

Muslim Brotherhood candidate trails in race for Egypt's presidency: UMD poll

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"The situation on the ground is changing by the day," says principal investigator Shibley Telhami, a University of Maryland political scientist who conducts regular polling across the Middle East. Credit: UMD/Sadat Chair

As Egypt prepares this week to elect its first president since the 2011 revolution, a new University of Maryland poll finds the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate tied for fourth place. Researchers describe the race as fluid.

The poll confirms the strategic damage inflicted by the Brotherhood's decision to field its own candidate, after saying it would not. Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed (71 percent) called the decision a "mistake."

The poll also shows [Egyptians](#) approaching the race differently from [Parliamentary elections](#), focusing more on personal trust and the economy over party affiliation.

Those surveyed identified personal [trustworthiness](#) as the key factor in selecting a presidential candidate (31 percent). In Parliamentary elections, political party was the biggest driver (24 percent).

Islamist moderate, Abd Al-Men'em Abul Fotouh, who broke away from the Brotherhood and is garnering the backing of some of its supporters, leads the way in the poll with 32 percent, followed by former Arab League chief, Amr Mousa at 28 percent, and former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq with 14 percent.

The Brotherhood's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, is tied for fourth place with Nasserist candidate Hamdeen Sabahi at eight percent.

While the role of religion in politics does not appear to be a significant factor driving potential voters (nine percent), the poll shows widespread support for making Islamic Shari'a law the basis for Egypt's national system (66 percent). However, the overwhelming majority, 83 percent, rejects a literal application of Shari'a law, including to the penal code, and prefers to apply its spirit with adaptation to modern times.

University of Maryland Anwar Sadat Professor Shibley Telhami directed the poll, which was fielded by JZ Analytic between May 4 and May 10. The poll surveyed a nationally [representative sample](#) of 772, and has a margin of error of plus/minus 3.6 percent.

"The situation on the ground is changing by the day," says principal investigator Shibley Telhami, a University of Maryland political scientist who conducts regular polling across the Middle East. "Morsi's numbers may be deceiving, and it is probable that he'll exceed his low showing in

the poll. We know that political machinery is essential in getting out the vote. But the Brotherhood has already lost some of its early advantages."

Telhami adds that predictive political polling in Egypt is especially challenging now because electoral behavior is still in the formative stage.

"The experiment is new, coalitions are still forming, and little information is available about turnout and likely voters," he says.

"Consider these numbers as indicative of trends and direction."

PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES

Abul-Fotouh: 32 percent

Amr Mousa: 28 percent

Shafiq: 14 percent

Morsi: 8 percent

Sabahi: 8 percent

Muslim Brotherhood supporters are divided between Morsi and Abul-Futouh, as are the ultra-conservative Salafis. Salafi support for Abul-Fotouh appears to hurt his standing with liberals who might otherwise be inclined to back him.

Those who identify the economy as the primary basis for selection tend to have a slight preference for Amr Mousa as President, while those who emphasize personal trust prefer Arab nationalist candidate, Hamdeen Sabahi and former Prime Minister, Ahmad Shafiq. Among the supporters of Abul-Fotouh, the biggest factor is the role of religion in politics. Among Amr Mousas supporters, the biggest stated factor is foreign policy.

PRESIDENTIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Christian Support:** Mousa received the highest support among Christians (43 percent), followed by Sabahi (24 percent) and Abul-Fotouh (9 percent).
- **Education:** Among university graduates Abul-Fotouh led with 35 percent followed by Mousa (23 percent) and Sabbahi (18 percent).
- **Age:** Abul-Fotouh led among those under 25 years of age (36 percent) to Mousa (23 percent).
- **Location:** Mousa led among respondents who lived outside cities with 31 percent followed by Morsi (21 percent), Shafiq (17 percent) and Abul-Fotouh (16 percent).

ADMIRER LEADERS

When asked to choose the non-Egyptian world leader they most admire, 63 percent of those polled identified the prime minister of Turkey, Recep Teyyib Erdogan, while five percent each identified President Obama and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. But asked which Egyptian leader they want their next president to most closely resemble, 35 percent identified Anwar Sadat and 26 percent Gamal Abdel Nasser.

UNITED STATES

Attitudes toward the United States remain overwhelmingly unfavorable (85 percent). Asked to name two steps by the United States that would most improve their views, 66 percent say brokering Middle East peace and establishing a Palestinian state, 46 percent say ending economic and military aid to Israel, and 44 percent identify withdrawal of American forces from the Arabian Peninsula.

As for their views of the American presidential elections, Romney wins 73 percent of Egyptians' support, Obama 25 percent. "It is unlikely that

most Egyptians are very familiar with Romney, the choice is more likely an expression of disappointment with Obama for his support of Israel," Telhami explains.

ISRAEL

Respondents were almost equally divided among those who would like to see Egypt maintain its peace treaty with Israel (46 percent) and those who would like it cancelled (44 percent). Another 10 percent would like to see the treaty amended. With regard to the prospects of lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, 55 percent say it will never happen, 40 percent consider it inevitable, but off in the future, while only five percent expect it to come in the next five years.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

When asked in an open question to identify the two countries that pose the biggest threat to them, 97 percent included Israel, 80 percent included the United States, and 20 percent Iran. Iran's standing as a threat has more than doubled compared to an earlier Telhami poll in 2009.

If Iran gets nuclear weapons, 61 percent of those surveyed say they would like Egypt to build one of its own, while 32 percent want Egypt to push for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East that includes Iran, Israel and Arabs.

Regardless of what Iran does, another 49 percent want Egypt to develop its own nuclear program as long as Israel has such weapons, while 45 percent prefer creation of a nuclear-free zone in the region.

SYRIAN CRISIS

While respondents overwhelmingly support the rebels rather than the Syrian government, they divide on how to address the crisis. A plurality (43 percent) objects to external military intervention in Syria, while 18 percent support such an approach - provided it comes through the United Nations Security Council. Support for Turkish-Arab military intervention stands at 15 percent.

More information: See additional results online: ter.ps/uc

Provided by University of Maryland

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