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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

General Findings: COPTIC DIASPORA SURVEY*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background.....	3
Diaspora Potential Participation in Development	4
Why This Study?.....	5
Methods	6
Survey Respondent Profile	7
Remittances	10
Identity	11
Diaspora Group Involvement	12
Philanthropy	13
Investment.....	16
Political Participation	17
Conclusion.....	18

BACKGROUND

The GW Diaspora Program, under the auspices of the GW Diaspora Capital Investment Project, conducted this survey in collaboration with and at the request of Coptic Orphans. The purpose of the survey was to identify the factors that keep Coptic diasporans interested in engaging in Egypt and in what particular ways. The existing GW Diaspora Capital Investment Project protocol was modified to include questions related to philanthropy and political engagement, in addition to its questions on investment interest and activities. This survey was funded by the Elliott School of International Affairs with promotional and design support from Coptic Orphans.



Coptic Orphans

Coptic Orphans' main focus is on developing the potential of individual children through education, because it is the best way to help others make permanent improvements for themselves and their communities. Coptic Orphans' partnership with the Coptic Church allows it to become part of the lives of people in villages from the Mediterranean ocean to Egypt's southern border near Sudan, and to promote its programs through the Coptic churches that minister to Copts in diaspora. (<http://www.copticorphans.org>).

George Washington University's Diaspora Program and Diaspora Capital Investment Project (GW-DCIP)

Housed in the Elliott School of International Affairs, the GW Diaspora Research Program is dedicated to the integrated study of immigrant communities that remain active in social, economic, cultural or political processes in their countries of origin and with compatriots worldwide. Primary focal areas center on identity, policy, and socio-economic development.

The GW Diaspora Capital Investment Project, located in GW's Center for International Business Education and Research (GW-CIBER <http://business.gwu.edu/CIBER/>) aims to generate and disseminate learning about diaspora investment and its role in development to assist policymakers, diaspora organizations, diaspora entrepreneurs, and researchers.



The GW Diaspora Program is located at The George Washington University in Washington, DC.

DIASPORA POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

Diasporas potentially contribute to the social, economic, and political development of their country of origin. In each of these arenas, contributions may be made through material inputs, knowledge transfer/human capital, and the facilitation and engagement of broader networks of actors and contributions. Each of these areas of contribution—social, economic, and political development—are briefly introduced below.

Social Development

Diasporans may contribute to social development by responding to humanitarian crises with financial donations and service missions. This diaspora philanthropic engagement is common in non-emergency situations and can entail the pooling of economic resources (sometimes referred to as collective remittances) for the purpose of supporting health, education, and livelihoods. More formally, diasporans may organize professional charitable organizations with the explicit aim to contribute to their country of origin's social development. Diaspora professional associations commonly organize service missions and capacity building projects. A less commonly recognized and understood diaspora contribution to social development is the influence diasporans have on country of origin social norms. Such influence may evolve and extend to greater numbers of people and institutions over a long period of time. For example, research suggests diasporas' potential influence on country of origin fertility norms, which may come to reflect the norms of popular destination countries.

Economic Development

Some diasporans directly invest in their country of origin, creating manufacturing facilities, producing goods for local and/or export sale, or establishing subsidiaries for businesses based in other countries. Others set up service operations, such as restaurants, retail chains, consulting companies, or tourism-oriented enterprises. Diasporans also invest in existing businesses in the country of origin through portfolio investment, private equity purchases, participation in venture capital funds, and (where allowable) the purchase of stocks or mutual funds comprised of firms located in the country of origin. Some diasporans contribute to lending funds that provide financial support to firms in the country of origin. A few governments currently offer diasporans the opportunity to contribute to economic development through diaspora bonds. Through the purchase of goods produced in the country of origin, or "nostalgia goods," and by traveling to and spending time in the country of origin, diasporans also contribute to development through trade and tourism.

Political Development

Beyond seeking political office or promoting alternative regimes, diasporans engage in other ways to influence the political development of the country of origin. Diasporans often seek to influence international public opinion related to the politics of the country of origin in an effort to persuade international actors to pressure country of origin governments to improve their governance practices. This includes respect for human rights and political freedoms. They may lobby the government of their country of residence and other international actors for specific interventions to support these aims. Diasporas also potentially influence norms of political practice and good governance over time. Those who are educated in democratic countries, for example, tend to engage in and influence related norms in the country of origin. Economic engagement with the country of origin has been shown to lead to improved bureaucratic quality and democratic practices.

WHY THIS STUDY?

A Different Diaspora Focus

Except in the case of fragile or contested states, studies to date have focused primarily on national diasporas, often assuming some homogeneity among what are large and highly diverse groupings. To our knowledge, this is the first diaspora survey of a subnational group and a religiously identified one. Studies such as these can begin to shed light on the types and scope of potential development contributions of minority-representative diasporas. For example, how does minority status in the country of origin influence such diasporans' identification with the national homeland as opposed to a sub-group identification of "home"? How might it influence how they target their contributions? Are they more inclined to make some types of contributions that are, for example, more specific to the needs of the minority group, over others that may be national in focus? And in the case of a religious diaspora, how do faith and related institutions influence how and for what diasporas engage?

Who are the Copts?

The Coptic diaspora represents minority status in the country of origin, as well as a religious identification. Copts are native Egyptian Christians who follow the Coptic Orthodox Church, under the auspices of His Holiness Pope Shenoudah III. The exact number of Copts residing in Egypt is contested, with estimates ranging anywhere from eight to twelve percent of the total population. Historically, Copts enjoyed periods of improved position in Egyptian society and government, though with intermittent periods of discrimination and backlash. Egypt is constitutionally an Islamic State, which empowers the Government to regulate, for example, the building of churches and church repair. For over a decade, the Copts have been singled out as victims of discrimination and human rights violations in reports on religious freedom in Egypt. Recent years, especially in the immediate period before and after the 2011 revolution, have seen an escalation in violence directed at Copts, including bombings and destruction of churches.



Copts in Diaspora

Exact numbers of Copts living in diaspora, as well as their destination countries, are difficult to trace as destination countries do not collect data on subnational identity. According to the International Organization for Migration (2010) 71% of the Egyptian diaspora resides in Arab countries. The number of Egyptians living in the countries surveyed for this study—the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom—is estimated to be 533,000. As with most diasporas, the Coptic diasporans estimate their numbers to be much higher than official estimates, even higher than the estimates of all Egyptian national immigrants. Are Copts over-represented in diaspora, perhaps owing to push factors that encourage their leaving? Or are they under-represented due to socio-economic status that limits opportunities to migrate? There are no data available to answer these questions. One study estimates that in Europe Copts make up 30% of Egyptian nationals residing there. One confirmed component of the Coptic diaspora experience is the important role the Coptic Orthodox Church plays in sustaining the Coptic identity abroad, connecting and reinforcing connection of Copts to the Mother Church as well as to Egypt, and even organizing and channeling diaspora contributions to Egypt.

METHODS

A cognitive pre-test of the survey with a diverse representation from the Coptic diaspora living in the Washington, DC, area enabled us to ensure the questions were understandable and relevant.



Cognitive pre-test of the survey, held at Coptic Orphans, Merrifield, VA, October 20, 2011

The online self-administered survey was designed to examine the demographic profile of the Coptic diaspora and their identity attitudes toward their country of origin, country of residence, and local diaspora communities. Survey questions were also included to query respondents' interest in and experience with philanthropy, investment, and political participation in Egypt. A cognitive pretest was conducted with a demographically diverse group of Coptic diasporans on October 20, 2011.

In order to control for the effects of common methods bias without the ability to collect predictor and criterion data from different sources, we used temporal, proximal, psychological, and methodological separation of measurement in the survey design. We collected responses from individuals who varied significantly regarding age, occupation, income, and organizational affiliation. All participants were provided detailed descriptions regarding the purpose of the survey and data security, and were assured that all responses would be completely anonymous. In addition, participants were provided with definitions of all technical terms and detailed directions for completing each section of the survey. All participants provided their informed consent to participate.

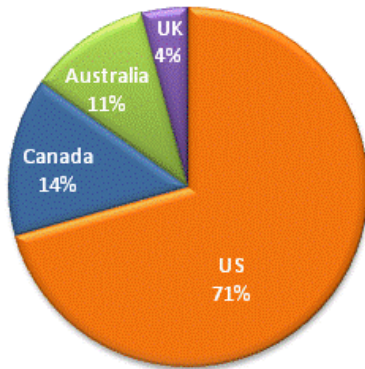
The survey was open from November 8, 2011 to January 13, 2012. The link was promoted primarily by Coptic Orphans through multiple methods, including:

- **Telephone:** Coptic priests (197) were asked to promote the survey in their congregations
- **E-mail:** Announcements were sent to 5,374 Coptic Orphans donors and 109 priests; GW also directly requested support from two Bishops in the US and one in Australia
- **Coptic Media, Associations, and NGOs:** 28 were identified and 7 responded by promoting the survey with their audiences; Logos TV, an Orthodox TV station of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California, and Hawaii also aired a program on the survey
- **Internet:** Coptic Orphans promoted the survey and posted the link on its website, blog, Facebook and Twitter (7 tweets)
- **Print Media:** In addition to Coptic Orphans' newsletter, the survey was addressed in an article in Al-Youm Al Sab'e online newsletter (November 14, 2011), and advertised in the Diocese of Sydney's "Spring of Love Magazine"

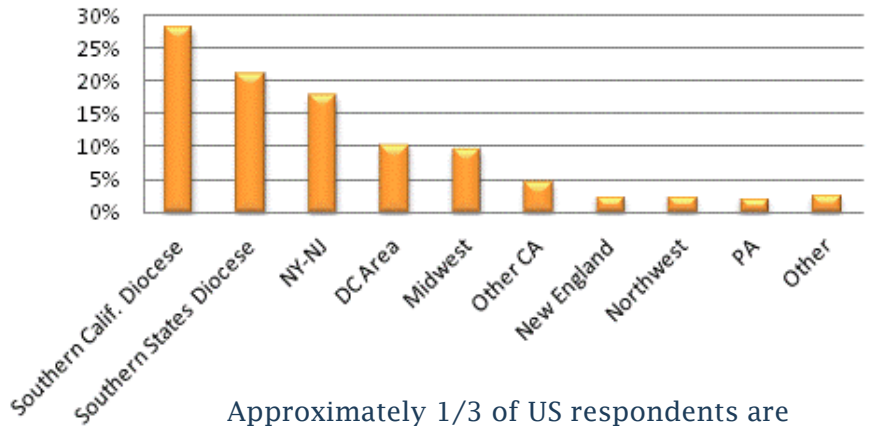
SURVEY RESPONDENT PROFILE

The majority of the sample resides in the United States (71%), but Coptic diasporans living in Canada (14%), Australia (11%), and the UK (4%) also responded.

Location of Respondents
N= 1559



Place of Residence - US
N=522

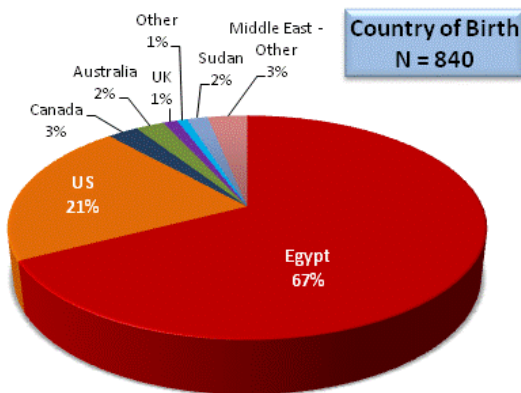


Approximately 1/3 of US respondents are located in California.

The sample is primarily US-based but it is well-distributed within the US.

Survey respondents residing in the United States were scattered across the nation, with participation from Coptic diasporans living within the jurisdiction of the Coptic Diocese of Southern California and Hawaii; the Coptic Diocese of the Southern United States; the New York-New Jersey area, where the Coptic Orthodox Archdiocese of North America is headquartered; the Washington DC area; the Midwest; and other parts of the United States. Coptic Orphans promoted the survey among its donors and the Coptic Orthodox Church more broadly. The distribution of the sample differs considerably from Coptic Orphans' donor base, suggesting there is no related bias in the data.

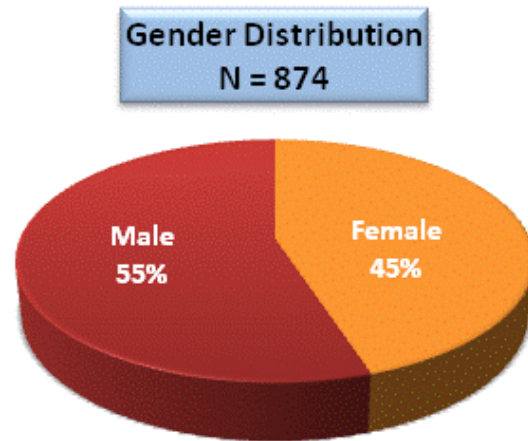
Over two thirds of the sample (67%) were born in Egypt and thus are first-generation migrants living in the countries of residence. Twenty-one percent of the survey respondents were born in the United States.



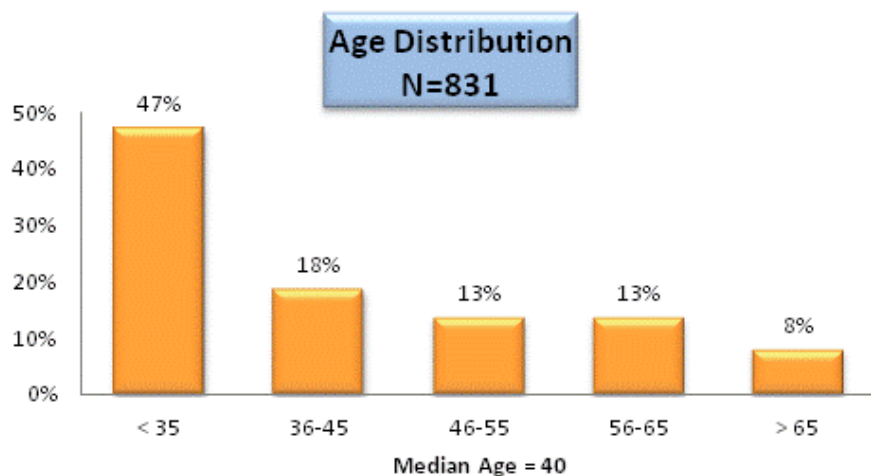
Over two thirds of the survey respondents (67%) were born in Egypt.

The sample is close to balanced in terms of gender. Forty-five percent of respondents are female. The proportion of respondents who are male (55%) is only slightly higher than the equivalent in the domestic Egyptian population (51%).

55% of those surveyed indicated that they were male (n=874). This is slightly higher than the equivalent ratio in the domestic Egyptian population (51%).

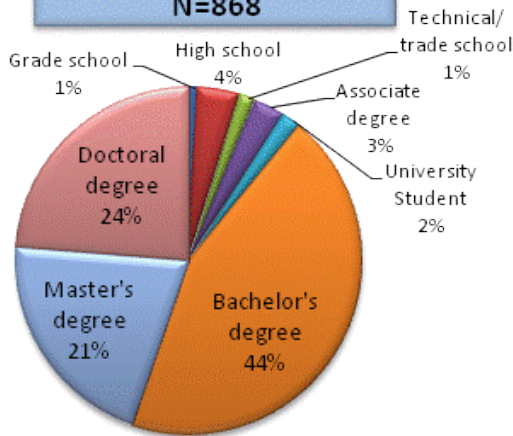


Respondents varied in age, ranging from 18 to 90 years old. The age structure of the sample is relatively young but diverse. Forty-seven percent of the sample is less than 35 years old. Eighteen percent is age 36-45, 13% are 46-55, 13% are 56-65, and 8% of the sample is age 65 or greater.



A wide range of age groups are represented in the sample. Yet, the sample is relatively young; 47% are younger than 35 years old.

**Highest Level of Education
N=868**

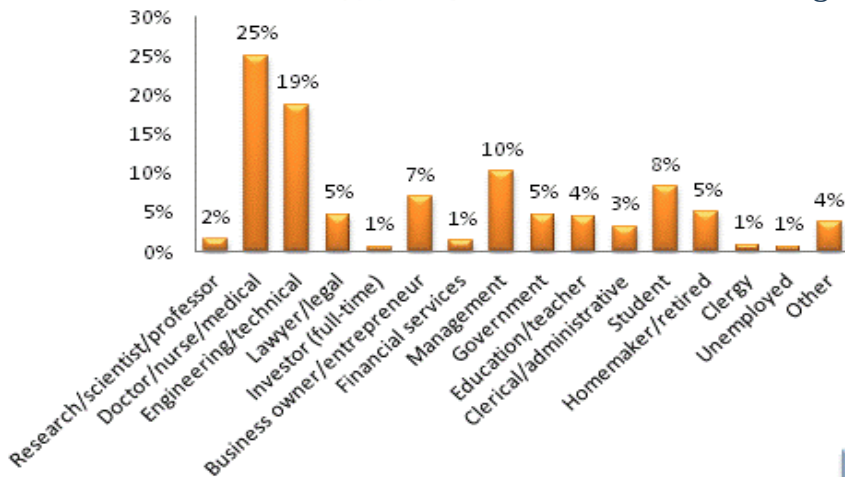


90% of respondents are college-educated, with 45% holding advanced degrees.

The findings suggest Coptic diasporans are relatively well-educated, with a wide range of occupations, a high percentage of professionals, and, on average, a fairly high household income.

Eighty-nine percent of the sample completed a bachelor's degree or higher (44% bachelor's, 21% master's, and 24% doctoral). The high education rates within the Coptic diaspora are not representative of the Coptic population remaining in Egypt, suggesting that many of those who could emigrate chose to do so.

**Occupation
N=849**



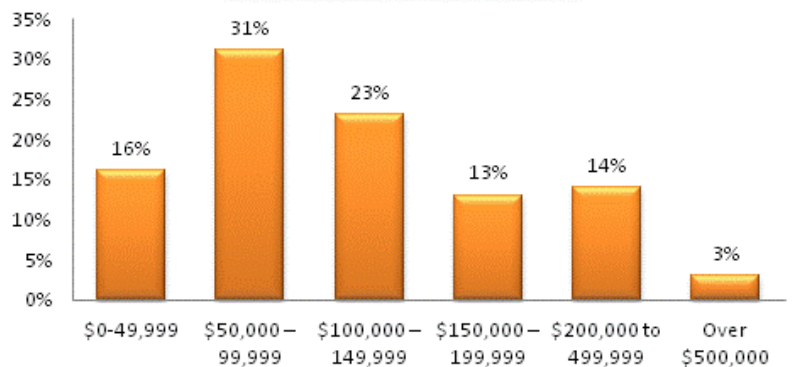
51% of respondents are in the legal, medical, engineering, or academic professions. 19% are in the business professions, including 7% who are business owners or entrepreneurs.

The sample represents a wide variety of occupations, with substantial proportions from the legal, medical, engineering and academic professions (51% combined).

Over 53% of the sample reports annual household incomes of over \$100,000, with 17% earning over \$200,000 annually.

53% of respondents have household incomes greater than \$100,000. 17% earn over \$200,000 annually.

**Annual Household Income
N=773**

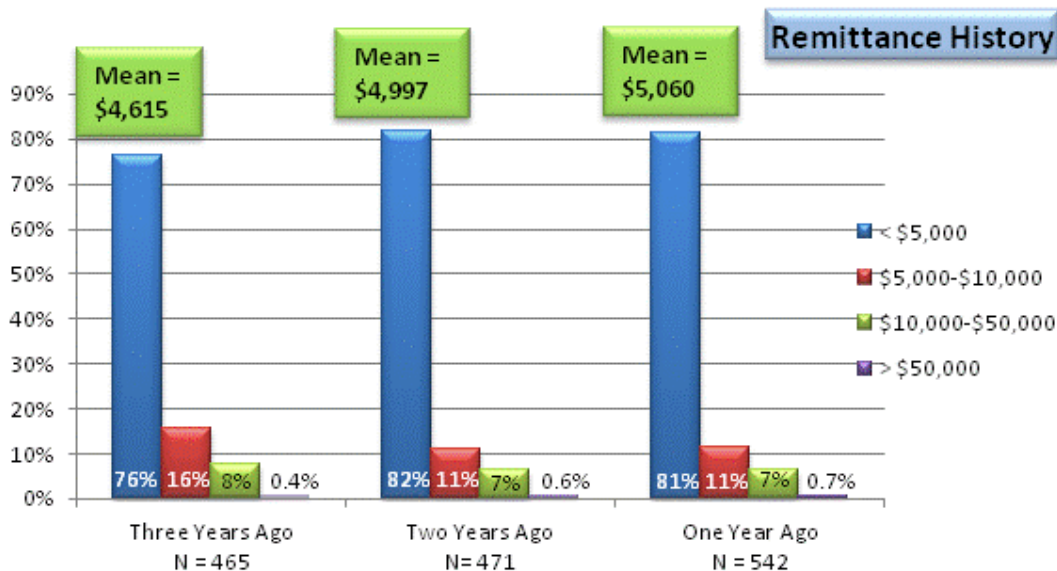
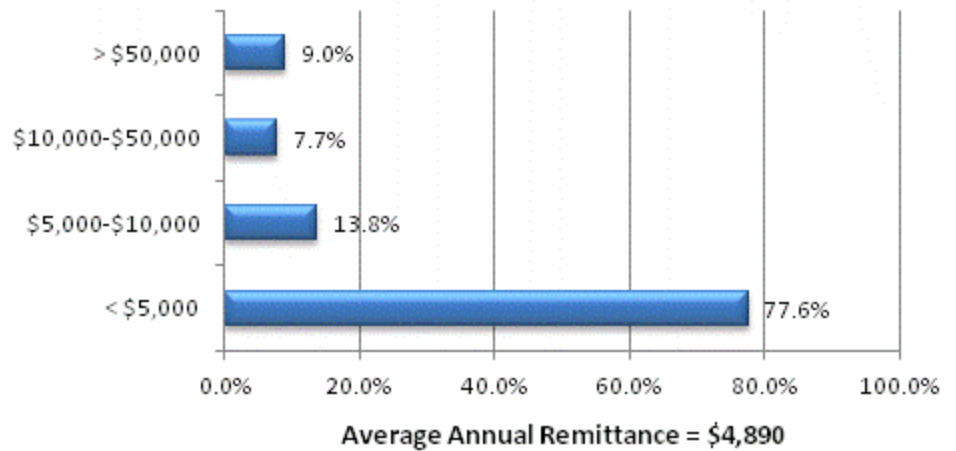


REMITTANCES

Respondents remit on average \$4,890 per year, over \$400 per month. Two years ago, one respondent reported remitting \$1.5 million. This same respondent reported purchasing real estate for personal use. Excluding this outlier, the average annual remittance drops from \$5,884 to \$4,890. Only 493 individuals (or 56% of those responding to the demographic questions) reported their remittance amounts.



Annual Average Remittances (Over Three Years)
N = 455

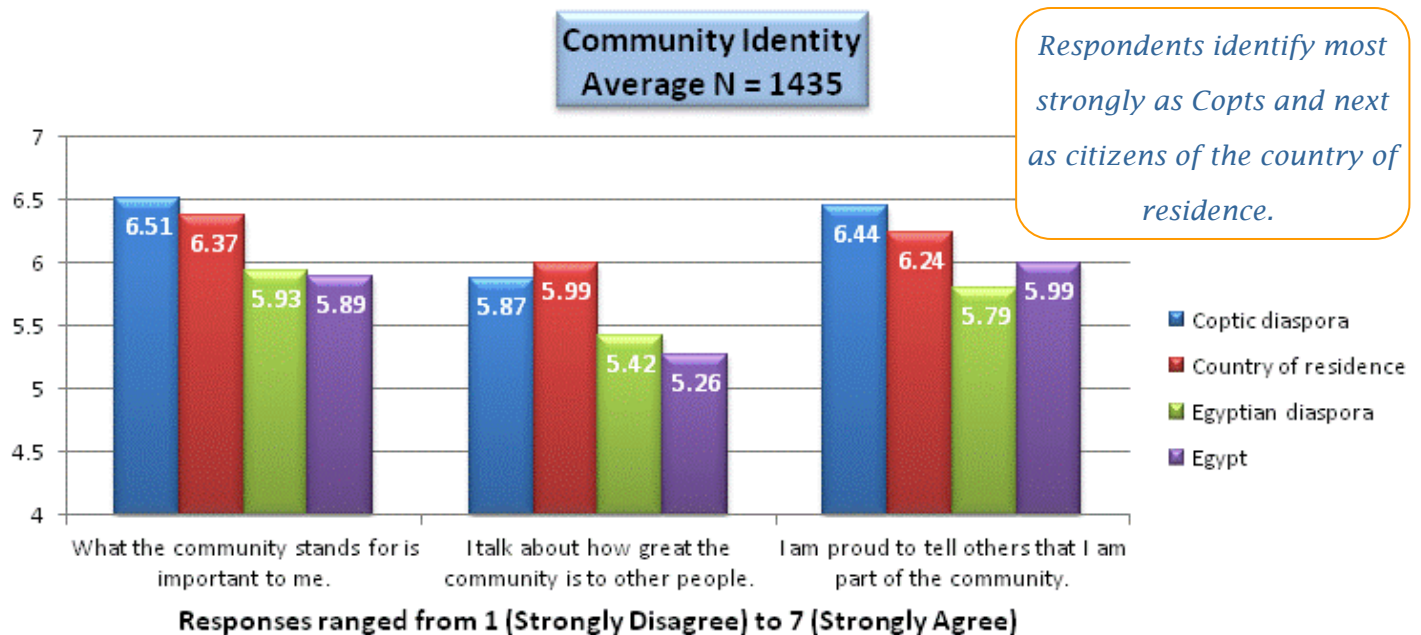


Over the past three years, respondents remitted on average \$4890 annually.

Excluding the outlier case yields an average remittance two years ago of \$4,997, and a gradual increase on average, by \$445 over the past three years. The data suggests an increase in the number of those remitting, particularly in the past year. New remitters primarily gave in the less than \$5,000 range. The increase in the number of remitters of smaller sums may reflect first-time or renewed remitters responding to the economic implications of recent developments in Egypt.

IDENTITY

We asked questions related to diasporans' identification with and pride in the Coptic diaspora, the broader Egyptian diaspora, Egypt, and their country of residence. All respondents consider themselves part of the Coptic diaspora, and 70% indicated they also belong to a broader Egyptian diaspora. Respondents most strongly identify with and take pride in the Coptic Diaspora (mean score of 6.28 out of 7), followed closely by the country of residence identity (mean score 6.20). Nevertheless, they still identify strongly with Egypt (mean score 5.71). Those who consider themselves members of the Egyptian diaspora also report they are proud of the community, speak highly of it, and what it stands for is important to them (mean score of 5.71).



Ninety-five percent indicated the future of Egypt is important to them. Respondents are most interested in making contributions to social development (80%), relative to economic (69%) and political development (67%). Only 9.76% (of 850 respondents) report they plan to live in Egypt in the future. Among these is the largest remitter.



DIASPORA GROUP INVOLVEMENT

Respondents were asked to identify the diaspora groups, both physical and online, that they participate in. Of diaspora organizations in which they are active, respondents overwhelmingly engage with their church and church related charities.



82% of respondents included their church and/or church-related charities among the diaspora organizations in which they participate. 72% reported these are the organizations in which they are most active.

These findings confirm the role the church plays in sustaining diasporans' identification both as Copts and with Egypt. Churches continuously connect their congregants to events and concerns of their compatriots remaining in Egypt.

Connections to events in Egypt are sometimes made even in the architecture of diaspora church buildings, as illustrated here. The iconography depicts individuals who were martyred in Egypt in 2000.



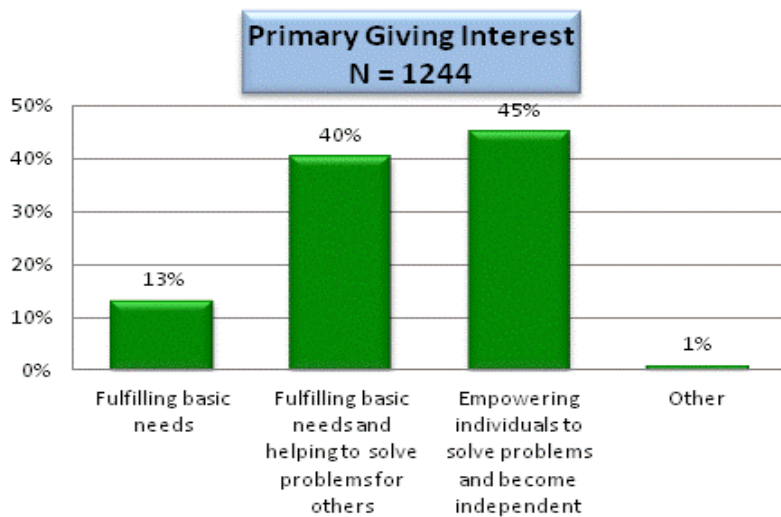
Iconography from St. Mina's Church, Riverside, CA.

Non-ecclesiastic organizations identified included:

- Student groups (e.g., Coptic Students of Austin Texas, UC Riverside Coptic Club)
- Community/location-based groups (e.g., UK Copts Association, Portland Area Greater Coptic Community)
- Professional associations (e.g., Coptic Medical Society, Coptic Lawyers Association)
- Advocacy organizations (e.g. Coptic Solidarity, Coptic Assembly of America)
- Coptic charity organizations (e.g., Coptic Orphans, Care4NeedyCopts), and
- Online groups (e.g., unitedcopts.com, copts.com, Coptic World).

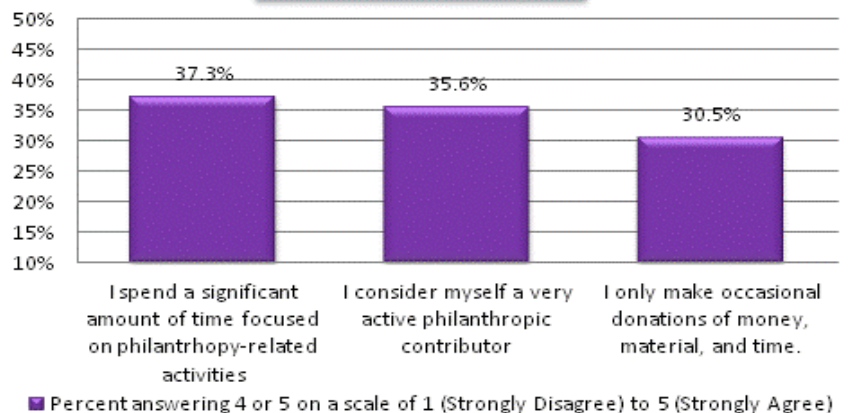
PHILANTHROPY: GIVING INTEREST

The majority of respondents are interested in more than simply providing charity to fulfill basic needs. Two thirds reported their primary interest is in providing assistance to their fellow Copts in Egypt. Those completing the “other” category largely indicated they would give to any in need but believe Copts in Egypt to be in most need of support.



Respondents are fairly active philanthropic contributors. Like most donors, they prefer making financial donations to volunteering their time. Their interest in volunteering their time in the country of residence (COR) is significant. Related projects may be organized by the church, for example. Approximately one quarter of respondents are interested in volunteering their time in Egypt.

Philanthropic Intensity
Average N = 1242



Degree of Philanthropic Interest
Average N = 1242



Respondents are most interested in providing financial donations, followed by volunteering in the country of residence on behalf of Egypt.

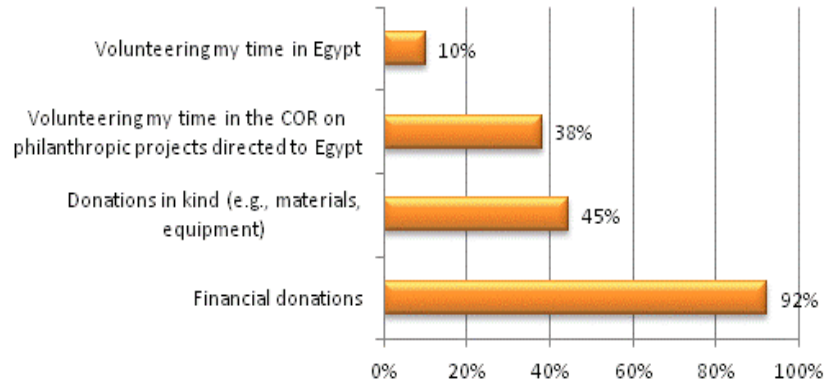
PHILANTHROPY: CONTRIBUTIONS

In the past three years, respondents were most active as financial donors. They volunteered less than their stated interest both in the country of residence (35% versus 57%) and in Egypt (10% versus 25%). Recent events in Egypt may have inspired new donors and new volunteers in the past year.

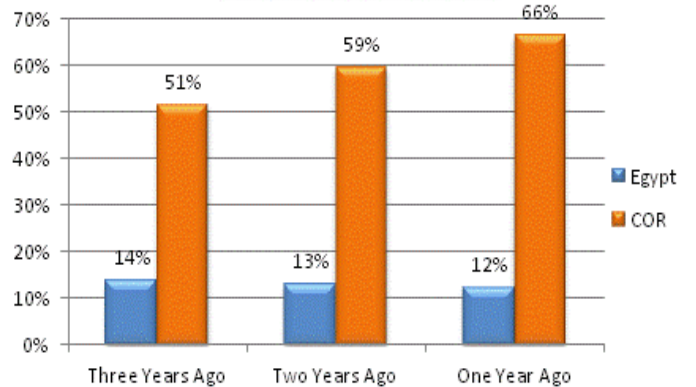
92% of respondents made financial donations to Egypt in the last three years.

Respondents volunteer greater time in the COR on behalf of Egypt than they do in Egypt. Last year witnessed a significant increase in volunteer days in the COR on behalf of Egypt and the number of volunteers giving time there.

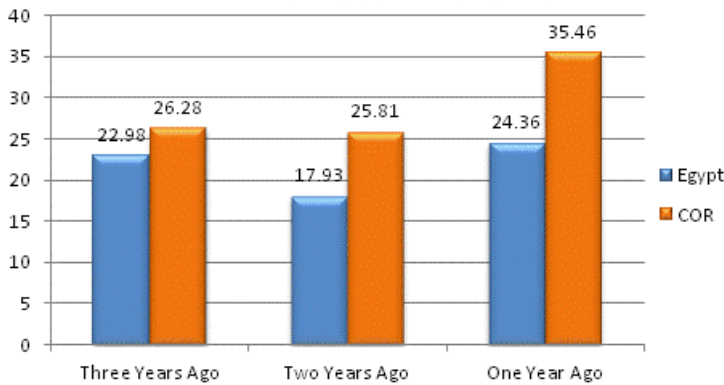
Philanthropic Contributions in Last Three Years
N = 1141



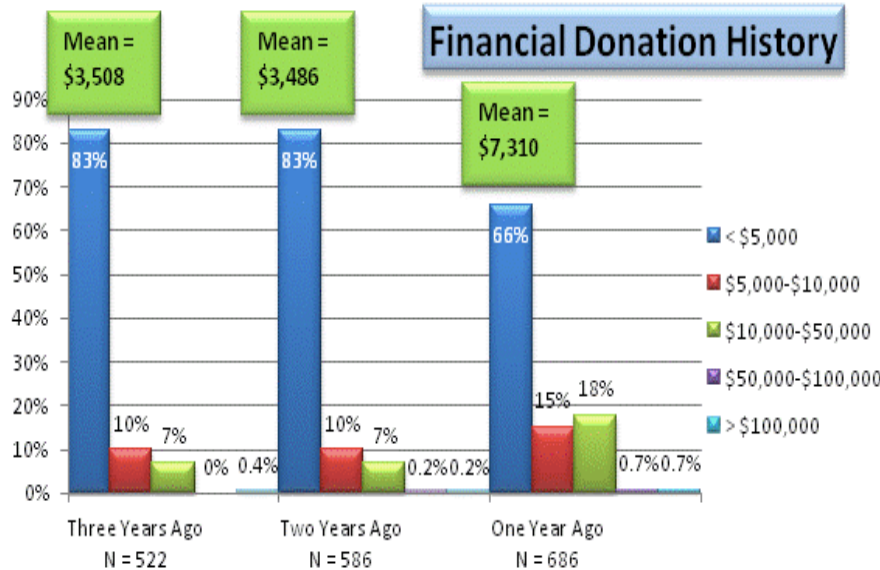
Number Volunteering
N = 468



Average Days Spent Volunteering



Financial Donation History



Both the number of financial donors and the average amounts of giving increased significantly in the past year.

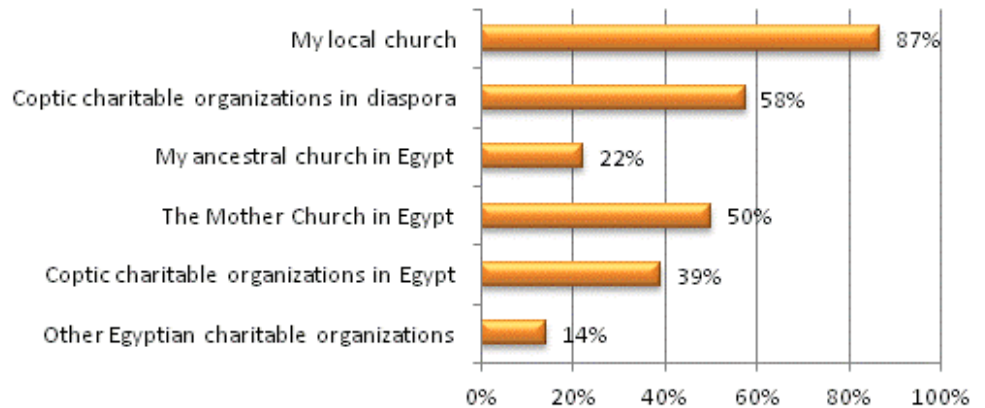
Most respondents gave on average less than \$5,000 in each of the last three years. The number of those who do not make financial contributions has declined over this period (from 16% to 2%). In other words, 14% of respondents became new donors in the last two years. On average, donation amounts grew significantly in the last year.

PHILANTHROPY: INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

Respondents prefer channeling their charitable donations to Egypt through organizations based in diaspora. Respondents rely most on their local church in diaspora. Their next preferred intermediary organizations are Coptic charitable organizations in diaspora. Among organizations in both diaspora and in Egypt, respondents prefer the Coptic Church as an intermediary organization for their philanthropy.

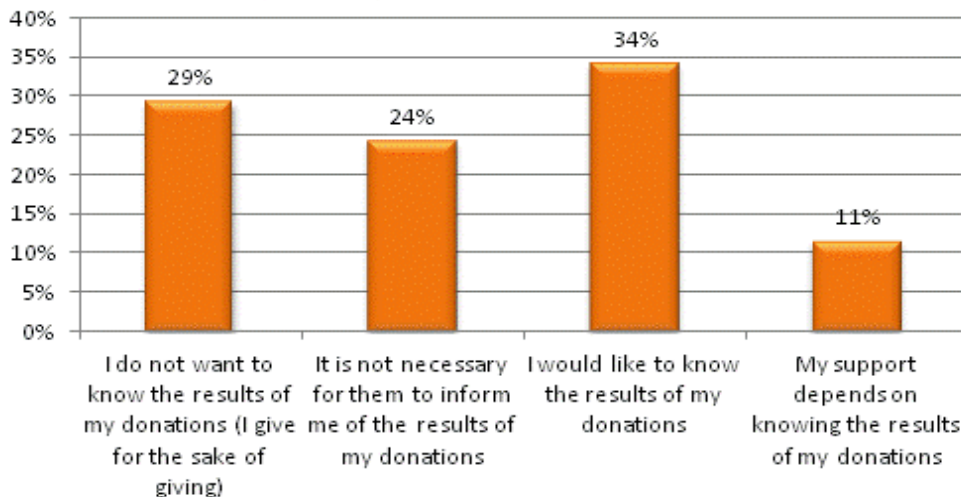


Preferred Charitable Organizations
N = 1242



Expectations of intermediaries are mixed among Coptic diaspora donors. Contrary to the norm among American donors generally, 54% of respondents reported they either do not want or do not need to know the results of their contributions.

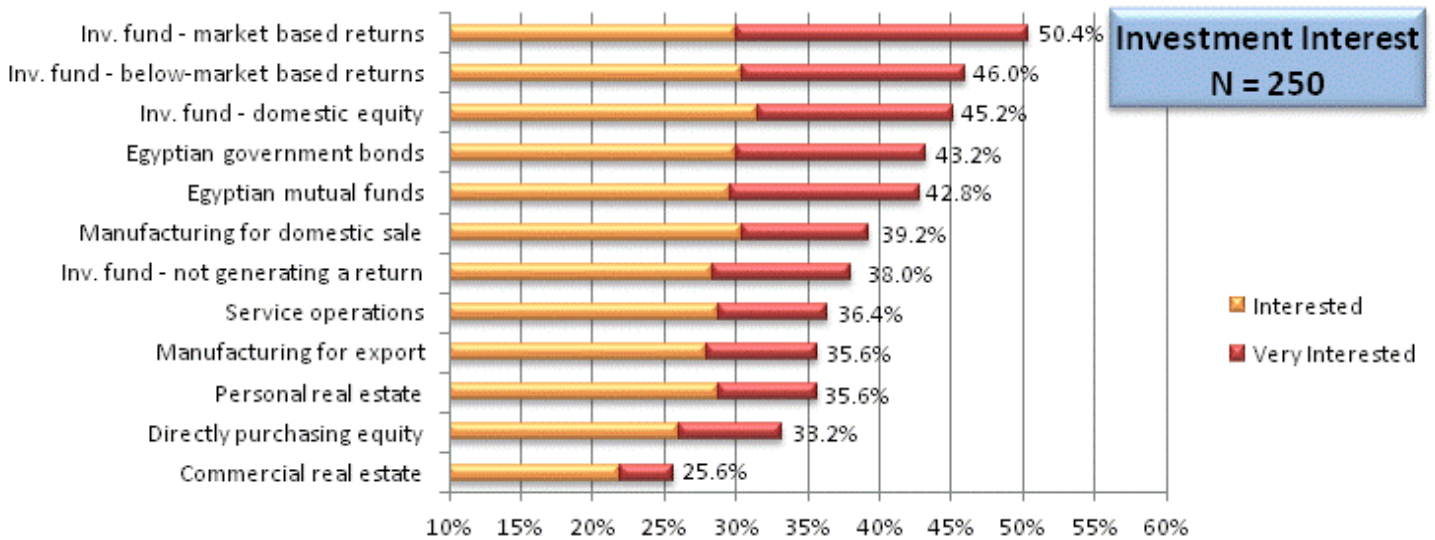
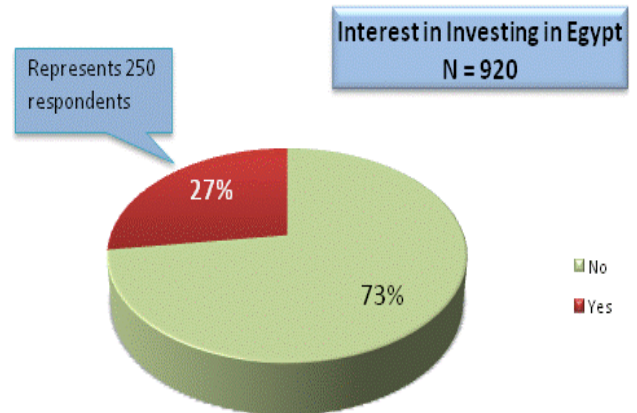
Expectations of Intermediaries
N = 1242



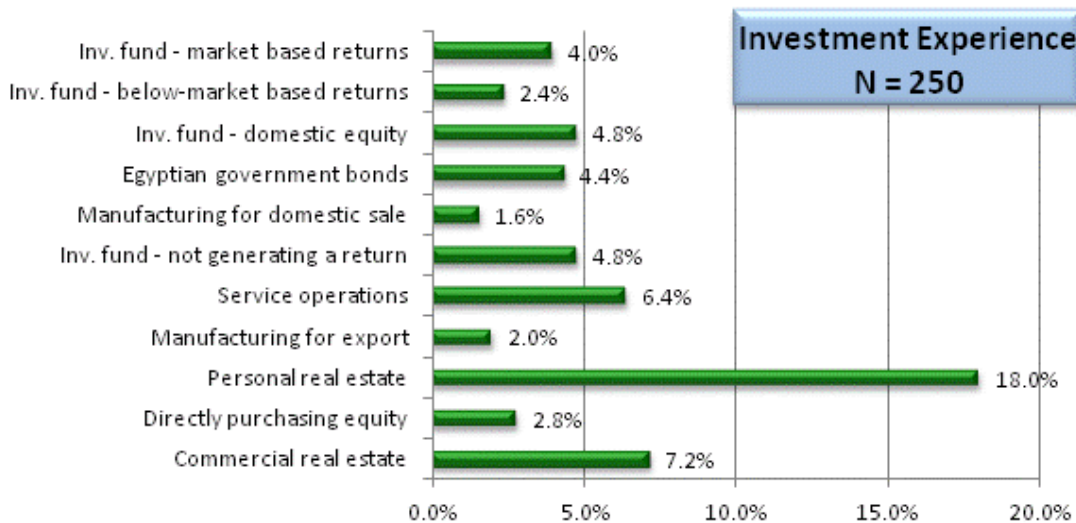
Giving for the sake of giving is rooted in the Coptic Christian teachings.

INVESTMENT INTEREST

250 respondents expressed interest in making investments in Egypt. This represents 27% of the 920 who answered this portion of the survey. Of these, respondents were most interested in investment funds. Slightly more than half expressed interest in investment funds with market-based returns (50.4%, or 13.7% of the 920 sample), and 46% reported interest in investment funds with below-market returns. This interest suggests an investment motivation beyond simply profit. More than a third of these respondents expressed interest in setting up businesses in Egypt: manufacturing for domestic sale (39.2%), service operations (36.4%), and manufacturing for export (35.6%).



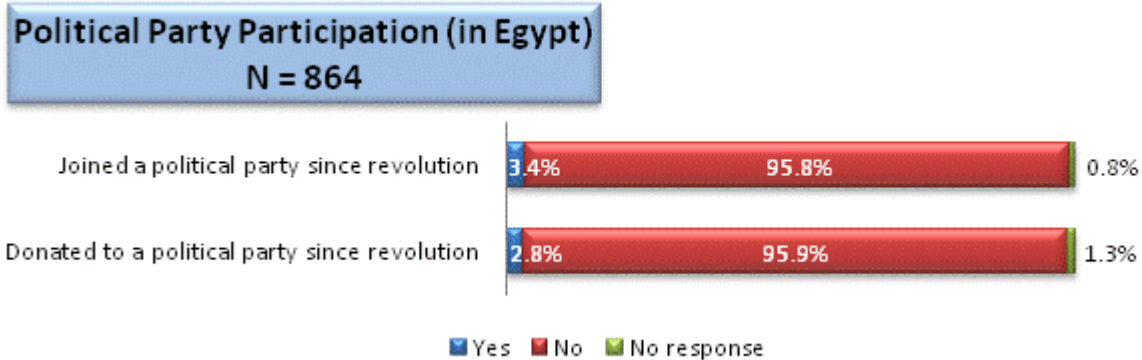
Only a fraction of those indicating interest in investing in Egypt have had experience making these investments. Although nearly one-fifth (18%) have invested in personal real estate, less than 10% have experience in any of the other investments listed in the survey.



While 27% of respondents indicated interest in investing in Egypt, apart from purchasing real estate for personal use, few among these had any experience in doing so.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

With respect to political activity, respondents were asked only about their participation in the formal political system in Egypt. Information collected on the diaspora groups in which they participate suggests that some respondents are also active in advocacy organizations in the country of residence. The survey received 864 respondents for this series of questions.

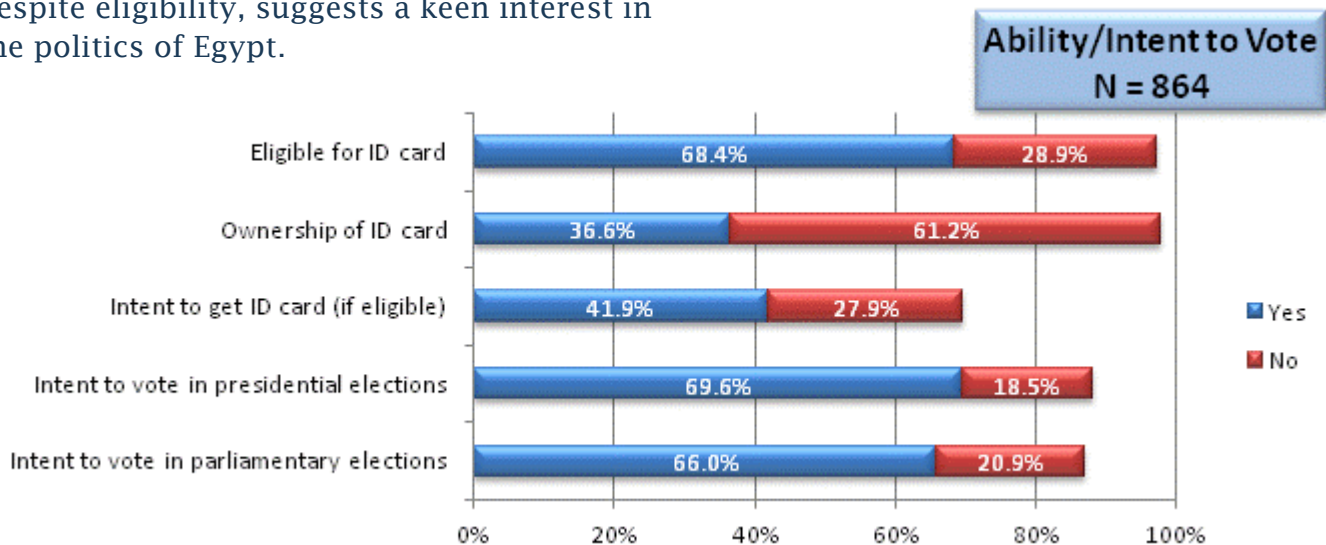


On the whole, respondents are not active in the formal political system in Egypt. Nevertheless, more than 3% of the sample joined a political party and almost 3% donated to a political party since the revolution.

While a significant number of respondents are eligible to hold an Egyptian identification card, only approximately 53.5% of eligible respondents actually hold one. Almost 42% of respondents intend to get one.

Over two thirds of respondents intended to vote in the parliamentary and presidential elections. Slightly more respondents intended to vote in the presidential elections than are eligible. This expressed intention, despite eligibility, suggests a keen interest in the politics of Egypt.

More respondents than were actually eligible reported they intended to vote in the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections.



CONCLUSION

This initial study suggests several insights about the Coptic diaspora and its interest and potential to engage for development in Egypt:

1. **The Coptic Orthodox Church is instrumental in keeping Coptic diasporans connected to Egypt.** Without the institutional and identity support provided by the Coptic Orthodox Church, it is possible that Copts living in diaspora could lose their connection to Egypt over time. They seem to identify most with their Coptic identity and their country of residence identity, and less with Egypt and its broader diaspora (though their identification with these is still significant). Members of the Coptic diaspora engage with church or church-related charities more than any other type of diaspora organization.
2. **Members of the Coptic diaspora are primarily engaged with Egypt through philanthropy.** This engagement is largely facilitated by the Coptic Church and by Coptic diaspora charitable organizations.
3. **The Coptic diaspora is more interested and more capable of contributing to development in Egypt than its current activities reflect.** Their interest in volunteering on behalf of Egypt, for example, is greater than their actual volunteering. Interest in making contributions to Egypt seems to have increased in the last two years, likely owing to recent events there. The median age of this diaspora is relatively young. The sample suggests this diaspora is highly educated and relatively well-off economically. There may be an important opportunity to harness this interest and the resources of the diaspora to contribute more to improved quality of life in Egypt.
4. **Coptic diasporans' interest in investment far surpasses their experience.** It is possible that socio-political conditions in Egypt have thus far discouraged most potential investors. It may also be that optimism regarding the reform processes underway in Egypt (at the time of the survey) are inspiring interest in investing for the first time.
5. **Some Coptic diasporans engaged in the formal political system in Egypt for the first time following the 2011 revolution.** Recent events seem to have inspired new interest in the politics of Egypt, but only for a small percentage of the diaspora. If the political opening of Egypt is reignited and optimism is sparked once again in this community, it is possible that their political engagement in the formal system may increase. Voting, in particular, is a highly symbolic mechanism for maintaining linkage to countries of origin and could reinforce intentions to make contributions there.

The GW diaspora research program will continue its analysis of the survey findings to identify more specific implications for philanthropy, investment, and political participation. Future research will seek to identify how the Coptic Church, charitable organizations, and policymakers can increase and facilitate the Coptic diaspora's contributions to Egypt's development. This research promises to inform future efforts to understand the potential, opportunities, and constraints of minority and faith-based diasporas in contributing to their countries of origin.