

## In-Class Activity: Exploring Political Attitudes Using the Arab Barometer

Stephanie N. Shady, Ph.D.

Assignment originally designed for POL 201: Introduction to Political Studies at the American University of Sharjah

### Learning Objectives

- Apply the introduced political psychology and behaviour concepts to real survey data by:
  - Writing a short possible theoretical relationship between a demographic characteristic and a political attitude.
  - Drawing this theoretical relationship to demonstrate a deeper understanding of it.
- Create a data visualization that compares a political attitude across a demographic characteristic.
- Reflect on the measurement of demographics versus the measurement of social identities in surveys.
- Explore political attitudes in a region and topic of interest.

**Time:** 40 minutes

### Instructions

1. Open the Arab Barometer online data analysis tool:  
<https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-analysis-tool/>
2. Choose a country and a survey wave. Note: Countries have different coverage by year.
3. From the list of variables, choose a political attitude that interests you to build a bar graph.
4. Using the “cross by” button and selecting a demographic variable, build on your bar graph to show how the attitude varies by group.
5. Save this graph.
6. Be a political psychologist—why do you think individuals in different groups hold different attitudes on the issue you’ve chosen?
  - i. There’s not a right or wrong answer. You are thinking about a theory whose implications could be tested with additional data and analyses.
  - ii. Summarize your theory in 1-3 sentences.
7. Draw your theory. As one of my mentors always says: “If you can’t draw it, you don’t have a theory!”
8. Submit your graph and theory (drawing + short written description) on the iLearn Discussion Board (the threaded discussion forum in your university’s learning management system).

### Variations

- Use any survey data relevant to your students’ geographic and topical interests (if it has a data visualization tool, or you can create your own tool for this purpose).
- For a methods course, this can serve as an introduction to theorizing.
- For an advanced methods course, have students write their own code to visualize the data in R, Python, or other programming software as it fits your course.
- In lieu of submission to a forum thread, use this assignment as a basis for an individual or group presentation (may be more appropriate for a course level above introduction to political studies or political science).