various possible outcomes of a hypothetical Article 140 referendum in Kirkuk. When asked if they would respect the results of a referendum in which the residents of Kirkuk voted to join the Kurdistan region, only Kirkuk and Ninawa showed support. In Kirkuk, however, the results were within the margin of error, with only 44 percent responding in favor and 39 percent opposed. When asked if they would respect a referendum that voted for Kirkuk to become its own region, even larger majorities in Ninawa and Kirkuk replied positively: 74 percent of Kirkuk residents responded they would respect this result, while 64 percent of Ninawa residents said they would. Strong majorities in Anbar, Salahhadin and Diyala opposed both the option of Kirkuk joining the Kurdistan region, and of Kirkuk becoming its own region. The universally-preferred result of such a referendum would be if Kirkuk voted for the status quo, with between 69 percent of residents in Ninawa and 90 percent in Anbar responding that they would respect this result.

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