

Derasat Center Publishes Results of Opinion Poll on Expectations on Upcoming Parliamentary and Municipal Elections

11th November, 2018

As part of its work in support of the electoral process in Bahrain, the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat) conducted an opinion poll on expectations for the parliamentary and municipal elections scheduled for 24th November. The purpose of the study was to explore whether the polled citizens will vote or not and what their expectations of what the upcoming Parliamentary and Municipal Councils might achieve.

The importance of the survey, carried out according to the strictest principles of transparency, professionalism and objectivity, stems from the interest of the Derasat Center to study issues of national importance. Derasat recognizes the role of opinion polls as a key tool in supporting sustainable development efforts and promoting the democratic process and, in this regard, it is of paramount importance to know citizens' opinions, attitudes, future expectations and aspirations. The results of the survey's data and analysis will be submitted to the relevant authorities to inform them about the perceptions, views and opinions of the public. Such surveys are useful additions to, and enrich information sources available to researchers and other stakeholders.

The surveyed population was randomly selected from citizens of both sexes (males and females) aged 20 and above. Data collectors ('interviewers') conducted face-to-face interviews with individuals (the 'study sample') in shopping malls and a number of universities using a comprehensive and specially-designed questionnaire form which was then collated by Derasat.

The total number in the study sample was 3,345 persons. Figure (1) shows the distribution of the number of respondents in each governorate of the Kingdom.

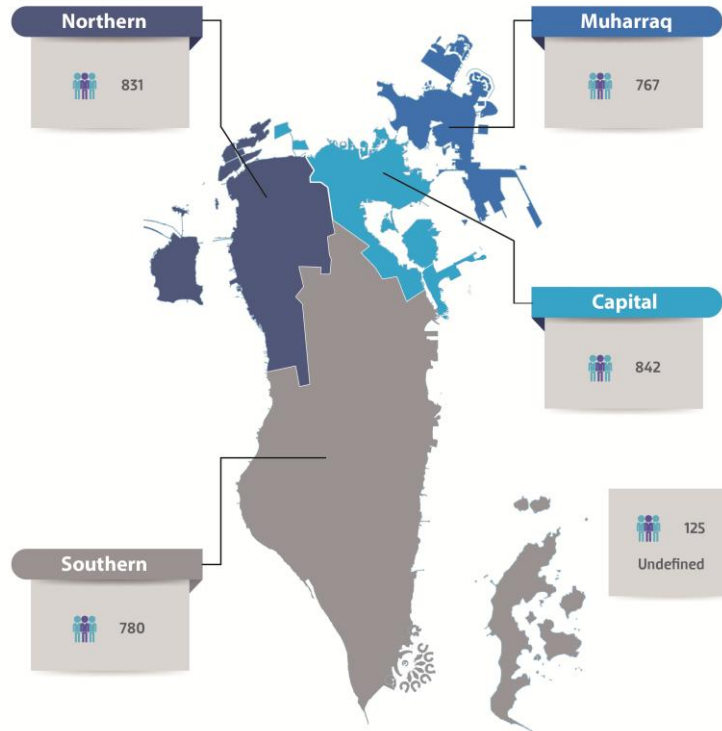


Figure (1): Distribution of Respondents in the Governorates of the Kingdom

The Survey and Opinion Polls Department at Derasat conducted a statistical analysis and the following are the main findings:

First: There was a clear interest amongst the voters on participating in the upcoming elections. A large percentage of the sample (44%) said that they will participate in the elections. Those who are still undecided (33%) said they will wait to meet with the candidates and see their action programs before they make up their mind. This indicates that the voter turnout could be anywhere between 44% and 77% of the total study sample, depending on whether the undecided do not vote (44%) or if all of them vote (77%). A more logical assessment, however, is that the voter turnout within the surveyed sample will range between 55% (if one third of the undecided decide to vote) and 66% (if two thirds of the undecided decide to vote).

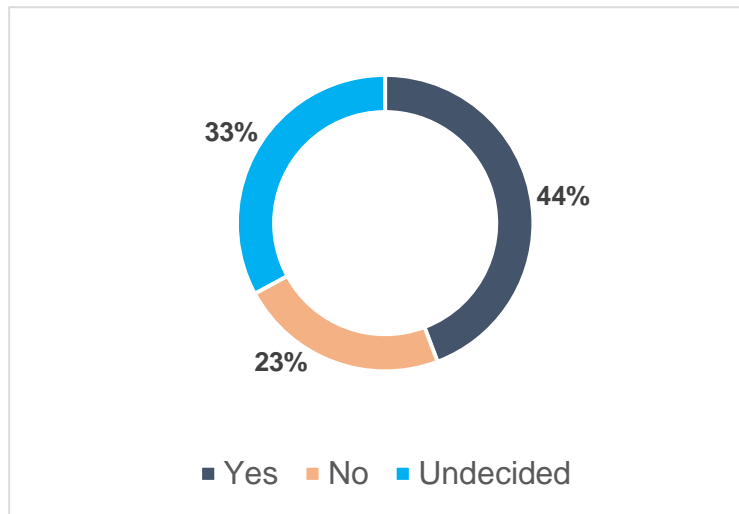


Figure (2): Respondent responses as to whether they will vote, or not, in the 2018 elections

This view is reinforced by the fact that the percentage of the “Yes” responses is almost identical amongst all the governorates, assuming the absence of any boycott of the elections, as shown in Figure (3).

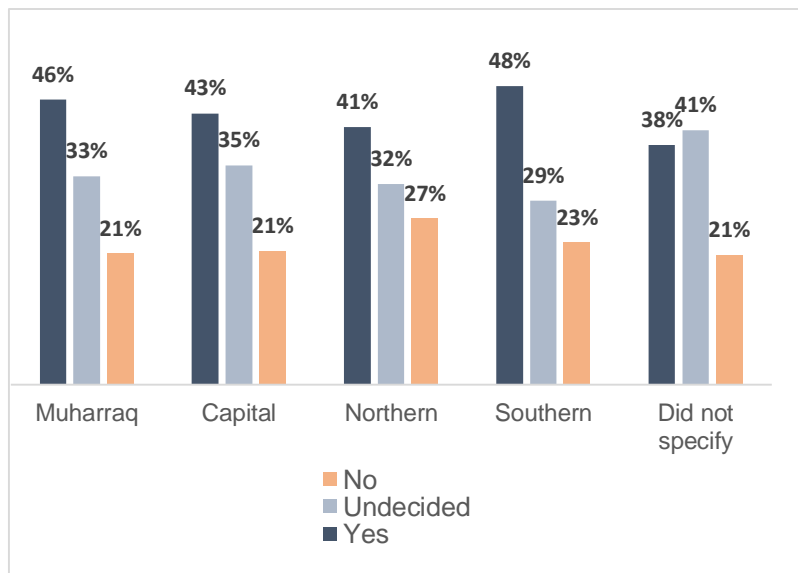


Figure (3): Percentage of potential participation in the elections by governorate

Second: The results confirmed the respondents’ strong sense of patriotism. For the majority (83%) of the respondents performing their national duty is the primary motive for them to go to vote. This will likely reflect positively on forecasting a high voter turnout among the sample surveyed.

As for what they expect the upcoming parliamentary and municipal councils will achieve, the majority of the respondents preferred to wait on commenting until the new councils

are in place. This indicates an awareness amongst the respondents that these councils should not be judged beforehand and that we should wait until after they are formed and the commencement of their performance of their functions before making judgments.

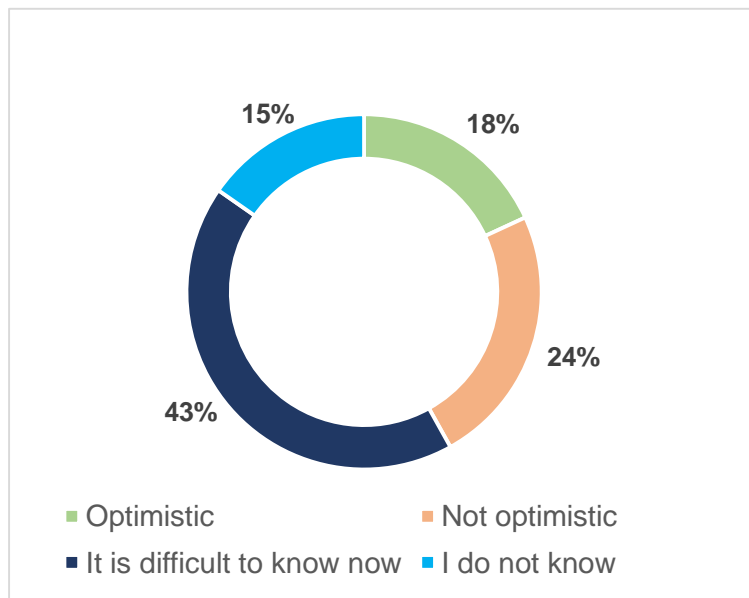


Figure (4): Respondents expectations on potential achievements of new parliamentary and municipal councils

The views of the sample of voters were united in identifying the most important issues that parliament should address. The voters considered that value-added tax (VAT), raising of salaries (pay rises) and early retirement as the main issues, in addition to other topics such as providing housing and controlling the rise in prices of consumer goods, foodstuffs and petrol.

The development of the country's infrastructure and roads, and in particular the development of the rainwater drainage network, were also at the top of the topics that the voters want the municipal councils to tackle. Other matters included solving traffic jam problems and looking into re-planning some of Bahrain's towns and villages.

In analyzing these responses and views, it can be suggested that improving the standard of living and the development of the Kingdom's infrastructure are the two main concerns of citizens.

Third: As for the opinions of the voters about the qualities and attributes that a candidate for a parliamentary or municipal seat should have, these were as follows: honesty and competence (72%), educated and knowledgeable (64%) and patriotism (61%). The independence of the Member of Parliament or municipal council scored (37%) and their activity in the social sphere (28%).

These results and percentages suggest that voters do not care whether or not a candidate is affiliated to a political or religious society, but rather about his professionalism and integrity. These are the attributes that the voters are likely to bear in mind when voting for a Member of the Parliament or the municipal council.

