



## PRESS RELEASE

**“Depression” in the oPt, September 2006**



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### Methodology

During the period 22-23 September, 2006, Near East Consulting (NEC) conducted a phone survey of over 1100 randomly selected Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem of which 794 were successfully completed. The survey covered a number of issues that examined the state of mind of Palestinians and how they perceive some aspects related to their life especially at a time of increasing unemployment, lack of prospects of a political settlement, a deepening hardship, etc. As such, NEC has used a “depression” indicator that was used in Kosovo by some international agencies. The level of “depression/low morale” was formulated and constructed based on the following five questions:

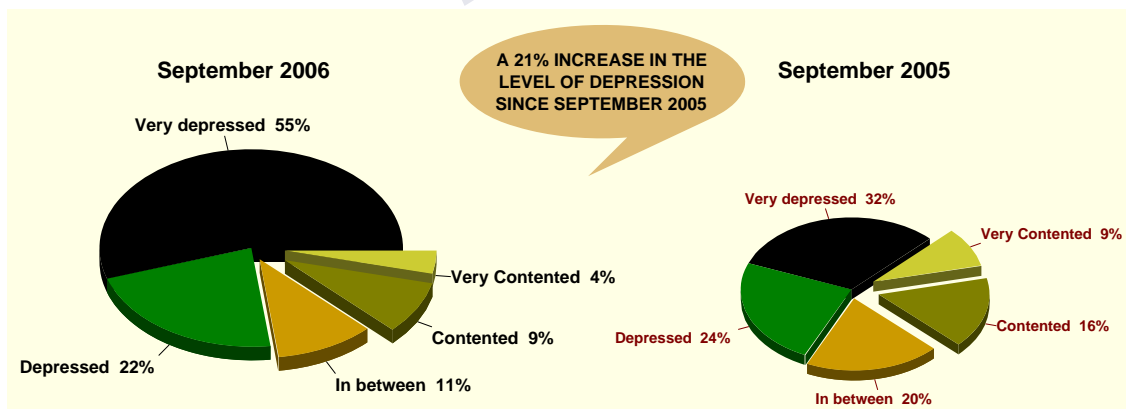
- 1) In the past two weeks, did you feel good spirited?
- 2) In the past two weeks, did you feel relaxed?
- 3) In the past two weeks, did you feel energized?
- 4) In the past two weeks, did you feel healthy?
- 5) In the past two weeks, did you feel that your life was interesting?

It is worth noting that the margin of error is +/- 3.5% with a 95% confidence level.

### Main Findings

The recent socio-economic and political situation in the oPt has undoubtedly affected the morale of the Palestinian population as more than ¾th of the Palestinian population is suffering from severe “depression” as 55% of the Palestinian population are very depressed and 22% depressed. These percentages point to an increase of 21% in just one year (from 56% to 77%). Meanwhile, 11% of Palestinians are on the borderline of a “depression”, and the remaining 13% are either contented (9%) or very contented (4%). Last year, still 25% of Palestinians felt contented.

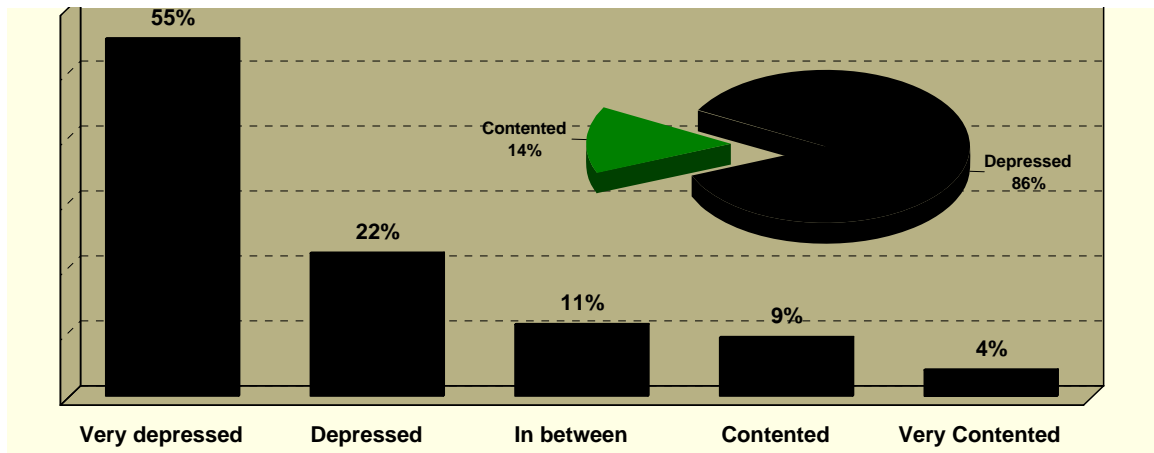
Figure 1: Level of “depression” in the oPt





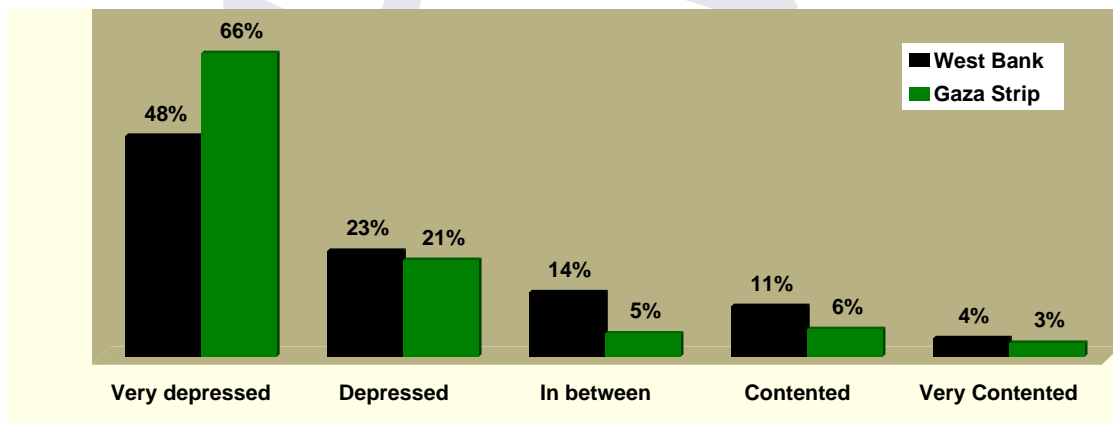
Meanwhile, when excluding those who are “in-between”, the Palestinian population is suffering from “depression” at the high rate of 86%, while a mere 14% of Palestinians are high-spirited. These results are portrayed in the figure below.

Figure 2: Level of “depression” in the oPt



“Depression” rates in the Gaza Strip resemble those of the entire oPt as 87% of Gaza Strip residents are either very depressed (66%) or depressed (21%) in comparison to the West Bank where less than half of Palestinians are very depressed (48%) and 23% are depressed. Meanwhile, around 19% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are on the borderline. Albeit a small percentage, more Palestinians in the West Bank (15%) than in the Gaza Strip (9%) are contented.

Figure 3: Level of “depression” according to region of residence

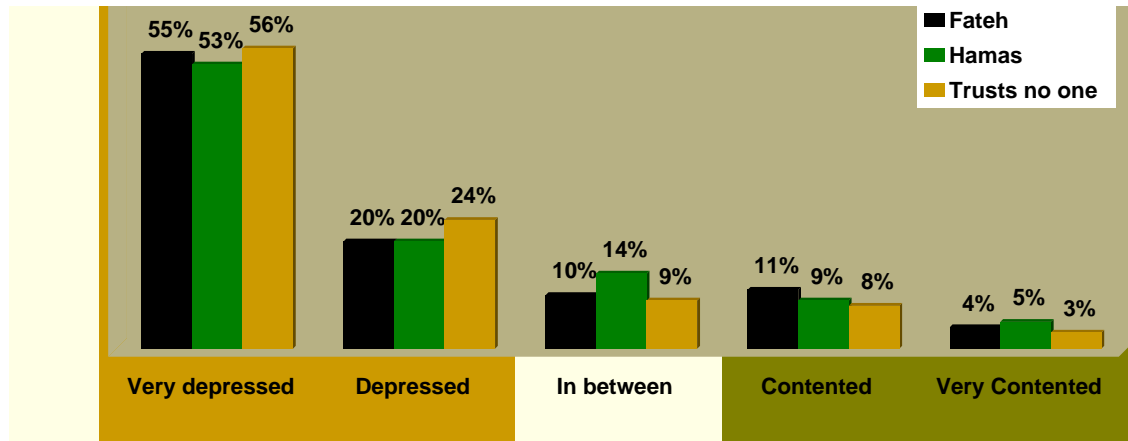


Depression levels according to factional trust are not significant as both Fateh and Hamas supporters seem to be equally discontented with their day to day life. More specifically, while 75% of respondents trusting Fateh are either very depressed or depressed, 73% of those trusting Hamas are feeling that way. Palestinians who do not



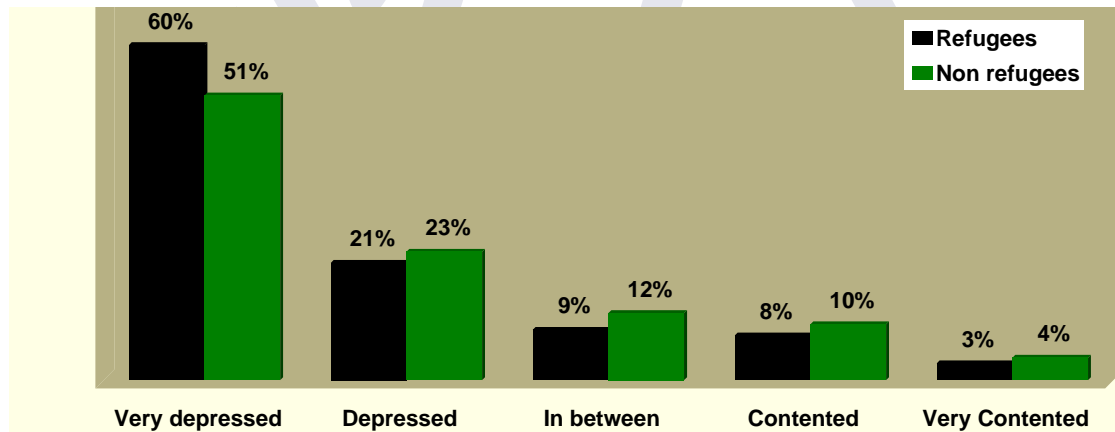
trust any faction suffer from “depression” at a slightly higher rate as 80% of them indicated that they are either very depressed or depressed.

**Figure 4: Level of “depression” according to factional trust**



According to refugee status, refugees more so than non-refugees seem frustrated as higher levels of “depression” are depicted among refugees (60%) than non-refugees (51%). The results are detailed in the figure below.

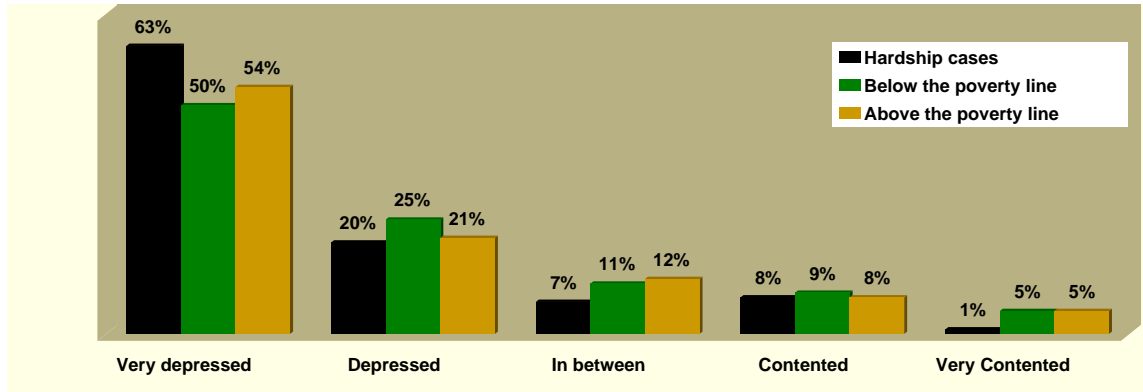
**Figure 5: Level of “depression” according to refugee status**



Not surprisingly, Palestinians living at the hardship extreme poverty level exhibit higher levels of “depression” than do Palestinians living below the poverty line or above the poverty line. As illustrated in the figure, below, 83% of those living in hardship are frustrated compared to 75% of those who live either above or below the poverty level. Still, in general, the level of contentment is low among all respondents irrespective of their socio-economic level. A mere percent of extremely poor respondents are very contented.

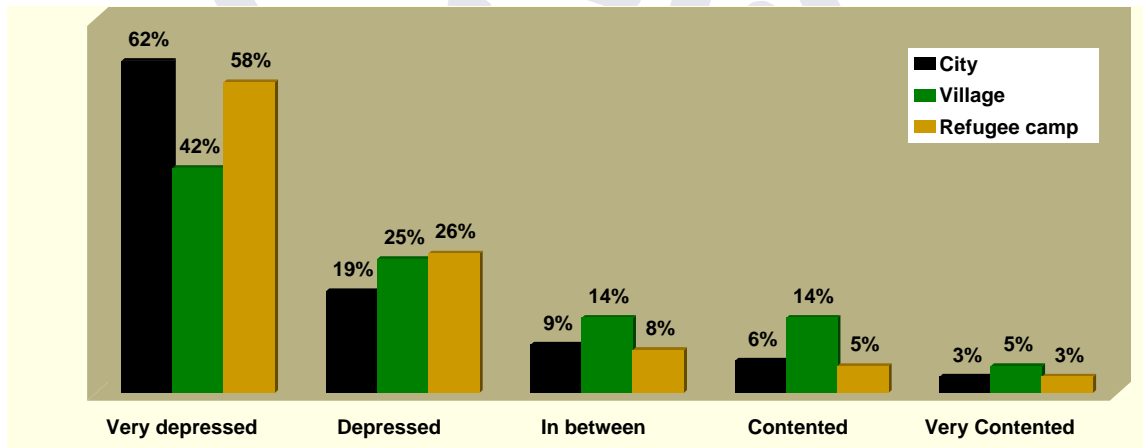


**Figure 6: Level of “depression” according to poverty level**



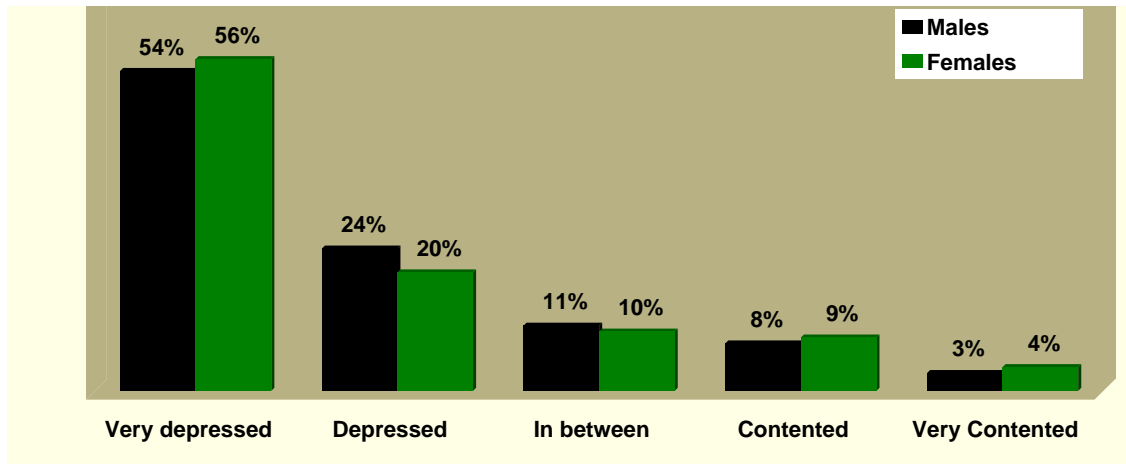
There is a clear difference in “depression” rates among Palestinians when it comes to their area of residence: cities, villages, or refugee camps. Refugee camp dwellers do face higher levels of “depression” than do village and city residents. Moreover, a higher rate of city residents (81%) than villagers (67%) are depressed. The latter are more contented than Palestinians living in cities and refugee camps.

**Figure 7: Level of “depression” according to area of residence**



With regard to “depression” from a gender perspective, females (76%) are slightly less dissatisfied than males (78%), but the differences are too small to be significant or relevant. The results on the level of depression according to gender are overviewed in the figure below.

**Figure 8: Level of “depression” according to gender**



In conclusion, the attitude Palestinians have towards their life is extremely negative and will undoubtedly remain as long as the situation in the oPt does not improve. This gloomy feeling about life in general could eventually translate itself into expressions of other forms of frustration, especially if the economic condition deteriorates further and if the political situation does not move forward. The exhaustion of the coping strategies will have a significant impact on the social cohesion of the Palestinian society as even economically relatively better-off Palestinians are increasingly unable to help their brethren and, this, at a time when international assistance is dwindling and the salaries of public employees are not paid.

These hard times on the economic front, and the hard realities on the political front do not provide a good picture of the future. This gloomy vision of the present reality of the Palestinian population might be transformed from feelings to actions: from frustration to aggression. All signs indicate that social disorder is bound to intensify in the midst of political and economic calamities. If nothing happens to alleviate the causes of this psychological hardship, the area risks to witness a new phase that will bring further tension and misery to the region.

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