



UPINION

Israel-Palestine conflict 2023: Community perspectives

19 October 2023

Introduction

This short brief presents the results of a quick conversation held from Friday October 13 till Thursday October 19, 2023, with Upinion’s online community in Lebanon. The conversation revolved around the ongoing developments concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict that began on 7 October 2023.

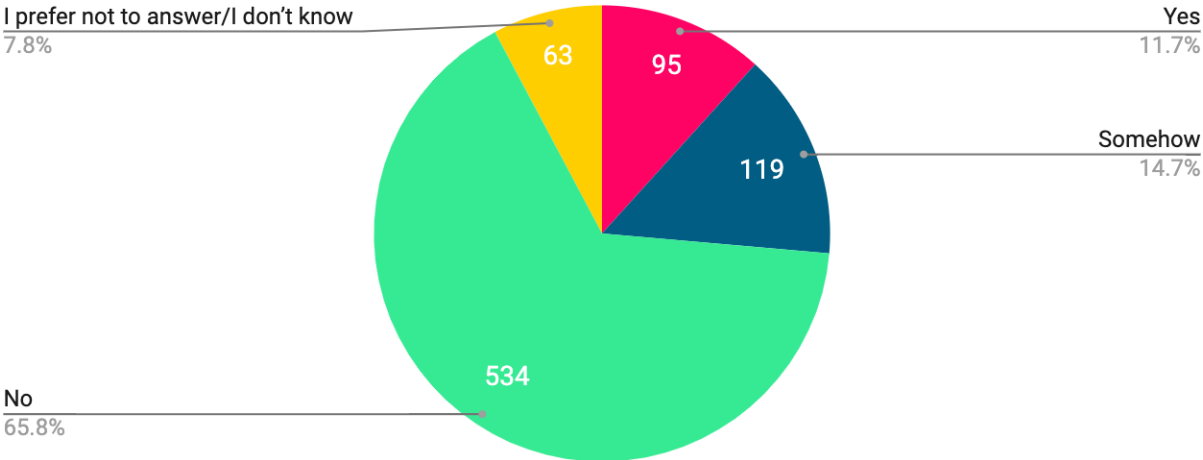
The conversation captures the general feelings of safety, fear of escalation, and precautions taken by individuals currently residing in Lebanon. As of October 19, a total of **814** individuals participated in Upinion’s conversation around this topic, with **711** respondents having answered all questions related to the conflict. This document reflects responses of all participants.

Feelings of safety

In order to gauge the sentiment of people in Lebanon regarding the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, all participants were asked about their feelings of safety.

The results reveal that **the majority (66%, n=811) do not feel safe with the current situation at all**. Only 12% reported feeling safe, while 15% expressed feeling safe to some extent.

Figure 1. “Do you currently feel safe in Lebanon?” - all respondents (n=811)

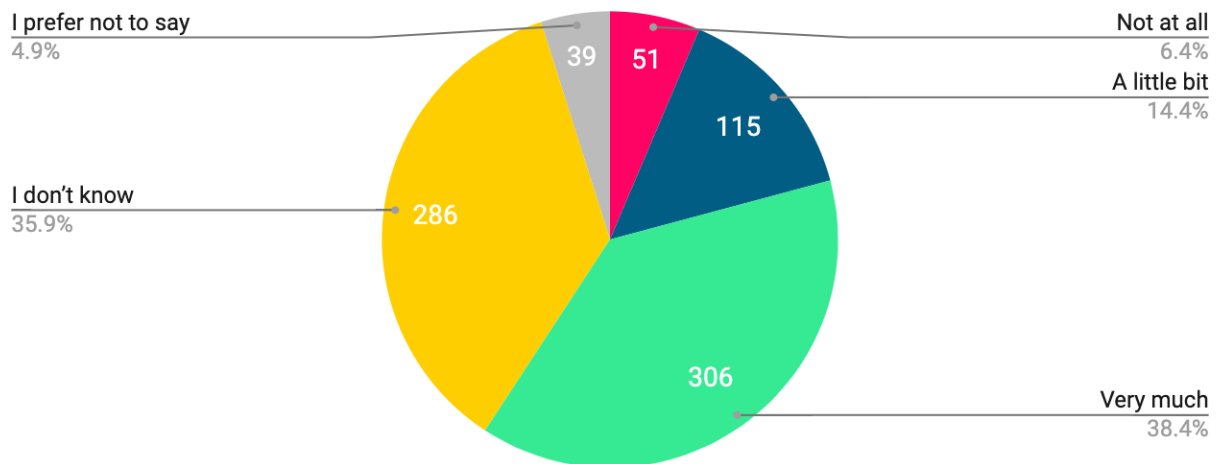


Disaggregation by age highlights that relatively more young individuals (**23%**, n=110) report feeling safe, compared to their older counterparts (around **9%**) .

Fear of escalation

When asking respondents to what extent they fear escalation of the conflict, the largest shares reported 'Very much' (**38%**, n=797) or that they do not know whether they fear its escalation (**36%**). Only **6%** indicated they do not fear escalation at all.

Figure 2. "To what extent do you fear that the conflict will escalate to Lebanon?" - all respondents (n=797)



In line with younger people's sentiment of safety, also relatively more young individuals (aged 18-25) reported to only fear escalation for a little bit (**24%**, n=110) or not at all (**11%**), compared to older age groups (around **12%** and **5%**, respectively).

When being asked for the reasons behind their level of fear, respondents underscored the ongoing national crises, the enduring aftermath of the 2006 war, and the influential role of Hezbollah in determining the fate of the population in Lebanon.

"All evidence points to war. We are a people who only want to live in peace. Isn't the economic and livelihood situation 'war' enough for us?"

"I have fear of war, destruction, and complete devastation that affects the entire country."

"All scenes and news suggest that the conflict is shifting and turning to the region. Due to pressure on the streets and the intense feelings following Israeli violations, as well as the exchange of strikes on the border and the mobilisation of forces from both sides, all of this makes me afraid of what is coming."

"I'm generally afraid for the future of my children and the possibility of this conflict leading to war. We've lived through many wars in Beirut from 1974 to 2006, wars that left a mark on Lebanon. But this time, there's great fear for my children - they were young and didn't understand much at previous times, but there's a great fear of the consequences for them now. Eventually, they will only know of Lebanon in a state of conflict."

"I have fear because of the presence of Hezbollah in Lebanon and its control of the regions near Palestine. The party seems to prioritise its political interests over the well-being of the people."

Many Syrian respondents highlighted the fear of going through a war once again, while being in a vulnerable position in Lebanese society, and their uncertainty regarding potential destinations should the conflict intensify.

"I'm afraid of a second war in the region, just after we escaped the war from Syria."

"I fear war and displacement, once again."

"I'm afraid of the escalation of this conflict, because we don't know where we could go. In Syria, it's war, and here, it might turn into war. Again, where will we go?"

"We lived through a war in Syria and cannot bear another war, especially not with young children."

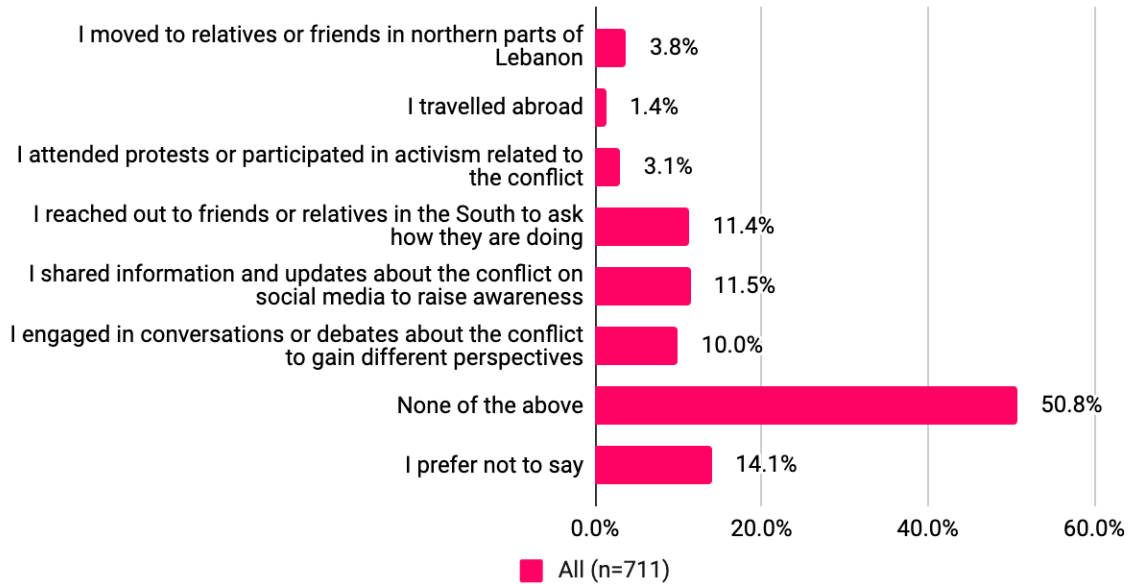
"Yes, here in Lebanon, if something happens, and the war expands, there would be a danger to our lives, because of the racism and hatred against Syrians these days. We will not be able to do anything."

Precautions

When asking respondents whether they (already) took precautions following the current developments around the Israel-Palestine conflict, more than half of the respondents (**51%**, n=771) reported they did not. Next to this, most respondents mentioned have shared information and updates about the conflict on social media to raise awareness (**12%**), they had reached out to friends or relatives in the South asking how they are doing (**11%**), or they engaged in conversations or debates about the conflict to gain different perspectives (**10%**).

Despite the pro-Palestinian protests happening in Beirut, only **3%** reported to have participated in activism related to the conflict. A small group of **4%** reported to have moved to northern parts of the country, and only **1%** reported to have moved abroad following the current developments of the conflict. See the bar chart on the next page.

Figure 3. "Did you take any of these precautions following the current developments around the Palestine-Israel conflict?" - multiple answer - all respondents (n=711)



Conclusion and next steps

In conclusion, this brief provides current insights gathered from a conversation held with more than 800 individuals in Lebanon. The results shed light on the sentiments of unsafety, concerns about the potential escalation of the conflict, which could result in the reliving of war for many and have devastating consequences, especially given the numerous crises currently afflicting Lebanon. Next to sending information and resources that could be useful to community members in Lebanon, Upinion will continue monitoring their needs and perspectives to inform key stakeholders.