



IRI Iraq Index

The International Republican Institute's (IRI) September 2012 nationwide survey of Iraq tested opinions on key issues and how the country's local and national levels of government responded to those issues. This survey is part of a series of national and regional polls that IRI has conducted in Iraq, including the [Southern region in December 2011](#), the [Central region in September 2011](#), the [Northern Triangle in April 2011](#) and the [Kurdistan region in December 2010](#). Prior to the Kurdistan region poll, IRI's most recent nationwide survey was conducted in [October 2010](#).

Economic Mood and General Indicators

Though a 55 percent majority across all 18 provinces felt that Iraq as a whole was going in the wrong direction, the provinces were largely divided. The most pessimistic provinces were Dahuk and Anbar, where 81 percent and 80 percent respectively believed the country was heading in the wrong direction. Majorities felt similarly in Sulaymaniya, Kirkuk, Ninawa, Erbil, Qadisiya, Dhi-Qar and Baghdad. However, large majorities in both Maysan (70 percent) and Muthanna (64 percent) stated Iraq was heading in the right direction, as did majorities in Najaf and Diyala. Overall, this indicator was almost unchanged from the October 2010 survey, when 57 percent of respondents reported the nation headed in the wrong direction and 35 percent said the right direction.

Although the majority of Iraqis believe the country is headed in the wrong direction, the perception on the overall economic situation was positive among respondents, with 56 percent indicating that the situation in the country was either very good or somewhat good. In Maysan and Karbala provinces, respondents were the most positive with 78 percent in Maysan and 71 percent in Karbala saying that the situation was either very good or somewhat good and only 22 percent and 28 percent respectively saying that it was either very bad or somewhat bad. Notably, the only province in which the majority reported a pessimistic outlook on the economic situation was Anbar, where 72 percent of the population found the current economic situation to be either very or somewhat bad.

These results were an improvement over the October 2010 national survey, in which Iraqi opinion was more evenly split over the country's economic situation. In 2010, 50 percent of those polled believed the situation was somewhat or very bad, and 49 percent indicated it was somewhat or very good.

In keeping with the overall positive shift in opinion, a number of the provinces were much more favorable in their 2012 viewpoints versus their 2010 viewpoints. For instance, in 2010 only 38 percent of the respondents in Wasit and 39 percent of the respondents in Baghdad reported the economic situation to be either very good or somewhat good. In comparison, the 2012 survey showed 56 percent of respondents in

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Wasit and 50 percent of the respondents in Baghdad with favorable opinions of the country's economic situation. Responses that the economic situation was either very good or somewhat good in October 2010 exceeded the September 2012 results in Karbala (81 percent in 2010 versus 71 percent in 2012), Babil (68 percent in 2010 versus 56 percent in 2012), and Najaf (62 in 2010 percent versus 59 percent in 2012), suggesting a relative cooling of economic optimism in this region of Iraq.

When respondents were asked about their own household economic situations, pluralities in all but three provinces said that their household's financial situation was doing better than it had been in the previous year, again reflecting an overall positive economic outlook in the country. The three provinces reporting the highest levels of household financial improvement were: Dahuk, 68 percent reported a better financial situation, 10 percent worse; Kirkuk, 63 percent said better and six percent worse; and Erbil, 59 percent reported better and 24 percent worse. Although no provinces showed pluralities that believed their household financial situation had gotten worse over the last year, Anbar was the only province of the 18 that had a plurality, 36 percent, reporting that its household economic situation had stayed the same.

Issues: Basic Services, Security and Corruption

The September survey found that a narrow plurality of respondents, 21 percent, viewed lack of water and electricity as the most significant problem facing the country, with security and government corruption tied for second and third place at 19 percent each. This was a reversal from the October 2010 national survey, in which 36 percent of respondents viewed security as the biggest problem facing the country, with water and electricity second at 25 percent and government corruption third at 15 percent.

Regarding security, 58 percent of respondents said that security in Iraq had improved over the last year, with 24 percent responding that it had worsened. Although a continued positive trend, sentiment had slightly worsened since the October 2010 survey when 65 percent of Iraqis said that security had improved in the last year. This is likely a result of escalated violence throughout the summer from insurgent groups across Iraq.

At the provincial level, sentiment towards security was more varied. When asked if security in their province had improved over the last year, respondents in 16 of the 18 provinces answered positively. This belief was particularly apparent in Dhi-Qar, Najaf and Maysan, where more than 80 percent of the population surveyed felt that security had gotten better. The outliers were Babil and Salahhadin, where 39 percent of respondents in each province felt that security had gotten worse.

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When read a list of seven issues and asked if the situation had improved or worsened over the last year, respondents provided varied answers. Government corruption stood out as the worst indicator with 61 percent of respondents saying it had gotten worse or much worse; 25 percent said it was the same as last year, and only nine percent described it as having improved. Corruption in Iraq’s government was the only issue in which a plurality of respondents described it as having gotten much worse over the last year. Unemployment also worsened over the last year with 54 percent of respondents saying it had gotten worse or much worse; 33 percent said it was the same as last year.

Provincial Councils and Federalism

When asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement “would you say that representatives in the Iraqi parliament are representing the needs and interests of the people,” 71 percent of nationwide respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed. This sentiment was particularly strong in Muthanna and Anbar, 87 percent and 83 percent disagreed, respectively. On the other hand, Sulaymaniya and Najaf were more positive in their perceptions of the Council of Representatives: 45 percent in Sulaymaniya and 44 percent in Najaf agreed that parliament was representing their interests.

When asked a similar question with regards to their provincial councils, again, majorities or pluralities in all provinces answered negatively – 64 percent of respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed that their provincial council represents the needs and interests of the people. Matching its sentiment towards the parliament, Muthanna was particularly negative with 90 percent expressing that their representatives in the provincial council were not representing their needs.

Scored side by side, however, the provincial councils were perceived by Iraqis slightly more positively than the parliament, with 32 percent of Iraqis agreeing that their provincial councils represent their needs, versus only 25 percent for the national parliament. The parliament also garnered a stronger negative response, with 38 percent responding that they strongly disagreed that parliament represented their needs, while only 26 percent said they strongly disagreed that provincial councils did so.

Furthermore, when asked if they believed Iraq’s federal government and provincial governments worked well together, an overwhelming 80 percent responded negatively, with 58 percent responding that they strongly disagreed.

Respondents were overwhelmingly favorable to the idea of provincial councils having greater authority than the federal government. In total, 87 percent of respondents either somewhat or strongly preferred the idea of provincial councils having more authority, while only one percent indicated they would prefer the federal government have more authority; 12 percent did not know or refused to answer.

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Muthanna (98 percent), Anbar (98 percent) and Dhi-Qar (97 percent) were the most unanimous in their responses; Babil and Dahuk, though still favored more authority for provincial councils, were the least decisive overall, with nearly a third of respondents from these two provinces (31 and 29 percent respectively) not knowing or refusing to answer.

When asked how Iraq's oil revenues should be directed, the plurality of respondents (39 percent) believed that revenues should be used to improve basic services such as water and electricity. This choice was followed by a preference for putting revenue towards creating jobs (22 percent) and improving security (19 percent).

A majority of those surveyed believed that their provincial councils were likely to improve conditions in terms of both basic services (63 percent) and security (60 percent), but not in terms of jobs. When asked about the likelihood of the respondent's provincial council improving job conditions, 57 percent, representing majorities in 13 of the 18 provinces, responded that it was not likely.

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