Optimism During Uncertain Times
A Report on Jordanian Youth
FES MENA Youth Study: Country Analysis Jordan

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The Jordanian society is a very youthful society, approximately 70 per cent are below the age of 30 of which 20 per cent are between 15 and 24 years old. However, the youth unemployment rate amongst the latter alone is at 33.4 per cent (2015). Amongst youth with a high educational level this rate is even higher. This has strong implications for their current and future prospects with regard to their economic, social, and political situation and perspectives.

The Arab Spring has underlined that economic, social, and political issues complement each other and have resulted in particular amongst youth in a feeling of uncertainty. Contrary to other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, Jordan only faced limited protests. This prompts questions about how Jordanian youth evaluate the political, economic, and social situation in Jordan as well as their personal situation.

All in all, Jordanian youth appear rather optimistic in terms of the (future) overall situation in Jordan, in their family and in their personal life.
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1. Introduction

Youth is a topic that has been largely neglected in studies on politics, economy, and society in Jordan. As a consequence, not much is known about Jordanian youth. This is surprising, given that similar to most other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Jordan has a very youthful society. This report aims to fill this gap. It presents the findings of a survey conducted from May to July 2016 with 1,000 Jordanian youth aged from 18 to 30, as well as selective follow-up qualitative interviews with youth from the survey sample in December 2016 and January 2017. It is part of a survey carried out by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in eight MENA countries.1

The analysis suggests that, overall, Jordanian youth are rather optimistic about their future in terms of the social, economic, and political situations. This report covers four main issues. The first section provides an overview of the characteristics of Jordanian youth. The following section focuses on questions of society and identity. The last two sections focus on the socio-economic situation of youth and their civic and political engagement.

2. Characteristics of the Survey Sample

The sample selection of Jordanian youth followed a quota based on age, gender, and region. Accordingly, 36 per cent of the youth belong to the age group 18 to 20, 35 per cent to the group 21 to 25, and 29 per cent to the group 26 to 30. The gender quota ensured that male and female respondents are equally included (50/50). Moreover, youth from all of the twelve regions in Jordan are represented in the sample. This ensures that the different perspectives and lives of Jordanian youth are covered.

This being said, the Jordanian youth included in this study represent a wide spectrum beyond the three indicators mentioned above, in particular in terms of their milieu of residence, educational background, and marital status.2 With regard to the milieu of residence, the majority of surveyed youth are either residents of large cities (37 per cent) or of medium-sized cities (33 per cent). In addition, youth from small cities (14 per cent), rural centres, villages, and refugee camps (16 per cent combined) were also included. The analysis of the educational background of respondents indicates that, although youth have low, medium, and high educational levels, most of them have a medium level (63 per cent; secondary or intermediate school). Only one in four has achieved a high degree (i.e. baccalaureate/A-levels/tawjihi or higher). These results need to be evaluated in relation to the age of Jordanian youth – i.e. the fact that many of them have not yet completed their education. One-third of the youth are currently students – 29 per cent of them at schools and 64 per cent at universities – who will receive their degrees in the near future. To ignore this fact would give a misleading picture of the educational background of Jordanian youth. In fact, in a regional comparison, the university attendance rate of Jordanian students is amongst the highest. With regard to their marital status, 68 per cent of young people included in this survey are still single. This is particularly the case among men (78 per cent) and youth with a medium educational level (75 per cent). Young women (35 per cent) and youth with a low (43 per cent) or high (35 per cent) educational level are more often married. Thus, the findings show that Jordanian youth cannot easily be regarded as a homogeneous group simply on their age – social, economic, and political dimensions have to be taken into consideration when talking about youth as a social group.

3. Society & Identity

Jordanian youth are strongly attached to their families and religion, both of which play a major role in their lives; however, leisure activities, friendships, as well as feelings of security or fear are also important.

The family constitutes the most important institution and group for Jordanian youth concerning nearly all aspects of life: 92 per cent of respondents believe that one needs a family in order to live a happy life. The family provides a feeling of stability that neither the partner nor friends – and even less the economic or political situation – can provide. For example, while 84 per cent consider their relations with the family to be (rather) stable, only 68 per cent make the same statements about their relationship with their partner. The trust in one’s friends was reported as (rather) stable by 62 per cent of the respond-

1. This survey was part of a regional study covering eight countries in the MENA region. The regional results are published in English as: Coping with Uncertainty: Youth in the Middle East and North Africa (London: Saqi Books, 2018). The complete regional and country-specific data is available at: http://www.fes.de/en/research/youth-study.

2. The sample only includes Jordanians who consider themselves youth and explicitly excludes self-identified adults.
The findings of this survey do not indicate that they are harmonious. Indeed, when explicitly asked about relations between the generations as has been demonstrated above. Moreover, 69 per cent think it has become more difficult to find a partner (highest score together with Tunisia): while men state that women are too demanding and want higher financial security, women say that men are increasingly poor/cannot take care of a family and that moral standards are decaying.\(^8\)

The survey results show that, in addition to family, religion plays a very important role in the life of Jordanian youth; 98 per cent of the respondents are Muslims and 2 per cent Christians. In fact, independent of the gender, educational level, marital status, budget, and milieu of residence, Jordanian youth have become more religious compared to five years ago, according to their own perception.\(^9\) As is the case with the feeling of stability that the family provides, 83 per cent of Jordanian youth state that their personal faith in religion is a (rather) stable field of personal life. In this respect, Jordan is not exceptional in the region. The tendency towards more religiosity and the importance of religion in the personal life of youth is a regional phenomenon.

Relations between women and men within the family are also reported to be harmonious (84 per cent).\(^6\) This holds true especially among youth with a high educational level (87 per cent) and in big cities (85 per cent).

However, slightly fewer women describe the relationship as harmonious (82 per cent). The father is predominantly the head of household (62 per cent) and the manager of everyday household affairs (59 per cent) and not the mother (only in 6 and 10 per cent of cases respectively).\(^7\)

Taken together, Jordanian youth, on average opt for more visibility, interference, and a larger role of religion in their daily life. Related to that, the analysis of the survey results highlights that more than half of respondents display signs of their religious orientation. The headscarf (32 per cent) and the prayer bump (17 per cent) are the most common ones. Men (66 per cent as opposed to only 20 per cent of women), youth with a low educational level (49 per cent), singles (48 per cent), and residents of small cities (50 per cent) more often do not display any signs of religious orientation. For 71 per cent of youth, halal products – especially food and cosmetics – are very important. Moreover, while 79 per cent of surveyed youth are convinced that religion is a private matter and nobody should interfere, 66 per cent think Islam should play a larger role in daily life.

\(^3\) Note also that 88 per cent say one needs children to live a happy life; only 8 per cent say a happy life is possible without children.


\(^5\) At the neighbourhood level this rate drops to 50 per cent and on the country level to 46 per cent. This tendency manifests across all the categories.

\(^6\) Similar to the relationship between the generations, this rate drops at the neighbourhood and at the country level (58 and 53 per cent respectively).

\(^7\) In 13 to 16 per cent of the cases, the head of the household and the manager of the everyday household affairs is the husband/wife or the respondent him/herself, especially among married youth.

\(^8\) UNDP, Chapter 4 (see note 4).

\(^9\) On a scale from 1 = »not religious« to 10 = »very religious«, religiosity currently reaches an average of 6.9 compared to 6.3 five years ago.
daily life. In addition, the traditional or tribal value of paying attention to codes of honour and shame is one of the most important aspects Jordanian youth refer to in the context of attitudes, behaviour, and life achievements.10

Youth identity and values are not only shaped by their families, religion, and traditional or tribal values, Jordanian youth also share the interests of youth around the world and engage in leisure activities, such as watching television (79 per cent), and surfing the Internet (52 per cent), listening to music (34 per cent), followed by visiting neighbours/relatives (31 per cent), and doing something with the family (26 per cent).11 Contrasting to these rather conventional and customary activities that do not challenge family values, other activities – such as going to the cinema, dancing/parties, sitting in coffee shops, or joining youth clubs – are much less prevalent (below 10 per cent). Similar dynamics can be observed in the region as a whole. While engaging in the latter kind of leisure activities also depends on their availability and whether youth have the financial means to finance their leisure activities, it is noteworthy that differences also exist between women and men. In most cases, they practice activities with varying frequencies. This is also the case with regard to sharing interests with youth around the world; whereas men share an interest in football (44 per cent), women favour fashion (46 per cent).

The focus on the family and individual activities further manifests in the group or clique attachment and participation. On average, 64 per cent of Jordanian youth in the survey are part of a fixed group of friends who frequently meet. Youth with a low educational level (52 per cent), women (58 per cent as opposed to 69 per cent of men), married individuals (52 per cent), and youth who live in small cities (53 per cent) are to a lower degree part of a clique. Although half of the respondents are very satisfied with their clique and slightly more than one-third are satisfied, in general, Jordanian youth prioritise a good job (46 per cent) and a good marriage (31 per cent) over good friends (4 per cent) when it comes to their personal future. This wish, similar to other statements the interviewees made, contradicts the claimed overall satisfaction with the socio-economic situation of youth and their family.

In addition to feelings of stability in their personal lives, which have already been discussed – such as family relations, religion, or trust in friends – youth also experience fear and anxiety. Before discussing this, however, it is important to emphasise that Jordanian youth display the highest overall feeling of security – including, inter alia, family, economic situation, political transformations, and future developments – amongst the youth included in this study. On a scale from 1 = »not at all secure« to 10 = »totally secure«, Jordanian youth rate 7.5; Bahrain (7.0), Morocco and Egypt (both 6.8) follow. Syrian refugees and Yemeni youth feel least secure (4.5 and 5.0 respectively). Jordanian youth are rather optimistic with regard to their own future and personal life (77 per cent) as well as the future of society (83 per cent). They, and Moroccan youth (76 per cent and 84 per cent respectively), are among the most optimistic youth among the youth in the MENA region. The main anxieties with regard to the future are becoming poor (41 per cent) and becoming seriously sick (36 per cent), followed by not being as successful as one wished (32 per cent) as well as increasing insecurity and losing one’s job (each 28 per cent). It is noteworthy that Jordanian men are slightly more anxious about the future than Jordanian women. Altogether, the level of anxiety is below the regional averages and Jordan is one of the countries in the region with the fewest anxieties amongst the youth. In terms of the importance of changes during the last five years, Jordanian youth report that changes within the family (70 per cent), social instability (65 per cent), food shortages (63 per cent), growing violence (58 per cent), and job losses (55 per cent) are the most important that have occurred. These high rates can partially be explained by the fact that Jordan is an immigration state, which has hosted several waves of refugees in the past two decades – mainly Iraqis and Syrians – in addition to the Palestinian refugees who have lived in Jordan for much longer. In particular, the high influx of Syrian refugees and the ongoing conflict in Syria in the recent past have nurtured the fears of Jordanian youth, as well as their feelings of stability and change.

4. Socio-Economic Situation

In general, respondents from all of the different backgrounds attest an improvement in the economic situation since 2010. The overall economic situation of their family is considered very or rather good by 79 per cent of Jordanian youth compared to 74 per cent in 2010.

10. The same level of importance is given to respecting law and order (8.6); engaging in politics, however, receives the least importance (4.6).

11. These activities also indicate that the youth overwhelmingly belong to the lower middle class (70 per cent according to self-assessment).
The evaluation of their personal economic situation confirms this optimism and resembles the assessment of the overall economic situation: 71 per cent describe their situation as rather/very good. Moreover, more than 50 per cent of them attest the stability of the economic situation. Thus, their optimism does not seem to be a snapshot in time. In order to shed light on this optimism, this section focuses on social class, employment, and questions of emigration.

According to their self-assessment, 70 per cent of respondents see their families as lower middle class and 19 per cent as wealthy or upper middle class (see Figure 1 below); 50 per cent consider themselves to be part of the working class.

A closer look at the Jordanian lower middle class reveals a more nuanced picture. At least three segments can be differentiated, of which one can be considered part of the upper middle class. This becomes particularly evident when looking at various indicators of class position. Several indicators help to assess class position — including the educational and employment background of the parent generation, living situation, expenditures, shopping patterns, and leisure activities.

With regard to the first two indicators, 40 per cent of respondents report that their fathers have a high educational level, 19 per cent medium, and 30 per cent low. The main occupation of their fathers is either state employee (26 per cent), self-employed without higher education (12 per cent), retired (20 per cent), or self-employed in the service sector (10 per cent). They receive a stable income, which amounts on average to 532 euro per month. By contrast, only 20 per cent of respondents state that their mothers have a high educational level, 36 per cent medium, and 26 per cent low. The majority of mothers do not have a stable income: 87 per cent of them work without income or are jobless, 5 per cent are state employees, and 3 per cent are retired. On average, the income of mothers who have a job amounts to 449 euro per month. Moreover, whereas 62 per cent of men with a paid job do not receive sickness payments, the rate among women is 83 per cent.

The living situation, expenditures, and shopping patterns also indicate that the social class of Jordanian youth is more complex and nuanced than often assumed. Characteristics of both the lower middle class and upper middle class can be jointly observed. In terms of housing, 41 per cent of youth live in single houses and 49 per cent in apartments. In rural areas, single houses dominate (64 per cent). In 66 per cent of cases, the family is the owner of the residence, and 85 per cent of respondents have a

Figure 1: Class Assessment (values in percentages)
room for themselves; this rate is lower among respondents with a low educational level (72 per cent). Jordanian youth are above the regional average in terms of the housing situation. With regard to expenditures, the major items they spend money on are food (69 per cent, including cooking oil, sugar, etc.), wheat/bread (54 per cent), clothes (45 per cent), and water/electricity (36 per cent). However, compared to these expenditures, which are more prevalent amongst the lower middle class, the expenditures for lifestyle activities and products that are characteristic for the upper middle class and the wealthy – such as mobile phones, the Internet, going out with friends, fast food, or cosmetics – are much lower. Thus, while the housing situation indicates that respondents are well off, a closer look at the expenditures suggests the opposite.

The shopping patterns give similarly mixed results that reveal patterns, particularly amongst the lower middle class: using predominantly bakeries (62 per cent), grocers (59 per cent), supermarkets (43 per cent), butchers (42 per cent), or weekly markets (33 per cent), and only rarely malls (29 per cent). In conclusion, respondents assess their own class position lower than the consideration of the various indicators suggests. However, it has been shown that there is variation across different indicators of class. Depending on which indicators are used to assess the class position and socio-economic well-being, the findings may change.

The financial situation of youth further underlines these findings. Three-quarters of respondents have no money at their disposal, and the main reasons are that they are either students (44 per cent) or not working (50 per cent). Amongst those who have access to money, most receive pocket money from their parents (58 per cent), earn money from their own work (37 per cent), or receive a scholarship (5 per cent). In more than 50 per cent of cases, the financial support takes place on an irregular basis. That also explains why few young Jordanians have their own bank account (18 per cent). Only those who have their own budget and have a high educational level typically have a bank account (38 per cent and 36 per cent respectively) and/or credit card (30 per cent and 28 per cent respectively). Similarly, 85 per cent of respondents do not have savings, but of those who have their own budget 42 per cent save money. Security/in case of need is the main reason for saving money (51 per cent), followed by dowry (15 per cent). Although the majority of respondents do not save money, they also do not have debts (79 per cent). The highest rates of debts are amongst men (26 per cent), youth with low educational levels (34 per cent), and married youth (40 per cent). The amount of debt ranges from medium, which is between one and six monthly budgets (46 per cent) to high, which is more than six monthly budgets (39 per cent).

Before discussing the employment situation, which includes questions of job security and satisfaction, it is important to underline that of those 25 per cent of respondents who have access to money, with only 37 per cent is it due to their own work. Amongst women, the rate is the lowest with only 15 per cent compared to

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Table 1: Monthly Expenditures
(values in percentages; multiple answers possible)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food (oil, sugar, etc.)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat and bread</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and electricity</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing rent</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local snacks</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas bottles (cooking)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going out with friends</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport/travelling</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying debts/instalments</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, KFC</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medication, drugs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video and online games</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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14. The youth who support their families primarily do so on an irregular basis (15 per cent), only 9 per cent on a regular basis.
Most respondents are state employees (30 per cent), followed by employees with insurance and workers without insurance but continuous employment (both 16 per cent); in addition, 10 per cent work in a family business, are self-employed, or work as day labourers. Differences between the genders, educational level, and milieu of residence are pronounced. With regard to the reasons for choosing a job, respondents with jobs list job security (61 per cent) and the social acceptance of the job (60 per cent) as the most important (see Table 3 below). The lack of other options is also a common reason for choosing a job (56 per cent). Furthermore, the work environment matters – that is, colleagues/friends (53 per cent), learning possibilities (52 per cent), and the option to upgrade one’s position (48 per cent).

The satisfaction with the work is rather high; only 22 per cent of respondents state that they are not at all or only a little satisfied with their work. In contrast, 45 per cent are satisfied a lot with their work, especially women (62 per cent). When asked about the criteria for a satisfying employment situation in general (including those who currently do not work), the answers given by all respondents are not so different from the reasons for choosing a job given by those who currently work: 57 per cent name job security as a very important criterion followed by a high income (56 per cent), the option to upgrade one’s position (53 per cent), as well as having the feeling of achieving something (52 per cent). Moreover, 70 per cent of respondents are rather or totally confident that it will be possible to realise their job wishes. This being said, 49 per cent are (consistently) not using their full potential with regard to their performance level (work, studies, daily affairs) and only 25 per cent feel that they have a good work-life balance. As a consequence, there seems to be a clash between job wishes and performance.

As discussed above, fears, the change of the current situation, refugees, and emigration concern Jordanian youth. Nearly 33 per cent of respondents have witnessed violence and 11 per cent have experienced psychologi-
Similarly, only 12 per cent state that one of their family members emigrated, either to North America (37 per cent), the Gulf (34 per cent), or Europe (19 per cent). Thus, Jordanian youth have limited experience with emigration and display mixed feelings about the issue. While some youth are fascinated by the idea of emigration (20 per cent) or emphasise the financial benefits of having a family member abroad (33 per cent), 27 per cent consider emigration to be a loss in their personal life or have been negatively influenced by the experience of an emigrated family member (18 per cent). Approximately 55 per cent of respondents with a family member who has emigrated state that emigration is of no importance to them, and 56 per cent of all respondents assert that they are definitely not going to emigrate. Among those who play with the idea of emigrating, the preferred destinations within Europe would be the United Kingdom (36 per cent), Germany, and France (both 32 per cent). Related to that, the readiness among all respondents to leave their family in order to obtain a good professional qualification, to accept work in a rural region in their own country, in an Arab country, or in Europe in order to change their current situation is between 36 and 49 per cent. Thus, approximately half of respondents do not appear to be very flexible in terms of emigration, whereas the other half does. Hence, initiatives aiming to facilitate the transition of youth from education to employment and the creation of employment opportunities need to consider this emigration inflexibility.

5. Politics & Society

Following the discussion about socio-economic issues, this section focuses on the political dimension, which includes civic and political engagement as well as political views. The Arab Spring has demonstrated that new communication technologies play an important role for youth and their mobilisation. Therefore, this section begins with an overview of communication.

Jordanian youth began to explore the modern communication technologies intensively around 2009. Although they were not among the early users of mobiles or smartphones (2009 on average) and the Internet (2011) compared to the other countries in this study, these are now widespread modes of communication in Jordan: 92 per cent of Jordanian youth use the Internet (only 78 per cent of youth with a low educational level use the Internet), and 98 per cent of them use their phones to do so. However, only a few actually have a contract (6 per cent), the majority uses prepaid plans; most contracts exist in rural areas (16 per cent). Rural youth also exhibit the highest rate of Internet use at home (97 per cent; this is the second highest among the countries under study). Other common places where youth use the Internet is anywhere they have access (40 per cent) or at the workplace (35 per cent). Internet cafés, shops, cafés, and restaurants are only used by about 20 per cent, and universities by 12 per cent of Internet users.

WhatsApp (91 per cent) and Facebook (89 per cent) are the dominant social networks amongst Jordanian youth. They primarily use these networks for leisure purposes – for example, to keep in touch with friends (65 per cent), to organise meetings with friends (43 per cent), to share music/videos/photos (42 per cent), and for job-hunting purposes (35 per cent). Discussions and mobilisation for politics rate very low (16 to 17 per cent), for religious affairs they are slightly higher (18 to 25 per cent).

These tendencies are consistent with the attitudes, values, and interests of youth discussed so far. As shown in the following, Jordanian youth do not use other channels for political discussions and mobilisations either; most of them simply have limited or no interest in civic or political engagement. Nevertheless, 51 per cent think that the political situation is (rather) stable.

The civic engagement of Jordanian youth is limited to a few areas of interest, none of them overly political or controversial. The main areas youth frequently support are the interests of the young people (14 per cent), helping the poor/vulnerable (12 per cent), improving the community life in their area of residence (12 per cent), a better/cleaner environment (11 per cent), and improving

16. Although this information was not provided explicitly, these results indicate that refugee youth have lived in Jordan for a long time or are born there and are not recent refugees.

17. These statements cannot be generalised, because only youth who have an emigrant in the family and who consider this to be important answered this question – that is, not more than 50 people.
the situation of disabled people (11 per cent). The survey results show that young men are somewhat more engaged than young women; the same holds true for youth with a high educational level as well as singles.

Similar to the limited level of civic engagement and the absence of controversial political issues on the agenda of Jordanian youth, the institutions and places of engagement are also few in number and hardly affiliated to a political group. Most youth participate in a group at school or university (15 per cent) or in a youth organisation (9 per cent). Only 6 per cent support social goals as members of a religious institution. So, if Jordanian youth do not show significant levels of civic engagement, what are the reasons for this? Respondents report a combination of personal and structural reasons for non-engagement: 45 per cent state that they are themselves already struggling to make ends meet; the same proportion have the feeling that none or few initiatives exist in their neighbourhood. In terms of structural reasons, others argue that social projects are not professionally managed (37 per cent), it remains unclear where the money goes (37 per cent), and only strong men have a say (37 per cent).

With regard to political engagement, 87 per cent of respondents state that they have little or no interest in politics. Youth with a high educational level and residents of small cities are slightly more interested in politics, they express a (high) interest in politics (17 and 20 per cent respectively). Accordingly, 92 per cent of respondents do not actively inform themselves about politics. The Internet (67 per cent) and TV (62 per cent) are the main sources of information. Only 16 per cent of respondents who inform themselves about politics use face-to-face conversations to do so. Amongst respondents, political actions considered/used are participating in elections and boycotting certain goods – both 6 to 16 per cent, so also rather low. Other political actions – such as participating in demonstrations/strikes or joining a political party (0 to 3 per cent) – are hardly considered or done. This has also become apparent in the small scale of protests in the context of the Arab Spring. In fact, respondents predominately term the events that have been taking place since late 2010/2011 »Arab Spring« (19 per cent), »foreign intervention« (20 per cent), and »anarchy/chaos« (14 per cent); they hardly describe these events as revolutions (8 per cent). Respondents are convinced that the events were started by youth but then hijacked by others (54 per cent), in particular by external/international actors such as the United States (41 to 47 per cent). Moreover, youth

| Table 3: Reasons for No Civic Engagement, answer »strongly agree« (values in percentages) |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                | Gender  | Education  | Milieu of Residence |
|                                | Total   | male  | female | low  | middle | high | large city | city | rural |
| There are no or only very few initiatives in my area | 45      | 45    | 45    | 34   | 45    | 53   | 43         | 48   | 59   |
| They are not professionally managed      | 37      | 39    | 34    | 34   | 35    | 43   | 36         | 33   | 44   |
| It remains unclear where the money goes  | 37      | 41    | 31    | 29   | 37    | 40   | 37         | 30   | 41   |
| It’s only for the benefit of a few       | 35      | 37    | 33    | 27   | 34    | 40   | 35         | 33   | 38   |
| Only strong men have a say               | 37      | 38    | 37    | 31   | 36    | 43   | 36         | 46   | 35   |
| Volunteer work never pays off            | 28      | 30    | 25    | 32   | 28    | 25   | 26         | 34   | 31   |
| The government is not supporting it       | 35      | 39    | 31    | 29   | 37    | 34   | 35         | 42   | 31   |
| There is no income from that             | 35      | 39    | 31    | 37   | 35    | 35   | 34         | 37   | 42   |
| There are no prospects in it              | 34      | 37    | 31    | 33   | 34    | 33   | 32         | 40   | 38   |
| My family does not want me to do so      | 29      | 26    | 32    | 33   | 28    | 28   | 28         | 32   | 31   |
| I am already struggling to make ends meet| 45      | 50    | 39    | 39   | 42    | 54   | 46         | 40   | 43   |

18. This is the highest rate amongst the countries under study. The average rate of not actively informing oneself about politics is at 82 per cent.
hold these events responsible for widespread violence (53 per cent). Thus, for the majority of Jordanian youth, the Arab Spring has more negative than positive connotations.

Given the small scale of political action and protests in Jordan, what are the preferred political systems among Jordanian youth? The survey results suggest that three different systems appeal to youth. The most popular political system sees a strong man who governs the country at the centre (32 per cent), and the third is a democratic system (21 per cent). The latter system is particularly favoured by rural youth. However, it does not become clear how youth define the current political system and whether it corresponds with their preferences. In view of the trust Jordanian youth put in state institutions and the role of the state in daily life they envision, we can conclude that they do not give much thought to these questions. In general, trust in institutions is (rather) high (see Table 4 below).

6. Conclusion

This report has shed light on a plethora of social, economic, and political issues that shape the lives and perspectives of Jordanian youth. It has become clear that, overall, respondents are optimistic about their future
with regard to the social, economic, and political situations. In light of the political instability and the socio-economic situation in Jordan, this is surprising.

Nonetheless, Jordanian youth are also plagued by fears. They are particularly afraid of impoverishment and security issues; the Arab Spring and its consequences across the MENA region play a large role in nurturing their fears.

Jordanian youth have very limited interest in politics and political action, and related to that do not inform themselves about political issues. Participating in elections is the closest many young people get to politics. However, besides their families and religion, state institutions – especially the government and the military – are considered trustworthy institutions.

The family and religion are of key importance to Jordanian youth. The majority of respondents still live with their families and consult them in all important matters of their lives. The family stands above all other aspects in life. Religion is the only other institution that provides a strong feeling of stability; in fact, a tendency towards more religiosity can be observed.
References


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