

REPORT ON THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN IRAQ'S ELECTIONS

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Contents

Introduction	4
Objectives.....	4
Research approach.....	4
The focus groups.....	4
Part 1: Findings from the 2009 Provincial Election study	8
Outline	8
Executive summary of differences between males and females	8
Part 2: Findings from focus group research	10
Executive summary	10
Baghdad	12
Feelings about the January 2005 National Election	12
Feelings about events post 2005.....	15
What discourages people to vote.....	17
What encourages people to vote.....	22
Perceptions of the registration process.....	24
Perceptions of the voting process	26
Anbar	28
Feelings about the January 2005 National Election	28
Feelings about events post 2005.....	29
What discourages people to vote.....	30
What encourages people to vote.....	32
Perceptions of the registration process.....	33
Perceptions of the voting process	33

Mosul.....	35
Feelings about the January 2005 National Election	35
Feelings about events post 2005.....	36
What discourages people to vote.....	37
What encourages people to vote.....	38
Perceptions of the registration process.....	39
Perceptions of the voting process	39
Appendix A: Discussion guide.....	41

Introduction

Objectives

In *The Iraqi Provincial Election Study* (YouGov 2009), which explored voting behaviour at the provincial elections, on the whole, fewer women said they were likely to vote in the Provincial Elections than men. This was particularly pronounced for younger women.

When respondents were asked to rate how likely they were to vote, 49% of them gave a score of either 9 or 10 on a ten point scale, where 0 is not at all likely and 10 is very likely. This corresponds closely with the actual published turnout of 50%. [...] Looking more closely it can be seen that there are large differences amongst a number of different groups. Of particular concern is the evident gender difference, with a higher percentage of male respondents selecting 9 or 10 compared to female respondents (55% to 41%) with younger females the group having the lowest result (39%).¹

The UNDP commissioned YouGov to understand this phenomenon. In particular, the UNDP sought insights about what motivates women to participate, what de-motivates them and what might simply stand in their way.

Research approach

To do this we made a closer examination of the differences found between men and women in *The Iraqi Provincial Election Study* (YouGov 2009). After this initial investigation, we conducted a total of eight focus groups of women conducted by YouGov in Baghdad (4 groups), Anbar (2 groups) and Mosul (2 groups). The findings from the focus group research will inform a quantitative survey designed to measure awareness of the impending National Election, identify information shortfalls, measure other impediments to participation and to forecast turnout.

The focus groups

When developing the discussion guide for the focus groups we kept the findings of *The Iraqi Provincial Election Study* in mind. Beyond the broad objectives of exploring what motivates women to participate, what de-motivates them and what might simply stand in their way, we also probed on the following:

- The role of past experience (post 2005 election) in future participation

¹ *The Iraqi Provincial Election Study* (YouGov 2009)

- The extent to which family and friends influence participation, choice of party, platforms or candidates
- Attitudes of non-participants to IHEC's electoral information on registration and voting

We cannot take it as a given that the experience of women in one part of the country are the same as those in another. Indeed, all evidence pointed to significant differences between regions. Therefore, we held groups in the Centre, West and North of Iraq (Baghdad, Anbar and Mosul). This is by no means a comprehensive cross-section of Iraq but given the constraints and study objectives this was considered the optimal design.

We included more Sunni dominated areas because it was amongst the Sunni population where the data from *The Iraqi Provincial Election Study* revealed lowest stated levels of interest and likelihood to participate. The data (i.e. the responses from respondents analysed in aggregate) from *The Iraqi Provincial Election Study* revealed sect to be the strongest predictor of political attitudes – more important than age, gender, education or any other variable.

Beyond giving consideration to regional differences, there are a variety of other variables we had to consider. Indeed, given the sensitive nature of the subject we have had to think carefully about the profile of each group. Put simply: in life, there are some discussions we just don't like to have openly have around certain other people. In order to create the conditions for free, fair, uninhibited and unbiased discussion we divided groups along education. We divided along education level because education or lack thereof can cause angst. We were concerned that less educated women might feel inhibited discussing their circumstances around significantly better educated women.

It was not within the scope of the project to split groups by participation in the last election (i.e. by those who voted and those who did not vote) so we designed mixed groups in this respect. Indeed, we used this as a catalyst for discussion.

We conducted the following eight focus groups:

Baghdad																
Group #	#1 – 28 th May 2009				#2 – 1 st Jun 2009				#3 – 4 th Jun 2009				#4 – 13 th Jun 2009			
R#	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Education	University degree	Diploma	University degree	University degree	Intermediate school	Intermediate school	Secondary school	Intermediate school	Diploma	University degree	University degree	Diploma	Intermediate school	Intermediate school	Illiterate	Intermediate school
Employment status	Employed	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed	Employed	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed	Retired	Retired	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed
Voted	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Age	47	41	24	25	35	33	61	45	28	27	46	64	40	25	55	30

Anbar								
Group #	#5– 4 th Jun 2009				#6 – 7 th Jun 2009			
R#	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Education	Intermediate school	Intermediate school	Primary school	Illiterate	Diploma	Diploma	Diploma	University degree
Employment status	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed	Employed	Employed	Not employed	Not employed
Voted	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Age	24	29	56	57	40	54	29	32

Mosul								
Group #	#7 – 7 th Jun 2009				#8 – 7 th Jun 2009			
R#	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4	R#1	R#2	R#3	R#4
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Education	Intermediate School	Primary school	Intermediate School	Primary school	University degree	University degree	Diploma degree	Secondary school
Employment status	Not employed	Employed	Employed	Not employed	Not employed	Not employed	Employed	Not employed
Voted	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Age	26	33	40	45	41	38	22	53

Part 1: Findings from the 2009 Provincial Election study

Outline

The Iraqi Provincial Election Study was commissioned by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in advance of the Iraqi Provincial Elections that took place on 31st January 2009.

The study, the first of its type most probably ever - and certainly since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 - had a number of aims including to investigate the political attitudes of the Iraq electorate generally, their opinion of the electoral process specifically and their views on the mechanics of the upcoming election. Results were analysed at a total level, for the entire electorate, and also divided into specific ethnic, regional and demographic groups, including gender, to investigate if any differences were present in the data.

Executive summary of differences between males and females

The following are the significant differences between males and females.

- When listing main reasons for voting, women are more likely than men to say that they vote because everyone else they know is voting (6 point difference), that a member of their family has convinced them to vote (4 point difference) or that someone from outside their family has convinced them to vote.
- In contrast men are more likely than women to regard it as their duty as an Iraqi or their religious duty to vote (5 and 6 point difference respectively).
- For not voting, women are more likely than men to state the security situation is a main reason (9 point difference) while men are more likely than women to believe the election would not be free and fair.
- When it comes to not registering to vote, women are more likely than men to say they do not understand the registration process or do not know how to register. (5 and 7 point difference respectively)
- Women are less likely to have heard of IHEC than men (10 point difference).
- Women are more likely than men to turn to the radio for information about politics and the democratic process.
- Men are more likely than women to turn to newspapers or the internet for such information.

- For information about the elections and electoral processes women are more likely than men to turn to television, while men are more likely than women to make use of the internet, friends and neighbours and IHEC.
- Women are more likely than men to not know who to turn to for this information.

We also looked at the significance of education specifically within the female population and found the following:

- Those with no formal education are less likely to vote.
- Those with no formal education were more likely than those with an education to say they would not know who to turn to for information on both politics and elections.
- Those with an education were more likely to feel it was their duty as an Iraqi to vote compared to those with no formal education.
- Those with primary education or no education at all were more likely to have received no accurate information about the provincial election.
- Similarly, those with primary education or no education at all were more likely to say they had not received enough information to allow them to vote.
- Those with the highest academic achievement are more likely to have heard of IHEC

Part 2: Findings from focus group research

Executive summary

- Many women are disappointed with progress since 2005 and doubt the value of voting (effectively providing their consent to what they regard as a broken politics). This should not be misunderstood as apathy – rather it is disillusionment with the performance of politicians and the political process.
- Respondents across the groups complain that politicians fail to live up to their promises.
- Similarly, a majority of respondents across all the groups say that evidence of Government effectiveness – e.g. delivering on promises of improved security, services and jobs – would encourage them to vote.
- Many respondents say they are discouraged to vote because they lack basic information about candidates' reputations or their policy platforms.
- A number of respondents say that more information about the candidates and their platforms may encourage more women to vote. Respondents report feeling disconnected from the politicians.
- Some respondents don't vote because they are scared for their personal safety.
- Some respondents believe that people are afraid of registering their names to vote.
- Some respondents don't vote because they don't know where to vote.
- Some respondents – especially those from Anbar and Mosul - don't vote because they can't travel the distances to their polling centre.
- A common rumour at the last election was that unused votes would be used fraudulently to rig the election. This motivated some women to get out and vote.
- Some women were discouraged to vote because they believed the elections were rigged and that therefore their vote was of no significance.
- Some respondents say that some women are strongly influenced by their husbands. Other respondents go further and say that husbands prohibit their wives from voting even if they want to participate.
- The IHEC information about registration and voting is easy to understand. All respondents grasp the material quickly and easily. Nevertheless, many women still

don't have accurate information in their possession or mistakenly believe they can vote at their local centres even if they are not registered there.

Feelings about the January 2005 National Election

Group 1

The group describe feeling positive at the time of the January 2005 election.

R1: "I think that everyone was happy, even Iraqis abroad; they called us from abroad asking us to vote and saying that they would vote too; everyone was determined to vote in the elections and they did; they helped in making the elections successful; this was the first successful democratic process in Iraq."

R2: "I was very happy at that day; it is like rising up after falling down or getting into the light after being in darkness."

R3: "In my neighbourhood I agreed with my friends to bring our families and go to vote; we went as a group to the polling centre; it was like Eid as my colleague said; that group included my Sunni and Christian neighbours; we didn't discuss who are we going to vote for or who is going to win; this group consisted of Sunnis, Shiites, and Christians; we all went together and ran into other groups of people in the street as cars were not allowed in the streets at that day; it was a very nice thing."

R4: "At that day I decided to wear the most beautiful clothes and look my best because I was very happy; I felt that we were lost and this was the time for us to have a start over."

However, respondent 4 continues to explain that she fell ill and was unable to vote but, because of what has happened since the election, she is glad she never managed to participate. Such dissatisfaction is widespread and seen most clearly in responses to probes about reasons for not voting.

R4: "I got sick and couldn't go to vote but I saw everyone else feeling happy; everyone went to vote, even the old, despite their illness; but later I thanked God for not voting and I will never ever vote."

However, there is recognition that not everybody in Iraq felt as positive or chose to participate.

R1: "Certain people decided to boycott the elections and this was a wrong decision because now we are struggling with the issues of Mosul and Kirkuk; this is the result of their boycott; they knew that they made a mistake and decided to vote in the next elections; some people refused the American presence in Iraq while others thought that democracy would grant power to the majority of the people of Iraq; they felt that they are marginalized so they didn't vote in the elections; democracy was fulfilled in a true way in Iraq; the group that represents the majority became empowered; when the previously marginalized people were in power, the elections made the other side afraid of losing power and increasingly marginalized so they decided not to vote; but years later they felt that they were wrong, decided to vote, and got what they deserve."

Group 2

Respondents 2 and 3 describe high expectations at the time of the January 2005 election.

R2: "We were very happy at that time; we kept hoping that the elections will bring a new thing; we expected to see changes; we experienced democracy and freedom; we voted for the candidates that we believed in at that time. I felt that the elections held in 2005 were the most democratic and honest elections. There were no rigging in the elections, no fraud. We walked for a long distance till we reached the polling centre; we had hope that we would choose a government that would represent us and all of the people of Iraq and Iraq would start over; we would begin from zero; we have had enough of oppression, suffering and tyranny."

R3: "2005 represents a dramatic change for Iraq; we used to live in a very bad situation; Iraqis, apart from those who used to work for Saddam, have been badly wronged by his henchmen. We had a dream to get rid of Saddam Hussein. This dream was realized on the hands of the Americans; they removed Saddam Hussein and claimed that they will spread democracy and improve the country; they gave us many promises and we were quite optimistic."

Some in the group maintain that everyone in Iraq was satisfied at the time of the election.

R3: "Yes, I tasted freedom and a change from one situation to another; it was a happy celebration for all the people of Iraq; there was no difference between Shiites or Sunnis."

R4: "All the people, Sunnis and Shiites, were happy in my neighbourhood; they all participated in the elections."

Respondent 1 describes a general dislike towards the State – both the previous regime and the current Gol - because of her personal experience.

R1: "I felt isolated from the government; there was a barrier between the government and people; the people of Iraq have suffered a lot under the current and the past regimes."

Respondent 4 describes the events as a celebration.

R4: "It was like a big wedding celebration for us; we all went out, me, my daughters and my neighbours."

Group 3

Some in the group recall positive feelings while others recall negative feelings to the January 2005 election.

Respondent 1 recalls feeling scared due to bombings, mortar shelling and rumours of a suicide bomb attack on the polling centre. As a result she did not vote.

R1: "While we were going to participate in the election, there were bombings and mortar shelling; we had to lay down on the street and hide; we heard that a woman committed a suicidal bombing in a polling centre close to the one we voted in and as well as a suicidal Sudanese man in another polling centre; we decided to go back and not to vote but I think that it was God's will that we participated and voted in the elections."

Respondent 2 says she was ambivalent at the time of the election and reports being unmotivated.

R2: "I didn't have a specific feeling and there wasn't anything special about that day; I wasn't motivated or encouraged by anyone to vote; my family and I chose not to vote."

Respondent 3 and Respondent 4 report feeling happy at the time of election; they recall the election as an opportunity to take part in the democratic process and influence the outcomes.

R3: "I was very happy for participating in the elections."

R4: "We all went happily to vote because this was the first democratic process in Iraq; we thought that we will move forward and our demands will be met."

Respondent 3 further articulates voting as a right.

R3: "I thought that was our chance to have a government and demand the occupation leave out of our country; it encouraged me to vote and I consider voting as one of my rights."

Notably, all four respondents mention different experiences at the time for Sunni and Shiites. Respondent 1 and 4 both recall heightened fears amongst Sunnis on Election Day.

R1: "At that day, Shiites were happy while Sunnis were divided into groups; some of them wanted to vote while others didn't want to. Some Sunnis were hindered by the unsettled security and they were afraid to go; some Sunnis decided willingly not to vote."

R4: "At the beginning there wasn't any difference in the feelings among the people; they were all happy but after reading the graffiti, Sunnis got frightened."

Respondent 2 draws contrasts between the Sunni and Shiite communities' feelings about the election.

R2: "Shiites were happy about the elections because they felt that it was their chance to prove themselves. Sunnis didn't vote because they were not convinced with the elections."

Group 4

The group describe positive feelings at the time of the January 2005 election. Responses suggest the day was seen as a momentous event in that it was the first free election for the people of Iraq.

R1: "I was happy that every Iraqi citizen is free to vote; I was very happy; it was the first electoral process for the people of Iraq..."

R2: "The people were happy as they practiced this process freely; everyone could vote for the candidate they wanted; I wanted to vote for a certain candidate and so did Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, or Arabs; each one chose the slate they wished to vote for long time ago; they couldn't do that previously because there used to be a single man regime while now there are many regimes; everyone can chose the side that will fulfil their demand; the people had high expectations about the elections"

Several respondents recall a combination of both happiness and fear.

R3: "The people were happy and frightened at the same time; they were hesitated to vote and didn't know whether it is in their best [interest] or not."

R4: "The people of Iraq were happy and felt that this day was like Eid; however; there were lots of threats; many people didn't go to vote because of that."

Feelings about events post 2005

Group 1

There is criticism of the performance of the politicians and the progress of the country but the overall tone is one of optimism.

R1: "All of us were happy about the elections; we voted for certain sides and some of them made alliances with parties; we were shocked that the people we voted for started fighting over power after winning the elections; they had conflicts over posts and then made compromises and figured out a way to divide those posts among them[selves]; the people of the other group started a sectarian attitude after losing the power and the same thing applies to the other group that represents the majority; power was their priority rather than the people of Iraq; after the elections, we had to deal with terrorism that attacked Iraq brutally; according to the media, terrorism was exclusive to a certain group but later involved all Iraqis; this was a motivation to get the people of Iraq united when they realized that terrorism was targeting all of them; this also led to forming the Awakenings; some of the provinces were hosting terrorism but later its people became leaders in eradicating it; this was nice; in the meanwhile, the politicians continued fighting each other; there are upcoming elections that will escalate the conflict."

R2: "[...] we voted in the elections because we wanted to end this chaos; the government had good accomplishments despite all the negative things we hear about like corruption, officials running away with their theft, or officials backing terrorist groups in secret; what stands out the most to me is eradicating the militias; this gave me hope; FAQ is a good achievement done by the government to improve security despite the bad things that happen every now and then."

R3: "The elections that led to forming the government replaced the bad things that used to be present after the war with good ones; the destruction was replaced by rebuilding; unsettled security has improved."

R4: "The services provision hasn't improved since 2005 but what I'm mostly proud of is security improvement; now I feel safe to go out and stroll the streets; this is what matters to me the most; services provision is important but security is more important."

Group 2

Some describe positive and some negative feelings after the election.

R1: "It is the same, this regime or the previous one. During the tenure of Saddam Hussein, they took my brother; we don't know why and we kept searching for him since 1980. I feel that there is a barrier between me and the state; this applies to the current and previous government... we weren't happy under Saddam Hussein; the people were oppressed; we hoped that a new government will make us live in prosperity, but the opposite occurred"

R3: "Many things were achieved since that time, but the negative events erased those achievements...The creation of sectarianism, the entry of terrorism, the prisons that were full of Iraqi men and woman, and so on."

Respondent 3 describes significant improvements in freedom including access to new technology.

R3: "...the salaries of the state employees were raised, the country has developed, and we can now use satellite receivers and mobile phones; Iraqis weren't allowed to use those things in the past; I used to return so sad and frustrated from Jordan because I see their satellite dishes on the roof tops and their cleaning workers carrying mobile phones; we were deprived of everything. Our lives changed now; we have mobile phones and satellite receivers now; we are now more open to the world, however there are some negative aspects of development that always accompany the positive ones."

Respondent 4 describes increased violence and sectarianism.

Moderator: "Can you now tell me how things progressed from that [2005 Election] day? What are the highlights of it? What are the things that stand out the most to you?"

R4: "I would never forget the acts of terrorists in my neighbourhood."

Moderator: "What do you mean by terrorism, the killings or the explosions?"

R4: "The killings; we know that foreign sides are supporting terrorists; Iraqis would never do such things. We can't accept Shiites to kill Sunnis; they have the same flesh and blood."

Moderator: "Were there any positive things that you will always remember?"

R4: "We became more aware of our religion; in the past we couldn't learn about religion from radio or TV."

Group 3

Three respondents talk about increased sectarian violence, displacement, detentions and killings in the years after the election. Respondent 1 notes that this was the case up until last year.

R1: "Until the last year, there was sectarian war, displacements and fear; some people left the country and other people were displaced; we had to leave our home and later we heard that it was ruined and burned down later"

R2: "I remember nothing since that day but the detention raids, burning down the houses, and displacements that happened because of the sectarian war."

R3: "All I remember since that day is sectarianism and the random killing."

Respondents 2 and 4 also report experiencing no improvement in service provision or employment.

R2: "I haven't witnessed anything good; the situation is going from bad to worse; there are no new job appointments or services provision."

R4: "No development happened since that day; the electric power is bad, safe water supply is bad, and the services provision is bad; the only good thing was raising the salaries of the state-employees; it improved the financial status of the people."

Group 4

The dominant post-election theme for most respondents is the cycle of improvement then deterioration in security conditions.

R1: "There were good and bad things; security improves every now and then so the people feel afraid; each year we hope that security becomes better but it remains the same and what happened yesterday proves that; I feel frightened and worried again."

R2: "We used to live in our home before the election and got displaced afterwards; this represents a bad thing to me; however, security used to improve from time to time like my colleague said; it was like a snake that hides for a while and appears again; nothing changed; murder and bombings are still present; nothing has changed though we held 2 elections."

R3: "Security has slightly improved over the past few years but things are getting worse now; the situation settled for a while but it started regressing now."

What discourages people to vote

Group 1

Overwhelmingly, respondents say that lack of trust in politicians dissuades people from voting. This lack of trust is rooted in the perceived failure of politicians to deliver on

election promises and improve people's quality of life. Furthermore, there is widespread suspicion of corruption.

R1: "I think that the people are frustrated. I vote for a candidate hoping to witness good achievements by the new government. Iraq has been through deprivation for 35 years despite the fact that it is a rich country and has many resources. I was hoping that Iraq will develop and follow the leads of the other countries especially that there are Iraqis with great potential and qualifications. I'm frustrated that thousands of young university graduates are unemployed, that services provision is not improving. However, the brutal terrorism besides the administrative corruption might have stood in the government's way. It is this frustration that changed the people's mind about voting; some people think that the new government will do nothing for them and nothing will change."

R2: "Iraqis don't trust the government anymore; the people of Iraq went to vote happily in the former elections thinking that everything will change; there was a change but it didn't meet their ambitions; Iraqis were hoping to witness a change about many things like services provision, salaries, and the appointments [jobs]."

"Other people think that the candidates look after nothing but their personal gains; some officials steal lots of money, leave the country, and get away with this without any punishment as they have immunity; for example, the Minister of Trade." R3

Some cite concern that the Gol is controlled by the United States as a reason for not voting.

R2: "[...] besides, they feel that the Americans control the government; the Gol is afraid of losing power if it disobeys the Americans; the Americans can bring terrorists back to Iraq so they wouldn't withdraw their troops; we're not stupid and know that the Americans are most likely behind terrorism in order to stay in Iraq, take over its resources, mess up with our religious beliefs and the minds of the youth; this is their way to fight Islam and weaken the young men and Arabs so they stop standing against Israel and give up Palestine."

R3: "Iraqis don't trust the candidates for many reasons; some people think that those candidates are loyal to the Americans; the Americans support such candidates to take advantage of Iraq's resources."

Some say they don't vote because there is minimal information about the candidates and their policies.

R4: "Iraqis need the media to deliver honest true information about the candidates and what they can really do for the people; I haven't seen candidates on TV talking about themselves; we know nothing about the candidates and their future plans for Iraq; there is nothing before the elections but commercials; Iraqis don't know who are they voting for and don't trust the candidates; we all wish to have a leader to follow."

Group 2

Some cite disappointment with the political parties and candidates as reasons for not voting.

R1: "Iraqis don't trust politicians anymore; I often see them fighting in Parliament. They are all professors, yet they are fighting. What should the other less educated people do then? Only God could solve this problem."

R2: "The people got disappointed of the candidates that they chose. Those candidates don't deserve the trust of the people; there are a lot of tensions among members of the Iraqi parliament and sectarianism is still going on among them; they are acting in a sectarian way even in Parliament; how do you expect them to act in reality; this is clearly seen in Parliament sessions; they are divided and act in a sectarian way."

R3: "The people feel disappointed; we were very optimistic during the first elections; we voted for the candidates putting our future in their hands; we thought that they will represent us, particularly the religious political blocks. We thought that members of those religious blocks will be honest; we thought that they will depend on the Holy Koran in their decisions; we didn't expect them to steal or deceive the people. With time, it was clear that religious parties used us and used religion."

When asked about independent parties, Respondent 3 vehemently criticises the state of politics in Iraq.

R3: "No, they all belong to political parties; Islamic Virtue Party has 30 seats; the party of Abdul Aziz Al Hakim has 35 seats. Adnan Al Dulami is a parliament member and he was discovered to have all kinds of car-bombs and explosives. How could we feel safe with the presence of all those conflicting sides in Parliament?"

Group 3

Fear on Election Day and disappointment with the lack of significant change since the last election are given as a reasons for not voting in 2009. Furthermore, some say some women are prevented from voting by their families.

Respondents 1 and 2 suggest fear was a reason some people did not vote in the 2009 Provincial Election.

R1: "Only fear. Unsettled security and the threats of the armed groups stopped Iraqis from voting."

R2: "Spreading rumours among the people about blowing up certain polling centres or attacking them by certain armed groups. Rumours frighten the people and stop them from voting; these rumours prevent them from going to vote."

Respondents 1, 3, and 4 make reference to the failure of the previous election to bring change in basic services, infrastructure and employment.

R1: "The disappointment about the outcome of the former elections; some people went to vote despite the threats and challenged the fear and got nothing in return; nothing happened in terms of appointments or services provision."

R3: "The people got disappointed; they went to vote previously hoping to witness a change to the better but things changed to the worse; what happened after the elections was horrible."

R4: "The people gained nothing out of the elections; all the people participated in the last elections but got nothing; there are no appointments; the electricity is bad; they are not rebuilding the infrastructure of the country which would have provided jobs for many people."

Several respondents describe a lack of suitable candidates and a dearth of information about candidates. They also suggest people are disinclined to vote for candidates for which there is little information available.

R1: "Sunnis were afraid as they had no suitable candidates that they trust to vote for, whether Sunni or Shiite candidates."

R3: "The people have no idea about both the election and candidates; we haven't witnessed any good achievements that serve the country. The candidates had no detailed profiles about themselves and their future plans."

Some respondents say that women are prevented from voting by their families.

R2: "Some women want to vote but their families don't allow them. These families fear for their daughters and don't allow them to go out so that nothing bad would happen to them."

R3: "Some of them are disappointed with the government and others are controlled by their husbands or families."

R4: "No, this is not a rule; some of the highly educated women can't vote because they were raised inside strictly conservative families that don't allow them to vote; some religious groups don't allow women to have education alleging that this is not accepted religiously."

Although not relating directly to women's participation in voting, Respondent 4 suggests some women would be denied the option of running for office by their families.

R4: "...some families are afraid of being criticized by their relatives and the other people if they allowed their daughters to run for the elections."

Group 4

Most respondents make reference to the failure of the previous election to bring changes in services and security as a reason for not participating in the last election.

R2: "The people went to vote in 2005 because they had hopes that the situation would change but nothing happened; killing and bombings are still present; unemployment increased; nothing has changed."

R3: "I could have done that but I didn't want to; nothing has changed to encourage me to vote; I wasn't convinced to go and vote; I could have registered my name in one of the polling centres in my current neighbourhood but I didn't want to."

R4: "Nothing changed after the first election so most people thought that they don't need to vote in the second election; however, I participate in the second election so no one can use

my ballot paper but they didn't allow me; they were supposed to offer facilities for the people to make them vote; they said that the people have to go to the nearest polling centre."

A number of respondents report a lack of information about the need to register beforehand or the location of polling centres.

Moderator: "What do you think encourages the people to vote?"

R1: "They should make it clear to the people of Iraq in TV that the situation is secure and they have to vote; they have to make the people of Iraq happy."

Moderator: "How can they make the people of Iraq happy?"

R1: "They have to provide everything needed and whatever it takes to make the voting process easy for the people."

Moderator: "So for you, this is the responsibility of the Electoral Committee?"

R1: "Yes."

Moderator: "But there was a registration period and the people could have registered their names during that time; it was between 15 July and 15 August, which got extended afterwards."

R1: "I didn't know about that; I only knew that everyone had to vote in the polling centre where the name of their ration card agent is present; back then they offered and clarified everything to make the people vote."

Respondent 4 mistakenly thought she could vote where she lived rather than where she was registered, which is a common misunderstanding. She feels she was misled.

R4: "They told me that my name isn't registered and I have to vote at the centre where my name is registered. I currently live in Doura but my name is in Yarmook and it remained there. "

Moderator: "Why didn't you change that?"

R4: "I didn't know that I had to; they said that the people can vote at the nearest polling centres; they should have offered exceptions for the people at that time because there was a curfew."

Respondent 1 suggests that given the risks and lack of progress produced by the last election, it was not worth voting this election.

R1: "People who hear about killing someone won't be motivated to vote; they ask themselves why should they vote when the government is doing nothing; nothing has changed over the past few years; every now and then we hear about murder, suicidal bombings, or car bombs; the government couldn't do anything till now; bad security discourages the people against voting."

R1: "Fear and killing keep the people from voting; they go to vote and the situation returns to the way it used to be. They carry out explosions or any acts that disrupt security right before the elections and the people don't go to vote."

What encourages people to vote

Group 1

More information about candidates, their reputations and their platforms are things that respondents say would encourage them to vote.

R1: "Knowing about the activities and programs of the political blocks would encourage the people to vote... I will consider the programs of the candidates which might suit me as a citizen and encourage me to vote for them; the current Parliament members might present a better performance in the second electoral period and this might convince me to vote for them; I have to vote in the elections; the improvement of the situations (like security) encourages me to vote."

R2: "I will vote for candidates who fight all kinds of corruption; the honesty and credibility of the candidates will encourage me to vote for them."

Some say that seeing effective government and the application of the rule of law acts as encouragement to vote.

R4: "Services provisions and the government's achievements will encourage the people to vote; the government has a huge responsibility; punishing the guilty people regardless to their positions is very important to the people; it will make them feel that the law is above everything; the government has to punish anyone trying to bribe the people to vote for them and announce this on the media."

Group 2

Some say that familiarity with the candidates is crucial to participation. This is not explicitly referring to open list systems but a closed system would preclude the kind of relationship desired by these respondents.

R1: "[...] I will not vote for candidates that I don't know; I have to know about them to be able to vote for them."

Again, effective government - specifically improvements to the economy and availability of jobs - is cited as motivation to participate.

R3: "Change, the people will vote if they think that the government will be able to improve the situations and vice versa; the people will ignore the elections if the state didn't provide their simplest needs like water, electricity, sewage service and employment; our young men are wandering our streets selling tissues and pastries in this hot summer; seeing them like that kills me with sadness. The state should reactivate the factories that stopped and stop

importing good from the neighbouring countries; they are benefiting the economy of the countries neighbouring Iraq and harming ours.”

Group 3

Most respondents think positive track records of government delivery - particularly security and services – are the key to encouraging people to vote.

R1: “Achieving the people's demands and improving security will encourage the people to vote; besides, providing appointments to the unemployed young people will encourage them and their parents to vote”

R2: “Security is the goal of everyone in addition to improving the electric power, providing appointments, and improving the services' provision; I will vote if I the candidates achieved what I'm looking forward to.”

R3: “The people will be encouraged to vote if the government met their needs. Resolving the issue of housing, providing appointments, improving security and electricity; these are simple rights for any human being.”

R4: “I will be encouraged to vote if our demands were fulfilled. Improving the electric power supply, providing housing and jobs, and improving the financial status of the people; many people are unemployed and many Iraqi families are suffering from poverty.”

Group 4

Most respondents say that improvements to security and quality of life drive people to vote.

“The media explained to the people the achievements that would follow the elections and showed them that security would improve in addition to the posters that were plastered in the streets; the candidates announced about their programs, future plans, and accomplishments for the people of Iraq; they talked about resolving the issue of unemployment and improving security; all of that encouraged the people to vote...” R2

“The people want security to improve and hope to have a better financial status; we thought that we could have our share of the oil's revenues; the people hope that there would be new jobs and improved services provision but nothing happened” R4

Several respondents say they voted because they were concerned that unless they used their vote it would be used by someone else to rig the election.

R1: “They have to vote so no one else uses their ballot papers; people told me not to vote but I insisted on voting for the candidate that I wanted even if there would be no change; I voted and I would do the same in all the elections.”

R2: “...if the people haven't voted, the others would have used their ballot papers and the elections would have been rigged; in fact the election was fraud; there were instance of box stuffing; the people went to vote to stop such things from happening but deep inside, they were not hopeful or optimistic about what is going to happen after the elections. ”

R2: "Protecting my vote and hope about witnessing a change but I know that nothing will happen; it is like running after a mirage."

Respondent 2 says that some women may have been prevented from voting by their husbands or fathers.

R2: "There is no difference between them; some women might have been prevented from voting by their husbands or fathers while women who voted had no one or nothing to prevent them; some women might have been sick or abroad at the time of the election; women abroad like the displaced ones living in Syria or Jordan probably didn't vote because their names were not present."

Perceptions of the registration process

Respondents in all groups were taken through the official process for registration before being asked for their thoughts on the process.

Group 1

Respondent 1 who voted in the 2009 elections recommends a system whereby the onus falls on the State to register individuals rather than individuals to register with the State.

R1: "The provincial councils could divide the neighbourhoods into sections and make the employees collect information about the residents of each section from time to time; this would help the High electoral committee; many people say that they are too busy to register their names; the polling centres are schools that many people don't know about their whereabouts."

Respondent 2, who did not vote, thinks the registration process was easy but recommended greater cooperation between the IHEC and provincial councils in the dissemination of electoral information.

R2: "I think that the registration process you explained is easy but there should be cooperation in the neighbourhood; a provincial council should identify the candidates and locations of the polling centres; they should let the new people know where they are registered."

Respondent 3 thinks the process is easy but also says that people might be afraid to register their names.

R3: "I think that this registration process is easy; in the last elections, I applied through the internet to become an observer in a polling centre; I read all the conditions and steps of registration online and there wasn't any problem about it; the people can have information about those steps through the internet or TVCs."

R3: "Some people might feel afraid of registering their names."

Respondent 4, who did not vote in the 2009, says she did not know how to register before the elections. However, after being presented with the IHEC information, she described the

process as easy. After probes by the moderator, she reveals she usually switches off from election information.

R4: "In general the registration process looks easy; some people might think that they are going to be asked for documents or ID; if you haven't given me this paper I wouldn't know about it through the internet; I have a computer but I don't have internet access at home."

Moderator: "Why?"

R4: "We are all unemployed college graduates so we can't afford for having internet at home."

Moderator: "The process of registration that I've explained to you was announced on TV. Haven't you seen it on TV?"

R4: "I haven't seen this registration process on TV."

Moderator: "You didn't know how to register your name?"

R4: "I didn't know how to register my name before the elections."

Moderator: "Haven't you listened about it on the radio? Do you listen to the radio usually?"

R4: "I usually listen to the radio but I change the tune once I hear anything about the elections."

Group 2

All respondents describe the process of registration as easy.

R1: "The process is easy; conditions were secure because the ISF were deployed everywhere."

R2: "The process is very easy"

R3: "The process is easy, particularly when they opened the polling centres for a month and a half before the election; all the people went and checked their names. It is very easy because they opened a lot of polling centres in the neighbourhood and the people didn't have to walk for long distances; al Mu'allimeen section in Za'faraniya has four polling centres."

R4: "It is not difficult; the process is easy."

Group 3

All respondents describe the process of registration as easy.

R1: "I think this process is easy and there is nothing that concerned me or made me afraid about it; the documents they are asking for can't be rigged."

R2: "The process is easy even for the uneducated people; nothing concerns or bothers me about that process."

R3: "This process is easy and there is nothing about it that concerns me or makes me uncomfortable...."

R4: "The process is easy..."

Group 4

All respondents describe the process of registration as easy.

R1: "It is very easy and there is nothing that prevents me from registering but some people told me not to go but I insisted on participating; this process is very easy."

R2: "The process is easy and nothing about it prevents me from going unless I was threatened by people who are against the elections or want the people to vote for certain candidates."

R3: "The process is easy and nothing about it keeps me from going; I will go to register and prove myself."

R4: "The process is easy; even if I went to register, the Electoral Committee might make it a difficult process."

Perceptions of the voting process

Respondents in all groups were taken through the IHEC materials and process for voting as a stimulus for discussion about the process.

Group 1

All the respondents, even Respondents 2 and 4 who did not vote in the 2009 elections, describe the voting process as easy.

R1: "It is very easy, especially the open slate; this is a very nice and easy way; I wish they follow it in the upcoming elections."

R2: "The process of casting the votes is easy and nothing concerns me about it; nothing prevents the people from voting."

R3: "No, nothing but security prevents the people from casting their votes."

R4: "After seeing those things, I think the process of casting the votes is easy; nothing is difficult about it."

Group 2

This issue was touched upon only briefly by the moderator and no one reported any difficulties with the voting process.

Group 3

Like the registration process, most respondents regard the voting process as easy:

R1: "The process is easy and nothing bothers me about it."

R2: "I didn't vote in the last elections so I don't know about the process of casting my vote."

Moderator: "What about the process I just explained to you; is it easy?"

R2: "Yes it is. Nothing concerns me or makes me uncomfortable about it."

R3: "The process is easy."

R4: "The process is easy and organized; the employees at the polling centres guided and helped us a lot."

Group 4

Like the registration process, most respondents regard the voting process as easy:

R1: "It is an easy process and nothing prevents me from going to vote; the employees made it easy for us at the time of the election; one of my family members went to register our names and all of us went to vote at 8 AM then came back home; it was quite normal."

R2: "The process is easy and nothing about it prevents me from going to vote; you can vote for any slate you want; there is nothing difficult about the voting process."

R3: "Everything about this process is easy and nothing prevents me from voting; I'm convinced about going to vote."

R4: "The process is easy and we voted freely without any pressure; everyone voted for the candidate they want."

Feelings about the January 2005 National Election

Group 5

Recollections of the 2005 elections are generally positive, although some recall fear for their personal safety.

R1: "I was happy and looking forward to have peace and security in Iraq; the elections will lead to security improvement."

R2: "I was afraid of going to vote because of the unsettled security; everyone at home was frightened; I remember waking up at 6am that day seeing the people going at 7am then they came back rising up their dyed fingers; we thought that we shouldn't stay like this; we had to go and dip our fingers in the blue ink; we dressed up and went to vote; I was happy and hoped for things to change to the better."

R3: "I was happy at that day; we had no government back then and they told us that a government would be formed after the elections; there was no government and nothing could have been done at the state-owned institutions so I was happy and thought that the elections would allow us to have a government and law; I participated in the elections."

R4: "I didn't participate in the elections and saw no one at that day; I was afraid to go out; I couldn't reach the doorstep because of the bombings; the Americans were nearby and so were al Mujahideen; I wanted to vote but I was scared."

One respondent recalls the election as a contest between the sects:

R3: "Shiite voted for Shiite candidates and Sunnis voted for Sunni candidates without knowing anything about them; most of the people in my neighbourhood are Sunnis; they didn't give up their rights and went to vote; all of them did; I saw Shiite people on TV looking happy; I felt that the elections were like a race between Shiite and Sunnis."

Group 6

Some in this group recall predominantly negative feelings before and during the 2005 election reflecting the tensions and turmoil of the time.

Moderator: "I'd like to now take you back a few years, imagine if you will that it's January 2005 and it is Election Day...How did you feel that day? Why?"

R1: "Frankly, I don't vote."

Moderator: "How did you feel?"

R1: "I didn't vote because I thought that no one would do anything for us."

Moderator: "How did you conclude that before the elections?"

R1: "They didn't do anything; many people went and voted and that changed nothing; they said that they went with the people."

Moderator: "How would you know the results before the elections?"

R1: "I felt that they will not be able to achieve anything."

Moderator: "How did you feel?"

R1: "I was dissatisfied; all the people felt this way after the fall of the previous tenure."

Some respondents say that the 2005 election was characterised by sectarianism – Sunnis voting for Sunnis and Shiites voting for Shiites – which discouraged them to participate.

R1: "People of each sect wanted a candidate from the same sect to win the election; sectarianism was very prominent in the election."

R2: "They (Shiite) said that they will elect a Shiite candidate and Sunnis said that they will vote for a Sunni candidate; the election went on a sectarian basis."

R3: "Sunnis voted for Sunnis and Shiite voted for Shiite They [Shiites] were saying that they outnumber the Sunnis; there are more Shiite provinces than Sunni province; they were expecting that they would win the election."

Respondent 4 however reports being excited about the chance to participate and talks about "not wasting" her vote.

R4: "I was happy. This was the first time for us; it represents a chance for us to express our opinions. At the beginning, we weren't willing to go, but our neighbours encouraged us, telling us that we shouldn't waste our votes; they also said that they might stop the ration supplies for those who don't vote."

Feelings about events post 2005

Group 5

Looking at the group in aggregate we see respondents describe improvements to services, salaries and infrastructure following the election.

R1: "Not everything has changed; security has improved this year; nothing else improved."

R2: "Security has improved; there have been projects to build primary health centres, bridges, and other buildings; the hospitals and schools are getting rebuilt; but some groups from the people of Iraq are wronged by the high prices of fuel; this is unfair to those who don't receive

salaries; the unemployed people are aggrieved; they have to pay for gasoline, groceries, and the local electricity generator; these things cost a lot."

R3: "There has been a progress since that day; the schools were rebuilt; many primary health centres were established; I'm talking about Baghdad and not Anbar; I watch such news on TV especially Iraqia channel that broadcast hopeful news all the time; I try to avoid watching the bad news."

R4: "I was happy about raising the salaries of the state employees; they used to have very low payrolls but now they are able to buy clothing and shoes."

Group 6

There is relatively little discussion of improvements although improved security is mentioned by respondents 2, 3 and 4.

R2: "Security improved, water and electricity are the same."

R3: "The road from Ramadi to Syria was quite dangerous, but thanks to Abu Risha who was able to secure that road."

R4: "... security improved during the last four months, but it deteriorated lately."

In other comments respondents 1 and 4 seem reluctant to acknowledge any significant improvements.

R1: "The teachers' salaries raise; that was the only good thing."

R4: "I can't recall good events; many people were randomly detained in Anbar. The American forces accompanied by the police were randomly arresting people...."

What discourages people to vote

Group 5

Some say that in the past the distances between homes and polling centres acted a barrier to participation. This was apparently exacerbated by the curfew, which made it particularly difficult or impossible for those with limited mobility to reach the polling centres.

R1: "Some women didn't want to vote, this is a matter of free opinion; some women couldn't vote because the polling centres were far away from their homes."

R4: "Voting is my right as an Iraqi woman; I will vote if the polling centre was close to my home; that was the only reason that stopped me from voting."

Several respondents make reference to women not being allowed to vote by their husbands or that male relatives voted on their behalf.

R3: "Some women couldn't go to vote or they were not allowed to go by their husbands, fathers, or brothers; there are such families that treat their daughters in a backward way; women who vote might come from open minded families; such women are free to vote."

R4: "Some women are not allowed to vote by their husbands or families; women who vote are brave"

R1: "[...] and some women had their husbands or fathers voting on their behalf so they didn't need to go because they were not allowed to"

Another respondent notes that she was able to vote because she is a widow.

R4: "I am a widow so no one could forbid me from voting."

Group 6

Distance to the polling station in combination with the curfews hindered several respondents.

R2: "I didn't vote; the polling stations were so far and there was a curfew; I was sick at that time and I wasn't able to walk all that distance."

R4: "...the explosions that occur against the polling stations and in the streets; this prevents the people from voting; sometimes the polling stations are very far, particularly in Ramadi, so the people don't go... Yes, and a curfew was imposed; no one provided any means of transport for old woman"

Several respondents suggest that their suspicions about electoral fraud discourage them from participating.

R1: "Frankly I didn't vote but they made me in charge of one of the ballot boxes; and I wish that I was never there; it was a joke, it was hard, it was hard; They rigged the elections; that made me very sad... they can fill the ballot papers of the people who didn't come to the polling stations; the whole election was rigged... I saw a man voting for a particular slate instead of some people who didn't come to vote."

R3: "We all voted for a particular slate in my neighbourhood; we expected them to win but that didn't happen; other slates from the same neighbourhood won the election; what does that mean; they must have rigged the election."

Respondent 4 believes some women may have been prevented from voting by the men in their families.

R4: "Those who don't vote are more likely to be ignorant; the same thing is applicable to their backward husbands; they might have told them: 'stay at home, what could you get from the election?'"

Moderator: "So you think that their husbands might have prevented them?"

R4: "Husbands, fathers or brothers."

What encourages people to vote

Group 5

Hope for a better future and sense of duty are noted by many as motivations to vote.

R1: "The feeling that voting is their duty will encourage them to vote besides the desire to vote for a certain candidate; the people will be encouraged to vote to accomplish a settled security in the country."

R2: "The people will vote so they wouldn't lose their rights or be disenfranchised and feel that they are Iraqi citizens living in a free country; hope about changing the situation motivates the people to vote."

R3: "I mentioned earlier that my desire to have a government encouraged me to vote; the people are free to vote or not; it's up to them; voting is the duty of all Iraqis."

R4: "The people's hope to have a better life will encourage them to vote; hope about witnessing a change will make me vote."

Group 6

All four respondents suggest that tangible improvements in security and basic services would motivate them to vote.

"Security; I would vote if conditions became secure like the past; we want to be able to walk freely in the street; otherwise, there is no reason for me to vote"

"The spread of security, improvement in basic services and providing residence for the people; all those things will motivate the people to vote." R2

"Good things like security; what else would we need? We want to enjoy security and move around comfortably." R3

R4: "I would vote if security and basic services improved; we are suffering from bad basic services in Ramadi; transportation, kerosene and cooking are lacking till now, but conditions are improving in Baghdad; every time I come here I notice more improvements..."

Respondent 4 feels that participating is an opportunity to be heard and that it affirms her place in society.

R4: "It is nice to express our opinions; this makes me feel that I exist and that I have an opinion; women have the right to vote."

Respondent 3 has concerns about electoral fraud; she cast her ballot in 2009 to prevent it from being used fraudulently.

R3: "Some felt like me and they voted so that they would not waste their votes... I was forced to vote; I heard that they will use the unused ballot papers."

Respondent 4 says she had heard ration supplies would be cut to those who did not vote.

R4: "This was the first time for us; it represents a chance for us to express our opinions. At the beginning, we weren't willing to go, but our neighbours encouraged us, telling us that we shouldn't waste our votes; they also said that they might stop the ration supplies for those who don't vote."

Perceptions of the registration process

Respondents in all groups were taken through the IHEC materials and process for voting as a stimulus for discussion about the process.

Group 5

Registration was seen as an easy process for all respondents

R1: "The process is easy and nothing about it concerns me, makes me fearful, or uncomfortable."

R2: "The registering process is very easy; nothing about it makes me fearful."

R3: "[...] the process of registration is also easy"

R4: "The process of registration is not difficult; nothing about it prevents me from going to register my name."

Group 6

The registration process was seen as easy for all respondents.

R1: "It's easy."

R2: "It is easy, not difficult."

R3: "The registration process is easy; I found my name there and my family had the same feeling about the process."

R4: "No, the process is easy; nothing would prevent me from registering."

Perceptions of the voting process

Group 5

Like the registration process, respondents found the voting process easy.

R1: "The process to cast the vote is not difficult; it depends on the slates of the parties; it is an easy process; nothing about it concerns me or makes me fearful."

R2: "The process of casting the votes is very easy; the employees at the polling centre welcomed the people and treated them kindly; the process is very easy and doesn't take a long time."

R3: "There is nothing difficult about it; the Committee employees treated us very kindly; the process took no more than 5 minutes..."

R4: "The process of casting the vote isn't difficult either and nothing about it concerns me or makes me fearful"

Group 6

Noted in the previous section, no respondents reported any difficulties with the voting process.

Feelings about the January 2005 National Election

Group 7

For most respondents, the 2005 election was characterized by both fear and hope:

R1: "The election was a new thing and the people were hopeful that conditions might improve even if for a ten percent, but day by day conditions were worsening."

R2: "Some people were optimistic and others were afraid, the majority were afraid."

R3: "Most people didn't go; they were afraid... People of the neighbourhood warned each other from voting; many warning graffiti were written on the mosques walls... Most people were afraid and they hesitated to participate in the election."

R4: "We didn't vote because we were afraid, though we thought that conditions would improve after the election... Some people were afraid and others were happy; they thought that conditions might improve."

Group 8

For most respondents, the day was characterized by fear, threats and expectation of explosions.

R1: "There were a lot of threats; Sunnis in particular were prevented from participating in the election so we remained at home."

R2: "We expected explosions to occur; conditions were highly volatile."

R3: "I didn't get out; conditions were very bad."

For one respondent the day was full of hope:

R4: "It was a nice thing; we were hoping that conditions will improve and develop...."

Respondents draw explicit distinctions between the experience of Sunni and Shiite communities. Respondent 3 says that Sunnis – even those who voted – felt they would get little from the election.

Moderator: "[Thinking about the 2005 election] Did all the people have the same feelings? Were there any differences between how different groups in Iraq felt?"

R2: "All the people experienced the same feelings; Christians had the same feelings, but the Kurds were more optimistic because they hoped that they would get a large representation and that really happened. Sunnis and Christians didn't get much from the election."

R3: "They [Sunnis] had the same feelings including those who went to vote; they knew that they would get nothing from the election, but they wanted to avoid troubles and they were hopeful that the election might change the conditions."

Moderator: "Did all the people have the same feelings?"

R3: "No, those were the feelings of most Sunni people; Shiites from the south had opposite feelings; most of them voted in the elections for candidates from their sects."

Moderator: "What about the people of Mosul? Were all the people afraid?"

R3: "Yes, even those who voted didn't want the others to know that they did; they rushed to wash the ink of their fingers so that the people wouldn't notice that they voted."

Feelings about events post 2005

Group 7

Several respondents report improvements to services, infrastructure and employment. However, many also note a deterioration to security.

R1: "Conditions are not secure from that time till now; having a job in the state institutes is more rewarding than before, so more people are seeking state employment, and to have that they should get better degrees."

R2: "Conditions deteriorated from ever since apart from state jobs, they are more rewarding than before; they also renovated a number of schools and institutes; the bad thing is that security deteriorated during that period; many people were plundered and many explosions took place."

R4: "Conditions didn't improve; they deteriorated; we left our house and when we came back we didn't find it; is that a good thing? "

R1: "I disagree, many people got employed and many buildings were reconstructed and renovated; state employees are doing a better job now because their salaries improved."

Group 8

Most respondents recall no real improvement in security or conditions in general.

R1: "Security might have improved for some time and deteriorated for other times; there is great fluctuation in security."

R2: "We went through a lot of miseries during the past four years...The events that occurred in Al Siha Tunnel and the tragedy of Zanjeeli; many families were killed and houses were destroyed."

R3: "We didn't notice any improvements; conditions remained unchanged"

R4: "Nothing changed; conditions are the same; we hoped that conditions would improve, but conditions are deteriorating"

Despite her criticisms, respondent 3 describes being able to stay out later at night.

R3 "Now we can stay out for some time at night; in the past all men, women and families used to stay at home; now we can remain out till 9:00 p.m. 10:00 p.m.; that is the only difference."

What discourages people to vote

Group 7

Respondents say they are disinclined to vote because they are disillusioned with the performance of politicians.

R1: "The disappointment of the people in the candidates they voted for; candidates whom we voted for should've executed our demands because we chose them to represent us; the Parliament members are only serving themselves and their relatives; they forgot the people and they don't care about their problems. We don't have anything to motivate us; the participation in the first election might have been 80 percent and it regressed till it reached 15 percent because no one deserved our votes; they didn't do anything for us."

R1: "When I hear the people saying that a particular parliament member is working very hard for the best of the country, or they succeeded in bringing security; I will vote if I heard all the people around me talking this way."

R2: "No one deserves our votes; they will never execute our demands and needs."

R3: "The people don't vote because they didn't gain anything from the last election; no one worked for the people of Iraq; each of them is self serving; no one solved our problems; they are serving the needs of a small section of the people."

R4: "No one deserves our votes; we voted for the previous candidates and they didn't do anything for the people."

Two respondents also imply that fear is a barrier to participation.

R3: "Those who voted are mostly from a lower social level because they had hope that the situations might change, unlike the educated women who remained at home afraid."

R3: "I will have less fear if I saw the people voting ahead of me; I will be encouraged to vote in this case."

R4: "We went to vote when we saw the people going to the polling stations before us."

Group 8

Several respondents identify the failure of previous elections to bring change as a reason not to vote.

R2: "Some people are very old, others don't believe in the election... They think that the same things will happen; they got desperate; they think that conditions will never change."

R4: "We did participate in the first election ('05), but we didn't get satisfying results, so why would we bother in the next election...They didn't do anything; they gave us nothing but the promises so we don't trust them anymore."

Respondent 3 didn't vote because of uncertainty about the candidates and party platforms.

R3: "I didn't find a suitable slate that would develop and improve the country; I didn't vote for a slate ('09) ... Other people didn't find a suitable candidate or slate to vote for."

Respondent 4 says she didn't vote because of the distance to the polling station.

R4: "The schools, polling station, were so far and they didn't allow cars to move in the street; there was a curfew; we can't take our children and walk all this distance."

Respondent 4 suggests that in the past some Sunni women didn't vote because of their husbands' influence.

R4: "Few Sunni women voted ('09); they see their husbands and sons against the current government, so they take a similar attitude."

What encourages people to vote

Group 7

Reflecting the factors that discourage people to vote, respondents reiterated the need for politicians to deliver on promises in order to encourage participation.

R1: "Positive things that are done for the people; the people need their basic rights and the essentials of life."

R2: "They should create security and do things that benefit the country, but that is not happening till now."

R3: "The promises of the candidates to the people; the people will vote if those promises were executed."

R4: "Hope and security; the people will vote if someone brought them security and stability."

Group 8

Respondents reiterated the need for politicians to deliver on promises in order to encourage participation.

R1: "The people will go if security, electricity and conditions of the streets improve. Providing jobs will also encourage the people to vote... The people will go if conditions improved after the election."

R2: "The promises and campaigns of the candidates before the election; they said that they will improve the country... the people had less trust in those candidates ('05 election) at that time. Most candidates are from the people of Mosul in this election... they are well known educated candidates; we didn't know most of the previous candidates."

R3: "The promises of the candidates and the hopes of the people that the election could change the situations of the people and the country; the election represents a chance that conditions may improve in the country."

R4: "There have been some improvements during the recent election; as if they made that; we all hoped that this will continue, but conditions deteriorated once the election ended; conditions even became worse... Yes, nothing encourages us to go and vote, unless we see that conditions have improved with our own eyes."

Perceptions of the registration process

Group 7

All four respondents said they did not know anything about the registration process, including those who voted in the recent election.

Group 8

Two respondents recall being visited and told about the election:

R1: "A group of people came to a school in the neighbourhood; they said that we should bring our IDs to the school to register for the election; they returned our IDs and we waited till the Election Day."

R2: "They held a symposium about the registration process in our institute; they showed us the polling stations and the people supposed to cast their ballots at; each neighbourhood had a particular school to go to."

Perceptions of the voting process

Group 7

None of the respondents spoke in detail about the voting process. Once respondents had been taken thought the process all saw the process as easy and clear.

Group 8

Generally the entire group found the voting process easy.

R3: "I didn't know about the process until the day of the election, but I heard that the procedure was so easy after the election; all the people said that the process was easy including those who are illiterate because the officials at the polling stations taught them how to vote; the process wasn't difficult."

Respondent 4 participated in 2005 but despite being registered for 2009 did not vote. She now regrets her decision not to vote.

R4: "We participated in the previous election and we made sure that our names were there; we brought our IDs and documents with us; each person had a number and we knew our polling stations, but we didn't go in the Election Day."

R4: "No, everything was clear and organized; I am regretful that I didn't participate; we should have voted because most Shiites voted and they will have a larger representation for sure; all Sunnis should vote in the next election."

Appendix A: Discussion guide

INTRODUCTION / PERSONAL INFO / MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Re-assure participants that:

- *There will be an audio recording to help us with our notes.*
- *Your comments will be kept confidential and will never be directly attributed*
- *There are no right or wrong answers, all we want are your open and honest opinions.*

SD1.	Religion [Religion should be known beforehand]

SD2.	Sect [Sect should be known beforehand]

SD3.	Please write down your...
a	Gender
b	Age
c	Origin (Governorate / City of birth)
d	Current Residence (Governorate / City)
e	Highest Educational Qualification
f	Profession (or simply employed, unemployed, student, retired)

SD4.	What newspaper, if any, did you read yesterday?

SD5.	Please list your two most watched TV channels for the following types of programs:
a	News and Current Affairs 1st
b	News and Current Affairs 2nd
c	Entertainment 1st
d	Entertainment 2nd
e	Religious Programming 1st
f	Religious Programming 2nd

WARM UP

VERBAL RESPONSE

Q1.	Has there been a news story in the past two weeks – something on the TV or radio – that gave you particular cause for concern [worry/fear/anxious/nervous/tense]? What was the news story and why did it concern you?
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VERBAL RESPONSE

Q2.	Has there been a news story in the past two weeks – something on the TV or radio – that gave you particular cause for happiness [hope/cheer/calm]? What was the news story and why did it concern you?
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STORY ELICITATION

Moderator: The aim of this section is to be as spontaneous as possible, the questions are to direct the conversation, not all need be asked if we feel the subject has already been covered.

I'd like to now take you back a few years, imagine if you will that it's January 2005 and it is Election Day...

- **How did you feel that day? Why?**
- **How do you think people generally felt? Were there any differences between how different groups in Iraq felt? Why?**
- **Can you now tell me how things progressed from that day, what I mean by that is if you were writing your own personal biography from that day till now, what are the highlights of it? What are the things that stand out the most to you? What else? Tell me more about that? (Moderator: always probe with why? Keep an ear out for stories/ rumors/ myths)**

LADDERING

Moderator: The aim of this section is to probe and clarify where people put the blame for not voting and how they see themselves in this context. The technique we are trying here is called laddering, the idea is to take the respondents answers and turn them into questions in order to get a higher level understanding.

What do you think are the main reasons for *not* voting in Iraq? Why?

Moderator: for every answer given, add a "why" in front of it and turn it into a question. For example, if a respondent says "the main reason for not voting is because people are not registered" ask "why do you think people aren't registered?", if the response is "because they don't know how" ask "why do you think they don't know how" or "what is it about them that makes not know how?"

Always ask in terms of others. De-personalise the issue to enable open discussion.

MOTIVATIONS

Moderator: The aim of this section is to probe and clarify why people vote.

What do you think encourages people to vote? Why?

Start by asking in terms of others. De-personalise the issue to enable open discussion.

What, beyond the obvious, are the differences between those women who vote and those who don't?

If respondents were to draw these characters, what would they look like? What attributes do they ascribe to them?

What would encourage you to vote? Why?

DETAILED PROCESS INVESTIGATION

If women like yourselves decide you would like to vote in a democratic election, there is a process to follow.

Moderator: detail each stage and set out the process from registration through to actually voting at the relevant polling station. Ask:

Registration: If this is the process to register as a voter, how easy or difficult is this process? How do you feel about this? Is there anything about this process which is difficult to do or concerns you, makes you fearful, uncomfortable or bothers you in any way, so that you would not register as a voter?

Casting your vote: If this is the process to cast your vote in an election, how do you feel about this? Is there anything about this process which concerns you, makes you fearful, uncomfortable or bothers you in any way, so that you would not cast your vote?

CLOSURE

Give participants incentives and close. ***Thank you for your participation***