



Next Generation

Lebanon – July 2020

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Contents

Acknowledgements	
Forewords	2
Executive summary	4
Introduction	10
Youth identities in Lebanon	16
Daily lives of youth in Lebanon	28
Youth civic and political engagement	42
Effect of violence and conflict on youth in Lebanon	58
Youth aspirations, dreams and a global outlook	64
Conclusion: Social contract	72
Recommendations	74
Appendix I: Research methodology	77
References	82





Forewords

I am delighted to write the foreword to the Next Generation Lebanon report, as I was involved in developing the concept for the first studies in the series over 10 years ago. I have seen colleagues in other countries gain valuable insights and evidence for policy development from the young people with whom we work, both to inform our own programming and to build a stronger dialogue with host governments and other stakeholders.

The Next Generation research series seeks to understand and give voice to young people, highlighting their concerns and aspirations and feeding these into policy and practice. The studies focus on countries undergoing critical moments in transition. When we commissioned the research earlier in 2019, we did not know what a significant year it would be – we were looking back to mark the 30th anniversary of the Taif Accord and, in part, to understand the legacy of war on a generation of young people who were born after the conflict.

The events of the 17 October uprising gave us a view of the aspirations of young people, some of which are captured in the findings of this report; if we had been listening more carefully, we might have predicted events. It is clear from our findings that the majority of young people identify themselves as Lebanese, and we later witnessed as young people rallied in the streets under the national flag.

We heard the voices of young people calling for an end to corruption and greater accountability; our research suggests that young people believe that *wasta* is more important than qualifications for obtaining a job. The survey shows that youth suffer from high unemployment, which is getting worse as the economic crisis and the current Covid-19 pandemic impact further.

In spite of this, the findings show that young people value education, although we see that the financial burden will increasingly limit access. The current economic crisis will make this burden greater; we are seeing parents struggle to meet fees, and schools struggle to remain viable.

The research finds that those young people who have missed out are interested in routes back into 'second chance' education and training – we should see this as an opportunity. In addition, young people reported an interest in entrepreneurship, creating their own futures rather than waiting for employment in either the private sector (viewed as more attractive for better career opportunities) or the public sector (viewed as offering greater job security).

Our data collection was interrupted by the events following 17 October, but we are able to compare findings over this period: youth interest in politics grew, whilst their support for political parties fell. Trust in government fell, whilst their belief in their own agency grew.

Young people reported more engagement in political discussions and seeing new potential in formal political processes, translating into an intention to vote.

As conditions in Lebanon become more challenging, there is a warning in our research that tensions are rising and that sectarian divisions at the community level have increased. Young people are fearful that this tension and the growing economic and unemployment problems increase the likelihood of young people being drawn into violence or conflict. Another worrying finding is the proportion of young people who have a desire to migrate to achieve their ambitions.

Our research partners present conclusions and recommendation for us and for others with a shared interest in a peaceful and prosperous Lebanon: to begin to rebuild trust between young people and the government, to provide opportunities for education and employment, framed as building a new social contract. The British Council is committed to making our small contribution through working with all stakeholders, particularly young people themselves, to meet these aspirations.

David Knox,
Director, British Council Lebanon

I was born in Lebanon right after the end of the civil war. I grew up thinking that power had been relinquished by those who should not have it, and that peace would abound. It did not take long for me to discover that this was not the case. The war had a legacy - for individuals, for the community, and for the region. That legacy does not only belong to our parents, but also to us.

The end of the war did not bring sustained reconciliation in the law or wider society. Although the Taïf accord brought an end to the bloodshed, it did not resolve the grievances and divisions that led to it. After 15 years of conflict, displaced communities of varying religious persuasions established new cities along post-war sectarian lines and the diversification of the collective Lebanese character and conscience turned into its greatest challenge.

Within these newly delineated boundaries, the post-war generation did not grow up alongside one another. We grew up separately, just as the regime had intended, and the promise of a better, more egalitarian future was withheld. Due to our patriarchal system, the masculine rhetoric of 'the glory of war' has always prevailed; it is an attempt to justify what comes after. As a result, it has taken precedence over another more searing truth, which is the forgotten suffering during the war years.

In this hostile environment, in which inequality pervades and where there is little imagination or intellectual rigour in civic leadership, young people looked elsewhere for their future.

In Lebanon, as around the world, financial and political power is jealously guarded by a minority, and this has led not just to despair for some people, but to disengagement and apathy.

Yet the digital age has exposed young people to new ideas and concepts, growing their appetite for change. The communities that had for so long defined themselves by division and separation learned instead what connects them.

On 17 October, like many young Lebanese men and women, I was on the streets of Beirut to witness and partake in an uprising with youth at its heart. We spoke out not only against the sectarian system and its ruling elite, but against our own apathy. It was not only an uprising against the old mindsets and stereotypes, but a public airing and reckoning of our inherited traumas.

We thought that this was the opportunity to capitalise on our failed experiences, to unite, and to create a new Lebanon, but our early optimism quickly faded. Standing on what would become one of the epicentres of the revolution in Beirut, the Ring Bridge, we feared the sound of violence was louder than the sound of reason. Watching some political actors attempt to manipulate the situation, we realised the complex nature of the system we were trying so hard to dismantle, and that positive change is hard to attain. This resurrection of sectarian rhetoric and beating of the drums of war made us question our ability to make that change. Nevertheless, we persisted.

Lebanon has, time and time again, faced events that test the resilience of its people and their susceptibility to slide back into conflict. But for the first time in its fraught recent history, the political power sharing model is not only in serious question, but it is virtually paralysed. And the threats facing it are real.

The World Bank is projecting that poverty will affect more than 50 per cent of the population. The currency has lost close to 70 per cent of its value to date. However, it is hard to see a sustained push for genuine reform. We still risk becoming polarised along identity and class lines. We need to break out of a political system that offers only benefits to small groups rather than trying to develop genuine change for the benefit of all.

Still, in the midst of this bleak context, there is hope. I do not believe that we will repeat the mistakes of previous years. And I do not believe that the answers lie only with political parties, nor with the ruling elites. This research offers answers that the outdated system cannot, and allows space for voices of the next generation to be heard, and their energy and agency put into practice.

Here, then, is an opportunity as well as an invitation for thinkers, academics, policymakers and youths to seize the moment and start thinking of a new model, a new social contract that is more reflective of the aspirations of the Lebanese and the next generation. It is the only choice we have.

Ralph Baydoun

> Executive summary

Thirty years since the end of the Civil War and signing of the Ta'if Accord, which gave rise to new peace and hope for Lebanon, the country finds itself in another period of crisis and uprising, and young people's voices are at the centre of the outcry.

At the time of data collection and writing, Lebanon continued to be in the midst of profound change. The uprising that began on 17 October 2019 vocalised the increasingly difficult circumstances of life in Lebanon cemented by a multi-layered financial, banking, and debt crisis, with youth at the forefront of demands for change. Young people across Lebanon have taken to the streets and social media and established new platforms to voice their opinions, criticisms, and priorities and engage in less-formal modes of political participation. Youth are fighting to bring about a new political system to not only improve their daily lives but also to allow for a brighter future for themselves and their country. They are also using this opportunity to wash away entrenched sectarianism within the country's social structures and to pave the way for a more unified Lebanon. Furthermore, the write up of this research was finalised at a time when Lebanon, and the wider world, faced unprecedented uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This global challenge has not only negatively affected economies and worsened those already struggling – including

Lebanon's – but also raised questions related to trust between state and society, the quality of and access to healthcare systems, as well as highlighting the resounding resilience and spirit of communities.

As part of the Next Generation research series, which uplifts youth voices in countries undergoing a period of significant change, the aim of Next Generation Lebanon is to provide an honest perspective on young people's lives in Lebanon, drawing on the diverse voices of youth in the country, including Lebanese, Palestinians, and Syrians. British Council Lebanon commissioned Connecting Research to Development (CRD) to conduct the study.

Using quantitative and qualitative methods, CRD was able to thoroughly assess different aspects of youth lives. Data collection was conducted between September and December 2019, with 2089 participants aged between 15 and 29. Data collection was temporarily disrupted by the general security conditions in the country between October – December 2019. However, these events also provided an opportunity to better gauge the demands and aspirations of the youth of Lebanon at this critical point, and these findings were integrated into the report.

The report explores and is organised according to five key research themes: youth identities, daily lives, civic and political engagement, conflict and violence, and dreams and aspirations.

Key findings

Youth identities in Lebanon

This theme explored how Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian youth construct their identities and how these constructs influence their views on and relationships with youth from religious, political, and national backgrounds different than their own.

The construction of a national identity by young Lebanese is a complex and convoluted process. Two-thirds of Lebanese youth overwhelmingly identify themselves as Lebanese, and the other third build their identity along religious lines. Family narratives and oral history remain the key routes through which youth acquire knowledge about the country's history in the absence of unified history curricula in schools. For this reason, 62 per cent of Lebanese youth do not believe that there is a unified Lebanese identity. The lack of a unified Lebanese identity 30 years after the end of the Civil War highlights the potential need for a renewed social contract that prioritises social reconciliation and finds a 'label' under which Lebanese can find unity.

Living in prolonged displacement, Syrian and Palestinian youth in the country battle questions of identity in a context of uncertain futures. As Palestinians have been living in exile for over 70 years and face an increasingly stagnant conflict, their given citizenship and 'sharing a common enemy' are the key

constructs of their identity. While Syrians hold a low sense of belonging to Lebanon, a large number of Palestinians – who have lived their entire lives in the country – expressed feelings of belonging during discussions and a demand for a basic set of rights, which are currently denied to refugee populations in the country.

Young people's identities lead them to hold a variety of values and beliefs regarding how they relate to individuals from 'other' backgrounds. At the most intimate levels, when seeking to build a family, Lebanese youth are unlikely to marry someone from a different religious or political background or someone who is Syrian or Palestinian. Lebanese youth have diverse sets of friends that include youth from various religious, political, and national backgrounds. This positive social cohesion was demonstrated in the survey as youth perceived themselves to hold more tolerant and accepting attitudes than those of older generations.

Daily lives of youth in Lebanon

To develop a more nuanced understanding of the struggles in young people's daily lives, this study focused on youth employment and education and identified prospects for potential intercessions.

Youth in Lebanon are motivated to pursue education, yet many struggle due to financial barriers, leading to 20 per cent of youth dropping out of school. In higher education, accessibility is again limited due to the high cost of tertiary education and the scarcity of scholarships for those who are in financial need. While financial burdens limit access to higher education, youth also question the relevance of their degrees with over half of working youth holding a university degree stating that the diploma they obtained is not relevant to their current employment.

Overall, while they acknowledge the importance of education, 71 per cent of youth in Lebanon also believe that personal connections or *wasta* are more important than their qualifications for obtaining a job.

With high youth unemployment rates and the ongoing financial crisis, youth face an increasingly challenging labour market. Approximately 17 per cent of surveyed youth were unemployed.

Youth outside of the capital particularly struggle to find opportunities, as centralisation in Lebanon has concentrated most jobs in Beirut. Tight competition in the labour market has increased tension between Lebanese and non-Lebanese youth, with 81 per cent of Lebanese youth agreeing with

the statement that 'people from other countries living in Lebanon take jobs away from the Lebanese'. Female youth in Lebanon face even more challenges related to employment. While most surveyed youth believe that women should have the same rights to work outside the home as men, the majority of youth agreed that employment opportunities remain unequal between young men and young women. Of youth who were not already self-employed, nearly two-thirds expressed interest in setting up their own business. However, youth require increased access to capital and skills training on running a business, as these are the main barriers to launching businesses and becoming entrepreneurs.

Youth civic and political engagement

At the community level, generally youth are not members of any organisations, associations or scout groups, demonstrating low levels of community participation. In political engagement, youth also exhibit low levels of involvement in the formal political process. Three-quarters of youth are not members of any political group or organisation, and 63 per cent do not support a political party, regardless of their nationality and voting eligibility.

Our study reveals multiple reasons for this low political engagement, such as youth believing that the existing political parties do not represent them and are corrupt, and that youth voices are not heard when political decisions are being made. Youth engagement is likely to increase only under a different political system.

As the study included 1,030 complete surveys prior to and 1,059 after the uprising, the collected data were disaggregated pre/post October 17 to explore how youth engage with politics.

Despite the monumental nature of the 1989 Taif Accord, prior to the uprising 51 per cent of Lebanese youth stated that they had never heard of the agreement. Following the start of the uprising, 75 per cent of Lebanese youth had heard of Taif. Most youth criticised the accord for deepening sectarianism in the country, generating a system that was more corrupt than before, and consolidating international influence over Lebanon. The October 17 uprising brought about a new source of confidence among youth regarding political participation that is reflected in this research.

First, Lebanese youth interest in politics in the country grew to 40 per cent from 27 per cent.

Second, support for political parties fell, and support for a new political system increased. Third, while Lebanese young people's trust in their government decreased (down to 20 per cent from 33 per cent), their belief in themselves as agents of influence and change grew significantly (up to 42 per cent from 19 per cent). Fourth, since the start of the uprising, surveyed Lebanese youth reported that they began to engage more frequently in political discussions with their friends and were more likely to use social media to express their political opinions on an issue. Finally, although youth have engaged in politics through various means and platforms throughout the uprising, an increased number stated that they intend to vote in the next scheduled elections, meaning that they saw new potential in formal political processes. The ongoing uprising demonstrates how youth communicate their needs and the platforms that are effective. These should be studied and understood by stakeholders working with youth to improve youth outreach and programming.

Effects of violence and conflict on the youth in Lebanon

In this theme, survey questions explored young people's relationship to the Civil War and their considerations regarding the potential for future conflict in the

country. Further, in discussions with youth across the country, the section sought to solicit their opinions on the culture of violence present in Lebanon.

Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian youth are no strangers to the armed conflicts that have taken place throughout their countries' histories. While half of Lebanese youth believe that the generation that lived through the Civil War holds views different from their own, a substantial one-third see the younger populations as still affected by the history of the war. Although many youth feel less affected by past conflicts, they are increasingly worried about the outbreak of future war or fighting. More than half believe that over the past ten years, tensions in Lebanon have worsened due to sectarian divisions at the community level and that, overall, tensions among different sects in Lebanon are growing.

The rise in these tensions is the main concern regarding the outbreak of future conflict. Furthermore, one-quarter of youth also consider the economic crisis as a potential factor that could lead to a future struggle, and significantly, most youth believe that unemployment increases the likelihood of a young person becoming involved in armed violence or conflict.

Youth aspirations and global outlook

This theme explores the hopes and dreams of youth in Lebanon, as well as the reasons why most youth seek to emigrate. It concludes with a look at how youth view other countries as negatively or positively impacting Lebanon.

At present, youth regard the lack of employment opportunities, financial difficulties, and corruption as an interwoven web of challenges that prevents them from achieving their dreams. Thereby, migration remains one of the key aspirations for youth in Lebanon, with 71 per cent stating that they would like to migrate to another country for better job opportunities; a decision of conflict due to having to leave their friends and families.

From a global perspective, Lebanese youth view European countries, the United States and the UK as the countries with the most positive influence on Lebanon. The concentration of perceived positive influence among Western countries is unsurprising, as they do not fall along sectarian lines, in comparison to regional countries such as Saudi Arabia or Iran. While Lebanon remains negatively affected by several regional conflicts, Israel was viewed as the country with the most negative influence on Lebanon, followed by the United States, who is thus viewed both positively and negatively by youth.

Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, the report findings across the five themes culminate with an understanding that the existing sectarian system limits national unity in a Lebanese identity, results in personal connections or *wasta* being more important than education to obtain employment and other opportunities, diminishes young people's enthusiasm for political engagement, and is the most likely cause of a future conflict. Finally, it creates a system that withers the hopes and dreams of youth and results in youth considering leaving Lebanon for better livelihoods and opportunities. However, young people's continued resilience and enthusiasm, as well as a strong belief that many in their generation have moved beyond the sectarian mind-set of their parents and grandparents, provide a unique and timely opportunity to engage with youth to create a stronger and more prosperous Lebanon for the current youth and future generations. Situating this within the context of the October 17 uprising, a clear need for a new social contract between the citizens and the state has emerged. The needs of the people, including youth, are not being met under the current structure, and youth are demanding more from the ruling institution.

The initial findings of this research were presented at a roundtable to an audience of stakeholders which included a discussion on recommendations based on the findings. Considering the undeniable change that will take place during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, the recommendations propose solutions to the challenges raised in this report. The recommendations explore effective pathways for community and political engagement, to build trust between communities and the state, improving access to and quality of education, and supporting youth participation in the labour market.





> Introduction

Next Generation series

Next Generation Lebanon is part of the British Council's Next Generation global research, initiated in countries that are experiencing a period of significant change. The aim of Next Generation is to ensure that young people's voices are heard and their interests are properly represented in decisions that will have lasting implications for their lives and futures. It gauges young people's views around education, employment and lifestyle, as well as uncovering their hopes and fears for their country, their degree of political engagement, their views on the wider world, and the values and beliefs that affect their lives. Next Generation research seeks to support better youth policymaking to ultimately encourage youth engagement to allow young people to become the next generation of influencers, leaders, and shapers of their countries.

This introduction details and situates the research within Lebanon's historical and more recent events, providing an understanding of youth in Lebanon and an overview of how Lebanon reached its current circumstances. The introduction also explains how the report is structured and offers some details on how we identified the youth of Lebanon and what topics we focused on in the research.

Next Generation Lebanon and research aims

Next Generation Lebanon was initiated in light of the various changes taking place and leading up to the 30th anniversary of the Taif Accord that in 1989 brought an end to the country's 15-year Civil War. At the beginning of this research, Lebanon was experiencing a period of political change due to the formation of a new government, which gave hope for the creation of opportunities for youth. During fieldwork and towards the study's conclusion, Lebanon experienced a popular uprising across the country. The October 17 uprising is unique in the period following the Civil War, as it has particularly targeted the current sectarian system and highlighted the corruption of the ruling elite. The uprising was spurred by a financial crisis plaguing the country. The uprising continues, and its outcomes are still unfolding.

Because of this critical juncture in Lebanon's trajectory, as well as the likely fallout of Covid-19, this research can shed light on the thoughts, aspirations and opinions of youth before and during a profound moment of uncertainty, hope and undeniable change.

Study sample and thematic focus

The focus of the project was on young adults aged between 15 and 29 across each of the regions of Lebanon. The research looks at Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian youth living in Lebanon for at least 5 years. A total of 2,089 participants were surveyed, with 1,591 being Lebanese, 260 Syrian, and 238 Palestinian. The gender breakdown was nearly equal, at 52 per cent male and 48 per cent female. Youth were divided into three age categories of 15-18, 19-24, and 25-29 years old to allow for age disaggregation within the analysis phase and understand the particular challenges and opportunities faced by each age group. Participants were asked to provide their confession, with options including Christian denominations (Maronite, Catholic, Orthodox, and Armenian Orthodox), Muslim denominations (Shiite, Sunni), as well as Druze and Alawi. Participants could also state no affiliation, other, or refuse to respond. While most data were not disaggregated by religion, when relevant, analysis includes disaggregation along confessional lines. Overall, the demographics included age, gender, marital status, physical disability, economic class, religion, and region of the participants for all three nationalities.

As a note on how the data are presented, 'youth' or 'all youth' refers to the full sample, regardless of nationality. When nationality is relevant to a finding, the nationality of the youth will be specified, for example, 'Lebanese youth' or 'Palestinian youth'.

Although Syrians and Palestinians are generally not citizens of Lebanon, they comprise a significant percentage of the total residents of Lebanon. Nearly all Palestinian youth were born in Lebanon, and since 2011, upwards of 1.5 million Syrians have sought refuge in the country. These two refugee populations play significant roles in the country and affect social dynamics, politics, and the economy.

The October 17 uprising began while the study was halfway through data collection, resulting in 1,030 survey responses prior to and 1,059 after the uprising began. During analysis, the data was disaggregated pre/post uprising to identify any significant differences in responses. The data remained largely consistent across all themes, except for political engagement. Thus, Chapter 3 includes a section on how the uprising has influenced youth political engagement.

Note on Covid-19

As the data was collected prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and with Lebanon's first recorded case being confirmed in February 2020, the data does not reflect insight into the impact Covid-19 has had on youth in Lebanon. However, many pertinent discussions that were raised by young people prior hold pressing importance and relevance when thinking about how Lebanon and the wider world will be changed and impacted by the global pandemic. Throughout the report, preliminary reflections are included.

Report structure

Chapter 1 – Youth identities in

Lebanon examines and compares how Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian youth identify themselves and which affiliations help construct these identities. This chapter details young people's views on discrimination, acceptance of others, and relationships with individuals from backgrounds different than their own.

Chapter 2 – Daily lives of youth in

Lebanon delves into experiences in education and employment. In particular, it details the challenges faced by youth and their views on the educational system and the labour market.

Chapter 3 – Youth civic and political engagement in Lebanon

first discusses youth understandings of and engagement with their communities, youth political engagement, as well as their opinions of the current political system. Furthermore, the chapter highlights populations, such as Palestinian and Syrian youth, who are largely excluded from political processes. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on changes observed in young people's political engagement since the October 17 uprising.

Chapter 4 – Effects of violence and conflict on the youth in Lebanon

examines the type of violent conflicts that youth encounter at the macro and micro levels. Furthermore, this section probes the generational differences in the effects of the country's Civil War on youth and their parents' generation.

Chapter 5 – Hopes and dreams of the youth in Lebanon

explores young people's aspirations and the barriers that stand in the way of those dreams. The chapter discusses migration trends and the views that youth hold about other countries.

Lebanese context

The aim of this section is to define the context in which the Next Generation study takes place, first by discussing the impact of the ongoing uprising, followed by a look at the history and recent events in Lebanon that led to the current situation in the country. A brief overview of the present context will ensure a better understanding of the study's findings.

Since 17 October 2019

On 17 October 2019, mass protests spread across Lebanon shortly after the government announced new austerity measures, including a planned tax on free phone calls over the instant messaging application 'WhatsApp'. After years of concealed rallying against electricity and water shortages, as well as government mismanagement and deterioration of economic conditions, hundreds of thousands of peaceful protesters gathered in cities across the country. People of different ages, religious sects, and social backgrounds took to the streets, blaming the ruling elite for corruption and the financial crisis engulfing the country.

Shortly after the start of mass demonstrations, the government announced a set of measures aimed at pacifying the street. The suggested economic reforms announced by the cabinet included the cancellation of proposed taxes and slashing the state deficit. Demonstrations continued in main Lebanese cities, with protestors chanting, 'All of them means all of them', and demanding accountability from the entire ruling class. After nearly two weeks of protests, under popular pressure, Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced his resignation.

After multiple setbacks, on December 16, President Michel Aoun tasked former

Education Minister Hassan Diab with forming the country's next government and designated him prime minister. On January 21, 2020, Diab formed a 20-minister cabinet consisting mostly of technocrats who were chosen by political parties. On February 11, the cabinet managed to win a vote of confidence in Parliament. However, hundreds of people protested that day, voicing their resentment of the new cabinet, which resulted in clashes between protestors and security forces.

Since the October 17 uprising, increasingly limited capital controls have been put in place. Unofficial exchange rates on the black market have skyrocketed. The severe shortage of US dollars threatened to disrupt supplies of imported goods, in particular fuel, medicine and medical supplies, and food. The Lebanese economy is extremely dependent on imports, as local production is severely limited. Food prices have already exhibited significant increases since the middle of October, affecting families and most critically those under the poverty line (World Food Programme, 2019). At the time of this writing, many consider the devaluation of the Lebanese lira imminent – and with it, a substantial loss of income for the lower social and economic classes in particular (Halabi and Boswall, 2019). The crisis is expected to further worsen poverty among Lebanese citizens and refugees, as well as widen income inequality.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent nation-wide lockdown which began on March 15, 2020 has further exacerbated the financial crisis in Lebanon.

The closure of all but essential businesses surged financial worries among most residents of the country. The country's economy is expected to shrink by 12 per cent this year, making

Lebanon one of the most economically affected countries by the pandemic (Reuters, 2020). Around 50 per cent of Lebanese are said to be under the poverty line, and Social Affairs Minister Ramzi Moucharafieh declared that 75 per cent of Lebanese require some type of aid (Azhari, 2020b). At the level of public health, Lebanon avoided a catastrophic outbreak of the virus, and the overall public health response has been seen as effective (Sly, 2020). However, the government's socio-economic response demonstrated a lack of capacity by the government to help its citizens. The government announced plans to distribute 400,000 LBP to 150,000 families in need, although the number of approved families is far below the target at time of writing (Azhari, 2020b). Otherwise, most economic and food assistance has been provided by NGOs, community led initiatives, religiously affiliated associations, and some municipalities. Disregarding the lockdown, protests have broken out in many cities, with anger over the further fall of the Lebanese Lira, rising cost of basic needs, hikes in unemployment rates, political inaptitude, and the additional financial hardships brought on by the pandemic (Azhari, 2020b).

While the long-term effects of the global pandemic, the uprising and the effectiveness of its tactics will continue to be studied and debated in the coming years, three effects from the uprising can be identified that also mirror the findings discussed throughout the report in more detail.

First, media coverage and literature on the uprising highlight that youth in Lebanon are eager and willing to participate in political and civic processes. This is also supported by the study's data on political participation when disaggregated pre/post October

17 uprising. The nation-wide uprising has seen significant youth participation, including strikes by both high school and university students, as well as the organisation of discussion or debate tents in the squares of major cities (Osseiran, 2019). The protests that have filled the streets and squares of many cities are replete with youth expressing their opinions.

Second, the sectarian system is losing further support at the social level, as demonstrations took place across the country and chants targeted every sectarian leader. Indeed, a resounding message in media coverage of the uprising showed that the Lebanese were proud to highlight the unity that existed amongst the people on the street.

Third, the Taïf Accord was rejected by the people, as voiced throughout the uprising and supported in the survey data with youth. A popular discussion throughout the uprising declared that finally, the Civil War had ended amongst the people, thereby revealing that Taïf had never achieved social reconciliation in its 30 years of implementation. Collectively, these effects lead to the argument for the need of a new social contract between society and the state. While Lebanese society has expressed this need through protests in the streets and squares, many commentators and actors (including in politics) have also publicised the discussions on the push forward to develop a new social contract (Al-Monitor, 2019; Itani, 2019; Mikdashi, 2019; Yahya, 2019; Yahya, 2020). Such a contract we argue, would need to have the voices and ideas of young people at its centre in order to address not only youth concerns and challenges, but those facing the country as a whole. Such a contract would also need to ensure a way of dealing with the pressing

issues that have been exacerbated by the global pandemic and issues relating to the state's response.

History and recent events of Lebanon

The Republic of Lebanon was established by the enacted Lebanese Constitution of 1926 and won its independence from France on November 22, 1943. Lebanon is a parliamentary democracy and formally based on the principles of separation, balance, and co-operation amongst the powers. For all important political and administrative functions, quotas have been established along the lines of the 1932 census, as stipulated in the National Pact of 1943, with the census yet to be updated. The president of Lebanon (a Maronite Christian) is the head of state and the symbol of its unity. Parliament elects the president for a single term of six years. Executive power is entrusted to the Council of Ministers, which drafts general policy and oversees its execution in accordance with the effective laws. The president appoints the head of the council, i.e., the prime minister (a Sunni Muslim), in consultation with Parliament.

Legislative power is in the hands of Parliament, with the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies being a Shia Muslim. The 128 parliamentary seats are distributed according to confession, with members elected in general elections for a four-year term. According to the constitution, local elections are held once every six years.

Since its founding, Lebanon has faced significant internal power struggles, combined with economic inequality, and ultimately culminating in the Civil War that began in April 1975. Nearly 15 years later, in November 1989, the Taïf Accord was ratified, ending the Civil War.

The war decimated economic and physical infrastructure resulted in severe human losses, and led to radical divisions along sectarian and political lines. Sectarian and political divisions were accentuated significantly after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 and resulted in the formation of two major blocs: March 8 (pro-Syria) and March 14 (pro-Western allies), which both dominated the political sphere for more than 10 years after Hariri's assassination. Divisions escalated further following the 2006 Israeli War, which resulted in 1,200 casualties, over 4,000 wounded, and 15,000 homes destroyed. Most recently, Lebanon came under increased pressure as a result of the Syrian conflict, which began in 2011 and resulted in an influx of approximately 1.5 million refugees into the country (Tan, 2015).

Despite historically being active in civic and political life, the Lebanese institutional system and policymaking process typically regard the country's youth as a marginal group. Throughout Lebanon's history, youth have been involved in the conflicts, struggles, and uprisings of the country as fighters, peacemakers, activists, and protesters. Alongside the conflicts listed above, popular uprisings and protests have taken place in the country, with patterns of high youth involvement, including in the country's struggle for independence. In recent history, youth have witnessed and participated in the 2005 Cedar Revolution which ousted the Syrian Army from Lebanon, 2015 'You Stink' protests as a response to the country's waste crisis, and now the ongoing October 17 uprising. Youth have also led numerous political, social, and humanitarian activist efforts across various fields.

In 2016, Michel Aoun¹ was elected president of the republic. Two years later, Lebanon saw the first parliamentary elections since 2013. Following, a national unity government was formed that was headed by Prime Minister Saad Hariri and included representatives of different political factions. Nevertheless, the government was challenged by severe socio-economic conditions with increased levels of poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, trouble in the banking sector lessened the investment of foreign currency in Lebanon, which also led to an economic decline (Halabi and Boswall, 2019). Although it committed to reforms made under the 2018 CEDRE Conference—an international aid conference for Lebanon—the government failed to implement any of the measures agreed upon with the donors. International donors at the conference pledged to grant soft loans for the establishment of investment projects totalling \$11.8 billion in value.

Methodology

For the Next Generation report, data collection and analysis took the following approach. A literature review was carried out to provide an overview

of young people in Lebanon, exploring political, economic, educational, and social experiences and histories to provide a strong contextual understanding of young people in Lebanon.

For data collection, a mixed-methods approach was utilised. Qualitatively, two tools were used: auto-driven photo elicitation (APE) and photovoice discussions (PVD). APE can be understood as a type of interview with participants who explain the images they have captured and their experiences as they understand them. Participants took photographs of their environment to elicit information about their experiences and opinions. PVDs are a community-based method that allows participants to identify the barriers they encounter in life and their possible causes. This method is a type of focus group that uses photography to guide the conversation and in which participants become co-creators of knowledge; researchers facilitated the process. These tools helped to delve deeper into young people's inner thoughts regarding different aspects of their lives. Quantitatively, the research relied on a nation-wide household survey adopting a stratified two-stage cluster sampling design. The survey targeted young

women and men aged 15–29 who are Lebanese, Syrian, or Palestinian and have lived in Lebanon for at least five years. Topics covered by the survey include demographic characteristics, identity, political participation and trust, education and employment, aspirations and the future of Lebanon. Qualitative and quantitative data collection was conducted in parallel between September and December 2019.

Within the report, each of the five themes are discussed in a chapter, using relevant quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the phases of research. When relevant, the results have been compared with other recent findings from previous national and international research studies to ensure a deeper understanding of the political, economic, educational, and social impacts on youth residing in the country and placing the conversation about youth in Lebanon.

More detailed information about the methodology can be found in Appendix I.

¹ > Aoun is a former army general and Head of the Lebanese Army from 1984 and 1988. He opposed the Taif Accord since it allowed Syrian troops to remain in Lebanon. In 1990, Aoun was forcibly ousted by Syrian-led forces and he was exiled to France. Soon after Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon in spring 2005, Aoun returned to the country. Aoun was the former head of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) – one of the major political parties in Lebanon.



> Youth identities in Lebanon

Constructing identity in Lebanon

Lebanon, a country of 6 million people,² is one of diversity and difference, resulting in individual, communal and national identity being contested across sectarian, political and cultural divides. The vernacular expression of identity has often been seen as a product of one's sectarian community, resulting in the perpetuation of social stigmas that attach citizens to a labelled identity. As mentioned by our respondents as a common practice, simply revealing an individual's hometown often results in assumed stereotypes related to religion, politics, and sect. Since the end of the Civil War in 1990, subsequent governments have failed to produce a unified history curriculum that includes events post 1943, leaving a certain liberty for schools to decide how and whose particular post-1943 history is taught and thus the creation of numerous narratives that impact how young people in Lebanon understand themselves and others.

In this chapter, the research dives deeper into how identity is constructed, understood and impacts the lives and relationships of young people in Lebanon. In addition to Lebanese youth, the chapter also explores experiences of Syrian and Palestinian youth living in Lebanon.

Despite a Palestinian presence in the country dating back to 1948 and Palestinian youth being born in Lebanon, they do not hold a full set of basic rights, and this creates barriers to education, employment, residence, home ownership, and political participation, amongst other areas. For Syrian youth, the prolonged crisis in their country has imposed tremendous political, economic and socio-cultural effects that have influenced all aspects of their lives and subsequently their identity. Discrimination against them has fomented exclusion. The legal contests regarding labour and residency raise new and challenging questions regarding the future of Syrian displaced identity in a context of fervent national debate and bilateral tensions between Syria and Lebanon.

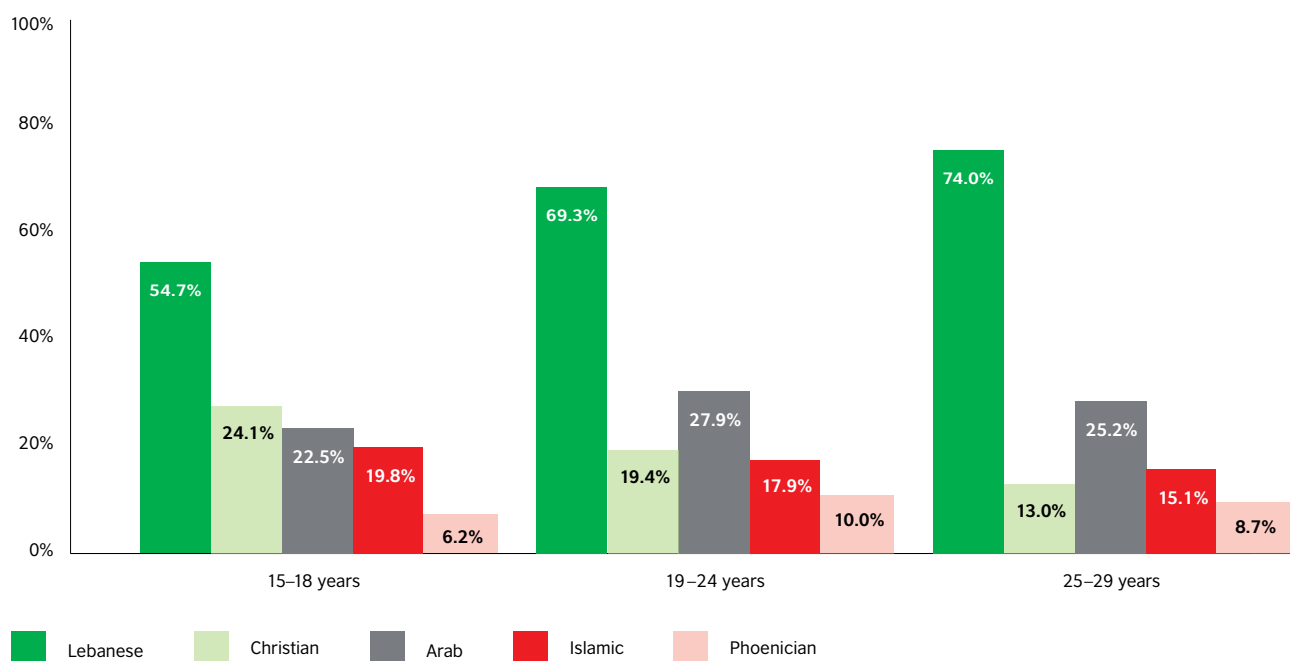
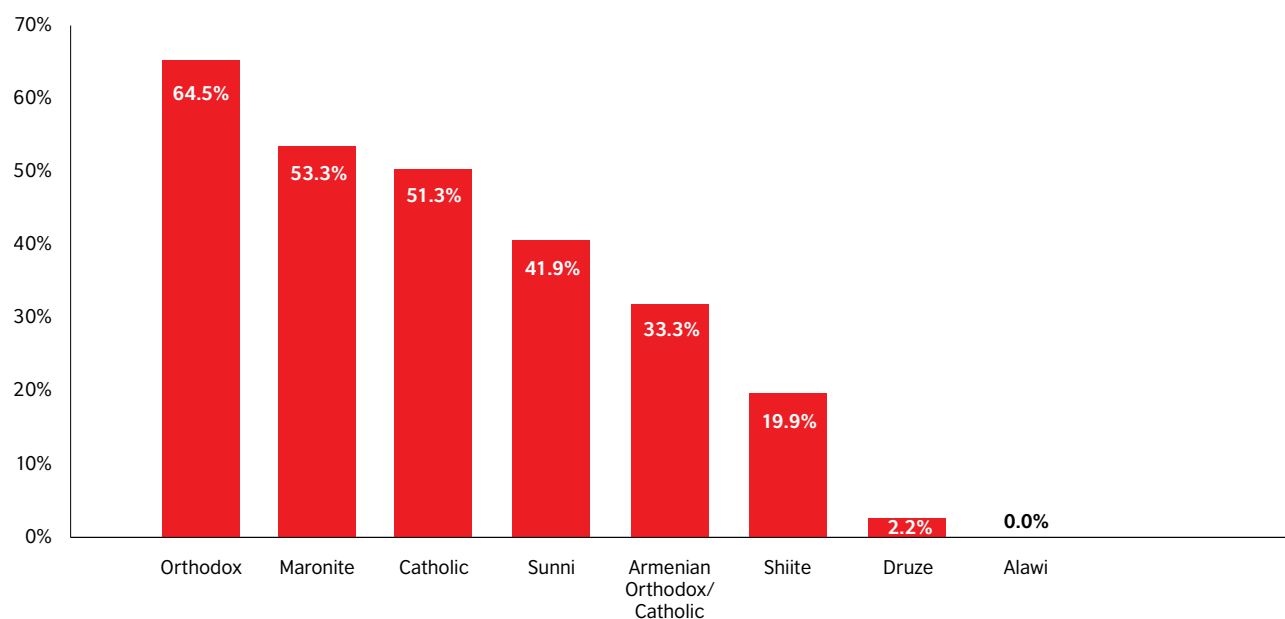
The question of identity for Lebanese youth

Many indications point to the fact that the majority of Lebanese youth hold firmly onto their Lebanese identity. When asked 'Which of the following best describes your identity?'³ 68 per cent of Lebanese youth responding to the survey chose 'Lebanese', while 35 per cent identified themselves along religious lines (Figures 2 and 3), most commonly among Christians of the north, mainly in the districts of Koura, Zgharta, Bcharre, and Batroun.

These four districts are homogenously Christian, with only minority populations of other religions, and are historically Christian dominant. Regardless of the age group, 'Lebanese' as an identity remains the most common, and significantly increases with age (Figure 1); conversely, identifying by religion declines with age. Identifying as 'Arab' was the third most common choice; thus, a regionally ethnic understanding of the identity of Lebanese youth trails behind national or religious adherences.

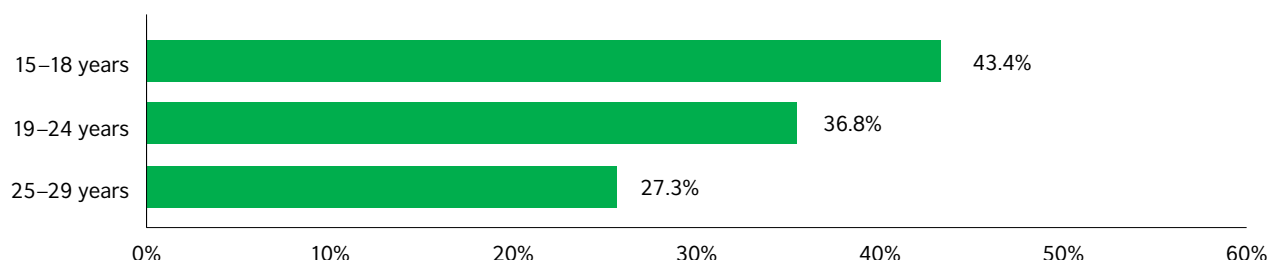
2 > Including Lebanese and refugee populations, according to latest World Bank data.

3 > Lebanese youth, 15-29 years old (N=1591); the question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 8 choices.

Figure 1: To the question, 'which of the following best describes your identity?' answers disaggregated by age⁴**Figure 2:** Lebanese youth who identified along religious lines; answers disaggregated by religion⁵

4 > Lebanese youth, 15-29 years old (N=1591), question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 8 choices.

5 > Lebanese youth who identified along religion lines N=569

Figure 3: Lebanese youth who identified along religious lines; answers disaggregated by age

In Lebanon, the sectarian system is formed along religious denominations. Since the country's independence, sectarian groups have affiliated with various regional actors to leverage power, political gain, security and protection for their communities. These affiliations came with a conflicting conception of Lebanon's identity and role in the region (Berkley Center for Religion, 2013). While it is encouraging that identifying as 'Lebanese' remains the most prevalent and has gained momentum since October 17, the 35 per cent who identify along religious lines may be an indicator of persistent sectarian identity being engrained in younger populations.

I was raised on being Lebanese, I respect my identity and I love my country [...] They [my family] taught me that my nationality is my country, my identity, my home.

Female, 22, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

I think that identity is established before you are born, it depends where you are born, your religion. That's the nature of the country. When you are born you are limited to certain categories. It's pre-packaged.

Male, 17, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

Lebanon is divided into different sects, each region is characterized by its sect. Each sect has its own beliefs, and based on it, the individual starts building their identity.

Female, 25, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

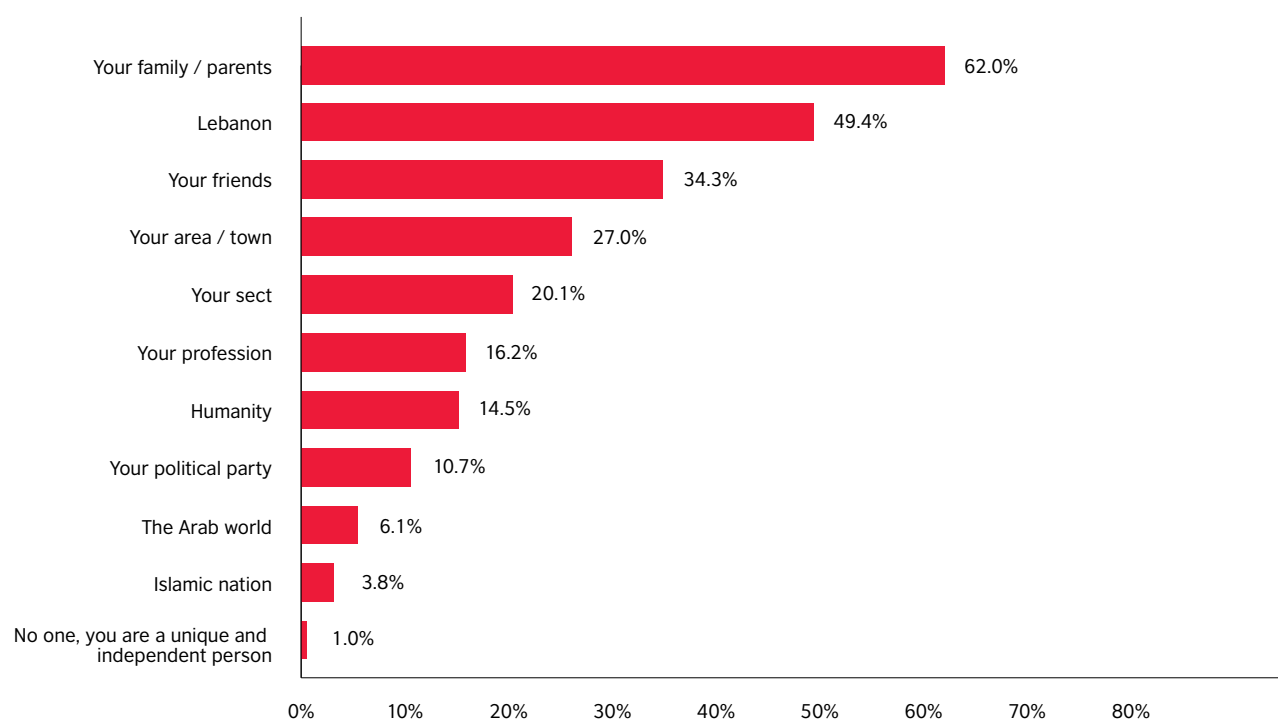
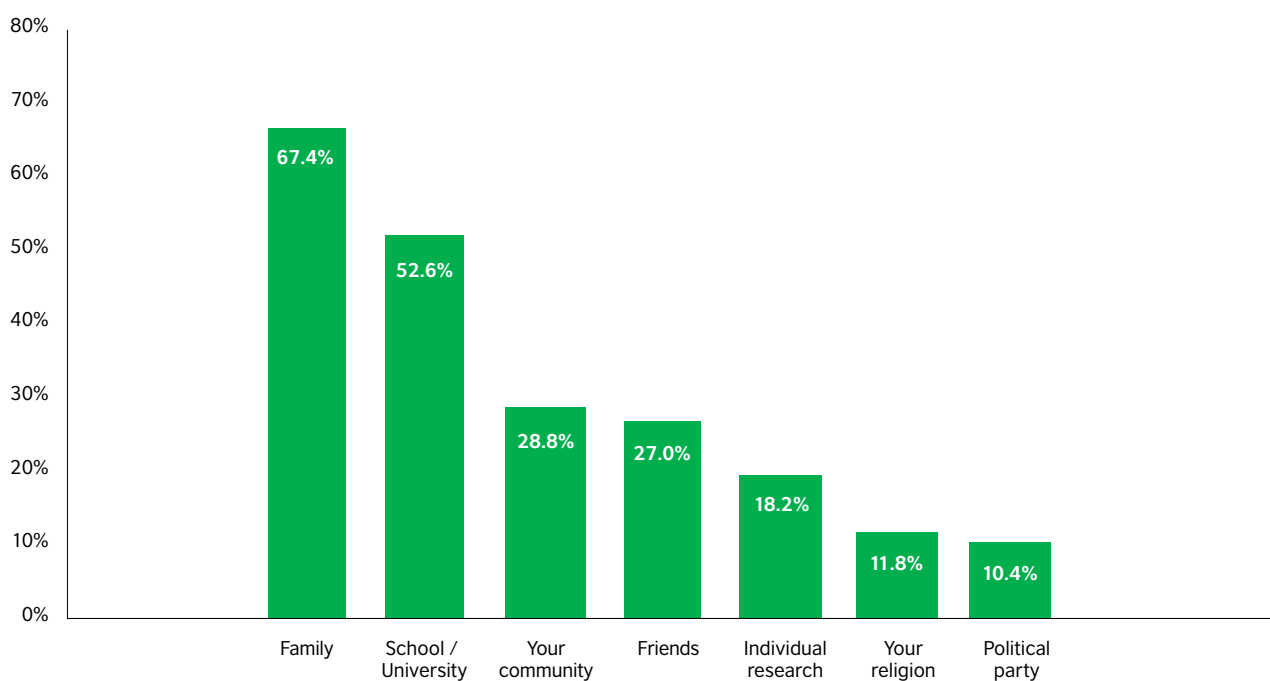
When Lebanese youth were asked what affiliation defines their identity most, 62 per cent connected themselves most with their family, followed by 49 per cent with Lebanon as a nation (Figure 4).⁶ Additionally, and reiterating the central role that families play in shaping identity in Lebanon, youth in Lebanon primarily learn about their cultural heritage and history through family (67 per cent), followed by school/university (53 per cent), community (29 per cent), and friends (27 per cent) (Figure 5).

Family narratives and oral history remain the key routes through which youth acquire knowledge about the country's history - including contemporary topics and the Civil War - in the absence of a unified post - 1943 history curriculum and in the presence of different narratives taught in schools.

Their [youth] identity is constructed based on how they were raised at home or how they're being raised in school. [This] doesn't give them any space to freely express who they are and who they want to become. [...] They would just have to follow what their parents do or have as ideas, whether it's political, religious, or anything else. And not just their parents, sometimes it depends on the area they're from and the dominant political party there.

Female, 21, Lebanese, South

⁶ > Youth were asked to select all that apply from a list of 11 answers.

Figure 4: Answers to the question 'most of what defines your identity is your affiliation to?'⁷**Figure 5:** Top answers to the question, 'which of the following were most important in informing you about your cultural heritage/history?'⁸

7 > This question was asked only to Lebanese youth (N=1591). The question asked youth to select all that apply from a list of 11 options.

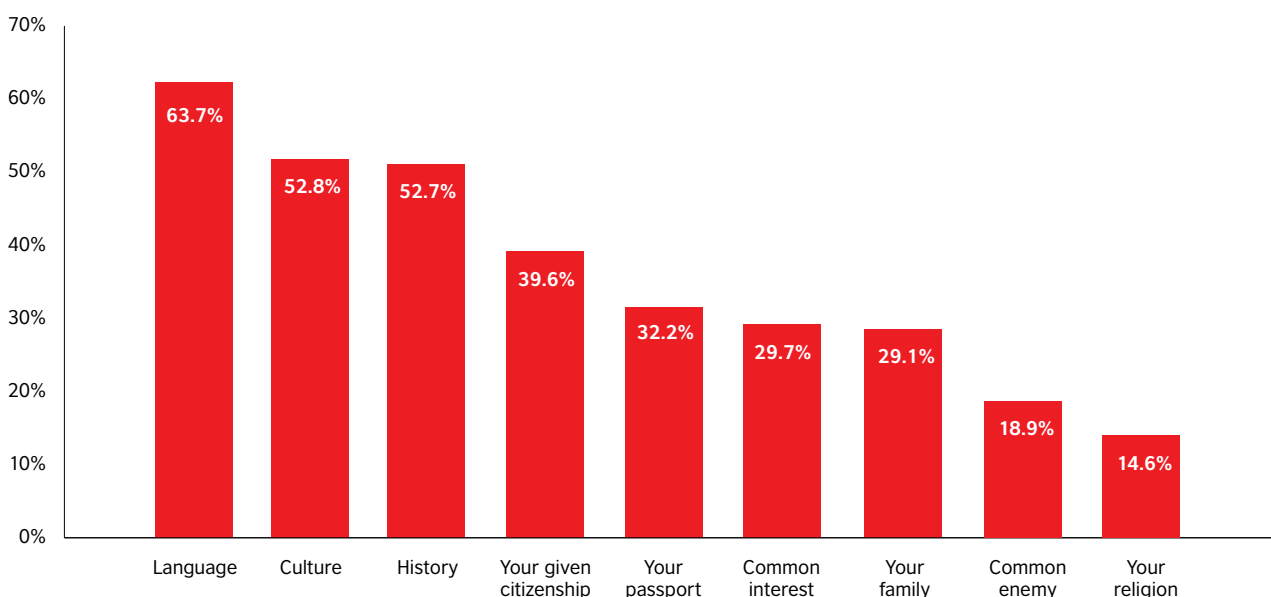
8 > Lebanese youth, N=1591, question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 7 options.

Understanding how Lebanese youth identify, and where identities are learned and passed on, Lebanese respondents were also asked what makes them Lebanese. Figure 6 shows the top three answers, with 64 per cent of respondents stating language, 53 per cent culture, and 53 per cent history.⁹

In our discussions, Lebanese youth confirmed that they share common traditions and customs, values and morals, and problems and challenges.

All the youth have a unified suffering. All the catastrophes they pass through unifies them. [...] when recently [October 2019] the forests were burning across the country, everyone participated in extinguishing the fires, everyone went, all the areas assisted.
Male, 21, Lebanese, Beqaa

Figure 6: Answers to the question, 'what makes you Lebanese'¹⁰



While the majority of youth identify themselves as 'Lebanese' – with numerous commonalities about what this may mean – 62 per cent do not perceive being Lebanese is a unified identity. The distinctiveness of being Lebanese might carry in its essence different meanings rather than an undisputed understanding around common language, culture, and history. With history being a key marker of identity that is learned from family, not through a unified and agreed historical narrative in education or at a national level, each individual holds a different story that is particular to their family's experiences, perceptions and wider sect. Perceptions of Lebanese identity amongst youth is simultaneously united yet divided.

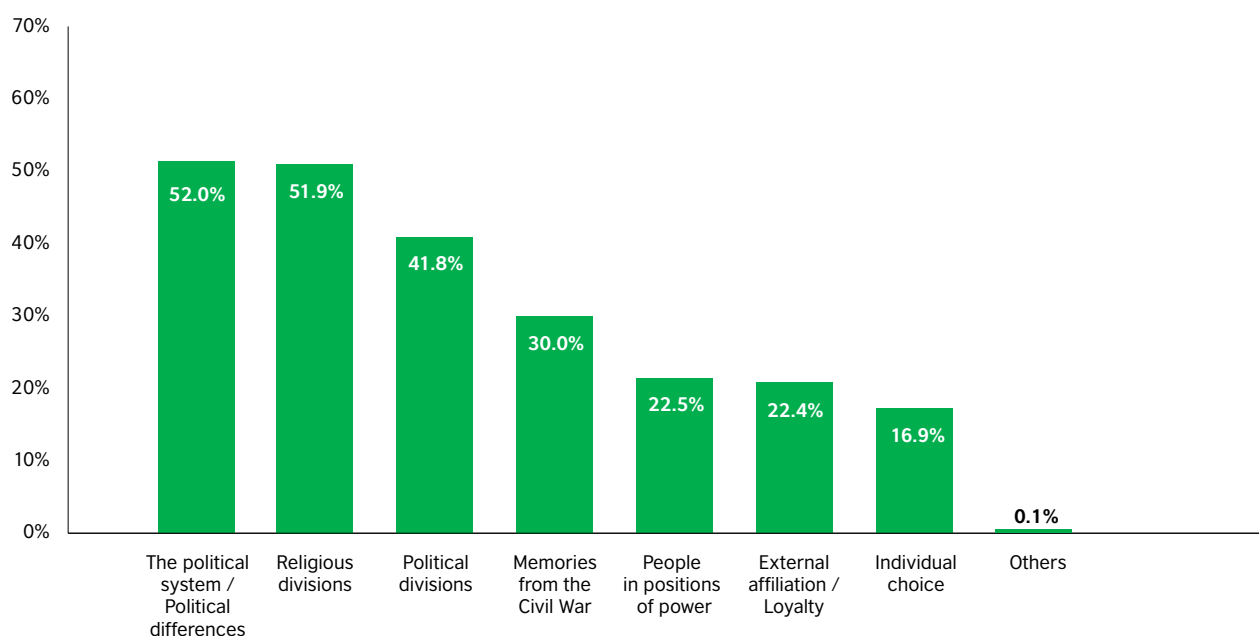
When asked why Lebanon does not have a unified identity, 52 per cent of respondents stated the cause as being the present political system, 52 per cent to religious partitions, and 30 per cent to memories from the Civil War (Figure 7). Highlighted below, many feel that the political system and society's sectarian divisions hinder the formation of a unified civic identity.

The Lebanese identity should reflect the presence of several political parties. If someone tells me 'the presence of several political parties and each individual is affiliated with a different party' I would guess that they're talking about the Lebanese identity.
Male, 29, Lebanese, Beirut

We do not have a common definition of civic identity. Lebanon is still not a civic country. There is still sectarianism. Some people define themselves as Druze or Muslim or Christian rather than saying Lebanese.
Male, 27, Lebanese, Beirut

9 > Lebanese youth, N=1591; the question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 9 options.

10 > This question was asked only to Lebanese youth, N=1591. Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 9 options.

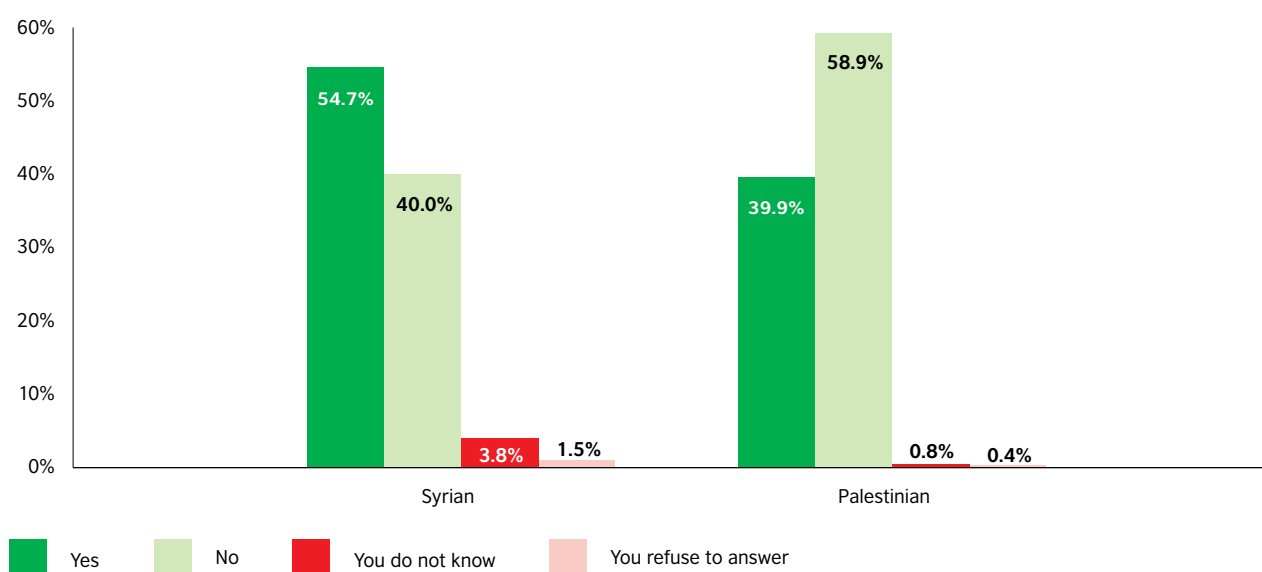
Figure 7: Reasons why Lebanese people do not have a unified identity¹¹

The question of identity for Syrian and Palestinian youth

Nine years after the beginning of the Syrian conflict and 72 years after the expulsion of Palestinians from their land, Lebanon finds itself hosting the highest density of refugees in the world

(UNHCR, 2019). The long-displaced status, the uncertainty of a potential return, and the ambiguity governing the prospects of their countries all present challenging questions related to the construction of identity for Syrian and Palestinian youth in Lebanon.

When asked, 'Do you think that Syrians/ Palestinians have a unified identity?' 40 per cent of Syrians and 59 per cent of Palestinians answered 'No' (Figure 8).¹²

Figure 8: Answers to the question, 'Do you think that Syrians/Palestinians have a unified identity?'

11 > This question was asked only to Lebanese youth who don't believe in a unified identity, N=992. Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 7 options.

12 > The question was asked to participants including only their respective nationality. Syrian N=260, Palestinian N=238.

Syrian youth were also asked, ‘What makes you Syrian?’ Similar to Lebanese youth, 78 per cent answered language, 68 per cent history, and 59 per cent culture (Figure 9).¹³ Although Syria has been undergoing a violent conflict for nearly a decade, the country’s youth in Lebanon – at least for now – is perceived to share a more unified understanding of history than Lebanese or Palestinian youth (55 per cent for Syrians, compared to 40 per cent for Palestinians and 31 per cent for Lebanese). However, given the unprecedented displacement that has taken place, in another decade, questions regarding Syrian youth identity may result in quite different answers, with competing narratives emerging based on the war.

When the question was asked to Palestinian youth, varying from their Lebanese and Syrian counterparts, Palestinian youth in Lebanon chose their given citizenship (56 per cent) and

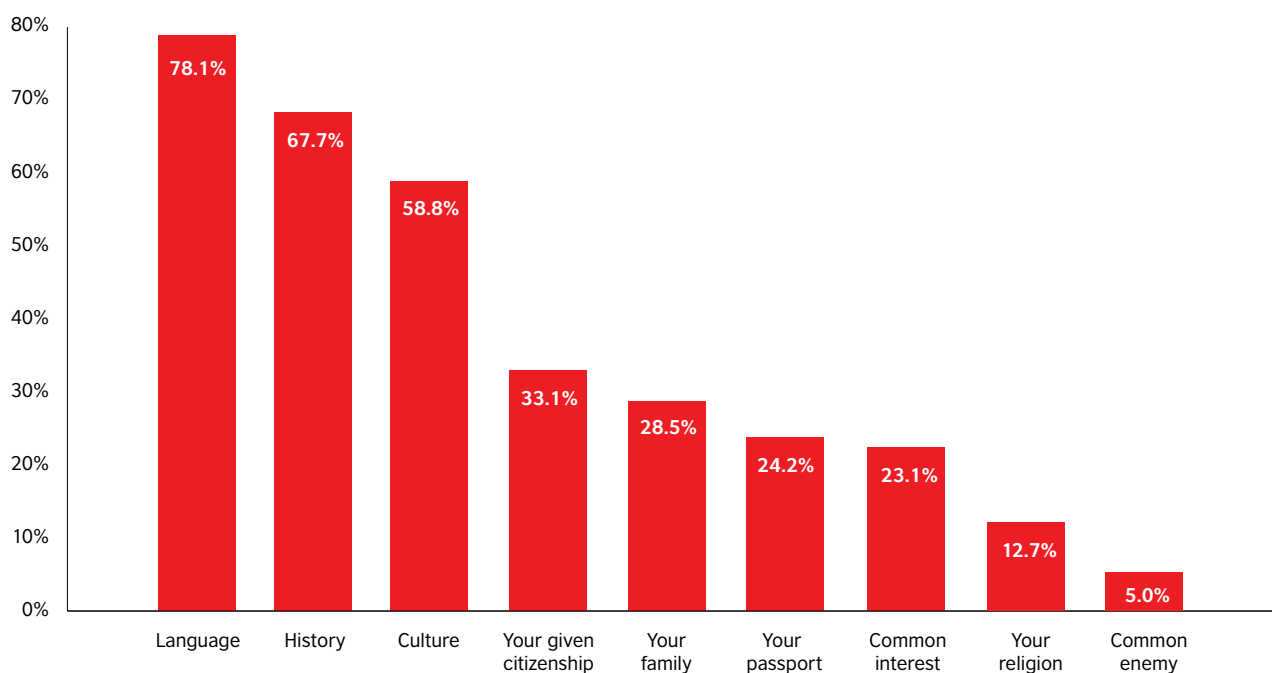
sharing a common enemy (49 per cent) as the pillars of their Palestinian identity.¹⁴ History followed at 46 per cent (Figure 10). As the Palestinian population in Lebanon has undergone over 70 years of displacement, their given citizenship dictates their legal standing in Lebanon, as well as aspects of their daily lives, including where they can live and available fields of employment. Indeed, when asked, ‘Why do Palestinians have a unified identity?’ 87 per cent answered ‘the Palestinian cause’.¹⁵ Palestinian participants discussed the history of their struggle as a unifying factor for their identity.

Regarding us, our identity is within our heritage. We remember the massacres and the martyrs that passed away for our country. We commemorate the memorial and we still talk about Nakbeh [the catastrophe] and Nakseh [the setback] and other things we faced.

Female, 19, Palestinian, South

Again, like Lebanese youth, Syrian and Palestinian youth turn to their families as the primary source of education regarding cultural heritage and history. Syrian and Palestinian youth shared similar answers to their Lebanese counterparts, stating family (87 per cent and 85 per cent, respectively), school (32 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively), and friends (33 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively) (Figure 11). Thus, regardless of the pillars that define their national identity, youth in Lebanon gain knowledge about this identity from similar sources.

Figure 9: Answers to the question, ‘what makes you Syrian?’¹⁶

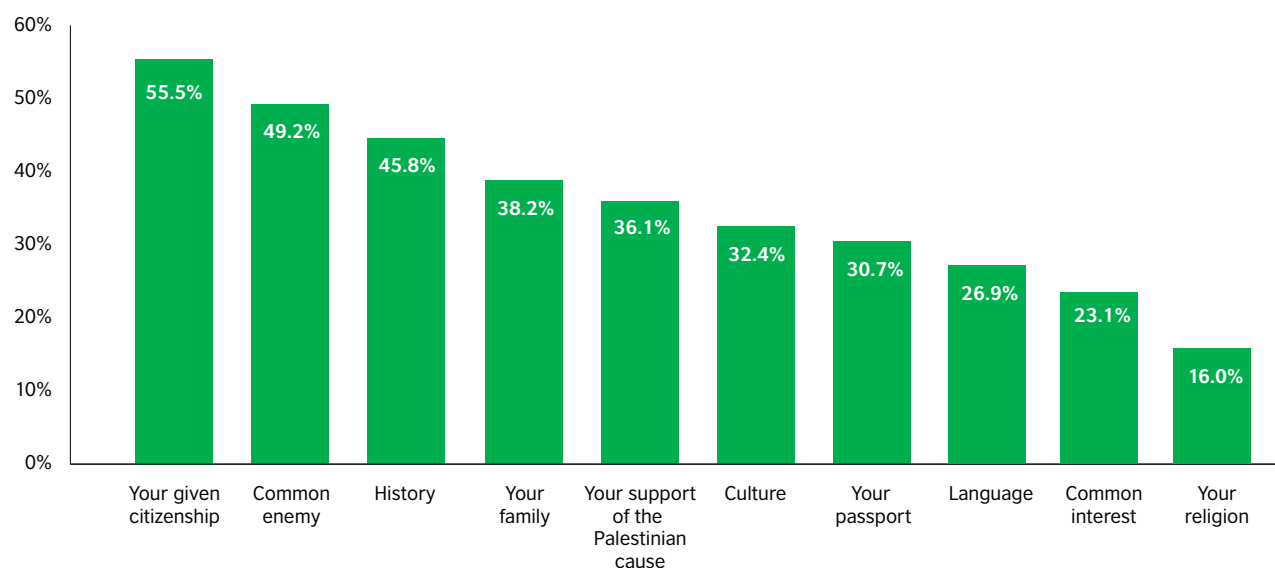
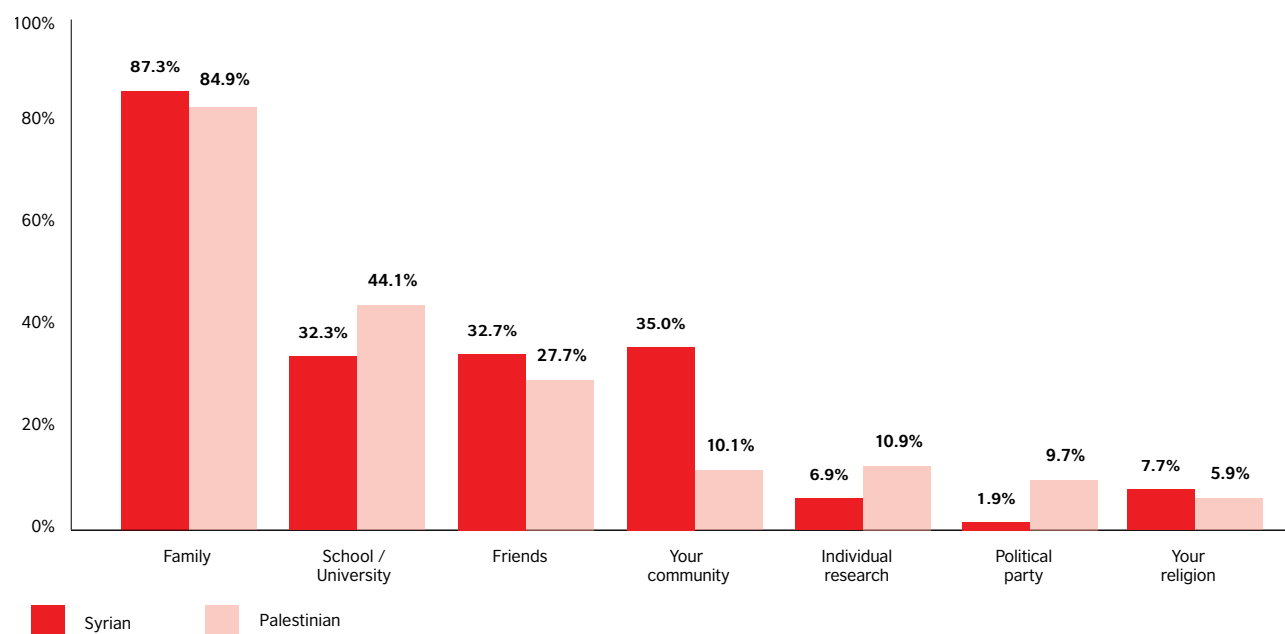


13 > The question asked participants to select all that apply.

14 > The question asked participants to select all that apply.

15 > This question was asked only to Palestinian youth only believed in a unified identity (N=95). The question asked participants to select all that apply.

16 > This question was asked only to Syrian youth, N=260. Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 9 options.

Figure 10: Answers to the question, 'what makes you Palestinian?'¹⁷**Figure 11:** Top answers to the question, 'which of the following were most important in informing you about your cultural heritage/history?'¹⁸

17 > This question was asked only to Palestinian youth, N=238. Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 10 options.

18 > Syrian youth, N=260, Palestinian youth, N=238, question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 7 options.

Of surveyed youth, non-Lebanese youth living in Lebanon generally have a low sense of belonging to the country. This is evident from the discussions with both Syrian and Palestinian youth.

However, Palestinian youth in Lebanon consider the country to be part of their identity because it is the place where they have lived for the entirety of their lives; but they face a precarious legal status and are denied a full set of rights. Some feel a dual identity because they have only lived in Lebanon and are acutely aware of its culture, politics, and history.

On the other hand, their Palestinian origins, history, and community link them to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Syrian youth do not feel fully integrated into Lebanese society, especially due to the legal framework in the country. Syrian and Palestinian youth shared their experiences of living in Lebanon:

Lebanese own homes here, and they work in companies or the government. But we are unable to work the same jobs that they do.

Male, 18, Syrian, Beqaa

We feel like we are a burden to the country. In Europe you would get the nationality after 10 years. Here I don't have the right to ask for a nationality.

Male, 20, Syrian, North

We consider ourselves Lebanese since we were born and raised here. Some wrote that we Palestinians have nothing to do with what is happening with the revolution and that we should go to protests in Palestine. But why? We are living in Lebanon; your problems are ours.

Male, 20, Palestinian, South

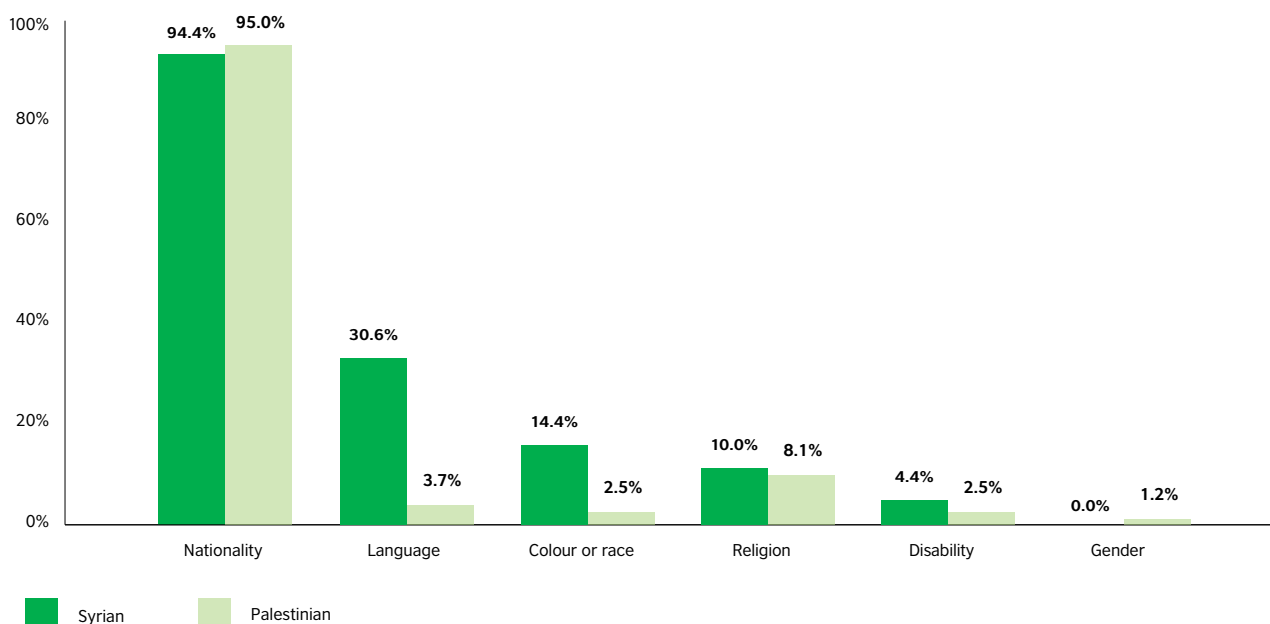
The beginning of the conversation [with someone] would be 'where are you from?' The answer would be 'we are from Palestine but we are Lebanese, we are Lebanese Palestinians.'

Female, 19, Palestinian, South

Values and beliefs

The various constructs of young people's identities in Lebanon – whether Lebanese, Syrian or Palestinian – form a number of views and beliefs regarding how youth perceive themselves, one another, and relate to youth from different backgrounds. When asked, 'Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against?' 62 per cent of Syrian and 68 per cent of Palestinian youth answered 'Yes'.¹⁹ Of those who answered 'Yes', 94 per cent of Syrian and 95 per cent of Palestinian participants chose nationality as the reason for such discrimination (Figure 12).²⁰

Figure 12: Answers to the question, 'on what grounds is your group discriminated against?'



19 > This question was asked only to Syrian (N=260) and Palestinian (N=238) participants.

20 > Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 9 options.

21 > This question was asked only to Lebanese youth, N=1591.

22 > This statement was asked only to Lebanese participants, N=1591. Other response options included 'you do not know' (3%) and 'refuse to answer' (15%).

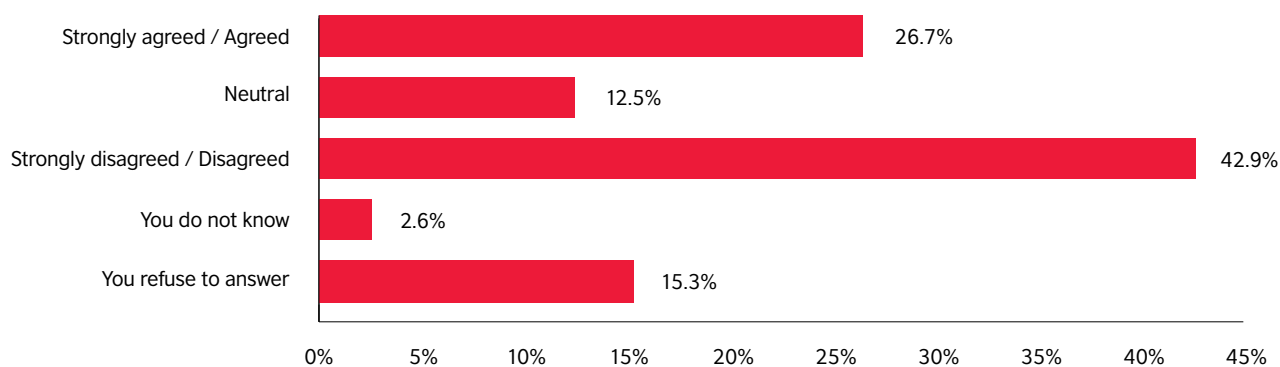
For Syrian youth, their presence in the country is linked to the Syrian crisis, despite Lebanon having had a significant Syrian population prior to the start of the Syrian conflict. The number of Syrian workers in the 1990s was estimated to be approximately 300,000 long before the eruption of the Syrian crisis (Bou Khater, 2017). Despite some documented positive impacts of the Syrian crisis for Lebanon (Yassine, 2018), when Lebanese youth were asked to complete the sentence,

'The Syrian Crisis has had a [blank] effect on Lebanon', 75 per cent chose 'Negative' regardless of regional area.²¹ Overall, 43 per cent of Lebanese youth strongly disagreed or disagreed with the following statement: 'You do not mind the Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon', while 27 per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, and 13 per cent were neutral (Figure 13).²² This is further validated by Syrian youth who participated in the study, as the statement below indicates.

[There is] discrimination, humiliation and even psychological violence when someone says, 'You're Syrian, what are you doing here? Go back to your country, you're a burden to the country [Lebanon]'.

Male, 23, Syrian, North

Figure 13: Answers to the question, 'you do not mind the Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon'



In addition to looking at individual and collective experiences and identities in Lebanon, Next Generation also asked about relationships between different communities and nationalities.²³ From the data, while Lebanese are more likely to be friends with someone from a background different than their own, they are less likely to marry them (Figure 14). While this is discouraging, it is important to note that Lebanon's civil status laws around marriage are particular for each sect, and thus, marrying someone from a different religion presents difficulties for couples, especially for women. Although in 2013 the Ministry of Interior took the unprecedented step of registering a civil marriage, couples must travel abroad, as many do to nearby Cyprus, to have a civil marriage.

Lebanese males are more likely to marry someone from a different religion (48 per cent) than Lebanese females (29 per cent). Regarding nationality, 31 per cent of males were willing to marry someone who is Syrian or Palestinian, compared to 16 per cent of females (Figure 15). Explanations for these gender differences span both legal and social spheres. It may be due to Lebanese women being unable to pass on their citizenship to their children or non-Lebanese husband. While controversy regarding marriage persists, the majority of Lebanese youth showing willingness to be friends with someone from a different background is encouraging and a possible sign that some wounds of the Civil War are less prominent for them.

I don't want to be sugar-coating the truth. I'm not telling you that I would marry someone from a different religion, because my parents and my surroundings would not accept that. But aside from marriage, I can have friends from different religions.

Female, 22, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

I have friends who belong to different sects, Christian, Shiite, everything. We all share the same goals and we leave religion out of this.

Male, 22, Lebanese, North

Figure 14: Lebanese youth opinion regarding friendship and marriage with someone from a different religion, political party, or Syrian/Palestinian nationality²⁴

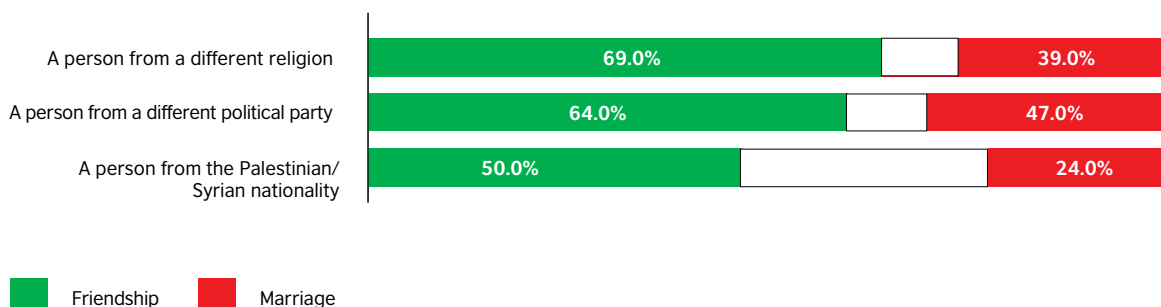
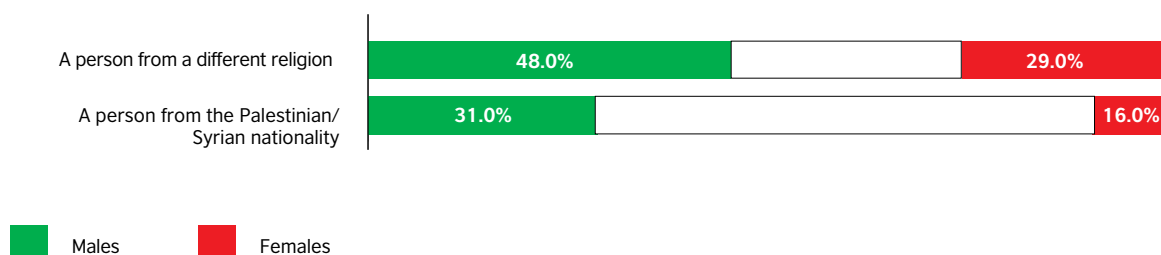


Figure 15: Lebanese youth opinion regarding marriage with someone from a different religion, or Syrian/Palestinian nationality; answers disaggregated by sex²⁵



23 > Questions were asked only to Lebanese participants, N=1591. Participants were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, strongly agreed, did not know, or refused to answer the following statements. 'You would be happy to be friends with someone from a different religious group.'; 'You would be happy to marry someone from a different religious group.'; 'You would be happy to be friends with someone from a different political party.'; 'You would be happy to marry someone from a different political party.'; 'You would be happy to be friends with someone who is Palestinian.'; 'You would be happy to marry someone who is Palestinian.'; 'You would be happy to be friends with someone who is Syrian.'; 'You would be happy to marry someone who is Syrian.'

24 > These questions were asked only to Lebanese youth, N=1591. Participants were presented with options to strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements. Percentages represent the combined answers of strongly agree and agree.

25 > These questions were asked only to Lebanese youth, N=1591. Participants were presented with options to strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements. Percentages represent the combined answers of strongly agree and agree.

However, nearly half of Lebanese youth are still likely to reside in areas that are politically or religiously affiliated with their own background. Forty-six per cent of Lebanese youth answered 'No' when asked, 'Do you feel comfortable in areas of Lebanon where the majority of people are from a different religion/political party than you?' Although the Civil War ended in 1990 and the battle lines that once separated the country have faded, the divisions that remain amongst youth in Lebanon are significant and highlight the need for strengthening social cohesion in the Lebanese population, as well as amongst Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians.

Considering comparisons between youth in Lebanon and the opinions of their parents, young people perceive themselves as being more likely to be accepting and tolerant of other religions. When presented with the statement, 'People of your age group's views on religion are more tolerant than your parents' generation', 50 per cent of youth strongly agreed or agreed. Furthermore, 67 per cent of youth strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that 'People who belong to different religions are probably just as moral as those who belong to yours.' (Figure 16) Youth frequently highlighted the increased progressiveness of their generation.

It's no longer like during the Civil War. People are accepting other people from other religions and other nationalities. [...] Maybe our parents

have stereotypes about people from other religions and other nationalities but we went outside and met diverse people and it's not true. The stereotypes and prejudgments are not true.

Female, 26, Lebanese, South

Our generation is more open minded due to internet and television. Maybe we haven't lived everything, but we do have a wider general knowledge and culture.

Female, 24, Palestinian, South

The youth of today are less intolerant of people from different religions. [...] This could be due to the Civil War that has occurred, people are fed up with war, that's why they are a little bit more tolerant of others that are from different religions.

Female, 22, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

We try to evolve in our way of thinking and in adopting new ideas that let us become liberated from the traditions we've inherited from our parents.

Female, 21, Lebanese, South

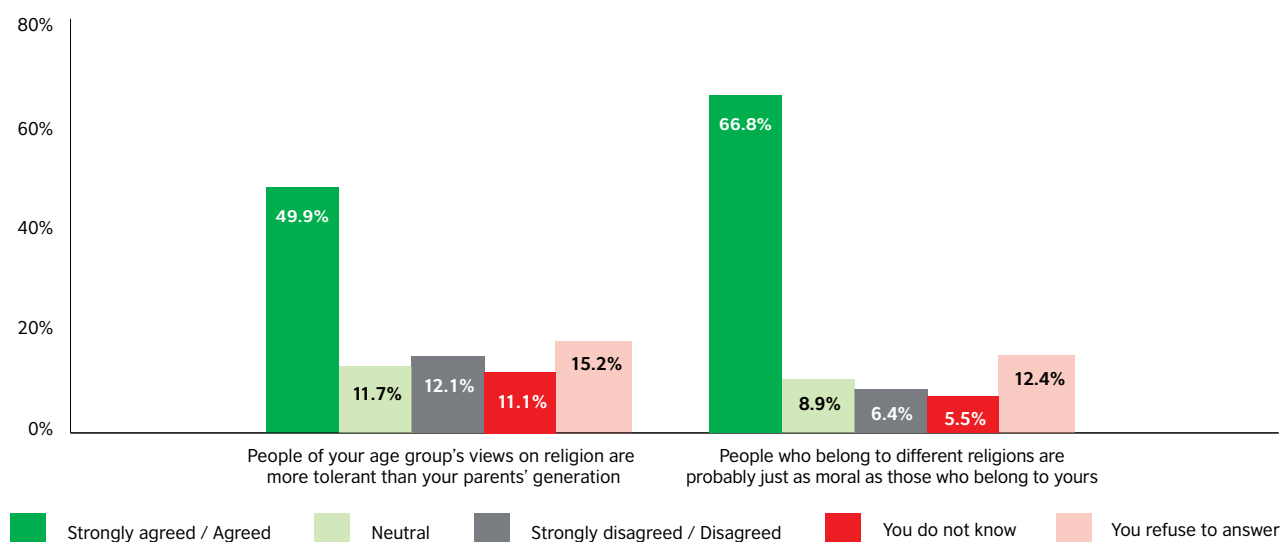
The older generation was more conservative regarding its hometown and religion. The new generation cares less about these things. I don't care if someone is Christian or Muslim. Let's live in peace, get an education, find a job, stay away from conflicts.

Male, 22, Lebanese, North

Identity and the need for a new social contract

From the above discussion, it is evident that the identities that youth hold and how these identities are constructed shape the ways in which they relate to and engage with other youth. While most Lebanese identify along national lines and construct this identity based on language, history, and culture, the lack of a unified identity stems from competing and diverse narratives of history, culture and identity. Reasons for this include a lack of a unified post-1943 historical narrative taught in schools and a more nationally recognised social reconciliation process to heal the communal and social wounds of the Civil War. Moreover, Syrians and particularly Palestinians – despite their long-term presence in Lebanon – still do not feel fully integrated into the social fabric of Lebanon. Divisions based on historical, contemporary and legal barriers seem to have created weak cohesion between sectarian and national communities – other than on the level of friendship – and result in individuals feeling uncomfortable residing in areas populated by people of different backgrounds. However, what is most encouraging is the openness of youth to others relative to older generations, which creates an opportunity and perhaps even demonstrates a demand for a new social contract. A new social contract presents an opportunity for local, communal and national identities and relationships to be questioned, discussed and reflected upon in order to move forward towards an understanding that respects markers of difference and commonalities without restricting rights or opportunities to youth in Lebanon.

Figure 16: Agreement scale for the statements, 'people of your age group's views on religion are more tolerant than your parents' generation' and 'people who belong to different religions are probably just as moral as those who belong to yours'



> Daily lives of youth in Lebanon

Introduction

Despite facing struggles in their daily lives, youth in Lebanon continue to pursue their education, seek employment, launch their own businesses, and identify openings for new opportunities.

Youth in Lebanon hold high school or higher education degrees, and exhibit high levels of knowledge and talents. However, some face challenges in regard to access to affordable education - especially at the tertiary level - and employment. Unfortunately, their high educational levels along with their willingness to pursue invigorating careers is hindered by the scarcity of job opportunities in a labour market crippled by the on-going economic crisis, and the fact that the majority of opportunities are centralised in Beirut. This makes it difficult for most youth to meet Lebanon's - and especially Beirut's - high cost of living. As will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter, it is evident that the majority of youth feel numerous challenges to their daily lives, and as discussed later in the report,

these challenges are seen as barriers to youth achieving their dreams and aspirations. As seen in the quote below, these are challenges that united many in the recent protests.

The majority of youth share these challenges, those who do not come from financially stable families would face these difficulties. Nowadays, the majority of youth resemble me, and that was evident in the protests.

Female, 23, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

Obtaining an education in Lebanon

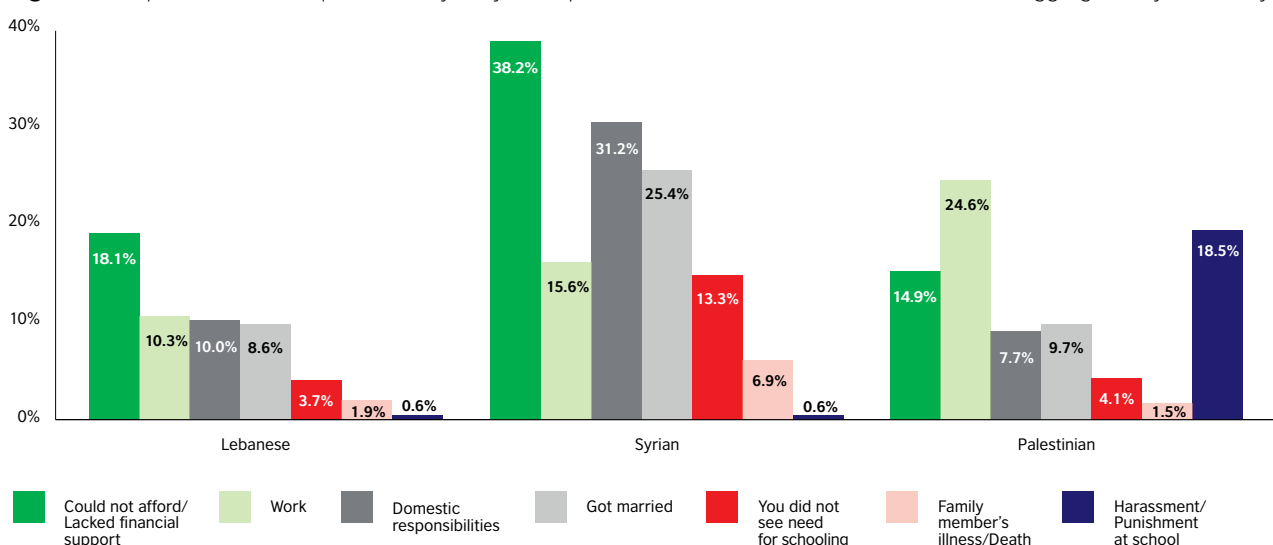
Youth in Lebanon continue to believe in the importance of education and are an educated population. Many young people in our sample between the ages of 15 and 24 are still pursuing their secondary and higher education degrees. However, approximately 20 per cent of surveyed youth 25-29 years old did not complete high school, which is close to the national average of 17 per cent at the intermediate level (Chaabn and El Khoury, 2016).²⁶

Reasons for dropping out from school varied, with the main cause being the inability of parents to afford the cost of education (Figure 17).²⁷ This includes tuition fees if students are enrolled in private school (approximately 70 per cent of the student population), transportation costs, and the cost of school supplies. For Palestinians, harassment or punishment in school was another key reason for dropping out of school that was not exhibited amongst Lebanese and Syrian youth. The need to obtain employment and earn income was another key reason why youth across all three nationalities dropped out of school. A Syrian participant explains in the quote below why dropping out of school at an early age was a necessity.

I have reached the 5th grade and then I dropped out because I am working. I also have two younger siblings that have also dropped out of school. If we go to school, no one would be able to work to provide for our parents.

Male, 18, Syrian, Beqaa

Figure 17: Top answers to the question, 'why did you drop out from education at this level?' answers disaggregated by nationality²⁸



²⁶ > This statistic is available only for youth 25-29 years old (N=654), as youth 15-24 are more likely to still be pursuing education.

²⁷ > Youth who dropped out of school were asked, 'Why did you drop out of education at this level?' Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 11 options.

²⁸ > Lebanese N=857, Syrian N=173, Palestinian N=195.

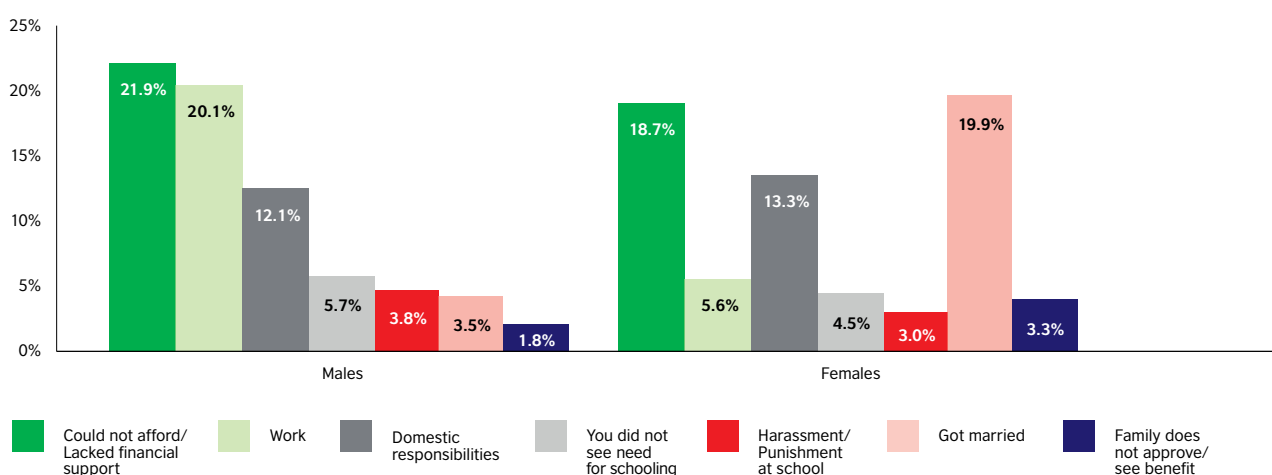
When disaggregating the data by gender, 20 per cent of males who dropped out of school sought to pursue employment and gain income.²⁹ For females who dropped out of school, 20 per cent did so as a result of getting married (Figure 18); however, the per centage was higher for Syrians (40 per cent) than for Lebanese (16 per cent) and Palestinians (18 per cent).³⁰ Of those who dropped out, almost a majority are still interested in completing their education (49 per cent).³¹ A small minority of 3 per cent of

youth never received education, with primary reasons being parents not enrolling their children in school and poverty and economic barriers (Figure 19). Significantly, in the study sample, only one Palestinian youth reported not having any level of education, while in the Lebanese sample 19 participants reported no level of education (1 per cent of Lebanese youth) and 40 participants amongst the Syrian sample (15 per cent of Syrian youth).³² Many youth aged 19-29 who never received an education

were interested in enrolling in adult education programmes (47 per cent).³³ These figures highlight the value youth place on education, and presents an opportunity for education stakeholders to engage with this category of youth.

Everybody is heading towards education and you won't find someone uneducated these days. This is why anyone should pursue education, no matter the way, in order to be able to find a job. You won't find a job without having a degree. Female, 23, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

Figure 18: Top answers to the question, 'why did you drop out from education at this level?' answers disaggregated by sex³⁴



29 > Males who dropped out of school, N=653.

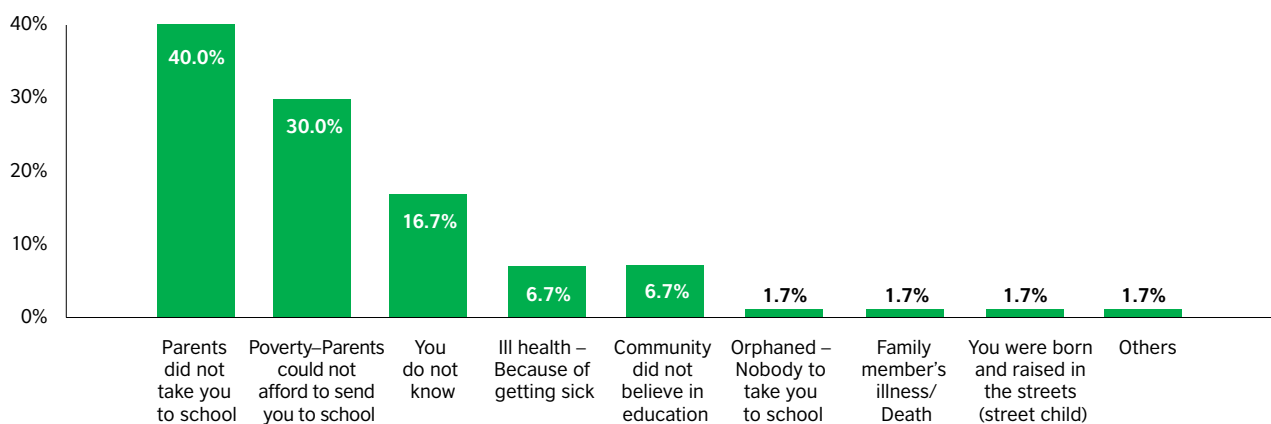
30 > Females who dropped out of school, N=572. Lebanese N=388, Syrian N=88, Palestinian N=96.

31 > The following question was asked of youth who dropped out of school (N=1225): 'Would you be willing to go back and complete your education if you had a chance?' 49% answered, 'Yes'.

32 > Lebanese N=1591, Syrian N=260, and Palestinian N=238.

33 > The following question was asked only of youth 19-29 years old who never received an education (N=34): 'Would you be willing to enrol in an adult education programme?'

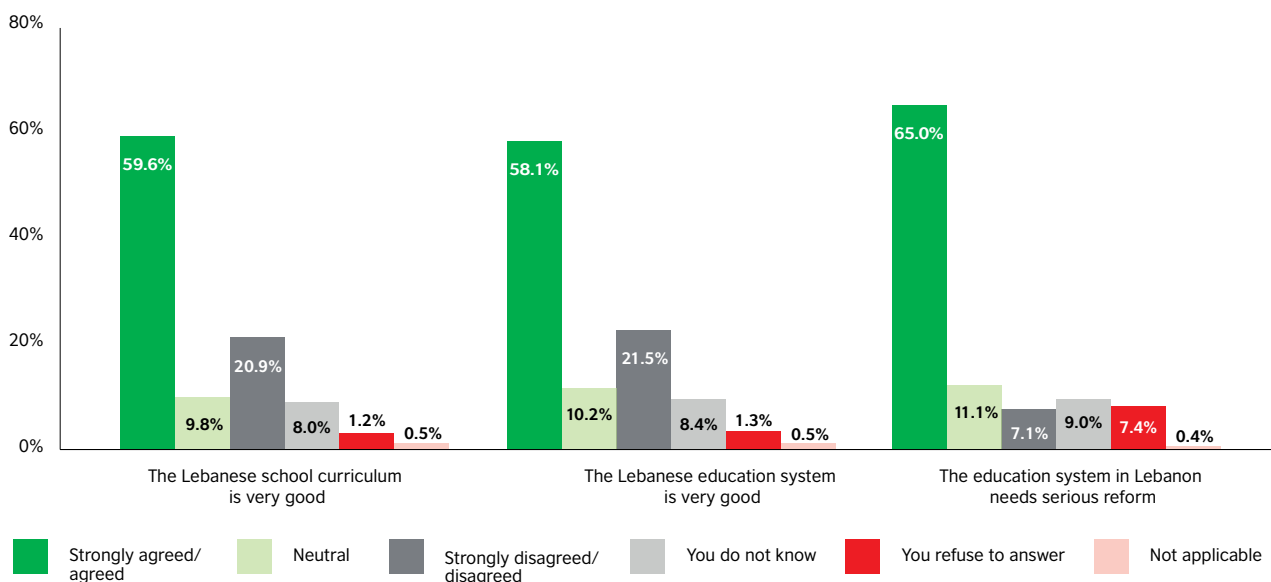
34 > Lebanese N=857, Syrian N=173, Palestinian N=195.

Figure 19: Reasons why 3 per cent of youth never attended school/received formal education³⁵

All youth were asked a set of statements regarding the quality of education in Lebanese schools (Figure 20).³⁶ Over half strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'The Lebanese school curriculum is very good', with similar response rates to the statement, 'The Lebanese education system is very good.' Conversely, 65 per cent also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'The education system in

Lebanon needs serious reform.' Thus, while over half of youth in Lebanon hold a positive opinion of the education provided by schools in Lebanon, they also recognise the need for improvement, although the above statements do not consider public versus private schools. While Lebanese public schools offer free education to Lebanese and Syrian students across the country,³⁷ trust remains higher in the

quality of education offered by private schools, and indeed, approximately two-thirds of Lebanese students are enrolled in private education (Daou and Mikhael, 2018). As we argue for the need of a new social contract, education must be a key component with the goal of rebuilding trust in the public education system, thereby assisting in lowering inequality and guaranteeing access and quality education for all youth.

Figure 20: Agreement scale³⁸

35 > The question was asked to youth who never attended school or received formal education (N=60). Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 8 choices.

36 > The following statements were posed to all youth, N=2089. Youth were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Other options included, 'You do not know' and 'You refuse to answer'.

37 > Palestinian students are provided free education through UNRWA.

38 > The statements were posed to all youth, N=2089.

39 > 15-24-year-olds are most likely to be still pursuing their education. 25-29-year-olds, N=654.

40 > Female N=311, male N=343

41 > Lebanese N=531, Syrian N=50, Palestinian N=73

42 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089).

Many youth in Lebanon pursue higher education in the form of university or technical schools. Although a small country, Lebanon has 40 higher education institutions registered with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), which includes Lebanese University as the only public university (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, no date). Of surveyed youth 25-29 years old, 42 per cent hold a university degree or a technical degree obtained after completing high school (Figure 21).³⁹

When disaggregating the data for 25-29-year-old youth by gender, 45 per cent of women completed either university or technical education, while 39 per cent of men reached this level in their studies.⁴⁰ The higher percentage of women in tertiary education compared to men is well known in Lebanon, and follows regional and even some possible global trends in the reversal of gender inequality in tertiary education (The World Bank, 2019). Disaggregating the data for 25-29-year-old youth by nationality demonstrates

that tertiary education is highest among Lebanese.⁴¹ Forty-seven per cent of Lebanese youth have achieved technical or university education, while only 29 per cent of Palestinians and 6 per cent of Syrian youth have reached similar education levels, demonstrating significant disparities across nationalities. Complementary education (grades 7-9) is the highest level completed for 44 per cent of Syrian youth surveyed, and secondary education (grades 10-12) is the highest level completed for 32 per cent of Palestinian youth surveyed (Figure 22).

Figure 21: Answers to the question, 'what is the highest level of education you have achieved so far?' answers disaggregated by age⁴²

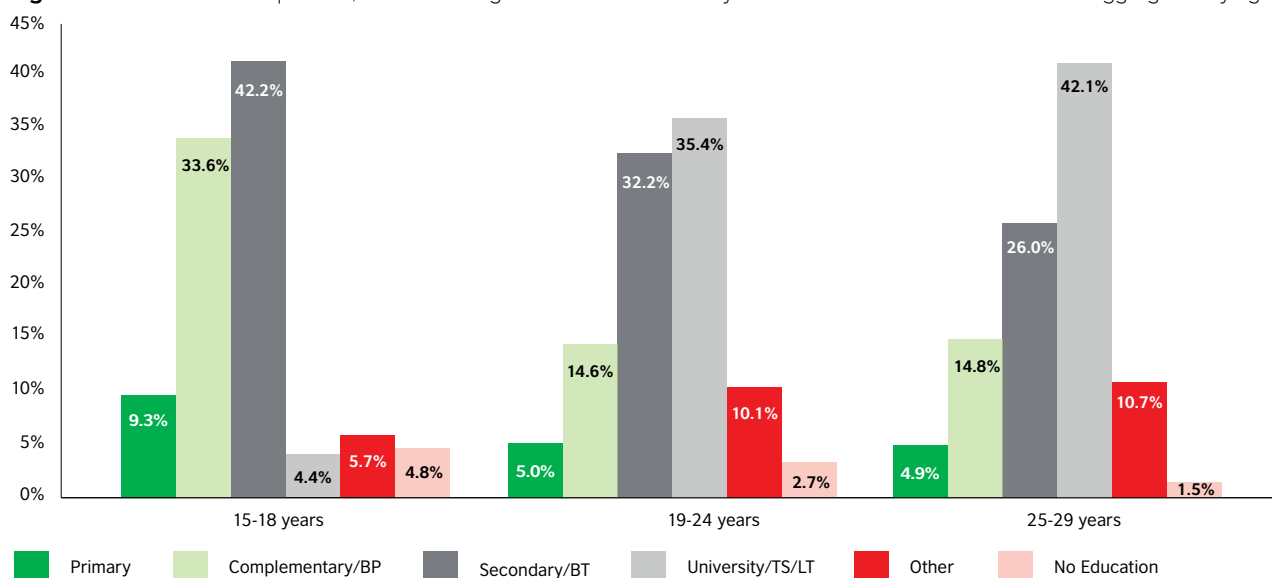
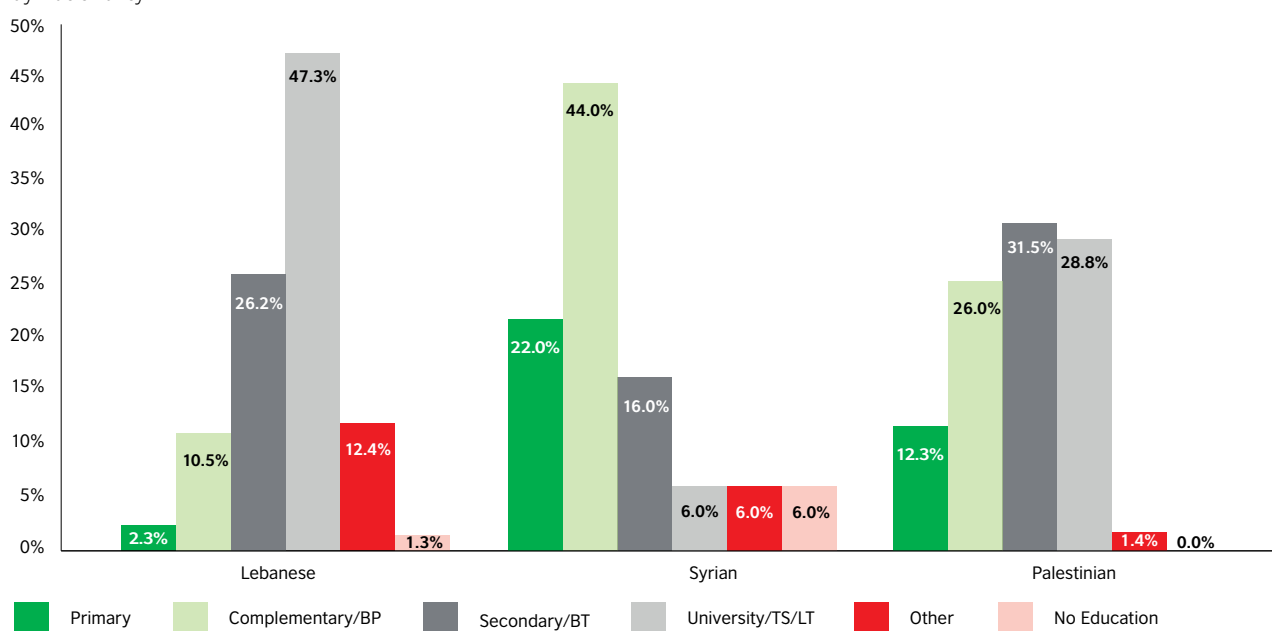


Figure 22: What is the highest level of education you have achieved so far? all youth aged 25-29 years old; answers disaggregated by nationality





While some youth face financial challenges in accessing primary and secondary education, this hurdle is also in place for graduates who are seeking to pursue higher education. To cover the cost of university or technical school, 89 per cent of youth who attended university or technical school sought assistance from their parents (Figure 23).⁴³ As Lebanese University is the only public institution for higher education in the country, when attending private universities, young people face tuition fees that are out of reach for the majority of youth. Similarly, private technical schools outnumber public institutions by nearly 3 to 1 (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2018). Due to these costs, families often take out private loans to cover the cost of tuition. In the qualitative investigation, APE and PVD participants detailed their struggles to afford higher education.

It's a daily struggle living here in Lebanon. There are a lot of unemployed people, a lot of people unable to live on the bare minimum. Some people, such as myself, have debts. I had to take a loan to be able to learn, my parents couldn't afford it.

Male, 27, Lebanese, Beirut

Even to pursue your education, it's very expensive. The Lebanese University isn't that good, at least not for all the specialisations, and the private universities are expensive. A lot of parents are obliged to sell properties or take loans to let their children have an education. So, even before graduating, you would feel financially pressured.

Male, 22, Lebanese, Beirut

There are others who have taken education loans. When they finish their studies, instead of saving money, they have to pay back their debts. Instead of using that money to start a new project that would benefit the country, they have to pay for university.

Male, 21, Lebanese, Beqaa

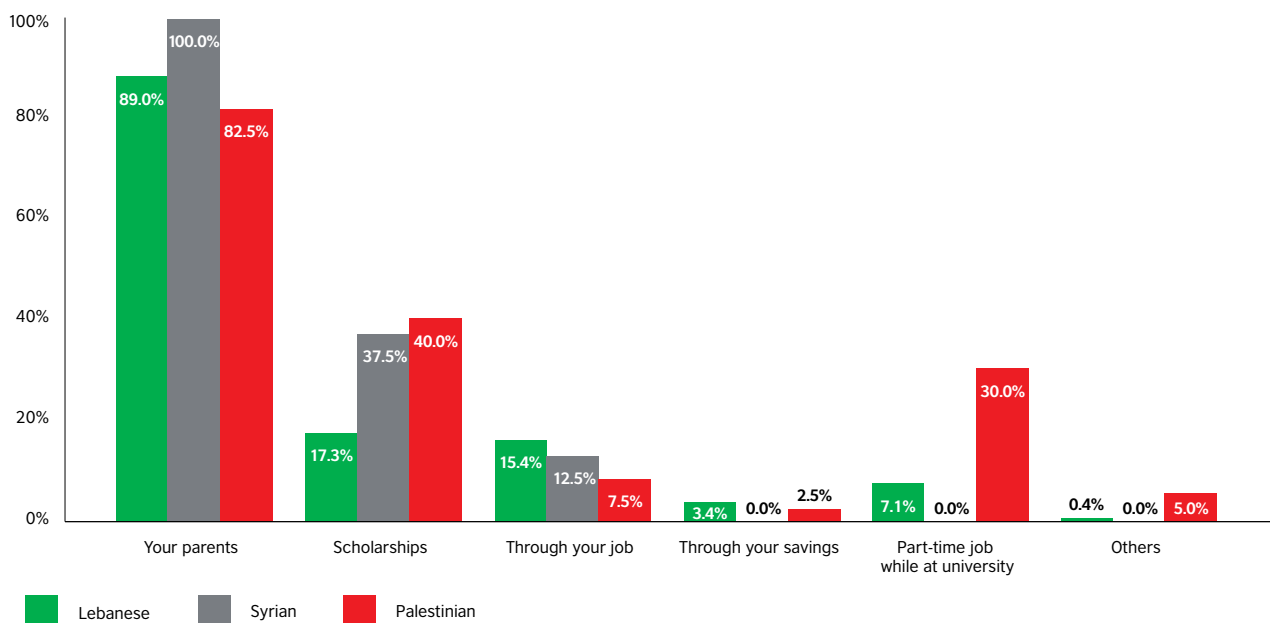
Although scholarships are available, only 17 per cent of Lebanese youth receive scholarships for higher education in Lebanon. Scholarship coverage, however, is higher for Syrians (38 per cent) and Palestinians (40 per cent)⁴⁴ (Figure 23), likely due to an increased number of initiatives that seek to assist refugee populations.⁴⁵ The quotes below by two different Palestinian participants in a PVD and an APE highlight the reliance on scholarships by many youth to pursue higher education.

He [my friend] got a scholarship to pursue his education. If it wasn't for the scholarship, he wouldn't have continued his education.

Female, 19, Palestinian, South

I'm speaking of my experience as young woman; I graduated university with an average of 62-63 per cent, which is really good considering it's in the Lebanese University. I couldn't pursue my masters because I don't have the financial means, so I could not pursue my ambition. Although I have the personal and educational potential and capacities, but not the financial.

Female, 24, Palestinian, South

Figure 23: Answers to the question, ‘how did you fund your university education?’ answers disaggregated by nationality

While many young people pursue education and see value within it, the overwhelming majority believe that personal connections, colloquially referred to as *wasta*, are more important for success than educational achievement. When presented with the statement, ‘You think personal connections are more important to succeed compared to educational achievements’, 71 per cent of youth strongly agreed or agreed.⁴⁶ Qualitatively, participants detailed that the country’s highly entrenched sectarian system tends to produce sets of behaviours and practices that are adopted out of necessity – such as reliance on and use of *wasta* – but rejected by youth due to personal ethics.

These behaviours and practices include relying on their sect for education funding, guaranteeing admission to a university, or seeking employment. This process was highlighted by Lebanese participants.

I would like to be part of the Lebanese Parliament. I would like to be an honest member, I like working in politics. [...] I am trying my best and working on it. Especially through the university specialisation that I chose. I am also working on my political knowledge, but I do not have a particular leader that I am following, or connections, or come from a wealthy family, that is an obstacle for me. I don't have connections (wasta).

Female, 23, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

This year I will finish university, I will need 1000 connections (wasta) for a law firm to hire me. And let's say I got hired, they would pay me a very low salary that would barely cover my transportation fees.

Female, 23, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

The sectarian and partisan atmosphere, this is a barrier for youth. For example, if I'm a doctor, I can't work and succeed because I don't belong to any party or sect.

Male, 29, Lebanese, Beqaa

There are many skilled people who are leaving the country because other people with connections are taking their job opportunities.

Male, 25, Lebanese, South

43 > Youth who attended tertiary education (N=613) were asked, ‘How did you fund your university education?’ They were asked to select all that apply from a list of 5 options..

44 > Youth who attended tertiary education (N=613) were asked, ‘How did you fund your university education?’ They could select all that apply from a list of 5 options. Lebanese N=565, Syrian N=8, Palestinian N=40.

45 > No relevant national statistics on the number of students receiving scholarships were found, as scholarships are largely provided by non-governmental organizations and international entities.

46 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089). Youth were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Other options included ‘You do not know’ and ‘You refuse to answer’.

While many youth are familiar with the need for *wasta* as guidance and to access opportunities, few receive professional guidance when choosing a major or career sector to pursue. Only 28 per cent of surveyed youth were provided with career guidance before graduating from school.⁴⁷ However, this figure increases slightly at the university level, with 38 per cent of students reporting having received career guidance (Figure 24).⁴⁸ Career guidance services are extremely important at the high school, university, and technical education levels to help students become aware of a broad scope of majors and careers, understand demand in the labour market, and be guided on how to best acquire the

necessary skills that also meet their interests (Hooley and Sultana, 2016).

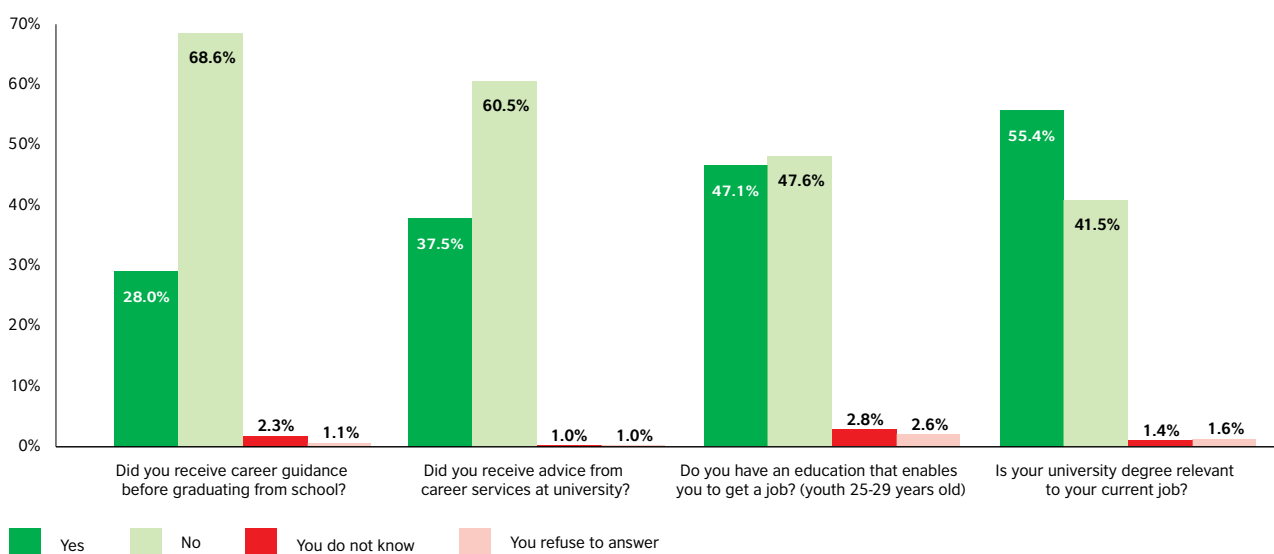
Findings show that young people's education is not leading them to relevant careers. When youth aged 25-29 years⁴⁹ were asked, 'Do you have an education that enables you to get a job?' only 47 per cent answered 'Yes'. When youth who have a university degree and are employed/self-employed⁵⁰ were asked, 'Is your university degree relevant to your current job?' 55 per cent stated 'Yes'. For Palestinians, the rate was much lower, with 39 per cent stating that their degree is relevant to their current job. This is likely due to Palestinians being prevented from employment in 39 professions and being

prevented by law from joining any professional syndicates (UNRWA, No date). Thus, while many young people pursue education, they face a labour market that offers few employment opportunities.

University degrees are being hunged on the wall without any use or efficiency. [The degree] should be much stronger than this and it should open for you a lot of doors and opportunities so that you can become an expert and gain the experience you want. [...] A lot of people have university degrees but don't feel happy about it or didn't do anything despite having a degree.

Female, 23, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

Figure 24: Answers to the questions, 'did you receive career guidance before graduating from school?', 'did you receive advice from career services at university?', 'do you have an education that enables you to get a job? (youth 25-29 years old)' and 'is your university degree relevant to your current job?'



47 > Youth who attended secondary school, technical school (BT/TS/LT) or university (N=1300) were asked, 'Did you receive career guidance before graduating from school?'

48 > Youth who attended university or technical school (TS/LT) (N=613) were asked, 'Did you receive advice from career services at university?'

49 > Youth 25-29 years old (N=654).

50 > N=426

51 > This statistic excluded students who are still pursuing their education.

52 > An additional 1.2% were 15-18 years old and working but not in school. The remainder were still studying.

53 > A water-pipe used to smoke flavoured tobacco.



Pursuing employment in a limited labour market

Unemployment continues to be one of the defining challenges for youth in Lebanon. Overall, unemployment in our sample stood at 17 per cent,⁵¹ which is comparable to various estimated national averages (Figure 26).⁵² According to other studies, the average national unemployment rate is 11 per cent, standing at 23 per cent for youth aged 15-24 and more than 35 per cent for youth holding a university degree (Abou Jaoudeh, 2015). During the current economic crisis, unemployment is expected to rise even higher. According to statistics, more than 220,000 people have permanently or temporarily lost their jobs between October 2019 – February 2020 (Business News, 2020). Moreover, in the same period, one-third of companies have reduced the salaries of their employees by upwards of 40 per cent, and 12 per cent of businesses across the country have closed. Rising unemployment, salary reductions, and closures of businesses have been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting nationwide lockdown. Due to this sobering reality, and as to be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5, many young people wish to go abroad in search of better employment and income opportunities (see Figure 55 in Chapter 5).

The qualitative findings highlighted that high unemployment amongst youth results in negative psychological effects such as depression and a sense of hopelessness. Youth reported developing passive coping activities to fill their time, such as spending time in coffee shops and smoking *arguileh*⁵³ with friends, activities that they deem to be unproductive and a 'waste of time'. In the quotes below, youth from across the country expressed their challenges in coping with unemployment.



Currently we are unemployed, and that's how we spend our nights, smoking and drinking coffee. [...] I am losing time; I lose most of my time doing this.

Male, 25, Syrian, North

We are reaching a point where we are suffocating from all sides whether it's socially, professionally [...]. For example, there is a high rate of unemployment for youth. These are all obstacles and of course, it [unemployment] has an impact on the person's mental health.

Female, 29, Lebanese, Beirut

In my life, I think the negatives outweigh the positives, because of unemployment, and due to the circumstances that the country is currently passing through.

Male, 21, Lebanese, Beqaa

Due to the challenges of finding employment, when there are opportunities available, competition exists in almost all areas of the labour market and creates a number of challenges for youth seeking work opportunities. First, Lebanon is a country where most opportunities, services, and goods are centralised in its capital. Sixty-one per cent of youth stated that there are insufficient employment opportunities outside Beirut⁵⁴ and 74 per cent of youth strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'Centralisation has meant that in order to get a good job you usually have to go to Beirut.'⁵⁵ Although just and equal development was one of the reform measures stipulated in the Taif Accord, it never translated into job opportunities. Second, increased hostilities due to employment competition between

refugee and host communities in Lebanon have been well documented (Atrache, 2020; Geha and Talhouk, 2018; Lorenza and Griesse, 2016; UNDP, 2019). These perceptions were also evident in the survey as 81 per cent of Lebanese youth – regardless of region or income level – strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'People from other countries living in Lebanon take jobs away from the Lebanese.'⁵⁶

Third, as in most of the world, women face particular challenges in gaining employment. Of all surveyed youth, 58 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, 'There are equal employment opportunities for young men and young women' (Figure 26).⁵⁷ In



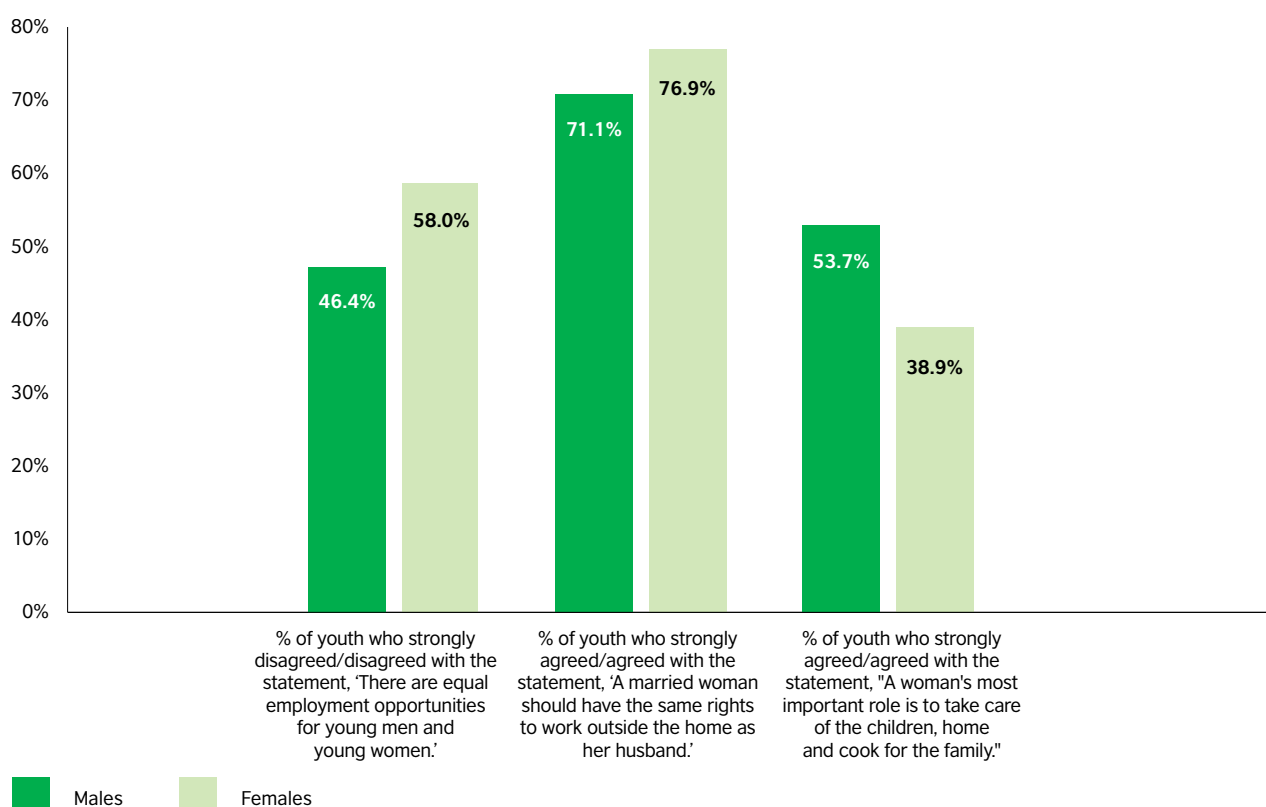
Lebanon, the female labour force participation rate increased from 19 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2019 (ILO, 2019). While this is disproportionate to the female population in Lebanon, within the MENA context, Lebanon's scores in the mid-range; higher than 12 per cent in Syria, but significantly lower than 58 per cent in Qatar (ILO, 2019). Furthermore, a range of additional impediments – including cultural and societal norms that perpetuate gender-based stereotypes – make it difficult for women to remain in the workforce and move up the corporate ladder, causing considerable underrepresentation in senior-level positions (International Financial Corporation, 2019). While the majority

of surveyed men and women strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'A married woman should have the same rights to work outside the home as her husband.'⁵⁸ A further 39 per cent of women and 54 per cent of men strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'A woman's most important role is to take care of the children and home and cook for the family' (Figure 25).⁵⁹ Thus, while equality in employment is crucial for women and Lebanon's society at large, failure to implement equality in the home in parallel could lead to a common gender equality concern across the world, including in many Western countries (Alonso, 2019; Barnes, 2017; Hagqvist, 2017; Orgad, 2019). As women gain equality in the labour market but fail to gain equality

in the home, their responsibilities only increase, as duties in the home are not equally distributed between men and women. Women thus face increasing challenges in being forced to choose between career and family and are more exposed to the gender pay gap that particularly affects working women who also have children (The Economist, 2019a; The Economist, 2019b; National Women's Law Center, 2018).

Despite the above challenges, 64 per cent of youth answered 'Yes' when asked, 'Do you have the enthusiasm to look for a job opportunity?'⁶⁰ Such motivation by the surveyed youth highlights opportunities for youth engagement and paints a picture of a determined young population.

Figure 25: Answers to statements regarding women's equality in work and at home; answers disaggregated by gender



54 > All youth (N=2089) were asked, 'Do you think that there are enough employment opportunities outside of Beirut in Lebanon?'

55 > All youth (N=2089).

56 > This question was only asked to Lebanese youth (N=1591). Participants were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Other options included 'You do not know' and 'You refuse to answer'.

57 > Female N= 992, Male N=1096.

58 > Female N= 992, Male N=1096

59 > Female N= 992, Male N=1096

60 > Question asked to all youth, N=2089

Looking at those employed, 32 per cent of youth were employed in the private sector, 15 per cent were self-employed, and 10 per cent were employed in the public sector (Figure 26).

Employed youth face further uphill battles in the workplace. Primary challenges include low wages and long

working hours, regardless of nationality.⁶¹ Corruption in the workplace was also of significant concern for all youth. For Palestinian youth in particular, mistreatment, unfair treatment, and favouritism/nepotism/tribalism/racism were significantly higher than for Lebanese or Syrian youth (Figure 27).

Palestinians face both legal hurdles in gaining employment due to their official residency status in the country as refugees and social struggles that are manifested through discrimination. It is significant that while Syrians face similar legal hurdles in employment, the surveyed Syrian youth did not explicitly highlight the same challenges.

Figure 26: Answers to the question, 'Which of the following are you?'⁶²

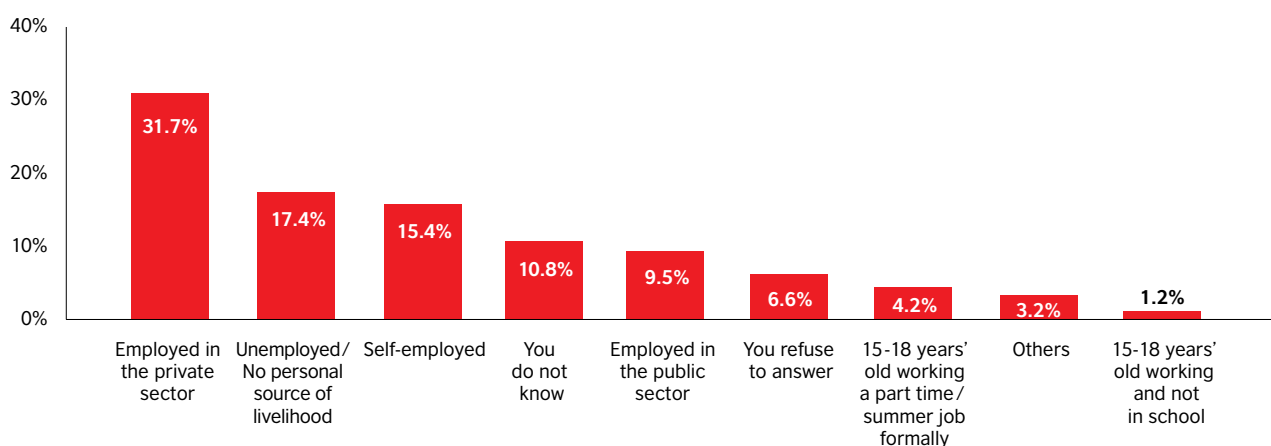
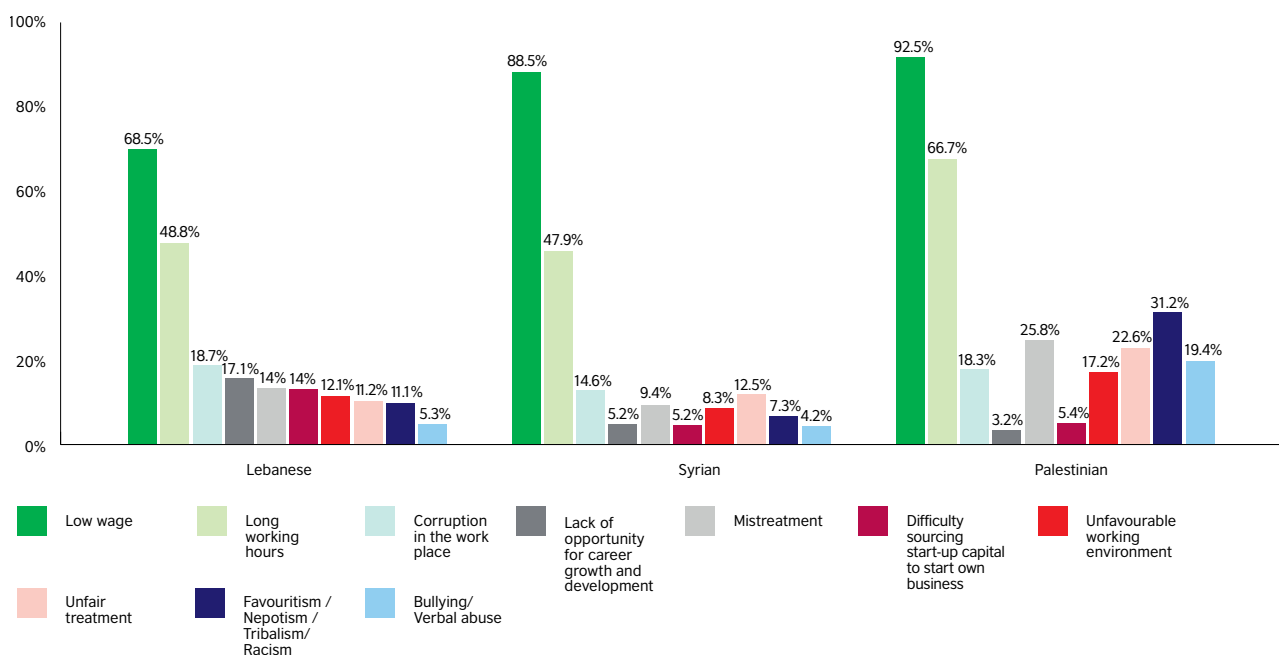


Figure 27: Top answers to the question, 'what would you say are challenges faced by youth like you in employment?' answers disaggregated by nationality⁶³



61 > Employed and self-employed youth, 19-29 (N=931) were asked, 'What would you say are the challenges faced by youth like you in employment?' Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 21 options.

62 > This question was asked to all youth, but the chart has removed youth who are still pursuing their education. Thus N=1786.

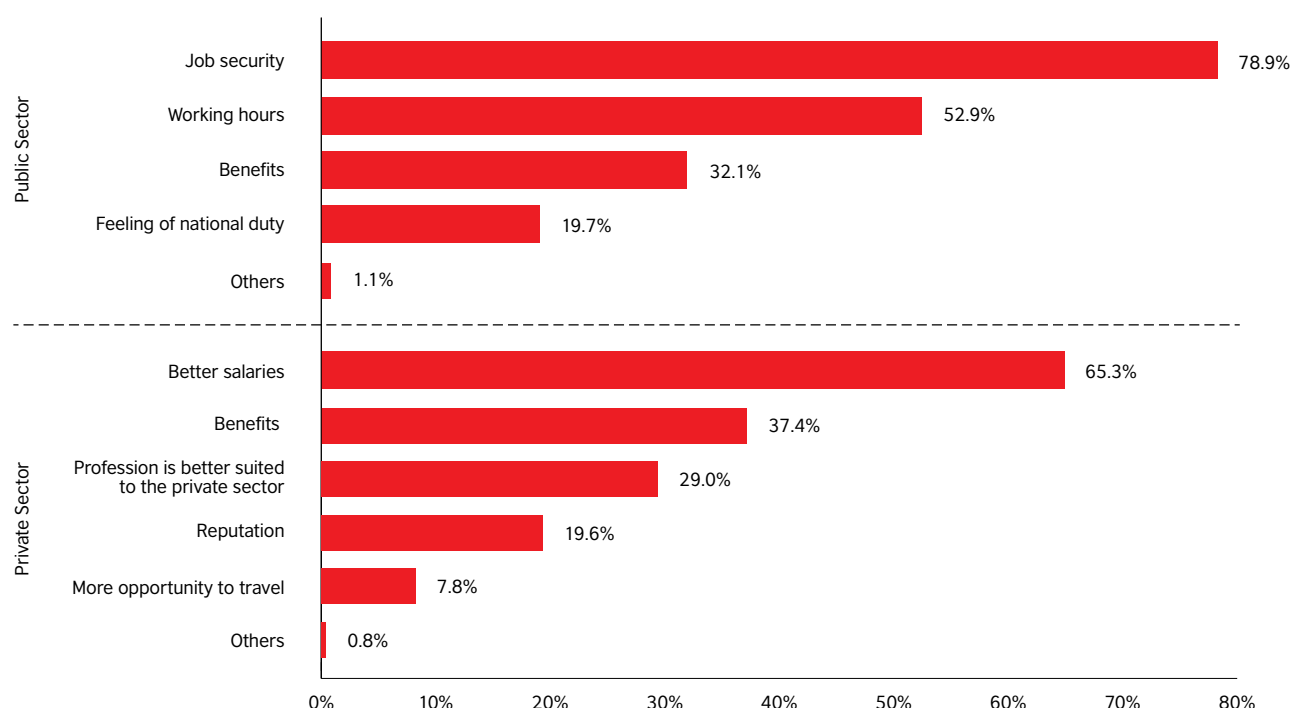
63 > Employed and self-employed youth, 19-29 (N=931) were asked, 'What would you say are the challenges faced by youth like you in employment?' Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 21 options.

While youth face many shared struggles in the labour market, they also hold sector preferences that align with the top two challenges of low wages and long working hours. Overall, 31 per cent of youth prefer the private sector over self-employment (18 per cent) or the public sector (17 per cent).⁶⁴ Youth prefer the private sector due to the perception of higher salaries, while the minority of youth who prefer the public sector do so for job security and shorter working hours (Figure 28).

With self-employment being the second-ranked option, 61 per cent of surveyed youth who are not already self-employed indicated that they have an interest in setting up their own business.⁶⁵ While self-employment is a key marker of Lebanon's history as an entrepreneurial culture (Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed and Julian, 2012; Fahed-Sreih and Pistrui, 2012), the main reasons that this generation of youth are seeking self-employment are high unemployment rates, a competitive labour market, and a lack of the educational and experience

qualifications necessary to compete in the labour market (Figure 29).⁶⁶ However, here again, youth face many hurdles. The main barriers to business initiation include lack of skills and experience, access to finance, and a lack of information on business opportunities (Figure 30).⁶⁷ As a significant per centage of youth are interested in self-employment as a means of financial sustainability, addressing the barriers facing young people in this area is a potential entry point for engagement with youth.

Figure 28: Top answers to the question, 'why would you prefer to work in the public/private sector?'⁶⁸



64 > All youth (N=2089) were asked, 'In which sector would you prefer to work?' They were asked to choose only one option from a list of 5.

65 > All youth who are not already self-employed (N=1814) were asked the question, 'Do you have an interest in setting up your own business?'

66 > This question was asked to self-employed youth (N=275), 'What influenced you to seek self-employment?' They were asked to select all that apply from a list of 5 options.

67 > This question was asked to all employed/self-employed youth, (N=1108), 'Which of the following do you think are the main barriers encountered in starting a business?' They were asked to select all that apply from a list of 6 options.

68 > The question, 'Why would you prefer to work in the public/private sector?' was asked to youth depending on their answer to the previous question of, 'In which sector would you prefer to work?' Youth who prefer working in the private sector (N=639), public sector (n=361). Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 4 options for the public sector and 5 options for the private sector.

Figure 29: Answers to the question, ‘What influenced you to seek self-employment?’⁶⁹

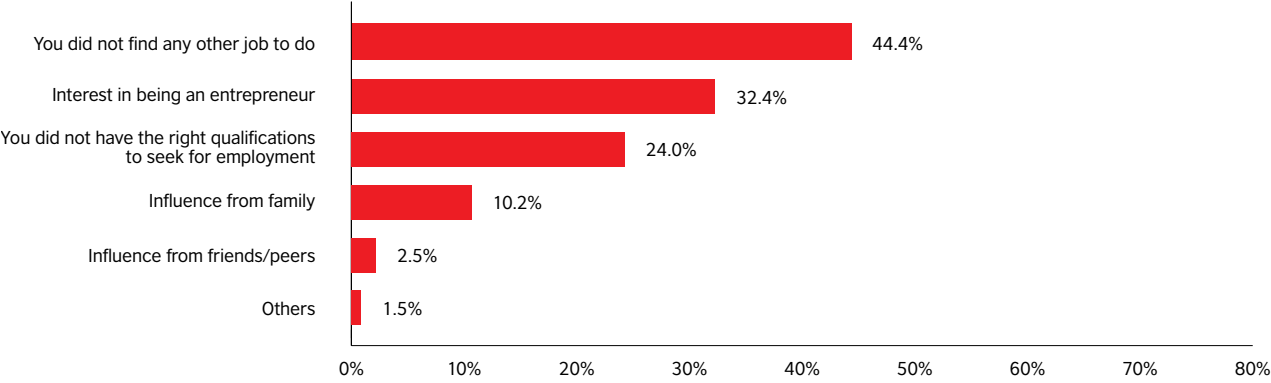
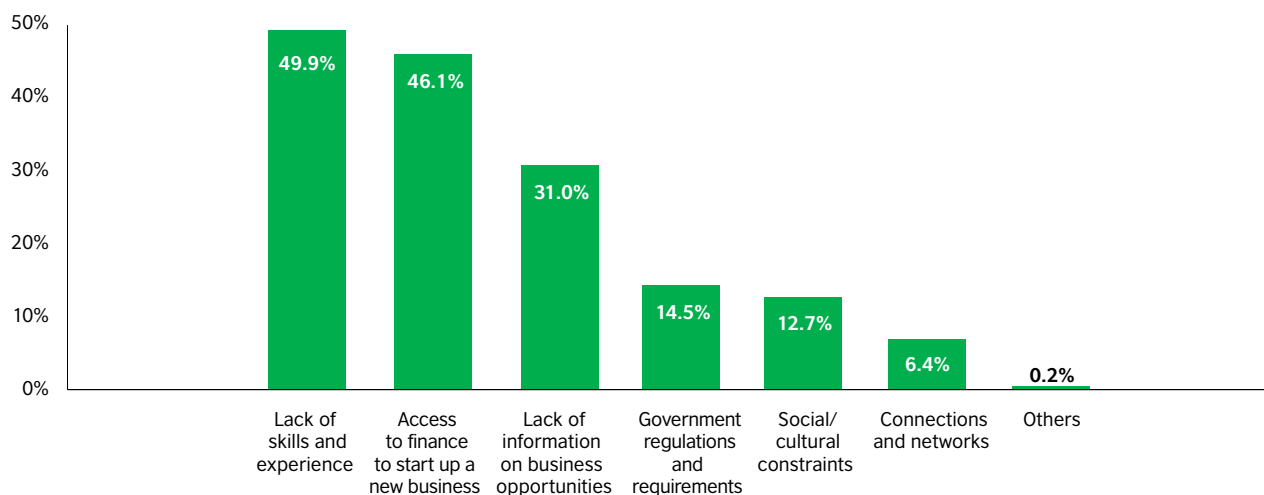


Figure 30: Top answers to the question, 'which of the following do you think are the main barriers encountered in starting a business?'⁷⁰

Daily lives and the need for a new social contract

The strengths of the youth in Lebanon lie in their vigour to pursue education and employment – including starting their own businesses – despite the challenging realities that they face. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, schools and educational institutions are moving classes online, despite poor internet infrastructure. As the global pandemic hits Lebanon's already fragile economy, the country's Gross Domestic Product rate (GDP) is set to shrink by 12 per cent in 2020. The impact of this is felt across the country as more people lose their wages, purchasing power against a currency in freefall and opportunities for starting new businesses continue to shrink.

Yet, with these challenges come opportunities for stakeholders seeking to (re-)engage with youth, particularly through programmes for individuals who have dropped out of school, career counselling, work-home gender equality, and entrepreneurship training. While targeted interventions with youth on the above should be carefully and purposely designed, they will be most effective only in a political and social structure that views youth as a key resource for Lebanon and one that must be invested in and developed. The enthusiasm of the surveyed population – despite their many struggles in daily life – should encourage policymakers and youth advocates to redouble their support for the youth, who are the future of Lebanon.

Improved education and employment opportunities for youth must be key pillars of a new social contract. While building up the private educational and labour sectors, and supporting entrepreneurs is important, it is crucial to restore trust in the public sector to provide quality education and employment opportunities. The above would help create a more equal society where education and experience are prized over *wasta*.

69 > This question was asked to all employed/self-employed youth, (N=1108), 'Which of the following do you think are the main barriers encountered in starting a business?' Select all that apply from a list of 6 options.

70 > This question was asked to all employed/self-employed youth, (N=1108), 'Which of the following do you think are the main barriers encountered in starting a business?' Select all that apply from a list of 6 options.

> Youth civic and political engagement

Introduction

Since the October 17 uprising, there has been a dramatic shift in youth civic and political engagement, as young people are invigorated and energised by the possibility of change and their role in determining its direction. While the sustainability of increased youth participation in the political sphere remains to be tested over time, young people have utilised the uprising as a platform to voice their opinions and take part in collective action. As highlighted below, prior to the uprising, youth engagement at the community and political levels was low, with a strong sense of apathy and disillusionment in politics.

This study shows that since the uprising, there has been a burst of new activity and interest, but novel and sustainable measures should be created to ensure the longevity of youth engagement. In analysing the findings of this section in relation to the current context, it is evident that the lack of youth engagement is not due to a lack of opinion or will. Instead, this perceived apathy is a result of a political system that youth view as ineffective, with young people's needs and voices not being heard or considered. This section examines youth engagement at both the community and political levels, as well as the demographics of youth in Lebanon who are excluded from the political process. Moreover, it provides an in-depth analysis of indicators related to youth involvement in politics before and during the ongoing uprising.

Finally, this section analyses the young generation's understanding of major political and historical events.

Community (dis)engagement

In Chapter 1, we noted that young people are most strongly affiliated with their families, who play a key role in youth's understanding of their own identities. Similarly, when asked, 'How do you define your community?' 71 per cent chose 'family and peers' followed by 'the area where you live' (Figure 31).⁷¹ Interestingly, the likelihood of defining community as 'family and peers' decreases as youth become older. While 79 per cent of 15-18 year-olds chose 'family and peers', this declined to 64 per cent for 25-29 year-olds. While 'the area where you live' remained the same as youth aged, the understanding of community as 'your village/town' grew from 32 per cent for 15-18 year-olds to 47 per cent for 25-29 year-olds. Although still a minority, 25 per cent of youth 25-29 years old chose their confessional group as their community, significantly up from 11 per cent for 15-18-year-olds (Figure 32). These data demonstrate that while family and peers and the area where young people live remain part of their understanding of community throughout their lives, this understanding expands as they age to also include their village or home town, as well as for some, their confessional group. In the quotes below, PVD participants discuss their idea of community.

I think the positive aspect is that we have our community. We always have our friends or family as a backup, so this is something compensating for all the stress we are living. Maybe, I am lucky because I have a good relationship with my environment, for someone else it might cause stress.

Male, 22, Lebanese, Beirut

In Lebanon you would find lots of villages and people coming from village communities, which are close and caring communities. I personally feel that I belong to my village and my church, which makes me feel safe and positive.

Female, 25, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

Regardless of how community is defined, youth engage with it through social activities that largely include social and religious events (Figure 33).⁷² Youth are thereby engaging with their communities in an expected manner but what is suggested is that they are not involved in community development or decision making. Young people's surface-level community engagement is due to their perceptions that the communities of which they are a part are neither supportive nor aware of their needs and priorities. When asked, 'Do you feel that the community is supportive of youth?' 75 per cent answered 'No'.⁷³ Young people believe that the reasons for this include youth not being a priority or of interest to their communities and communities being unaware of youth issues (Figure 34).⁷⁴ In a PVD, a participant stated that while they feel supported by their family (the main definition of community among young people), they do not feel supported by their larger community.

The good part of your community is the family, who usually supports them [youth]. However, the community does not support youth at all.

Male, 21, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

71 > This question was asked to all participants, N=2089. The question asked participants to choose all that apply from a list of 6 options.

72 > All youth (N=2089) were asked, 'How do you contribute to your community?' Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 5 options.

73 > This question was asked to all youth, N=2089.

74 > Youth who answered 'No' to the previous question (N=1558) were asked to select from a possible list of reasons why communities are not supportive of youth.

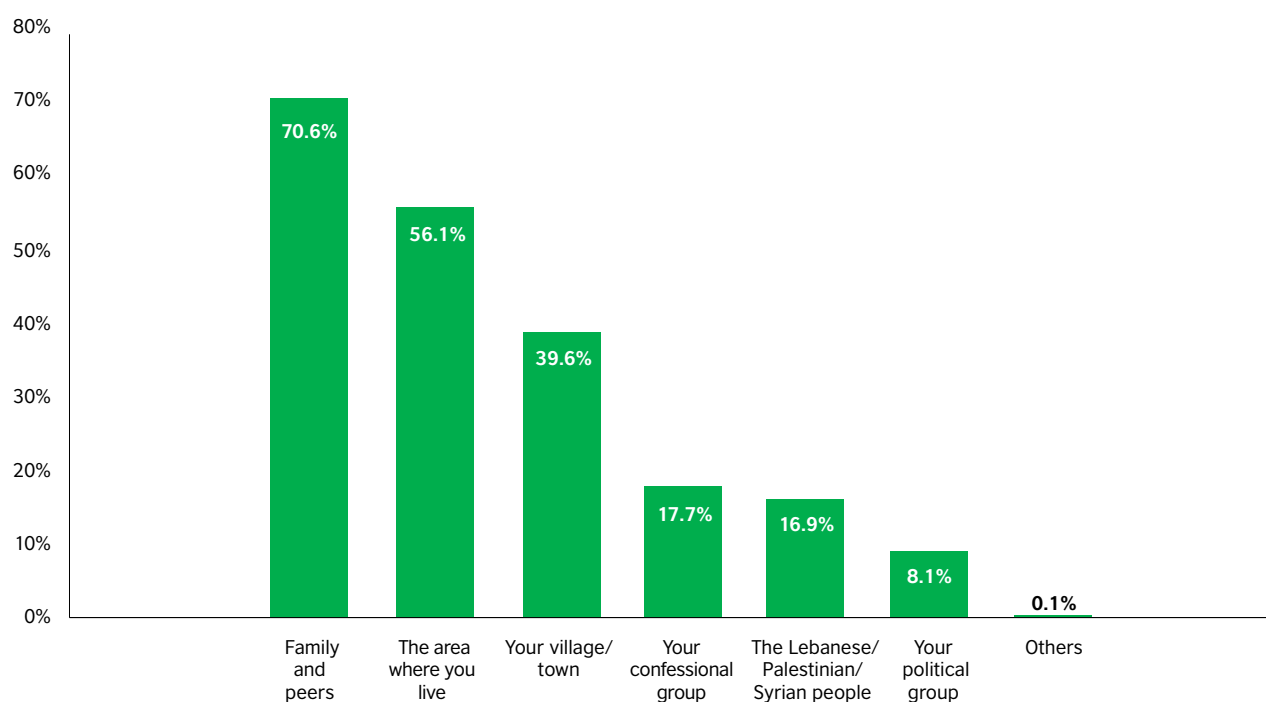
These findings highlight a gap in the communication between youth and their communities, whether at a horizontal level amongst other community members or at a vertical level with the local government, such as the municipality. Therefore, there is a clear opportunity for stakeholders working with youth to develop community commitment in support of the youth in their areas. When asked whether they were a member of any organisation/association/scout group, 85 per cent of youth answered 'No'. As for the youth who answered 'Yes', the

major concentration was in Beirut with 19 per cent, with areas outside of the capital showing even lower youth engagement. The data further underline the need to identify new and sustained ways of engaging with youth.

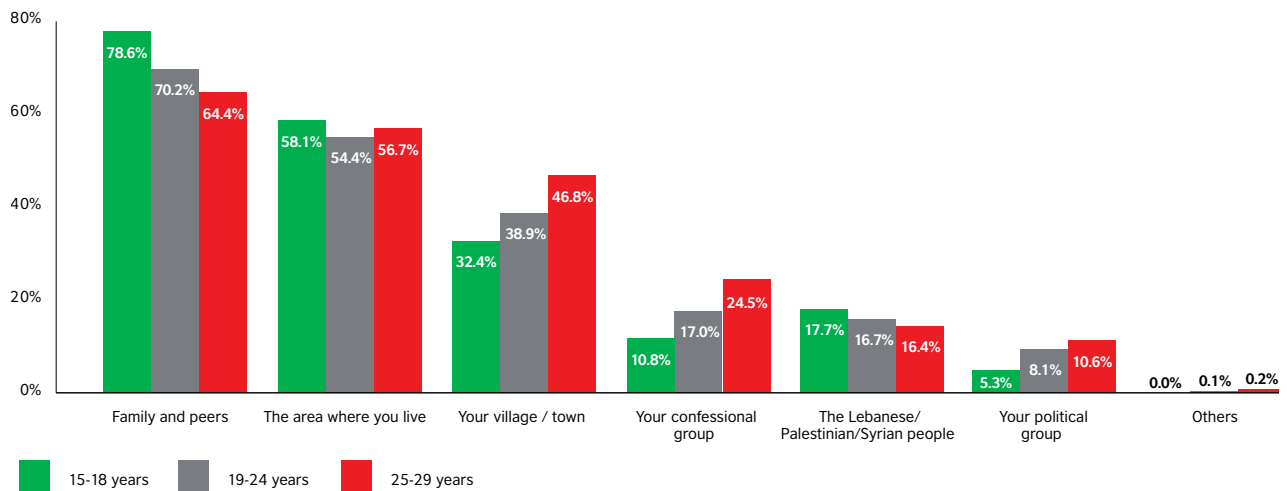
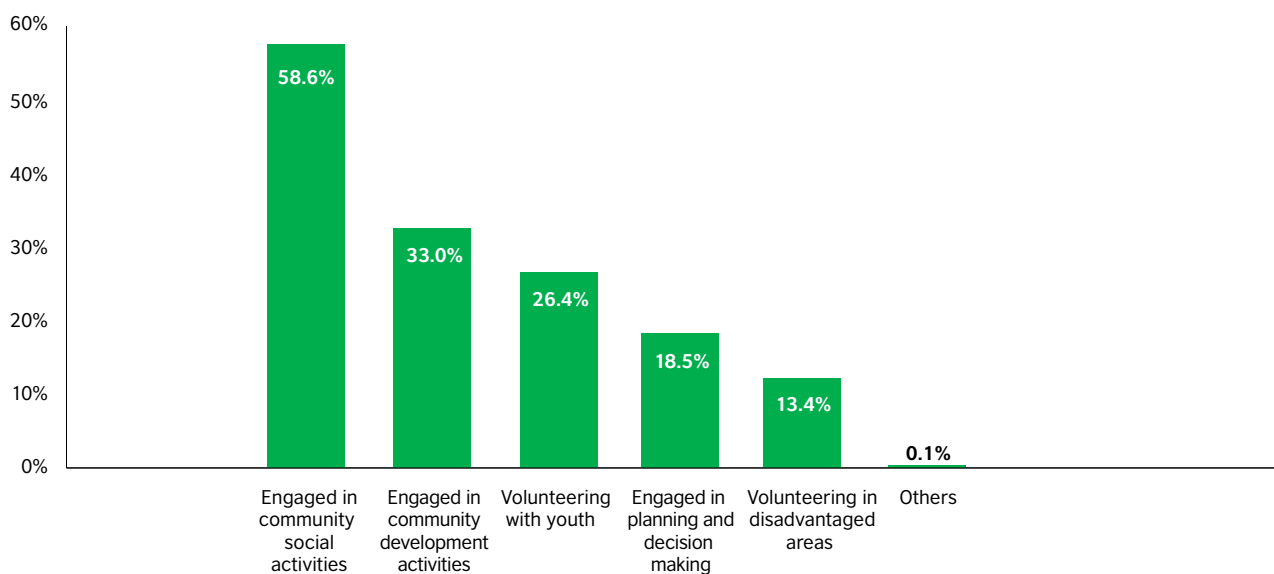
Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the lack of state presence in areas and neighbourhoods of the country has been noted. Local parties and sectarian groups, in addition to NGOs and community initiatives, have positioned themselves as actors in supporting their communities, providing sanitation,

awareness campaigns, and aid initiatives (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Some argue this as a way for local political parties to strengthen their patronage networks in lieu of strong government presence and support (Chehayeb, 2020). What this may mean in terms of how youth view and engage with their communities, and the impact it may have on sectarian divisions, remains to be seen, and further research will be necessary to identify how youth view and engage with their communities to assess what impact the global pandemic in Lebanon has had.

Figure 31: Answers to the question, 'how would you define your community?'⁷⁵

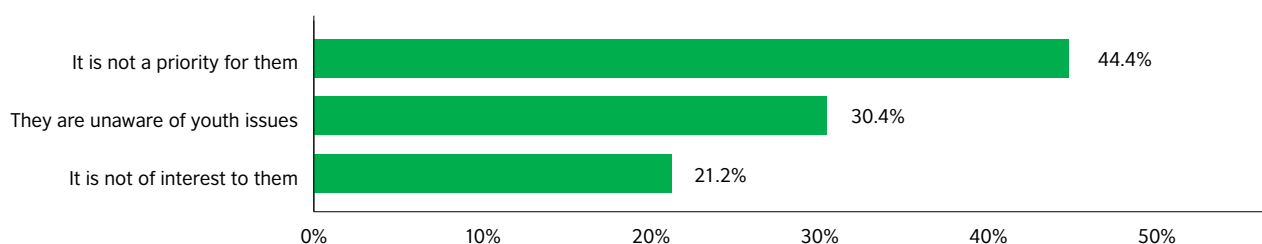


⁷⁵ > This question was asked to all participants, N=2089. Question asked participants to choose all that apply from a list of 6 options. Participants were presented with the option, 'The Lebanese/Syrian/Palestinian people' based on their respective nationality.

Figure 32: . Answers to the question, 'how would you define your community?' answers disaggregated by age⁷⁶**Figure 33:** Answers to the question, 'how do you contribute to your community?'⁷⁷

76 > This question was asked to all participants, N=2089. Question asked participants to choose all that apply from a list of 6 options. Participants were presented with the option, 'The Lebanese/Syrian/Palestinian people' based on their respective nationality.

77 > This question was asked to all youth, N=2089. Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 5 options.

Figure 34: Answers to the question, 'why do you think the community is not providing the support that youth need?'⁷⁸

Youth participation and perceptions of politics

In data collected prior to 17 October 2019, youth responses demonstrated that just as they were disengaged from their communities, they were also disengaged from the political sphere in terms of being members of political parties, political organisations or associations, voting, or even engaging in political discussions. When asked, 'Are you a member of any political youth group or organisation?' 78 per cent of Lebanese youth and 83 per cent of Palestinian answered 'No'.⁷⁹

Similarly, 62 per cent of Lebanese youth and 79 per cent of Palestinian youth answered 'No' when asked, 'Do you support a political party?'⁸⁰ Youth who do not support political parties stated so for three key reasons. First, a majority do not feel that any of the currently existing political parties represent them. Additionally, they consider political parties to be corrupt and related to this, are cynical about political engagement in Lebanon and do not believe that it brings about change (Figure 35).⁸¹

Such findings on youth political disengagement are a well- documented global phenomenon and highlighted across other next generation reports,⁸² with the stated reasons being common across the world. In our qualitative research, young Lebanese frequently discussed their discontent with the existing political parties and the need for parties that they feel they can be a part of, as demonstrated in the quotes below.

We need to change all the political parties and give a chance for youth, who are more qualified, to be deputies and ministers.

Female, 22, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

We totally believe that we don't benefit from all the political parties we have.

Male, 20, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

[We need] to have not only these political parties that have always been there, we need new blood.

Female, 23, Lebanese, South

Looking at voter turnout as a form of political engagement, only 44 per cent of surveyed Lebanese youth who were eligible to vote in the last general election in May 2018 voted,⁸³ close to the overall national participation rate of 49 per cent.⁸⁴ Youth who did not vote were asked their reasons why, with most feeling that their vote would not change anything (Figure 36).⁸⁵ Youth within the PVDs verbalised their frustrations with the political process in Lebanon and related this to their reasons for not voting.

Political participation does not exist for the youth, even during the elections, because politics in Lebanon is hereditary when one leader resigns his son would take over. There was fraud during the elections.

Male, 29, Lebanese, Beirut

I did not vote because I believe that if I voted or not, nothing will change. It doesn't make a difference.

Male, 21, Lebanese, Beqaa

78 > Youth who answered 'No' to the previous question (N=1558) were asked to select from a possible list of reasons why communities are not supportive of youth. Question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of three options.

79 > 42% of Syrian youth refused to answer this question.

80 > Nearly half, 45%, of Syrian youth refused to answer this question.

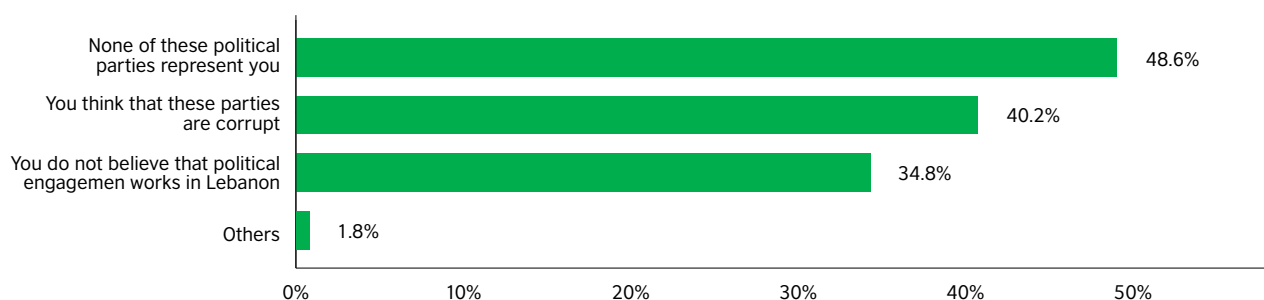
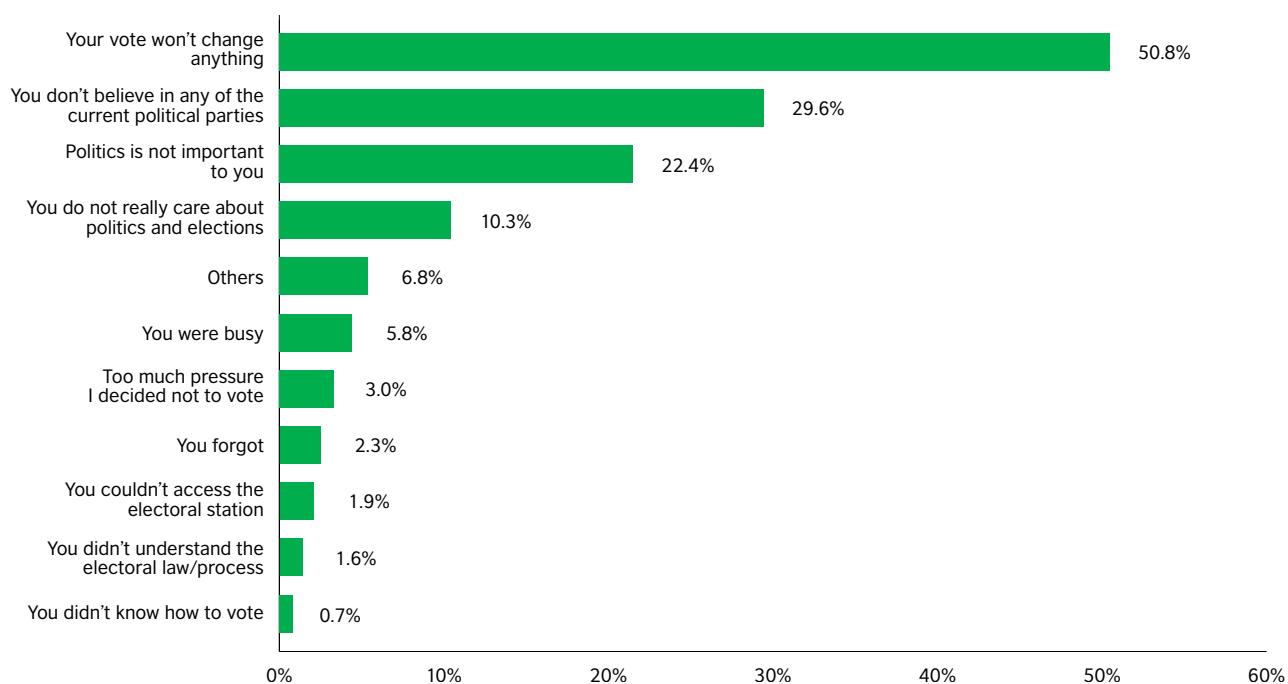
81 > Youth who answered no to the previous question (N=1307) were asked to select all reasons that apply from a list of 3 options.

82 > See the following Next Generation report: Next Generation Zimbabwe, Next Generation Germany, Next Generation Ireland- Northern Ireland, Next Generation UK, and Next Generation Turkey.

83 > Lebanese youth (N=1591) were asked, 'Did you vote in the last general elections in May 2018?' Youth could answer, 'Yes', 'No', or 'No, you were under 21' as well as 'You refuse to answer'.

84 > According to the '2018 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections: Results and Figures' published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), young people between 21 and 35 years old constituted approximately 30% of registered voters. In a survey conducted by Maamari and El Zein, 'The Impact of Social Media', 81.38% of the 2,742 22-27-year-old registered voters surveyed were not interested in voting or willing to vote. Registration as candidates decreases further, with only 5% of youth between 21 and 35 years old registered as candidates in the elections.

85 > Youth who were not under 21 and did not vote in the last general elections in May 2018 (N=429) were asked, 'Why did you not vote in the elections?' Youth were asked to select all that apply from a list of 10 options.

Figure 35: Reasons for not supporting a political party⁸⁶**Figure 36:** Answers to the questions, 'why did you not vote in the elections?' by youth who did not participate in 2018 parliamentary⁸⁷

86 > Youth who answered 'No' to the question, 'Do you support a political party?' (N=1307), were asked, 'Why' and to select all reasons that apply from a list of 3 options.

87 > Youth who were not under 21 and did not vote in the last general elections in May 2018 (N=429) were asked, 'Why did you not vote in the elections?' Youth were asked to select all that apply from a list of 10 options.

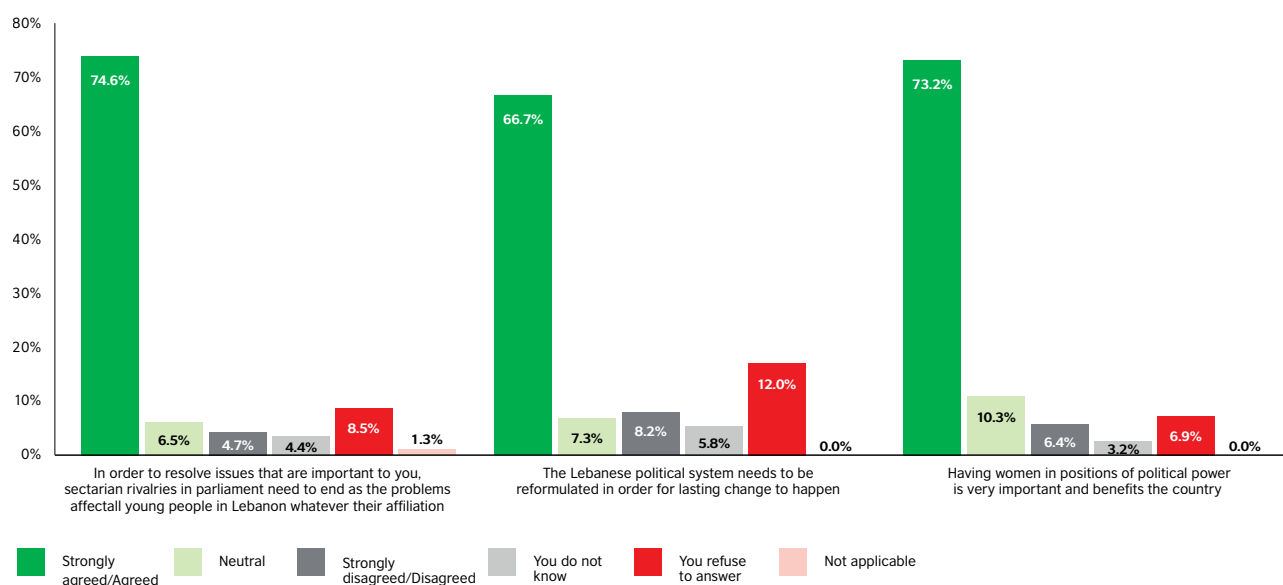
Similar to their opinions of their communities, in general, youth have a strong impression that their needs are not considered by politicians. When asked, 'Do you think that the voices of youth in Lebanon are listened to when political decisions are made?' 82 per cent of Lebanese youth said 'No'.⁸⁸ The correlation between youth viewing both their communities and the political parties in the country as being deaf to their voices and opinions is not surprising.

With these perceptions, youth discussed in detail what they believe would need to change in order to be more politically

engaged within the political processes of Lebanon. When presented with the statement, 'In order to resolve issues that are important to you, sectarian rivalries in Parliament need to end, as the problems affect all young people in Lebanon whatever their affiliation', 75 per cent of Lebanese youth strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.⁸⁹ Furthermore, 67 per cent of Lebanese youth also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'The Lebanese political system needs to be reformulated in order for lasting change to happen'.⁹⁰

This overhaul also includes the need to include more women in politics, with 73 per cent strongly agreeing or agreeing that having women in positions of power is very important and benefits the country.⁹¹ As of May 2018, the current 128-member Parliament has only 6 women as members of Parliament. More positively, the current 20-member cabinet of Prime Minister Hassan Diab, formed in January 2020, has 6 women in ministerial positions, representing 30 per cent of the cabinet.

Figure 37: Agreement scale for the statements, 'in order to resolve issues that are important to you, sectarian rivalries in parliament need to end as the problems affect all young people in Lebanon whatever their affiliation', 'the Lebanese political system needs to be reformulated in order for lasting change to happen' and 'having women in positions of political power is very important and benefits the country'⁹²



88 > This question was asked to Lebanese youth only, N=1591.

89 > This question was asked to Lebanese youth only, N=1591.

90 > This question was asked to Lebanese youth only, N=1591.

91 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089).

92 > These questions were asked to Lebanese youth only, N=1591.

As is well documented above, Lebanon's confessional and sectarian system in everyday life and politics is something many youth argue as hindering change and development. The large network of parties and associations based on each of Lebanon's 18 official sectarian groups has created a mix between religion and politics, with only a few political parties being secular. Such a system is further enshrined by the confessional make up of a majority of neighbourhoods and communities in Lebanon. In looking at the election results from the 2018 parliamentary elections, it is evident that most people vote along confessional and party lines, although this is not specified in the current electoral law. Numerous reasons encourage them to do so; predominantly as political parties representing a particular area are also often responsible for providing protection, surveillance, and services in the area. The sectarian system is reinforced by encouraging voters to vote along sectarian lines in order to receive services and protection in their local neighbourhoods and daily lives; this remains evident during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Contrary to the current intermixing of politics and religion, when youth were presented with the statement, 'Religion should have no influence over politics', 53 per cent strongly agreed or agreed. Furthermore, overall, 54 per cent of Lebanese youth also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'Religion and State should be completely separate entities.' Agreement with this statement grew to 52 per cent post uprising, compared to 43 per cent pre-October 17. Interestingly, as youth grow older, they are more likely to agree with both statements (Figure 38) and show a stronger preference for the separation of church and state. When disaggregating the data by religion, Lebanese participants who identified as Christians were significantly more likely to agree with both statements than Lebanese participants who identified as Muslim. It is evident from our discussions with participants that the sectarian system seeps into every aspect of young people's daily lives (education, social groups, lifestyle, etc.) and dictates how they can engage politically. Even for Lebanese youth who wish to disengage from the sectarian system, familial relationships are believed to be a barrier.

Eliminating sectarianism [is the solution] because once you do, people won't look at you anymore as a Muslim or a Christian, they would look at you as a human being. And based on that, there will be secularism, we would be able to improve and evolve our government and not cut it into shares between each other.

Male, 27, Lebanese, Beirut

At universities, you are forced to be affiliated to certain political parties that are inside the university where the university is situated, you can't do otherwise. There are no impartial activities, all activities are related to political parties or religions. [...] What if I don't want to be affiliated to any political party, but I am obliged to study in the university, then I have to be affiliated to a certain party.

Male, 22, Lebanese, Beirut

Figure 38: Answers to questions 'religion and state should be completely separate entities' and 'Religion should have no influence over politics'; answers disaggregated by age

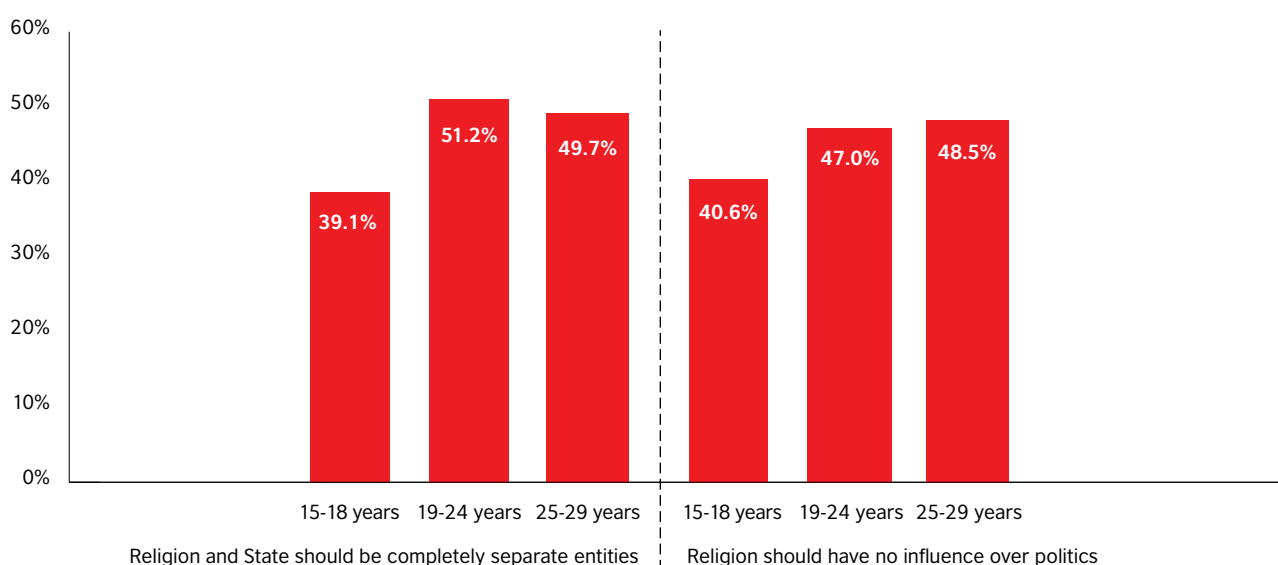
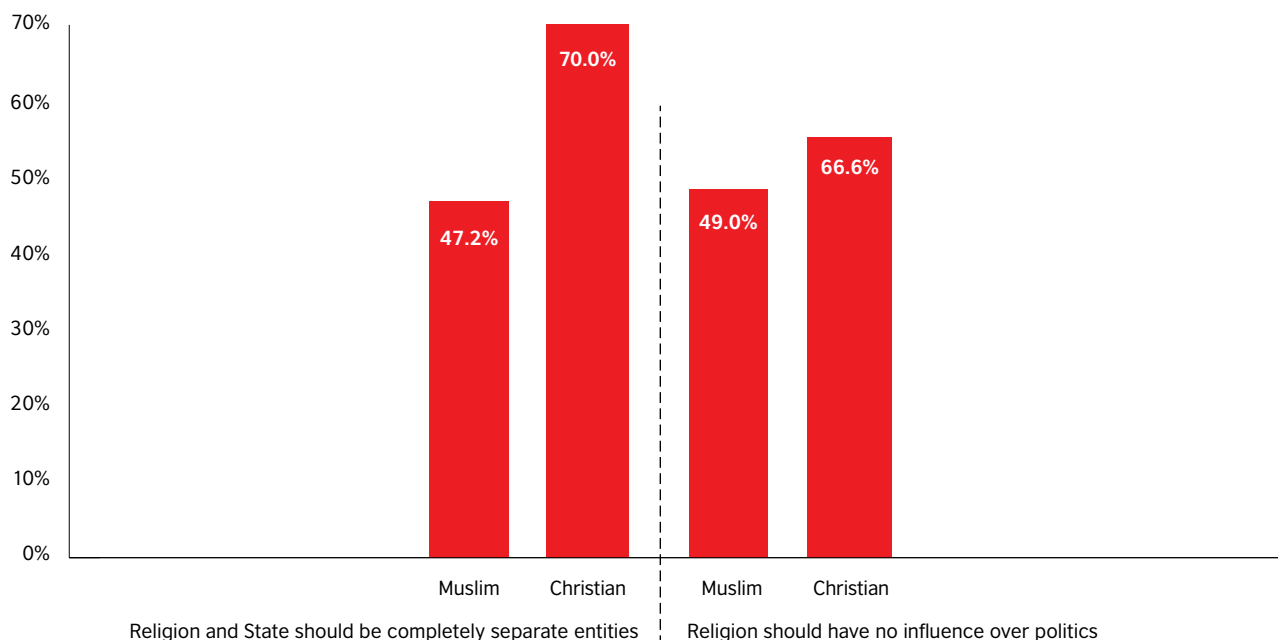


Figure 39: Answers to questions 'religion and state should be completely separate entities' and 'Religion should have no influence over politics'; answers disaggregated by religion



Legally excluded youth and other means of participation

While many young people are disengaged from politics and seek a reformulation of the current system, several demographics of youth in Lebanon are systematically and legally excluded from national political processes.

Youth who are born to a Lebanese mother and a non-Lebanese father are largely excluded from the national political process, as Lebanese mothers are legally unable to pass on their citizenship to their children. The current nationality law issued in 1925 discriminates against women married to foreigners, their children, and spouses by denying

citizenship to the children and husband; affecting almost every aspect of the children's and spouses' lives, including access to work, education, services and political rights. However, many young people disagree with this law. Seventy-seven per cent of youth strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'Women should be able to pass on their Lebanese citizenship to their children.'⁹³ The level of support differs along religious lines, with 88 per cent of surveyed Muslim youth standing in agreement, compared to 68 per cent of surveyed Christian youth (Figure 40), highlighting sectarian differences in opinion. Speculation as to why, may be is due to Lebanon's sectarian power sharing agreement

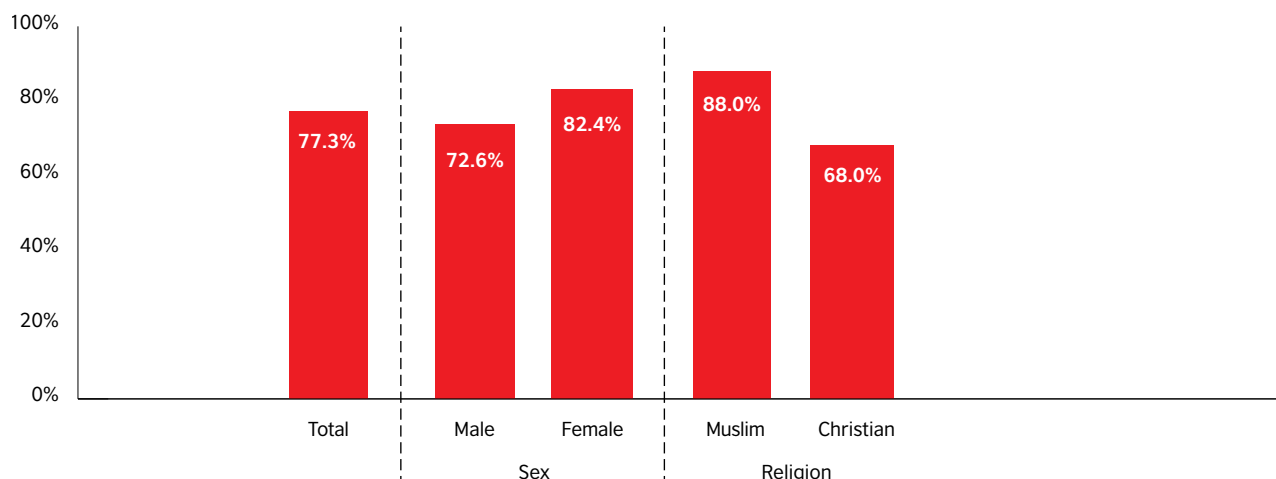
being structured around population demographics – albeit outdated ones – and thus, giving Lebanese nationality to a new segment of the population raises demographic debates. Within our discussions, some participants voiced their support for a change in the law.

I saw a lot of people on TV asking for the Lebanese citizenship if their mother is Lebanese. They have the right to have the Lebanese citizenship since they were born and bred here and their mothers are Lebanese. So that they would have more rights in education, health, job opportunities. It's their right.

Female, 20, Lebanese, South

93 > This question was asked to all youth, N=2089.

Figure 40: Answers to question ‘women should be able to pass on their Lebanese citizenship to their children’; answers disaggregated by sex and religion



A second group excluded from formal political participation are Palestinian communities. Despite most Palestinian youth being born and living their entire lives in Lebanon, they are excluded from the political process. However, they have created their own dynamics – exercised through political parties and NGOs – in the different camps and communities in which they live. Palestinian refugee camps have significant political and security autonomy in Lebanon. Palestinian communities in Lebanon have their own political parties, which are linked to the dominant political parties in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with representatives from the Occupied Palestinian Territory occasionally visiting the camps in Lebanon. However, the Palestinian political sphere in Lebanon has often spilled into armed conflict with violence both inside and outside the camps, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Despite having political autonomy within the camps, some Palestinian youth are demanding rights in Lebanon.

Naturalisation remains a contentious topic for both Palestinians and Lebanese, but many Palestinians are demanding increased civil rights – as was demonstrated in during the labour rights protest in the summer of 2019. Palestinian participants, such as the one below, stated their opinion regarding the need for increased rights.

We also need rights. We are nothing without any rights. Every time we come to talk about something, they tell us we are not allowed to talk because we are Palestinian. I am allowed to talk.
Female, 19, Palestinian, South

Looking at the Syrian community, whilst youth are not allowed to participate in Lebanese politics, occasional engagement with Syrian politics is possible. In 2014, Syrians residing in Lebanon were able to vote in Syria's criticised presidential elections. Alternatively, Syrian youth tend to engage in community and volunteering activities. This is seen as a mechanism to replace their limited political participation in Lebanon. Indeed, many prominent Syrian NGOs operating in Lebanon have been founded since 2011 by Syrian refugees residing in the country and are responsible for relief and humanitarian efforts within their communities, including in education, health, psychosocial and livelihoods.

Discrimination against refugees in Lebanon at political and community levels has continued in various practices since the Covid-19 pandemic. Reports highlight limited awareness of precautionary measures, aid support and access to healthcare, despite international organisation support and government reassurances that refugees will have the same access to healthcare as Lebanese citizens (Hamdan, 2020).

Political apathy and a new source of confidence since October 17

As highlighted above, it is evident that youth communities in Lebanon possess a strong degree of political apathy and thus disengagement due to the political system and the realities of politics in Lebanon. However, a change in this was witnessed both on the ground and in the research data, since the October 17 national uprising.

The survey conducted as part of this study was split almost equally between the periods before and after October 17, 2019, the date when the ongoing national uprising began.⁹⁴ When disaggregated, the survey data pre/post October 17 showed the greatest significance and differentiation.⁹⁵

Since the start of the uprising, 40 per cent of youth, compared to 27 per cent previously, strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, ‘You are very interested by politics in your country.’ Additionally, with interest in politics increasing, support for political parties fell. When asked, ‘Do you support a political party?’ 65 per cent of youth answered ‘No’ post-uprising, compared to 56 per cent of youth prior. Furthermore, support for a new political system has risen. When asked, ‘What do you think

⁹⁴ > 1030 surveys were collected prior to the uprising, and 1059 surveys were collected after the uprising.

⁹⁵ > The pre/post October 17 data include only Lebanese participants because the majority of questions that produced significant differences in the pre/post uprising data were only asked to Lebanese youth (N=1591).

can be done to improve youth participation in politics?', the answers of 'reforming the political system' and 'changing the electoral law' saw a significant rise since the start of the uprising (49 per cent post vs. 38 per cent prior, and 34 per cent post vs. 21 per cent prior, respectively) (Figure 41). In addition to these renewed levels of engagement and interests, the uprising has been viewed as a new platform to voice both their opinions and concerns and to express their anger with the current political status quo. Qualitative discussions that took place post October 17 were often dominated by conversations related to the uprising.

I feel that before the revolution there wasn't much engagement. When the revolution started, a lot of people wanted to learn about politics and now they even know who the politicians are. Maybe what's positive is that before a lot of people were passive and didn't want to know, and now they want to know and be in control of the politics that is happening in Lebanon and to take part.

Female, 29, Lebanese, Beirut

The revolution now is all youth, not people who are 60 years old. Its spirit is young. Everyone who is unemployed has nothing to lose so they're protesting. If you were to ask me last year, for example, I would have told you that I have no hope in Lebanese youth and that they're very indifferent and don't care about anything. But now as I see it, there's hope, there are people who want to change and youths are becoming more responsible.

Female, 21, Lebanese, South

Our generation is more conscious. We're not as scared as our parents. Our parents' generation would not say no to their political leaders. But we would say no when we see injustice. We are more conscious and we are standing up to our parents and to political leaders so we can get our rights and make this revolution work.

Male, 25, Lebanese, Nabatieh

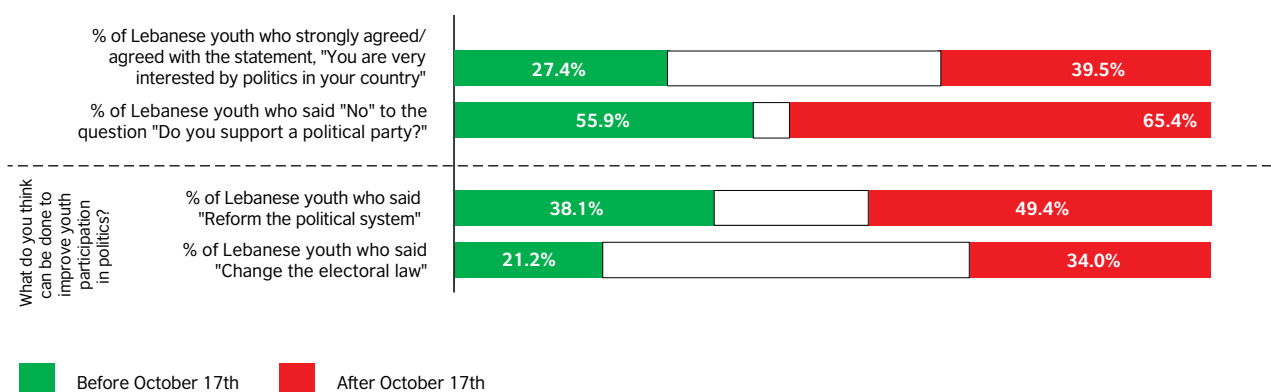
There are also spaces where discussions and debates are happening. For example, how KAFA [a local women's rights NGO] did an exposé on the personal status law because the civic law is different than the personal status one. This is very nice and it should continue even after the revolution. People are talking to each other and debating.

Female, 27, Lebanese, Beirut

You have to ask if it's before or after the revolution. Before the revolution, we reached a point where a young woman or man would look and feel a sort of indifference because they've lost hope. After the revolution, I have a flag in my car as big as the table, I am very happy with it.

Female, 29, Lebanese, Beirut

Figure 41: Youth political engagement, before and after the October 17 uprising



As demonstrated in the footage from the nation-wide protests, youth were at the front of demonstrations. This form of engagement, it seems, has led Lebanese youth to hold more trust in themselves as a collective group and lose trust in the national government. When Lebanese youth were asked, 'Who do you trust to influence the changes you want in Lebanon?' 42 per cent of youth post-uprising stated that young people themselves are the ones to make change for youth in Lebanon compared to 19 per cent prior to October 17 (Figure 43). Similarly, when presented with the statement, 'You trust this government to lead Lebanon in the right direction and make significant changes', agreement with the statement fell from 33 per cent to 20 per cent.⁹⁶

While trust and support in the government, political system, and political parties has decreased since the uprising, youth awareness and engagement has shown signs of growth. After October 17, more youth started to have political discussions with their friends. When asked, 'Thinking about you and your friends, how often do you discuss politics?' 23 per cent answered 'Never' post-uprising compared to 49 per cent prior (Figure 42).

Furthermore, more youth see new possibilities for political engagement since the uprising, including through social media. When presented with the statement, 'If you have a political issue that you want to express, you will post it on social media?' 39 per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement post-uprising compared to 29 per cent prior (Figure 44). Indeed, applications such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook have been crucial for the dissemination of information, planning of events, and coordination by protestors since October 17. Youth participants highlighted the political and community changes that they have witnessed occurring around them since the uprising began.

[...] previously the youth were not allowed to have a voice or a space to express ourselves. It's not just that we didn't have a party, even those who tried, their voices weren't heard correctly. Now, I think it's one of the first times where the youth and people who think differently [...] have a voice and popularity.

Male, 24, Lebanese, Beirut

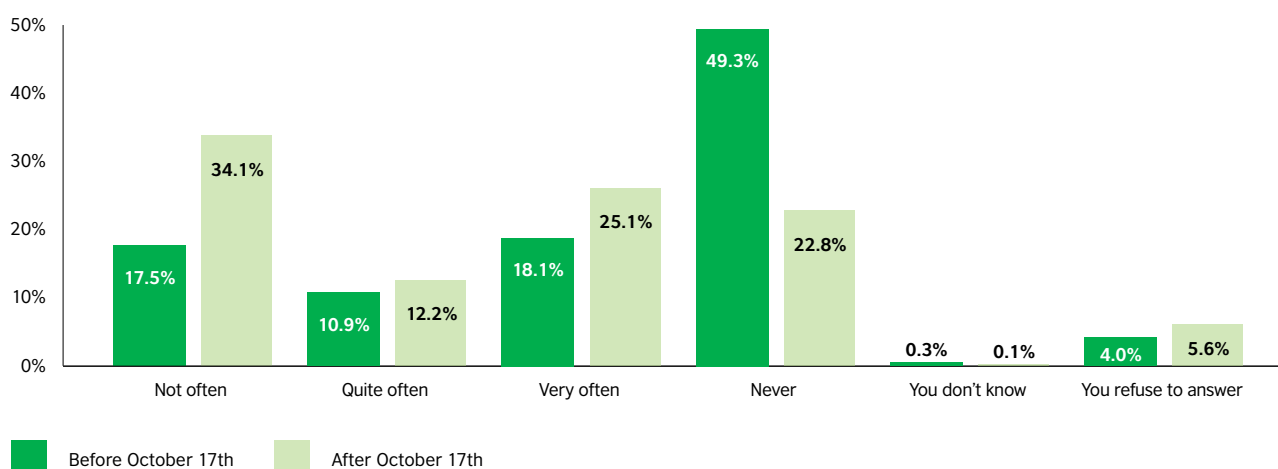
If you notice, there are a few small communities who are working together. People who didn't know each other met in the squares and tried to close the roads. These people are trying to do more than just close the roads, they are trying to mobilise each other to do something bigger for the community. This might evolve later on and become a political movement or at least a social movement.

Female, 27, Lebanese, Beirut

What is nice about the revolution is that every morning they are cleaning the streets and recycling. The first two days, there were some people who were really unexpectedly cleaning and recycling. Maybe, it's a stereotype that I had about them but they were doing that. So, as you said, maybe, if they were given the chance and they were shown that they are part of a community and able to participate equally with the rest and that they are seeing a result. This is why I think it should be more community based.

Female, 29, Lebanese, Beirut

Figure 42: Answers to the question, 'thinking about you and your friends, how often do you discuss politics?' before and after the October 17 uprising



⁹⁶ > Note that this question was asked while the former government of Prime Minister Saad Hariri was still either in power or acting as a caretaker government. The survey was completed before the new government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab took power.

⁹⁷ > Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 11 options.

Figure 43: Top answers to the question, 'who do you trust to influence the changes you want in Lebanon?' before and after the October 17 uprising⁹⁷

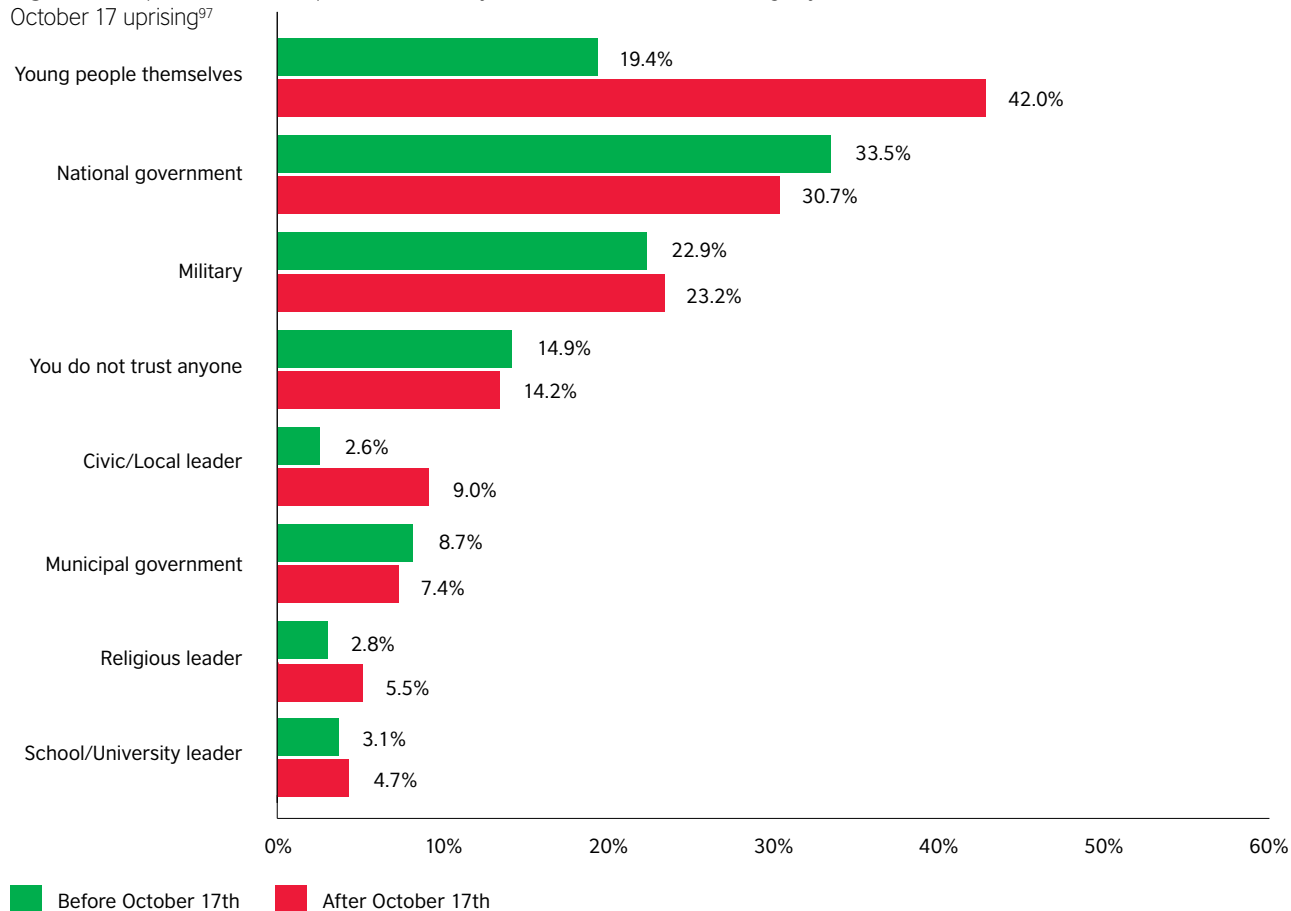
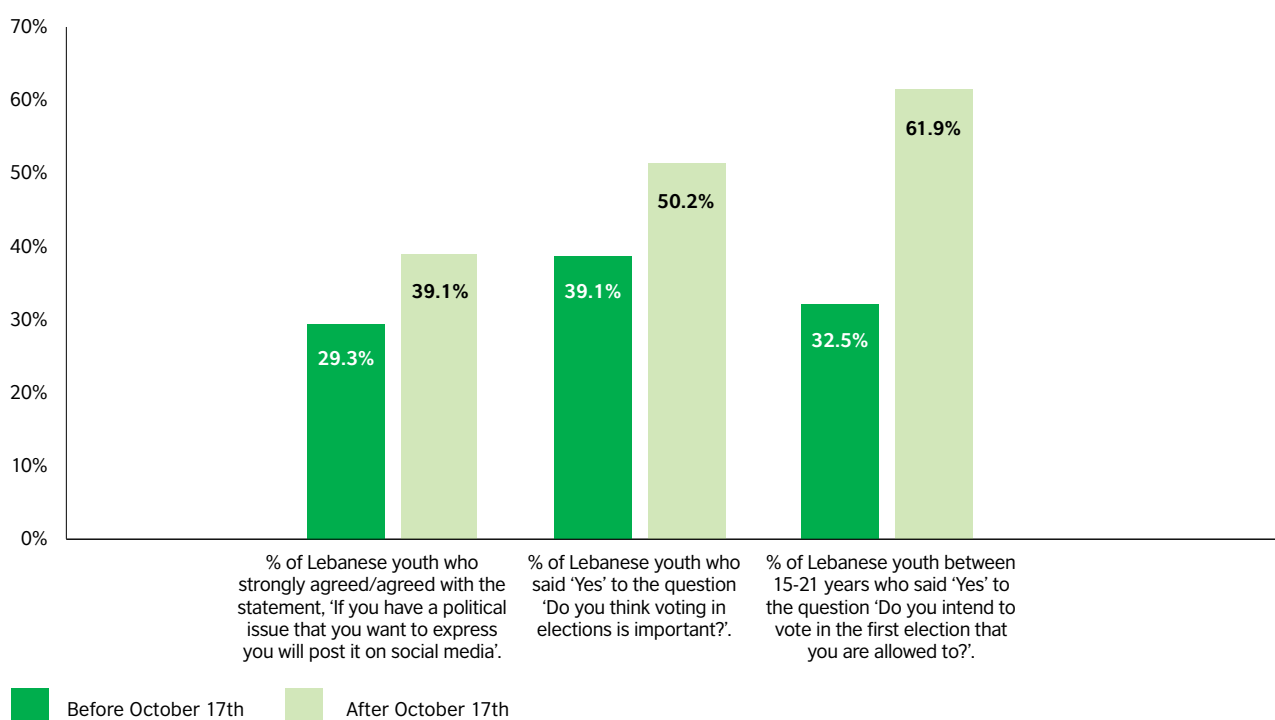


Figure 44: Youth political engagement; before and after the October 17 uprising

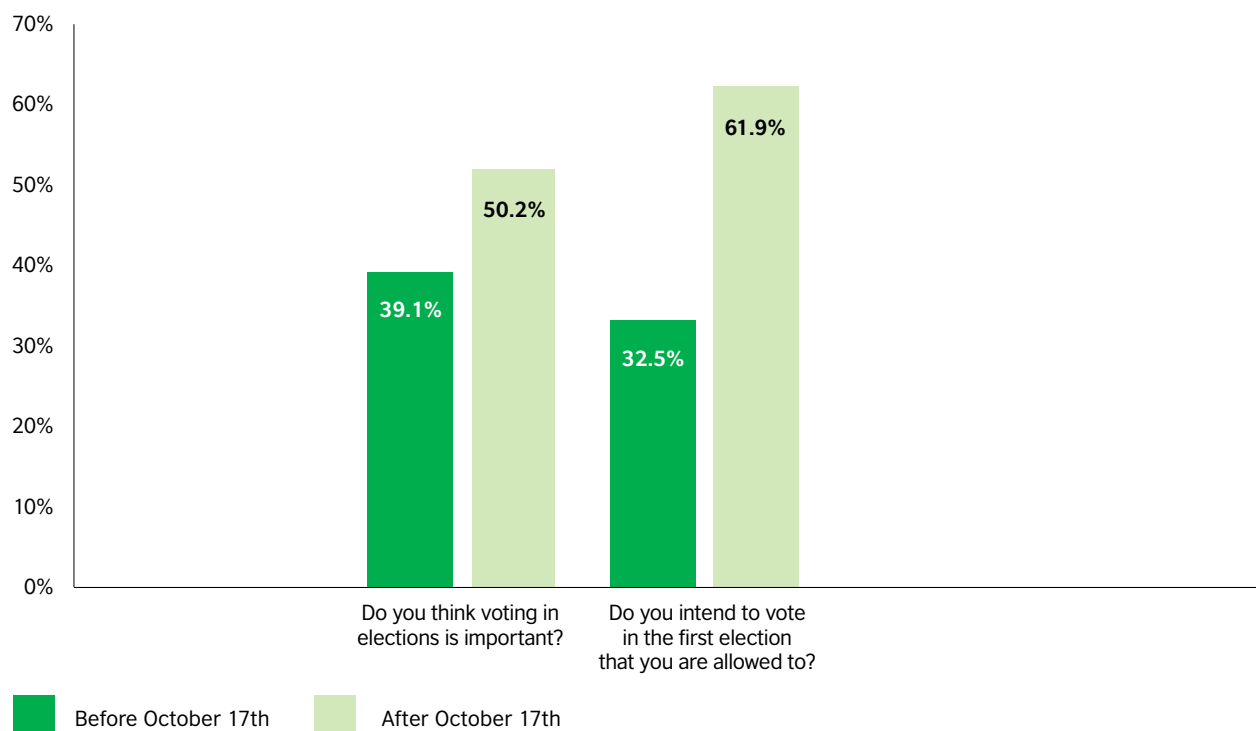


Although the next scheduled elections – both municipal and general – are not until 2022,⁹⁸ apathy surrounding voting is already declining. When asked, ‘Do you think voting in elections is important?’ 50 per cent answered ‘Yes’ post-uprising, compared to 39 per cent pre-uprising. Of youth who are between 15-20 years old, thus under voting age, when asked, ‘Do you intend to vote in the first election that you are allowed to?’ 62 per cent

answered ‘Yes’ since the uprising, compared to a mere 33 per cent pre-uprising (Figure 45). An actual increase in voter turnout, and if those votes are cast in a new direction, will be a strong test for the power of the movement. Furthermore, although the impact of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown has yet to be fully understood in relation to how youth engage with politics and levels of trust between state and society,

in light of this revived sense of confidence and responsibility, there are hints of a continued desire to engage, not be silenced and trust themselves to lead calls for change. The nation-wide lockdown saw youth and activists move discussions online through virtual gatherings and seminars, before defying the lockdown and returning to the streets to protest against the worsening situation exacerbated by the pandemic (Kranz, 2020).

Figure 45: Voting in elections; before and after the October 17 uprising



Awareness of the Taif Accord

Since the end of the Civil War, the Taif Accord has directed the path of the country's politics more than any other agreement. Named after the Saudi Arabian town where the agreement was drafted, the Taif Accord was signed and ratified in 1989 as a celebrated measure to end the country's 15-year Civil War. The agreement sought to achieve national reconciliation among the country's different sectarian groups and thereby made amendments

to articles of the Lebanese constitution, such as limiting the powers of the president of the republic (a Maronite power position) and expanding the powers of the Council of Ministers (led by a Sunni prime minister). Taif tackled not only political equality amongst the sects but also governance and development improvements across Lebanon. The agreement included an annex document that stipulated measures for administrative decentralisation, equal development across the country, and

administrative reforms. While the Taif Accord initially further entrenched sectarianism in Lebanon's political process, it was also intended to eventually abolish the sectarian system, a measure that has failed to materialise in the 30 years of the agreement's implementation.

Despite the monumentality of the accord, when asked, ‘Have you heard of the Taif Accord?’ 47 per cent answered ‘No’ after October 17 and 71 per cent prior (Figure 46).⁹⁹

⁹⁸ > There have been calls and support for early elections, both by some participants in the uprising and politicians, but early elections have not been confirmed at the time of this writing.

⁹⁹ > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089).

In qualitative discussions held prior to the uprising, youth who had heard of the accord had trouble recalling its purpose. Taif has been frequently discussed during the uprising, and thus, the increase in youth awareness regarding the accord was expected. While the signing of the Taif Accord is taught in the civic education courses that are in the curriculum of every school in Lebanon, our qualitative findings show the courses to be ineffective, using outdated material, and therefore not taken seriously by students.

Of youth who had heard of the accord, 64 per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'The Taif Accord was an international agreement imposed on Lebanon that resulted in the consolidation of the influence of other countries in

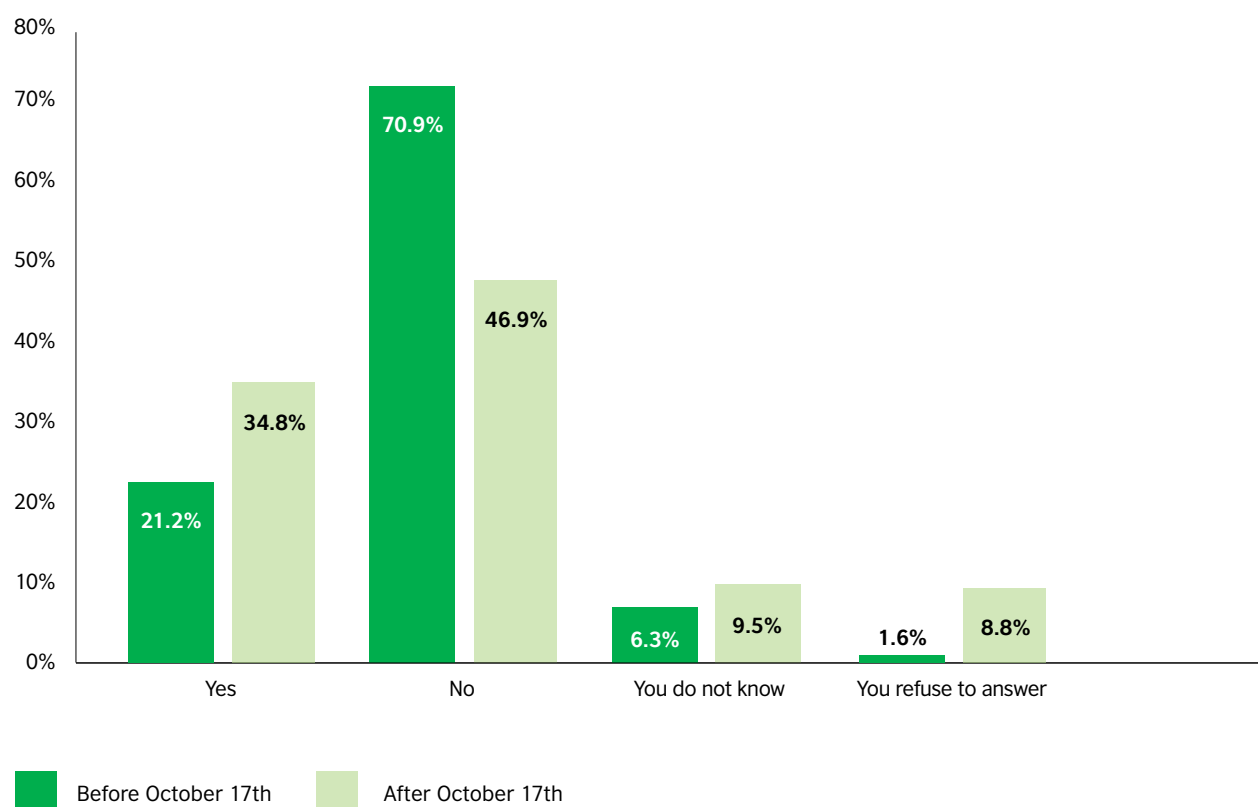
Lebanon.' Similarly, 63 per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'The Taif Accord deepened sectarian schisms in Lebanon.' Finally, 56 per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'The Taif Accord generated a system that was more corrupt than before' (Figure 47). Overall, among youth familiar with the agreement, most have a negative perception of its impact. While Taif succeeded in ending the Civil War, it failed to implement its other objectives, including improved governance and development, and most of all, ending the sectarian system. The uprising of October 17 has seen calls for the dissolution of the agreement, and new debates around Taif have begun, including deliberations on its

replacement. In discussing the Taif Accord with participants, they were largely in agreement with the survey findings, as seen in the quotes below.

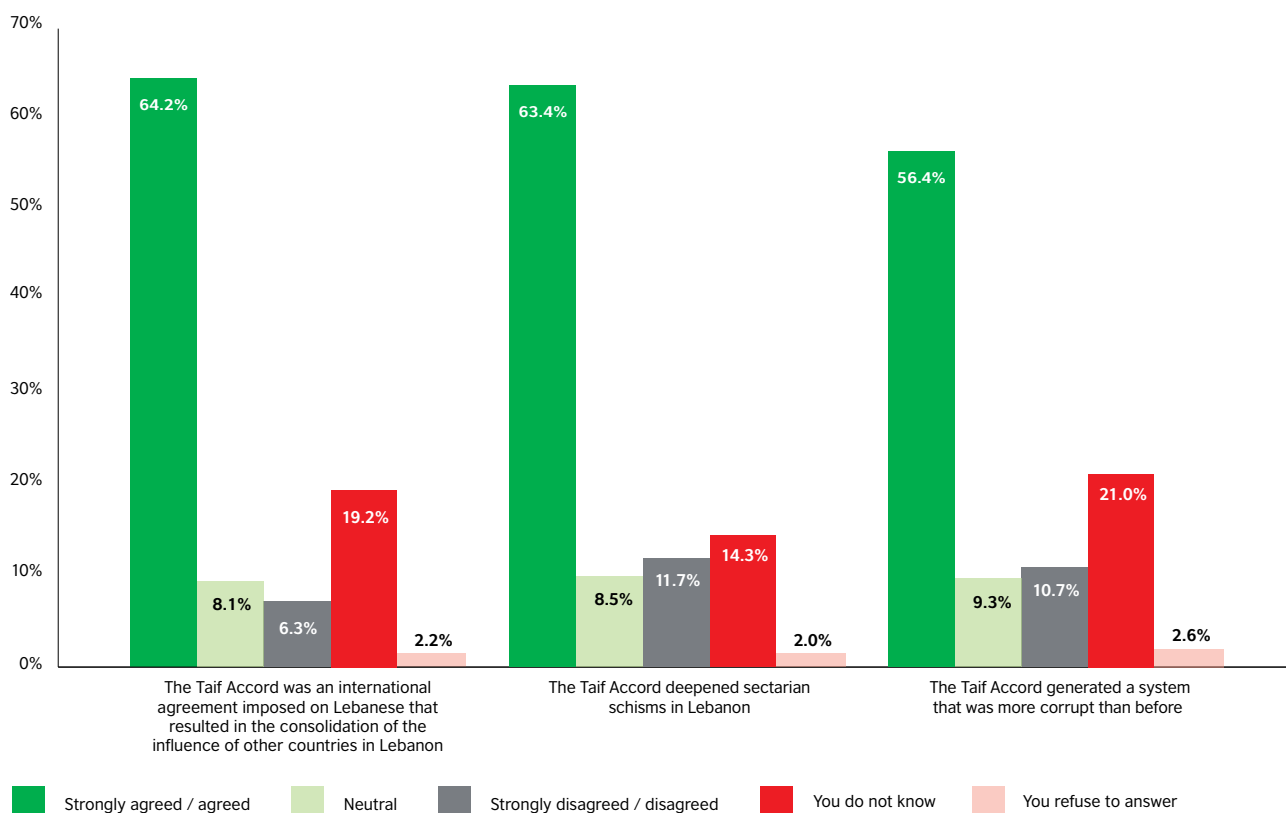
It divided the country into different sects. It created quotas for administrative and political positions. [...] It also protected a lot of criminals.
Male, 25, Lebanese, Nabatieh

They did it after war as a solution to divide the different sects and that each one takes a share of the government. For me, personally I believe it's the worst thing you might do to a country, to divide people and to put shares based on sects.
Male, 27, Lebanese, Beirut

Figure 46: Answers to the question, 'have you heard of the Taif accord?'¹⁰⁰



¹⁰⁰ > This question was asked to Lebanese youth (N=1591).

Figure 47: Youth who heard of the Taif accord (N=495)

Civic and political participation and the need for a new social contract

In light of the highlighted findings and in the changing context in which this research took place, it is evident that there is a unified understanding of a disconnect between young people in Lebanon (across socio-economic, religious and national divides) and the political system that governs the country. Thirty years ago, the Taif Accord sought to establish a new social contract between the new government of the country and its citizens. Although this accord was agreed upon by the country's political factions, there was no additional national reconciliation at the societal level. The agreement that was supposed to modernise the country by making it more democratic and transparent failed to do so. Instead, thirty years later, the country is facing a banking, financial, and debt crisis, with an accompanied national uprising and the impact of a global pandemic.

For youth in particular, the data generated from the study show that they are disconnected from the political system, with substantial segments believing in the need for its reform. Whilst there have been previous efforts and policies developed to target and benefit youth specifically, such as the National Youth Policy of 2012, little has come to fruition. The youth policy included a set of measures and recommendations that revolved around five sectors: demographic properties and emigration, education and culture, social integration and political participation, employment and economic participation, and health. However, the recommendations were never implemented due to the legislative paralysis that took place shortly after endorsement. When surveyed youth were asked if they had ever heard of the National Youth Policy, only 14 per cent answered 'Yes'. This information highlights that even efforts that are specifically

designed to target and communicate with youth are ineffective, and youth in Lebanon continue to be unreachable by both the political system and their communities. Based on the above findings, this study raises some intriguing questions on the need for a new social contract, especially in light of the October 17 uprising and the current political landscape. Further, any new social contract, or policies that target youth, must also analyse how to best engage with youth in meaningful discussions where they are not only participants but also engaged leaders. A new social contract, unlike Taif, should result in increased youth participation in a new political system and encourage political party engagement with youth that beyond sectarian divides and allows for the frustrations and challenges voiced throughout the protest and Covid-19 pandemic, to be acknowledged.



> Effect of violence and conflict on the youth in Lebanon

Introduction

Over the decades, Lebanon as a country and society has experienced various degrees of intra- communal violence and international conflict. As mentioned previously, the 15-year Civil War and the Taif Accord have set the tone for many of the experiences and livelihoods young people have faced since 1990. Since then, conflicts such as the 2005 assassination of Rafiq Hariri followed by other political assassinations, as well as bombings and attacks; 2006 Israeli War; 2007 Fatah Al-Islam clashes with the Lebanese Armed Forces in Nahr Al-Bared (northern Lebanon); May 2008 clashes in the western part of Beirut and outside the capital between Sunni and Shia factions; 2012 fighting between sectarian factions in the Jabal Mohsen and Bab Al-Tabbaneh neighbourhoods of Tripoli, with more sporadic fighting from 2013-2014;

multiple terrorist attacks from 2013-2015 across Lebanon resulting in hundreds of casualties; and the ongoing Syrian conflict have shaped political and social life in Lebanon.

The last decade saw the rise of a number of militant groups, some of which were also recruited in Lebanon or entered the country through the porous border with Syria. Various violent confrontations have taken place in the last decade between the Lebanese Armed Forces and groups such as al-Nursa Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This included a series of car bombings in 2013 and 2014 and the Battle of Aarsal in August of 2014 that saw a peak in fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Nursa and ISIS. Some regional areas of Lebanon experience more frequent outbreaks of violence related to sect, politics, or organised crime, and are often negatively stereotyped by this reality.

To better understand these experiences and their impact on youth communities, Next Generation Lebanon asked a series of questions looking at conflict and violence at both macro (national) and micro (societal) levels.

Macro level: The civil war, regional conflicts and their impact

The youth surveyed in this study lived through many of the above-mentioned conflicts and are no strangers to the eruption of armed conflict in Lebanon. While none of them lived through the Civil War, memories of that 15-year war linger. Our study raised questions about the impact of the Civil War to see its effects on Lebanon's young generation. Lebanese youth were divided when presented with the statement, 'The generation that lived through the Civil War has different views of society in Lebanon to you.'¹⁰¹



Fifty-six per cent of all Lebanese youth strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 33 per cent of youth strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'young people in Lebanon today are still affected by the Civil War' (Figure 48).¹⁰² Interestingly, and perhaps encouragingly, it is the youngest age group of 15-18 years old that feels least affected by the history of the Civil War (Figure 49). The above statistics reveal that although there is progress in how Lebanese youth relate to the history of the war in comparison to their parents, there remains a significant portion of the young population that feels the burden of the country's past. While only 33 per cent of young people believe the youth are still affected by the Civil War, the majority believe that the Taif Accord impacts them negatively in numerous ways, as discussed in Chapter 3. The accord itself is a lingering

element of the Civil War, meant to end the fighting and to bring about a reconciliation that many argued has failed at the societal level. Thus, one might argue that the accord itself is keeping the young generation tied to the past and has further normalised sectarianism. Throughout our discussions with youth across Lebanon, they frequently discussed the generational differences between them and their parents regarding their relationship to memories of the war and how this shapes their outlook on the country today, as well as the need for collective reconciliation.

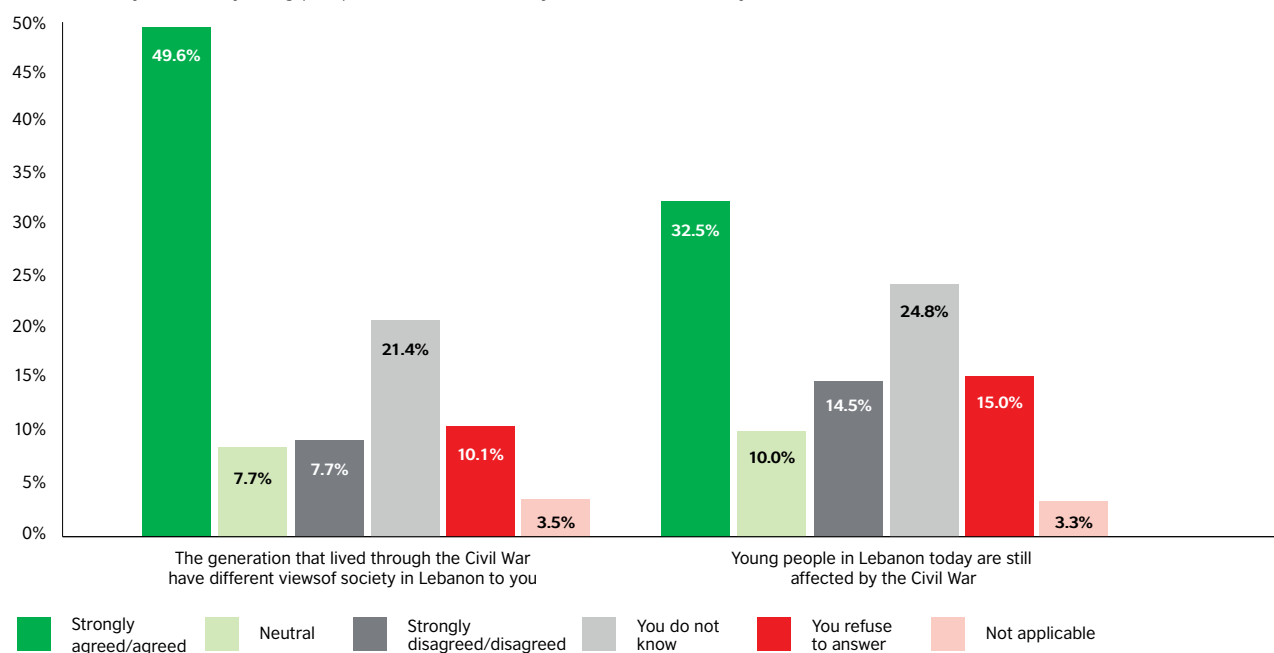
The mentality has changed. The idea is that we have seen how much our parents suffered from everything they've been through, that's why we don't accept to live the same way they lived. In my opinion, neither me nor the youth in this generation accept to return to war.

Female, 22, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

It [the Civil War] remains as fear in the back of their [parents'] minds, 'what would happen if we turned into a secular government'. They also transfer this fear to us, even if I am not sectarian and I don't care about religion, they still give me this fear somehow. I feel that our parents' generation is not really willing to take this step while we are trying but maybe the future and younger generation might be more leaning towards a secular government. But our parents' generation are still stuck.

Male, 29, Lebanese, Beirut

Figure 48: Agreement scale for the statements, 'the generation that lived through the Civil War has different views of society in Lebanon to you.' and 'young people in Lebanon today are still affected by the Civil War'.¹⁰³

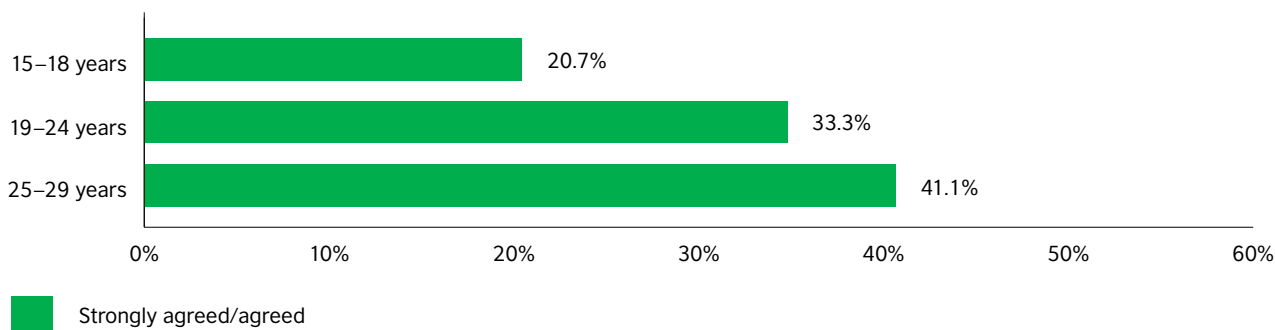


101 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089). Participants were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement. Other choices included 'You do not know' and 'You refuse to answer'.

102 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089). Participants were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement. Other choices included 'You do not know' and 'You refuse to answer'.

103 > These questions were asked to all youth (N=2089).

Figure 49: Agreement scale for the statement, ‘young people in Lebanon today are still affected by the Civil War.’; answers disaggregated by age¹⁰⁴



As mentioned in previous chapters, family is a key source of information regarding history, culture and is seen as a key figure in youth definitions of community. Regarding the war, again family are instrumental in providing information to young people in Lebanon. For more alternative perspectives, youth also increasingly use media, especially social media, to learn about their history, as evident in the quotes below.

We learned about the war] from our history, from our parents. And each person has his own perceptions about the Civil War, depending on what his parents have lived, or it depends on his religious sects, or parents' political affiliation.

Male, 20, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

Media talks about the memory of war. Also, parents and community, we have people who died during war. [We learn about it] from our parents, our environment, and our community.

Male, 21, Lebanese, Beqaa

I did not learn [about the Civil War] at school or university, but in society, it's present in each one of us. I've heard about it in several places in society and even on Facebook. There are a lot of platforms that post videos and documentaries about it. This is how I formed my idea of it.

Male, 22, Lebanese, North

Thinking of the time since the war and recent conflicts, when asked, ‘How would you characterise tensions in Lebanon in comparison to 10 years ago?’ 58 per cent of surveyed youth answered much worse or worse.¹⁰⁵ The rise in tensions is perceived to be primarily fuelled by sectarian divisions at the community level, with 34 per cent agreeing with this (Figure 50).¹⁰⁶ Alarming, 52 per cent of youth strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, ‘Tensions between different Lebanese sects are getting worse’.¹⁰⁷

Thinking about previous findings, such as youth understandings themselves to be less affected by the war and being

more tolerant to other religions, it is unsurprising that youth view sectarian divisions, political corruption, and the political system as being the key causes behind a rise in tensions. These are the same causes that sparked previous conflicts. As to be seen in the next section on micro level experiences and perceptions of violence and conflict, the two levels are interconnected, with localised experiences of violence being influenced and influencing national issues and conflicts.

When you take advantage of people's labour power and they live in poverty, they would have to resort to political leaders or certain people of authority who would take advantage of them [...] and maybe make them engaged in armed violence.

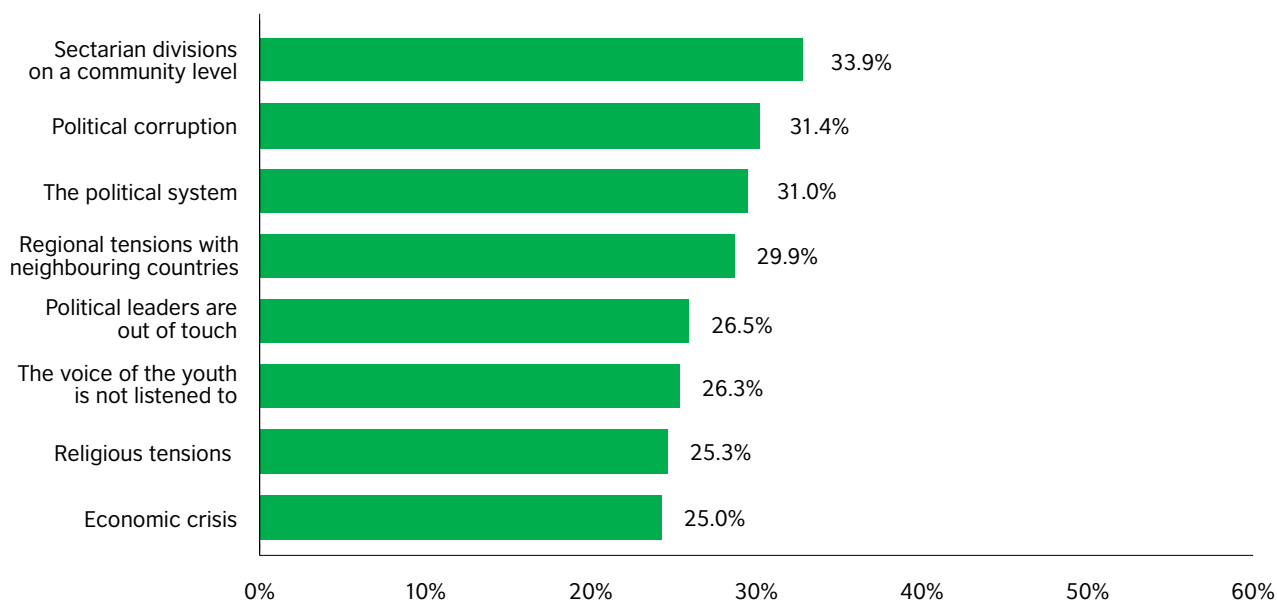
Female, 24, Lebanese, Saida

¹⁰⁴> This question was asked to all youth (N=2089).

¹⁰⁵> This question was asked only to 20-29-year-old Lebanese and Palestinian youth due to the timeframe presented in the question, as the majority of Syrian youth had not lived in Lebanon for 10 years or more. N=1222

¹⁰⁶> This question was asked to all youth, N=2089. Youth were asked to select all that apply from a list of 8 options.

¹⁰⁷> This question was asked to all participants, N=2089. Participants were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement. Other choices included ‘You do not know’ and ‘You refuse to answer’.

Figure 50: Answers to the question, 'what factors might contribute to Lebanon experiencing war again?'¹⁰⁸

Micro level: Gender-based violence, violence in schools, and interpersonal conflicts

Looking at the micro level, Next Generation Lebanon aimed to gain a better understanding of conflict and violence in regard to gender, violence in schools, and interpersonal conflicts. Due to the sensitivity of the topics, they were discussed and brought up by participants during qualitative discussions, rather than through the nation-wide survey. In some discussions, participants identified domestic violence to be of particular concern in regard to more intimate experiences of violence. They linked domestic violence to additional concerns, particularly poverty and financial struggles, and considered it to have ripple effects including negative psychological effects, depression, and further aggression.

Participants also discussed violence and bullying in schools experienced by students at the hands of other students and teachers. Within the survey, of youth who dropped out of school, while 3 per cent reported the reason to be harassment/punishment at school, when disaggregating by nationality, this rose to 18 per cent among Palestinian youth who had dropped out of school, as previously discussed in Chapter 2.

I think domestic violence is the toughest. Maybe the financial situation of the parents isn't good. The father doesn't work much for example and it might affect the children. So, they [the parents] might abuse their children whether it's verbal or physical and the child himself might also become violent at school with his peers or with his teachers. So, it would create big problems. This is very common in schools.
Female, 25, Lebanese, Nabatieh

Within a national context, women and girls are protected by the Law No. 293 of 2014 on Protection of Women and other Family Members from Domestic Violence, although the law should be strengthened by clarifying that it criminalises marital rape. A bill that proposes amendments to improve the law has been drafted but is yet to be considered by Parliament (UNDP, 2018). Overall, one in four women in Lebanon are subject to some kind of sexual assault, and an average of 13 women report sexual assaults to the police every month, although the unreported incidents of sexual and overall gender based violence are likely higher (ABAAD, 2018).

108 > This question was asked to all youth, N=2089. Youth were asked to select all that apply from a list of 8 options.

Other categories of domestic and micro level violence that were not explicitly mentioned by participants but have received national and international attention include violence against domestic migrant workers and corporal punishment in schools (Amnesty International, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2019; Mansour and Suha, 2012; Save the Children, 2019). Reasons as to why these were not mentioned and/or what youth feel about these seek further study. As with many other countries facing nation-wide lockdowns due to Covid-19, additional resources have been developed to support women and children in abusive households in Lebanon. With steep rises in calls to domestic abuse hotlines during the initial weeks of the lockdown, it is evident that domestic violence witnessed by youth continues to be an issue needing to be addressed (Azhari, 2020a).

Participants highlighted a multitude of effects result from both the micro and macro levels of violence, particularly increased poverty, negative psychological consequences, damage and destruction of the built environment, and a continued cycle of a culture of violence. Indeed, most youth in Lebanon have witnessed effects of violence, at a minimum through the many buildings and infrastructure across the country still bearing the scars of armed conflicts. Discussions with youth showed that they are aware of a culture of violence that is evident across the country. Youth who participated in this research often linked the macro and micro levels of violence, discussing domestic violence and political violence in one sentence.

Religion, poverty, politics, sectarianism, ignorance, unemployment, external involvement: there are other countries that are playing with our [country]. They sell us weapons because it's profitable for their economy, by doing so they are promoting conflicts in Lebanon.

Female, 27, Lebanese, Beirut

Nowadays people kill so easily. Even if they were just fighting over a parking spot or for anything. Just like the person who died in the revolution.

Male, 18, Lebanese, Nabatieh

Youth involvement in armed violence

The possibility of children and youth becoming involved in armed conflict and violence exists not only in times of war, but is already a reality for some youth in Lebanon, translating this national concern into everyday lived experiences, and something perceived by young Palestinians in Lebanon in particular. Currently, children involved in armed violence are most common in Palestinian refugee camps across the country, as well as other regions of the country where children are driven towards armed violence by politics, community, family, organised crime, and societal expectations (UNICEF, 2018). Palestinian youth in Lebanon face a distinct environment of conflict and violence that is particular to the refugee camps where they reside and related to internal political and militant factions. Only 13 per cent of Palestinian youth strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'Palestinian camps are a safe place for a child to grow up in.'¹⁰⁹

Palestinian youth in the Palestinian discussions addressed the reality of armed violence, particularly related to poverty and internal politics, in the camps.

There are political parties and factions, as well as people who are armed and have power at the camp.

Female, 24, Palestinian, South

There are politics in the camp, those who follow Fateh and those who follow Hamas. No matter which [party the individual belongs to], by the fact that he is guarding and has a weapon and is a party follower, he would step on the normal people.

Male, 20, Palestinian, South

Firstly because of poverty [youth join armed groups]. They [armed groups] give the youth weaponry and give them 15,000 LBP¹¹⁰ for example, so this is an income. Second, this is a mean for having power. A person who has weapons will not feel any danger inside the [Palestinian refugee] camp. Especially that the camp, unfortunately, is known for its numerous conflict occurrences. So, the one who has a weapon is the winner.

Female, 24, Palestinian, South

¹⁰⁹> While the question was asked to all youth, the data here are presented only for Palestinian participants (N=238).

¹¹⁰> 10 USD at the official exchange rate of 1,515 LBP to 1 USD.

Although Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 and has demonstrated dedication to ameliorating the condition of children and safeguarding their welfare, children and youth are still involved in armed violence in the country. The condition of children has practically and legislatively improved in Lebanon since the end of the Civil War in 1990, when children's involvement in armed violence was more common.

Social factors, such as high levels of poverty and unemployment, can also be drivers of violence, especially in marginalised areas. Within the survey, participants overwhelmingly viewed poverty as a risk that raises individuals' likelihood to engage in armed violence or to hold more radical ideas. Eighty-one per cent of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'Unemployment increases the likelihood that a young person will become involved in armed violence/conflict,' and 72 per cent of participants strongly agreed and agreed with the statement, 'Poor young people are more at risk of radicalisation.' Within the current context of increased youth unemployment and national poverty rates, addressing the issue of violence within Lebanon's complex context should stem not only from a security approach but also extend to address socio-economic and political approaches.

Violence and conflict and the need for a new social contract

As is evident from the above discussion, violence and conflict continues to be present in the daily lives and consciousness of youth in Lebanon. Due to the long history and very real experiences of conflict and violence at both micro and macro levels, any new social contract must address issues of conflict and violence from security, socio-economic, and political perspectives, and take measures to protect youth and all of Lebanon's residents and citizens. Many efforts to do so link with discussions in previous chapters on the need for a new political system and the establishment of basic rights for everyone in the country.

At a macro level, Lebanon's young generation still fears the possibility of violent conflicts occurring in their country due to its fragile political and security situation. Lebanon's political life has long been correlated with sectarian tensions that have a history of erupting and manifesting at the community level. Memories associated with the Civil War still haunt the minds of not only the citizens who passed through it but also the young generation. At a micro level, youth are vulnerable to violence in schools, domestic violence, and gender-based violence.

While these issues affect individuals personally, their widespread occurrence is of national concern and continues to be so during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although more remains to be done, the Lebanese government, often supported by engaged stakeholders – especially Lebanese civil society – has made laudable gains in gender-based violence and child protection.

> Youth aspirations, dreams and a global outlook

Introduction

In this chapter, Next Generation Lebanon reflects on the dreams and hopes of young people in Lebanon. What is evident is that youth aspirations and dreams revolve primarily around a desire to build a future for themselves in Lebanon, although the current political and economic situation provides numerous barriers to obtaining this. As such, young people are faced with a difficult predicament: do they continue through their struggles at home or seek a brighter future abroad, away from their friends, family, and country? In addition to their hopes and dreams inside Lebanon, and conversations around challenges and migration, this chapter also examines youth's views of other countries and how they influence Lebanon.

Since data collection and the Covid-19 pandemic, Lebanon and the wider world has seen one impact of this being a near-total freeze of human movement with many airports, ports, and borders closing to non-citizens or essential travel. With the medium- and long-term implications and the future of life both inside and outside of Lebanon remaining to be seen, further research will be needed to explore youth aspirations and dreams in a different world and Lebanon that may emerge.

Dreams and hopes of a better Lebanon

The common set of struggles faced by youth in their daily lives – as outlined in Chapter 2 – is linked to the common set of hopes and dreams that youth hold for their lives in Lebanon.

Evident in the quotes below, youth aspire to gain unsurprising needs, such as a house, a car, and the ability to support their families. This set of aspirations reveals that youth do not feel that even the most basic foundations of a quality life are guaranteed to them in the current environment of the country. This set of hopes and dreams is not linked to young people's abilities or determination but the need for a new foundation in the country that includes laws, policies, and structures that result in a higher quality of life and the ability for young people to obtain such standards.

Our aspirations and dreams are a job, a house, a car, being able to provide food. I don't want a Ferrari, just a simple car. Those are my dreams. Whereas we are working here, we can't afford all of that, all we do is pay rent. We can't go out or do anything.
Male, 19, Syrian, North

For example, if I had a job or a ready house then I wouldn't have to go and block roads [during demonstrations]. It has nothing to do with being Syrian. If I had a job or a house I wouldn't block roads or anything.
Male, 20, Syrian, North

All young people want to reach stability in life. Those who are studying want to find a job, and those who have a job want their salaries to last until the end of the month. All youth want to escape this atmosphere: lack of jobs, staying home all the time, conflicts. We want to see a calm and beautiful life.
Male, 22, Lebanese, North

While most youth discussed personal hopes and dreams, at the national level, youth aspired for Lebanon to become better to provide increased opportunities for youth and all residents of the country. Paramount to this coming to fruition, however, is the importance of peace. When the statement 'Maintaining peace in your country is of the utmost importance to you' was put to young people, 93 per cent strongly agreed or agreed. Conversely, previous chapters discussed that youth believe that tensions in the country are rising. In our discussions, youth described a vision of Lebanon that would meet their individual aspirations. Some even mentioned specific government policies that are needed to realise those dreams.

We dream to live in a Lebanon where there are job opportunities, there is absence of corruption and connections (wasta). We would like to see new skilled youth that represent us as ministers and President of the Republic. In addition, we dream to have free medical and education services, and to have access to 24/7 electricity and water. [...] In sum, we dream to have our rights in Lebanon.
Female, 22, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

[Youth dream] to have a country that accepts them and, in a way, they should feel like they're giving to a country that's also giving things back to them. Also, to live decently, to have a good financial situation, good health, and to be able to have fun and not be stressed out all the time.

Male, 25, Lebanese, Nabatieh

Challenges and struggles

Building on previous discussions of challenges faced in the country, young people in Lebanon were asked specifically what are the challenges that get in the way of achieving their potential.¹¹¹ Unsurprisingly, the lack of employment opportunities, financial difficulties, corruption, and overall hardships in life were all highlighted as key challenges (Figure 51). When disaggregating the data by nationality, 50 per cent of Palestinian youth in particular find discrimination to be a key challenge hindering achievement of their full potential, which is significantly higher than for Lebanese youth (28 per cent) and Syrian youth (13 per cent).¹¹² Nationality presents many barriers for non-Lebanese youth, due to access to employment, services and rights being tied to citizenship. Syrian refugees in Lebanon require a sponsor in order to obtain a work permit and are able to work only in the construction, agriculture, and cleaning sectors with data demonstrating that only 4 per cent hold a work contract (Leaders for Sustainable Livelihoods, 2019). While Palestinians' access to employment has slightly improved in recent years, they still encounter difficulties in obtaining work permits. In this context, only 14 per cent of Palestinian youth have employment contracts (UNRWA, 2017). This concern was raised by a Palestinian participant.

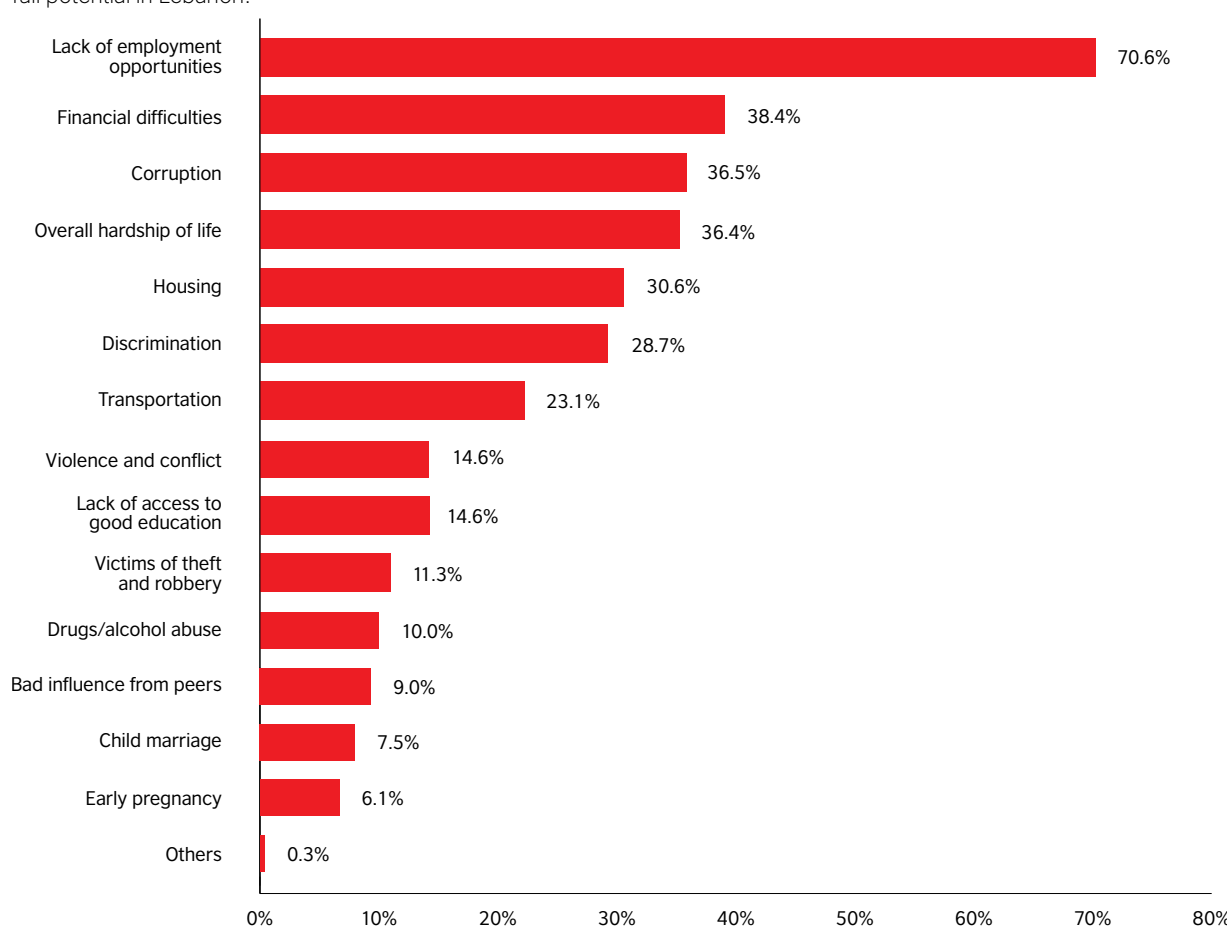
As Palestinian refugees, we are deprived of our rights. As soon as you show your identity, the person's impression of you would change. [...] you do not have the right to have the career you dream of.
Female, 24, Palestinian, South

Youth hold various people and entities as responsible for addressing these challenges. When asked, 'Who do you think is most responsible for addressing those challenges?' they chose society as a whole and the government most frequently (Figure 52).¹¹³ The answers demonstrate that society and the government have failed to provide youth with the necessary means to fulfil their aspirations and are not supportive of the youth population in Lebanon.

This information links to opinions and perceptions held by youth regarding the failure of the political system and the Taif Accord in previous chapters. Again, we see another indication of the need for a new social contract that does not limit youth aspirations and fulfils its obligations in working towards the development of Lebanon. This sentiment was detailed by a participant.

First of all, the person should trust his country, and in return his country should be capable of responding to his needs. If the person is able to find employment and earn money, he wouldn't want to leave the country. It's rare to find individuals who want to immigrate for other reasons. The government should provide the needs of the people, so that they wouldn't leave. We need retirement plans, if someone over 60 years old is not married and is retired and has gotten sick, who would take care of them?
Female, 23, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

Figure 51: Answers to the question, 'as a young person, what would you say are the challenges that get in the way of fulfilling your full potential in Lebanon?'¹¹⁴

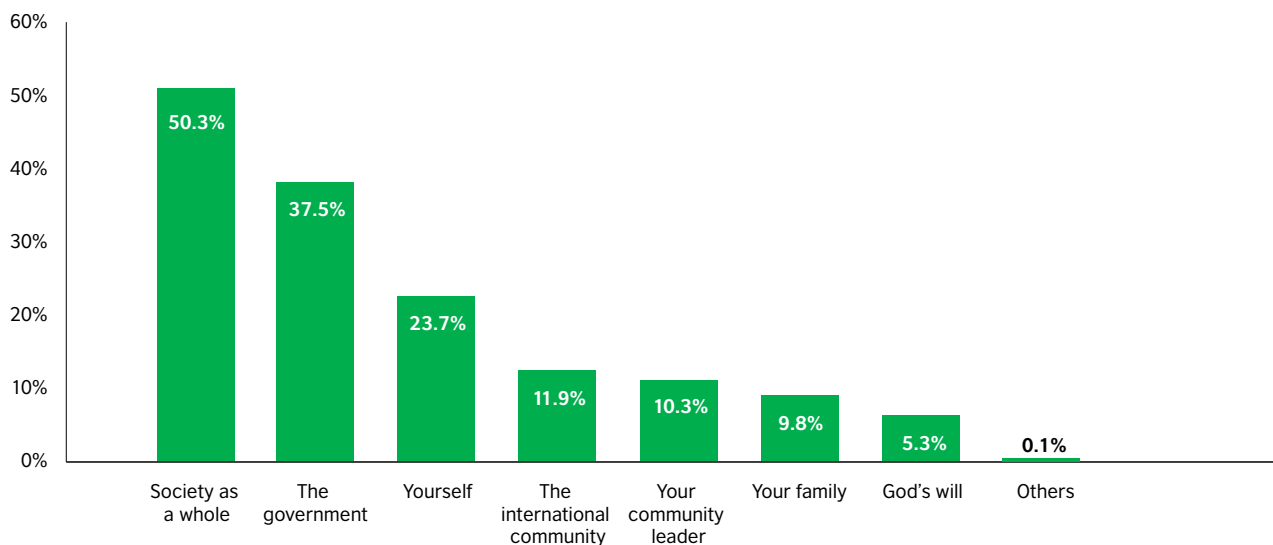


111 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089). Question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 14 options.

112 > Lebanese N=1591, Syrian N=260, Palestinian N=238.

113 > This question was a follow-up to 'As a young person, what would you say are the challenges that get in the way of fulfilling your full potential in Lebanon?' The question was asked to all youth (N=2089) and youth were instructed to select all that apply from a list of 7 options.

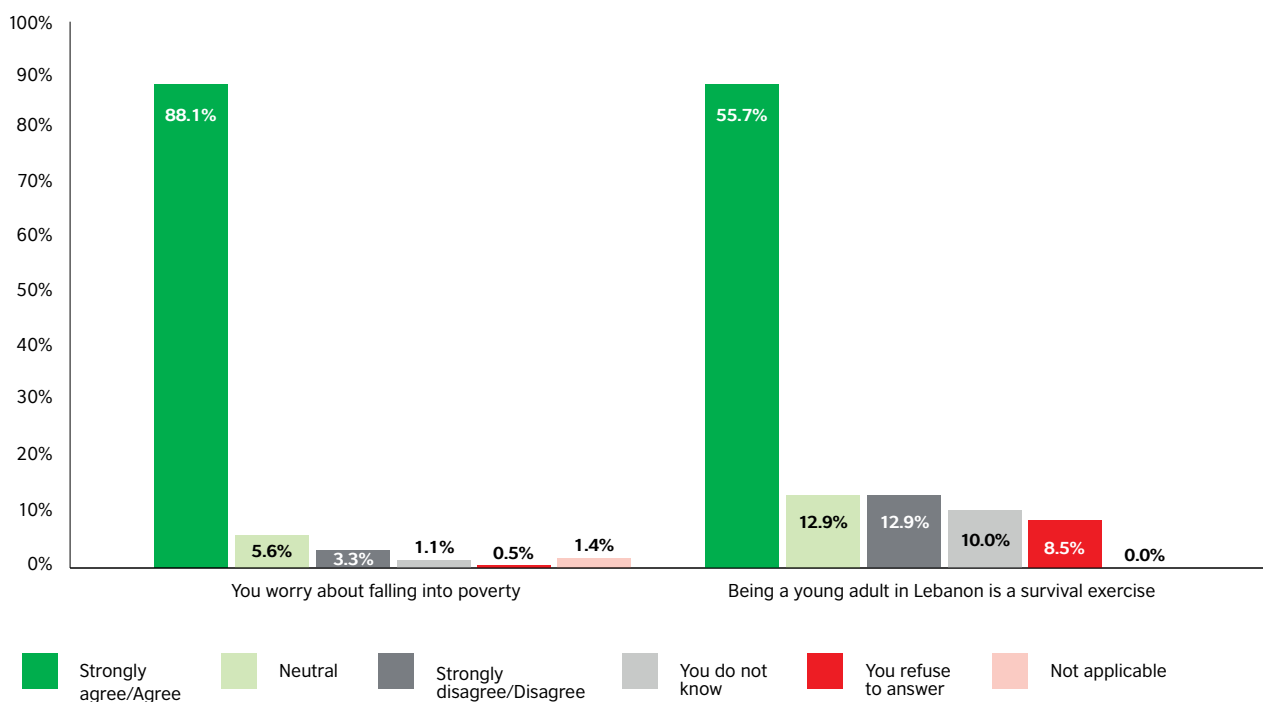
114 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089). Question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 14 options.

Figure 52: Answers to the question, 'who do you think is most responsible for addressing those challenges?'¹¹⁵

Overall, due to the multitude of challenges that stand in the way of youth aspirations – particularly low employment opportunities that lead to financial difficulties and overall hardship – many young people see themselves facing an unpredictable and insecure future. Eighty-eight per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'You worry about falling into poverty.'¹¹⁶ Further, another 56 per cent

of youth agreed with the statement, 'Being a young adult in Lebanon is a survival exercise' (Figure 53).¹¹⁷ This is especially evident in the context of the severe economic situation that Lebanon is currently experiencing and as youth unemployment is likely to climb further in the current crisis. One participant expressed her persistent worry over employment.

The most important thing is that you are always worried about losing your job and fear of reaching the point where you won't have any resources anymore, as in getting to a point where you won't have an income anymore.
Female, 22, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

Figure 53: Agreement scale for the statements, 'you worry about falling into poverty' and 'being a young adult in Lebanon is a survival exercise'

Mirroring discussions around the importance of connections, or *wasta*, qualitative discussions highlighted the role of socio-economic class strongly influencing their ability to achieve their hopes and dreams. The listed barriers to young people's aspirations formed an intertwined web, where each obstacle led to another. Although some barriers – such as low employment opportunities – are present for all youth in the country, other obstacles – such as financial difficulties – are not present for wealthier individuals. Therefore, the aspirations of youth from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be realised. Youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are also more likely to have *wasta* with more influential individuals, often due to the social and professional circles of their parents. This eliminates or minimises many of the barriers otherwise faced by youth. Furthermore, the reality that youth from more privileged economic backgrounds face different barriers to their goals also leads them to hold a different set of aspirations altogether. The common dreams of a house, a car, and the ability to support their families are likely already realities for wealthier youth due to their economic status.

I think it depends on the socio-economic status; I think wealthy people have different aspirations than the poor.

Female, 19, Lebanese, Beirut

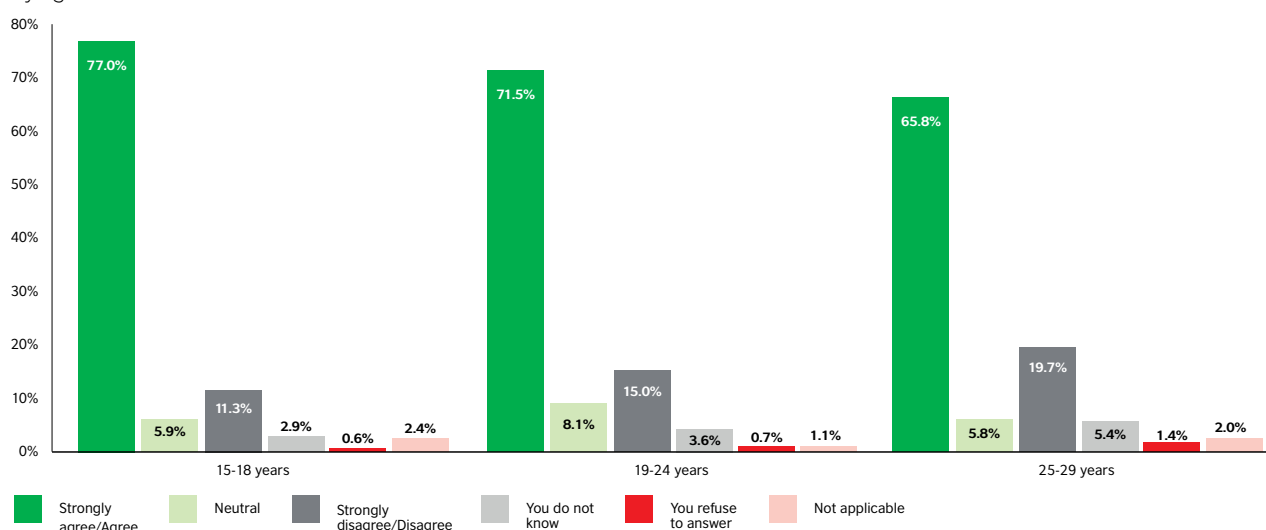
Migration and views of other countries

Although the actual size and definition of the Lebanese diaspora is debated, it is a well-known fact that whether counting only first-generation migrants or including up to the fourth generation, the diaspora is significant in size relative to the country's population. Total estimates of the diaspora are as high as 14 million, although only a small percentage hold Lebanese citizenship (The National Archives, 2008). The largest diaspora populations reside in Latin American countries, while many others live in North America, Europe (particularly France), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Australia and certain sub-Saharan African countries with prominent Lebanese businesses. While many emigrated from Lebanon due to the various conflicts in the country over the past 150 years, others pursued trade and business interests. Most Lebanese in Lebanon have been affected by emigration and have family living abroad. When Lebanese seek to leave Lebanon, they often consider

countries where their family members already reside and draw upon their networks to facilitate the process. A common factor among Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians is their significant diasporas, as in all three populations the diaspora community is more populous than the country's population.

While Lebanon has a strong history of migration, the current economic crisis is expected to increase this trend relative to that in recent years. When youth were presented with the statement, "You would like to migrate to another country for better job opportunities", 71 per cent strongly agreed or agreed.¹¹⁸ When disaggregating the data by age, as youth become older, their desire to migrate slightly falls because they are then more likely to be married, have children, or have more relations and responsibilities that tie them to Lebanon (Figure 54). Unsurprisingly, when youth were asked why they desired to migrate, searching for employment stood out as the primary cause (Figure 55). Additional reasons include the pursuit of higher income and continued education, especially to pursue rare opportunities for specialised majors at the graduate and post-graduate levels.

Figure 54: Answers to the question 'you would like to migrate to another country for better job opportunities'; answers disaggregated by age¹¹⁹



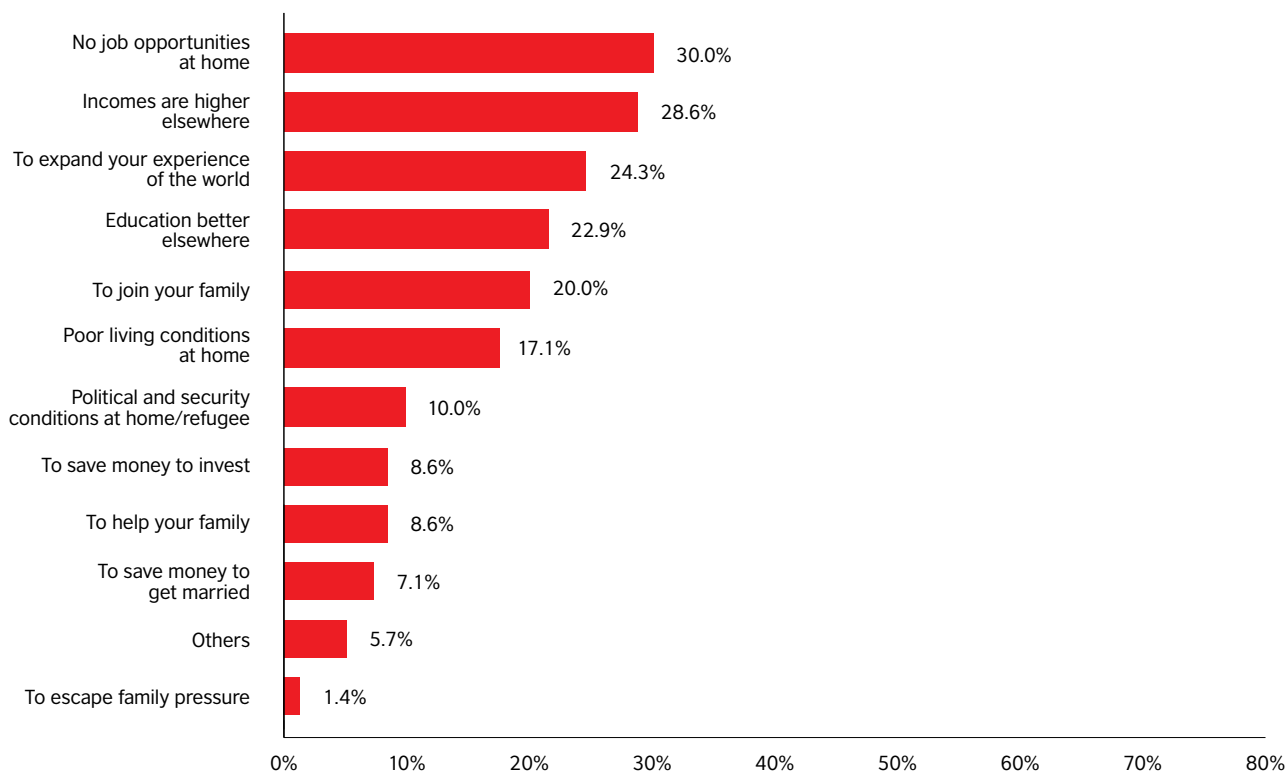
115 > This question was in follow up to 'As a young person, what would you say are the challenges that get in the way of fulfilling your full potential in Lebanon?' The question was asked to all youth (N=2089) and youth were instructed to select all that apply from a list of 7 options.

116 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089). Participants were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Other options included 'You do not know' and 'You refuse to answer'.

117 > Statement asked to youth who had ever travelled outside Lebanon to work/study/live for more than 6 consecutive months (N=70).

118 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089). Participants were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Other options included 'You do not know' and 'You refuse to answer'.

119 > This question was asked to all youth (N=2089).

Figure 55: Answers to the question, 'what are the main reasons for migration?'¹²⁰

A large number of youth in our qualitative discussions considered the frequency of youth migration and its contradictory positive and negative effects: favourable in that other countries present optimistic prospects but negative because immigration contributes to a brain drain of Lebanon's talents, separates families, and displaces individuals. Below is a selection of discussions related to youth and the internal conflicts they face when considering migration.

My father tells me that once I'm done with my studies, he will send me to Germany. Honestly, I'm confused. I do want to go because the situation would be better but I also don't want to leave my parents and my friends and everyone I love here.

Female, 20, Lebanese, South

Nowadays, we have reached a point in the country, where the youth no longer have any hopes and dreams here. It's very hard for them to accomplish their dreams here, because look at what's happening in the country, and the protests that are occurring. We as youth, we like living in Lebanon, we like studying and working in Lebanon, we like staying in the country, but there is nothing that would motivate us to stay.

Female, 23, Lebanese, Mount Lebanon

I am obliged to travel to achieve my dreams, and at the same time I cannot travel and leave my family behind. I feel that my hands are chained, I want to live my life but I can't.

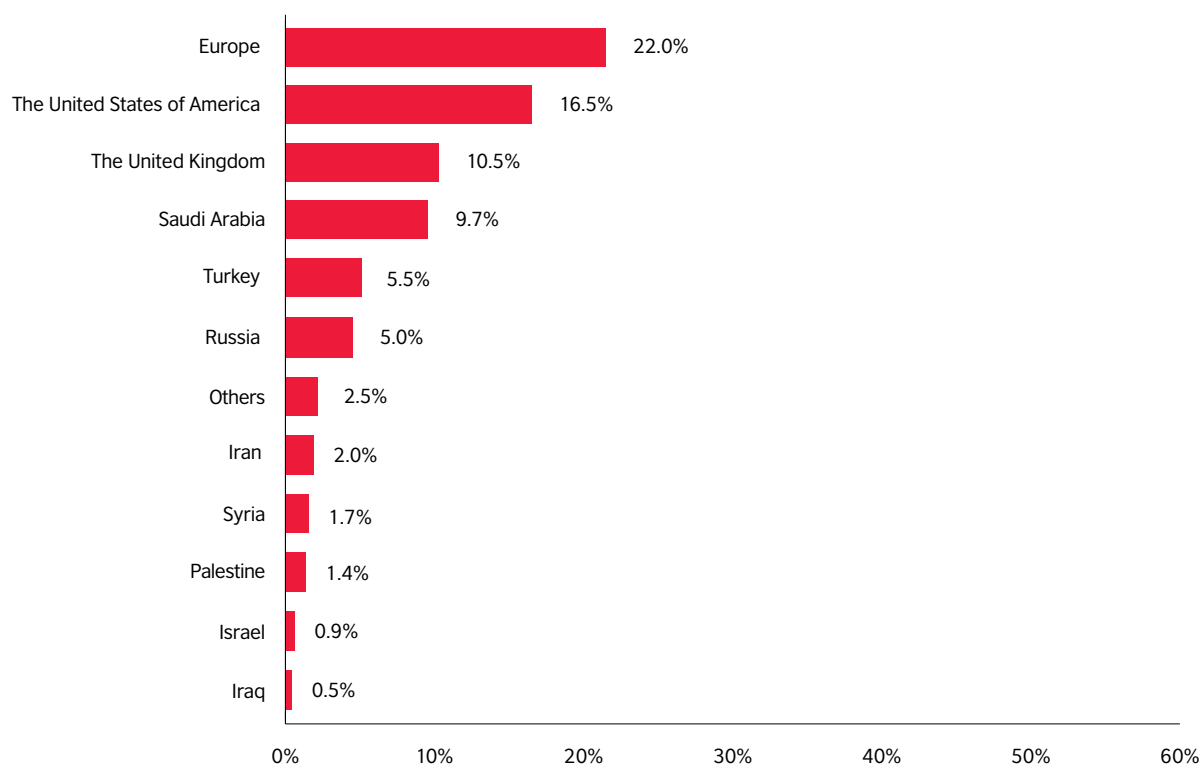
Male, 18, Syrian, Beqaa

While where youth would like to migrate varies strongly based on personal opinion, family and peer connections, and other factors, youth do hold similar opinions on how other countries are influencing Lebanon. Lebanese youth were asked, 'Which of the following countries do you see as a positive influence on Lebanon?'¹²¹ European countries, the US, and the UK had the highest response rates (Figure 56). The concentration of perceived positive influence among Western countries is unsurprising, as they do not fall along sectarian lines, in comparison to regional countries such as Saudi Arabia or Iran. When asked which countries had a positive influence on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Palestinians most frequently selected European countries (24 per cent).¹²²

¹²⁰ > Participants were asked to select all that apply from a list of 11 options.

¹²¹ > This question was asked to all youth regarding their respective country. Here the data are given only for Lebanese (N=1591). The question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 11 options.

¹²² > This question was asked to all youth regarding their respective country. Here the data are given only for Palestinians (N=238). The question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 11 options.

Figure 56: Top answers to the question 'which of the following countries do you see as a positive influence on Lebanon?'¹²⁵

For Syrian participants, it is significant to note the 57 per cent refusal to respond, likely due to a desire to not show any political affiliation.¹²³

Conversely, Lebanese youth were asked, 'Which of the following countries do you see as a negative influence on Lebanon?' Overall, despite Lebanon

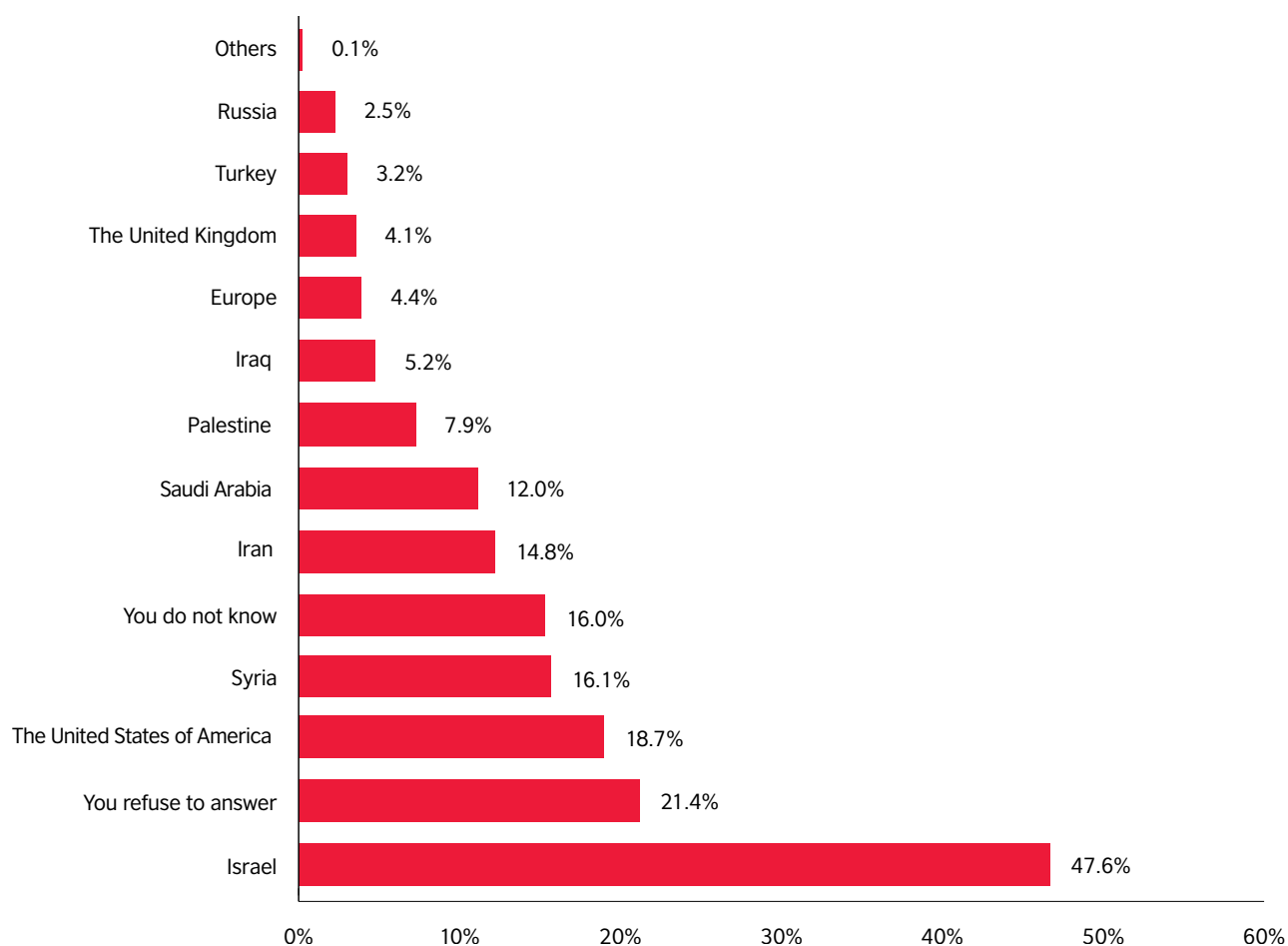
being affected by multiple regional conflicts, Israel remains the country that youth view as having the most negative influence, followed by the United States, which is seen as both a positive and negative actor (Figure 57). The 21 per cent rate of refusal to answer is likely due to participants

finding the question politically sensitive and not willing to reveal their affiliations. Palestinians followed a similar pattern, with 79 per cent choosing Israel and 37 per cent choosing the United States. Statistics for Syrian participants produced a 57 per cent refusal to answer and 19 per cent did not know.¹²⁴

123 > Syrian N=260

124 > Lebanese N=1591, Palestinian N=238, Syrian N=260

125 > This question was asked to all youth in regard to their respective country. Here the data is given only for Lebanese (N=1591). Question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 11 options.

Figure 57: Top answers for the question, 'which of the following countries do you see as a negative influence on Lebanon?'¹²⁶

Youth aspiration and the need for a new social contract

It is evident from the discussion that young people believe that the current state in Lebanon does not provide the security and stability youth need in order

to achieve their aspirations. Thus, there is common perception that to achieve their own hopes and dreams, they are often viewed as being more attainable outside Lebanon's borders. For youth to view and believe that their dreams and

aspirations are possible within Lebanon, a new social contract is necessary in order to build trust and provide opportunities for young people in Lebanon to build their lives and contribute to the betterment of Lebanon.

¹²⁶ > This question was asked to all youth in regard to their respective country. Here the data is given only for Lebanese (N=1591). Question asked participants to select all that apply from a list of 11 options.



> Conclusion: Social contract

As detailed in the report and vocalised in the October 17 uprising, the challenges faced by young people, and society as a whole, demonstrate the urgency and need for improved relations, or a revised social contract between communities in Lebanon and those in power. At the societal level, Lebanese identity is fragmented, no unified account of post-1943 history exists, and most Lebanese youth do not feel comfortable in areas dominated by a different religion or political party than their own. For Syrian and Palestinian youth, although born or residing in the country for years, they consider themselves to be part of discriminated groups and lack a basic set of rights. Economically, staggeringly high youth unemployment rates demonstrate that the current economic model failed to establish a robust and stable economy that would lead to job creation and utilisation of youth's skills and education.

Within the oversaturated labour market, connections or *wasta* are perceived to be more important than qualifications. At the political level, the data generated from the report showed that youth are disconnected from the political system, with at least two-thirds believing that the Lebanese political system needs to be reformulated for lasting change to happen.

The current challenges faced by Lebanon have continued to be exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the report, and similar to other observers, we have argued that as a foundation of meaningful change, the data implies the need for a revised social contract: an improved relationship between state and society.

The term social contract was first coined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau – a French Enlightenment Era thinker – in his 1762 book entitled *On the Social Contract*. Within a social contract, individuals consent – explicitly or implicitly – to allow for the limitation of some freedoms and acknowledge the authority of the ruler/state. In return, state and authorities provides protection and provision of the remaining rights. As political structures developed, in particular the nation-state, countries established constitutions that outline the rights and obligations of citizens.

The study data argues that there is a need to reconsider identity structures that do not further solidify sectarian divisions among both citizens and residents in Lebanon. While a multitude of identities is healthy in any society, each identity should be guaranteed equal basic rights which guarantee quality and access to education and employment, healthcare and opportunities.

Employment opportunities should be based on merit rather than *wasta*, and the government must prioritise increasing employment, particularly for youth, in order to limit migration and brain drain. When looking at the data, there is a call for a political system with increased political accountability and governance structures. Education on the rights and duties of the citizen and the state would create a different structure and build up trust between citizens and the state, meeting the current aspirations of youth in Lebanon. A new social contract is necessary to establish increased possibilities for unity and erase divisions along religious, political, and even national lines, and prevent future outbreak of conflict. Developing a new social order requires political will – often sparked by the demands of the people - from the country's policymakers.

Improving relations between the state and young people in Lebanon begins with dialogue and for all youth voices in Lebanon to be heard and acknowledged. The recommendations in the next section provide an opportunity for young people in Lebanon, policy makers, and civil society actors to envision how a revised social contract between the youth of Lebanon and the political establishment might look and how it can be achieved.



> Recommendations

In light of the conclusions of this study, a set of recommendations was developed that considers how to bring about a new social contract and establish platforms for a national discussion regarding its content. The recommendations below are based on the collected data and the openings revealed for increased support of youth in Lebanon, taking into consideration the current context in the country. These recommendations also consider the roles of civil society and international organisations – such as British Council Lebanon’s programming, in the areas of arts, education and society. Ultimately, the recommendations seek to meet the study’s identified needs of young people in Lebanon as discussed throughout this report.

Pursuing effective pathways for community and political engagement with youth

The findings of the study illustrated that youth are disengaged from both community and political engagement. Young people feel unheard, unrepresented, and ignored by both their local and national representatives. In order for increased community and political engagement to develop, youth need to have a sense of trust in their communities and government, to understand their rights and duties as citizens and residents, and to be able to visualise themselves as community and political leaders.

1. **The establishment of horizontal and transparent communication between youth, communities and national government should be developed.** This process should begin with research into what channels of communication are effective to engage youth, how to ensure that opportunities for engagement are equal across all communities, transparent in how their voices are heard and utilised, and effective in reaching local and national level leaders to encourage change. A participatory process will allow youth to feel heard and part of the solution for greater communication and engagement that is based on their needs.
2. **Civic laws and rights need to be better communicated and understood by citizens and residents.** A revision of civic and history school curriculums is required, in order to ensure young people, know of their rights, and share a common understanding of past events in order to formulate their own judgement and understanding. In addition to greater understanding of rights and history, this will develop a common understanding of citizenship as identity, and allow for identity in Lebanon to expand beyond the ideas of nationality or sect.
3. **Opportunities for political engagement at municipal and national level should be better available and communicated to young people in Lebanon.** This includes/ providing opportunities for young people to be connected to and part of the local and national government to allow young people to be involved in all levels of government. National laws regarding political participation should be revised to support this.
4. **Basic rights and civil status must be revisited and revised to enable and ensure that all young people in Lebanon have equal opportunity and access to services and civic rights in Lebanon.** This includes the rights of women, such as the ability to pass on their citizenship, along with increased protections in regard to employment discrimination, harassment, and domestic violence. Further, the rights of refugee populations should be secured in order to ensure that they do not become the most marginalized and poverty affected populations in the country. A clear understanding of equality must be a cornerstone of a new social contract.

Improve access to and quality of education

It is a well document fact that around 70 per cent of students in Lebanon are enrolled in private rather than public schools due to a nation-wide perception that private education is of higher quality. This raises concerns in regard to access to and quality of education. The study found that many youth view the education that they receive to be irrelevant to their careers, although they still believe in the importance of obtaining a degree.

5. Continued development of and investment in public education is important in order to increase trust in the public sector and improve the quality of education.

Stakeholders working in the education sector should continue their crucial support of public education in Lebanon, especially as a rise in public school enrolment is expected due to the financial crisis. As trust in the public sector grows, parents should be encouraged to take advantage of the public education system.

6. The TVET and higher education sectors must ensure that they are providing education related to the most in-demand sectors. Labour market needs assessments should continue to be conducted, with expanded categories such as cultural and creative sectors, and consider freelance and remote working opportunities that are available to youth at a global level. Career guidance services should be increased and improved at the secondary, TVET, and higher education levels.

Support youth participation in the labour market

Increasing employment opportunities is paramount to increase youth's financial stability, allow them to achieve their aspirations, and limit migration outside of Lebanon. Unemployment rates for youth are higher than the national average, and are expected to rise during the ongoing financial crisis.

7. Any upcoming economic policies and rescue plans, as well as international support efforts, should explicitly consider youth and include young people in identifying challenges and developing solutions.

The communication of economic plans should follow suggestions related to recommendation one in order to ensue effective and transparent communication.

8. At the public level, the local and national governments should open employment opportunities for youth in local government positions and public administration levels to encourage a positive perception and understanding of public sector jobs.

There should be a mapping of human resource openings at the public sector level (for which budget lines already exist), the creation of profiles for each position, and the development of youth friendly public administration policy that would encourage more youth to take these positions.

9. In regard to entrepreneurship, youth stakeholders should continue to expand their work with entrepreneurs in Lebanon, as a significant per centage of youth are self- employed or seeking self-employment.

Next Generation Lebanon and other research can provide insight and data on how to strengthen and target these interventions for young people interested in entrepreneurship.

> Appendix I: Research methodology

The research used a mixed methodology consisting of quantitative and qualitative tools.

Qualitative research

The qualitative component was designed to highlight the subjective reasoning behind the quantitative data. It aimed to probe the feelings and insights of youth in Lebanon in order to gauge how they feel about the issues and prospects facing them, and to delve deeper into why they think things are as they are and how they would like to see them changed.

Adopted methodology

The qualitative approach for the study was that of auto-driven photo elicitation interviews (Shell, 2014) combined with the photovoice methodology (Coughlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Both methods are visual methodologies. Visual methodologies are a novel approach to qualitative research derived from traditional ethnography methods used in anthropology and sociology.

Method 1: APEs

Auto-Driven Photo-Elicitation combines two activities, namely Auto-Photography and Photo- Elicitation.

- **Auto-photography:** Participants take photographs of their environment. These photographs are then used as data.
- **Photo-elicitation:** Photographs taken by participants/ other mediums are used to elicit information during an interview to generate un-structured discussion which is then used as data.

Method 2: PVDs

Photovoice is a community-based method that aims at directly influencing policy-making by engaging participants and allowing them to identify the barriers that they encounter in life, and the underlying reasons for these barriers/problems.

Recruitment of participants

CRD utilised its wide network of grassroots-level partner organizations and the established regional/local focal points to guarantee adequate and prompt recruitment of participants; in parallel, key community gate-keepers were mobilized to ensure smooth access to marginalised youth and 'sensitive' areas of Lebanon.

Tools

PV and APE tools and guides were developed and tested. They were developed in English, translated into Arabic and then back translated into English to ensure accuracy. The preparation of the qualitative tools relied mostly on the Literature review and its findings that was completed in the first stage of research, as well as guidelines for APE and PV discussion tools that are already established as it is a relatively un-used approach. The quantitative tool were drawn heavily on the research outcomes of the Literature Review, as well as relying on previous Next Generation surveys (to allow for cross-country comparison), and previous Youth surveys in Lebanon and the Middle East. The World Values Survey also served as reference for the values section of the questionnaire.

Pre-testing

Two APEs and one PV session were conducted to assess instrumentation rigour and formulate measures to address any limitations or threats that might bias the results of the qualitative research. The proficiency of pretesting helped identify obstacles, and challenges in the interview process; and assessed the participants' acceptability and/or sensitivity towards specific questions within the tool; and thus, increased the methodological and social reliability essential to conducting trustworthy qualitative research, while also ensuring both personal and professional contentment of the research and facilitators team members.

Data collection

APEs and PVs were conducted in Arabic or English according to the participants' language preference.

APE interviews

For APE interviews, the following five steps were adopted to recruit and select participants.

1. 1 initial participant was recruited within each area for a total of 13 APEs.
2. CRD held a workshop to explain the research project to participants and the Next Generation Lebanon 'themes'.
3. Participants were given 7 days to go out and take 2 photographs per theme relating to a 'positive' (e.g. opportunity) and a 'negative' (e.g. barrier) that faces them in the context of the themes.
4. All participants submitted their photographs to a designated e-mail address.
5. 1 pair of photographs per participants from each 'theme' was randomly selected for a photo- elicitation interview. Participants discussed only one theme per APE.

PV discussions

Photovoice Discussions were conducted by one of the trained facilitators assisted by a note taker; the discussion lasted up to 1 hour and 30 minutes. PV logistics such as the venue and timing were organised taking into consideration mobility and accessibility issues, satisfactory levels of security and safety, confidence and self-reassurance for those who participated. CRD used established fieldworkers in each region to help bring together a group of young people from the community who were the selected participants for the PV discussions. They were selected based on a criterion that makes them representative of the community that they came from. One PV discussion was held in each of the 13 areas with 6-13 participants per PV. Photovoice discussions were recorded, where consent for recording was given by participants, and transcribed. Where consent was not given, the note-taker's notes were transcribed.



Data handling and data entry

The below procedures were adopted for data handling and data entry.

File names: Each APE and PV was allocated a unique identifying number to be written on all forms and notes taken, and utilised to name audio files and transcript documents.

Coding participants' names: During PVs, participants were asked to introduce themselves by either using their real name or a pseudo- name and were referred to in the discussion by that first name. However, all these names were removed during transcription; all names mentioned were replaced by general wordings such as 'participants', 'local NGO', etc. in line with the informed consent obtained from participants. Names mentioned during APEs were replaced in the same manner.

Transcription of data: Each audio recorded PV/APE was directly translated into English, transcribed, and allocated a unique identifying number compatible with its corresponding PV/APE guide and audio. Any PV/APE that was not audio recorded was converted into soft copy in English in the form of notes and was allocated the unique identifying number compatible with its corresponding PV/APE guide.

Storage of data: All hard copies of FGD/ interview notes, field notes, audio files, consent forms, transcripts, and any other notes were kept secure in a cabinet within the office while all soft copies were password protected and backed on the CRD server. The research team solely had access to the notes and audio content of the FGDs/IDIs; the raw data was provided to the Next Generation Focal Point.

Analysis of data

A **directed content analysis**, combining manifest with latent analysis, was adopted for this research. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Bengtsson, 2016). The process therefore started by coding transcribed interviews/discussions according to pre-determined overarching themes (daily lives etc.) and then a process of inductive re-coding and analysis took place to produce sub-categories for each theme.

Quantitative research

Next Generation survey research

The Next Generation survey was a national study addressed towards young women and men aged 15 to 29 and targets Lebanese and non-Lebanese individuals residing in Lebanon for at least the past five years.

The inclusion criteria entailed the following:

- The person was aged between 15 and 29 years.
- The person was Lebanese or non-Lebanese living in Lebanon for at least the past five years.
- The person was capable and willing to provide informed consent to participate.

The exclusion criteria included the following:

- The person was unable to understand Arabic or English.

The survey instrument started by an eligibility short questionnaire. In case there was doubt or a lack of clarity regarding their eligibility, the participant was excluded.

Study design

The study adopted a nationally representative stratified cluster sampling design. The population categories mentioned within the proposal were adequately represented.

Sampling technique

A stratified two-stage cluster sample design was adopted. The Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) were the cadastral areas (cadastres), and the Secondary Sampling Units (SSUs) were the households. Fifteen households were recruited from each cluster.

Two hundred forty clusters were randomly selected from the official administrative geographical divisions in Lebanon, named municipalities/cadastres, through a probability proportional to size (PPS) technique.

After selecting the clusters, a random selection of households followed in every selected cluster. A grid technique that divides the designated cadastres into equally sized geographical units, in household density and easily identifiable by landmarks was used. Selected households were visited by fieldworkers to interview eligible participants. Within each household, one respondent was randomly selected using the Kish selection method.

Sample size

The sample size was determined based on two hard interlocks:

a. age groups: 15-18, 19-24 and 25-29

b. nationalities: Lebanese and non-Lebanese¹²⁷

127 > Non-Lebanese will include only Syrians and Palestinians.

Age Groups	CAS*	Population estimates of the Lebanese target group	Population estimates of the Syrian target group	Population estimates of the Palestinian target group
15–18	10.6 per cent	653,111	100,972	62,827
19–24	9.2 per cent	566,851	87,636	54,529
25–29	7.6 per cent	468,269	72,395	45,046

*The figures were estimated using linear interpolation between the brackets of age assuming a linear distribution of population within the 5 years' age class given in the CAS population estimates.

Considering the above parameters, a precision of 2 per cent, a type I error of 0.05, and a 50 per cent variance across the strata, the total sample size calculated using the Neyman optimal allocation method¹²⁸ was 2,399. Neyman method provides the most optimal allocation considering the population as one population with several sub-group categories.

The sample of each stratum h was proportionate to the population size of the stratum. The calculated sample size for each stratum is presented in the below table:

Neyman optimal allocated sample by strata	Lebanese	Syrian	Palestinian
15–18	891	138	85
19–24	773	120	74
25–29	639	98	61

Accounting for a 20 per cent non-response rate (NRR), the total number of participants to be sampled in each stratum according to the following formula: $nn' = \frac{nn}{1 - NRR}$, yielding a total sample of:

Neyman optimal allocated sample by strata	Lebanese	Syrian	Palestinian
15–18	1,114	172	106
19–24	966	150	93
25–29	799	123	76

The total sample size was 3,599 and the expected target was 2,879.

128 > Wright, T. (2014). A simple method of exact optimal sample allocation under stratification with any mixed constraint patterns. *Statistics*, 07.

Data collection tool

The tool itself was designed and structured by a qualified CRD team and allowed for the understanding of the position and aspirations of the youth in Lebanon. The tool was forward and back-translated from English to Arabic by a certified translator. Interviews were primarily conducted in Arabic.

Data collection

Data collection took place during specified days and times: on a daily basis, teams were mobilized into corresponding clusters, with field supervisors, to conduct household visits and fill the questionnaire through a KoBoCollect application downloaded on electronic tablets. The average time for filling a questionnaire was around 40–45 minutes.

Data management and analysis

All data were merged, cleaned, and analysed using Stata SE, version 14. Simple descriptive statistics with means, proportions, and frequency distributions were conducted. Bivariate analyses were conducted using Chi-square tests to assess relationships between variables. In situations where normality assumptions were not met, non-parametric equivalents of the above test was used (Fisher's exact test).

Training and quality control

Fieldworkers conducted the data collection after adequate training on consent obtainment, survey administration, and abidance to the ethical considerations of research: this was important to reduce variability in the quality of collected data and minimize participation refusals. The research team provided a comprehensive package of training including role play sessions (role plays would enhance the knowledge, attitude and practice of the field workers in matters related to dealing with refusals, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, practicing on the electronic tablets, and others).

Quality assurance

The research team daily supervised the fieldworkers and held regular feedback sessions, during which they reviewed the field report and provided the necessary feedback on the data quality. Daily spot checks were carried out to ensure quality, minimise errors and follow up on any major data concerns.

Pilot testing

A pilot test was conducted to check and validate the study procedure, test the feasibility of the field logistics, and examine the validity and reliability of the tool. Adjustments were then introduced when deemed necessary. *NB: Data generated from the pilot testing phase were not included in the study sample.*

Challenges and limitations

This section outlines the challenges and limitations of the study and their impacts on the findings.

1. Within the quantitative component, difficulties were encountered by the research team resulting from the political, demographic and methodological particularities of the country setting. Few areas were not accessible for the fieldworkers due to their potentially compromised safety. The research team faced significant issues in gaining access to regions of the country with a particular demographic, resulting in the under representation of this demographic.
2. Quantitative and qualitative data collection took place both before and after October 17, 2019, resulting in two varied sets of data. The focus, answers, and attitudes of participants shifted since the uprising.
3. Despite thorough preparations for fieldworkers to enhance trust and comfortable circumstances for participants, the sensitivity of some questions compounded refusal among participants and may have introduced social desirability bias.
4. The qualitative component of the study relied on the perceptions and viewpoints of the participants of the APEs and PVDs. Audio taping the interviews posed a challenge considering the sensitive nature of the study and participants' acceptance to recording was respected. When recordings were not available, expressed perceptions and viewpoints of participants were harder to document by the note taker.



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About the Authors

Connecting Research to Development (CRD) is a non-profit consultancy non-governmental organization that operates in the support, generation and dissemination of evidence-based research and implementation of projects in the public interest with concentration on public health and youth. Throughout its thematic works in each of health, gender, access to justice, and youth policy, CRD provides high quality services, follows ethical standards of conduct, acknowledges a human rights approach in all ventures, and collaborates with individuals, organizations and communities to promote creative and fruitful initiatives.



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