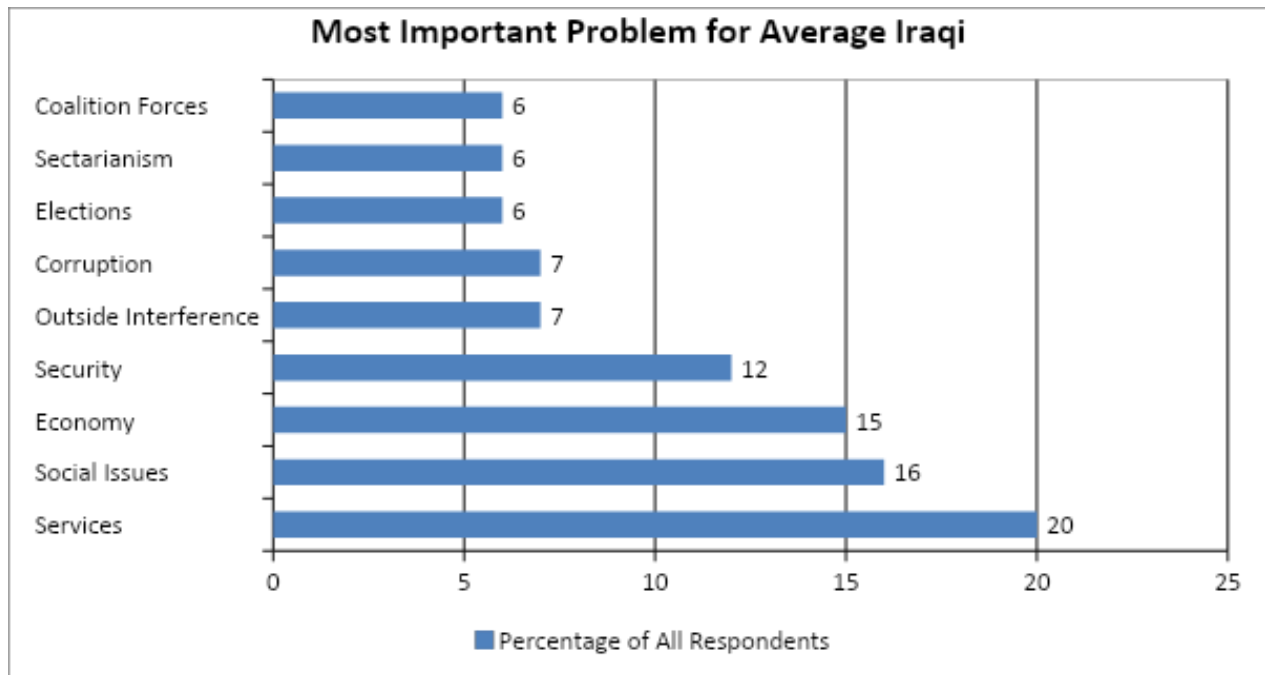




Iraqis Discouraged by Post-Election Government Negotiations

In a public opinion survey of 4,000 respondents conducted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in late June,¹ the frustration of the Iraqi people with the prolonged negotiations over formation of a new government was evident. Seventy (70) percent of respondents were somewhat or very concerned that a new government had not formed, and 63 percent assessed that the political situation in Iraq was moving in the wrong direction.

Consequently, it is not surprising that 46 percent of respondents were not sure or definitely would not vote if elections were held again in Iraq. This number includes more than 50 percent of respondents from Baghdad and the Shi'a-dominant southern governorates, indicating that most of the people in Iraq believe that they expressed their opinion in the March parliamentary elections and now just want the politicians to get on with the business of forming a government and solving the pressing issues that affect people's everyday lives. For a majority of respondents, these issues are problems that hit closest to home, with 20 percent identifying the provision of basic services; 16 percent social concerns, such as education, health care and housing; and, 15 percent the economy, jobs and inflation.



¹ The poll was in the field from 21 to 26 June 2010.

In terms of forming the government, 60 percent of respondents believed that the political parties are guided more by their own political interests rather than by the interests of the Iraqi people – and this view was consistent across all regions of Iraq with least cynicism toward the parties expressed in Baghdad (at only 53 percent).

Half of respondents considered it important that the next government be led by a member of their sect, while 60 percent of all respondents, including two thirds of Kurdish respondents, believed that it was somewhat or very important for all coalitions to be included in the new government. Only 44 percent of respondents were somewhat or very concerned that the new government could lead to the return of the Baath Party to power, and this sentiment was highest in the most southern provinces of Basrah, Muthanna, Missan and Thi Qar at 53 percent and lowest in the non-Kurdish provinces north of Baghdad at 31 percent. Finally, while 62 percent of Shia respondents expressed a positive opinion about the merger of State of Law and Iraqi National Alliance, a majority (53 percent) of all respondents expressed a negative opinion.

The NDI poll demonstrates that the Iraqi public is increasingly frustrated about the delay in formation of a government based on an election that 61 percent judged to have been largely or somewhat free and fair. These opinions are held equally by men and women, old and young, employed and unemployed. The main lines of divisions among the population are based on sectarian and ethnic identities and geographic location. Thus, in Baghdad and northern and western provinces of Anbar, Diyala, Salah al Din, Kirkuk and Ninewah, there is more support for secular government, especially one led by Allawi's coalition. In the southern provinces, there is greater cynicism and less unity of opinion over what type of government should emerge from the election. In the Kurdish north, people want their representatives to have a place in the government and for that government to focus on the key economic and social concerns of provision of basic services, employment, and inflation.