

Majority of Iraqis Endorse Election and Show Optimism

January 31, 2006

But Sunnis Strongly Reject Election And Regret Overthrow of Saddam

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The majority of Iraqis overall view the recent parliamentary elections as valid, are optimistic that their country is going in the right direction and feel that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein has been worth the costs. Sunnis, on the other hand, overwhelmingly reject the validity of the elections, see the country going in the wrong direction and regret the overthrow of Saddam. This pervasive pessimism challenges hopes that the alienated Sunni Arab minority, which boycotted Iraq's first post-Saddam elections a year ago, would feel empowered by participating in last month's elections.

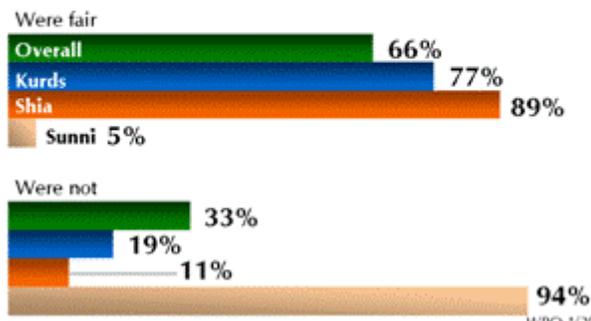
The poll was conducted for WorldPublicOpinion.org by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland and was fielded by KA Research Limited/[D3 Systems, Inc.](#) Polling was conducted January 2-5 with a nationwide sample of 1,150, which included an oversample of 150 Arab Sunnis (hereafter simply called Sunnis).

Overall, two out of three Iraqis (66%) believe that the recent parliamentary elections were free and fair. Approximately the same number (68%) say "that the government to be established by the newly elected Parliament will ... be the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people."

Even larger majorities feel this way among the Shia and Kurds. Eighty-nine percent of Shia and 77% of Kurds say the elections were free and fair, while 90% of Shia and 81% of Kurds say the new government will be the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people.

Were The Elections Fair?

Do you think that recent parliamentary elections were or were not free and fair?

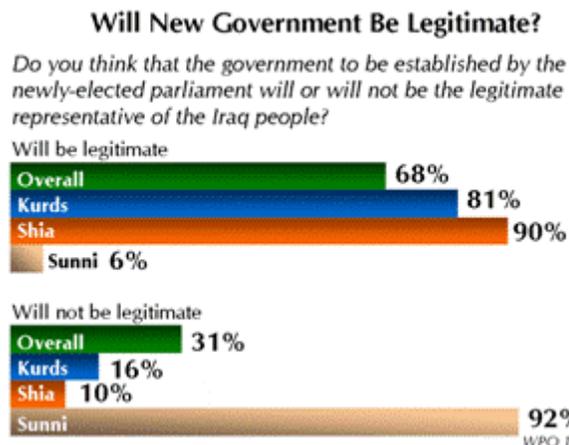


However, despite significant participation by Iraq's Sunnis in the December 15 parliamentary elections, an overwhelming majority rejects the validity of these elections. An extraordinary 94% of Sunnis say the elections

were not free and fair. Ninety-two percent say that the new government resulting from the elections will not be the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people.

Sunni objections are not, however, predicated on the position that they have a unique right to dominate the government. Sunnis as well as other groups polled are nearly unanimous in supporting the position that “all groups should participate in the political process” (overall 97%, Sunnis 98%, Shia 97%, Kurds 93%).

Overall, 64% of Iraqis say that Iraq is heading in the right direction, while just 36% say it is heading in the wrong direction. This represents a sharp upward movement from when the International Republican Institute asked this question in November 2005 and just 49% said that Iraq was headed in the right direction and 36% said the wrong direction. The only other time that IRI has found such a high number expressing such optimism was in April 2005—also just after an election—when 67% said the country was headed in the right direction and 20% the wrong direction.



Among the Shia and Kurds optimism is even higher. Seventy-six percent of Kurds and 84% of Shia say they think the country is headed in the right direction.

Sunnis, though, are overwhelmingly pessimistic. A remarkable 93% say the country is headed in the wrong direction. (Trendline data by ethnic group was not released by IRI.)

Iraqis overall have a positive view of the toppling of Saddam Hussein. Asked, “Thinking about any hardships you might have suffered since the US-Britain invasion, do you personally think that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it or not?” 77% say it was worth it, while 22% say it was not.

Gallup asked the same question in April 2004. At that time, 61% said that it was worth it and 28% said that it was not.

Is Iraq Going in the Right Direction?

Do you think that Iraq today is generally headed in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Right Direction



Wrong Direction



WPO 1/2008

However, here again, the ethnic divisions are very sharp. Ninety-eight percent of Shia and 91% of Kurds say the hardships were worth it, while 83% of Sunnis say they were not.

Since Sunnis largely reject the election outcome and the new government that will be formed, and harbor continued resentment about Saddam's overthrow, the challenge is as strong as ever to make the Sunnis feel they are included in Iraq's political process.

Was Ousting Saddam Worth It?

Thinking about any hardships you might have suffered since the US-Britain invasion, do you personally think that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it or not?

Worth it



Not worth it



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