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Report

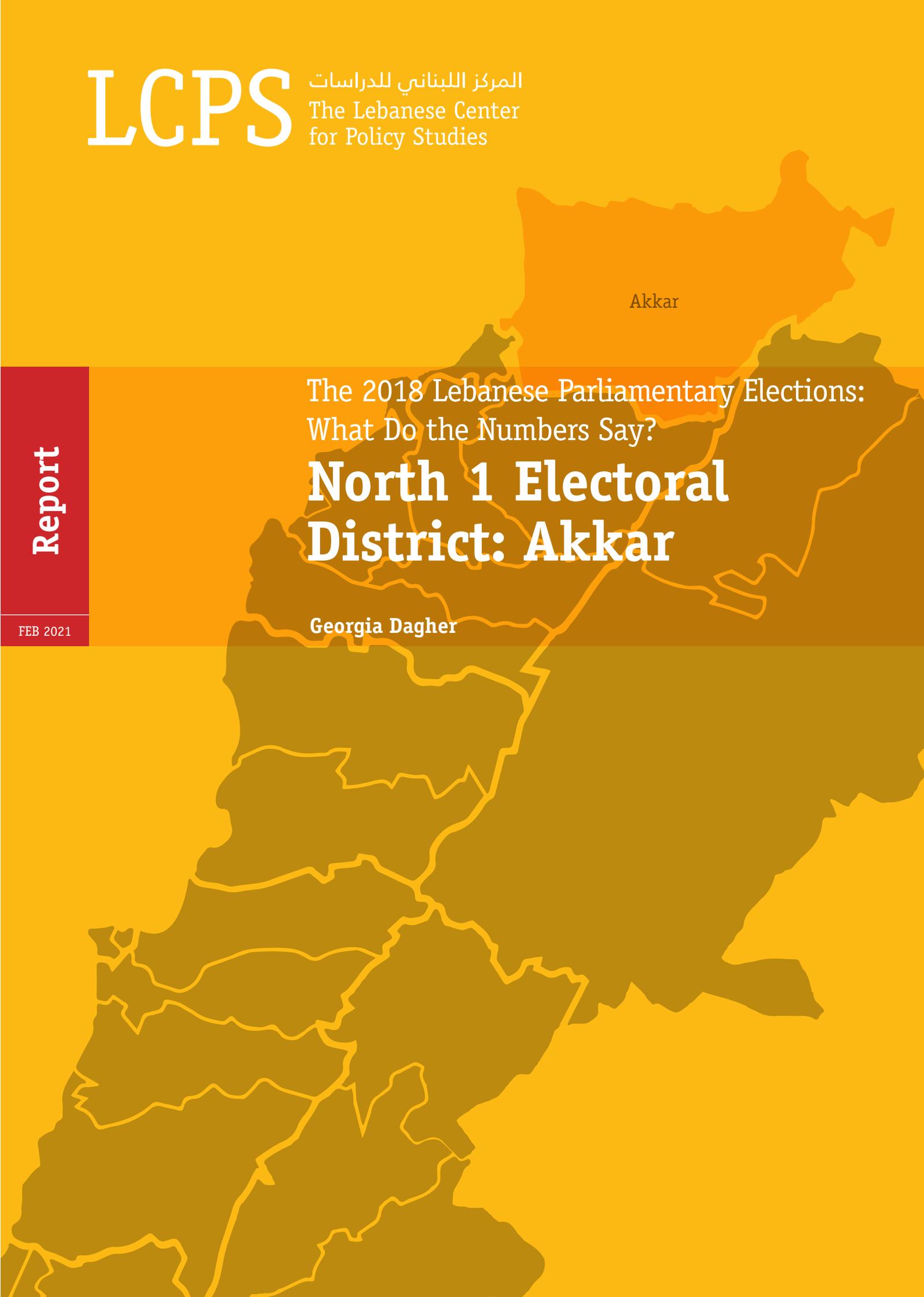
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The 2018 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections:  
What Do the Numbers Say?

## North 1 Electoral District: Akkar

Georgia Dagher

Akkar



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# North 1 Electoral District: Akkar

## **Georgia Dagher**

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## Executive Summary

Lebanese citizens were finally given the opportunity to renew their political representation in 2018—nine years after the previous parliamentary elections. Akkar remained one of the Future Movement's strongholds, and owed its success to the Sunni community, which also turned out to vote in much higher numbers than other groups. The two other main winning parties, the Lebanese Forces and Free Patriotic Movement, relied on the Christian groups, while no party showed to represent Alawite voters, who in turn were the least likely to vote. Voters in Akkar showed preferences for their co-confessional candidates, and even voters who voted for independent candidates tended to cast their preferential vote for a co-sectarian one. Geographical variations in sectarian preferences were still observed: More confessionally fragmented areas saw a lower presence of sectarian preferences. Apart from voters' preferences, there were some signs of voter rigging on the part of the Future Movement. Two patterns, which tend to occur in irregular elections, were observed in the votes for the party: It generally performed better in polling stations with smaller numbers of registered voters, and in stations that recorded significantly high turnout rates.

## Introduction

After passing a new electoral law in 2017, the Lebanese parliament finally agreed to hold elections in 2018—nine years after the previous ones, and two mandate extensions later. The new electoral law established a proportional representation system for the first time in the country's history, paving the way for increased competition. This new system, however, led to little changes in political representation, with voters in 2018 reiterating their support for the main established political parties. Nevertheless, these results must not be taken at face value and require a closer analysis, as voting patterns across and within electoral districts, as well as across voters' demographic characteristics, still showed variations.

As part of a larger study on the 2018 elections, LCPS has analyzed voter behavior at the national level and the electoral district level. Using the official elections results at the polling station level published by the Ministry of Interior,<sup>1</sup> the analysis unpacks the elections results and examines differing patterns in voting behavior across demographic characteristics and geographical areas. The results at the polling station level were merged with a series of potential explanatory factors at the individual and cadastral levels. First, based on the ministry's list of registered voters by confession and gender in each of the polling stations,<sup>2</sup> we identified the demographic characteristics of registered voters in each of the polling stations. The results at the polling station level were also merged with a series of

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://elections.gov.lb>.

<sup>2</sup> Note that some polling stations had voters from multiple confessional groups registered to vote. Similarly, some had both men and women registered to vote.

factors that may have affected voters' choices at the cadastral level in each electoral district. These factors include the level of economic development in a cadaster, approximated by the night-time light intensity;<sup>3</sup> the poverty rate in a cadaster, approximated by the ratio of beneficiaries of the National Poverty Targeting Program over the population in the cadaster;<sup>4</sup> the level of sectarian homogeneity in a cadaster, constructed by LCPS and based on the distribution of voters by confession in each cadaster;<sup>5</sup> and, finally, the share of refugees over the number of registered voters in a cadaster.<sup>6</sup> Through the use of multivariate regression analyses, the explanatory significance of each of these factors on voter behavior is identified.

Apart from voters' preferences, the study also examines incidents of electoral fraud. We seek to identify evidence of voter rigging—such as vote buying—and vote rigging—such as ballot stuffing and vote counting manipulations.

This report unpacks the results in the electoral district of North 1 (Akkar), which is allocated seven parliamentary seats—three Sunni, two Greek Orthodox, one Maronite, and one Alawite. The report is divided into seven sections. First, we present the demographic distribution of registered voters in Akkar. The second section analyzes voter turnout which showed to vary across confessional groups, gender, and cadastral areas. The third section of this report delves into voters' preferences for political parties and candidates. Going beyond the results at the aggregate level, we shed light on the varying preferences for parties and candidates across voters' sect and gender and across geographical areas in Akkar, and how these preferences were affected by cadaster-level characteristics. In the fourth section, we examine voters' sectarian behavior, namely their preferences for candidates of their same sectarian group. The fifth section looks at the performance of women candidates, all running on an independent list, while the sixth section looks at the performance of the second independent list that ran for elections in Akkar. The seventh and final section of this report identifies incidents of electoral fraud. Using a number of statistical methods—which include analyzing the distribution of results at the polling station level, such as turnouts, votes for each list and party, and the share of invalid ballots—we test for voter and vote rigging, such as pressure to vote through vote buying, or manipulations in the vote counting process.

3 Obtained from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

4 Data on National Poverty Targeting Program beneficiaries was obtained from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

5 Based on electoral data on the sect of voters per polling station, we constructed an index of homogeneity  $(H) = \sum_{i=1}^n S_{ij}^2$ , where  $S_{ij}^2$  is the sum of the square root of the share of each sectarian group in the total number of registered voters in a cadaster. The index ranges between 0 (when the cadaster is fully heterogeneous) and 1 (when the cadaster is fully homogeneous, or only one sectarian group is present).

6 Data on the refugee population is collected from UNHCR.

## I Who are the voters?

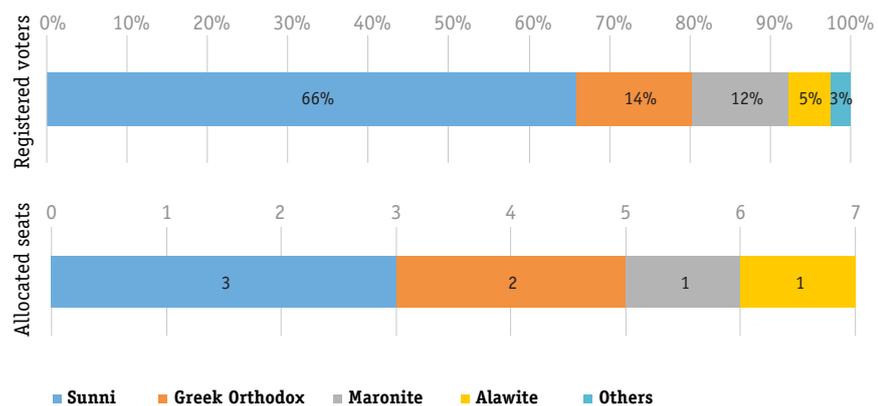
In the Lebanese parliamentary elections of May 2018, nearly 290,000 Lebanese were registered to vote in the electoral district of Akkar (North 1). Among these, 284,786 were registered in Lebanon<sup>7</sup> and 3,621 were registered abroad. Out of Lebanon's 128 parliamentary seats, seven seats were at stake in Akkar: Three Sunni, two Greek Orthodox, one Maronite, and one Alawite seat.

Compared to other districts, Akkar has a high degree of confessional fragmentation, although the majority of registered voters are Sunni. They represent 66% of registered voters, and Greek Orthodox represent 14%, Maronites 12%, and Alawites 5%, while the remaining 3% is split between Shias, Greek Catholics, Christian minority groups, Armenian Orthodox, and Armenian Catholics.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Including 1,397 public employees.

<sup>8</sup> We calculate the number of registered voters by confession using the official election results published by the Ministry of Interior, as well as the ministry's list of registered voters by confession in each of the polling stations. Our approximation of the confessional composition of each district excludes public employees and diaspora voters, whose confessions were not specified.

**Figure 1 Registered voters and allocated seats by confession in Akkar**



Given the confessional allocation of seats in the Lebanese parliament, representation is not equal for each voter. Rather, it depends on the confessional group to which they belong. Although more than 60% of registered voters in Akkar are Sunni, their representation is much lower compared to other confessional groups.

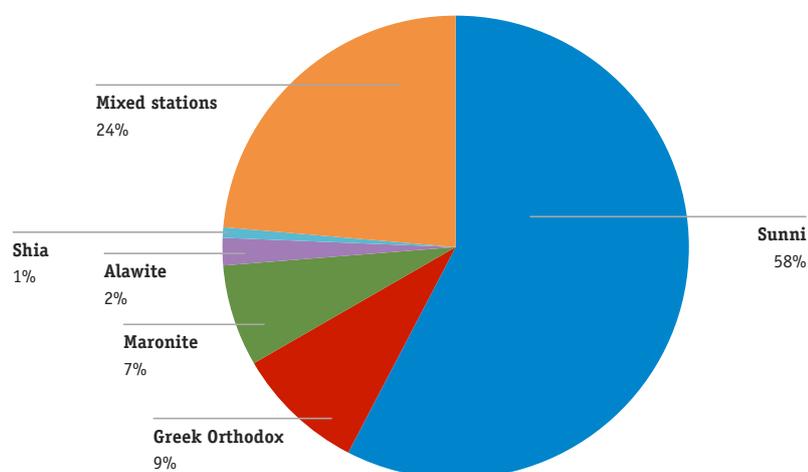
The number of Sunni constituents per seat is over four times higher than that of Alawite constituents: Each Sunni seat represents about 62,000 voters while the Alawite seat represents around 14,500. It is also three times higher than the number of Greek Orthodox constituents per seat (about 20,500), and almost twice the number of Maronite constituents represented by their seat (about 34,000).

**Table 1 Confessional composition of Akkar and allocated seats by confessional group**

	Number of voters	Percentage*	Number of seats	Voters per seat
Sunni	186,598	66%	3	62,199
Greek Orthodox	40,902	14%	2	20,451
Maronite	34,178	12%	1	34,178
Alawite	14,520	5%	1	14,520
Shia	3,425	1%		
Greek Catholic	2,709	1%		
Christian minorities	1,014	0.4%		
Armenian Orthodox	30	0%		
Armenian Catholic	13	0%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>283,389</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	
Public employees	1,397			
Diaspora	3,621			
<b>Total</b>	<b>288,407</b>			

Note Percentages have been rounded up.

Registered voters were generally divided among electoral centers depending on their confession and gender. In Akkar, the majority of polling stations had Sunni voters registered (58%), followed by Greek Orthodox and Maronite voters (9% and 7% respectively), with a few reserved for Alawite voters (2%) and Shias (1%). Twenty-four percent of polling stations serviced voters from multiple groups—thus inhibiting a comprehensive analysis of voter behavior by confessional group. These polling stations serviced nearly 67,000 voters.

**Figure 2 Confessional composition of polling stations in Akkar**

Note Percentages have been rounded up.

A comparison between the total number of registered voters by confession and the number of voters registered in stations exclusively servicing voters of their confession shows that about 90% of Sunni voters, 60% of Greek Orthodox voters, 60% of Maronite voters, and only 40% of Alawite voters were registered in their own stations. Around 60% of Shia voters were also registered in their own stations. Moreover, among Akkar's nearly 67,000 voters registered in mixed stations, the highest share were Sunni (35%), followed by Greek Orthodox and Maronite (about 20% each), Alawite (15%), and other confessional groups.<sup>9</sup>

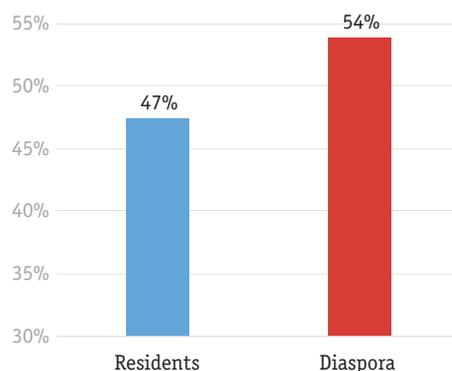
<sup>9</sup> These percentages are calculated by comparing the total number of registered voters by confession to the number of voters registered in their own stations. On the same basis, it is also possible to calculate the confessional composition of mixed stations.

## II Who voted?

Turnout in Akkar was lower than the national average—47.5% compared to 49%. Among the 288,407 Lebanese registered in the district, 136,947 cast a vote while the remaining 151,460 did not. Akkar also saw a large drop in turnout from 2009, when 53% of voters voted.

Turnout varied across residencies, and the Lebanese diaspora—who were given the opportunity to vote for the first time in 2018—had a higher participation rate. Among the 3,621 Lebanese emigrants who registered to vote in Akkar, 54% of them decided to vote, compared to 47% of Lebanese registered in the country (figure 3).

**Figure 3** Turnout across residencies in Akkar



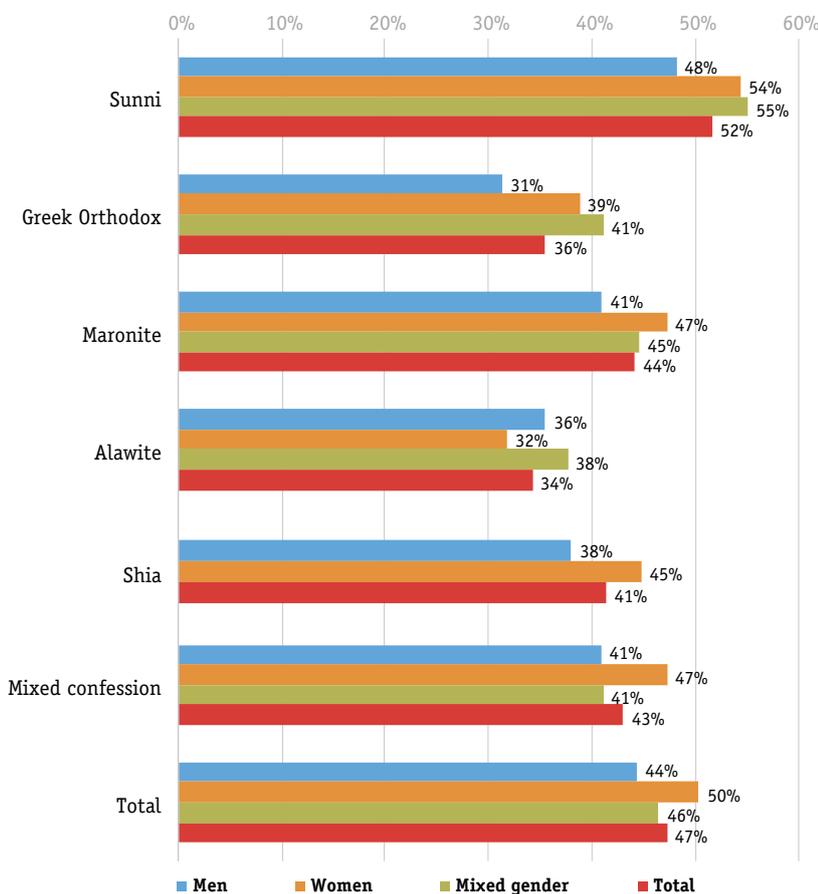
### The Sunni community and women voters were the most mobilized

Turnout largely varied across confessional groups, with Sunni voters being the most mobilized. Nearly 52% of Akkar's Sunni voters decided to vote, while less than 45% of all other confessional groups did so. Among other represented groups, Maronite voters came in second with a 44% turnout, while Greek Orthodox and Alawite voters had the lowest participation rates (36% and 34% respectively). Shia voters, who are not represented by a seat in the district, had a higher turnout than the two latter (41%); and polling stations that had voters from multiple groups registered to vote recorded an even higher turnout

(43%). These turnout variations across confessional groups are statistically significant even after controlling for voters' gender as well as characteristics of the cadasters in which they were registered, such as level of economic development and confessional fragmentation: Sunnis were the most likely to vote while Alawites were the least likely to do so. There was no statistically significant variation between Maronite, Shia, and Greek Orthodox voters' likelihood to vote.

Turnout was significantly higher among women voters than it was among men. Turnout in women-only polling stations was 50%, compared to only 44% in men-only stations. In polling stations which had both men and women registered to vote, turnout stood at 46%. Even after controlling for voters' confession and cadaster-level characteristics such as level of economic development and confessional fragmentation in each cadaster, women were more likely to turn up and vote than men. Women from most confessional groups were more mobilized than their male counterparts (figure 4). Turnout among all of Sunni, Greek Orthodox, Maronite, and Shia women was over 6% higher than that of their male counterparts. Mixed-confession stations also saw higher turnouts among women. The only exception was among Alawite voters, where turnout was 4% lower among women than among men.

Figure 4 Turnout by confessional group and gender in Akkar



### Geographical variations in turnout are explained by the confessional composition of cadasters

There were large geographical variations in turnout, with turnouts across cadasters varying from below 30% to above 60%.

Turnout exceeded 60% in 19 cadasters. The highest participation rate was observed in Aamaret Akkar (85%), followed by Dayret Nahr El-Kabir (80%)—driven by the high turnout in the town of Khat Petrol (83%) rather than the second town voters were registered in, Bqayaa that saw a 53% turnout. Other cadasters that recorded high turnouts were Koueikhat (77%), El-Noura (67%), and Khirbet Daoud (67%). All of these five cadasters are fully Sunni, thus reflecting the pattern of higher turnouts among this group. Out of the 14 remaining cadasters with turnouts between 60% and 65%, 11 were fully Sunni.<sup>10</sup> The exceptions were El-Nahriye (64%, Greek Orthodox), Hokr El-Dahri (63%, Alawite), and Aain El-Zeit (61%, Alawite).

Turnout was below 30% in 14 cadasters. Mechaailha Hakour and Deir Dalloum recorded the lowest turnouts (13% and 14% respectively). Other low-turnout cadasters include Beino (21%), Hnaider, Bqerzala, and Karm Aasfour (25% each). Eight cadasters saw turnouts between 27% and 30%.<sup>11</sup> In line with the higher overall turnout among Sunni voters, none of these low-turnout cadasters had Sunni voters registered, except Charbila, where nearly 10% of registered voters were Sunni. Nearly all (12) cadasters with a turnout below 30% were almost, if not fully Christian; one was fully Alawite (Hnaider), and one was majorly Maronite, with a high share of Alawite voters (Beit Ghattas, 70% and 30%).

Geographical variations were driven by both inter-sect and intra-sect differences. In line with the higher turnout among Sunnis, a higher share of Sunni voters registered in a cadaster was associated with higher turnout rates, as mentioned above. Low-turnout cadasters had comparatively larger numbers of Maronite and Greek Orthodox voters, with Sunni voters representing less than 1% of registered voters in all of them. The exception was Charbila, a Greek Orthodox-majority cadaster, where around 10% of registered voters were Sunni.

There were also some variations in turnouts by cadaster within each confessional group. Sunni voters had their highest turnout in Dayret Nahr El-Kabir (80%, Khat Petrol and Bqoyaa), and their lowest in Ain Yaaqoub (33%). Greek Orthodox voters had their highest turnout in the small cadaster of El-Nahriye (63%), and their lowest one in Mechaailha Hakour (16% in Greek Orthodox stations). Maronite voters had their highest turnout in Qbaiyat (55%)—particularly in the neighborhood of El-Qatlabe (60%), while they had low turnouts in Bqerzala and Beit Mellat (27% each). Finally, Alawites had their highest turnout in Berbara (51%), and their lowest one in Hnaider (25%).

<sup>10</sup>

These were Aarqa, Khirbet Char, Majdel, Cheikh Aayash, Bzal, Chane, Jdeidet El-Qaitaa, Bsatine, Daousse, Aamayr, and Mazareaa Jabal Akroum.

<sup>11</sup>

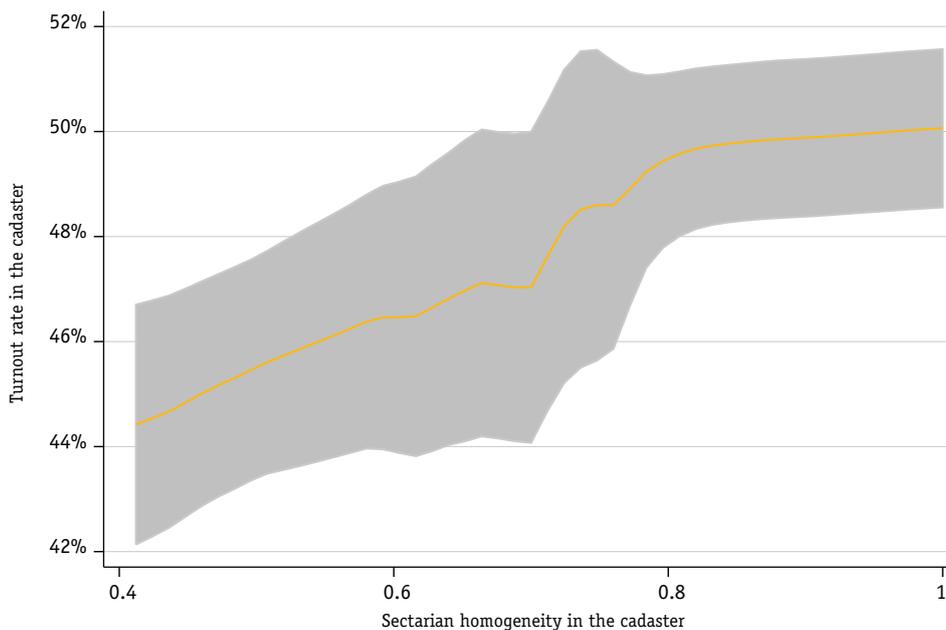
These were Beit Mellat, Zouq El-Mqachrine, Qboula, Beit Ghattas, Charbila, Hedd, Jebrayel, and Rahbeh.

Beyond the prevalence of any specific confessional group in a cadaster, turnout was affected by the level of confessional homogeneity in a cadaster—that is, whether many different groups cohabit or there is a high predominance of one, regardless of which.<sup>12</sup> The more homogenous the cadaster is, the higher the participation rate in the elections.

On average, turnout rates by cadaster increased steadily from 44% in the most heterogeneous cadasters to 50% in the most homogeneous ones (figure 5). This points at sectarian parties' higher capacity in mobilizing voters in more homogeneous areas. However, when controlling for voters' gender and confession, this factor was not statistically significant for all groups of voters. The exception was Sunni voters: Those registered in more homogeneous cadasters voted in higher numbers than Sunnis in more heterogeneous cadasters.

<sup>12</sup> This study employs an index of confessional homogeneity  $(IH) = \sum_{i=1}^n S_{ij}^2$ , where  $S_{ij}^2$  is the sum of the square root of the share of each confessional group in the total number of registered voters in a cadaster. The index ranges from 0.4 (most heterogeneous) to 1 (full homogenous—only one confessional group is present in the cadaster).

Figure 5 Sectarian homogeneity by cadaster and turnout rate in Akkar



### What are the main drivers of turnout in Akkar?

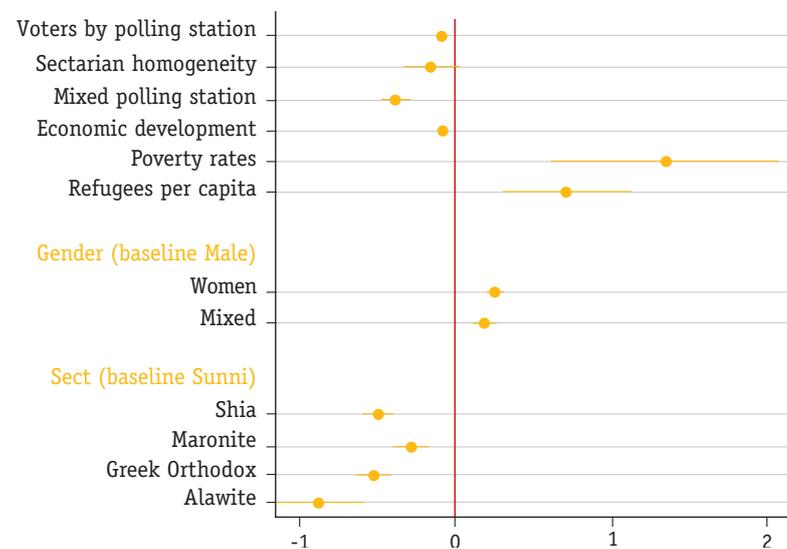
A multivariate analysis shows the relevant impact of different individual and geographic factors on turnout rates. Factors that significantly affected these rates were the size of a polling station, whether a station was mixed or not, and the level of economic development, poverty rates, and number of refugees per Lebanese residents in a given cadaster, as well as voters' gender and sect.

Across geographical areas, cadasters with lower levels of economic development and those with higher poverty rates generally saw higher turnouts than others. This could suggest that parties were able to mobilize voters by offering benefits in exchange of votes.

Regarding variations across polling stations, voters registered in smaller polling stations (measured by the total number of registered voters per station) voted in higher numbers—which might be due to parties’ ability to better monitor votes in smaller polling stations. Moreover, voters registered in confessionally mixed polling stations voted less frequently compared to those in homogeneous stations. This points at parties’ targeted mobilization of voters based on their confession.

Voters’ individual characteristics, as mentioned above, significantly affected turnouts. Sunnis were more likely to vote than members of other sects, while Alawites showed to be the least likely to vote. There were no significant variations between Maronite, Shia, and Greek Orthodox voters’ likelihood to vote, although Maronites were slightly more likely to cast their votes than the two other sectarian groups. Finally, by gender, women voters were more likely to vote than men, even after controlling for voters’ sect and geographical characteristics mentioned above.

**Figure 6 Drivers of turnout in Akkar**



### III Who voted for whom?

Six lists—four complete and two incomplete—competed in Akkar. A total of 37 candidates were up for election, including 18 Sunni candidates competing for three seats, nine Greek Orthodox candidates competing for two seats, six Maronite candidates competing for one seat, and four Alawite candidates competing for one seat.

#### Akkar remains a Future Movement stronghold—although the party lost some support

Out of the six competing lists in the district, two managed to win seats. The ‘Future for Akkar’ list formed by the Future Movement (FM) and the Lebanese Forces (LF) won nearly 58% of votes (76,452 votes), obtaining five of the seven seats. These included all three Sunni seats, won by candidates from or affiliated with the FM: Walid El-Baarini<sup>13</sup> (20,426 votes, affiliated with the FM), Mohammad Suleiman (14,911 votes, affiliated with the FM), and Tarek El-Merhebi (14,145 votes, FM). The list also won the only Maronite seat, which went to FM candidate Hadi Hobeich (13,055 votes), and one of the two Greek Orthodox seats, won by LF candidate Wehbi Qatisha (7,911 votes).

The second winning list was ‘Strong Akkar’, a list formed by the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) which included one candidate from Jama’a al-Islamiyah (the Islamic Group party), and one other from the Lebanese Popular Movement (LPM). The list obtained Akkar’s two remaining seats with 26% of votes (34,430 votes), including the second Greek Orthodox seat, which went to FPM candidate Assaad Dergham (7,435 votes), and the only Alawite seat, which went to Mustafa Ali Hussein of the LPM (1,353 votes).

The 2018 results altered the balance of power in Akkar slightly. In the 2009 elections, Lebanon’s then majoritarian system allowed for one list to obtain all seats with a majority of the votes, which led the FM-led March 14 coalition to win all seats in Akkar with 63% of the votes. In 2018, two of those seats were lost to FM’s opponents.

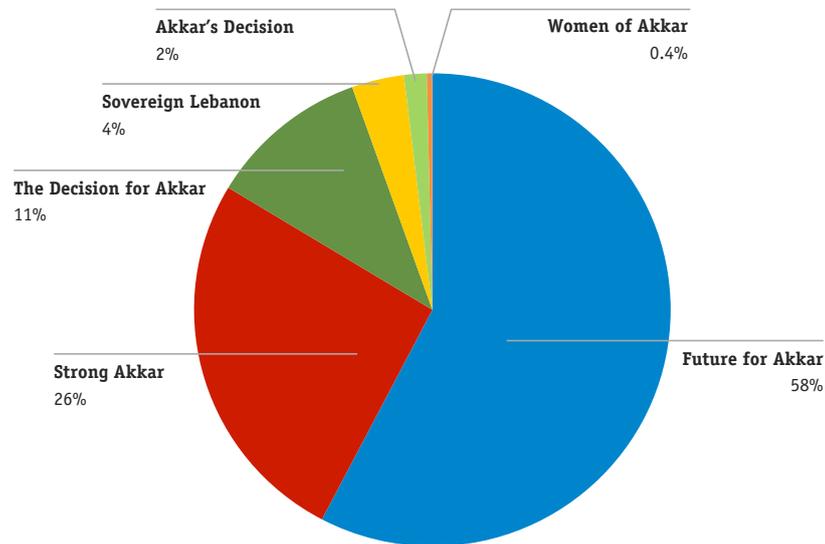
Four lists did not succeed in winning any seats: ‘The Decision for Akkar’, formed by the Marada Movement and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP); ‘Sovereign Lebanon’, backed by Ashraf Rifi, the FM’s main opponent; ‘Akkar’s Decision’, an independent list; and ‘Women of Akkar’, a second independent list formed exclusively by women candidates.

The Marada-SSNP list won close to 11% of the votes (14,449 votes), falling short of about 4,600 votes to pass the electoral threshold—the minimum number of votes a list needs to obtain—for winning a seat in Akkar (14%).<sup>14</sup> The list backed by Ashraf Rifi obtained nearly 4% of votes (4,713 votes) while ‘Akkar’s Decision’ won 1.5% (2,032 votes), and ‘Women of Akkar’ only 0.4% (498 votes).

<sup>13</sup> Walid El-Baarini was up against his father Wajih El-Baarini, who ran on ‘The Decision for Akkar’ list, formed by Marada and SSNP.

<sup>14</sup> The electoral threshold is equal to the number of valid votes divided by the number of seats in a district. In Akkar, this is equal to 14.3% of votes.

**Figure 7 Percentage of votes for each list in Akkar**



**Note Percentages have been rounded up.**

The range of votes obtained by each candidate or party in Akkar varied from more than 20,000 to less than 100 votes. Only eight out of the 37 candidates managed to win over 5% of preferential votes—with these, combined, representing 70% of preferential votes cast in Akkar. In total, 19 candidates managed to win over 1,000 votes.

Walid El-Baarini was by far the most successful candidate on the FM-LF list, winning 16% of preferential votes. He was followed by Mohammad Suleiman, Tarek El-Merhebi, and Hadi Hobeich, who each secured between 12% and 10%, and Wehbi Qatisha who won 6%. The two candidates on the list who did not make it to parliament were Jean Moussa (independent, Greek Orthodox) who won 3% (3,759 votes), and Khodor Habib (FM, Alawite), who only won 0.4% (561 votes).

As for the FPM list, Jimmy Jabbour (FPM, Maronite) did not win a seat, although he was the most successful candidate on that list, winning nearly 7% of preferential votes (8,667 votes). He was followed by Mohammad Yahya (independent, Sunni) who also lost despite securing 6% of the votes (8,144 votes). The third candidate was FPM winner Assaad Dergham (6%). Mohammad Chedid (Sunni), the candidate from Jama'a al-Islamiyah, won 4% of preferential votes (5,277 votes). The remaining three candidates on the list won 1% of preferential votes each. Those were Mahmoud Haddara (independent, Sunni, 1,628 votes), Alawite winner Mustafa Ali Hussein, and Riad Rahal (independent, Greek Orthodox, 1,304 votes).

The Marada-SSNP list did not win any seats, but still presented candidates who received substantial numbers of votes. Emile Abboud (SSNP, Greek Orthodox) won 4% of preferential votes (4,915 votes) while Hussein Salloum (independent, Alawite) won 3% (4,245 votes) and Karim Rassi (Marada, Greek Orthodox) won 2% (2,590 votes). The

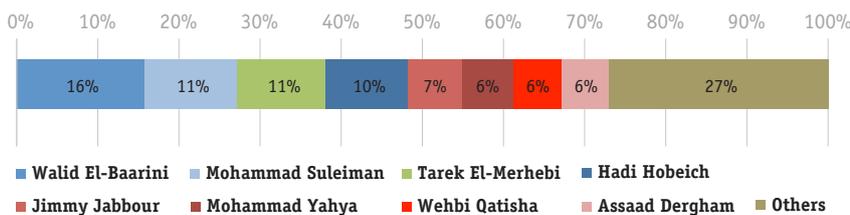
remaining candidates on the list, Wajih El-Baarini—father of winner Walid El-Baarini, who ran against his son—Michel Daher, Adnan Marab, and Hussein Masri, won less than 0.5% of preferential votes each (between 700 and 500 votes each).

All seven candidates on the list backed by Ashraf Rifi obtained less than 1% each, with Ahmad Jawhar and Elie Saad performing best (1,059 and 1,037 votes respectively). The other five candidates received between 730 and 380 votes each.

The independent list ‘Akkar’s Decision’ presented four candidates and Georges Nader was the most successful of them with 0.9% (1,111 votes); all others received less than 370 votes each.

Finally, none of the five women from ‘Women of Akkar’ won more than 160 votes. Only Nidal Skaff and Rola El-Mourad received over 100 votes (158 and 119 votes respectively).

Figure 8 Most successful candidates in Akkar



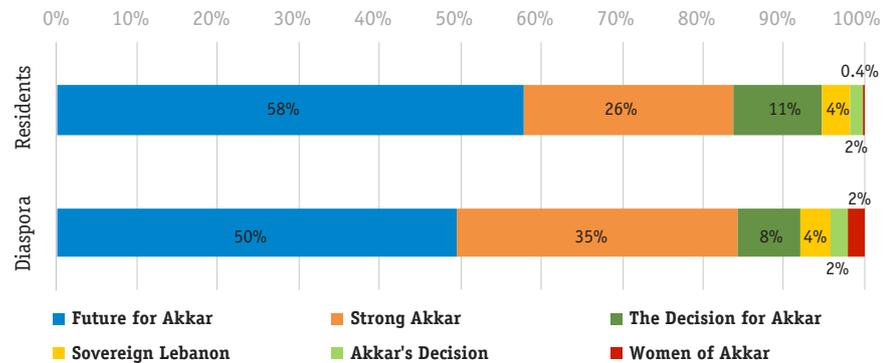
### Akkar’s diaspora vote differed from residents’ voting pattern

Diaspora voters were notably less supportive of candidates on the FM-LF list ‘Future for Akkar’ than residents—the share of votes obtained by the list among emigrants was 8% lower than the share among residents.<sup>15</sup> Emigrants also voted in slightly lower numbers for the Marada-SSNP list ‘Decision for Akkar’ (3% less). This translated into a much higher share of votes for the FPM list ‘Strong Akkar’ (9% higher) and higher support for ‘Women of Akkar’ (2% higher). The perhaps most striking difference was the strong support Christian candidates got from diaspora voters: Christian candidates won 81% of emigrants’ votes but only 41% of residents’.

Diaspora voters showed high levels of support for LF and FPM candidates. LF’s Wehbi Qatisha was the most successful by far: The share of votes he received from the diaspora was 20% higher than among residents (26% compared to 6% of votes). FPM candidates Jimmy Jabbour and Assaad Dergham secured shares that were 10% and 7% higher, respectively, among emigrants. The diaspora, in contrast, showed much less support for FM and FM-backed candidates: The votes for Walid El-Baarini, Mohammad Suleiman, and Tarek El-Merhebi were all between 11% and 7% lower among emigrants than they were among residents. This was also the case for Hadi Hobeich (2.5% lower) and Mohammad Yahya (6% lower).

15 Among the Lebanese emigrants who registered to vote in their country of residence, 1,896 voted for a list and 1,842 cast a preferential vote.

Figure 9 Votes for each list across residencies in Akkar



### The process of seat allocation—after ballots were counted—determined who made it to parliament

Under the proportional representation system, combined with the option to cast a preferential vote, the sectarian allocation of seats, and the introduction of high electoral thresholds, candidates who receive the highest number of preferential votes do not necessarily win. Were seats obtained by the most successful candidates representing each sectarian group, regardless of list, the Alawite winner would change: Hussein Salloum, running on the Marada-SSNP list, would win instead of Mustafa Ali Hussein. While Hussein won with less than 1,400 votes, Salloum lost despite receiving over 4,200 votes.

These results are based on who would win under a non-list system, but even the process of seat allocation under the proportional representation system—i.e. the selection of candidates from each winning list that would make it to parliament—created competition across and within lists. In other words, candidates were competing not just against those on opposing lists, but also against candidates on their own lists. This means that significant weight was given to the preferential vote, rather than the list or party vote.

The process of seat allocation in the 2018 elections followed a 'vertical' distribution. Once the results were counted and the number of seats obtained by each list determined, all candidates from the winning lists in the district were ranked from highest to lowest, regardless of the list. The most voted for candidate would then win their seat, regardless of the list they belong to. With the sectarian allocation of seats, this means that one sectarian seat has already been filled; and with the number of seats won by each list, the list this candidate belongs to would have one less remaining seat to win. In Akkar, Walid El-Baarini (FM-LF list) ranked first, thus winning a Sunni seat. This means that the FM-LF list, which won five seats, now had four remaining seats to obtain. In addition, as Walid El-Baarini is Sunni, only two of the Sunni seats would be left to fill. All parliamentary seats are allocated following the same method—based on rank—but constrained by the number of

seats allocated to each sect and the number of seats won by each list. This process of distributing seats was not specified in the electoral law: It was a method that was actively chosen and an alternative one could have been used. It prioritized the preferential vote—the candidate—over the proportional vote—the support for a party or list.

Another seat allocation process that could have been used under the same electoral system is a ‘horizontal’ distribution of seats. Under such a distribution, candidates within each list, rather than across all lists, are ranked, with seats won by the most successful candidates in each winning list, while being constrained by the sectarian quota. The first seat would then go to the most successful candidate from the most successful list—in Akkar, that would again be Walid El-Baarini. The second winner would be the most successful candidate from the second winning list—or Jimmy Jabbour, the Maronite FPM candidate, who did not win. The third winner would be the second-ranking candidate from the FM-LF list—Mohammad Suleiman (Sunni); and the fourth would be the second-ranking candidate in the FPM list—Mohammad Yahya (Sunni), who, again, did not win. The changes in the sectarian seats won by the FPM list would then lead to changes in the sectarian seats won by the FM-LF list.

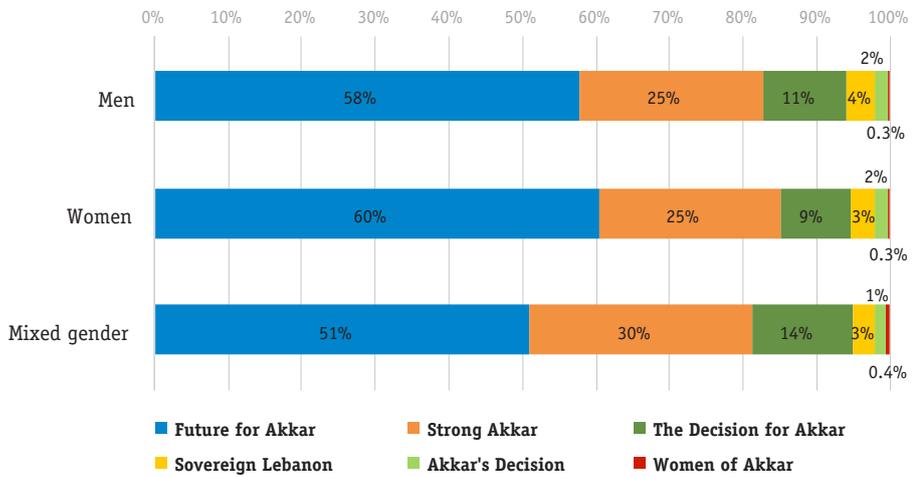
Overall, had seats been distributed in that way in 2018, four of the winners would change. As Jimmy Jabbour would win the Maronite seat, Hadi Hobeich would lose it; and as Mohammad Yahya would win one of the Sunni seats, Tarek El-Merhebi, who was the least successful Sunni candidate in the FM-LF list, would lose. The sectarian seats that were actually won by the FPM list—one of the Greek Orthodox and the Alawite seat—would then be shifted to the FM-LF list. In other words, Jean Moussa would win the second Greek Orthodox seat instead of Assaad Dergham, and Khodor Habib would win the Alawite seat instead of Mustafa Ali Hussein.

### Minor voting variations across genders, but large ones across confessional groups

No large variations in preferences for lists were observed between men and women voters registered in their own polling stations. Women voted slightly more for the FM-LF list compared to men (2% more), while they voted less for the Marada-SSNP list (2% less). The differences in votes for other lists were lower than 0.5%. Voters in polling stations that had both men and women registered, on the other hand, had diverging preferences: They voted much less for the FM-LF list (8% less, on average) and much more for the list formed by FPM (5% more).

These variations were in part driven by the fact that gender-mixed stations had a lower share of Sunni voters—who voted much more for the FM-LF list—compared to gender-specific stations.

Figure 10 Votes for each list by gender in Akkar

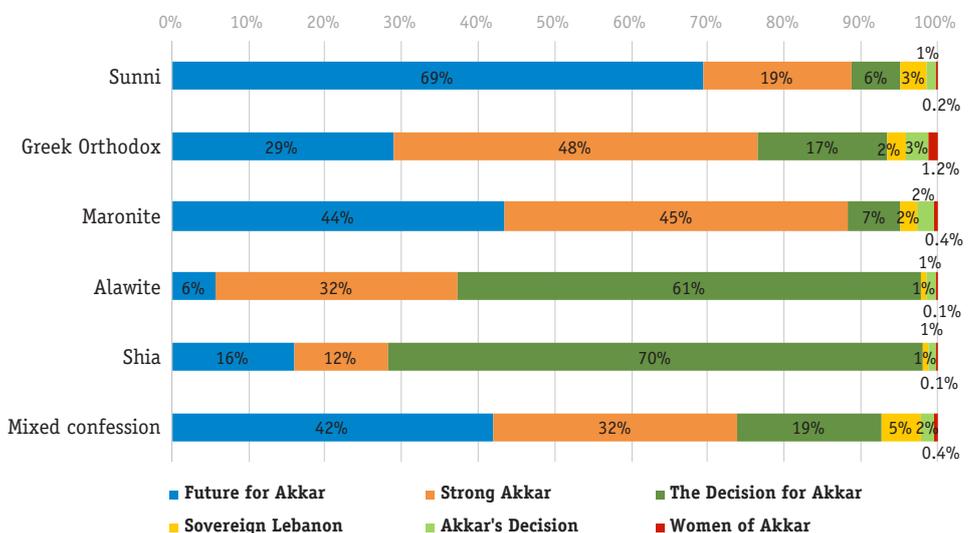


Note Percentages have been rounded up.

More variations were recorded across confessional groups, highlighting the sectarian character of Lebanese politics. Parties largely drew their constituencies from single confessional groups: FM candidates were mainly backed by Sunni voters while LF and FPM candidates relied on Greek Orthodox and Maronite voters. Akkar’s Alawite voters did not vote for a specific party.

Looking at each list, 69% of Sunni voters voted for the FM-LF list. In comparison, 48% and 45%, respectively, of Greek Orthodox and Maronite voters cast their ballots for the FPM list, while an almost equal share of Maronite voters (43%) voted for the FM-LF list. Alawite voters gave the majority of their votes (61%) to the Marada-SSNP list, as did Akkar’s Shia voters (70%), who are not represented by a seat.

Figure 11 Votes for each list by confessional group in Akkar



Note Percentages have been rounded up.

Very few candidates managed to win a high number of each confessional group's vote (figure 13).

Only six out of the 37 candidates running for a seat in Akkar secured more than 5% of the Sunni preferential vote, each. Candidates from or backed by the FM received 63% of the Sunni preferential vote: The most successful was Walid El-Baarini, who alone won 23%, followed by Mohammad Suleiman and Tarek El-Merhebi who secured 16% and 15%, respectively. Hadi Hobeich received 9%, and two candidates managed to win more than 5% of the Sunni vote: Mohammad Yahya, an independent on the FPM list (7%), and Mohammad Chedid from Jama'a al-Islamiyah (6%).

As for Greek Orthodox voters, five candidates won more than 5% of their votes. Assaad Dergham secured almost a third of the votes (32%), which was twice more than the next candidate, Wehbi Qatisha (16%). The FPM's Jimmy Jabbour and Emile Abboud from the SSNP ranked third and fourth with 12% each. Hadi Hobeich, finally, received 8% of the Greek Orthodox vote.

Many candidates who were successful among Greek Orthodox voters also appealed to Maronites. The most successful candidate by far was Jimmy Jabbour, who won 39% of the Maronite preferential vote, followed by Hadi Hobeich (23%), and Wehbi Qatisha (19%), and Assaad Dergham was the last one to win over 5% of their vote (5%).

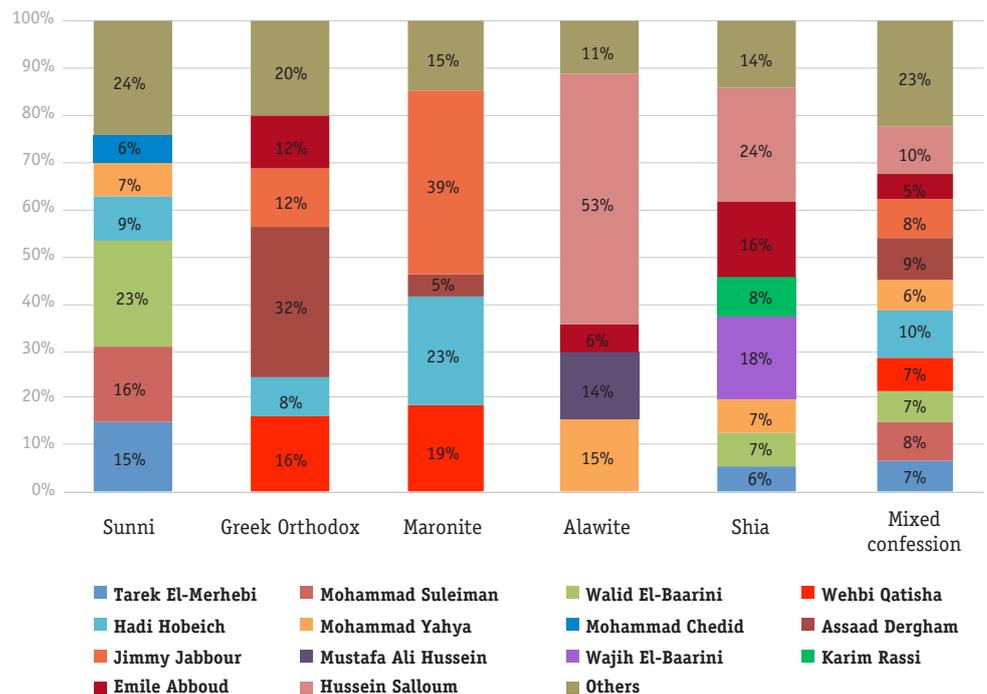
The majority of the Alawite vote (53%) went to independent candidate Hussein Salloum on the Marada-SSNP list. Three others received over 5% of the Alawite vote: Mohammad Yahya (15%), winner Mustafa Ali Hussein (14%), and Emile Abboud (6%).

Shia voters, who are not represented by a seat in Akkar, cast over 5% of their preferential votes for seven candidates. Hussein Salloum was the most successful with 24% of the Shia vote, followed by Wajih El-Baarini, an independent on the Marada-SSNP list (18%). Wajih El-Baarini received support only from this group and received less than 0.5% of all other confessional groups' votes. The third preferred candidate among Shias was Emile Abboud (16%), followed by Karim Rassi from the Marada (8%), and Mohammad Yahya and Walid El-Baarini (who won 7% each).

Several candidates managed to appeal mostly to voters from specific confessional groups. Walid El-Baarini, Mohammad Suleiman, and Tarek El-Merhebi were only successful among Sunni and Shia voters. Mohammad Chedid only appealed to Sunni voters, and received less than 0.2% of votes among all other confessional groups. Mohammad Yahya received support from Sunnis, Alawites, and Shias; Alawite winner Mustafa Ali Hussein from Alawite voters mainly; Hussein Salloum from both Alawites and Shias; and Wajih El-Baarini from the Shia constituency only. Akkar's Christian candidates generally appealed only to the Greek Orthodox and Maronites. Wehbi

Qatisha, Assaad Dergham, and Jimmy Jabbour were successful among both Christian groups. Hadi Hobeich and Emile Abboud found much broader support. Hobeich received a high share of both the Sunni and Christian vote, and Abboud a high share of the Greek Orthodox, Alawite, and Shia vote.

**Figure 12** Main candidates by confessional group in Akkar



Note Percentages have been rounded up.

An interesting thing to note is that the majority of Sunni, Greek Orthodox, and Maronite voters voted for the winning candidates while this was the case for only 19% of Alawite voters. Also, winning candidates were not always the most popular among the confessional group they each represent. Sunni voters' most voted for candidates were the three Sunni winners, receiving 54% of their combined votes. The same was true for Greek Orthodox voters, who cast 48% of their votes for the two Greek Orthodox winners. This was not the case for Maronite and Alawite voters. Maronite FPM candidate Jimmy Jabbour was the top candidate among his community with 3,314 (39%) of their votes, compared to the 1,925 votes Maronite voters gave to the Maronite winner Hadi Hobeich (23% of their preferential vote). More than half of Alawite voters registered in their own polling stations (887 voters, 53%) chose Alawite candidate Hussein Salloum (independent candidate on the Marada-SSNP list), while 14% voted for winner Mustafa Ali Hussein (240 Alawite voters).

Table 2 Number of votes for each winner by confessional group in Akkar

Winner	Name	Walid El-Baarini	Mohammad Suleiman	Tarek El-Merhebi	Wehbi Qatisha	Assaad Dergham	Hadi Hobeich	Mustafa Ali Hussein	Total preferential votes
	Party	Future Movement	Future Movement	Future Movement	Lebanese Forces	Free Patriotic Movement	Future Movement	Lebanese Popular Movement	
	Confession	Sunni	Sunni	Sunni	Greek Orthodox	Greek Orthodox	Maronite	Alawite	
Voters	Sunni	18,149	12,479	11,968	2,562	1,366	7,277	145	79,602
	Greek Orthodox	33	13	75	1,375	2,781	721	7	8,638
	Maronite	58	3	37	1,598	446	1,925	7	8,528
	Alawite	1	5	4	0	23	51	240	1,676
	Shia	53	14	43	3	10	5	9	765
	Mixed confession	1,864	2,283	1,799	1,845	2,493	2,821	916	27,535

### Each party and candidate had their own strongholds, depending on the sectarian composition of each geographical area

In line with voters' tendency to support their sectarian parties, the traditionally Sunni-supported FM was able to capture a large percentage of votes in Sunni-majority cadasters while typically Christian-supported parties—the FPM and the LF—were most successful in Christian-majority regions. This allowed the FM, for example, to obtain more than 80% of votes in a number of cadastral areas. The FPM only captured above 80% in two, while the LF won less than 40% in all cadasters but one.

Most strongholds of candidates from or backed by the FM were in the southern part of Akkar, while they performed worse in the district's central areas. These southern cadasters included Fnaydeq, Aayoun El-Ghizlane, Beit-El-Haouche, and Dinbou, where between 80% and 85% of the votes went to the FM or FM backed candidates. They also managed to obtain over 70% of votes in a number of neighboring cadasters—among them Michmich (78%), Mar Touma and Qabaait (76% each), Bzal, Qornet Aakkar, Chane, Berqayel, and Majdla (between 75% and 70%).

The party was also successful in a number of central cadasters, such as Koueikhat (88%), Kroum El-Aarab (75%), and Souaisset Aakkar (72%), and in the northern areas of Khirbet Daoud (75%), Khirbet Char (74%), and Fraydes Aakkar (71%). All cadasters that saw over 70% of the votes go to FM are fully Sunni, with the exception of Fraydes Aakkar, where 10% of registered voters were Alawite. Looking at each candidate, Walid El-Baarini—who received 20,158 votes from Akkar's residents, when excluding public employees—managed to capture over 500 votes in eight cadasters. The highest

share of his votes—over a quarter of them—came from voters in Fnaydeq (5,576 votes, 77% of the cadaster’s votes), followed by Michmich (2,353 votes, 47%), Bebnine (911 votes, 16%), Qornet Aakkar (776 votes, 53%), and Berqayel (750 votes, 19%). All of these cadasters are fully Sunni, reflecting the high support he obtained from these voters.

Mohammad Suleiman, the second most successful FM candidate who won 14,797 votes among residents,<sup>16</sup> was highly successful in the cadaster of Aamayer—receiving 3,200 votes, or 49% of preferential votes. A high number of these came from the Aamayer neighborhoods of Wadi Khaled (1,278 votes, 36% in the neighborhood), El-Hichi (671 votes, 68%), and El-Rama (591 votes, 74%). Mohammad Suleiman also secured a high share of votes in Mazareaa Jabal Akroum (1,336 votes, 35%), Aakkar El-Aatiqa (636 votes, 13%), and Dinbou (585 votes, 22%). Out of the 13,926 votes Tarek El-Merhebi received in Akkar, 1,431 votes came from Berqayel (37% of votes) and 1,477 from Bebnine (26% of votes). He also won over 500 votes in Michmich (766 votes, 15%), Dinbou (697 votes, 26%), and Aakkar El-Aatiqa (642 votes, 13%).

Hadi Hobeich, who won 12,800 votes among Akkar’s residents, received his highest share from voters in Qbaiyat Aakkar (1,656 votes, 32% of the preferential votes), Aakkar El-Aatiqa (1,155 votes, 24%), and Halba (641 votes, 23%). He also won about 400 votes in Aandqet and 320 in Bebnine.

Jean Moussa, one of the least successful candidates on the FM-LF list (3,645 votes among residents) received his highest share from Aakkar El-Aatiqa (365 votes, 8%). He only managed to win between 200 and 250 votes in the areas of Michmich, Daouret Aakkar, Jebayel, Berqayel, and Fnaydeq, with a total of 1,490 votes.

Finally, Khodor Habib, who only won 555 votes among residents, received the highest share of those votes in Tall Meaayan where 100 voters (8% of preferential votes in Tall Meaayan) voted for him. He secured less than 35 votes in all other cadasters.

LF candidate Wehbi Qatisha, on the same list, won a total of 7,383 votes among residents in Akkar. The highest share of preferential votes he managed to obtain was in Khirbit El-Jord (45%), where he performed significantly better than the two FPM candidates combined (both received 18%). Qatisha won less than 40% of votes in all other cadasters, but performed best in regions and areas that are nearly or fully Christian, including Memnaa (38% of votes) and Beit Mellat (35% of votes), as well as the neighboring ones of Tallet Chattaha, Beino, Qboula, and Shaqdouf, in all of which he fared relatively well (reaching above 20% of the vote). In both of Nfisseh and Bqerzla, he secured 31% of the votes. Apart from the share of preferential votes, the highest number of votes he obtained was in Qbaiyat Aakkar, where

<sup>16</sup> The votes cited in this section exclude the number of votes candidates obtained from public employees.

he won 627 votes (representing only 12% of preferential votes in the cadaster). The second highest was in Chadra (462 votes), followed by Bebnine and Minyara (about 280 votes in each).

Looking at voting patterns in Christian-majority areas, FPM candidates fared better than LF candidates across the district. Together, the two FPM candidates obtained more than 80% of votes in two cadasters—Kfar Noun (82% of votes) and El-Nahriye (80%)—and were also successful in Sfinet El-Draib (67%), Cheikh Mohammad (66%), Deir Jannine, and Haytla (60% in each). All of these cadasters are fully Christian, except for Haytla where about 40% of voters were either Sunni or Alawite.

The first FPM candidate, Jimmy Jabbour, won 8,265 votes among Akkar's residents when excluding public employees, and was most successful in the Maronite cadasters of Qbaiyat Aakar (2,176 votes, 44%) and Aandqet (799 votes, 43%). The third highest number of votes he obtained was only 324 votes in the Greek Orthodox cadaster of Chadra (representing 20% of preferential votes), where the two main Greek Orthodox candidates (Assaad Dergham and Wehbi Qatisha) were more successful (over 450 votes each).

Assaad Dergham, also from the FPM, won a total of 7,119 votes among residents. He was generally successful in Greek Orthodox cadasters, with his highest number of votes coming from voters in Rahbe (707 votes, 37%), followed by Chadra (485 votes, 30%). He also won a substantial number of votes—between 300 and 375—in Tall Aabbas (373 votes, 30%), Halba (345 votes, 12%), Jdidet El-Joumeh (336 votes, 36%), and Minyara (304 votes, 19%).

While the FPM was overall more successful than the LF candidate Wehbi Qatisha, the latter performed better in cadasters with a fully Sunni population. These include El-Noura (where Qatisha received 15% of preferential votes compared to the FPM's 8%), Bani Sakher (11% compared to 2%), El-Mqaiteaa (10% compared to 0.2%), and Aamayer (5% compared to 1%)—suggesting that, as a candidate running on the same list as FM, the main Sunni party, he was able to capture the Sunni vote.

Alawite winner Mustafa Ali Hussein, also on FPM's 'Strong Akkar' list, won only 1,324 resident votes, excluding those he received from public employees. He managed to secure more than 100 votes only in four cadasters: Tall Bireh (230 votes, 28% of preferential votes in the cadaster), Hissa (147 votes, 12%), Massaaoudiyeh (141 votes, 26%), and Rihaniye (107 votes, 29%). All of these have a big majority of Alawite voters, explaining his success.

Independent candidate Mohammad Yahya, who received 8,067 votes in total, received 1,733 votes from voters in Aamayer (26% of preferential votes), with most of these coming from the neighborhood of Wadi Khaled (1,290 votes, 36%)—where he beat Mohammad

Suleiman by a very small margin (12 votes). He was supported by 1,095 voters in Machta Hammoud, and was particularly successful in the cadaster's neighborhood of Mqaible (709 votes, 48% of preferential votes), where he beat Suleiman by nearly a 300 votes margin. Yahya also received a high number of votes in Mazareaa Jabal Akroum (567 votes, 15%) and Aakkar El-Aatiqa (450 votes, representing, however, only 10% of preferential votes)—all of these cadasters were nearly, if not fully, Sunni.

Finally, Mohammad Chedid, the only Jama'a al-Islamiyah candidate, won a total of 5,203 votes among residents, and received 829 of them from Bebnine (14% of the cadaster's votes). He also won over 300 votes in Michmich (349 votes, representing only 6% of preferential votes in the cadaster), Tikrit (342 votes, 16%)—where he beat all other candidates—and Berqayel (307 votes, representing only 8%).

Among the losing lists, SSNP candidate Emile Abboud on the Marada-SSNP list was generally successful in cadasters that had a high share of Greek Orthodox voters. He was most successful in the cadasters of Idbil (248 votes, 49%), Minyara (697 votes, 44%), Zouq El-Moqachrine (only 73 votes, but equal to 41%), Zouq El-Hosniyeh (393 votes, 32%), and while he won over 20% of preferential votes in Qboula (29%), Karm Aasfour (25%), and Mechaailha Hakour (23%), these translated into less than 60 votes in each cadaster. All of these cadasters are majorly Greek Orthodox, and nearly fully Christian, with the exception of Zouq El-Hosniyeh which is fully Sunni. The Sunni community's support for Emile Abboud in Zouq El-Hosniyeh may be explained by this cadaster's close proximity to cadasters with a high share of Greek Orthodox voters. Abboud received a total number of 4,763 votes among residents, the highest share of which came from voters in Minyara (697 votes) followed by Zouq El-Hosniyeh (393 votes). He won less than 300 votes in all other cadasters.

Marada candidate Karim Rassi, who received 2,533 votes from residents, won over 150 votes only in the cadasters of Halba (245 votes, 9% of preferential votes), Cheikh Taba (228 votes, 30%), and Aakkar El-Aatiqa (152 votes, representing only 3% of preferential votes). And while he obtained over 30% of preferential votes in Hedd (42%), Sayssouq (40%), and Qloud El-Baqieh (30%), these do not translate into a high number of votes (21 votes, 100 votes, and 19 votes, respectively). These areas are all fully Maronite, except for Cheikh Taba which is Greek Orthodox, reflecting his higher success among Christian voters.

The last candidate who received a high number of votes on the Marada-SSNP list was independent Hussein Salloum—the most successful Alawite candidate in Akkar. He won a total of 4,220 votes among residents, and his highest share of votes came from the Alawite-majority cadasters of Tall Bireh (434 votes, 52%) followed by

Sammaqiyeh (321 votes, 47%), and Massaoudiyeh (310 votes, 56%). In all other cadasters, he won less than 300 votes.

The fourth and final list backed by a politician, ‘Sovereign Lebanon’ supported by Ashraf Rifi, received a significant share of votes in Cheikhlar (109 votes, 83%). It also won a high share in Ain El-Zeit (309 votes, 45%—its second highest number of votes across all cadasters), Tleil (118 votes, 25%), Rmah (64 votes, 24%), Tshea (178 votes, 24%), Bebnine (499 votes, 9%), Biret Aakkar (230 votes, 11%), and Fnaydeq (210 votes, even though these represent only 3%).

### What are the drivers of votes for each list and party?

A multivariate analysis highlights some of the geographical-level and individual characteristics that might have impacted votes for each list and party.

Looking at the factors that affected votes for each list, across geographical areas, higher levels of sectarian homogeneity in a cadaster were associated with a higher share of votes for the FM-LF list, and a lower one for the Marada-SSNP list. It, however, did not significantly affect the votes for the other party-affiliated lists—the FPM one and the one backed by Ashraf Rifi. Voters in cadasters with lower levels of economic development voted more for the FM-LF list and the one backed by Rifi. The Marada-SSNP list performed better in cadasters with higher poverty rates, but was also generally more successful in those with higher levels of economic development. As for the FPM list, it performed better in cadasters with lower poverty rates. Finally, cadasters with a higher concentration of refugees generally saw a higher percentage of votes for the FPM list and the one backed by Rifi, and a lower one for the Marada-SSNP list.

Regarding variations across polling stations, voters registered in mixed polling stations voted more for each of the FPM, Marada-SSNP, and the list backed by Rifi, while they voted less for the FM-LF list. Across confessional groups, Sunnis were the most likely to vote for FM-LF and the list backed by Rifi. Both Christian groups—Maronites and Greek Orthodox—were the most likely to vote for the FPM list. Finally, Shia and Alawite voters were the most likely to vote for the Marada-SSNP list.

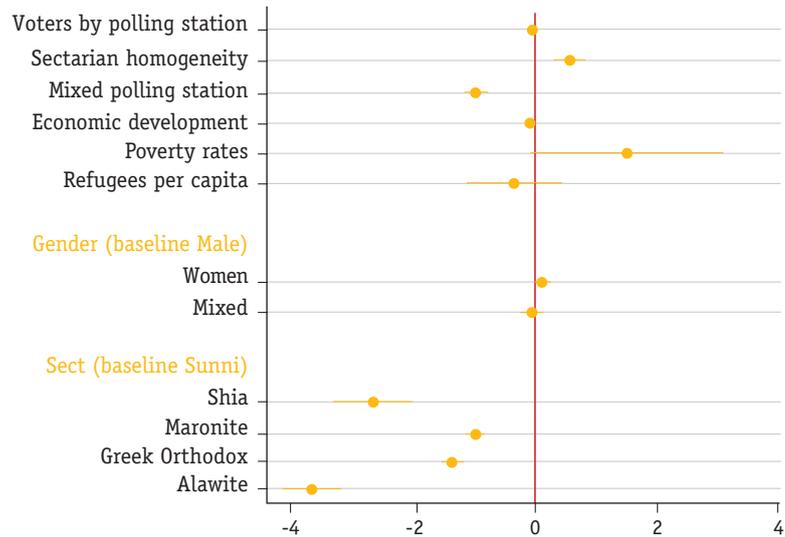
Among the parties in the FM-LF list ‘Future for Akkar’, candidates from or backed by the FM generally performed better in more homogeneous cadasters, areas with lower levels of economic development, and those with higher poverty rates. These results could suggest incidents of vote buying, as parties may be more inclined to offer benefits in exchange for votes in poorer areas. Across polling stations, voters in homogeneous polling stations voted significantly more for the FM, which could be due to the relatively lower share of Sunni voters—the party’s main constituents—registered in these

stations. Indeed, Sunnis were the most likely to vote for FM, even after controlling for cadaster-level characteristics. The least likely to vote for the party were Alawite voters.

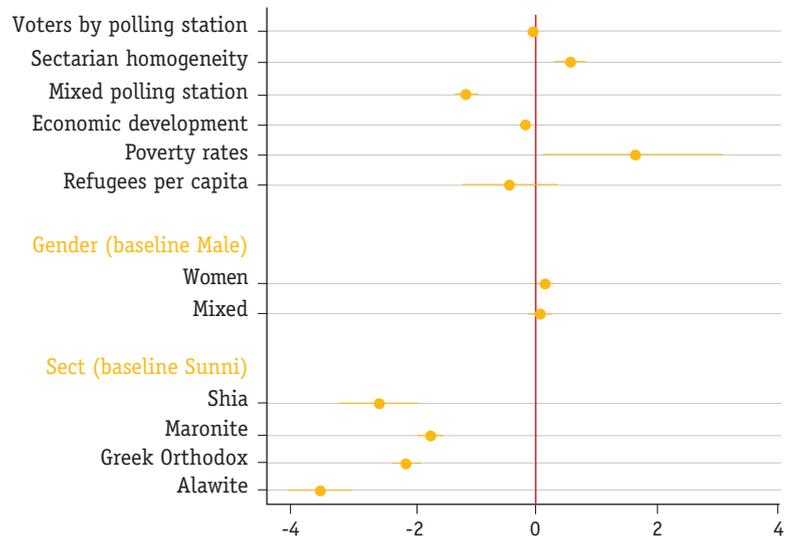
On the same list, the LF candidate Wehbi Qatisha performed better in cadasters with higher levels of economic development. He generally received better results in mixed polling stations, which could be due to the relatively high share of Christian voters registered in these. Across confessional groups, Maronites, closely followed by Greek Orthodox voters, were the most likely to vote for him, while Alawite voters were the least likely to do so.

Figure 13 Drivers of votes for the 'Future for Akkar' list and its parties

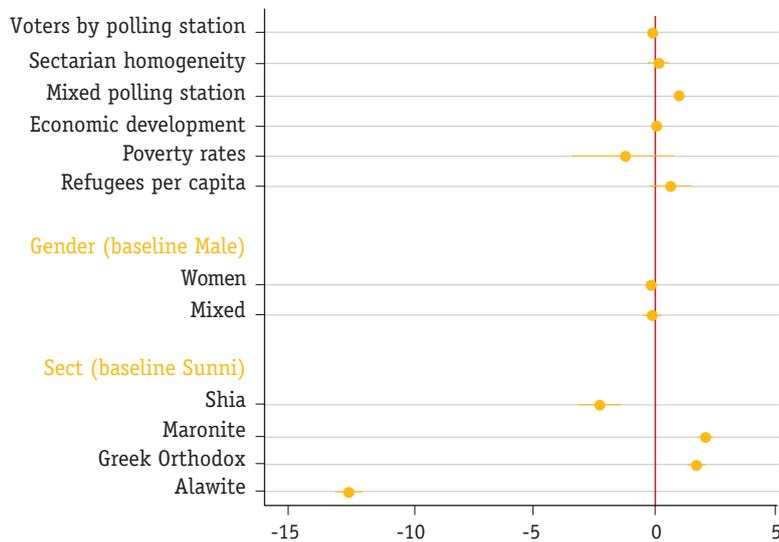
**a Drivers of votes for the 'Future for Akkar' list**



**b Drivers of votes for the Future Movement**



### C Drivers of votes for the Lebanese Forces

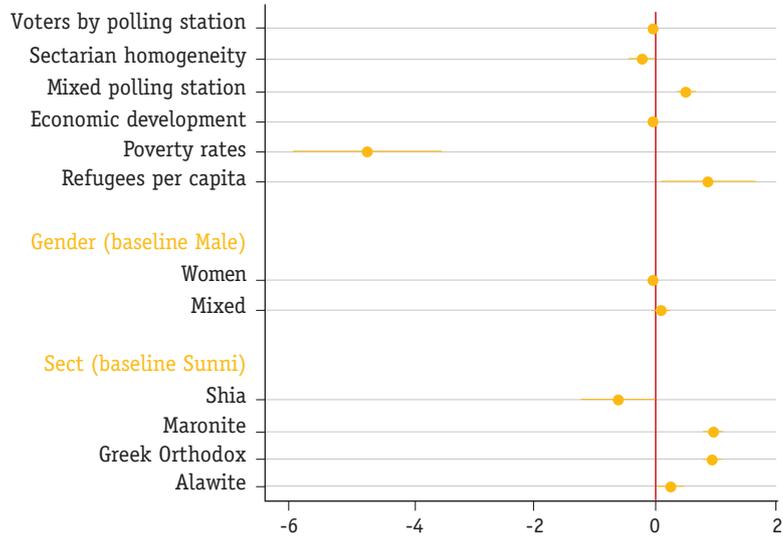


In the FPM-led ‘Strong Akkar’ list, FPM candidates were more successful in cadasters with a lower prevalence of poverty. They also generally performed better in cadasters with a higher concentration of refugees. Similar to the LF candidate, voters in mixed polling stations were more likely to vote for FPM compared to those in homogeneous stations—possibly due to the high share of Christians in these stations. In fact, even after controlling for cadaster characteristics, Maronite and Greek Orthodox voters were the most likely to vote for FPM. Alawite and Shia voters were less likely to do so. The candidate from the Lebanese Popular Movement, winner Mustafa Ali Hussein, was generally more successful in more heterogeneous cadasters, as well as those with lower levels of economic development and higher poverty rates. Across polling stations, he performed better in mixed ones. Alawite voters were significantly more likely to vote for him compared to other groups, and were followed by Shias, while there were no significant variations among other confessional groups.

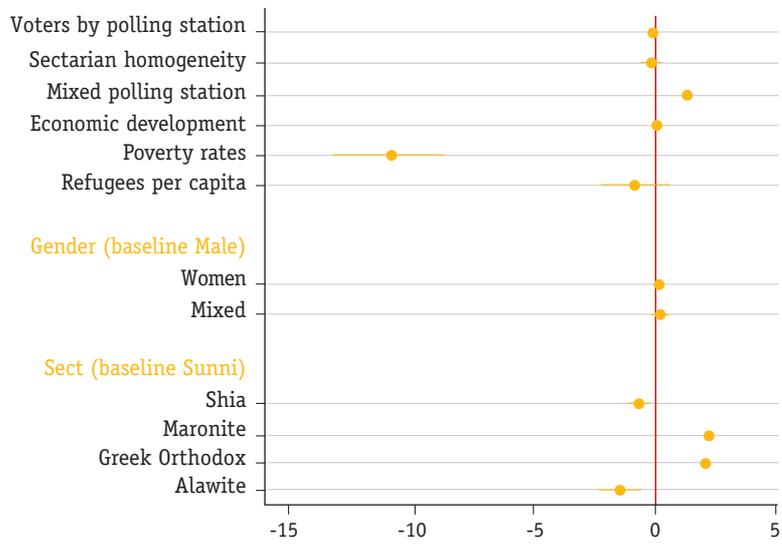
Finally, the candidate from the Jama’a al-Islamiyah Mohammad Chedid, also on the ‘Strong Akkar’ list, was slightly more successful in cadasters with higher levels of economic development. Across polling stations, he was generally more successful in homogeneous polling stations, while across confessional groups, Sunni voters were significantly more likely to vote for him compared to other groups, and Alawite voters were the least likely to do so.

Figure 14 Drivers of votes for 'Strong Akkar' and its parties

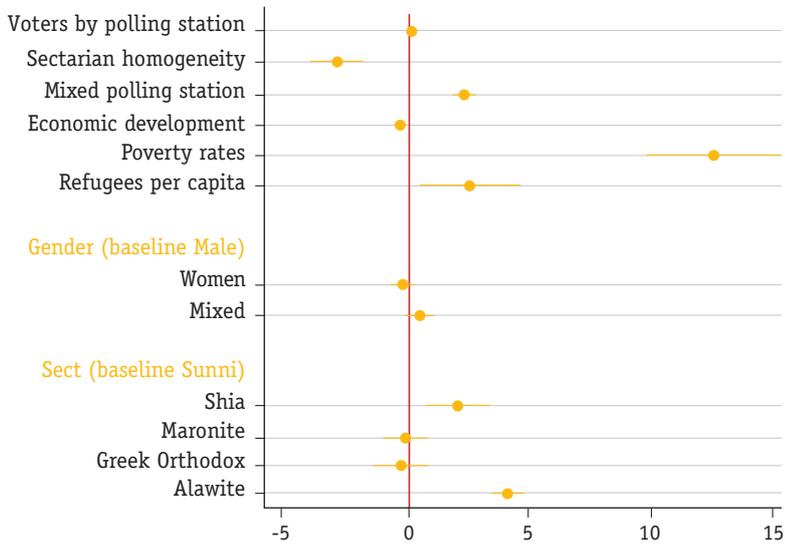
a Drivers of votes for the 'Strong Akkar' list



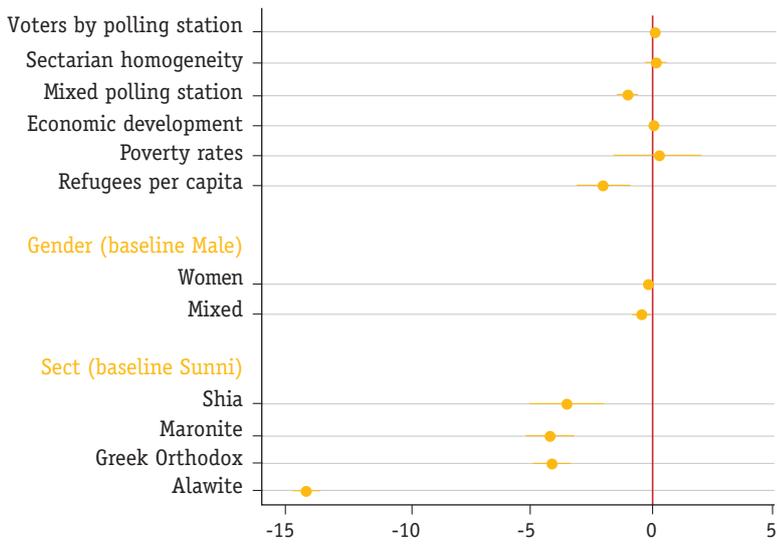
b Drivers of votes for the Free Patriotic Movement



**C Drivers of votes for the Lebanese Popular Movement**



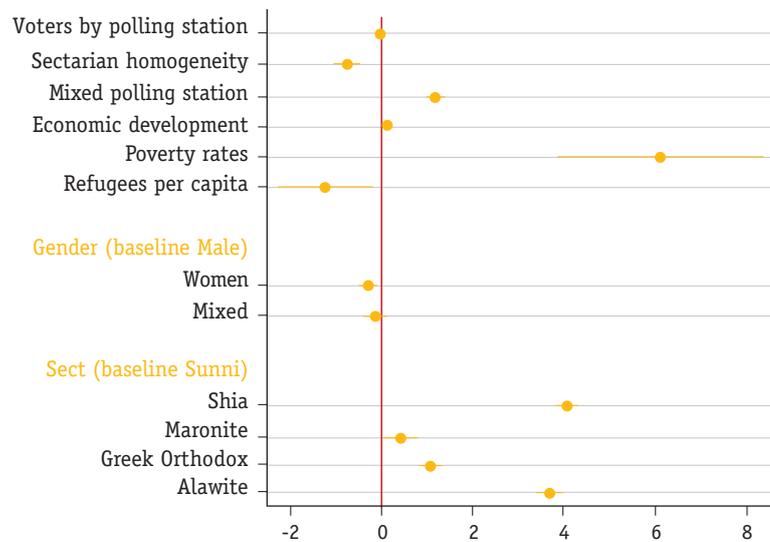
**d Drivers of votes for Jama'a al-Islamiyah**



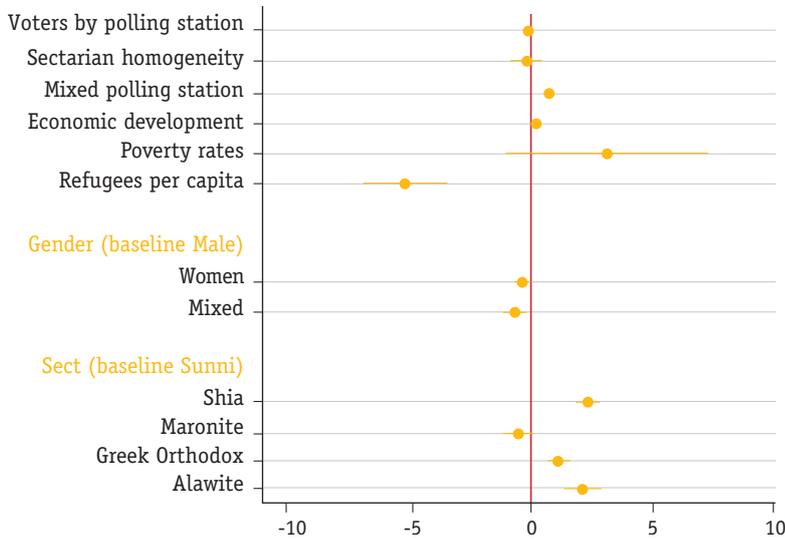
On the Marada-SSNP 'Decision for Akkar' list, SSNP candidate Emile Abboud performed better in cadasters with higher levels of economic development. He was also generally more successful in mixed polling stations than he was in homogeneous ones. Across confessional groups, Shia and Alawite voters, closely followed by Greek Orthodox voters, were the most likely to vote for him, while Maronite and Sunni voters were the least likely to do so. On the same list, the second party candidate, Karim Rassi from Marada, also performed better in cadasters with higher levels of economic development, with no other geographical factor significantly affecting the support he obtained. Across confessional groups, Shia voters were the most likely to vote for the candidate, while Sunni and Alawite voters were the least likely to do so.

Figure 15 Drivers of votes for the 'Decision for Akkar' and its parties

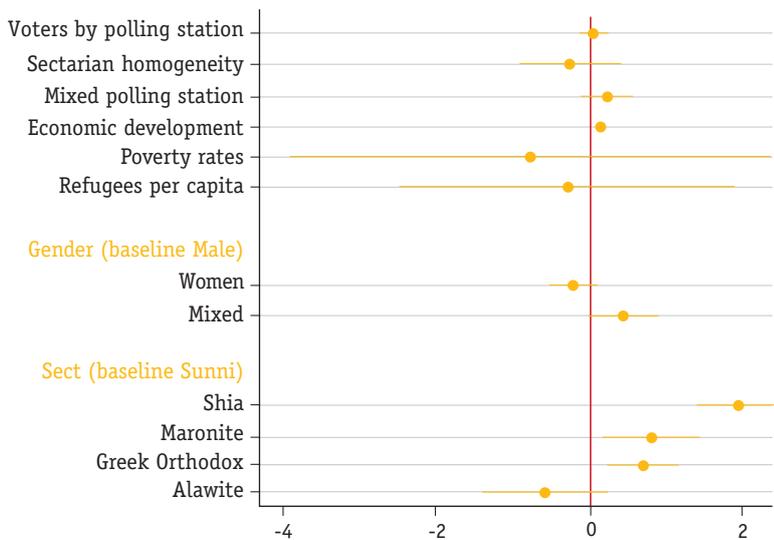
a Drivers of votes for the 'Decision for Akkar' list



**b Drivers of votes for the Syrian Social Nationalist Party**

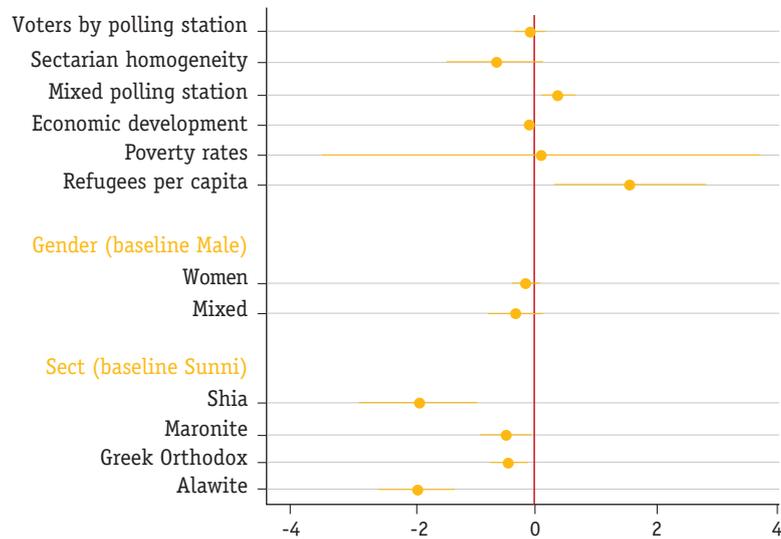


**c Drivers of votes for Marada**



Finally, candidates from the ‘Sovereign Lebanon’ list supported by Ashraf Rifi performed better in cadasters with lower levels of economic development. Voters in mixed polling stations were slightly more likely to vote for the candidates, and across confessional groups, Sunnis were more likely to vote for the list’s candidates than others, while Alawites and Shias were the least likely to do so.

Figure 16 Drivers of votes for the 'Sovereign Lebanon'



#### IV Do citizens cast preferential votes for candidates from their same confession?

In Akkar, 98% of voters cast a preferential vote for a candidate on their selected list. Among those represented by a seat in the district, 72% gave their preferential vote for a candidate from the same confession.

##### Minor variations in sectarian biases across confessional groups and genders

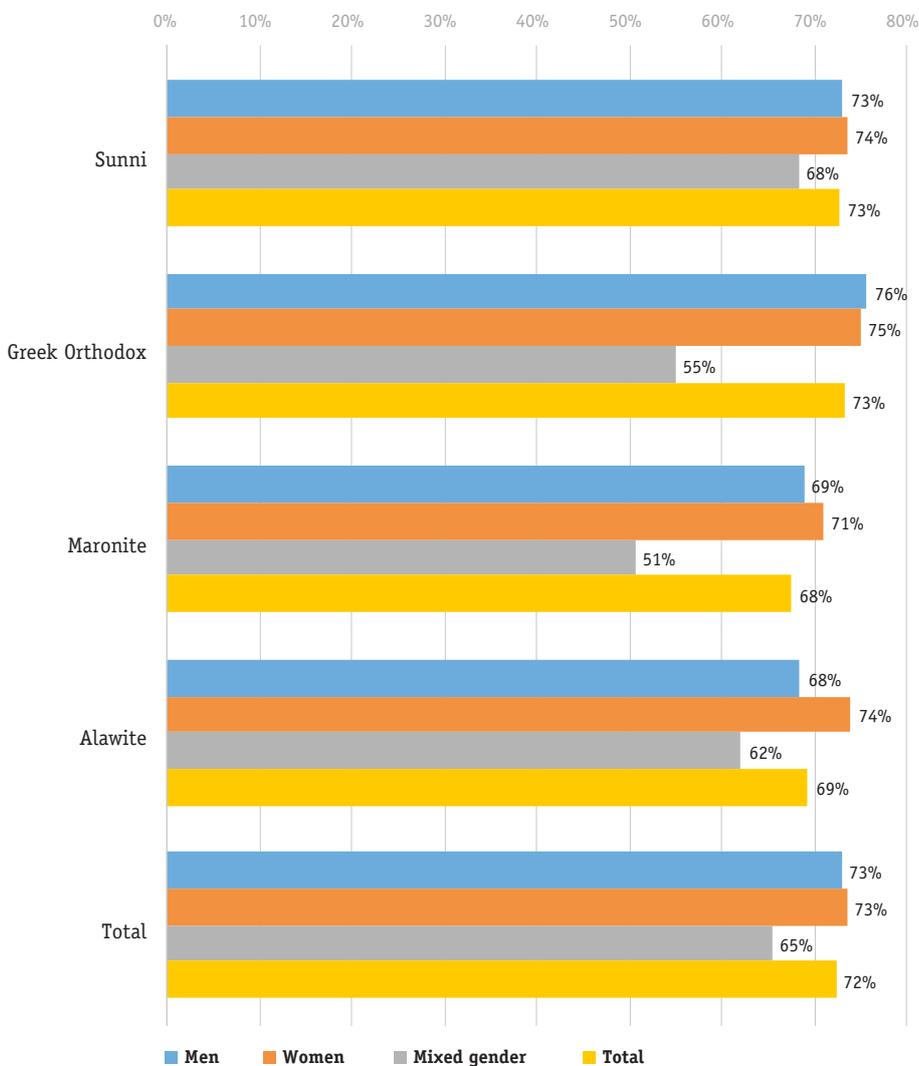
Confessional biases varied only slightly across confessional groups and genders (figure 17). Greek Orthodox and Sunni voters were the most sectarian, with 73% of each giving their preferential vote to a co-confessional candidate. They were followed by Alawite voters (69%), while Maronite voters were slightly less sectarian (68%). Greek Orthodox voters were the most likely to vote for a co-sectarian candidate even after controlling for geographical-level characteristics as well as voters' gender, while Maronites were the least likely to do so.

There were no large variations across genders, with the share of votes given to co-confessional candidates being only slightly higher among women (0.6%). In polling stations that had both men and women registered to vote, however, voters were much less sectarian—the share of votes given to co-sectarian candidates was 8% lower, on average, than it was in gender-specific stations. Across both voters' sect and gender, Alawite women were more supportive of candidates from their own sect compared to Alawite men (the share of votes they gave to co-sectarian candidates was 6% higher than the share among Alawite men), as were Maronite women in comparison to Maronite

men (2% higher). Sunni women were slightly more sectarian than their male counterparts (1% higher), while Greek Orthodox women slightly less (1% less).

Lower support for co-sectarian candidates in gender-mixed stations was observed across all confessional groups, where the share of votes cast for co-sectarian candidates was on average 20% lower among Greek Orthodox and 5% lower among Sunni voters registered in gender-mixed stations, compared to those registered in gender-specific stations.

**Figure 17** Votes for co-confessional candidates by confessional group and gender in Akkar



When voters did not vote along sectarian lines, Sunnis voted mostly for non-Sunni candidates on the FM-LF list (16%, out of the 27% who did not vote for a Sunni candidate)—in particular Hadi Hobeich (9% of their preferential vote), the FM's Maronite candidate. Greek Orthodox who did not vote for a candidate from their own confession mostly chose Maronite candidates (24% out of the 27% who did not vote for a Greek Orthodox candidate), thus still showing a bias toward Christian candidates. Maronites showed a similar pattern: Most of those who did not vote for Maronite candidates chose Greek Orthodox candidates (31% out of the 32% who did not vote for a Maronite candidate). They voted in particular for candidates from the LF and the FPM, traditionally Christian-supported parties: 19% voted for Wehbi Qatisha, and 5% for Assaad Dergham. Alawite voters who did not vote for Alawite candidates mostly chose Sunni politicians (17% of the 31% who did not cast a sectarian vote), in particular Mohammad Yahya (15%).

#### Large geographical variations in confessional biases within each confessional group

Voting preferences for co-sectarian candidates varied across Akkar's cadasters. In some areas, over 90% of voters chose a candidate from their own confession; in others, less than 30% of voters did. The southern area of Akkar generally saw highest support for co-confessional candidates, which was lower in the center.

All voters in the cadaster of Aamara voted for a co-confessional candidate; this is however one of the smallest cadasters, where only 48 preferential votes were cast. Over 90% of voters cast a sectarian vote in Aayoun El-Ghizlane (95%), Jebrayel (95%), Fnaydeq (92%), and Ouadi El-Jamous (91%). In all of these, the homogeneous stations had only Sunnis registered to vote, with the exception of Jebrayel, where only Greek Orthodox voters had their own polling stations.

The lowest support for co-confessional candidates were observed in Douair Aadouiyeh (19%), Sayssouq (22%), Kfar Harra (23%), and El-Nahriye (29%). With the exception of Douair Aadouiyeh, all of these cadasters were fully Christian, and saw a high bias toward Christian candidates of other denominations.

Variations were also seen within each confessional group. Sunni voters cast votes for non-Sunni candidates in areas including Douair Aadouiyeh (19%), where Maronite candidates got most of their votes (Jimmy Jabbour 36% and Hadi Hobeich 23%), and Daouret Aakkar (34%), where most votes went to Hadi Hobeich (21%) and Greek Orthodox candidate Jean Moussa (17%). As mentioned above, Sunni voters had their highest confessional bias in Aamara, Aayoun El-Ghizlane, Fnaydeq, and Ouadi El-Jamous.

Areas where Greek Orthodox voters showed lower support for their co-sectarian candidates included Kfar Harra (where 23% voted for a

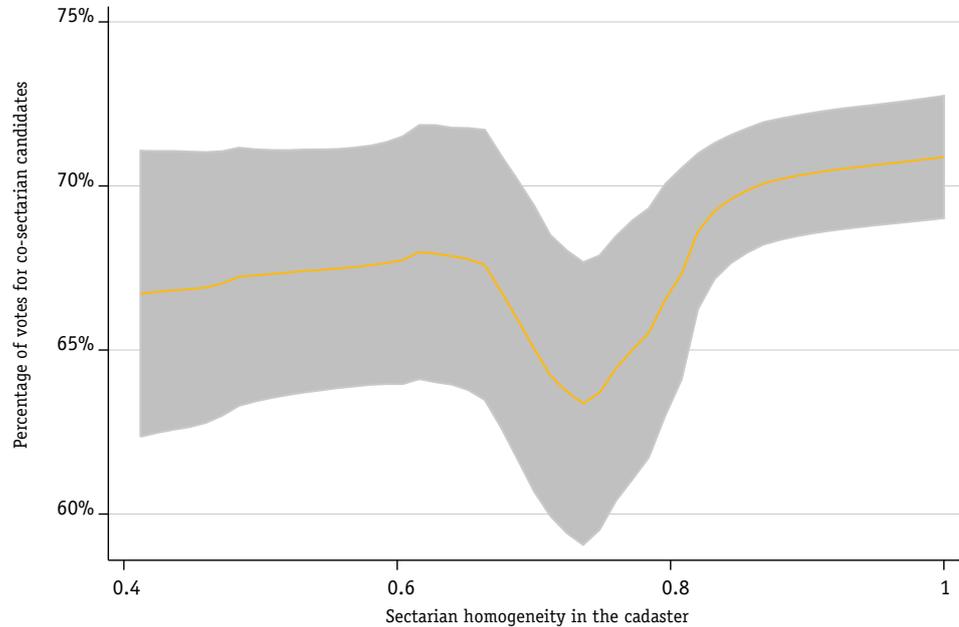
Greek Orthodox candidate), where Maronite candidate Hadi Hobeich received 28% of their votes, and El-Nahriyeh (29% voted for a Greek Orthodox candidate), where Jimmy Jabbour won 57% of their vote. Greek Orthodox voters therefore voted mostly for Maronite candidates in these areas. The two areas with highest co-confessional voting in the Greek Orthodox community were Jebrayel (95%) and Minyara (83%).

Maronite voters supported co-confessional candidates to a high degree in Qbaiyat Aakkar (84%) and Sfinet El-Draib (82%). On the opposite end of the scale was Khirbit El-Jord (14% co-confessional votes), where 45% of Maronites voted for Greek Orthodox Wehbi Qatisha. Bqerzla showed a similar tendency among Maronites (where 31% of them cast a sectarian vote), who voted mostly for Greek Orthodox candidates, including Wehbi Qatisha (29%) and Assaad Dergham (18%). In the neighboring cadaster of Sayssouq (22% voted for a Maronite candidate), most votes went to Marada Greek Orthodox candidate Karim Rassi (41%). Rassi also received a high share of Maronite votes in El-Hedd, where 43% supported him while only 33% voted for a Maronite candidate.

Alawite voters only had their own polling stations in five neighborhoods—El-Haissa, Berbara, Tall Bireh, Hnaider, and Qarha—meaning that their preferences for Alawite candidates can only be measured there. They showed their highest support for Alawite candidates in Tall Bireh (83%). Their lowest intra-confessional support was in Qarha (54%), followed by Hnaider (59%), where a high share of the Alawite vote went to Sunni candidate Mohammad Yahya (34% in Qarha and 24% in Hnaider).

These variations in preferences for co-confessional candidates across cadasters and within each sectarian group are partly explained by the level of sectarian homogeneity in a cadaster. Voters in more homogeneous cadasters were generally more likely to vote for a co-confessional candidate, compared to those in more confessionally-mixed cadasters. The percentage of votes given to co-sectarian candidates increased from 66% in the most heterogeneous cadasters to 71% in the most homogeneous ones. This factor is statistically significant even after controlling for voters' gender and confession, as well as other geographical-level characteristics, such as level of economic development and poverty rates. This may point to a higher capacity and interest on behalf of sectarian parties to mobilize voters in more homogeneous areas where they can guarantee a higher share of votes.

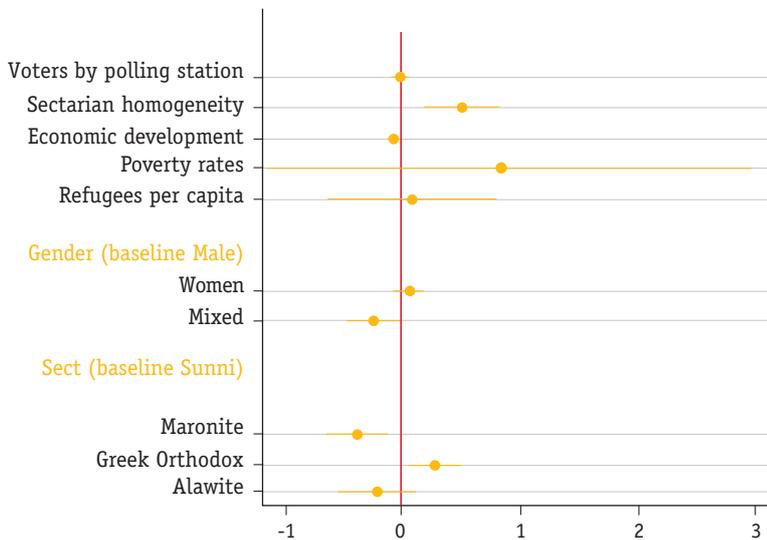
**Figure 18** Sectarian homogeneity by cadasters and votes for co-sectarian candidates in Akkar



### What are the drivers of votes for co-sectarian candidates?

Factors that affected voters' preferences for co-sectarian candidates include the level of sectarian homogeneity in a cadaster with, as mentioned above, voters in more homogeneous cadasters tending to show a higher sectarian bias. In addition, the level of economic development in a cadaster also had an impact, with voters in less economically developed areas voting more for candidates of the same sect. Across confessional groups, Greek Orthodox voters were the most likely to cast a sectarian vote in Akkar. They were followed by Sunnis and Alawites, leaving Maronite voters as the least likely to vote for co-confessional candidates.

Figure 19 Drivers of votes for co-confessional candidates in Akkar



## V How did women candidates perform?

Only five of the 37 candidates that put themselves forward in Akkar were women, and all of them ran on the 'Women of Akkar' list. The list won a total of 498 votes (0.4%) in the district, and the five candidates on it received 434 preferential votes (0.3%). 'Women of Akkar' was much more successful among the diaspora, securing 2.1% of their votes—representing 40 votes.

The five candidates in the list were Nidal Skaff (Greek Orthodox, 158 votes), Rola El-Mourad (Sunni, 119 votes), Gulay Al-Assaad (Sunni, 75 votes), Marie Khoury (Maronite, 46 votes), and Souad Salah (Sunni, 36 votes).

'Women of Akkar' had a highly limited success across cadasters. The list did not receive any votes in 301 polling stations, and won less than 1% of the votes in 120 cadasters. It was however highly successful in the Greek Orthodox cadaster of Mechaeilha Hakour, where it won 33% of the votes (representing 55 votes). Nidal Skaff was behind this higher level of support in Mechaeilha Hakour, where she alone got 53 votes. 'Women of Akkar' also performed relatively well in El-Ayoune (6%, 23 votes), where all of its votes went to Rola El-Mourad, and El-Kouachra (3%, 20 votes), where Gulay Al-Assaad was more successful (19 votes).

### Each woman candidate performed best among her sectarian community

Support for 'Women of Akkar' did not vary across genders (0.3% among both men and women). Still, the list received a higher number of votes from women (201 votes) than it did from men (174 votes) registered in their own polling stations. The votes for the list were slightly higher

in polling stations that had both genders registered to vote (0.4%, representing 81 votes) (table 3).

Nidal Skaff was the most popular candidate among both men (55 votes) and women (59 votes), followed by Rola El-Mourad (49 votes from men and 48 from women). Gulay Al-Assaad ranked third among both genders, but received more votes from men (35 votes) than women (25 votes). Marie Khoury and Souad Salah were more successful among women than men (with 20 women and 11 men voting for Khoury, and 15 women and six men voting for Salah).

**Table 3** Number and percentage of votes for 'Women of Akkar' and candidates by voters' gender

		Votes for 'Women of Akkar'	Nidal Skaff	Rola El- Mourad	Gulay Al-Assaad	Marie Khoury	Souad Salah
Number of votes	Men	174	55	49	35	11	6
	Women	201	59	48	25	20	15
	Mixed gender	81	32	13	11	6	13
Percentage of votes	Men	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
	Women	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Mixed gender	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%

Across confessional groups, the highest share of votes for 'Women of Akkar', although still very low, came from Greek Orthodox voters (1.2%). Less than 0.4% of voters from every other confessional group cast their ballot for the list; among Alawites and Shias, only one voter voted for it. As the largest share of voters in Akkar were Sunni, the highest number of votes received by 'Women of Akkar' came from Sunni polling stations (200 votes), followed by the Greek Orthodox ones, as well as mixed stations (about 100 votes each), with a lower number coming from Maronite polling stations (about 40 votes).

Each of the women candidates had different levels of success among the different confessional groups (table 4), with the confessional character of Lebanese voting behavior being present among 'Women of Akkar' voters as well. And so, 83% of Sunni voters, 73% of Greek Orthodox, and 62% of Maronite voters who voted for a woman candidate in Akkar chose their co-sectarian one. Among the 167 Sunnis who voted for a woman, Rola El-Mourad was the most successful (69 votes), followed by Gulay Al-Assaad (46), and Souad Salah (29). The majority of the votes received by each of these three candidates came from Sunni polling stations.

Among the Greek Orthodox community, 73 of the 100 who voted

for a woman candidate chose the Greek Orthodox candidate Nidal Skaff—meaning that half of her votes came from this community. Marie Khoury, the Maronite candidate, received close to the majority of her votes from her co-sectarian voters. Among the 29 voters in Maronite polling stations who voted for one of the women candidates, 18 chose Khoury.

The single Alawite voter who voted for a woman chose Rola El-Mourad, while the Shia voter who voted for the list did not cast a preferential vote. One observation is that voters in mixed-confession stations voted mostly for Nidal Skaff (52 out of the 101 who voted for a woman), which could be due to the relatively higher share of Christian voters registered in these stations.

**Table 4** Number and percentage of votes for ‘Women of Akkar’ and candidates by confessional group

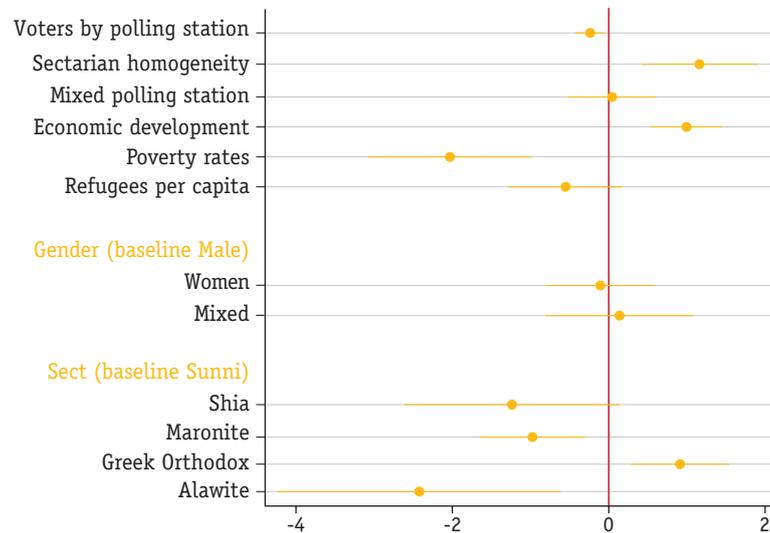
		Votes for					
		‘Women of Akkar’	Nidal Skaff	Rola El-Mourad	Gulay Al-Assaad	Marie Khoury	Souad Salah
Number of votes	Sunni	200	20	69	46	3	29
	Greek Orthodox	107	73	10	11	4	2
	Maronite	38	1	2	7	18	1
	Alawite	1	0	1	0	0	0
	Shia	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Mixed confession	109	52	28	7	12	2
	Percentage of votes						
	Sunni	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
	Greek Orthodox	1.2%	0.8%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
	Maronite	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%
	Alawite	0.1%		0.1%			
	Shia	0.1%					
	Mixed confession	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

### What are the drivers of votes for ‘Women of Akkar’?

Across Akkar, voters in areas with higher levels of confessional homogeneity voted more for ‘Women of Akkar’, compared to those in more heterogeneous areas. Moreover, voters in cadasters with higher levels of economic development, as well as those with lower poverty rates, voted in higher numbers for the list. This may have to do with the high capacity of other, sectarian-oriented, parties to mobilize voters in poorer areas by offering benefits in exchange of votes. Regarding voters’ sect, as previously mentioned, even after controlling for geographical factors, Greek Orthodox voters, closely followed by Sunni voters, were the most likely to vote for ‘Women of Akkar’, while

Alawite voters were the least likely to do so. Maronite and Shia voters stood in between.

Figure 20 Drivers of votes for 'Women of Akkar'



## VI How did 'Akkar's Decision' perform?

Besides 'Women of Akkar', another independent list ran for elections in the district: 'Akkar's Decision'. This section presents their results.

The 'Akkar's Decision' list received a total of 1.5%, or 2,032 votes in the elections. The list was more successful among diaspora voters, winning 2.2% of their vote compared to 1.5% of resident votes.<sup>17</sup>

The candidates in the list were Georges Nader (Maronite, 1,111 votes), Bassem Khaled (Sunni, 369 votes), Ali Omar (Sunni, 347 votes), and Kamal Khazaal (Sunni, 140 votes). Their performance varied across geographical areas. The list was highly successful in Machta Hassan (198 votes, 19%), Rahbeh (189 votes, 10%), and Beit Ayoub (124 votes, 19%). It also won a high number of votes in Qbaiyat Aakkar (229 votes, representing 4.5%), El-Borj (52 votes, 9%), and Biret Aakkar (61 votes, 3%).

### Some variations in support for 'Akkar's Decision' across confessional groups—and much larger ones in support for each of its candidates

Some variations in support for 'Akkar's Decision' were seen across confessional groups (table 5). Greek Orthodox voters showed the highest support (2.9% of the Greek Orthodox votes), followed by Maronite voters (2.2%). Less than 1.5% of voters from other groups voted for the list, and the lowest share was among Shia voters (1.1%). In line with the higher share of Sunni voters in Akkar, half of the votes received by 'Akkar's Decision' came from Sunni polling stations

<sup>17</sup> Note that the emigrant votes only represent 41 votes compared to 1,991 votes among residents.

(985 out of the 1,975 votes the list won among residents), followed by mixed ones (506 votes). By contrast, less than 2% of the votes received by the list came from voters in Alawite and Shia stations (24 and 9 votes, respectively).

There were no variations in support for the list across genders: The share of votes given by men was only 0.04% higher than that by women (1.55% compared to 1.51%). In actual numbers of votes, this translated to 794 men and 871 women supporting the list, which also received 310 votes from polling stations that had both men and women registered to vote.

**Table 5** Votes for 'Akkar's Decision' by confessional group and gender

		Number of votes	Percentage of votes
Confession	Sunni	985	1.2%
	Greek Orthodox	256	2.9%
	Maronite	195	2.2%
	Alawite	24	1.4%
	Shia	9	1.1%
	Mixed confession	506	1.8%
Gender	Men	794	1.6%
	Women	871	1.5%
	Mixed gender	310	1.5%

Support for each candidate in the list varied across confessional groups and genders. Georges Nader had mixed constituents, while other candidates—all of them Sunni—mostly relied on the Sunni vote, highlighting co-sectarian preferences even among voters who did not vote for a sectarian party.

Most voters who supported the list chose Georges Nader, who won 0.9% of all preferential votes in Akkar. Nearly all Greek Orthodox, Maronite, and Alawite voters who voted for the list cast their ballots for him: 244 out of the 252 Greek Orthodox who voted for one of the list's candidates chose Nader, as did all 195 Maronite, and 20 out of 21 Alawites who voted for one of the candidates. Nader also came very close to being the preferred candidate among Sunnis supporting the list, receiving 305 of their votes—only five less than Ali Omar, who was the most popular among Sunnis. He was also the most successful candidate in mixed stations, winning 315 of their votes—nearly twice as much as all the other candidates in the list combined. Nader ranked first among both genders, but received a higher number of votes from women (471 votes, compared to the 443 men who voted for him).

Finally, the candidate was highly successful in some cadasters, and received most of his support from the cadasters of Qbaiyat Aakkar (226 votes, 4.5% of preferential votes in the cadaster) and Rahbeh (180 votes, 9.5%).

All other candidates on the 'Akkar's Decision' list barely received any votes from non-Sunni voters. Out of Bassem Khaled's 358 votes from residents, only 11 came from Greek Orthodox, Maronite, Alawite, and Shia voters. Khaled received 223 votes from Sunni stations, where he ranked third among candidates on the list, and won 124 from mixed stations, where he ranked second. He was the only candidate in 'Akkar's Decision' to perform better among men (141 votes) than women (134 votes), although only slightly. In fact, an almost equal number of men voters in their own stations voted for Khaled as they did for the third-ranking candidate in 'Akkar's Decision', Ali Omar, while by contrast, women voters voted much more for Omar. Across Akkar, over half of Khaled's votes came from voters in Machta Hassan alone, where he received 186 votes (representing 18% of preferential votes there).

The third candidate on the list, Ali Omar, won only five non-Sunni votes, meaning that 91% of his votes among residents came from Sunni polling stations. He was the most successful 'Akkar's Decision' candidate among Sunnis (310 votes), although by a five-vote margin. As mentioned above, Omar was significantly more successful among women than men (179 compared to 139 votes). Similar to the other candidates on his list, Omar had his own stronghold: Over one third of Omar's votes—122 out of 342 votes he won among residents—came from voters in Beit Ayoub, representing 19% of preferential votes in the cadaster.

The last candidate on the list, Kamal Khazaal, won 131 votes among residents. He did not receive any vote from non-Sunni voters, although he obtained some in mixed polling stations (23 votes). The Sunni community gave him 108 votes. Across genders, Khazaal was slightly more successful among women than men (57 of his votes were cast in women-only polling stations, and 48 in men-only stations). Over a quarter of the votes Khazaal won came from the cadaster of El-Borj, where he won 42 votes (7% of preferential votes in El-Borj).

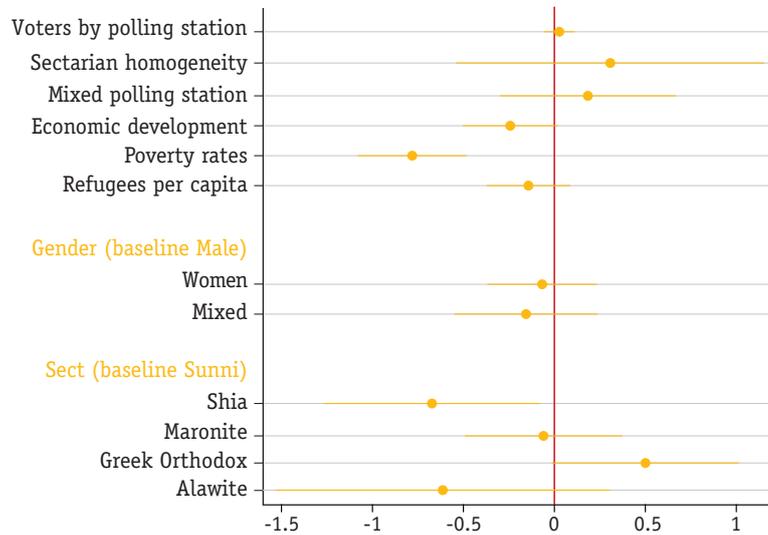
**Table 6** Votes for each candidate on 'Akkar's Decision' by confessional group and gender

		Georges Nader	Bassem Khaled	Ali Omar	Kamal Khazaal	
Number of votes	Confession	Sunni	305	223	310	108
		Greek Orthodox	244	7	1	0
		Maronite	195	0	0	0
		Alawite	20	0	1	0
		Shia	2	4	3	0
		Mixed confession	315	124	27	23
	Gender	Men	443	141	139	48
		Women	471	134	179	57
		Mixed gender	167	83	24	26
	Percentage of votes	Confession	Sunni	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
Greek Orthodox			2.8%	0.1%	0.0%	
Maronite			2.3%			
Alawite			1.2%		0.1%	
Shia			0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	
Mixed confession			1.1%	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%
Gender		Men	0.9%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%
		Women	0.8%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%
		Mixed gender	0.8%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%

**What are the drivers of votes for 'Akkar's Decision'?**

A multivariate regression analysis shows that voters in cadasters with comparatively lower poverty rates voted more for 'Akkar's Decision'. No other geographical factor seems to have affected the list's results. Across confessional groups, Greek Orthodox voters were only slightly more likely than others to vote for the list, while Shias were the least likely. There were no significant variations between Sunni, Alawite, and Maronite voters.

Figure 21 Drivers of votes for 'Akkar's Decision'



## VII Were there any signs of irregularities?

Irregularities can occur during the election process, through ballot stuffing that either increases the total number of votes or adds votes for one party at the expense of another. Fraud can also occur during the vote aggregation process when there is collusion between certain candidates—usually the more connected ones—and election officials. Voter rigging (pressuring voters to cast ballots in a certain manner) tends to occur more in small polling stations, where it is easier to monitor voters' behavior. Therefore, testing whether turnout was abnormally higher in smaller voting centers can help approximate whether there was voter rigging or not. Another method of detecting signs of election fraud is examining the distribution of turnout and vote numbers, and testing whether they have a 'normal' shape. For example, an abnormally high number of voting centers with close to 100% turnout could suggest either voter or vote rigging at any stage of the election process. Other lines of research focus on statistical tests that examine the random nature of numbers to test whether numbers were manipulated in a non-random manner.

### There are some irregular patterns in turnout

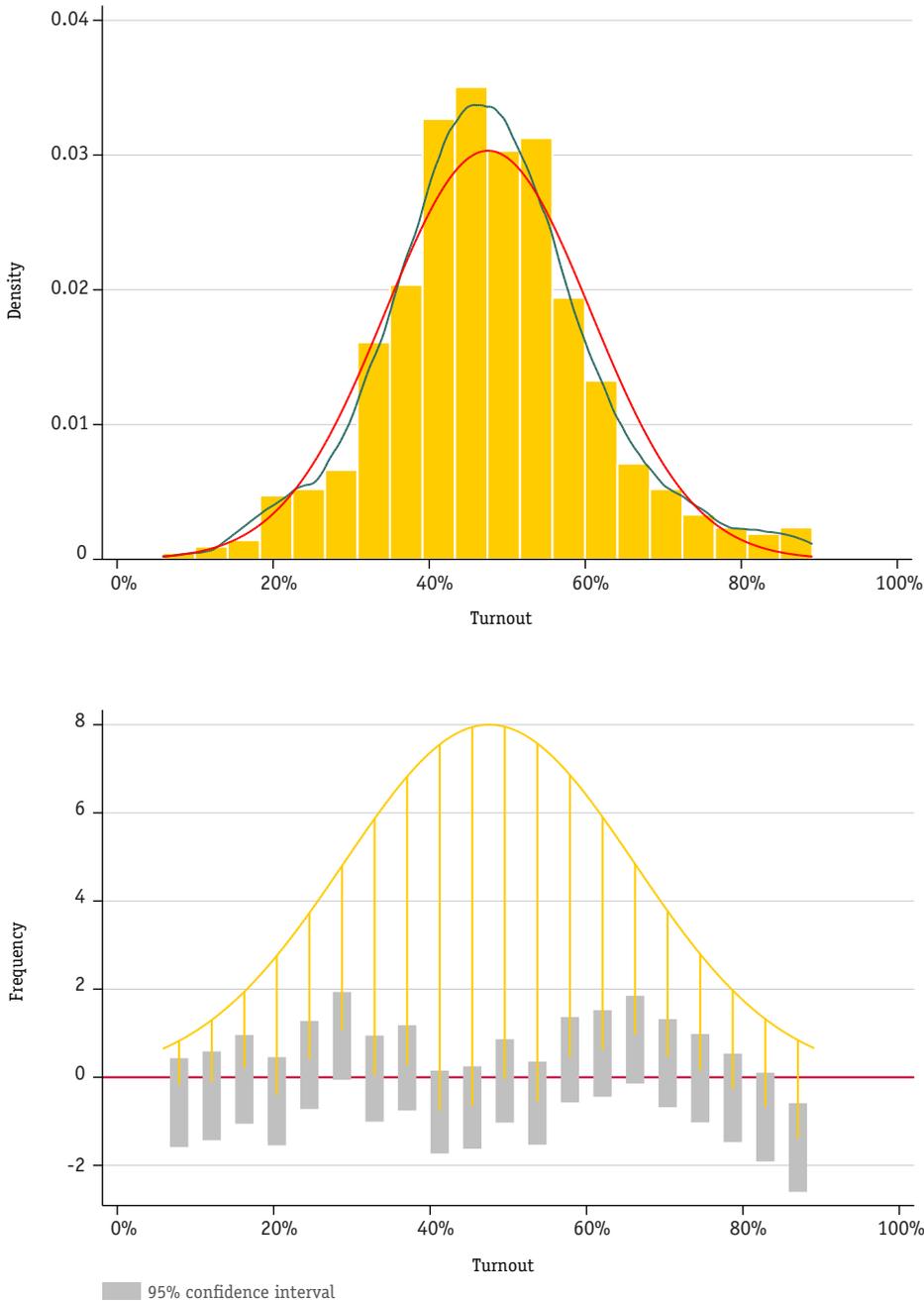
The distribution of turnout by polling station usually has a normal shape, with the majority of electoral centers having turnouts close to the average and a small number of centers having a very high or very low turnout rate.

In Akkar, the average turnout across the 504 polling stations was 47%, ranging from 6% to 89%.<sup>18</sup> The distribution of turnouts by polling station diverged slightly from the normal curve, as the number

<sup>18</sup> Polling stations with public employees and diaspora voters registered to vote were excluded.

of stations with very high turnout rates (above 80%) was higher than expected. Six polling stations in the district saw such high turnouts. This provides some initial suggestive evidence of irregularities, such as pressure to vote or ballot stuffing.

**Figure 22** Distribution of turnout rates by polling station in Akkar



### Some evidence of voter rigging in Akkar

Voter rigging entails political parties pressuring or coercing voters with the intended aim of affecting turnout, through, for example, vote buying. The literature on election irregularities distinguishes vote rigging from voter rigging, as coercion is not apparent in the latter case. However, there are some ways to detect potential instances of voter rigging through statistical tests.

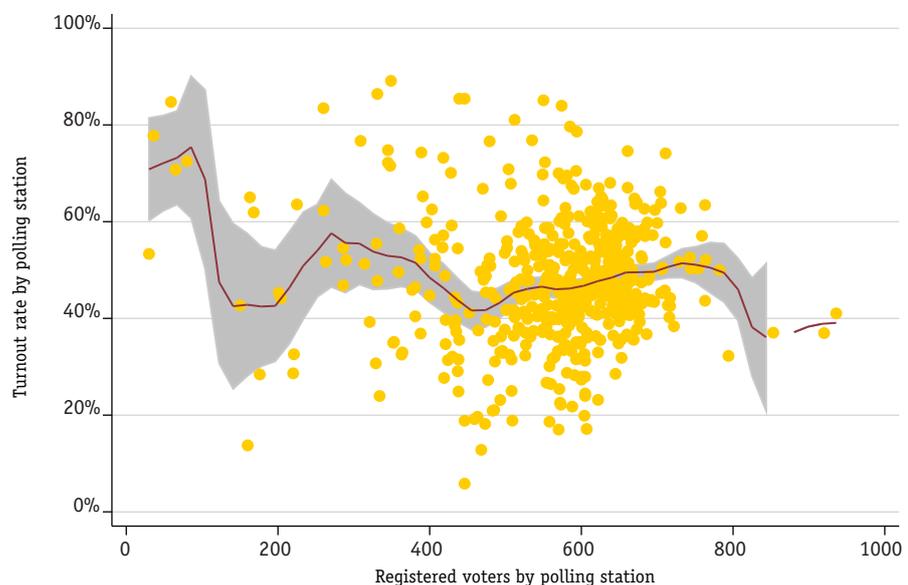
One way to test for voter rigging is by examining the correlation between turnouts and the size of a polling station. Previous evidence shows that polling stations with fewer voters are more attractive among politicians buying votes, or exerting some kind of pressure on voters, because smaller groups of voters in a polling station facilitate aggregate monitoring of whether voters cast their ballots, and for whom.<sup>19</sup> High turnouts in polling stations with fewer voters may therefore point at fraud in those stations.

There were some signs of voter rigging in Akkar, as turnout by polling station tended to decrease as the size of a polling station increased. In addition, comparing the turnouts in small polling stations—or those whose size was at least one standard deviation below the mean (about 430 voters or less in Akkar)—to turnouts in stations whose size was closer or larger than the mean polling station size, shows that turnout in small polling stations stood at 51%, compared to 47% in other ones. Such a discrepancy might suggest higher and more effective mobilization of voters in those stations, potentially through vote buying.

<sup>19</sup> Rueda, M. R. 2016. 'Small Aggregates, Big Manipulation: Vote Buying Enforcement and Collective Monitoring.' *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(1): 163-177.

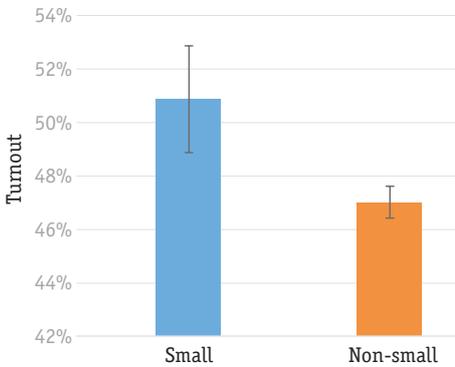
Figure 23 Polling station size and turnout rates in Akkar

#### a Correlation between the size of a polling station and turnouts



**b Turnout in small polling stations compared to non-small ones<sup>20</sup>**

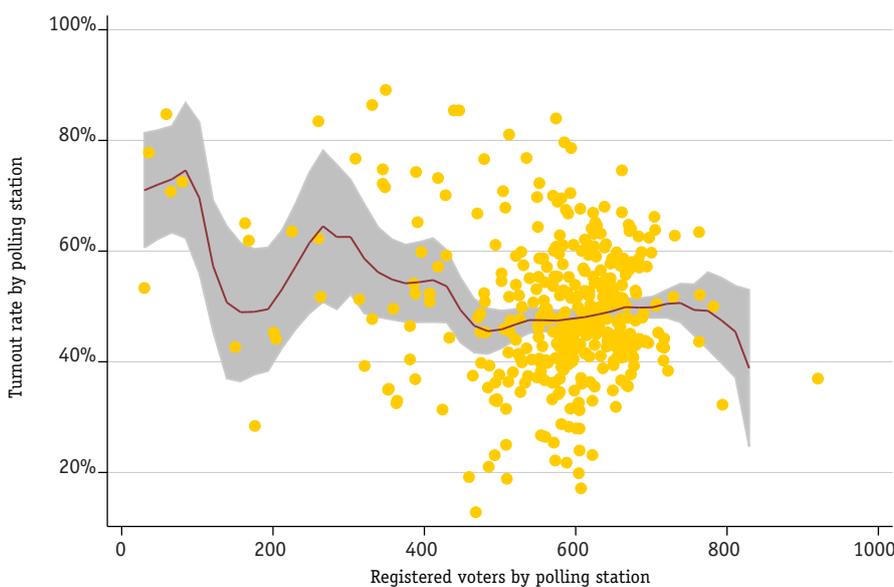
<sup>20</sup> Small polling stations are those that are one standard deviation below the mean polling station size.



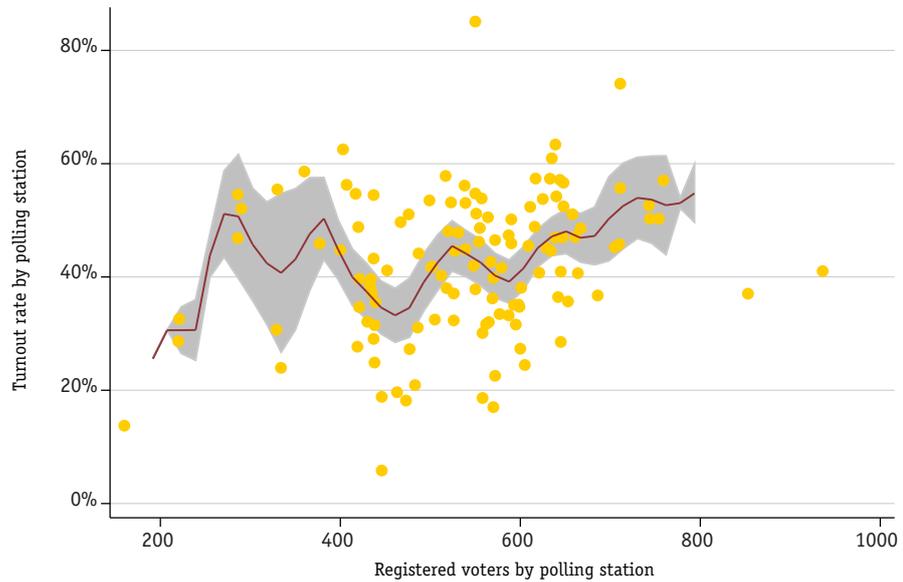
Given that registered voters are segregated by confession and gender in Lebanon, political parties may have a higher interest in targeting voters in specific polling stations, where their main constituents are registered to vote. Comparing the relationship between polling station size and turnouts in homogeneous versus mixed stations shows a negative relationship between the two in homogeneous stations but not mixed ones. In homogeneous stations, turnouts on average decreased from 70% in the smallest to 40% in the largest stations. No clear relationship is observed in mixed polling stations, suggesting targeted mobilization of specific constituents.

Figure 24 Polling station size and turnout rates by type of polling station

**a Homogeneous stations**

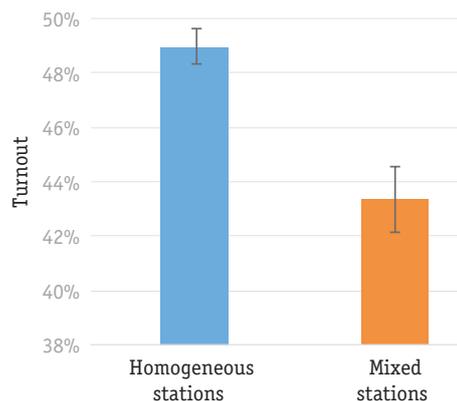


**b Mixed station**



Regardless of the size of the polling station, those with one confessional group registered to vote showed much higher turnout rates than those with more than one confessional group registered to vote (49% compared to 43%). This provides further suggestive evidence of targeted mobilization.

**Figure 25 Turnout in homogeneous versus mixed polling stations**



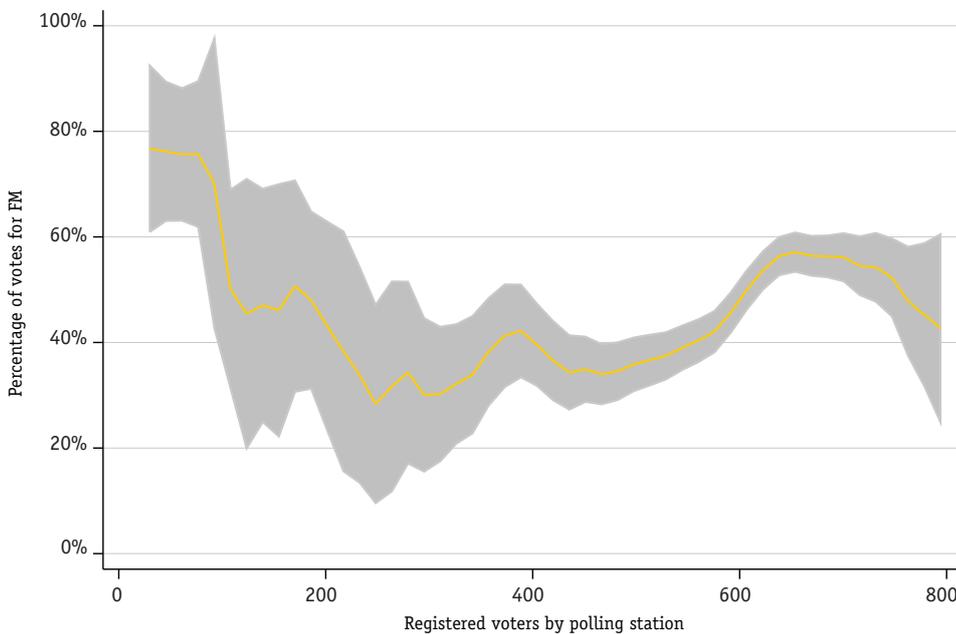
Given this correlation between polling station size and turnout, looking at the performance of each list and party across polling stations can show whether one benefited from smaller stations and/or higher turnouts. This can highlight whether one specific party or list committed acts of electoral fraud.

Results show that the FM-LF list fared better in smaller polling stations, in particular the FM candidates and not the LF candidate. The FM received on average 80% of votes in the smallest polling stations, a rate which decreased until reaching less than 50% in

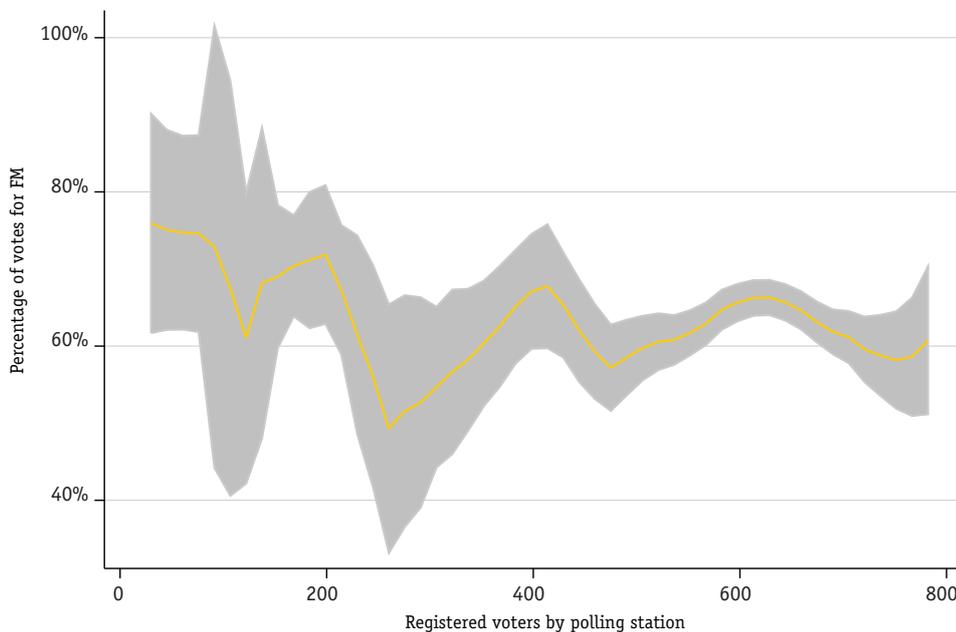
the largest ones (figure 26). This pattern was particularly apparent in Sunni only stations—those where the party’s main supporters were registered to vote: The average share of votes the FM received decreased from 80% to less than 60% in the largest Sunni stations. When looking at the performance of each candidate, a particularly strong pattern was detected for the FM candidate Mohammad Suleiman, as well as Hadi Hobeich, who both won seats.

**Figure 26** Polling station size and share of votes for the Future Movement

**a** Polling station size and share of votes for the Future Movement



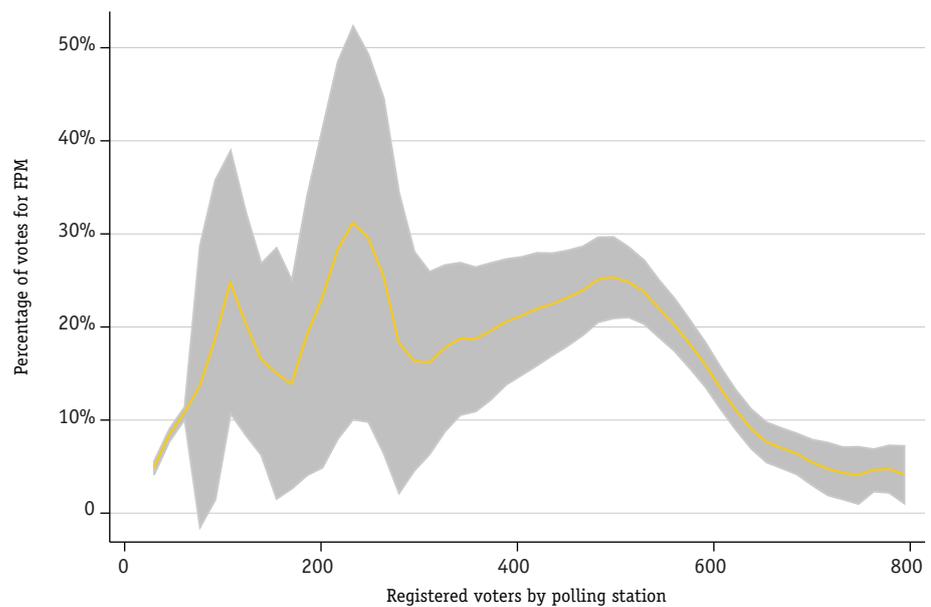
**b** Polling station size and share of votes for the Future Movement in Sunni polling stations



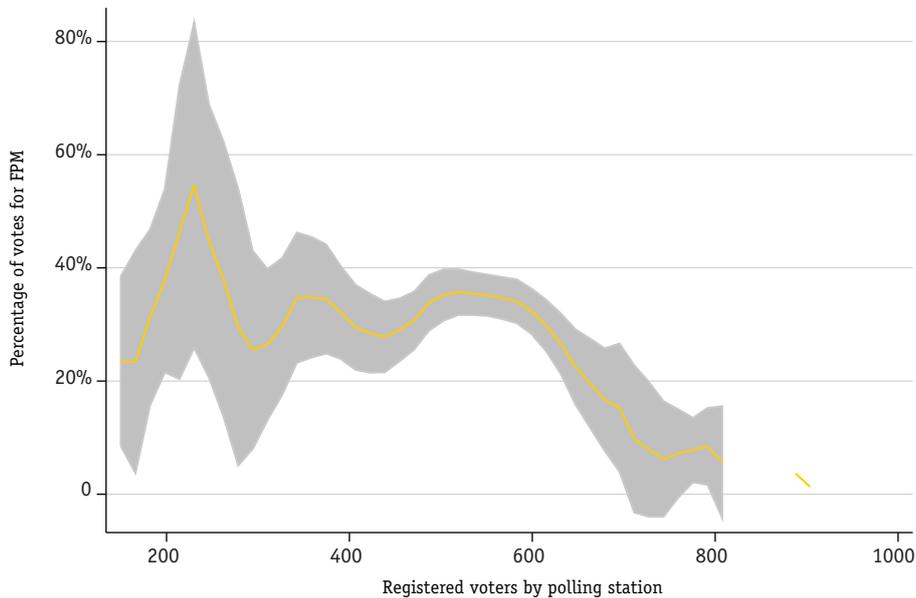
There was also some evidence that the ‘Strong Akkar’ list, in particular the FPM candidates, found higher success in smaller polling stations (figure 27). FPM candidates’ share of votes averaged 20% in smaller polling stations (those with 400 registered voters or less), and decreased steadily until reaching below 5% in the largest polling stations. Similar to the FM, the FPM performed best in the smaller polling stations where their main constituents, in this case Maronites and Greek Orthodox, were the majority of voters. This was also the case in mixed stations, which had a high share of Christian voters. The FPM received an average of 50% of votes in the smallest Christian and/or mixed polling stations but less than 5% in the biggest ones. FPM candidate Jimmy Jabbour’s performance followed this pattern to a particularly high degree.

**Figure 27** Polling station size and share of votes for the Free Patriotic Movement

**a** Polling station size and share of votes for the Free Patriotic Movement



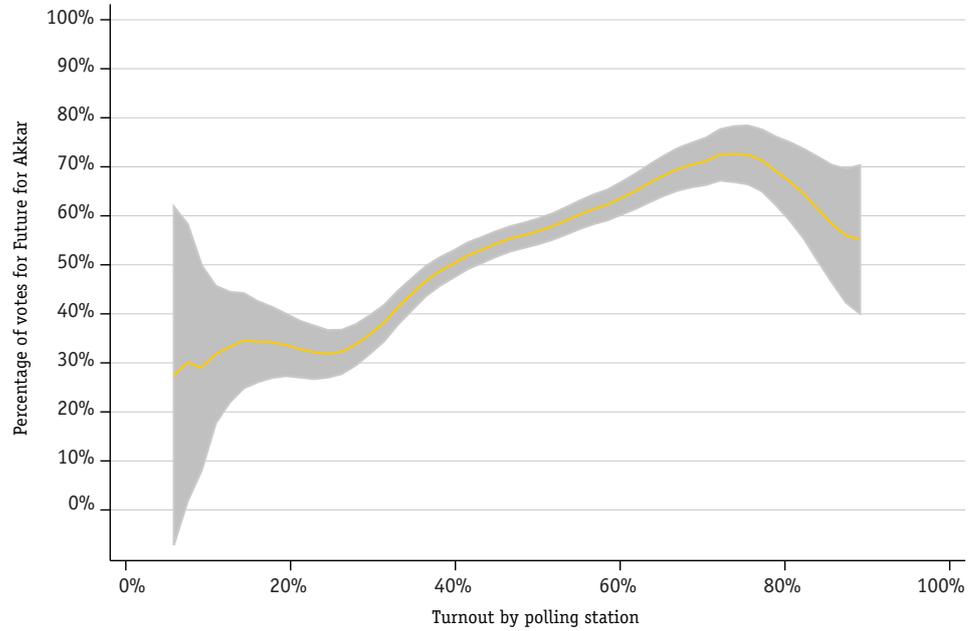
**b Polling station size and share of votes for the Free Patriotic Movement in Christian and mixed stations**



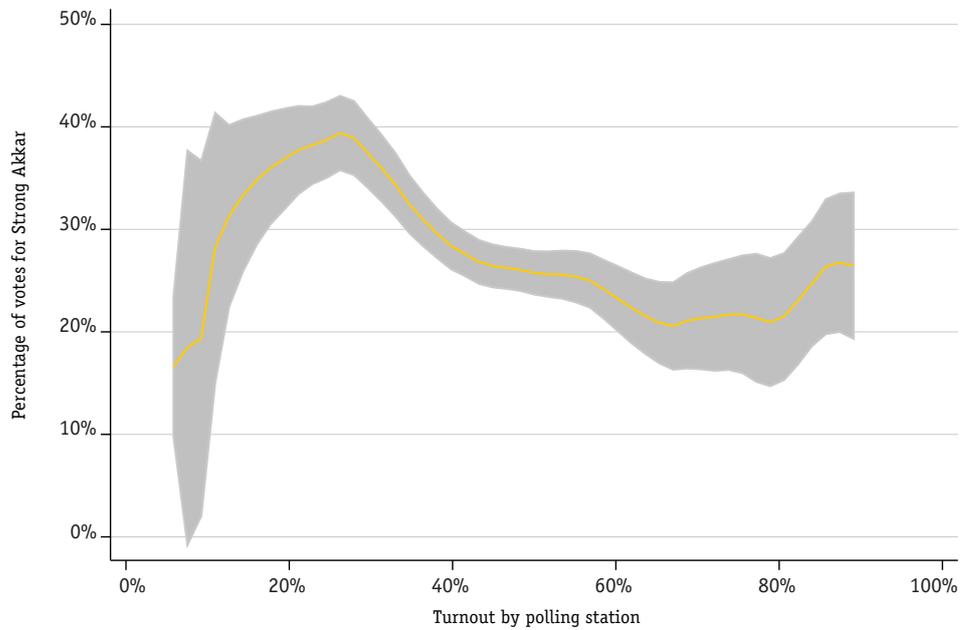
Beyond the size of each polling station, one list or party may have benefited from higher turnouts. A list benefiting from higher turnouts by polling station can further give an indication on whether or not fraud can be suspected—as pressure to vote for a given list would increase both turnout and votes for the same list in a polling station. A positive relationship between turnouts and votes for a list could also be due to vote rigging, such as ballot stuffing, as adding ballots for a list would increase turnout in a polling station. Among the two winning lists in Akkar, the FM-LF list seems to have benefited from high turnouts, driven mainly by the performance of the FM and not the LF candidate. The same pattern was not observed for the FPM candidates on the ‘Strong Akkar’ list.

**Figure 28** Turnout by polling station and percentage of votes for each winning list

**a** Turnout by polling station and percentage of votes for the 'Future for Akkar' list



**b** Turnout by polling station and percentage of votes for the 'Strong Akkar' list



Higher turnouts in a polling station associated with an increase in votes for a list could be due to its higher success in mobilizing its specific constituents. As seen above, homogeneous stations saw higher turnouts, suggesting targeted mobilization. The FM-LF list benefited from higher turnouts, however, this could be due to the higher support it generally obtained from Sunni voters, who had the highest turnout in Akkar.

### The Future Movement benefited from high turnouts, suggesting fraudulent behavior

Normally, if there was a lack of pressure on voters to cast their ballots in a certain way, votes for each list or party should be more or less similar regardless of whether centers had very low, normal, or very high turnouts.<sup>21</sup> As mentioned above, the FM-LF list benefited from higher turnouts, however, this could be related to the higher turnouts among Sunni voters—its main constituents. In order to take into consideration that variations in turnouts and votes for each list by polling station are not driven by one specific confessional group, we create standardized variables of turnout rates and percentage of votes for each list. For any polling station, the standardized turnout rate would be the turnout rate in the specific polling station minus the average turnout rate of all polling stations in its district with registered voters from the same sect, all of it divided by the variability (standard deviation) of the turnout rates in those centers. This measures how abnormally low or high the turnout in a polling station is compared to all other centers within the same sect. The standardized measures of share of votes for lists and parties follow the same procedure. As previous studies have found, no clear relation should be observed between turnouts and number of votes for a particular list or party in ‘clean’ elections.<sup>22</sup>

Accounting for the differences in votes for each list, as well as party and turnouts among each confessional group, shows significant variations in the election results between polling stations that had abnormally low turnouts (1 standard deviation below the mean turnout by polling station), normal turnouts (close to the mean), and abnormally high turnouts (1 standard deviation above the mean turnout) (figure 29).

Candidates from the FM performed much better in polling stations that had abnormally high turnouts, while politicians from the LF, the FPM, Marada, and the SSNP performed better in stations that had abnormally low turnouts. The FM, compared to its share of votes in centers with normal turnouts (47%), received considerably higher support in centers with high turnouts (55%), and lower one in centers with low turnouts (32%).

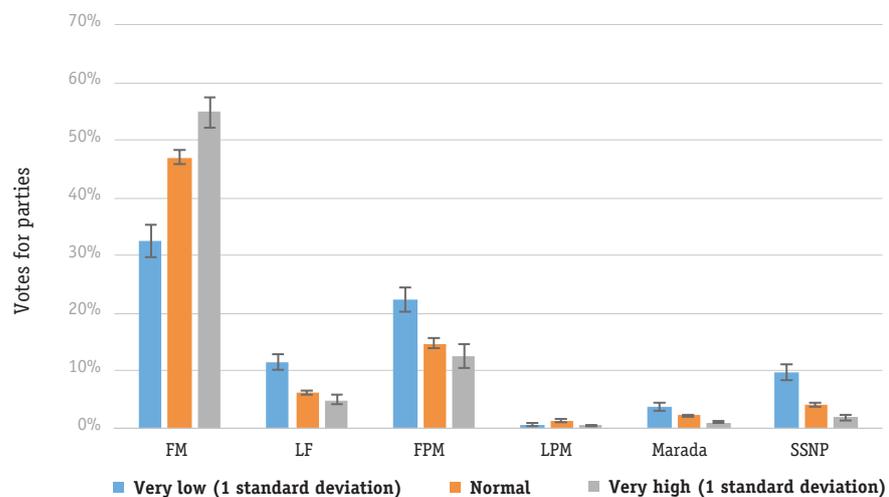
<sup>21</sup> Myagkov, M., P.C. Ordeshook, and D. Shakin. 2009. *The Forensics of Election Fraud*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Interestingly, the opposite pattern was seen for candidates from other parties. The LF candidate on the FM-LF list received 6% of votes in normal turnout centers but 12% in very low turnout centers. Candidates from the FPM saw received 22% of votes in stations with very low turnouts but 15% in centers with normal turnouts. The one SSNP candidate running for elections in Akkar also performed better in very low turnout centers (10% compared to 4% in stations with normal turnouts, and only 2% in centers with very high turnouts). The Marada candidate, finally, also performed better in low turnout centers (nearly 4% of votes in those centers, compared to 2% in normal turnout centers and 1% in very high turnout ones).

Again, the strong performance of FM candidates in stations with very high turnouts may indicate instances of pressure to vote for FM candidates. The fact that Christian parties saw better numbers in very low turnout centers might be explained either by a tendency to perform better among constituents not targeted by the FM, or simply a weaker ability to mobilize voters.

**Figure 29** Percentage of votes for each party and standardized turnout rate in Akkar



These results above provide further evidence of voter rigging to the benefit of FM. Very high turnouts benefiting a certain party could also be due to ballot stuffing, as adding ballots for a party would increase both turnouts and votes for the party.

### No evidence of vote rigging in Akkar

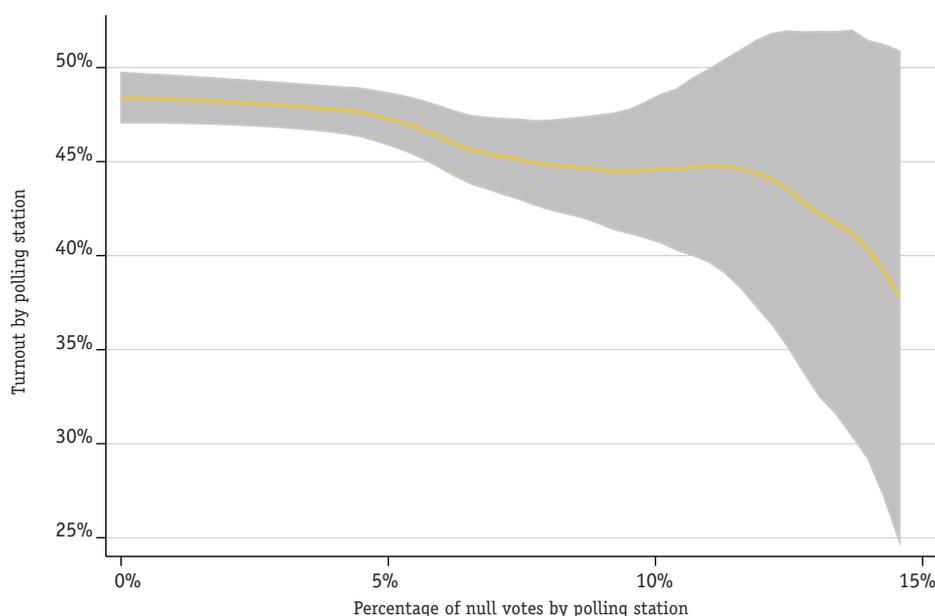
Besides putting pressure on voters, another form of fraud is vote rigging, such as ballot stuffing and manipulation in the vote count.

One method of testing for signs of ballot stuffing is determining how the percentage of null votes in a polling station correlates with turnout, as well as the percentage of votes that a party obtained. Previous evidence shows that when political parties add ballots they

tend to forget to include a similar proportion of invalid votes.<sup>23</sup> Potential irregular behaviors can be identified by looking at the correlation between the percentage of null votes, turnouts, and votes for a list or party. A lower percentage of invalid votes in a polling station, associated with a higher turnout and a higher percentage of votes for a list or party would suggest manipulations in the vote count. However, a negative correlation is not enough to suggest ballot stuffing—as null votes could be ‘protest’ votes. Stronger evidence of ballot stuffing would be apparent in cases where the increase in the share of null votes is smaller than the decrease in the percentage of votes for a list or party.

Akkar saw a weak negative relationship between the percentage of null votes and turnout by polling station: The increase in the share of null votes was much larger than the decrease in turnouts (figure 30). A 15% increase in the share of null votes per polling station (from 0% to 15%) was associated with only a 10% decrease in average turnouts by polling station (from 48% to 38%, on average). This therefore does not provide evidence of ballot stuffing.

**Figure 30** Turnout and percentage of null votes by polling station in Akkar



Even looking at the relationship between null votes and votes for each list and party in a given polling station shows no evidence of ballot stuffing on the part of any party in the elections in Akkar.

Another form of vote rigging would entail parties ‘cooking’ the numbers, i.e. parties manipulating the vote count either by adding or subtracting votes for a list, or ‘re-shuffling’ votes within their list from one candidate to another. One way of detecting manipulations

23  
Friesen, P. 2019. ‘Strategic Ballot Removal: An Unexplored Form of Electoral Manipulation in Hybrid Regimes.’ *Democratization*, 26(4): 709-729.

<sup>24</sup> Beber, B. and A. Scacco. 2012. 'What the Numbers Say: A Digit-Based Test for Election Fraud.' *Political Analysis*, 20(2): 211-234.

in the vote counting process is to look at the distribution of the last digits in the number of valid votes, as well as those in the number of votes for a list or party.<sup>24</sup> The last-digits test is based on the hypothesis that humans tend to be poor at making up numbers which would result in an abnormal distribution of numbers at the aggregate level. In 'clean' elections, last digits in votes for a party should be uniformly distributed, with an equal chance of every number (from 0 to 9) to appear (10% chance).

Restricting the sample of voting centers where at least 50 votes were valid (as a small vote count may lead to an oversample of zeros and ones) shows no evidence that the last digits in the valid votes were non-uniform in Akkar. Looking at the distribution of last digits in votes for each list and party in Akkar also shows no significant deviations from the uniform line. There is therefore no evidence of vote rigging in the elections in Akkar.

#### Overall, in Akkar, there are signs of voter rigging on the part of the Future Movement

Some signs of voter rigging to benefit FM candidates were seen in the Akkar elections. There were no indications of vote rigging, such as manipulations of the vote count and ballot stuffing.

Turnout rates were significantly higher in smaller polling stations, and generally decreased as the size of a polling station increased. Literature on voter rigging shows that polling stations with low numbers of registered voters are more attractive for politicians attempting to buy votes, as the smaller numbers of voters facilitates the monitoring of their behavior—i.e. whether they turned out to vote, and for whom. In Akkar, FM candidates received much higher support in small polling stations, which suggests that there may have been pressure on voters to vote for them, either through vote buying or monitoring. The same pattern could also be detected in the support for FPM candidates, pointing to potential voter rigging on their part as well—however, in contrast to FM, further methods of testing for voter rigging did not provide evidence of fraudulent behavior from FPM.

Another method of testing for voter rigging is to look at the relationship between turnout by polling station and the share of votes obtained by each party regardless of the size of the polling station. In regular elections, the share of votes for a party should not significantly vary between polling stations that had very low, normal, and very high turnouts. The results from Akkar show that FM candidates performed significantly better in polling stations that had very high turnouts—another suggestive evidence of voter rigging to their benefit. Votes cast for Akkar's traditionally Christian-supported parties (the LF, the FPM, the SSNP, and Marada) did not follow the same pattern. Candidates from these parties instead performed better

in polling stations with very low turnouts. This could be due to their weaker mobilization of voters, and may indicate that they performed better among constituents not specifically targeted by the FM.

While very high turnouts benefiting a certain party may suggest voter rigging, it could also be a sign of ballot stuffing, which would increase both turnouts and votes for this party. One way to test for ballot stuffing is to examine the correlation between the percentage of null votes and votes for a party in a polling station. Previous evidence shows that when political parties add ballots, they tend to forget to include a similar share of invalid votes. Seeing a significant decrease in both turnouts and votes for a party associated with an increase in the share of null votes in a polling station would provide some evidence of ballot stuffing. No such relationship was observed in Akkar. Another form of fraud would be vote counting manipulations, which can be detected by looking at the distribution of last digits of votes for a list or party. In Akkar, no irregular distribution in the number of votes was observed, thus showing no signs of vote rigging.

In conclusion, the results suggest that there may have been cases of voter rigging on behalf of FM candidates running for office in Akkar, but no vote rigging in the district.