



Syrians and the Constitution

(Survey)



اليوم التالي
لدعم الانتقال الديمقراطي في سوريا



THE DAY AFTER
Supporting Democratic Transition In Syria

Syrians and the Constitution

(Survey)

October 2020

All rights reserved to The Day After ©

The Day After (TDA) is a Syrian organization that works to support democratic transition in Syria, and its scope of work is focused on the following areas: Rule of law, transitional justice, security sector reform, electoral system design and Constituent Assembly election, constitutional design, economic reform and social policies.



We thank the Orient Policy Center for their valuable contribution to this report.



The Orient Policy Center (OPC) is an independent research center established in 2014, providing consultations and research services with the aim of developing humanitarian policies and programs, and supporting stabilization and reconstruction in crisis areas and fragile environments.

Contents

Executive Summary _____	6
Introduction _____	7
Methodology _____	8
Chapter 1: The Priority of Constitutional Efforts and the Interest of Syrians _____	12
Total Sample Indicators _____	12
Subset Indicators _____	15
Chapter 2: Perceptions of the Constitutional Efforts _____	21
Full Sample Indicators _____	21
Comparative Presentation at the Subset Level _____	22
Chapter 3: Hopes for the Constitutional Committee _____	27
Overview _____	27
Comparative Presentation at the Subset Level _____	29
Chapter 4: Controversy of Constitutional Issues: What has Changed in Three Years? _____	34
Religion and the State in the Constitution _____	34
Basic Rights and Values in the Upcoming Constitution _____	46
The Political System (Form of Government, Central Issues, and Ethnic Identities) _____	50
Conclusions _____	62
Recommendations _____	63
Appendix: The Survey _____	64





Executive Summary

The Constitutional Committee, tasked to draft and amend the Constitution in Syria, began its work on October 30, 2019, after a delay of nearly two years in order to agree on its formation.

Syrian citizens' views on this Committee have been limited to general initial impressions, with little clear idea about it due to a lack of information—even though their opinions are supposed to form the foundation for the work of this Committee and its outcomes.

This study explores the views of Syrians regarding the Constitutional Committee, the extent of their knowledge about the details of its work, and their views on the most prominent constitutional issues—formed throughout the country's history—that have been the main controversies in the drafting of previous constitutions since the 1920s.

Our analysis was based on opinion samples from 2,966 Syrians living inside and outside the country, collected during June 2020. The researchers took special care to balance the sample for a reasonably accurate representation of the population as a whole, taking into account regional, religious, and ethnic affiliations, gender, and levels of income and education.

The study analyzes the views of Syrians about the Constitutional Committee and its work on four levels: their degree of interest, the extent they approve of the Committee's work and its general framework, their most prominent perceptions about it, and their aspirations for its main outcomes and outputs. We also surveyed Syrians' views on the most prominent constitutional issues: the relationship of religion with the state, the form of government system, and the relationship of the central authority with local authorities, in order to highlight the most important broad-agreement themes or issues.

The study revealed a wide gap between the Syrian people and their representative delegations in the Constitutional Committee. This gap was particularly clear in the difficulty of Syrians' access to accurate information about the work of the Committee. Data also showed that Syrians consider the issue of the constitution less important than other issues related to the stability of security and military conditions in the country.

As for the system of government, respondents generally tended toward a decentralized system of administration with wide powers given to local authorities, existing in a mixed political system which limits the powers of the President of the Republic by sharing those powers with a government chosen by the Parliament.

At the subset level, women and lower-income individuals showed increasing frustration with the ability of the Committee to reach a final solution. Religious and sectarian minorities showed a greater desire to avoid referring to religion in the constitutional text.

Based on the above, members of the Constitutional Committee should increase their efforts to create new channels of communication with Syrians and their local communities. The international community and the United Nations, as supporters of the Committee's work, will also have to steer the work toward additional negotiation tracks in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

Introduction

With the launch of the Constitutional Committee's work, one of the most important questions raised by everyone was: What do Syrians want from the next constitution? What is their position on the Constitutional Committee in its current form?

This study attempts to clarify Syrians' views and aspirations about the shape of the future constitution, especially with regard to the issues that have always witnessed the greatest controversy throughout the country's history. Our study also explores Syrians' interest and satisfaction with the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva nearly a year after its launch. Then we highlight the most important weaknesses obstructing its performance from the viewpoint of Syrian citizens.

The constitution will form the context to govern political and civil action frameworks in Syria's future, making the elaboration of its details a vital—and at the same time thorny—matter for the country and its citizens. The process of drafting and amending the constitution that is currently taking place in Geneva faces enormous problems, perhaps the most prominent of which is the issue of location.

The majority of Syrians are unable to effectively participate in the drafting process for constitutional provisions; this is a reversal from previous constitution-drafting processes during periods of democratic rule in the country, and even during periods of military government at some points.

For the first time during the current period, analyzing public views on these issues is crucial to providing information about the general orientations of Syrians with their various affiliations and religious, class, and national backgrounds.

This study will attempt to understand the relationship between Syrians' positions on constitutional issues and the nature of their lives, to identify those constitutional issues that are most polarizing among the Syrian community, and to contribute to the dissemination of these views and make Syrians' voices heard at a time when it seems no one is listening.



Methodology

The study is based on a survey of a systematic sample of 2,966 Syrian adult males and females, residing both inside and outside the country, and from a variety of religious and national backgrounds.

Determining the number of respondents was extremely difficult, as there are no accurate figures on the number of Syrians living inside or outside the country. However, figures from UN agencies and host countries were used as a guide to help us estimate the total number of Syrians inside and outside the country.

The last comprehensive census of the population was conducted in 2004, making it absurdly unreliable because of the large lag. Even in the data collected by the regime's Central Bureau of Statistics, variables related to national and religious affiliation were not apparent. No census has been conducted of the religious and sectarian diversity in Syria since the 1920s, nor are there reliable figures on national distribution. During the study, we tried with the utmost care to balance sample percentages as much as possible according to general estimates, without claiming that the sample represents the population accurately.

Despite that, there does exist a bias in the final sample in favor of Syrians living outside Syria; their percentage of our total sample was 41.6%, while in actuality the percentage is about 32% of the total population.

We can also note an increase in the percentage of Syrians residing in Europe within the sample at the expense of other countries such as Lebanon. Although the actual number of Syrians in Lebanon is equal to or slightly more than their counterparts in European countries, within our sample the percentage of Lebanon residents was only 7.9% of the total sample of Syrians abroad, compared with 32% Europe residents. This is due to the difficulties encountered by researchers in accessing Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as a large percentage of them live in camps or informal areas that do not have internet access. Also, many of them refused to conduct the questionnaire over the phone when discussing topics they considered sensitive, such as their preference as to the system of government or their religious and sectarian affiliation. This is a result of Lebanese security restrictions placed on Syrian refugees; many refugees fear such discussion would result in them being deported back to Syria.

As for the religious affiliation distribution, the absence of a clear or close statistical reference for the study made it impossible to accurately control proportions in the sample. But we attempted to approach ratios that mimic general impressions about the proportions of the religious sects in the country. In reality there may be bias in some of these ratios. For example, the percentage of the Druze and Ismaili sects within the sample may be greater than within the country, while the percentage of Alawites among the respondents may be less than their real percentage among the population in Syria. All of this depends on researchers' estimates, of course, as there have been no religious affiliation statistics in Syria for nearly a hundred years.

The questionnaire investigated the opinions of the respondents at several levels related to their interest and knowledge of the processes of the Constitutional Committee's work, and their opinions and aspirations about the form and content of the next constitution.

The survey was conducted by specialized field researchers from late June to early July 2020. The results are based on direct online audio interviews, due to the inability to conduct physical interviews under the current conditions of the Covid-19 epidemic.

When choosing the sample, we did achieve a balance at various levels, taking into account gender, age, place of residence, religious and national backgrounds, and the standard of living. For level of education, we relied on the old education division levels in Syria, used until 2003, divided into Elementary level (Level 1, grades 1-4 in the current division) and the Primary level (Level 2, grades 5-9 in the current division), while the rest of the levels coincide between the old and new divisions.

1 - Gender

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Male	1535	51.8%
Female	1431	48.2%
Total	2966	100.0%

2- Age

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Between 18 and 25	542	18.3%
Between 26 and 39	1240	41.8%
Between 40 and 50	695	23.4%
Between 51 and 59	331	11.2%
More than 60	158	5.3%
Total	2966	100.0%

3 – Province of Origin

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Aleppo	503	17.0%
Al-Hasakeh	396	13.4%
Ar Raqqah	155	5.2%
As-Sweida	157	5.3%
Damascus	151	5.1%
Dara'a	215	7.2%
Dayr az Zawr	155	5.2%
Hama	219	7.4%
Homs	240	8.1%
Idlib	375	12.6%
Latakia	117	3.9%
Quneitra	21	0.7%
Rif Dimashq (Rural Damascus)	229	7.7%
Tartus	33	1.1%
Total	2966	100.0%

4 – Current Residence

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Outside Syria	1234	41.6%
Inside Syria	1732	58.4%
Total	2966	100.0%





4a – Current Residence by Syrian Province

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Aleppo	414	23.9%
Al-Hasakeh	256	14.8%
Ar Raqqah	145	8.4%
As-Sweida	91	5.3%
Damascus	40	2.3%
Dara'a	153	8.8%
Dayr az Zawr	95	5.5%
Hama	116	6.7%
Homs	54	3.1%
Idlib	161	9.3%
Latakia	88	5.1%
Rif Dimashq (Rural Damascus)	106	6.1%
Tartus	13	0.8%
Total	1732	100.0%

4b – Current Residence Outside Syria

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Europe	397	32.2%
Jordan	121	9.8%
Turkey	398	32.3%
Kurdistan-Iraq	221	17.9%
Lebanon	97	7.9%
Total	1234	100.0%

4c – Current Residence by Category

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Regime-controlled areas	789	26.6%
Opposition-controlled areas	447	15.1%
Autonomous Administration	496	16.7%
Turkey	398	13.4%
Non-Turkey Neighboring Countries	439	14.8%
Europe	397	13.4%
Total	2966	100.0%

5 – Education Level

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Uneducated	47	1.6%
Elementary	355	12.0%
Primary	1188	40.1%
Secondary	1113	37.5%
University	263	8.9%
Total	2966	100.0%

6- Self-Reported Standard of Living

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Very Low	190	6.4%
Low	723	24.4%
Average	1767	59.6%
High	276	9.3%
Very High	10	0.3%
Total	2966	100.0%

7- Ethnic Background

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Arabic	2265	76.4%
Kurdish	372	12.5%
Syriac/Assyrian	141	4.8%
Turkmen	109	3.7%
Prefer Not to Answer	79	2.7%
Total	2966	100.0%

8 – Religious Affiliation

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Sunni	2116	71.3%
Christian	204	6.9%
Druze	175	5.9%
Ismaili	123	4.1%
Alawite	121	4.1%
Other Minorities	30	1.0%
Irreligious	81	2.7%
Prefer Not to Answer	116	3.9%
Total	2966	100.0%

Figure 1: Sample Distribution

During the interview process, the team applied quality control standards for survey procedures, by controlling the balance of the sample throughout the interview process, achieving the basic conditions to ensure the accuracy of the data and avoid imbalances. The team also ensured that the opinions of the respondents of the study were independent and free from any external influence.





Chapter 1: The Priority of Constitutional Efforts and the Interest of Syrians

The extent of public interest in the efforts of the Constitutional Committee is a key indicator of Syrians' views on the importance of these efforts and the viability of such as a political solution. Syrians' interest in the ongoing constitutional efforts can serve as a guide for their expectations of the political track as a whole, and for the level of their anticipation for any successful outcomes on the political track, including the work of the Committee.

This chapter documents levels of interest and follow-up according to Syrians' priorities for what must be accomplished in this current period of Committee work, based on an analysis of the total respondent sample, and then that of various affiliation subsets.

Total Sample Indicators

The data collected during this study shows that the prioritization of the constitutional track is still declining among Syrians, as only 7.1% of respondents placed constitutional efforts at the top of things that Syria needs today. About 43% indicated their priority is to establish an official ceasefire until a comprehensive political solution is reached; this is despite the significant reduction in the intensity of the fighting in the country, which means Syrian citizens lack confidence in the military de-escalation, which they consider very fragile so far.

The release of detainees ranked second among respondents; 23% considered this the most urgent priority in the country today, reflecting the importance of this issue for a wide range of Syrians.

» In your opinion, the top priority today should be given to

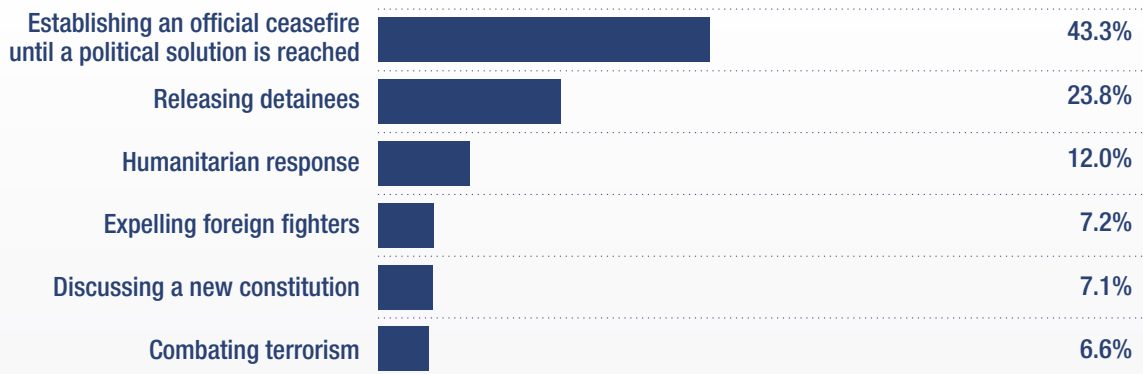


Figure 2: Political Priorities of Respondents

The decline of respondents' interest in the constitutional efforts is reflected in their levels of familiarity with it. While only 15% said they are well-informed about these efforts, about 32% expressed their attempt to remain informed. If we count these two categories as "interest" in the work of the Committee, even to varying degrees, then their percentage is about 47%. This percentage keeps the work of the Committee outside the interest of more than half of the respondents—14% of the total sample said they did not know anything about the subject.

» To what extent you are familiar with the ongoing committee efforts in Geneva to draft a new constitution for Syria?

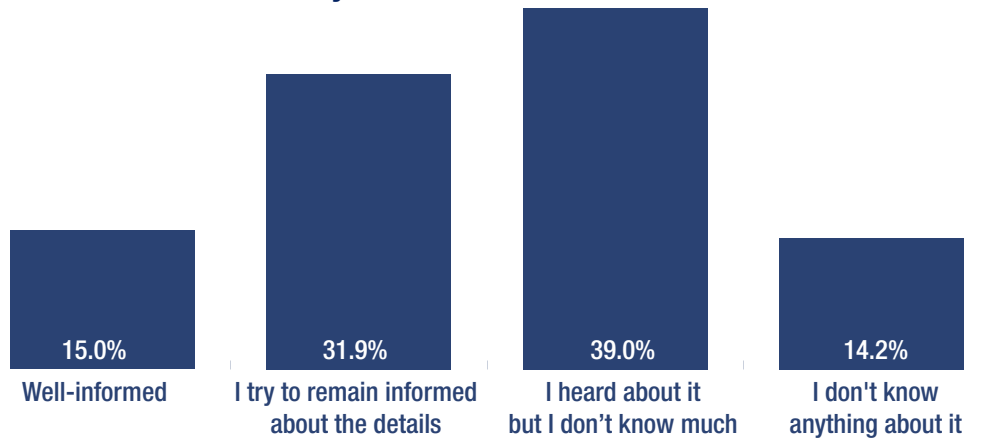


Figure 3: Familiarity with the Work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva

As for where respondents get their news and the latest developments, more than two-thirds of the sample reported two main sources: television and social media. These dominate for the simple reason that they are the easiest to acquire without the need for extra research or efforts to obtain information. This gives us an indication of the nature of interest, and also highlights the role of social media in delivering news; but this influential role paves the way for the spread of false or unverifiable information, unlike traditional media such as television, newspapers, and websites—although traditional media outlets are not completely innocent from spreading false news themselves.

» What are the sources you rely on to stay informed?

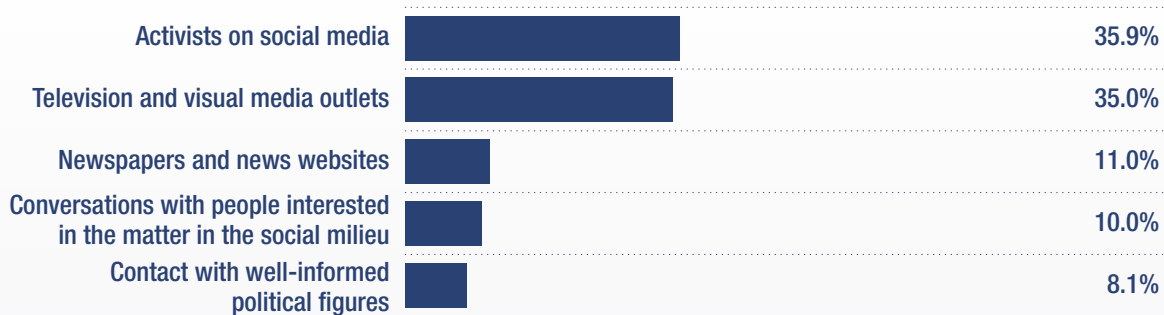


Figure 4: Sources of Information About the Constitutional Committee's Work

Although the Constitutional Committee has 150 delegates, and the smaller committee tasked to formulate the basic underlying principles has 45 people, respondents were aware of only a very limited number of names. About 72% said they knew fewer than 5 members of the Committee by name, or they don't know anyone; the percentage of those who know more than 30 people from the Committee was just 2.7%. This wide gap can be explained by the news sources the respondents use; these mediums usually focus on specific names and avoid mentioning a wide list of people.

Despite the fact that Constitutional Committee member lists are widely available, the lack of knowledge of these members may be due, in addition to the above, to two main factors: lack of interest and follow-up by this category of respondents, or their lack of familiarity with anyone among the names on the published list. This may be an indication of the extent of these members' reputations in their communities and among Syrians in general.





» How many people do you know in the Constitutional Committee, either personally or by name?

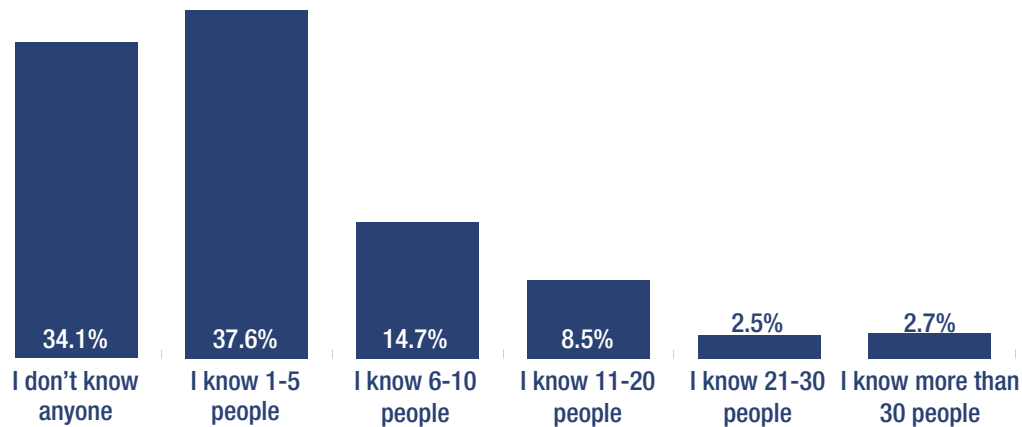


Figure 5: Knowledge of Constitutional Committee Members

The vast majority of respondents expressed their interest in following Syria's political news in general on a permanent or intermittent basis, a marked difference from interest in the Constitutional Committee in particular. This can be attributed to several reasons: respondents' consideration that the work of the Committee is not one of the main priorities in Syria today (leading to ignoring news about it or not bothering to research updates), and the lack of available information about the work and news of the Committee.

» Do you follow Syrian political news in general?

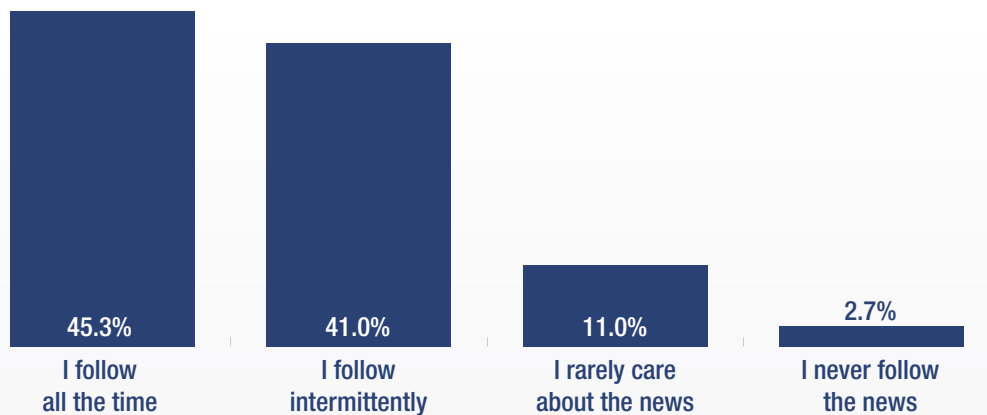


Figure 6: Extent of Interest in Syria's Political News

In contrast to the decline in general interest in the work of the Constitutional Committee among our respondents, we find that a significant percentage of them participated in activities and meetings related to this Committee. Among respondents, 13.6% reported participating in activities related to constitutional efforts. This is a good percentage, considering the distribution and number of the sample. This may be evidence of successful engagement by the organizers of the Committee with large numbers of Syrians in following up and expressing opinions on the Committee's efforts and endeavors.

» Have you participated in any activities or meetings related to the constitutional efforts?

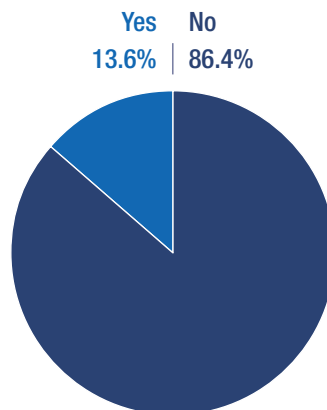


Figure 7: Extent of Participation in Constitutional Efforts

Subset Indicators

The subset numbers—which take into account sample stratifications of gender, religious and ethnic affiliations, and different areas of residence—show a number of important correlations. By analyzing the respondents' data, a number of differences can be observed which may indicate a structural difference within Syrian society toward the constitutional priorities and efforts in general.

Correlational analysis of the data showed that the highest percentages of those who consider the constitutional efforts a top priority in Syria right now were among those belonging to the Druze and Alawite sects, with percentages approaching 14% from each. This prioritization declines significantly among those of Sunni and Christian affiliation, at 6.3% and 2.5% respectively.

Establishment of a ceasefire and the release of detainees ranked as first and second priority among the majority of respondents, but combating terrorism as a major priority in Syria today differed according to religious affiliation. Just over 18% of Alawites and 16.2% of Christians believe that combating terrorism is a top priority in Syria today, while only 4.5% of those affiliating as Sunni see it as their top priority.

The main priority of those affiliating as Ismaili differed; 52.8% of them consider the humanitarian response to be the most important priority in Syria today. This can be explained by the low level of humanitarian response in areas surrounding the Ismaili community of Salamiyah, in Hama Governorate, which is far from the city centers.

Although the lack of accurate information regarding the distribution of religious sects in Syria creates problems (specific areas have a certain sectarian majority), we can rely on existing estimates as long as there are no accurate statistics to refute them.



» In your opinion, the top priority today should be given to

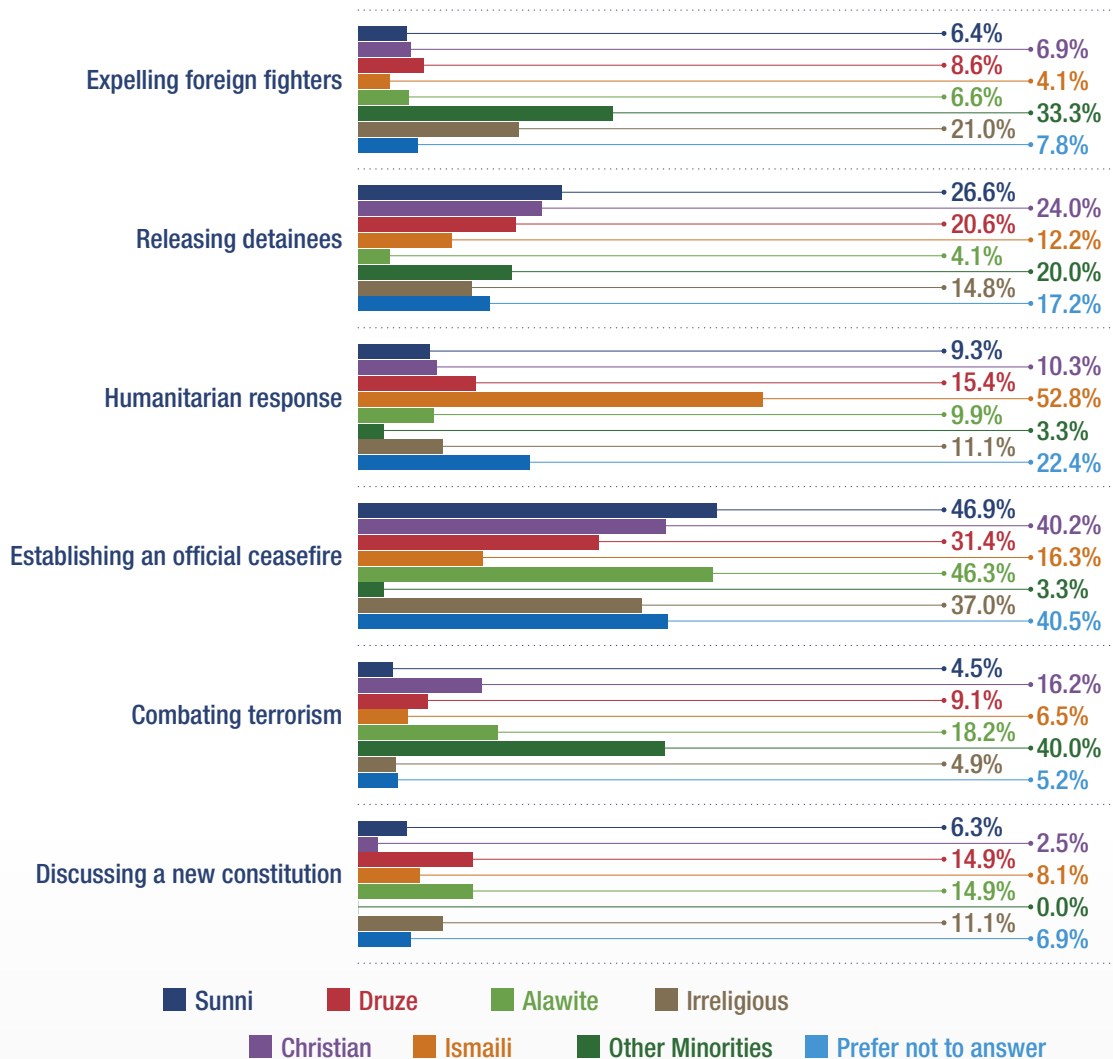


Figure 8: Political Priorities of Respondents Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

General interest in public affairs in Syria, and the constitutional efforts in particular, appear to be linked to gender; 58.6% of male respondents said they always generally follow Syria's political news, while only 31% of female respondents said the same. These figures reflect Syria's structural imbalance with regard to women's participation in the public sphere, which then affects their interest in it. The figures may also reflect women's wider frustration with public affairs in Syria under the circumstances of war; this can be seen from the higher percentage of female respondents who never follow Syrian news (3.6%) than that of male respondents who said the same (1.8%).

» To what extent are familiar with the ongoing efforts to draft a new constitution for Syria?

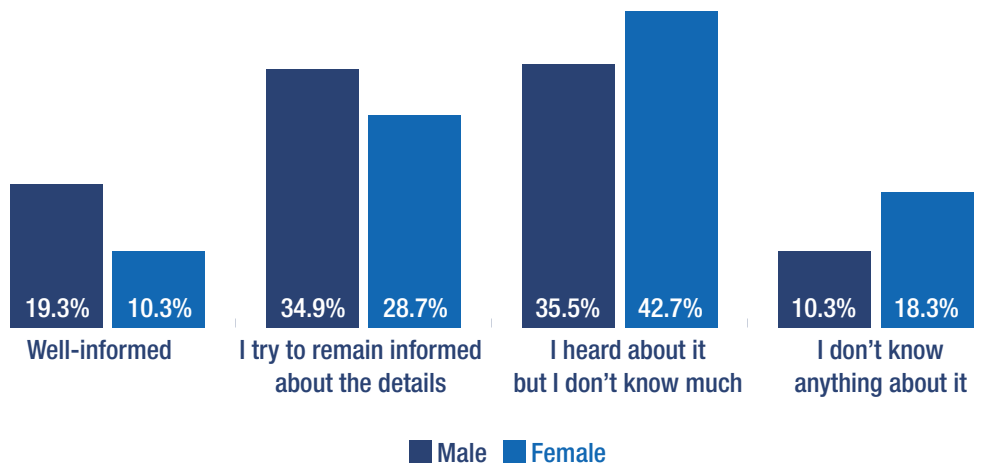


Figure 9: Familiarity with the Work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva Breakdown by Gender

» Do you follow Syrian political news in general

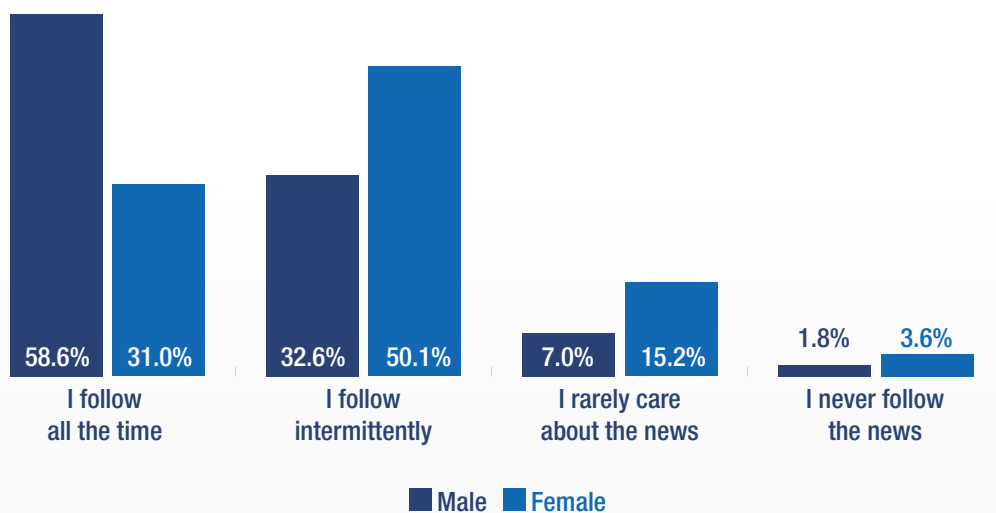


Figure 10: Extent of Interest in Syria's Political News Breakdown by Gender

While 40.5% of female respondents said they don't know any Constitutional Committee members by name, male respondents' result for the same answer was 28%. This appears to confirm the previous assumption about women's lack of interest in public affairs; the continued exclusion of women from the public sphere structure increases their frustration to the point that they simply don't expect much in Syria.





» How many people do you know in the Constitutional Committee, either personally or by name?

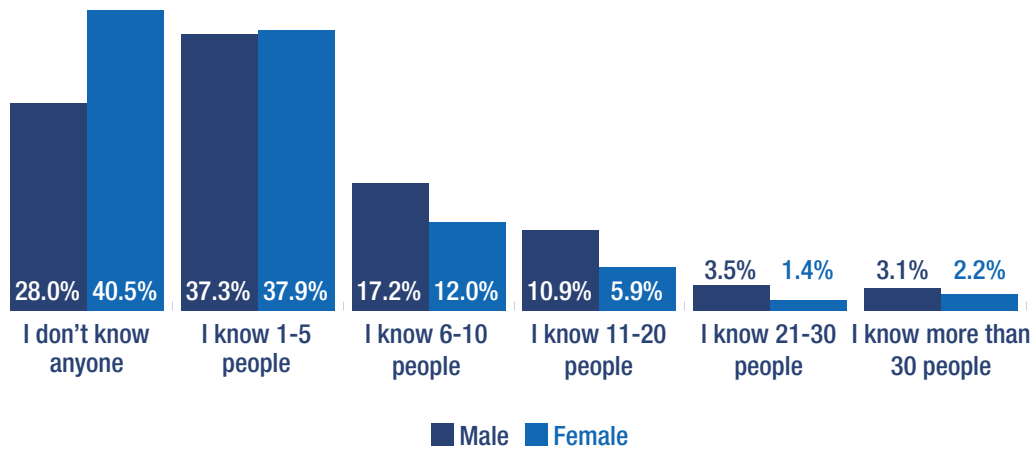


Figure 11: Knowledge of Constitutional Committee Members Breakdown by Gender

But the rates of participation among women and men in activities related to constitutional efforts are almost identical; 13.9% of male and 13.3% of female respondents participated in activities or meetings related to constitutional efforts. This may be evidence that the organizers of these meetings succeeded in creating a gender balance.

» Have you participated in any activities or meetings related to constitutional efforts?

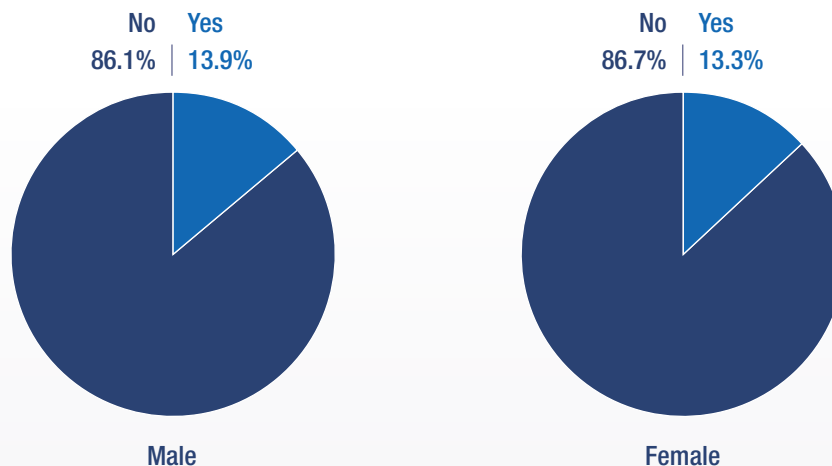


Figure 12: Extent of Participation in Constitutional Efforts Breakdown by Gender

Income level of respondents also contributes to level of interest, especially among those respondents who report being “well-informed” about developments in Syria; the percentage of “well-informed” increases in proportion to level of income.

Ten percent of “very low income” respondents and 12.9% of “low-income” respondents said they were well-informed. Middle-income respondents who chose “well-informed” were 14.8% of the subset, and 24.6% of those with high income chose that option. The “very high income” percentage of well-informed respondents decreases to 20%, but that figure is still higher than those with lower income; this appears to confirm a direct correlation between the two variables. This correlation may be interpreted as an expression of citizens’ available time and devotion to delve into Syrian public affairs and developments; an increase in income allows for less daily preoccupation with the provision of basic needs.

Similarly, Figure 14 shows that people with lower self-reported living standards are more likely not to know any member of the Constitutional Committee.

» To what extent are you familiar with the ongoing constitutional efforts in Geneva to draft a new constitution for Syria?

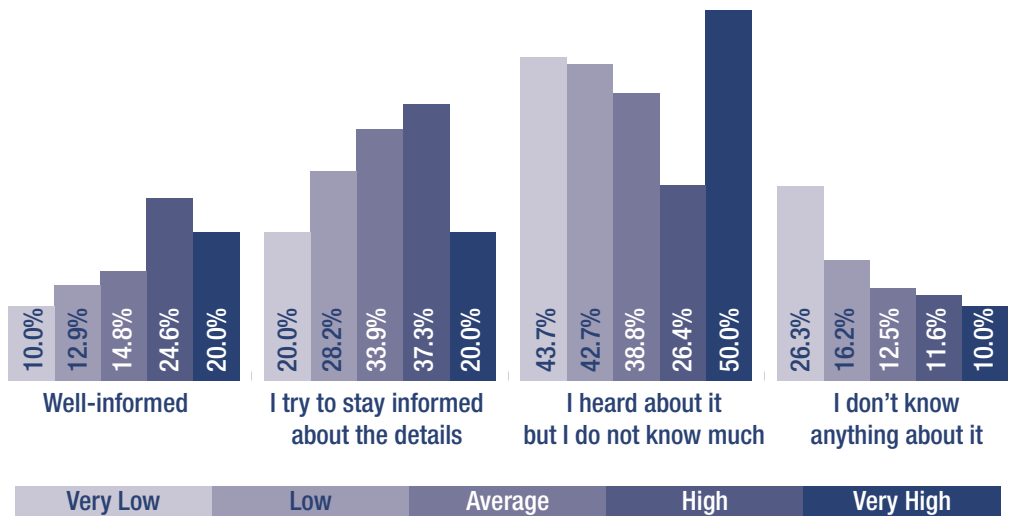


Figure 13: Familiarity with the Work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva Breakdown by Self-Reported Standard of Living

» How many people do you know in the Constitutional Committee, either personally or by name?

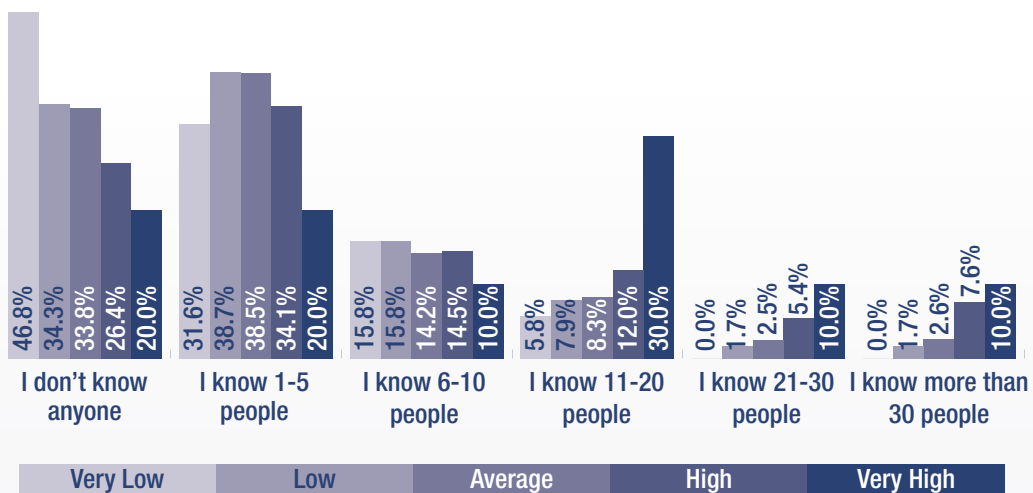


Figure 14: Knowledge of Constitutional Committee Members Breakdown by Self-Reported Standard of Living

In addition to the previous factors, the analysis of subsets reveals the effect of place of residence on Syrians' familiarity with the work of the Constitutional Committee. The sample results showed a notably higher percentage of respondents in regime-controlled areas who do not know anything about the current constitutional efforts—21.9%—compared with 8.9% living in opposition-controlled areas and 8.7% living in Autonomous Administration areas. This difference is certainly attributed to the absence of any space for the public discussion of issues in regime-held areas, as well as the regime's complete control of the local media, which has apparently avoided referring to the Committee. This makes it extremely difficult for people in regime-controlled areas to access information on this topic.





» To what extent are you familiar with the ongoing constitutional efforts in Geneva to draft a new constitution for Syria?

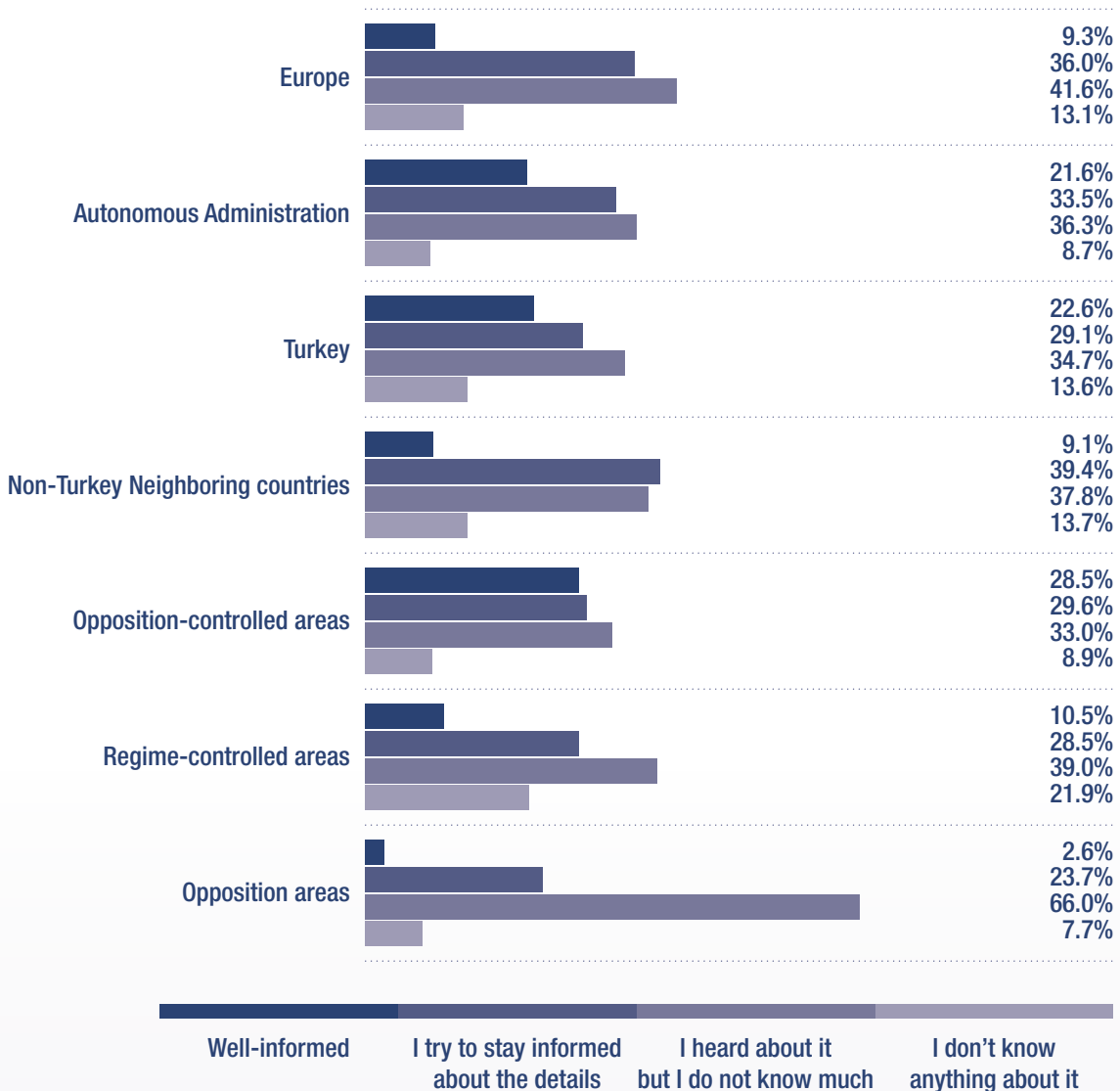


Figure 15: Familiarity with the Work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva Breakdown by Category of Current Place of Residence

In summary, this part of the study shows a general trend among all respondents to regard the constitutional efforts as less of a priority than other issues, such as establishing a ceasefire. Those who have shown interest and knowledge of constitutional efforts, or of Syrian political news in general, vary according to specific subsets such as sex and income level. This is reflected in levels of effective participation to influence political efforts, including the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva.

Chapter 2: Perceptions of the Constitutional Efforts

Syrians’ general perceptions about the work of the Constitutional Committee provide an indication of their future position on the outcomes of this committee, its legitimacy, and its ability to convince Syrians of the results of its work.

Differences based on religious diversity and income and education levels are indications of risks facing the work of the Committee and its outputs. These risks, if not avoided, may perpetuate structural problems within Syrian society that have not as yet been effectively confronted. For example, women’s participation in public affairs should be strengthened generally—rather than by fixed quota only. They should be aided in obtaining broader information about developments in Syrian politics and encouraged to try to influence these developments.

Full Sample Indicators

Nearly two-thirds of respondents said that the international consensus to launch the work of the Constitutional Committee is an attempt to circumvent the essence of the Syrian problem, or an attempt to “look busy.” This high negativity reveals the lack of political confidence of Syrians in general and their frustration with the political or constitutional track in its current situation—an important indicator of the incompatibility of these efforts with the aspirations of the sample respondents, which may well reflect the general populace overall.

Only 15.3% considered launching the work of the Committee to be the only possible way to set Syria’s political process back on track, which means that the majority of respondents either do not trust the political process as a whole or consider other issues to be more important at this juncture. Thus, continuing the political process in its current form will only further frustrate Syrians, who today do not trust the international community to understand Syria’s best interests.

» How would you describe the international consensus on launching the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva last year?

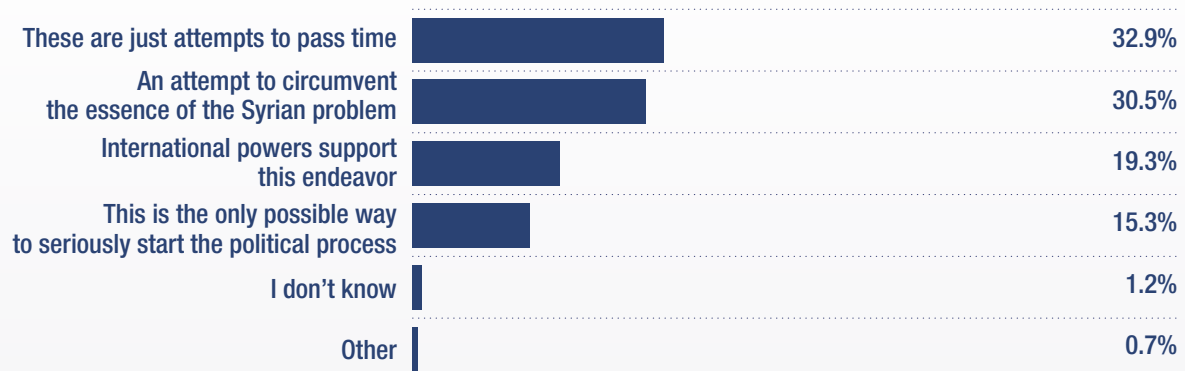


Figure 16: General Perception Regarding International Consensus Over the Constitutional Committee

Asking respondents about their general position on the Constitutional Committee offers indicators that explain the results of the previous question. In this regard, 38.4% of the respondents support the idea of the Committee, but they disagree with the way it was formed—this may represent a fundamental objection to the Committee by the Syrian public. The Committee was chosen according to international guidelines without taking into account what the Syrian people actually want to happen. This leaves the Committee without popular legitimacy, regardless of its approval by international and regional powers and some Syrian political parties.





» Do you have a position regarding the Constitutional Committee?

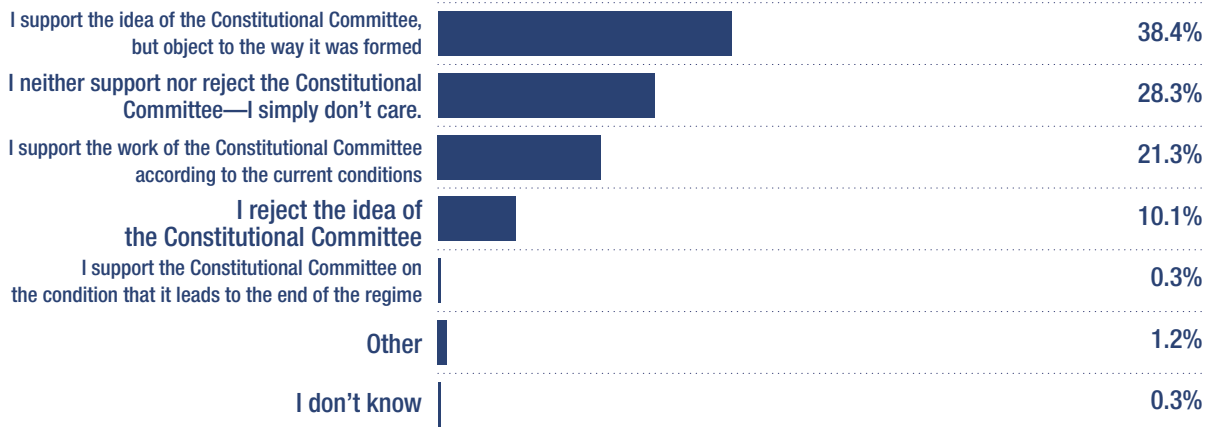


Figure 17: Respondents' Position on the Constitutional Committee

Comparative Presentation at the Subset Level

Religious affiliation affects a lot in Syria, and those factors are evident here. In our sample, 24% of Alawites and 22.5% of Christians believe that constitutional efforts are the only possible way to start a political solution, while percentages of this choice among the rest of the respondents who reported a religious affiliation range between 11% and 14%.

Although the gap between these subsets is not wide, it may give an indication that a high percentage of Alawites and Christians approve of the Constitutional Committee's work. As for Sunnis, 66% of our respondents in that subset consider the launch of the Committee's work an attempt to circumvent the essence of the Syrian problem or merely to pass time. This reflects a broad mood among the Sunni community, that does not seem to trust international efforts for a political solution in Syria—at least not the effort represented by the Committee.

This is likely because the areas that continue to suffer from military tensions and the possibility of skirmish outbreaks are mostly populated by Sunnis—the same areas that have witnessed the most violent military operations in the country. However, the dissatisfaction of Sunnis with existing international efforts to find a political solution in Syria is also related to a partial lack of confidence among our subset that the forces responsible for these efforts actually intend to make a real change in the political system.

Of note: the percentages of irreligious respondents' answers are close to the percentages given by Sunni respondents; more than two-thirds of the "Irreligious" subset consider the launch of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva at this time to be an attempt to look busy or to circumvent the essence of the Syrian problem.

» How would you describe the international consensus on launching the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva last year?
(8-Religious Affiliation Subset)

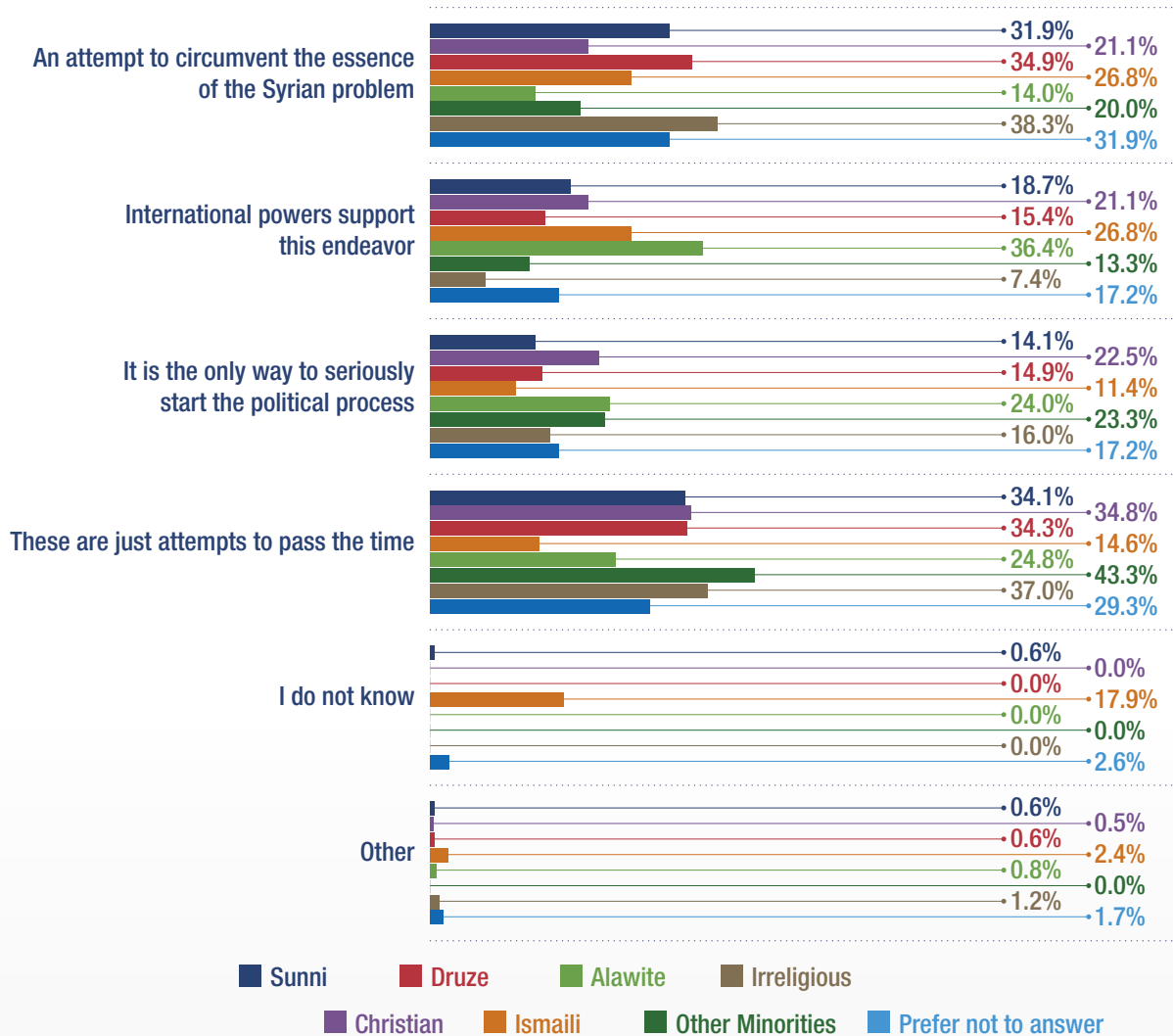


Figure 18: General Perception Regarding International Consensus Over the Constitutional Committee, Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

When analyzing the data by gender, women’s lack of interest in the Constitutional Committee confirms the conclusions of the previous chapter; public affairs is not a sphere welcoming to women in Syria and does not achieve their desired results. Nearly 35% of female respondents said they have no position on the Committee and simply don’t care, while among males this was only 22.2%.





» Do you have a position on the Constitutional Committee?

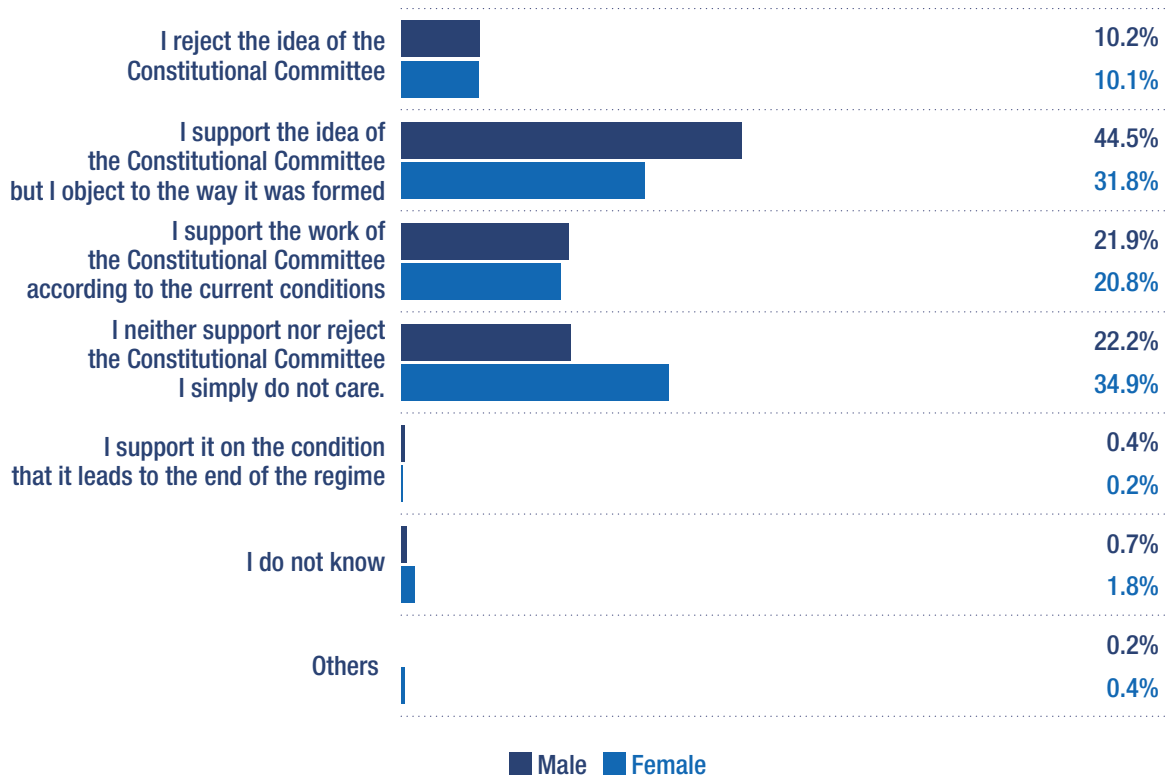


Figure 19: Respondents' Position on the Constitutional Committee Breakdown by Gender

The study data enables us to note the correlation of education level with the degree of interest in the Constitutional Committee. Interest decreases notably as the level of education drops. While the percentages show that a higher level of education increases support for the idea of the Committee, there is substantial objection among those higher-educated to the way the Committee was formed, though equal consideration that forming a constitutional committee was good and positive in principle.

» Do you have a position on the Constitutional Committee?

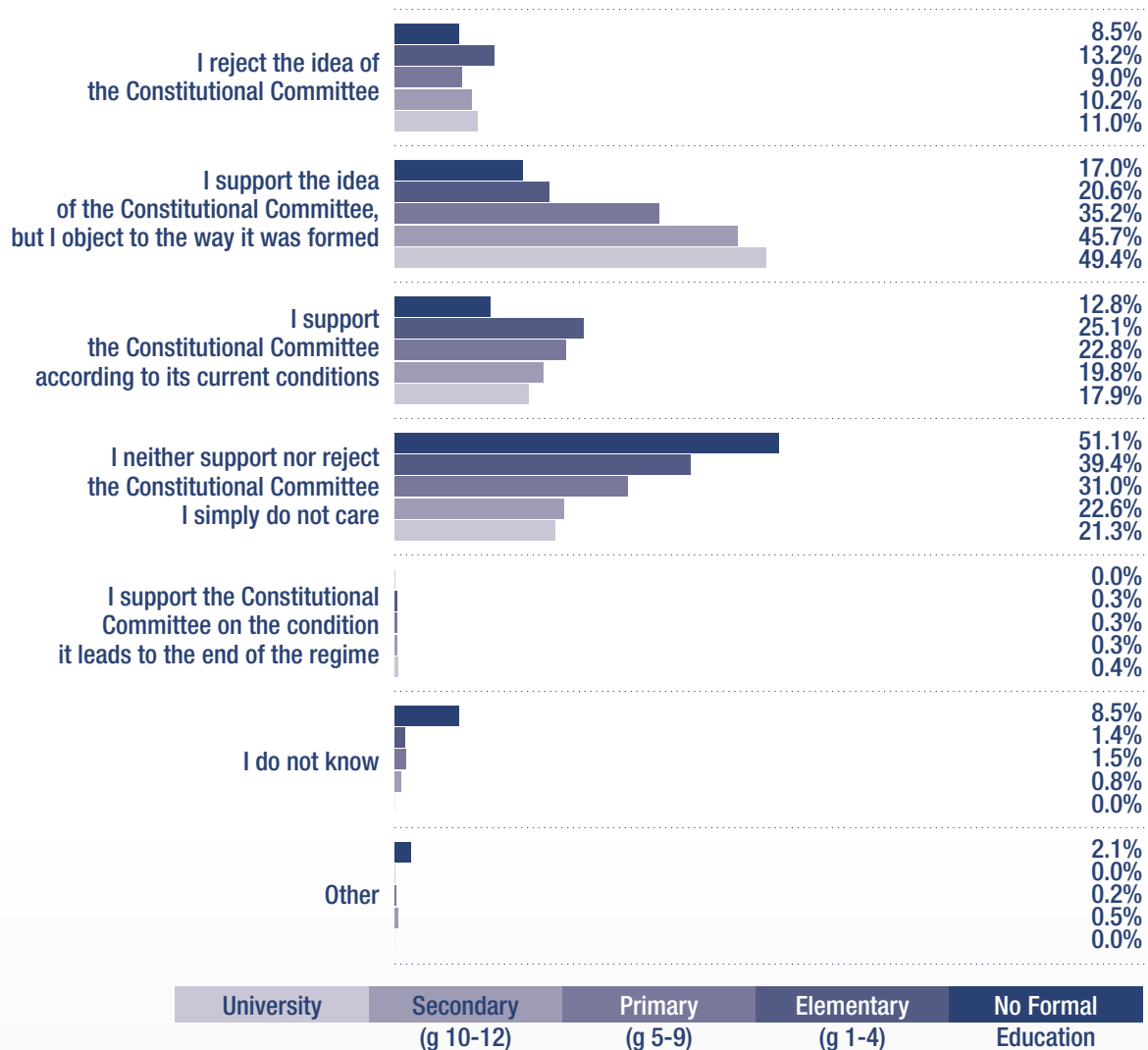


Figure 20: Respondents' Position on the Constitutional Committee Breakdown by Education

If we examine respondents' current place of residence as a subset to approval or rejection of the work of the Constitutional Committee, other details emerge. In the sample, 11.9% of residents living outside Syria reject the idea of a constitutional committee, while rejection drops to 8.9% among residents inside Syria. In contrast, support for the work of the Committee, according to the current data, for residents inside Syria has risen to 25%, while 15% of those living outside Syria selected the same option.

These percentages are a logical reflection of the urgent need of Syrian residents for some sort of political solution; far more urgently than those living outside the country. Today's political solution is closely linked to a number of vital issues—including the economic situation, security, and military stability, all of which will provide better living conditions somewhat resembling "normal" for residents.





» Do you have a position on the Constitutional Committee?

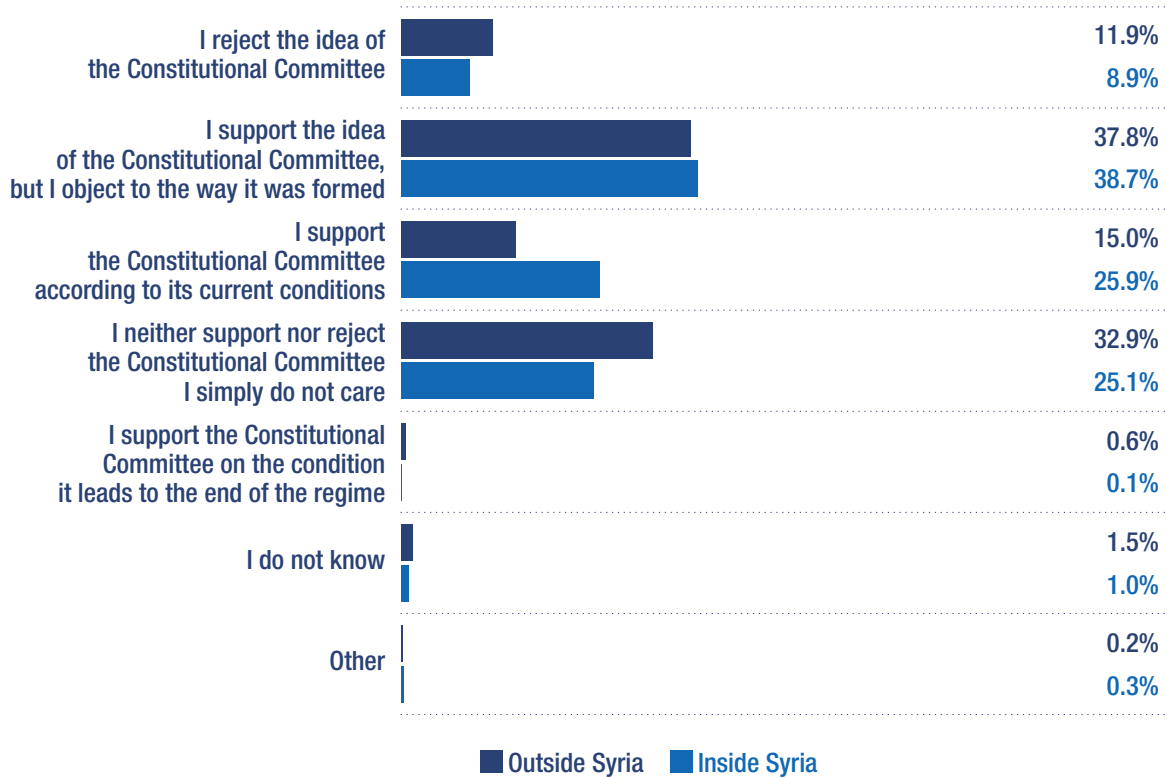


Figure 21: Respondents' Position on the Constitutional Committee Breakdown by General Current Residence

Our overall sample shows that 38.4% of respondents support the idea of the Constitutional Committee, while objecting to the way it was formed. This must be the context for encouraging more transparency in the work of the Committee, in order to increase mutual trust—especially among those who think that the inability to form this committee through direct election is a fundamental flaw, and a door for criticism that can be exploited when wide disagreements pop up between the Committee and the public.

Chapter 3: Hopes for the Constitutional Committee

The hopes of the Syrian people—if they exist—contribute to the success of the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, and will be reflected in an increase of their interaction with its work and discussions. Lack of hope, however, will lead to decreased interaction and eventually to the marginalization of the Committee’s political importance. On the other hand, achieving tangible and clear progress will help improve its image among Syrians.

In this chapter, we will measure the satisfaction of the Syrian people with, and the level of their hopes and aspirations in, the work of the Committee. This will be analyzed at both full sample and subset levels, which will allow us to draw some conclusions about the extent of the importance of the current constitutional efforts for Syrians, and the extent to which they are eager for important results from these efforts.

Overview

When talking about the hopes for and expectations from the Committee, a general frustration becomes evident. According to the study results, 37.4% of respondents have low hopes, while 33.3% said they have no hope for the Committee’s success. These high levels of frustration explain the lack of direct public support.

» What level of hope do you have for the success of the work and results of the Constitutional Committee?

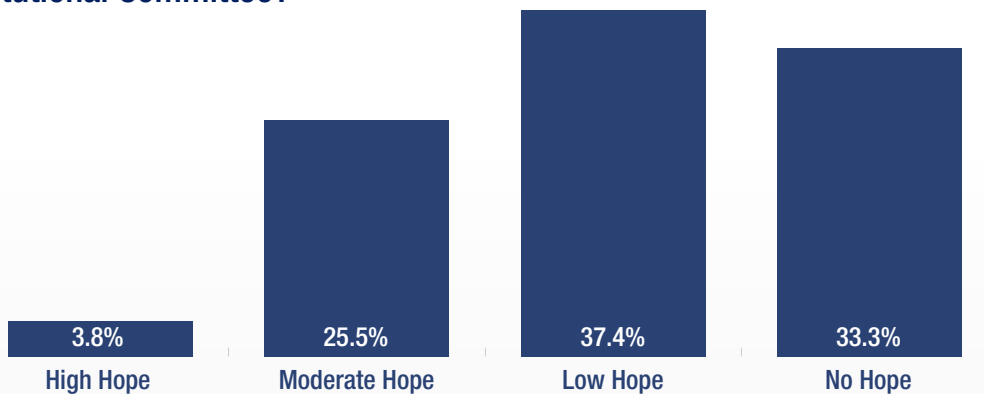


Figure 22: General Hopes for Successful Results from the Constitutional Committee

Digging a little deeper into the general pessimism, 34% of respondents who expressed “little” or “no” hope for the success of these efforts said that the supporting countries are not serious, while 33.7% of the same subset said that writing a new constitution will not solve the problem.

Some reflection is needed when approximately two-thirds of the sample express a general lack of interest in and frustration with the performance of the Committee, which is echoed through the entire political track in Syria and in the way priorities for this track were set without actual input from Syrian citizens.

This block of respondents who take a negative stance on this track demonstrates the increasing frustration among women and lowest-income individuals, which can be seen through the subsets.

» Why don’t you hope for much success?

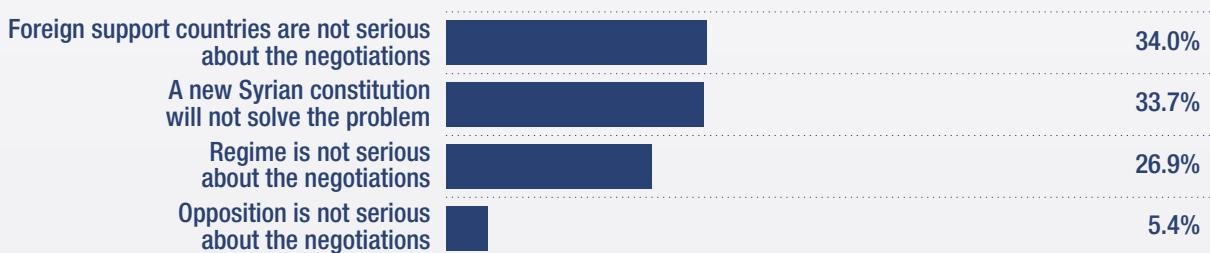


Figure 23: Reasons for Little or No Hope Regarding the Success of the Constitutional Committee (n=2098)





Dissatisfaction rates were highest in the evaluation of the various Constitutional Committee delegations communicating with the public (44.5% of respondents were not at all satisfied). This dissatisfaction is a clear expression of the widening gap between Syrians and the Committee.

The Constitutional Committee will have to convince Syrians they represent of any outcomes they reach, which means communication with the public during the drafting process must be a top priority for a new constitution.

» How satisfied are you with the level of communication about the negotiations you receive from your Committee delegate?

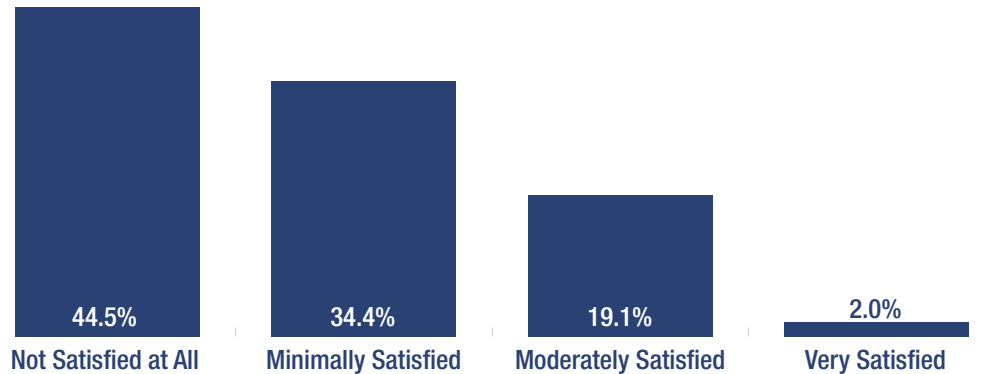


Figure 24: Evaluation of Communication from Respondents' Individual Committee Delegates

Note: This question excludes those who claim to have no knowledge of the ongoing Constitutional Committee efforts in Geneva. (see Figure 3)

When asked about the negotiation performance of their respective delegation, 40.9% of respondents evaluated “minimally satisfactory” in terms of mobilizing international support, while 32.3% indicated “not satisfactory at all.” This reflects discontent with international interaction with the course of the Committee. It seems that Syrians consider the performance of their negotiating delegations within the Committee to be severely lacking.

» How satisfied are you with the level of international support mobilization by your Committee delegate?

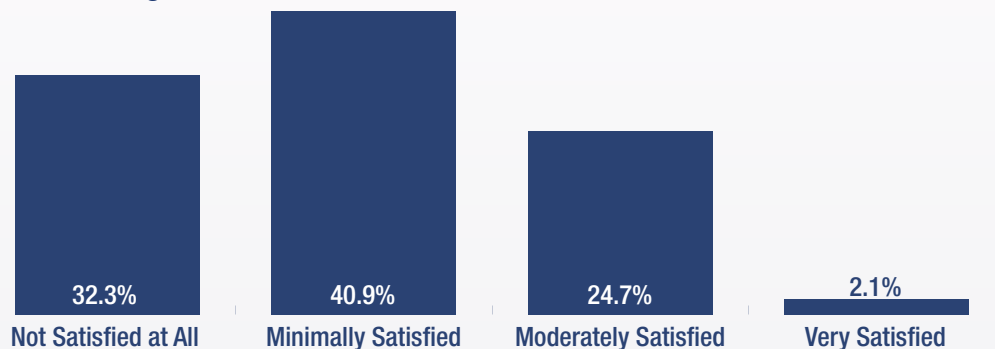


Figure 25: Evaluation of International Support Mobilization by Respondents' Individual Committee Delegates

Note: This question excludes those who claim to have no knowledge of the ongoing Constitutional Committee efforts in Geneva. (see Figure 3)

Satisfaction rates tend to increase with regards to legal expertise and negotiating performance, highlighting again that most of the dissatisfaction stems from delegations' communication with the public. However, overall levels of satisfaction with the delegation performance are not high, so we can assume that while the delegates aren't considered to be great, at least they know their law and can haggle.

» How satisfied are you with your Committee delegate's negotiation performance and persuasion ability?

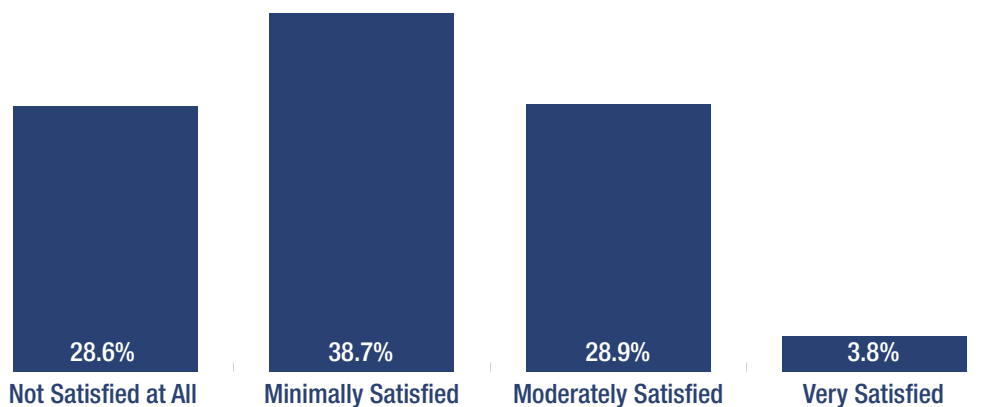


Figure 26: Evaluation of Negotiation Performance and Persuasion Ability by Respondents' Individual Committee Delegates

Note: This question excludes those who claim to have no knowledge of the ongoing Constitutional Committee efforts in Geneva. (see Figure 3)

» How satisfied are you with your Committee delegate's legal and expertise capabilities?

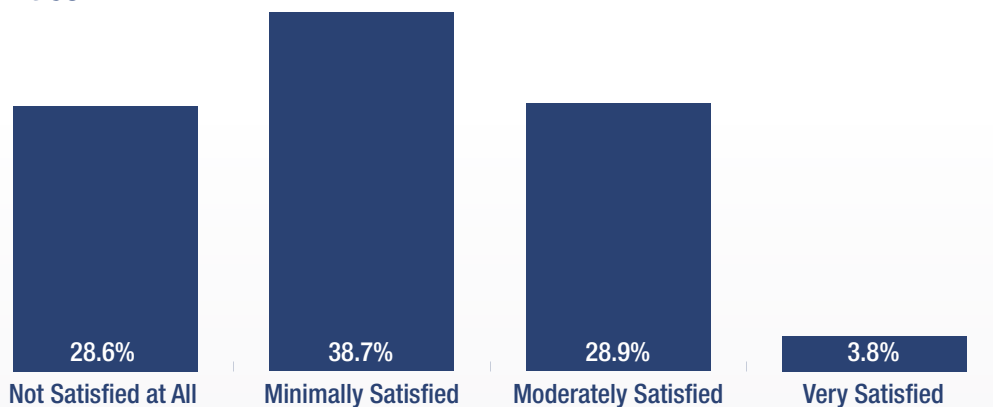


Figure 27: Evaluation of Legal and Expertise Capabilities of Respondents' Individual Committee Delegates

Note: This question excludes those who claim to have no knowledge of the ongoing Constitutional Committee efforts in Geneva. (see Figure 3)





Comparative Presentation at the Subset Level

Despite the sample's overall tendency to express frustration with the Constitutional Committee, female respondents showed a particular increase in the percentage of answers that they do not have any hopes from the Constitutional Committee, as 36% of women chose this option compared to 30% of men. The reasons for this frustration differ depending on the gender variable, as 37% of women said that writing a new constitution will not solve the Syrian problem, while 35.1% of men believe that the supporting countries are not serious.

The growing frustration of women, despite sharing the common tendency to take a negative stance on the constitution process among respondents, shows that they do not find in this track a clear translation of the problems they face in their lives, or a representation of their aspirations.

» What level of hope do you have for the success of the work and results of the Constitutional Committee?

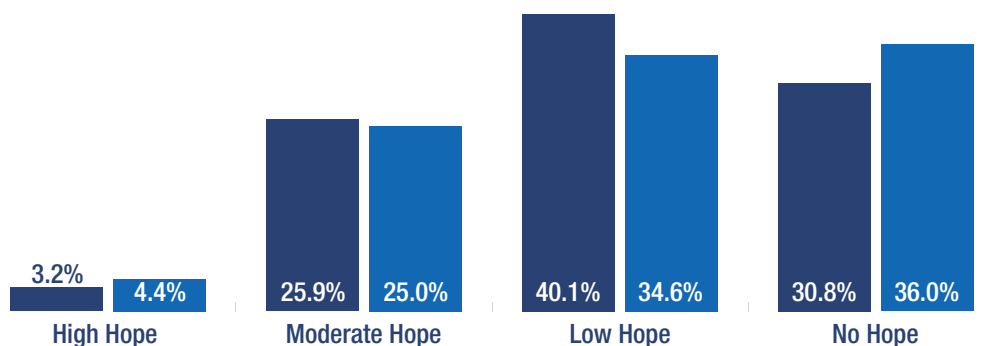


Figure 28: General Hopes for Successful Results from the Constitutional Committee Breakdown by Gender

» Why don't you hope for much success?

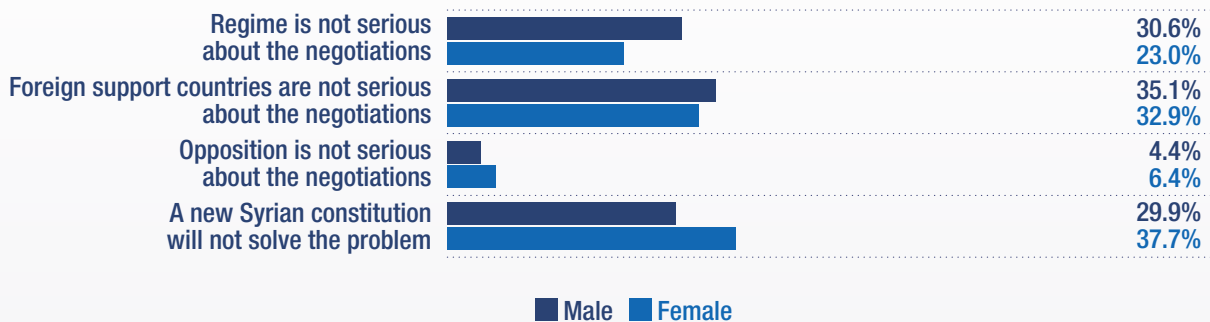


Figure 29: Reasons for Little or No Hope Regarding the Success of the Constitutional Committee Breakdown by Gender (n=2098)

Religious affiliation, in turn, has a clear effect on respondents' hopes. It can be observed that levels of frustration among those of the Alawite sect are lower than those of Sunni, Druze, and Ismaili sects. We can translate this on several overlapping levels, related to the tendency of the sects to reside in places with different security situations, as well as the link of political position in Syria to sectarian polarization, which is directly reflected in the levels of satisfaction and the hopes placed on the parties supported by the respondent.

It can also be related to the rates of asylum among sects. Precise figures of these rates cannot be obtained at the present time, but the general impression is that those affiliated with the Alawite sect are the least inclined to leave Syria, which leads to biases associated with living inside Syria as well as those of sectarian affiliation.

» What level of hope do you have for the success of the work and results of the Constitutional Committee?

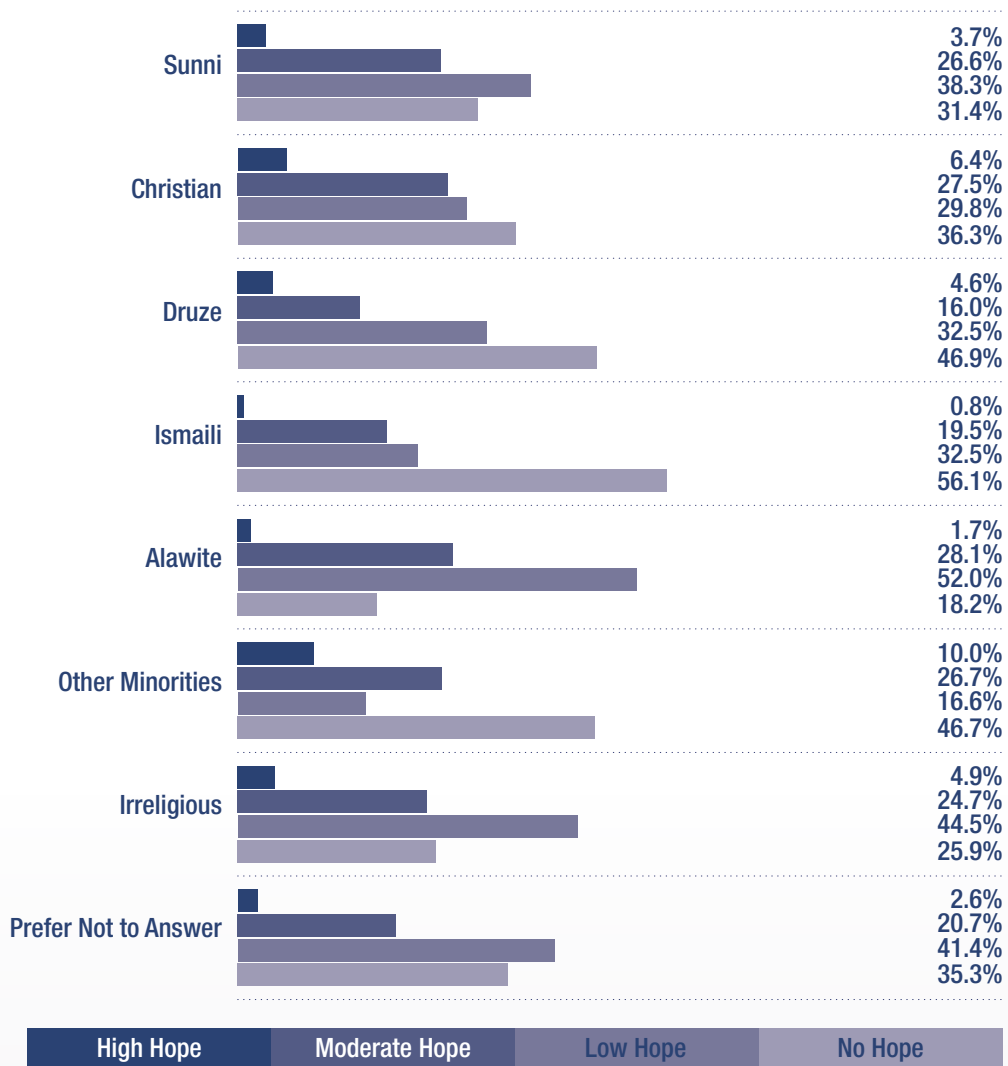


Figure 30: General Hopes for Successful Results from the Constitutional Committee Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

Respondents' place of residence is one factor that clearly affects levels of satisfaction with the performance of the Committee and hopes for its outcomes. This can be seen in evaluations of their negotiating delegates in terms of mobilizing international support. On this, 40.5% of respondents living outside Syria said the performance was "not satisfactory at all," while among residents living in Syria the same evaluation was 20%.

Of respondents living outside Syria, 39.8% had no hope for the success of the Constitutional Committee or for reaching acceptable outcomes, considerably higher than the 28.7% with no hope among those residing inside Syria. This could be an expression of growing frustration among Syrian refugees with regard to the political track and little confidence in what this track can produce. That lack of confidence will certainly affect their future plans, especially in regard to returning to Syria. It is worth mentioning here that 80% of Syrians residing outside Syria are refugees.⁽¹⁾

But the lower level of "no hope" among residents of Syria does not automatically mean "high hopes," as only 5% of respondents living inside Syria said they have high hopes for the success of the work of the Committee.

(1) Karam Shaar, *Syrians on the Move*, The Middle East Institute, 2020.





» How satisfied are you with your Committee delegate's negotiation performance and persuasion ability?

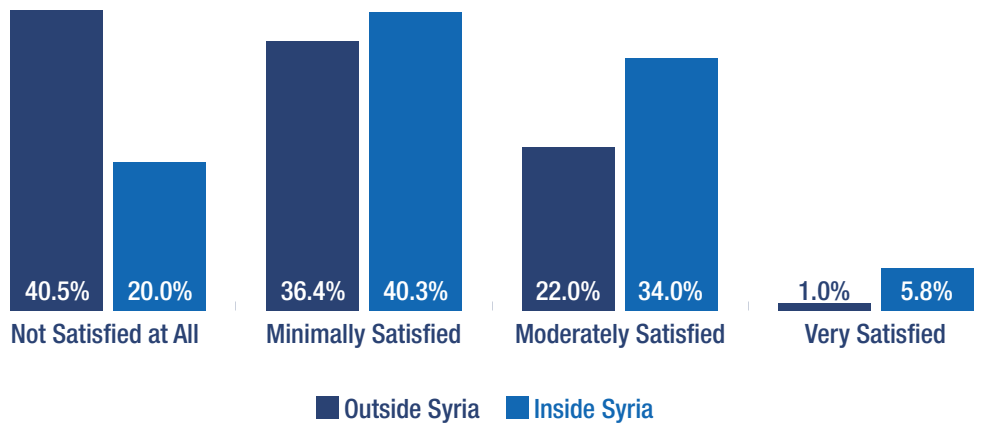


Figure 31: Evaluation of Negotiation Performance and Persuasion Ability by Respondents' Individual Committee Delegates Breakdown by General Current Residence (n=2546)

Note: This question excludes those who claim to have no knowledge of the ongoing Constitutional Committee efforts in Geneva. (see Figure 3)

» What level of hope do you have for the success of the work and results of the Constitutional Committee?

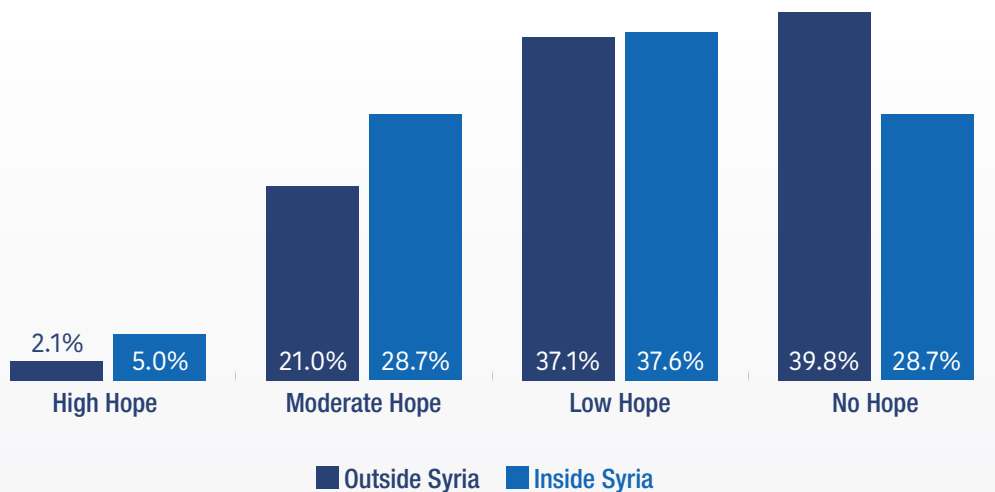


Figure 32: General Hopes for Successful Results from the Constitutional Breakdown by General Current Residence

Respondents inside Syria disagree with those outside Syria in terms of the reason for their frustration with the work of the Constitutional Committee. "Writing a new constitution will not solve the problem" and "Foreign support countries are not serious about the negotiations" received the highest percentages among Syrians residing abroad, at 41.2% and 34.5% respectively. Respondents inside Syria, however, chose "Foreign support countries are not serious about the negotiations" and "Regime is not serious about the negotiations," with 33.7% and 30.8% respectively.

» Why don't you hope for much success?

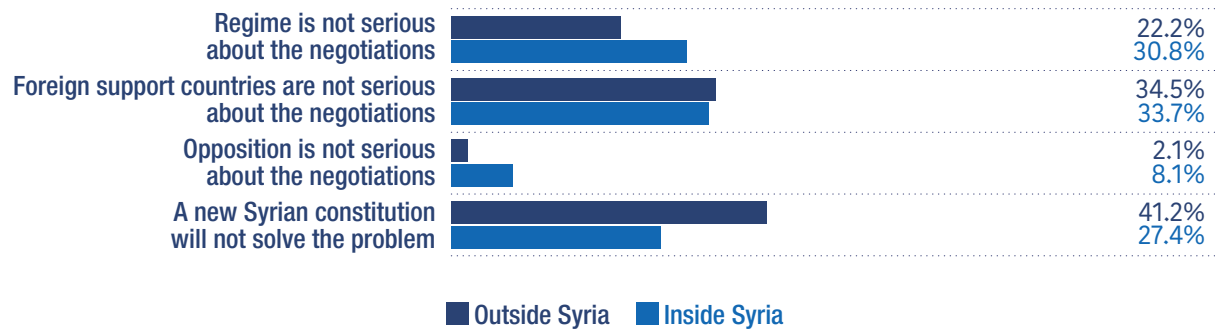


Figure 33: Reasons for Little or No Hope Regarding the Success of the Constitutional Committee Breakdown by General Current Residence (n=2098)





Chapter 4: Controversy of Constitutional Issues: What has Changed in Three Years?

There are major issues that will determine the shape of the constitution, the form of political government that will result from the new constitution, and the relationship between the authorities and the type of political system. The political and social history of Syria raises a number of issues which have been the subject of controversy and discussion during the writing of previous constitutions. It is possible to infer the most prominent of these issues from the opinions of our survey respondents.

In 2017, researchers from The Day After conducted a survey for Syrians (published in July 2018), about public views on the most important constitutional issues that are considered controversial and problematic within Syrian society, in order to understand their aspirations and positions on what a future Syrian constitution could be.

In addition to analyzing the current study data, this chapter makes comparisons between opinion trends today and three years ago, and what may have changed in the positions of Syrians in general, especially their positions as influenced by their various affiliations and backgrounds.

Religion and the State in the Constitution

The issue of religion's relationship with the state has always been problematic when writing most of the Syrian constitutions. The Constituent Assembly engaged in extensive and in-depth discussions during the preparation of the 1950 Constitution on this issue. The relatively democratic atmosphere⁽²⁾ in which that constitution was discussed in the Drafting Committee, the Parliament, and on the Syrian street indicated that this debate expanded to include Syrian society.

Records of discussion sessions regarding the 1950 constitution show that the Drafting Committee reached a compromise on the issue of the constitution's religion, by replacing the phrase "the state religion is Islam" with the phrase "the religion of the president of the republic is Islam" and "Islamic jurisprudence is the main source of legislation." These records also indicate that one of the main figures within the Islamic movement, Mustafa Al-Seba'i, defended this option as a compromise between the different opinions. Al-Seba'i, who was the General Observer of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, urged that this clause be considered an expression of the desire of a large group of Syrians without detracting from the rights of other sects and religions in the country, or taking a hostile stance against them.⁽³⁾

The issue of not mentioning the religion of the head of state during the drafting of the Constitution of 1973 sparked a number of protests in the country, which were led by figures and leaders from the Muslim Brotherhood. Saeed Hawwa, a Muslim Brotherhood leader, says in his memoirs⁽⁴⁾ that his participation during those protests resulted from no mention of the religion of the head of state in the first version of that constitution, which changed later to adopt the final text with "the religion of the president of the republic is Islam"—although that constitution's Drafting Committee was appointed by the ruling military regime after Hafez al-Assad's coup at the end of 1970.

It is expected that this point will spark wide disagreements and discussions, both within and outside the Constitutional Committee, among the various segments of Syrian society.

This study data shows a clear polarization in the answers to the questions about the relationship between religion and the state in the upcoming constitution. Perhaps the religious and sectarian affiliation subsets can help explain that. The biggest contradiction comes from the agreement of the majority of the studied sample (59.2%) that the Syrian constitution should not include any reference to any religion, in addition to the refusal of nearly half of the sample to state Syria's Islamic

(2) Syria was then still ruled by a civilian government headed by Hashem Al-Atassi, but most of the constitutional discussions took place after Adib al-Shishakli's first coup, through which he overthrew the old army leadership, while preserving the civilian government, which of course ruled under the influence of Shishakli. The Constituent Assembly had been elected to draft the constitution on November 15, 1949, that is, before Shishakli's first coup.

(3) [The Religious Issue in the Syrian Constitutions: A Historical and Comparative Survey](#), Dr. Ibrahim Darraji and Dr. Reem Turkmani, Syrian Constitutional Papers Series, London School of Economics and Political Science, November 2019.

(4) Hawwa Saeed (1987) *This is My Experience and This is My Testimony*, Cairo, Wahba Bookstore.

identity in the next constitution (44.8% “disagree” or “strongly disagree”).

» What is your position toward on this statement?

“The constitution should state no reference to any specific religion.”

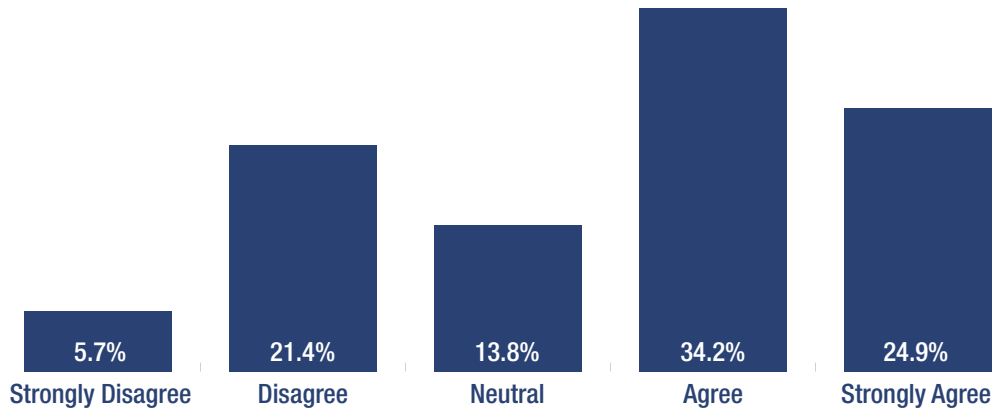


Figure 34: Attitudes Toward Exclusion of Specific Religion in New Constitution

» What is your position regarding this statement?

“Syria’s Islamic identity should be stated in the new constitution.”

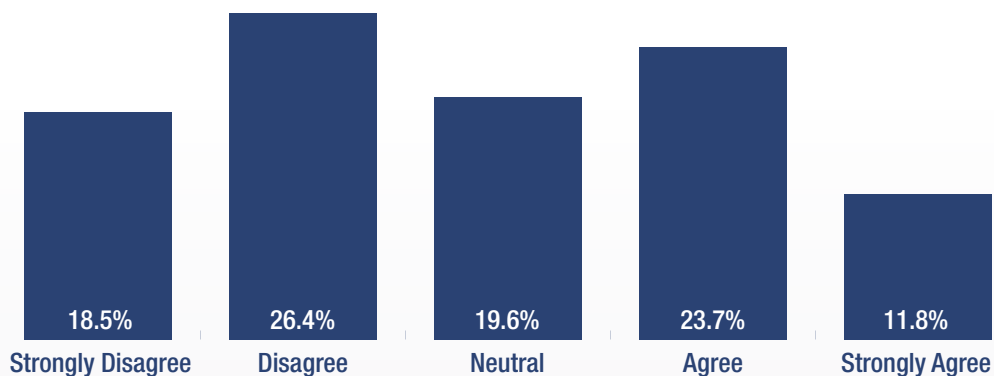


Figure 35: Attitudes Toward Inclusion of Syria’s Islamic Identity in New Constitution

This contradicts the sample’s tendency to agree that the state’s religion is Islam (43.5% “agree” or “strongly agree” with such a statement, while 37% “disagree”). A later analysis of the subsets will explain this contradiction.

» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state that the religion of the country is Islam.”

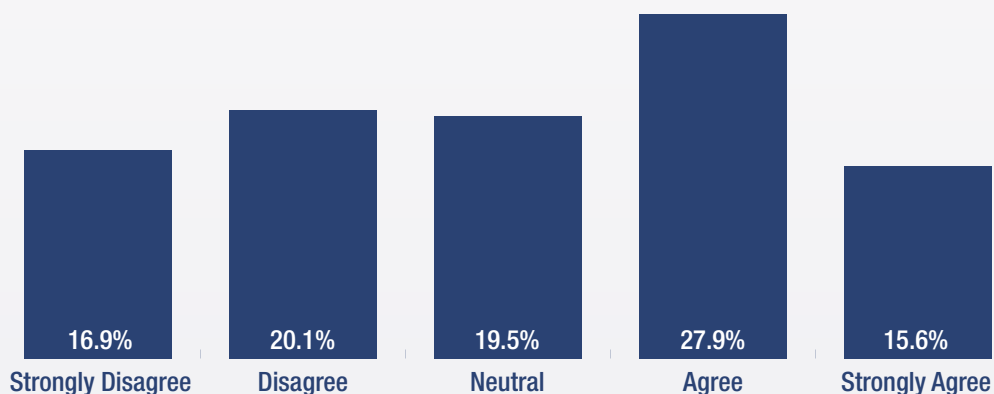


Figure 36: Attitudes Toward Designating Islam as State Religion in New Constitution





As for the adoption of Islamic Sharia as a primary source of legislation, respondents showed a tendency to disagree (45.1% “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with this statement, while 36.1% “agree”). This disagreement turned to a good percentage of agreement when Islamic Sharia was placed as just one of the sources of legislation in the Constitution (66.2% “agree” or “strongly agree” with this statement).

These percentages indicate the acceptance of a significant number of respondents to the adoption of Islamic Sharia as one of the sources of legislation, as is the case in the country’s current constitution (similar phrases were used in previous Syrian constitutions, such as the Constitution of 1950). It seems that the issue of the relationship of Islamic Sharia with personal status laws in particular will be a vital issue for a large number of Syrians, a subject of previous controversy and disagreements during the discussions of the constitution.

While it is possible to see a wide acceptance of Islamic Sharia being among the sources of legislation, the rejection of it being the primary source of legislation can be explained on several levels, the most prominent of which is the fear among broad groups of the population (that are by no means limited to religious minorities) of repeating rule by extremist organizations such as the Islamic State (ISIS) and Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, formerly Al-Nusra).

The second level of explanation is related to the variables of different religious and ethnic affiliations, which will be explained in the subset analysis.

» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state that Islamic Sharia is the primary source of legislation.”

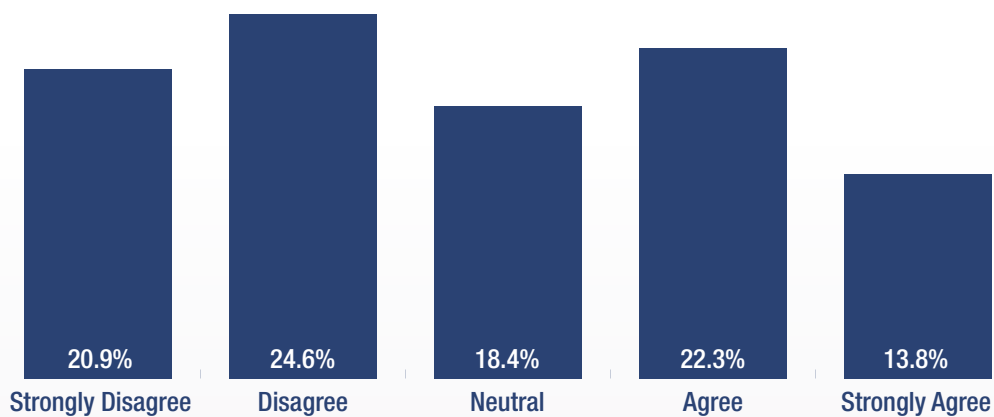


Figure 37: Attitudes Toward Designating Islamic Sharia as the Primary Legislative Source in New Constitution

» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state that Islamic Sharia is one source of legislation.”

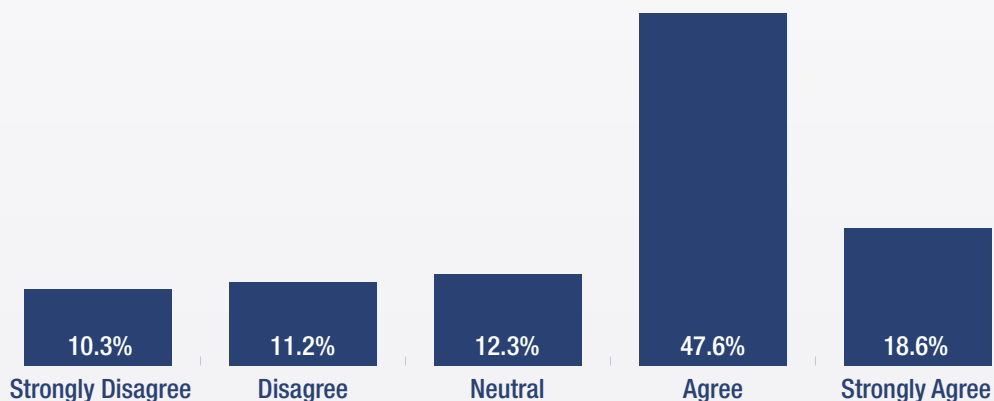


Figure 38: Attitudes Toward Designating Islamic Sharia as One Legislative Source in New Constitution

We notice a polarization in the sample results when asking if the religion of the president of the republic should be included in the constitution. The percentages of agreement and disagreement are close on stating that the religion of the head of state is Sunni Islam (38.4% “disagree” or “strongly disagree,” compared with 39.8% who “strongly agree” or “agree”). This reflects a general sentiment among a large portion of Syrians that defining the religion of the head of state comes in contrast to a trend toward equality among citizens.

It should also be noted that the Syrian constitutions from 1920 until 2012 indicated that the religion of the head of state is Islam. It should also be noted that the 1920 Constitution issued by the Syrian Congress also defined the religion of the king as Islam—this was a foregone conclusion, since the king was from the Hashemite family, while the main powers were in the hands of a government accountable to and appointed by Parliament. The religion of the prime minister was not specified in the text of the 1920 Constitution.

» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state the President of the Republic should be Sunni Muslim.”

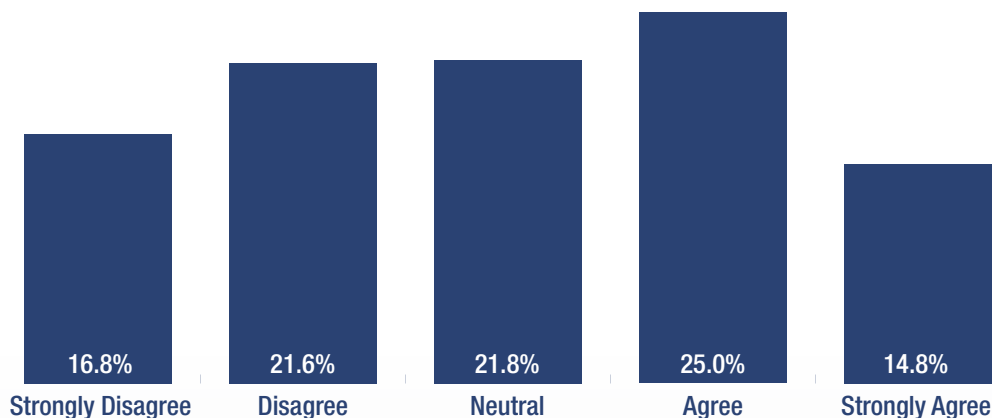


Figure 39: Attitudes Toward Stating Requirement that Head of State be Sunni Muslim in New Constitution

At the subset level, varying degrees of polarization emerge which indicate the influence of religious and sectarian affiliations, in addition to ethnicity, on Syrians’ views of the position of religion in the state. This is especially true since the political history of Syria witnessed similar debates, which sometimes turned into polarization in the Syrian streets. The impact of these experiences on the positions of religious minorities can also be expected.

But we do notice a sharp decline in the polarization of the Sunnis toward views that link Islam to the Syrian constitution, even if approval percentages remain predominant.

The inclusion of a set of terms linking Islam with the Syrian state in the constitution is more evident than linking Islam, and specifically Sunni Islam, with the mechanisms of the political system and laws, such as personal status laws. Such linkage is of course important for a significant segment of Syrians.

These terms are related to, as considered by many Syrians, an affirmation of the Sunni identity in Syria, in light of the years of oligarchy⁽⁵⁾ sectarian rule by Alawites. Such rhetoric retreated toward relying on sub-identities that were never completely absent from political and social discussions. However, these circumstances contributed to an increase in polarization. One example was the movement led by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1973 to impose a clause in the constitution, which was being drafted at that time, stating that the religion of the head of state is Islam.

Starting from the years of the Assad regime’s rule—nearly 50 years now—widespread repression after the start of the Syrian revolution, and the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against areas of Sunni majority, have all contributed to encouraging an important part of the Sunni Arabs to consider themselves directly targeted by a process of

(5) Oligarchy or minority rule is a form of government in which political power is confined to a small segment of society distinguished by money, lineage, or military power. The word «oligarchic» is derived from the Greek word: ὀλιγαρχία oligarchia. Oligarchic regimes and states are often dominated by a few powerful families that inherit wealth and power from one generation to another.



political and material exclusion aimed at removing them from the public sphere permanently, and even removing them from their areas of residence to other areas in Syria or outside the country permanently. This is what actually happened in many Sunni majority areas, especially in the countryside, during the Syrian revolution.

On the other hand, religious minorities' objection to linking the country's constitution to a religious identity—specifically the identity of the country's religious majority (Sunni Islam)—has roots in the modern and ancient history of the region. Christians still remember the massacres they were subjected to in Mount Lebanon and Damascus in the 1860s, after centuries of discrimination against them by Ottoman laws that gave the Sunni Muslims an advantage in everything over those of other sects.

Other religious sects have a history full of discrimination and persecution by ruling authorities in Syria, whether during the period of Ottoman rule over the region and Syria itself, or the discrimination on class and political basis during the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, when transformations in Ottoman property laws allowed the emergence of local feudalist elites that controlled large areas of land, while members of sectarian minorities were deprived of these properties. This created a wide agricultural ownership problem in Syria over the areas of religious minorities such as Alawites⁽⁶⁾ and Ismailis, who were clearly victims of this process and to the general impoverishment that it caused.

Hence, political and economic reasons are mixed under a broader cover of identity polarization within Syrians' options for the relationship of religion and the state in the constitution. This is in addition to the historical relationship between personal status laws and the resultant property issues related to the distribution of property in Islamic Sharia in Syria and the region in general.

According to the study data, respondents belonging to religious minorities showed a clear tendency to agree that the constitution should not include any reference to any religion. In the sample, 94.3% of Druze respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" with the above statement, and 92.7% of Ismailis agree with it as well. Also, 80.4% of Christians and 77.6% of Alawites said they "agree" or "strongly agree" with it.

The sample shows the tendency of religious minorities to "strongly agree" with that statement. For example, 72% of Druze respondents "strongly agree" that the constitution should not include any reference to any religion. Irreligious people show a similar tendency at 77.8%. The only exception to this tendency among minorities was among the Alawites; 51.2% of them "agree" to the statement, while 26.4% "strongly agree."

(6) Batatu Hanna (2014), *Syria' Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables and Their Politics*, translated by Abdullah Fakil and Raed Naqshbandi, Doha, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.

» What is your position toward on this statement?

“The constitution should state no reference to any specific religion.”

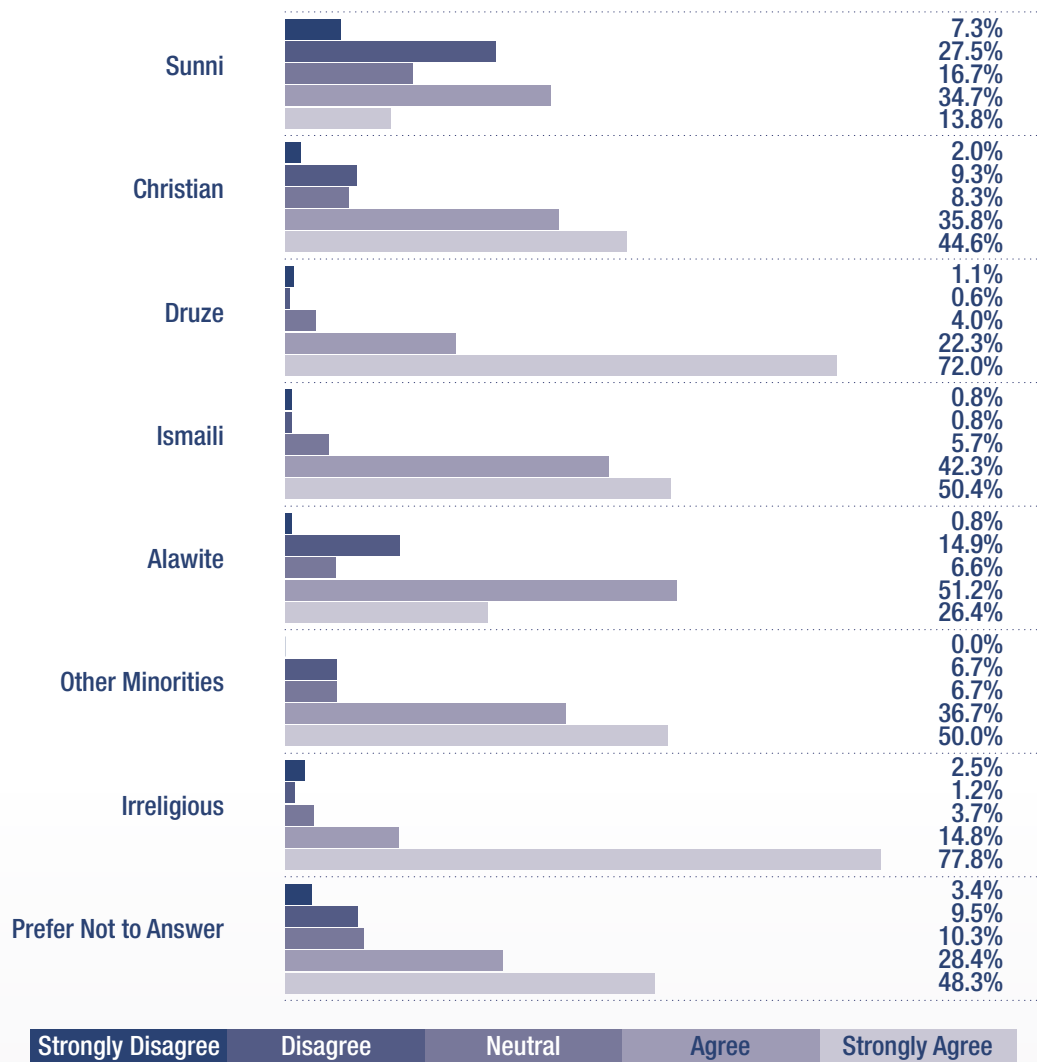


Figure 40: Attitudes Toward Exclusion of Specific Religion in New Constitution Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

Alawite respondents' exception is not limited to not having a hard position on this issue. Alawites objection to have Islamic Sharia as one source of legislation was only 17.3%, the lowest percentage among religious minorities whose majority objected to this option.

Minority voices show an increase in objection when the statement is that Islamic Sharia would be the primary source of legislation in the country. The percentage of those who “strongly disagree” or “disagree” was 91.5% among Druze respondents, 95.6% among Christians, 91.1% among Ismailis and 77.6% among Alawites.





» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state that Islamic Sharia is one source of legislation.”

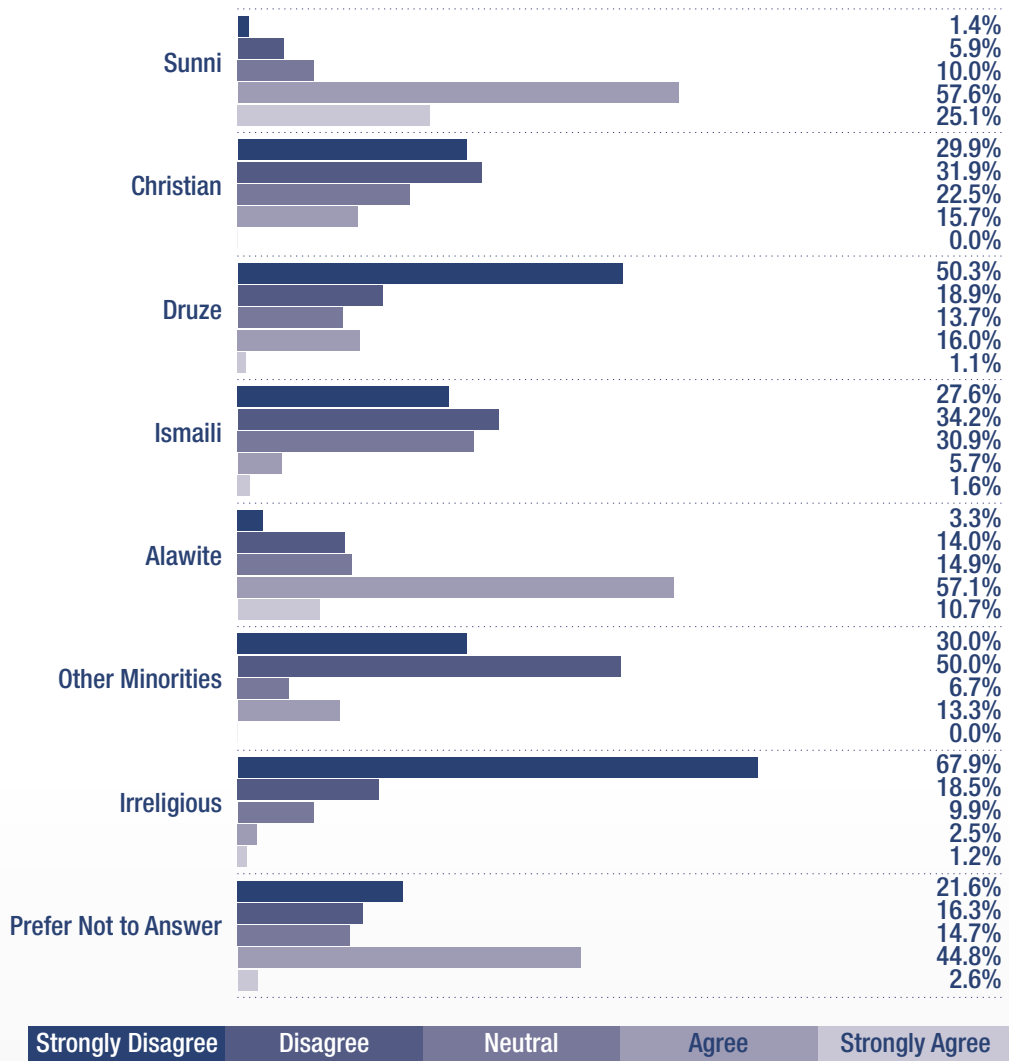


Figure 41: Attitudes Toward Designating Islamic Sharia as One Legislative Source in New Constitution Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state that Islamic Sharia is the primary source of legislation.”

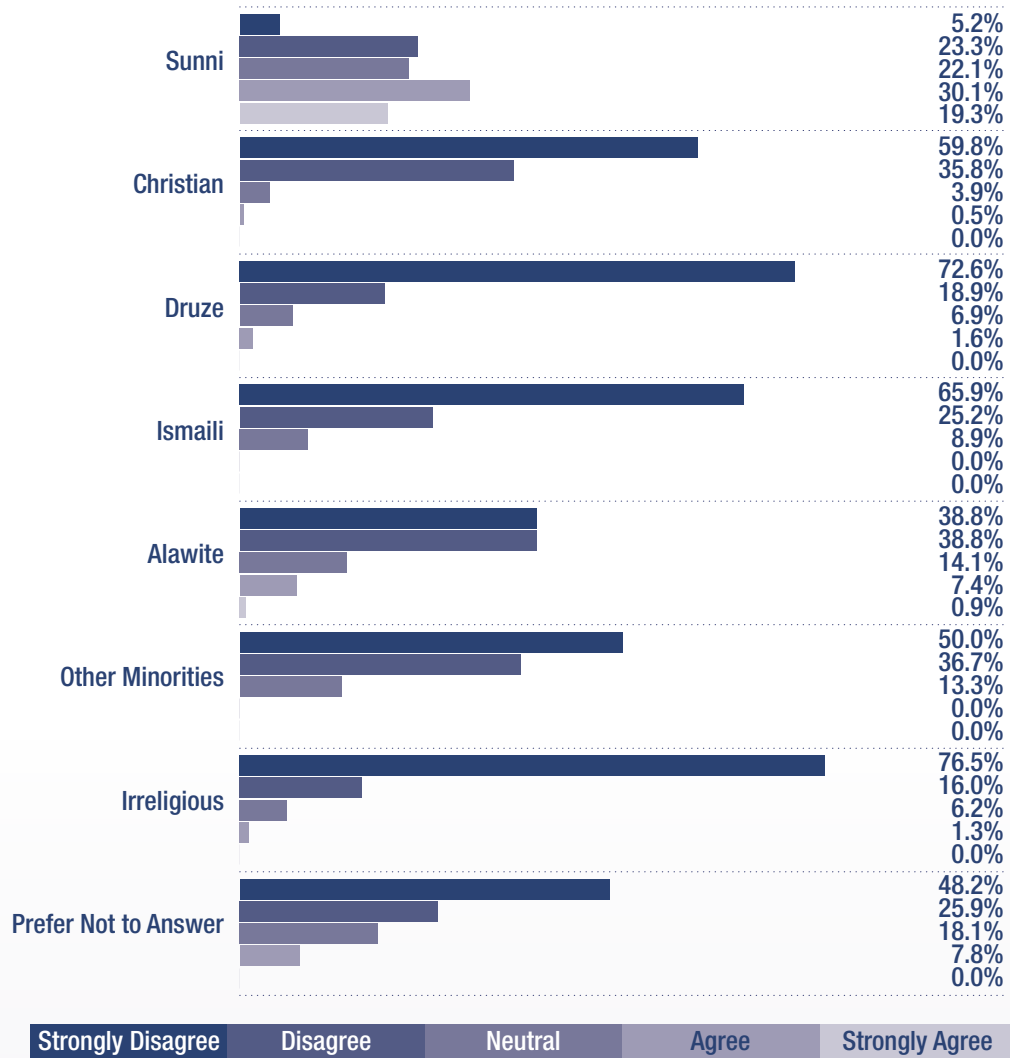


Figure 42: Attitudes Toward Designating Islamic Sharia as the Primary Legislative Source in New Constitution Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

Although rates of disagreement in general remain most common among Alawites, they show a higher acceptance of the relationship between Islam and the state in the constitution, which can be explained by political experiences that were imprinted in their memories during the rule of the Assad regime, and the nature of the dual relationship that gave Sunni Islam the official front of the public religious sphere in Syria at a time when influential Alawite figures preserved the most prominent military and security centers in the country. These centers exercised government directly or indirectly throughout the Assad regime’s rule.

Sunnis tend to agree to this link, taking into account the light polarization they have, as their levels of acceptance with these expressions do not reach high levels of disagreement from sectarian minorities. This may allow for compromises that satisfy all parties, as happened during discussions of the Constitution of 1950.

Despite the widespread opposition of religious and sectarian minorities to stating Sunni Islam as the religion of the head of state, the objection shows less polarization on this particular point.





» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state that the religion of the country is Islam.”

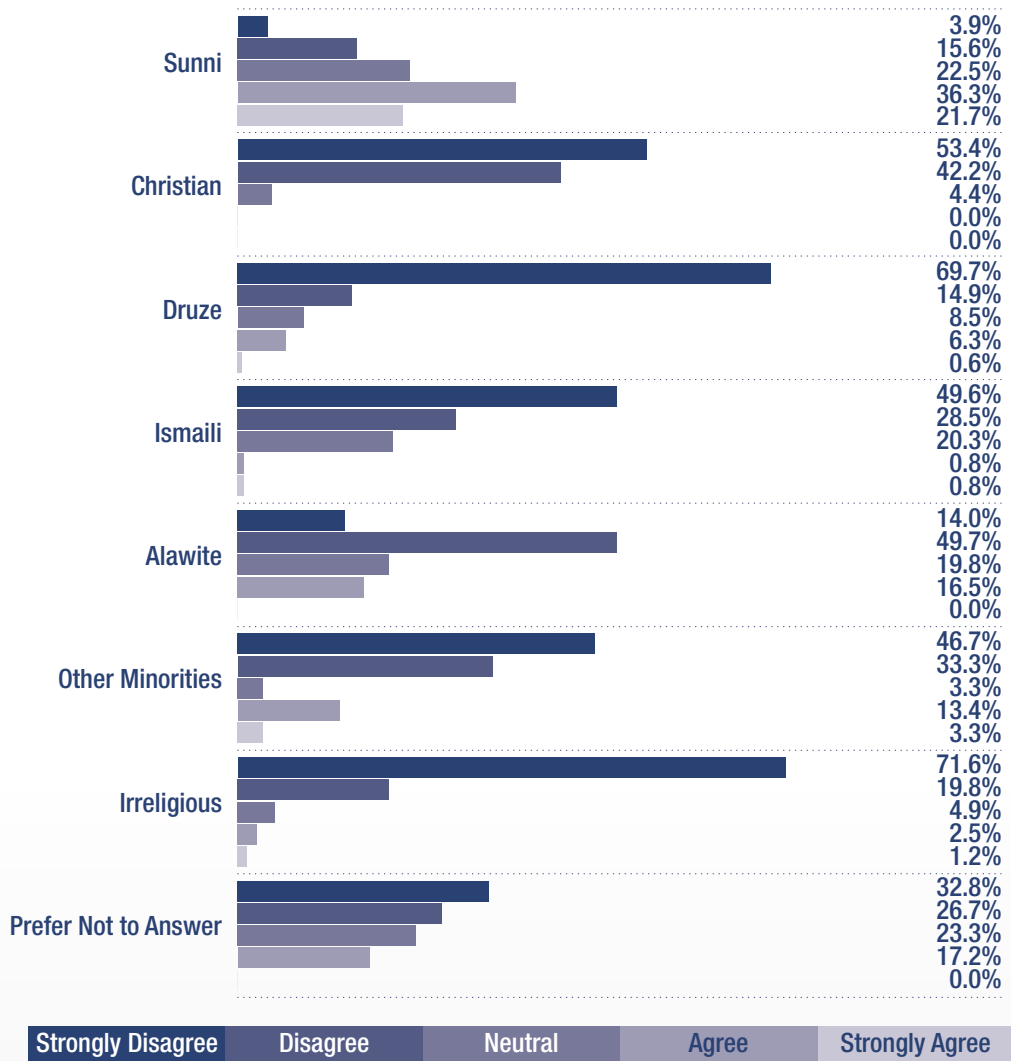


Figure 43: Attitudes Toward Designating Islam as State Religion in New Constitution Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state the President of the Republic should be Sunni Muslim.”

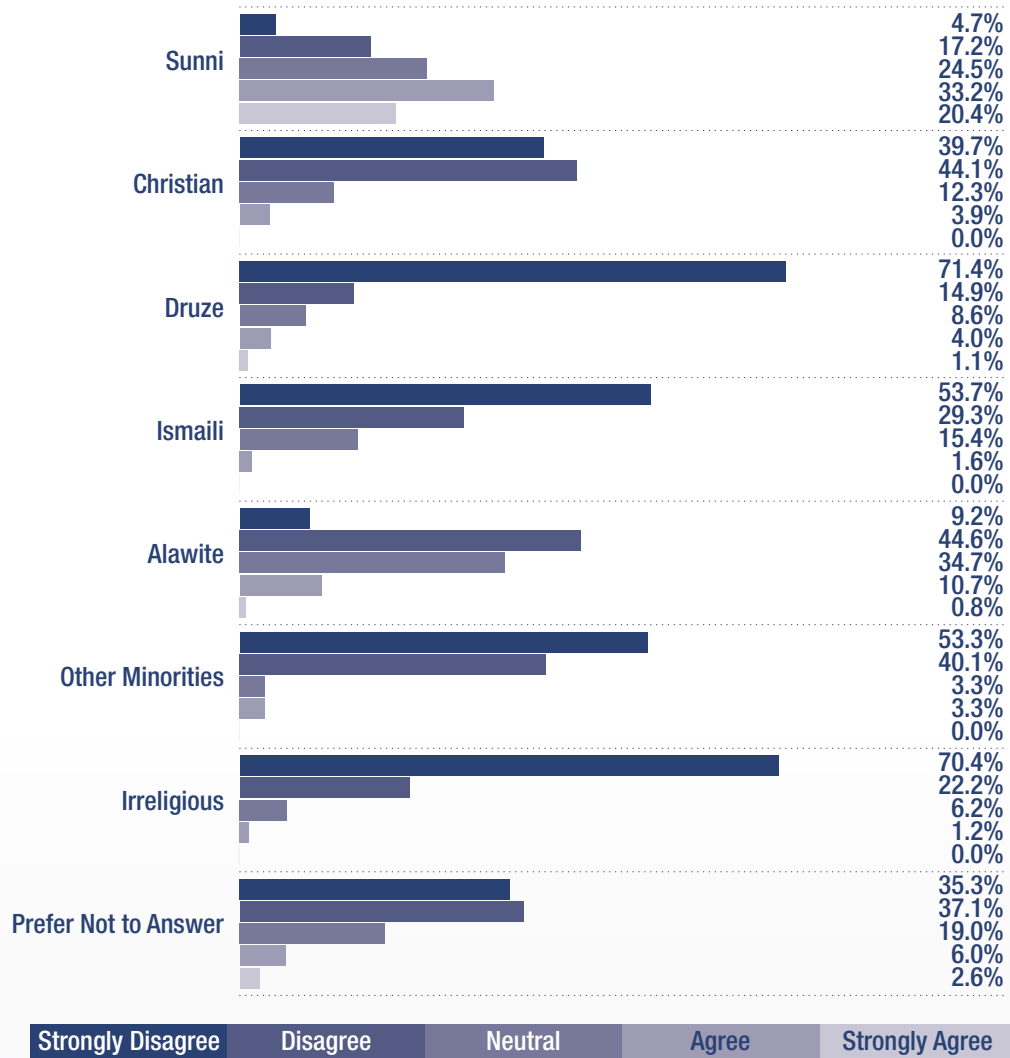


Figure 44: Attitudes Toward Stating Requirement that Head of State be Sunni Muslim in New Constitution Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

Naturally, factors of class and standards of living also affect respondents’ choices and the extent of their polarization toward linking Islam to the state in the constitution. Middle and upper-middle classes show a greater tendency toward tolerance in not associating religion with the state, while there is an increase in approval of this association among poorer and richer classes, despite the wide economic gap between them.

Likewise, the nature of the agricultural and service economy in the country helps explain this tendency among these classes. Large agricultural properties are generally linked to tribal and regional affiliation, especially in the Sunni Arab regions, which increases the need for those identity-based ties among the rich of those groups.

The poorest, however, need the collective support provided by the same identity-based affiliations, including residents of the regions in which Sunni Arabs constitute a majority; this increases the tendency to regard the link between religion and the state in the constitution as important.



» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state that the religion of the country is Islam.”

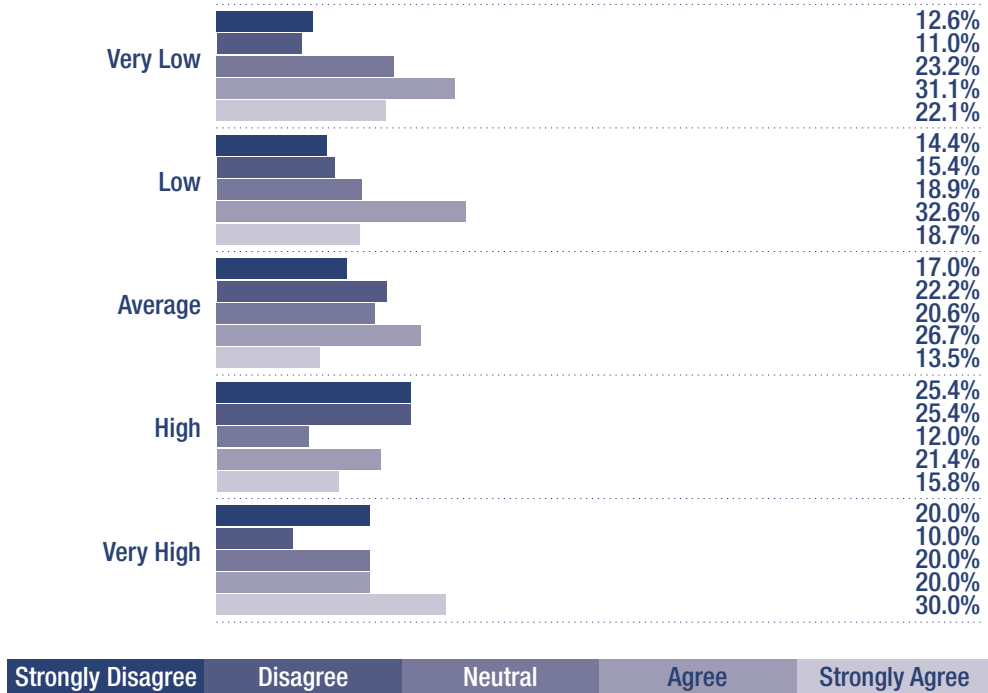


Figure 45: Attitudes Toward Designating Islam as State Religion in New Constitution Breakdown by Self-Reported Standard of Living

As for the Kurds, 53.3% of them “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with stating that the religion of the president of the republic is Sunni Islam, even though it is the religion of the majority of Kurds in Syria. This tendency can be explained based on identity polarization, which of course includes political, cultural, and economic complications. Arab views, however, tended to balance between disagreement and agreement, while 48.6% of Turkmen said that they “agree” or “strongly agree” with this statement. The majority of Assyrian respondents disagree with this option, a rejection consistent with their religious affiliation as well.

» What is your position regarding this statement?

“The constitution should state the President of the Republic should be Sunni Muslim.”

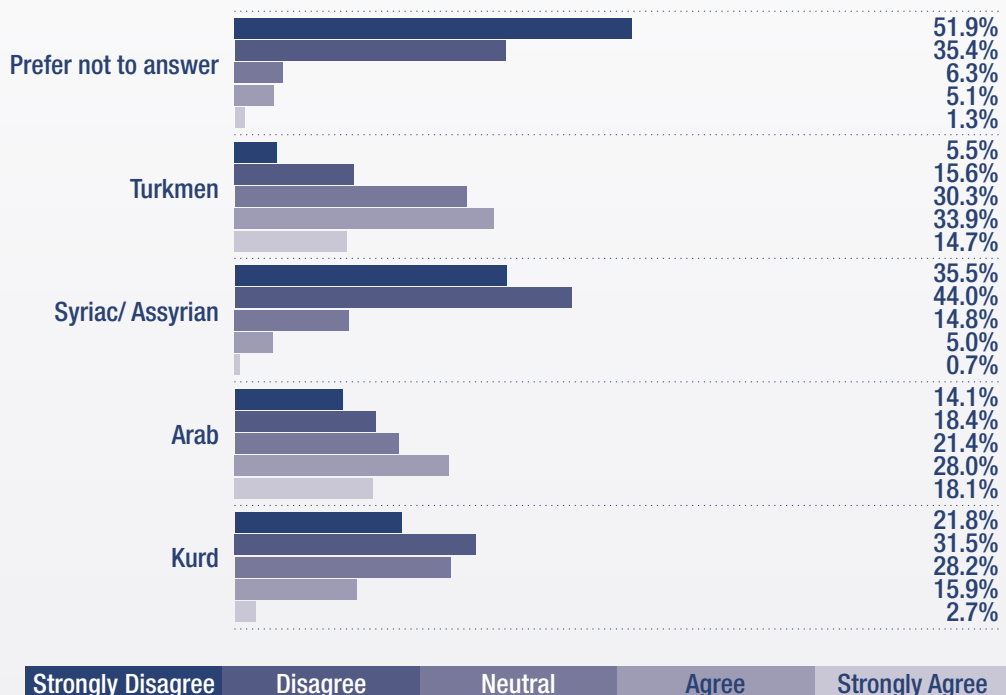


Figure 46: Attitudes Toward Stating Requirement that Head of State be Sunni Muslim in New Constitution Breakdown by Ethnic Affiliation

In this context, women show a greater preference (63.2%) than men (55.4%) for not referring to any religion in the next constitution. The religious laws emanating from that reference in the constitution distinguish between women and men, whether in the Sunni Islamic Sharia courts, or in the rest of the other religious bodies that play this role in relation to other religions and sects. Therefore, the enthusiasm of women to not link the next constitution to any religion is understandable; it broadly affects their lives, their ability to be independent from family or husband, and their ability to make independent economic and life decisions.

» **What is your position toward on this statement?**

“The constitution should state no reference to any specific religion.”

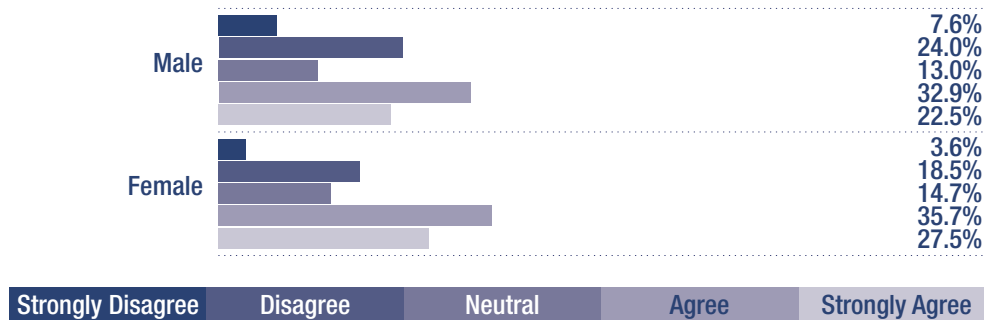


Figure 47: Attitudes Toward Exclusion of Specific Religion in New Constitution Breakdown by Gender

A number of indications are also evident by comparing the data of this survey to that of 2017. It can be observed that the percentages of approval for a link between religion and the state in the next constitution has declined. In 2017, 77.9% of the total sample agreed that Islamic Sharia be a source of legislation; now, 66.2% of the respondents of the current study agree with this option. We note that the tendency continues to move toward acceptance.

While 57.4% of respondents in 2017 agreed that “the state religion is Islam” should be in the constitution, that agreement decreased to 43.5% in this year’s survey. And the number of people who agreed that the future constitution should stipulate that “the religion of the head of state is Islam” was nearly half of respondents (45.5%) in 2017; this year agreement decreased to 39.8%, approximately 6 percentage points.

Comparing the correlational analyses of those answers may be useful to explain this decline in overall values. There is a clear increase in disagreement among Sunnis to linking religion with the state between the two surveys. In 2017, 12.7% of Sunnis disagreed with the statement that Syria’s Islamic identity should be preserved in the next constitution; this year disagreement increased to 29.6%.

This change can be understood within the Sunni community on several levels, including the decline in the influence and presence of Islamic projects linked to Salafi and jihadist factions in Syria, the many large clashes of these factions with local communities during the past years, or their loss of control over their areas as a result of their battles with regime forces. This has caused the displacement of large numbers of Syrians from their towns and cities, for fear of the regime’s repression, which may have led to 16.9% of Sunnis in this survey to move toward objection to the issue of linking religion and the state.

This block will play a pivotal role in mitigating identity-basis among Syrians, especially in matters of linking religion and the state in the country’s future constitution, which is considered one of the most important challenges for the post-transition phase.



» Religion and the constitution

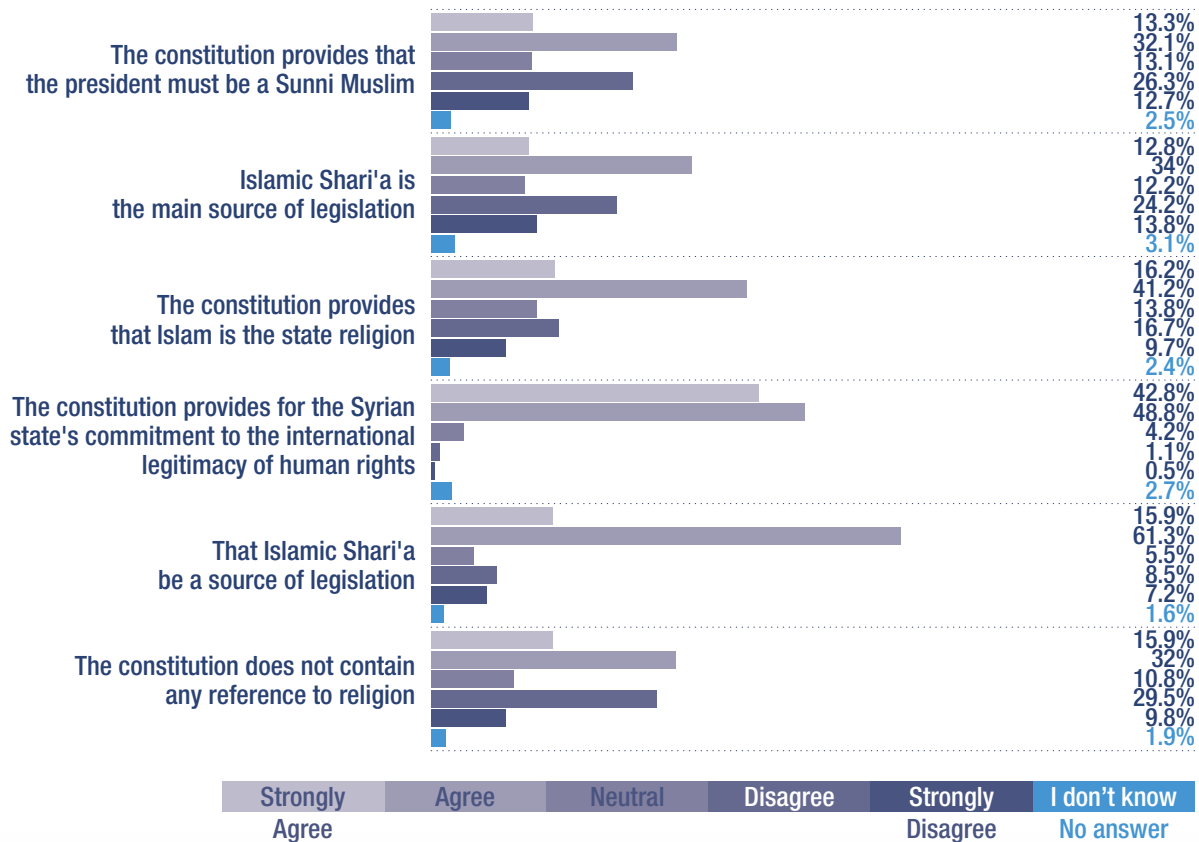


Figure No. (48) shows the opinion of the respondents about the relationship between religion and the state in the opinion poll conducted in 2017.

Basic Rights and Values in the Upcoming Constitution

The constitutional drafting of the basic rights of citizens is one of the most important rules that ensure respect for laws and their enforcers. This includes a set of basic controls that go beyond natural rights (such as the right to life) to guaranteeing political equality (which is the main basis of liberal democracy) and combating discrimination on the basis of gender or regional or sectarian affiliation.

After more than nine years of violations against the Syrian people—war crimes committed by the Syrian regime and a number of other parties—the focus on constitutional rights finds wide resonance among the respondents in this survey. The collected data shows very broad agreement with regard to a number of key rights such as equality and economic rights as part of the future constitution, and that the constitution should abide by international law.

In the sample, 86.6% of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” with the state’s commitment to international law and to not issue laws that contradict it, while only 3.6% “disagree” with this statement.

The overwhelming majority of the sample consider ensuring equal rights for all citizens regardless of religion or ethnicity (97.3%) as “important” or “very important,” with a tendency toward “very important” (73.1%).

Likewise, it can be noted that ensuring women’s rights—including political rights—is an important matter for the overwhelming majority of the sample, with 91.9% saying that the matter is “important” or “very important.”

In parallel, economic rights, such as constitutionally guaranteeing the rights of the poor and ensuring the rights of workers, were approved at high levels by the majority of the sample, at 96.4% and 96.9% respectively.

» What is your position toward on this statement?

“The constitution should state that the state should be committed to international law and will not issue any law that violates it.”

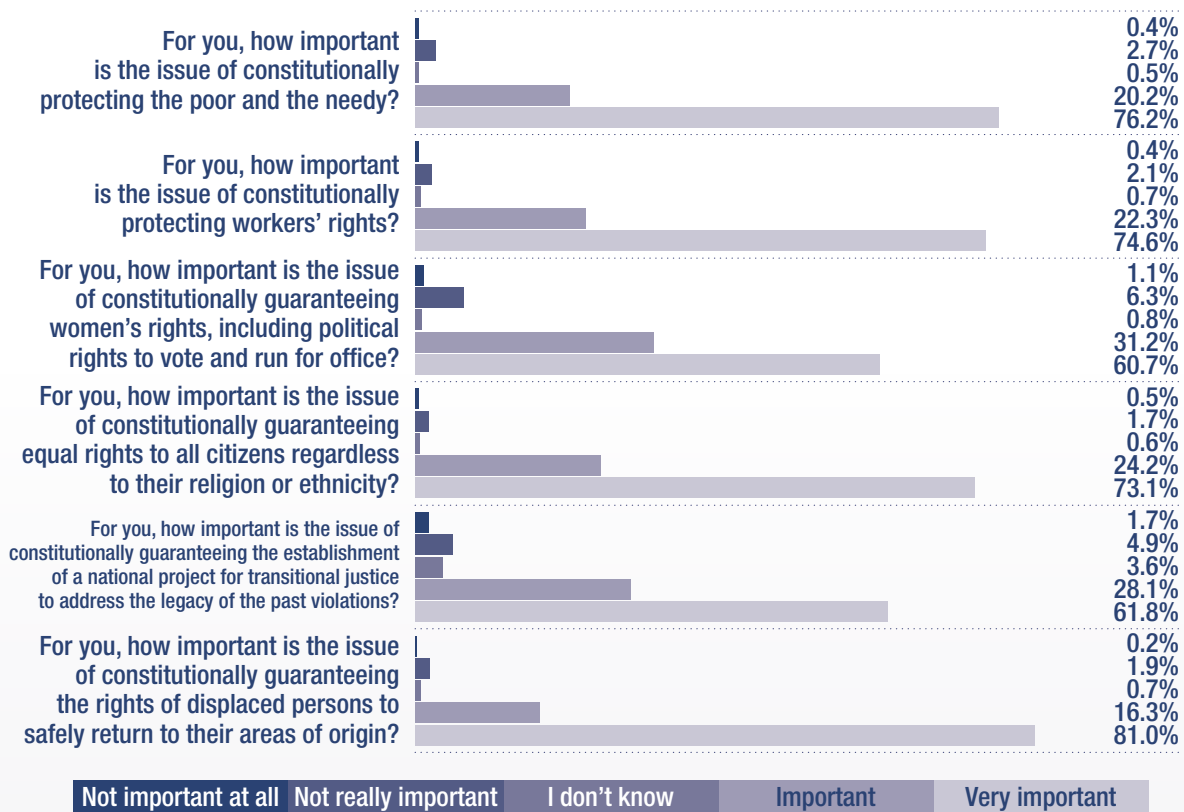
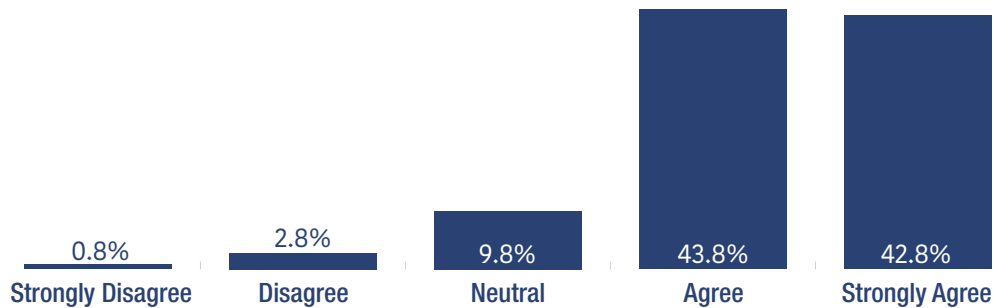


Figure 49: General Attitudes Toward Specific Political, Economic, and Social Rights in the New Constitution

Class affiliation also clearly influences the tendency to prioritize the importance of economic issues such as guaranteeing workers' rights. While this issue was “important” or “very important” to 98.9% of the very low-income subset, the “important” or “very important” percentage decreased to 90% among the highest-income groups in the sample.



» As a constitutional issue, how important to you is protecting workers' rights?

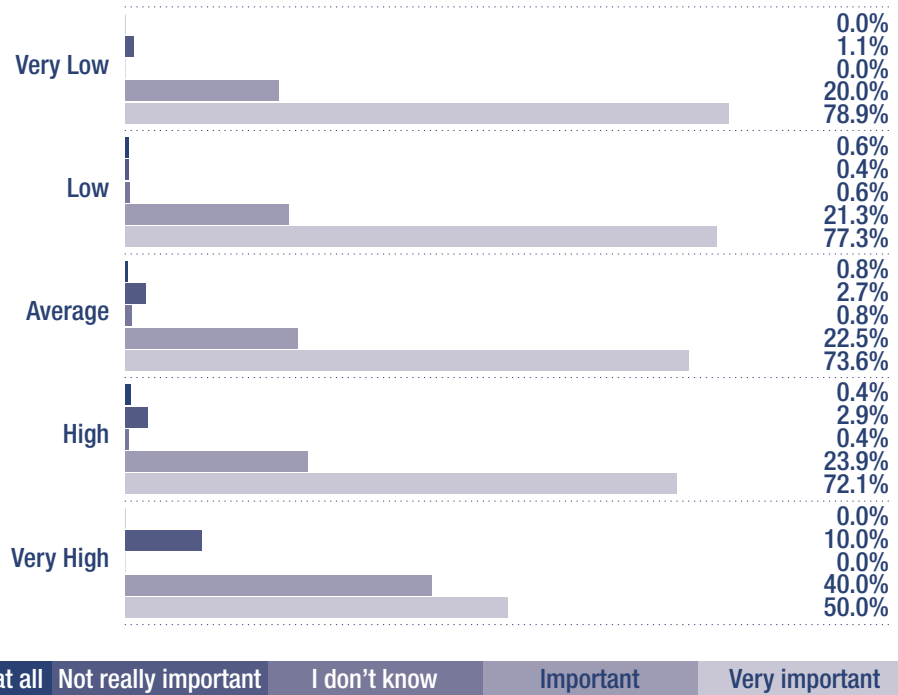


Figure 50: Attitudes Toward Including Specific Protections for Workers' Rights in the New Constitution Breakdown by Self-Reported Standard of Living

Given the gender divisions in the sample, we notice a near-consensus among female respondents on the importance of ensuring women's rights, including the right to vote and to run for public office; 95.5% said this issue is "very important" or "important," with a tendency toward "very important." A majority of male respondents agree—88.4% said this issue is "important" or "very important"—but this difference of about 7% between the two groups shows the importance for Syrian women of adding articles related to women's rights to the next constitution.

» As a constitutional issue, how important to you is guaranteeing the rights of women, including political rights to vote and to run for office?

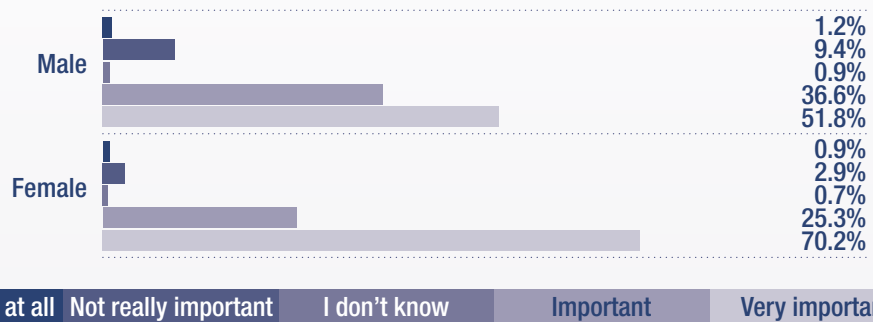


Figure 51: Attitudes Toward Including Specific Protections for Women's Rights in the New Constitution Breakdown by Gender

Our 2020 sample did not show fundamental differences in terms of constitutional rights in political and economic terms, although the tendency was toward more consensus on these issues. For example, guaranteeing women's political rights was considered "important" for 87.6% of respondents in the 2017 survey sample; the 2020 sample reached 91.9% "important."

» Rights which the constitution must guarantee



Figure (52) shows the respondents' position, which shows the respondents' position on basic rights in the constitution, in the poll conducted in 2017.

Likewise, this year's sample showed a greater consensus on ensuring equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnicity—just over 97%, compared to just under 94% in the 2017 survey.

As for the most important values according to respondents, security and justice came first and second, receiving 37.3% and 30.3% approval respectively. In light of the security and living conditions that Syrians live in—war and forced displacement—the precedence of security and justice over intellectual, political, and democratic freedoms can be understood. Accountability as top priority ranked third with 22.6%, while 24% of respondents placed development and economic welfare of highest importance.



» Place the following values in order of importance for you:

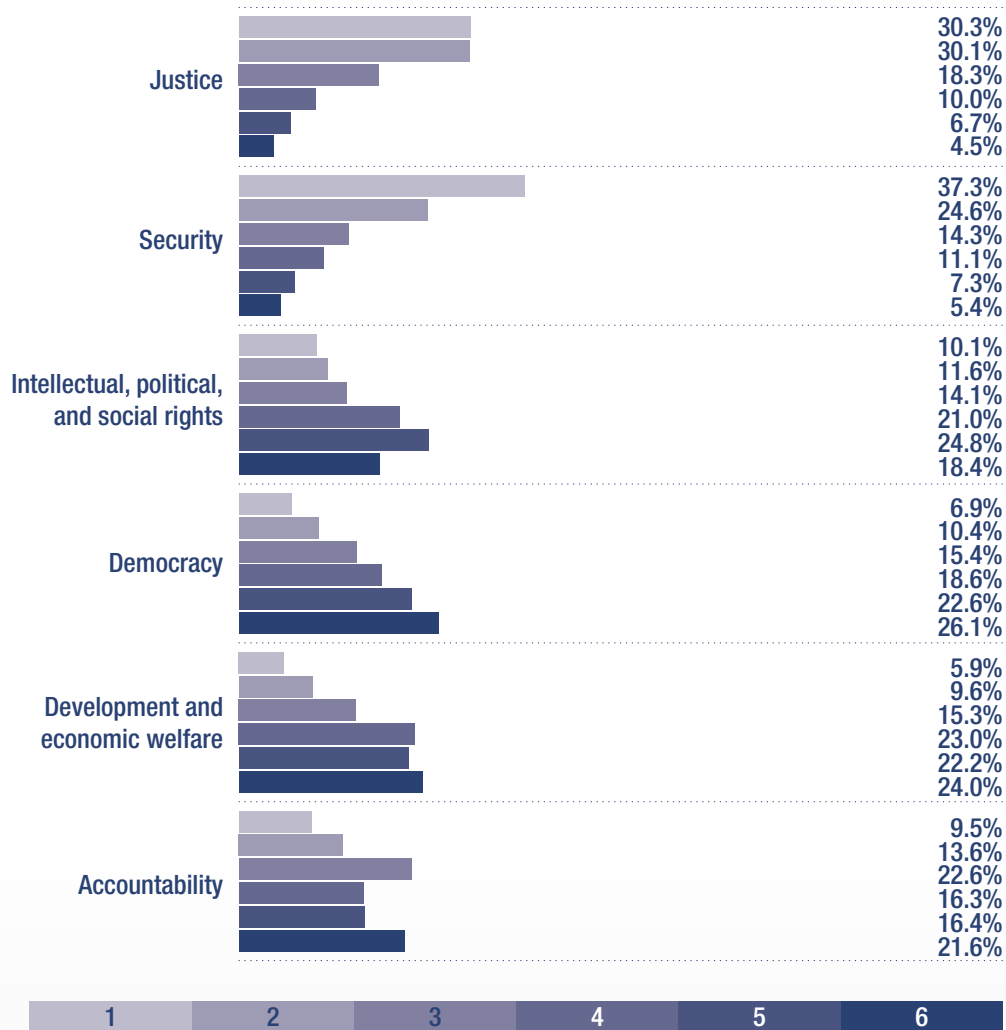


Figure 53: Respondents' Ranked Importance of Various Constitutional Values

The Political System (Form of Government, Central Issues, and Ethnic Identities)

Syrian constitutions have adopted a republican form of government since the Constitution of 1930, which came nearly a decade after the abolishment of the country's monarchy by the French mandate. Since then, the republican system is the declared political system for Syria in its various constitutions.

However, the particular form of republican system has differed through the historical and political transformations that swept the country during the 20th century, as some constitutions (1930 and 1950) relied on a mixed system that divided executive powers between the prime minister and the president of the republic, with clear oversight by the parliament.⁽⁷⁾

All respondents answered the question about the powers of the executive authority, so that the whole sample gave their opinion about this authority and its form.

Respondents clearly tend to favor the mixed system (parliamentary-presidential), with 43.3% saying that the most appropriate way to determine executive power is by sharing power between the head of the state and the prime minister,

(7) The Constitution of 1920 adopted the parliamentary monarchy system, which gave the main executive powers to a head of government appointed by the parliament. It also adopted administrative decentralization. Although the nascent political system after the mandate adopted the mixed system, the president of the republic was elected by the parliament, which effectively gave the parliament the most important powers. The head of the largest parliamentary bloc was the one with the main influence in governing the country, regardless of his position (president or prime minister).

while 41% said the best way is to limit executive powers granted to the president and to the prime minister.

Also, 75.4% said the best way to form a government is for it to be chosen by the elected parliament. More than half of respondents supported a two-chamber parliament, the first of which includes members directly elected by the people, and the second reserved for notables and local leaders who represent social components (63.5% of the total sample “agree” or “strongly agree”).

» There is a suggestion that the next Syria parliament be composed of two chambers. One chamber will have elected members with legislative powers, and the other will have oversight role on the first chamber and its members will include local dignitaries, notables and leaders who represent social components of the different regions.

What is your position on such a parliament system?

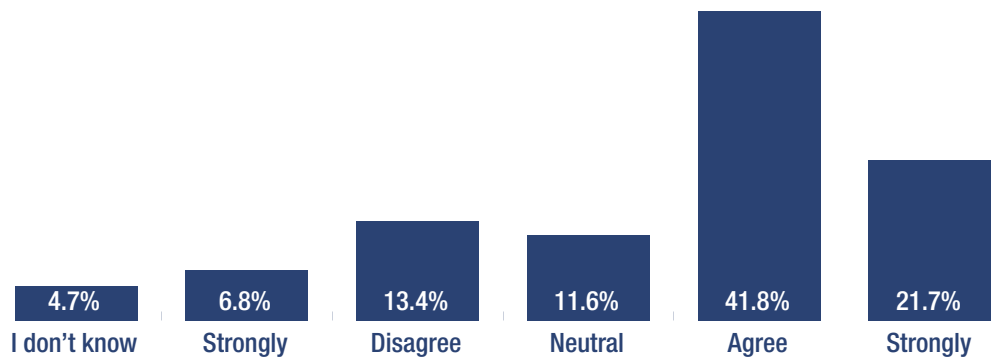


Figure 54: Attitudes toward Two-Chamber Parliament, One Directly Elected and One of Appointed Social Component Representatives

» In your opinion, what is the best way to form the executive power?

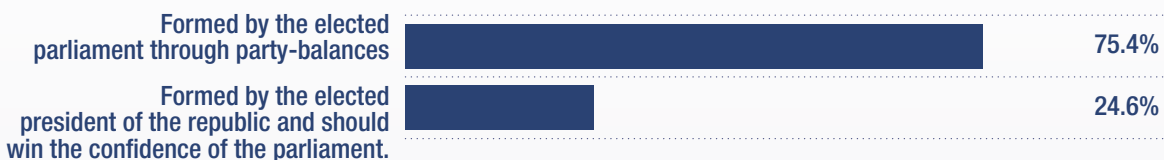


Figure 55: Opinions on Forming Executive Power

» In your opinion, what is the best way to limit the executive powers?

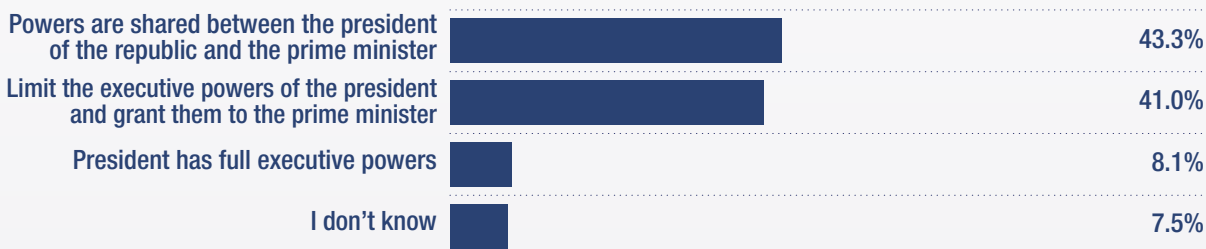


Figure 56: Opinions on the Means of Identifying Executive Powers

Since 1930, constitutions have shown a clear tendency toward central system administration. This was justified under the French mandate and beyond, as a result of the refusal of the main city notables and major political bloc figures to divide Syria into separate states. In this context, Ma'rouf al-Dawalibi, a member of the National Bloc and former prime minister, says in his diaries that his first political activities were participating in mass demonstrations against the division of the country into multiple states.





Later, during the union with Egypt, and after the Ba'ath Party coup, the political system showed a sharp tendency toward centralization in managing the country's affairs, by using security repression in a systematic way to impose its authority on the parties.

One of the results of that central administration was the taking of arbitrary measures against Kurdish Syrians by stripping them of their citizenship during the first half of the 1960s, on the recommendations of officials appointed by the central government in the Jazira region, before the Ba'ath Party came to power.

Although the problems of this centralization became evident with the existence of large development projects during the late 1960s and early 1970s—such as the Euphrates Dam—Hafez al-Assad's regime insisted on continuing the centralized system in his administration, especially with regard to security, the military, and the judiciary.

While Local Administration Law—the first version of which was issued in 1971—allowed some theoretical margins for the various regions to manage their day-to-day affairs, the dynamics of that administration, its controlled elections, and the powers of provincial governors appointed by the central authority, withdrew any real effectiveness of local administration in the country.

Additionally, the retreat of the Hafez al-Assad regime from strictly enforcing agricultural reform laws and allowing the spread of wide land ownership in the provinces of Al-Hasakeh, Dayr az Zawr and Ar-Raqqah, brought back the problems of concentrated wealth, power, and influence in the hands of certain groups in those areas.

This was compatible with a presidential system in the Constitution of 1973 that gave the president of the republic almost absolute powers, including legislation and the dissolution of the People's Council of Syria (the parliament) and the appointment or dismissal of all members of the executive authority. This enabled the Hafez al-Assad regime to create a heavily centralized system around the Ba'ath Party and himself—considered by the Constitution of 1973 as the leader of the state and society.

Within those circumstances a number of conflicts escalated, but the most prominent was the interrupted development caused by centralization. Also, any overt cultural presence of ethnic minorities in the country was prohibited, to the point of changing the names of Kurdish villages into Arabic.

This central administration method also led to the transfer of the country's wealth to specific cities (Damascus and Aleppo mainly), and investments were made in them at much higher levels than in the rest of the cities and governorates. Although this same policy applies at the local level, when it was applied in Aleppo and Damascus more investment was made in city centers than in their outskirts. But the vast difference, in terms of infrastructure and the spread of services within the rest of the Syrian regions—such as Al-Jazira, which includes the provinces of Ar-Raqqah, Al-Hasakeh, and Dayr az Zawr—was clear even on the outskirts of Damascus.

Since the Spring of 2011, the Syrian revolution has revealed a number of sharp contradictions between the administrative center and other political parties, as a result of implemented policies throughout the years of Hafez al-Assad and Ba'ath Party rule.

Today, the issue of the relationship between the central government and the local administrations of the regions in Syria is a fundamental question to ask in order to understand the shape of any future political system and its resultant dynamics. The type of political system is directly and indirectly related to these dynamics, new trends in development, and the relationships between different Syrian regions.

Although our survey's respondents were more inclined to limit the powers of the president of the republic, the issue of a central government system revealed new polarizations—not about the idea itself, but about its application on the ground and the powers related to matters of security, justice, and taxation.

In the sample, 65.9% of respondents agreed that Syria should adopt a decentralized political system that grants local authorities broad administrative powers. This was rejected by only 16.5%. These percentages show that a majority of Syrians agree to a decentralized system of government. This is compatible with the current reality in many Syrian regions still outside the authority of the Syrian regime, or who have gone through a similar experience where local communities organized and administered themselves directly.

Despite all the complications related to the authority of existing military factions, the clear tendency of the sample toward

decentralization shows that Syrians refuse to return to the central system of government that prevailed before 2011.

» **What is your position on the following statement?**

“Syria should adopt a decentralized political system that grants local authorities broad administrative powers.”

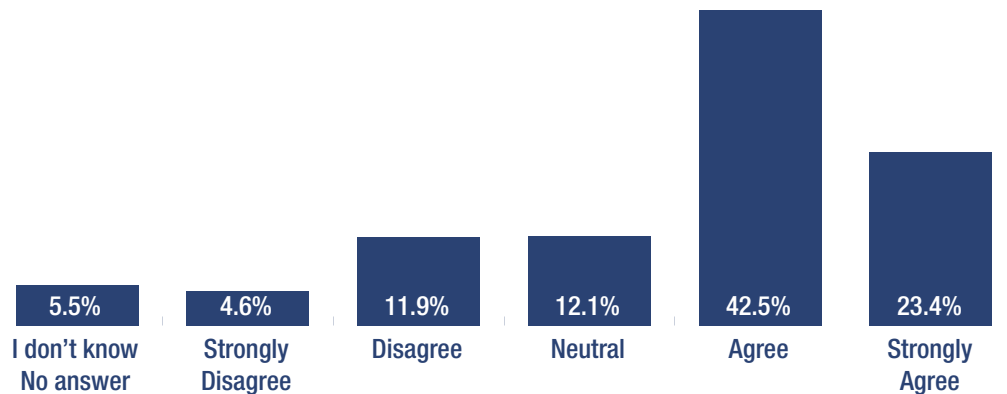


Figure 57: Positions on Adopting a Constitution for a Decentralized System of Government

But matters differ when detailing which powers must be given to local authorities; a majority of respondents tended to give local authorities average or very few powers with regard to taxes, while showing support for higher powers in matters of spending.

The sample showed some polarization with regard to the judiciary—32% of respondents said that the powers of local authorities should be low or close to zero with regard to the judiciary, while 27.1% of the respondents said that local authorities should have absolute powers related to the judiciary. Respondents showed a similar polarization regarding the issue of security, reflecting a split of opinions regarding the handing over of these powers to local governments, which can be explained by looking at the subsets. Security powers may well be one of the main polarizing factors when discussing the next constitution.



» In your opinion, how much power should be in the hands of the local authority? On a 1-5 scale, where 1 is under full control of the central government and 5 is under full local control.

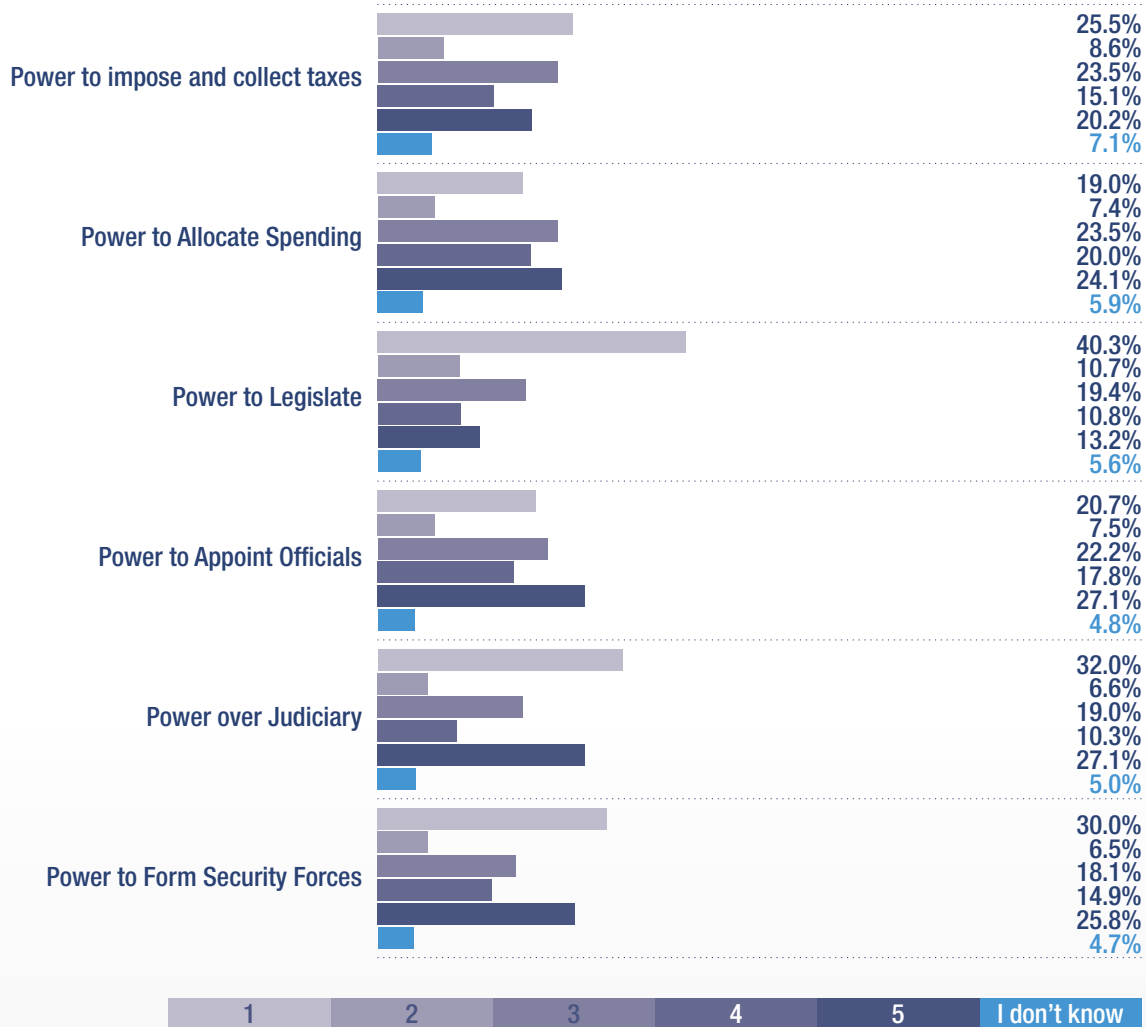


Figure 58: Opinions on Narrow/Broad Powers of Local Authority in the New Constitution

In the overall sample, the vast majority of respondents (76.7%) said the most appropriate form of government to overcome the sectarian issue in Syria is a system of government based on the principle of citizenship and equality. The option of “a system of government based on the principle of sectarian quotas” received only 4.9%.

The state of citizenship and equality among all Syrians is one of the most important demands of the Syrian revolution. The data show that all social components of religious and ethnic sects support this option, which makes it one of the main points of agreement in public discussion about the Syrian constitution among different groups and political orientations.

» In your opinion, what is the most suitable form of government to overcome the sectarian issue in Syria?

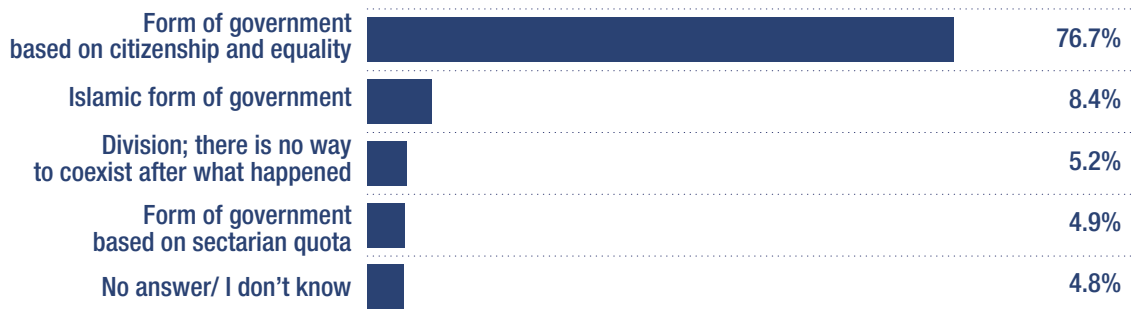


Figure 59: Opinions on Overcoming Sectarian Issues by Form of Government

Likewise, it can be seen that most respondents (87.7%) agree to recognize the cultural and ideological rights of ethnic, national, and religious minorities in Syria, in line with their responses to the previous question.

» What is your position on this statement?

“Cultural and ideological rights of ethnic and religious minorities in Syria should be recognized.”

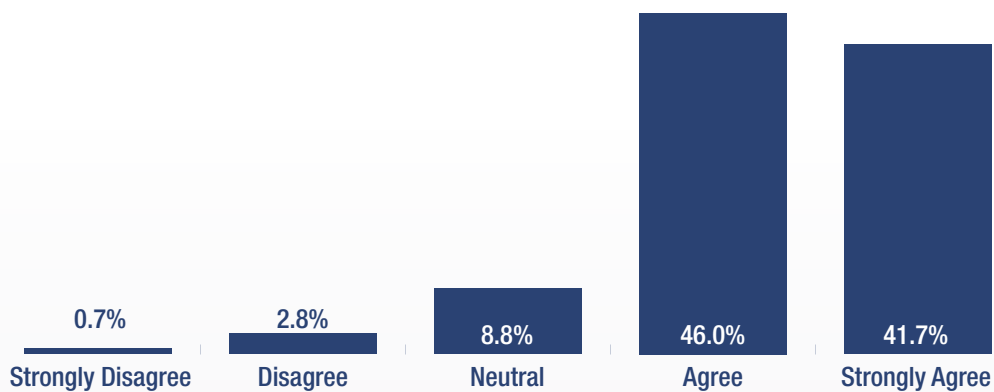


Figure 60: Opinions on Recognition of Cultural and Ideological Rights of Minority Groups

However, we observe a shift in overall sample attitudes when it comes to the recognition of Kurdish as a second official language in the country; 43.4% of respondents disagree with this option. Although the recognition of the Kurdish language has become constitutional in a neighboring country—Iraq—the current political polarization in Syria seems to directly affect the views on this issue.





» What is your position on this statement?

“Kurdish should be recognized as a second official language in the country in the new constitution.”

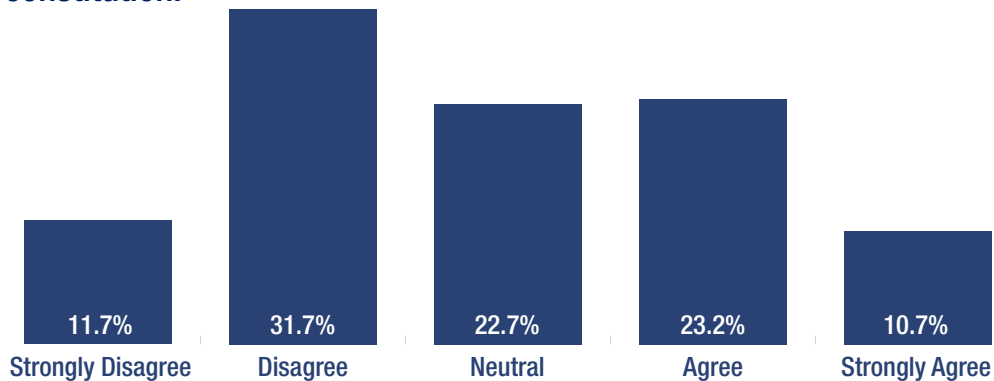


Figure 61: Opinions on Recognition of Kurdish as Second Official Language

Measuring the support of respondents regarding a statement related to the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria could provide an explanation for opinions on the previous question. Of the sample, 56% of respondents disagreed with granting the Autonomous Administration areas special status. This could deepen the political problem reflected in the issue of state identity and the relationship with ethnic minorities, specifically the Kurds.

The sample as a whole tends to agree with this statement: “Syria’s Arab identity must be preserved in the next constitution” (61.3%).

» What is your position on this statement?

“The areas of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria should be granted a special status.”

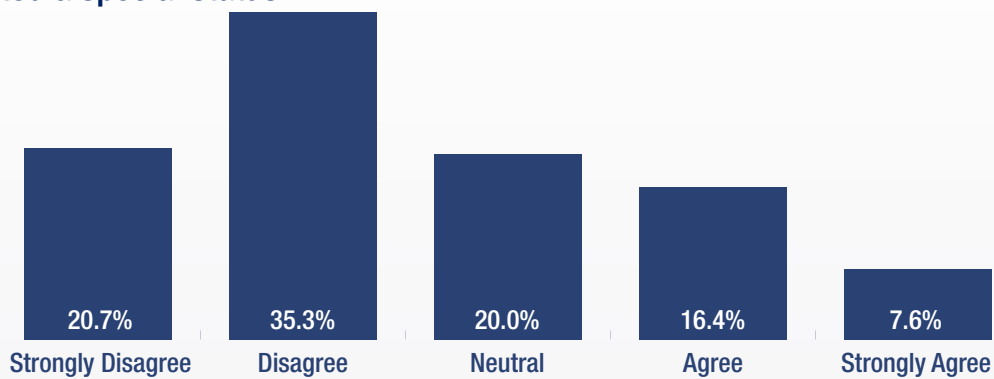


Figure 62: Opinions on Granting Special Status to Autonomous Administration

» What is your position on this statement?

“Syria’s Arab identity should be preserved in the next constitution.”

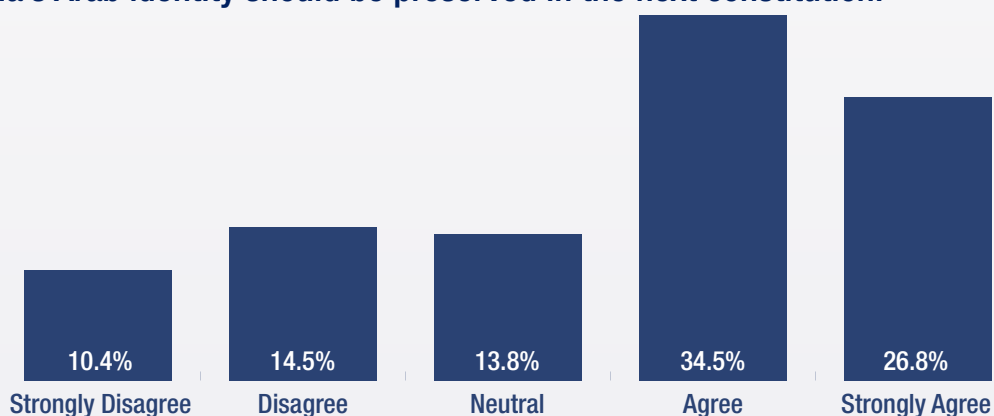


Figure 63: Opinions on Preserving Syria's Arab Identity in the New Constitution

By looking at the subsets, a number of trends in the overall sample can be explained about issues of the form of government, identities, and language in the future constitution of Syria. We see polarization on a religious basis, and we see sectarian minorities behaving opposite of general expectations.

Sunni respondents tend to approve of Syria’s adoption of a decentralized political system, based on granting local authorities broad powers (65.5% “agree” or “strongly agree”), and religious minorities tend to agree in general. However, this does not apply to Alawite respondents, only 47.9% of whom said they agree with this form of government. Although Ismaili respondents did not have wide acceptance either (49.6% “agree” or “strongly agree”), the high level of rejection among Alawite respondents shows an independent attitude toward this issue (45.5% disagree with this form of government).

» What is your position on the following statement?

“Syria should adopt a decentralized political system that grants local authorities broad administrative powers.”

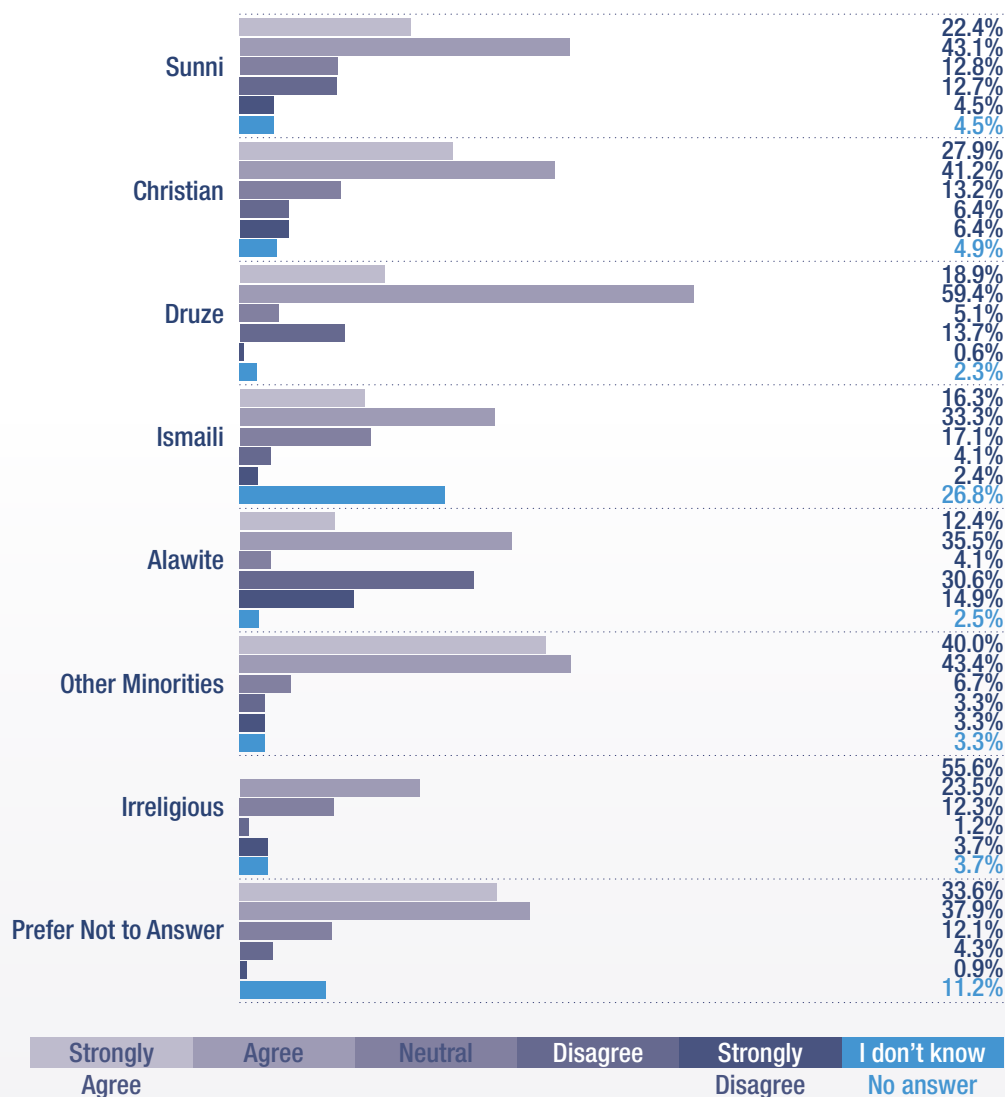


Figure 64: Positions on Adopting a Constitution for a Decentralized System of Government Breakdown by Religious Affiliation

Likewise, when asked about which powers should be given to local authorities with regard to tax collection, respondents who declared their affiliation with the Alawite sect showed a tendency toward giving the local authorities minimum powers in this regard (39.7% believed that local powers in this regard should be 0 or 1).





» On a 1-5 scale where 1 is under full control of the central government and 5 is under full local control, in your opinion, how much power should be at the hands of the local authority to impose and collect taxes?

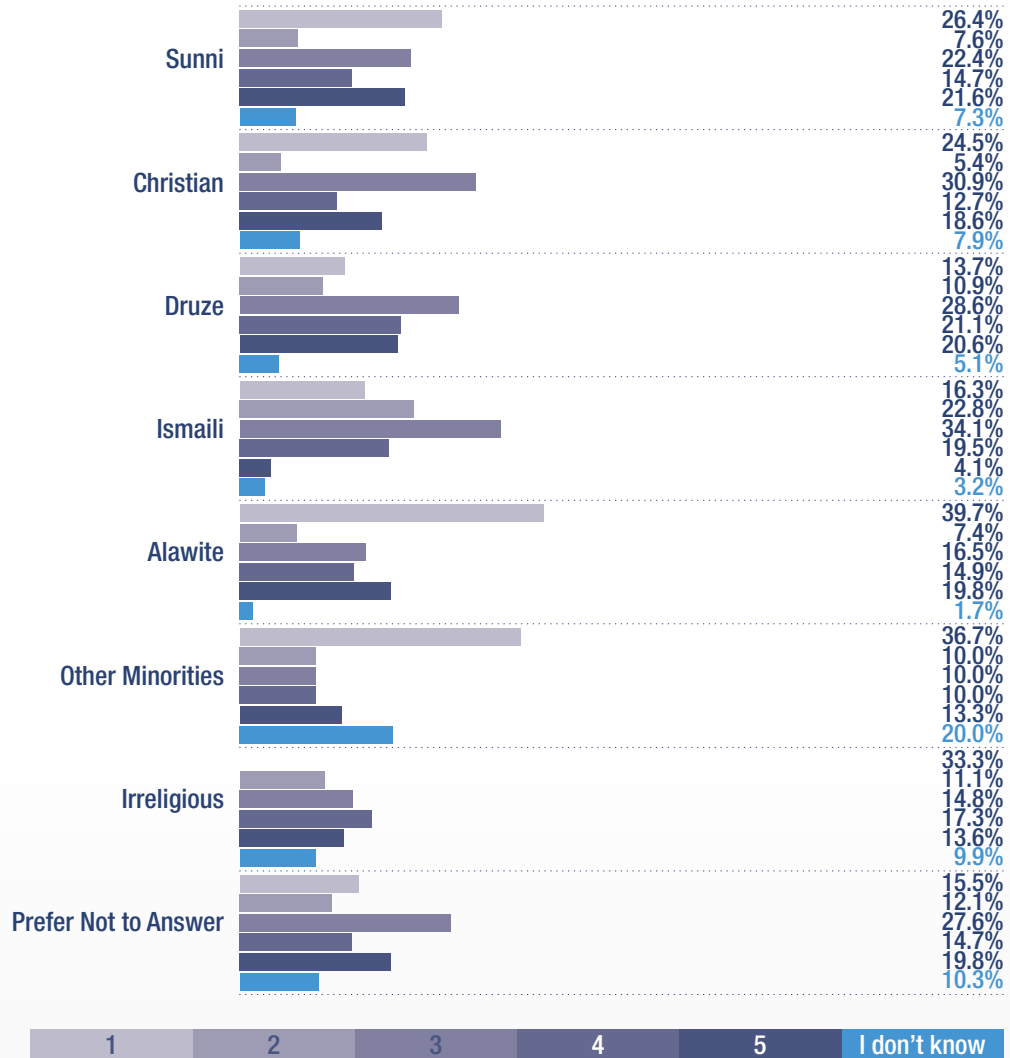


Figure 65: Opinions on Narrow/Broad Powers of Local Authority in the New Constitution (Taxes Breakdown by Religious Affiliation)

Looking at the ethnic affiliations of respondents, a general tendency to approve the adoption of a decentralized political system in the country can be seen.

» What is your position on the following statement?

“Syria should adopt a decentralized political system that grants local authorities broad administrative powers.”

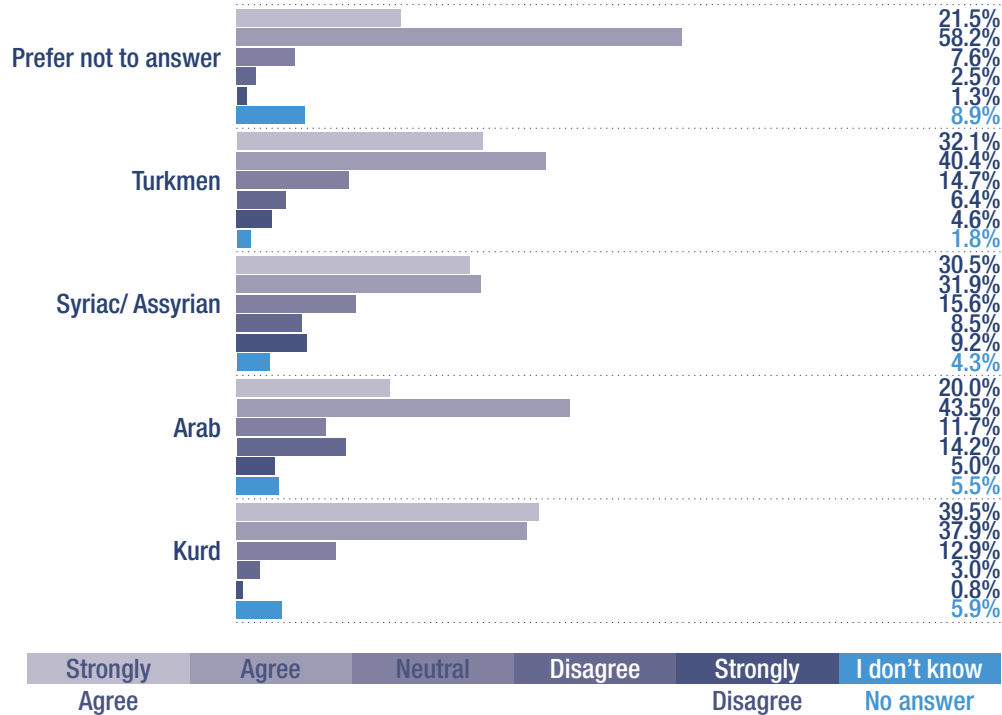


Figure 66: Positions on Adopting a Constitution for a Decentralized System of Government Breakdown by Ethnic Affiliation

However, this tendency differs at the subset level when talking about local powers and taxes. Arab respondents prefer that the local authorities have average or low powers in this regard, while Kurds tend to give local authorities broader powers in this regard.

» On a 1-5 scale where 1 is under full control of the central government and 5 is under full local control, in your opinion, how much power should be at the hands of the local authority to impose and collect taxes?

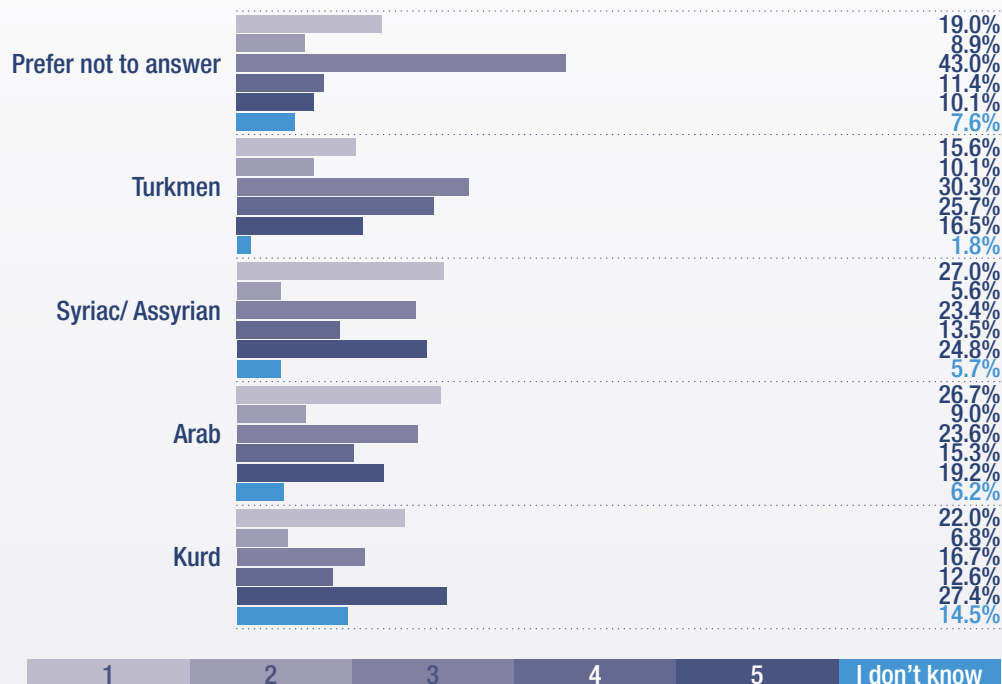


Figure 67: Opinions on Narrow/Broad Powers of Local Authority in the New Constitution (Taxes Breakdown by Ethnic Affiliation)





Considering Kurdish as a second official language in the constitution reveals a similar split. Arabs and Turkmen tend to disagree with this option, while we find almost complete agreement among Kurds in favor.

» What is your position on this statement?

“Kurdish should be recognized as a second official language in the country in the new constitution.”

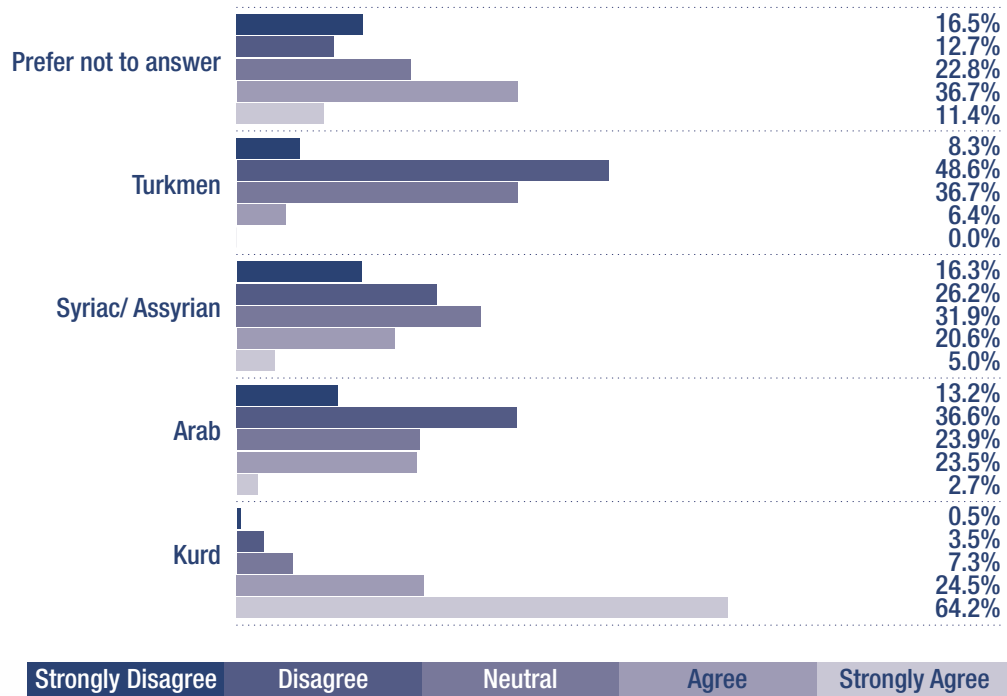


Figure 68: Opinions on Recognition of Kurdish as Second Official Language Breakdown by Ethnic Affiliation

This split is also seen when respondents were asked about granting areas of the Autonomous Administration special status.

» What is your position on this statement?

“The areas of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria should be granted a special status.”

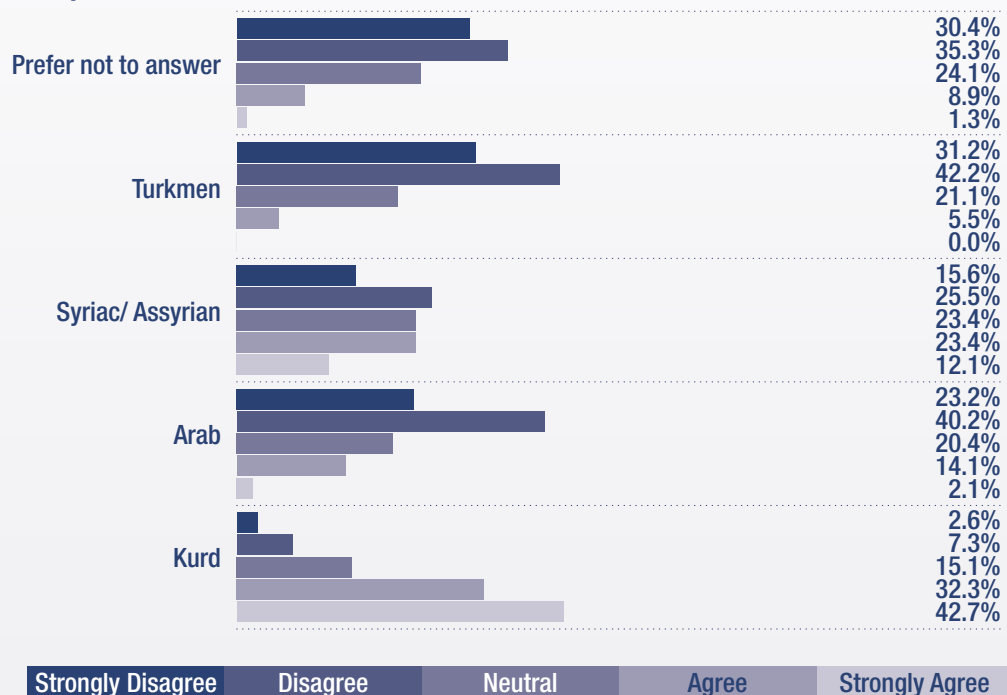


Figure 69: Opinions on Granting Special Status to Autonomous Administration Breakdown by Ethnic Affiliation

The study of the gender subset shows that women are more tolerant toward granting special status to the Autonomous Administration regions in Northeast Syria. While men disagreed at 61.7%, the disagreement among women was only 50%. This shows greater tolerance among women on this issue, which is considered one of the most polarizing issues in Syrian society today.

» **What is your position on this statement?**

“The areas of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria should be granted a special status.”

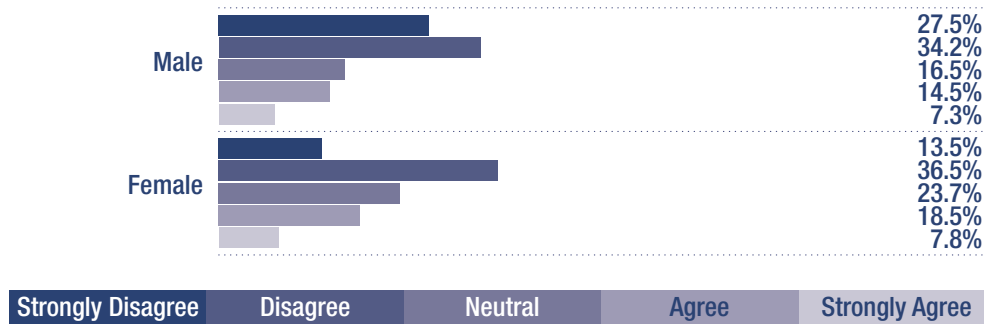


Figure 70: Opinions on Granting Special Status to Autonomous Administration Breakdown by Gender

By comparing the data from this survey with that from the survey conducted in 2017, the issues of the form of government and ethnic identities show positive trends. In the 2017 sample, 80.1% of respondents said the cultural rights of ethnic, national, and religious minorities should be recognized; in 2020 it has increased to 87.7% without major changes.

The approval rate for the recognition of the Kurdish language as a second official language in the country has remained roughly the same—32.8% of respondents in the 2017 sample supported this point; 33.9% of the 2020 respondents support it.

The only change that can be observed between the two samples in the issue of form of government is an increase in the tendency toward the acceptance of a decentralized system of government—65.9% of the 2020 sample agreed to this option, while only 42.4% of the 2017 sample agreed to such a system.





Conclusions

The sample showed that Syrians are not interested in following the work of the Committee. Less than half of respondents said they are familiar with the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva (46.6%), which contributes to a gap that widens with the passage of time between discussions of the Committee with Syrian society. This allows the emergence of opinions that could be included in the constitution which do not reflect the true opinions of Syrians.

Social media has a great influence on the delivery of information (35.9% get news of the Committee from activists on social media), which contributes to the spread of inaccuracies or preconceived positions on the work of the Committee, depending on the type of material being spread on social media.

A large percentage of Syrians do not know any of the members of the Committee by name, despite the presence of well-known public figures among its members. This can be explained by the lack of following updates, in addition to weak communication by Committee members with their local communities, and the lack of strong ties between members and their communities. The lack of awareness about Committee members increases among women and those with the lowest income—a dangerous indicator of the exclusion of women and the poorest groups from public affairs interaction, and the failure to seriously work on overcoming these gaps in regard to the Committee.

There is a general belief among the sample under study that the international consensus on the constitution circumvents the main problem in Syria and is a waste of time. This tendency increases among members of the Sunni community, the majority in Syria, who do not view the constitution as the main problem—there are far more urgent problems to work on.

In the sample, 38.4% support the idea of the Constitutional Committee, while objecting to the way it was formed, while only 21.3% of the respondents support it according to the current data. This can be considered confirmation that international consensus is not sufficient to form a committee to draft a constitution for Syria.

Among the respondents, 37.4% said that they have low hopes, and 33.3% said they have no hope, for the success of the work of the Committee. This means that current efforts do not give Syrians strong incentives or new hopes for peace and justice. It can also be noted that levels of frustration are increasing among women, reflecting the complex problems of general frustration, and the neglect of the hopes and aspirations of Syrian women by those in charge of the political track and the Constitutional Committee.

Syrian refugees are highly frustrated with the efforts and outcomes of Constitutional Committee meetings. This will lead to a greater tendency for refugees to withdraw from public affairs, creating a large gap between them and the political track in the future. The very slow work of the Committee at the present time, and the disruption of other political tracks, will not give any incentives to change this reality.

Almost half of the respondents evaluate the performance of their negotiating delegations not satisfactory at all in terms of communication with the public, increasing the divergence between the Committee's work and the tendencies of the Syrian people.

The sample under study tends to agree with terms traditionally used in Syrian constitutions to link religion with the state; this tendency diminishes with the use of other expressions, such as stating Syria's Islamic identity, in the next constitution.

The study shows that Syrians tend to agree to the adoption of Islamic Sharia as one source of legislation, but differ widely on adopting it as the primary source. In comparison to the survey conducted in 2017, the current sample shows a decline in Syrians' interest in linking religion and the state in the text of the constitution.

The vast majority of the sample (97.3%) consider ensuring equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnicity as "important" or "very important." This should be reflected in the formation of a societal consensus when drafting basic political rights within the constitution. Respondents' views also show a preference for security and justice issues over other basic issues, while we find that Syrians, for the present, have focused on accountability at the expense of welfare and economic development.

The majority of those surveyed tend to choose a mixed system or a semi-presidential system. Also, 65.9% of respondents agree that the country's system of government should be decentralized, an increase in this percentage from the 2017 survey. Despite the tendency toward decentralization, Sunnis and Alawites tend to view the judiciary, security, and taxes as powers of the central government, while Kurds tend to view them as powers of the local authorities.

Political polarization and the resultant ethnic problems, particularly in the northeast, are reflected in the percentages of approval to explicitly include in the constitution the linguistic and cultural rights of ethnic minorities.

Recommendations

To the members of the Constitutional Committee:

- The continuation of the Constitutional Committee's work must be linked to clear progress on the level of the political solution and discussions related to the transfer of power and the transitional phase in general, as indicated by UN Security Council Resolution 2254.
- The level of communication with the Syrian public must be increased, and social media should be used extensively in order to achieve this goal. There should be attempts to publish accurate and correct information about the work of the Committee, its objectives, stages of its work, and its agenda.
- Direct channels of communication must be created between members of the Constitutional Committee and their local communities. This can be achieved through organizing periodic online meetings, which have become more accessible and easier. Building such relationships through traditional channels of communication will also be very important.
- Effective communication with women and the poorest groups must be strengthened, encouraging them to express their opinions and participate in the discussions of the Constitutional Committee.
- Clarification of delegations' positions on the main issues, published papers explaining the backgrounds of those positions, and published summaries of the main meeting minutes would be useful in explaining these discussions to Syrian citizens, a procedure that was followed during the discussion of Syrian constitutions during periods of democratic rule.
- The views of Syrians regarding the form and nature of government, and the relationship of the central government with the local authorities, must be considered.
- Commitment to international laws and legislations that guarantee human rights and equality for all citizens, and the promotion of affirmative action among the most vulnerable groups in order to increase participation in public affairs, must be part of the Constitutional Committee's work and outcomes.

To the UNSG Special Envoy for Syria:

- The very slow pace of the Constitutional Committee's work is considered one of the reasons for Syrians' lack of interest. An acceleration of its work would increase interest among the Syrian people. However, the sole focus on the constitution makes Syrians feel that these meetings are aimed at circumventing the problem or wasting time. Work on the rest of the negotiation tracks resulting from Security Council Resolution 2254, such as the transfer of power.
- Motivate the international community to support a more transparent and clear political process for the Constitutional Committee; work on creating spaces to help Syrians participate in the discussions of the Constitutional Committee.
- Ensuring that women participate in consultative meetings on constitutional efforts is not sufficient to raise the level of women's general participation and their hopes about the outcomes of the Committee's work in Geneva. Strengthen affirmative action regarding women and the poorest groups through new tools.
- Ensure adequate and clear representation of Kurdish ethnicity within the Constitutional Committee through processes of expansion of the Committee or exchanges within political forces. This is important, especially since other ethnic affiliations showed a lack of interest or rejection of clearly placing Kurdish cultural demands in the constitution, such as recognizing Kurdish as a second official language.





Appendix: The Survey

Section 1—General Information

1	Sex	1	Male
		2	Female
2	Age	[direct fill-in]	
3	Province of Origin	[direct fill-in]	
4	Place of Current Residence	[direct fill-in] (City, Province, Country)	
5	Education Level	1	Uneducated
		2	Elementary
		3	Primary
		4	Secondary
		5	University
6	Living Standard	1	Very Low
		2	Low
		3	Average
		4	High
		5	Very High
7	Ethnic Background	1	Arab
		2	Kurd
		3	Syriac/Assyrian
		4	Turkmen
		5	Circassian
		6	Armenian
		7	Other [direct fill-in]
		8	Prefer not to answer
8	Religious Affiliation	1	Sunni
		2	Shia
		3	Alawite
		4	Christian
		5	Druze
		6	Ismaili
		7	Morshedi
		8	Yazidi
		9	Other [direct fill-in]
		10	Prefer not to answer

Section 2- Measuring Familiarity with and Interest in Constitutional Efforts

101	In your opinion, the top priority today should be given to:	1	Establishing official ceasefire until a comprehensive political solution is reached					
		2	Discussing a new constitution					
		3	Combating terrorism					
		4	Releasing detainees					
		5	Kicking out foreign fighters					
		6	Humanitarian response					
102	How would you describe the international consensus on launching the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva last year?	1	It is the only possible way to seriously start the political process					
		2	There are international powers that supported this effort					
		3	These are just attempts to look like they're accomplishing something					
		4	It is an attempt to circumvent the essence of the Syrian problem					
		5	Other [direct fill-in]					
103	To what extent are you familiar with ongoing constitutional efforts in Geneva to prepare a new constitution for Syria?	1	Well informed					
		2	I try to stay informed about the details					
		3	I heard about it but I don't know much					
		4	I don't know anything about the subject (Skip to Question 106)					
104	What sources do you rely on to stay informed?	1	Television and visual media outlets					
		2	Newspapers and news websites					
		3	Activists on social media					
		4	Contact with informed political figures					
		5	Conversations with people interested in the matter in my social milieu					
105	How would you evaluate the performance of your Constitutional Committee delegate in terms of:		Very satisfactory	Satisfactory to an acceptable level	Satisfactory to the minimum level	Not satisfactory at all		
							Communication with the public	1
							Mobilizing international support	2
							Negotiation performance and persuasion ability	3
							Legal and expert capabilities	4





106	Do you have a position on the Constitutional Committee?	1 I support the work of the Constitutional Committee according to the current conditions 2 I reject the idea of the Constitutional Committee 3 I support the idea of the Constitutional Committee but I object to the way it was formed 4 I don't support nor reject. Simply, I don't care 5 Other [direct fill-in]
107	What level of hope do you have for the success of the work and results of the Constitutional Committee?	1 High Hope 2 Moderate Hope 3 Low Hope (Skip to Q 109) 4 No Hope (Skip to Q 109)
108	Why don't you hope for much?	1 The opposition is not serious in the negotiations 2 The regime is not serious in the negotiations 3 The supporting countries are not serious 4 Writing a new constitution will not solve the problem in Syria
109	How many people do you know in the Constitutional Committee, either personally or by name?	[direct fill-in, 0-150]
110	Do you follow Syrian political news in general?	1 I follow all the time 2 I follow intermittently 3 I rarely care about the news 4 I never follow the news
111	Have you participated in any activities or meetings related to the constitutional efforts?	1 Yes 2 No

Section 3- Surveying the Constitutional Issues

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know/ No answer
201	What is your position on each of the following? "The constitution should state..."						
	...no reference to any specific religion."	1					
	...that the President of the Republic should be Sunni Muslim."	2					
	...Islamic Sharia is one source of legislation."	3					
	...Islamic Sharia is the primary source of legislation."	4					
	...that the religion of the country is Islam."	5					
	...that the state should be committed to international law and will not issue any law that violates it."	6					
202	This section provides a number of constitutional issues. Describe the importance of each issue to you.						
			Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all	I don't know
	Protecting the poor and the needy	1					
	Protecting the rights of workers	2					
	Guaranteeing the rights of women, including the political rights to vote and to run for office	3					
	Guaranteeing equal rights to all citizens regardless of their religion or ethnicity	4					
	Guaranteeing the establishment of a national project for transitional justice that addresses the legacy of the past violations	5					
	Guaranteeing the rights of displaced citizens to safely return to their areas of origin	6					
203	In your opinion, what is the most suitable form of government to overcome the sectarian issue in Syria?	1	2	3	4	5	
		An Islamic form of government	A form of government based on sectarian quotas	Division; there is no way for coexistence after what happened	A form of government based on citizenship and equality	No answer/ I don't know	





204	What is your position on this statement? "Syria should adopt a decentralized political system that grants local authorities broad administrative powers."	1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Neutral 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree 6 I don't know/ No answer																																										
205	In your opinion, how much power should be in the hands of the local authority? On a 1-5 scale, where 1 is under full control of the central government and 5 is under full local control.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>5</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td colspan="5">Powers to impose and collect taxes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td colspan="5">Power to allocate spending</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td colspan="5">Power to Legislate</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td colspan="5">Power to Appoint Officials</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td colspan="5">Power Over Judiciary</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td colspan="5">Power to Form Security Forces</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		1	2	3	4	5	1	Powers to impose and collect taxes					2	Power to allocate spending					3	Power to Legislate					4	Power to Appoint Officials					5	Power Over Judiciary					6	Power to Form Security Forces				
	1	2	3	4	5																																							
1	Powers to impose and collect taxes																																											
2	Power to allocate spending																																											
3	Power to Legislate																																											
4	Power to Appoint Officials																																											
5	Power Over Judiciary																																											
6	Power to Form Security Forces																																											
206	There is a suggestion that the next Syria parliament be composed of two chambers. One chamber will have elected members with legislative powers, and the other will have oversight role on the first chamber and its members will include local dignitaries, notables and leaders who represent social components of the different regions. What is your position on such a parliament system?	1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Neutral 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree 6 I don't know																																										
207	Do you know what is meant by "the executive authority"?	1 Yes 2 No (Skip to Q 210)																																										
208	Which of the following is the primary task of the executive authority?	1 Enacting laws 2 Implementing laws 3 Resolving disputes between the institutions and the people 4 I don't know (Skip to Q 210)																																										
209	In your opinion, what is the best way to limit the executive powers?	1 To have all the powers with the president 2 To limit the executive powers of the president and grant them to the prime minister 3 To divide the powers between the president and the prime minister 4 I don't know																																										

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
210	What is your position on the following statements?					
	Syria's Arab identity should be preserved in the next constitution.	1				
	Syria's Islamic identity should be stated in the next constitution.	2				
	Kurdish should be recognized as a second official language in the country in the constitution.	3				
	Cultural and ideological rights of ethnic and religious minorities in Syria should be recognized.	4				
	The areas of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria should be granted a special status.	5				
211	Place the following issues in order of importance to you.	1	Justice			(.....)
		2	Security			(.....)
		3	Intellectual, political, and social rights			(.....)
		4	Democracy			(.....)
		5	Development and economic welfare			(.....)
		6	Accountability			



اليوم التالي
لدعم الانتقال الديمقراطي في سوريا



THE DAY AFTER
Supporting Democratic Transition In Syria

