



# POWER2YOUTH

## Who Are Lebanese Youth? A Segmentation-Based Approach to Understanding Youth and Youth's Attitudes in Lebanon

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## Who Are Lebanese Youth? A Segmentation-Based Approach to Understanding Youth and Youth's Attitudes in Lebanon

Mohammad Diab, Sami Atallah and Mona Harb<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Lebanese youth are often constructed through fragmented lenses and policies that lack a holistic, interdisciplinary and integrated understanding of their complex, dynamic and highly differentiated livelihoods. In this paper, we argue against this generic representation, and for a reading of youth where their categorization is unpacked and related to other variables, able to reveal how being young is a diverse and subjective experience, intersecting with social relations, experiences and inequalities. The paper uses survey data analysis from the Power2Youth questionnaire fielded by Information International in Lebanon in winter 2016. Using data segmentation, the paper identifies five youth segments with different social characteristics, and mixed views on politics, religiosity and women's rights. This demonstrates how Lebanese youth are not a homogeneous lot but a quite complex and diverse group, a factor which policy makers need to account for carefully in their agenda setting.*

**Keywords:** Lebanon | Youth | Public opinion | Domestic policy | Religion | Women

### INTRODUCTION

The public policy narrative on Lebanese youth is dominated by a generic and normative understanding of youth exclusion mainly focused on issues of youth unemployment and youth emigration. As we have shown elsewhere (Harb 2016a), international organizations produce more in-depth knowledge about youth exclusion, but they still focus on the same “problem” categories of unemployment and emigration, with some additional challenges related to gender, education and political participation. Scholars have produced a more substantive critical understanding of youth exclusion, albeit with significant fragmentation across academic disciplines and language. Thus, “youth” and youth “problems” are “constructed” categories, which are significantly disembedded from the complex dynamics of legal, economic, social, political and spatial planning policy issues in Lebanon. These categories are also often reproduced by a wide variety of policy actors, and sometimes experts and scholars, without taking into account how these problems intersect with wider and transversal policy issues.

Accordingly, “youth” as a category needs to be unpacked and related to other variables associated to social relations and experiences, in order to better reveal that being young is a very diverse and subjective experience that intersects with several other relationships and inequalities. Our earlier findings on youth mobilization in Lebanon (Harb 2016b, 2016c) underscored how patterns of youth inclusion and exclusion in the context of Lebanese

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sectarian politics are dominated by partisan groups as well as religious and family authorities, that lock youth in. Moreover, youth's associational life reproduces sectarian politics, and depoliticizes engagement. However, new forms of mobilization structured as loose coalitions have been multiplying, especially in cities and towns, and these may be the components for future collective action, and perhaps seeds of an independent youth social movement.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, we unpack youth as a classification, highlighting its multidimensionality and intersectionality, relying on survey data analysis from the Power2Youth questionnaire fielded by Information International in Lebanon between 12 January and 5 February 2016, on behalf of Fafo Research Foundation and the Power2Youth consortium. We also test again our earlier interrogations related to Lebanese youth's potentials to engage in social and political change, albeit with major structural constraints related to the country's sectarian setup. We do so by assessing youth's attitudes and perceptions of politics, religiosity, and women's roles and rights. The paper is organized in three sections. We begin by providing a brief of the survey sample, followed by a discussion of selected survey results. In the second section, we suggest a reading of youth based on a segmentation of the data, which leads us to draw five relatively distinct segments across the landscape of Lebanese youth. The third section investigates youth's perceptions on religiosity, politics, and women's roles and rights, with respect to youth's characteristics and the five segments we identified. The paper concludes with a synthesis of findings and recommendations for future work. We show that youth's perceptions are to some degree mixed across the five segments. Broadly, the older group is more settled in mainstream politics and views, while the younger group is more prone to change, albeit divided on issues of secularism vs. religiosity. This demonstrates how Lebanese youth are not a homogeneous lot but a quite complex and diverse group, a factor which policy makers need to account for carefully in their agenda setting.

## **1. A SNAPSHOT OF LEBANESE YOUTH'S ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS**

### **1.1. Survey Sample Description**

The 1,000-person national sample is equally divided into males (50.2 percent) and females (49.8 percent). Participants are between 18 and 29 years old, meaning they were born between the late 1980s and late 90s. The mean age is 23.4 while the median respondent is 23 years

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<sup>2</sup> In 2011, youth activism in Lebanon became more openly anti-sectarian, with a series of protests challenging the corrupt political system. In summer 2015, a movement protesting the collapse of waste management services in Beirut (which led to the accumulation of garbage throughout city streets for weeks) emerged and quickly consolidated. Referred to as al-Hirak (movement in Arabic), activists widely used social media to denounce state repression, uploading huge numbers of videos and photos that helped them build court cases, and pressure the government to release civilians who got jailed. Al-Hirak eventually ceased its protest action, given that its members did not all agree on a common course of action, which led to its fragmentation into several groups. However, al-Hirak allowed activists to gain confidence in organizing against the sectarian system. One platform of urban activists decided to lead a campaign and run for the 2016 municipal elections in Beirut: they named themselves Beirut Madinati (Beirut, My City). Their crowdfunding campaign gathered close to 200,000 dollars in less than three weeks. They did not win but gathered more than 30 percent of the votes - a substantive score in the capital city dominated by sectarian politics. Accordingly, our survey question on supporting Al-Hirak is a proxy for evaluating if a sizable number of young people sympathize with an independent movement organizing against mainstream politics, which may indicate interest in political change.

old. A quarter of the youth are married. Those married tend to be female, and between 25 and 29 years old. Three quarters of the respondents live in urban areas. Around 70 percent of the youth come from middle-class families whose economic situation is average compared to national standards.<sup>3</sup>

The sample is diverse in terms of religious sects: 27 percent are Sunni, 27 percent Shiite, 22 percent Maronite, 17 percent Christian minorities, and 6 percent Muslim minorities. Overall, over half of the youth are religious. It is more common for Muslim youth to be religious than Christian youth, especially those who belong to the Shiite sect, among whom four fifths are religious.

Around 56 percent of the respondents are not enrolled in any form of education: one third of them have already obtained a university degree, while another quarter decided to stop after high school. The main reasons why youth are not enrolled in school are having achieved the highest degree desired, immediate need to work (males), and marriage (females). Of the 44 percent still enrolled in some form of education, the majority are aged 22 and below. Around 57 percent of them attend private institutions, while 41 percent receive public education.

During the past 12 months, only 38 percent of the respondents had a job. Those who had a job mostly worked in the private sector, or were self-employed. On average, they worked 47 hours per week. The majority earned a monthly salary ranging between 675,000 and 1,900,000 Lebanese pounds (450-1,250 dollars). Around 62 percent of the respondents did not have a job over the past 12 months. However, many of these are not in the labour force due to being a student, housewife or pregnant, or having family restrictions. Unemployment is common among fresh university graduates: 32 percent of university graduates aged 22 to 26 are currently unemployed and actively looking for a job.

## **1.2. Discussion of Selected Survey Results**

In this section, we select specific questions from the questionnaire to explore further, and cross-tabulate them with a series of variables (age, gender, economic situation, sect, urban/rural, religiosity, education).

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<sup>3</sup> The questionnaire did not ask about household income but rather the overall economic situation of the household, which is a subjective assessment by the household itself or the respondent. Thus, this is a self-classification (as opposed to an "objective" measure such as income). The term "household income," which is used in the graphs and tables, and occasionally in the text, actually refers to this self-classification.

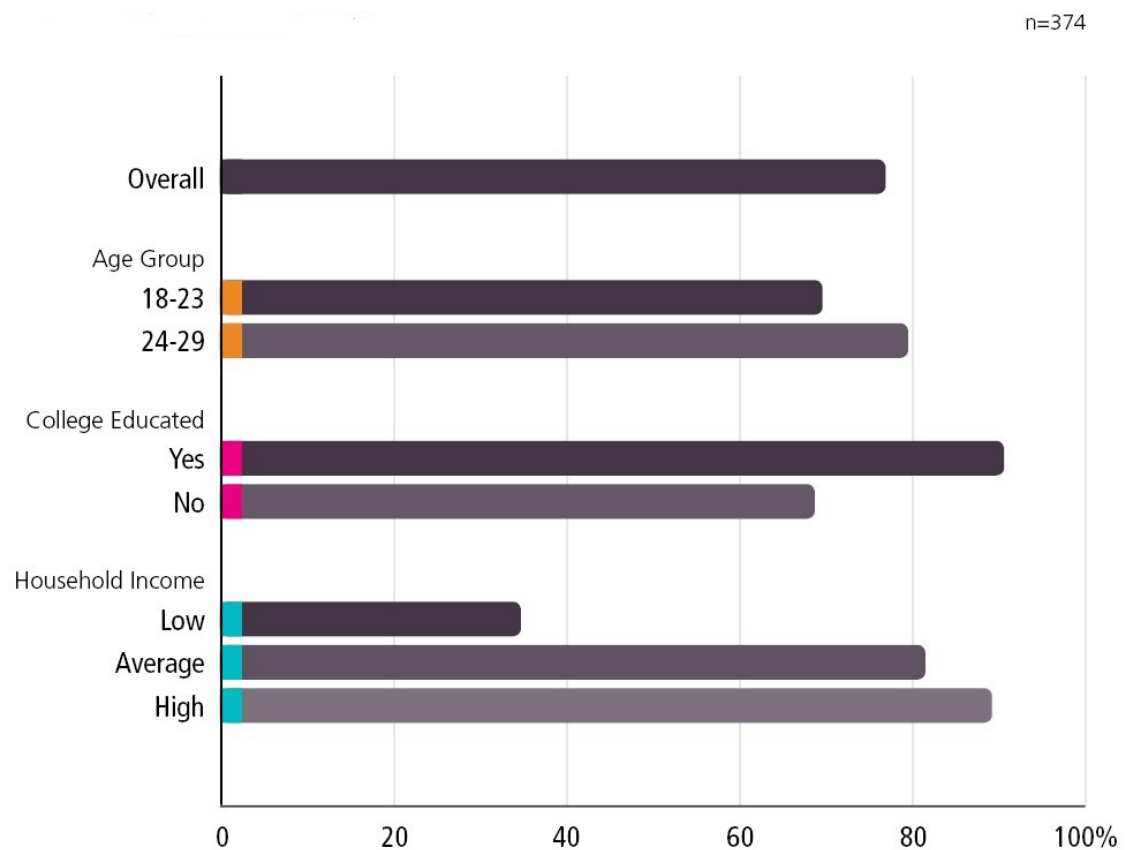
**Table 1** | Overview of Lebanese youth's satisfaction, attitudes, and perceptions

Questionnaire#	Variables/questions	Total %
JF10	Youth satisfied with earnings	77.0
JF23	Youth who are the main providers in their households	30.7
JF29	Youth satisfied with main job	85.3
TR01	Youth satisfied with their life as a whole	84.8
PP01	Youth who are members of any organization, such as a religious organization, a sports club, a political party, a trade union, a community association	8.7
PP03	Youth who ever participated in a group of people working to solve a problem or "do good" in local community	16.9
PP04	Youth who sympathize with al-Hirak (see footnote #2)	41.7
PP09	Youth interested in politics	30.6
PP27	Youth who voted in the last national elections (among those eligible to vote then)	48.8
PP45	Youth who think young people are active in political life	74.6
PP49	Youth who think politicians pay enough attention to issues of relevance to youth	16.7
SP08	Youth who think it is safe to go out in their neighbourhood during the day	97.9
SP09	Youth who think it is safe to go out in their neighbourhood during the night	86.3
SP10	Youth exposed to sexual harassment over the past three months	3.7
SP11	Youth satisfied with their neighbourhood	94.9
IM01	Youth who own a PC/laptop	62.8
IM01	Youth who own a smartphone	92.1
OA30	Youth who are satisfied with how Lebanon is governed	18.6
OA37	Youth who think the overall impact of the Arab Spring on the Middle East has been positive	9.2
OA47	Youth who say they are very religious	2.8
OA47	Youth who say they are religious	58.9
MI09, MI10, MI17	Youth who say it is likely they will travel to another country in the next 5 years to seek work or permanent residence	22.1

Once the cross-tabs were generated, we identified for each question the variables with statistical significance, and show them below in graph histograms (see Annex 1 for significant Chi<sup>2</sup> details).

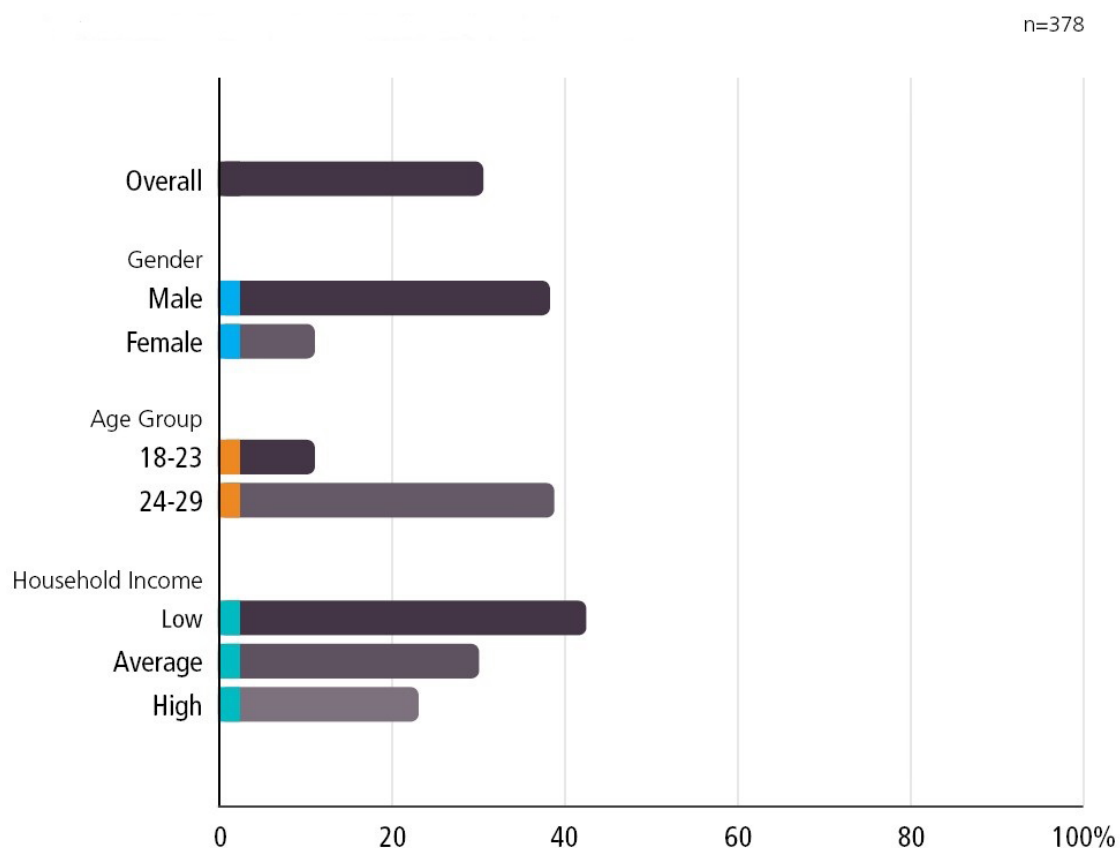
Three quarters of the youth are satisfied with the money they make. Having higher education correlates with higher economic satisfaction, while youth who live in low-income households are mostly dissatisfied with their earnings (Figure 1).

**Figure 1** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth satisfied with earnings



Among working youth, one third are the main provider in their household. The main provider in a household tends to be a male aged between 24 and 29. There is an adverse correlation between household economic situation and being a main provider: youth in low-income households seem to face more pressure to become the main provider than their better-off counterparts (Figure 2).

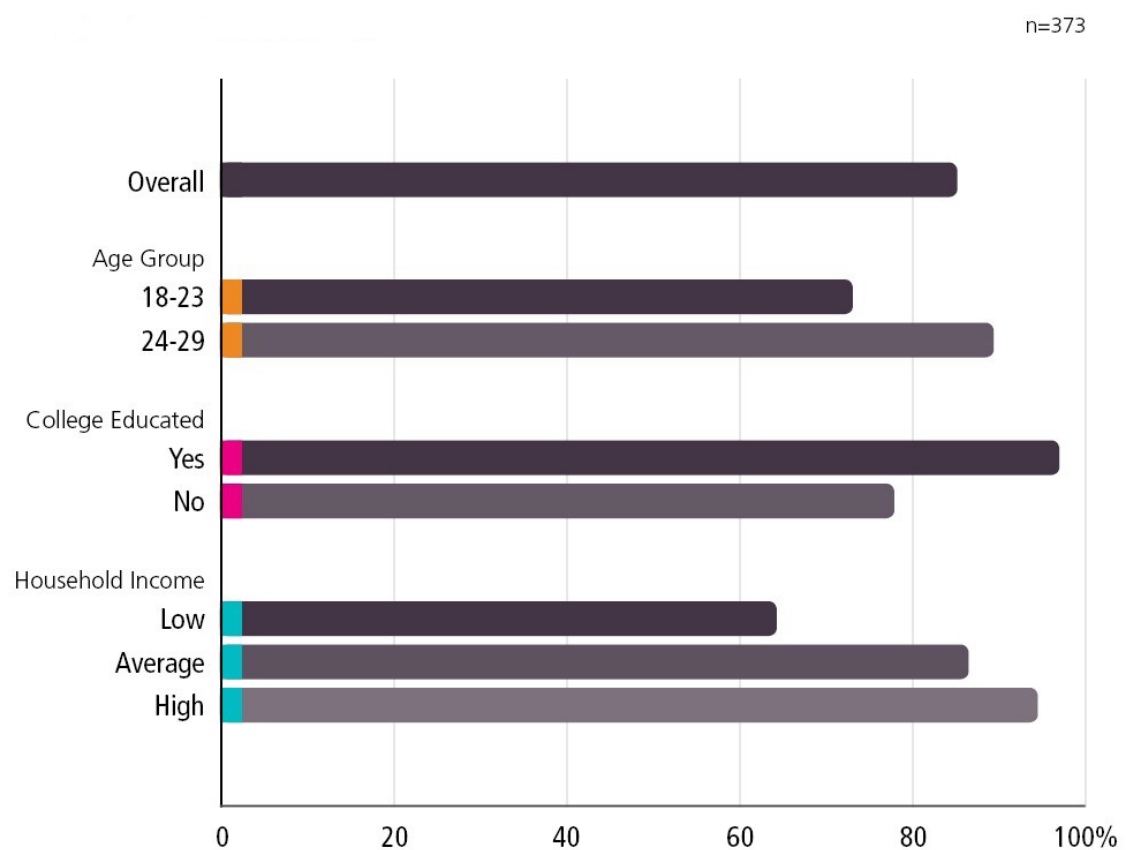
**Figure 2** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who are the main provider in their house-hold





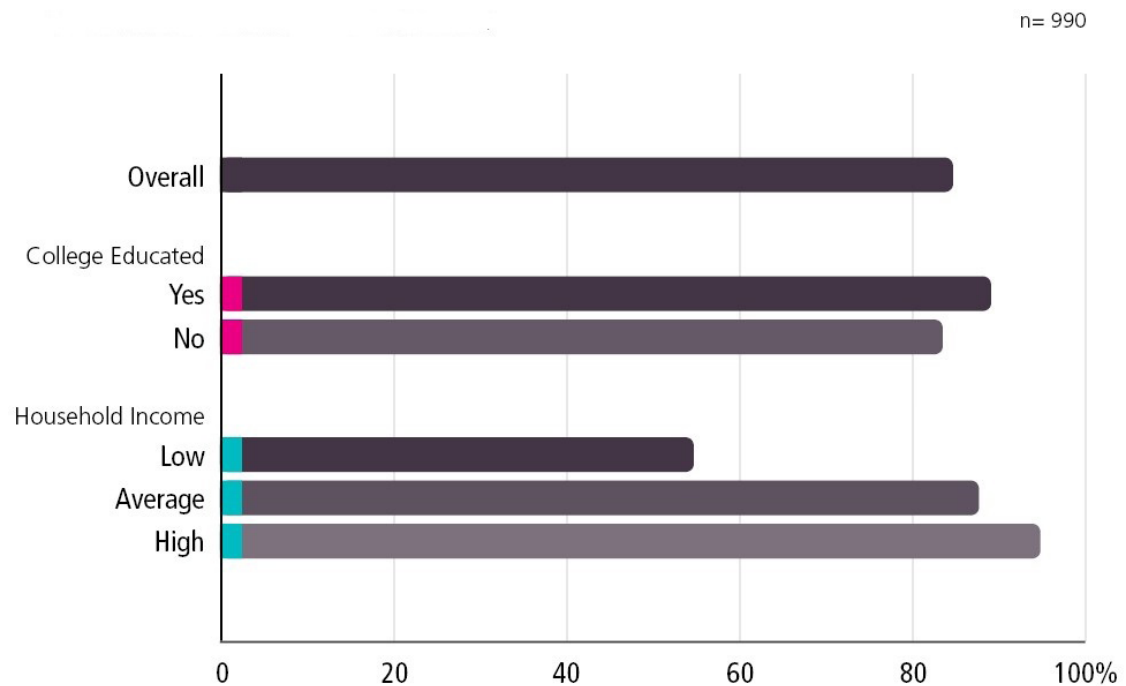
A great majority of Lebanese youth are satisfied with their job. Those who are over 24, college educated, and higher earners are the most likely to be satisfied with their job (Figure 3).

**Figure 3 |** Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth satisfied with their main job



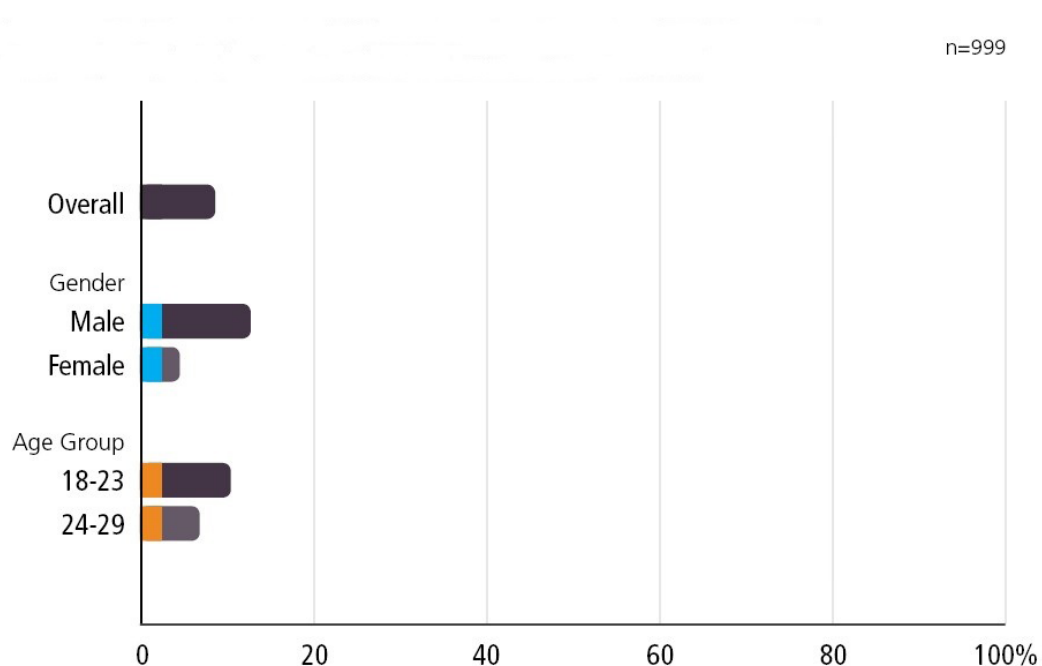
Overall, over 80 percent of the youth are satisfied with their life as a whole. Individuals from average and above-average income households are much more likely to be satisfied than those who live in low-income households (Figure 4).

**Figure 4** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth satisfied with their life as a whole



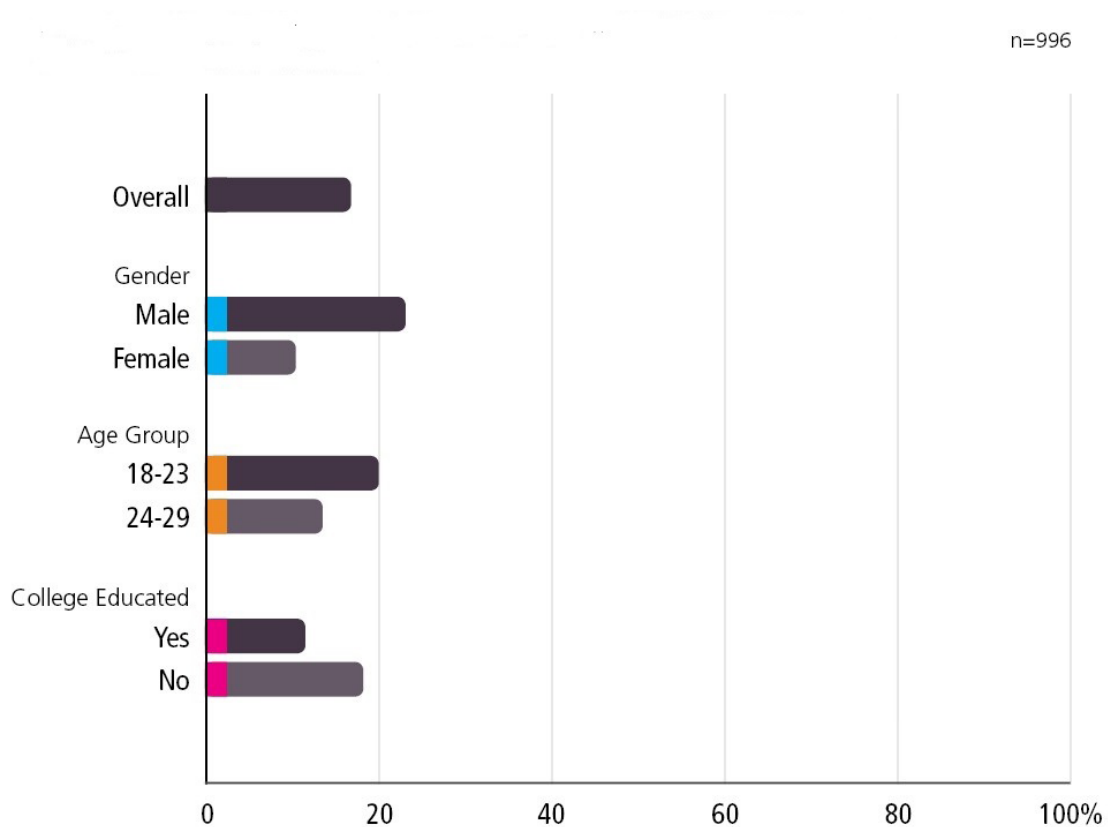
Only one out of every ten is a member of an organization, be it religious, political, communal or professional. Likelihood of organization membership is higher for males, and for youth aged 18-23 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who are members of any organization (religious, sports club, political party, trade union, community association)



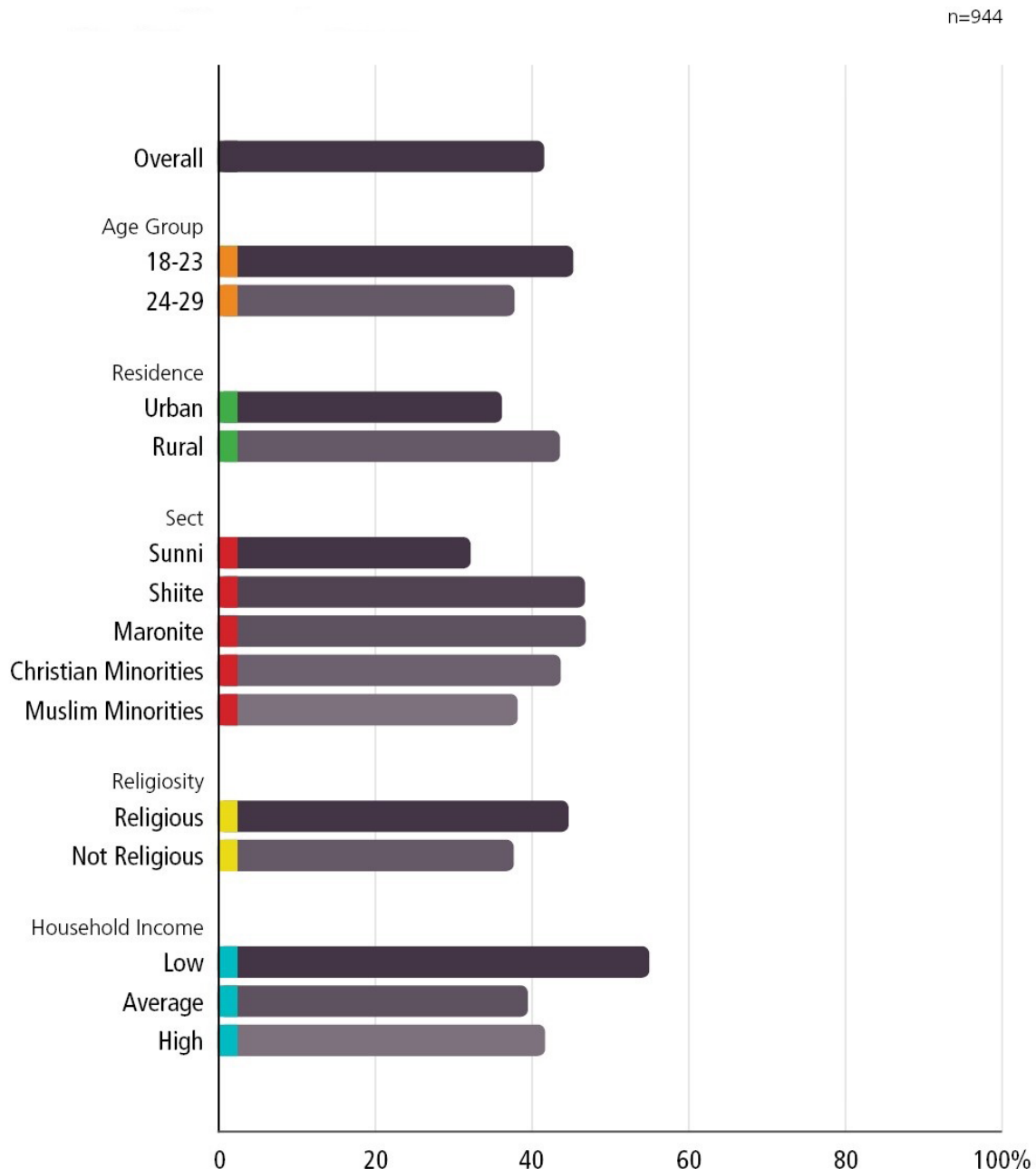
The great majority of youth have never participated in a group of people to solve a problem or “do good” in the local community. The few who did participate were mostly male. Those who have not finished college education were also more likely to have participated in community work (Figure 6).

**Figure 6** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who have ever participated in a group of people working to solve a problem or “do good” in their local community



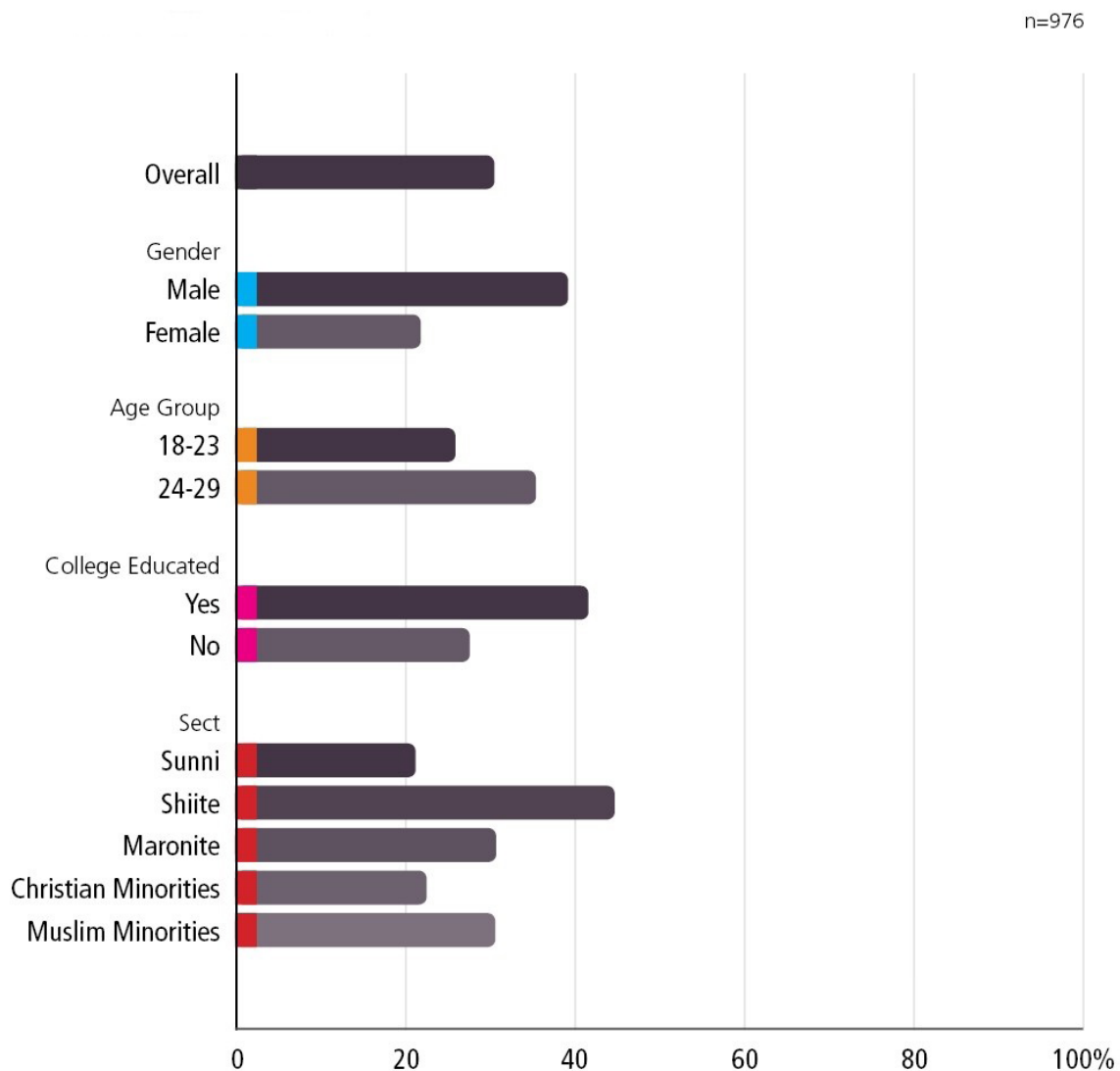
About 40 percent of Lebanon's youth sympathize with the 2015 protest movements, called al-Hirak. Sympathy is higher among rural, religious and low-income youth. Muslim Sunni youth are the least sympathetic with the movement, among Lebanon's major sects (Figure 7).

**Figure 7** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who sympathized with al-Hirak



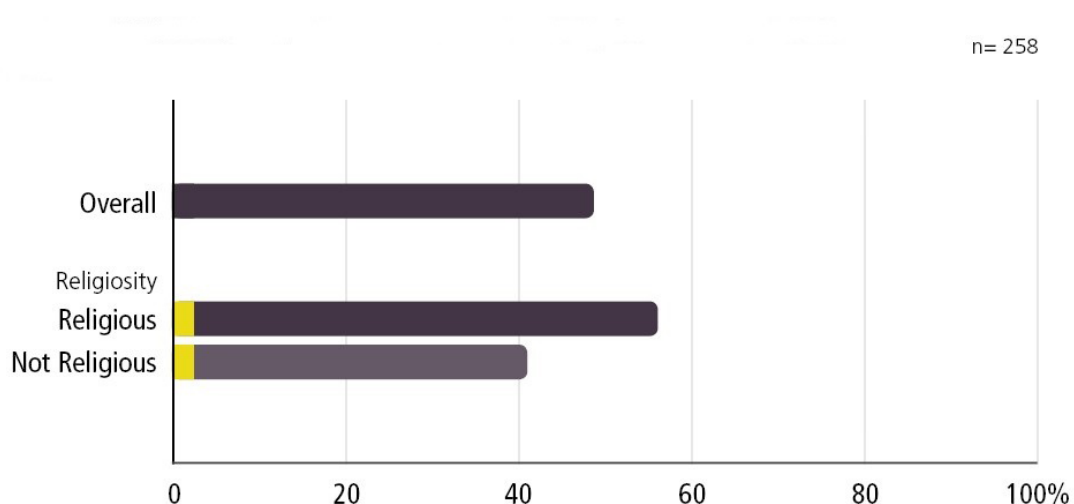
Almost 70 percent of the youth lack interest in politics. Male, older and college-educated youth are slightly more interested. A young person's sect is a major determinant of their interest in politics: over 40 percent of Shiite youth, as opposed to around 20 percent of Sunni and Christian minority youth are interested in politics (Figure 8).

**Figure 8** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth interested in politics



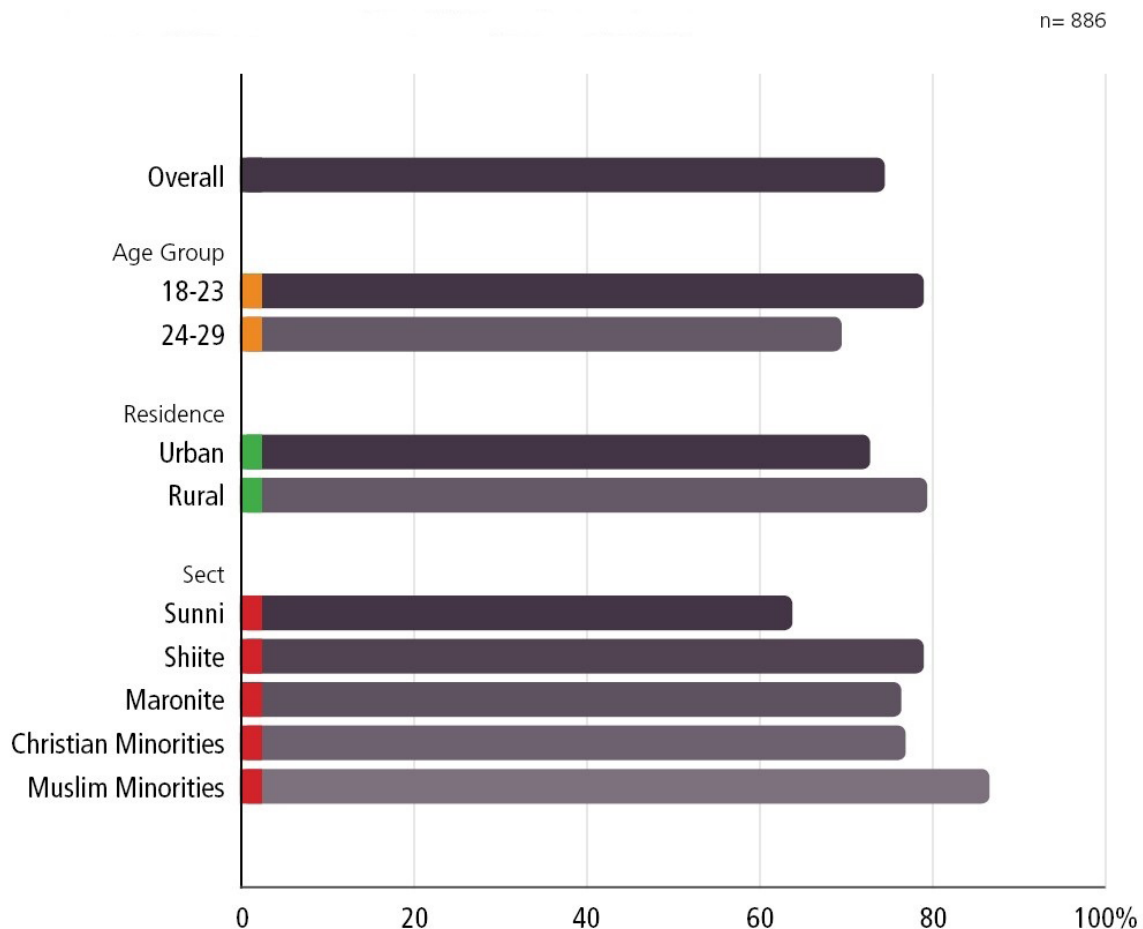
Among youth who were eligible to vote in the last national elections, half opted to vote. Religious youth seem to have been more enthusiastic about voting than non-religious youth (Figure 9).

**Figure 9** | Percentage and religiosity profile of Lebanese youth who voted in the last national elections



Despite low political participation rates, three quarters of the youth believe that young people are active in political life. Being in the 18-23 age segment and living in a rural area slightly increase the likelihood of this belief. Muslim minority (mainly Druze) youth more firmly agree than youth of other sects, particularly Sunni youth (Figure 10).

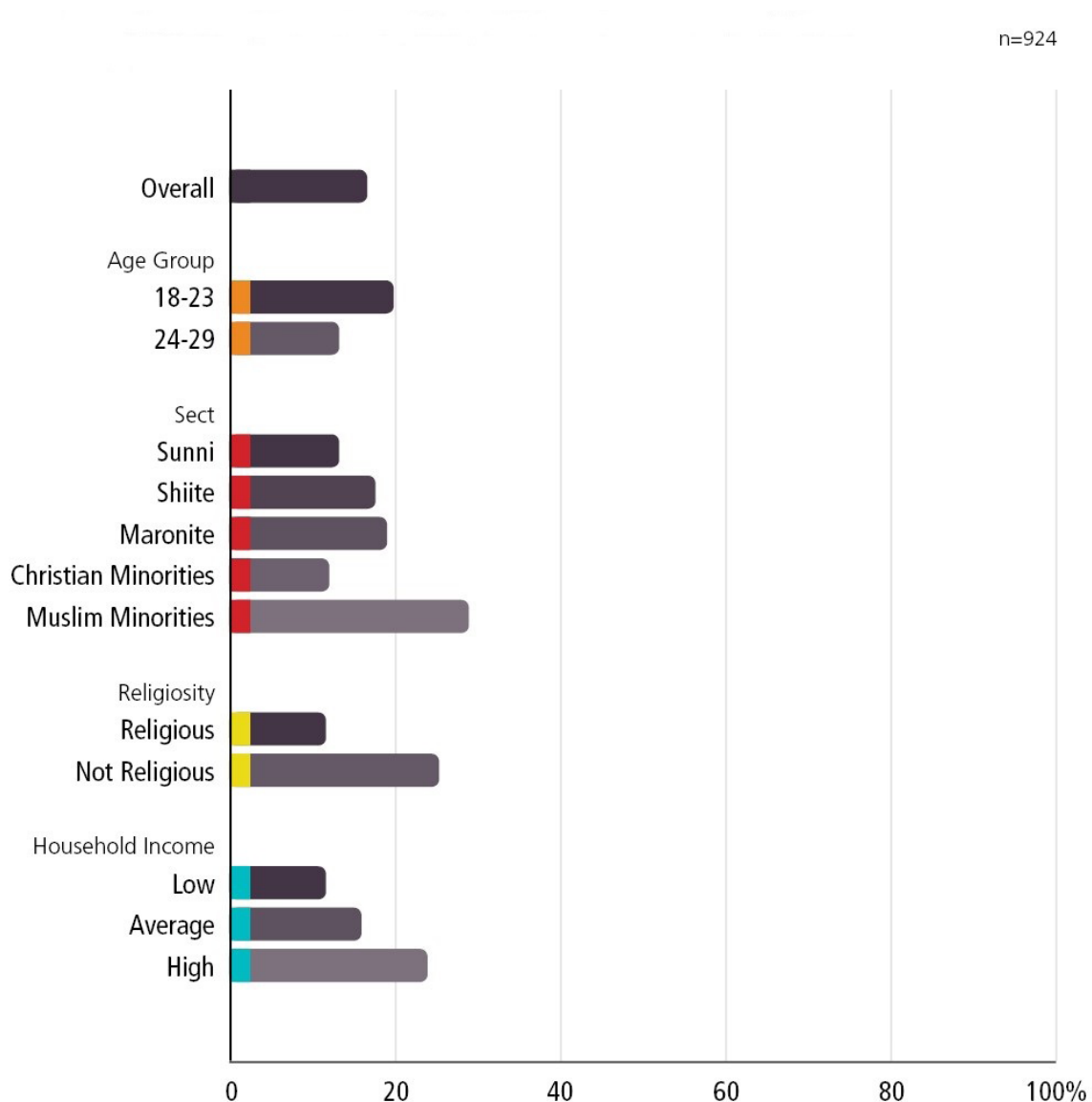
**Figure 10** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who think young people are active in political life





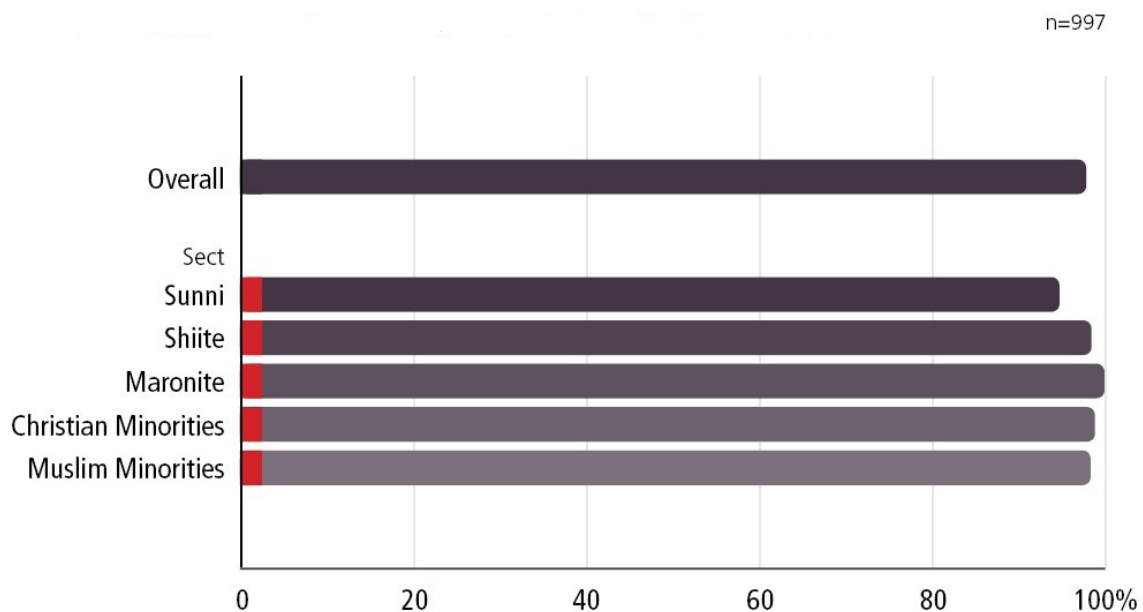
Over four fifths of the youth think that politicians do not pay enough attention to issues of relevance to youth. Non-religious, high-income youth are more likely to trust politicians in this matter. Muslim minority youth are also highly trusting, especially compared to their Christian minority counterparts (Figure 11).

**Figure 11** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who think politicians pay enough attention to issues of relevance to youth

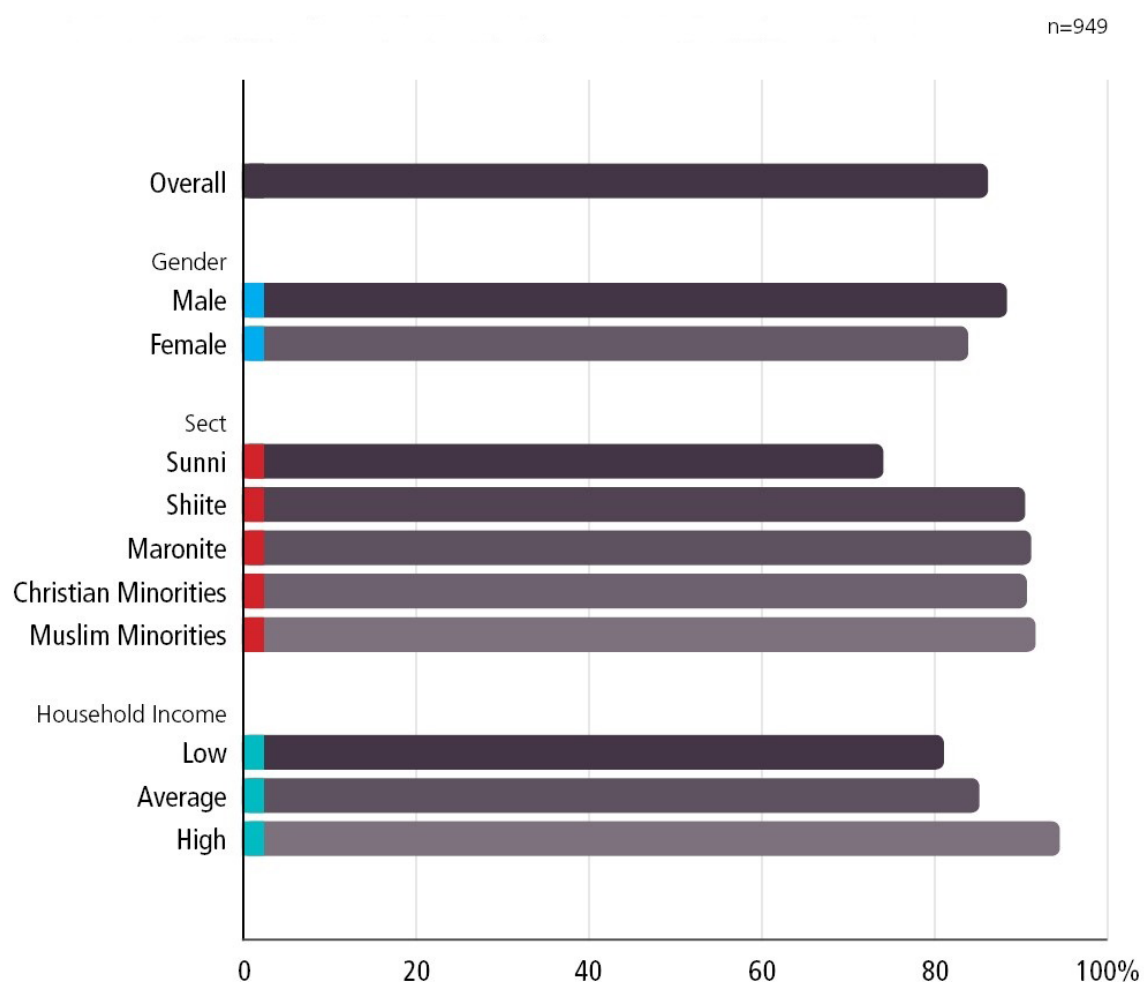


Almost every young person in Lebanon feels safe to go out in their neighbourhood during the day. However, around 15 percent would be worried to go out during the night. Females are slightly more likely than males to feel unsafe at night. Youth who live in low-income households are most worried about going at night: the reason could be that low-income households tend to be located in low-income, less safe neighbourhoods (Figure 12 and Figure 13).

**Figure 12** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who think it is safe to go out in their neighbourhood during the day

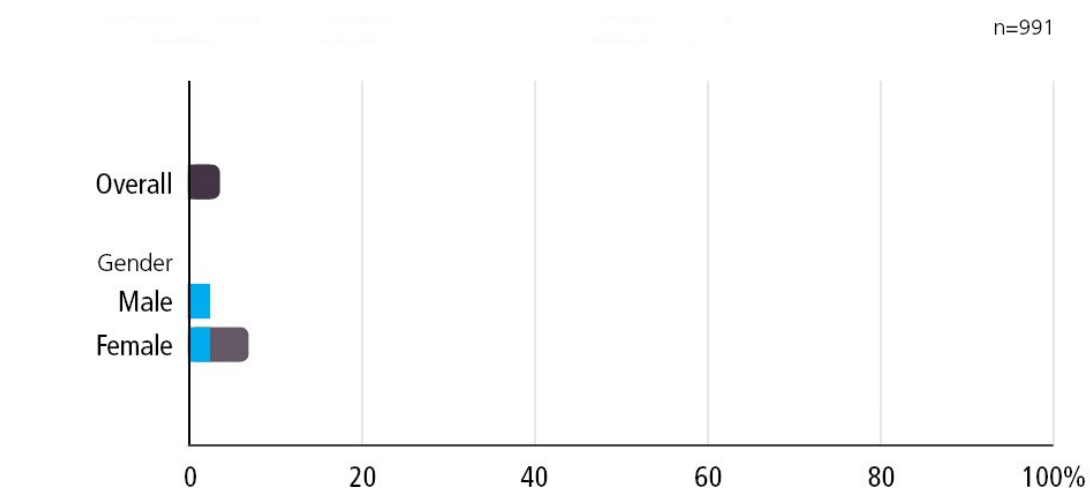


**Figure 13** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who think it is safe to go out in their neighbourhood during the night



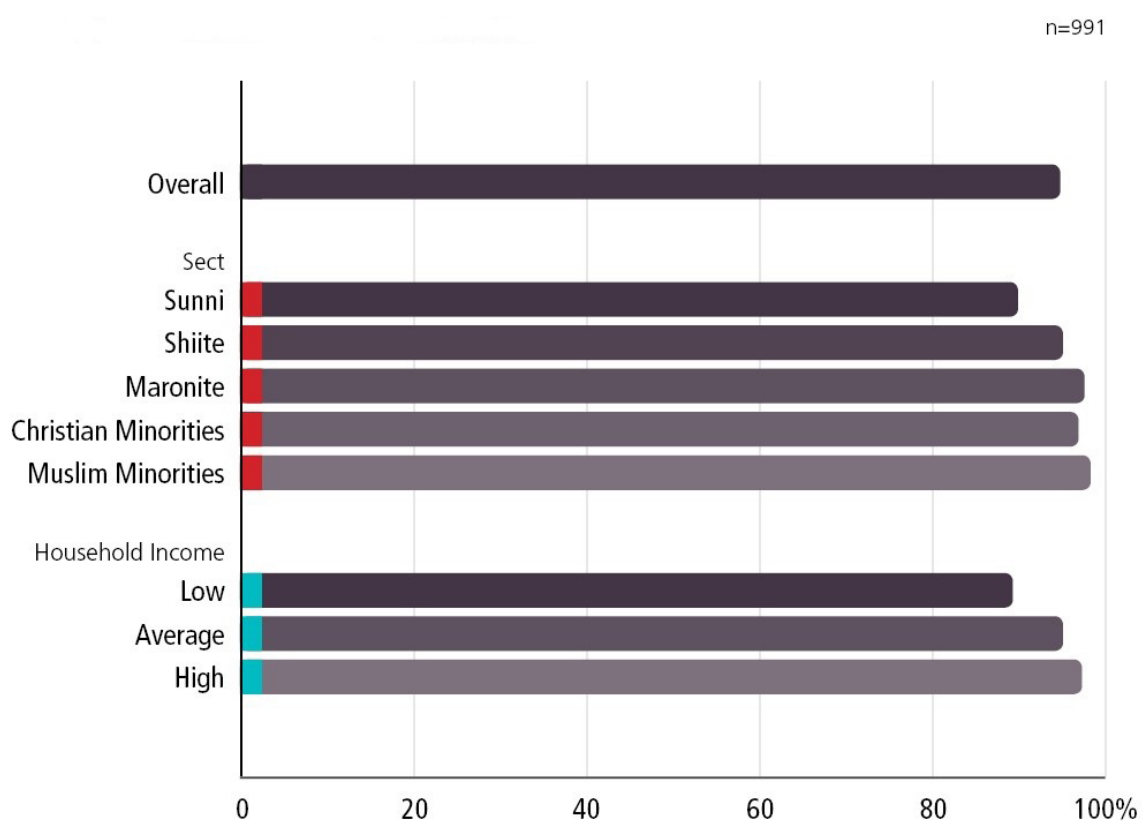
Despite the fact that 15 percent of youth do not feel safe to go out in their neighbourhood at night, less than 5 percent were exposed to sexual harassment over the past three months. Females were much more likely to be harassed than males (Figure 14).

**Figure 14** | Youth exposed to sexual harassment



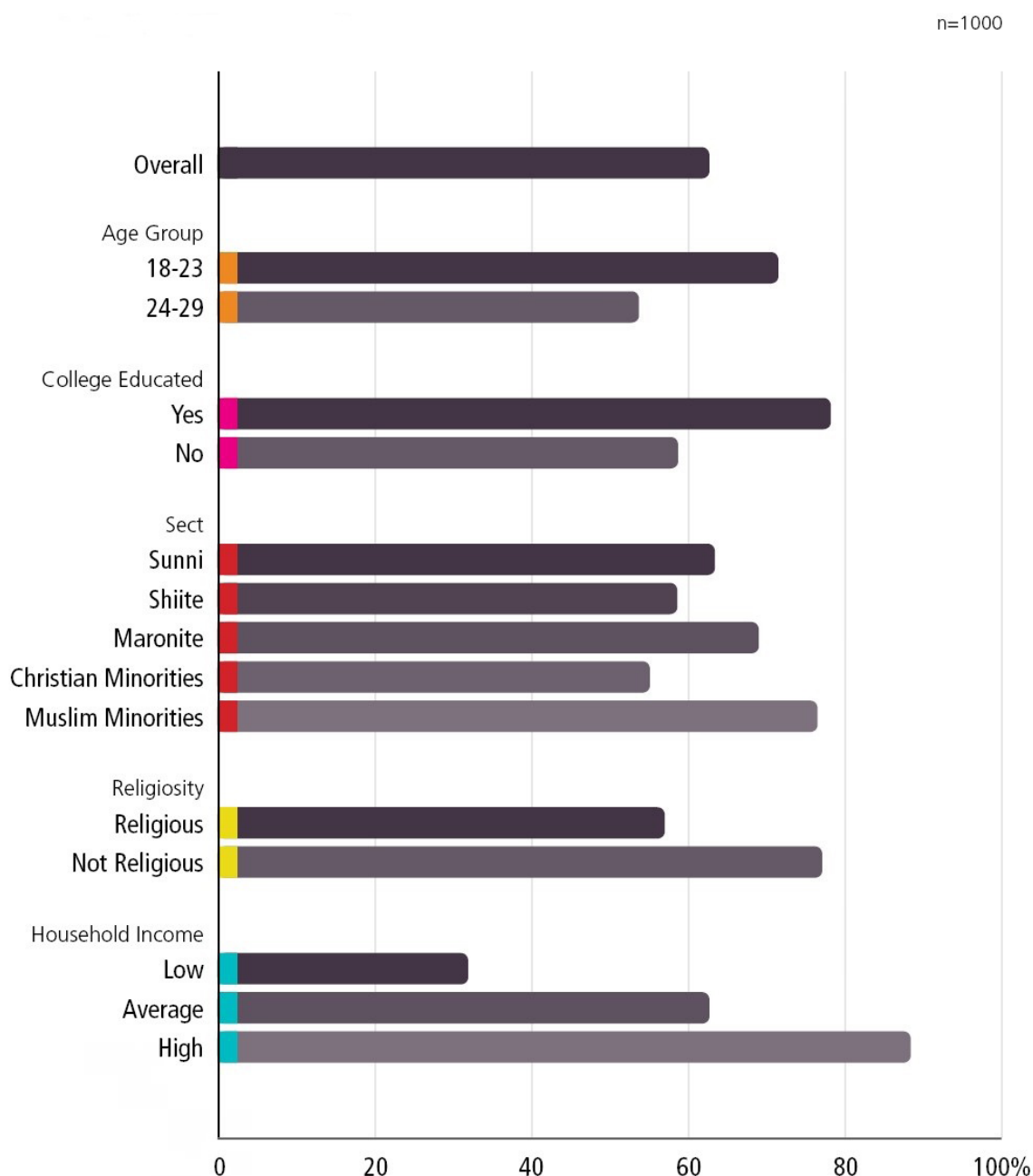
Over 90 percent of the youth are satisfied with their neighbourhood. Those unsatisfied tend to be Sunni, and live in low-income households (Figure 15).

**Figure 15** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth satisfied with their neighbourhood

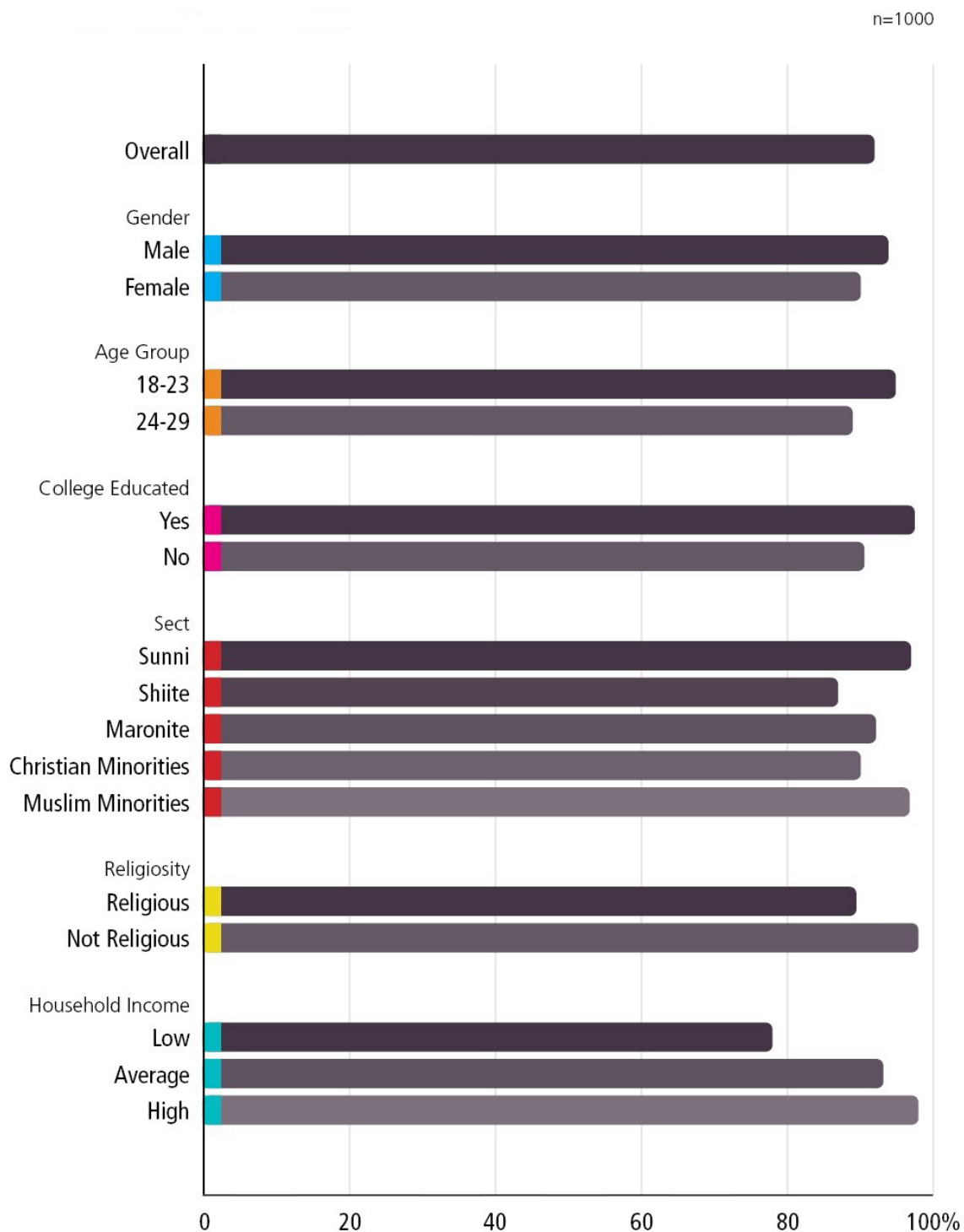


Around 60 percent of the youth own a PC or laptop, while over 90 percent own a smartphone. Youth who are 18-23 have a higher ownership rate than those who are 24-29. College-educated youth and those with middle and high income are more likely to own a computer or smartphone. Being religious reduces the likelihood of owning one of these devices (Figure 16 and Figure 17).

**Figure 16** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who own a PC/laptop

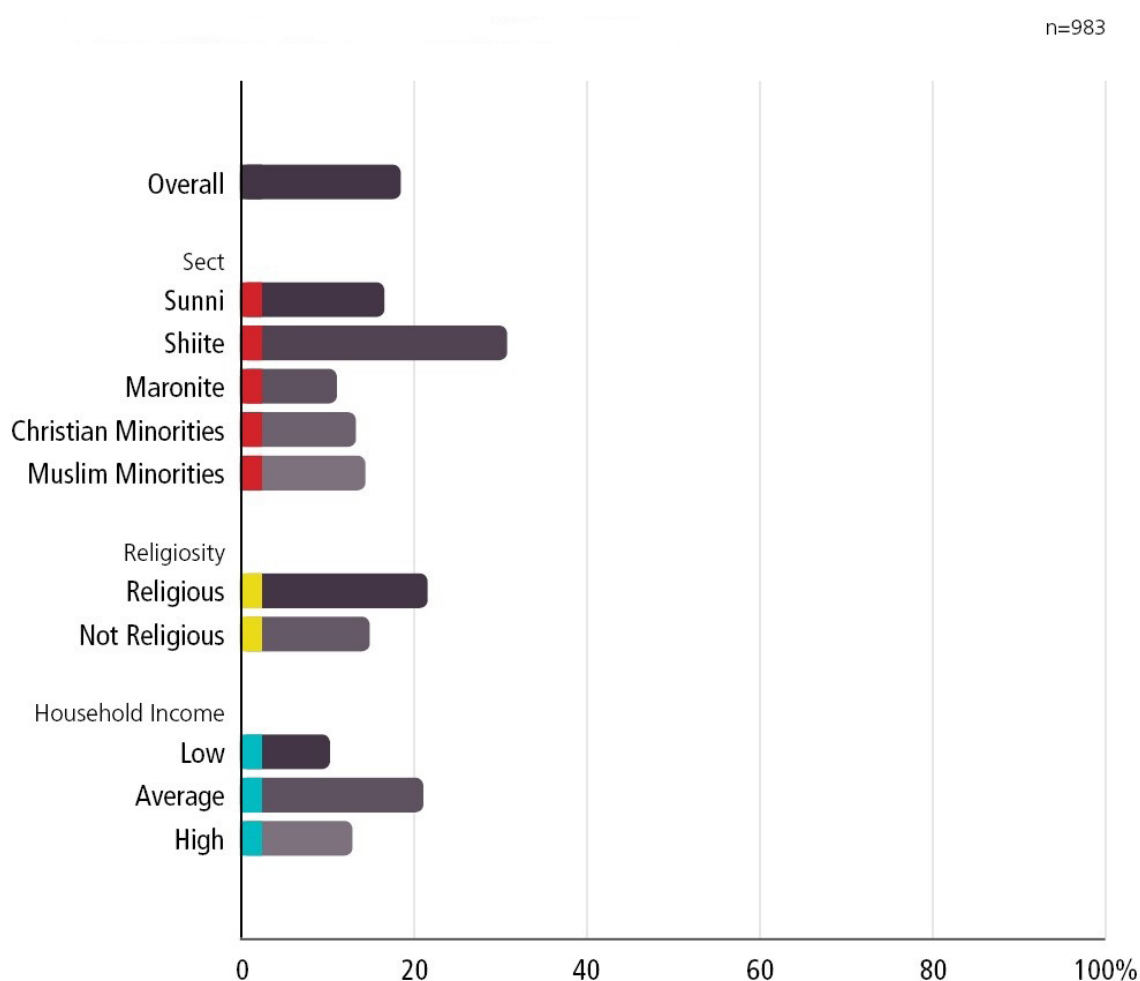


**Figure 17** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who own a smartphone



Less than a fifth of Lebanon's youth are satisfied with the way the country is governed. Religious youth, particularly Shiites, have a higher satisfaction rate. Youth who live in average-income households are significantly more likely to be satisfied than those who are either above or below average income (Figure 18).

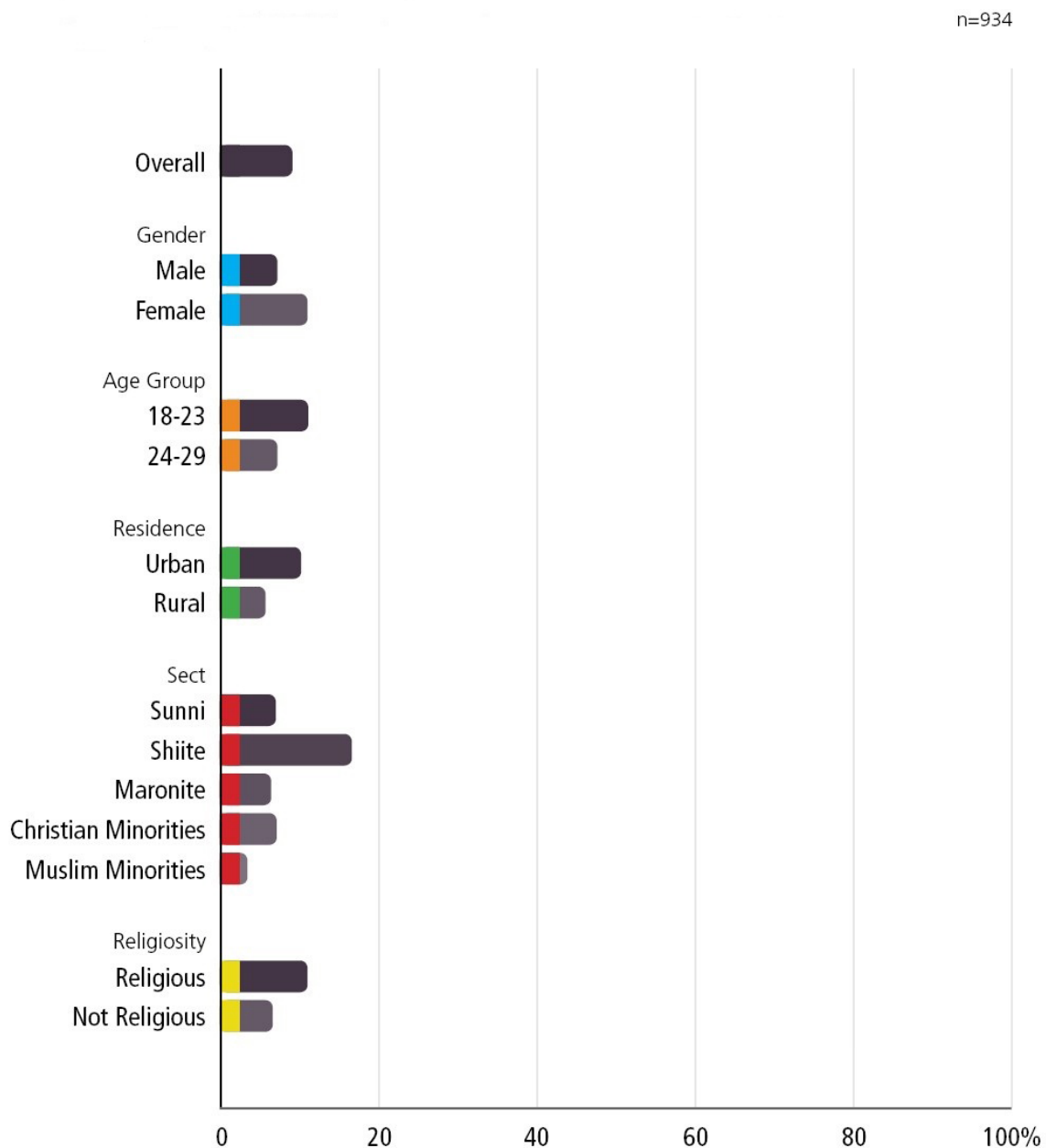
**Figure 18** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who are satisfied with the way Lebanon is governed





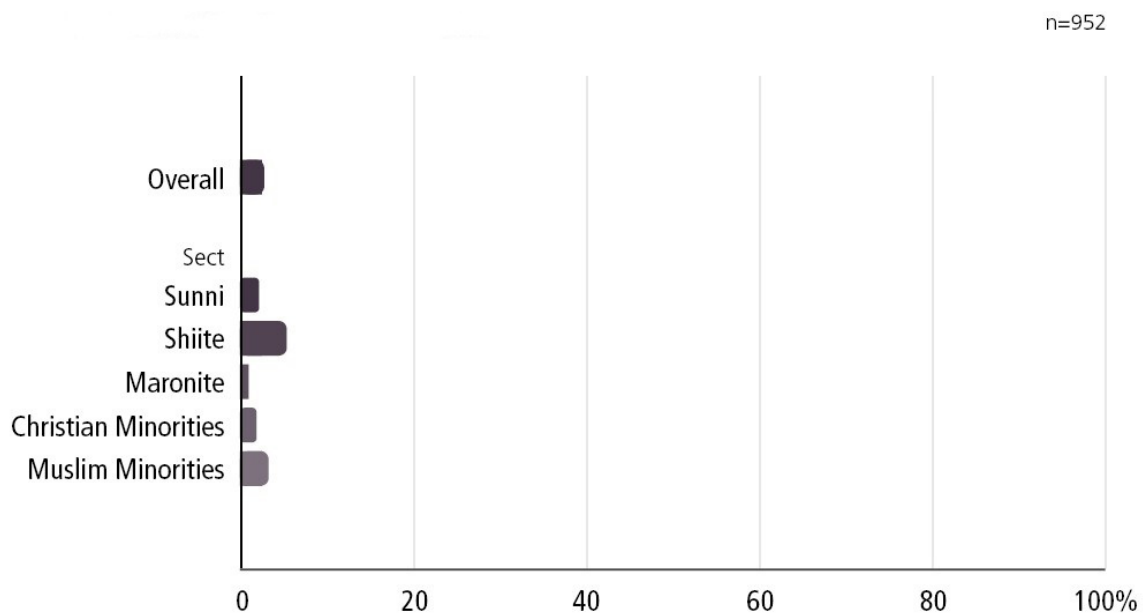
A small minority of the youth think that the overall impact of the Arab Spring has been positive in the Middle East. Female, younger, urban and religious youth tend to be more optimistic about the Arab Spring's impact (Figure 19).

**Figure 19** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who think the overall impact of the Arab Spring on the Middle East has been positive

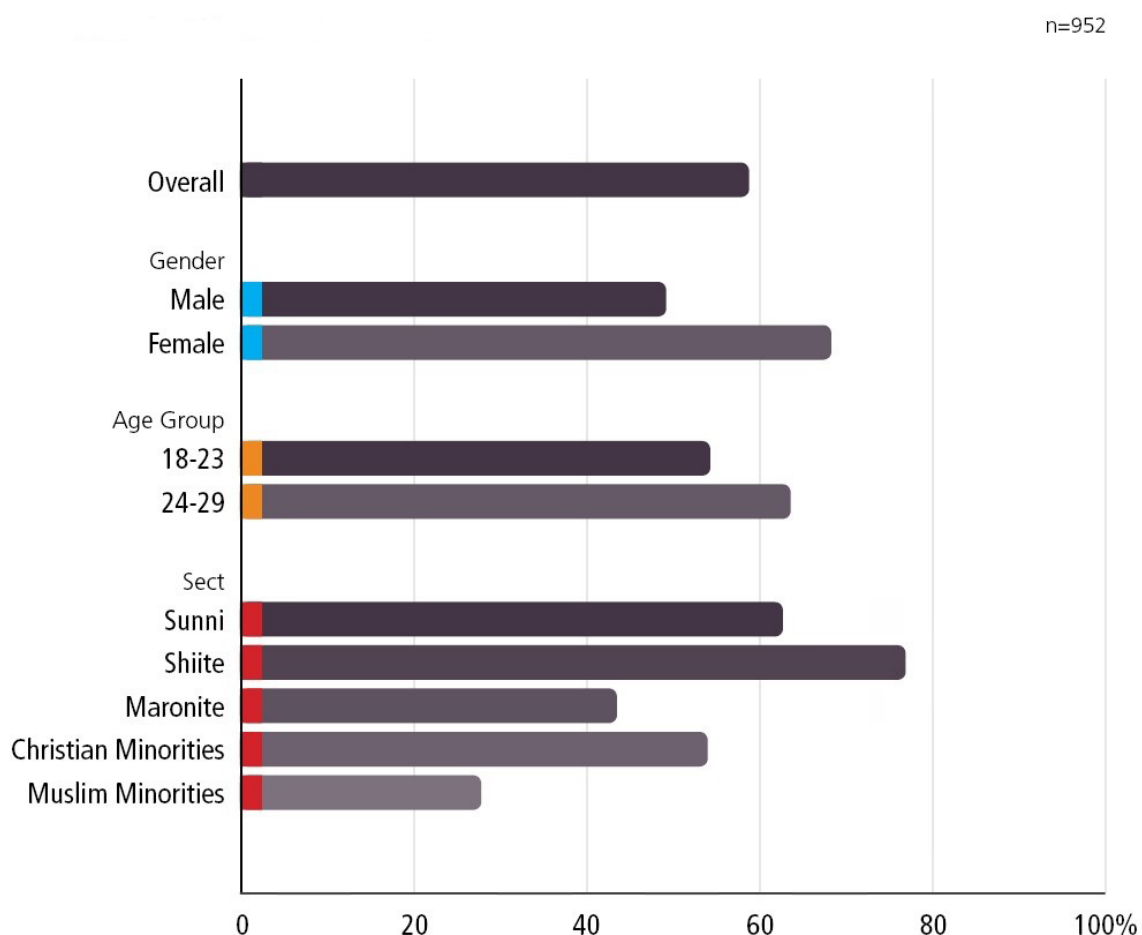


While less than 5 percent of Lebanon's youth identify as very religious, nearly 60 percent identify as religious but not very religious. Females tend to be more religious than males. Over 75 percent of Shiite youth are religious, as opposed to around 60 percent of Sunnis, slightly over 40 percent of Maronites, and around 50 percent of Christian minorities. Muslim minorities are the least likely to be religious (Figure 20 and Figure 21).

**Figure 20** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who say they are very religious

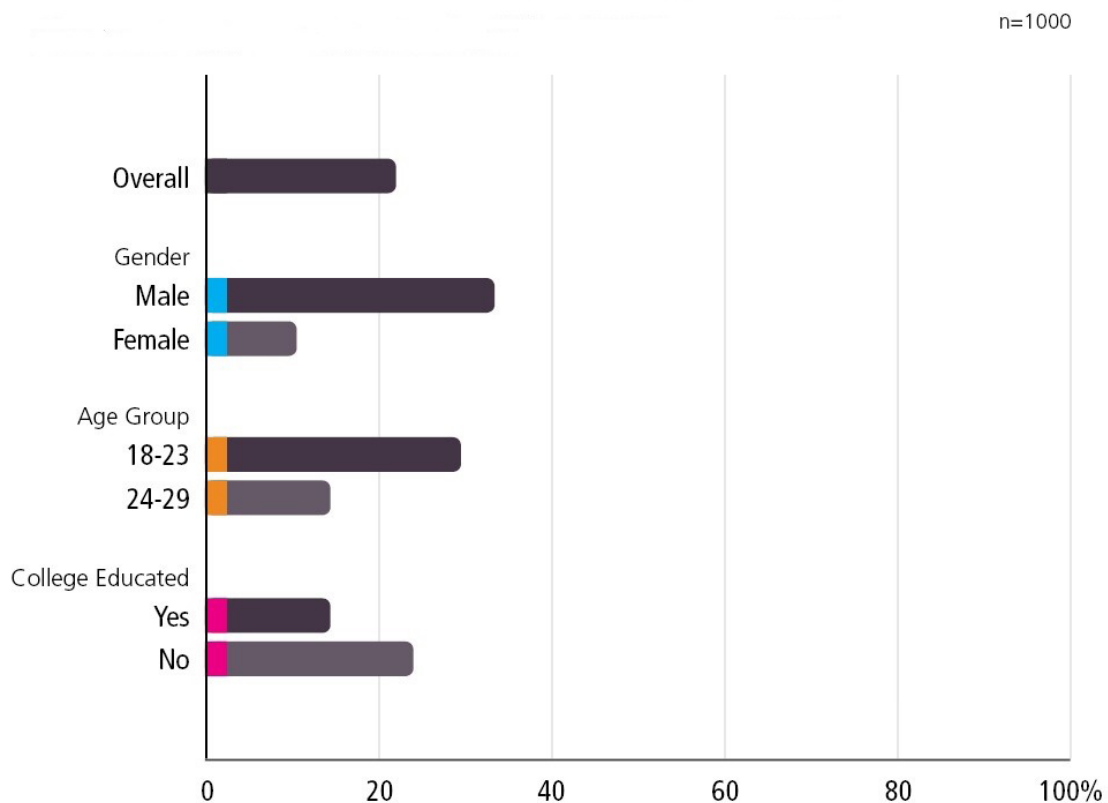


**Figure 21** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who say they are religious



One in every five of Lebanon's youth is likely to migrate in the coming 5 years to seek work or permanent residence. This involves over a third of males. Potential migrants tend to be in the 18-23 age segment, and did not hold a college degree at the time of the survey (Figure 22).

**Figure 22** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth who say it is likely they will travel to another country in the next five years to seek work or permanent residence

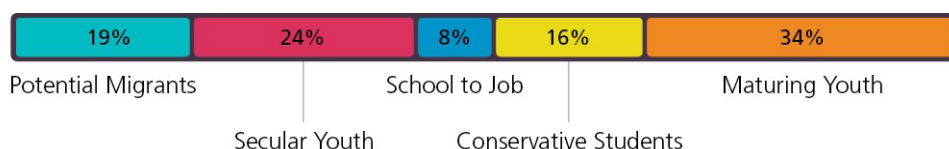


## 2. CLUSTERING LEBANESE YOUTH INTO FIVE SEGMENTS

Based on the previous discussion, Lebanese youth seem to be quite a complex group, who think very differently according to a wide range of intersecting variables, leading to diverse perceptions. To verify this first reading, we constructed segments from the data to identify more specifically the various ways Lebanese youth may be grouped. To do so, we employed the k-means clustering method to generate the segments. This process of segmentation implies that each segment member is closer to his/her segment's centre (average) than to that of any of the other segments.

In line with data variations observed in our earlier findings, the following variables were used to segment the data: age group, study/work status, marriage status, religiosity, participation in political action, opinion about women's rights, and attitude towards migration. Gender was not used in the segmentation to avoid skewing the segments towards gender separation. This way, gender separation will only appear if it exists due to other criteria. The optimal number of segments we found is five. Trying for additional segments yielded a high degree of repetition between at least two segments. We examined characteristics of the five segments, and gave them the following titles based on their distinct characteristics: potential migrants, secular youth, school to job, conservative students, and maturing youth. In what follows, we describe each segment, highlighting its main features as well as its relationship to politics and religiosity.

**Figure 23** | Distribution of Lebanese youth into five segments



### Segment A: Potential Migrants (19 percent of youth)

Predominantly male, 70 percent of the youth in this group are students. They share the desire to leave the country within 5 years to seek work or permanent residence abroad. This highly frustrated segment has the highest political participation rate.

Profile:

80 percent male

Average age: 21.3

70 percent study, 28 percent work

Single

Household economic situation: 11 percent low, 69 percent average, 19 percent high

Half religious, half not

All sects

32 percent participated in political action

**Segment B: Secular Youth (24 percent of youth)**

Identifying as non-religious, this segment is equally divided into males and females, averaging 22 years old. They most strongly believe that religious practice is a private matter and should be separated from public and political life.

Profile:

Not religious

Strong support for a secular state

All sects; high relative representation of Maronites

55 percent male, 45 percent female

Average age: 21.7

69 percent study, 28 percent work

Single

Household economic situation: 9 percent low, 73 percent average, 18 percent high

**Segment C: School to Job (8 percent of youth)**

Members of this segment are 18 to 23 years old. They mostly entered the job market straight from school. Over 40 percent of them live in rural areas. One third of this segment work in sales and services. Unemployment is highest in this group.

Profile:

40 percent male, 60 percent female

Average age: 21.4; all between 18 and 23

27 percent married

43 percent rural

Mostly work

15 percent unemployed; most of them likely to migrate

Religious

Mostly Sunni and Shiite with fewer Maronite and minorities

Relatively low support for gender equality

Household economic situation: 14 percent low, 79 percent average, 6 percent high

**Segment D: Conservative Students (16 percent of youth)**

With an average age of 20.5, members of this group are all students. Two thirds of them are female. They tend to be more religious than other groups. They also tend to be Muslim and urban. They prefer to stay in Lebanon, and do not see themselves migrating in the coming years.

Profile:

Student

Religious

75 percent Muslim, 25 percent Christian

Support gender equality, but resist secular state

35 percent male, 65 percent female

Average age: 20.5

Single

80 percent urban

Household economic situation: 9 percent low, 74 percent average, 17 percent high

### **Segment E: Maturing Youth (34 percent of youth)**

Mostly in their late 20s, 43 percent of the youth in this group hold a college or university degree. Over two thirds of them are already married. They are more interested in politics, but they choose not to translate their interest into action.

Profile:

Average age: 26.9; all between 24 and 29

Majority work

43 percent college graduates

68 percent married

35 percent male, 65 percent female

78 percent religious

All sects; high relative representation of Shiites

High interest in politics; low participation in action

Household economic situation: 11 percent low, 70 percent average, 19 percent high

## **3. YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICS, RELIGION, AND WOMEN'S ROLES AND RIGHTS**

In this section, the discussion focuses on selected questions concerning youth's political participation, interest in political change, and an assessment of their diverse attitudes with regard to religion, women's roles and rights, and patriarchy. These questions are relevant to the project's general interest in understanding features of youth's mobilization, and changing perceptions of youth, if any, particularly with regard to gender roles.

For youth's political participation and interest in political change, we assessed three questions.<sup>4</sup> For youth's opinions on religion and politics, we examined two questions.<sup>5</sup> For youth's opinions on women's roles and rights, and patriarchy, we assessed four questions.<sup>6</sup> All the nine questions were cross-tabbed, in each set, with relevant variables (gender, age, urban/rural, college education, working parent, economic situation, sect, religiosity, parent's education, parent's activism, and with the five youth segments previously identified). Below, we present results in graph histograms showing totals as well as significant variables (see Annex 2 for detailed results).

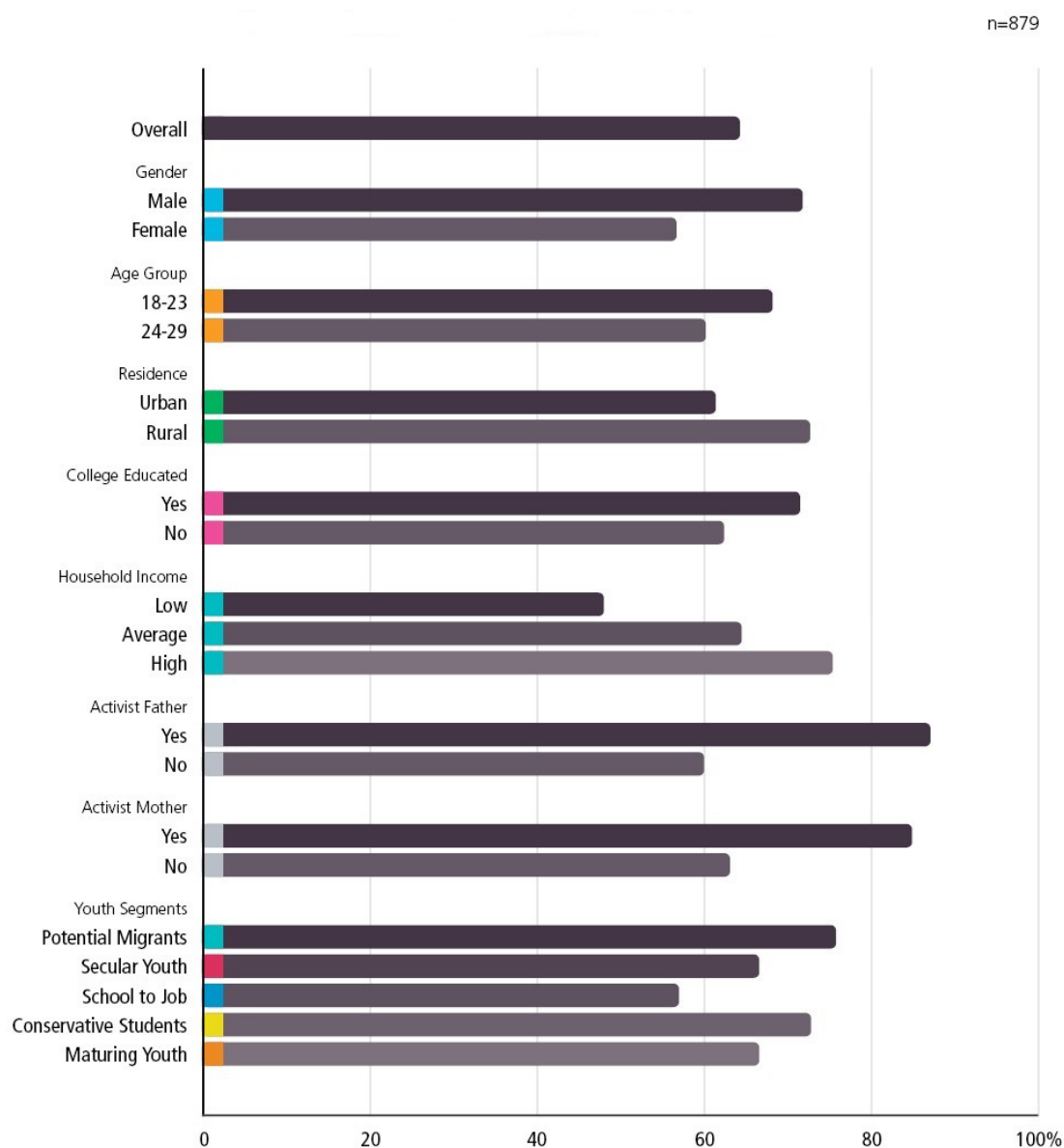
<sup>4</sup> These are: (OA18) youth who believe they "can make a change even if small on political decisions;" (PP04) youth who said they "sympathize with al-Hirak;" and (PP27) youth who "voted" (and who were of voting age).

<sup>5</sup> These are: (OA34) youth who strongly and somewhat agree that "religious practice is a private matter and should be separated from public and political life;" and (OA35) youth who strongly and somewhat agree that "mosques and churches should not be used to influence people's opinions about public matters."

<sup>6</sup> These are: (OA05) youth who strongly and somewhat agree that "men and women should receive equal pay for equal work;" (OA08) youth who strongly and somewhat agree that "men and women should have equal inheritance rights;" (OA09) youth who strongly and somewhat agree that "men and women should receive equal divorce rights;" and (OA06) youth who strongly and somewhat agree that "men should be making the important decisions in the family."

Over 60 percent of Lebanon's youth believe they can make a change, even if small, on political decisions. Those whose (either) parent is active in the public sphere are significantly more likely to believe in their ability to make a change. Male, college-educated and high-income youth are also positive about their role. Among youth segments, youth in the "School to Job" segment are least likely to believe in their ability to make a change, while "Potential Migrants" and "Conservative Students" have an above-average likelihood (Figure 24).

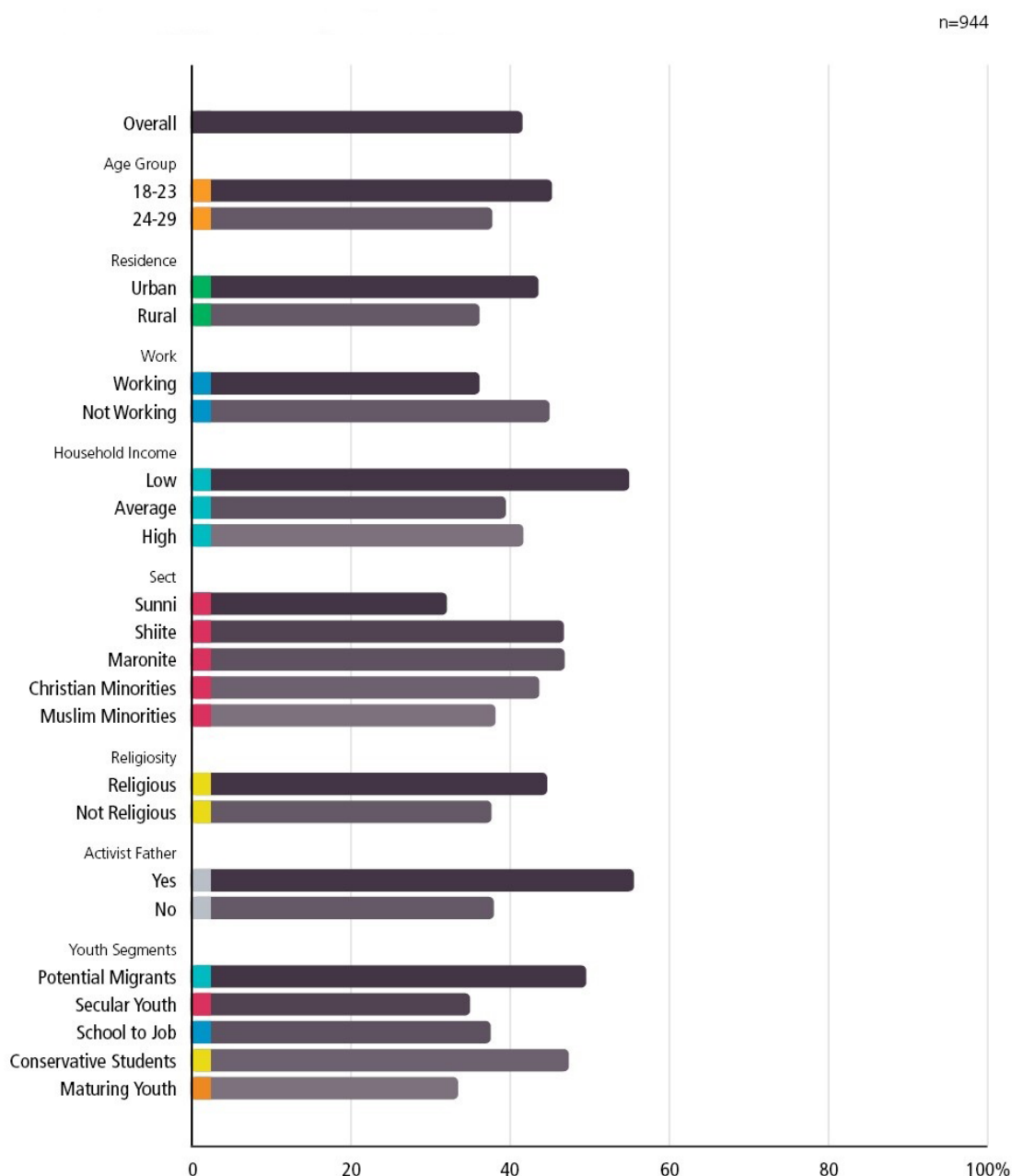
**Figure 24** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who believe they can make a change, even if small, on political decisions





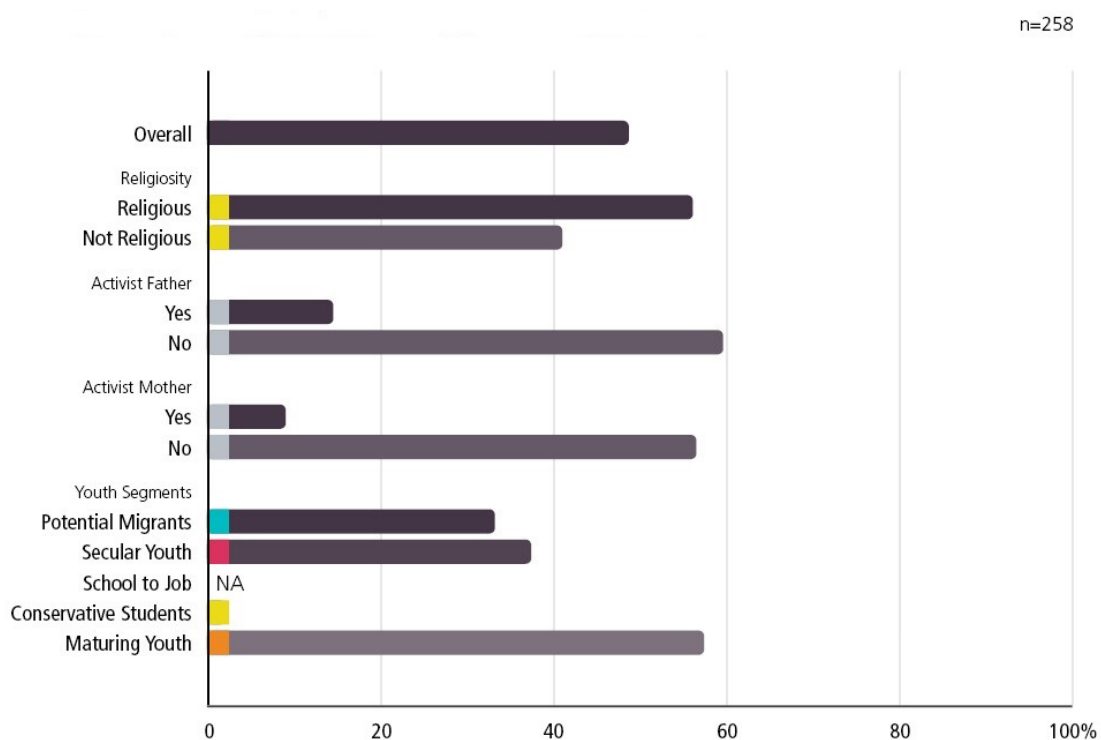
As previously discussed, about 40 percent of Lebanon's youth sympathize with the recent protest movements, al-Hirak. Sympathy is higher among rural, religious and low-income youth. Sunni youth are the least sympathetic with the movement among Lebanon's major sects. Al-Hirak has been particularly appealing to those whose father is an activist. Among the youth segments, "Potential Migrants" seem to count on the protest movements more than others, while "Secular" and "Maturing Youth" are most sceptical (Figure 25).

**Figure 25** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who sympathize with al-Hirak



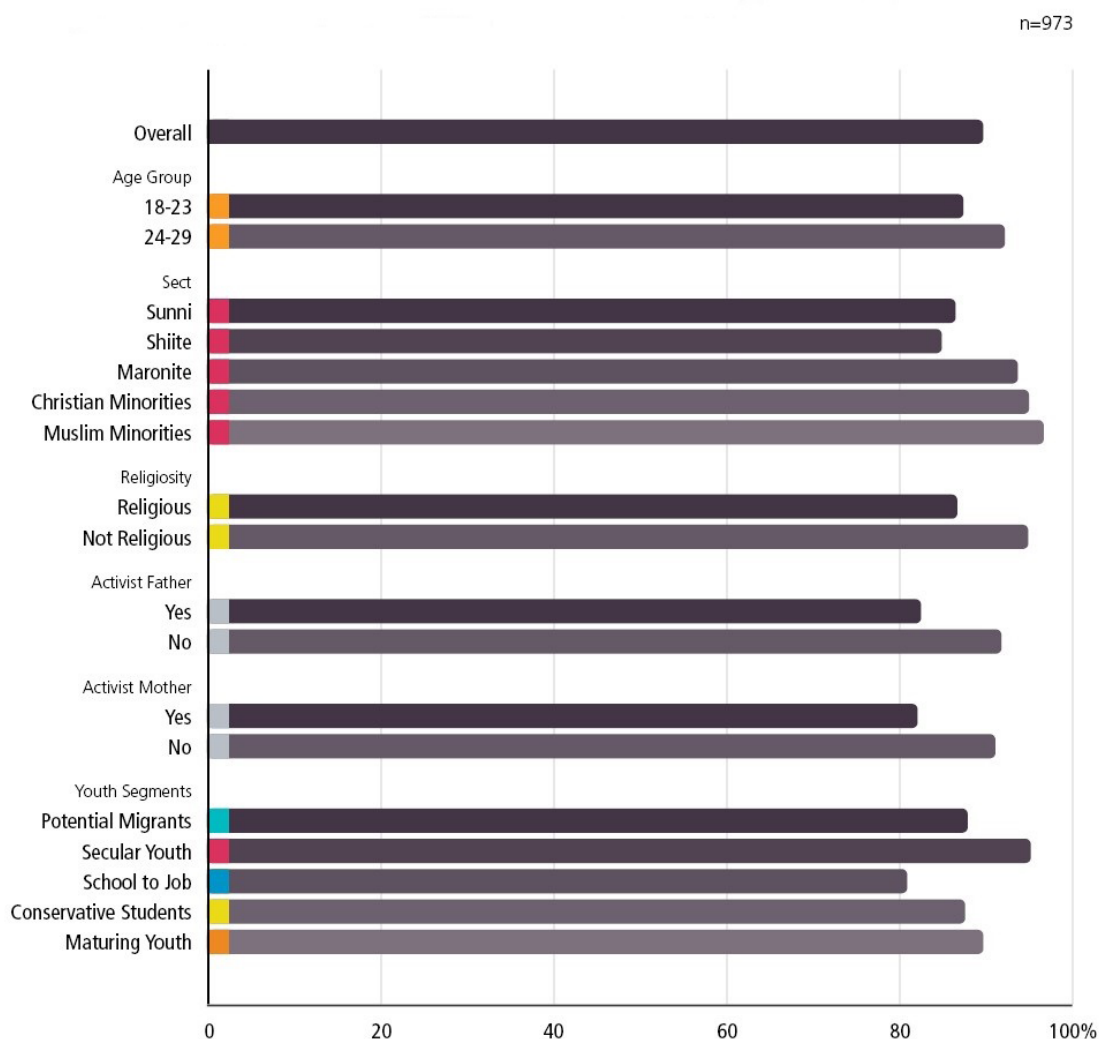
As previously mentioned, among youth who were eligible to vote in the last national elections, only half opted to vote. Religious youth seem to have been more enthusiastic about voting than non-religious youth. Having an activist parent seems to have an adverse effect on youth's desire to vote. "Conservative Students" who were eligible to vote did not use their right, while the majority of "Potential Migrants" and "Secular Youth" did not show up on election day (Figure 26).

**Figure 26** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who voted in the last national elections (among those eligible to vote)



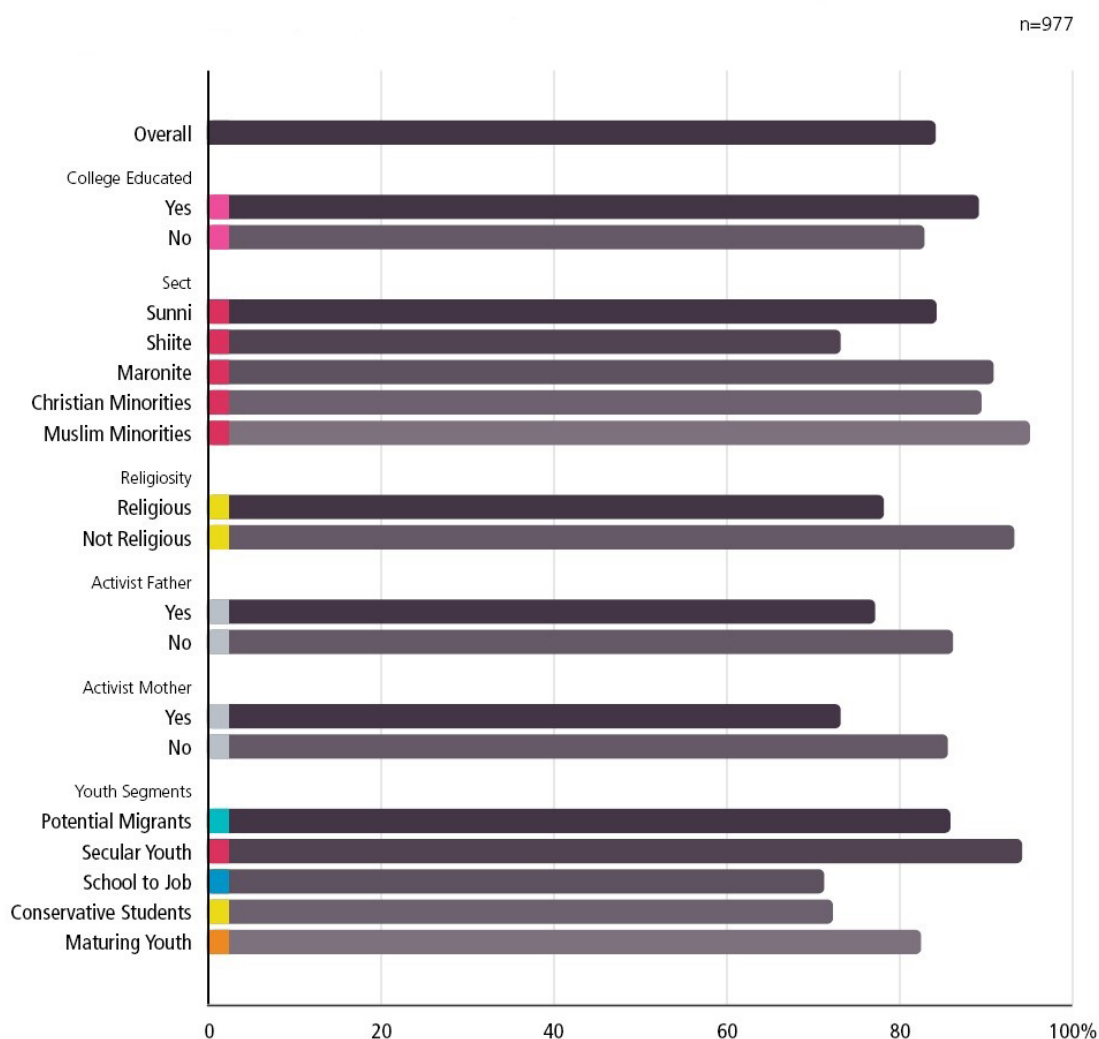
Around 90 percent of the youth agree that religious practice is a private matter and should be separated from public and political life. Religious youth are more resistant to this idea than their non-religious counterparts. Sunnis and Shiites are more sceptical than others. “Secular Youth” strongly advocate separation of religion from public and political life (Figure 27).

**Figure 27** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who agree that “religious practice is a private matter and should be separated from public and political life”



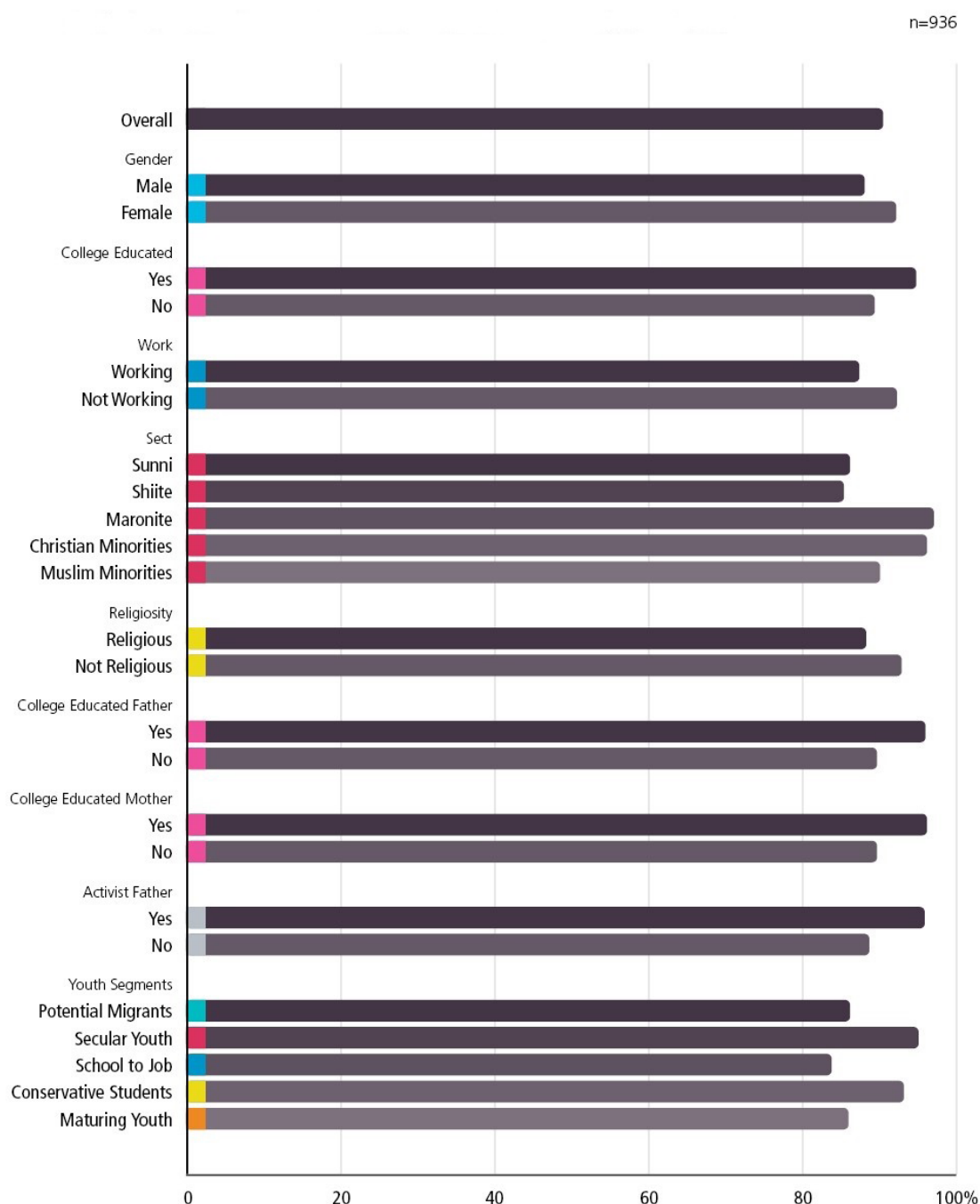
When it comes to limiting the public influence of religious institutions, many Lebanese youth reluctantly agree. Over 15 percent of them do not agree that mosques and churches should not be used to influence people's opinions about public matters. Shiite youth are the strongest opponents of the idea. Overall, "School to Job" and "Conservative Students" youth tend to be less opposed to the public influence of religious institutions than "Secular Youth" (Figure 28).

**Figure 28** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who agree that "mosques and churches should not be used to influence people's opinions about public matters"



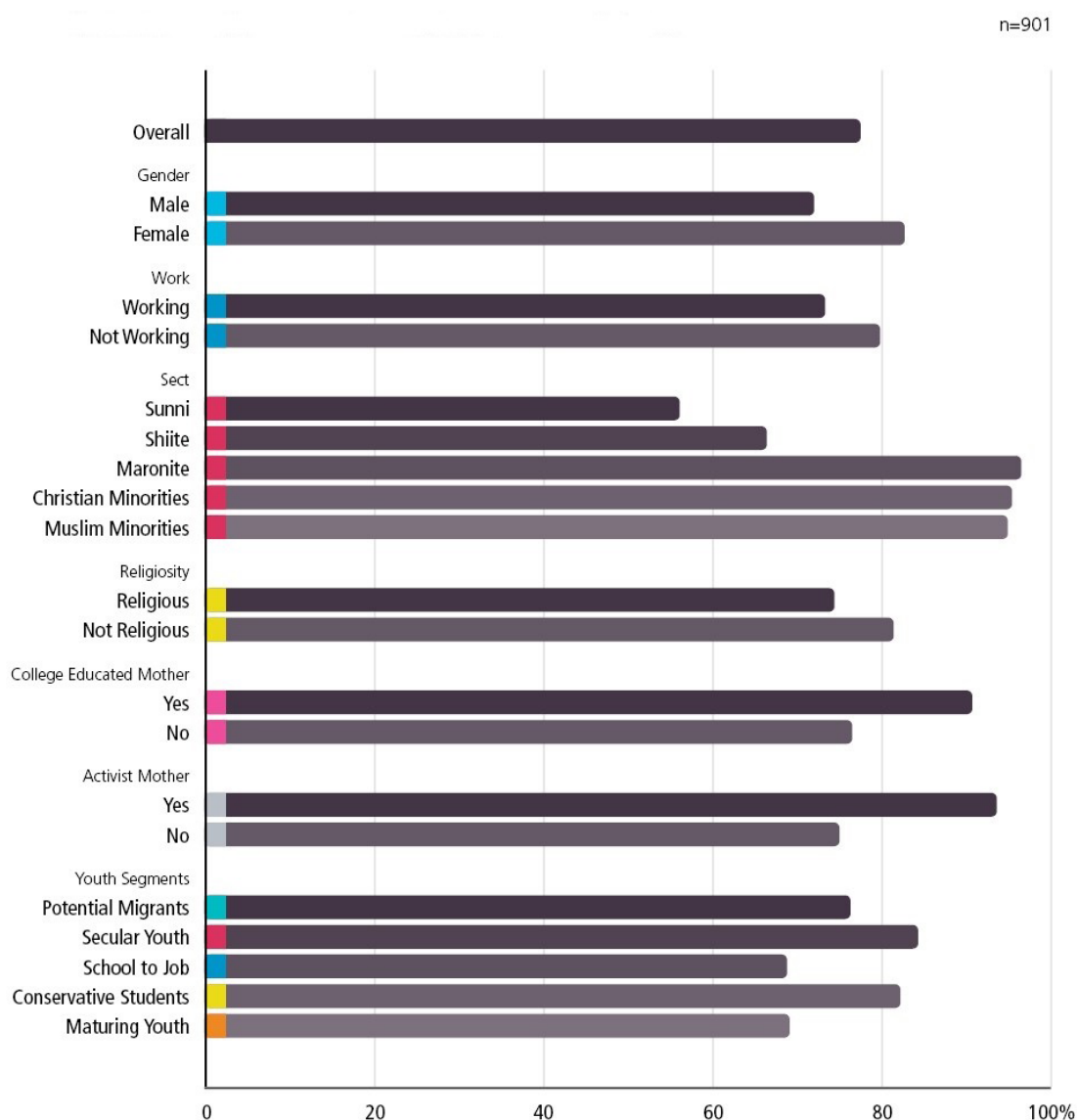
Youth agree that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work. Women, and college-educated youth are slightly more likely to agree. Having a college-educated parent increases the odds of believing in equal pay. Muslim youth are more likely to oppose equal pay than their Christian counterparts. Students, represented by “Secular Youth” and “Conservative Students,” seem to be strong advocates for equal gender pay (Figure 29).

**Figure 29** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who agree that “men and women should receive equal pay for equal work”



Over one fifth of youth oppose equal inheritance rights between men and women. Women are not united for equal inheritance: over 15 percent of them do not accept the idea. Mothers play a clear role: those whose mothers are activists or college-educated are significantly more likely to approve equal inheritance. Driven by religious instructions about inheritance, Sunni and Shiite youth do not welcome equal inheritance. Maronites and Christian minorities strongly support gender equality in this regard. Here too, “Secular Youth” and “Conservative Students” are relatively strong supporters of gender equality (Figure 30).

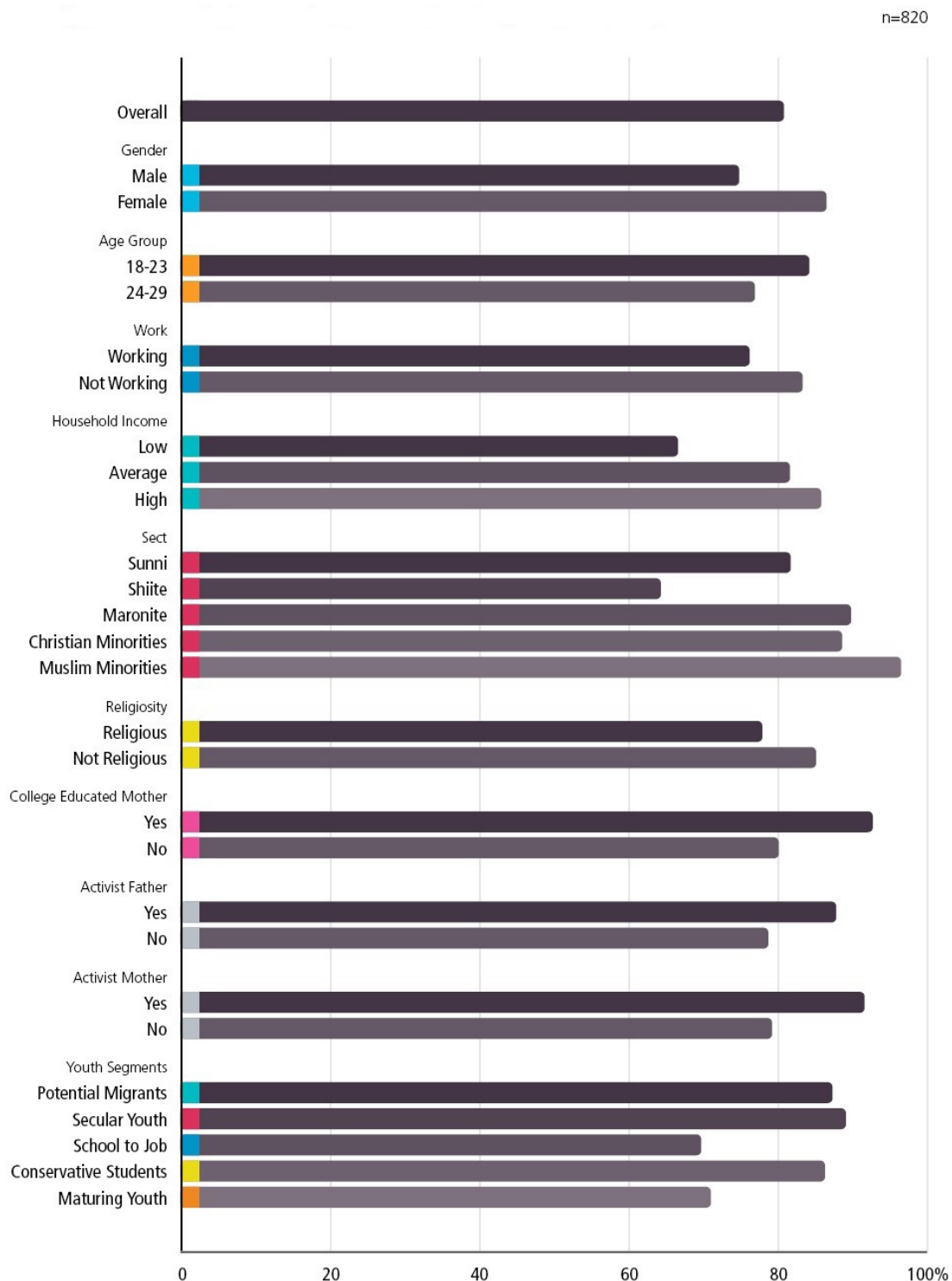
**Figure 30** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who agree that “men and women should have equal inheritance rights”



Around 80 percent of the youth agree that men and women should have equal divorce rights. Women are more supportive of the idea. Also, the higher the household economic situation, the more supportive of equal divorce rights youth are. Christian youth are overall more inclined to grant women an equal right to divorce than their Muslim counterparts. An activist

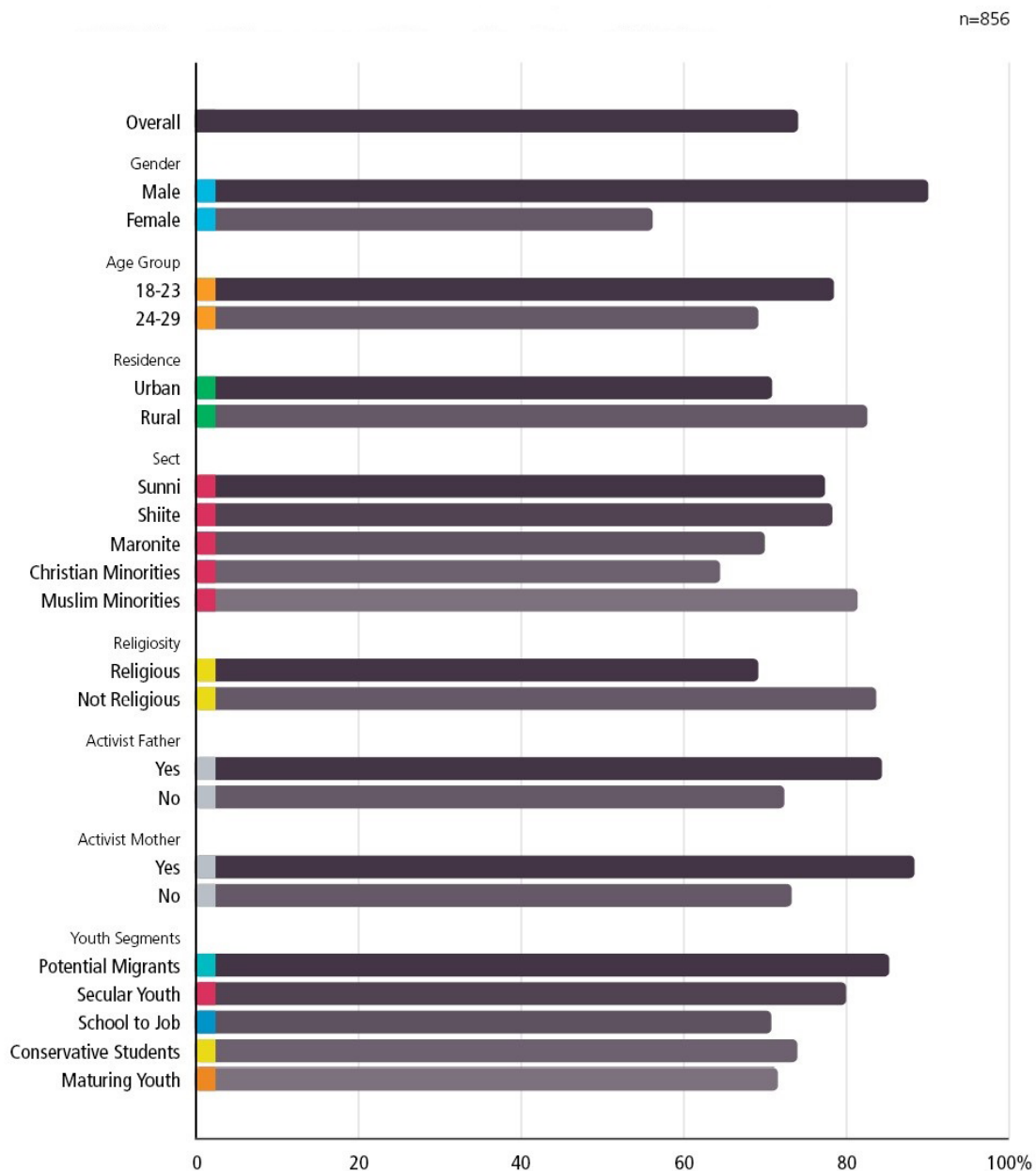
parent or a college-educated mother increases the odds of a young person's acceptance of equal divorce rights. Among youth segments, "School to Job" and "Maturing Youth" are the most resistant to divorce equality (Figure 31).

**Figure 31** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who agree that "men and women should have equal divorce rights"



Three quarters of Lebanon's youth agree that men should be making the important decisions in the family. There is a great gender divide here: while 90 percent of men accept the idea, less than 60 percent of women approve it. Youth in the 18-23 age group support men's family leadership more than those in the 24-29 age group. Rural youth approve the idea more than their urban counterparts. Muslim minorities, who generally advocate gender equality, are firm supporters of men's family leadership. Contrary to popular belief, non-religious youth highly support this gender-specific role. "Potential Migrants" and "Secular Youth" lead the way in supporting man's role as a decision-maker in the family (Figure 32).

**Figure 32** | Percentage and profile of Lebanese youth and youth segments who agree that "men should be making the important decisions in the family"





## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The “youth” category is defined legally by the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports according to the age variable, as people between the ages of 15 and 25. Scholars and policy makers who work on Lebanese youth also define young people through their age bracket, expanding it to 15-29 years, and sometimes to 18-35 years. This generic, homogeneous and normative understanding of young people dominates the understanding of Lebanese youth. They are commonly represented as depoliticized persons, passive agents, unworthy of being seen and heard, unless in a token role in problem solving, capacity building or entrepreneurship. They are gendered into highly educated/skilled male youth who are encouraged to emigrate and send remittances back home, or poorly educated/skilled young males, unemployable, with a propensity to become radicalized. For young women, a distinction is made between those who will marry conventionally, and those who will not marry and will become what is perceived as a social burden.

Lebanese youth are thus often constructed through these fragmented lenses and policies that lack an intersectional understanding of their complex, dynamic and highly differentiated livelihoods. In this paper, we argued against this generic representation, and for a reading of youth where their categorization is unpacked and related to other variables such as social relations and experiences, revealing that being young is a diverse and subjective experience, intersecting with several other relationships and inequalities.

Indeed, the paper’s findings revealed that Lebanese youth do not fit the typical reductionist binary portrayal of the partying youth in trendy downtown Beirut vs. the Islamist bearded youth fighting with Hizballah, a portrayal that is widely spread in the media. Instead, we identified five segments of Lebanese youth who are differentiated according to their socio-economic characteristics as well as their perceptions and attitudes towards religiosity, politics, and women’s rights and roles.

The largest group of youth (34 percent) is the one we identified as the “Maturing Youth” (segment E). Those are in their late 20s, and almost half of them have a college education, while two thirds are married, and two thirds are women. They mostly have an average household economic situation. They are highly interested in politics but do not act on this interest. Almost 80 percent of them are religious. They least supported al-Hirak. We can hypothesize that this group is consolidating the status quo, and following mainstream sectarian leaders, as contesting the dominant social and political system would be very costly at their life stage.

The second largest group we singled out is the “Secular Youth” (24 percent, segment B). These young people average 22 years old; they are mostly single students with an average economic situation, and identify as non-religious. They view religiosity as a private matter that should be separated from public and political life, and support a secular state. They also support equal women’s rights and roles (see Figures 30 and 31), although their views can also be quite conservative on other issues (see Figure 32). We can hypothesize that they are the ones who mobilize into coalitions and informal groups eager to challenge the dominant political, social and moral order.

The third and fourth largest groups are the “Potential Migrants” (19 percent, segment A), and “Conservative Students” (16 percent, segment D). “Potential Migrants” are predominantly single male students, eager to leave the country. Interestingly, they also have the highest political participation rate, and are divided between those who say they are religious and those who say they are not. Similarly to “Secular Youth,” their views on women’s rights are progressive, but inconsistent (see Figures 30, 31 and 32). As for conservative students, a majority are female students, who are more religious than their peers, mostly Muslim and urban, and are quite anchored in Lebanon, with no desire to migrate. They have strong views on women’s equal rights and roles but resist the secular state. It is noteworthy that almost half of them supported al-Hirak. This is a group that highlights the significant role of morality and piety amongst young Muslim women in Lebanon, as well as their potential to play an important role in political change - perhaps not to challenge the sectarian system, but rather to entrench their religious identity.

The smallest (and youngest) group is the “School to Job” youth (8 percent, segment C). These are youth who entered the job market straight from school. Unemployment is highest in this category, many are Muslim, and over 40 percent of them live in rural areas. One third of them are already married. They are religious, and the weakest proponents of women’s rights and roles among their peers. They also score the lowest on believing they can make an impact on politics. We can hypothesize that this group is the most excluded among young people, and has perhaps a high propensity to become radicalized.

In conclusion, our approach to examining Lebanese “youth” through survey analysis aimed to deconstruct their representation as one homogeneous group, and to emphasize their complexity and diversity. By highlighting how youth are segmented into five clusters with different characteristics and attitudes towards politics, religion and women’s rights, we have shown how scholarship and policy-making need to adjust their analysis and recommendations to such multifaceted and intersectional realities, rather than providing a generic and normative reading of Lebanese youth as if they form a monolithic group.

Our analysis also reveals that young Lebanese men and women have mixed perceptions and attitudes with regards to politics, religion and women’s rights - which provides both opportunities and challenges with regard to Lebanon’s future political and social landscape. Indeed, while a sizable group of younger people (“Secular Youth,” “Potential Migrants” and “Conservative Students,” almost 59 percent of the sample) are eager to participate in politics, and concerned to improve women’s rights, they disagree on the role of religion in public and political life, and a sub-group of them are planning to emigrate. Still, these findings provide some window of opportunity for political change. If independent civil society activists keep organizing to enter state institutions (local, regional and central), and pressuring for a fair election law that could lead them closer to power, they have some ability to challenge the hegemony of the warlords who dominate the political system, transform it into a corrupt regime, and essentialize sectarianism to better serve their petty business interests. We could then perhaps imagine a Lebanon where public institutions are led and governed by a majority of legitimate political elites, held accountable by a relatively well-functioning democratic system, with checks-and-balances minimizing corrupt deals, who may then become more concerned with serving the public interest.

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**Annex 1**

	Overall	Gender	Age	Urban/rural	College education	Sect	Religiosity	Economic situation
JF10	77.0 n= 374		18-23: 69.7 24-29: 79.6		Yes: 90.7 No: 68.8			Low: 34.8 Average: 81.6 High: 89.3
JF23	30.7 n= 378	M: 38.4 F: 11.2	18-23: 11.2 24-29: 38.9					Low: 42.6 Average: 30.2 High: 23.2
JF29	85.3 n= 373		18-23: 73.2 24-29: 89.5		Yes: 97.1 No: 78.0			Low: 64.4 Average: 86.8 High: 94.6
TR01	84.8 n= 990				Yes: 89.2 No: 83.6			Low: 54.8 Average: 87.8 High: 94.9
PP01	8.7 n= 999	M: 12.8 F: 4.6	18-23: 10.5 24-29: 6.9					
PP03	16.9 n= 996	M: 23.2 F: 10.5	18-23: 20.1 24-29: 13.6		Yes: 11.6 No: 18.3			
PP04	41.7 n= 944		18-23: 45.4 24-29: 37.9	Urban: 36.3 Rural: 43.7		Su: 32.3 Sh: 46.9 Mr: 47.0 Ch: 43.8 Is: 38.3	Yes: 44.8 No: 37.8	Low: 55.1 Average: 39.6 High: 41.8
PP09	30.6 n= 976	M: 39.3 F: 21.9	18-23: 26.0 24-29: 35.5		Yes: 41.7 No: 27.7	Su: 21.3 Sh: 44.8 Mr: 30.8 Ch: 22.6 Is: 30.7		
PP27	48.8 n= 258						Yes: 56.2 No: 41.1	
PP45	74.6 n= 886		18-23: 79.1 24-29: 69.6	Urban: 72.9 Rural: 79.5		Su: 63.9 Sh: 79.1 Mr: 76.5 Ch: 77.0 Is: 86.7		
PP49	16.7 n= 924		18-23: 19.9 24-29: 13.3			Su: 13.3 Sh: 17.7 Mr: 19.1 Ch: 12.1 Is: 29.0	Yes: 11.7 No: 25.4	Low: 11.7 Average: 16.0 High: 24.0
SP08	97.9 n= 997					Su: 94.8 Sh: 98.5 Mr: 100 Ch: 98.9 Is: 98.4		
SP09	86.3 n= 949	M: 88.5 F: 84.0				Su: 74.2 Sh: 90.6 Mr: 91.3 Ch: 90.8 Is: 91.8		Low: 81.2 Average: 85.3 High: 94.6
SP10	3.7 n= 991	M: 0.4 F: 7.0						

SP11	94.9 n= 991					Su: 90.0 Sh: 95.2 Mr: 97.7 Ch: 97.0 Is: 98.4		Low: 89.4 Average: 95.2 High: 97.4
IM01	62.8 n= 1000		18-23: 71.6 24-29: 53.8		Yes: 78.3 No: 58.8	Su: 63.5 Sh: 58.7 Mr: 69.1 Ch: 55.2 Is: 76.6	Yes: 57.1 No: 77.2	Low: 32.0 Average: 62.8 High: 88.5
IM01	92.1 n= 1000	M: 94.0 F: 90.2	18-23: 95.0 24-29: 89.1		Yes: 97.6 No: 90.7	Su: 97.1 Sh: 87.1 Mr: 92.3 Ch: 90.2 Is: 96.9	Yes: 89.6 No: 98.1	Low: 78.1 Average: 93.3 High: 98.1
OA30	18.6 n= 983					Su: 16.7 Sh: 30.9 Mr: 11.2 Ch: 13.4 Is: 14.5	Yes: 21.7 No: 15.0	Low: 10.4 Average: 21.2 High: 13.0
OA37	9.2 n= 934	M: 7.3 F: 11.1	18-23: 11.2 24-29: 7.3	Urban: 10.3 Rural: 5.8		Su: 7.1 Sh: 16.7 Mr: 6.5 Ch: 7.2 Is: 3.5	Yes: 11.1 No: 6.7	
OA47	2.8 n= 952					Su: 2.2 Sh: 5.4 Mr: 1.0 Ch: 1.9 Is: 3.3		
OA47	58.9 n= 952	M: 49.3 F: 68.4	18-23: 54.4 24-29: 63.7			Su: 62.8 Sh: 77.0 Mr: 43.6 Ch: 54.1 Is: 27.9		
MI09 MI10 MI17	22.1 n= 1000	M: 33.5 F: 10.6	18-23: 29.6 24-29: 14.5		Yes: 14.5 No: 24.1			

**Annex 2**

	<b>OA18</b>	<b>PP04</b>	<b>PP27</b>	<b>OA34</b>	<b>OA35</b>	<b>OA05</b>	<b>OA08</b>	<b>OA09</b>	<b>OA06</b>
<b>Overall</b>	64.4 n=879	41.7 n=944	48.8 n=258	89.8 n=973	84.3 n=977	90.6 n=936	77.6 n=901	80.9 n=820	74.2 n=856
<b>Gender</b>	M: 71.9 F: 56.8					M: 88.2 F: 92.3	M: 72.1 F: 82.8	M: 74.9 F: 86.6	M: 90.2 F: 56.3
<b>Age</b>	18: 68.3 24: 60.3	18: 45.4 24: 37.9		18: 87.5 24: 92.3				18: 84.3 24: 77.0	18: 78.6 24: 69.3
<b>Urban-rural</b>	U: 61.5 R: 72.8	U: 43.7 R: 36.3							U: 71.0 R: 82.7
<b>College education</b>	Y: 71.6 N: 62.5				Y: 89.3 N: 83.0	Y: 94.9 N: 89.5			
<b>Working</b>		Y: 36.3 N: 45.1				Y: 87.5 N: 92.4	Y: 73.4 N: 79.9	Y: 76.3 N: 83.4	
<b>Economic situation</b>	L: 48.1 A: 64.6 H: 75.5	L: 55.1 A: 39.6 H: 41.8						L: 66.7 A: 81.7 H: 85.9	
<b>Sect</b>		Su: 32.2 Sh: 46.9 Mr: 47.0 Ch: 43.8 Is: 38.3		Su: 86.6 Sh: 85.0 Mr: 93.8 Ch: 95.1 Is: 96.8	Su: 84.4 Sh: 73.3 Mr: 91.0 Ch: 89.6 Is: 95.2	Su: 86.3 Sh: 85.5 Mr: 97.2 Ch: 96.3 Is: 90.2	Su: 56.2 Sh: 66.5 Mr: 96.6 Ch: 95.5 Is: 95.0	Su: 81.8 Sh: 64.4 Mr: 89.9 Ch: 88.7 Is: 96.6	Su: 77.5 Sh: 78.4 Mr: 70.1 Ch: 64.6 Is: 81.5
<b>Religiosity</b>		Y: 44.8 N: 37.8	Y: 56.2 N: 41.1	Y: 86.8 N: 95.0	Y: 78.3 N: 93.4	Y: 88.4 N: 93.0	Y: 74.5 N: 81.5	Y: 78.0 N: 85.2	Y: 69.3 N: 83.8
<b>Educated father</b>						Y: 96.1 N: 89.8			
<b>Educated mother</b>						Y: 96.3 N: 89.8	Y: 90.8 N: 76.6	Y: 92.8 N: 80.2	
<b>Activist father</b>	Y: 87.2 N: 60.1	Y: 55.7 N: 38.1	Y: 14.6 N: 59.7	Y: 82.6 N: 91.9	Y: 77.3 N: 86.3	Y: 96.0 N: 88.8		Y: 87.9 N: 78.8	Y: 84.5 N: 72.5
<b>Activist mother</b>	Y: 85.0 N: 63.2		Y: 9.1 N: 56.6	Y: 82.2 N: 91.2	Y: 73.3 N: 85.7		Y: 93.7 N: 75.1	Y: 91.7 N: 79.3	Y: 88.5 N: 73.4
<b>Youth segments</b>	A: 75.9 B: 66.7 C: 57.1 D: 72.9 E: 66.7	A: 49.7 B: 35.1 C: 37.7 D: 47.5 E: 33.6	A: 33.3 B: 37.5 C: NA D: 0 E: 57.5	A: 88.0 B: 95.3 C: 81.0 D: 87.7 E: 89.8	A: 86.0 B: 94.3 C: 71.4 D: 72.4 E: 82.6	A: 86.3 B: 95.2 C: 83.9 D: 93.3 E: 86.1	A: 76.4 B: 84.4 C: 68.9 D: 82.3 E: 69.2	A: 87.4 B: 89.2 C: 69.8 D: 86.4 E: 71.1	A: 85.4 B: 80.1 C: 70.9 D: 74.1 E: 71.7



*POWER2YOUTH is a research project aimed at offering a critical understanding of youth in the South East Mediterranean (SEM) region through a comprehensive interdisciplinary, multi-level and gender sensitive approach. By combining the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres and a macro (policy/institutional), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level analysis, POWER2YOUTH explores the root causes and complex dynamics of the processes of youth exclusion and inclusion in the labour market and civic/political life, while investigating the potentially transformative effect of youth collective and individual agency. The project has a cross-national comparative design with the case studies of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Turkey. POWER2YOUTH's participants are 13 research and academic institutions based in the EU member states, Norway, Switzerland and South East Mediterranean (SEM) countries. The project is mainly funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme.*

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