

Citizens' Attitudes Towards Local Governance and Their Opinions on the Performance of Municipalities

A national public opinion survey on municipal performance and local administration models in Jordan



Al-Hayat Center - RASED

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Executive Summary

82%

Direct Impact

of citizens say municipal work has a direct impact on their daily lives

56%

Service Improvement

recorded a relative improvement in service levels during the recent period

49%

Complaint Dissatisfaction

reported dissatisfaction with complaint-handling mechanisms

2,118

Valid Surveys

questionnaires approved for final analysis after data cleaning

 This report presents the results of a national public opinion survey on the performance of municipalities and governorate councils in Jordan, and citizens' attitudes toward local administration models, in the context of a transitional phase currently being witnessed by this sector, alongside ongoing discussions on developing the Local Administration Law.

1

Administration Models

52% prefer appointing the mayor vs. **44%** who prefer electing the mayor. **46%** prefer fully appointed councils.

65% support separating decision-making from implementation, and **75.7%** believe this separation strengthens accountability.

2

Political Participation

A clear division exists in citizens' attitudes: **41%** stated they would definitely participate in upcoming elections, compared with **38.5%** who said they would not participate.

Weak trust in the electoral process is the main reason for abstention, highlighting the challenge of trust-building as a key determinant of success.

Overall, the survey results indicate a real opportunity to redesign Jordan's local administration model in a way that achieves a better balance between administrative efficiency and democratic representation, strengthens accountability and responsiveness tools, and is directly linked to improving citizens' experience with local services.

Introduction & Study Context

This study comes at a pivotal moment for Jordan's local administration sector, amid ongoing administrative transformations and accelerating national discussions on developing the Local Administration Law and redefining the roles of actors within it — including elected councils, the executive administration, and the central government.

Evidence-Based Reform

Any genuine reform of the local administration system must be grounded in a deep understanding of citizens' daily experience with municipal services, their level of satisfaction, their trust in local institutions, and their attitudes toward different governance models.

Legislative Timing

Jordan is witnessing advanced institutional movement toward reformulating the legal framework for local administration, with the draft law reaching its final stages. This places decision-makers before the responsibility of ensuring proposed amendments align with citizens' needs.

Societal Consensus

The study explores public opinion trends toward alternative models of local administration, including mechanisms for selecting mayors and societal acceptance of modern governance concepts such as separation of powers and strengthening accountability.

Decision Support

This study represents a tool that supports the decision-making process by providing the government with inputs that contribute to enhancing acceptance of proposed legislative amendments and linking the legislative debate with societal reality.

Methodology

This study adopted the **descriptive quantitative approach**, through the implementation of a field public opinion survey using a structured questionnaire tool developed according to scientific foundations that take into account international best practices in public opinion measurement.



The methodology combined statistical accuracy, field quality control, and adherence to international standards in measuring public opinion — enhancing the reliability of findings as a sound basis for supporting decision-making.

Sample Size

Minimum required: **1,844** questionnaires at 99% confidence level and $\pm 3\%$ margin of error.

Collected: **2,145** questionnaires

Approved for analysis: **2,118** valid questionnaires

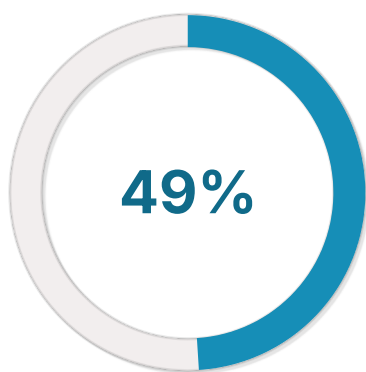
Quality Assurance Measures

- Prior training of researchers on the questionnaire tool and field implementation mechanisms
- Periodic evaluation of researcher performance during implementation
- Field and office verification of questionnaire samples
- Immediate review of data completeness and consistency
- Operations Room for real-time follow-up of fieldwork progress

i The questionnaire covered multiple axes: quality of municipal services, complaint-handling mechanisms, field presence, administration models, governance and separation of powers, accountability, political participation, and evaluation of governorate councils' experience.

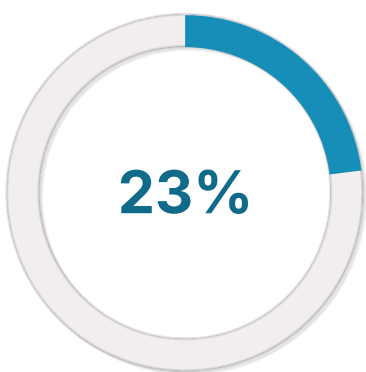
Section One: Importance of Municipal Work & Service Evaluation

Municipal work is viewed as an essential element in citizens' daily lives, with the general evaluation of services tending toward a medium level. Results show a relative improvement during the recent period, although it remains insufficient to create a clear shift in overall satisfaction.



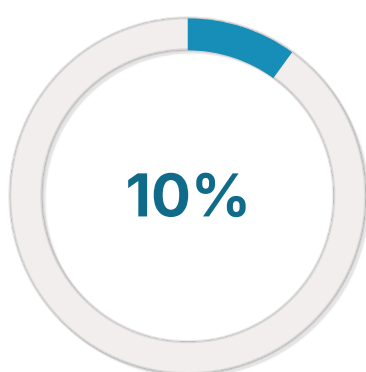
Significant Impact

Municipal work has a significant impact on daily life



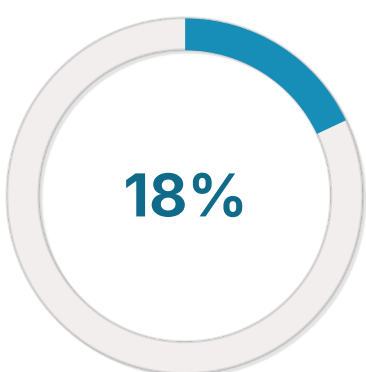
Some Impact

Municipal work has some impact on daily life



Limited Impact

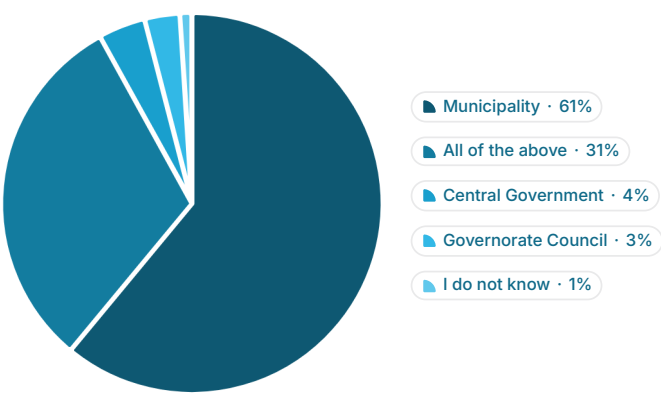
Municipal work has limited impact on daily life



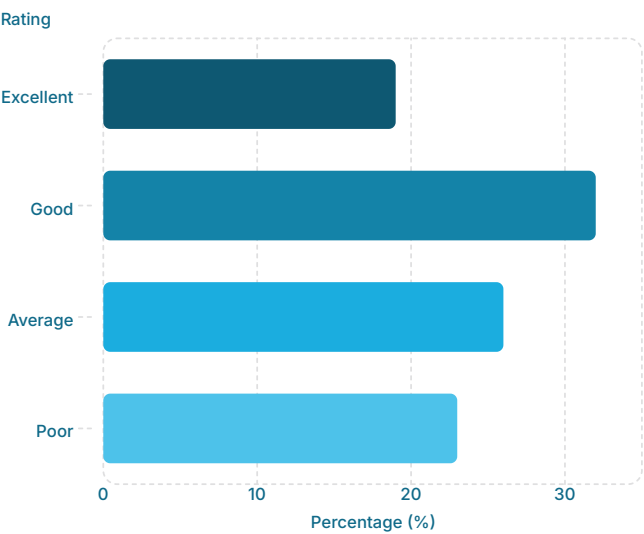
No Impact

Municipal work has no impact on daily life

Who Is Responsible for Improving Services?



Service Level Evaluation (Last 6 Months)



Comparison with previous period: **23%** clearly improved, **33%** improved to a limited extent, **32%** unchanged, **12%** declined.

Section Two: Complaints and Response Mechanisms

This section reflects a relative weakness in citizens' interaction with the complaints system, both in terms of use and the level of trust in it. Clear challenges exist in the speed and quality of response, directly affecting citizens' satisfaction and raising questions about the effectiveness of current accountability mechanisms.

Complaint Submission

30% submitted or heard about a complaint

70% did not submit a complaint

Overall Satisfaction

14% Yes, completely satisfied

37% Yes, to some extent

49% No, not at all

1

Response Speed

36% Response was fast

24% Response was slow

37% No response was provided

3% I do not know

2

Compared with the Past

9% Much better

34% Better

41% Unchanged

16% Worse

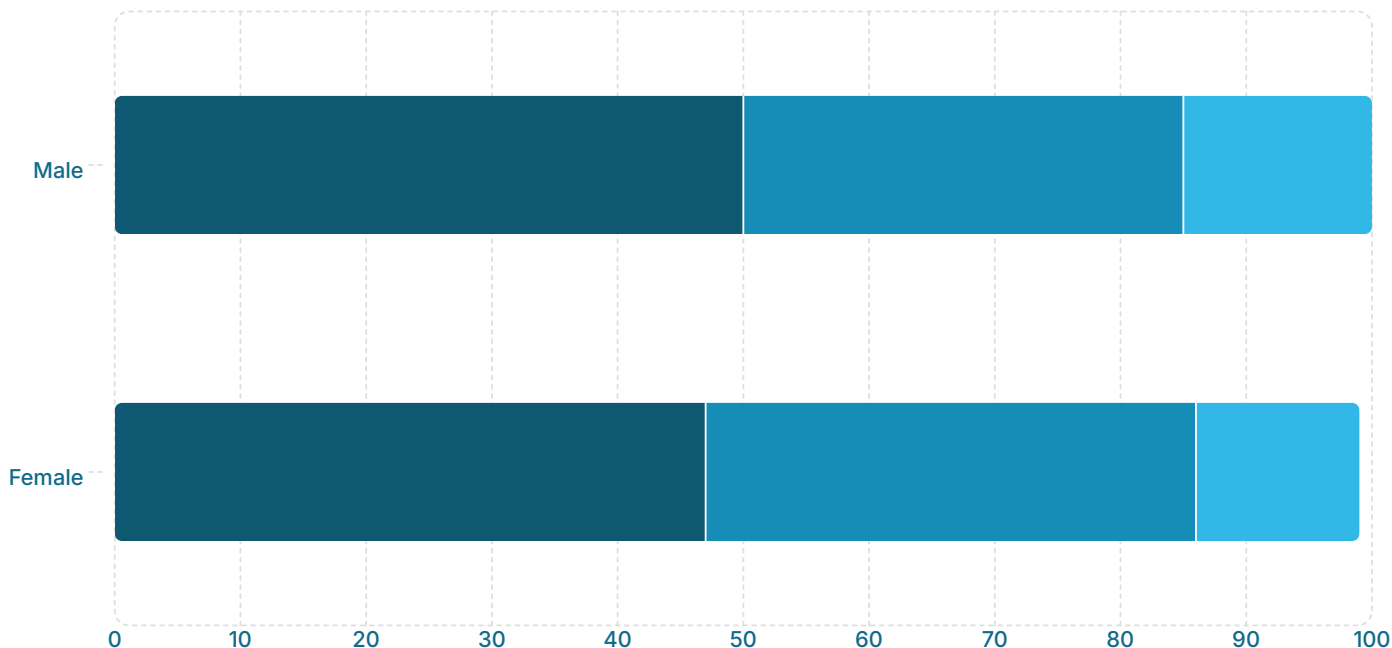
Complaint Satisfaction by Gender

No, not at all (%)

Yes, to some extent (%)

Yes, completely (%)

Gender

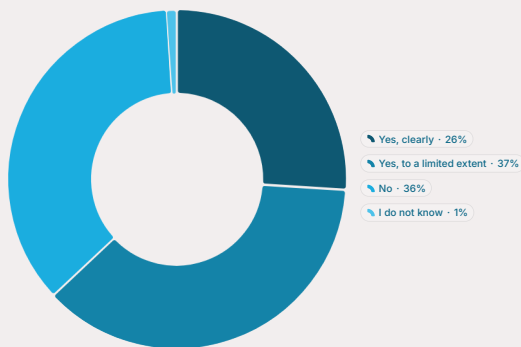


With **49% of citizens** reporting dissatisfaction with complaint-handling mechanisms, this represents one of the most critical gaps in municipal service delivery — pointing to systemic challenges in responsiveness and accountability.

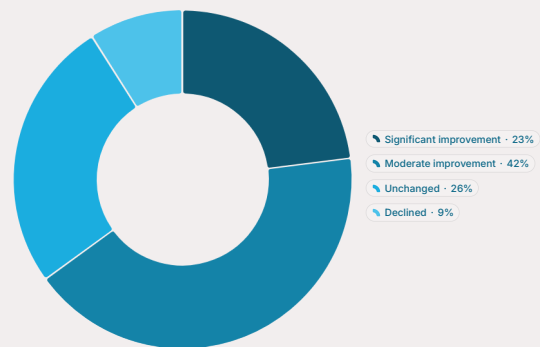
Field Performance & Daily Service Quality

This section indicates a relative improvement in the operational aspects of municipal services, particularly regarding field presence and public cleanliness. Nevertheless, variations persist in the evaluation of work organization and the quality of interaction with citizens.

Field Presence of Municipal Staff



Public Cleanliness Evaluation



Work Organization

10% Very organized
| **51%** Organized |
23% Disorganized |
16% Chaotic



Citizen Interaction (Male)

46% Respectful and cooperative |
26% Acceptable |
7% Weak | **7%** Poor | **15%** Did not visit



Citizen Interaction (Female)

44% Respectful and cooperative |
21% Acceptable |
5% Weak | **2%** Poor | **28%** Did not visit

Section Four: Evaluation of Appointed Committees

This section reflects a good level of citizens' awareness of the current nature of municipal administration, with an evaluation that tends to be positive in terms of performance and speed of transaction completion. Results indicate relative acceptance of the current model, especially with regard to operational efficiency.

54%

Fully Aware

Citizens who know the municipality is currently managed by an appointed committee

21%

Heard About It

Citizens who have heard about the appointed committee model

51%

Better Performance

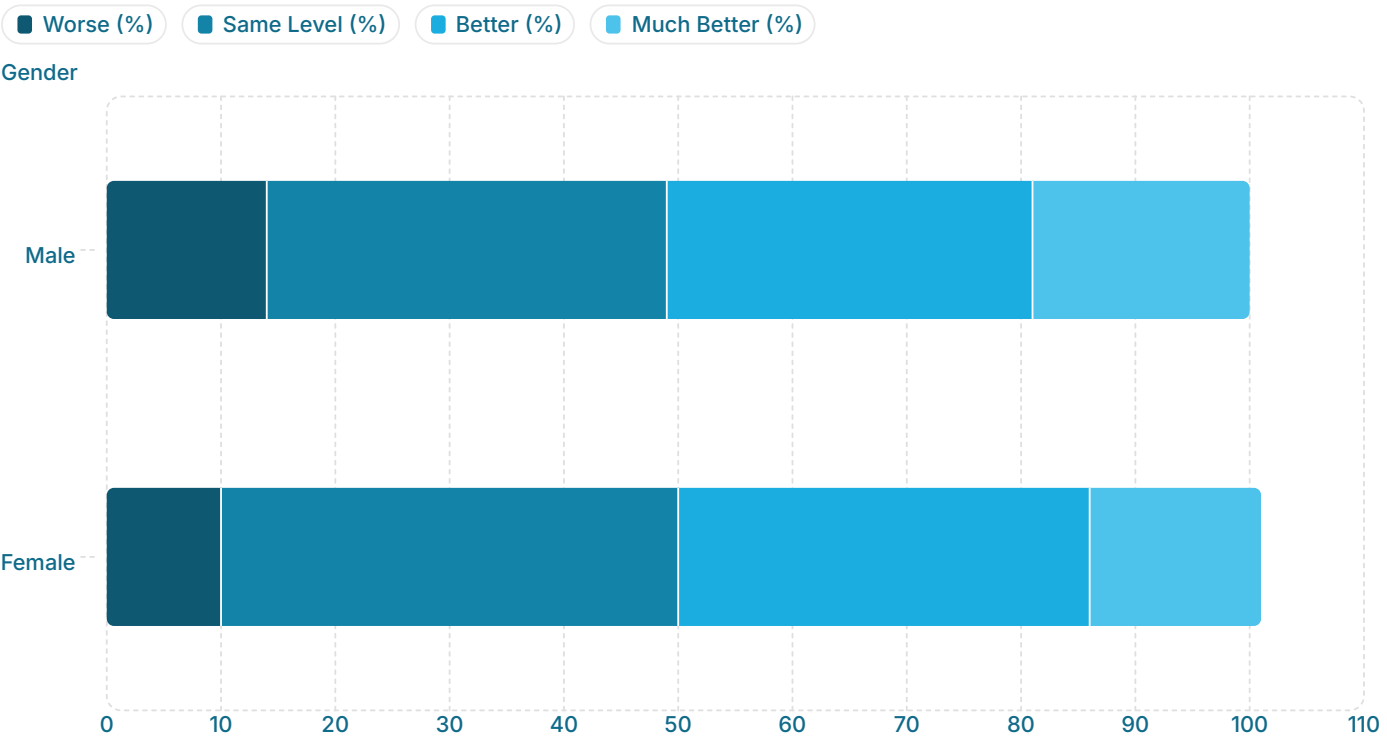
Citizens who rate the appointed committee as better or much better than before

47%

Faster Transactions

Citizens who say transaction completion is faster or much faster under the current model

Performance Evaluation of Appointed Committee by Gender



✓ A combined **51% of citizens** rate the appointed committee's performance as better or much better than before, while **47%** note faster transaction completion — indicating meaningful operational gains under the current model.

Section Five: Local Administration Models & Leadership Selection

This section reflects a divergence in citizens' attitudes between models based on electoral representation and those based on appointment, with a relative inclination toward models that enhance administrative efficiency and stability. Citizens show clear awareness of the impact of each model on governance and the level of personal interventions.

Most Appropriate Model for Municipal Councils

46% — Fully appointed council

39% — Fully elected council

13.6% — Partially elected (two-thirds elected / one-third appointed)

1% — Other

Most Appropriate Model for Selecting the Mayor

52% — Appointment by the government

44% — Direct election by citizens

4% — No difference

By gender — Mayor selection:

Male: **54%** appointment | **41%** election

Female: **50%** appointment | **46%** election

What Direct Election Contributes

- **40%** Strengthening the mayor's relationship with the local community
- **39%** Strengthening direct representation of citizens
- **11%** Strengthening direct accountability before people
- **9%** Reducing the influence of personal interventions

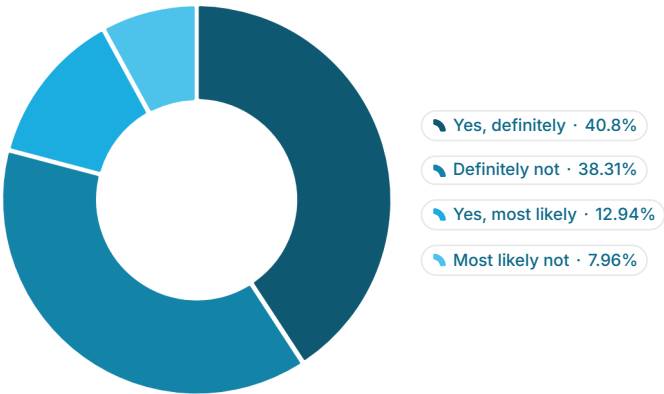
What Government Appointment Contributes

- **55%** Limits waste and personal interventions
- **16%** Strengthens administrative governance
- **15%** Strengthens institutional accountability tools
- **13%** Contributes to separating powers between decision-making and implementation

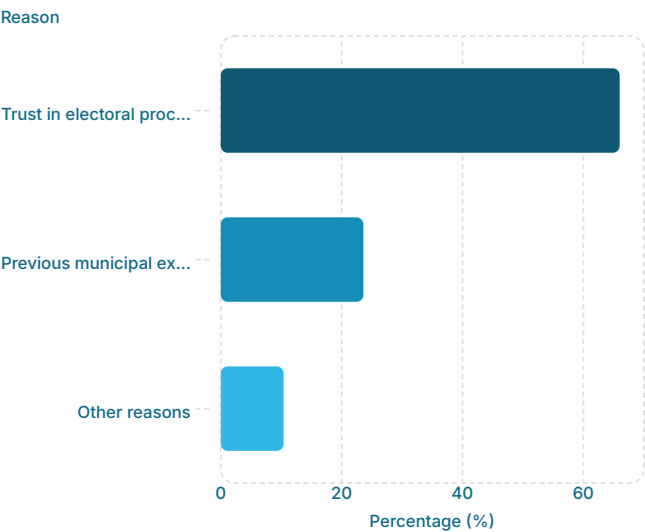
Section Six: Political Participation & Elections

This section reflects a state of division in citizens' attitudes toward participation in local elections, where willingness to participate intersects with challenges related to the level of trust in the previous experience and in the electoral process.

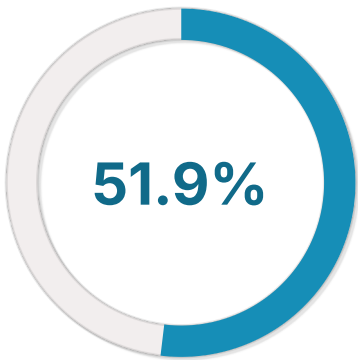
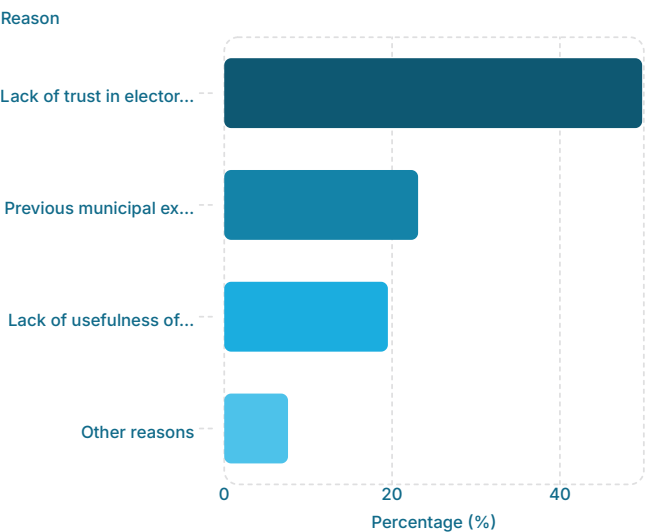
Willingness to Participate in Local Elections



Reasons for Participating

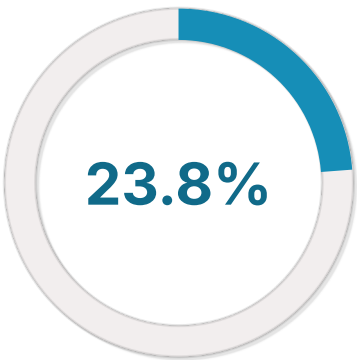


Reasons for NOT Participating



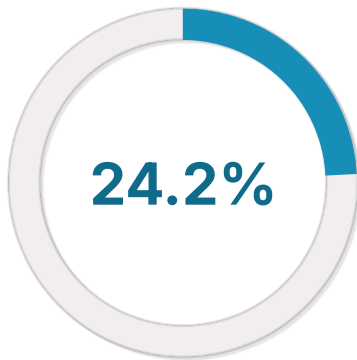
Vote Is Influential

Citizens who feel their vote is very influential



Somewhat Influential

Citizens who feel their vote is influential to some extent



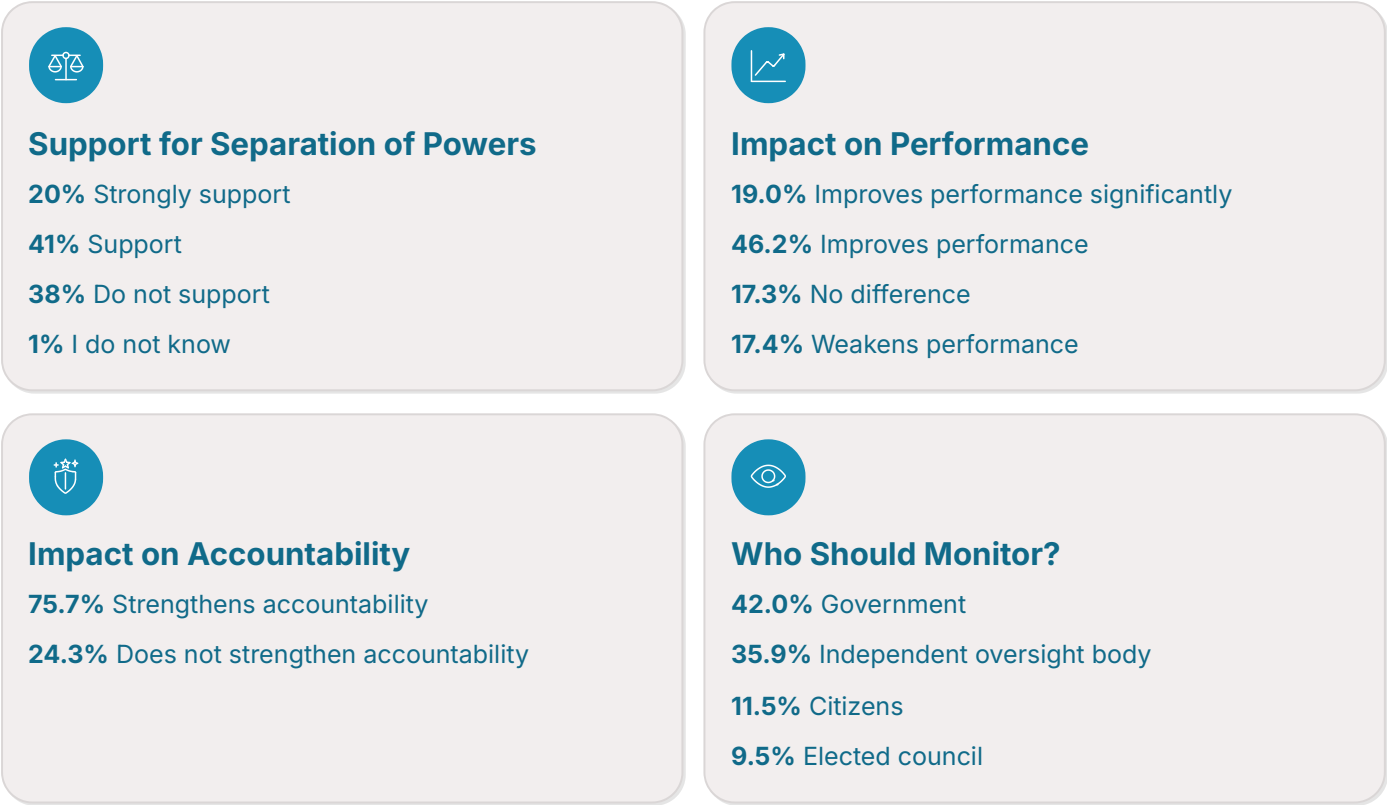
Not Influential

Citizens who feel their vote is not influential

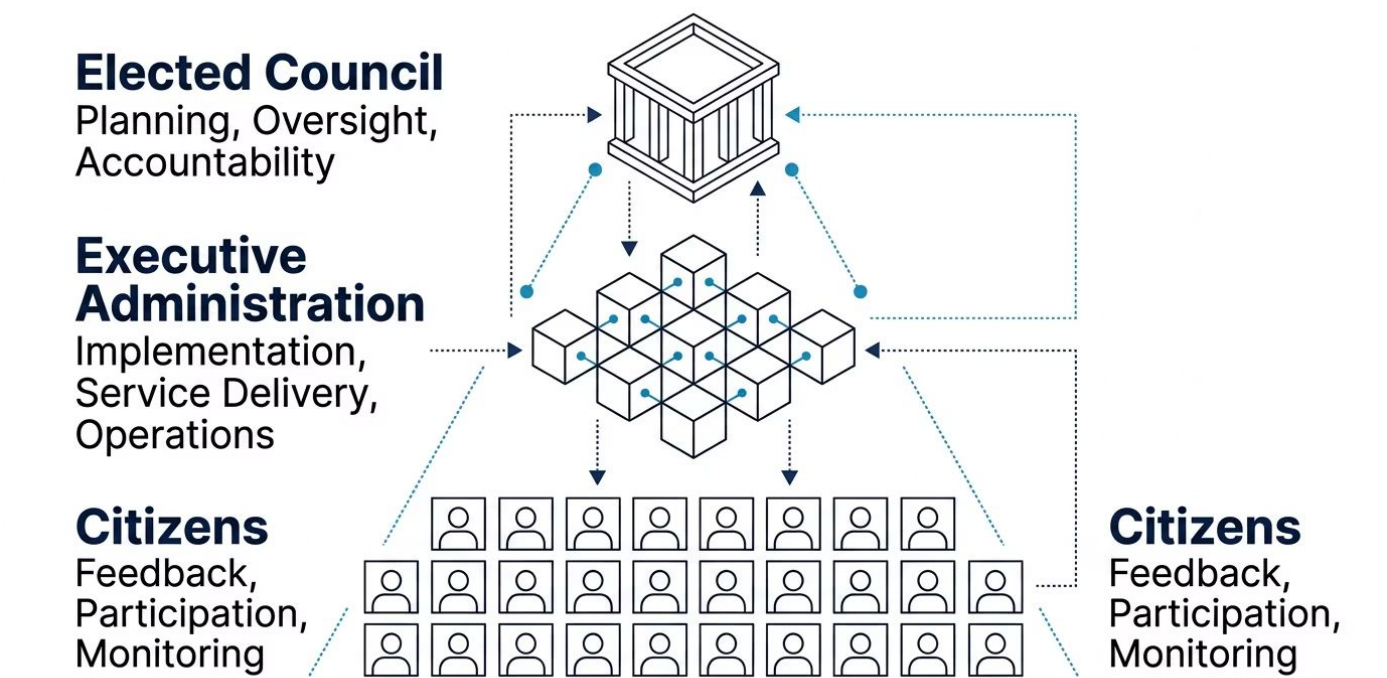
Among those who confirmed participation (excluding Amman): **53%** prefer a fully elected council and **60%** prefer direct election of the mayor — showing that engaged citizens lean more strongly toward representative models.

Section Seven: Governance, Separation of Powers & Accountability

This section reflects a clear tendency among citizens toward adopting more modern governance models based on the separation of powers between elected bodies and the executive administration. Results show high awareness of the importance of this separation in improving performance and strengthening accountability.



The role of municipal councils is also being reconsidered: **32%** strongly agree and **33%** agree to some extent that councils should focus on planning and oversight rather than executive functions — reflecting a growing maturity in understanding the requirements of local governance.



Section Eight: Special Models — Greater Amman Municipality & Major Cities

This section reflects a clear tendency among citizens, especially in major cities, toward adopting more centralized and professional administrative models, similar to the Greater Amman Municipality model. Notable support exists for appointing mayors in major cities, in connection with improving efficiency and reducing interventions.

Support for Applying the Greater Amman Municipality Model

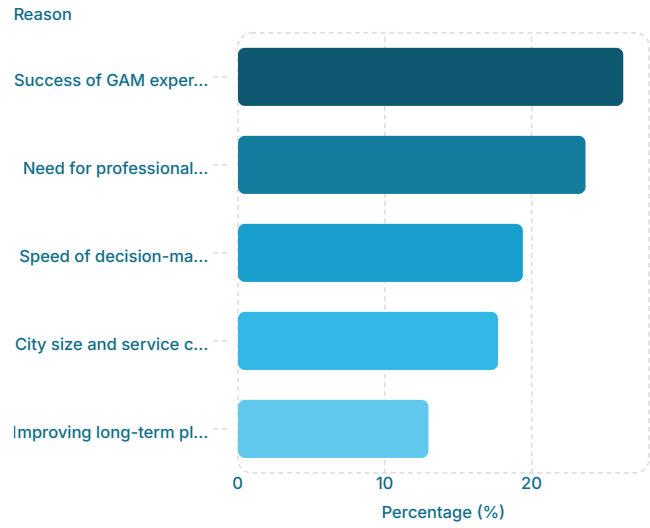
Irbid:

- 63% Strongly support
- 17% Support
- 16% Oppose
- 4% Strongly oppose

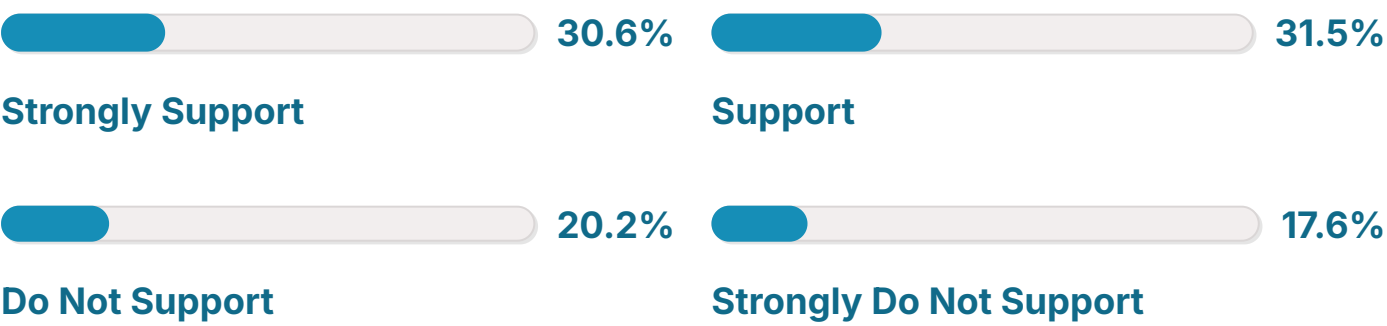
Zarqa:

- 65% Strongly support
- 22% Support
- 11% Oppose
- 1% Strongly oppose

Reasons for Supporting the Greater Amman Model



Support for Appointing the Mayor in Major Municipalities

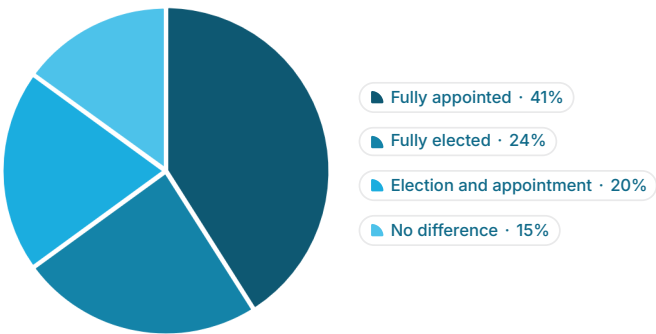


✔ A combined **62.1%** of citizens support or strongly support appointing the mayor in major municipalities, reflecting confidence in professional, centralized management for complex urban environments.

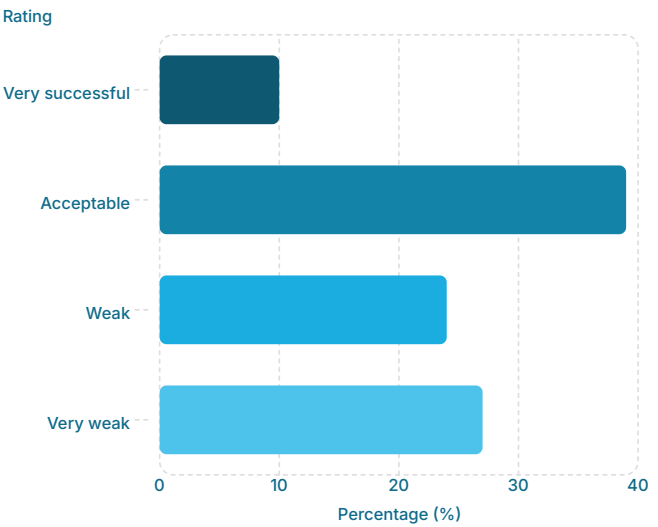
Section Nine: Governorate Councils & Overall Evaluation

This section reflects a critical evaluation of the governorate councils' experience, with a clear tendency to redefine their role so that it is more closely linked to planning and oversight. Results also indicate a relatively positive evaluation of the current direction of municipal administration.

Most Appropriate Model for Governorate Councils



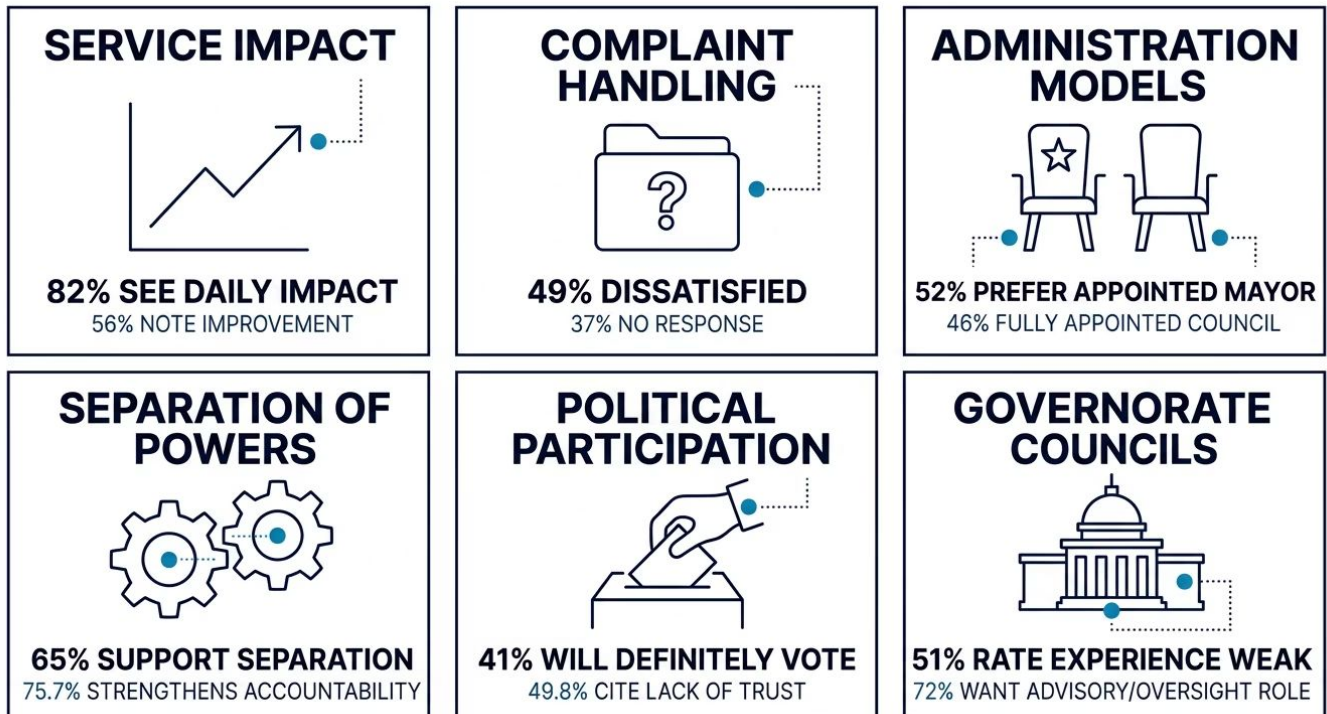
Evaluation of Previous Governorate Councils' Experience



Future Role of Governorate Councils 72% believe the future role should be advisory, planning, and oversight focused 28% say there is no need for them in their current form	Evaluation of Current Municipal Administration Direction 19.7% Yes, completely positive 49.5% Yes, to some extent 24.0% No 6.7% No, not at all	Support for Continuing Appointed Committees 22% Strongly support continuation 47% Support continuation 27% Reject continuation 5% Strongly reject continuation
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Key Findings at a Glance

A comprehensive overview of the most significant findings from the national survey, organized by thematic area.



→ Municipal Work Centrality

With **82%** of citizens affirming direct impact on daily life, municipalities are the most visible face of government for ordinary Jordanians — making their performance a matter of national priority.

→ Accountability Gap

Despite operational improvements, **49%** remain dissatisfied with complaint handling and **37%** received no response at all — revealing a critical gap between service delivery and institutional responsiveness.

→ Governance Maturity

Strong support for separation of powers (**65%**) and the belief that it strengthens accountability (**75.7%**) signals a growing civic sophistication about the requirements of effective local governance.

→ Trust as the Central Challenge

Whether in elections (**49.8%** cite lack of trust as reason for abstention) or complaint systems, trust-building emerges as the single most important determinant of citizen engagement with local institutions.

Conclusions & The Path Forward

Overall, the survey results indicate a real opportunity to redesign Jordan's local administration model in a way that achieves a better balance between administrative efficiency and democratic representation, strengthens accountability and responsiveness tools, and is directly linked to improving citizens' experience with local services.

"The current phase represents an opportunity to recalibrate the local administration model in a way that balances institutional efficiency with trust-building and community participation — constituting an essential entry point for the ongoing discussions on the new legislative framework."



Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms

Reform complaint-handling systems and establish clear response timelines. The 49% dissatisfaction rate demands urgent structural improvements in how municipalities respond to citizens.



Implement Separation of Powers

With 65% supporting the separation of executive powers from elected representatives, and 75.7% believing it strengthens accountability, this reform has strong public backing and should be central to the new Local Administration Law.



Rebuild Electoral Trust

Address the root causes of electoral abstention — 49.8% cite lack of trust in the electoral process. Transparent, credible elections are essential to restoring citizen confidence in local democratic institutions.



Redefine Governorate Council Roles

With 72% preferring an advisory, planning, and oversight role for governorate councils, and 51% rating their past performance as weak or very weak, a fundamental redesign of their mandate is both necessary and publicly supported.

i This study was produced by **Al-Hayat Center – RASED** with support from **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung – Jordan Office**. The views expressed reflect those of Al-Hayat Center – RASED only. For inquiries or further information, please contact Al-Hayat Center – RASED directly.



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