



# Opinion Poll

## Jordanian Youth 2011 Aspirations for Constitutional Reform

Produced by:

**Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development**

Studies and Research Unit      and      Leaders of the Future Initiative

[www.hayatcenter.org](http://www.hayatcenter.org)

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### Executive Summary:

This poll aims at investigating the aspirations of young Jordanians with regards to constitutional reforms, especially in light of the recommended amendments presented by the Royal Committee for the Review of the Constitution. It targeted a representative sample of young Jordanians aged 18 – 30, covering the country's twelve governorates. The survey was structured into three sections; to gather general information on the surveyed, to measure their level of public participation and political awareness, and finally to explore their ambitions for constitutional reform. A simple random sample methodology was used to decide on geographically representative samples, totaling at 907 young men and women.

The survey developed by Al-Hayat Center was tested on different groups formed from the members of the Leaders for the Future Initiative, in order to eliminate possible ambiguity in any question, and correct, add or omit questions as found necessary. The final survey administered is illustrated in Annex I.

The survey process had gathered the opinions of a diverse group of Jordanian youth with regards to educational levels and fields of work, observing a close gender balance as well. Notably, however, the percentage of females surveyed who are aware of the recommendations of the Royal committee is lower than that of males.

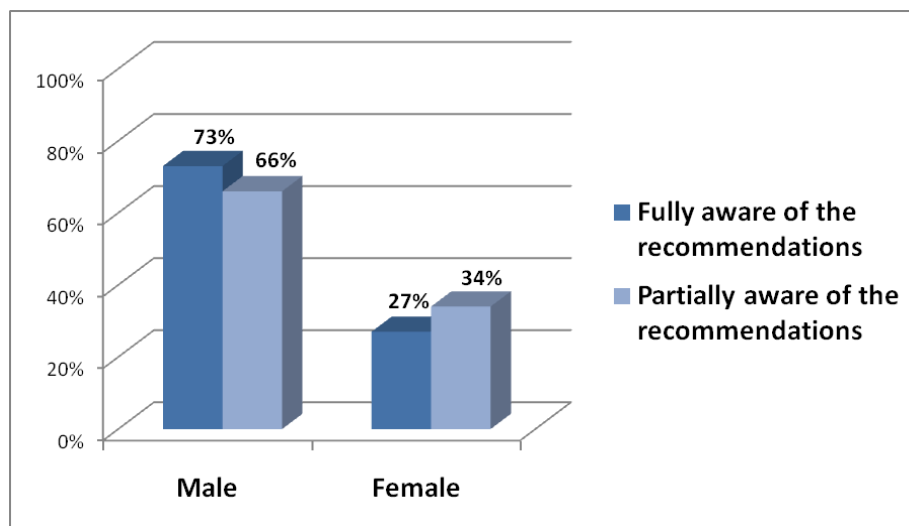


Figure 1: Young males and females aware of the recommended amendments to the Constitution by the Royal Committee

The analysis indicated that only 35.5% of those surveyed had taken part in at least one form or another of the activities<sup>1</sup> calling for reform that were held over the past nine months, whereas 78.4% of the total sample have responded to be aware of the submission of the recommendations by the Royal Committee. The later showcases great interest and close follow up by young Jordanians to the issue of constitutional reforms.

Consequently, the figure below presents the difference of opinion between those who took part in the activities calling for reform and those who did not, regarding the adequacy of the Royal Committee's recommendations to enhance public liberties in general. Where 59.4% of the former group responded positively and 73% of the later agreed with them, which signifies that those who have been involved in the reform movement are somewhat skeptical about the recommended amendments.

<sup>1</sup> Demonstrations, Facebook discussions, seminars, conferences, workshops, etc...

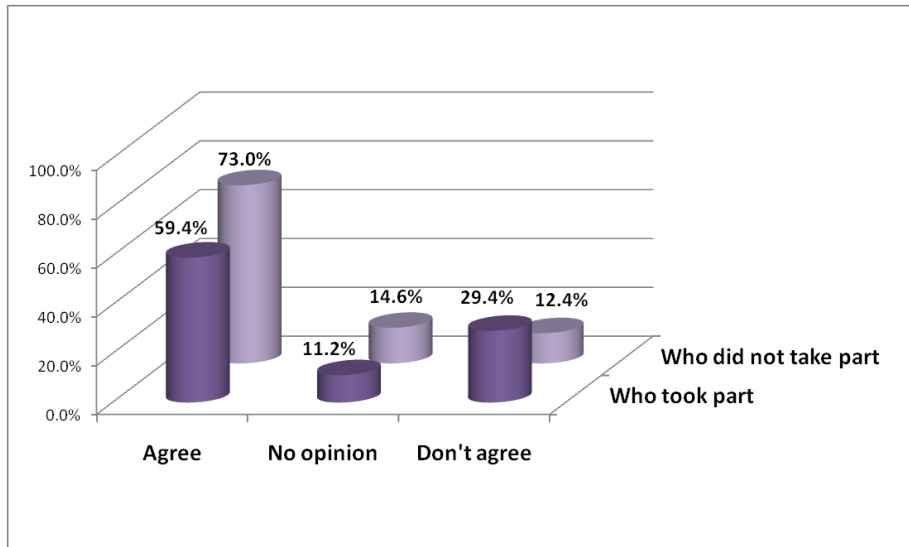


Figure 2: The youths' opinion regarding the Royal Committee's recommendations contribution to enhancing public liberties in comparison to their participation in the reform movements

Moreover, in their response to whether the outcomes of the Royal Committee live up to the general expectations and popular calls, 48.1% of young Jordanians said "No!" A further analysis, shows only 22.7% of those involved in the reform movement thought the recommendations of the committee were satisfactory, and merely one third of those who were not involved agreed with them.

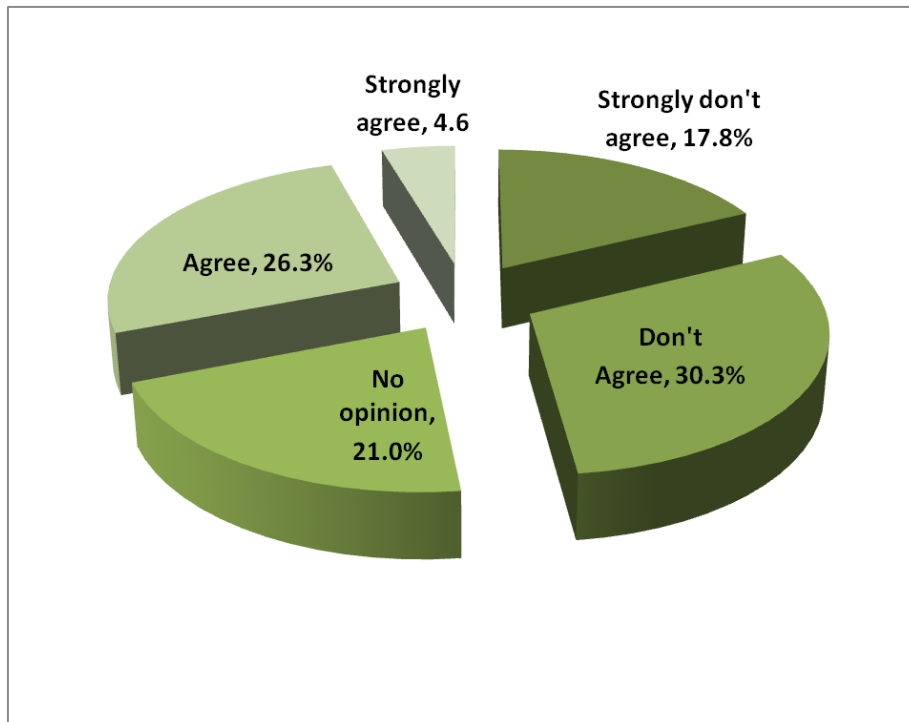


Figure 3: The youths' opinion on whether the recommendations of the Royal Committee live up to general expectation and popular calls.

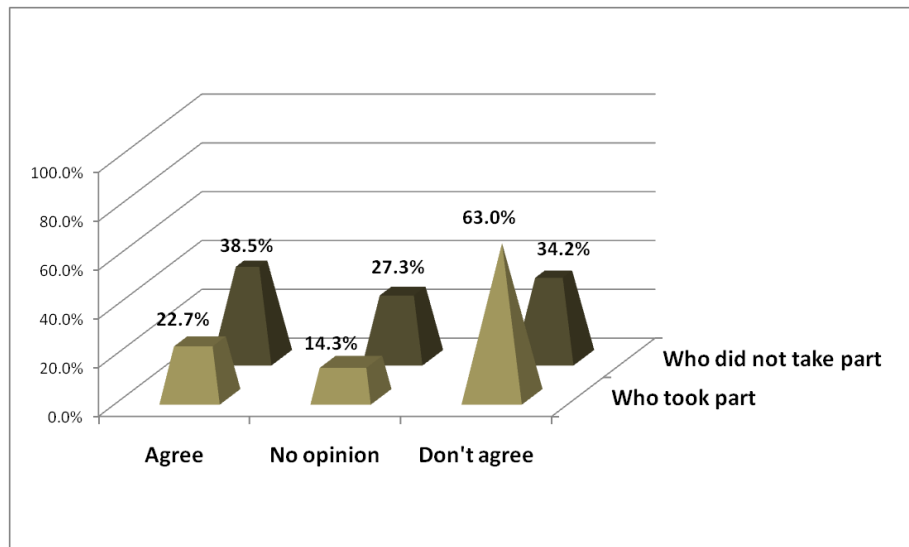


Figure 4: The youths' opinion on whether the recommendations of the Royal Committee live up to general expectation and popular calls in comparison to their participation in the reform movements

The comparison of figures 2 and 4 indicates that a majority of young Jordanians acknowledge the propensity of the recommended amendments to the Constitution to enhance the overall public liberties in the country, nonetheless, about half of those surveyed mark the recommendations insufficient. This observation coincides with the agreement of 69.7% of those involved in the reform movement and 81.3% of those who did not take part in such activities in their view of the committee's recommendations as a first step on the path for a comprehensive reform touching public policies that govern the political, social and economic aspects of life.

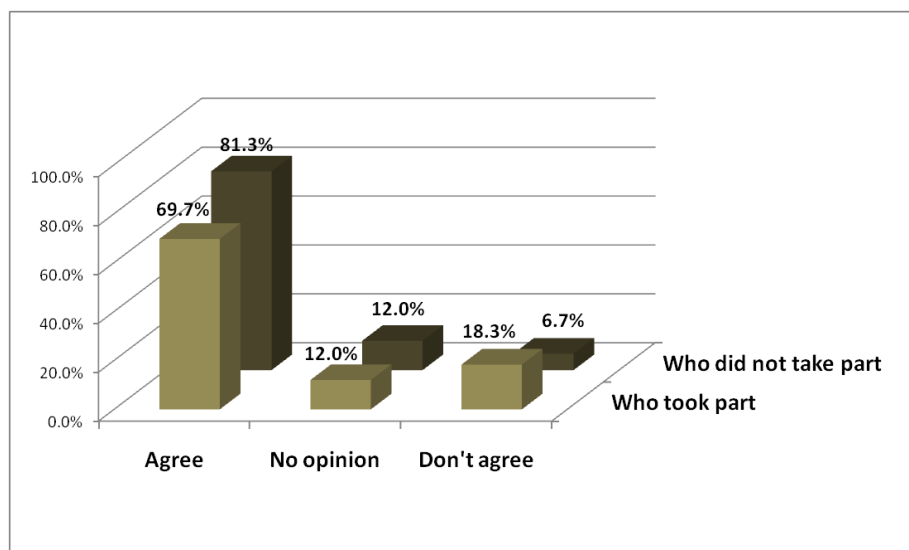


Figure 5: The youths' opinion on whether the recommendations of the Royal Committee represent a first step towards comprehensive reform in comparison to their participation in the reform movements

It should be noted, as well, that 83.5% of the surveyed young men and women have pointed the necessity to introduce article to the Constitution preserving media freedoms, in conjunction with several criticisms by entities concerned with the safety and independence of journalists for the lack of such articles in the recommendations of the Royal Committee.

With regards to the specificities of the proposed amendments, over two thirds of the respondents have shown enthusiasm for the establishment of a Constitutional Court to replace the Higher Council to Explain

the Constitution, showing a sense of awareness for the need to govern state affairs away from political interpretations of the Constitution and entrusting such matter with an apolitical judiciary. Consistently, 73.4% of the youth thought it is important to allow individual citizens and civil society organization to resort to the Constitutional Court directly, without referring to Courts of Appeal as a prerequisite.

Likewise, as shown in the figure below, the majority of the of young Jordanians agree to the prosecution of Ministers by the judiciary rather than a Higher Council formed by Parliament for this matter with a total percentage of 80.6%, more interestingly, 69% of those supporting a judiciary prosecution of Ministers believe that such trials should not require any sort of vote by Parliament.

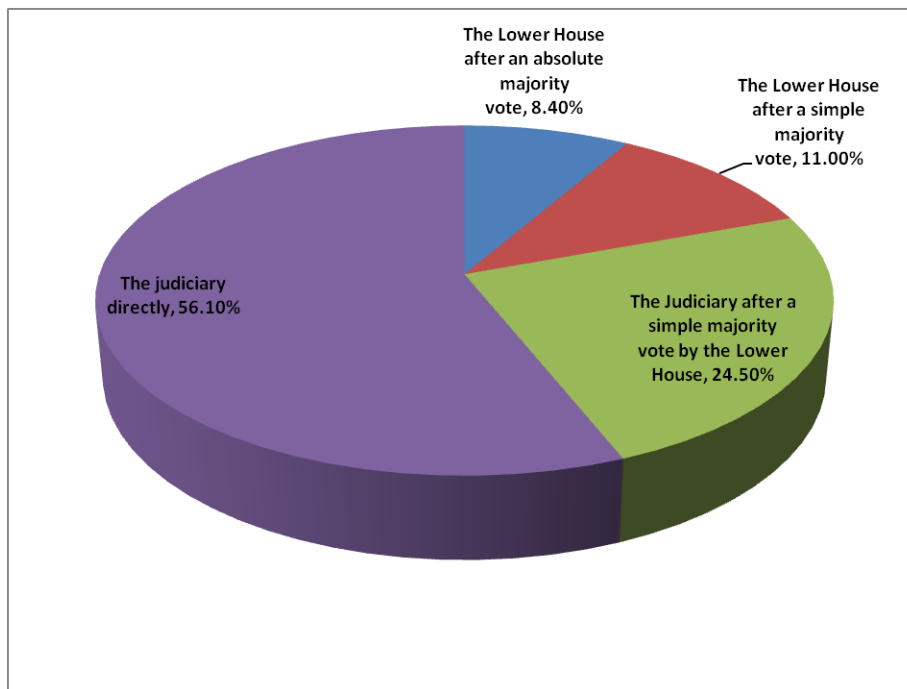


Figure 6: The youths' opinion regarding the prosecution of Ministers

Concerning the prerogatives of the King, 38.5% of the sample was in favor of eliminating the King's power to postpone parliamentary elections, therefore, obligating the government to hold it according to constitutional timelines. Noting that 25.2% did not have a say on the matter. In contrast, just under two thirds of the respondents have agreed with maintaining the article allowing the King to extend the term of Parliament for a period not less than one year and not longer than two.

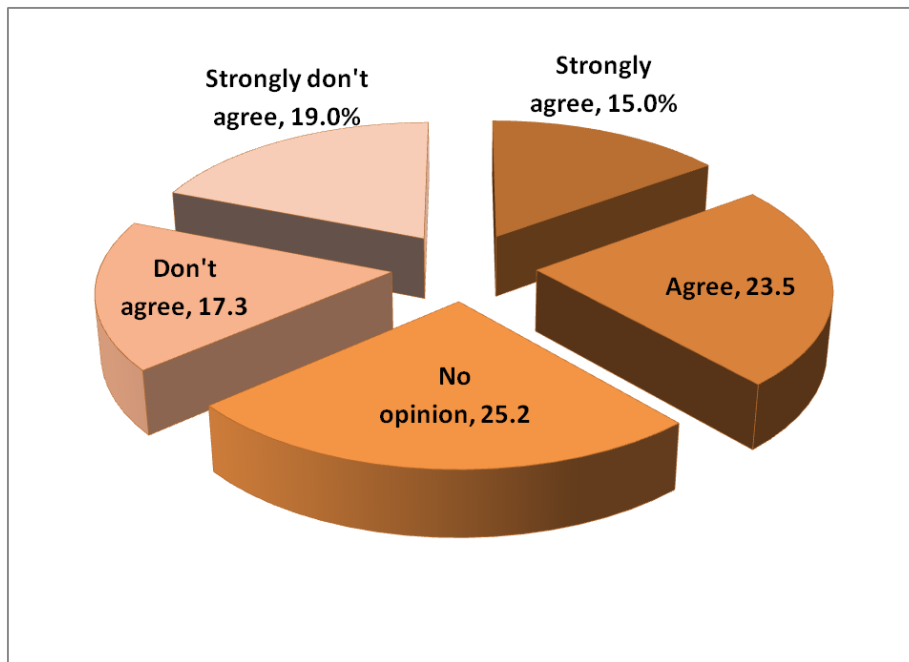


Figure 7: The youths' opinion regarding the King's power to postpone parliamentary elections

Predictably, the amendment obligating the government that recommends the dissolution of Parliament to resign within one week of the dissolution has received the approval of 64.2% of the surveyed, and 69.3% agreed that Parliament not to be immune from dissolution under any circumstance.

The majority of young Jordanians feel that Parliament should have an input in the appointment of the Prime Minister, where 69.3% of the respondents would appreciate some sort of consultations between the King and parliamentary blocs on this matter, though 50.1% of the sample indicated (in a different question) favoring and appointment of the Prime Minister from the parliamentary majority.

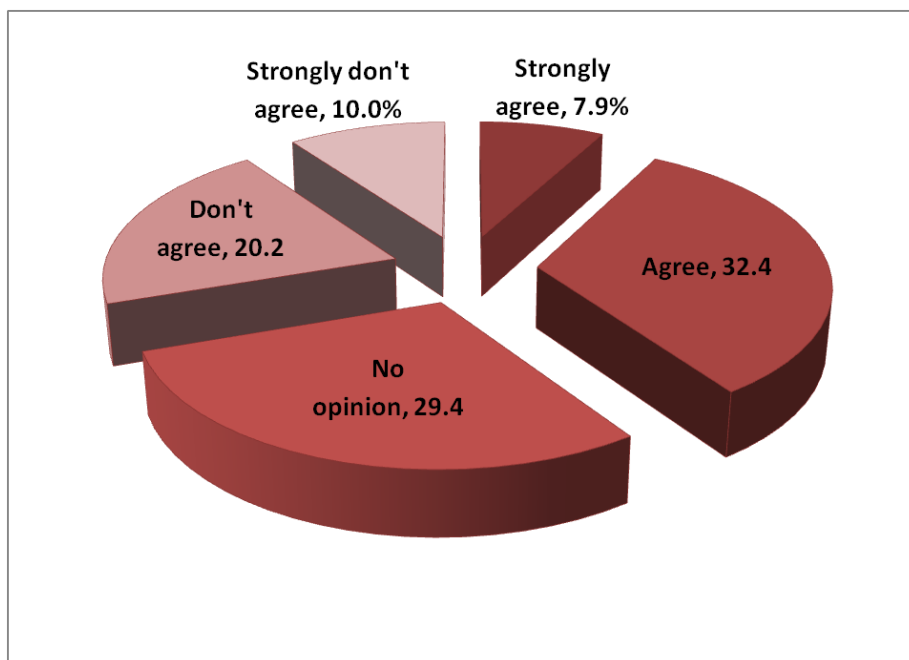


Figure 8: The youths' opinion on whether the recommendations of the Royal Committee would ensure the integrity of the parliamentary elections

Electoral reform and the integrity of the elections process was found to be of importance to young Jordanians, as 40.2% of respondents believed the amendments would guarantee free and fair elections, about one third of the sample was doubtful. Moreover, the establishment of an independent elections commission has yielded the support of 90%, however, with an equally important percentage of 81% calling to embedding the process and criteria of appointing the members of the commission in the Constitution.

Similarly, 82% of the youth have favored the judiciary to look into cases of disputed parliamentary memberships, in oppose to the disputes being settled by Parliament itself, by which they are clearly calling for the distinction between authorities and viewing the judiciary as the only institution with the power to resolve all sort of disputes.

This call for the distinction between authorities was also present in 72.5% of the youths supporting the limitation on issuance of temporary laws by the executive to cases of war and emergency, natural disasters and the need for emergency expenditure, notwithstanding, 79.2% have also favored the constitution to clearly define and limit the situations falling under the concept of “emergency expenditure”.

Other important results have been the belief of about half of the surveyed that extending the regular session of Parliament from four to six months would enhance parliamentary performance, and the support of 58% of the sample to limiting the jurisdiction of the State Security Court to cases of terrorism, espionage and treason.

Finally, the surveyed youth were allowed the opportunity to provide recommendations that could not otherwise be measured by the questionnaire. These were:

- The dissolution of the State Security Court;
- To clearly state the equality of all citizens before the law regardless of gender or religion;
- To review the Constitution periodically;
- To include cases of narcotics and economic security under the jurisdiction of the State Security Court;
- To develop a parliamentary oversight/accountability mechanism; and
- To establish a national independent commission to monitor and oversee strategic planning and sustainable development projects in all state actors.