

A stylized map of Palestine composed of a grid of dots. The dots are mostly light gray, with several red dots highlighting specific locations. The map is centered on the page.

Turning Away from Politics

A Survey among Palestinian Youth

FES MENA Youth Study: Country Analysis Palestine

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- Most Palestinian youth feel moderately secure: very few do not feel secure at all or very secure. Women and educated youth feel the most secure.
- Palestinian youth have place most of their trust in non-political institutions including the family, education system, and public health system. They trust political institutions including the parliament, militias, and political parties the least.
- Palestinian youth seem to be increasingly religious, regardless of demographic factors; however, this change does not seem to indicate inclinations towards political Islam; two thirds of respondents indicated that religion is a private matter.



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1. Introduction

Many Arab countries witnessed waves of protest and upheaval that started in 2011. These events, which the media called the Arab spring, varied in nature and intensity between one Arab country and another. With few exceptions, such as Tunisia and to a lesser extent Egypt, these events developed into bloody, violent confrontations and civil war involving large-scale killing, destruction, and displacement. Since the majority of the Arab population is young, this ongoing violence affected the Arab youth sector the most. However, young people in Palestine have had a different experience compared to the one of youth in other Arab countries. First, the occupied Palestinian Territory was not witness to the Arab Spring due to the Israeli occupation, which actively suppresses and influences public resistance. Second, the occupation and the uncertainties that come with it deeply affect Palestinian youth's experience, (which is) influenced by regular acts of violence, restricting movement and economic activity, and preventing national expression. Nevertheless, the events in the surrounding Arab countries may have had some secondary effects on Palestinian youth. This survey seeks to reveal these impacts.

Overall, Palestinian youth have moved towards religion as a private resource and away from political engagement. They worry most about the economic situation and their own prospects for a career; female youth are most concerned about attaining a good marriage, as the majority do not participate in the labour market. Palestine has one of the lowest rates of female labour force participation in the region, at 19.1 percent.¹ The Israeli occupation imposes restrictions on movement and access, hindering investments, economic development, and increasing unemployment, especially among young women. Otherwise, Palestinian young adults tend to be optimistic, finding support among family and friends despite the instability they face.

2. The Sample

This survey was conducted in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, between the dates of May 22nd and June 15th of 2016. Data was

collected in paper and pencil interviews. The sample size was 1,001 respondents. This survey, conducted in the occupied Palestinian Territory, is part of a wider survey and research aimed at examining the impact of upheavals underway since 2011 on youth in eight countries of the MENA region.² The FES MENA Youth Study is focused on how and to what extent young people in these countries are coping with uncertainty in their life.

The survey includes 1,001 respondents between 16 and 30 years old. The interviews were conducted in 107 sampling points across 16 governorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, chosen randomly according to the population. In the West Bank, 625 young people were surveyed as well as 375 in Gaza. The largest group (42%) was between 16 and 20 years old, 32 percent were between the ages of 21 and 25, and 26 percent were between 26 and 30 years old; this representative target distribution was achieved through quota sampling and subsequent weighting procedures. In their own perception, the majority (95%) consider themselves to be youth, while five percent see themselves as adults.

Other characteristics of the sample include:

- The majority (64%) of those surveyed are single at the time of study, 31 percent are married, four percent engaged, and one percent divorced or widowed.
- Not unlike the rest of Palestinian society, the average number of people living in the respondents' households is 6.2, with the average number of people at home between ages 16 and 65 numbering four people.
- Most respondents (46%) live in rural areas, 44 percent live in small and medium-sized cities, and ten percent live in refugee camps.
- The majority (56%) has already completed their education, with 44 percent still in school or college. Most (56%) of those still being educated are in school, with 43 percent enrolled in universities.

1. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2017): Indicators. Ramalla, Palestine. Online. Access date: August 19, 2017; http://www.pCBS.gov.ps/site/lang__en/881/default.aspx#Labour

2. This survey was part of a regional study covering eight countries in the MENA region. The regional results of the FES MENA Youth Study are published in *Coping with Uncertainty: Youth in the Middle East and North Africa*. London: Saqi Books, 2018. The regional and country specific data is available at: <http://www.fes.de/lnk/youth-study>.

- Most respondents (87 %) say their father is still living, with an average age of 53 years. When asked to state the level of their fathers' education, half of respondents say their father are highly educated. The other half of respondents indicate that their father has a medium or low education, while only three percent are illiterate (two percent say they did not know). The vast majority of fathers is employed (self-employed, working for the government, or day labourers), with nearly half of them being paid monthly. The average income is 704 euro a month.
- Of most of the respondents (95 %), also the mother is still alive, with an average age of 48. Six percent of respondents' mothers are illiterate, 19 percent are poorly educated, 38 percent somewhat educated, and 37 percent highly educated.
- Most mothers of respondents do not earn an income; the average monthly income of those who work is 595 euro monthly.

3. Employment and Economic Perspectives

Feelings of security among Palestinian young people vary from one demographic group to the other. Female youth feel more secure than males, and the more educated feel more secure than less educated youth. Overall, the feeling of security is moderate: very few do not feel secure at all and very few feel very secure.

When these feelings are probed, it appears that the area of perceived highest security is health status, followed by access to food, emotions, future of respondent's family, and exposure to violence. On the other end of the spectrum, the area of least security is represented by the probability of armed conflict, which is not surprising, given the ongoing occupation, followed by insecurity over a future career, and the economic situation.

This latter finding is consistent with the reality that harassment and violence from the occupation and unemployment among youth are daily problems. Young people in Palestine have higher unemployment rates than the overall public, where four out of ten are unemployed³

3. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2016): International Youth Day, Ramalla, Palestine; http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_InterYouthDy2016E.pdf.

and large segments of youth have simply dropped out of the labour market.

Despite this insecurity about their economic future, three-fourths of respondents (73 %), when asked directly to assess their families' economic situation, perceive it to be very good or rather good, while only a fourth report that it is rather poor or very poor. Education seems to be the most determinant factor in this regard, with 64 percent of uneducated respondents reporting that their family's economic situation is bad or very bad.

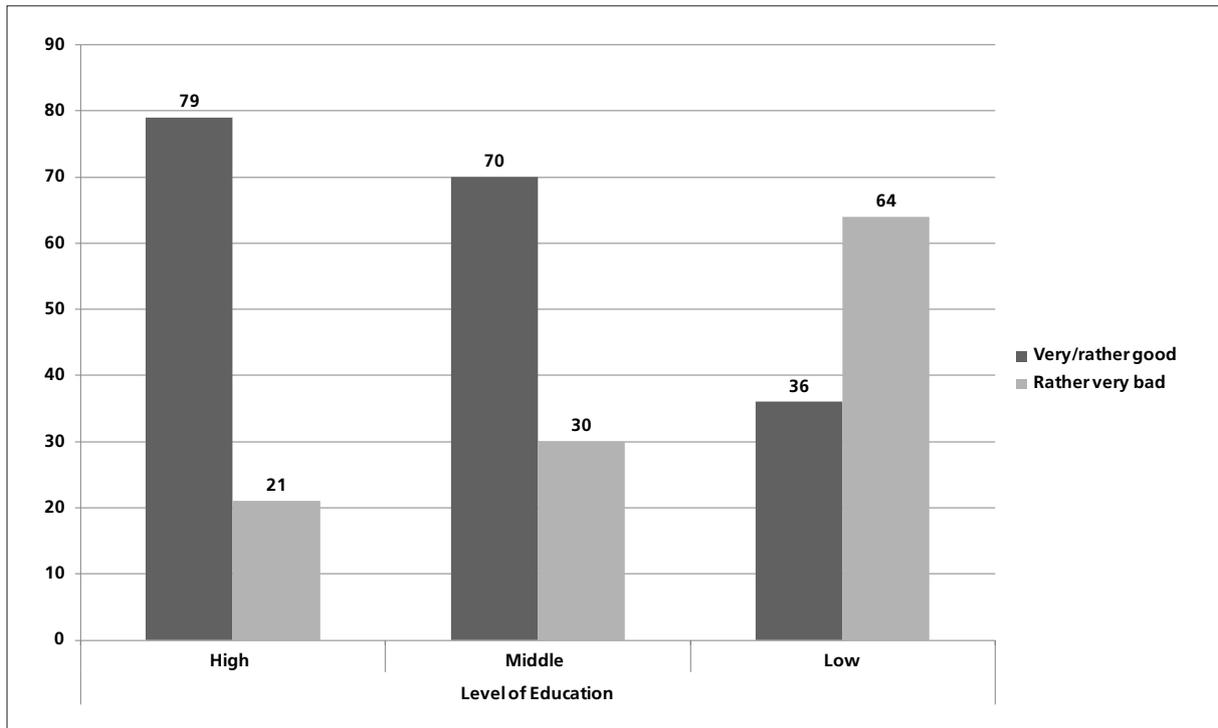
In their assessment of the economic situation today it is interesting to note that, when asked to assess their families' economic situation compared to 2010, answers from respondents are more or less the same: 63 percent say very good or rather good, 32 percent say very bad or rather bad, and five percent do not know. This is in contrast with the perceptions of youth in the Arab countries that experienced major upheaval starting five years ago; young Palestinians see their economic situation as not having changed much.

4. Consumption and the Middle Class

Most respondents say they are not wealthy, but rather that they are either lower middle class (50 %), poor (14 %), or destitute (3 %). The remaining 33 percent self-identify as wealthy/upper middle class. At the same time, 49 percent of young people surveyed do not consider themselves part of the working class (32 percent said they are). A large segment (19 %) answers that this is not applicable or that they do not know if they are part of the working class. This appears to indicate a rupture between workers and the poor/lower classes, which were once linked through unions and leftist ideologies. This link has been weakened through the political decline of the left, as well as the shrinking share of manufacturing and agriculture in the Palestinian economy.

Respondents go on to describe comparatively robust patterns of consumption. The majority (90 %) of young people surveyed live in neighbourhoods dominated by private housing, 83 percent say their homes are owned by the family, of which 58 percent have been constructed by the family and 27 percent inherited from the family. More than half (59 %) of respondents have their own rooms. Almost all of them have running water, electric-

Figure 1: Assessment of the Family's Economic Situation Today (values in percentages)



ity, a bathroom, kitchen, a stove, television, satellite TV, and a refrigerator. 60 percent have a computer, 61 percent have internet access, 27 percent have a vehicle, and 21 percent have air conditioning.

Only seven percent of respondents' households have live-stock (pigeons, chicken, sheep, goats, or rabbits). The minority (18 %) reports that they (or their families) own agricultural land. 14 percent of respondents produce some food for their own consumption. This again indicates the dwindling significance of farming and agriculture in the Palestinian economy overall.

Formal financial structures have not made inroads with Palestinian young people, despite their growing presence in the Palestinian economy. The majority of those surveyed (85 %) do not have their own bank accounts, and 92 percent do not possess a credit card. About half do not have money readily available; 52 percent of this group are students. About half of the budget of those who do have money available comes from their families and the other half comes from their own work, about half of which is regular and the other half irregular.

The majority (96 %) of those who work have only one job, with most of them working as day labourers, wage employees, or as self-employed: Most of them get information about jobs from relatives and friends, which is an indicator that employment offices are not efficient or reliable. The average income from their jobs is 20 euro for those paid daily, 82 euro for those with weekly pay checks, and 569 euro for those with a monthly salary. The majority (72 %) are not paid when they take sick leave; 28 percent receive sick pay (which is in line with Palestinian law).

Most polled are satisfied with their jobs: 37 percent are very satisfied, 54 percent are somewhat satisfied, and only nine percent are not satisfied at all. Few (18 %) working young people support their parents, on average by 231 euro monthly.

Only 15 percent of respondents have savings. These do not exceed an average of 141 euro a month. The main purpose of their savings is security, to be used in case of emergency. On the other hand, 24 percent are in debt. About two thirds of respondents have health insurance; 84 percent have it from the government.

Table 1: Employment of youth having an income

Area	Total
State employee	11 %
Employee (with insurance)	14 %
Worker (no insurance, but continuous employment)	13 %
Remunerated laborers as part of a family business	10 %
Self-employed with higher education (medical doctor, etc.)	5 %
Self-employed without higher education (trade, etc.)	13 %
Self-employed in agriculture	6 %
Self-employed in the service sector (continuous work, unstable income)	13 %
Day laborer (unstable employment, unstable income)	15 %
Retired	0 %
Other	7 %

Respondents spend their money mostly on food, then on clothes, water, electricity, gas, and finally on their studies. For 63 percent of respondents, the availability of cheap bread is very important; half of them always buy bread, 36 percent exclusively bake it at home, and only four percent have a ration card for food. It is worth noting that most of the spending goes to necessities rather than luxury commodities, which might be an indicator of relatively low income.

5. Politics

When identifying their most pressing requirements, securing basic needs is the highest priority. This is followed by the absence of violence, freedom of speech, and then freedom of movement.

Respondents say they trust institutions in the following order: family, education system, public health, police, media, government, trade unions, and finally their parliament. Militias, political parties, and the United Nations range relatively low. The relatively low rating of the military should not be surprising: the Palestinian

parliament has been inactive since the general election in 2006. The success of the Islamic movement Hamas in that vote led to political discord, the arrest of many parliamentarians by Israeli authorities, a subsequent division of authority between Gaza and the West Bank, and the effective shuttering of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Palestinian young people seek greater government involvement in daily life, with 73 percent saying that the government should play a larger role. Those who want greater state interference mainly seek government involvement in social security.

The surveyed Palestinian youth are divided on their attitudes concerning the Arab Spring in neighbouring countries. Most Palestinian young people seem to have a negative impression of those events. When asked to discuss them, the largest proportion of respondents give negative terms, including, for example foreign intervention, anarchy, coup d'état, civil war, and insurgency.

The smaller group that describes the events using positive connotations used terms such as revolution, rebellion, uprising, and popular movement.

The data available does not allow us to evaluate a direct impact of the Arab Spring on these attitudes of the Arab Spring. Looking at other indicators during the first one or two years of the events, however, it is possible to conclude that the initial opinion about the events was relatively more positive. For example, youth demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza in 2012 and 2013 used Arab Spring slogans such as »the people want the end of occupation«, and »people want the end of split,« the latter referring to the political division between Hamas and its rival Fatah.⁴

Most respondents seem to agree that the Arab Spring is still in progress. Respondents were asked to evaluate (agree/disagree) the following statements: that events are ongoing, that they were started by youth, that the

4. For further information about the influence of the Arab spring on the youth movement in Palestine, see Alsaafin, Linah (2012): Imperfect Revolution: Palestine's 15 March movement one year on. In: *Electronic Intifada*; <http://www.electronicintifada.net/content/imperfect-revolution-palestines-15-march-movement-one-year/11092>; and Natil, Ibrahim (2017): Palestinian Youth Movements and »the Arab Spring«. In: Arbatli, Ekim/Rosenberg, Dina (ed.): *Non-Western Social Movements and Participatory Democracy*, New York, Springer.

Arab Spring was later hijacked by others. Youth agree with these three statements. They also agree that the events did not change anything. Even more, the least agree that the events united the youth globally and changed their life. This is not surprising because Palestinian youth were not involved in the events and therefore not effected directly.

In addition, Palestinian youth seem to be divided over who initiated these ongoing events. A fifth (19 %) believe that the events were enabled by secular youth, while a similar proportion (18 %) say that the Muslim Brotherhood was behind the events.

6. Religion and Value Orientation

Palestinian young people seem to be increasingly religious, regardless of other demographic factors. When asked on a scale from one to ten to describe their religiosity, the average is 7.2, indicating that youth see themselves as very religious. In fact, youth today perceive themselves as more religious than five years ago. When asked to choose on a scale from one to ten how religious they were five years ago, the average response is 6.4.

The majority (99 percent) of those surveyed are Muslim. Only one percent is Christian.

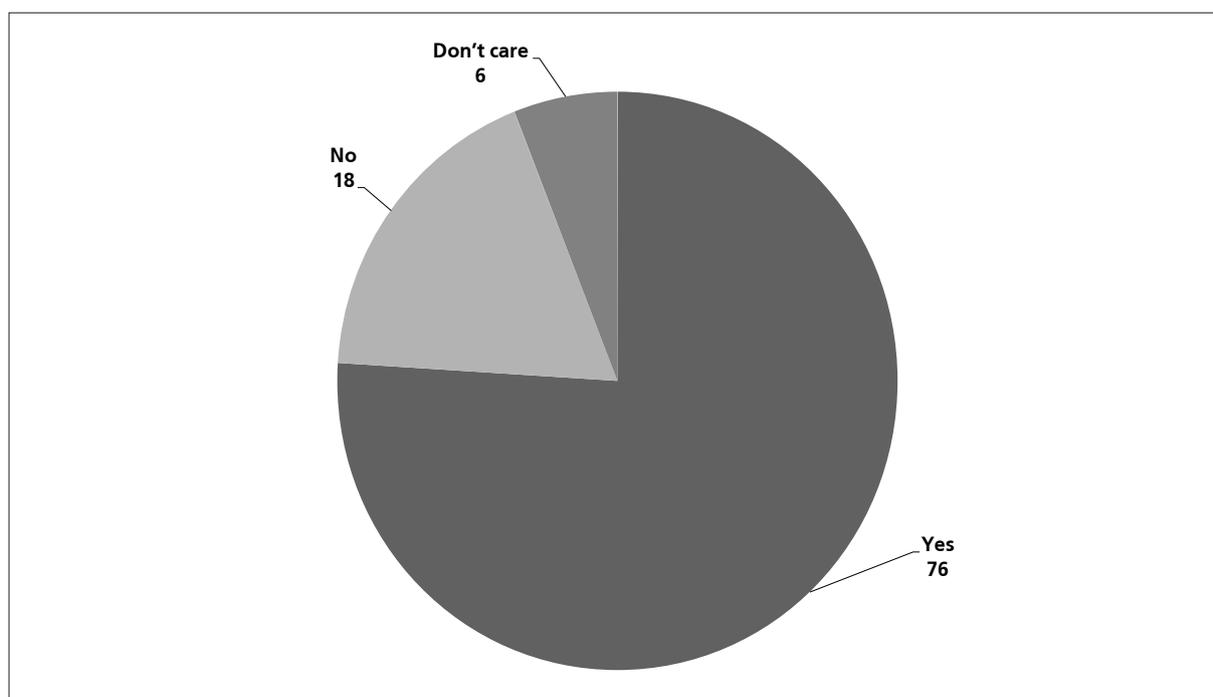
This finding is confirmed when respondents are asked about the most important part in their life. »Belief in God« is one of the most important points, irrespective of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

This change does not seem to indicate inclinations towards political Islam, as represented by the electoral success, for example, of Hamas in 2006 elections or support for foreign-based groups that base their politics on Islamism such as al-Qaida, the Muslim Brotherhood, or even ISIS. Instead, 76 percent of the respondents indicated that religion is a private matter; only 18 percent said it is not private, and six percent said they were indifferent either way.

Young people living in urban areas are slightly more likely to view religion as political; with 61 percent in large cities indicating they believe it to be a private matter compared to 85 percent of youth in rural areas.

Young people see religion as a resource, with 73 percent believing that Islam should play a larger role in daily life.

Figure 2: »What do you think? »Religion is a private matter and nobody should interfere« (values in percentages)



This overshadows the 22 percent who say that its current role is adequate and only three percent say Islam should only play a minor role. Educated young people are slightly more inclined to increase the role of religion in daily life, with 76 percent of highly educated youth seeking a greater role compared to 60 percent of youth with little education.

Young Palestinians feel attached to various groups. They see themselves belonging first to their family (average score is 9 out of 10), then religious community, regional community, national community (Palestinians), the Arab nation, the tribal community, and then to young people around the world (3.9 out of 10). This too indicates the overall shying away from politics of Palestinian young people, likely brought on by years of frustration with unrepresentative and unresponsive political systems operating underneath the control of the occupation.

Instead of the heady political goals that might have guided past generations, Palestinian young people define their achievements as: believing in God (9.1), having

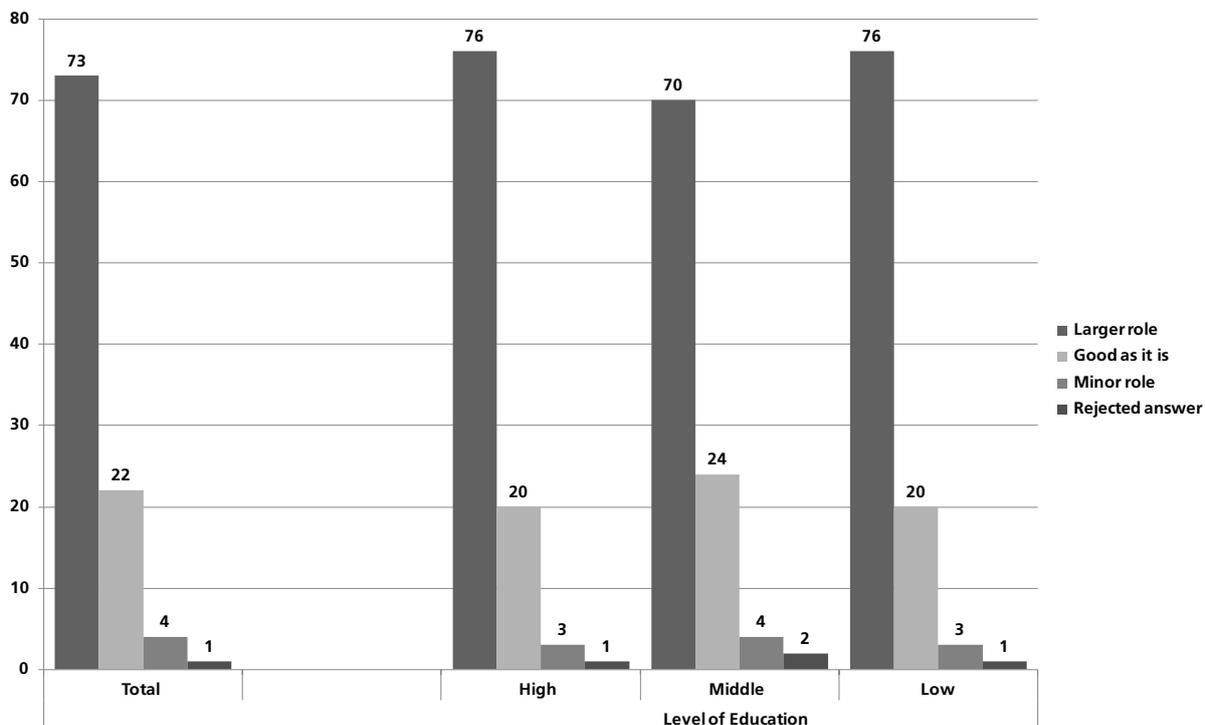
a partner that I can trust (8.9), achieving a high standard of living (8.8), engaging in a good family life (8.7), living consciously a healthy life (8.6), being diligent, hardworking, and ambitious (8.5), and spreading the message of Islam (8.1).

By contrast, their least important priorities are: engaging in politics, allowing my decisions to be guided by emotions, doing what others do, pursuing my agenda even when it is in opposition to others.

The high importance of religion and the low belief in politics among youth are major findings of this survey. The decline in interest of politics should be no surprise, given that these young Palestinian people grew up during the years of the failure of the Oslo Accords with Israel and the absence of political life through the Palestinian Authority, which has not held general elections in over a decade.

Instead, this generation underscores the importance of family and friends, while expressing a lack of confidence in public and religious institutions. When asked whom

Figure 3: »Should Islam play a larger or smaller role in daily life, or is it good as it is at the moment?« (values in percentages)



they would refer to when they need money, most respondents mention family and then friends.

Likewise, when asked whom they address when looking for a job, most say friends, then public institutions, family, and finally the internet. When sick, the youth surveyed seek help and comfort first from family, a partner, and then friends. Finally, when facing personal problems, young people also seek help from family, friends, and then a partner.

7. Political Mobilization

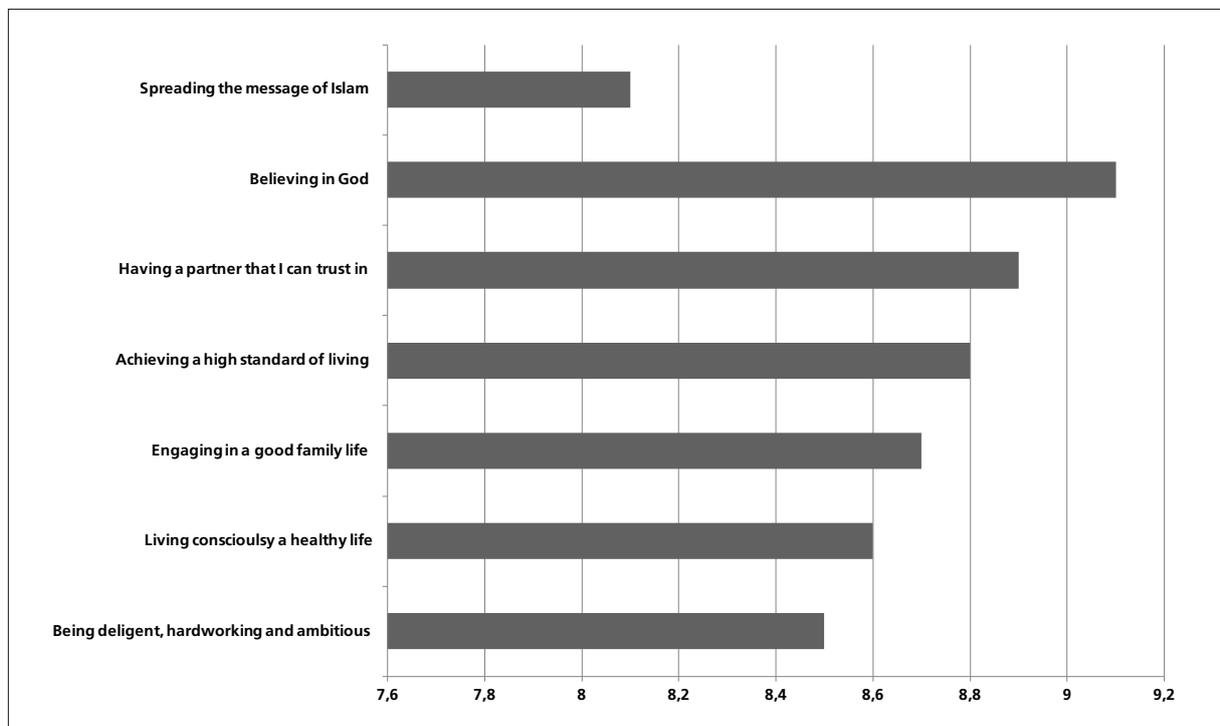
When asked directly about their interest in politics, Palestinian young people are divided. Almost half (53 %) are not interested in politics, while the other half is either a little interested (28 %), or interested (15 %). Only four percent are very interested, indicating a sea change from previous generations that were highly engaged in Palestinian nationalism and the quest for national representation. A further indicator of the lack of interest is that 77 percent of youth do not actively follow political news and

events. The sources of information for those who do inform themselves are first TV, followed by internet, face-to-face conversation, radio, and finally print newspapers.

When offered a list of options, young people say that they prefer to participate in politics through election, followed by boycotting certain goods, associating with others, or participating in strikes. When respondents are asked which of these they have already done, their answers follow the same trend: most say they have participated in elections (22 %), boycotted certain goods (15 %), participated in strikes and demonstrations (11 % each), and engaged in associations (10 %).

When youth engage in social or political activities, they do so mainly in order to help poor people and to improve the environment. The least common motive for engaging in social and political activities is to ensure equality between men and women and to achieve social and political change. These activities take place mainly at universities and schools, then at associations, youth organizations, religious institutions, political parties, and finally in unions.

Figure 4: »If you reflect about possible achievements in your life, how important are the following points for you, on a scale from 1 = absolutely unimportant to 10 = absolutely important?«



Those who say that they do not participate in politics were asked why not and given a list of reasons to choose from. The most prominent answers are that such participation does not produce income, that his or her family does not allow political participation, that the government is not supportive, that there is no prospect of success, that they are too busy working to make a living, and finally that there is a lack of financial transparency.

Young people spend their leisure time watching TV (66 percent consider this among their top three pastimes), surfing the internet (53%), listening to music (14%), participating in sports (12%), spending time with family (37%), visiting neighbours or relatives (35%), reading books or magazines (11%), going to coffee shops (8%), and visiting youth clubs (7%).

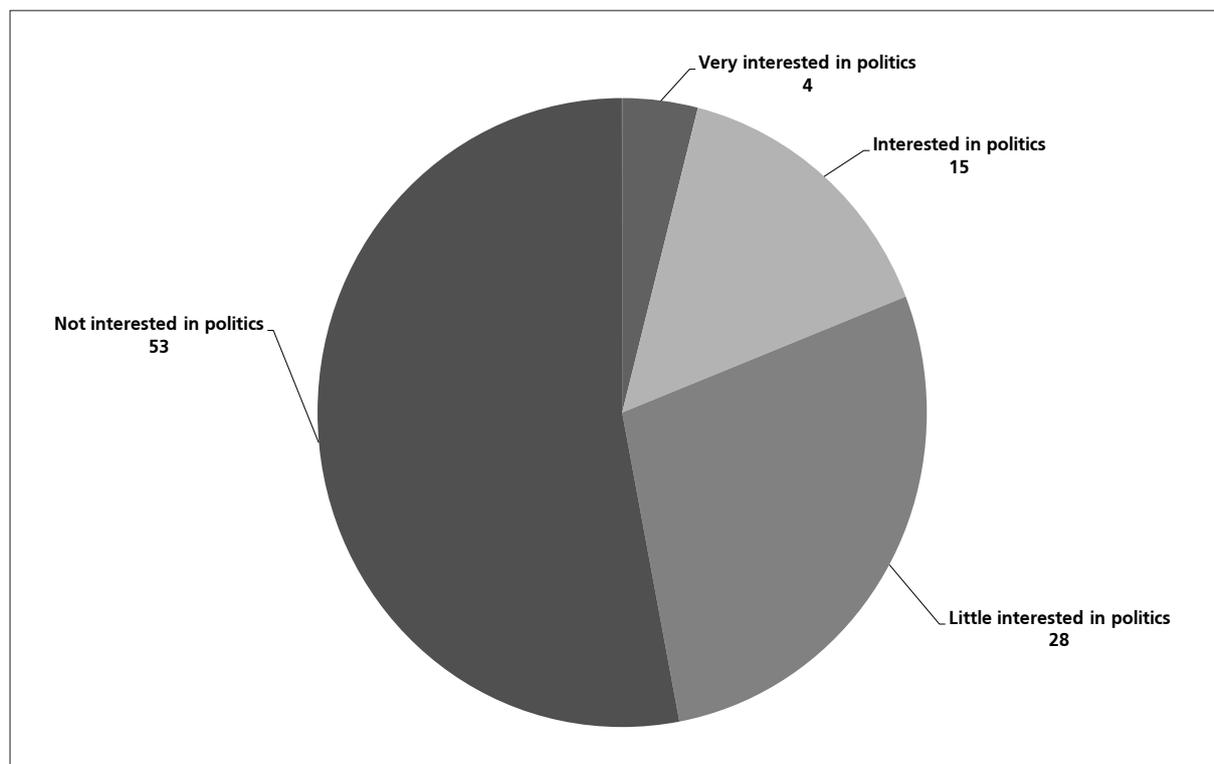
Palestinian young people are mostly positive, with 59 percent saying they are optimistic about their personal future, and 55 percent optimistic about the future of their society. This level of optimism is not reflected in other indicators in the survey, such as anxiety over career and the economic future.

8. Family and Future

The main concern for Palestinian youth regarding the future is for 41 percent of the respondents finding a job, for 35 percent securing a good marriage, and for 21 percent maintaining good family relationships. Education and gender, when factored in, play a determining role. For example, while 55 percent of male youth say that jobs are the most important concern, 49 percent of females say that marriage was their main concern. One possible reason is the high level of unemployment, especially among women. Moreover, the traditional culture places males in charge of income and the perception that security for women can be found in marriage is very prominent.

There seems to be a tendency to focus on immediate concerns, with a majority (50%) of single youth reporting that jobs are their most important concern, while 56 percent of married youth say a good marriage is the most important. These priorities reflect the economic situation, where the highest levels of unemployment are found among youth, and especially among the educated. In many respects, Palestinian young people are similar to

Figure 5: »Are you interested in politics?« (values in percentages)



their peers around the world. They connect with those in other countries through soccer, fashion, gaming, human rights, and religious groups, in that order of prominence.

Most of the respondents (64%) are part of a group of friends. It is worth noticing that female youth and uneducated youth are much less involved in such groups compared to young males and highly educated youth. Almost half of these youth are »very satisfied« with these groups and another 45 percent are »satisfied«. Women are generally more satisfied than men in this category.

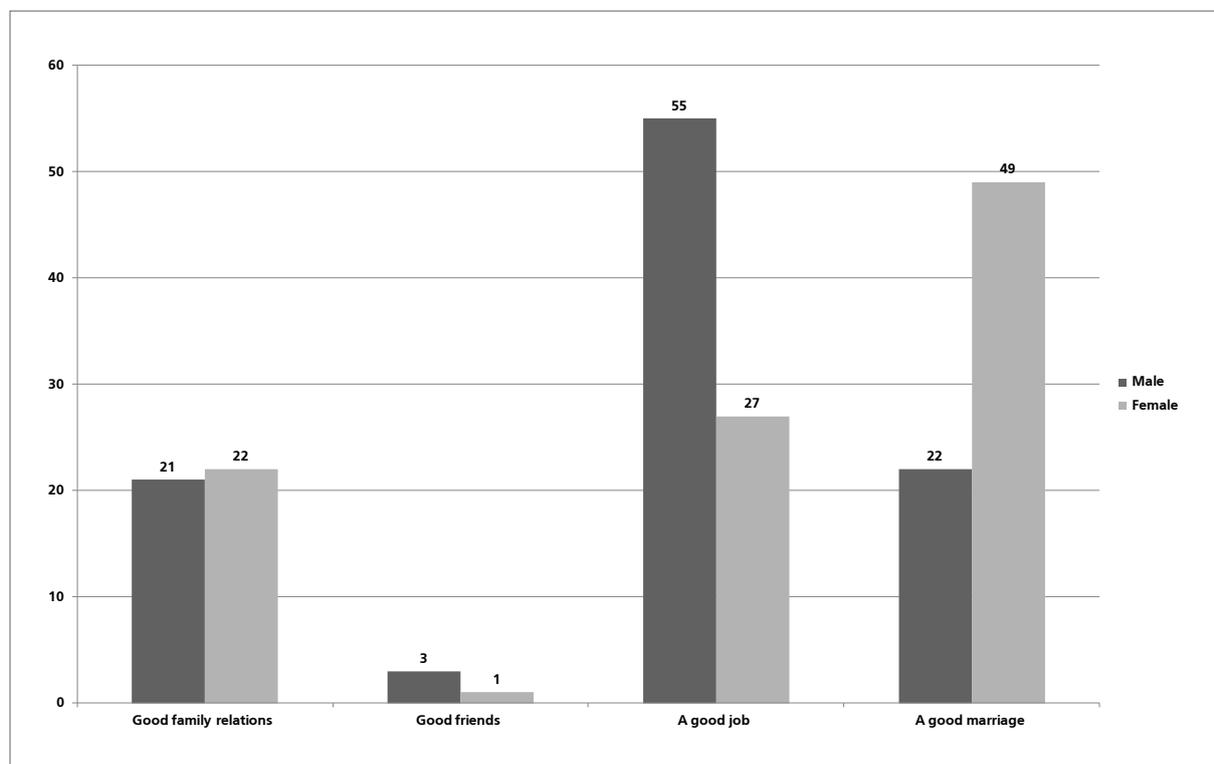
The majority (94%) of respondents agree that one needs a family to live happily. This does not change according to gender, economic background, education, or other factors. When asked whether they would describe relationships between men and women as being in harmony, respondents mostly affirm this: ascribing more harmony to relationships within their own family (83%) than in their neighbourhood (63%) and the country as a whole (52%).

A majority (59%) of the youth surveyed say that it has generally become more difficult to find a partner or

spouse, whereas 30 percent do not think so. This might be partially related to education, as 79 percent of uneducated youth say it is difficult to find an appropriate partner. It is interesting to note that in general, it seems to be more difficult to find a partner in recent years; however, the problem is bigger in large cities compared to rural areas. Most men claim that women are too demanding and require high financial security in the form of a dowry or resources from a potential partner. Women, on the other hand, explain their difficulties in finding a partner by saying that men are increasingly poor and cannot take care of a family, while also charging that men's moral standards are deteriorating.

The majority of respondents (91%) believe children are also important in order to live a happy life, while only five percent say they are not. Young people are uncertain when asked if they will raise their children the same way that they were raised. Only 35 percent say they would do it exactly the same way, while 36 percent would do it about the same way. 23 percent say they would raise their children a different way, and six percent would do it very differently. Urban youth are more likely to want to

Figure 6: »What is most important for your personal future?« (values in percentages)



be different in their child rearing, while those who seek to be less different are more likely to be uneducated. Urban and the less educated youth are less traditional and more exposed to new and modern ways of life.

Anxieties about the future are common among Palestinian young people for a variety of reasons. Most are worried about becoming poor, increased insecurity, becoming sick, not being successful, and losing work. In contrast, the anxieties chosen the least are: staying unmarried, not having friends, having to leave the country for economic reasons, having to leave the country for political reasons, and becoming the victim of a terror attack or armed conflict. Armed conflict falls only in the middle of this spectrum of anxieties, despite the ongoing violence of the occupation. However, it may be that young people who have grown up in the current status quo see this violence as a hazard of daily life and therefore not something to be anxious about.

In general, the relationship between the generations is seen as harmonious, however, with room for improvement, mostly inside the family, then in the neighbour-

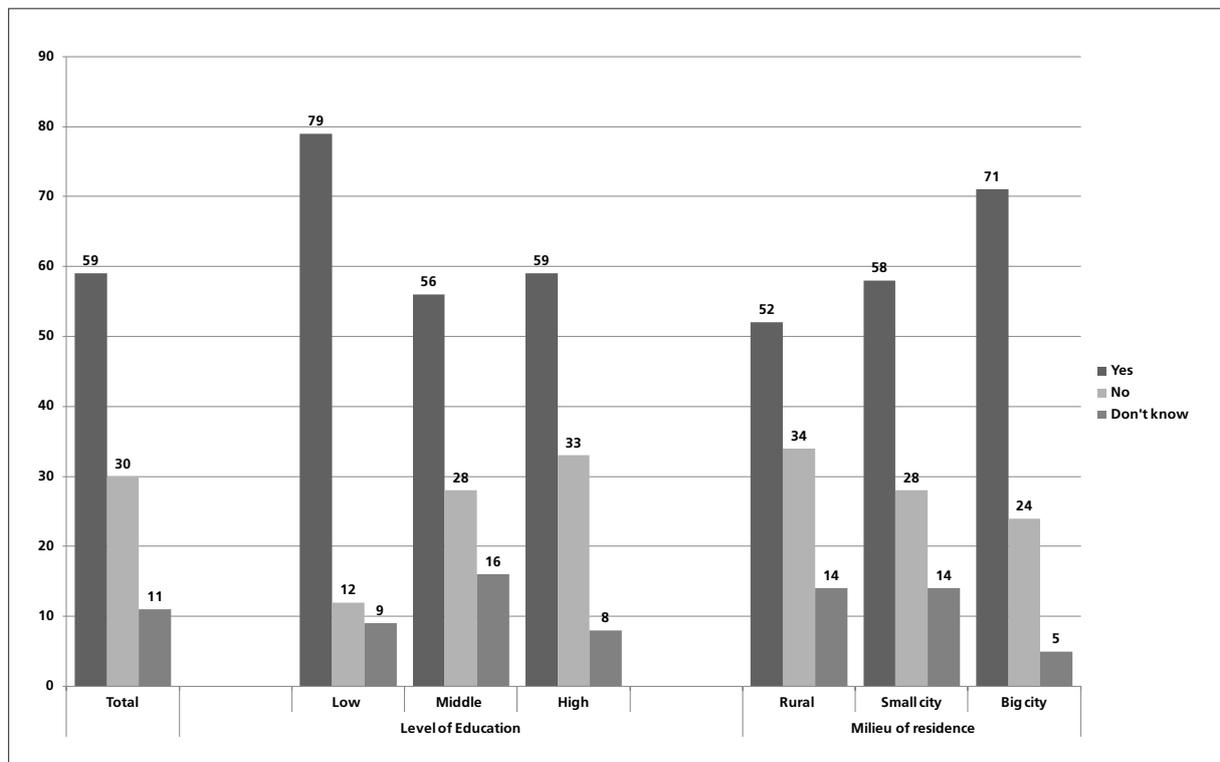
hood, and less in the country (among Palestinians). Differences between generations become more obvious, however, when respondents are asked about wealth distribution. About one third (32 %) of young people surveyed say that the older generation should reduce its demand for resources in favour of the new generation. Only 16 percent say that the younger generation should reduce its resource demands in favour of the older generation. Another 36 percent believe that wealth is distributed equitably between the two generations.

It is interesting to note that a relatively higher percentage of those who want the older generation to reduce their resource demands are highly educated or residents of large cities. This is most probably because the most educated, who usually live in large cities, are less traditional and have more self-confidence.

9. Communication

Palestinian youth are well connected; they began using and owning mobile phones in 2007 and started to use

Figure 7: »Has it become more difficult to find a partner in recent years?« (values in percentages)



smart phones in 2012. Nearly everyone has one smart phone, but 89 percent of them are prepaid. Only nine percent use phones that are under contract. On average, youth phone users pay an average of eleven euro in phone expenses per month.

Palestinian young people started using the internet as early as 2010. 70 percent are connected to the Internet, while 30 percent are not. Only 26 percent of the least educated are connected to the Internet, while 78 percent of the highly educated are online, exposing a deep technology gap between these groups. Young people mostly use the internet at home, then at a university and/or school, and finally at work and internet cafes. The devices that young people use the most are smart phones, then laptops, and then a desktop computer.

The average time of internet usage per day is 3.6 hours. This time is spent mostly on Facebook (used by 92 percent of the respondents), then on WhatsApp (60%), Viber (39%), and Instagram (33%). The social media used the least is Twitter (14%) and blogs (4%). When asked how they use social media networks, it appears

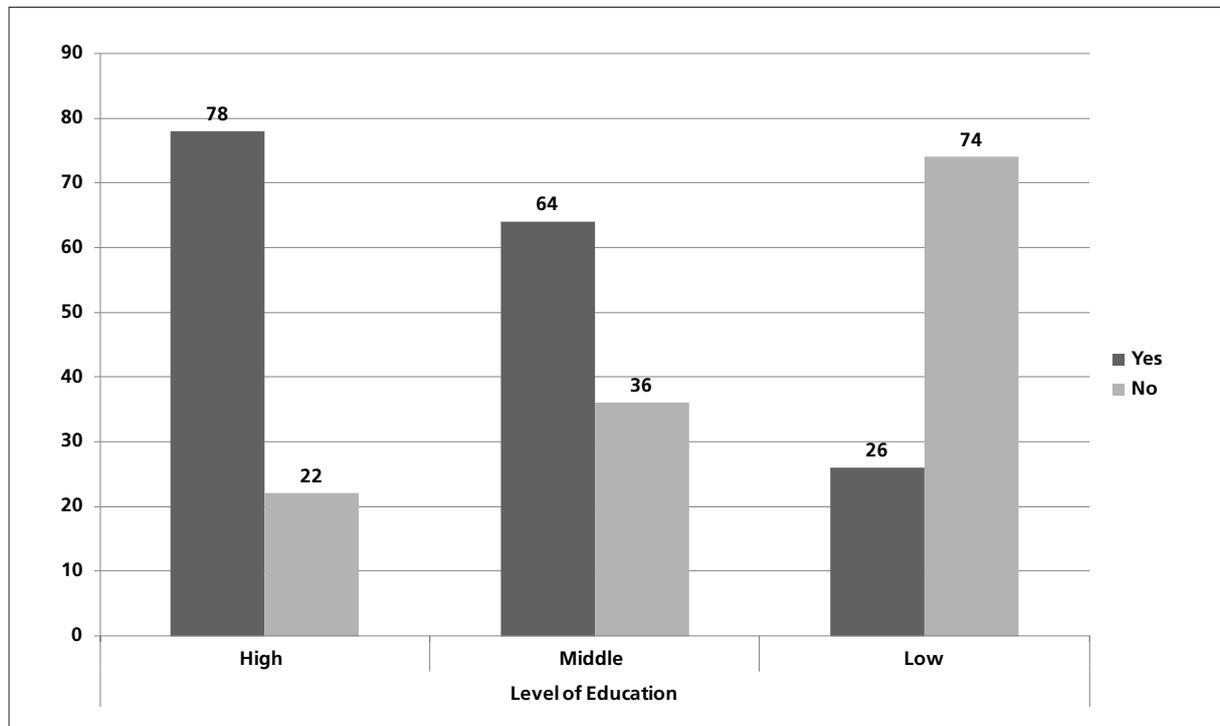
that young people use them first for keeping in touch with friends and family, then organizing meetings with friends, sharing music, videos, and pictures, and finally to look for job opportunities.

10. Instability and Violence

Instability plays a large role in the Palestinian psyche, given the experience of being uprooted, exiled, and the lack of political redress. Forty percent of the youth surveyed say they consider themselves refugees, 60 percent say they do not. A higher proportion (64 %) of the least educated say that they are refugees. Only 18 percent of rural residents say the same. One explanation might be that most Palestinian refugees live in or next to urban areas rather than villages.

Young Palestinians find stability in things that are immaterial, while the material aspects of their lives are less secure. The most stable things for this generation include faith in religion, relations with the family, belief in one's skills, and trust in friends. The things that are named as less stable include the economic situation, the prospects

Figure 8: »Do you use the internet?« (values in percentages)



of fulfilling one's life objectives, and the political situation, in that order.

Many respondents (42 %) have witnessed violence, but relatively few have personally experienced psychological violence (16 %), the demolition of a home or workplace (9 %), or violence within their family (8 %).

Most respondents feel sad and depressed (90 %) when considering the violence that appears in the media. In addition, a considerable proportion of respondents feel increasing tension in public spaces. Most surveyed say that they hate violence and cannot endure it. This sentiment is strongest among youth who themselves have experienced violence. However, perceptions of the impact of violence appear contradictory, as a considerable proportion of respondents say that women dressing »inappropriately« should not complain about sexual harassment (61 %).

This problematic perception is common in religious and traditional societies in many Arab countries. This is promoted actively by religious opinion leaders and seems to be accepted by traditional sectors in these societies, including in Palestine.

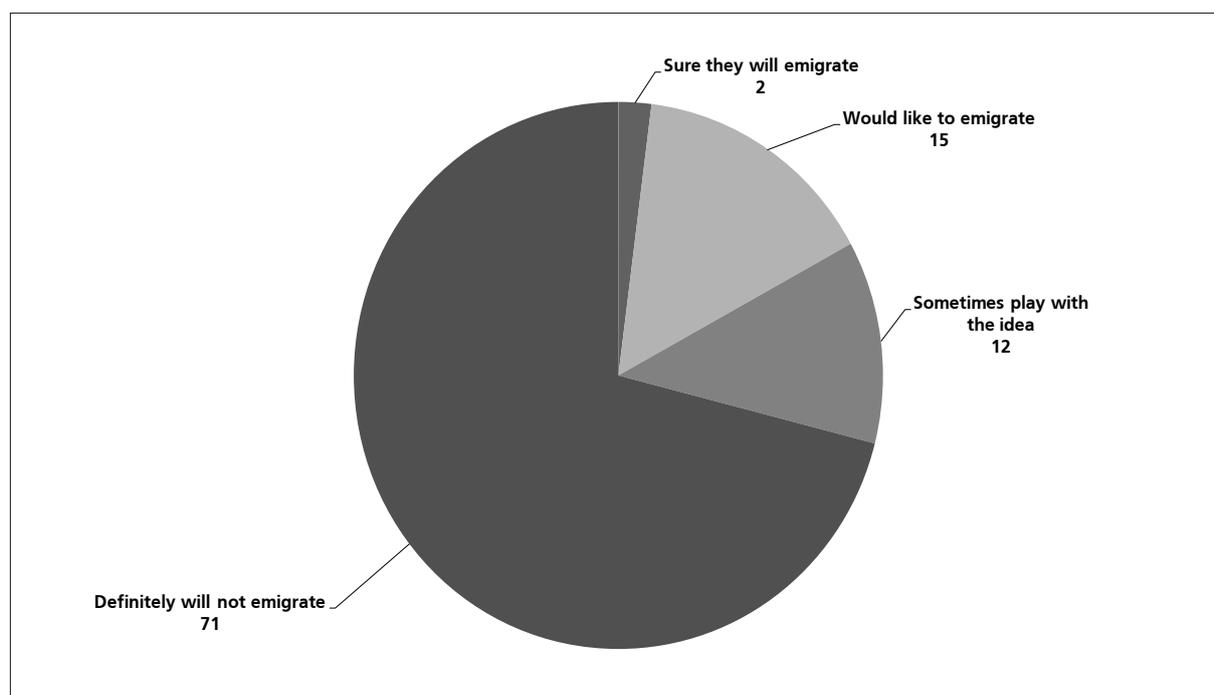
11. Mobility and Migration

Palestinian youth have grown up with extensive restrictions on their ability to move, both within the occupied Palestinian Territory and abroad. It is not surprising that a majority of 93 percent of youth surveyed say that they have never lived outside their own country; seven percent say that they have. Most of those who have lived outside lived in other Arab countries, including the Gulf. A small minority has lived in Europe.

Similarly, 86 percent say no one from their family has migrated to a foreign country. The 14 percent minority that has family members who left, reported migrations to other Arab countries including the Gulf, and fewer cases to Europe and the United States, Canada, Asia, and Australia.

Nevertheless, more than half of this 14 percent minority say that their family's emigration experience is important to them. When asked how they feel about the emigration of a family member, most of the young people in this group say it was a loss. Some say that they had mixed feelings about the departure and even fewer say they do not wish to do the same. The smallest group says that they benefit from remittances that the immigrant sends home.

Figure 9: »What would best describe your situation?« (values in percentages)



Consistent with previous answers, only eight percent have been in contact with someone trying to find a job or asylum in Europe in the last three months by phone, Skype, or SMS. Those who were in contact report speaking to friends, a family member, or a neighbour.

These results support other polls⁵ that indicate that emigration is not as significant as one might think among Palestinians. 71 percent say they will definitely not emigrate, twelve percent say they sometimes play with the idea of immigrating, 15 percent would like to emigrate, and only two percent are sure that they will emigrate. In fact, one of the possible interpretations is that the opportunities are very limited.

When those who consider emigration are asked where they would like to go, respondents tended to pick (in this order of prominence) Sweden, Germany, and France.

Palestinian young people seem to be willing to change their life circumstances under certain conditions. These include that they would: accept a job working in rural areas in their own country (64 %) or in another Arab country (30 %); leave their families to obtain a professional qualification (27 %); accept work below their qualification (27 %); marry someone from a class that is much above their personal background (26 %); marry someone from a lower class (25 %); work in a rural region in Europe (24 %); and leave their families even if it was risky (9 %). It is notable, however, that the least accepted options for change include marrying someone from different religion (7 %) or someone who is significantly older (5 %).

12. Conclusions

This survey has shown that most of the aspects and causes of uncertainty among Palestinian youth result from the Israeli occupation or are related to it. It also seems that the events of the Arab Spring that largely shaped the experiences of Arab youth in general, had little effect on Palestinian youth so far.

The most pressing factors for feelings of insecurity are the probability of armed conflict, insecurity over a future career, and the economic situation. The difficulty of finding a job is consistent with the high level of unemployment. In the same way, the concern over mobility is consistent with the other finding that the majority of these youth and their families have never experienced living abroad. That can be explained by the Israeli control over borders and the restrictions on movement.

Palestinian youth are becoming more religious and more alienated from politics and political activities. Most of them do not perceive themselves as political activists. They find refuge in religion and God rather than in politics and political institutions.

5. A survey of Palestinians aged 15 to 29 conducted by PCBS also showed that only 23.6 percent of youth in Palestine desire to migrate abroad and that the prevailing conditions in Gaza Strip play a major role in increasing the percentage of youth desire to migrate. 37 percent in Gaza Strip want to leave, compared to 15.2 percent in the West Bank. http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_YouthSurvPal2015E.pdf



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