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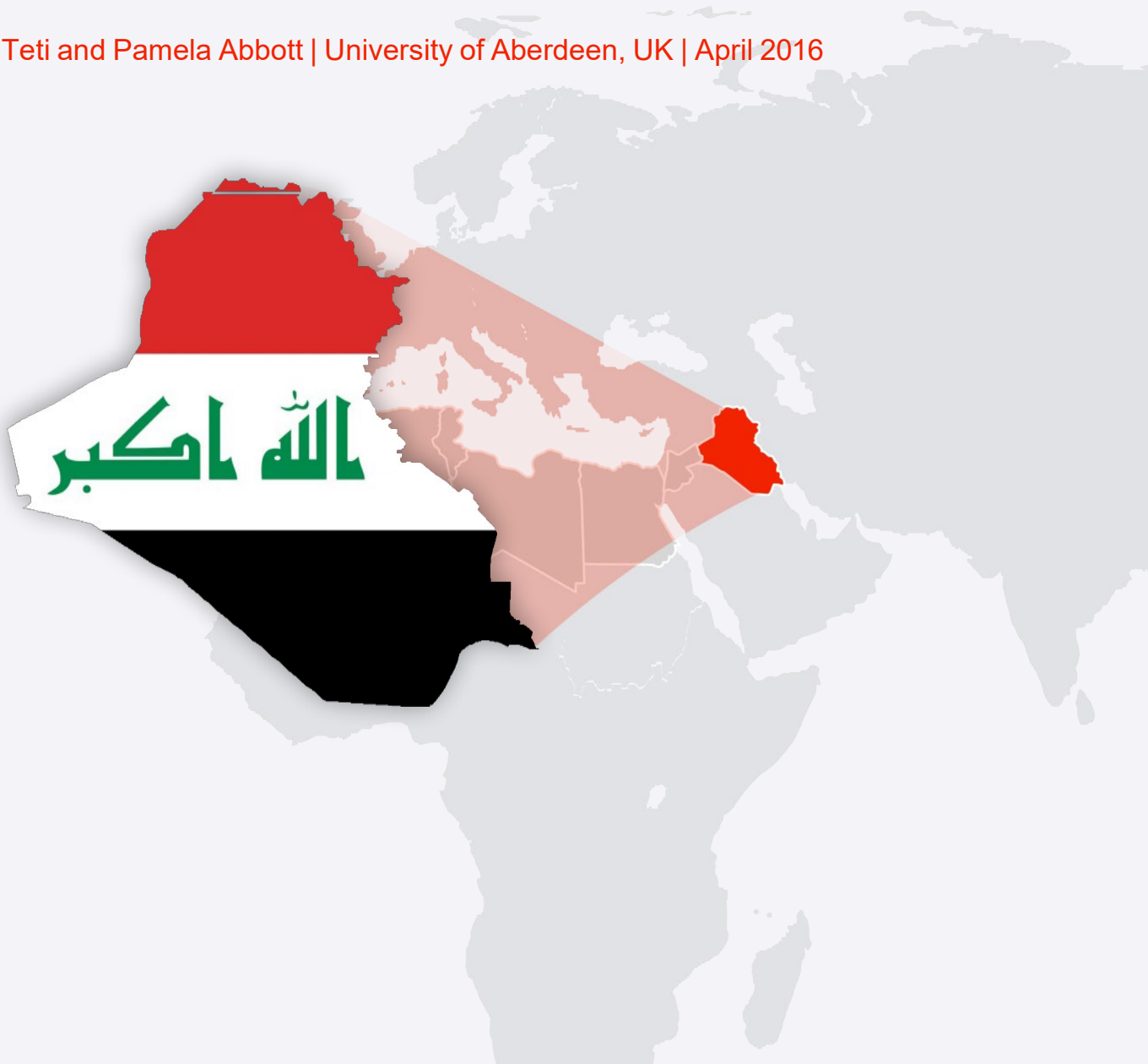
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The Arab Transformations WORKING PAPER SERIES

NUMBER 1

The Relative Importance of Religion and Region in Explaining
Differences in Political Economic and Social Attitudes in Iraq in 2014:
Findings from the Arab Transformations Public Opinion Survey

Andrea Teti and Pamela Abbott | University of Aberdeen, UK | April 2016



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ArabTrans



SEVENTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME



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The Arab Transformations consortium is an international research project operating within the European Commission's FP7 framework. The project looks comparatively at attitudes and behaviours in the context of the social, political and economic transformations taking place across Middle East and North Africa since February 2011. The countries covered are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. The survey on which this report was based was carried out between 25th May and 31st August 2014.

Ethical approval for the Project was given through the Ethical Review Procedures of the University of Aberdeen.

Further details of the project including the Survey Technical Report and the Longitudinal Data Base and Guide can be found on the project web site at www.arabtrans.eu.

Acknowledgements

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The Arab Transformations Project is coordinated by the University of Aberdeen (UK) and includes further 11 partners: Dublin City University (DCU), Dublin, Ireland; Análisis Sociológicos Económicos y Políticos (ASEP), Madrid, Spain; Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI), Milan, Italy; Universität Graz (UNI GRAZ), Graz, Austria; Societatea Pentru Metodologia Sondajelor Concluzia-Prim (Concluzia), Chisinau, Moldova; Centre de Recherche en Économie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD), Algiers, Algeria; Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research (BASEERA); Cairo, Egypt; Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies (IIACSS), Amman, Jordan; University of Jordan (JU), Amman, Jordan; MEDA Solutions (MEDAS), Casablanca, Morocco; Association Forum Des Sciences Sociales Appliquées (ASSF); Tunis, Tunisia

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Executive Abstract:

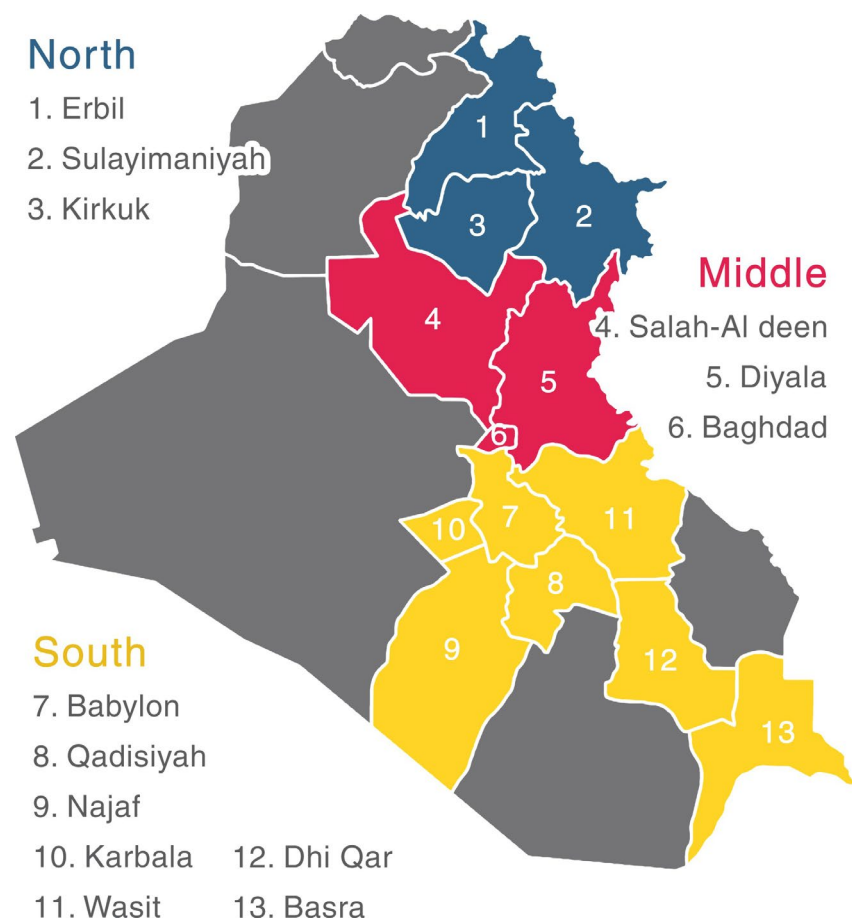
Based on the Arab Transformations survey of Iraq in 2014, this paper examines the relative weight of religious identification and region of residence in several key areas, including main challenges perceived by the population, perceptions of security, of economic conditions, of governance, political mobilisation, corruption, and migration. Contrary to the perception that sectarian identity is the most important factor in understanding contemporary Iraqi politics, this analysis shows that religious identification is often a confounding variable, and that regional location better captures variations in respondents' perceptions, including in key areas such as security, the economy, and migration.

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1. Introduction

The main dividing line in Iraq has been said to be sectarian, i.e. ethno-religious. By contrast, the question this paper tackles is: is there any evidence that region makes a difference after controlling religion? To answer this question, we use the Iraq country data from the Arab Transformations Survey, which was carried out between May 4th and June 22nd 2014. The survey used multistage probability sampling using residential listings with sample proportionate to size. The sample included 13 out of 19 Governorates: three were excluded because of civil disorder and military conflict, and one with very low and two with relatively low population density. Primary sampling units were selected using simple random sampling, households selected using random number tables and respondents identified using the next birthday method. The aimed for sample size was 2000 non-institutionalised respondents aged 18 years and over. All respondents were asked to give verbal informed consent to participation in the survey, and ethical approval was given through the Ethical Review Procedures at the University of Aberdeen.



Map 1: Iraq Governorates Identifying Those Included in the Sample

The achieved sample was 1,750 representing an 87.5 per cent response rate. Following quality assurance checks using the Percentmatch routine, 7.8 per cent of cases were removed from the data set due to the potential for data contamination (duplication/near duplication¹), leaving 1,613 cases. The sample size is adequate to generalise with 95 per cent confidence and a five per cent margin of error at country level.

In the achieved sample the vast majority in the North are Sunni and in the Southern Shiites Muslim, but in the Central Region the population is split rough 50/50 Sunni and Shiite (Table 1).² Although there are few reliable data on the Sunni/Shiite split in Iraq, the sample profile (43.6% Sunni, 53.3% Shiite, 3.1% refused) is in line with other surveys carried out in Iraq in recent years³.

Table 1: Region and Religion

Region	Sunni	Shiite	% Sample Total
North	98.2% (374)	1.8% (7)	381 (24.4%)
Middle	49.3% (322)	50.7% (331)	41.8% (653)
South	1.5% (8)	98.5% (521)	33.8% (529)
% Total Sample	704 (45%)	859 (55%)	100~% (1563)

Just over half the sample is male (51.8 per cent) which suggests that it is reasonably representative in terms of gender. In terms of age it is difficult to get reliable estimates but comparison with UN population estimates suggests that the sample probably underrepresents young adults and over represents those in mid-adulthood but is fairly representative for the oldest age group.⁴

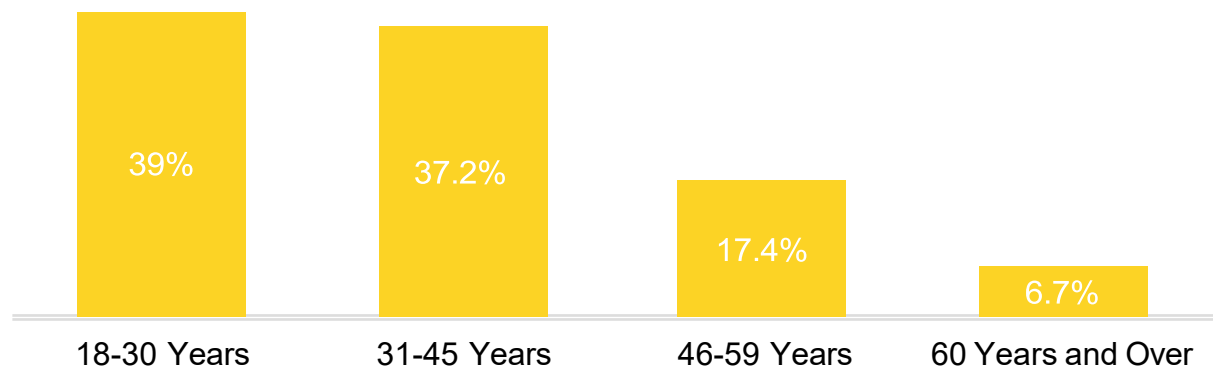
¹ Noble, K. and Robbins, M. (2016). Don't Get Duped: Fraud through Duplication in Public Opinion Surveys. *Journal of the IAOS*, preprint, 1-11, <http://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji978>, last accessed 9th April 2016.

² N.B.: the survey questionnaire did not offer respondents the option of self-identifying as Kurds, rendering the identification of preferences amongst Northern Kurdish populations arduous.

³ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/18/the-sunni-shia-divide-where-they-live-what-they-believe-and-how-they-view-each-other/>

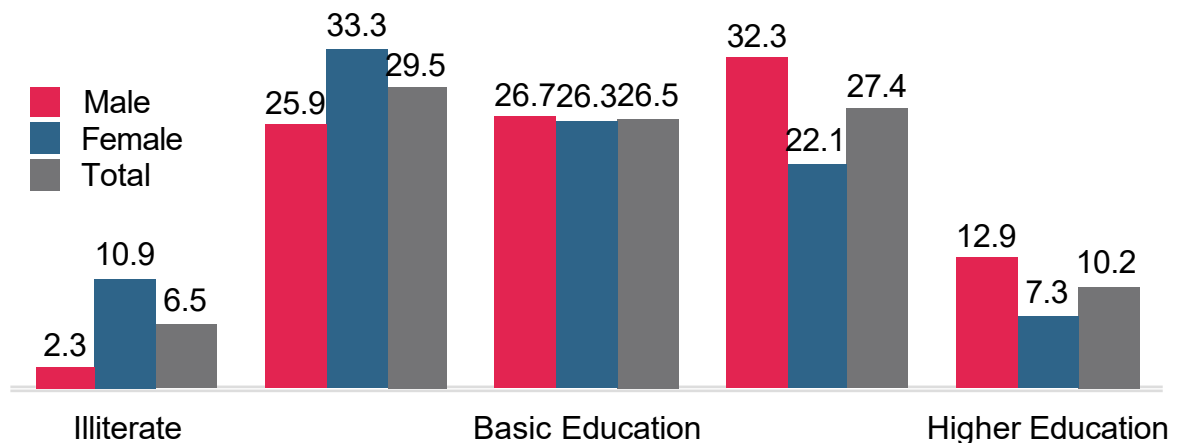
⁴ UN data: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DVD>, last accessed 2nd December 2015. <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=iraq> last accessed 9th May 2016.

Figure 1: Age in Broad Age Groups



As with age, it is difficult to get any reliable data on the education attainment of adults in Iraq. However, comparison with available UNESCO data suggests the sample underrepresents those that are illiterate.⁵ The educational attainment of women is lower than men’s as would be expected (Figure 2). Also as would be expected younger age groups are better educated. Only two per cent of 18-30 year olds are illiterate compared to 25 per cent of those aged 60 years and over and while 45 per cent of 18-30 year olds have at least completed secondary education this only the case for 24 per cent of those 60 years and older.

Figure 2: Educational Attainment by Gender (%)

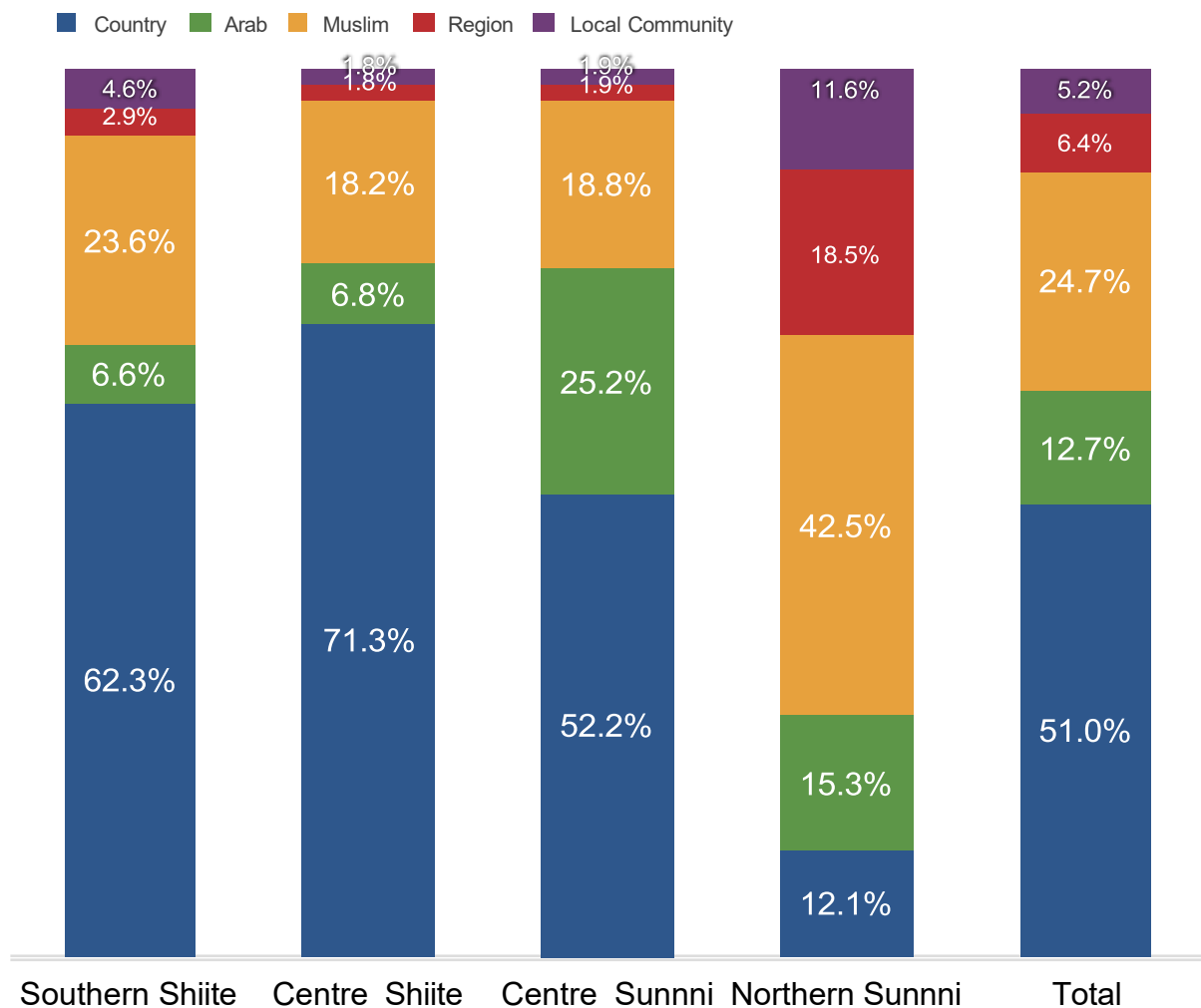


As we have already pointed out there is a strong relationship between religious identity and region with the North being Sunni, the Southern regions being Shiite-majority areas, and the Central regions being more religiously mixed. Contrary to frequent claims made in academic literature, in the media, and in policy-making

⁵ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Documents/UIS-literacy-statistics-1990-2015-en.pdf>, last accessed 9th May 2016.

circles, survey data also demonstrates a clear relationship between the region a person lives in and their identity (Figure 3). Region clearly makes a difference to identity after controlling for religion: for example, while the identity of Shiites living in the Central Region is similar, it is not identical, to Southern Shiite and Middle Region Sunnis are very different from Northern Sunni and although more similar clearly still different from Central Shiites. This is perhaps not surprising as a majority of the Sunni living in the North are likely to be Kurds and to be less likely to identify themselves primarily as Iraqi. Not least for this reason, what is perhaps surprising is the relatively small proportion (30 per cent) that identify themselves with their region or their local community – the closest possible proxies to ethnic Kurdish identification, which as noted above is absent from the survey questionnaire.

Figure 3: Identity by Religion and Region (%)



(Note in this and other tables where we look at the relative importance of religion and region we have excluded those that do not identify as Sunni or Shiite, and for the regions we have excluded those identifying themselves as Shiite and living in the North and those identifying themselves as Sunni and living in the South.)

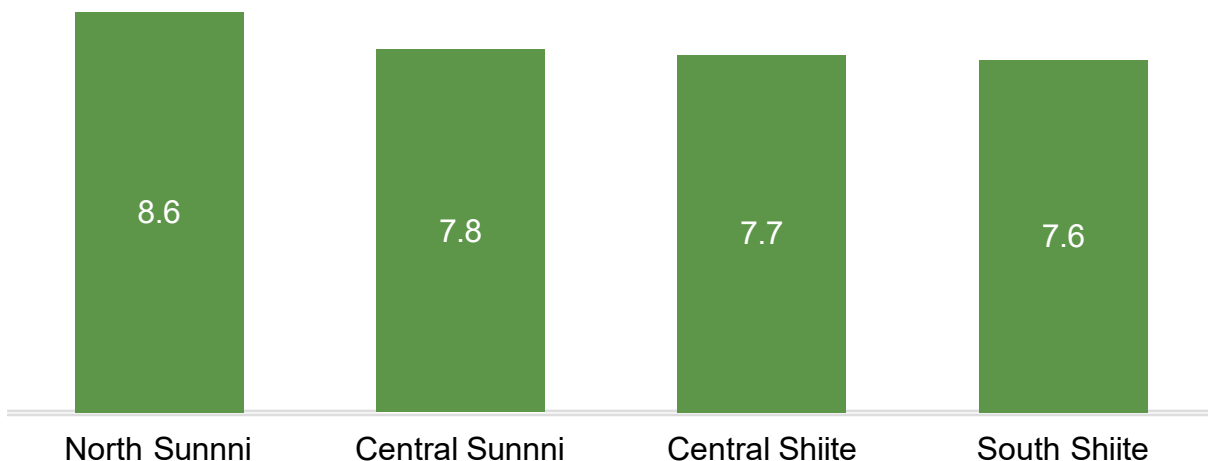
The vast majority of respondents identify their households as neither very poor (struggling) or relatively well off (comfortable). There are no noticeable differences by religion or region.

Figure 4: Estimation of Adequacy of Household Income



However, on a 10-point Index of Deprivation measuring how often households have to go without everyday essentials ranging from food to entertainment Sunnis in the North have a noticeably higher mean score than Sunnis or Shiite in the Central Region or Shiite in the South Region (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Mean Score on Index of Deprivation by Religion and Region



2. Support for the Arab Uprisings

Anti-government protests on political, social, or economic issues during 2010-2011 are not easily described as part of the broader regional 'Arab Uprisings'. The roots of these protests go back at least to the period immediately after the 2003 US occupation, and the nature and development of such protests is very different from those witnessed in 'Arab Uprisings' countries such as Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, or indeed Bahrain. In addition, while at least initially protests were explicitly non-sectarian in the countries mentioned above (e.g. Bahrain and Yemen) the sectarian dimension of political elites/leaderships (as opposed to popular sentiment) was already entrenched in Iraq by 2010. On these grounds, it is prudent to differentiate between 'support for the Arab Uprisings' expressed by Iraqi respondents which is likely to manifest support for the general movement, and support for political protest and mobilisation within Iraq itself.

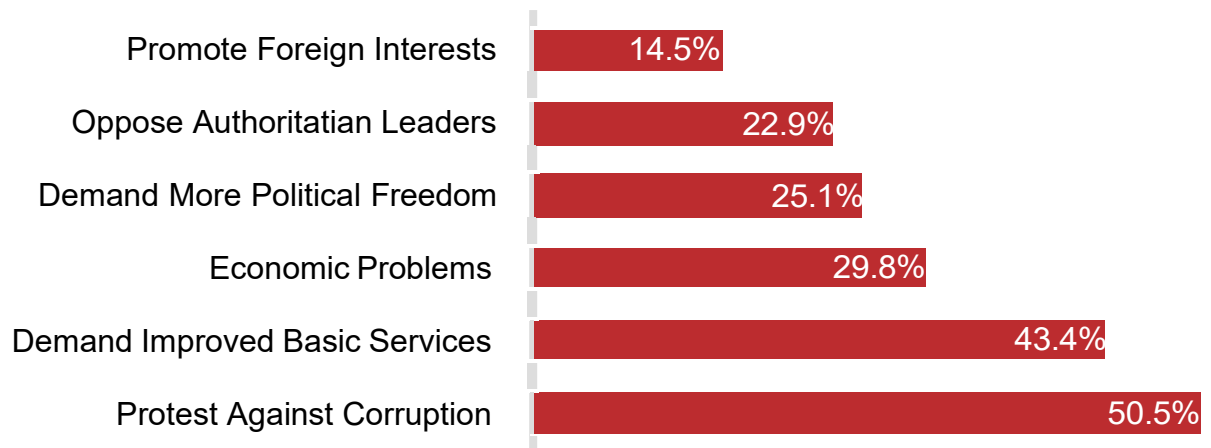
Support for the Arab Uprisings and participation in political mobilization were both relatively low. In total 16 per cent of respondents said that they had supported the Arab Uprisings compared with an average across the five AT countries of 32.5 per cent (varying from a low of 13.6 per cent in Jordan to a high of 72.5 per cent in Libya) and three per cent of respondents who actually participated in protests,⁶ compared with an average of 16.3 per cent across the Arab Transformations countries, with Iraq having the lowest participation rate and Libya with 64.2 per cent the highest. There are no significant differences in likelihood of having supported the Arab Uprisings by religion or region. Interestingly, 24 per cent would go on a demonstration now, and of these 60 per cent supported the Arab Uprisings. Sunnis living in the Northern Region and Shiites living in the Southern Region are more likely to say that they would go on a demonstration now, at 42 per cent in both Regions. This is a markedly higher level compared to those living in the Central Region, where 28 per cent of Sunnis and 23 per cent of Shiites would go on a demonstration.

Although some nuance is necessary because corruption, economic factors, and political factors are clearly not unrelated, analysis of the survey data suggests that, on balance, respondents perceive the region-wide Arab Uprisings as more motivated by economic and governance concerns rather than political ones *per se*. It seems likely that the reasons respondents attribute to those participating in the Arab Uprisings are likely to provide some clues as to what Iraqis' main concerns were. On an open-ended question that enabled respondents to nominate up to two reasons for people protesting during the Arab Uprisings, half of respondents mention corruption as the main motivator. However, 62 per cent nominated explicitly

⁶ In response to a question on participation in Arab Spring demonstrations in their country 5.8 per cent said that they had. While marginally higher than the AT proportion it still indicates low support.

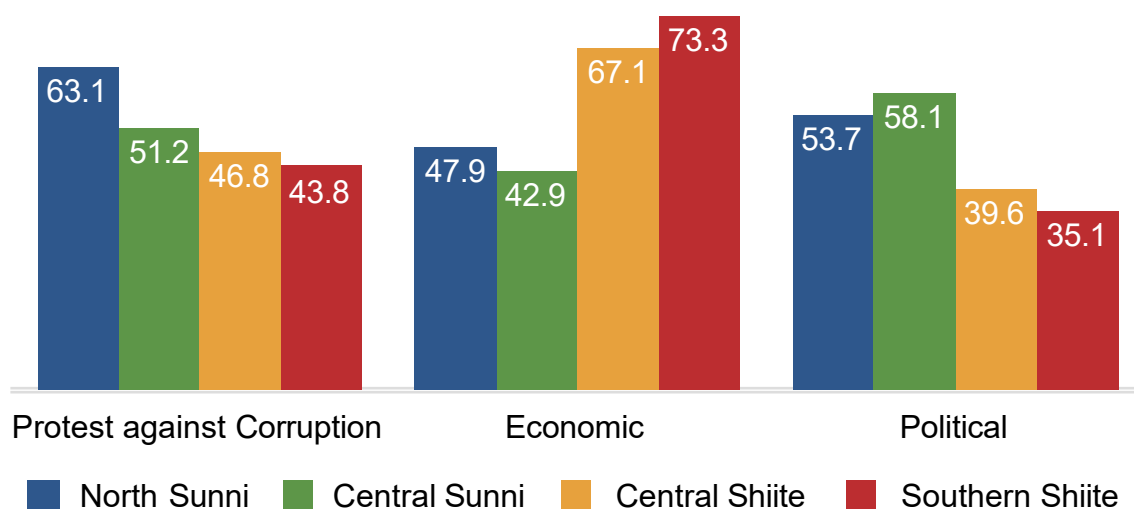
economic drivers as first or as second factor, while only 45 per cent nominated a political driver.

Figure 6: The Two Main Reasons Why People Protested in the Arab Uprisings



Religion rather than where people live seems to be more important in terms of what they see as the main drivers of the Arab Uprisings, although region does have an independent impact in terms of corruption. In general Shiites see economic factors as the main driver, while Sunnis are more likely to indicate political factors. Sunnis in the North (both Kurdish and Arab) are more likely to see corruption as a main driver of Uprisings than those living in other regions, irrespective of religion. Sunnis in the Central Region are marginally more likely to see corruption as a main driver than Shiites in the same Region.

Figure 7: Two Main Reasons Respondents think People Protested About During the Arab Uprisings by Religion and Region

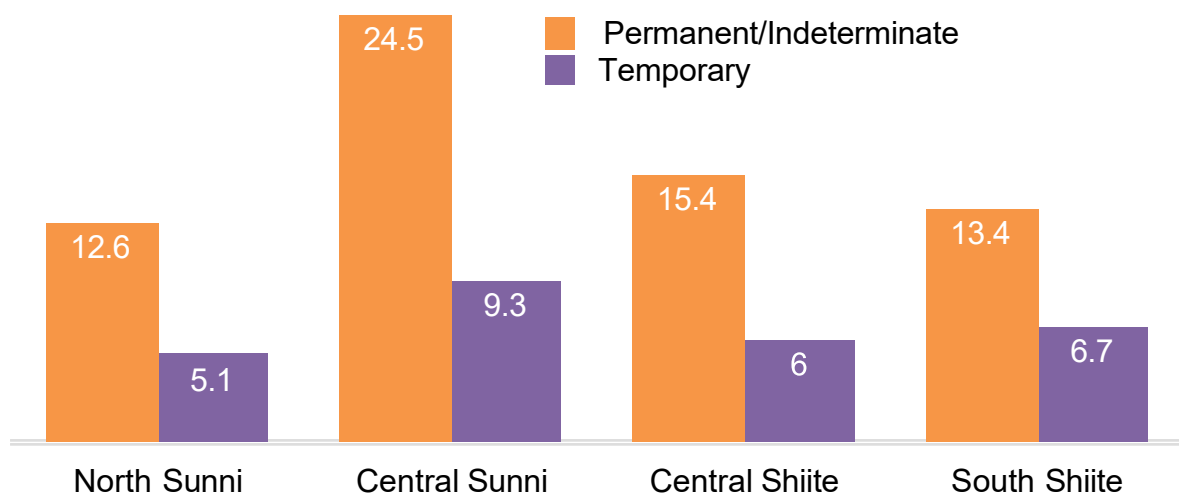


3. Migration Intentions

An interest in migrating can be a clear indicator about concerns about the economic and/or political situation in the country. Migration can be motivated by factors such as fear of political persecution, fear for one’s own and one’s family’s safety, wanting a better life (economic migration), or on a temporary basis for educational or economic reasons. Almost a quarter of respondents (23.6%) have considered living abroad, either permanently or for an indeterminate period (15.7%) or for a limited period of time (6.3%). Men are twice as likely to have considered migration (30.9%) as women (15.3%). Younger people and the more educated are also more likely to have considered migration.

Although detailed analysis is difficult given the numbers, it is clear that giving consideration to permanent/indeterminate migration is influenced by religion and region, with Sunnis living in the Central Region much more likely to have considered permanent/indeterminate migration than Sunnis living in the north Region or Shiites living in the Central or Southern Region. By contrast, differences in terms of having considered temporary migration are relatively small.

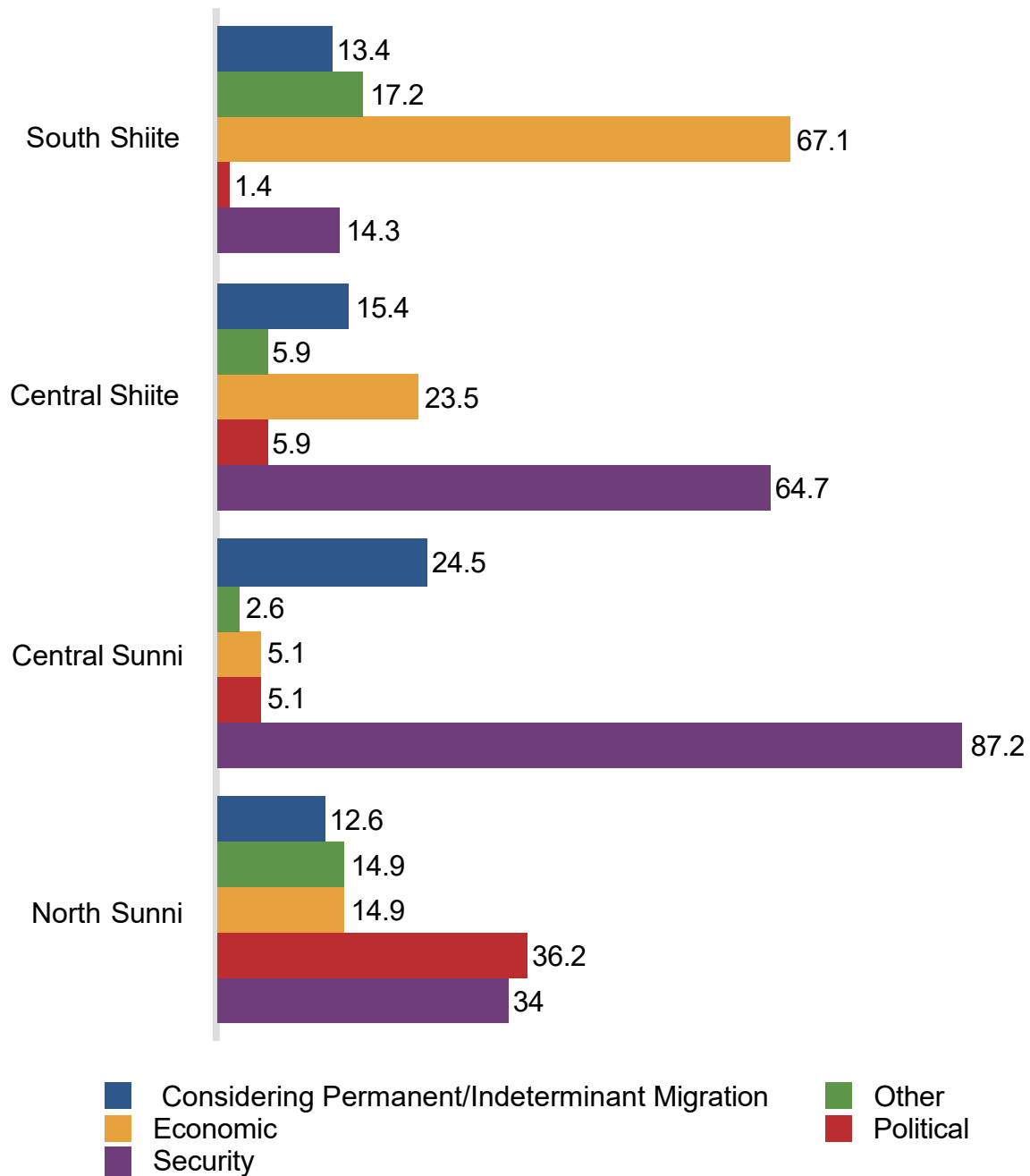
Figure 8: Permanent/Indeterminate and Temporary Migration by Religion controlling for Region



Region seems to be more important than religion in influencing the main reason that people have for considering permanent temporary migration. The main driver in the Central region is security concerns, although this seems to be a more important factor for Sunnis compared to Shiites living in the same Region. A noticeable proportion of Shiites living in the Central Region are motivated by economic factors. The main driver for Southern Shiites is economic while Sunnis in the North are as

likely to be motivated by economic as security factors or other factors such as education or family reasons.

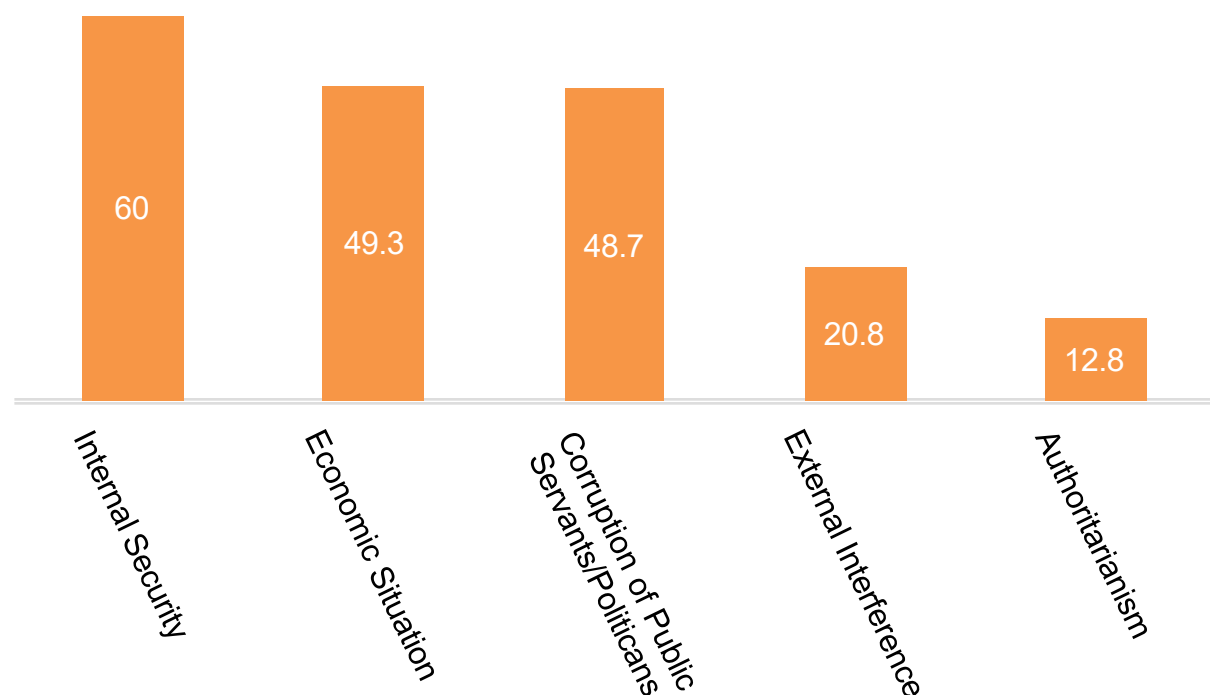
Figure 9: Main Driver of Considering Permanent/Indeterminate Migration by Religion controlling for Region, %



4. The Main Challenges Facing Iraq in May/June 2014

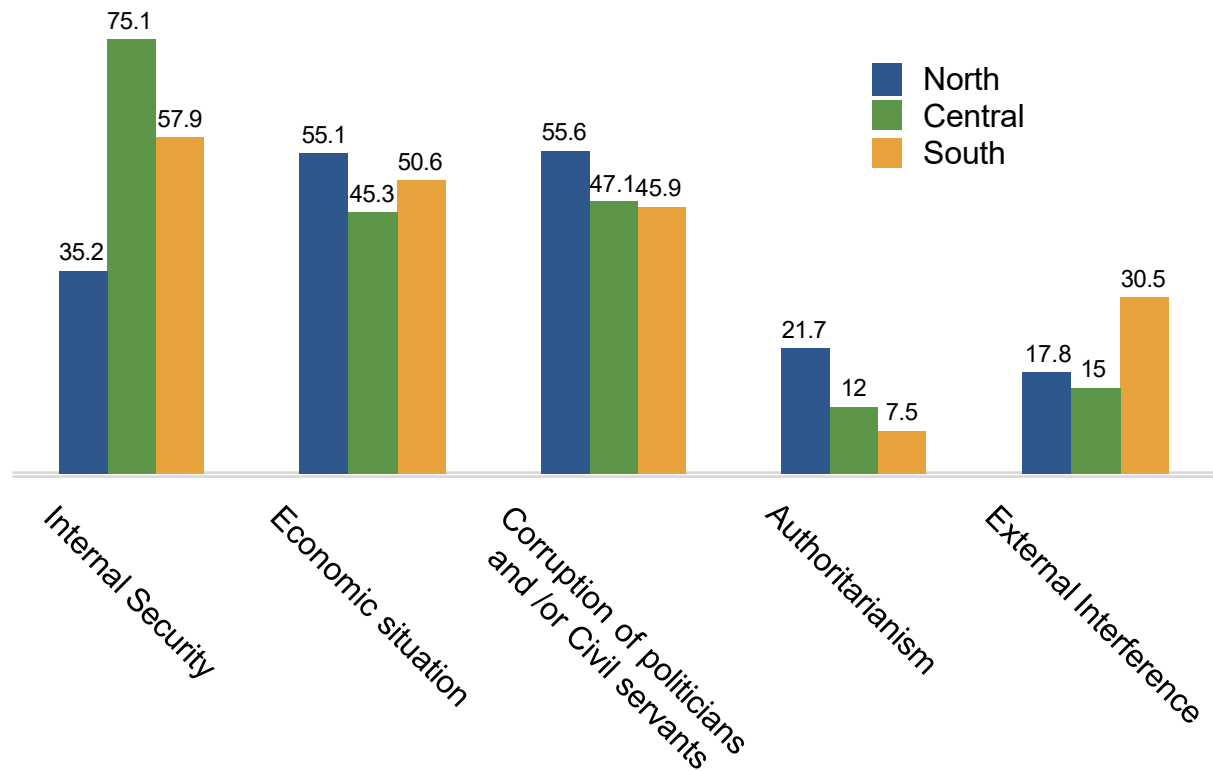
When it comes to what are seen as the two main challenges facing the country in May/June 2014, notably before the ISIS/Daesh takeover of Mosul, Figure 10 suggests that the main concerns remain internal security, the economic situation, and corruption, with less concern about external interference and authoritarianism (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Nominated as Two Main Challenges Facing Iraq in May/June 2014 (%)



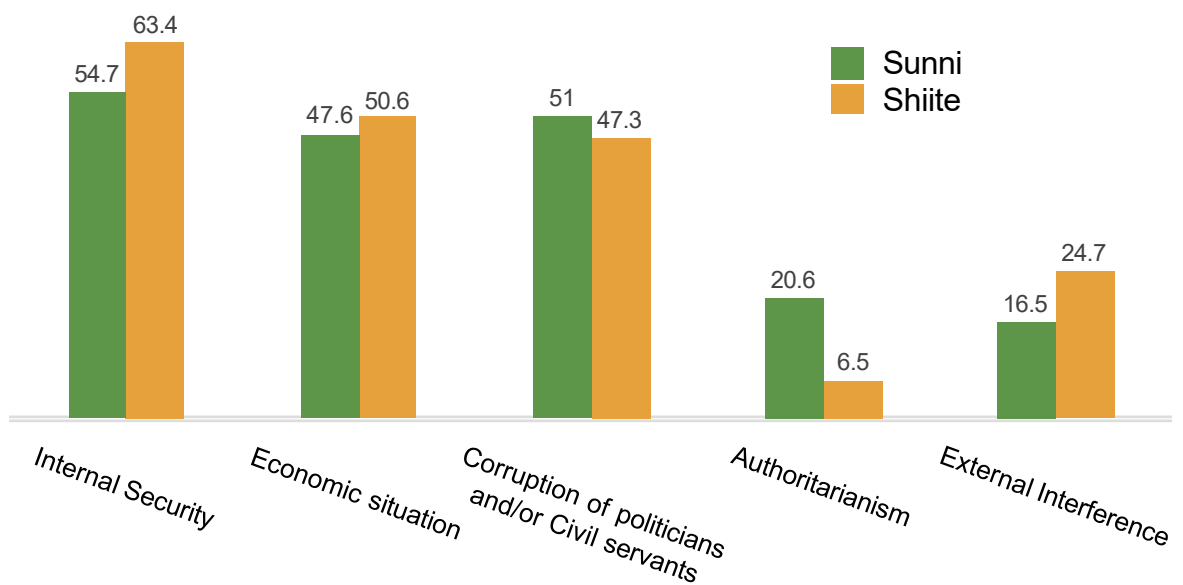
However, Region seems to make a difference, with those in the Central Region being much more concerned than those in the North or South about internal security and those in the South being more concerned about external security. Those living in the North Region are noticeably more concerned about the economic situation, about corruption, and about authoritarianism than those in the other two Regions, and indeed are more likely to nominate the economic situation and corruption as one of the two main challenges facing the country rather than internal security.

Figure 11: Nominated as Two Main Challenges Facing Iraq in May/June 2014 by Region (%)



Religion also seems to make a difference, with Shiites being noticeably more concerned about internal security and external interference than Sunnis, and Sunnis being noticeably more concerned than Shiites about authoritarianism.

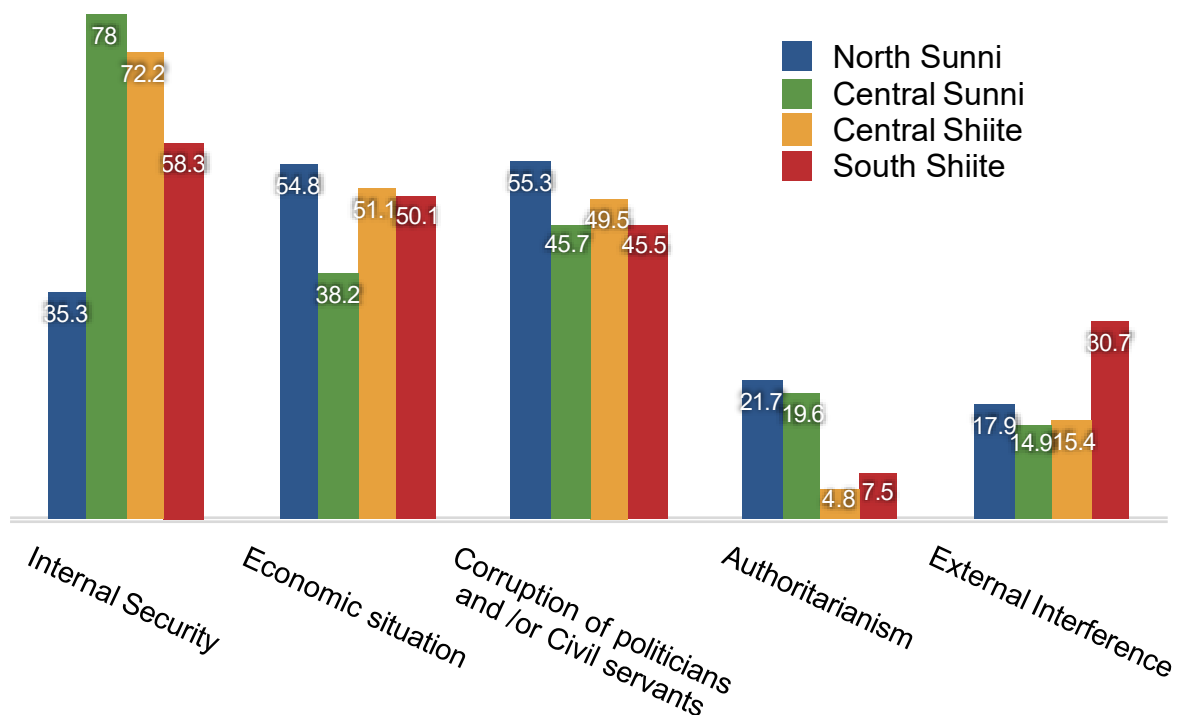
Figure 12: Nominated as Two Main Challenges Facing Iraq in May/June 2014 by Religion (%)



However, when we look at differences by religion while controlling for region, a rather different picture emerges. For internal security, contrary to expectations, it is clear that religion is a confounding variable and that the main factor explaining differences in seeing internal security as one of the two main challenges facing the country is in fact region of residence. For external interference, it is Shiites in the South that are noticeably more likely to see it as a major challenge. Sunnis, however, whether they live in the North or in the Central Region, are more likely than Shiites to see authoritarianism as a major problem. While the differences are less noticeable for the economic situation, Sunnis in the North are more likely to see this as a major challenge and Sunnis in the Central Region least likely.

These results would seem coherent with the political context: Arab Sunnis (which constitute a majority of Sunnis in the Central and Southern regions, and locally majorities in mixed areas of the North) have been largely marginalised from institutional power structures since the 2003 US invasion, and perceive Shiite-dominated Federal government as responsible for their marginalisation and political oppression. The focus on the economy in the North is likely to be due to the fact that ‘Sunni’ here captures both Arab and Kurds, with Kurds in greater control of regional government and concerned with ensuring the viability of their autonomy through securing access to and profits from oil resources.

Figure 13: Nominated as Two Main Challenges Facing Iraq in May/June 2014 by Religion Controlling for Region (%)

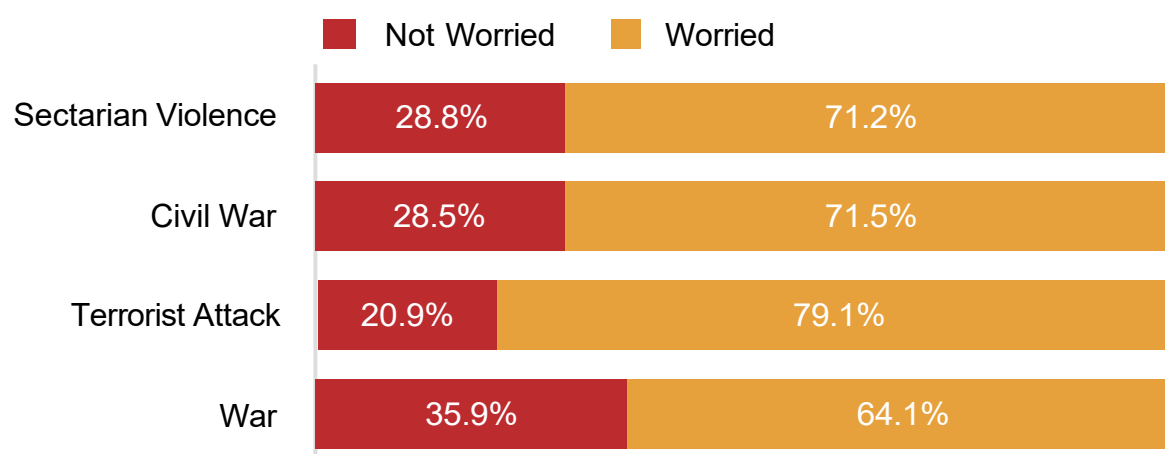


This analysis, taking account of what respondents thought motivated the Arab Uprisings, what motivated protest/mobilisation in Iraq, and what they see as the major challenges facing the country in May/June 2014, suggests that at this point in Iraq there is a complex relationship between public opinion and attitudes to security, governance, the economic situation, and politics, and that viewing national politics merely through the prism of sectarian identity is unwarranted. In terms of concerns about internal security, it is clear that living in the Central region is a major factor, not surprisingly given that so-called Islamic State (Daesh) was challenging for control of the Region at this time. In terms of corruption, Sunnis in the North Region are noticeably more likely to be concerned than those living in other Regions, whatever their religion. While in terms of the political situation the division seems to be along religious lines. For attitudes to the economic situation the picture seems more complex, but Shiites in the Central and Southern regions seem more concerned with the economic situation than Sunnis in the Central Region. With regards to drivers of the Arab Uprisings, Sunnis in the Central and Northern Regions both see the economic situation as less important than Shiites and by 2014 Sunnis in the North are the most likely to see the economic situation as one of the main problems, while Sunnis in the Central Region are the least likely. The remainder of this paper explores the relationship between religion and place in more detail.

5. Public Opinion on the Security Situation in Iraq in May/June 2014

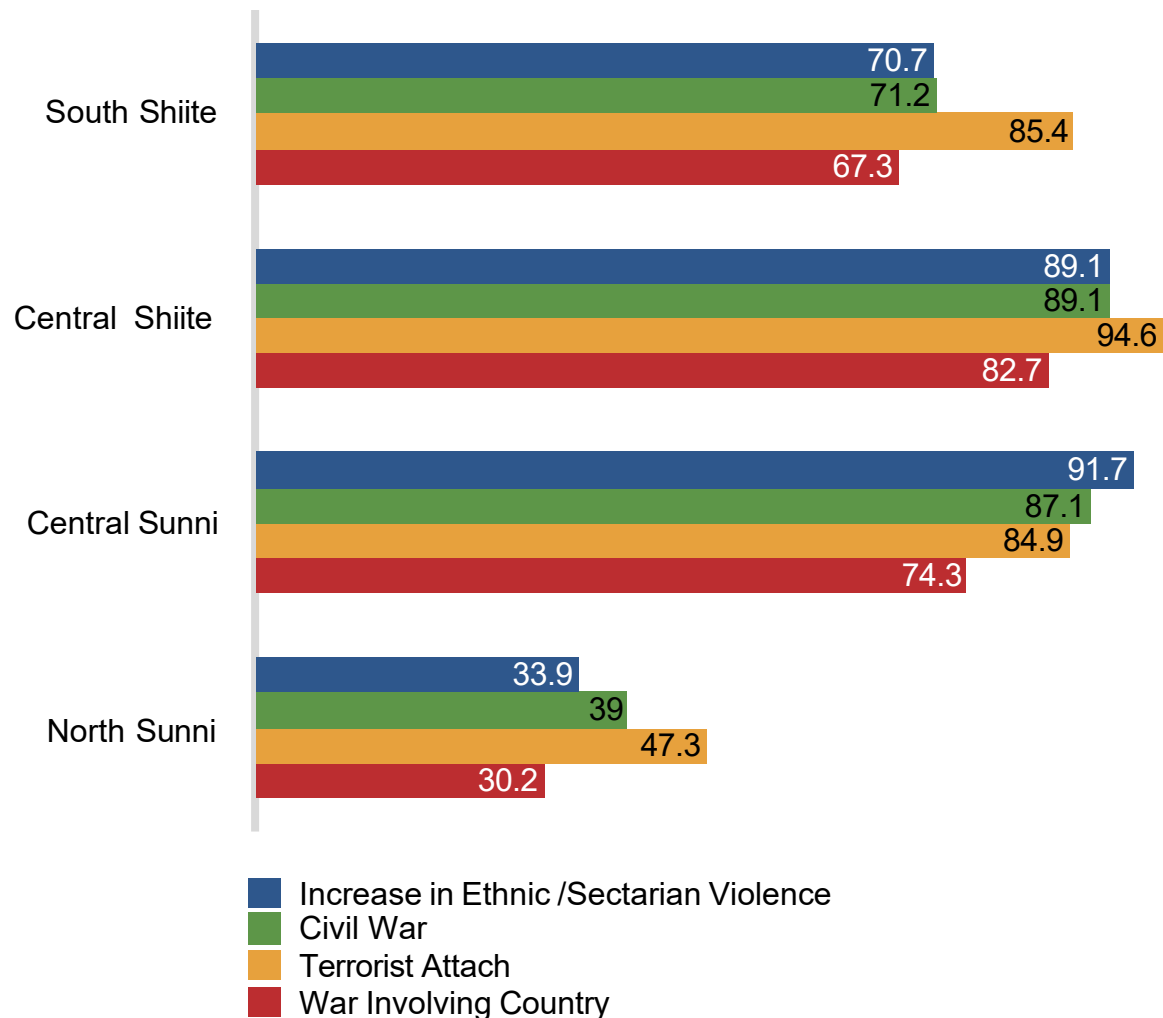
Unsurprisingly for a country mired in conflict, there is considerable concern about the possibility of war, terrorism, and sectarian violence, ranging from over three-quarters of respondents being concerned about terrorist attacks to just under two-thirds being concerned about the possibility of a war involving Iraq.

Figure 14: Worried about War, Terrorism and Violence (%)



However, while there are religious differences, regional differences would seem to be much more important (Figure 15). This suggests that religion is a confounding variable rather than a being the most important factor associated with concern about conflict. Sunnis and Shiites living in the Central Region share a similar level of concern about the possibility of war, terrorism and violence, and in this regard the Sunni in the Central Region are clearly very different for those in the North. In addition, while the difference are not as great, the same can be said for Shiites living in the Central Region compared with those in the South Region. On regression analysis on a scale of Fear of War and Violence computed from the four variables (one factor explaining 67.8% of the variance, Cronbach's Alpha 0.84) region explains 30.9 per cent ($p > 0.01$) of the variance. Religion, on the other hand, does not make a significant contribution.

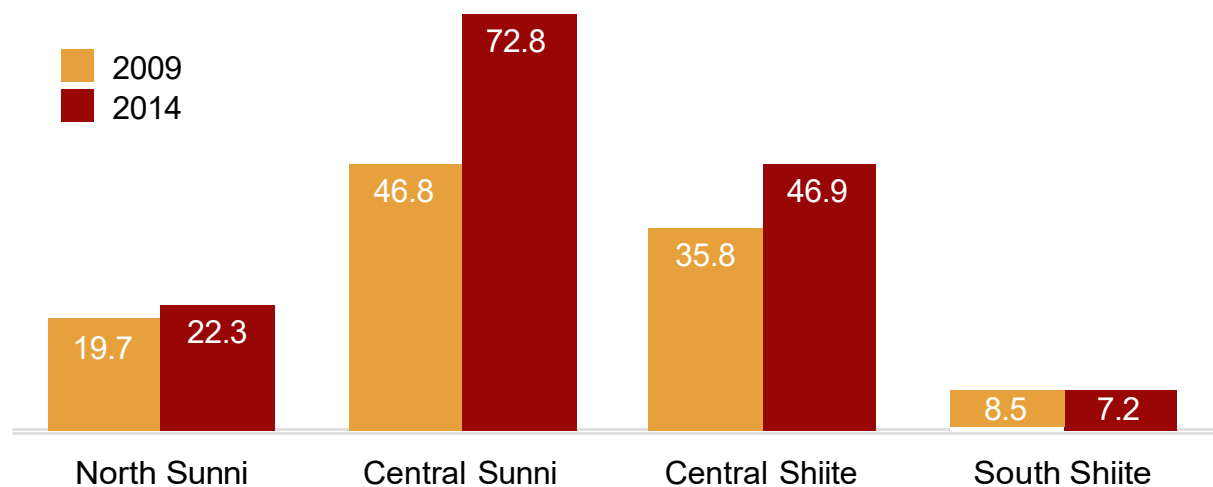
Figure 15: Percentage of people worried about War, Terrorist Attack and Violence by Religion Controlling for Region



Concern about security and safety can be at different levels; concerns people might have for their family and local community as compared with the region in which they live and their country.

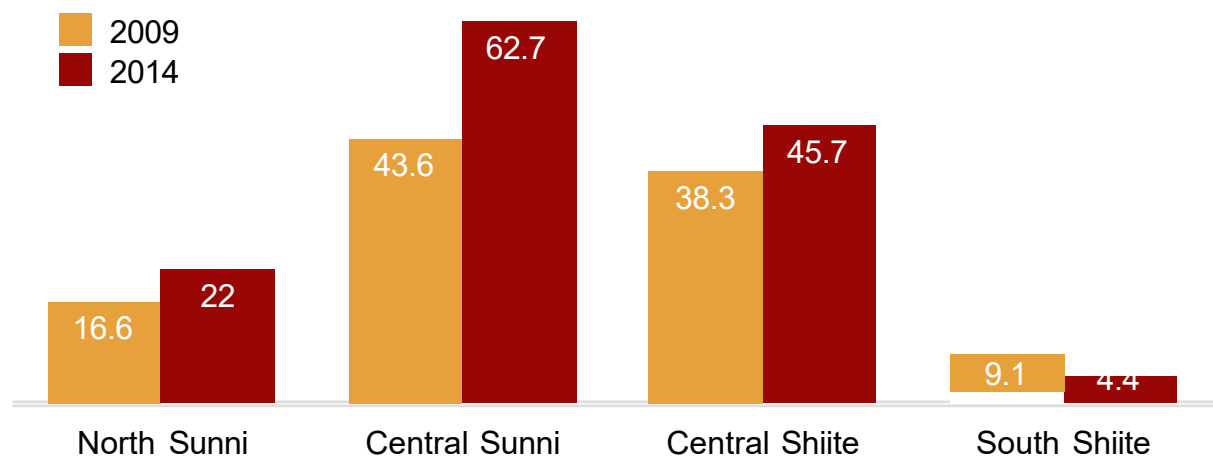
Concern about the security of one’s family is relatively high: Figure 16 shows that both Sunnis and Shiites living in the Central Region are more concerned about the security of their families than Sunnis living in the North and Shiites living in the South, with 25 per cent of respondents saying that they had been concerned in 2009 compared to 34 per cent saying they are concerned in 2014. This increase in concern about the security of their family was among those living in the Central Region, especially the Sunni while there was no noticeable increase among Sunni living in the North Region or Shiite in the South Region.

Figure 16: Concerned about Security of Family in 2009 and 2014 by Religion Controlling for Region, % Giving 1/5 or 2/5



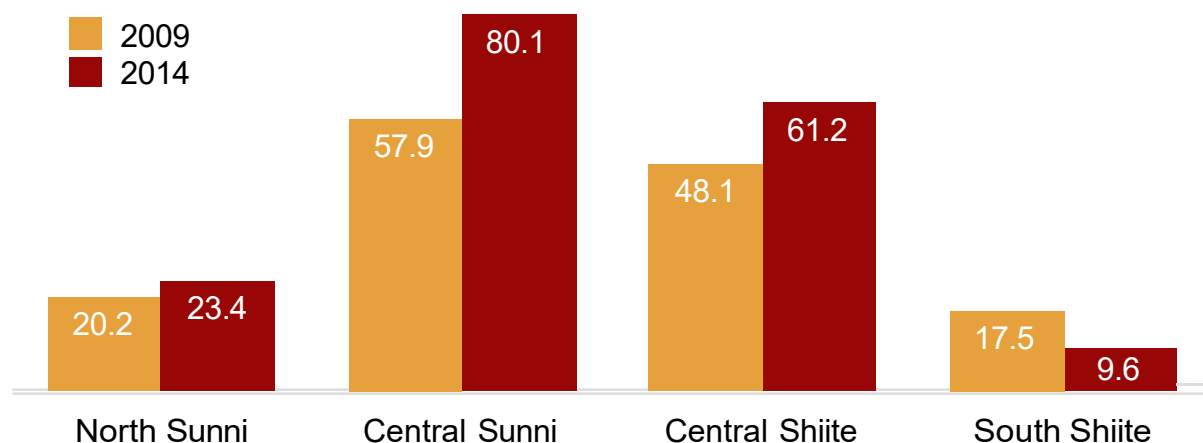
Similarly, there was an increase in concern about the security of the community from 25 per cent in 2009 to 30.4 per cent in 2014. Figure 17 shows much the same picture for concerns about the security of the local community as for concerns for one’s family, with the changes between 2009 and 2014 being much the same, and the proportions being concerned also much the same.

Figure 17: Concerned about Security of Community in 2009 and 2014 by Religion Controlling for Region, % Giving 1/5 or 2/5



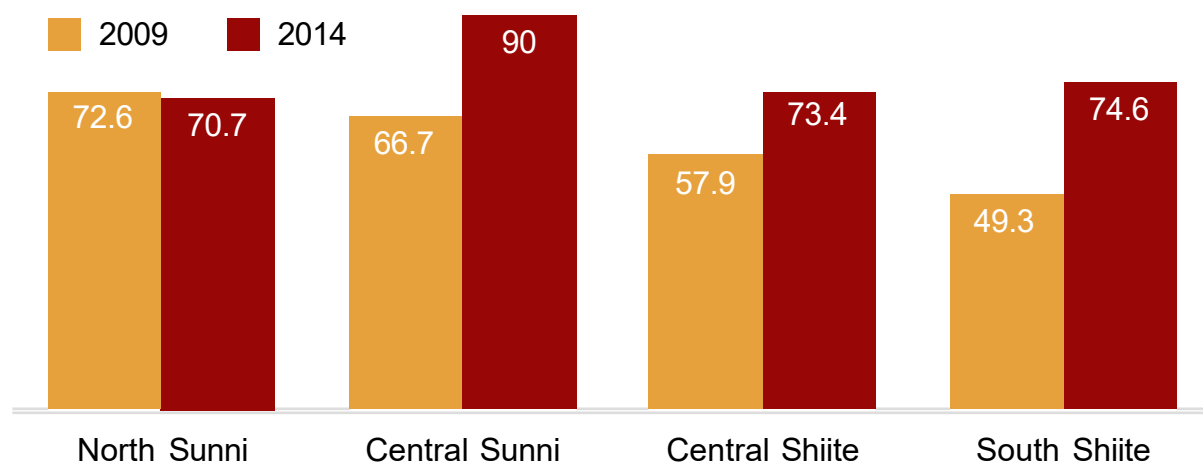
Concern about the security of the district where one lives increased from 34 per cent in 2009 to 40 per cent in 2014 with concern about the security of the district being much higher among those living in the Central Region in 2009 and 2014. Central Sunnis are even more concerned than Central Shiites.

Figure 18: Concerned about Security of My Region in 2009 and 2014 by Religion Controlling for Region, % Giving 1/5 or 2/5



However, when it comes to concerns about national security, the picture is rather different. There has been an increase in the overall concern from 60 per cent in 2009 to 76 per cent in 2014 with Central Sunnis most concerned about the national security situation. However, the level of concern about the security of the country is high across Regions ranging from 71 per cent among North Sunni to 90 per cent among Central Sunni. Sunnis in the North and Shiites in the Central and Southern Regions are much more likely to be concerned about the national security situation than they are about the security situation of their family, neighbourhood or region, and while the concern was equally high in the North in 2009, it increased noticeably among Shiites in the Central Region and South Regions between 2009 and 2014.

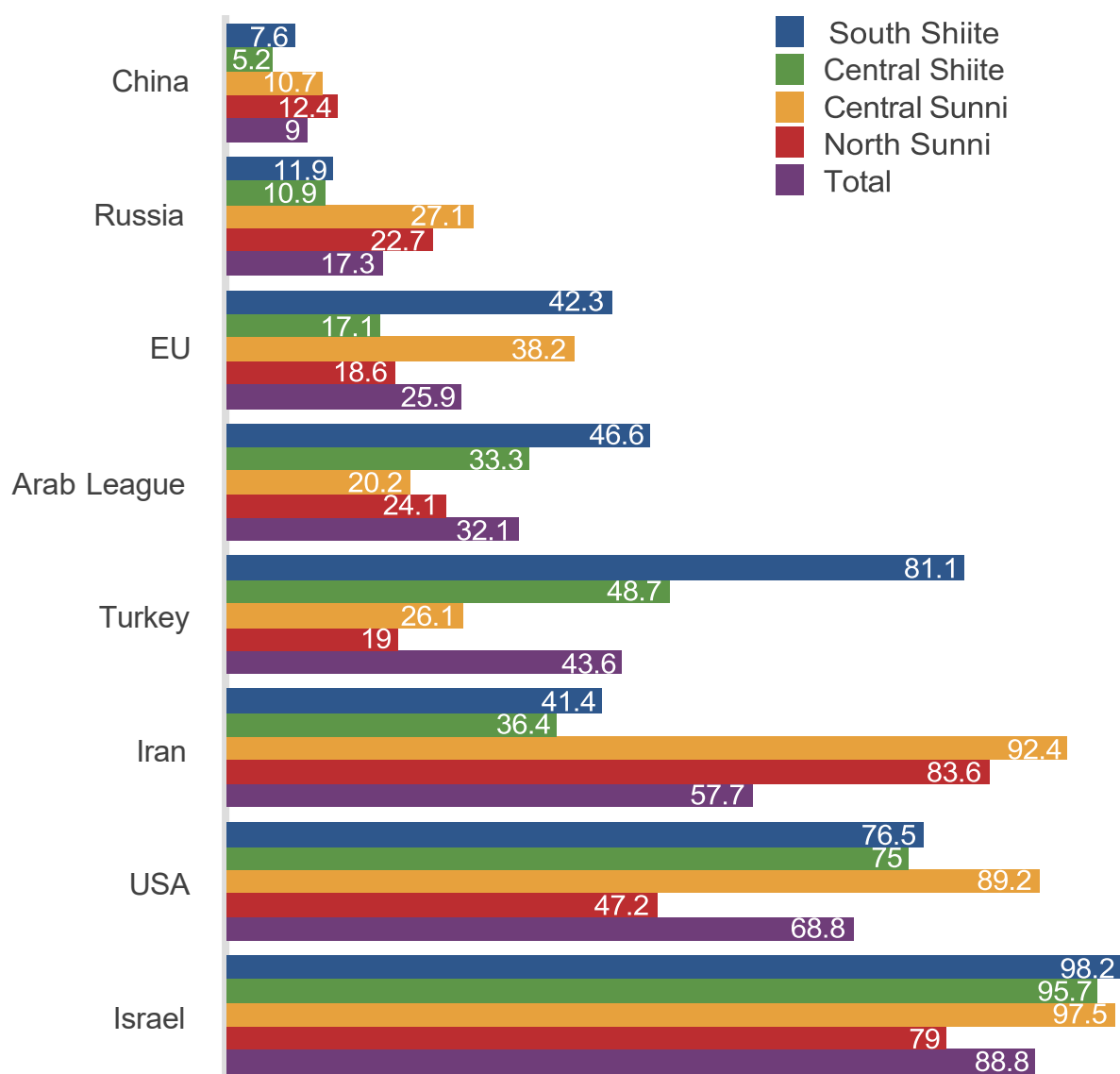
Figure 19: Concerned about Security of Iraq in 2009 and 2014 by Religion Controlling for Region, % Giving 1/5 or 2/5



There are also concerns that international and regional powers pose a threat to the stability of the country.

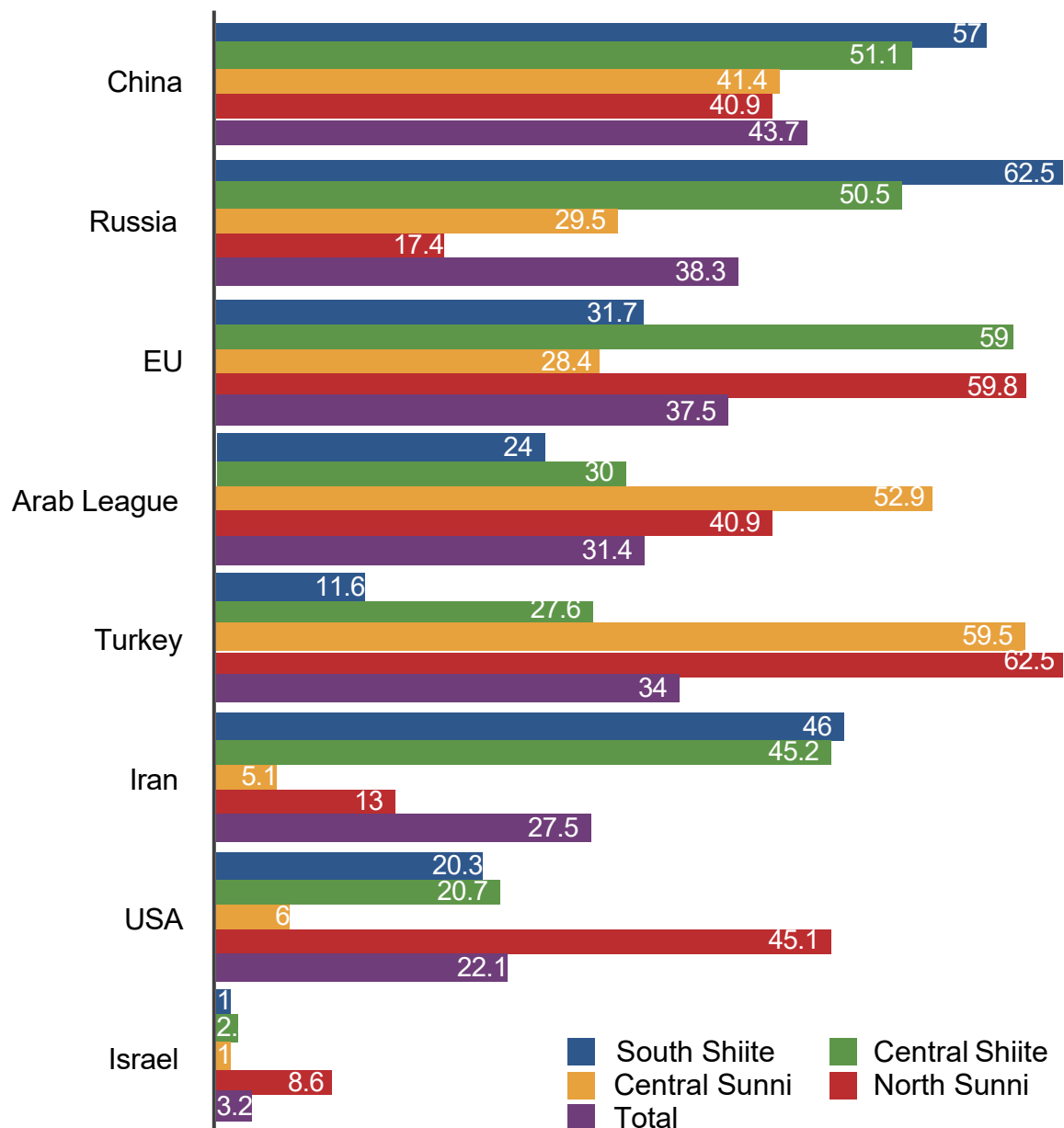
Religion clearly has an influence on what international powers are seen as a threat. Israel is the frontrunner in terms of being seen as a threat to Iraq's stability, closely followed by the US, although Northern Sunnis are less likely to see the US as a security threat than those living in the Central Region or Shiites generally. Sunnis irrespective of district are more likely to see Iran as a threat, while Shiites' concerns focus on Turkey and on the Arab League. Russia and China are seen as much less of a threat, although Sunnis are more likely to see them as a threat than Shiites.

Figure 20: Countries that are a Factor of Instability by Religion Controlling for Region



The pattern of responses by region and religion for countries that are seen as factors promoting stability are the reverse of that for countries that pose a threat to stability, perhaps not surprisingly. Religious identification is again the main dividing line. Overall China, Russia and the EU are seen as the main powers that can promote stability, with Shiites irrespective of Region being noticeably more likely to nominate China and especially Russia than Sunnis. The EU is seen as a factor for stability by Northern Sunnis and Central Shiites.

Figure 21: Countries that are a Factor for Stability, by Religion Controlling for Region

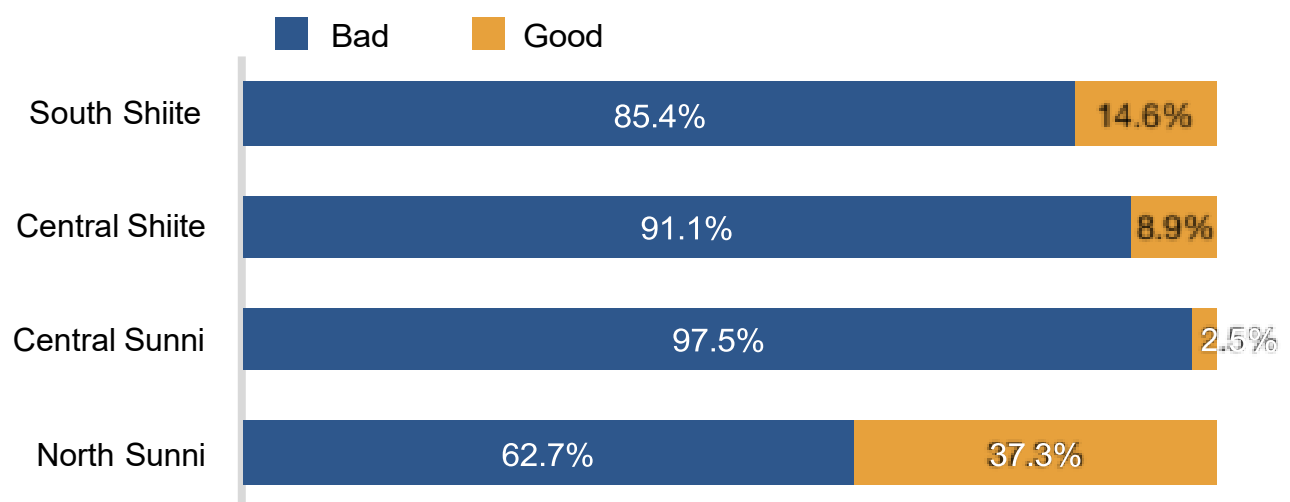


We can conclude from this analysis that region is the most important determinant of concerns about security for one's family, community, and region, with those in the Central Region having the greatest concerns both in 2009 and 2010 and having

seen a noticeable increase in concern between 2009 and 2014, although Central Sunnis are even more concerned than Central Shiite. In terms of national security in 2014 Region makes less of a difference although Central Sunnis are more concerned than the other groups.

Differences in security concerns are reflected in how respondents rate the Government's performance on security matters. In total, 83 per cent of respondents thought the Government was performing badly on security matters, but this varied by region – with virtual unanimity that the Government was doing a bad job in the Central Region, and not much lower in the South Region, but with a third thinking that the Government was doing a good job in the North.

Figure 22: % of Respondents Rating the Government's Performance on Security Matters by Religion Controlling for Region

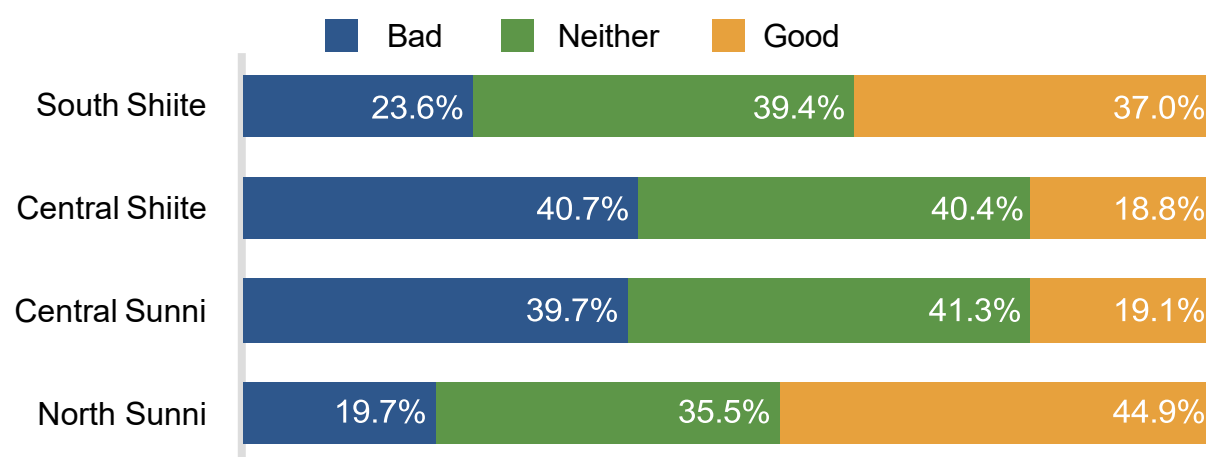


6. Public Opinion on the Economic Situation in Iraq in May/June 2014

We have already pointed out that 50 per cent of respondents see the economic situation as one of the two main challenges facing the country, varying from a low of 38 per cent of Central Sunnis and a high of 55 per cent of Northern Sunnis, but with little difference between Northern Sunnis and Central and Southern Shiites. However, this does not mean that Sunnis living in the Central Region do not see the economic situation as problematic, merely that they are less likely to nominate it as one of the two top challenges facing the country. This section looks in more detail at public opinion on the economic situation and examine if there are religious or regional differences. As with security it is important to consider people's opinions regarding their own household's finances in combination with opinions about the country's finances more generally.

Respondents seem to generally see their household finances as neither very good nor very bad: only 10 per cent see them as very bad, and three per cent as very good. In total, 31 per cent see them as bad, 39 per cent as neither good or bad, and 30 per cent as good. Comparing 2014 with 2009, respondents saw little change – a marginal increase in those who saw the situation as neither good or bad, and a comparative marginal decrease in those who saw it as bad and in those who saw it as good. However, opinion varies by region: Sunnis living in the North Region are the most satisfied – or least dissatisfied – with their household's economic situation, while Sunnis and Shiites living in the Central Region are the most dissatisfied. Shiites living in the South are closer to Sunnis living in the North than they are to Shiites living in the Central Region in this respect. The greater satisfaction of Sunnis in the North Region with the economic situation of their household is perhaps not surprising given the higher mean on the Index of Deprivation for Sunni Households in the Region (see Figure 5 above). These similarities appear to confirm qualitative research suggesting that non-Kurdish (Arab) Sunnis which constitute the majority in the Central Region and in parts of the North perceive the Federal government and local government in the North as marginalizing Sunni Arabs.

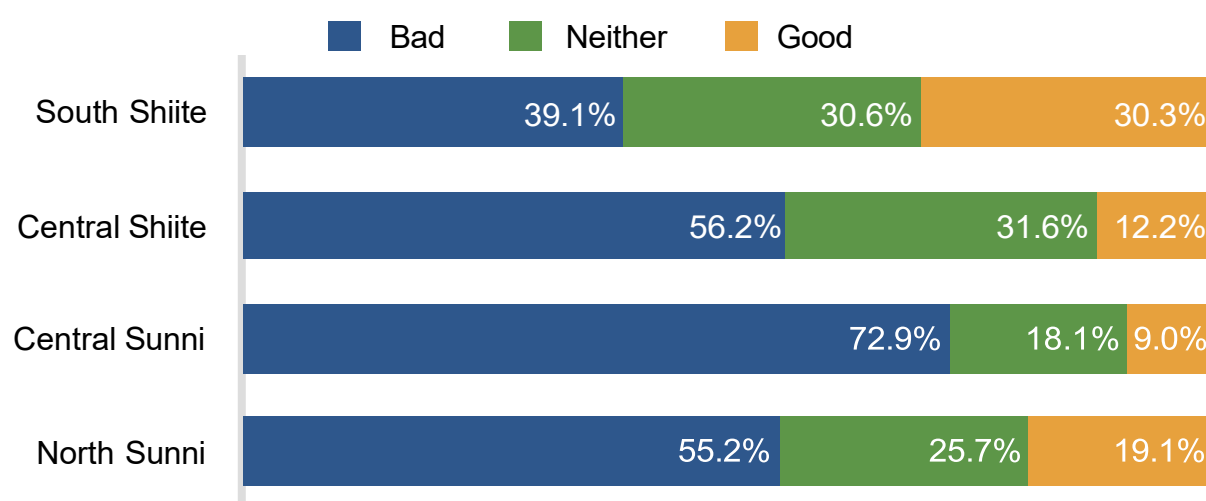
Figure 23: Opinion About the Household's Economic Situation in May/June 2014



The overall view of respondents on the state of the national economy is much the same as for their household economy: few see it as very good, and nearly a quarter (23 per cent) see it as very bad. In total 23 per cent see it as good and 50 per cent as bad, with the remaining 27 per cent seeing it as neither good or bad. Compared with five years ago overall respondents suggest that there has been a slight shift to the middle as with opinions on changes in the economic situation of households.

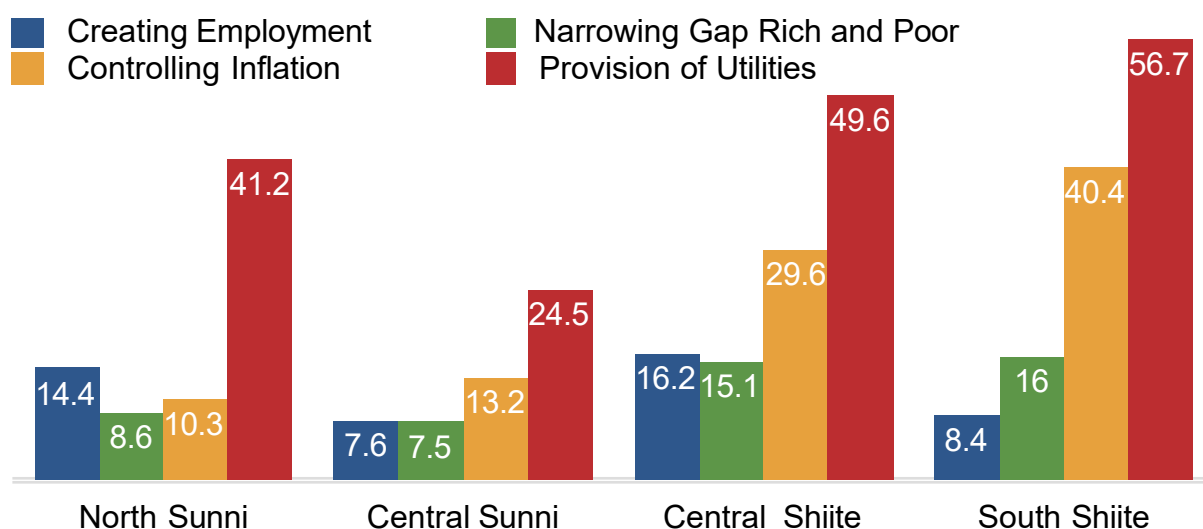
Region does seem to have an impact, with Shiites living in the South having the most positive – or rather least negative – view about the country's economy (Figure 24) while Sunnis living in the Central Region have the most negative view, with nearly three-quarters rating it as bad. Northern Sunnis and Central Shiites have similar opinions on the state of the national economy and stand somewhere between the views of Southern Shiites and Central Sunnis.

Figure 24: Opinion About Country's Economic Situation in May/June 2014



Respondents' general opinion of the Government is that it is not performing well in terms of economic policies. It is judged to be performing least well on creating job opportunities, with only 12 per cent of respondents thinking it is going a good job, 13 per cent thinking it is performing well in terms of narrowing the gap between the rich and poor, and 26 per cent that it is performing well in controlling inflation. Its best performance is perceived to be the provision of utilities, but even here only 22 per cent of respondents think it is performing well. Figure 25 shows that there is no overall easily identifiable pattern by religion or region. However, on a scale of Economic Performance computed from the four variables (variance explained 57.7%, Cronbach's Alpha 0.75) religion explains 10.6 per cent of the variance (sig $p > 0.001$) but region does not make an additional significant contribution to the r^2 explained. This indicates that while religion but not region does make a difference, other factors are more important in explaining differences.

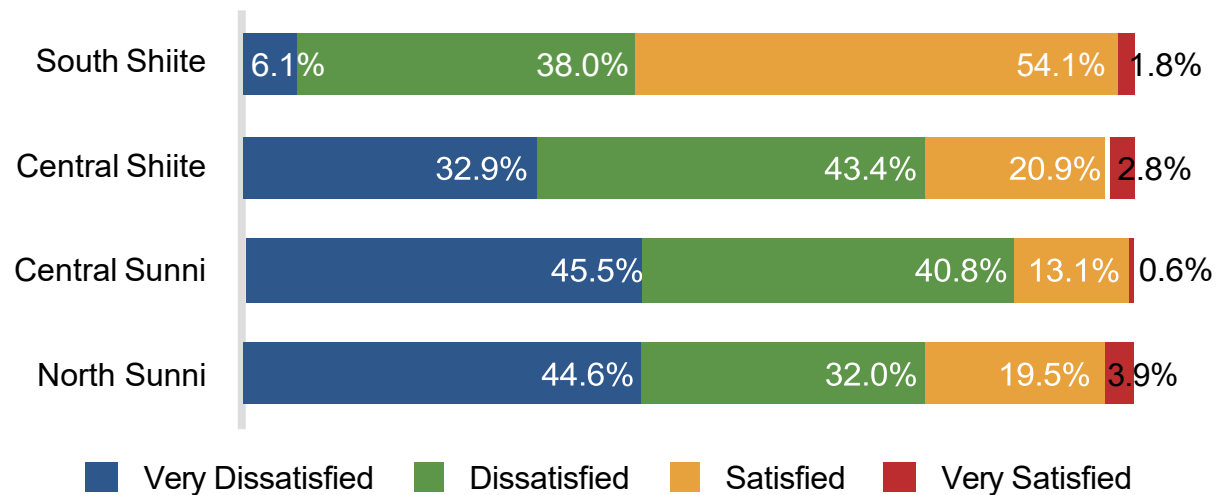
Figure 25: Government Performing Duties in Office Well



Not only is there concern about how well the Government is performing in terms of economic policies, there is also – perhaps not surprisingly – general dissatisfaction with how the economy is developing: a mere two per cent of respondents are very satisfied, while 29 per cent are very dissatisfied. In total, 68 per cent are dissatisfied compared with just under half that number (32 per cent) expressing at least some degree of satisfaction. However, satisfaction /dissatisfaction varies with both religion and region in a manner consistent with claims about the political marginalization of Arab Sunnis in post-2003 Iraq, particularly in the Central region. The most satisfied are Southern Shiites, over half of whom are satisfied with the way the economy is developing. The most dissatisfied are Central Sunnis, only 14 per cent of whom are

satisfied. Northern Sunnis and Central Shiites are much the same with about a quarter of respondents being satisfied with Government performance on the economy

Figure 26: Satisfaction with the Way the Economy is Developing

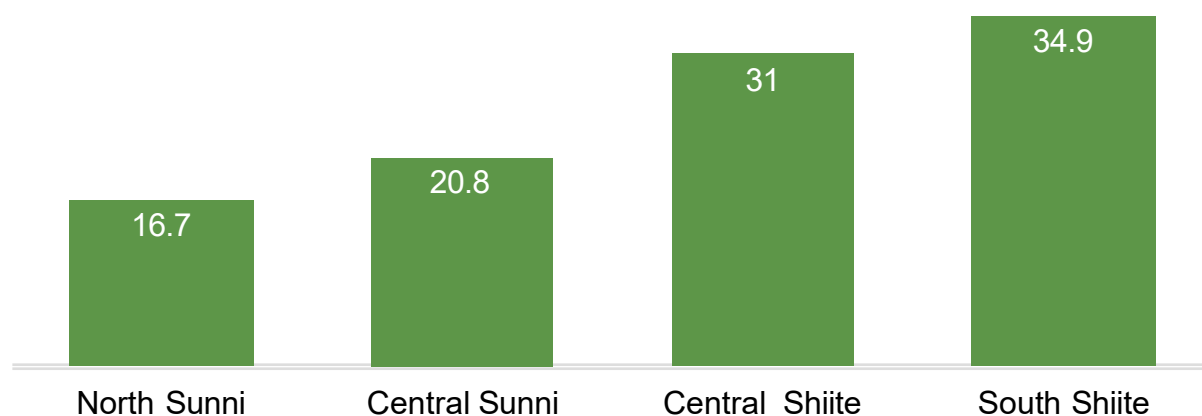


In terms of public opinion on the economy there is some evidence that both religion and region play a role, but that region is more important than religion. Shiites tend to be more positive about the Government’s performance than Sunnis, although Northern Sunnis tend to have a more positive view about the economic situation of their household and this ties in with their households, on average, being better off as measured by the Index of Deprivation. Overall, it is Southern Shiites that have the most positive opinions on the Government’s economic performance, with Central Shiites being a little less negative than Sunnis in the North or Central Regions. This is again consistent with accounts emphasizing the marginalization of Sunni Arabs from post-2003 federal governments.

7. Public Opinion on Governance in Iraq in May/June 2014

There are low levels of general trust,⁷ with only just over a quarter of the respondents (27.3%) thinking that other people can generally be trusted. However, this varies by religion and by Region. A third of Southern Shiites generally trust other people, compared with only a sixth of Northern Sunnis (Figure 25). Sunnis are less likely to trust other people than Shiites, and while those living in the Center Region are more likely to trust other people than those in the North, the difference, although noticeable, is not large.

Figure 27: General Trust in other People by Religion Controlling for Region



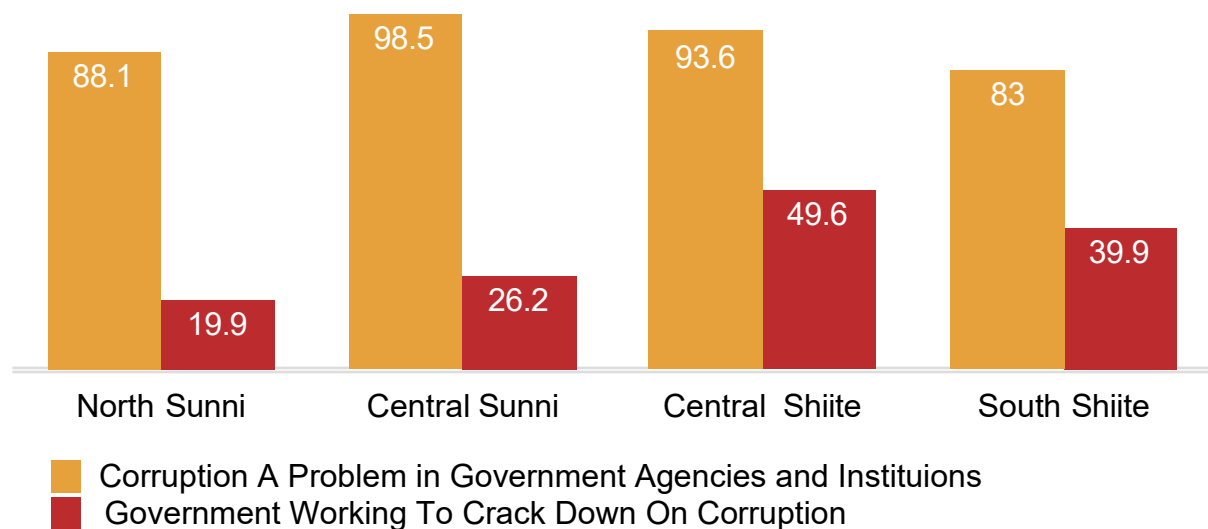
We have already seen that there is a concern about corruption by politicians and civil servants. Although by no means the main concern of respondents, nevertheless less corruption is seen as one of the main drivers of the Arab Uprisings, and one of the two main challenges facing the country. There is also some evidence that Northern Sunnis may see corruption as more of a problem than those living in the Central or the South Regions, irrespective of religion.

Less than one per cent of respondents think there is no corruption in state institutions, and 90 per cent think that corruption occurs to a significant extent. In addition, only one third think that the Government is working to crack down on corruption. Respondents in the Central Region – irrespective of religion – are more likely than those in the South and the North to think that corruption in state institutions is a problem. However, Shiites living in the Central or Southern regions

⁷ In the 6th Round of the World Values Survey on a comparable question the average score for the pooled data set is 47.2 per cent varying from a high of 83 per cent for Norway and Denmark to a low of nine per cent for Paraguay.

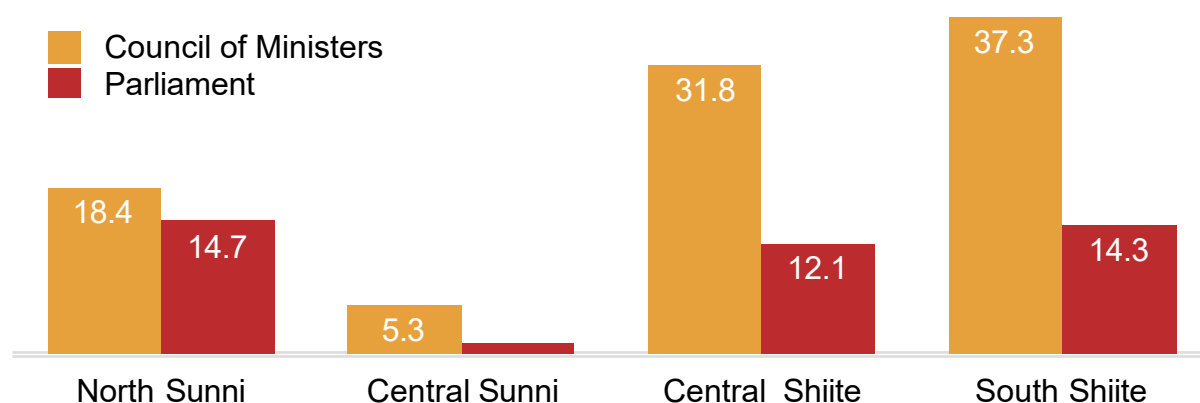
are more likely than Sunni, irrespective of where they live to think that the Government is working to crack down on corruption, albeit that even then only a minority think that this is the case. Sunnis in the Central Region are marginally more likely – a quarter compares to a fifth of respondents – than those in the North to think the Government is cracking down on corruption.

Figure 26: Corruption a Problem in State Institutions and Government Working to Crack Down on it by Religion controlling for Region



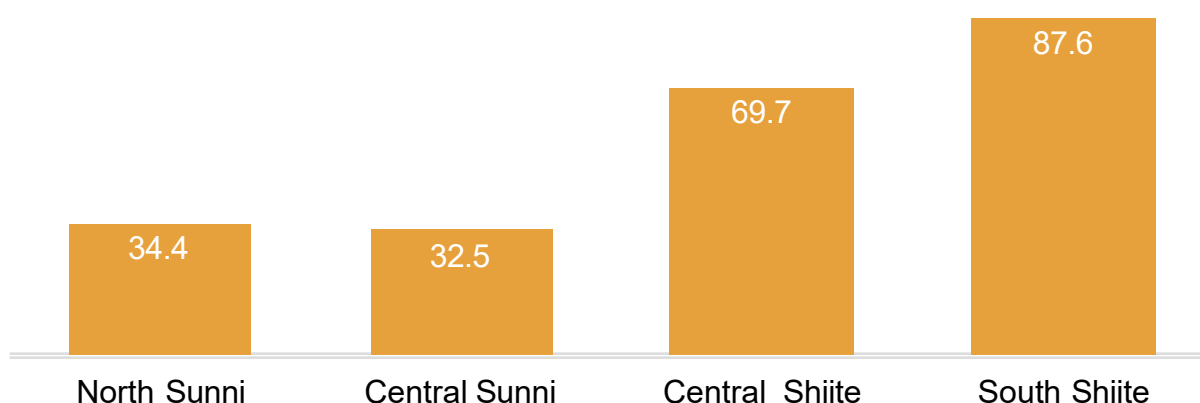
Trust in Government (Council of Ministers) and Parliament is very low nationally, with only a quarter of respondents trusting the Council of Ministers, and an even lower 11 per cent trusting Parliament. However, trust varies by Region and by religion, especially for trust in the Council of Ministers, where Shiites have much higher levels of trust than Sunnis, albeit still relatively low. Northern Sunnis have higher levels of trust than Central Sunnis and for trust in Parliament much the same as Shiites living in the Central or Southern Region. The two variables scale, explaining 77.9 % of the variance with a Cronbach's Alpha of 7.1. In regression analysis, religion accounts for 10 per cent of the variance (R^2 p sig>0.001). When region is added to the model, it makes a significant contribution and increases the R^2 to 12 (p sig>0.001) indicating that both region and religion contribute to explaining differences. However, the amount of variance explained is relatively small overall, indicating that other factors are also important.

Figure 27: Trust in the Government by Religion Controlling for Region



Trust in local government is somewhat higher at 56 per cent, and although trust across the country is higher, the same pattern holds, with trust lower among Sunnis and higher among Shiites, irrespective of location. The very high level of trust in local government by Southern Shiites is especially notable. Again, although it is important to differentiate between populations and the parties claiming to represent them, these patterns appear compatible with accounts emphasising the marginalisation of the concerns of Sunni Arabs within federal government structures, and/or the inability of those groups claiming to represent them to effectively influence federal policy.

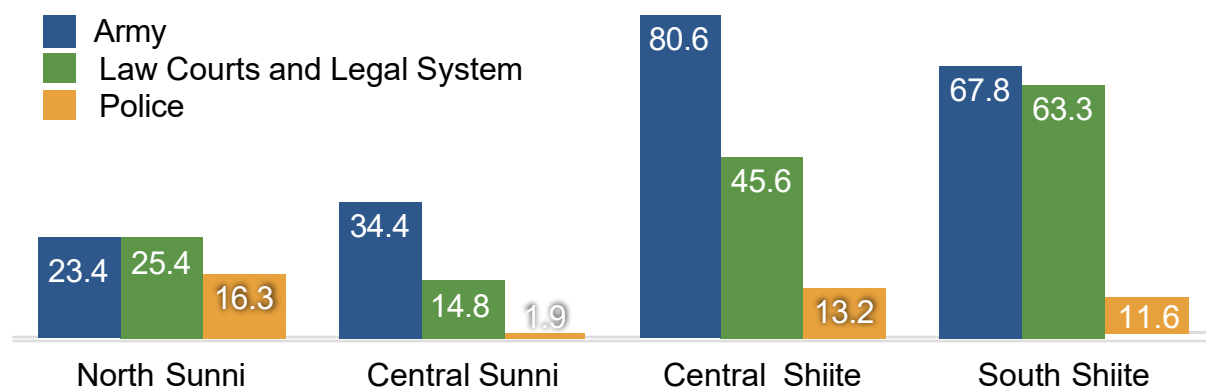
Figure 28: Trust in Local Government by Religion controlling for Region



There is a strong relationship between trust in the army and trust in the law courts and legal system by religion, with Shiites more likely to trust irrespective of where they live. Trust in institutions of law and order is relatively high for the courts and the army, but lower for the police: 57 per cent of respondents trust the army, 40 per cent the law courts and legal system but only 10 per cent the police. Trust in the army and in the law courts is relatively high in the South and very high in the army among

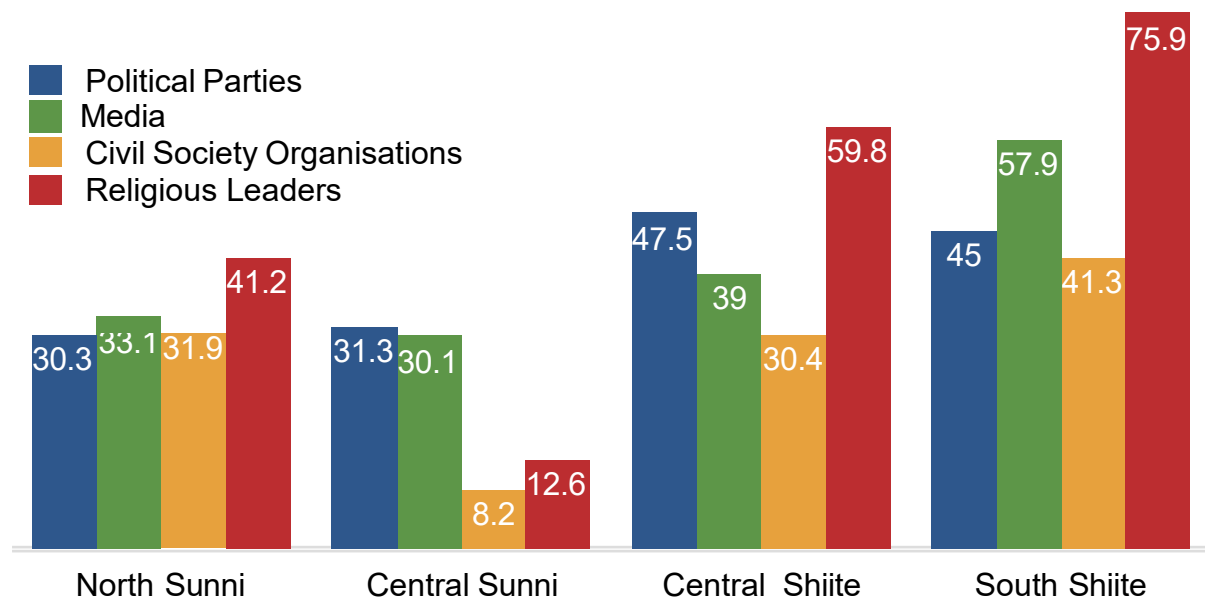
Central Shiites and much lower among Central Sunnis and Northern Sunnis. For the police, levels of trust are much the same for Northern Sunnis and Central and Southern Shiites, but noticeable lower for Central Sunnis. It should be noted that the relationship between security forces (private as well as state), federal government, and general population is particularly complex, not least due to the changing configuration of those forces, with politically-affiliated private militias becoming increasingly prominent since 2003, and with such militias' changing relation to the state. Some such forces have at various points been 'incorporated' within federal structures, albeit retaining significant degrees of independence, while at other times – most spectacularly with the fall of Mosul – federal forces have melted away, reflecting at least partly the fraught relations between Arab Sunni-majority parts of those forces, local populations (especially in the Central region) and Shiite-dominated federal government.

Figure 29: Trust in Institutions of Law and Order by Religion Controlling for Region



People rely on independent institutions in order to get impartial authoritative information and to act on their behalf in lobbying government. Virtually all the respondents said that they had at least one source that they trusted to get information on politics. However, trust in institutions is low, with only 37 per cent of respondents expressing trust in political parties, 35 per cent trusting the media, 29 per cent trusting civil society organisations, and 43 per cent trusting religious leaders. Generally, trust is higher among Southern and Central Shiites than Central and Northern Sunnis. Trust is notably lower in civil society organisations and religious leaders among Central Sunnis and higher among Southern Shiites in religious leaders and the media.

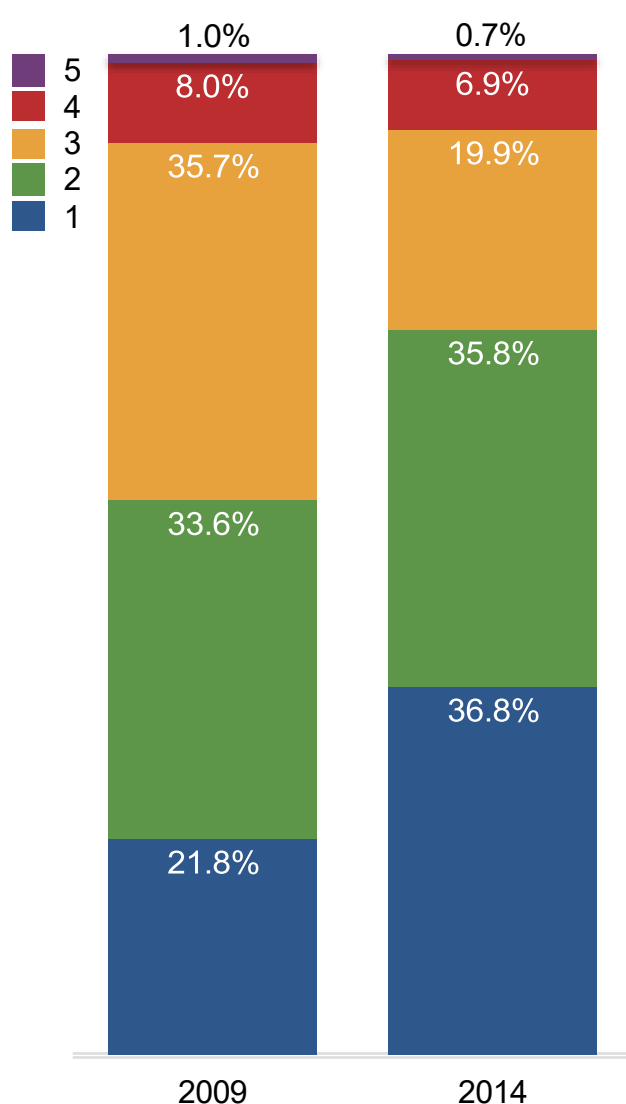
Figure 30: Trust in Political Parties, the Media, Civil Society Organisations and Religious Leaders by Religion Controlling for Region



8. Public Opinion On Politics in Iraq in May/ June 2014

The political system is not rated very highly by respondents, and is rated even less highly in 2014 than they rated it for 2009. While 55 per cent of respondents give the system a mark of 1 or 2 out of 5 for 2009, 73 per cent gave it the same grading for 2014, an increase of about one third.

Figure 31: Political System 2009 and May/June 2014, Marks Out of Five

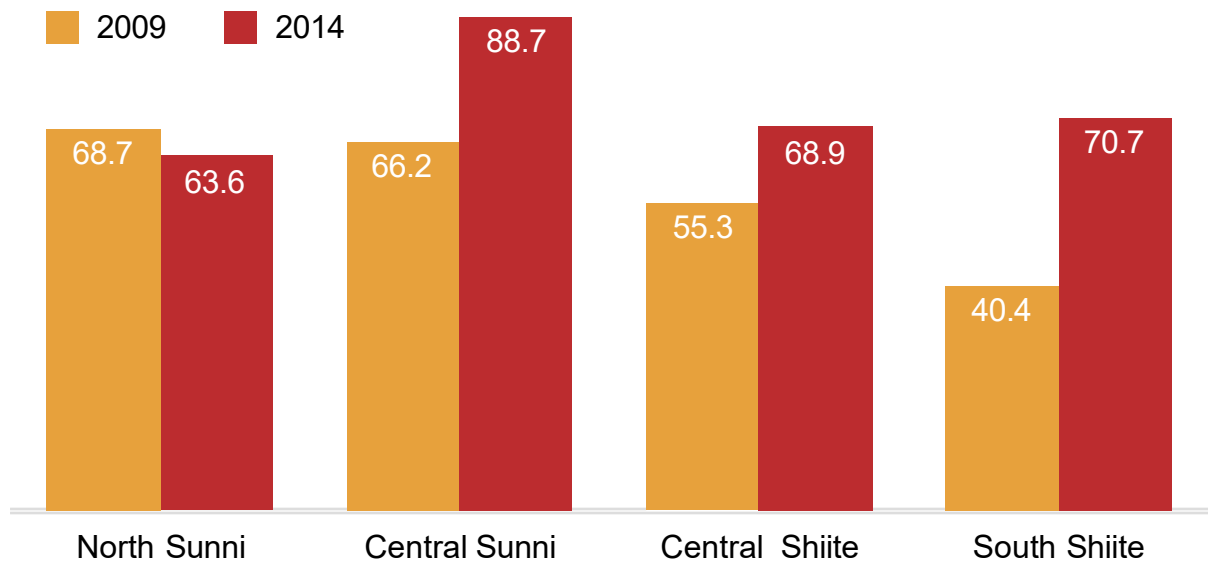


Respondents were more likely to rate the political system as poor in 2014 compared to the rating they gave it for 2009. The difference was marginal in the North, but increased by 30.3 percentage points among Southern Shiites, 13.6 per cent among Central Shiites and 22.5 among Central Sunnis. In 2014, Central Sunnis are the most likely to score the political system as very poor with nearly 90 per cent doing so, followed by Southern and Central Shiites where it is just over two-thirds. Northern Sunnis are least likely to rate the system as poor, but their rating is not much lower than that of Southern Shiites and of Central Shiites. While Iraqi political history makes clear that different groups have different reasons for rating government as poor, it is also clear that no subset of the population has a particularly high opinion of the system and of political elites. Alongside other data evidenced by the Arab Transformations survey – particularly

the generalized lack of trust, the challenges respondents perceive, their rating of their economic condition, and their expectations of political systems and of democracy – this suggests both a fairly profound disjoin between population and political elites of whatever ethno-religious background, and commensurately the

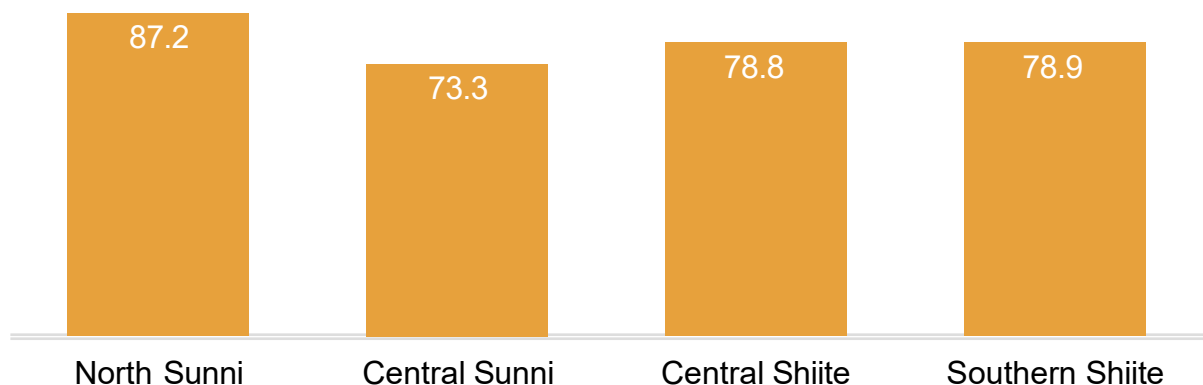
possibility of a demand for a social, political, and economic ‘contract’ based on more than sectarianized agendas.

Figure 32: Give the Political System in 2009 and 2014 a Mark of 1 or 2 out of 5 by Religion controlling for Region



Three-quarters of respondents thought that government and parliament should make laws according to the wishes of the people. Support is high across the country with Northern Sunnis being most likely to support this proposition with 87 per cent, while Central Sunnis least likely to support it, albeit still at 73 per cent.

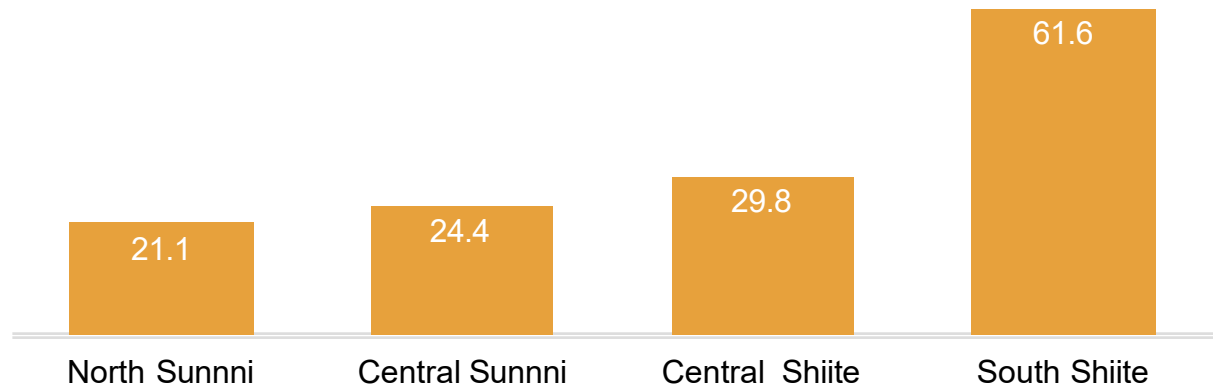
Figure 33: Support for Government to be according to the wishes of the People Controlling for Region



A quarter of respondents thought that it was necessary for people to obey government decisions even if they disagree with them. Shiites in the South are

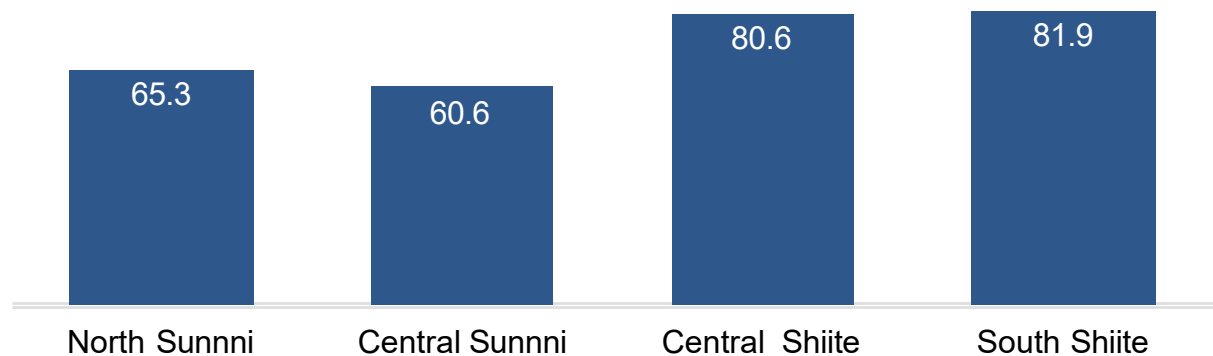
especially likely to support this proposition, but the differences between Sunnis and Shiites living in the Central Region are relatively small.

Figure 34: Obey Government Decisions Even if Disagree with them by Religion Controlling for Region



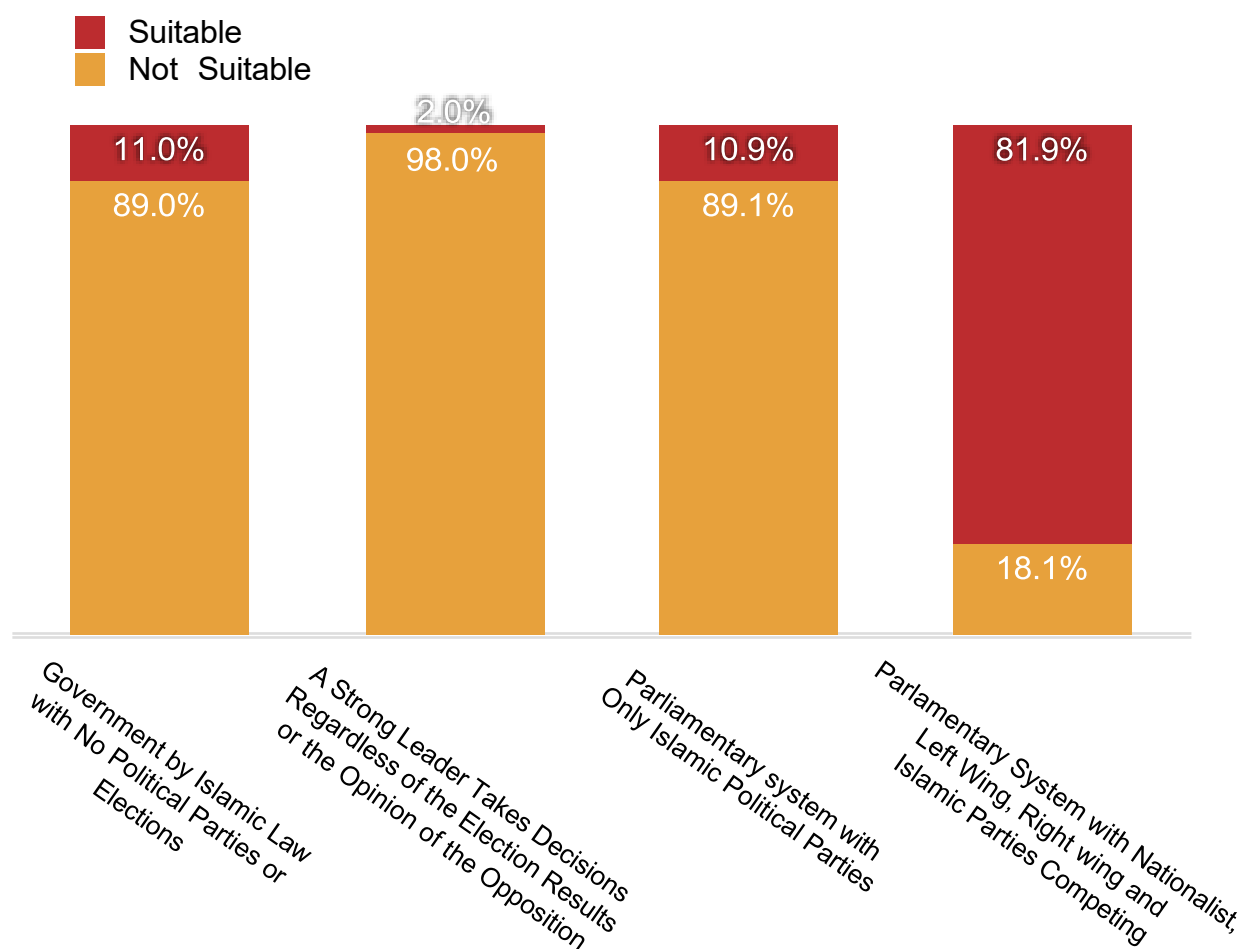
Two-thirds of respondents think that Political reform should be introduced gradually and there is relatively high support across the country for the proposition, but Shiites are much more likely to support it than Sunnis, irrespective of region where they live.

Figure 35: Political Reform Should be Introduced Gradually by Religion Controlling for Region



Support is high for a political system where there is competition between political parties both secular and religious. This is in line with the strong support for the government and parliament to take into account the wishes of the people.

Figure 36: Type of Political System Would Support, % of Respondents



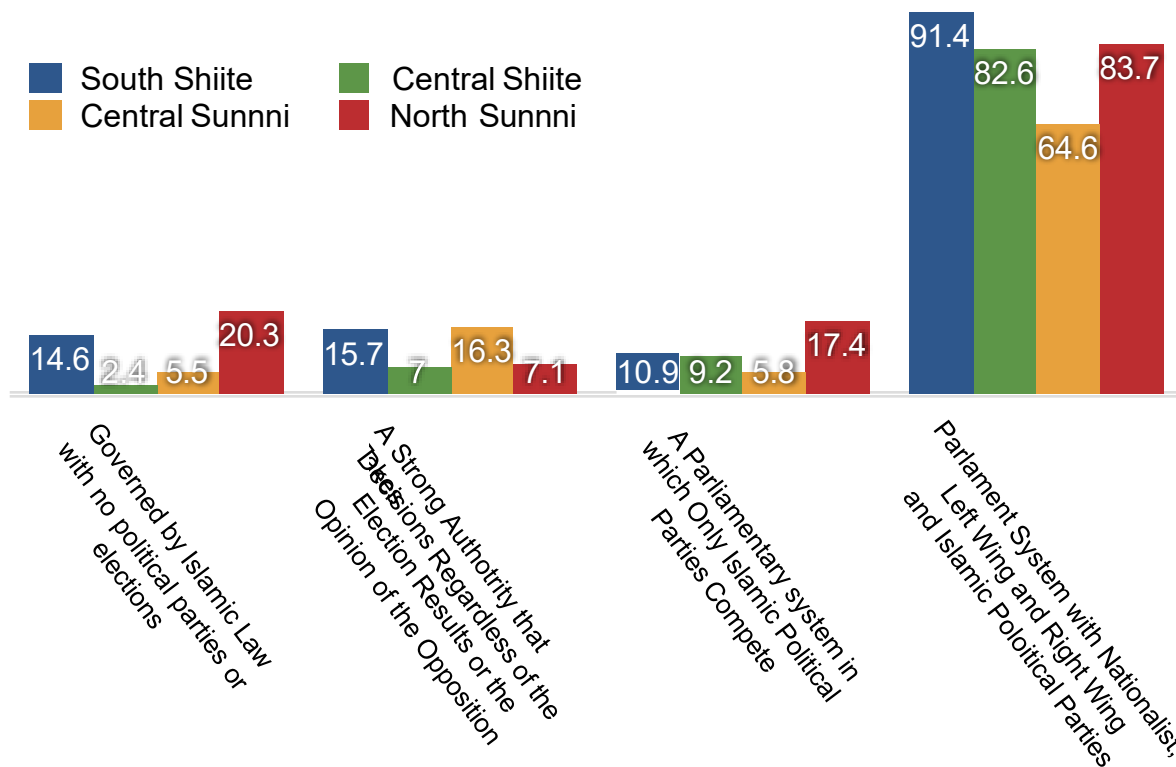
With regard to the type of political system respondents would favour, there is little evidence of differences along religious or regional lines. Support for a multiparty parliamentary system is strong across the country, and although support among Sunnis in the Central Region is lower than elsewhere, significantly it still remains at around two thirds (64.6 per cent). Sunnis in the North are most likely to support a system based on rule by Islamic law with no parties or elections (20.3 per cent), with Shiites living in the South not far behind (14.6 per cent) but support among Sunnis and Shiites in the Central Region is far lower.

Three elements of these results appear significant. First and foremost, the high levels of preference expressed for a 'liberal' party system with elections and party participation without a prior exclusions of particular religious positions or ethnic groups. Although the lowest level of support for such a system is 64.6 per cent amongst Central Sunnis, this is still over three times the level of support for the next most preferred political system (20.3 per cent for a system based on Islamic law with no parties, amongst Northern Sunnis; and 17.4 per cent for a multiparty system restricted to Islamic parties again amongst Northern Sunnis).

Second, the comparability of these results across regional and religious divides. In other words, despite the high levels of conflict and the low levels of trust in institutions and low opinions of the job political representatives are doing at a federal level, the vast majority of Iraqis express support for a representative parliamentary system.

Finally, it seems significant that the highest levels of support for religious government of some kind come from the Shiite-majority Southern region and from the mixed Kurdish-Arab Sunni-majority North. In particular, this pattern of preferences raises questions about the hypothesis according to which Sunni Arabs – the bulk of which are located in central and Northern (north-western) regions – display lower levels of trust in institutions, in government action, etc. than their Kurdish and Shiite counterparts due to their relative marginalization in federal government since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003. Insofar as these systems are *a priori* more exclusionary than the pluralistic parliamentary system that nonetheless is the clear national preference, one might expect these preferences to be displayed by marginalized groups – Sunni Arabs – whereas groups displaying greater satisfaction with government performance and with the economic situation might be thought to have a greater stake in the institutional status quo.

Figure 37: Type of Political System Would Support by Religion Controlling for Region



9. Conclusions

This paper presents interesting results in several areas, challenging some received notions about the relative weight of sectarian identity as opposed to other factors – particularly residential location – in explaining the variation of perceptions of respondents to the 2014 Arab Transformations survey in Iraq. These regional variations point to the importance of local conditions rather than – or at least alongside – identity politics in explaining Iraqi public opinion, which in turn has potentially significant implications for policy design in and for Iraq.

Main challenges: Nationally, internal security and the economy are the greatest challenges perceived (60 per cent and 50 per cent respectively) with corruption trailing at 31 per cent. Internal security is a particular concern for those living in central areas, regardless of religious identification; in the South, the primary concern is instead with external security, while the North is more concerned with the economy, authoritarianism, and with corruption. In addition, although sectarian identity is a popular spectrum through which to view Iraqi politics, survey data shows few marked differences in between Sunnis and Shiites, with the exception of Sunnis' concerns about authoritarianism (20 per cent) outstripping Shiites' (6 per cent) nationally.

Security: Nationally, respondents are very concerned about violence, with the least of these concerns being war (64 per cent) and terrorist attacks, civil war, and sectarian violence all scoring between 70 and 80 per cent. The least concerned across all categories are Northern Sunnis, followed by Southern Shiites, with those by far most concerned being Sunnis and Shiites resident in central regions. With a 'low' of just under 60 per cent amongst Northern Sunnis, the federal government's performance on security issues is uniformly very poor (85.7 per cent amongst Southern Shiites, 91.1 per cent amongst central Shiites, and 97.5 per cent amongst Central Sunnis). At a regional/international level, Israel, the US, and Iran are perceived as the countries contributing most to Iraq's instability (with the exception of Turkey, which predictably scores highly as a concern in the North).

Economics: Northern Sunnis again hold the least negative opinions about their own economic situation (20 per cent bad, 35 per cent neither, 45 per cent good) and about government performance in this area. Southern Shiites hold a comparable position, while inhabitants of Central regions – whether Sunni or Shia – are more pessimistic (40 per cent bad, 40 per cent indifferent, 20 per cent good). Again, region seems to be more important than religion. Dissatisfaction with the way the economy is developing, on the other hand, seems to be relatively lower in the Central and Southern regions amongst Shiites, compared to Sunnis both in the

Central and Northern Regions.

Governance: Corruption is perceived as a uniformly pervasive problem, with between 88 and 98 per cent identify it as a problem across regions and religion. Shiites in the Central and Southern regions are more confident in the government working towards tackling it, although at 50 per cent and 40 per cent respectively, these are still low values. Trust in government is highest amongst Shiites in the Central Region (32 per cent for Council of Ministers) and South (37 per cent), but at most half these levels for Sunnis in other regions. At sub-national level, over two thirds of Shiites in the central region and nearly 88 per cent in the South trust local government, while a mere third of Sunnis in both the Northern and Central Regions do so. Trust in other institutions is nearly universally lower, with the police scoring particularly poorly (from 16 per cent among Northern Sunnis, to two per cent amongst Central Sunnis). The exception is religious leaders, who are little trusted by Central Shiites (12 per cent), but score significantly higher elsewhere: 41 per cent amongst Northern Sunnis, 60 per cent amongst Central Shiites, and 76 per cent amongst Southern Shiites. Political parties also score relatively low, between 30 per cent and 47 per cent.

Political System: An important result is that Iraqis preponderantly favour a parliamentary form of government in which all parties – religious and secular, right and left – can take part. The highest level of support for this system is amongst Southern Shiites (91 per cent), followed by Central Shiites and Northern Sunnis (both at 83 per cent), and finally Central Sunnis (64 per cent). While the latter figure is significantly lower than others, it nonetheless shows that despite often difficult situations in central regions in terms of security, the economic, corruption, or trust in state institutions, the space for political inclusiveness remains, at the popular level if not at the level of political elites.

Uprisings: Perception of reasons for participating in Uprisings focus preponderantly on economic factors (protest against corruption at 50 per cent, demand for improved basic services at 43 per cent, and economic problems at 30 per cent) while explicitly political factors took fourth and fifth place (demand more political freedom at 25 per cent, oppose authoritarian leaders at 23 per cent)

Migration: Almost a quarter of respondents (23.6 per cent) have considered living abroad, either permanently/for an indeterminate period (15.7 per cent) or for a limited period (6.3 per cent). Men are twice as likely to have considered migration (30.9 per cent) as women (15.3 per cent). Younger people and the more educated are also more likely to have considered migration. Sunni Arabs from the Central regions are the group most likely to consider migration. Respondents are more likely to consider permanent or indeterminate migration rather than temporary migration, reinforcing the gravity of the factors leading respondents to consider migrating. Region is more

important than religion in influencing the main reason that people have for considering permanent temporary migration. The main driver in the Central region is security concerns, although this seems to be relatively more important for Sunnis compared to Shiites living. The economy is a greater push factor in the South, whereas political and security drivers are evenly split (roughly one third) for Northern Sunnis, with the economy and other factors at 15 per cent each.