



**مركز البيان للدراسات والتخطيط**  
Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies

# The Political Interests of Iraqi Youth (Opinion Survey)

**Ahmed Khudair Hussain**



**Al-Bayan Center Studies Series**

## **About**

Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies is an independent, nonprofit think tank based in Baghdad, Iraq. Its primary mission is to offer an authentic perspective on public and foreign policy issues related to Iraq and the region.

Al-Bayan Center pursues its vision by conducting independent analysis, as well as proposing workable solutions for complex issues that concern policymakers and academics.

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Since 2014**

# The Political Interests of Iraqi Youth (Opinion Survey)

Ahmed Khudair Hussain \*

## **Executive Summary:**

The absence of youth, this essential and vital community group, from the political process arena created a wide gap between political decision-makers and society, especially if we know that young people in Iraq are the most prominent representative of society with a population of more than 60%. Regardless of the fact that political decision-makers in Iraq have marginalized the role of young people and deliberately or unintentionally neglected their political upbringing, the youth seemed so far to be far from direct involvement in the world of politics, without this implying their complete lack of interest in this matter, as the figures show.

There are several reasons behind the youth's lack of interest in politics, including the bad economic conditions and high unemployment rates, which made young people more interested in getting a job or a small job in the flabby government sector, and this is what keeps them from thinking about politics, let alone engaging in it. The negative nature of the political process in Iraq, especially the performance of parties, was exacerbated due to accusations of corruption, involvement in sectarian quotas, and the sharing of oil revenues, public jobs, and land.

This survey conducted by the Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies shows that Iraqi youth today do not want to engage in the political process directly. Most respondents in this survey answered that they participate in demonstrations, write political posts on social media

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platforms, and discuss political issues with their families and friends. It is also noted that most of the respondents, aged 15 to 19, answered that they are not interested in political issues, although this age group is the largest group present in the October 2019 demonstrations, which was the most prominent political forum for youth after 2003. Females showed little interest in political affairs, although unofficial statistics estimate that the percentage of females in Iraq exceeds 49%, and this means that half of society does not want to interact with political issues.

The political class and the actors in the political process should take the ratios and data of this survey into consideration. The youth in Iraq are dormant volcanoes, and no one knows when their anger erupts, and this is what we had seen in October 2019 demonstrations, and these demonstrations are only a test scene of a large volcano scenario that may change the course of the political process fully.

### **The Concept and Context (Methodical Framework)**

The current study targeted the youth category (males and females) by a questionnaire that consisted of fifteen main questions, directed to a sample of (1000) respondents, who were selected by the cluster sampling method according to the districts of the selected governorates, and the respondents' residence areas: (Baghdad, Erbil, Nasiriyah, and Anbar), and they were distributed intentionally according to the population in each of the four governorates to the proportion of the selected sample, with a very slight variation in the methodology of some governorates.

The survey covered the youth category from (15) to (30) years old, and this age category was chosen according to the estimates of the Youth Survey, both males and females. The questionnaire was distributed according to the size of the population in each governorate, as it was distributed directly through (3) researchers working in the Al-Bayan Center, one of whom is fluent in the Kurdish language, and

they practiced work by documenting the responses orally with the respondents, as the answers were filled out via tablets, over (25) days, from 1/2/2022 to 25/2/2022.

The questionnaire was translated into Kurdish as well as Arabic. The questions included the variables of gender, age distribution, educational level, profession, governorate, and a Likert scale that includes nine items related to political interests.

The current survey examines the situation of Iraqi youth and their interests of various groups and nationalities, as well as reveals the orientations of the youth whose opinions were surveyed regarding the following:

- Shedding light on the political interests of the Iraqi youth.

The current survey clarified the interests, opinions, and political stances of young people through the collected data, and analyzing their activities, which were adopted based on the descriptive-analytical approach, through a social survey of a sample of young people, with different orientations, different geographical areas, and different cultures in a way that allows generalizing the results to them.

The table shows the sample size and percentage in each governorate, according to the city-center's district, the environment (rural or urban), the distribution (neighborhood or village), and the percentage of its population according to 2021 estimates:

The sample according to the neighborhood or village		Urban area	Rural area	Urban area	Rural area	The sample in the district center of the center	percentage of the study sample	Total community size	Governorate
		<b>Rural area</b>		96	54	150 Al-Nasireya District	15%	2263695	Thi Qar
14	Al-Sharqiya neighborhood	17	Said Dakheel Village						
	14	Al-Fadaa neighborhood	18	Al-Bathaa Villages	35 %				
13	Aredo neighborhood	19	Ur Villages	64%					
	13	Al-Thora neighborhood							
14	Al-Bishaer neighborhood	19	Ur Villages						
	14	Al-Iskan neighborhood							
	14	Sumer neighborhood							

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The urban area of Karkh		The rural area of Rusafa	
29	Al-Shaab	51	Al-Rashidea Villages
29	Al-Qahira	52	Adamiyah
	29		.Palestine St
	30		Al-Sadar City
	29		AL-Waziriya
	30		Al-Krarda
	29		Jamila
	30		New Baghdad
			AL-Nahrwan
Urban side of Karkh		Rural side of Karkh	
30	Al-Khdimia	51	Abu Gareeb
30	Al-Shuala	51	Al-Hurea
	30		Al-Yousfia
	31		Al-Shalichiya
		385	205
		65.3%	34.7%
		590	59%
		Karkh \ Rusafa	8780422
			Baghdad

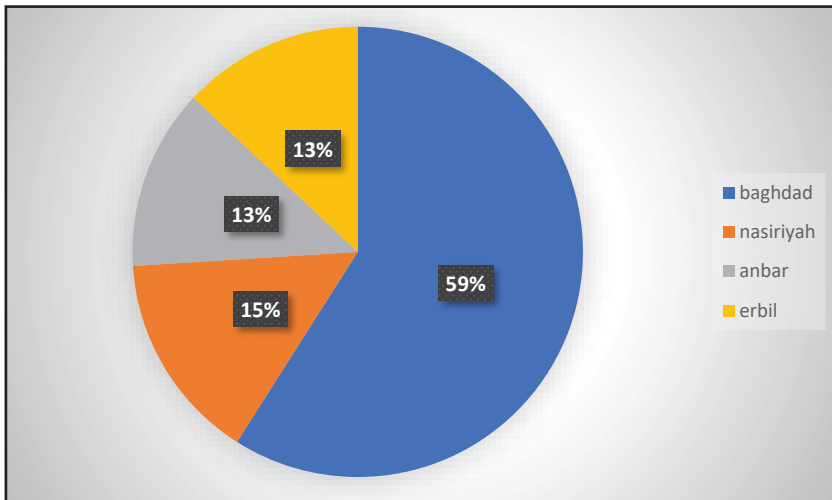
		Anbar				Erbil					
11	Al-Shota neighborhood	18	Al-Jamhoria neighborhood	Al-Andulis neighborhood	Al-Mukhabarat neighborhood	65	65	130	28.9%	1914165	Anbar
	11										
	11										
	11										
11	Al-Moalmeen neighborhood	17	Al-Houz neighborhood			65	50%				Erbil
	10										
14	Terawa neighborhood	11	Gwargra neighborhood	Badwa neighborhood	Azady neighborhood	108	22			2003963	
	13										
	14										
	13										
14	Norouz neighborhood	11	Zanyari neighborhood	Sedawa neighborhood	Ankawa neighborhood	83%	17%	130	13%		
	14										
	13										
	13										



## Demographic Questions

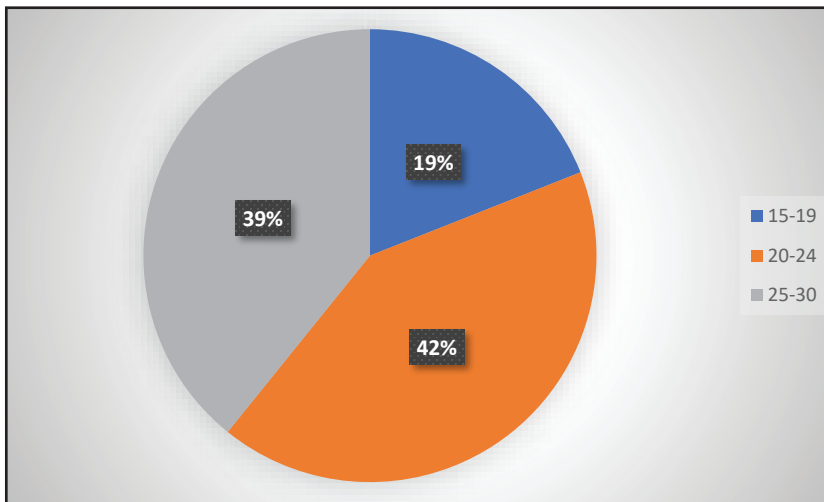
### 1. The Governorate

The results of the survey showed that the respondents' answers were distributed over (4) governorates in Iraq, and the question was: In which governorate do you live? The answers were similar and close to the reality of their representation of the total population size in the governorates, they varied slightly with each other, and the details of the results were distributed, as shown in the figure below.



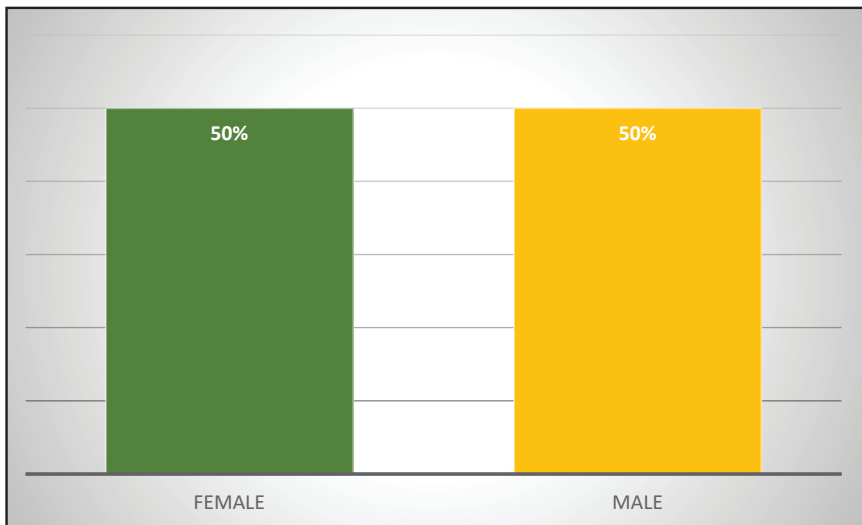
## 2. Age

It is noted that the ages of the respondents whose ages ranged between (20–24) reached (418), and their percentage was (41.8%) of the total sample units and they were close to half of the respondents. Then the age group (25–30) reached (392) respondents, with a percentage of (39.2%) of the total sample units. It also shows that the age group (15–19) reached (190) respondents with a percentage of (19%) of the total sample units. These age groups represent the preferred groups of the labor market, marriage, and life in general with their various activities and effectiveness, the most important of which is their role in bringing about change and influencing society, whether through political participation or through criticism of the opposition and influencing public opinion.



### 3. Gender

The current figure shows the gender distribution of the study sample units, as the number of males reached (500) and (50%) of the total sample units, while the number of females reached about (500) and (50%) of the total sample units. The sample choices were equal and according to gender distribution in the four governorates (Baghdad, Erbil, Nasiriyah, and Anbar).

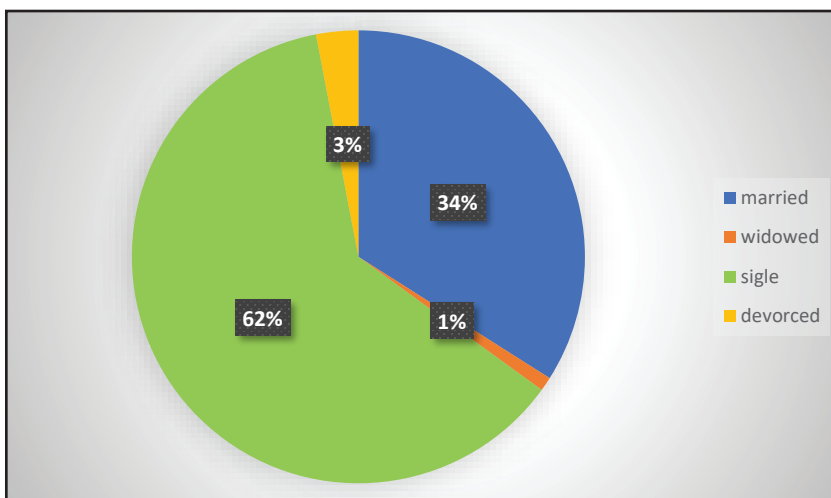


#### 4. Marital status

The current figure shows that the number of married respondents reached (343), with a percentage of (34.3) of the total sample units. The number of single people was (622) respondents, and their rate was (62.2). While the number of widows was (12) at a rate of (1.2%) of the total sample units, the divorced respondents were (23) and their rate was (2.3).

It is noted that the percentage of married, widowed, and divorced was (37.8), and for singles was (62.2), which means approximately from four-fifths to one-fifth, (one out of every five of the sample members went through a marriage experience).

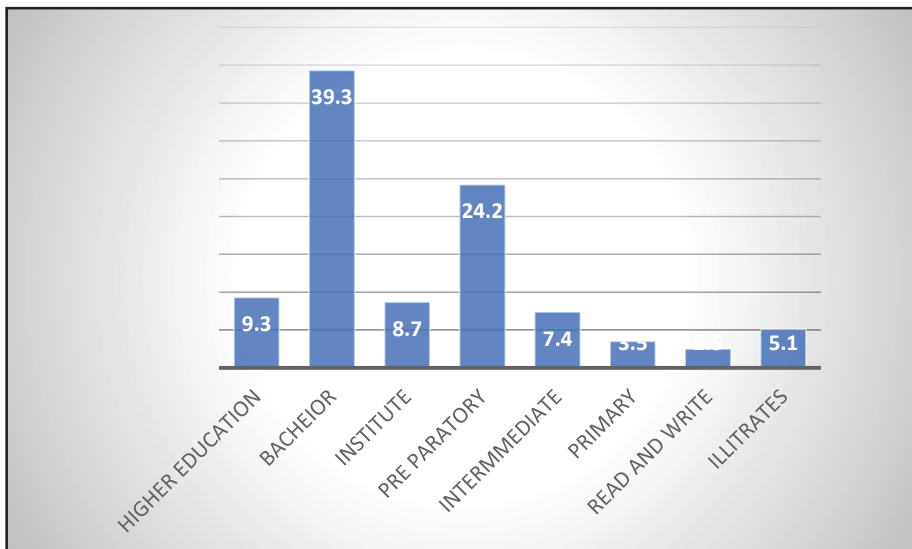
The marital status with its four categories (married, single, widowed, and divorced) came as close as possible to the balanced distribution of the total sample.



## 5. Educational level

We note from the data in the figure below that the cumulative percentage of primary certificate holders and below reached about (111) respondents and their rate was (11.1%) of the total sample units. The cumulative percentage of intermediate and preparatory certificate holders combined reached about (315) respondents, and (31.5) of the total respondents. The cumulative percentage of the Institute's certificate and the bachelor's degree holders combined reached about (480) respondents, and their rate was (48) of the total respondents. As for the number of postgraduate certificate holders (93) respondents, their percentage was (9.3) of the total respondents, which indicates that most of the sample units are of good to very good educational level.

The current survey targeted young people in the four governorates (Baghdad, Erbil, Nasiriyah, and Anbar), so it appeared among the sample units (illiterates, those who can read and write, and those who hold an elementary certificate), which explains their presence in the current survey.



The sample unit's distribution of educational levels in its various categories that have been referred to in the figure below came in varying proportions from a low level, and it increases to reach an (institute or bachelor) educational level as the highest percentage, and then turns over to (Masters or Ph.D.) educational level and return to fall, and is drawn accordingly a graphical curve indicating the distribution of the samples which came close to the studied population.

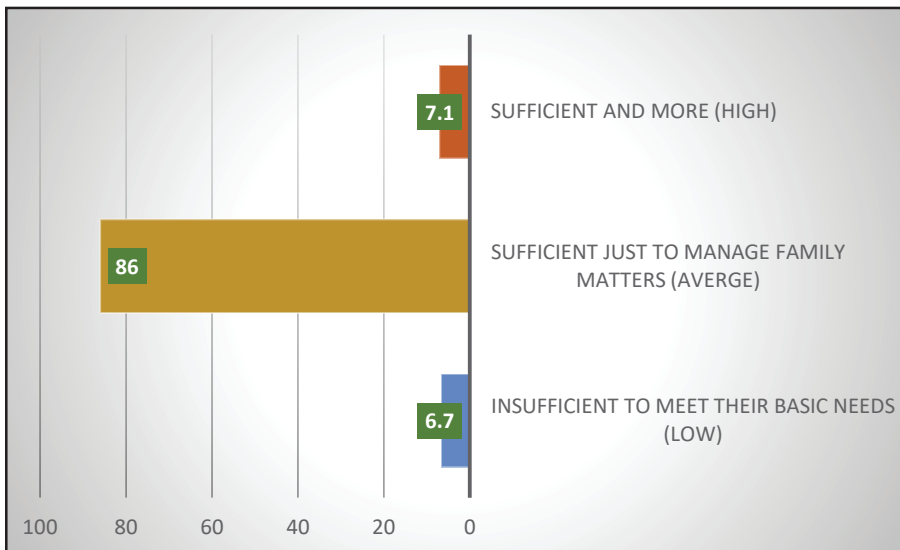
## **6. The Standard of Living**

To know the standard of living of the study sample units and to avoid mentioning the amount of income in numbers, because this question is often not answered for fear of envy, tax prosecution, or theft. Therefore, three categories were proposed so that the respondents could describe their living standards similarly, and the researcher combined these categories: The first category represents a low standard of living, the second category represents an average standard of living, and the third category represents a high standard of living.

The survey data show that the number of those who described their monthly income as often insufficient to meet their basic needs reached (69) respondents, and (6.9) of the total sample units. As for those who described their monthly income as being sufficient to manage family matters, it came at a rate of (860) respondents, and a percentage of (86) out of the total sample units. While (71) respondents, which makes (7.1) described that their income and possessions are sufficient for them to live in prosperity.

It appears from the results of the figure data below that the highest percentage of respondents are with an average standard of living, and above, with a cumulative percentage of (93.1), as the standard of living is often associated with various other variables such as educational level, type of profession, number of family members, income level, and

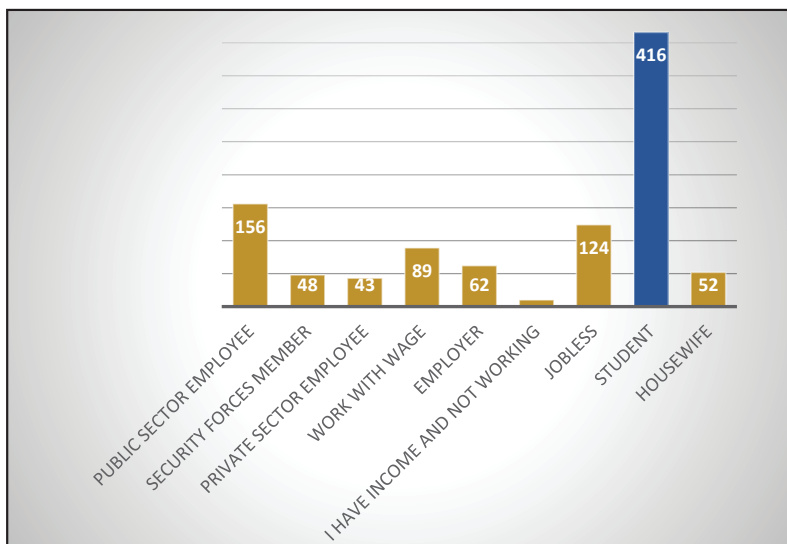
other factors. Variables, and if we compare the educational level and its relationship to the standard of living, it becomes clear that about (88.8) of the total sample units are those with a good to very good educational level. This may indicate the existence of a relationship between the educational level and the standard of living of the respondents on the one hand, and between them and the expansion of conditions for entry and participation in the public sphere on the other hand, where the educational level and the quality of good and continuous work contribute in one way or another to the practice of activities such as attending cafes and cultural forums, or participating in Civil society organizations, and stimulating political participation as well, opinion-making and influencing it, and others.



## 7. Quality of work

It is noted in the data in the figure below that the number of male and female students reached (416) respondents with a percentage of (41.6) of the total sample units. As for the number of employees in the public sector, it reached (156) respondents, at a rate of (15.6) of the total sample units, and the number of unemployed reached (124) respondents, at a rate of (12.4) of the total sample units. The number of paid employees reached (89) respondents, representing (8.9) of the total sample units, followed by employers, whose number reached (62) respondents, representing (6.2) of the total sample units.

The number of housewives reached (52) respondents, at a rate of (5.2) out of the total sample units, while the number of workers in the security forces came with (48) respondents, at a rate of (4.8) of the total sample units. As for the number of male employees working in the private sector, it amounted to (43) respondents, at a rate of (4.3) of the total sample units, and the number of those who have income and do not work reached (10) respondents, at a rate of (1%) of the total sample units.





## Secondly: Political Interests

1. The political interests of the Iraqi youth.

Alternative			seq	Phrases
No, never	Sometimes	Yes, always	%	
<b>409</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>I am interested in political matters in general</b>
40.9	38.5	20.6	%	
<b>684</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>I am interested in political participation by running for elections</b>
68.4	20.2	11.4	%	
<b>398</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>I care about political participation by voting in elections</b>
39.8	31.9	28.3	%	
<b>796</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>I am interested in political work by joining a party</b>
79.6	11.5	8.9	%	
<b>392</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>I watch political programs and follow the news</b>
39.2	44.3	16.5	%	
<b>536</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>Participate in demonstrations and protests</b>
53.6	29.3	17.1	%	
<b>648</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>I write articles, tweets, and political comments</b>
64.8	23.9	11.3	%	
<b>416</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>I follow the government's performance and evaluate its work</b>
41.6	40.1	18.3	%	
<b>311</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>seq</b>	<b>I discuss political issues with family, friends, and relatives</b>
31.1	42.6	26.3	%	

- The results of the answer to the first phrase, which is (I am interested in political matters in general), showed that (409) respondents, with a percentage of (40.9%), which is the highest percentage of the total percentages, answered “No at all”, while the lowest percentage of the answers were about “Yes always” paragraph. Their number was (206) out of the total sample, or (20.6%).

- The results of the answer to the second paragraph which says (I am interested in political participation by running for elections) showed that (684) respondents with a percentage of (68.4) answered “never,” which is the highest percentage. As for the lowest percentage of answers, it was for the “always yes” option, as their number reached (114) out of the total sample, and their percentage was (11.4).

- The results of the answer to the third paragraph, which explains (I am interested in political participation by voting in elections), showed that 398 respondents with a percentage of (39.8) answered “never,” which is the highest percentage of the total percentages, while the lowest response rate was about the option “yes, always”, as their number reached (283) of the total sample, and their percentage was (28.3).

- The results of the answer to the fourth paragraph, which explains (I am interested in political work through party affiliation), showed that (796) respondents with a percentage of (79.6%) answered “never,” which is the highest percentage of the total percentages, while the lowest answer was about an option “yes, always,” as their number reached (89) of the total sample, and their percentage was (8.9%).

- The results of the answer to the fifth paragraph, which explains (I watch political programs and follow the news), showed that (443) respondents with a percentage of (44.3%) answered “sometimes”, which is the highest percentage of the total percentages they answered. The lowest response rate was for the “ yes, always “ option, as their number was (165).

- The results of the answer to the sixth paragraph, which explains (I participate in demonstrations and protests), showed that (536) respondents with a percentage of (53.6) answered “No, never” which is the highest percentage of the total percentages. As for the lowest response rate, it was for the “yes, always” option, as their number was (171) out of the total sample, and their percentage was (17.1).

- The results of the answer to the seventh paragraph, which explains (Write articles and political tweets), showed that (648) respondents with a percentage of (64.8%) answered “never,” which is the highest percentage of the total percentages. As for the lowest response rate, it was for the “always yes” option, as their number was (113) out of the total sample, and their percentage was (11.3%).f the total sample, and their percentage was (16.5%).

- The results of the answer to the eighth paragraph, which explains (I follow the performance of the government and evaluate its work) showed that (416) respondents with a percentage of (41.6%) answered “never,” which is the highest percentage of the total percentages. As for the lowest percentage of answers, it was for the “always yes” option, as their number was (183) of the total sample, and their percentage was (18.3%).

- The results of the answer to the ninth paragraph, which explains (I discuss political issues with family, friends, and relatives) showed that (426) respondents with a percentage of (42.6%) answered “sometimes”, which is the highest percentage of the total percentages. As for the lowest response rate, it was for the “always yes” option, as their number was (263) of the total sample, and their percentage was (26.3%).

**The difference between youth age and interests based on the foregoing**, field facts show that the tendencies and interests of young people in politics are negative, and they are not interested in political

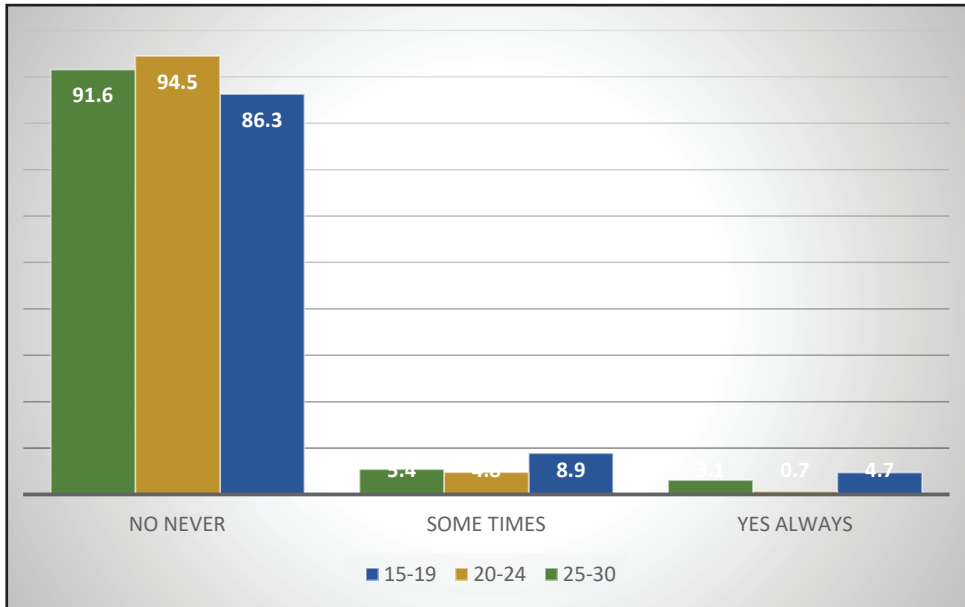
matters or the details of the political process.

This may be due to the negative reputation that the political process has acquired and its workers because of rampant corruption and accusations against politicians, not to mention the distortions of daily political life in Iraq. However, the general interest in politics among young people gives the impression that young people may be ready to enter politics through direct participation or comment in the public space if they see any result from that.

Of course, the level of negativity and positivity among young people varies in their field of political interest according to the different demographic variables, as follows:

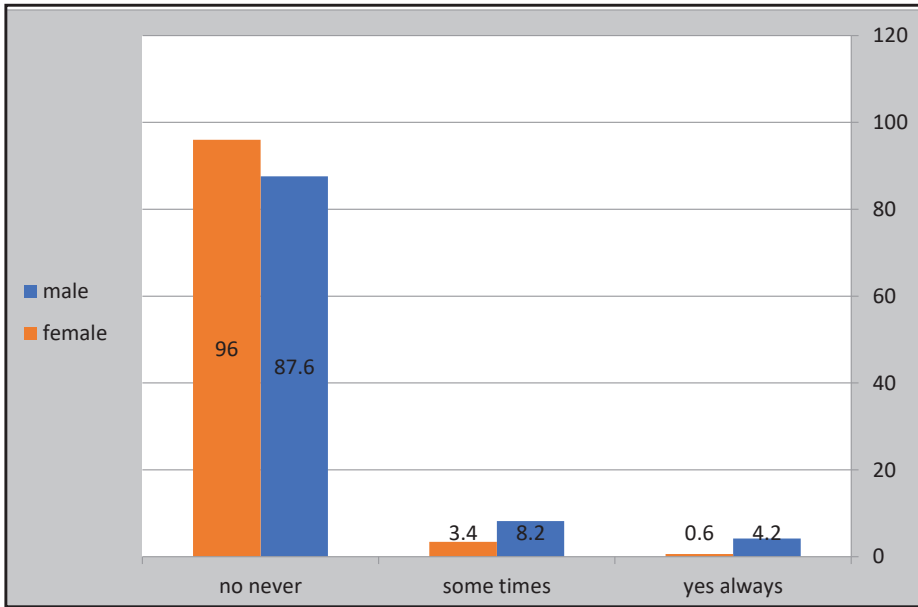
### **1 . Political Variable**

It is noted that the number of those who have political interests in the age group (15–19) was (9) respondents and their percentage was (0.9) of the total units. While there are (164) respondents, and (16.4) are not interested and are far from the world of politics. On the other hand, the number of those who have political interests in the age group (20–24) was (3) respondents and their percentage was (0.3) of the total units. As for those who were not politically interested, they were (395), and their percentage was (39.5), of the total units of the respondents. Followed by the age group (25–30), and the number of those who have political interests in this category was (12) respondents, and their percentage was (1.2) of the total units of respondents, while those who are not interested in political details were (359) respondents and their percentage was (35.9) of the total units of respondents. This means that the older the respondents, the higher their political interests in general.



## 2. The difference between the gender of youth and the nature of political issues

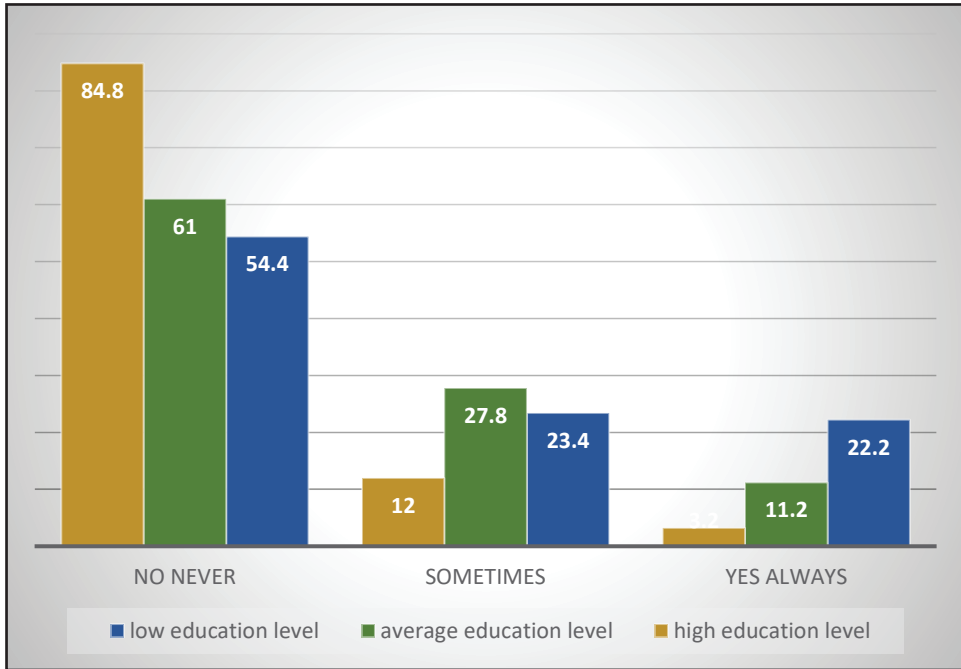
The figure below shows a comparison of all the paragraphs of the youth political interests table in general as a single measure with the sexual distribution, and it is noted that males with political interests were (21) respondents, and their percentage (2.1) of the total units of respondents. While there are (438) respondents, their percentage was (43.8) and they were not interested and far from political issues. While the number of females with political interests was (3) respondents, and their percentage was (0.3) of the total units of respondents. Some are not politically interested, and their number is (480) and their percentage is (48) of the total units of the respondents. It seems that males are more inclined and interested in interacting with such political issues than females.



### 3. The difference between educational level and the nature of political activities

The figure below shows a comparison of all the paragraphs of the table of the political interests of young people in general as a measure of their educational levels. It is noted that those with a low level of education and who have political interests were 8 respondents, and their percentage was 0.8% of the total units of the respondents. 93 respondents, or 9.3 percent, were uninterested and far from political issues. While the number of those with political interests at the average educational level was 10 respondents, at a rate of 1 of the total sample units, and some were not politically interested 363 respondents or 36.3 of the total units of respondents. Followed by the higher educational level, those who have political interests B at this level were 6 respondents and 0.6 percent of the total units of respondents, and some are not interested in political issues, and they were 462 respondents, and their percentage was 46.2 of the total units of the sample, meaning that the

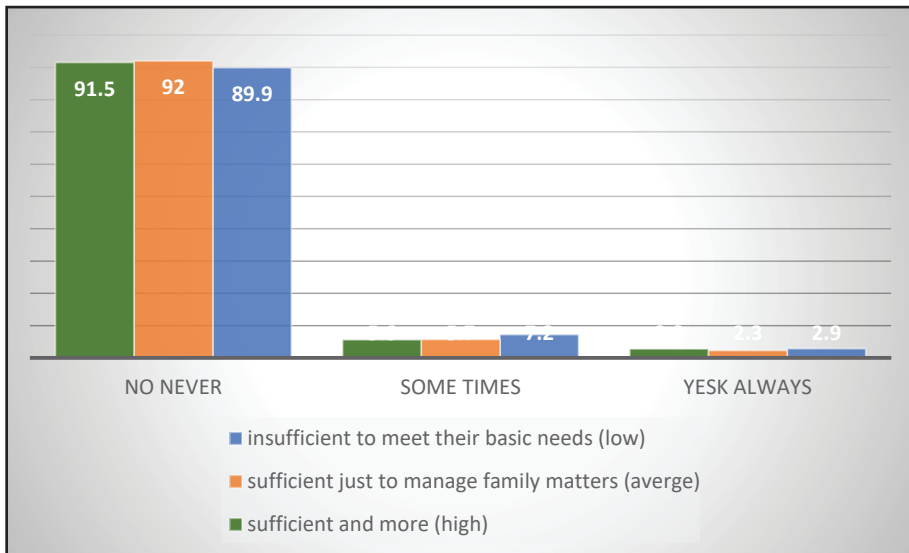
more educated young people are, the greater their political interests in general.



#### 4. The difference between the living situation of young people and the nature of their political interests

The figure below shows that those who are in a poor standard of living and have political interests were (2) respondents, and their percentage was (0.2%) of the total units of respondents, and there were (62) respondents, and their percentage (6.2) were not interested and far from political issues. While those with an average standard of living who had political interests were (9) respondents, and their percentage was (0.9) of the total sample units, and some were not interested in politics and its issues, and they were (425) and their percentage was (42.5) of the total units of the respondents. As for those who were in a good standard of living and had political interests, their number

was (11) respondents, and their percentage was (1.1) of the total units of respondents, and some were not interested in political issues, and they were (366) respondents, and their percentage was (36.6) of the total sample units. It was also found that the excellent standard of living (luxury) of those who have political interests were (2) respondents, and their percentage was (0.2) of the total units of respondents, and some were not interested in political details by (65) respondents, and their percentage was (6.5) of the total units of respondents. This means that political interests in general increase at the average standard of living and the good standard of living.





## 5 . The difference between the province, and the interests of the political youth.

The figure below shows that the respondents of Baghdad governorate who had political interests were (15) respondents, and their percentage was (1.5%) of the total units of respondents, and there (941) respondents and their percentage was (94.1) were not interested and far from political issues. While the respondents of Nasiriyah governorate who had political interests were (54) respondents, and their percentage was (5.4) of the total sample units, and some were not politically interested at the rate of (852) and their percentage was (85.2), out of the total units of the respondents. Followed by Al-Anbar Governorate, the number of those who had political interests was (31) respondents, and their percentage was (3.1) of the total units of the respondents, and some were not interested in political issues (877) respondents, and their percentage was (87.7) of the total sample units. It was also found that the number of those who had political interests in Erbil governorate was (23) respondents, and their percentage was (2.3) of the total units of respondents, and some were not interested in political details, and they were (931) respondents, and their percentage was (93.1) of the total sample units.

