

**A Year After its Formation:
Jordanians' Opinion of Dr. Bisher
Al-Khasawneh's Government
and Some Current Issues**

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Center for Strategic Studies – University of Jordan



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**Public
Opinion
Study**



Public Opinion Study:

A Year After its Formation: Jordanians' Opinion of Dr. Bisher Al-Khasawneh's Government and Some Current Issues

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Please note that the opinions expressed in the survey represent the viewpoint of the respondents only, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Center for Strategic Studies, the University of Jordan, or their employees.

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Introduction

Continuing on the vocation of the Center of Strategic Studies of probing citizens' perceptions and analyzing public opinion discourse regarding Jordanian governments' ability to fulfill their mandates, this poll has been conducted on Dr. Bisher Al-Khasawneh's government following one year of its formation; as the government was formed on 12/10/2020, and the center conducted the formation poll between 13-19/10/2020, the one-hundred days poll between 24-31/1/2021, and the two-hundred days poll between 16-21/5/2021.

This poll was conducted between 4-11/10/2021. The national sample size was 1872 respondents aged above 18 years, with an equal gender representation (50% males and 50% females), randomly selected from 156 locations representing the entirety of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The opinion leaders sample size was 655 respondents, distributed into seven categories, namely: senior state women and men, political party leaders, professional and labor union leaders, university professors, senior business men and women, novelists and journalists, and writers and artists; and at a response rate of 93.5%.

Seventy-five field and office-based researchers and 15 supervisors took part in conducting this survey. The margin of error in the national sample was ± 2.5 at a confidence level of 95.0%.

This poll also surveys Jordanian citizens' attitudes and evaluation of their government's performance in a number of focal areas, as well as its ability to fulfill the duties stated in the Designation Letter. Furthermore, the survey aimed to investigate the trends in public opinion on the general course of development in the country, and the main challenges facing Jordan and the region today. In addition, it aimed to understand people's opinions and perceptions on a number of current affairs in Jordan, the economic circumstance in Jordan, trust in public institutions, social trust and happiness in Jordan, as well as the New Levant alliance, and the Egyptian-Jordanian-Syrian-Lebanese agreement.

Main Findings

The Government: Trust & Performance

- ❖ The vast majority of Jordanians believe that the government has succeeded in providing internal security and stability (72%) and in Jordan's foreign policy (68%), whereas the success rate in the cases of education and higher education (42%), the healthcare system (46%), and maintenance of water security (46%) are the lowest-rated in the government evaluation.
- ❖ The majority of Jordanians believe that the government succeeded in the files of: supporting the Palestinians and supporting the armed forces as tasks specified in the Designation Letter, and only 40% believe it has succeeded in: improving the healthcare system and increasing its coverage, developing the health center system, and consolidating the principle of the rule of law. But overall, the government did not achieve a success rate of (50%) in 19 out of the 22 provisions appointed to them to work on.
- ❖ After a year of its formation, the government still maintains the trust of one third of Jordanians as 33% trust the government, compared to (33%) who trusted Razzaz' government a year after its formation. However, (67%) still do not trust the government of Bisher Al-Khasawneh, a year after its formation.
- ❖ Less than half of Jordanians (42%) follow the government's proceedings since its formation until now, compared to 89% of the 'opinion leaders' respondents who do/did follow the government's past/present proceedings.
- ❖ The majority of Jordanians (52%) evaluated Bisher Al-Khasawneh's media performance as "poor", and 57% of the 'opinion leaders' respondents also evaluated it as "poor".
- ❖ Only one third of Jordanians (33%) believe that the government was able to assume the responsibilities of the past period. And 42% of the 'opinion leaders' respondents believe that the government was able to take responsibility during the past period. On the other hand, (67%) of Jordanians believe that the government was not able to assume the responsibilities of the past period.
- ❖ Jordanians trust the ability of the Prime Minister to assume his responsibilities more than they trust the ministerial team to assume their responsibilities, whereby 34% if the national sample and 44% of the 'opinion leaders' respondents trust in his ability. Whereas 31% of the national sample and 40% of the 'opinion leaders' respondents trust in the ability of the ministerial team.

- ❖ During the period of conducting this opinion poll, more than half of Jordanians (56%) and the majority of 'opinion leaders' respondents (65%) saw the need for an amendment to the ministerial team of Dr. Bisher Al-Khasawneh's government.
- ❖ Only 29% are optimistic about the government one year after its formation, and a third of the 'opinion leaders' respondents (33%) are optimistic about the government after a year of its formation. Whereas (71%) reported not being optimistic in the government after a year of its formation.
- ❖ Males, the educated and the elderly are the highest trusting of others, the happiest and the most knowledgeable about internal and regional affairs.

Direction of Things

- ❖ Less than a quarter of Jordanians (23%) believe that things are moving in the positive direction, compared to (39%) who believed the same one year after Dr. Omar Al-Razzaz' government formation, and (41%) one year after Dr. Hani Al-Mulki's government formation.
- ❖ Unemployment and poverty, high prices and cost of living, and reduced salaries remain at the top of the most important challenges facing Jordan today and which the government must tackle immediately, as well as the general suffering in the economy, the implications and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the generally poor quality of services.
- ❖ For the first time, Jordanians believe that the threat to social security has priority over fighting nepotism ('wasta'), whereas (21%) believe that it is one of the most prominent non-economic problems facing Jordan, compared to (13%) who believe that financial and administrative corruption and nepotism are the most important non-economic problem facing Jordan, and which the government must address.
- ❖ The majority of Jordanians believe that the Palestinian case, refugees, and instability in neighboring countries are the most prominent regional problems facing the region, and the government must address them.

The Latest Ministerial Amendment to the Government of Dr. Bisher Al-Khasawneh Made on 11/10/2021

- ❖ The majority of Jordanians (58%) know/heard about the recent amendment that was made to the government of Dr. Bisher Al-Khasawneh.
- ❖ 41% of Jordanians believe that the post-amendment government will be able to assume the responsibilities of the next period, and the same percentage (41%) believe that the prime minister will be able to assume the responsibilities of the next period after the amendment that has been made. Also, 41% believe that the post-amendment ministerial team (except the prime minister) will be able to assume the responsibilities of the next period.
- ❖ The majority of Jordanians (46%) do not believe that the ministerial amendments that take place on governments have an impact on the performance of these governments, while a quarter (26%) believe that they have a positive impact, and (21%) believe they have a negative impact.

Trust in State Institutions: The “Trust Gap” Crisis Remains and is Expanding

The trust crisis between the citizens and various state institutions has expanded and deepened, as Jordanians' trust in most state institutions has declined as follows compared to the formation poll:

- Decline of trust in the judiciary from (64%) to (53%).
- Decline of trust in the professional unions from (49%) to (42%)
- Decline of trust in the labor unions from (46%) to (36%)
- Decline of trust in the Jordanian media from (48%) to (39%)
- Decline of trust in the Imams and religious scholars in Jordan from (52%) to (47%)
- Decline of trust in the political parties from (22%) to (12%)
- Decline of trust in the House of Representatives from (20%) to (15%).

And in comparison with the government of Dr. Omar Razzaz a year after its formation, trust was as follows:

- The judiciary (53%).
- Media (39%).
- Political parties (12%).
- House of Representatives (16%).

Living Circumstances: Individual Optimism and a General Pessimism

- ❖ An increase in the percentage of those who are optimistic about the improvement of their economic conditions during the next twelve months to (29%) a year after the formation of the government, compared to (20%) at the formation poll.
- ❖ On the other hand, a decline in Jordanians' optimism regarding the local economy, whereby almost half of Jordanians (51%) are not optimistic about the local economy in the coming two years, compared to 30% who were not optimistic at the formation poll, and 46% are optimistic about the Jordanian economy in the coming two years, compared to 69% who felt optimistic at the formation poll.
- ❖ The vast majority of Jordanians (81%) believe that the economic situation in Jordan is currently moving in a negative direction, while 64% of the 'opinion leaders' respondents agree to this. Economic challenges, addressing poverty and unemployment issues, and fighting corruption are among the most important issues for Jordanians.

Corruption and the Jordanian Economy

- ❖ The vast majority of Jordanians (87%) think that administrative and financial corruption is widespread in Jordan, compared to 94% in the 200-day poll. Also, the majority of 'opinion leaders' respondents (81%) think that administrative and financial corruption is widespread in Jordan.
- ❖ The majority of Jordanians think that ministers and senior government personnel are the main contributors to the spread of corruption at a percentage of 49%. Moreover, 27% of Jordanians think that businessmen and chief merchants are the second most contributing category to the spread of corruption. On the other hand, 40% of the 'opinion leaders' respondents think that ministers and senior

government personnel are the main contributors to the spread of corruption, whereas 20% of them think that businessmen and chief merchants contribute the most to the spread of corruption, and 15% see that junior public sector employees are the highest contributors to corruption.

- ❖ 35% of Jordanians believe that the most effective solution to address the financial and administrative corruption in Jordan is tightening oversight and implementing stricter laws to hinder corruption, holding accountable and prosecuting those found guilty of corruption (21%), and selecting honest and competent individuals for government positions (17%).

The New Levant Alliance: A Ray of Hope for Jordanians

Contrary to the trust and optimism percentages in the government, institutions and the economy, and despite the dominance of “darkness, pessimism and distrust” on citizens’ perceptions, signs of great hope and restoration of Jordanians’ confidence come to light when they see policies and procedures from the state and government that inspire satisfaction, confidence and optimism.

- ❖ Only a third of Jordanians have heard/know about the mutual cooperation between Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (The New Levant Alliance), and the vast majority (78%) of those who have heard of it, think that this alliance is going to be economically beneficial to Jordan.
- ❖ Two thirds of Jordanians (65%) are optimistic about the mutual cooperation between Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (The New Levant Alliance), and the majority (71%) think that this alliance will succeed in fulfilling its economic goals for Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. 44% think that the gains from this alliance are going to be equal among the three countries, while 27% think that Jordan is going to be the largest beneficiary of the alliance.
- ❖ The majority of Jordanians who have known about the New Levant alliance believe that it is based on common economic interests (66%), half of Jordanians (49%) think that the main cause for forming this alliance is to enhance investment and stimulate the economic situation across the ‘New Levant’ countries, whereas 21% believe that the justification for this alliance is to activate and boost the exchange of interests amongst the signatory countries.

Gas Transport Agreement to Lebanon: Great Jordanian Satisfaction

- ❖ Approximately half of Jordanians (48%) heard about the agreement that has taken place between Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon to transport Egyptian gas through Jordan and Syria to Lebanon to solve Lebanon's electricity crisis, and 81% support this agreement. Moreover, the vast majority of them (82%) think that this agreement will contribute to solving the electricity crisis in Lebanon.

The "Two Thirds Puzzle": Reasons and solutions?

- ❖ The poll notes that the percentages of those who know/heard about the Royal Committee, the New Sham Alliance, and the Egyptian-Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese gas agreement, as well as those who trust the government or its ability to assume its responsibilities, mostly recorded that "two-thirds" of Jordanians do not know of them, or do not trust the government.

Social Trust: Continuing Loss of Trust Among Jordanians

- ❖ The vast majority of Jordanians do not trust most people in Jordan today (72%), compared to 71% in the formation survey. This means that Jordanians and those residing in Jordan do not trust each other, which is a critical indicator to the society's stability and a harbinger of danger for building social integration policies, economic growth and political reform.
- ❖ In contrast, Jordanians' trust is restricted to family members, as 95% reported, and in the second place, their trust extends to their neighbors (66%) and friends and acquaintances (67%).
- ❖ The lack of social trust in Jordan was evident in people's confidence in the prices of goods and services and discounts, whereas the vast majority of Jordanians have no trust in the prices of goods and services (only 28% report trust today, compared to 33% who did in the formation survey), nor do they trust in discounts on prices in Jordan (only 29% report trust today, compared to 32% in the formation survey); and that is a crucial factor in measuring social trust.
- ❖ Decline in the percent of respondents who trust that the community/neighborhood/ relatives/ tribe are keen on supporting them economically if needed to 37%, compared to 43% in the May 2021 survey.

Happiness in Jordan: Happy Individuals... and an Unhappy Society!!

- ❖ The majority of Jordanians (74%) do not think that the Jordanian society is a happy one, whereas 65% of Jordanians describe themselves as happy! This indicates that the Jordanians' judgment on the happiness of others or their own may need to be revised.
- ❖ Respondents from the governorate of Ajloun reported to be the happiest, whereas respondents from the governorate of Tafilah reported to be the least happy.
- ❖ Jordanians believe that the United Arab Emirates is the happiest country in the Arab world, and that the United States of America is the happiest country in the world.

Summary of Findings Based on Demographic Variables

- ❖ The eldest category of respondents (55 years and older) are the least believing that things are going in the wrong direction. And females are more optimistic than males that things are moving in the positive direction. The higher the educational level of the respondent, the greater their belief that things are moving in the negative direction.
- ❖ Also, the eldest category of respondents (55 years and older) reported the highest trust in the current government. Whereas the higher the educational level of the respondent, the less trust they reported in the current government.
- ❖ The youth (18-34 years) and the elderly (55 years and older) are more positive in their evaluation of the performance of the government, the prime minister and the ministerial team, compared to the rest of the groups, whereas the higher the educational level of the respondent, the less their positive evaluation of the performance of the government, the prime minister, and the ministerial team.
- ❖ The higher the age of the respondent, the more optimistic they are about the current government after one year of its formation, whereas the percentage of those who reported optimism in the current government among those aged (55 years and older) rated 34%, compared to 27% with the rest of the age groups. Females are also more optimistic about the current government than males. The results show that the higher the educational level of the respondent, the less optimistic they are about the current government.
- ❖ The results show that there a consensus on the direction of movement of the Jordanian economy (whether negative or positive) based on age and gender, however, differences in opinion appear within the varying educational backgrounds of respondents; as the percentage of those who believe that the Jordanian economy is moving in the negative direction increases from 76%, as per individuals with less than a secondary education, to 84%, as per respondents who hold a bachelor's degree or higher.
- ❖ Optimism in the Jordanian economy over the course of the next two years grows with the increase in the age of the respondents; as (40%) of respondents aged (18-34) reported optimism in the Jordanian economy, compared to 54% of respondents aged (55 years and older). However, the relation becomes inverse when comparing optimism in the economy based on the educational level of the respondents;

the higher the educational level of the respondent, the lower their optimism about the Jordanian economy over the next two years, as (58%) of those who have completed less than secondary education reported optimism, compared to 35% of those who hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Female respondents are more optimistic about the Jordanian economy over the course of the coming two years compared to males.

- ❖ The results show that trust in the majority of people is related to the age and the educational level of the respondent; the higher the age of the respondent, the greater their confidence that the majority of people can be trusted, while the younger category of respondents (aged 18-34 years) reported the least trust in people (only 22% reported to trust the majority of people). The higher the educational level of the respondent, the greater their confidence that the majority of people can be trusted (26% of those whose level of education is less than secondary schooling see that the majority of people can be trusted, compared to 29% of those who hold a bachelor's degree or higher). Male respondents tend to trust others (30%) more than female respondents (23%).
- ❖ Higher educated respondents describe themselves as "happy" more readily than others (72% of Bachelor degree or higher certificate holders reported to be happy, compared to 63% of respondents with less than secondary education). The elderly (55 years and older) describe themselves as "happy" more often so than other age groups (18-54 years).
- ❖ Males, the higher educated respondents and the elderly are more acquainted with the joint cooperation that took place between Jordan, Egypt and Iraq (the New Sham Alliance), compared to the rest of the groups. They are also the most knowledgeable about the agreement that took place between Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon to transport Egyptian gas through Jordan and Syria to Lebanon.