

Il Mondo islamico e la democrazia

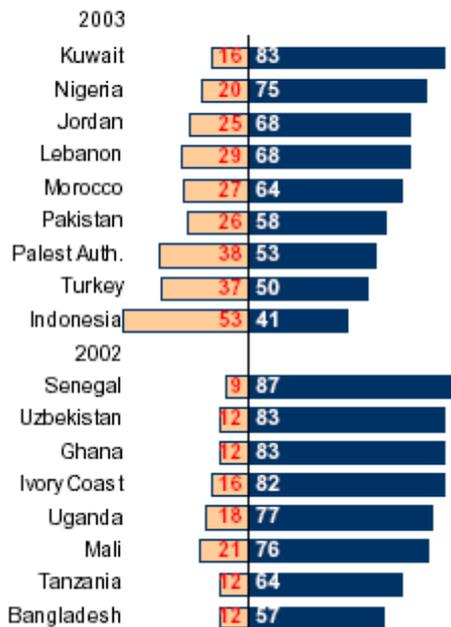
Iraqi Vote Mirrors Desire for Democracy in Muslim World

A Pew Global Attitudes Project commentary

Muslims' Views of Democracy

Commitment to Democratic Ideals

Western Way Can Work Here



Based on Muslim respondents only.

"democracy is a Western way here." Instead, most of the democracy can work in their democratic government over Muslim countries – Lebanon democracy over a strong leader is about the same as in the U.S. (63% U.S., 63% Lebanon, and 57% Turkey).

Muslim publics attach considerable importance to specific democratic principles, especially the freedom to criticize the government. Honest multi-party elections, a fair-handed judiciary and a press free to report without government censorship also are valued, especially in Turkey and Lebanon. There is less enthusiasm for these ideals in Pakistan, Indonesia and Jordan though, even in these countries, majorities view honest elections and freedom of the press as at least somewhat important. Yet throughout the Muslim world, with few exceptions, most people feel that their nations are lacking in these freedoms.

Polls taken in Iraq prior to the election by the U.S.-funded International Republican Institute (IRI) also found broad support for democracy. While Iraqis rated security and economic concerns as far more pressing issues than the coming election – priorities that, as Pew polls confirm, are shared throughout the developing world – about two-thirds of those polled in late December and early January said they were "very likely" to vote on Jan. 30. Moreover, in an IRI poll last summer 82% strongly agreed that a new constitution should guarantee the basic rights of all Iraqis.

Yet while Muslims are generally receptive to democracy and supportive of basic freedoms, they also believe that Islam should have a prominent role in politics. Pew surveys found majorities of Muslims in nine of the 14 countries surveyed favored a "very large" or "fairly large" role for Islam in political life. In Pakistan, 86% of Muslim respondents expressed that view, as did large majorities of Muslims in Indonesia (82%) and Jordan (73%). In Turkey, however, far fewer Muslims (41%) think that Islam should play a major role in the nation's political life.

Nonetheless, Muslims generally are no less supportive of keeping religion separate from government policy than are people in other countries. Indeed, in predominantly Muslim countries with secular traditions, such as Turkey, Senegal and Mali, roughly

Very important to live in a country where...

People can openly criticize the gov't	There are honest, two-party elections	The media can report without censorship	
%	%	%	
Regional medians			
Latin America	71	66	67
Sub-Saharan Africa*	71	73	63
Eastern Europe	57	60	60
Predominantly Muslim countries			
Mali	79	82	68
Turkey	83	75	68
Bangladesh	81	71	64
Senegal	71	87	53
Lebanon	67	71	57
Pakistan	63	46	38
Indonesia	56	40	40
Uzbekistan	42	42	44
Jordan	32	28	35
Significant Muslim populations			
Nigeria	68	75	69
Tanzania	56	62	42

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Based on total national population. In nations with significant Muslim and non-Muslim populations (Lebanon, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Tanzania) an analysis of Muslim and non-Muslim responses shows no systematic differences by religion.

* Includes African nations with relatively small Muslim populations: Angola, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda. Questions not permitted in Egypt.

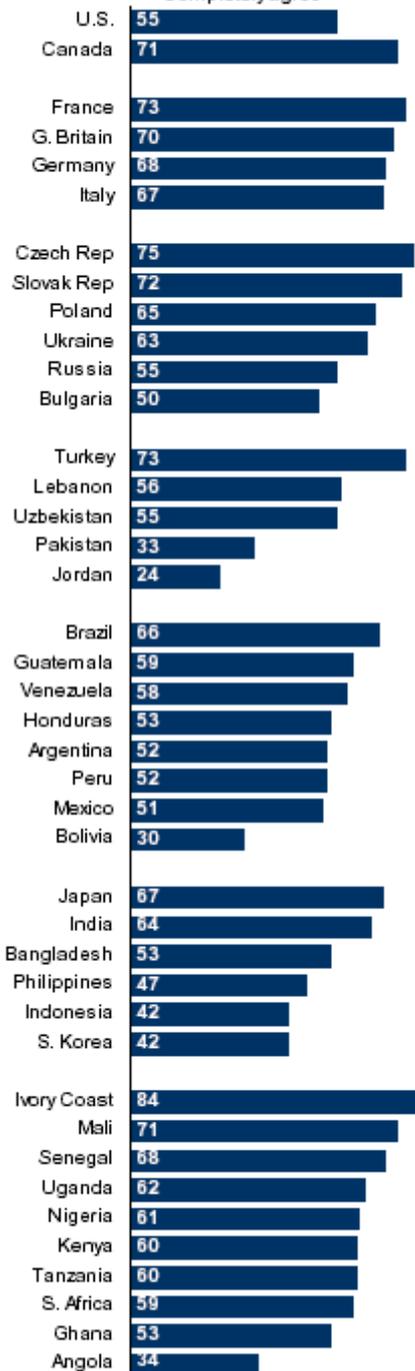
Released: February 3, 2005 High voter turnout in Sunday's elections has strengthened hope that Iraq can ultimately emerge as a model of working democracy in the Muslim world. Despite warnings from terrorist leader Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi that for Muslims support for democracy is "the very essence of heresy," large numbers of voters chose to exercise their franchise.

The vote in Iraq indicates that support for democracy in the Muslim world observed in surveys is genuine and holds up under challenging conditions. Pew Global Attitudes Project surveys conducted in 2002 and 2003 found receptiveness to democracy in nearly all of the 17 Muslim populations in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa covered by the polls.

Relatively few Muslims said that of doing things that would not work Muslim publics surveyed felt that country. In addition, they clearly favor "a leader with a strong hand." In two and Turkey – the number preferring

Religion is a Personal Matter and Should be Kept Separate from Government

Completely agree



seven-in-ten respondents completely agreed that religion should be kept separate from government policy. In the U.S., significantly fewer (55%) expressed that view.

Other surveys have shown that Muslims take a nuanced view of religion and politics. Shibley Telhami, a professor at the University of Maryland, polled in six predominantly Muslim countries last June – including Egypt and Saudi Arabia – and found that while most respondents favored a stronger role for the clergy in politics, few expressed admiration for religious leaders. Telhami attributed this finding to a widespread perception in the Arab world that the cleric-controlled government in Iran has been a failure.

IRI polls found similar sentiments among Iraqis. While the edict issued by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani calling participation in the election a "religious duty" no doubt influenced the heavy turnout in Shiite dominated areas, only 33% of respondents in a November-December 2004 poll said they would follow all decrees issued by clerics concerning the election. In a December-January poll, 51% of Iraqis agreed that "religion and government should respect one another by not impeding on the rights, roles and responsibilities of the other," while 42% said that "religion has a special role to play in the government." Only 28% favored having religious leaders elected to public office. Support for separation of the two was strongest in Baghdad, in Kurdish areas and in other Sunni areas.

A new analysis of Pew survey data shows that the confidence in democratic potential throughout the Muslim world extends across age and gender groups. Indonesia is the only predominantly Muslim country in which there is a significant age difference in these opinions, with more respondents under age 40 than older people expressing the view that democracy can work there (44% vs. 34% of those age 40 and older). There also are few gender differences, with the exception of Pakistan where a higher percentage of men than women feel democracy can work (63% vs. 51%).

There is no evidence, however, that support for democracy will necessarily do much to diminish the extensive anti-Americanism throughout the Muslim world. In Pakistan, those who strongly support democratic values (based on responses to questions about the importance of an independent judiciary, religious and press freedom, honest, competitive elections and civilian control of the military) are just as hostile to the United States as those who place little or no importance on such values.

Nearly two-thirds of Pakistanis (65%) who strongly support democratic principles express a very unfavorable view of the United States; that compares with 59% of those who express moderate support for those principles and 54% of those who attach little importance to democratic ideals. This pattern is evident in Turkey and Indonesia as well. In Jordan, however, strong supporters of democratic principles do have a much more favorable impression of the United States than those who are less supportive of those ideals. Roughly six-in-ten Jordanians who strongly support democratic ideals have a favorable view of the United States; that compares with just 14% who attach little or no importance to democratic values.

In general, as Pew surveys and others have shown, anti-American sentiment has surged in recent years among Muslim populations. A March 2004 Pew survey found, for example, that 70% of Jordanians and 66% of Moroccans believe that suicide bombings of Americans and other Westerners in Iraq are justifiable. Even in Turkey and Pakistan, two U.S. allies, 31% and 46%, respectively, shared this view.

Still, the example of the successful election in Iraq, as well as that recently held by the Palestinian Authority may well strengthen sentiments in favor of more democratic forms of government in the Muslim world. Whether Iraq will prove a compelling model for melding Islam and representative government will depend crucially on what happens next. As the interim government struggles to quell violence, create jobs and restore public utilities and institutions, Iraq's newly elected National Assembly faces a fast deadline for drafting a new constitution to be submitted to national plebiscite by Oct. 15, 2005. "Constitutions are rarely written during calm times," observes Nathan J. Brown, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in a new report. But, adds Brown, the author of four books on Arab politics, "it is difficult to think of more difficult circumstances for deliberating over basic matters of governance, politics and identity."

Based on total national population. Question not permitted in Egypt, China or Vietnam.