

Regional and Sectarian Stratification in Education in Lebanon:
The Impact of the Civil War

Hassan Diab

Rania Tfaily

Andrzej Kulczycki

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Abstract

We examine the impact of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1991) on disparities in education among the country's religious sects and regions. Lebanon's historic patterns of socio-economic development explain much of the country's earlier rapid and uneven expansion of education. We consider historic and survey evidence, including the 1996 Population and Housing Survey, the most detailed socio-demographic survey since Lebanon's last census of 1932. We adopt district of registration as a proxy for religious/sectarian affiliation through a novel, detailed classification to assess sectarian differentials by region and regional differentials within each major religious group. Regional/sectarian stratification is examined by education (literate, intermediate, secondary, college) and sex for five-year birth cohorts born over 1927-1981. Findings show that with many young men joining militias, the civil war inadvertently helped close the gender gap in education. It also reproduced pre-existing conditions of lopsided educational development across regions and sects that continue to the present-day.

Keywords: education; Lebanon; regional inequalities; religion; Christians; Muslims; civil war

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Introduction

A recent World Bank analysis of national education systems in the Middle East and North Africa both praised and cautioned regional policymakers. On the one hand, countries were commended for improving access to education, especially for reducing the gender gap, and for investing in education. Very few children in the region, particularly girls, attended formal schools in the 1950s, whereas by the turn of the century, most countries had achieved full/almost full enrollment in basic education and no longer had severe gender disparities in secondary and tertiary education. This progress has contributed to reductions in fertility, infant and child mortality, as well as promoted life expectancy. However, the relationship between education and economic growth has remained weak, literacy rates remained relatively low, labor markets were unable to absorb the growing supply of an educated labor force, and measured in absolute terms, there continued to be an “education gap” with other regions. The World Bank also concluded that schooling had to improve quickly for the region to be more successfully integrated into the global economy (World Bank, 2008).

International comparisons show that greater educational progress has been achieved in much of Latin America, most parts of Asia, and other regions at comparable levels of development (UNDP 2002; 2008; UNESCO 2007). A major challenge is posed by demography; the Middle East and North Africa region now has one of the largest cohorts of young people in the world, relative to its total population. This cohort will

impose heightened demands for new learning opportunities and improved results as it works its way through the education system.

Overall, the existence and effects of gender, spatial and other differentials in educational attainment remain poorly documented for the Middle East and North Africa. This paper looks at the case of Lebanon, a small country on the eastern Mediterranean shore, which has long enjoyed a position as an entrepôt and banking hub for the Middle East in particular, as well as a regional center for educational excellence. It began to cede these positions as it became embroiled in a devastating civil war (1975-91). Against this backdrop, it is especially pertinent to ask what has been the impact of the civil war and subsequent reconstruction efforts on education and on differentials in education within Lebanon. The case of Lebanon is also of special interest because throughout its history, Lebanon has been cited as a unique experiment in multicultural and multi-religious interdependence (Malik, 2002).

Lebanon is ruled by a system of political confessionalism, based on a complex community-based power-sharing arrangement that considers the country's 18 legally recognized religious sects. These primarily include Christian as well as Muslim groups.¹ No census has been taken since 1932 when the country was still under the French mandate, reflecting the immense political sensitivity over the confessional balance (Chamie, 1981; Faour, 2007; Soffer, 1986). In Lebanon's multi-sectarian society, region of residence is highly associated with religion or sect. Shi'a Muslims predominate in the

¹ Christian religious groups include Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copt, and Protestant. Muslim religious groups include Shi'a, Sunni, Alawite and Druze. There is also a very small Jewish community.

South, Sunni Muslims in the North, and Maronite Christians in the Mount Lebanon region.

Lebanon has vast regional socioeconomic disparities whose visibility is magnified by the country's small size. The country's elites, based primarily in the capital city of Beirut, have long served as a bridge between the Arab and Western worlds. Even prior to the country's independence in 1943, economic services were mostly concentrated in Beirut, while other sectors and regions were marginalized (Traboulsi, 2007). Many scholars perceived these regional and sectarian socioeconomic disparities as the primary causes of Lebanon's longest civil war (Johnson, 1978). Subsequent efforts to rebuild the country and to revitalize its role as the Middle East center of services and tourism have focused heavily on Beirut (Diab 1999). These efforts have only partially addressed the many socioeconomic and regional disparities that underpin the political and security tensions in the country (Stewart, 1996).

We look at one aspect of social stratification – education – and examine how gender and regional/sectarian disparities have changed over time and the extent to which they were affected by the civil war. We compare school attendance of various birth cohorts at different educational levels. The paper uses data from the 1996 Lebanese Population and Household Survey (PHS), the most detailed and comprehensive socio-demographic survey to be held in Lebanon since the 1932 census. We employ an intersectional analysis approach that recognizes the interrelations between gender, religious sects and region – which, in Lebanon as in many other countries, is a proxy for socio-economic services and conditions. We examine why the expansion of the education system has not benefited evenly all regions and religious sects (referred to hereafter as

region/sect). The impact of civil war on education is also investigated. The objectives of the paper are to examine how school enrollment differed by gender and region/religious affiliation on the eve of the civil war and in its aftermath; look at the extent to which the civil war affected these differentials; and explain the persistent regional/sectarian differentials in education. We first consider the historical context of Lebanon's socioeconomic and regional development as well as its educational system, to more fully inform our analysis.

Background

Historical and present context

Following the collapse of Ottoman rule in the wake of World War I, the French and the British divided the Ottoman territories between them. 'Greater Lebanon' (Mount Lebanon and its newly added regions) was placed under the French Mandate (1920-1943). The 1932 census showed Christians (mainly Maronites) in the majority. Reflecting historical ties, the French tended to favor the Maronites, who constitute one of the Syrian Eastern Catholic churches. When Lebanon gained independence in 1943, the new republic had wide regional and sectarian disparities in socio-economic development (Salibi, 1988; Kubursi, 1999). The unwritten National Pact reserved the powerful presidency for a Maronite and the posts of prime minister and speaker of parliament for Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, respectively. The 1989 Taif Accord, which helped end the civil war, shifted the balance of power to the Sunni prime ministership and equalized the ratio of parliamentary seats between Muslims and Christians.

In aggregate terms, the economy prospered until the civil war erupted in 1975 (Kubursi, 1999; Eken et al., 1995). The subsequent conflict resulted in the deaths of an estimated 150,000 people, countless more injuries, and destroyed much of the country's economy and infrastructure. Sectarian cleansing led to the displacement of over several hundred thousand people (Kasparian 1996). Perhaps over one million people, mostly well-educated, had emigrated, and most would not return (Hourani and Shehadi 1992; Labaki 1992). Despite a post-war economic recovery facilitated by migrant remittances, banking services, agricultural exports, and international assistance, Beirut could not recover its former preeminent trading and financial role in the Middle East region (Stewart, 1996). Much of the country received significantly less attention in the reconstruction program, which focused on rebuilding Central Beirut and the national infrastructure (Nagel, 2002). To this day, life for the average Lebanese remains hard with much of the country's wealth concentrated in the hands of a very visible minority drawn from across the country's religious groups (UNDP 1997; Rainow 2008; Traboulsi 2007).

The 1996 Population and Household Survey (PHS) revealed a population of 3.1 million inhabitants, a total that excluded several hundred thousand Palestinians in refugee camps and even more Syrian workers living and working at construction sites. (Many of these workers returned to Syria following the withdrawal of Syrian troops from the country in 2005). In the mid-1990s, the total fertility rate was estimated at 2.9, but very large regional fertility differentials were also evident for what is a relatively small territory. Among women born in 1937-51 (aged 45-59 at the time of the survey), cohort fertility rates ranged from 3.6 in Kesrwan (an affluent Christian district in Mount

Lebanon) to as high as 7.5 in Minye and 7.6 in Akkar, districts in North Lebanon that are among the least developed in the country (Kulczycki and Saxena 1999).

Lebanon is administratively divided into six regions (governorates, or ‘mohafazats’). The governorate of Beirut consists of the inner city only, or about 13% of the population in 1996. However, the non-administrative Greater Beirut (the city of Beirut and its suburbs within 5-7 miles radius) comprises close to half Lebanon’s residents (Davie, 2002). The 1996 PHS confirmed that Mount Lebanon, which includes the suburbs of Beirut, is the most populated governorate (36% of residents) and Nabatiyye the least (7%). Other governorates include the North (13%), South (22%), and Bekaa (9%). Breakdowns of the population by sect are unavailable, and estimates that have been proposed are hotly contested (see Soffer 1986; Faour 1991; 2007). However, Maronite Christians are no longer the largest sect and are now widely believed to be fewer in number than either the Shi’as or the Sunnis (Faour, 2007). The Maronites, Shi’as and Sunnis form the great majority of the population and are most strongly represented in government. In 1996, 13% of the population was illiterate (9% among males, 18% among females), but illiteracy has been almost eradicated among the young (UNDP 1998; 2002).

The educational system in Lebanon

The roots of modern education in Lebanon can be traced back to the early activities of foreign Christian missionaries in the Ottoman semi-autonomous Mount Lebanon region (Abouchedid et al., 2002). These missionaries founded modern Lebanon’s two most prestigious universities: Université Saint-Joseph (USJ) and the non-

sectarian American University of Beirut (AUB). Beirut soon dominated educational activities, as with all other spheres of life (Fawaz, 1984; Traboulsi, 2007). French education flourished and Christians supplied the new republic with the needed elites and technocrats, reflecting their social and development advantage over other groups (Salibi, 1988). Islamic schools also provided limited education, especially for Sunnis (Johnson, 1978). By the end of the nineteenth century, the Shi'a was the only confessional community in Lebanon that neither had its educational institutions nor generally had access to schools established by other communities or by foreign missionaries (Abouchedid, 2002; Salibi, 1965).

After independence, a vast expansion of the Lebanese educational system occurred to serve the growing Lebanese economy and to meet the demands of the emergent Gulf oil economies that lacked educational infrastructure (Kubursi, 1999). The creation of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab boycott and Palestinian exodus, along with military coups in a number of Middle Eastern countries, prompted many Arab bourgeoisie to flee to the "laissez faire" economy of Beirut and its secured banking system (Kubursi, 1999; Traboulsi, 2007). In the early 1970s, the booming economies of the oil-rich Persian Gulf states enabled Beirut to consolidate its status as the financial and trading hub of the Middle East (Eken et al., 1995). Lebanon reached the highest adult literacy rate in the Arab region (Richards and Waterbury 2007). The expansion of the educational system benefited members of various religious groups (Traboulsi 2007).

However, the increased wealth was unevenly distributed. Inequalities in education were evident in the vast differences in resources between public and private schools, the concentration of educational institutions in Christian areas, the extremely high selectivity

in access to higher education, and sectarian differentials in access to higher posts and salaries (Traboulsi, 2007). These inequalities in the education system widened the regional gaps in socio-economic development that contributed to the country's civil war (Nagel 2002). Schooling was interrupted for various periods by the fighting, with many men joining militias organized primarily along sectarian lines. Many educated and well-connected Lebanese fled overseas, many seeking opportunities in the Gulf region (Faour, 1991; Kubursi, 1999) which were increasingly able to conduct their own business without Beirut's assistance. Schools and universities suffered greatly during the civil war (Abouchedid et al. 2002). Many experienced teachers left the education system (Kubursi 1999) and public schools became increasingly occupied by families displaced from their homes.

Between the 1980s and late 1990s Rafic Hariri, the Lebanese billionaire and then Prime Minister, sponsored through his foundation the college education of thousands of Lebanese students in Lebanon as well as abroad. The Hariri Foundation provided financial assistance especially to promising college students from modest backgrounds and this helped in creating a new middle class in Lebanon. While these educational fellowships were distributed across various sects and regions, anecdotal evidence suggests that Beirut benefited the most, especially given its number of elite schools and universities and its political significance. The foundation significantly reduced its educational outreach by late 1990s.

The education system in Lebanon is divided into several levels: pre-school (optional); primary (five years); intermediate (4 years); secondary (3 years); and post-secondary (where the number of study years depends on the major). All schools follow a

prescribed curriculum set by the Ministry of Education and revised in the late 1990s. The number of school years remained 12, with primary education increased to six years and intermediate level education reduced to three years. Students were again required to pass government-administered exams at the end of the intermediate level (grade 9) and the secondary level (grade 12). Although the first eight years of education are compulsory, this stipulation is not fully enforced.

Currently about half of all students attend public schools (ILO, 2004), with parents paying very modest fees in addition to the cost of books. Private schools vary substantially in their tuition and quality of education, and are allowed to add more courses to their curriculum with approval from the Ministry of Education. Private schools can be divided into four major groups: 1) expensive and elitist, with either French or American curricula; 2) religious or missionary-run schools (mostly Catholic, with the number of Islamic schools increasing substantially in the 1990s), catering primarily to middle class parents; 3) relatively inexpensive schools targeting less well-to-do families; and 4) government subsidized schools that target the poorest students who find no seats in public schools. The last two groups of schools have lower teaching quality and higher drop-out rates (Haidar 2002). Vocational education is available mostly in private schools at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Like schools, universities vary greatly in terms of student intake, quality of education provided, and subsequent graduate prospects. These institutions include elite and expensive universities, the Lebanese University (the only public university in which currently about half of the college students enroll), and lesser known universities. Neither the PHS nor other data permit

separate analyses of educational stratification by type of schooling received; we can only examine overall levels of education by region/sect.

Data and methods

We analyzed data from the 1996 Lebanese Population and Household Survey (PHS), which is nationally representative of Lebanese citizens. The survey, conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs with assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), used a stratified cluster sample of 64,472 households, or about one in ten Lebanese households. The survey collected data on individual and household-level demographic, social and economic characteristics. In common with other Lebanese surveys, the PHS did not ask about religious or sectarian affiliation because it was deemed potentially divisive. Beirut's sectarian/religious cosmopolitan composition was treated as one unit rather than divided into its traditional three electoral constituencies, for fear of recognizing its sensitive sectarian distribution. The PHS also collected information about district of origin (place of registration) and current district of residence.

In this paper, we used district of registration as a proxy for religious/ sectarian affiliation. Despite some shortcomings, this is appropriate for two main reasons. First, districts in Lebanon tend to be heavily segregated on a sectarian basis. Second, most households are officially registered in the district of origin of the household head. Registrations of marriages, births, and deaths, issuance of official documents, and voting still largely occur at places of origin. As noted by Daive (2002: 164-165), urban migrants “retained their traditional rural ties because the Lebanese political system prevented the

forging of new urban identities and elites. Residence in a city did not make you a citizen of the city: Lebanese still voted in the constituency of their parents, as defined by the 1932 census.”

We assigned a district to one of the main religious groups (Christians, Shi’a Muslims and Sunni Muslims) based on information from the codebook of the 1996 Lebanese national parliamentary election. Although there are no official data on the religious and sectarian distribution of the Lebanese population, the government provides electoral lists of the names of eligible voters in each of the national elections. Because voting in Lebanon is based on sectarian affiliation, these lists are available by sect for each of the election stations. Based on this information, it is possible to estimate the religious and sectarian distribution of each of the districts in Lebanon. Following the analysis of the 1996 voter lists by Panniza and El-Khoury (2001), we assigned a district to a particular group if about 60% or more of the eligible voters belonged to that group. On this basis, we were able to classify all the districts with the exception of one (Rachaya) which has almost equal numbers of Druze and Sunni Muslims and, to a slightly lesser extent, Christians., and its Exclusion of this district from the data analysis does not affect the results in any substantive way because of the district’s very small population; the number of eligible voters in Rachaya is about 1% of the all voters.

In order to examine disparities in education over time, we stratified the sample by religious/sectarian affiliation and governorate because of Lebanon’s wide regional differentials in socio-economic development. Lebanon’s six governorates are further subdivided into twenty-five districts (*qaada*), with the latter divided further into several municipalities, each sometimes enclosing a group of towns or villages (Map 1 shows the

administrative divisions of Lebanon). We combine the Nabatiye and the South governorates because these two contiguous areas, which formed one governorate until the 1980's, are similar in terms of level of development and sectarian distribution. The nine categories² that we used throughout this paper are:

- 1) Beirut, which has a mixed sectarian composition with Sunni Muslims constituting almost half of the population and a large percentage of Christians (especially Orthodox Christians) and to a lesser extent Shi'a Muslims.
- 2) Christians of Mount Lebanon: includes districts of El-Metn, Kesrouan and Jbeil. These districts are overwhelmingly Christians (over 95%) with very few Muslims.
- 3) Druze and Christians of Mount Lebanon: includes districts of Chouf, Aley and Baabda. These three districts combined are mostly Christians (around 38%) and Druze (37%). Shi'a Muslims and Sunni Muslims are minorities.
- 4) Christians of the North: includes districts of Batroun, Koura, Bcharre, and Zgharta. These districts are overwhelming Christians (over 95%) with very few Muslims.
- 5) Christians of the South and Bekaa: includes districts of Zahle and Jezzine. This category is around 70% Christians and has comparable numbers of Shi'a Muslims and Sunni Muslims.
- 6) Sunni Muslims of cities (other than Beirut): includes districts of Tripoli and Saida, the largest cities to the north and south of Beirut, respectively. These two districts combined are about 80% Sunni Muslims and have comparable numbers of Christians and Shi'a Muslims.

² The religious/sectarian distribution of each category is based on the authors' calculations using the list of eligible voters by sect in each of the districts for the 1996 national parliamentary elections (see Panizza and El Khoury, 2001).

- 7) Sunni Muslims of the peripheries: includes districts of Akkar, Minieh-Dinnieh, Western Bekaa and Hasbaya. This category is about 70% Sunni Muslims, 26% Christians, very few Shi'a Muslims and even fewer Druze.
- 8) Shi'a Muslims of the South: includes districts of Nabatiye, Marjeeyoun, Sour (or Tyre) and Bint Jbail. These districts are overwhelming Shi'a Muslims (over 90%), some Christians and very few Sunni Muslims.
- 9) Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa: includes districts of Hermel and Baalbek. These two districts combined have around 75% Shi'a Muslims and comparable numbers of Christians and Sunni Muslims.

We use descriptive statistics to examine regional/sectarian stratification in education for various birth cohorts, and the impact of the civil war on enrollment in intermediate, secondary and college education. Throughout this paper, we test whether the differences are statistically significant using level of significance of 0.05. The analyses were conducted separately by gender to show the differential impact of the civil war. The results are presented in graphical form for ease of interpretation.

Logistic regression analysis was employed to examine how the regional/sectarian disparities in education varied over time. We specifically compared disparities within two birth cohorts: the 1952-1956 birth cohort (who generally finished their education before the start of the civil war) and the most recent birth cohort in the survey. For the case of intermediate education, the educational experience of the 1952-1956 was compared to that of the 1977-1981 birth cohort; for secondary education, the 1952-1956 and 1972-1976 birth cohorts were contrasted; and college education; the experience of the 1952-1956 and 1967-1971 birth cohorts were compared.

Results

Changes over time: the impact of the civil war

Figure 1 shows the percentages of Lebanese residents who have had some intermediate, secondary and college education for each sex by five-year birth cohort. The gender gap in education closed for cohorts born after the 1950s for all levels of education. In fact, females born since the early 1960s had higher intermediate and secondary school attendance levels than males. College attendance levels for females and males converged for cohorts born in the late 1960s, shortly before the onset of the civil war. The closing of the gender gap was due to both the secular increase in women's education and the suspension (or even reversal) of the gains in men's education during the civil war.

Unlike the case for their female counterparts, the civil war seems to have slowed down and/or slightly reversed the increase in men's education. This is almost certainly due to the recruitment of young men into militia or entry into the labor force at an early age. This is most evident for the 1957-1961 and 1962-1966 birth cohorts who were in their early to late teens at the eve of the civil war. There are no statistical differences in enrollment rates for males in intermediate and secondary school for the 1957-1961 and 1962-1966 birth cohorts compared to those born during 1952-1956. The stagnation in college attendance for males is visible starting with the 1952 – 1956 birth cohorts whose members were about age 20 in 1975. Male college enrollment levels did not significantly vary for the 1947-1951 through 1962-1966 birth cohorts. There was a slight increase in college attendance for both the 1967-1971 male and female birth cohorts, who would have been of college age by the time hostilities ended in 1990-91.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Regional/sectarian disparities

Literacy increased substantially over time for different religious sects/ regions. Over 90% of males and females born after 1980 were literate. The increase in literacy was especially significant for Shi'a Muslims (data not shown). Despite recent increases, Sunni Muslim males and females in periphery areas still lag behind other sects/ regions. Differentials in literacy for cohorts born before the 1942 independence were large. Druze and Christians of Mount Lebanon, Beirutis, and to a slightly lesser extent Christians of other regions and Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli had the highest literacy levels, while Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa and Sunni Muslims of periphery/rural areas were especially lagging behind. Disparities in literacy declined significantly over time (data not shown).

However, male school attendance levels stagnated or slightly declined for a number of birth cohorts (from 1952-56 through 1962-66) across different sects/ regions. These birth cohorts had their schooling affected by the 1975-91 civil war years. Compared to the 1952-1956 birth cohort, male enrollment in intermediate school did not significantly change for Beirutis, Christians of the North, Christians of the South and Bekaa³, Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli⁴, and Sunni Muslims of the peripheries for the 1947-1951, 1957-1961 and 1962-1966 male birth cohorts (data not shown). The civil war also interrupted improvements in intermediate school enrollments for the 1957-1961

³ Intermediate school attendance of the 1962-1966 male birth cohort of Christians of the South and Bekaa was significantly higher than that of the 1952-1956.

⁴ In addition to the previous cohorts, the intermediate school enrolment rates of the 1967-1971 male birth cohort of Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli is not statistically significant from that of the 1952-1956 birth cohort.

and 1962-1966 male birth cohorts in the case of Christians of Mount Lebanon, Druze and Christians of Mount Lebanon, Shi'a Muslims of the South, and Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa (data not shown). Intermediate school enrollment increased significantly for the post 1966 birth cohorts across all groups with the exception of the 1967-1971 birth cohort of Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli and the 1972-1976 birth cohort of Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa. However, the difference in enrollment between the 1972-1976 and 1977-1981 birth cohorts is especially small in the case of Beirut, Christians of the North, and Sunni Muslims (other than Beirut).

Female intermediate school attendance generally increased steadily across all cohorts and sects/regions⁵. The increase was especially dramatic for Christians of Mount Lebanon, Shi'a Muslims, Druze and Christians of Mount Druze (data not shown). While female intermediate school enrollment continued to increase for more recent cohorts, the increase was particularly small in the case of Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli. Females enjoyed higher intermediate school attendance levels than males for the most recent cohort (1977-1981) among all different sects/ regions. The smallest gender gap is among the Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa and the largest among Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli and Christians of Mount Lebanon and the North (data not shown).

Figures 2-5 show the differential impact of civil war on different religious groups/ regions at the secondary education and college levels. We do not present results for intermediate schooling levels, because these mirror the patterns and trends for secondary education. Male secondary school attendance stagnated for a number of cohorts across different sects/ regions (Figure 2). Compared to the 1952-1956 birth cohort, the

⁵ Compared to the 1952-1956 birth cohort, the increase in intermediate school enrolment was not statistically significant for the 1956-1961 female birth cohort of Beirut and Christians of the north,

plateauing of enrollment is evident for Beirut, Christians of the South and Bekaa, Sunni Muslims⁶, and Shi'a Muslims for the 1947-1951, 1957-1961 and 1962-1966 birth cohorts. Similarly, secondary school enrollments for the 1957-1961 and 1962-1966 birth cohorts were statistically comparable to that of the 1952-1956 in the case of Christians (and Druze) of Mount Lebanon and Christians of the North (who also did not witness improvements for the 1967-1971 birth cohort). As in the case of intermediate education, the difference in secondary school enrollment between the two most recent cohorts (1967-1971 and 1972-1976) is very small for all groups. In addition, secondary school enrolment for the 1972-1976 male birth cohort of Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa declined compared to the previous cohort and is statistically comparable to that of the 1952-1956 birth cohort. As stated above, very similar patterns were noted for intermediate enrolment.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

As with intermediate school attendance, secondary school attendance for females generally continued to increase even for women who became of age during the civil war (Figure 3). However, the increase between the 1952-1956 and 1957-1961 birth cohorts was not statistically significant in the case of Beirut, Christians of the North and Christians of the South and Bekaa. While enrollment for the most recent cohorts is significantly higher than that of the 1952-1956 for all groups, the change in secondary school attendance between the two most recent cohorts (1967-1971 and 1972-1976) is

⁶ In addition, secondary school enrolment among male Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli for the 1952-1956 birth cohort is not statistically different from that of the 1942-1946 birth cohort.

particularly small in the case of the peripheries (Christians of the South and Bekaa, Shi'a Muslims of the South and Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa). Compared to males, females had higher secondary school attendance for the most recent cohort (1972-1977) among all groups. The gender gap was large for Christians (and Druze) of Mount Lebanon and Christians of the North. It was the smallest among Sunni Muslims of the peripheries and Shi'a Muslims of the South and Bekaa.

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

The civil war had a substantial effect on college attendance for males which either declined or stagnated for several cohorts. Consistent with previous results, the civil war affected college attendance for all groups and to a greater extent than its impact on intermediate and secondary school enrollments. College attendance for the 1952-1956 male birth cohort was generally statistically comparable to that of the 1942-1946⁷ (with the exception of two groups), 1947-1951, 1957-1961, and 1962-1966 birth cohorts across all sects/regions. College attendance is higher for the most recent male birth cohort (1967-1971) than that of the 1952-1956. However, the increase is not statistically significant among Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli, Sunni Muslims of the peripheries, Shi'a Muslims of the South and Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa.

FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

⁷ College attendance for the 1942-1946 birth cohort was significantly lower than that of the 1952-1956 birth cohort for Christians of Mount Lebanon and Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa. Among Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli, the levelling off in college attendance seems to have started earlier than other groups: the difference in college enrolment between the 1937-1941 and 1952-1956 was not statistically significant.

Female college attendance continued to significantly increase over time and across different sects/ regions. The increase in college attendance is not statistically significant between the 1945-1951 and 1952-1956 birth cohorts, as well as between the 1952-1956 and the 1957-1961 birth cohorts for Beirut and Christians of the North. Also, the increase in female college attendance is not statistically significant between the 1952-1956 birth cohort and the two cohorts (1957-1961 and 1962-1966) for Christians of the South and Bekaa, Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli, and Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa. Unlike the case of men, college attendance among women is significantly higher for the most recent cohort (1967-1971) than that of the 1952-1956 for all groups. For the 1967-1971 birth cohort, males were more likely to have attended college than females. This is especially the case among Shi'a Muslims of the South and Bekaa. This might have changed for cohorts born in the 1970s and 1980s.

FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

School attendance levels in the mid-1990s

Table 1 shows school attendance for children aged 7-17 years at the time of the survey by gender and region/ religious sect. We first make two general observations. First, persistent regional disparities in school attendance levels are apparent for both sexes and range from 80-95%. Second, school attendance levels are slightly higher for females than for males, except for Christians in the North where they are within a percentage point of each other. This implies that the pattern of high female education levels is now very solidly entrenched and that the trends noted above for the female birth

cohorts continue into the present. Moreover, equality has been reached between the sexes, with a slight female advantage.

Male school attendance exceeds 90% among Beirutis, Christians (and Druze) of Mount Lebanon and Christians of the North. They are followed by Christians of the South and Bekaa as well as Shi'a Muslims of the South and Bekaa. Male Sunni Muslims (except for Beirutis) have the lowest school attendance rate (around 80%). Surprisingly, male school attendance among Sunni Muslims of cities such as Saida and Tripoli is one percentage point lower than that among their counterparts in the peripheries.

Female school attendance levels show a very similar pattern, except for a relatively higher school attendance rate for Sunni Muslim females in Saida and Tripoli. Female school attendance is highest in Beirut and among Christians (over 90%) followed by Shi'a Muslims of the South, Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli and Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa (over 86%). Sunni Muslims of the peripheries lag further behind (around 82%). Across various groups, girls (ages 7-17 years) are at least as likely as boys to attend school. The gap is generally small except among Sunni Muslims in urban areas other than Beirut.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Regional/ sectarian disparities over time

Tables 2 and 3 show how the regional/sectarian disparities have changed over time, as seen by means of a comparison of disparities within the 1952-1956 birth cohort to that of the most recent cohort: 1977-1981 (for intermediate school), 1972-1976 (for

secondary school), and 1967-1971 (for college). The results show that differentials in school enrollment have increased over time especially between the core and peripheries. Columns 1, 3 and 5 of table 2 show the 1952-1956 male birth cohort odds of attending intermediate, secondary and college education for different regional/sectarian groups compared to Beirut. Columns 2, 4 and 6 show the odds of attending various educational levels for the 1977-1981, 1972-1976 and 1967-1971 birth cohorts, respectively. The results indicate that each set of comparisons between birth cohorts exhibit large regional/sectarian disparities and several additional observations can be made. First, excluding Beirut, Christians are, on average, more educated than Muslims. This difference is especially striking in the North where Christians are often as educated as Beirutis, while Sunni Muslims, even from cities such as Tripoli and Saida, are significantly disadvantaged. Second, marked regional differentials persist even within the major sect groupings. For example, although education is highest in Beirut and among Christians (and Druze) of Mount Lebanon and Christians of the North, it is considerably lower among Christians of the South and Bekaa at all educational levels.

Third, education of both Sunni and Shia Muslims lags behind in regions other than Beirut. Shi'a Muslims of the South and Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli are, generally, more educated than Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa (except in the case of intermediate education in which the odds are higher for Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa than those for Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli). Fourth, Sunni Muslims of the peripheries are consistently the most educationally disadvantaged group in Lebanon. Fifth, disparities between Christians (of various regions) and Beirut declined over time. For the 1977-1981 birth cohort, Christians (and Druze) of Mount Lebanon are more likely to have attended

intermediate school than Beirutis. However, the gap in school enrollment relative to Beirut is maintained – or even increased – for the other groups: Shi’a Muslims of the South, Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli, Shi’a Muslims of Bekaa and Sunni Muslims of the peripheries.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Enrolment in school for women who were born between 1952 and 1956 also differed substantially by region and sectarian affiliation (table 3). First, as for men, female from Beirut and to a lesser extent Mount Lebanon (Christians) had the highest educational attainment overall. In contrast, Shi’a Muslims from Bekaa and the South, as well as Sunni Muslims of the peripheries and other cities, had considerably lower odds of having intermediate, secondary and college education. Second, differentials in education are also statistically significant between Beirut and some regions/sects for the most recent cohort. Christians (and Druze) of Mount Lebanon and Christians of the North have even higher intermediate educational attendance rates to those of Beirut. The gap between Christians of the South and Bekaa and Beirut is larger for the most recent cohorts (except for intermediate education). Finally, relative to Beirut, disparities in attending intermediate and secondary education slightly declined over time for Shi’a Muslims of the South, Sunni Muslims of the peripheries and Shi’a Muslims of Bekaa. Nevertheless, they were maintained or even increased (in the case of college attendance) for Sunni Muslims of Saida and Tripoli.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings show that the gender gap at the national level in school enrollment has been completely bridged. In fact, female enrollment rates for cohorts born shortly before the civil war exceeded those for males at several levels, including secondary education. The education process for men was interrupted by the civil war, and the system produced educated men at a slower pace than before or to some extent after the civil war. The declines in male school enrollment rates during the civil war are evident across different regions/ sectarian groups. This finding may reflect, in large part, the reality that many young men from all regions and sectarian groups joined either the local militias or the Lebanese Army (whose recruits came mostly from peripheral areas). The direct effect of the civil war on the education of males is evident even at the intermediate level. This indicates that the recruitment of men especially into militias started at young ages. In contrast, the civil war produced no significant dents in education prospects for females, who continued to make steady progress throughout this extremely difficult period.

Data from 1999-2000 indicate that school drop-out remains common in Lebanon, especially among children aged 15-18 years (30.9% for boys and 22.8% for girls). The families' financial need is cited as a major reason for school drop-out. The proportion of youth aged 15-18 in the formal labor force is reportedly over 10% (CAS and UNICEF 2002 as cited in ILO 2004), the overwhelming majority being boys. The proportion is approximately twice as high in the North (15%) and the South (13%) as it is in Beirut (7%) (CAS and UNICEF 2002 as cited in ILO 2004). In addition, there may still be some gender discrimination in the quality of school, an important issue on which the PHS did

not collect data. For the academic year 1999-2000, it is reported that a slightly higher percentage of girls below university level (53%) than boys (47%) were enrolled in public rather than private schools (ILO 2004).

Although school enrollment rates have increased for more recent cohorts, the regional/ sectarian disparities that predated the civil war are still to a large extent replicated in the current analysis, especially for men. For education, the core periphery dichotomy analysis (Beirut and Mount Lebanon vs. non-Christian North, Bekaa, and South) continues to hold true, regardless of residents' sects. Beirut - with its registered residents as predominately Sunnis and Christians – continues to have the highest educational attainment levels. Mount Lebanon (mostly Christians and to a lesser extent Druze), where early foreign Christian missionaries started their educational work, closely follows. In contrast, the peripheral regions of the South, Bekaa and (in the case of Sunni Muslims only) the North, still lag considerably further behind.

Overall, the evidence suggests strongly that the educational situation of Christians remains the most favorable and has improved the most in general, though there persist significant gaps between core and peripheral regions (see figures 2-4). Significant progress is also evident in the case of the Shi'a from the South. This may be due to several factors. First, Shi'a migration from the South to Beirut has been ongoing since the 1950s, when the South was far poorer than it is today. Second, as former peasants, the Shi'a of the South formed much of the poverty belt around Beirut and were more willing to assume any job than were the city's longstanding residents; crucially, however, they had access to Beirut's educational institutions. The educational attainment levels of the Shi'a of the South slowly became comparable to those of urban Sunnis in other cities,

primarily Saida and Tripoli. This is in contrast to the case of the non-peasant Shi'a of Bekaa who migrated to Beirut since early 1960's. These Shi'a are known to have maintained more clan-shaped family structures whose members found it shameful to accept any miniature "dirty" job. The last two groups who fared the worst in terms of their educational attainment were those in the far peripheries: the Shia of the Bekaa and the Sunni of the North, who were the least likely to migrate to Beirut. Interestingly, these two impoverished groups formed the large reservoir of both the Lebanese Army and local militias.

We have argued that while educational differentials in Lebanon are rooted in the country's historical, social, political and economic conditions, the civil war and the period thereafter maintained the educational disparities and reproduced their conditions. Like its integrated economy in the Middle East, Lebanon's education system served as a capital for the country's investment in the region. This investment generated a significant financial outcome (remittances) that helped Lebanon's citizens face the repercussions of the civil war. It also created demand for the educational system to keep graduating students for the booming economies of the oil-rich Gulf countries. Thus, the development and, to a great extent, the survival of Lebanon's education system have become increasingly dependent on the regional conditions more than on the country's limited internal demands. International migration (chiefly to North America and Australia) has absorbed the excess number of higher education graduates who seek to either continue their studies or to emigrate for economic reasons, be it to improve their own situation or the welfare of family members left behind in Lebanon.

This is, to the best of our knowledge, the first paper that looks at sectarian and regional disparities in educational attainment in Lebanon over time. Nevertheless, several limitations in the empirical data may affect our analysis. First, the dataset utilized in this paper lacks direct questions about religious and sectarian affiliation. As a result, we have had to rely on aggregate population affiliations registered in each of the districts. We used district of registration because it is a better proxy for sectarian affiliation than current district of residence. While many of these districts are homogenous in terms of religious affiliation (especially Christian districts in Mount Lebanon and the North, and Shi'a districts in the South), others are less so. There might also have been compositional differences over time within some of our categories of analysis due to differential fertility and emigration rates. Nevertheless, we believe that the educational disparities in Lebanon would be shown to be even wider if it were possible to consider individual (rather than district) sectarian affiliation. Second, our analyses do not take into account the impact of regional and sectarian differences in family size on education. It is probably more feasible for the Lebanese Christians to register improvements in education due to their generally lower fertility rates. In contrast, Muslims (especially outside Beirut) have long had higher fertility rates (Chamie 1981). In fact, Sunni Muslims of the peripheries and Shi'a Muslims of Bekaa, groups that have the lowest educational attainment levels in Lebanon, also have the highest fertility rates (Kulczycki and Saxena 1999).

Third, we can only examine the trend in educational disparities until 1996. Our findings show that disparities were maintained – and intensified in the case of men – in the initial post-war period. However, based on what we know about Lebanon, it is very unlikely that there were any significant changes in these conditions since. Former Prime

Minister Rafic Hariri, who presided over Lebanon's reconstruction efforts through his ambitious Horizon 2000 Plan and until his assassination in 2005, attempted to revive Lebanon's role as the middleman between the economies of the Gulf oil-producing countries and the West. The re-construction program achieved only limited success, however. Although central Beirut and key elements of the national infrastructure were rebuilt, critics saw these moves as creating isolated business islands or measures amidst a largely stagnant economy (Daive, 2002).

Among the most significant findings of this study, we have detected the persistence of Lebanon's core-periphery education attainment gap even in the period right after the civil war. Logically, the gap between the relatively stable peripheries and Beirut, which endured the brunt of the war, should have narrowed by the end of the civil war. Part of the explanation for this puzzling observation lies in the fact that Beirut has always been the location of the country's major educational institutions. Another reason presumably rests in the centralized political, economic, and administrative function that Beirut has always played in the country's life. It is plausible that any eclipse of this function would only be accompanied by a worsening, rather than an improving, situation for the rest of the country. On the other hand, the concentration of re-development activities in the country's core region at the expense of its peripheries further prolongs Lebanon's socio-economic and sectarian inequalities, which are a key cause of the country's past and present instability.

We believe this study speaks even more broadly to an observation made about educational systems throughout much of the world. Ever since Lebanon achieved independence, successive governments have adopted educational policies that have

limited equality in education in order to improve quality. In his “Quality and Equality Third World Education,” Anthony Welch (2000) refutes the argument that quality of education can only be achieved at the expense of equality. In Lebanon it is not hard to detect the application and adaptation of such a policy, which has led to strongly stratified systems of education and labor force participation. For example, the small number of graduates from the historically elitist and expensive educational institutions in Lebanon continues to secure the best paid and highest status jobs, both within Lebanon and its wider region. In contrast, the majority of graduates are from the much larger and underfunded Lebanese State University, and invariably occupy the lower rungs of the employment ladder. A more equitable and sustainable development path would involve pursuing a less elitist educational policy, one that allowed for greater consideration of the interests of the underprivileged. This would also lead toward a reduction of regional and group inequalities within Lebanon.

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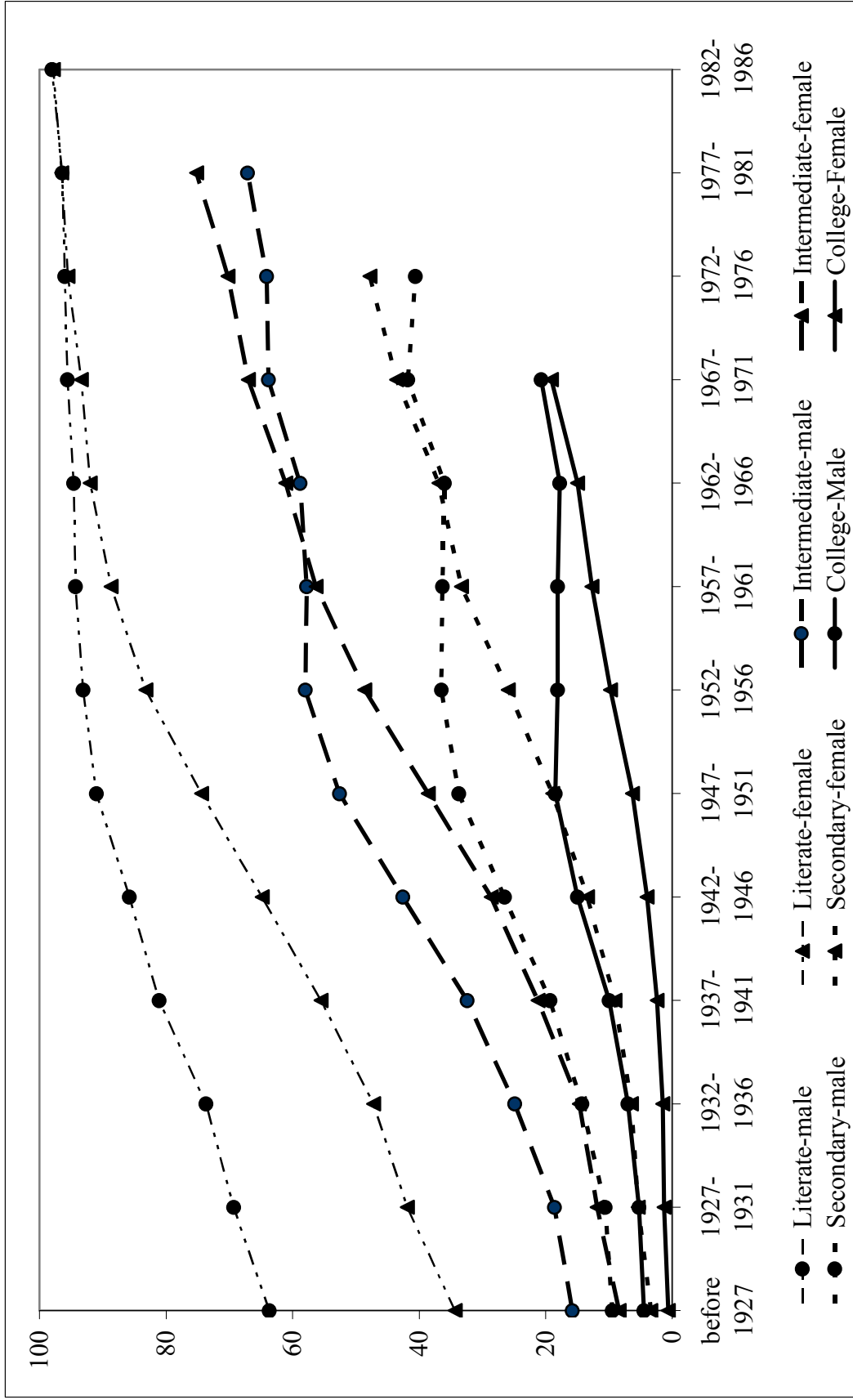
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Map 1: Lebanon's Governorates and Districts



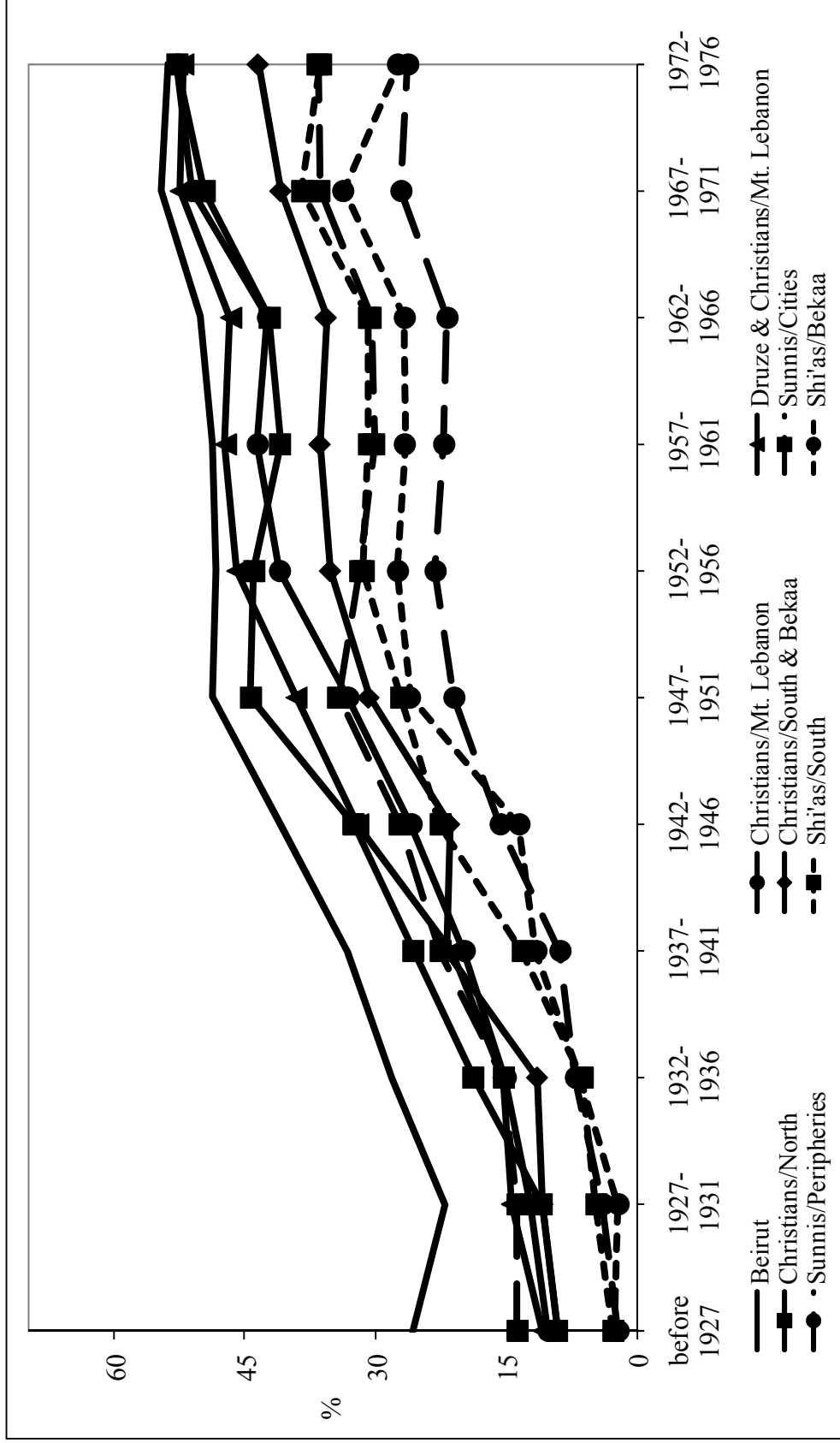
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Figure 1. Percentages of respondents who attended school by birth cohort, gender and level of education, Lebanon, c. 1927-1986



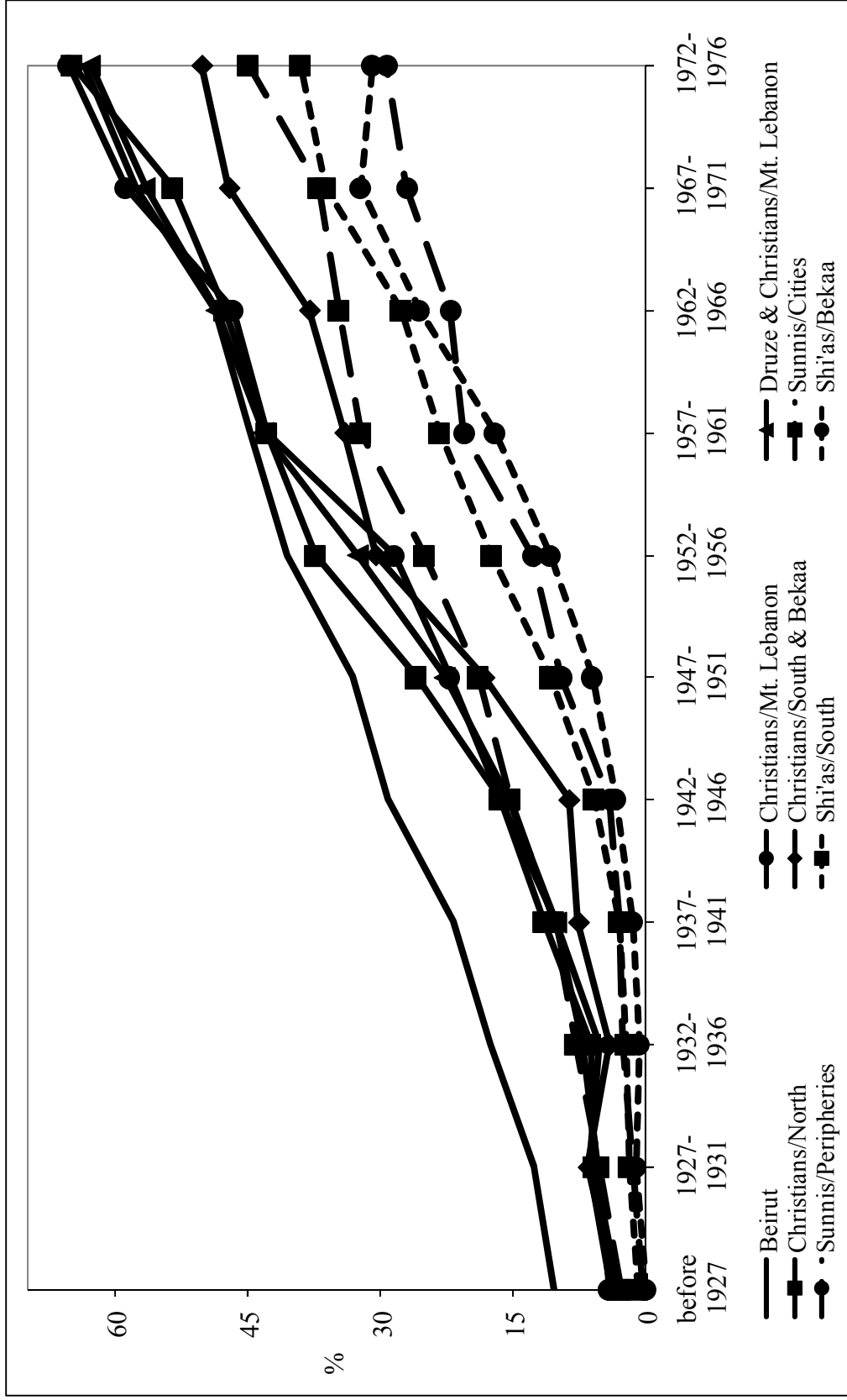
Source: Calculated from the 1996 Population and Housing Survey (PHS) for Lebanon

Figure 2. Percentages of males who enrolled in secondary school, by birth cohort and region/sect, Lebanon, c. 1927-1976



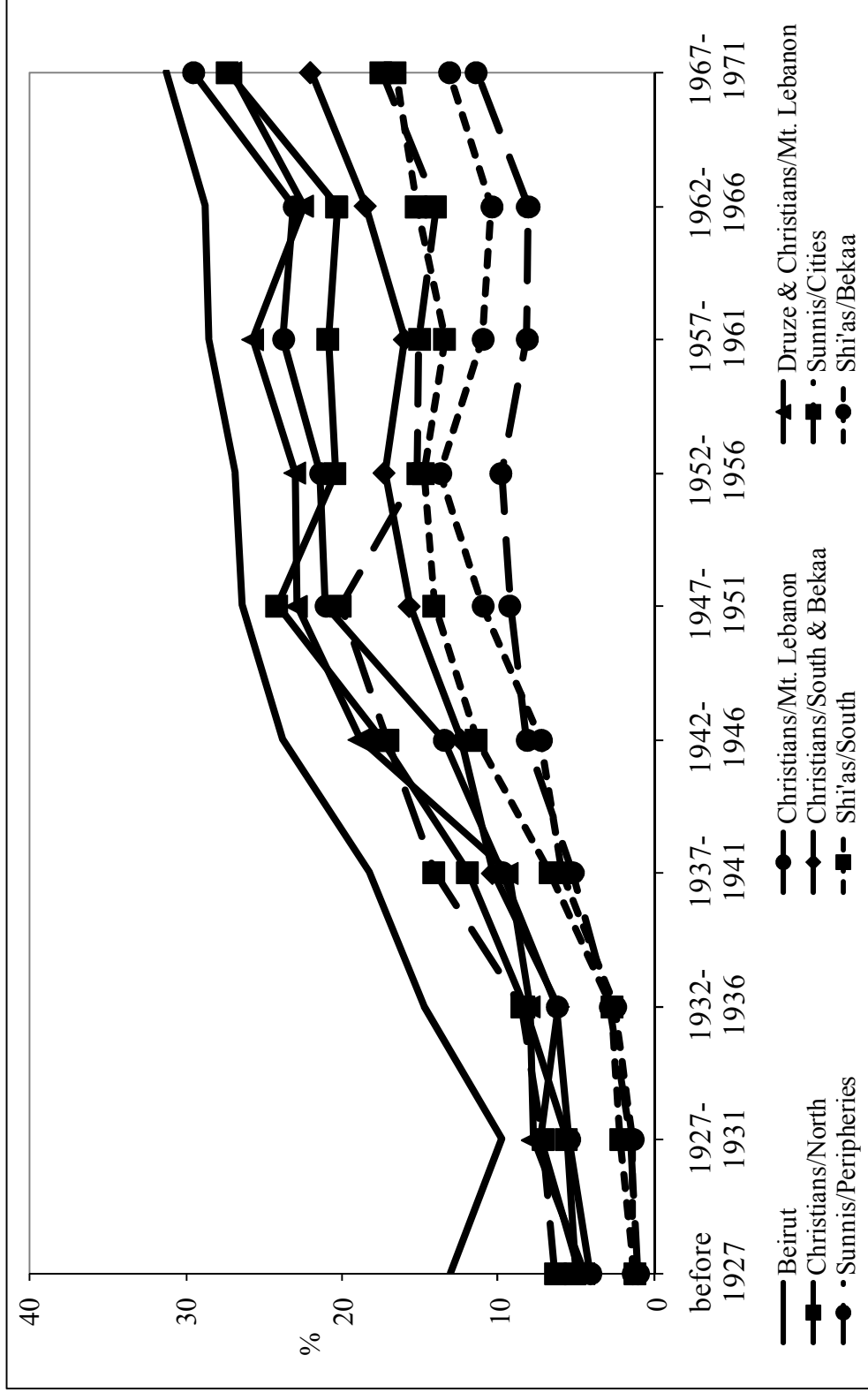
Source: As for Figure 1

Figure 3. Percentages of females who enrolled in secondary school, by birth cohort and region/sect, Lebanon, c. 1927-1976



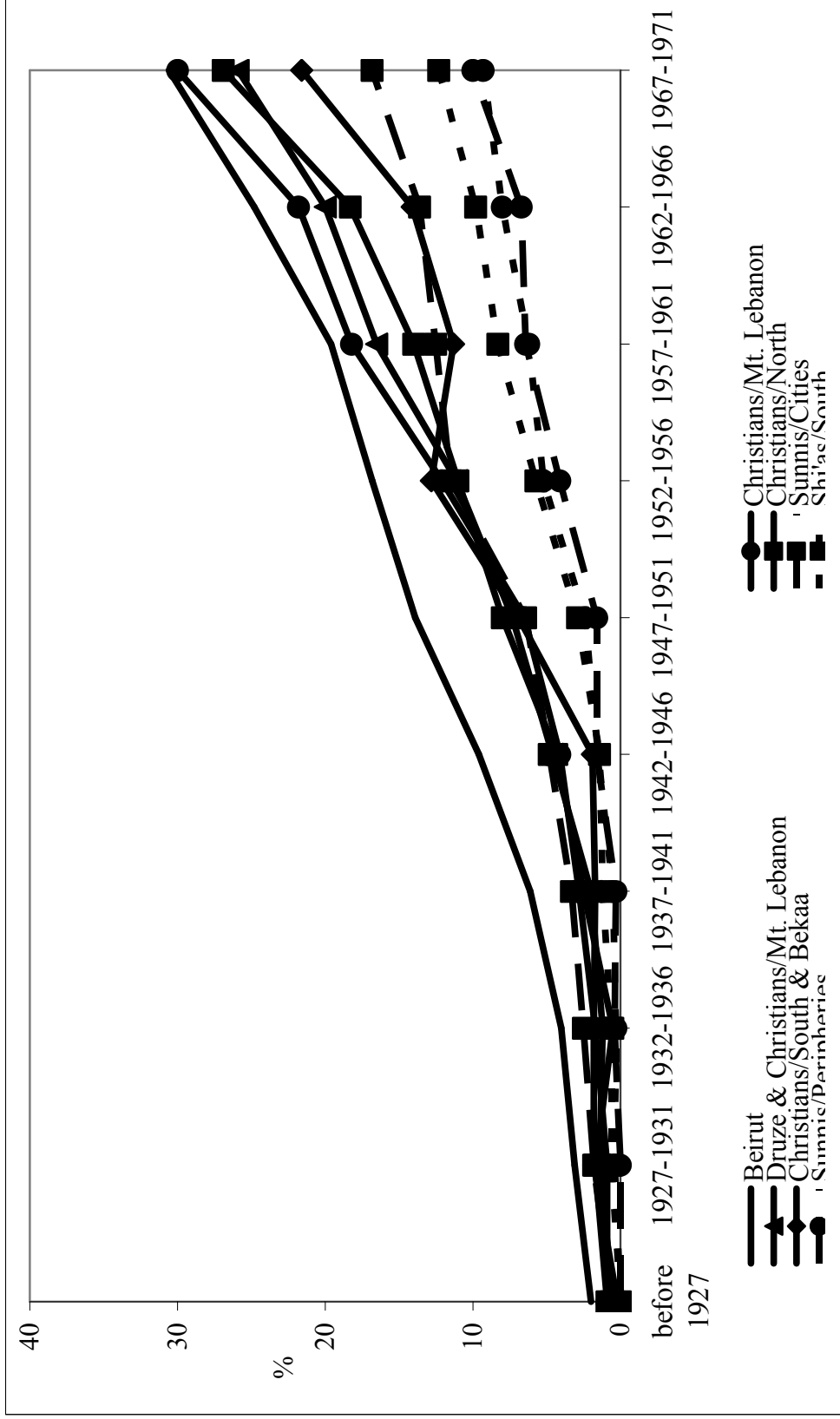
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Figure 4. Percentages of males who enrolled in college, by birth cohort and region/sect, Lebanon, c. 1927-1971



Source: As for Figure 1

Figure 5. Percentages of females who enrolled in college, by birth cohort and region/sect, Lebanon, c. 1927-1971



Source: As for Figure 1

Table 1. Percentages of children aged 7-17 years attending school by gender and region/sect, Lebanon, 1996

Region/sect	Male	Female
Beirut	90.5	92.8
Christians – Mount Lebanon	91.4	94.9
Christians & Druze – Mount Lebanon	92.5	94.4
Christians – North	94.4	93.6
Christians – Bekaa/South	88.7	90.9
Sunni Muslims – other cities	80.3	86.3
Sunni Muslims – Peripheries	81.5	81.6
Shi'a Muslims – South	86.3	89.8
Shi'a Muslims - Bekaa	86.0	86.0

Source: As for Figure 1

Table 2 Odds ratios (with 95-percent confidence intervals) of disparities in education for males by region/sect, Lebanon, 1996

Region/sect	Intermediate school		Secondary school		College	
	52-56	77-81	<i>Birth cohort:</i>		52-56	67-71
			52-56	72-76		
Beirut (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Christians – Mount Lebanon	0.87 (0.70 – 0.06)	1.05 (0.85 – 1.31)	0.74** (0.61 – 0.91)	0.96 (0.81 – 1.14)	0.74* (0.59 – 0.94)	0.92 (0.76 – 1.12)
Christians & Druze – Mount Lebanon	1.13 (0.91 – 1.38)	1.26* (1.03 – 1.54)	0.91 (0.75 – 1.11)	0.93 (0.80 – 1.09)	0.81 (0.65 – 1.02)	0.82* (0.68 – 0.99)
Christians – North	0.90 (0.71 – 1.15)	0.98 (0.77 – 1.25)	0.84 (0.67 – 1.07)	0.96 (0.78 – 1.17)	0.70 (0.53 – 0.93)	0.83 (0.66 – 1.04)
Christians – Bekaa/South	0.60*** (0.47 – 0.77)	0.75* (0.60 – 0.93)	0.58*** (0.46 – 0.74)	0.66*** (0.54 – 0.79)	0.57*** (0.43 – 0.76)	0.62*** (0.49 – 0.78)
Sunni Muslims – Other cities	0.49*** (0.40 – 0.61)	0.37*** (0.31 – 0.45)	0.50*** (0.41 – 0.62)	0.49*** (0.42 – 0.58)	0.49*** (0.38 – 0.63)	0.47*** (0.38 – 0.57)
Sunni Muslims – Peripheries	0.29*** (0.24 – 0.35)	0.28*** (0.24 – 0.33)	0.32*** (0.26 – 0.40)	0.31*** (0.26 – 0.36)	0.30*** (0.23 – 0.39)	0.28*** (0.23 – 0.35)
Shi’a Muslims – South	0.60*** (0.49 – 0.74)	0.57*** (0.48 – 0.69)	0.49*** (0.40 – 0.60)	0.49*** (0.42 – 0.57)	0.47*** (0.37 – 0.61)	0.44*** (0.40 – 0.53)
Shi’a Muslims – Bekaa	0.47*** (0.37 – 0.58)	0.47*** (.39 – 0.57)	0.41*** (0.32 – 0.52)	0.32*** (0.27 – 0.39)	0.43*** (0.31 – 0.60)	0.33*** (0.26 – 0.42)
N	6891	14138	6891	13732	6891	11593
Wald chi-square	288.5	598.8	197.2	490.7	115.0	273.6

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

Source: As for Figure 1.

Table 3 Odds ratios (with 95-percent confidence intervals) of disparities in education for females by region/sect, Lebanon, 1996

Region/sect	Intermediate school		Secondary school		College	
	<i>Birth cohort:</i>					
	52-56	77-81	52-56	72-76	52-56	67-71
Beirut (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Christians – Mount Lebanon	0.73** (0.59 – 0.89)	1.53** (1.16 – 2.03)	0.58*** (0.47 – 0.72)	1.10 (0.90 – 1.28)	0.68** (0.51 – 0.91)	0.97 (0.80 – 1.18)
Christians & Druze – Mount Lebanon	0.76** (0.63 – 0.91)	1.37* (1.06 – 1.76)	0.70*** (0.58 – 0.85)	0.97 (0.82 – 1.14)	0.62*** (0.48 – 0.80)	0.79* (0.66 – 0.95)
Christians – North	1.00 (0.78 – 1.27)	1.35 (0.99 – 1.85)	0.87 (0.69 – 1.10)	1.10 (0.85 – 1.31)	0.61** (0.44 – 0.86)	0.83 (0.67 – 1.04)
Christians – Bekaa/South	0.51*** (0.41 – 0.64)	0.72* (0.55 – 0.94)	0.64*** (0.51 – 0.81)	0.58*** (0.47 – 0.70)	0.73 (0.53 – 1.00)	0.62*** (0.50 – 0.78)
Sunni Muslims – Other cities	0.38*** (0.31 – 0.46)	0.39*** (0.31 – 0.48)	0.49*** (0.40 – 0.60)	0.47*** (0.39 – 0.55)	0.64** (0.48 – 0.85)	0.46*** (0.37 – 0.56)
Sunni Muslims – Peripheries	0.18*** (0.15 – 0.22)	0.24*** (0.19 – 0.29)	0.22*** (0.17 – 0.27)	0.24 *** (0.20 – 0.28)	0.21*** (0.15 – 0.31)	0.25*** (0.20 – 0.31)
Shi’a Muslims – South	0.30*** (0.25 – 0.36)	0.57*** (0.46 – 0.72)	0.31*** (0.25 – 0.38)	0.37*** (0.31 – 0.43)	0.30*** (0.22 – 0.41)	0.32*** (0.26 – 0.39)
Shi’a Muslims – Bekaa	0.18*** (0.14 – 0.23)	0.35*** (0.28 – 0.44)	0.18*** (0.13 – 0.25)	0.25*** (0.21 – 0.31)	0.27*** (0.16 – 0.47)	0.23*** (0.18 – 0.30)
N	7469	13280	7469	12812	7469	11987
Wald chi-square	555.3	666.5	308.1	776.2	111.1	403.9

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

Source: As for Figure 1.