

# New Poll Reveals Moderate Trend Among East Jerusalem Palestinians

by [David Pollock \(/experts/david-pollock\)](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[David Pollock \(/experts/david-pollock\)](#)

David Pollock is the Bernstein Fellow at The Washington Institute, focusing on regional political dynamics and related issues.



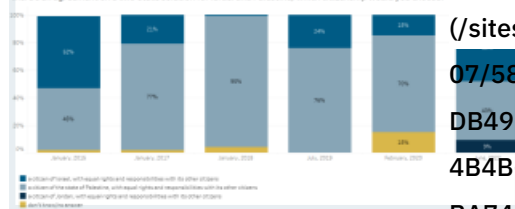
Brief Analysis

## A new poll captures East Jerusalem attitudes towards Arab-Israeli rapprochement, involvement from other Arab countries, and the U.S. policy on the conflict.

**A**s U.S. President Joe Biden prepares to visit Jerusalem, a June 2022 survey of the nearly 400,000 Palestinians there, commissioned by the Washington Institute and conducted by the Palestine Center for Public Opinion, shows that this public has reverted to relatively moderate positions—compared both to pre-pandemic polls and to West Bank attitudes today.

This new trend is most vividly expressed on the bellwether question of citizenship options. Today, half (48%) of the city’s Palestinian residents say that, if they had to make a choice, they would prefer to become citizens of Israel, rather than of a Palestinian state. From 2017 to early 2020, that figure hovered around just 20%. Today, only a minority (43%) of East Jerusalemites say they would pick Palestine; while the remainder (9%) would opt for Jordanian citizenship. Among West Bankers, the comparable figures are Israel, 25%; Palestine, 65%; Jordan, 10%.

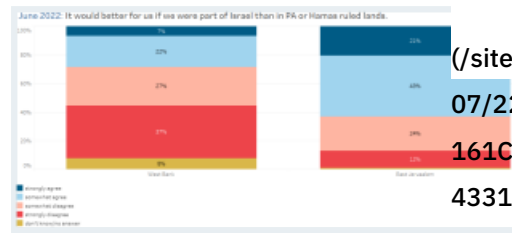
East Jerusalem: With states offering their citizens certain rights and requiring certain responsibilities, and there's an agreement on a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, which citizenship would you choose?



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Significantly, this sharp contrast is now evident on other, related questions as well. For instance, in East Jerusalem, 63% agree at least “somewhat” with this purposely provocative statement: “It would be better for us if we were part

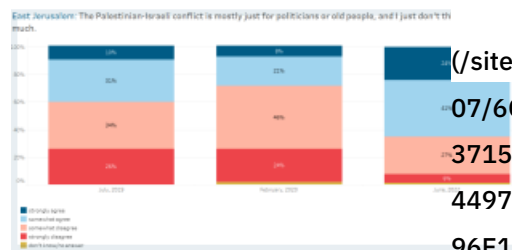
of Israel, rather than in Palestinian Authority or Hamas ruled lands.” In the West Bank, the corresponding figure is less than half that proportion (28%).



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These striking findings represent a reversion to the pragmatic East Jerusalem attitudes last registered in 2014, before the “knife intifada,” rising tensions on the Temple Mount, and tough Israeli responses. The current more conciliatory mood probably reflects their recent experience of access to Israeli health care, social welfare benefits, ability to travel both inside and outside Israel, and jobs during the past two years of Coronavirus issues. By comparison, most Palestinians across the security barrier in the West Bank have none of those advantages. Moreover, East Jerusalem’s Palestinians are increasingly aware of the internal problems on the other side. Currently, 63% agree that “the Palestinians should push harder to replace their own political leaders with more effective and less corrupt ones.”

Such comparatively moderate (or just apolitical) views emerge in response to many other questions in this new survey as well. For example, 62% agree with this statement: “Right now, the Palestinians should focus on practical matters like jobs, health care, education, and everyday stability, not on big political plans or resistance options.” The same proportion also agree that “right now, the Palestinians need to pay much more attention to countering extremist Islamic trends in our own society.” And a solid majority (65%) say that “the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is mostly just for politicians or old people, and I just don’t think about it very much.”



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All these data points counter the impression of mass alienation and anger in East Jerusalem, especially since this survey was taken so soon after high Ramadan tensions there. In this context, it was likely helpful that this time, unlike in some earlier episodes, Israel allowed tens of thousands of mostly local Palestinian Muslims to pray peacefully in Al-Aqsa and the surrounding plaza (al-haram al-sharif).

Similarly, on most questions related to violent “resistance,” most East Jerusalem Palestinians demur. Sixty-one percent *disagree* that “the Palestinians should move to a new intifadah and make armed struggle their top priority.” Even more (68%) say that attacks on any Israeli civilians, including settlers, are “bad.” And when asked why a new intifadah has not erupted, the most popular response by far is that “most people are more preoccupied with their personal lives than with politics.” Around half (54%) of East Jerusalem’s Palestinians agree with this purposely provocative assertion: “I hope some day we can be friends with Israelis, since we are all human beings after all.” In the West Bank, the comparable figure is a mere 26%.

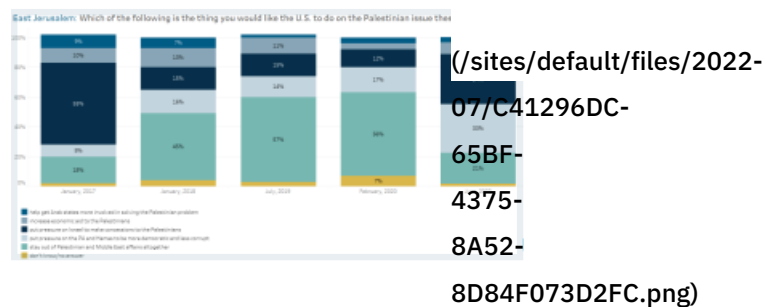
Still more surprising are the responses in East Jerusalem to other Arab governments, and to new moves toward broader Arab-Israeli rapprochement. Half (47%) of the city’s Palestinians express at least a “somewhat” favorable

view of the Abraham Accords—compared with just one-fourth of West Bankers. Half also say that Jordan should play a “major role” inside Jerusalem itself—compared with only about a third who say that about either the Palestinian Authority or Hamas.

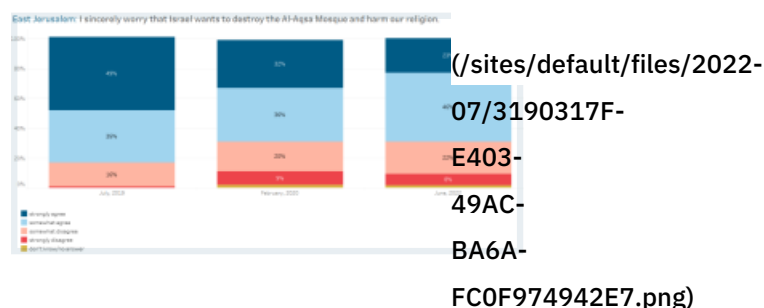
Answers to two other questions reinforce this unexpected finding, with solid majorities. East Jerusalem Palestinians overwhelmingly (79%) concur with this proposition: “Arab governments should take a more active role in Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking, offering incentives to both sides to take more moderate positions.” In addition, 57% agree that “the Palestinians should look more to other Arab governments, like Jordan or Egypt, to help improve our situation.”

As for views of the United States, exactly half of East Jerusalem’s Palestinians rate relations with it as at least “somewhat” important. By comparison, just 32% say the same about Iran—but, remarkably, three-quarters see some importance to Palestinian ties with both Russia and China. Also noteworthy is the large minority (41%) who voice at least a “somewhat” positive view of “the Biden Administration’s approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.”

Asked about their specific top priority for U.S. policy on this problem, these Palestinians offer intriguingly mixed responses. One-third pick “put pressure on Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians”; but one-third would prefer the U.S. to “put pressure on the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to be more democratic and less corrupt.” The rest are split among these other options: “stay out of Palestinian and Mideast affairs altogether” (21%); “increase economic aid to the Palestinians (8%); or “help get Arab states more involved in solving the Palestinian problem” (3%).



Notwithstanding all of the above largely pragmatic positions, some questions worded in religious, emotional, or politicized terms prompt agreement with more negative responses. For example, 23% of East Jerusalem Palestinians agree “strongly” with this assertion: “I sincerely worry that Israel wants to destroy the Al-Aqsa mosque and harm our religion.” An additional 46% agree “somewhat” with that sentiment. Nineteen percent agree “strongly” that “we should demand Palestinian rule over all of Jerusalem, east and west, rather than share or divide any part of it with Israel”; an additional 45% offer lukewarm agreement, given that maximalist formulation. Finally, this deliberately inflammatory hypothetical arouses the harshest responses: “When I think about the occupation, I get so angry that I wish all Israelis would disappear.” A large minority (41%) “strongly” agree, with another 33% “somewhat” agreeing as well.



Methodological Note: This analysis is based on a face-to-face survey, conducted June 6-21, 2022, with a true random,

geographical probability sample of 300 Palestinian adult (age 18+) legal residents of East Jerusalem, within its official municipal boundaries. The author personally reviewed the questionnaire’s translation, sampling procedures and quality controls, assurances of confidentiality, and other fieldwork protocols with the entire Palestinian professional team, based in neighboring Beit Sahour on the West Bank. The statistical margin of error for a sample of this size and nature is 6 percent, at the 95% confidence level. Additional methodological details, including full responses to all questions in the survey, are available on request, or on the Washington Institute’s new [interactive polling data platform \(/node/17516\)](#). ❖

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