

## All Iraqi Ethnic Groups Overwhelmingly Reject al Qaeda

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### But Groups Vary on Iran, Syria, Hezbollah

[Full Report](#)

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)

[Transcript of Brookings Saban Center Event](#)

A new poll of Iraqis shows that al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden are rejected by overwhelming majorities of Shias and Kurds and large majorities of Sunnis.

Shias have mildly positive views of Iran and its President, while Kurds and Sunnis have strongly negative views. Shias and Kurds have mostly negative views of Syria, while Sunnis are mildly positive. Shias have overwhelmingly positive views of Hezbollah, while Kurds and Sunnis have negative views.

The poll was conducted for WorldPublicOpinion.org by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland and was fielded by KA Research Ltd. / [D3 Systems, Inc.](#) A nationwide representative sample of 1,150 Iraqi adults was surveyed September 1-4.

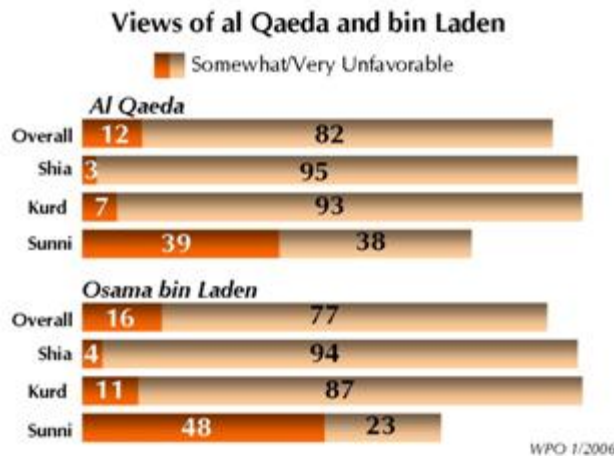
It may be easy to assume that as the Iraqi people become more supportive of attacks on U.S.-led forces (see [WPO main article](#)), they may grow warmer toward al Qaeda—the probable source of a significant number of attacks on U.S. forces. However, this does not appear to be the case. Al Qaeda is exceedingly unpopular among the Iraqi people.

Overall 94 percent have an unfavorable view of al Qaeda, with 82 percent expressing a very unfavorable view. Of all organizations and individuals assessed in this poll, it received the most negative ratings. The Shias and Kurds show similarly intense levels of opposition, with 95 percent and 93 percent respectively saying they have very unfavorable views. The Sunnis are also quite negative, but with less intensity. Seventy-seven percent express an unfavorable view, but only 38 percent are very unfavorable. Twenty-three percent express a favorable view (5% very).

Views of Osama bin Laden are only slightly less negative. Overall 93 percent have an unfavorable view, with 77 percent very unfavorable. Very unfavorable views are expressed by 87 percent of Kurds and 94 percent of Shias. Here again, the Sunnis are negative, but less unequivocally—71 percent have an unfavorable view (23% very), and 29 percent a favorable view (3% very).

### Regional Actors: Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah

Some observers fear that with the ascension of Shias to a dominant role in Iraq, there is potential for the formation of an alliance between Iraq and Shia-dominated Iran. In this



poll, though, Shias show only mildly positive attitudes toward Iran, while Kurds and Sunnis are quite negative. Asked whether Iran is having a mostly positive or negative influence on the situation in Iraq, just 45 percent of Shias say it is having a positive influence (negative 28%, neutral 27%), while Iran’s influence is viewed as mostly negative by large majorities of Kurds (71%) and Sunnis (94%).

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad does a bit better among Shias, with 64 percent having a very (28%) or somewhat (36%) favorable view. But Kurds have a largely unfavorable view (very 43%, somewhat 34%) and the Sunnis an exceedingly unfavorable view (very 80%, somewhat 17%).

While some have expressed fears of Syria being a link in an emerging Shia crescent (though very few Syrians are Shia), public opinion in Iraq would hardly be the cement. Most Shias (68%) think Syria is having a negative influence on Iraq’s situation, as do most Kurds (63%). Sunnis are only mildly positive, with 41 percent having a favorable view (17% negative, 43% neutral).

Hezbollah elicits highly polarized views. An overwhelming 91 percent of Shias have a very (50%) or somewhat favorable (41%) view of Hezbollah, while an equally large 93 percent of Kurds have a very (64%) or somewhat (29%) unfavorable view. Sunnis are also fairly negative, with 59 percent having a very (10%) or somewhat (49%) unfavorable view.