



NEC's monthly report on Palestinian perceptions towards their political, economic, and social conditions[^]

“Palestinian Political Pulse”

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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NEC's monthly bulletin on Palestinian perceptions towards their political, economic, and social conditions

1. Introduction

During the period 4-8 October, 2006, Near East Consulting (NEC) conducted a phone survey of over 1180 randomly selected Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem of which 805 were successfully completed. The survey covered a number of issues that fit into NEC's monthly "Palestinian Political Pulse", "Palestinian Peace Pulse", "Palestinian Security Monitor" and "Palestinian Social Monitor" with the aim of monitoring Palestinian perceptions of their living conditions and the political situation over time. These include: factional trust and trust in political figures, Palestinians' feeling of security since the PLC elections, attitude towards the domestic political crisis, support for a peace agreement with Israel, support for a ceasefire, perceptions on whether or not there is a peace partner in Israel, perceptions on whether or not there is a Palestinian peace partner and opinions on whether or not Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel. The survey also covered the issue of depression in the oPt, which fits into NEC's newly established social monitor.

It is worth noting that the margin of error is +/- 3.4% with a 95% confidence level.

2. Main Findings

- 75% of the Palestinians over the age of 18 are 'depressed' and 18% are 'not depressed'.
- 48% of the respondents attribute their feeling of 'depression' or concern to security matters (26% to internal power struggle and 23% to lack of security).
- 49% of the respondents believe that the security situation has worsened since the elections.
- 36% of the respondents said that corruption has increased since the elections (50% among Fateh supporters and 28% among Hamas supporters) and 33% (54% among Hamas and 24% among Fateh) said that it decreased. The remaining 31% said that the corruption level remained unchanged.
- 30% of the respondents blame all the security powers for the recent clashes. However, 27% (34% in the Gaza Strip) blame the Hamas-led Executive Force for the problems while 9% blamed the Preventive Security, 8% blamed other Palestinian security forces and 26% blamed other powers for these clashes.
- 52% of the respondents said that the coping strategies are no longer available to them (48% in the West Bank and 54% in the Gaza Strip). Only 12% stated that they still have sufficient resources to help cope with the hardship.
- 76% of the respondents believe that crime, child abuse, and other social disorders have increased in the past six months.



- 68% of the respondents support a peace settlement with Israel (+2% from September), and 86% support a cease-fire (90% among Fateh supporters and 73% among Hamas supporters).
- 66% of the respondents said that Hamas should change its position regarding the 'elimination' of the state of Israel (an increase of 6% from the September figure). According to factional trust, 83% of Fateh supporters and 38% of Hamas supporters want Hamas to change its position on this matter.
- 64% of the Palestinians do not believe that there is a peace partner for the Palestinians in the Israel (75% among Fateh supporters and 75% among Hamas supporters). However, 77% of the Palestinians believe that there is a peace partner for Israel among the Palestinians.
- Palestinians trust Mahmoud Abbas slightly more than they trust Ismael Hanieh. While 53% trust the former, 47% trust the later. This is a 4% increase in the level of trust for Abu Mazen since NEC's September survey. Trust in Abu Mazen reaches 92% among Fateh supporters, 8% among Hamas supporters, and 58% among those who do not trust any political or religious faction. As for Hanieh, 94% of Hamas supporters, 8% of Fateh supporters, and 42% of those trusting no faction favored him over the President.
- The blame for the recent clashes between Fateh and Hamas were put equally on the main two factions.
- When asked whether the respondents support new elections, 61% said they do and 39% opposed the holding of new elections.
- Having said that, 49% of the respondents believe that Hamas should stay in power as opposed to 51% who stated otherwise.
- Of the respondents, 70% said that Abu Mazen should not resign while 30% supported his resignation. Support for Abu Mazen in this respect is the same in the Gaza Strip as it is in the West Bank.
- In case the Hamas Government falls, only 13% of respondents would prefer a Fateh government and 3% a Hamas Government. However, 44% would prefer a Fateh-led national unity government, compared to 40% who prefer a Hamas-led national unity government.
- As for what Palestinians would like Abu Mazen to do, 62% said a national unity government and 20% said they prefer Abu Mazen to call for new elections and 8% to dissolve the PA. Support for a national unity government is stronger among Hamas supporters (78%) than among Fateh supports (48%). Support for a national unity government among respondents who do not trust any faction is 60%. As for calling for new elections, 36% of Fateh supporters prefer this option compared to 7% among Hamas supporters while the percentage is 16% among those who do not trust any faction.
- Support for factions has decreased from the September figure. Whereas 36% of the respondents in September trusted Fateh most, 32% trusted Hamas most, and 25% said that they did not trust any faction, the figures for October are 30% for Fateh (-5%), 25% for Hamas (-7%), and 37% (+12%) for those trusting no faction.
- The poverty level among the Palestinians has increased from 65% in September to 67% in October (76% in the Gaza Strip and 57% in the West Bank*).
- 71% of Fateh supporters live below the poverty line while the percentage is 66% among those respondents trusting Hamas.

* The poverty level in the West Bank should be slightly more acute because the poverty line for the Jerusalem residents, who are part of the West Bank in this report, is higher than that of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip yet they are treated here as if they live under similar conditions as the rest of the oPt.



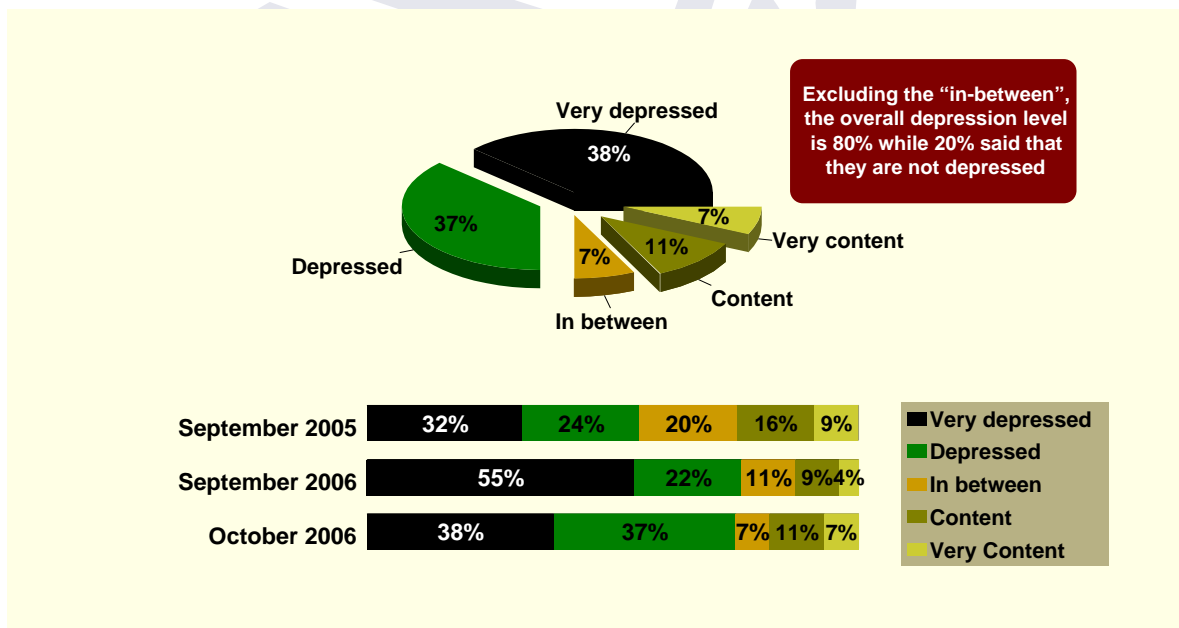
3. The social monitor

3.1. Depression levels

NEC's latest survey on depression and the shocking rates of Palestinians that are either suffering from severe depression (55%) or are depressed (24%) has pushed NEC to monitor, in addition to its monthly political and poverty monitors, the psycho-social situation of the Palestinian people at a more in-depth level, especially given the recent economic and political turmoil in the oPt.

The percentage of respondents that indicated that they were depressed in October is down by 2% from September 2006 were 77% of Palestinians were very depressed. or depressed as opposed to 75% in October. This being said, the percentage remains significantly higher than the level of September 2005, as indicated in figure 1, below.

Figure 1: Level of Depression

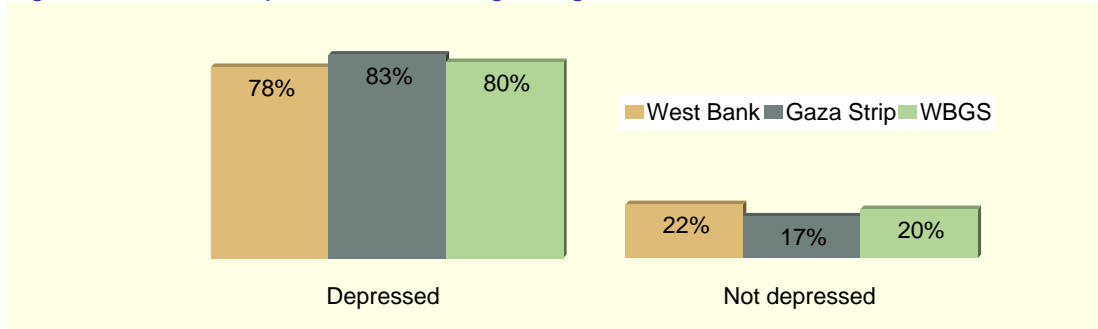


Not surprisingly, the level of depression seems to be higher in the Gaza Strip than it is in the West Bank. As indicated in figure 2, below, 83% of the Gaza respondents were regarded as 'depressed' compared to 78% in the West Bank*.

* Notwithstanding the 'in-between' category, the level of depression increases to 80% in the opt. (instead of 75% when the in-betweens are included in the calculation).



Figure 2: Level of depression according to region

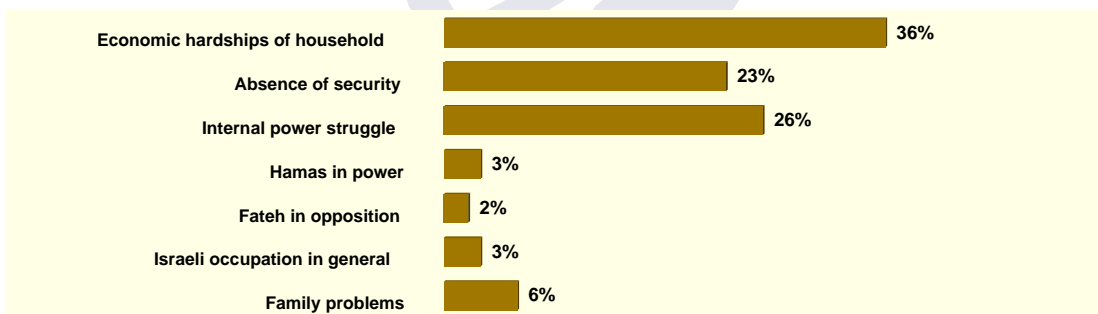


3.2. Reasons for the feeling of depression

Palestinians were asked about the reason behind their feeling of depression. The main reason for Palestinian feeling of depression is due to economic hardships of their household as outlined by 36% of Palestinians. The internal power struggle comes in second (26%) followed by the absence of security (23%). This brings the security issue as the main concern for the Palestinian people where 49% feel insecure due to the internal power struggle or due to lack of security for the household.

The fact that Hamas is in power only makes 3% of Palestinians depressed whereas 2% are depressed that Fateh is opposition. Interestingly, the Israeli occupation in general seems to make only 3% of Palestinians depressed, although direct results of the occupation[♦], especially in terms of the economy and security cannot be dismissed when it comes to why Palestinians are depressed. Only 6% of Palestinians indicated that their family problems are behind their depression.

Figure 3: What makes you feel depressed?



[♦] Researchers were instructed not to mention the "Israeli occupation" as a reason of depression.



Interestingly, however, is the fact that respondents trusting Fateh attribute their feeling of depression or concern primarily to the economic hardship, while respondents trusting Hamas attribute the internal power struggle as the main cause of their depression, as indicated in table 1, below. Those who do not trust any faction are closer to the views of the Fateh supporters than to the Hamas supporters.

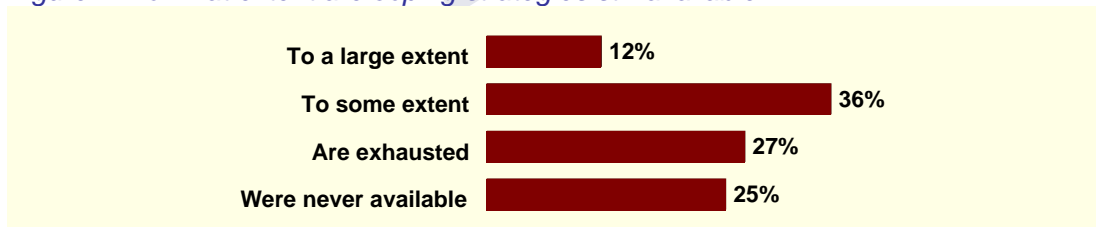
Table 1: Reasons for concern/depression according to factional trust.

	Factional trust.						Total
	Hamas	Fateh	PFLP	Islamic Jihad	Others	I trust no faction	
The economic hardship of my household	28%	43%	28%	44%	40%	37%	36%
The absence of security for me and my family	20%	22%	22%	6%	20%	26%	23%
The internal power struggle	38%	22%	22%	38%	27%	21%	26%
Hamas in power	1%	8%	11%			2%	3%
Fateh in opposition	5%					2%	2%
The Israeli occupation in general	3%	2%	6%	6%	13%	4%	4%
Family problems (health, children, divorce, etc...)	5%	4%	11%	6%		8%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.3. Coping strategies

Coping strategies (such as selling jewelry, family property, assistance, sending kids to the labor force, or receiving help from other family members etc.) are available to some extent according to 36% of respondents while 12% said that they are available to a large extent. As indicated in figure 4, below, however, over 50% of the respondents said that they have no means to any coping strategies (27% of Palestinians believe that coping strategies are exhausted and 25% believe that coping strategies were never available in the first place).

Figure 4: To what extent are coping strategies still available?

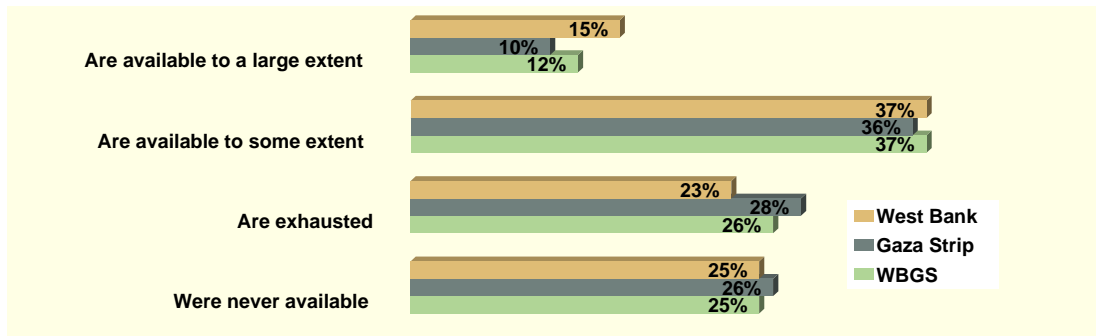


In terms of region, coping strategies seem to be readily available to a larger extent among West Bankers than among Gazans, as indicated by 15% of West Bank residents and 10% of Gaza Strip residents. There seems to be no difference between region of residence and whether coping strategies were never available. However, more Gaza



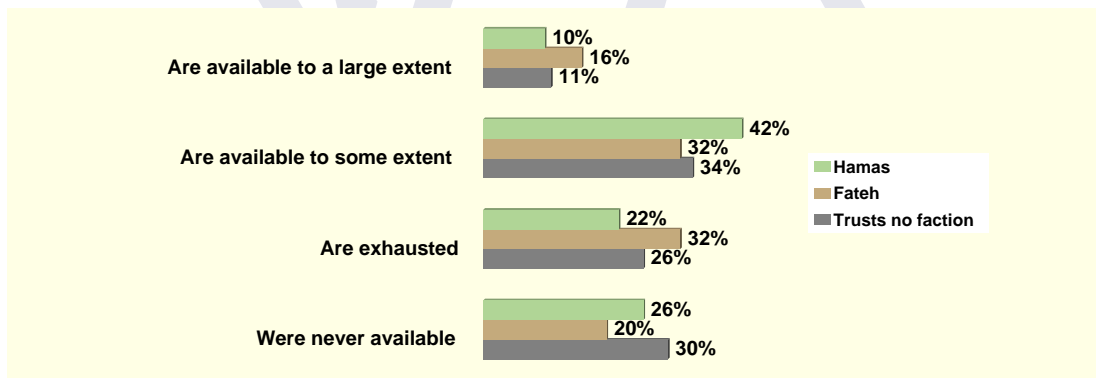
residents (28%) than West Bankers (23%) believe that the available coping strategies are exhausted (23%), as illustrated in figure 5, below.

Figure 5: Availability of coping strategies according to region



Supporters of Hamas believe at a higher percentage (42%) than supporters of Fateh (32%) or those that do not trust any faction (34%) that coping strategies are available to some extent whereas Fateh supporters (32%) believe more than Hamas supporters (22%) and those Palestinians that do not trust any faction (26%) that coping strategies have become exhausted. Likewise, a larger percentage of those not trusting any faction (30%) still believe that coping strategies were never available in the beginning.

Figure 6: To what extent are coping strategies still available according to factional trust



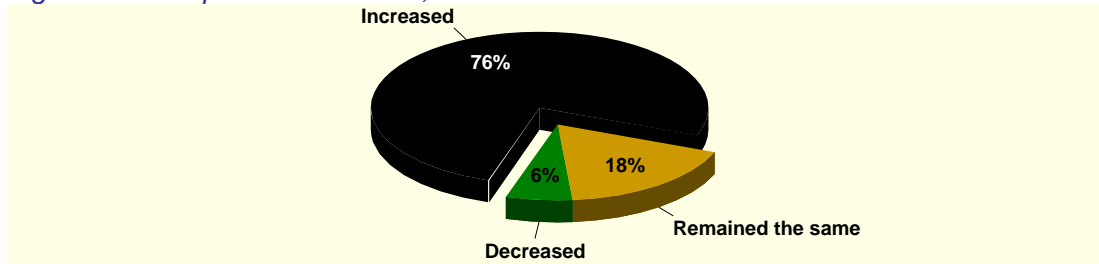
3.4. Social problems

More than ¾ of the Palestinian population have the perception that crime, child abuse and other social disorders have increased rather than decreased in the oPt in the past six months. Only 6% of the Palestinians believe that crime, child abuse and other social disorders have decreased. The perception that crime, child abuse and social disorder have remained at the same rate is shared by 18% of Palestinians. There is no significance between region of residence and Palestinian perception about whether or



not crime, child abuse and other social disorders have increased, decreased or remained the same.

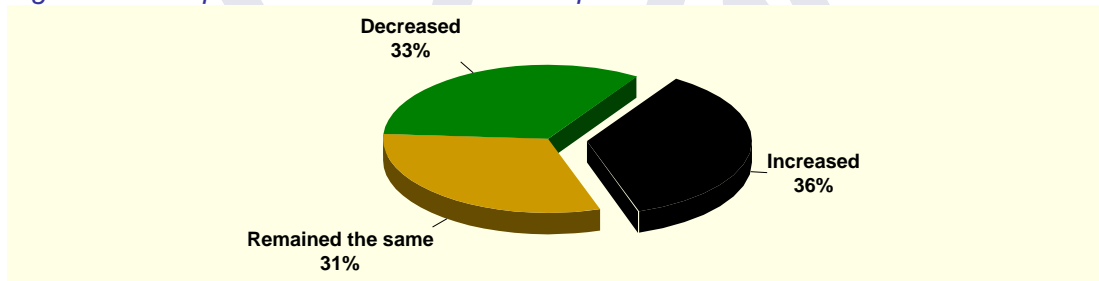
Figure 7: Perception about crime, child abuse and other social disorders



3.5. Corruption in the PA

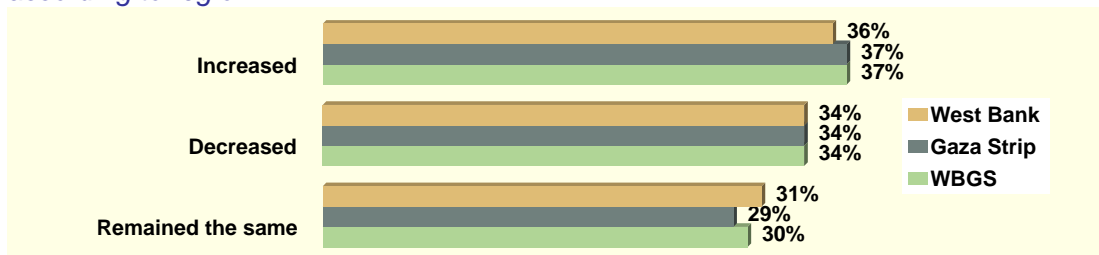
Palestinians also seem to be divided on the issue of whether corruption in the PA has increased, decreased or remained the same since the elections. As illustrated below, 36% of Palestinians believe that corruption has increased since the elections compared to 33% that believe otherwise and 31% that believe that the level of corruption in the PA has not changed since the PLC elections.

Figure 8: Perceptions about the level of corruption in the PA since the elections



The belief that corruption in the PA has increased, decreased or remained the same since the elections is almost the same among Palestinians whether they reside in the West Bank or the Gaza, as indicated in the figure, below.

Figure 9: Perceptions about the level of corruption in the PA since the elections according to region

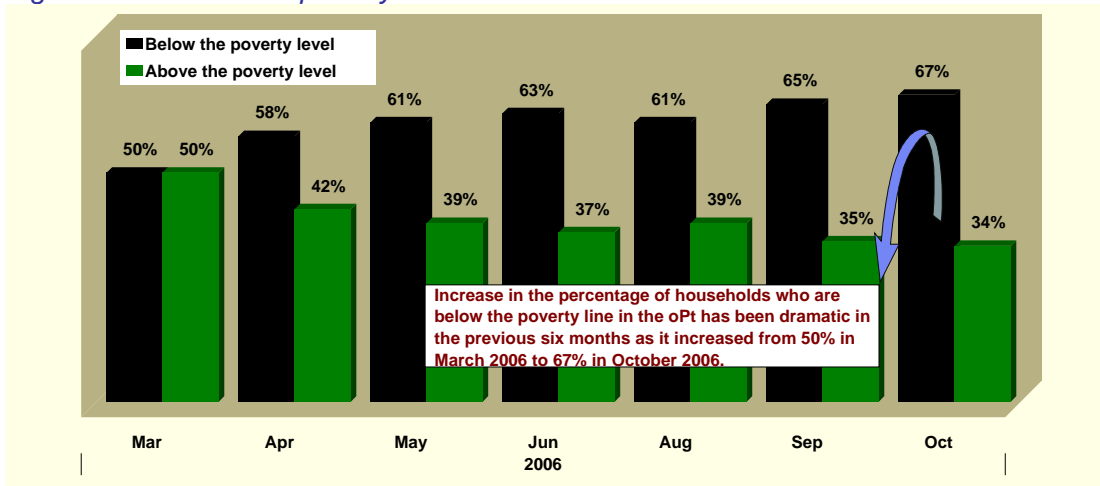




3.6. Poverty conditions^θ

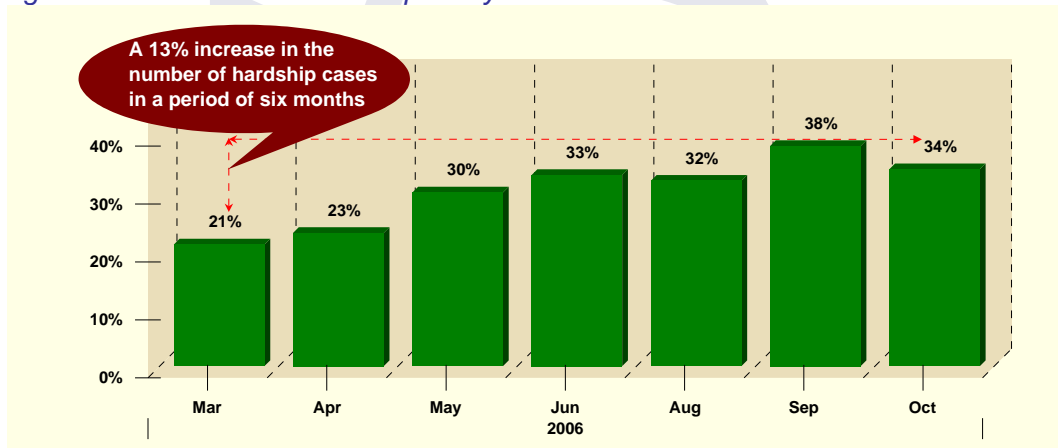
Once again, the level of poverty in the oPt has reached unprecedented levels. As illustrated below, 67% of the Palestinians fall under the poverty line, an increase of 17% since March 2006.

Figure 10: Evolution of poverty march-October 2006



Although this increase is alarming, what is more worrisome is the increase in the percentage of households living under extreme poverty conditions. As illustrated in figure 11, below, the percentage of people living in hardship has increased from 21% in March to 34% in October, 2006.

Figure 11: Evolution of extreme poverty



^θ For further information on poverty conditions, refer to NEC's Poverty Monitor www.neareastconsulting.com

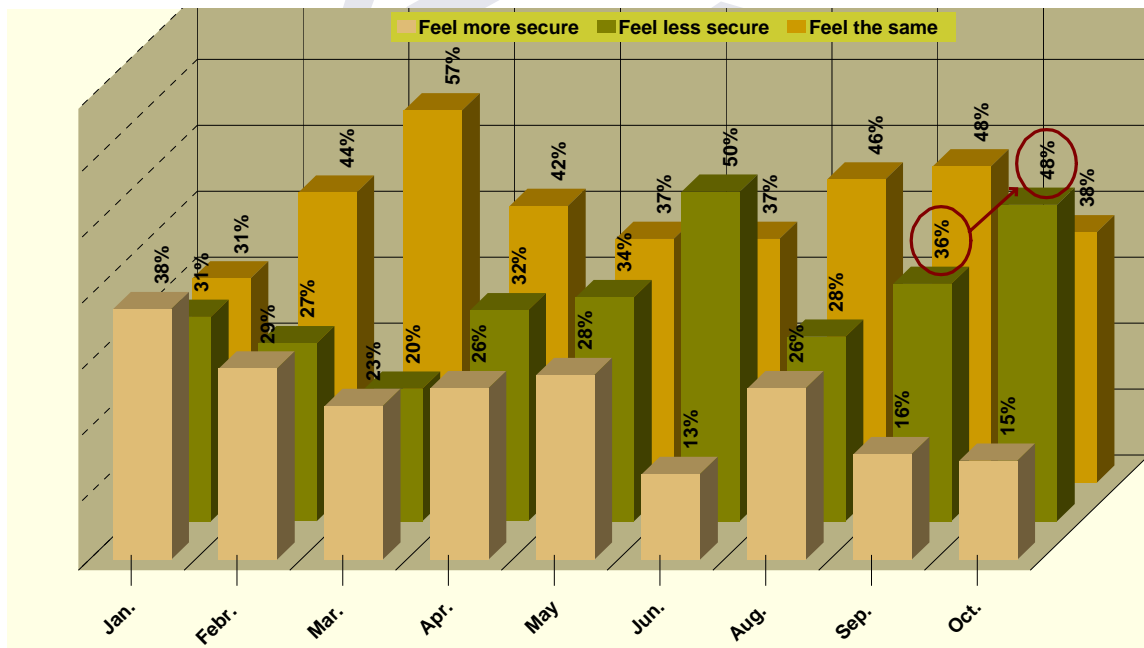


4. The security monitor

4.1. Feeling of security in general since the elections

In comparison to the results of last month, this month's results reveal an increase in the percentage of Palestinians that feel less secure where the percentage of people that felt less secure in September was 36% while it now stands at 48% in October, an increase of 12%, as overviewed below in figure 12. Indeed, whereas NEC's August's survey showed a rise in the feeling of security among Palestinians this is not the case in October. The increase in Palestinians' feeling of insecurity could be attributed to the increase in the tension between Fateh and Hamas in the Gaza Strip recently as well as to the unstable economic and political situation in the oPt.

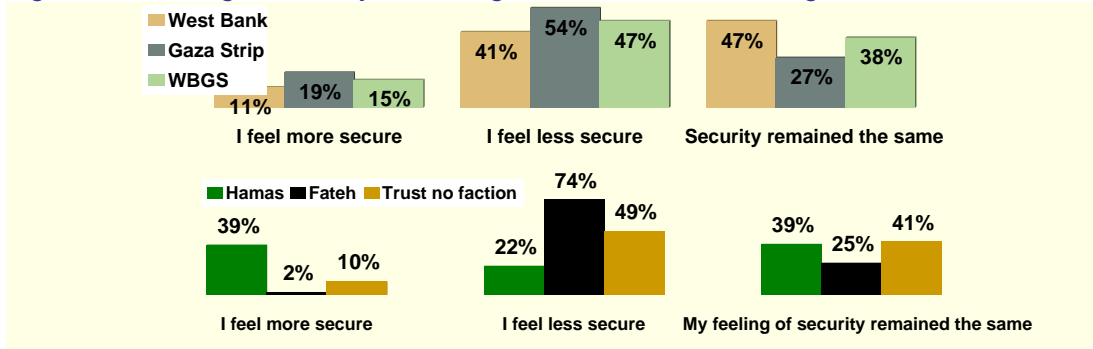
Figure 12: Feeling of security since the elections



Palestinians' feeling of security varies considerably depending on which faction Palestinians trust most and the region they reside in. Whereas 74% of Fateh supporters and 49% of those who do not trust any political faction feel less secure since the PLC elections, this is the case for 22% of Hamas supporters. According to region, a higher percentage of Gazans (54%) than West Bankers (41%) feel less secure, as indicated in figure 13, below.



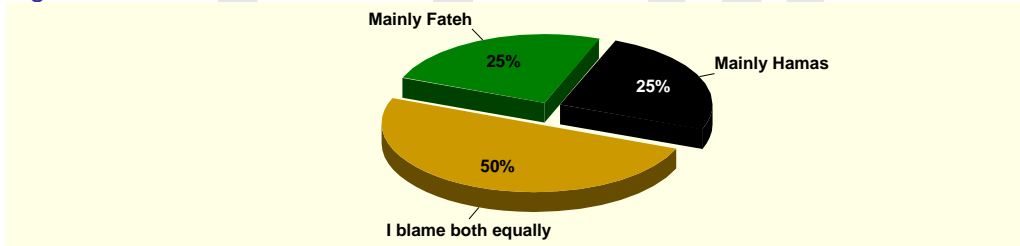
Figure 13: Feeling of security according to factional trust and region



4.2. Palestinian attitudes towards the recent clashes in Gaza

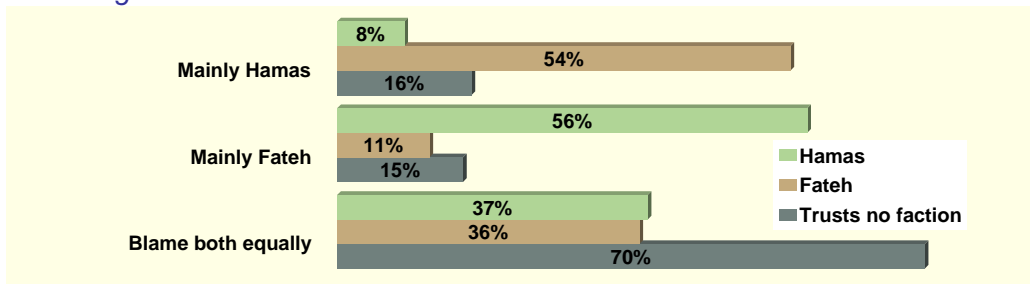
Half of the Palestinian population blames Fateh and Hamas equally for the current crisis between the two rival factions. As indicated in the figure below, ¼ of the population blames Fateh for the current crisis whereas the other ¼ blames Hamas. Region of residence has no effect on whether respondents blame Fateh, Hamas or both equally for the recent violence between the two main factions.

Figure 14: Who do Palestinians blame for the current crisis between Fateh and Hamas



Naturally, more than half of Fateh supporters blame mainly Hamas for the current crisis and almost the same percentage of Hams supporters blames mainly Fateh. Around 70% of those that do not trust any faction take the neutral side and blame both Fateh and Hamas, as illustrated below.

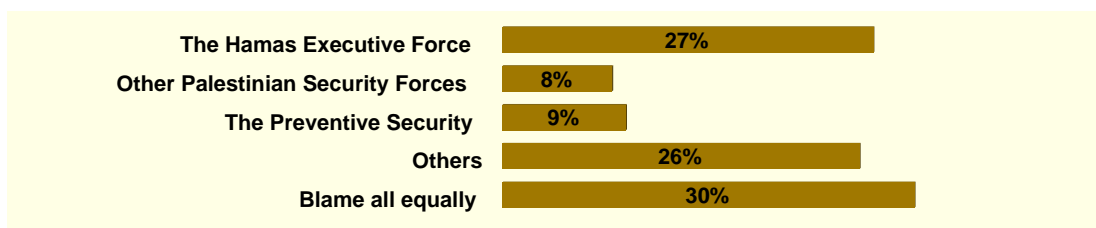
Figure 15: Who do Palestinians blame for the current crisis between Fateh and Hamas according to Factional trust





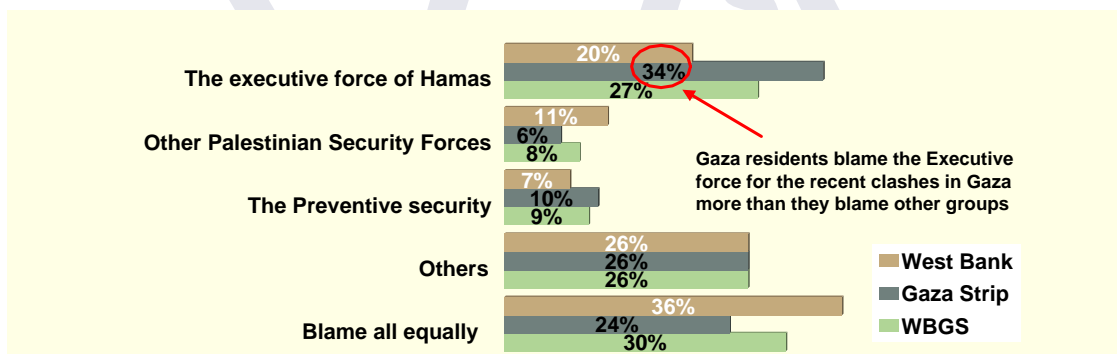
When respondents were asked as to the security agency that they feel to be responsible for the recent clashes in the Gaza Strip, more Palestinians blame the Hamas-led Executive Force than Preventive Security or the other security forces. As indicated below, 27% of the respondents blame the Executive Force for the clashes. In addition, 30% of the respondents blame all the security agencies equally for the problems and 26% put the blame on sources other than the Palestinian security forces.

Figure 16: Who do you blame for the recent problems in Gaza?



Gaza Strip residents blame the Hamas Executive Force for the recent clashes more than they blame other groups. As indicated below, 34% of Gazans blame the Executive Force compared to 20% of West Bankers who tend to put more blame on all sides.

Figure 17: The organization blamed for the recent clashes in Gaza according to region



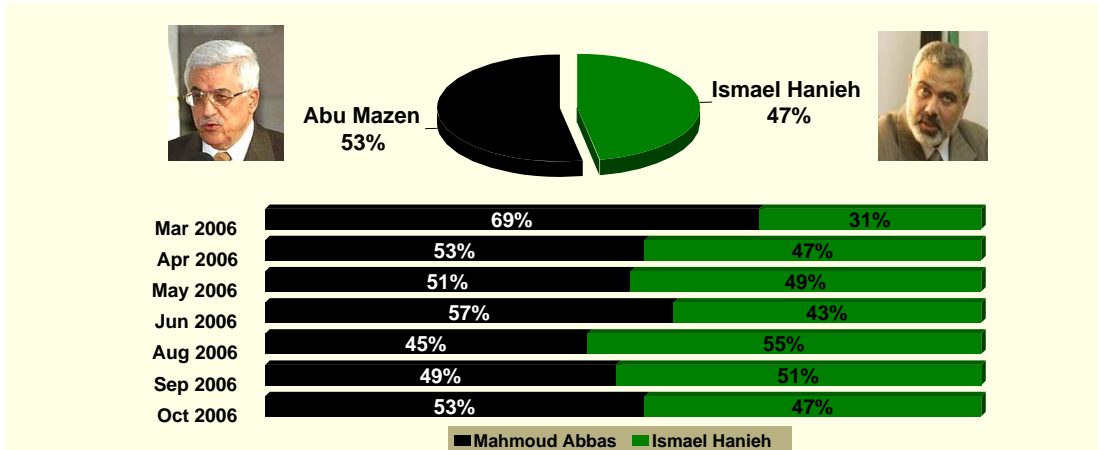
5. The Palestinian political pulse

5.1. Leadership

When it comes to the leader Palestinians trust most, the current political and economic situation seems to have given Abu Mazen a slight boost over Ismael Hanieh where a two month trust in Hanieh has dwindled and now stands at 47% compared to 53% of for Abu Mazen, up 4% in one month.

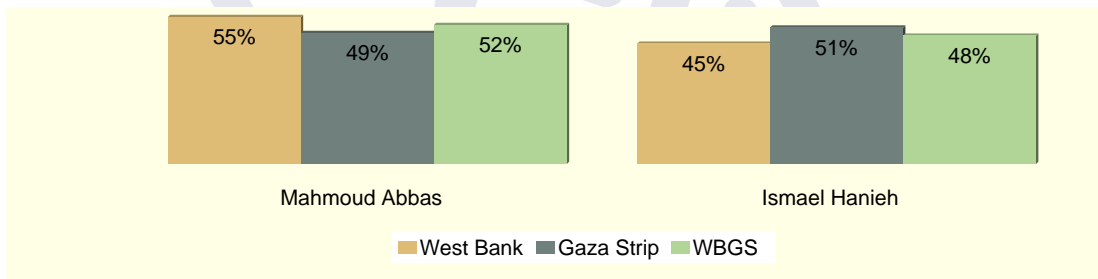


Figure 18: The Leader Palestinians trust most



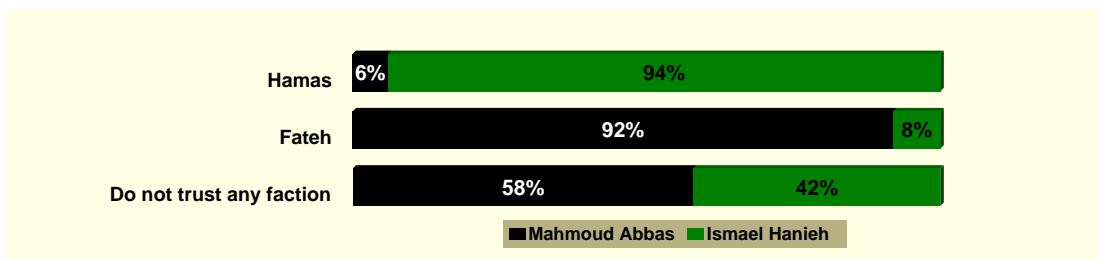
Trust in Mahmoud Abbas is relatively higher among West Bankers than among Gazans, whereas trust in Ismael Hanieh is the opposite and is higher in the Gaza Strip where a predominately large number of Hamas supporters reside, compared to Fateh.

Figure 19: Trust in Abu Mazen and Ismael Hanieh according to region



The leader Palestinians trust most according to factional trust does not seem to be surprising as 94% of those trusting Hamas also trust Ismael Hanieh and 92% of those trusting Fateh trust Mahmoud Abbas more. However, more than half of those that do not trust any faction trust Mahmoud Abbas compared to 42% that trust Ismael Hanieh.

Figure 20: Leader Palestinians trust most according to Factional Trust

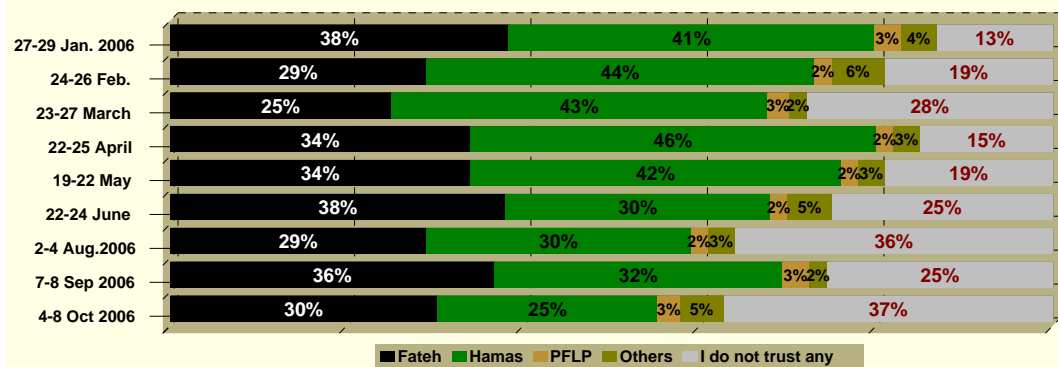




5.2. Factions

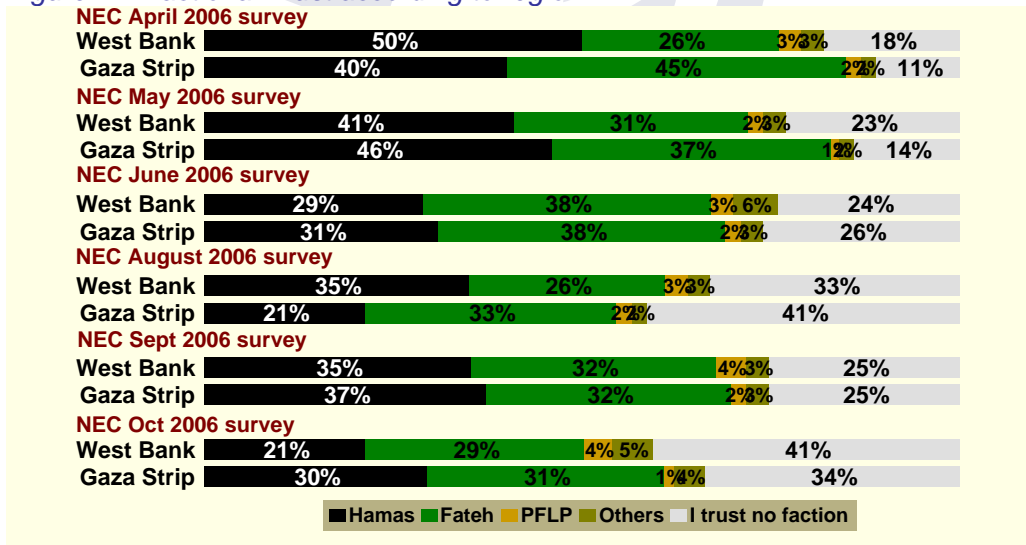
Factional trust continues to fluctuate between those that support Hamas and Fateh as the months pass and as the current situation continues to develop. Clearly, the higher the internal tension, the less is the support to either party. Where trust in Fateh was 36% in September this is not the case in October as trust in Fateh dropped by 6%. Supporters of Hamas decreased by 7% this month also from September while the percentage of those Palestinians that do not trust any faction has increased by 12% in just one month, as indicated in figure 21, below.

Figure 21: Factional Trust



Factional trust also fluctuates considerably over time between the two different regions of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). Overall, however, since the NEC August survey, trust in Hamas has been stronger in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip but this is not the case this month where support for Hamas has dropped from 35% in the West Bank in September to 21% in October. Trust in Fateh has decreased slightly this month by 2% in the West Bank and by 1% in the Gaza Strip.

Figure 22: Factional Trust according to region



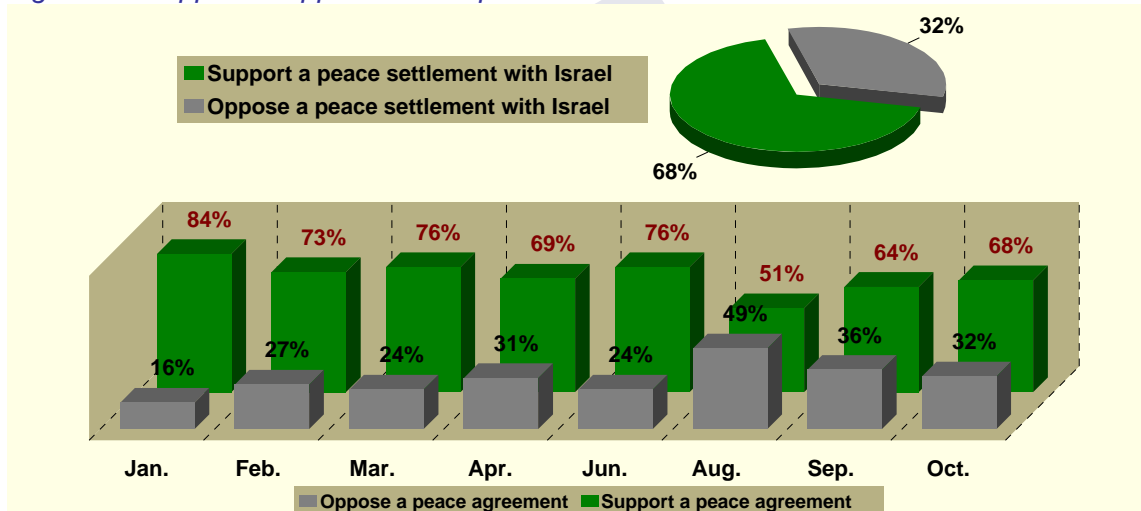


6. The Peace Pulse

6.1. Support of a peace settlement

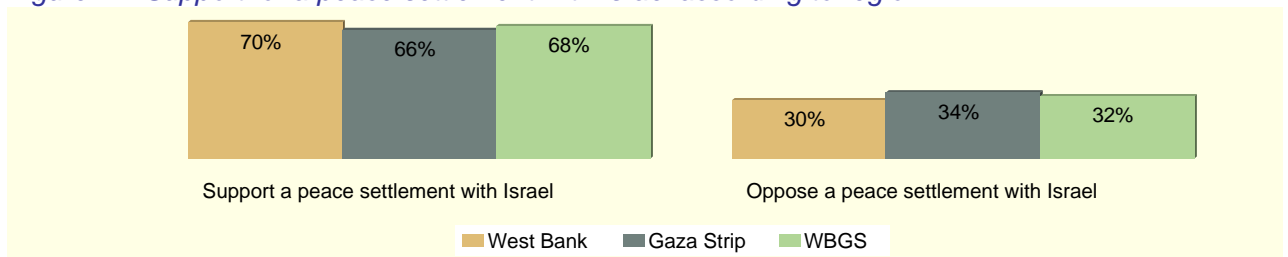
Where support for a peace settlement with Israel once stood at 51% in August 2006 during the Israeli incursions into Gaza and the Lebanon this is no longer the case as 68% of Palestinians now support a peace settlement with Israel, up 4% from September. Although opposition to a peace settlement with Israel has also decreased by 4% in just one month, the current rate is double from where it stood in January when only 16% opposed a peace settlement with Israel. The highest increase in opposition to a peace settlement with Israel was witnessed in August during the Lebanon-Israeli war and during the continuous military operations in the Gaza Strip.

Figure 23: Support or opposition to a peace settlement



The support for a peace agreement with Israel remains higher among those residing in the West Bank than among Gaza Strip residents. This support is significantly higher than the percentage reported in August as a result of Palestinian negative attitude towards Israel because of the invasion of the Lebanon and the military attacks in the Gaza Strip during that period.

Figure 24: Support for a peace settlement with Israel according to region

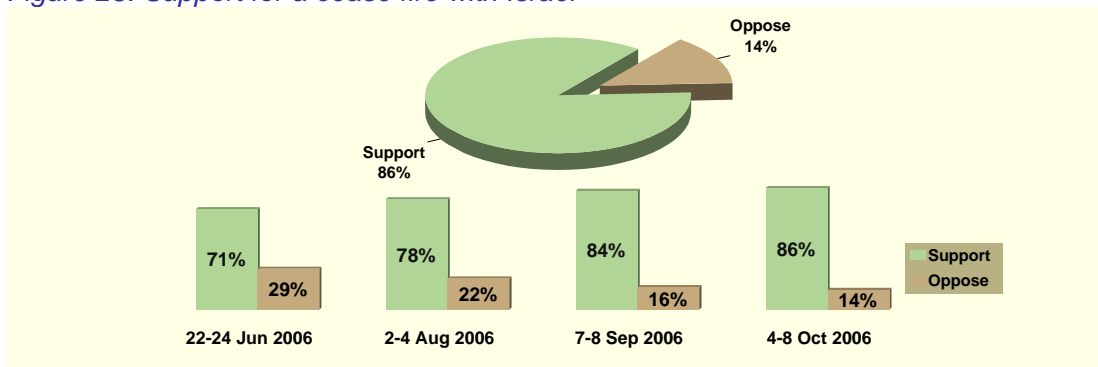




6.2. Support for a ceasefire agreement with Israel

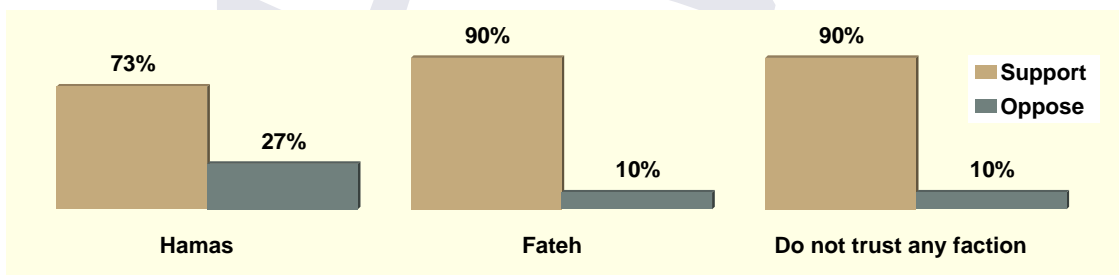
As for the support for a ceasefire with Israel, the results this month show a slight increase (+4%) from last month were support for a cease fire with Israel stood at 84%. There is no statistical significance between support and opposition to a ceasefire with Israel irrespective of whether the respondents live in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip.

Figure 25: Support for a cease fire with Israel



However, support for ceasefire is higher among Fateh supporters and those not trusting any faction than among Hamas supporters. Whereas 90% of those trusting Fateh and not trusting any faction want a cease fire with Israel, 73 of those trusting Hamas want that.

Figure 26: Support for a cease fire according to factional trust



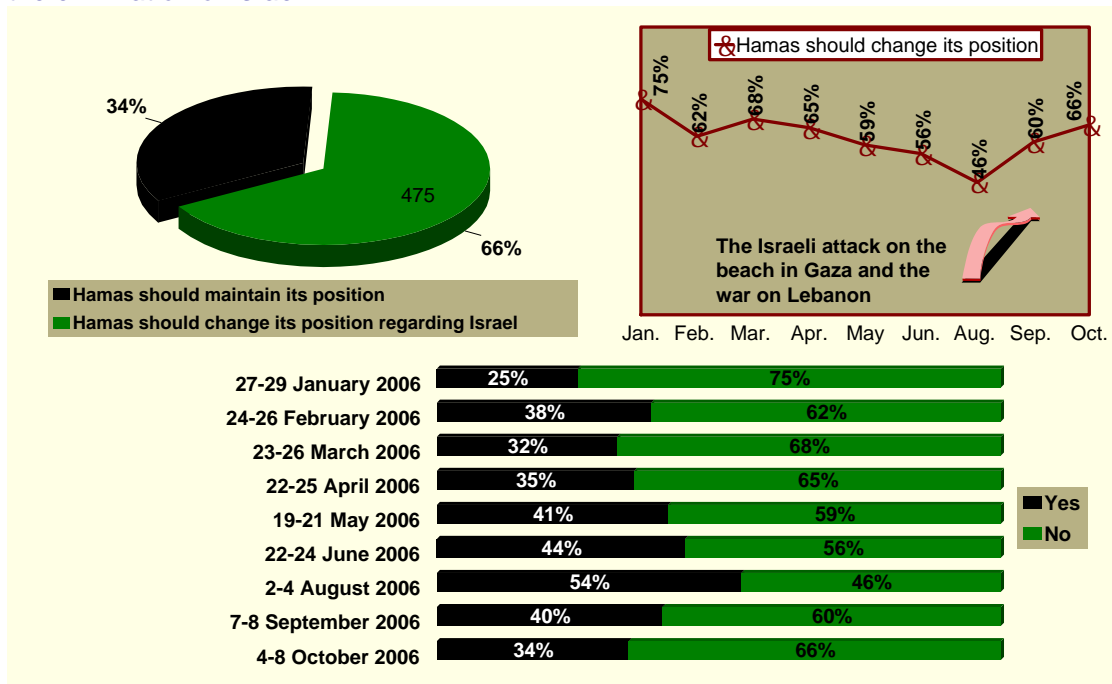
6.3. Hamas and the 'elimination' of the state of Israel

When examining Palestinians' opinions with regard to the Hamas position on the elimination of Israel, a larger number of Palestinians (66%) believe that Hamas should change its position on the elimination of Israel, an increase of 6% from where it stood at 60% in September. Down from last month, 34% of Palestinians believe that Hamas should maintain their position on the elimination of Israel from 40% in September also as



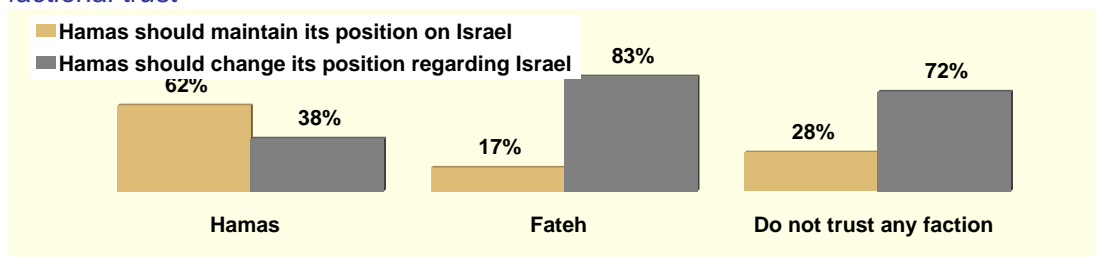
compared to 54% of Palestinians in August that believed that Hamas should maintain its position regarding Israel. As indicated in the figure below, the highest percentage of support for Hamas's position was in August, again during the attacks against the Gaza residents and the incursion into the Lebanon.

Figure 27: Palestinian perceptions about whether Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel



Accordingly, when examining whether Hamas should maintain its position on the elimination of Israel according to factional trust, it is clear that those Palestinians trusting Fateh (83%) or not trusting any faction (72%) believe at a higher percentage than those trusting Hamas (38%) that the Hamas Government should change its position regarding Israel, as indicated in the figure below. In addition, more than half of those that trust Hamas also believe that Hamas should maintain its position on Israel whereas only 28% of those not trusting any faction and to a lesser extent Fateh also share this stance against Israel.

Figure 28: Should Hamas maintain its position on the elimination of Israel according to factional trust

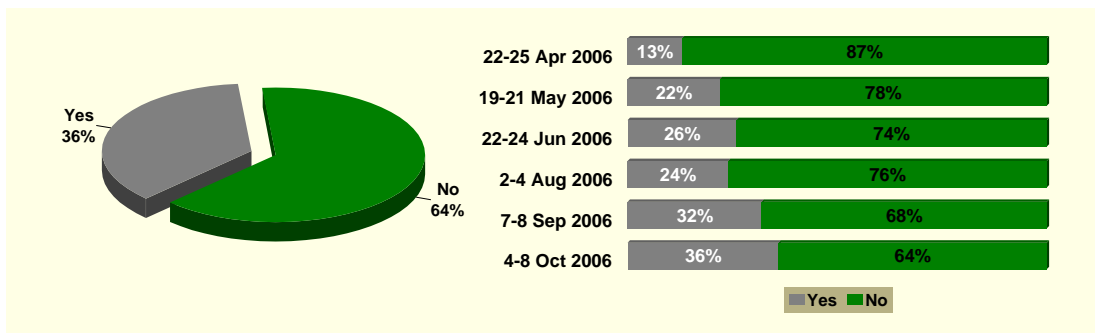




6.4. The existence of a peace partner for the Palestinians in Israel

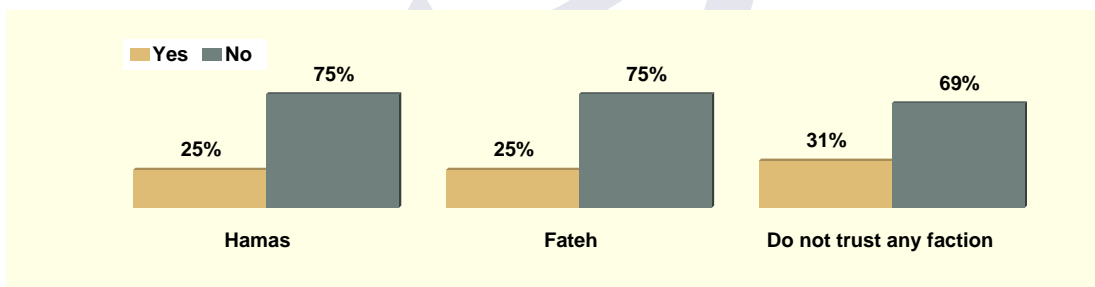
When respondents were asked if they believe that Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel, 64% of the respondents indicated that “no” there is no partner for peace in Israel for Palestinians compared to only 36% that believe otherwise, as indicated in the figure below. The belief that there is no peace partner for Palestinians in Israel is slowly decreasing from when it stood at 87% in April 2006 to 76% in August and now in October at 64%.

Figure 29: Do you believe that Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel?



When the issue was examined according to factional trust, a higher percentage of those that do not trust any faction (31%) than Hamas supporters (25%) and Fateh supporters (25%) believe that Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel.

Figure 30: Do Palestinians have a partner for peace in Israel according to factional trust?



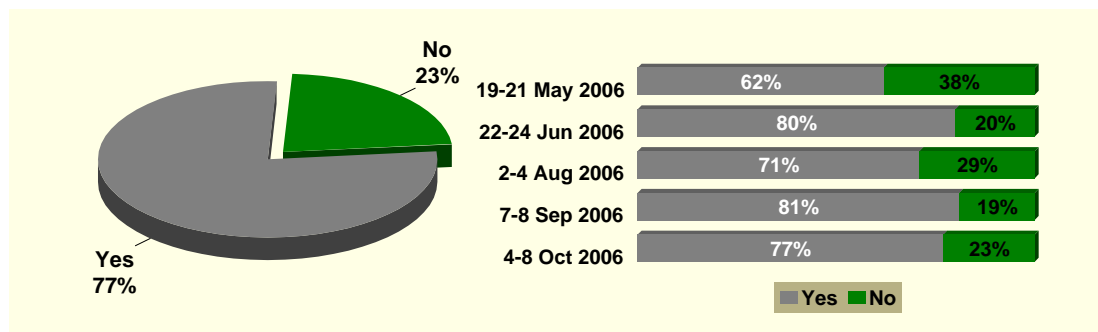
6.5. The existence of a peace partner for Israel in Palestine

However, when Palestinians were asked whether there is a Palestinian peace partner for Israel, 77% of Palestinians indicated that there is a peace partner for Israel, down 4%



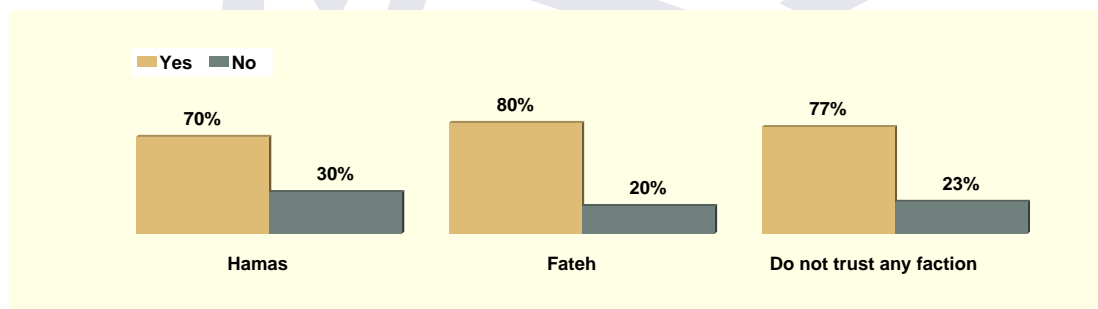
from where is stood at 81% in September. Likewise, the percentage of Palestinians indicating that there is no Palestinian peace partner for Israel is slightly higher this month compared to that in September.

Figure 31: Is there a Palestinian peace partner for Israel?



The belief that there is a Palestinian peace partner for Israel but no peace partner in Israel for Palestinians varies among those trusting different factions. As outlined in the figure below, a higher percentage of Fateh supporters (80%), than among those not trusting any faction (77%) and of Hamas supporters (70%) believe that there is a Palestinian peace partner for Israel.

Figure 32: Is there a Palestinian peace partner for Israel according to factional trust?



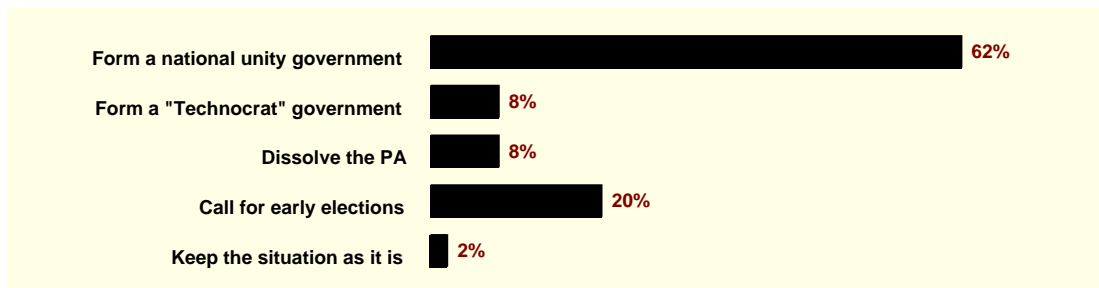
7. The current political deadlock

The best possible thing for Abu Mazen to do to end the current crisis in the oPt is to form a National Unity Government according to 62% of Palestinians. Still, some Palestinians disagree with this notion and believe that the way to end the current crisis is to call for early elections as expressed by 20% of Palestinians. As illustrated below, 8% of the



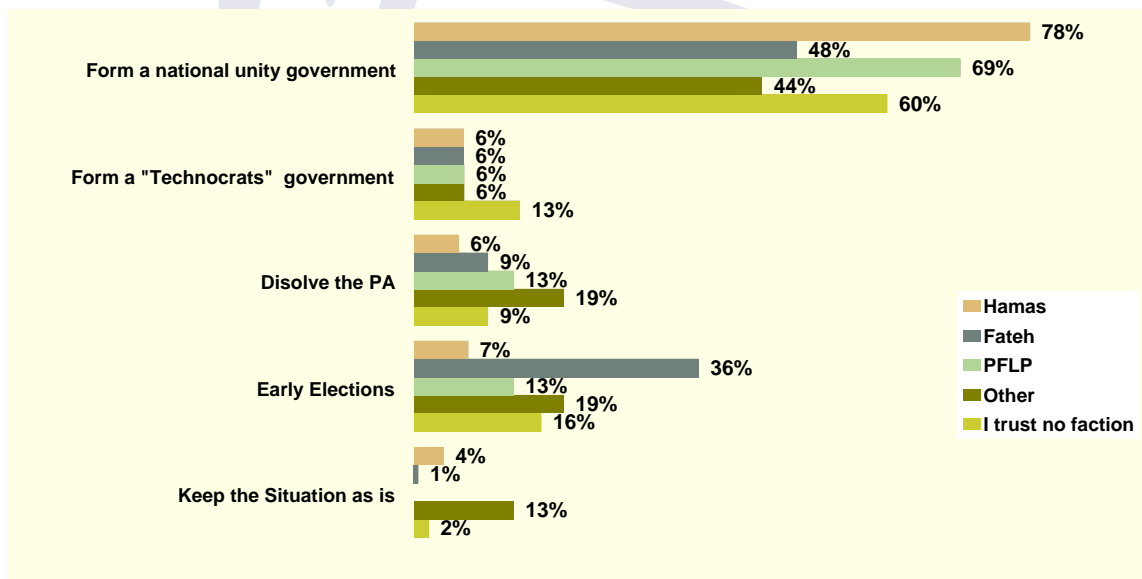
Palestinians believe that Abu Mazen should form a "Technocrat" government or dissolve the PA in order to end the crisis while a mere 2% believe that Abu Mazen should keep the situation as it is and not do anything.

Figure 33: What should Abu Mazen do to end the current crisis?



More than ¾ of Hamas supporters believe that if Abu Mazen forms a National Unity Government that it will help end the current crisis compared to 48% of Fateh supporters and 60% of those Palestinians that do not trust any faction. 36% of Fateh supporters on the other hand believe that calling for early elections by Abu Mazen will end the current crisis even though only 7% of Hamas supporters and 16% of those that do not trust any faction share this position. Dissolving the PA as a solution to the current crisis is indicated by only a small minority of Palestinians, particularly 19% that trust other factions, 6% that trust Hamas, and by 9% that either trust Fateh or do not even trust any faction.

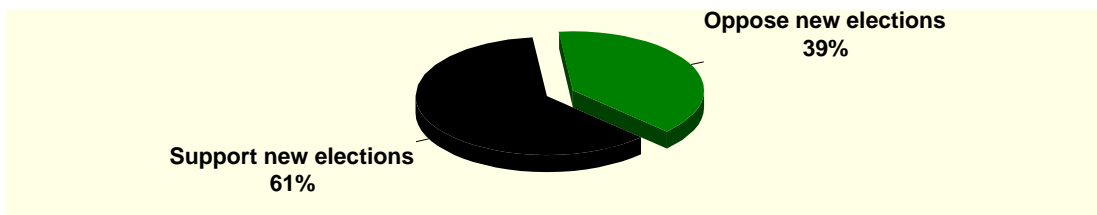
Figure 34: What should Abu Mazen do to end the current crisis according to factional





Although elections is supported primarily by Fateh supporters, when respondents were asked whether they support the idea of early elections, 61% of the respondents affirmed this whereas 39% opposed the idea.

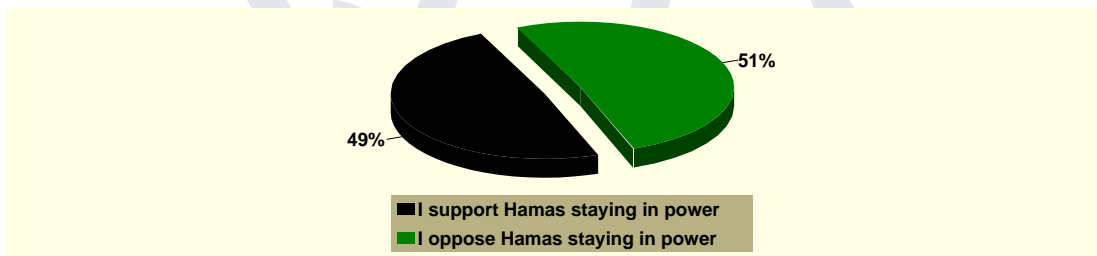
Figure 35: Level of support for new elections



7.1. Should any one resign?

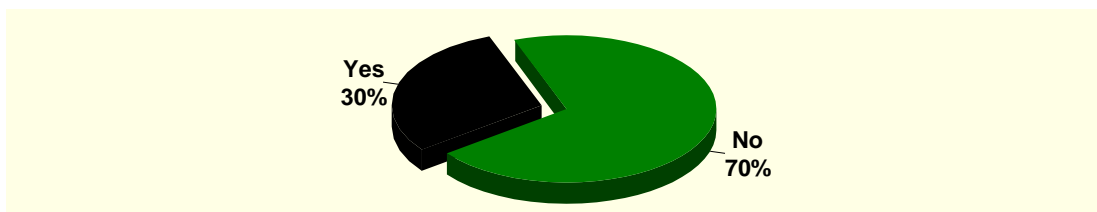
Palestinians are divided when it comes to supporting or opposing Hamas staying in power as 51% of Palestinians oppose Hamas staying in power while the remaining 49% support Hamas staying in power.

Figure 36: Should Hamas stay in power?



As for the resignation of Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinians generally disagree that Abu Mazen should resign his post as the Palestinian President according to 70% of Palestinians. Only 30% of Palestinians believe that Abu Mazen should resign.

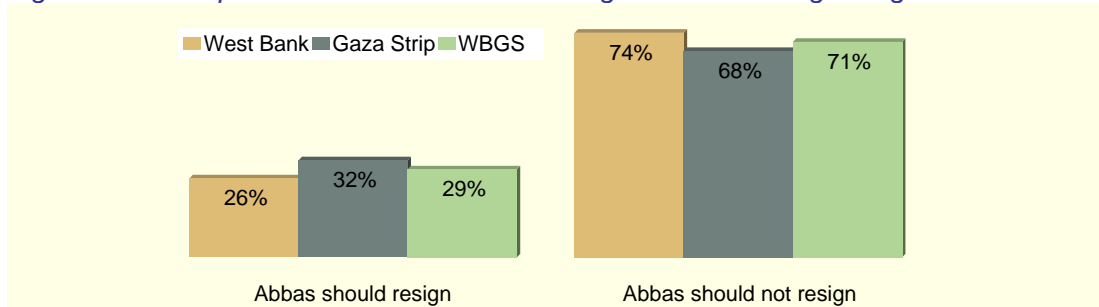
Figure 37: Perceptions about Abu Mazen's resignation





The perception that Abu Mazen should not resign is consistent among all regions whether in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. However, a larger percentage of West Bankers (74%) oppose Abu Mazen's resignation than (68%) of Gazans that share this same perception regarding his resignation.

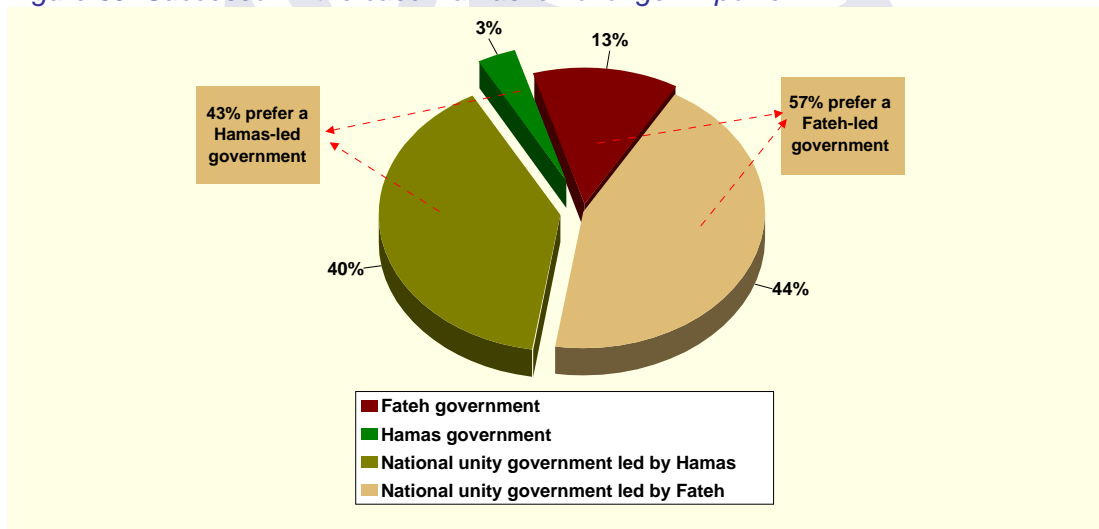
Figure 38: Perceptions about Abu Mazen's resignation according to region



7.2. Who do Palestinians like to take over the government in case the current government is no longer in power

If the case arises that Hamas is no longer in power, 57% of Palestinians prefer a Fateh-led government whether a pure Fateh-led government (13%) or a National Unity government led by Fateh (44%). The other 43% of Palestinians prefer a Hamas led government whether pure or a National Unity government led by Hamas.

Figure 39: Successor in the case Hamas is no longer in power

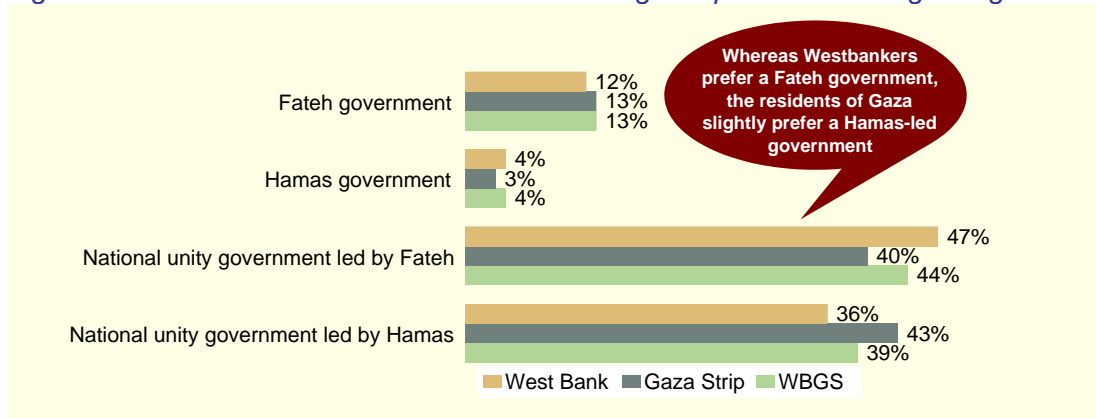


A National Unity Government led by Fateh is supported by 47% of West Bankers if the case arises that Hamas is no longer in power compared to 40% of Gazans that share



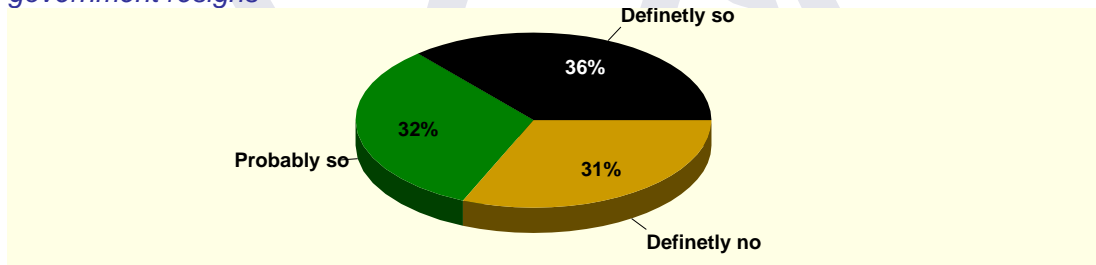
this same view. Meanwhile, 36% of West Bank residents prefer a National Unity Government led by Hamas compared to 43% in the Gaza Strip.

Figure 40: Successor in the case Hamas is no longer in power according to region



Irrespective of who takes over the government, only 36% of the respondents that the crisis will end with the resignation of the Hamas government. As illustrated below, 31% of the respondents do not believe that the situation will ease and 32% think that it might.

Figure 41: Perceptions about the consequences of the current crisis if the Hamas government resigns



The optimism about such a solution is stronger in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip where the majority of respondents there believe that the crisis will not ease if Hamas resigns.

Figure 42: Perceptions about the consequences of the current crisis if the Hamas government resigns according to region

