



What policy positions are publicly acceptable in Bangladesh? Evidence from the Jonomot opinion poll

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- The centre of public opinion in Bangladesh is economically interventionist and socially conservative: 78.4% of respondents fall in the left-conservative quadrant.
- Support for a strong state role in the economy is broader than support for market liberalisation. The average centred economic score is -2.33. Hence, interventionist economic policies might garner popular support. On the other hand, much campaigning is needed to make market liberalisation popular.
- On religion and the state, support for equal treatment of religions reaches 92.3%, but this coexists with support for prioritising the majority religion in state affairs (74.2%) and for a theocratic state (68.5%). This suggests a degree of confusion among voters regarding the role of religion, most likely due to a lack of information.
- On sexual violence, respondents support blaming perpetrators, but many also endorse narratives that regulate women's behaviour. The strongest majority position, at 88.4%, is that the abuser is to blame, but women should dress modestly and be careful outside. This is a sobering reality, and much campaigning needs to be done by the policymakers and the activists to educate people on gender-based violence.

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Public policy is often shaped by voices that are more visible than representative. This brief uses new nationwide survey evidence to identify where public opinion actually sits and which concrete policy positions appear to fall inside the broad range of public acceptability in Bangladesh. The aim is descriptive but practically important: to show which kinds of economic and social arguments are likely to resonate with broad publics, and which are likely to remain outside the current mainstream.

What the survey shows

The evidence comes from the second round of the Jonomot opinion survey, based on 3,072 completed mobile-phone interviews across Bangladesh. Of these, 2,927 respondents can be placed on both the economic and social dimensions of the survey's political compass. All headline results are weighted, so the brief is best read as a map of opinion among adults reachable by mobile phone during the survey period rather than as an unqualified census of every adult citizen.

The national centre of gravity is left-conservative

The average respondent sits to the economic left of the midpoint and modestly on the socially conservative side. The weighted mean economic score is -2.33, while the weighted mean social score is 1.04. In practical terms, this means the public is substantially more comfortable with a strong state role in the economy than with an openly market-liberal policy package, while also leaning towards social order, moral traditionalism, and a meaningful public role for religion.

- 78.4% of respondents fall in the left-conservative quadrant.
- Only 1.3% fall in the right-libertarian quadrant, while 4.8% are right-conservative.

This means Bangladesh's public is not well described by a simple one-dimensional left-right model. Support for state provision and regulation coexists with conservative instincts on many social questions. Supplementary multinomial models in the working paper also show that demographic differences by sex, age, education, area, and division do not overturn this basic pattern: the left-conservative mode remains the dominant national configuration.

Market liberalisation is outside the public mainstream

Across questions on pricing, wages, privatisation, and public provision, market-oriented positions remain weak. Respondents are consistently more comfortable with regulation, public provision, and state involvement than with privatisation, user fees, or looser labour protections. This does not imply that all reform is unpopular. It does imply that reforms framed narrowly through

efficiency, competition, or fiscal discipline will face headwinds unless they are also linked to fairness, household protection, and visible improvements in service quality.

A strongly market-liberal agenda sits well away from the mass centre of opinion.

For policy actors, the implication is practical rather than abstract: reforms framed mainly through efficiency, competition, or market discipline are unlikely to command broad support unless they are also framed through fairness, affordability, and visible public benefit. In other words, the political challenge is not only what reforms do, but how they are publicly justified.

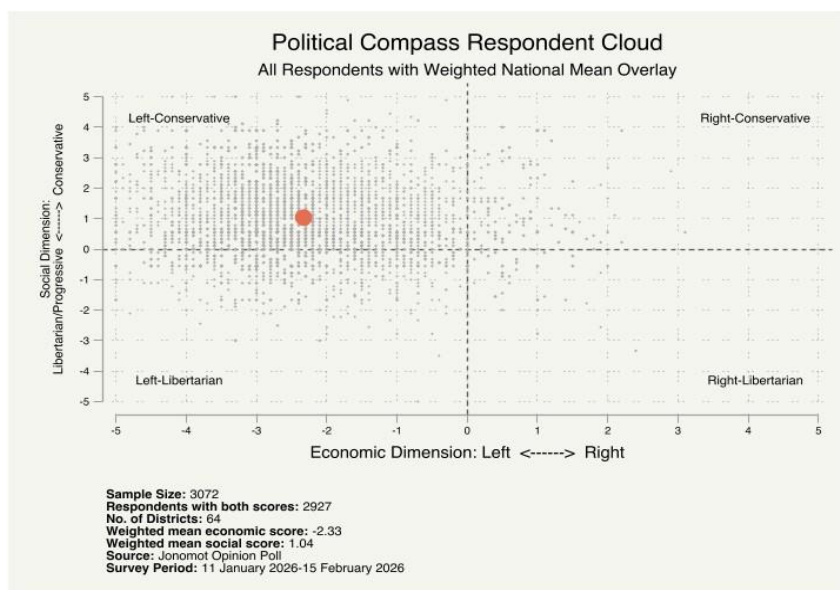
The survey also included dedicated modules designed to identify which specific positions are publicly acceptable on religion and the state, and on perceived causes of sexual violence. These modules matter because average ideology scores alone do not tell us which concrete claims parties, advocates, and public institutions can advance without moving outside the current range of majority support.

On religion and the state, support for equality across religions is overwhelming, but this coexists with support for majoritarian religious privilege and substantial openness to a theocratic state.

On sexual violence, perpetrator blame is widely accepted, but so are narratives that place responsibility on women's attire, behaviour, and social change. Structural explanations of violence are less widely accepted.

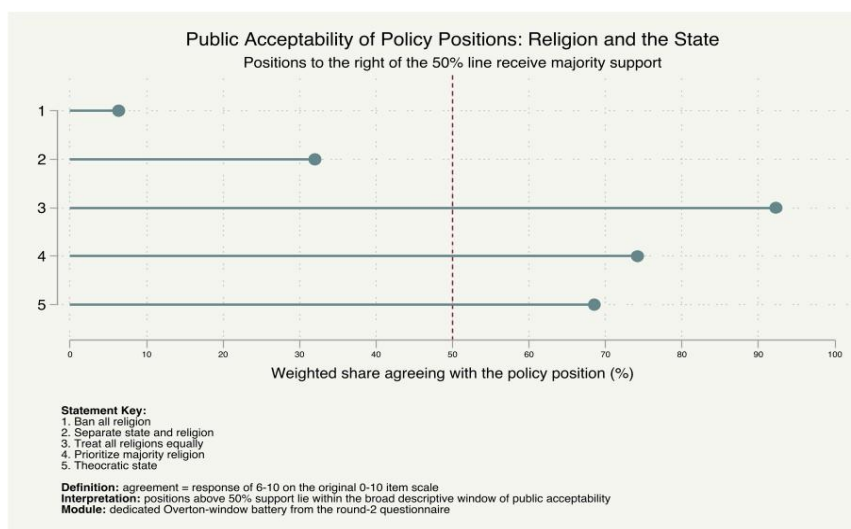
Together, these results show that public opinion in Bangladesh is structured, but not ideologically tidy. The same respondents can support equality across religions while also supporting a privileged role for the majority religion. That layered pattern is important for debates on minority rights, school curricula, constitutional identity, and the language used by both political parties and civil society organisations.

Figure 1: Bangladesh's ideological centre of gravity



Note: The highlighted point marks the weighted national mean. Source: Jonomot Round 2 opinion survey.

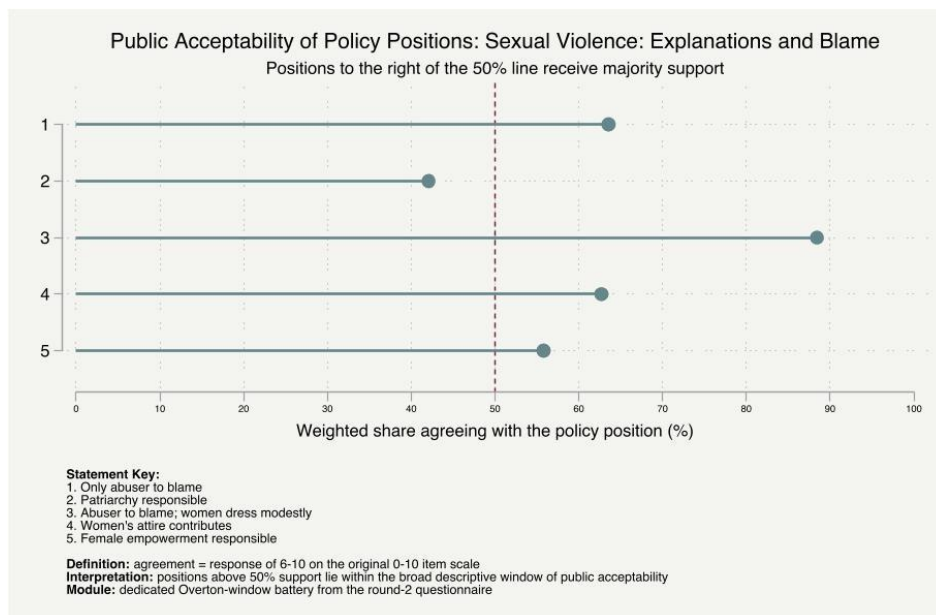
Figure 2: Public acceptability of positions on religion and the state



Note: Positions to the right of the dashed threshold line receive majority support. Source: Jonomot Round 2 opinion survey.

The sexual-violence module tells a similar story of layered attitudes. A majority blame the abuser, but support is even stronger for the mixed view that the abuser is responsible, but women should dress modestly and be careful outside (88.4%). This matters for policy and advocacy because it suggests that public communication campaigns cannot assume a fully structural understanding of violence is already mainstream. Messages centred only on patriarchy will likely miss many citizens' current moral intuitions, even where those same citizens also condemn perpetrators.

Figure 3: Public acceptability of policy positions on sexual violence



Note: Only 42.1% support the view that patriarchal society is responsible, while 62.7% say women's attire contributes to sexual violence. Source: Jonomot Round 2 opinion survey.