

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

YOUTH IN JORDAN

FES MENA Youth Study: Results Analysis

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This survey was performed from September to November 2021 through 1,047 face-to-face interviews with Jordanians aged 16 to 30 with varying educational and socio-economic backgrounds and places of residence. In the category of religion, youth see themselves as more religious than five years ago, and the vast majority believe that Islam should play a larger role in public life. Religiosity and conservatism are prevalent among young people and have certainly influenced the way in which they view the government. In the democracy and policy section of the survey, youth were found to most strongly favour a governmental system based on Sharia law or a combined democratic and Islamic system over a purely democratic one.



Young people were, additionally, found to trust more traditional institutions, such as the family, tribe and military more than representative institutions, such as parliament and civil society. The younger generation's view of the government may have led to decreased political participation as the majority of youth say that the overall political situation in Jordan has deteriorated and over 70 per cent of young people reported not being interested in politics. Despite this distrust in representative institutions, over two-thirds of youth believe the government should play a larger role in the daily lives of its citizens. Lastly, it is clear from the survey that the majority of Jordanian youth are aware of and worried about climate change.



Climate activism was a very popular form of civic engagement, second only to helping poor and vulnerable groups. In conclusion, while positive perceptions of the government among youth do not seem to have increased in response to reforms, young people's desire for the government to be more involved in daily life is still very present. Religiosity has become increasingly valued over the past few years and it is clear that youth support a more conservative style of governmental system as Jordan continues to reform. Lastly, the climate emergency in Jordan is at the forefront of the younger generation's minds. While to many it seems like a hopeless endeavour, youth are eager to advocate for climate change solutions.

Further information on the topic can be found here:

<https://mena.fes.de/topics/youth-study>

<https://jordan.fes.de>

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1

INTRODUCTION

Youth in Jordan between the ages of 16 and 30 represent approximately one-third of the population. Of the youth population, approximately one-third of individuals who have completed secondary education are enrolled in university. Despite this level of higher education, inconsistencies between Jordan's college-educated youth and the skills required by the workforce, an insufficient labour demand, and a lack of transitional training has failed to result in benefits for this population.

In recent years, this has led to record increases in the youth unemployment rate in Jordan. The share of unemployed people aged between 15 and 24 years increased to 37.8 per cent, while for those aged between 25 and 39 years, the percentage reaches as high as 50 per cent, and the female unemployment rate for the same age group is 62.3 per cent (The Jordan Times 2022). Among young people who have successfully completed secondary education, 85 per cent go to university, which creates a high demand for jobs in specific fields that match their education level. This high demand is related to expatriate (mainly Egyptian and Syrian) workers taking on employment in other sectors, as this affects the opportunities available for young Jordanians who would have been seeking jobs in fields that do not necessarily require secondary or tertiary education.

In light of the high rate of unemployment, young people's priority is to find a job. High unemployment rates have led to a trust gap between the government and youth, which has in turn increased feelings of political and economic marginalisation. As a result, like their peers across the region, unemployed youth have taken to the streets to demonstrate in different areas of Jordan.

These challenges have prompted the Jordanian government to pay more attention to the younger generation in recent years. For instance, the Crown Prince Foundation for Youth was established in 2015, the Ministry of Youth took over a year to launch the National Youth Strategy of the years 2019-2025, and recent royal meetings and dialogues fo-

cused on the younger generation, their demands and priorities. For the first time, young people were directly involved in the committee formed by King Abdullah II to modernise the political system, and a sub-committee was formed with a focus on integrating the younger generation into political and party work. Moreover, the average age of parliamentary election candidates was reduced from 30 to 25 years, which necessitated constitutional and legal amendments. As a result of a new political parties' law, parties are required to ensure that 10 per cent of their membership at the time of formation consists of women and young people, followed by 20 per cent after 3 years of existence.

These new policies aimed at bridging the gap between the state and the younger generation in recognition of the economic challenges and the daily pressures they face, and of the increasingly important and effective role they have been playing in the protest movement since the Arab Spring. This survey comes at a time when Jordan is trying to encourage more positive attitudes among young people towards the state and official policies. As such, it is an important instrument for measuring attitudes and reflecting on the changes that have taken place, coinciding with the Arab Barometer (2021-2022) report that shows that approximately 63 per cent of Jordanian youth (18-29 years) are considering emigrating.

The survey raised many questions and issues related to Jordanian youth. In this report, we will focus on three main questions that in fact cover multiple issues. The first is a question pertaining to the religious orientation of Jordanian youth and their social values. The second is related to young people's positions on the subject of democracy and Jordanian policies. And the third is related to climate change and young people's awareness of the importance of this issue.

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METHODOLOGY

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) views young women and men as instrumental for democratic development in the region and is keen to strengthen their potential to initiate change in the world of politics and across society. Based on the results on a long-term survey, launched in 2016, the FES seeks to provide insight into young people's situation in the MENA region. In 2021, the FES launched its second large-scale representative survey in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as in Tunisia and Yemen. With the 1,000 in-depth interviews conducted for each country, the FES MENA Youth Study generates a large database of answers to around 200 questions concerning the personal background of the interviewees and their views on a variety of topics.¹

2.1 SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

For reasons of feasibility, a nationwide quota sampling method was chosen, with the aim of conducting 1,000 interviews per country. This sample size is considered adequately representative of the target group as well as socio-demographic and regional subgroups (e.g., age, gender, level of education).

In Jordan, the local institute responsible for fieldwork and sampling was NAMA Strategic Intelligence Solutions. The institute has an established set of methods for selecting sampling points and identifying eligible households to survey, with the aim of randomising the selection process as much as possible. The aim was to ensure a geographic spread of respondents that was as close as possible to the distribution of the survey universe in the respective country. For each geographic area, the institute provided a list of sampling points.

The fieldwork phase was conducted between September and November 2021. The survey ultimately reached 1,047 Jordanians aged between 16 and 30 years. The data was

collected in face-to-face interviews conducted with computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) technology. All interviews were carried out in the local Arabic dialect. Interviews were held at respondents' homes or in public places, such as cafés, community centres and the like. It was of major importance that the respondents felt comfortable and the interview locations were chosen accordingly.

The data collected was stored in a central CAPI database. During the fieldwork, Kantar Public, a specialist research, evidence and advisory business, carried out data validation with sets of interim data via Excel and SPSS (statistical software program) syntaxes. In parallel, Kantar Public and the University of Leipzig conducted the final comprehensive data check. To ensure that the final structure of the sampling reflected the structure of the survey universe, differences were reduced with factorial weighting. The survey data was weighted for all target groups with respect to the structural variables of age, gender, and region, based on available statistics.

2.2 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Of the surveyed population (youth aged 16-30 years), the majority (49 per cent) live in a large city (more than 500,000 people), 3 per cent in refugee camps, 25 per cent in villages and towns up to 20,000 inhabitants and 23 per cent in cities up to 500,000.

A total of 30 per cent of the respondents were in the 16-20 year age group, 36 per cent were in the 21-25 year age group, and 34 per cent in the upper age group (26-30 years). In addition, 72 per cent of the total sample were single at the time of the survey (higher among males, at 85 per cent, than females, at 57 per cent), and 26 per cent stated that they were married (higher among females, at 39 per cent, than males, at 14 per cent).

¹ For more information on the FES MENA Youth Study: <https://mena.fes.de/topics/youth-study>

When asked about their living situation, the vast majority (71 per cent) of respondents stated that they lived in the same household as their parents (82 per cent of male respondents and 58 per cent of females), 23 per cent lived with their own nuclear family (with their partner/without their parents).

The average household size across respondents is 5.6 persons per household with an average of 4.1 persons for respondents aged between 16 and 65. Respondents in the 16-20 year age group reported having a higher average household size than the other two age groups (6.3 compared to 5.7 for the 21-25 year age group and 4.9 for the 26-30 year age group). This indicates that, in Jordan, the younger generation tends to have larger families than the older generation.

One-third of respondents (32 per cent) reported that they were students at the time of the survey and 68 per cent reported that they were not. In addition, 46 per cent of students stated that they were attending school and 52 per cent were in university education.

Only 1 per cent have no formal education, 6 per cent have finished primary school, 37 per cent had a medium level of education (secondary/intermediate schooling), 57 per cent have a general secondary education certificate or tawjihi and higher) and 19 per cent of respondents hold a university degree.

A total of 62 per cent stated that the head of the household was their father and 14 per cent said that their mother took this role, 19 per cent responded that their husband/wife was the head of the household but only 10 per cent considered themselves to be the head of the household (multiple responses were possible).

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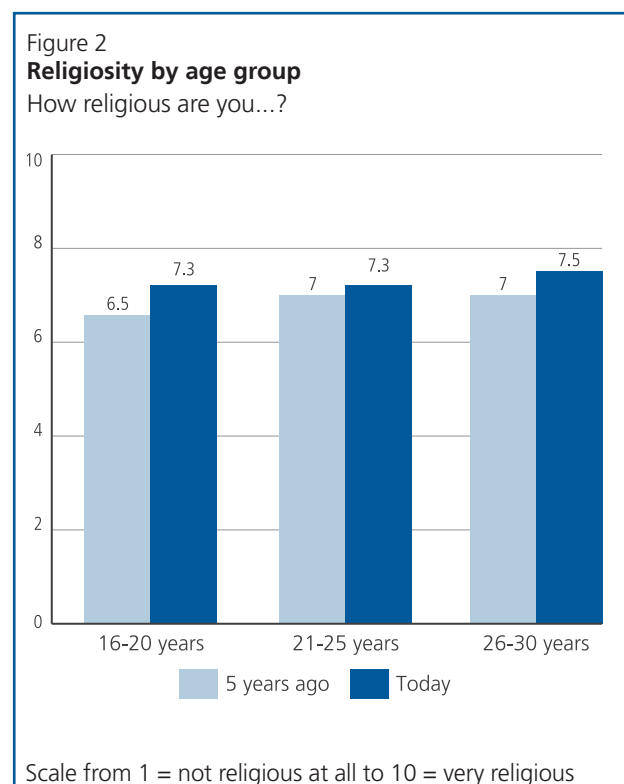
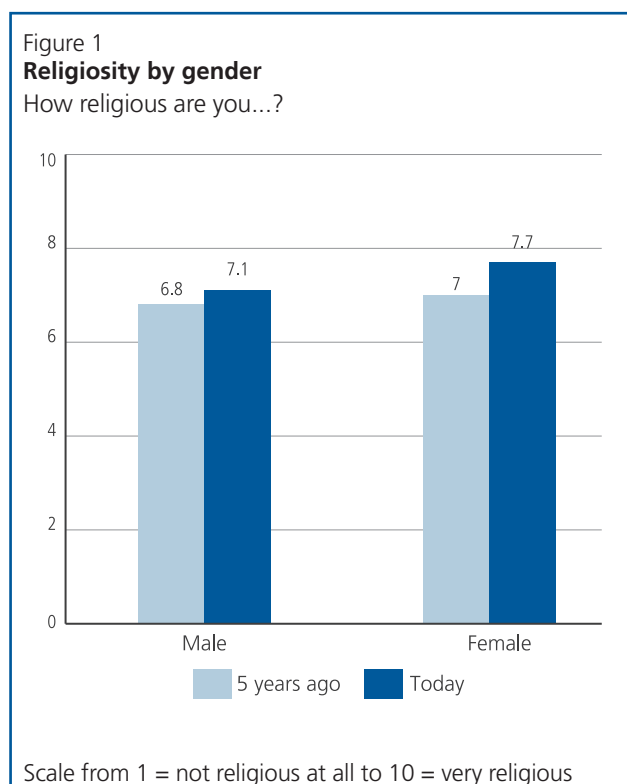
RELIGION AND VALUES

3.1 RELIGION AS A PRIVATE MATTER

An analysis of Figure 1 shows that both genders, on average, consider themselves to be more religious now compared to five years ago (on a scale from 1 to 10). Furthermore, when separated by age group, the older generations described themselves as being more religious in general compared to the 16-20 age group. Although the former consider themselves to be more religious now compared to five years ago, the scale gap between the youngest age group and oldest age group has decreased. Across all levels of education, personal economic situations and milieus of residence (city vs. rural), respondents recorded similar levels of religiosity. Across all groups, the respondents from 2021 stated they are more religious than respondents from 2016. From these responses we can conclude that there is a general rise in religiosity among youth in Jordan, as descriptive factors such as education level or economic status do not affect how religious respondents consider themselves to be.

A study conducted in 2015 entitled »Spiritual Beliefs and Practices, Religiosity, and Spiritual Well-Being Among Jordanian Arab Muslim University Students in Jordan« by Ahmad Musa found a link between spiritual well-being and religiosity. Musa concluded that Jordanian youth participate in religious practices that increase their spiritual well-being. Cultural and spiritual beliefs such as, »everything I do returns to me« were found to motivate students. While social norms and education may be influential variables, it is evident that spirituality and religiosity are ingrained in Jordanian youth as a means to increase their overall well-being, despite other negating categorical factors, such as economic situation, age and gender.

Most Jordanians agree that religion is a private subject that should not be interfered with by others. As illustrated in Figure 3, more than 75 per cent of both male and female groups believe religion is a private matter.



On this subject, respondents also said that they believe Islam should play a larger role in public life. This response was given by both genders, across age groups and personal economic situations. Although it seems to contradict the data regarding religion as a private matter, possible explanations are stated in the following paragraphs. There was one outlier to this question that we found interesting. Respondents in most categories agreed that »Islam should play a larger role in public life« (between 82 and 86 per cent). However, among respondents with a low level of education, only 69 per cent agreed that Islam should play a larger role and 26 per cent thought the role of Islam was fine as it is. From this, we can speculate whether or not these respondents are fully aware and informed of current Islamic influence in public life.

Looking at both results, however, we can see that young people in Jordan would like Islam to play larger role in public life as it is beneficial to society. That said, young people still consider religion to be a private matter in which nobody should interfere. These two responses seem to be contradictory. Either religion is a personal matter and its role is limited in public life, or vice versa, but not both, as the majority of respondents seem to indicate. This reflects a certain confusion regarding the distinction between the role of religion in the public and private spheres.

Another explanation for this apparent inconsistency between the two answers for the majority of participants is that they prefer an individual religiosity pattern which is not associated with a particular group or authority, but, at the same time, they prefer to live in a society underpinned by conservative religious values.

Respondents were asked about the importance of various possible achievements in their life on a scale from 1 (absolutely unimportant) to 10 (absolutely important). On the one hand, the majority assigned high values to believing in God, living a healthy life and being able to trust their partner.

On the other hand, the respondents assigned low values to being politically active, doing what the others do, pursuing their own agenda even if this is against others' interests and allowing their decisions to be guided by their emotions.

While it was not unexpected that the respondents assigned high values to believing in God, it was interesting that the majority of respondents assigned low values to political activism, especially given the high value for related achievements, including safeguarding the country's traditions and respecting law and order.

Figure 3

Religion as a private matter

Do you think religion is a private matter and nobody should interfere?

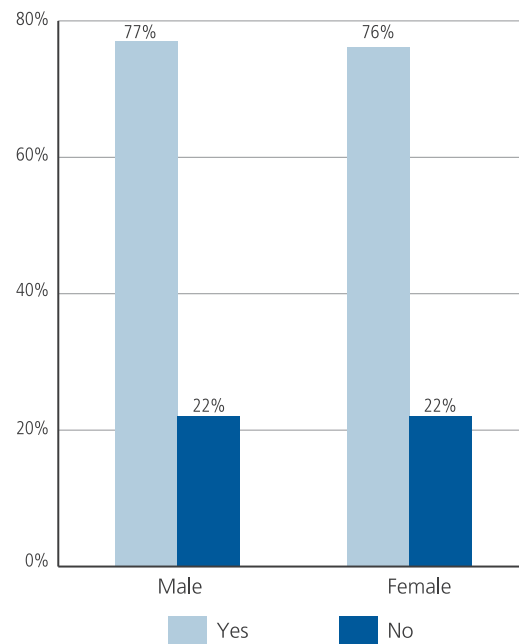
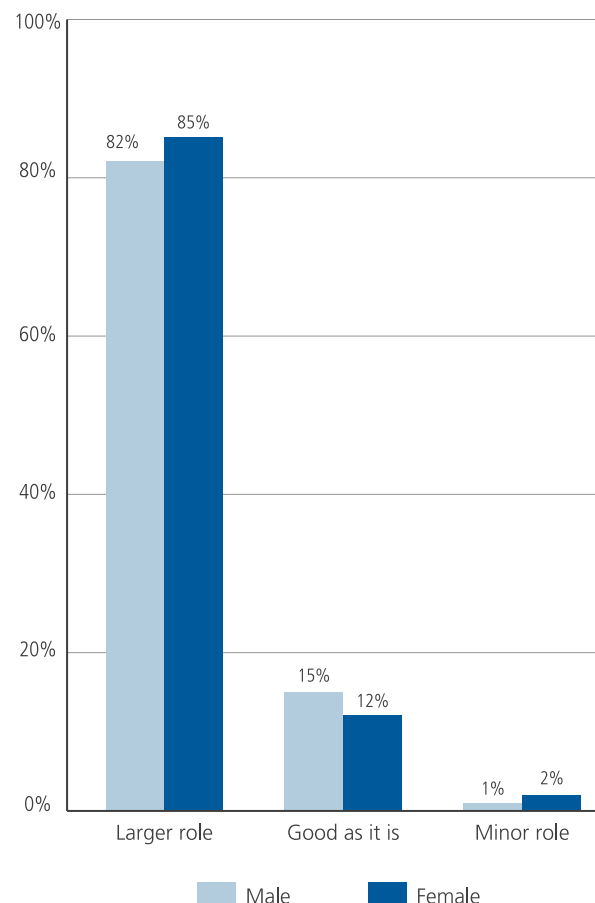


Figure 4

Role of Islam in public life

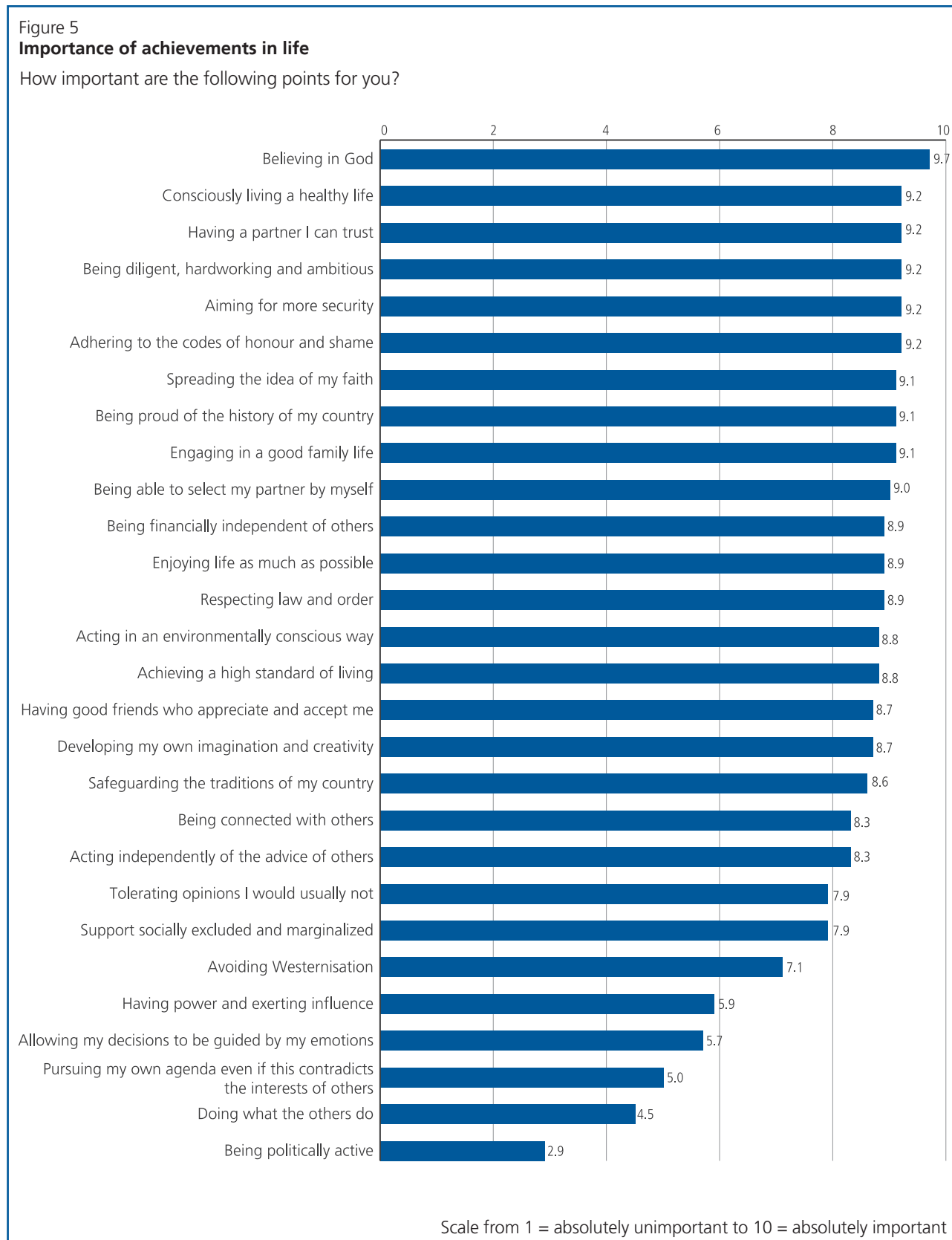
Should Islam play a larger or a minor role in public life, or is it good as it is at the moment?



3.2 PERSONAL VALUES AND ATTITUDES

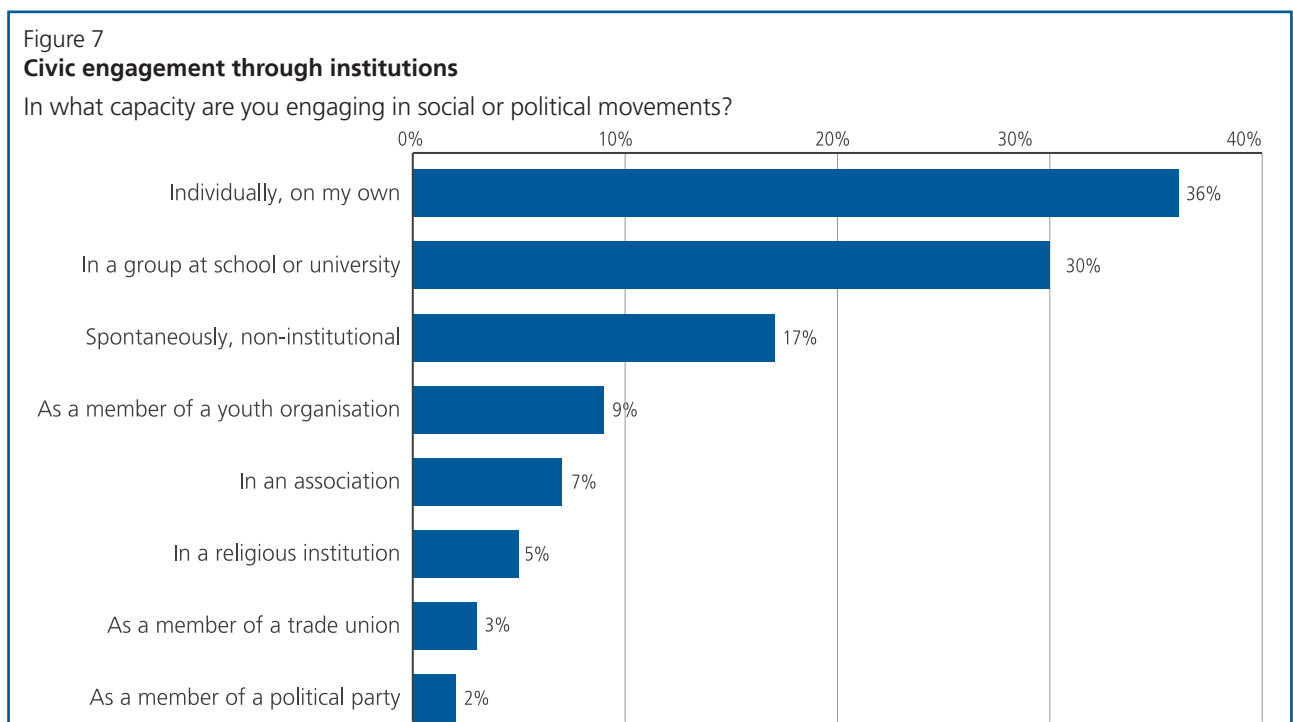
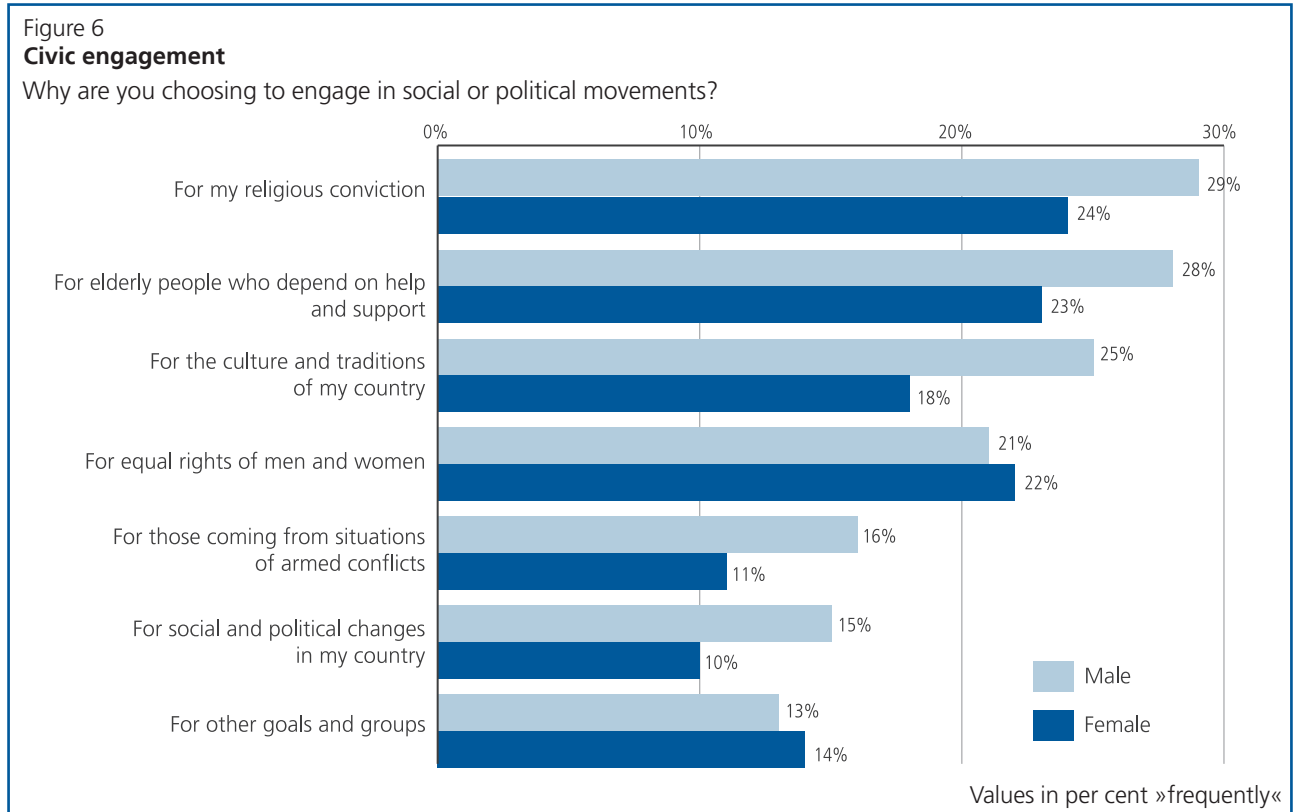
In terms of civic engagement, we can see from the results that young men say they are more »frequently« involved in civic activities for reasons such as religious conviction, desire to help the elderly, and culture and traditions, than women. In comparison, women also responded that they

often engage in equal rights for men and women. These results illustrate the similar, but still varying, importance of different social and political issues between the male and female respondents.



In Jordan, in general, a very low percentage of people trust political parties (The Center for Strategic Studies 2019) and less than 1 per cent are members of political parties. Reasons such as repression, lack of freedom and depoliticization may explain the low numbers. This tendency is also reflected in the responses of Jordanian youth. It can be seen throughout their responses on civic and political participation, for instance, with the results of this study showing that just 30 per cent of the sample engage in a group at school or university, despite the fact that the majority of respondents are enrolled in school or university education. A total of 7

per cent are part of an association, 5 per cent are involved in a religious institution, 2 per cent are members of a political party, 3 per cent are members of a trade union, 9 per cent are members of a youth organisation, but 17 per cent become spontaneously involved in political activity, outside the institutional context, and 36 per cent engage on their own. The results show no significant differences between males and females. In the entire sample, 17 per cent do not engage at all. (Note: multiple responses were possible, thus we have more than 100 per cent in total.)



3.3 TREND TOWARDS RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CONSERVATISM

Various trends can be observed among Jordanian youth in recent years. One of these is their increasing level of religiosity. There is a relative increase in the number of respondents who see themselves as religious and the overall percentage is also generally considered high, especially among young people (16-20 years), that is those born in the new millennium. In this group, the average number of those who see themselves as religious increased by 0.8 percentage points while the increase in other age groups was smaller.

In order to work out the reasons for this result, more in-depth social and cultural studies may be required. This is particularly the case when we consider that the rise of those who see themselves as religious has been coupled with a rise in the tendency towards individual religiosity.

These results are similar to those of the Arab Barometer surveys with regard to the increase in the number of those considering themselves religious (compared to the previous wave). The results of the Arab Barometer on this issue varied between the sixth (2019-2020) and seventh (2021-2022) waves. In Jordan, the percentage of those who do not consider themselves religious declined by 3 per cent. If there is one variable that can explain the high rates of religiosity in the last two years, especially among the younger generation, it is most likely the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to long periods of isolation. This result is reinforced by the fact that the vast majority, with an average assessment of 9.7 out of 10, considered belief in God to be one of the most important values governing their lives.

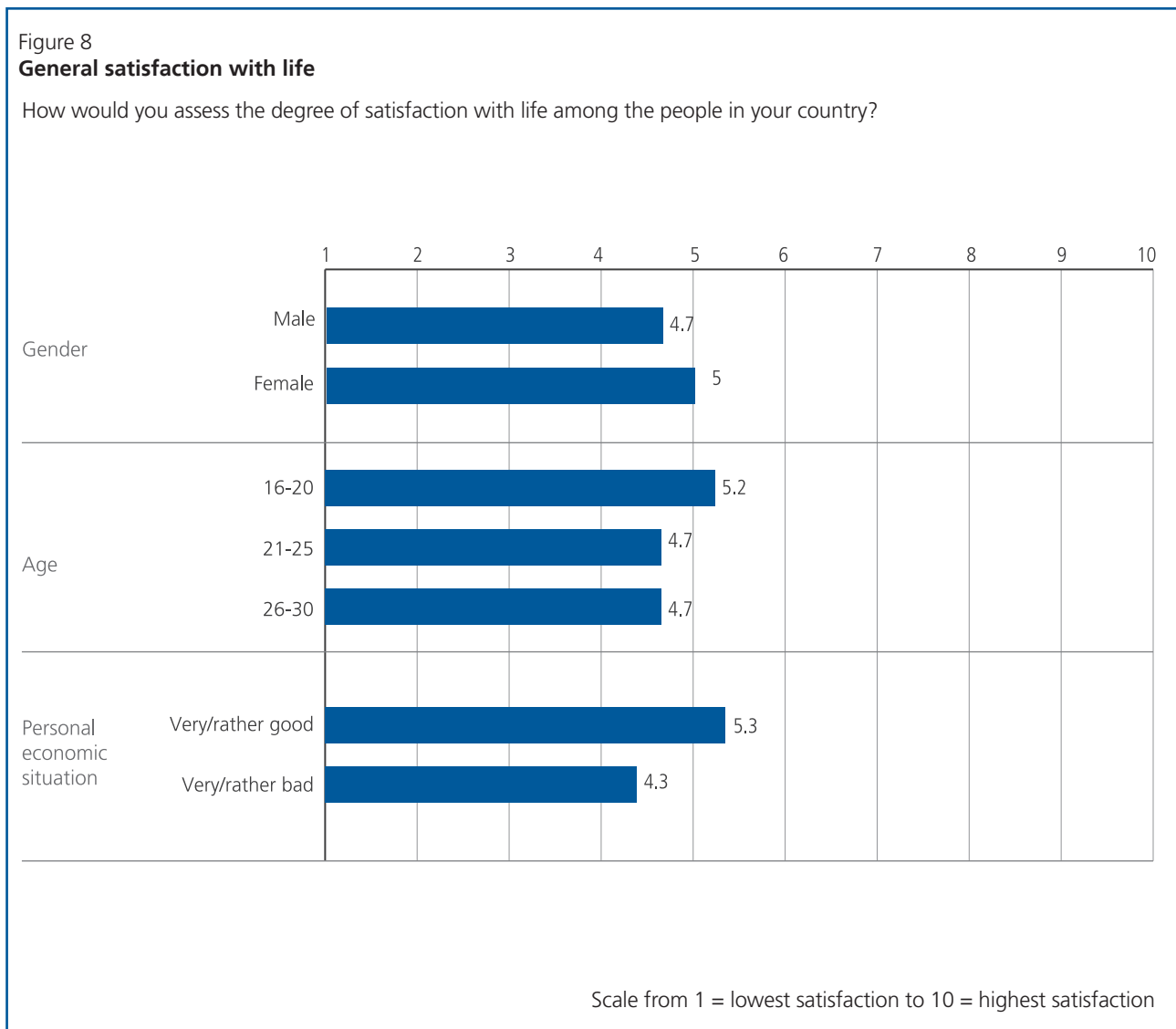
4

POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

This section discusses democratic values and young people’s attitudes towards various political systems. It also examines their satisfaction with current systems in the country, as well as how much they trust political institutions, state institutions, civil society, tribes and their families. These perceptions provide insight into the levels of social and political trust held by youth and the state’s ability to integrate young people into the public sphere nationally.

4.1 SATISFACTION WITH LIFE

The degree of satisfaction with life among the Jordanian population, as assessed by young people, was on average 4.8 (on a scale from 1 to 10), which shows that young people assess people’s satisfaction with life negatively. Young women were more optimistic than young men in this regard (5 for females compared to 4.7 for males). Those within the



16-20 age group gave an average score of 5.2, those within the 21-25 age group 4.7, and those in the 26-30 age group 4.7.

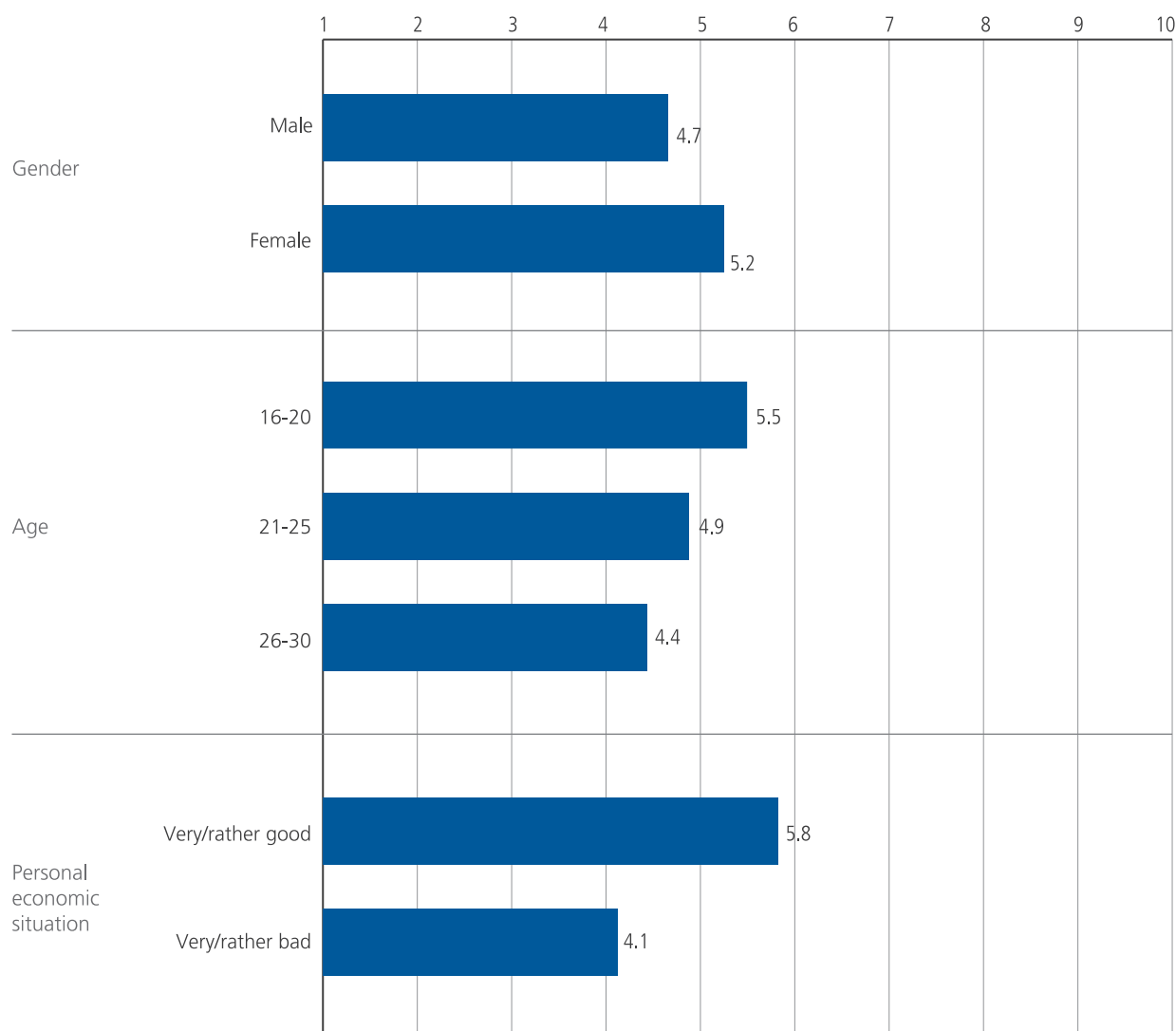
On the personal level, satisfaction with life in Jordan declines with increasing age. Young people in the 16-21 age group are satisfied with their own lives, giving an average score of 5.5, compared to 4.9 for those in the 21-25 age group and 4.4 for those in the upper age group (26-30). This may be due to the fact that the youngest Jordanians surveyed are still in school and university and therefore have not yet begun to face the various pressures of life. The second

group (21-25 years) have then entered the job search stage, and the oldest (26-30 years) are assumed to have entered the stage of economic stability. Due to the harsh economic conditions in the country, satisfaction declines significantly among the oldest segment, and this may not be limited to the economic aspects of life but may also extend to other areas (e.g., satisfaction with general services, infrastructure, government performance).

Figure 9

Personal satisfaction with life

How would you assess your own recent satisfaction with life?



Scale from 1 = lowest satisfaction to 10 = highest satisfaction

4.2 PREFERRED POLITICAL SYSTEM

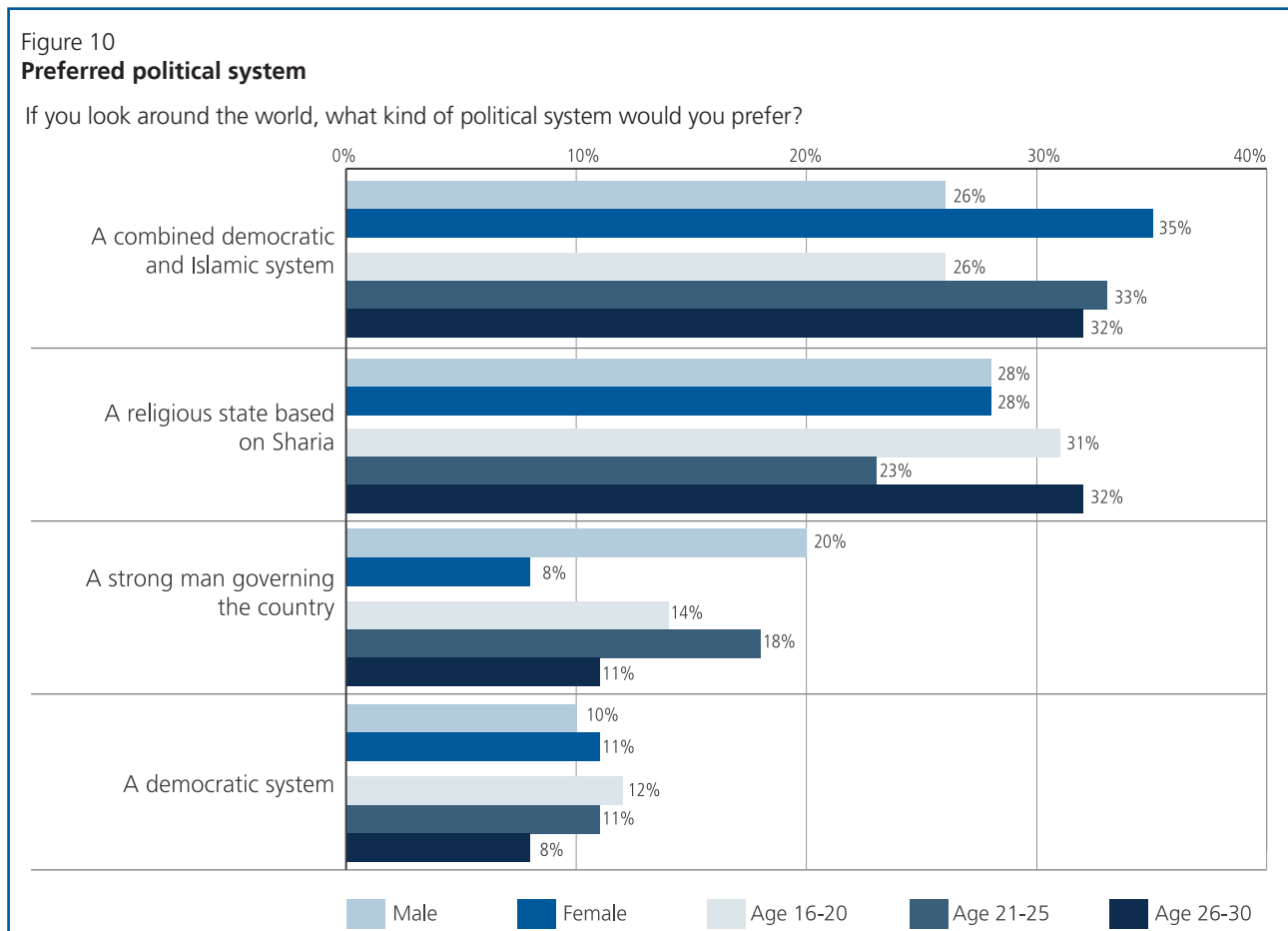
A combined democratic and Islamic system is the most preferred political system among youth, followed by a religious state based on Sharia law. It should be noted that the survey did not ask respondents about their thoughts on a parliamentary monarchy, which is the current Jordanian political system.

On this issue, there were two notable differences between age groups in their responses. A total of 26 per cent of respondents in the 16-20 age group prefer a combined democratic and Islamic system, while 33 per cent of respondents age 21-25 and 32 per cent of respondents age 26-30 prefer this system. Similarly, 31 per cent of 16-20 year olds prefer a religious state based on Sharia, along with 32 per cent of 26-30 year olds. However, only 23 per cent of 21-25 year olds prefer this system, showing differences in opinion for different age groups. There was a difference between male and female responses in two of the categories: the percentage of males in favour of a strong man governing the country was over double that of females. This is likely due to traditional views of power and masculinity in Arab societies favouring men in positions of governmental power over women. In addition, the percentage of women who supported a combined democratic and Islamic system of government was 11 per cent higher than that of men, which shows that women favour some element of democracy in governance more than men do, also seen in views on other political systems.

Across the responses, a clear majority support maintaining the role of religion in the government, with over half of males and females supporting a religious state based on Sharia or a combined democratic and Islamic system.

The results of the survey show that 20 per cent of male respondents prefer a strong man to govern the country compared to just 8 per cent of females. Only 1 per cent of males and 4 per cent of females prefer a strong woman to govern the country, which speaks to the distrust of women in politics. A total of 28 per cent of males and females prefer a religious state based on Sharia law, 1 per cent of males and females prefer a socialist system, 3 per cent of both genders prefer a combined socialist and Islamic system, 10 per cent of males and 11 per cent of females prefer a democratic system, 26 per cent of males and 35 per cent of females prefer a combined democratic and Islamic system.

Based on these results, there seems to be a growing tendency among young people to prefer a greater role of religion in the public sphere, compared to other forms of political systems such as democracy and strong male rule. Here there is a clear difference between these findings and those of the seventh Arab Barometer report, where the majority of respondents in the latter (not limited to youth) indicating a preference for a democratic system over others, while acknowledging that it has many problems.



4.3 TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS AND THE STATE

The family is the institution most trusted by Jordanian youth overall. Of the public sector institutions, the most trusted institutions are the armed forces and security institutions, followed by tribes and the legal system. The least trusted institutions are political parties and the parliament.

The Arab Barometer carried out polls among a diverse group of Jordanian citizens in both 2019 and 2021. The results of these polls are useful in comparing the views of Jordanian youth versus a wider group of citizens. The results shown in Figure 11 are surprising given that according to the Arab Barometer, there has been a decline in support for the government from 63 per cent in September 2020 to 43 per cent in March 2021.

Youth tend to have less trust in the healthcare, police, military and judiciary systems, and more trust in the education system than the rest of the Jordanian public. In 2021, the Arab Barometer calculated that 57 per cent of Jordanian citizens trust the healthcare system, while the corresponding figure for youth was 67 per cent according to this study. Trust in the police force among the general public in Jordan was calculated as 90 per cent in 2019 and about 90 per cent among youth in 2021. Similarly, there is a high trust in the military: in 2019 it was 90 per cent among the Jordanian public and in 2021, it was about 93 per cent (Arab Barometer 2019, 2021).

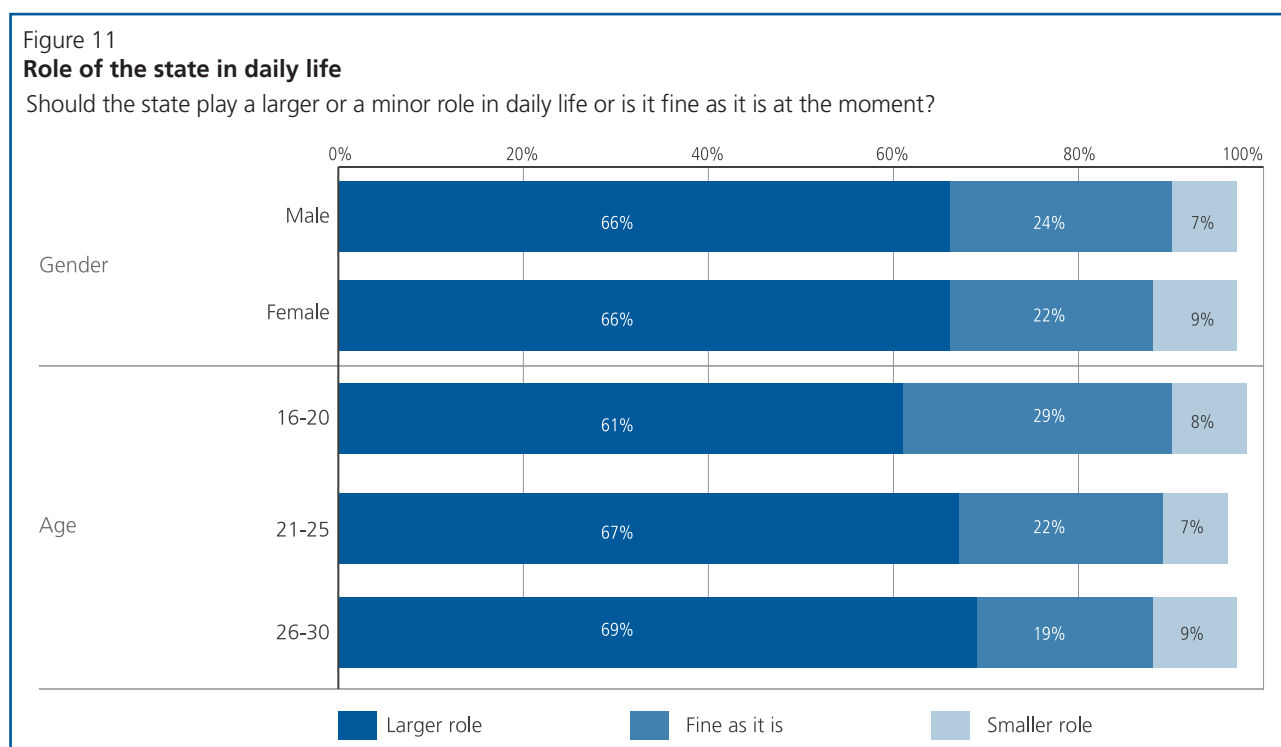
Education seems to be one of the only sectors in which youth trust more than adults: 34 per cent of youth trust their education system, while in the same year 2021, only 24 per cent of the general public in Jordan seem to approve of their educational institutions.

While approval of many institutions (such as police, military and healthcare) seems to be decreasing, youth maintain the position that the state should continue to play an important role in the daily lives of the country's citizens.

It appears from these figures that the younger generation has the highest confidence in the traditional social and official institutions, such as the family, tribes, the army and the security forces, compared to a significantly lower level of trust in various political institutions, especially representative ones such as parliament, civil society institutions and international organisations.

The results of the study show that women trust the education system slightly more than men with 37 per cent of women giving this response versus 31 per cent of men. Additionally, both groups have a high trust in their families (90 per cent of men; 91 per cent of women), the police (69 per cent of men; 73 per cent of women) and the military (79 per cent of men; 78 per cent of women). Another important institution that the male and female respondents trust equally is their tribe, with 50 and 53 per cent respectively, placing their trust here.

Despite a decline in levels of trust in the government, 66 per cent of young people think that the state should play a larger role in the daily life of citizens, 23 per cent believe the state's role is fine as it is now, 8 per cent believe the state should play a minor role, and 3 per cent are unsure. Although modern states largely encourage citizens to be more independent and look and seek more private services and jobs, Jordan's lingering history of a robust public sector may still be at the forefront of young people's minds as they think about the role of government in public life.



4.4 JORDAN AND THE ARAB SPRING

Participants were asked how they would refer to the events that have been taking place in the MENA region since late 2010/early 2011.

There is no consensus among young people when it comes to describing the events that took place in the MENA region in 2010/2011. A total of 19 per cent of males and 16 per cent of females said Arab Spring, 14 per cent of males and females called it a revolution, 9 per cent said riots, 7 per cent referred to it as a rebellion, 5 per cent said uprising, 7 per cent of males and 5 per cent of females classified it as a Civil War, 12 per cent of males and 8 per cent of females said foreign intervention, 9 per cent called it a coup d'état (inqilab), 12 per cent said anarchy (fawda), 4 per cent saw it as a popular movement (haraka shaabiyya), and 25 per cent of males and 32 per cent of females don't know how to describe such events.

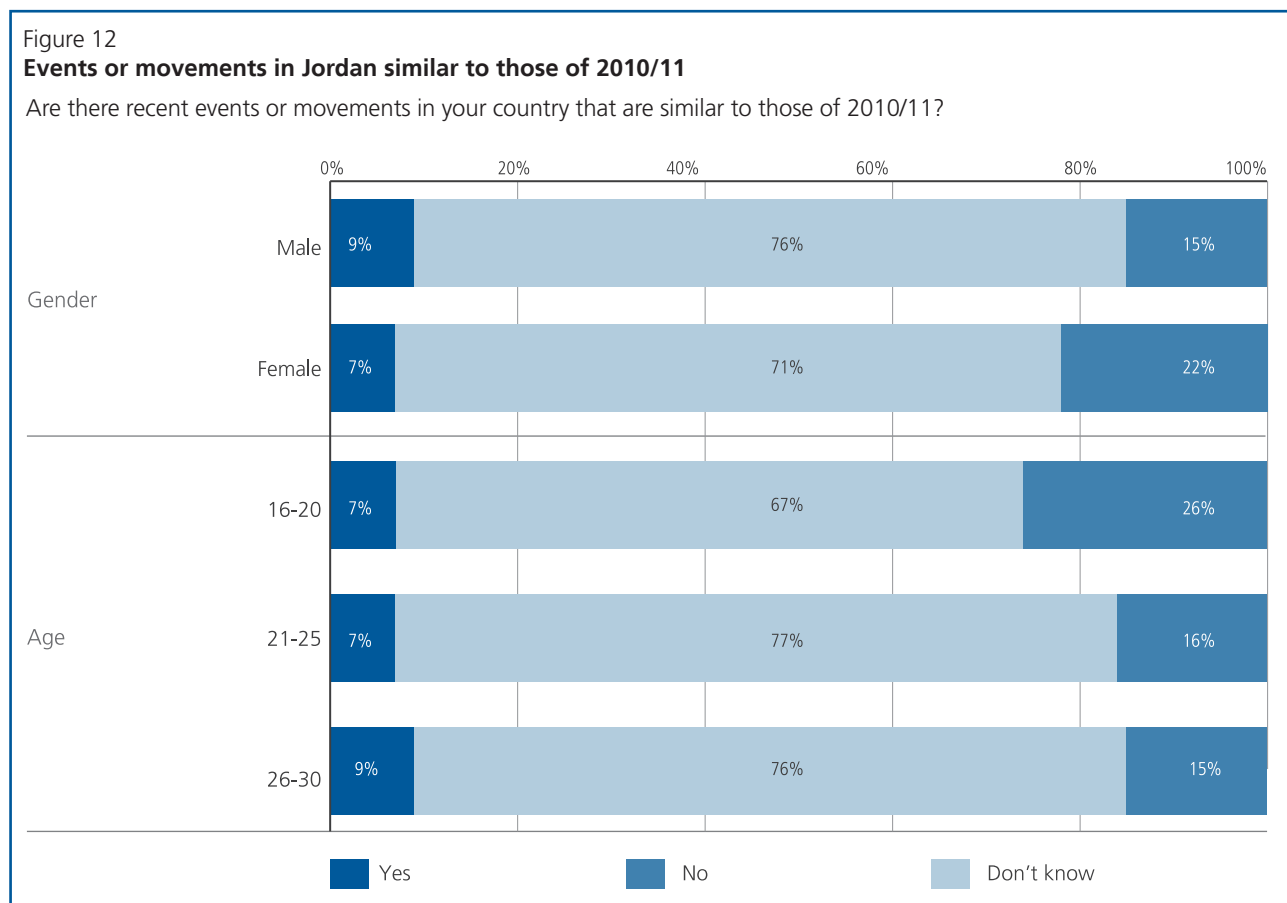
At the beginning of the Arab Spring, many people thought it was a foreign intervention/conspiracy and there have not in fact been any real changes leading to democratic shifts as a result of the Arab Spring.

The majority of youth in Jordan (74 per cent) said there were no recent events or movements in Jordan that resembled those that happened in 2010/2011 in the MENA region, with only 8 per cent saying they did think there were similar events in Jordan and 19 per cent saying they were unsure.

In a similar vein, respondents were asked about the overall political situation, specifically whether they thought this has improved over the past five years. Over half of the respondents thought that the political situation in Jordan had deteriorated somewhat (19 per cent) or significantly (36 per cent). A total of 18 per cent of males and 20 per cent of females said it had (somewhat or significantly) improved, 20 per cent of males and 25 per cent of females said it had stayed the same.

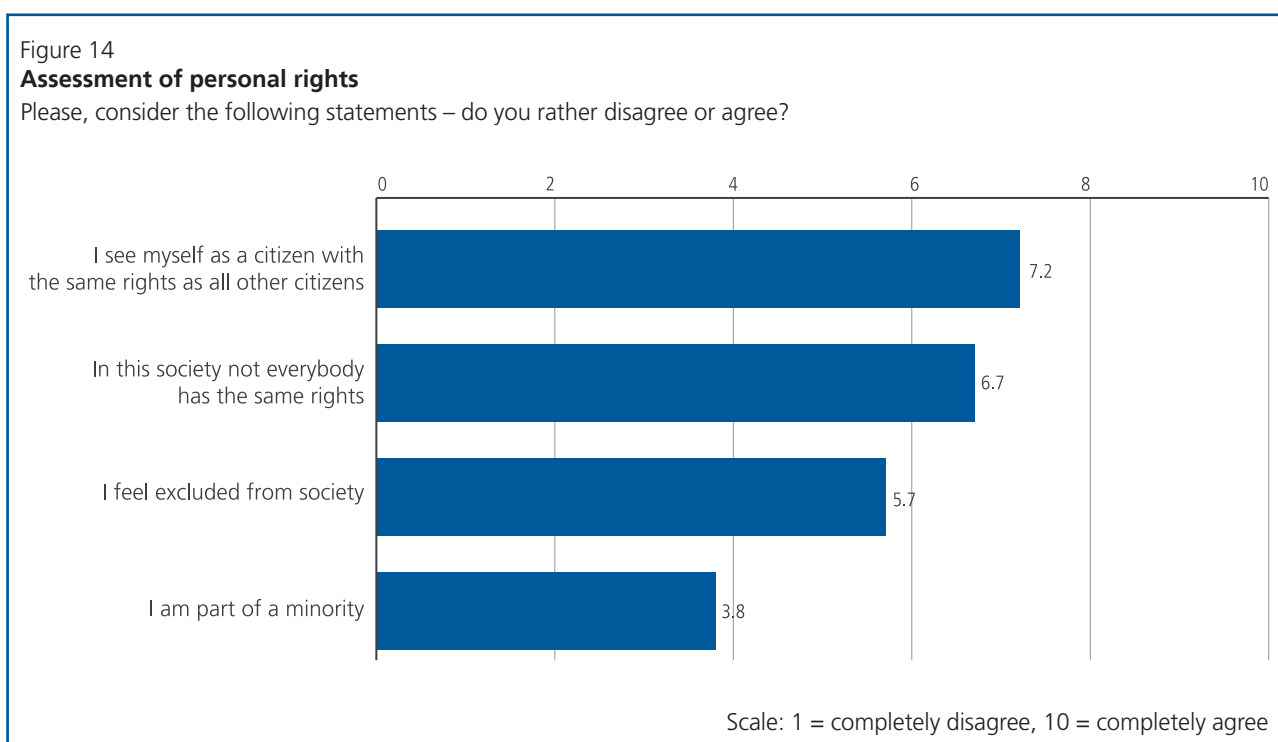
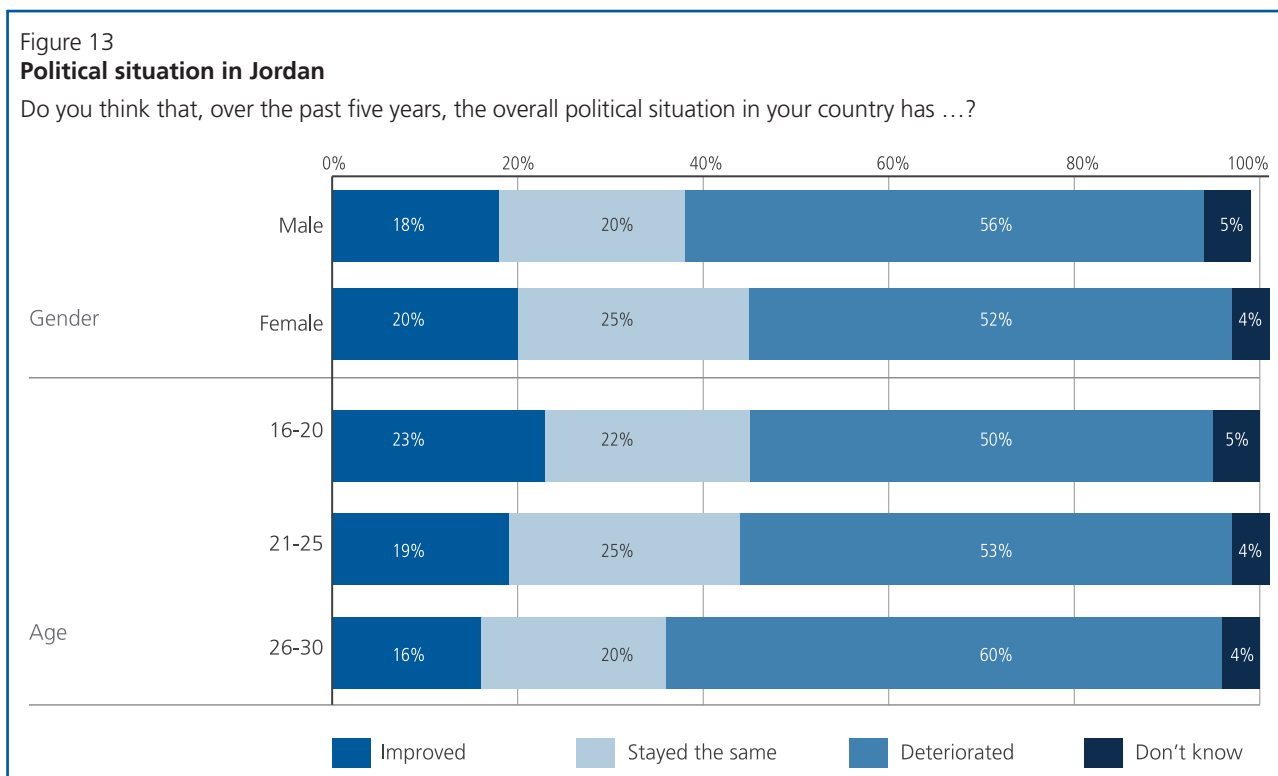
This can be explained by the nature of the movement and protests in Jordan, from the time of the Arab Spring until today. There were no calls for revolution or for the regime to be changed completely or overthrown (as had been the case with the Arab Spring in other countries). Moreover, the popular movement in Jordan has not reached the same dimensions as in other countries.

These figures indicate the extent of the frustration and disappointment among Jordanian youth sparked by the perceived lack of seriousness of the political reform project, despite the fact that the period during which the survey was conducted coincided with the formation of a royal committee to modernise the political system. The frustration is greater among the largest segment of youth (26-30 years). This may be because this was the generation that witnessed the Arab Spring in 2011, participated in many protests and demanded reform. However, on the whole, this group does not believe that things are changing for the better, but rather for the worst politically (60 per cent).



When asked whether they agree or disagree with certain statements on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 indicating complete disagreement and 10 indicating complete agreement), the young people surveyed responded with the following. For the statement »I see myself as a citizen with the same rights as all other citizens«, the average score was 7.2, for the statement »In this society not everybody has the same rights«, the average score was 6.7, for the statement »I feel excluded from society«, the average score was 5.7, and for the statement »I am part of a minority«, the average score

was 3.8. The results did not show any differences between males and females nor between the different age groups (see Figure 14). These results revealed an important issue in Jordan related to the inclusion or exclusion of young people, as although they do not feel that they are from a minority group, they nevertheless feel discriminated against in some way.

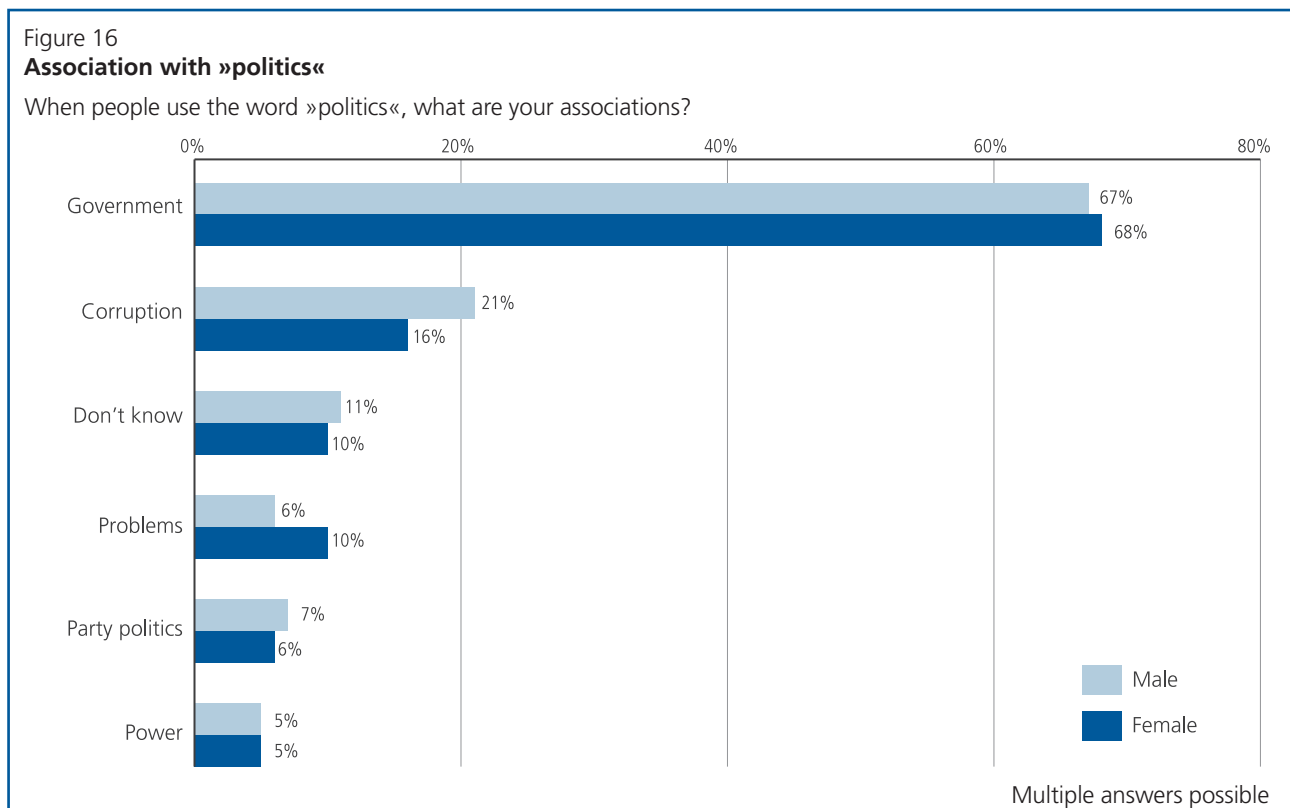
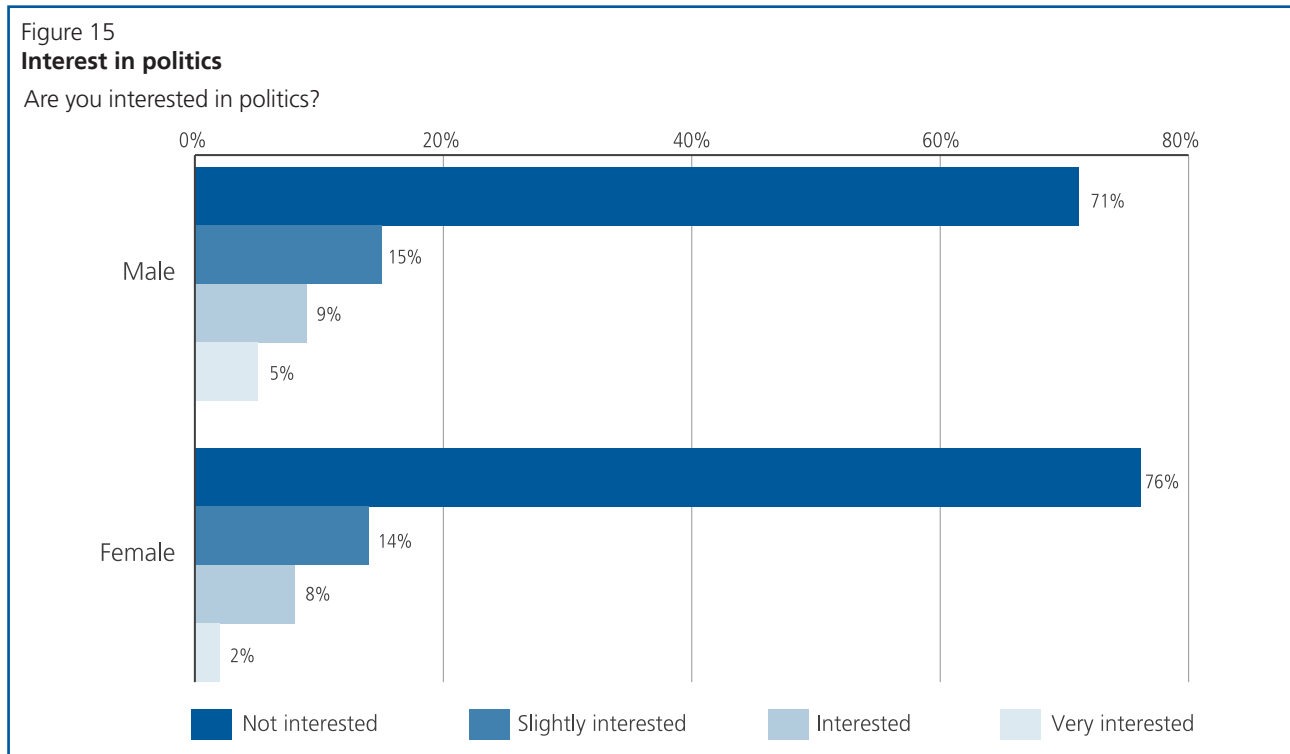


4.5 POLITICAL MOBILISATION

The vast majority of youth in Jordan are not interested in politics at all, and only 4 per cent report being »very interested«. Males are slightly more interested in politics than females. Eight per cent indicated interest, 14 per cent indicated slight interest and 74 per cent indicated no interest.

These figures confirm the frustration of the younger generation with regard to political work and participation in

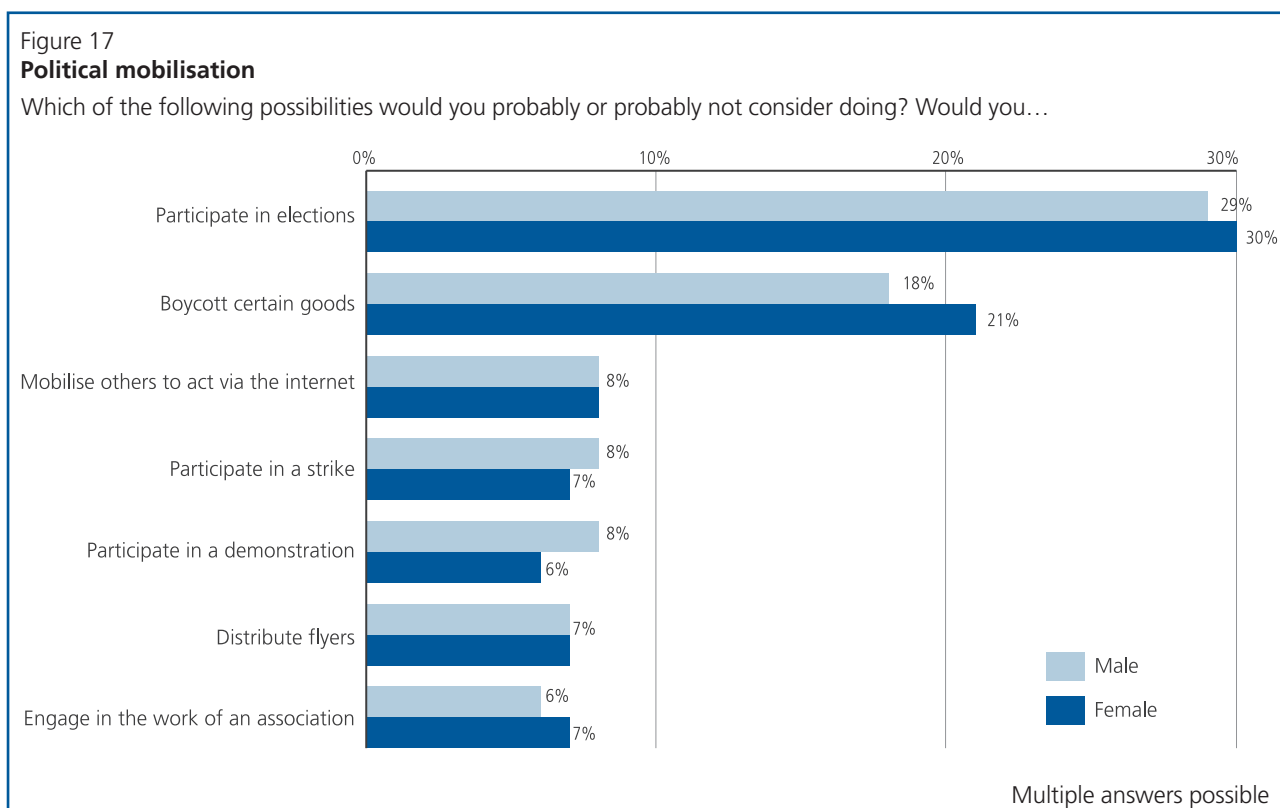
decision-making, as mentioned earlier, and at the same time reveal that, against the backdrop of a rising youth unemployment rate (now almost 50 per cent) young people's greatest interest today is to have a financially secure life, especially in the context of work and marriage (UNICEF Jordan 2022). The figures also reveal that young people are distanced from political work in various fields, with this distance being more pronounced among young females.



Two-thirds of young people associate the word politics with »government« and 16 per cent associate it with »corruption«, which might explain the very low share of young people interested in politics (see Figure 17).

Youth found that participation in elections is the best way to act on a cause/matter that is important to them, followed by boycotting certain goods.

In Jordan, participation in strikes and demonstrations is very low. Instead, people tend to take other actions to show their dissatisfaction with how the issues that matter to them are being handled. This tendency is reflected in the results of our study, which shows that, among young females, just 6 per cent would »certainly« or »probably« participate in a demonstration, compared to 8 per cent of males. A total of 7 per cent of female respondents reported that they would participate in a strike, compared to 8 per cent of males. Across both genders, just 2 per cent said they would join a political party, 29 per cent of males and 30 per cent of females would participate in elections, 6 per cent of males and females would keep informed by joining an existing group via the internet or social media, 8 per cent would mobilise others to act via the internet, 21 per cent of females and 18 per cent of males would boycott certain goods, 7 per cent of both males and females would distribute flyers, 7 per cent of both males and females would distribute flyers, 3 per cent would sign an online petition, 7 per cent would become involved in the activities of an association.



5

WATER, ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

5.1 GENERAL CLIMATE BEHAVIORS

Despite the vast majority of individuals, both male and female, stating that they were worried about, increasingly aware of or personally impacted by environmental issues, only 27 per cent of males and 23 per cent of females would consider participating in climate demonstrations.

The results of the survey show that the majority of young people (66 per cent) fully/tend to agree with the statement »Awareness of environmental issues in society has grown in recent years«. Nevertheless, polling of adults through the Arab Barometer indicates that 80% of adults polled believe that lack of environmental awareness among citizens contributes to environmental challenges to a great or medium extent.²

68 per cent fully/tend to agree with the statement »I am worried about the environment«, 72 per cent fully/tend to agree with the statement »I have personally witnessed the effects of climate change in my country«. A total of 60 per cent stated that the climate crisis is quite/very important to them. The older the respondents, the more they seemed to care about climate change (54 per cent of 16-20 years old compared to 58 per cent of 21-25 years old and 62 per cent of 26-30 years old).

Overall, young people are more concerned with climate change, as of adults polled in 2022, 54% answered that climate change was either very or somewhat important to them³. This may be due to a greater awareness of climate change among youth. Polling conducted by NAMA found that environmental concerns about climate change are greater among those who are educated, 70% of those who completed university education were aware of climate change while only 36% of those who did not complete secondary education were⁴. Not only are the youth in Jordan

overall formally educated, but they are informally educated on issues facing their country through social media, which may explain this difference.

25 per cent fully/tend to agree with the statement »I would consider taking part in climate protests (such as »Fridays for Future«) in my hometown«, and 57 per cent fully/tend to agree with the statement »As individuals, we do not have the power to do anything about climate change«. This shows that some young people in Jordan are beginning to take an interest in climate change and are aware of how it impacts them. Taken together, these results indicate that although youth are concerned about the climate, many of them do not feel empowered to solve the issue. This discrepancy is an area for growth, as those young people that are concerned about the climate but not empowered could be engaged to work on issues related to climate change.

The most important problem/crisis that affected young people's daily lives was the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by supply shortages, insecurity and hunger. This represents another area for increasing climate change engagement, as these issues will be exasperated by climate change. If youth were educated on the intersectionality of the issues, they may become more mobilized regarding the environment.

² <https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/Climate-Change-Presentation-Public-Opinion-2021-2022.pdf>

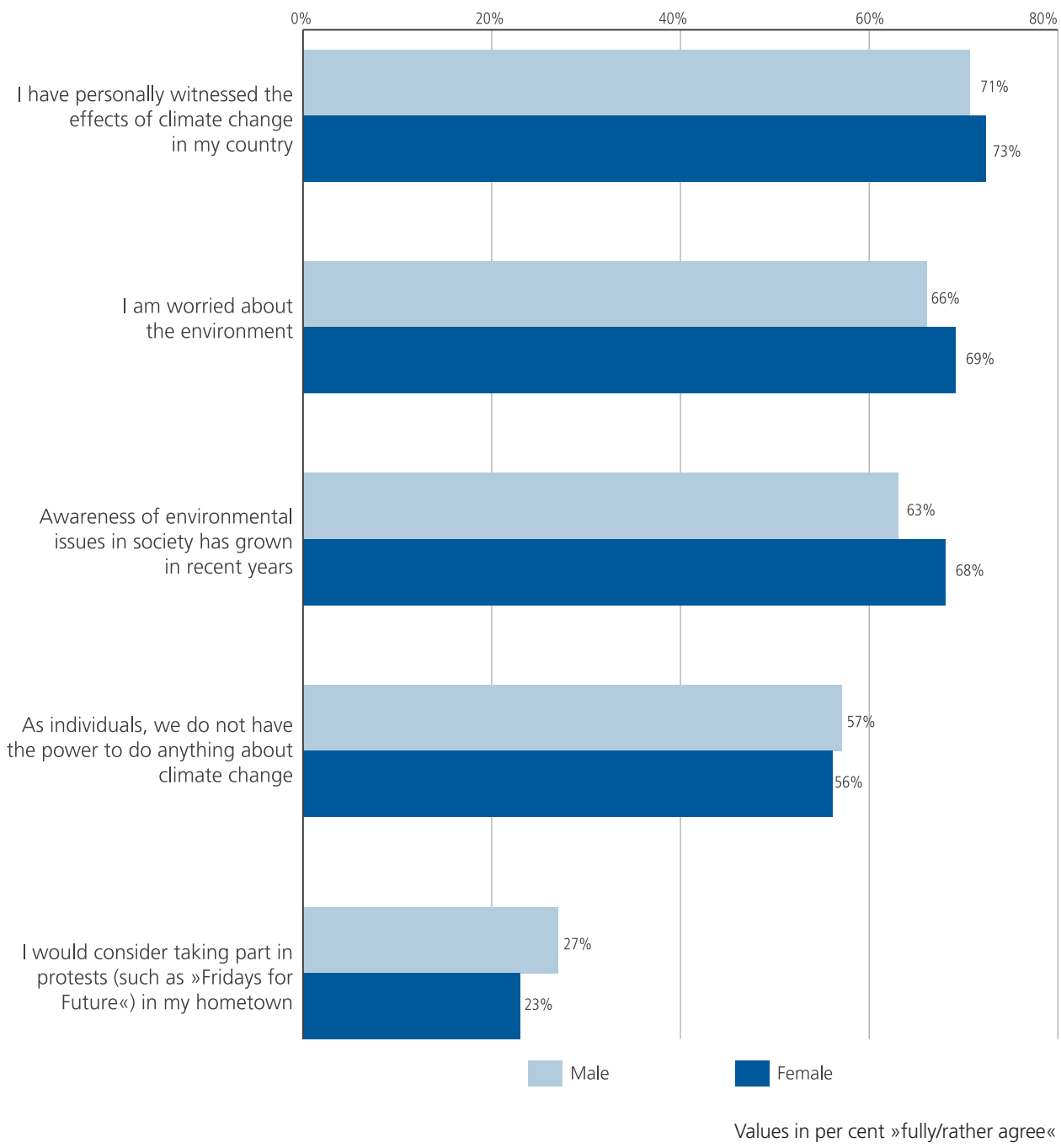
³ <http://jordantimes.com/news/local/survey-gauges-'jordanians'-knowledge-attitudes-behaviour'-climate-change>

⁴ <https://www.jordannews.jo/Section-36/Opinion/Jordanians-awareness-about-climate-change-more-needs-to-be-done-18856>

Figure 18

Attitudes towards climate change

Do you rather agree or rather disagree with the following statements?



5.2 CIVIC PARTICIPATION, ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to worries about and awareness of environmental issues, it is clear that Jordanian youth are making a direct contribution to a cleaner environment through civic engagement. When asked about their involvement in civic activities for the benefit of others, 29 per cent of Jordanian youth said they »frequently« participated in civic activities related to helping poor and vulnerable people, while the second most popular form of civic engagement was wor-

king towards a better and cleaner environment. This answer was fairly consistent irrespective of gender, age, education, personal economic status and milieu of residence.

These results indicate that although many young people are concerned about the climate, fewer are engaging to solve environmental issues. This may be a result of previous findings which indicate that the majority of youth do not believe that their individual contribution would be meaningful to solving climate change. Nevertheless, in recent years the number of private climate organizations as well

as government initiatives to channel civic engagement have increased. The Jordan Environmental Union, introduced in 2017, organizes and outlines the top environmental organizations in Jordan. It includes both government ministries, such as the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, as well as non profits and privately owned groups such as WADI for Sustainable Ecosystems Development and the Arab Renewable Energy Commission.

Youth targeted and run organizations have also increased. In 2022, the Local Conference of Youth was hosted in partnership with UNICEF, Generations For Peace and Nahno and with the support of HRH Princess Aisha Bint Feisal, HRH Princess Sara Bint Feisal. 100 youth from Jordan participated in conversations, panels and workshops on climate change activism, concluding in the launching of Sawm, a new program to train young Jordanians on climate change activism and policy making⁵. This convention was coupled with a policy brief published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on December 14 called »Youth for Climate Action: Engaging Jordanian Youth in Climate Related Policymaking«. It requests that work be done to increase climate engagement among youth, and to include them in conversations as key stakeholders and partners in climate policy and action in the future.⁶

5.3 ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Most young people in Jordan (97 per cent) have access to tap water and electricity. While access does not differ greatly across genders, age groups, personal economic situations or milieus of residence, there is a dip in the numbers when analysing the effect of education on water/electricity access: 98 per cent of youth with high levels of education have access to water and electricity, while only 92 per cent and 94 per cent of youth with low levels of education have access to tap water and electricity, respectively. These findings indicate that with low levels of education are more likely to be impacted by the effects of climate change because of their lack of resources, but other findings indicate that they least likely to be informed about it overall.

Water and electricity also feature prominently when it comes to main expenditures of Jordanian youth, with the latter spending the second largest amount of money on »water/ electricity« (17 per cent place this outgoing in their top four expenditure categories) after »going out with friends« (28 per cent). The greatest disparity in these numbers can be seen between age groups: while only eight per cent of 16-20-year-olds consider water/electricity to be a main expenditure, the percentage increases to 26 per cent for the

26-30 age group. The reason for this could be that young people in this age category are getting married and moving away from home and therefore, rather than their parents paying for water and energy, they are responsible for their own bills. Overall, Jordanian youth do have access to resources including tap water and electricity, though those resources factor in greatly to their expenditures. If these were to become more expensive as a result of resource depletion because of climate change, overall access may decrease.

When asked to rank the most important aspects of life on a scale from 1 to 10, Jordanian youth gave an average of 8.8 to »acting environmentally consciously in any circumstance«. This category was assigned the sixth highest number of points after »believing in God« and »consciously living a healthy life«, for example. While Jordanian youth do care about climate change, it is not necessarily a priority for them when compared to other aspects of life.

There was little difference between gender, age, education and personal economic situation, but youth in rural environments (9.1) ranked this category higher than those in cities (8.6) and large cities (8.8). Although a small difference, this may indicate that those in rural areas are experiencing the impacts of climate change more so than those in an urban environment.

Clearly youth do care about the climate change that is taking place and about the methods and ways to adapt or mitigate the effects, even more so than the older generation. The majority of our respondents reported having witnessed the effects of climate change in Jordan. They also believe that people are more aware about climate change these days than in the past. Overall, there is a strong potential for an increase in climate change involvement and engagement among youth as youth indicate that they care about climate change but are not currently empowered to take action. With the increase in climate focused organizations and initiatives, this level of engagement could rise in coming years.

5 <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/press-releases/young-people-across-jordan-mobilize-take-climate-action-during-local-conference>

6 <https://jordan.un.org/en/211531-youth-climate-action-engaging-jordanian-youth-climate-related-policymaking>

6

CONCLUSION

This opinion poll of Jordanian youth was launched in an attempt to understand the disconnect between education levels and employment. The survey was conducted at a time when youth unemployment is high and the government is attempting to nurture a functional relationship with younger generations. It covered three main points regarding public opinion. First, religiosity and social values. Second, democracy and Jordanian governmental policies. Third, climate change. An analysis of the results of the survey revealed some significant findings regarding Jordanian youth attitudes towards religion, the government and climate change.

First, when it comes to religiosity, the majority of respondents agree that they are more religious now than five years ago. This is true across all categories such as age, gender and economic situation. Furthermore, the majority of respondents agree that religion is a private matter, yet, at the same time, believe that Islam should play a larger role in public life. This contradiction must be investigated further to come up with a more comprehensive explanation. However, we can speculate that religion is a personal matter for Jordanian youth but they prefer public life to coincide with or reflect their personal beliefs. Additionally, previous research shows a link between religiosity and spiritual well-being, which could explain the private nature of religiosity and how strong it is among Jordanian youth.

An analysis of attitudes towards the government shows that there is a low level of trust in representative institutions such as the government. Respondents expressed more trust in traditional institutions such as the family or tribe. This lack of trust seems to affect Jordanian youth's interest in the government as the vast majority are not interested in political matters, with this being the case for 71 per cent of males and 76 per cent of females. This growing frustration among the younger generation is also demonstrated by their response to the current political situation in Jordan. The majority of respondents across all age groups and genders agreed that the political situation in Jordan has deteriorated. The 26-30 age group has a unique perspective as this generation witnessed the 2011 Arab Spring and even participated in protests, hence the fact that 60 per cent of this group responded that the situation has »deteriorated« may reflect their belief that the situation has not improved and may have even worsened, meaning that the movements

that took place in 2011 did little to implement the change they wanted or hoped for.

For respondents who are involved in civic activities, there was a difference in motivation between men and women. Men tend to be more involved due to religious conviction, the desire to help the elderly and due to the culture and values of the country. Besides these reasons, women are driven to engage in civic activities by the ambition of achieving equal rights between men and women. This means that political disparities can result with women and men having different reasons for participating in civic activities. For example, gender inequality may have more of an influence on women's participation in civic activities than on men's, who probably have different reasons for participating. Furthermore, the majority of young people believe that participating in elections is the best way to support a cause.

Lastly, young people in Jordan mostly agree when it comes to the issue of climate change and climate awareness. A total of 71 per cent of males and 73 per cent of females said that they have personally witnessed and experienced the effects of climate change. Additionally, the second most popular form of civic engagement among young people was working towards a cleaner environment. Overall, there is clearly a growing awareness of and sense of civic duty regarding climate change.

When we reflect on the results of the survey, it is clear that religiosity has grown among young people in Jordan. Moreover, despite growing distrust in the government, young people still participate in elections as a way to advance a cause, such as introducing new laws to combat climate change. These results of the survey can be seen as a reflection of the frustrations of Jordanian youth and how they manifest politically. The results for now provides a detailed basis for the current position of Jordanian youth in relation to the government and their response to the current political situation. With high unemployment rates -despite the increase in the rate of higher education- there are specific issues the government would do well to address regarding religiosity, democracy and climate change. Still, there is scope for more research to be conducted into the reason behind these attitudes and behaviors.

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In 2021, the FES launched its second large-scale representative survey in 12 MENA countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as Tunisia and Yemen. With its 1,000 in-depth interviews conducted for each country, the FES MENA Youth Study generates a large database of responses to more than 200 questions concerning the personal background of the interviewees and their views on a variety of topics.

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