



COMMITTED TO DEMOCRACY AND UNITY:  
PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY IN LIBYA

March 2014

**JMW**  
CONSULTING

 **NDI**  
NATIONAL  
DEMOCRATIC  
INSTITUTE

## Table of Contents

1	Acknowledgements.....	1
2	Executive Summary.....	2
3	Political Context .....	4
4	National Direction.....	5
5	Regionalism.....	10
6	Democracy and Governance.....	13
7	Political Parties and Leaders .....	19
8	The Development of a New Constitution .....	25
9	International Organizations .....	29
10	Armed Groups and Personal Safety .....	32

## **1 Acknowledgements**

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Cover Photo – Voter and Poll-workers on the Constitution-Drafting Assembly Election Day (The Libyan Network to Promote Democracy, 2014)

## 2 Executive Summary

After the fall of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, Libya initiated a political transition designed around a series of elections and a process to adopt a new constitution. In 2013, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and JMW Consulting launched a series of public opinion surveys with funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. These surveys, part of a broader program to strengthen Libyan political parties, are designed to explore citizens' views on various questions facing the country today. Diwan Market Research, a public opinion firm based in Tripoli, Libya, conducted survey fieldwork in collaboration with JMW Consulting.

This report details findings from the third survey, conducted nationwide from November 10 to December 8, 2013. The survey was conducted through face-to-face, household interviews with 1,200 Libyan respondents. Respondents were randomly selected in a probability-proportional-to-size sampling and in all 13 governorates of Libya.<sup>1</sup>

Survey findings include Libyans' opinions on a range of topics, including: the current situation; the performance of elected institutions; views on democracy, political parties, and leaders; claims to regional autonomy; the constitution-drafting assembly; international organizations; armed groups; and personal security. The report also includes comparisons with findings from the two previous surveys in this series, conducted in May and September 2013. The findings yield several broad themes about Libyan views:

1. *Libyans continue to be concerned about the country's security and stability.* The vast majority of Libyans continue to view disarmament of militias, political stability, and personal security as the most important issues to be addressed. Instability in the country was highlighted by the abduction of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan in October – an action which 92 percent of Libyans believe was not justified. Libyans place primary responsibility for ensuring security with Zeidan and his cabinet.
2. *Claims of regional autonomy are not supported by the majority of Libyans.* Libyans largely reject the declarations of regional autonomy made by the Cyrenaican Political Bureau in the East and by tribal leaders in the South. Even within the two regions, majorities disapprove of the declarations. Furthermore, a majority of Libyans also say that the seizure of oil production facilities by armed groups is unjustified.
3. *Libyans exhibit growing dissatisfaction with the performance of the General National Congress (GNC).* Sixty-eight percent of Libyans now describe the GNC's performance as poor; a 32-point fall in the legislature's performance rating since May 2013. The decline correlates to a growing perception that the GNC has not taken appropriate steps to ensure national reconciliation, improve security, combat corruption or establish a constitution-drafting assembly.
4. *Popular support for democracy remains high, with 80 percent of Libyans saying they believe it is the best form of government.* Libyans view political parties, however, with increased negativity. Forty-seven percent of Libyans now believe that parties are not necessary for democracy compared to only 14 percent in May 2013. Similarly, favorability ratings for both political parties and political leaders continued to decline.
5. *Public services—with the exception of education—receive poor evaluations from Libyans.* In the East, a greater share of Libyans have negative perceptions of the quality of public services.

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<sup>1</sup> The sampling is based on census data from 2006.

6. *Support for political parties and political leaders has seen an overall decline.* The National Forces Alliance (NFA) remains the party with the highest net support, but it has seen a 30 point drop in its overall favorability since May 2013. While most political leaders have experienced a similar decline in net favorability, Prime Minister Ali Zeidan has experienced the largest drop; his net favorability fell from 69 percent in May 2013 to negative three percent in the current survey.
7. *Fifty-two percent of Libyans say they intend to vote in the elections for the constitution-drafting assembly (CDA); a decline of eight points from September 2013.* Libyans say that the factors that will drive their choice at the ballot box are candidates' stances on human rights and knowledge of legislation and constitution-drafting. Tribal and family affiliations are the least important factors for Libyans in determining their support for CDA candidates.
8. *Among international organizations, the United Nations (UN) is viewed the most favorably by Libyans.* Sixty-four percent of Libyans have a positive view of the UN and it is also the organization that most Libyans feel their country should cooperate with to ensure political stability and security. The African Union evokes the most mixed responses.
9. *One-third of Libyans feel unsafe when traveling to work, school, the mosque, and the market.* Similarly, only 49 percent feel 'very safe' in their own homes and 61 percent feel unsafe when traveling by bus or taxi. Eighty-two percent of Libyans believe that firearms have an overall negative effect on their safety, and 94 percent support efforts to limit the spread of firearms in Libyan society.

### 3 Political Context

This survey was conducted from November 10 to December 8, 2013. It is the third in a series conducted by the National Democratic Institute and JMW Consulting throughout 2013, with two previous surveys implemented in May and September 2013. Since the previous survey, various security-related events and transitional milestones have impacted the political landscape in Libya. In the beginning of October, the Libyan Prime Minister, Ali Zeidan, was kidnapped from his hotel in Tripoli. He was released hours later. The kidnapping of Zeidan came days after U.S. forces captured Al-Qaida leader Abu Anas al-Liby, who was wanted for involvement in the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

In mid-November, a Misrata-affiliated armed group based in Tripoli fired on citizens demonstrating to call for the armed group's departure from the capital. Security forces responded and the resulting clash led to some of the bloodiest fighting since the overthrow of Gaddafi with the Tripoli Local Council Health chief reporting 47 deaths and more than 500 casualties. The incident provoked a general strike in Tripoli to demand that all militias leave the city. Prime Minister Zeidan also came under criticism for failing to implement Law No. 27 passed by the GNC, which calls for the government to remove all militias from Tripoli and state institutions, and to disband all non-state armed groups.

Instability persisted throughout the survey in Libya's East with continued assassinations in Benghazi. In November, government security forces began a push to secure both Benghazi and Derna leading to confrontations with local armed groups. The federalist Cyrenaican Political Bureau led by Ibrahim Jadhnan continued to demand autonomy for the region—including the creation of a regional government, regional oil company, and seizure of oil production facilities.

During the survey period Libya continued to prepare for a constitution-drafting assembly (CDA) election. The 60-member CDA will be tasked with drafting Libya's new constitution and submitting it to a popular referendum for approval. The survey period occurred during the CDA candidate registration period, which ran from October 6 to November 12, and the voter registration period, which began on December 1.

Preparations for several national dialogue initiatives also took place throughout the survey period. On November 3, the National Forces Alliance (NFA) launched a National Dialogue to convene local and national political, cultural, and religious leaders to discuss transitional issues. Both the GNC and Prime Minister's office prepared similar initiatives.

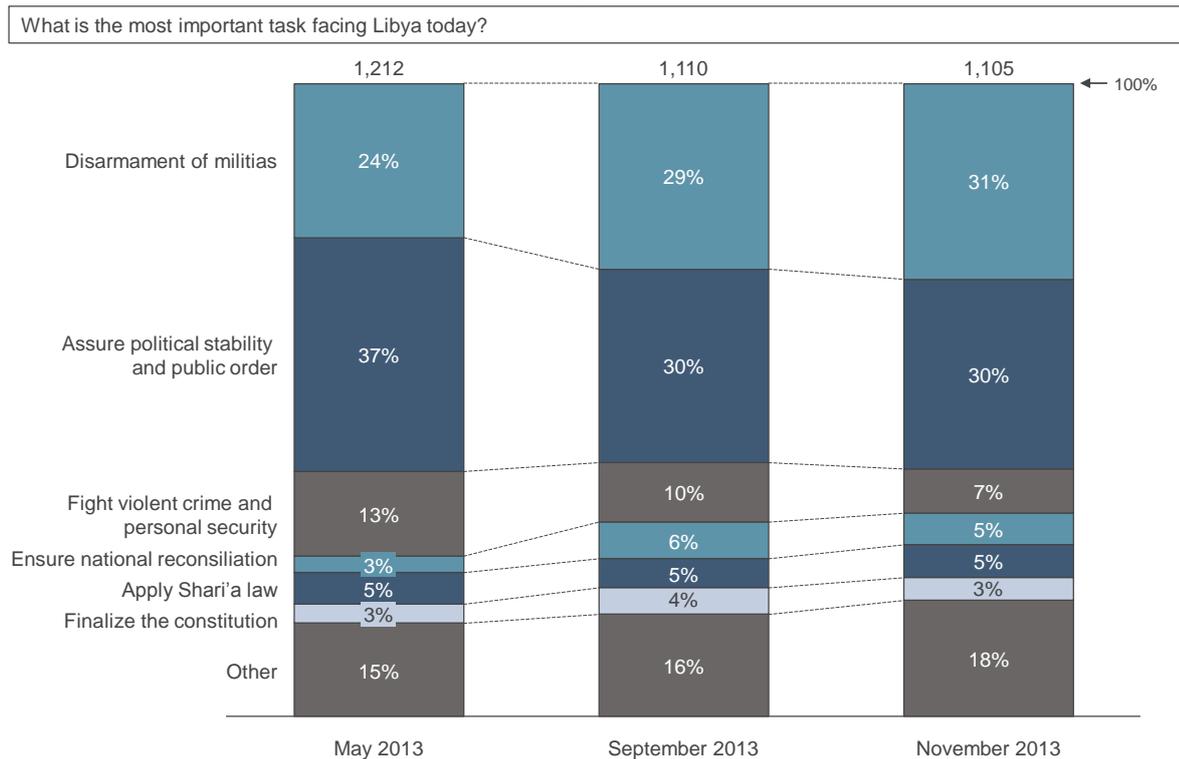
## 4 National Direction

### Summary:

- Similar to surveys in May and September 2013, Libyans view efforts to disarm militias, promote political stability, and ensure personal security as the most important tasks facing the country.
- Sixty-four percent of Libyans remain optimistic about Libya's situation, and a similar share believes that three years from now, Libya's situation will be better than before the revolution.
- Ninety-two percent of Libyans do not believe the October 2013 abduction of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was justified.

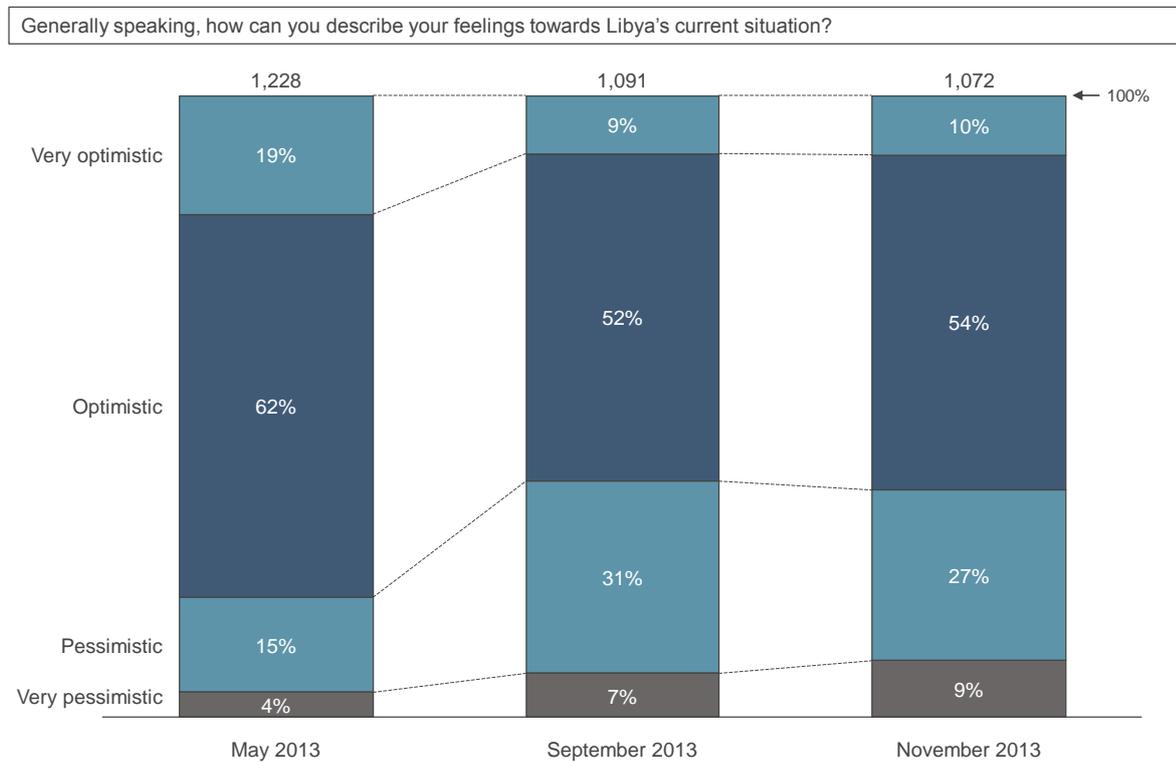
The following section assesses Libyans' views on the country's current situation and expectations for the future. Security continues to be the highest priority for citizens, in line with findings from May and September. Thirty percent of Libyans see political stability and public order as the most important task facing the country, while an almost equal share (31 percent), prioritizes disarmament of militias. Militia disarmament is increasingly being identified as a most important priority, rising seven percentage points from May to November.

**Figure 1: Security issues remain top priorities**



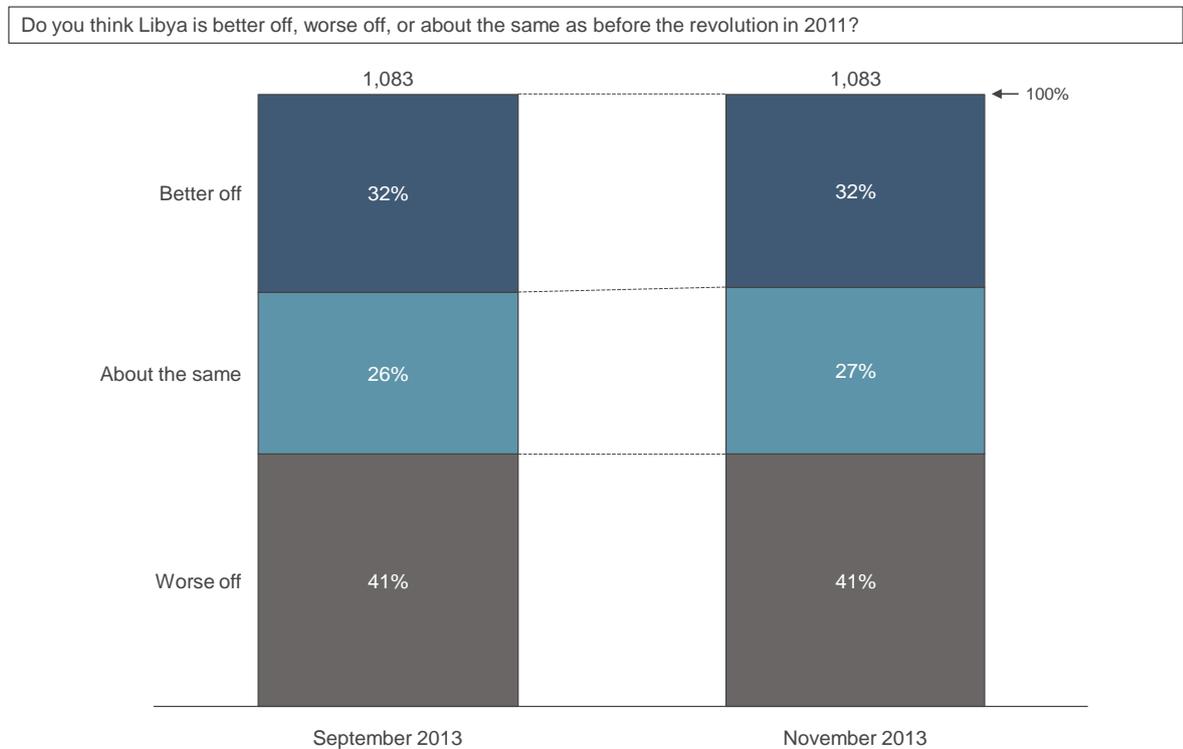
Overall, respondents remain optimistic about the current state of affairs in Libya, with minor variances from September. The proportion of Libyans describing themselves as ‘very optimistic’ or ‘optimistic’ rose slightly from September to November, while the share of pessimistic respondents fell to 36 percent overall.

**Figure 2: Sixty-four percent of Libyans continue to be optimistic about the current situation**



Forty-one percent of Libyans continue to believe that Libya is worse off since the revolution with no significant changes between September and November 2013.

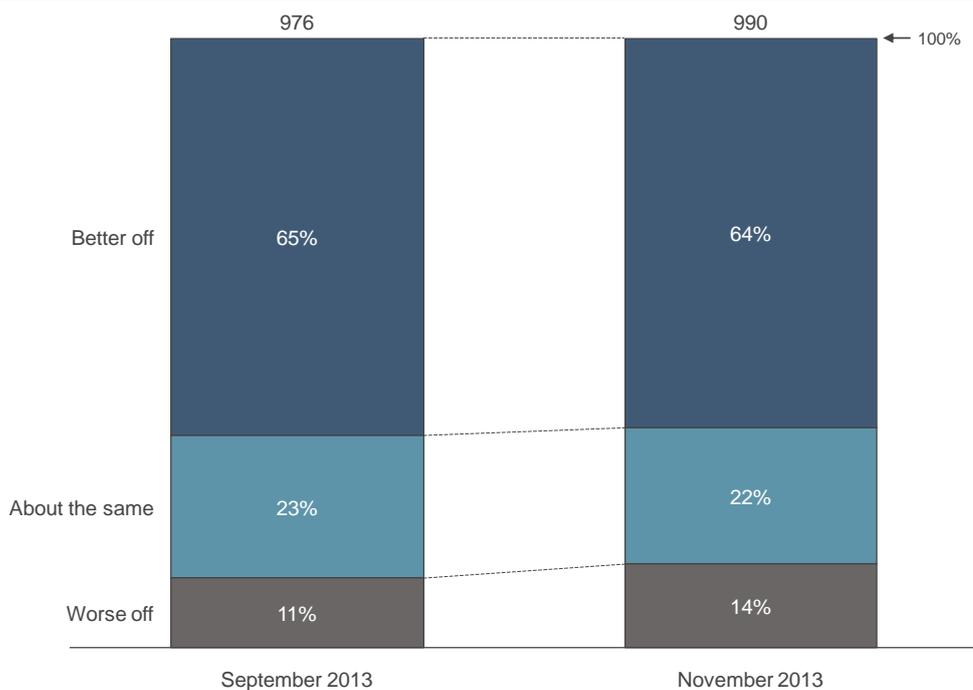
**Figure 3: Forty-one percent of Libyans continue to believe that Libya is worse off since the revolution**



Sixty-four percent of respondents predict that in three years, Libya will be better off than before the 2011 revolution. Fourteen percent anticipate that the country will be worse off – a slight increase from September.

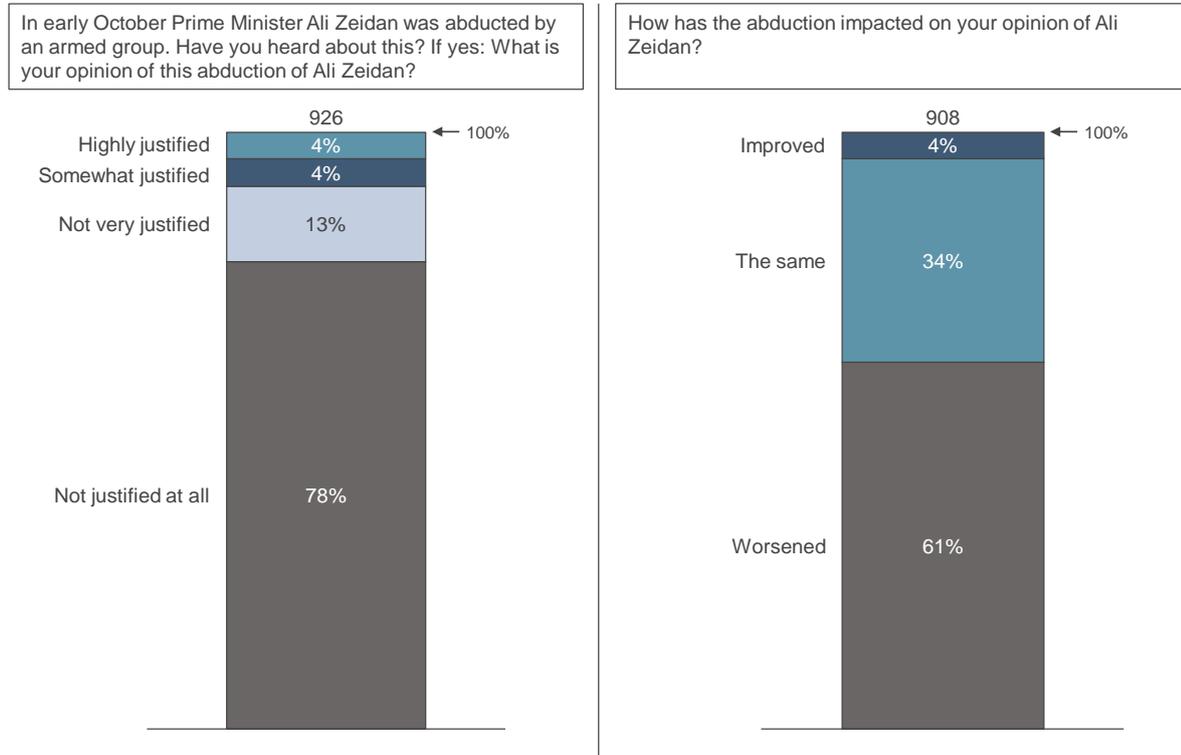
**Figure 4: No significant changes in outlook on the situation in Libya three years from now**

Do you think the situation in Libya three years from now will be better than, worse than, or about the same as before the revolution in 2011?



In early October, the Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was abducted from a hotel in Tripoli. Ninety-two percent of Libyans view this act as unjustified. Despite the clear lack of support for the abduction, 61 percent of Libyans note that the incident led them to perceive the Prime Minister in a more negative light, while the second-largest share (34 percent) say the incident did not alter their views.

**Figure 5: Abduction of Prime Minister Zeidan is not seen as justified**



## 5 Regionalism

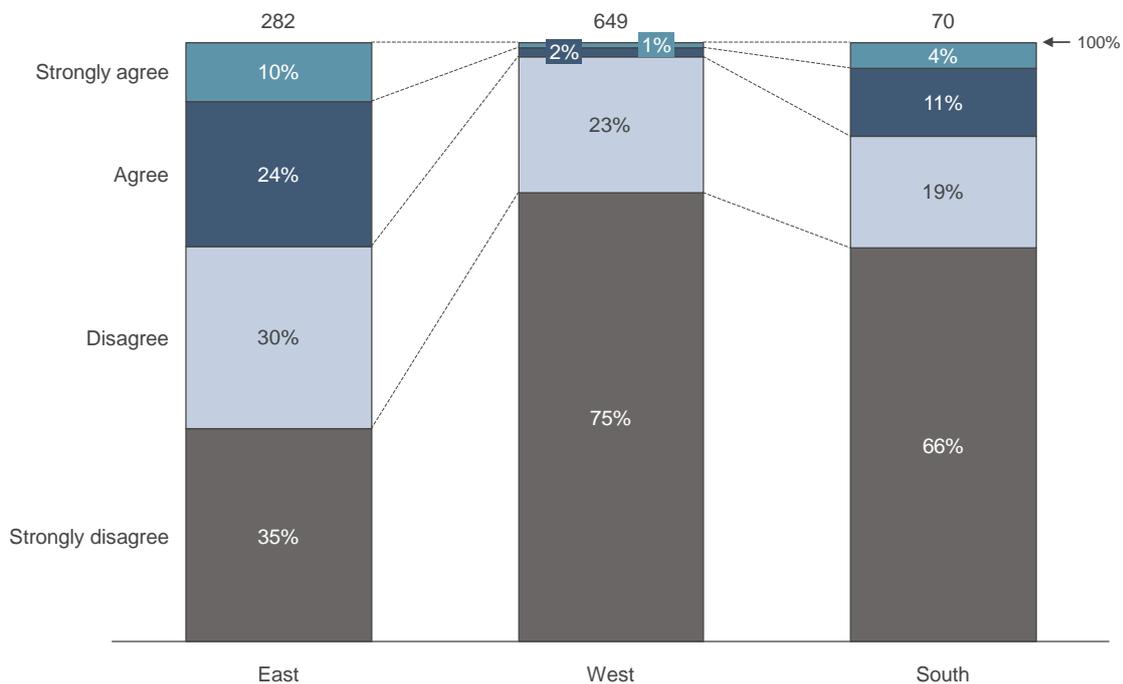
### Summary:

- The majority of Libyans disagree with declarations of regional autonomy made by the Cyrenaican Political Bureau in the East and tribal leaders in Fezzan in the South.
- Declarations of autonomy invoke the most support in the country's East and strong disapproval in the West.
- A majority of Libyans view the seizure of oil production facilities by armed groups as unjustified.

In 2013, local figures in Libya's East and South took actions to advocate for greater regional autonomy. Across the country, a majority of Libyans disagree with the Cyrenaican Political Bureau's June 2013 declaration of autonomy for the eastern region of Cyrenaica. Nonetheless, levels of disapproval vary markedly across Libya's three regions. Sixty-five percent of Libyans disagree with the declaration in the East, compared to 85 percent in the South and 98 percent in the West.

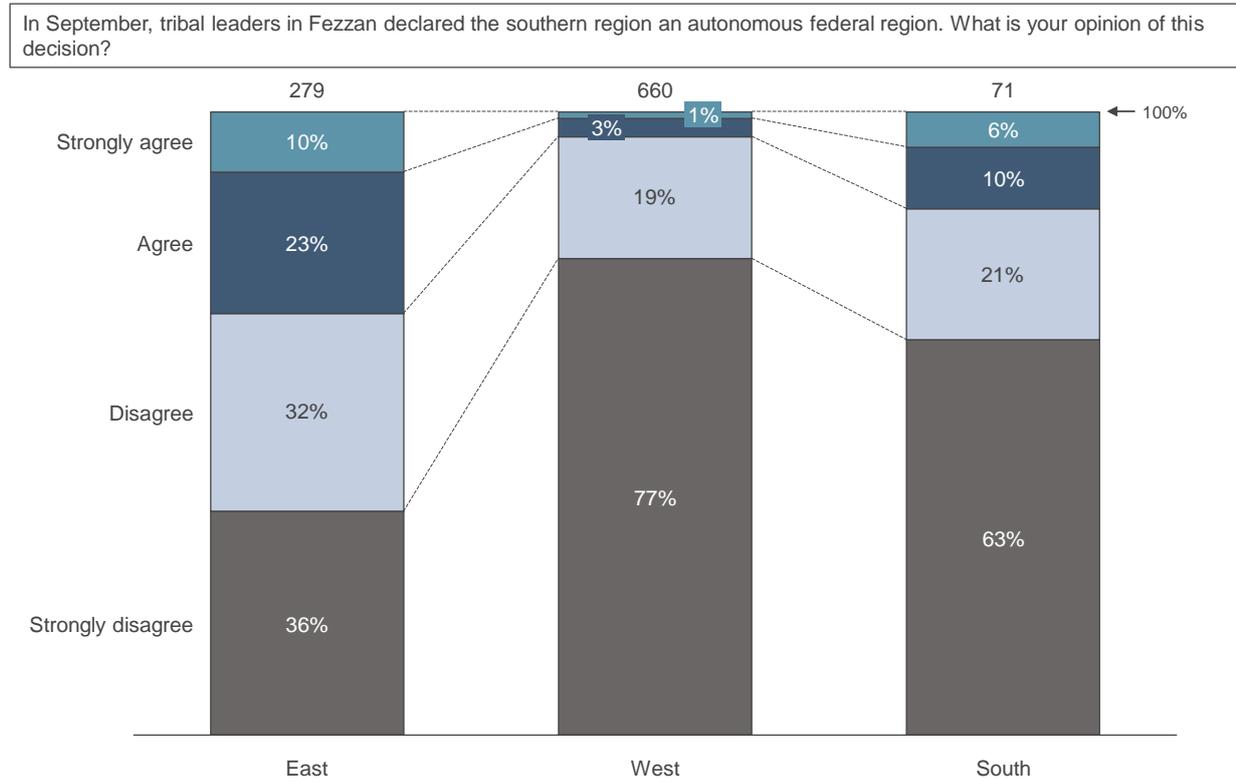
**Figure 6: Sixty-five percent of Libyans in the East disagree with Cyrenaican Political Bureau's declaration of regional autonomy**

In June the Cyrenaican Political Bureau declared the eastern region an autonomous region. What is your opinion of this decision?



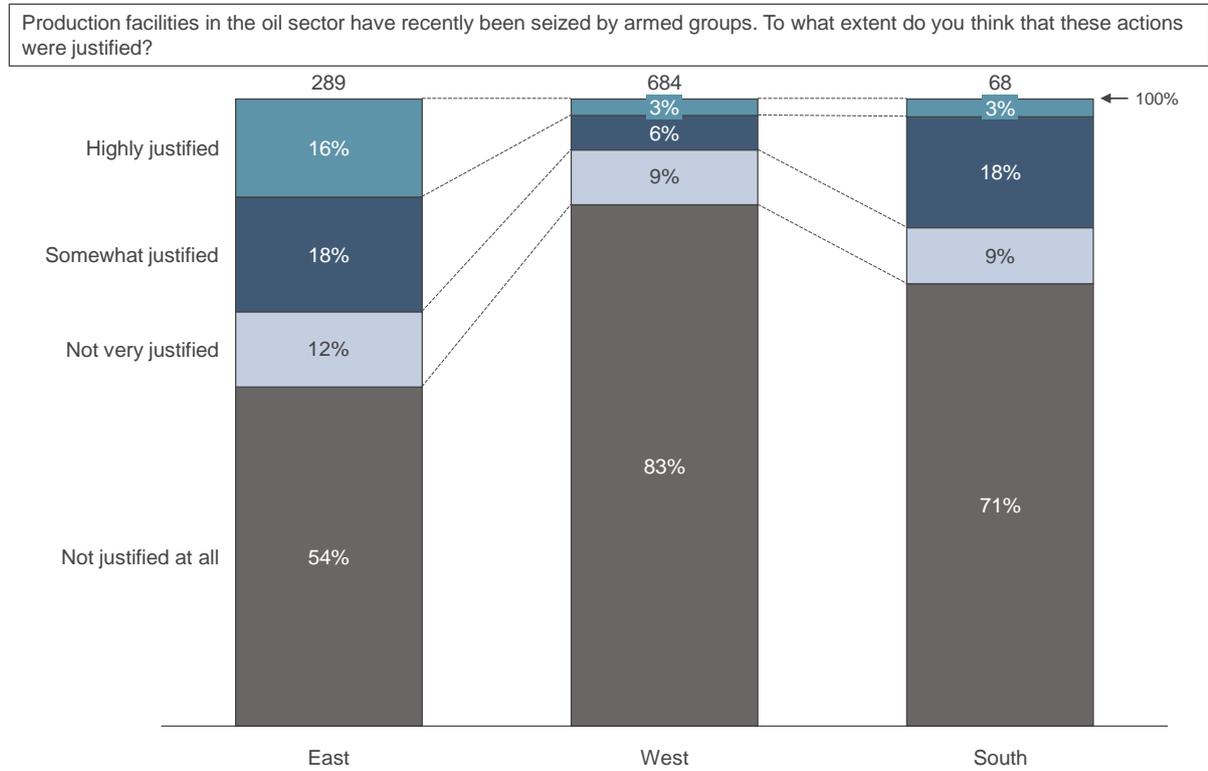
Similarly, in September tribal leaders in Libya’s South also declared autonomy for the Fezzan region. Across all three regions, majorities of Libyans disagree with this act. The declaration it evokes greater support in the East and South, with respondents in the East twice as likely to endorse the decision in comparison the South.

**Figure 7: Eighty-four percent of Libyans in the South disagree with a declaration of regional autonomy by tribal leaders**



Armed groups have assumed control over oil production facilities in various locations throughout Libya. While majorities of Libyans in each region do not believe that the seizures are justified, respondents in the South and East are more likely to view these actions as justified.

**Figure 8: Majority of Libyans across all regions believe the seizure of oil production facilities by armed groups is not justified**



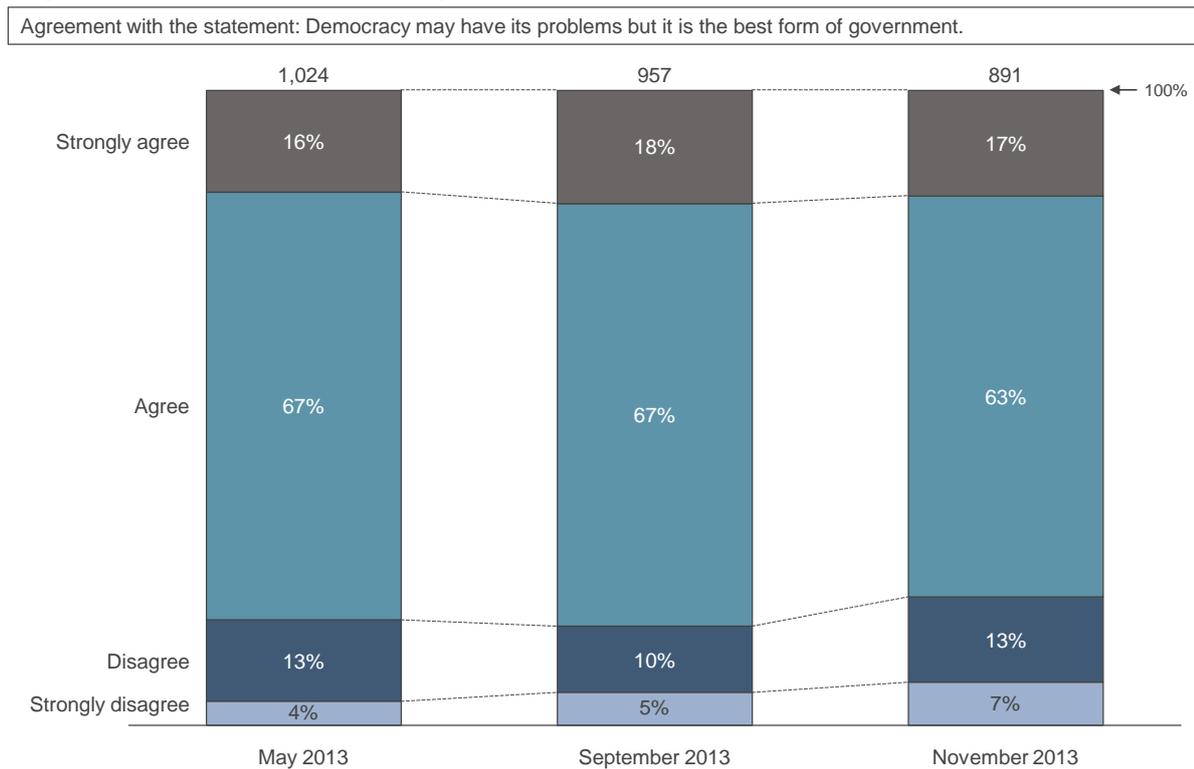
## 6 Democracy and Governance

### Summary:

- Libyans continue to voice strong support for democracy; 80 percent of Libyans agree that democracy is the best form of government.
- Views of the GNC's performance continue to deteriorate, and fewer Libyans now believe that the GNC has taken adequate steps to ensure national reconciliation, combat corruption, improve security, and launch the constitution-drafting process.
- Libyans generally rate the quality of education services positively, but other public services such as electricity, healthcare, infrastructure, and law enforcement evoke negative evaluations. Overall, the East tends to rate public service delivery more poorly, while service delivery receives the highest ratings in the West.

Despite their increasing pessimism and preoccupation with security issues, Libyans' positive views of democracy have changed only slightly between May and November 2013. Eighty percent of Libyans continue to agree that democracy, despite its flaws, is the best form of government. However, this represents a five point decrease since September 2013. Libyans' faith in democracy is noteworthy given that their satisfaction with current leaders and institutions continues to decline.

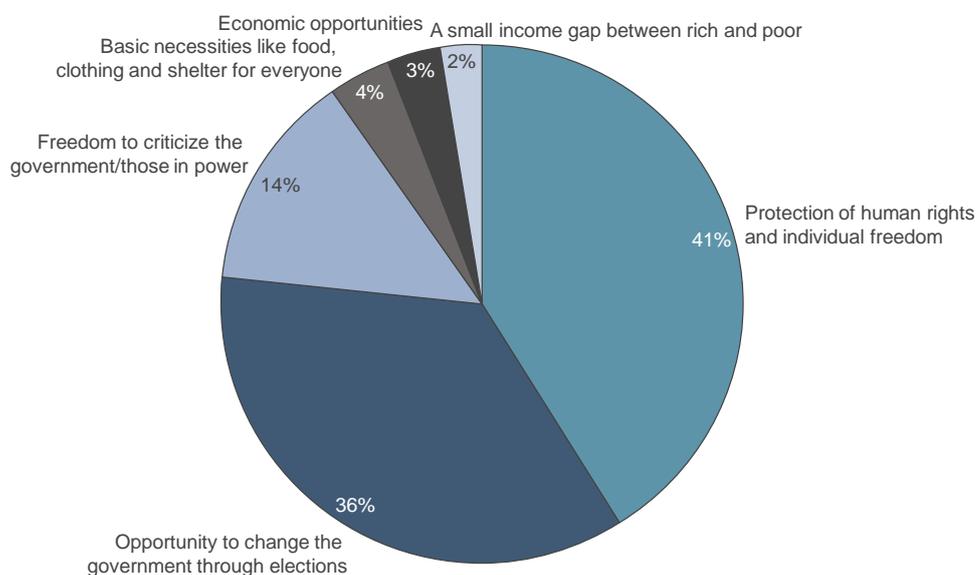
**Figure 9: Continued Strong Support for Democracy**



A majority of Libyans continue to identify rights, freedoms, and elections as the most important characteristics of democracy. Similar to the May and September surveys, 41 percent believe the most important characteristic of democracy is the protection of human rights and freedoms, for 36 percent of respondents it is the opportunity to change the government through elections, and for 14 percent it is the freedom to criticize those in power. Only nine percent of Libyans equate the most important characteristic of democracy with economic gains (producing economic opportunities, reducing income inequality, and providing basic living necessities).

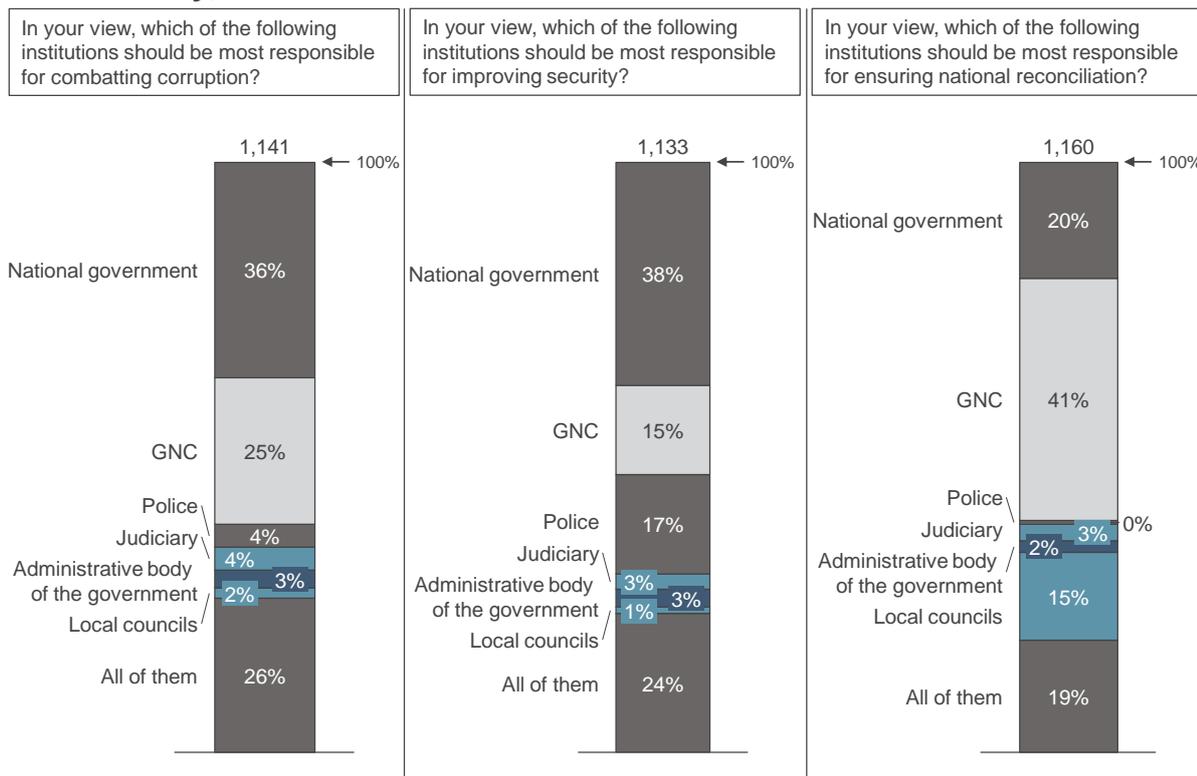
**Figure 10: Libyans continue to characterize democracy in terms of political freedoms and human rights**

If you have to choose only one thing, what would you choose as the most important characteristic of democracy?



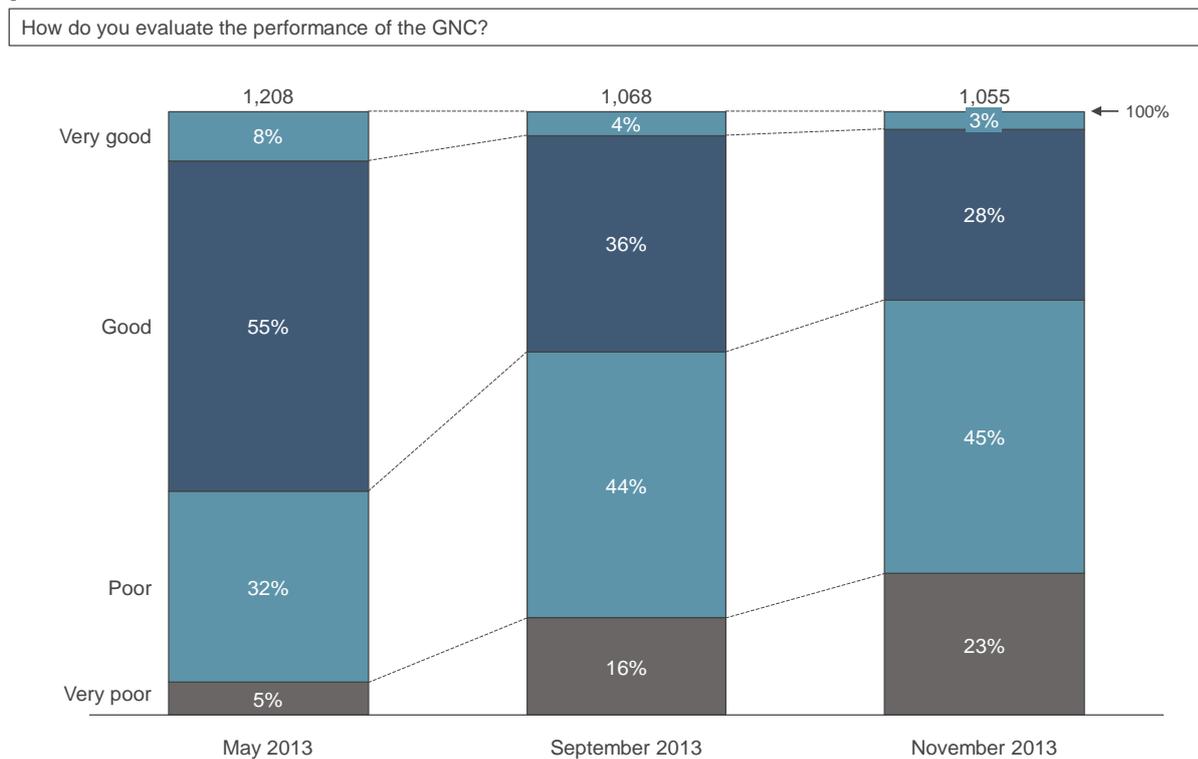
Libyans differ over which government institution should assume primary responsibility in addressing a range of key issues facing the country, such as security, national reconciliation, and corruption. Libyans tend to assign the most responsibility to the national government and the GNC, though in some cases significant portions of respondents view a role for other actors, such as the police and local councils. Thirty-six percent of Libyans believe the national government should be responsible for combating corruption, while another 38 percent believe the national government should also be responsible for ensuring security. Forty-one percent believe that the GNC has primary responsibility for ensuring national reconciliation.

**Figure 11: National government should be responsible for corruption and security, while the GNC should address national reconciliation**



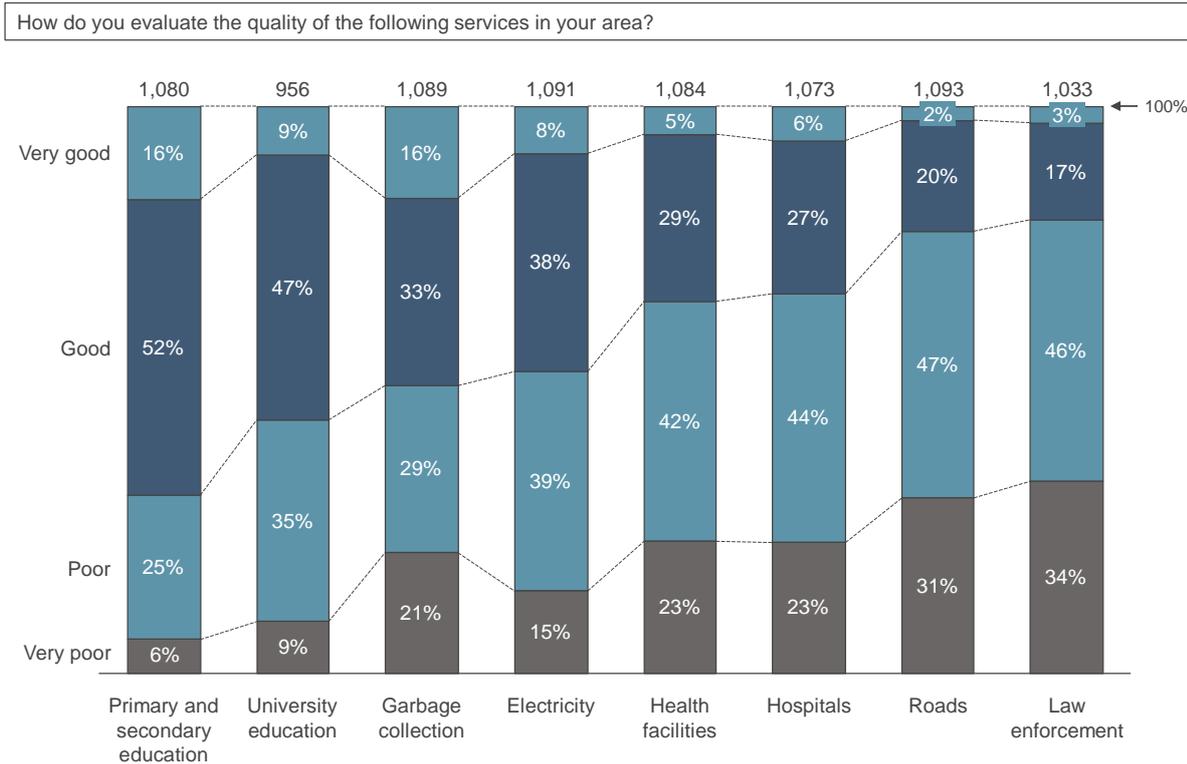
Libyans' evaluation of the GNC's performance continue to decline. The share of respondents who rated the GNC's performance as either good or very good fell from 63 percent in May to 40 percent in September and 31 percent in November. The portion of Libyans who describe the GNC's performance as poor or very poor increased to from 60 percent in September and to 68 percent in November.

**Figure 12: Declining portion of Libyans have positive views of the GNC's performance**



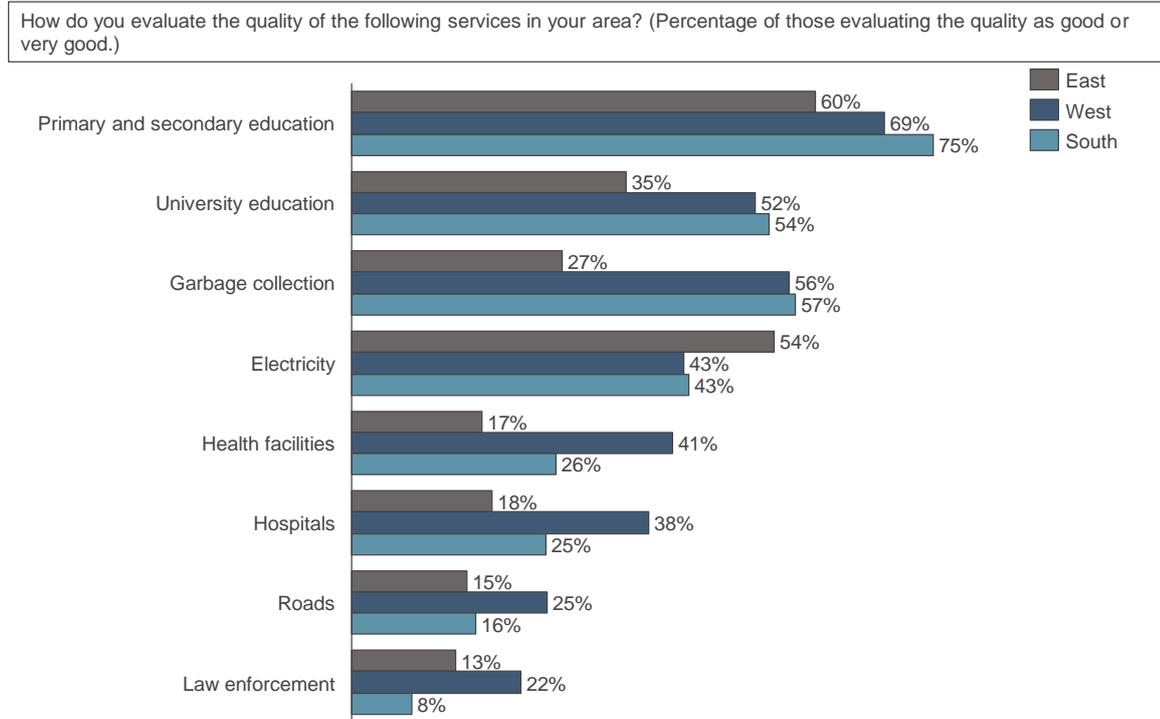
Overall, Libyans rate the quality of public services poorly. Views of law enforcement are the most negative, with only 20 percent of Libyans rating its delivery as good or very good. The only services rated by a majority of Libyans as 'good' or 'very good' are primary, secondary, and university education. Majorities of Libyans believe that delivery of electricity, health services, infrastructure, and law enforcement services is either 'poor' or 'very poor'.

**Figure 13: Education is the only public service that a majority of Libyans rank as 'good' or 'very good'**



Important differences exist across regions in terms of perceptions of the quality of public service delivery. Respondents in the East generally tend to evaluate the delivery of public services more negatively than those in other regions. Overall, the West tends to rate public services more positively than other regions.

**Figure 14: Significant regional variations in perceptions of the quality of public service delivery**



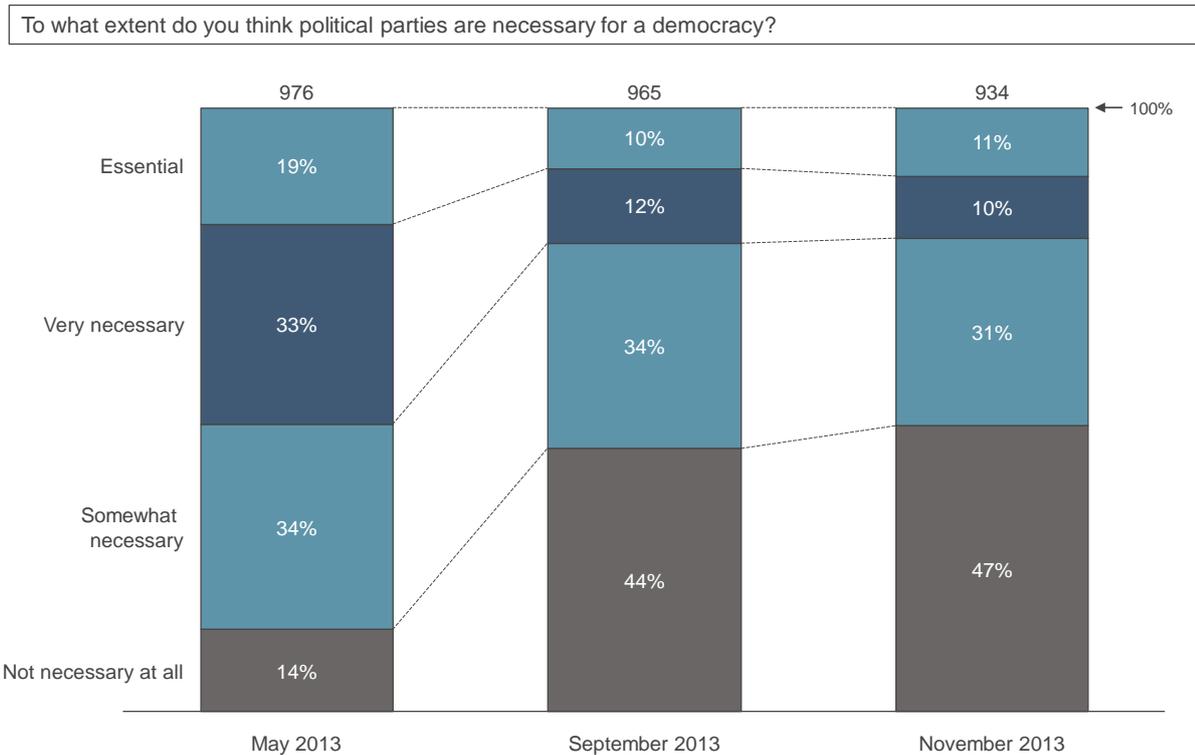
## 7 Political Parties and Leaders

### Summary:

- Libyans' increasingly view political parties negatively; 47 percent believe that parties are not necessary for democracy and the net favorability of most political parties declined between September and November 2013.
- The net favorability of political leaders declined from September to November, but their ratings are generally higher than those of political parties.
- In comparison with past surveys, fewer Libyans say they intend to vote in parliamentary elections.

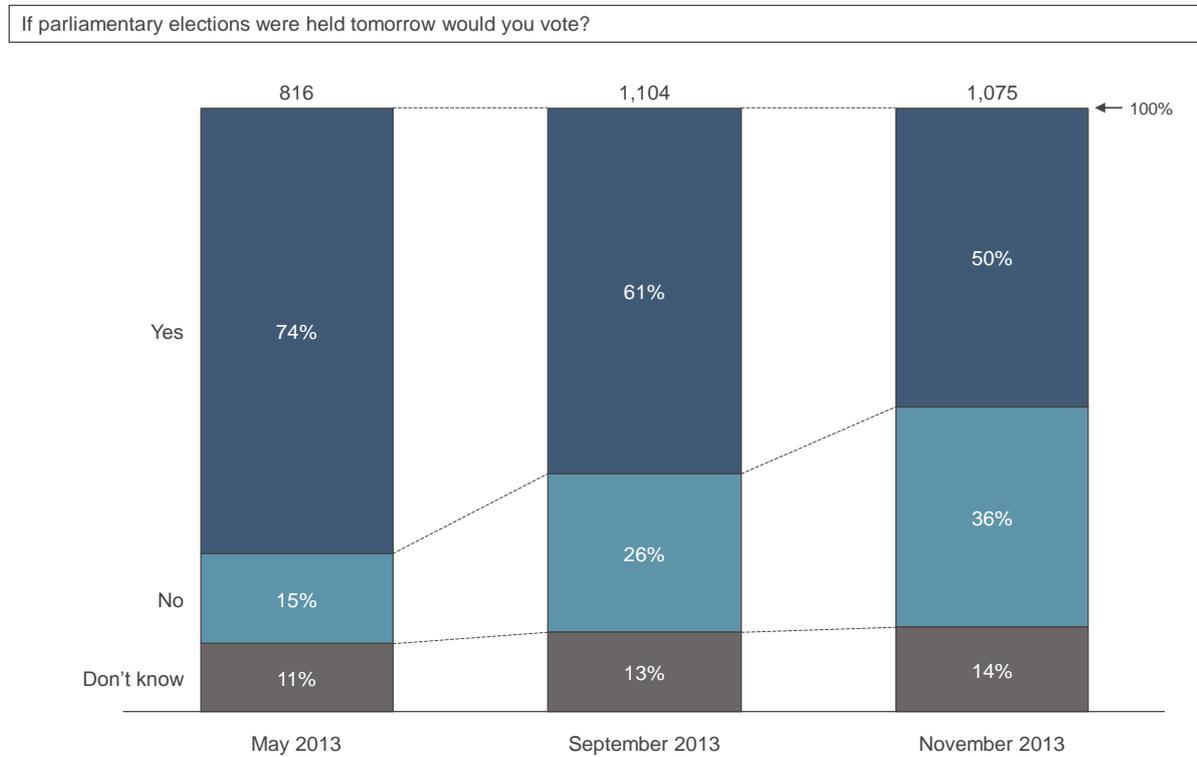
Libyans expressed increasing scepticism about the necessity of political parties in a democracy. While a majority still believe that parties are, to some extent, necessary for democracy, support for this view fell significantly between May and September, and these views persisted in November.

**Figure 15: Fewer Libyans believe political parties are necessary in a democracy**



The portion of Libyans who say they intend to vote in future parliamentary elections continues to fall. Fifty percent of Libyans responded in November that they would vote if elections were held tomorrow, down from 74 percent in May and 61 percent in September.

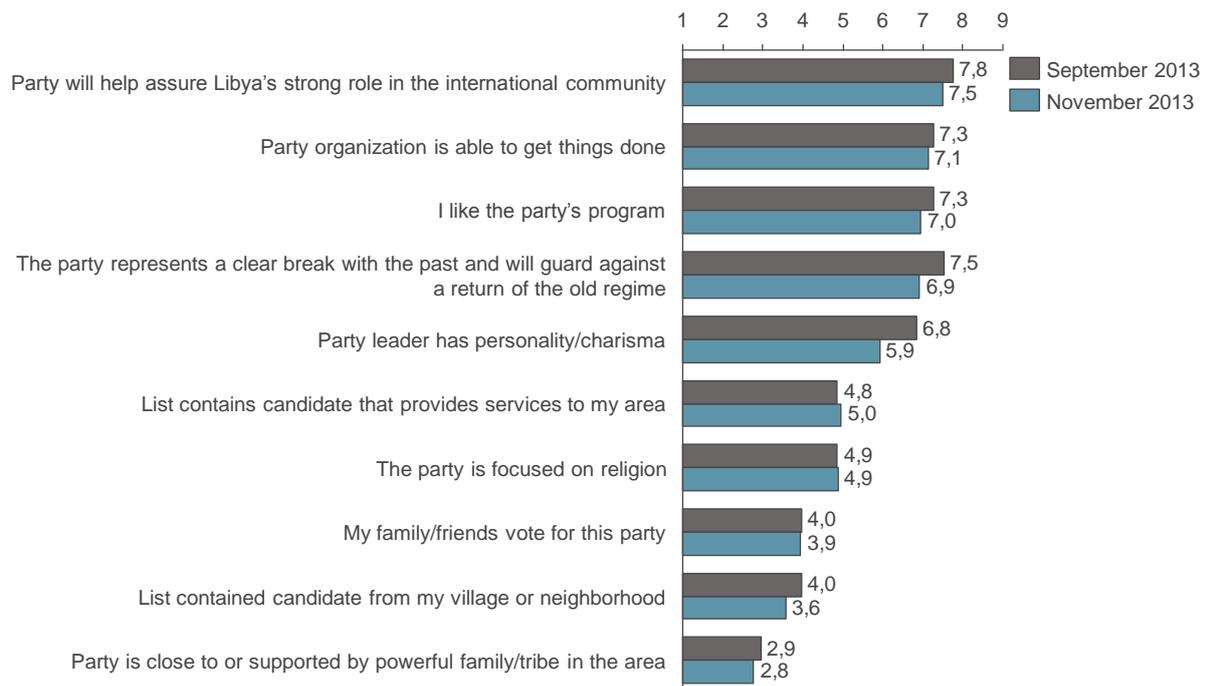
**Figure 16: Decline in the number of Libyans who intend to vote in elections**



In deciding which party to support in elections, Libyans continue to identify political factors—party identity, platform, and performance—as more important than local or tribal ties. In general, Libyans are more likely to vote for a political party if it is seen as: able to promote Libya’s role internationally; represents a clear break from the former regime and a bulwark against the return of former regime members; is organizationally capable and able to accomplish its goals; and has a suitable political program.

**Figure 17: Political parties: role in international community, organization, and party program shape voting opinion**

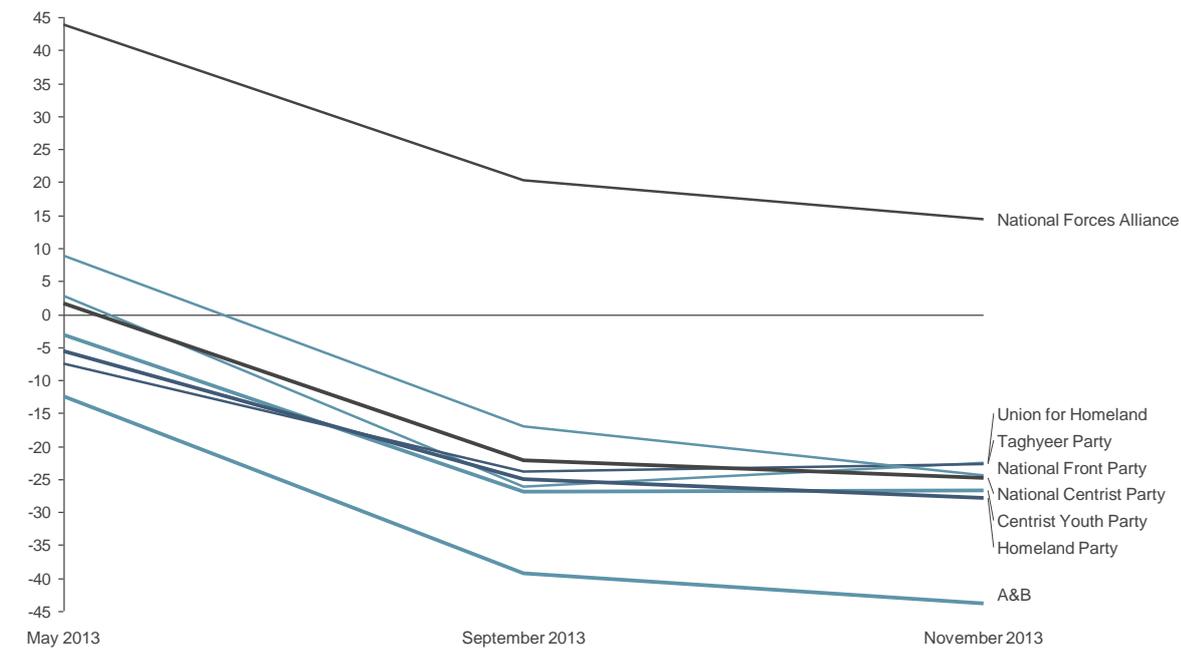
On a scale of 1 to 9, 1 being completely unimportant and 9 being very important, how important were the different elements in shaping your opinion of which party to vote for?



Parties' favorability ratings declined in November, continuing a trend observed between the May and September surveys. Even though the NFA is still the most popular party, positive perceptions of the NFA declined significantly since September 2013. Unlike most parties, both the Tagheer and Union for Homeland parties witnessed slight increases in favorability between September and November.

**Figure 18: Decline in positive perceptions of most political parties**

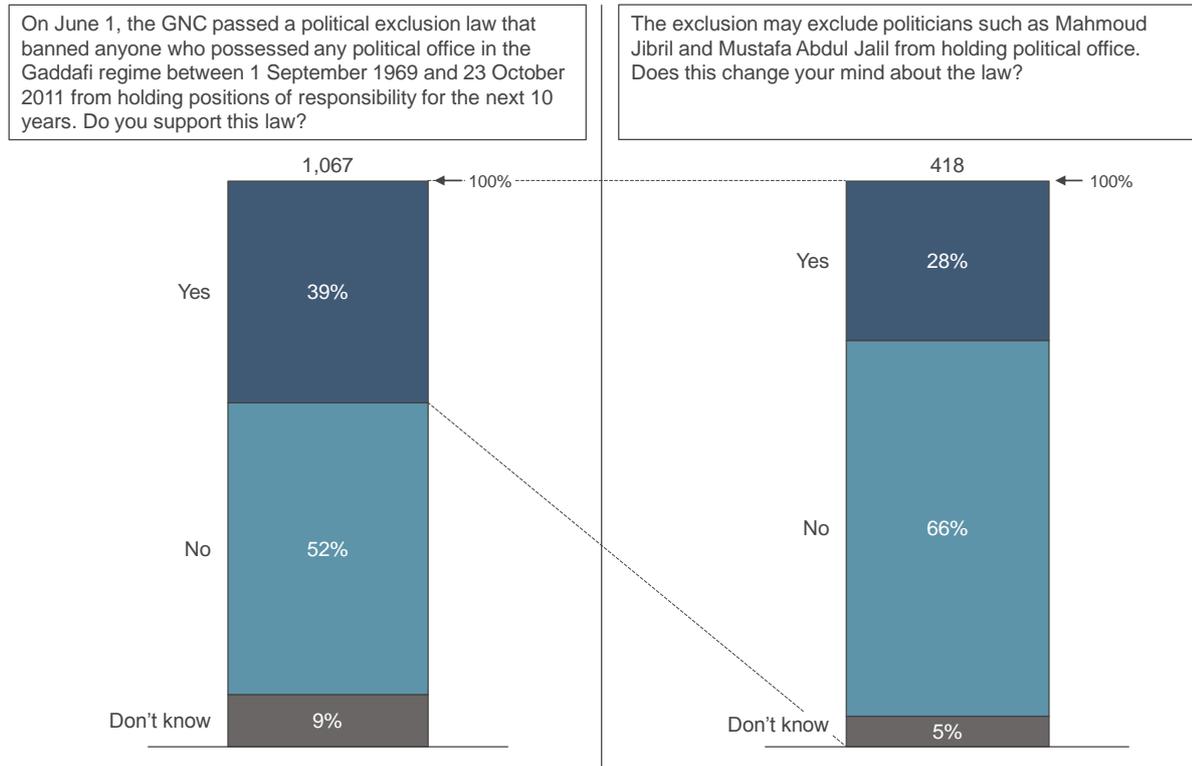
Now I would like to hear what your feelings are towards different political parties. For each of the following, please tell me if you feel positively, negatively about the party, or if you don't know the party well enough to have an opinion.  
 Net favorability (favorable minus unfavorable).





On May 5, 2013 the GNC passed a Political Isolation Law that would exclude a wide range of officials affiliated with the Gaddafi regime from holding public office and leading political parties for a ten-year period. In November 2013, 39 percent of Libyans indicated support for the law. Yet, after supporters are informed that the law may exclude notable leaders from the country’s political transition—such as Mahmoud Jibril and Mustafa Abdul Jalil—from holding political office, 28 percent of the law’s supporters change their opinion.

**Figure 20: Thirty-nine percent of Libyans support the Political Isolation Law**



## 8 The Development of a New Constitution

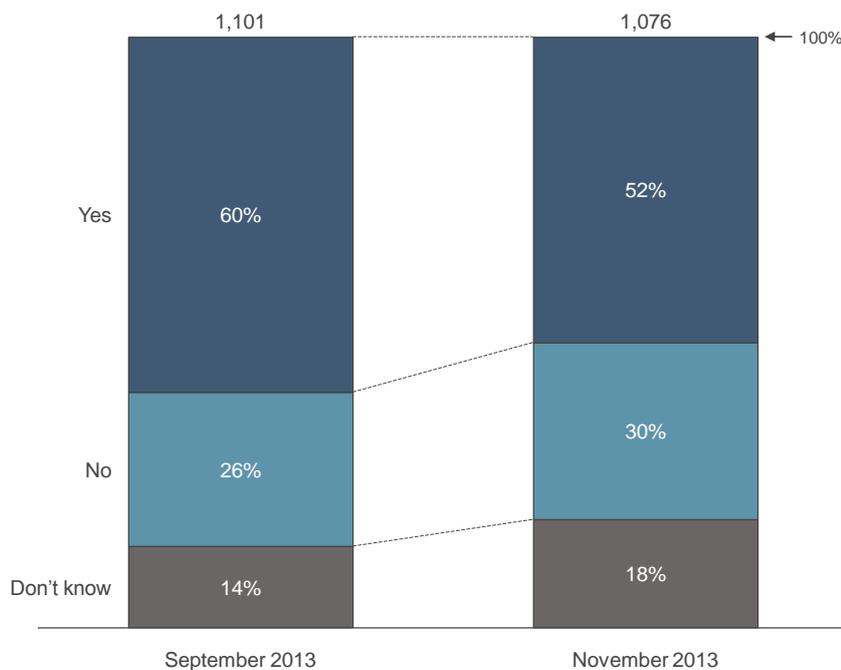
Summary:

- Fifty-two percent of Libyans intend to vote in the upcoming constitution-drafting assembly (CDA) election; an eight percentage point drop from September 2013.
- Those who intend to vote report that the factors that will drive their choice at the ballot box are candidates' stances on human rights and knowledge of legislation and constitution-drafting.
- Shari'a continues to be viewed as an important reference for the constitution.

In November 2013, 52 percent of Libyans intend to vote in the CDA election. This represents an eight percentage point drop since September 2013.

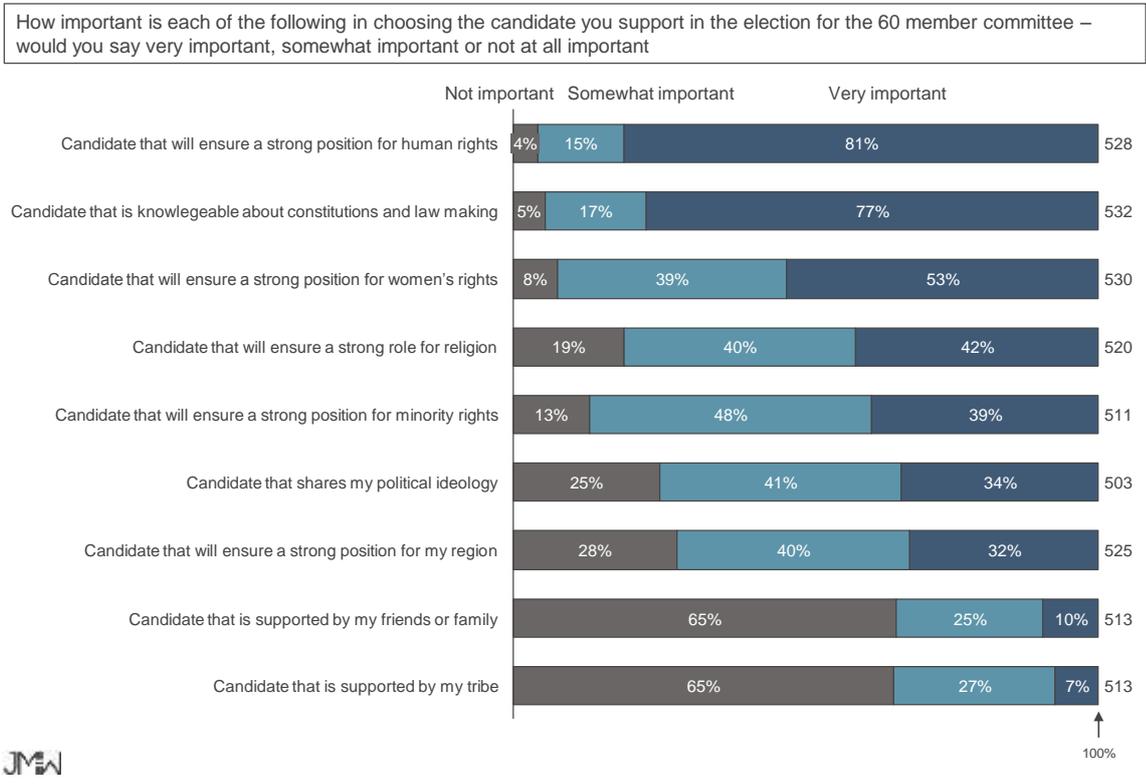
**Figure 21: Decline in the share of Libyans who intend to vote in the constitution-drafting assembly election**

As you may know, there will be elections for the 60 member committee. Do you intend to vote in the election?



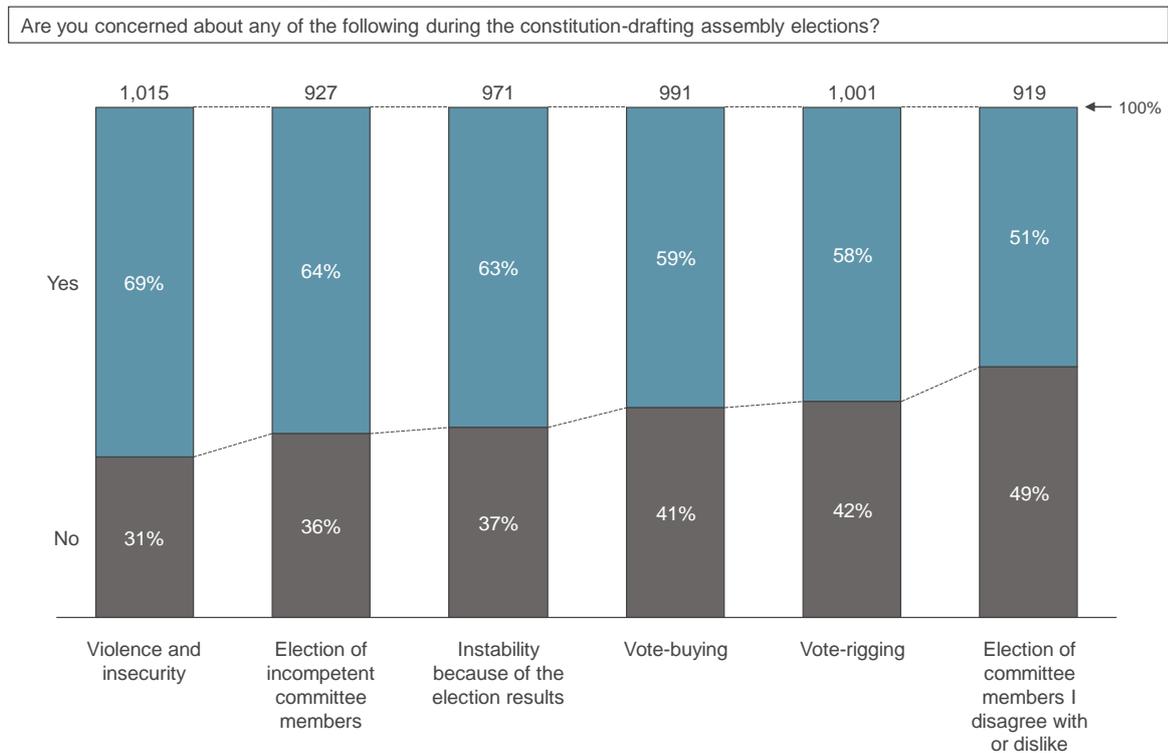
Respondents who intend to vote seek candidates with strong commitments to human rights, and knowledge of constitutions and law-making. Tribal and family affiliation rank last in factors that influence voters' choice of CDA candidates.

**Figure 22: Libyans say a strong position on human rights is the most important factor when choosing CDA candidates**



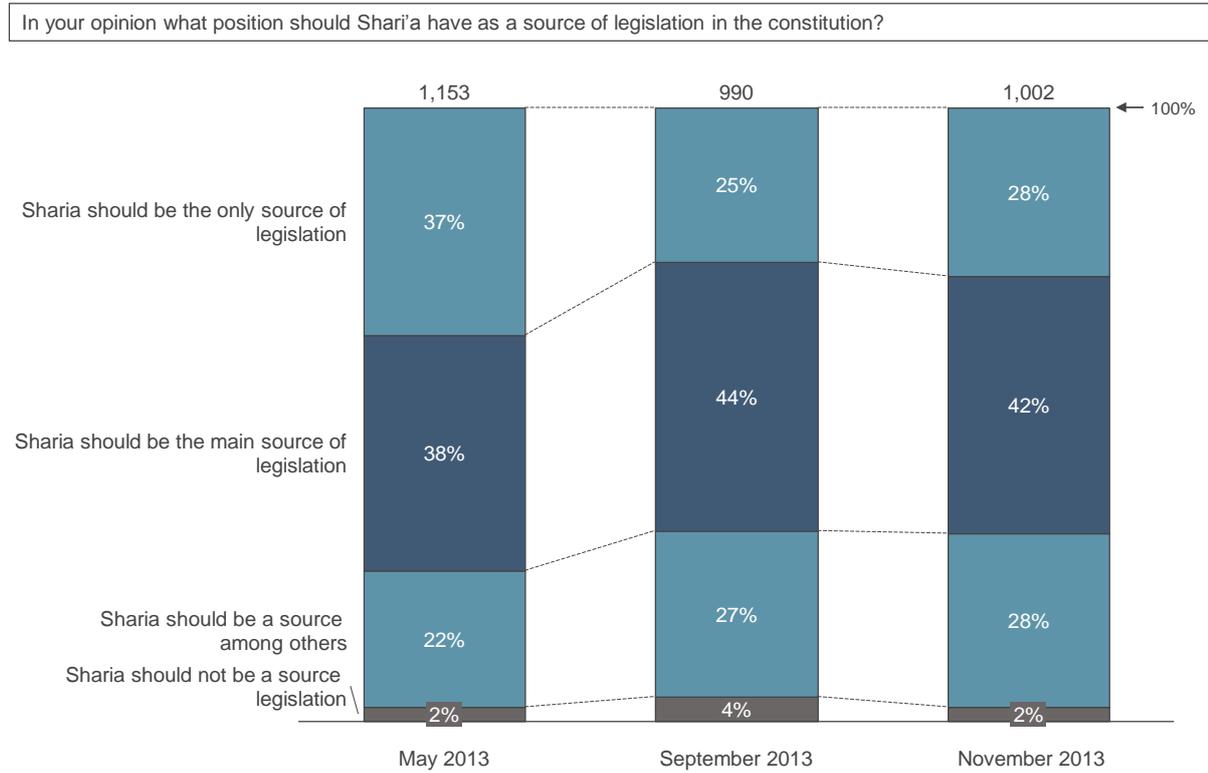
A majority of Libyans express concern about the conduct of the CDA election: 69 percent of Libyans anticipate violence and insecurity and 63 percent worry that the election results will contribute to instability. Majorities of Libyans also express concern about the election of incompetent candidates, vote-buying, or vote-rigging.

**Figure 23: Libyans are concerned about the safety and integrity of the constitution-drafting assembly election**



Shari'a continues to be viewed as an important reference for the constitution. Libyans' opinions on the role of Shari'a in the new constitution have not changed significantly since September 2013, in comparison to the May to September period which saw an increase in support for other sources of legislation in the constitution in addition to Shari'a

**Figure 24: Shari'a remains an important reference for the constitution**



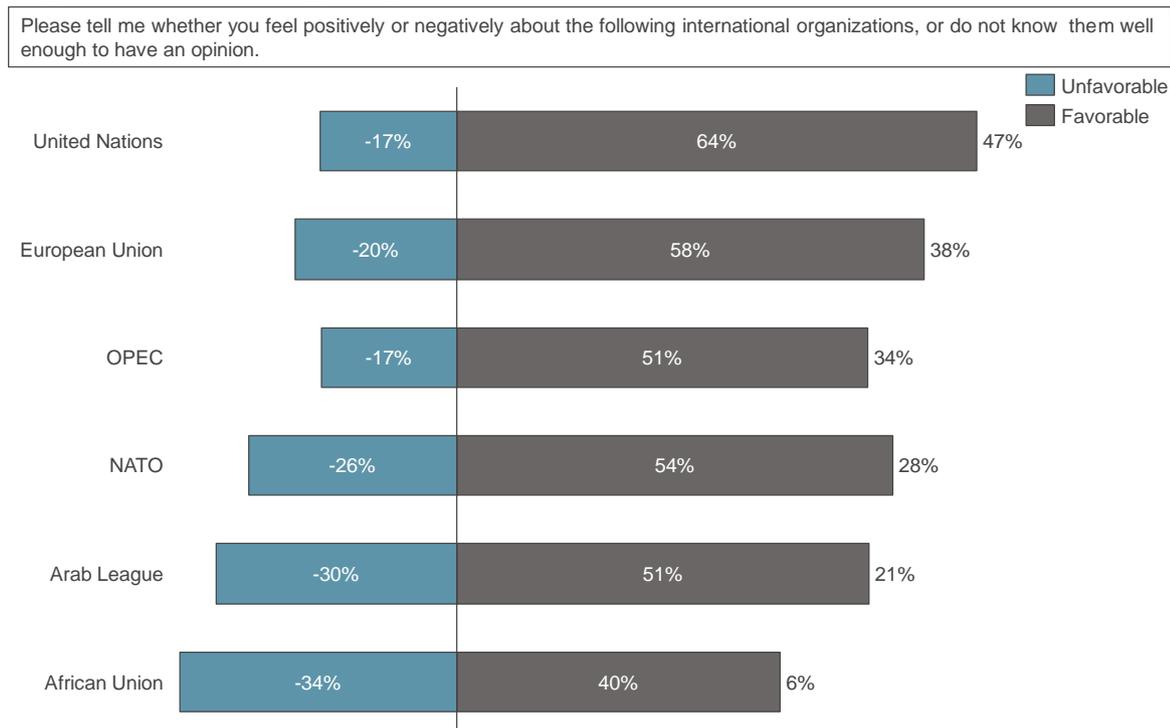
## 9 International Organizations

### Summary:

- The United Nations (UN) is the international organization with the highest net favorability rating amongst Libyans.
- A majority of Libyans favor cooperation between Libya and a range of international organizations on both economic development and security.
- The largest majority of Libyans favor the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as a potential international partner on economic development, while the UN is seen as a primary partner on ensuring political stability and security. In both cases, the African Union is considered the least favorable partner for Libya.

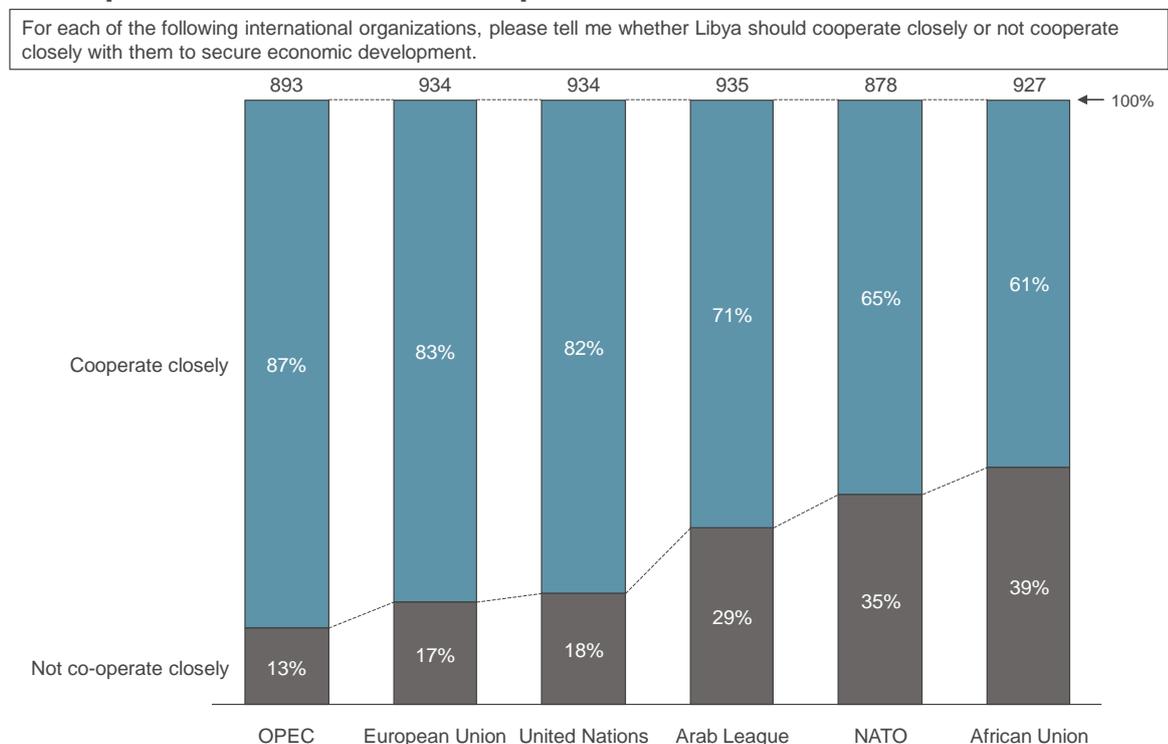
This section explores Libyans' attitudes towards different international organizations. The UN has the highest favorability, with a net rating of 47 percent. The European Union (EU) follows the UN as the second-most favorable organization, while the African Union (AU) is the most negatively viewed with six percent net favorability. Large majorities of respondents are able to recognize these organizations.

**Figure 25: The UN is the most positively perceived international organization among Libyans**



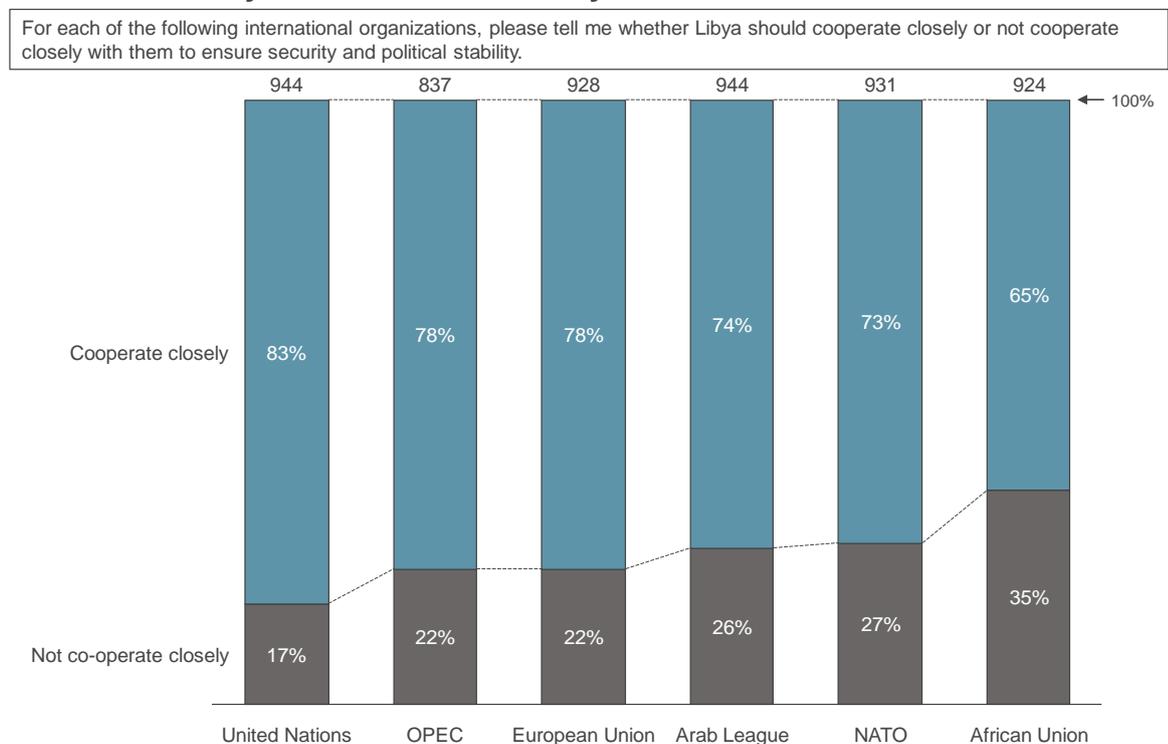
Asked more directly about Libya’s potential cooperation with international organizations, OPEC receives the most support as a potential partner in the area of economic development, followed by the EU and the UN. Majorities of Libyans seek cooperation with each of the organizations listed.

**Figure 26: Strong support for partnerships with OPEC, the UN, and the EU to promote economic development**



Similarly, majorities of Libyans believe their country should cooperate closely with international organizations to ensure security and political stability. Again the UN, OPEC, and EU rank highest, while the AU ranks lowest.

**Figure 27: UN Perceived to be Most Important in Cooperating with to Ensure Security and Political Stability**



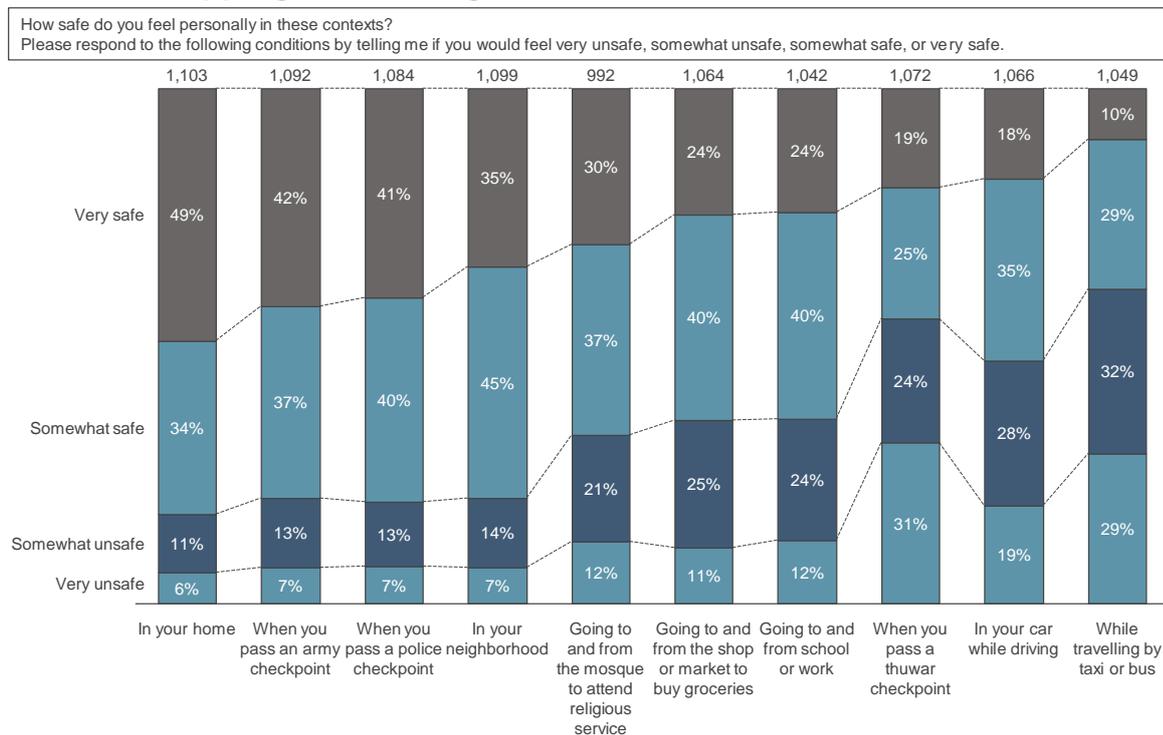
## 10 Personal Safety and Armed Groups

### Summary:

- While Libyans perceive armed groups formed during the revolution more positively than those formed after the revolution, a majority have unfavorable views of any armed group that does not abide by government authority.
- Approximately one-third of Libyans feel unsafe when traveling to ordinary locations such as school, work, the market, or the mosque, and more than half feel unsafe passing a “*thumar*”<sup>2</sup> checkpoint or traveling in a bus or taxi. Only 49 percent feel ‘very safe’ in their own homes.
- Eighty-two percent of Libyans say firearms do more to threaten their safety than to ensure it. Ninety-four percent of Libyans support efforts to limit the spread of firearms in Libya.

Libyans feel the most safe when they are at home or in their neighborhoods. However, one-third or more of Libyans identify everyday activities such as shopping, attending religious services, or going to school or work, as somewhat unsafe or very unsafe. A majority feel that travel by taxi or bus is somewhat or very unsafe; while 47 percent feel similarly about traveling in their own cars. Libyans also make a clear distinction between passing through checkpoints manned by security forces (where 80 percent feel safe) and “*thumar*,” revolutionaries or militia members (where 44 percent feel safe).

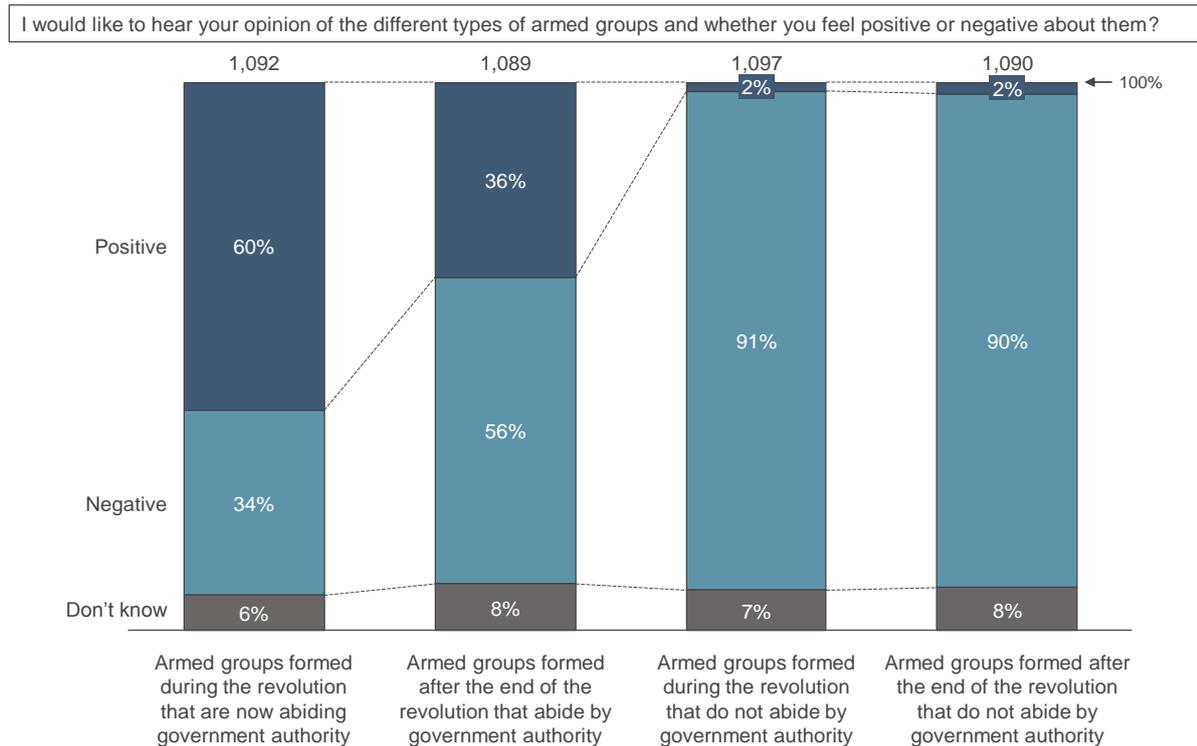
**Figure 28: Roughly one-third of Libyans feel unsafe during daily routines such as shopping or traveling to school or work**



<sup>2</sup> *Thumar* (revolutionary in Arabic) commonly refers to members of armed groups who fought against the Gaddafi regime in Libya’s 2011 uprising.

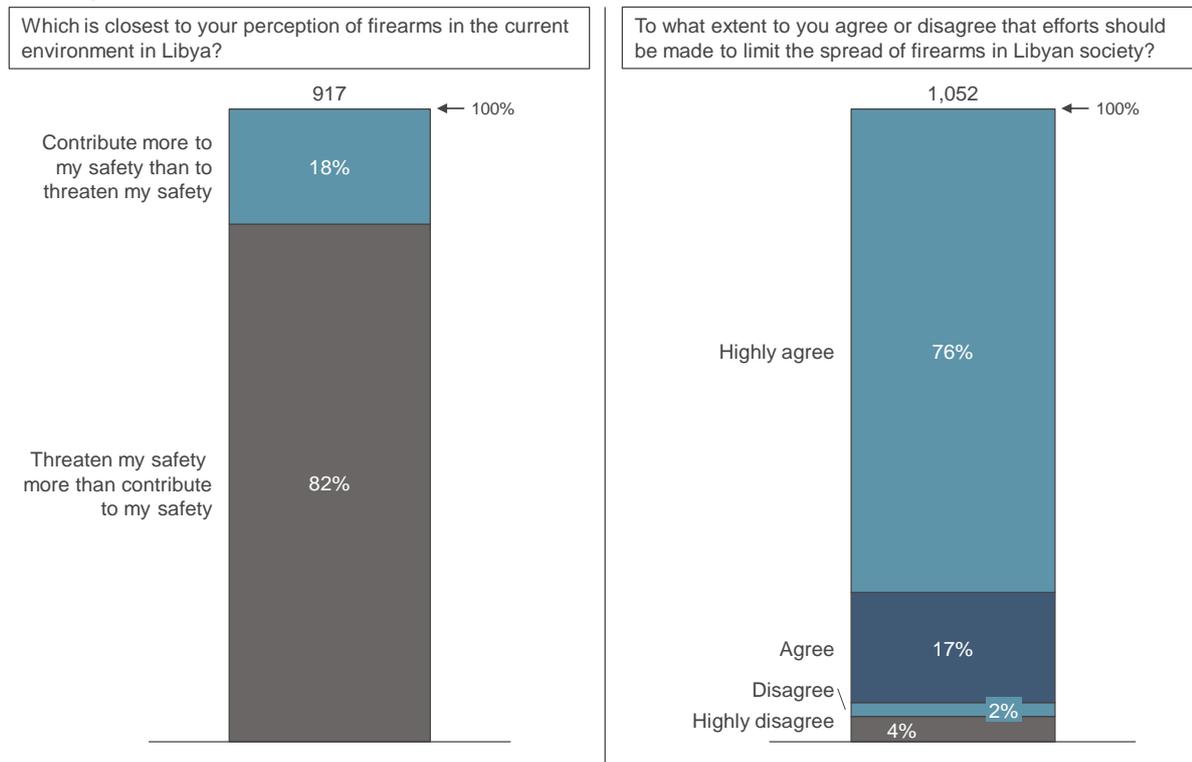
Similar to the September survey findings, the November survey confirmed that the history of an armed group influences its reception among Libyans. Groups formed to fight the Gaddafi regime during the revolution are seen in more positive light than groups formed after the revolution ended. Libyans, however, consider an armed group’s adherence to government authority as more important than the timing of its formation. Only two percent of Libyans have positive views of armed groups that do not abide by government authority, regardless of when the group was formed. In contrast, between 36 and 60 percent of respondents hold positive perceptions of armed groups abiding by the government’s authority, depending on the timing of the group’s formation.

**Figure 29: Armed groups formed during the revolution which abide by government authority elicit the most support**



Eighty-two percent of Libyans believe that firearms have a net negative affect on their personal safety. In line with this, 93 percent of Libyans ‘agree’ or ‘highly agree’ that efforts should be made to limit the spread of firearms in Libyan society.

**Figure 30: Libyans generally believe that firearms are a threat to their safety**



In December 2013, the GNC passed a law criminalizing the possession of firearms without a license, giving citizens 90 days to seek a license or hand in their firearms. Thirty percent of Libyans claim to have a firearm in the household. Among those who do, over 90 percent say that they would be convinced to hand their weapons to government authorities if there is a general improvement in the security situation and establishment of well-functioning police and military. Other conditions include creation of a mechanism for voluntary firearm handovers and a law forbidding personal firearm possession. A majority say that monetary compensation would not be sufficient to convince them to hand in their firearms to authorities.

**Figure 31: Security improvements are key to convincing gunowners to hand in their weapons**

