Research Report

Active Citizenship as a Promoter of Gender Equality in Lebanon:
A Research Study

أبعاد
abaad

— # Contents

— Acknowledgement

Qualisus would like to thank all of whom participated in the development of this research study, including the research team and the data collectors. Qualisus Consulting would like to especially thank all the young women and men from all over Lebanon who took time to participate in this study.

A special thank you for ABAAD for its close support and coordination throughout this study.

Qualisus Consulting Research Team

Jessica El Moujabber: Team Leader

Mirdza Abele: Project Manager

Layal Ghamlouche: Programme Officer

Jana El Sakakini: Programme Associate

Shana Abi Akel: Field Coordinator

Mohammad Tarek Al Halabi: Quantitative Expert

ABAAD Resource Centre for Gender Equality Focal Points

Rana Rahal: Head of Programmes

Khaled Yamout: Senior Programme Support Lead

Sarah El Hassrouny: Projects Coordinator

Kinda Majari: Projects Coordinator

QUALISUS CONSULTING

Acronyms

ABAAD	ABAAD – Resource Centre for Gender Equality
AC	Active Citizenship
ACCI	Active Citizenship Composite Indicator
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
IR	Inception Report
KKIs	Key Informant Interviews
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health rights
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDEF	The United Nations Democracy Fund
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USJ	Saint Joseph University in Beirut
VAW	Violence against Women

Abstract

Lebanon has been struggling with multiple obstacles over the past few years bringing political and economic instability. This has exacerbated pre-existing social issues such as gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV). In light of these events, ABAAD has been appointed by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) to develop and implement a national project called Engaging Civil Society and Youth in Gender-Inclusive Citizenship and Leadership in Lebanon. This research study is the first phase of the national project, and it aims to provide more concrete knowledge around existing and missing linkages between gender and active citizenship (AC) in Lebanon by answering the following research question:

"Is active citizenship a promoter of gender equality in Lebanon, or could active citizenship be a promoter of gender equality in Lebanon?".

A national survey was conducted with 1,214 Lebanese men and women between the ages 15 and 35 years old distributed equally from the eight governorates of Lebanon to measure the level of AC among Lebanese youth according to a set of indicators adopted from the Active Citizenship Composite Indicator (ACCI). Based on the findings from the survey, 22 focus group discussions were held with men and women from the general public and stateless communities across all the governorates in Lebanon to explore their understandings and perceptions of AC and its relationship to gender equality. The qualitative data collection for the ABAAD project faced several challenges, including low interest in face-to-face participation, low participation rates, low participant turnout, insufficient interest from initial survey samples, lack of male interest, and resistance from stateless participants.

These challenges were mitigated through various strategies such as shifting to online FGDs, rescheduling low-turnout FGDs, augmenting sample size, and tailoring questions to specific contexts. Statistical and thematic analysis were conducted. The participants were predominantly women and aged between 25 and 35 years old. They were mostly Lebanese citizens, highly educated, and had a substantial level of unemployment. Our findings show that the majority of participants perceive themselves as highly active citizens. The definition of AC is not static according to the literature review and is highly contextual. In Lebanon it is characterized by responsibility, engagement, community and collaboration, diversity and inclusion, and promoting equality and social justice. Results indicate that gender and employment status influence the definition and understanding of AC, with females being more socially active, and being employed associated with higher levels of AC. Freedom of expression, desire for positive social change, and human rights being identified as motivators for both genders, while gender stereotypes and the patriarchal system were barriers for females, and a lack of official recognition as citizens was a barrier for stateless individuals.

Participants are not highly engaged with social media in general, and with social issues in specific due to online backlash and cyberbullying. Most participants (81.86%) reported not supporting any political party in Lebanon, and identified factors affecting political participation, such as lack of trust in political parties, financial/personal gains, and pressure from family. Women's participation in political life and support for female quotas were seen as important, but were hindered by social norms, patriarchal attitudes, and lack of access to resources and networks. Women and younger generations being more active in civil society life, and females are more engaged in social or human rights organisations than males, while both genders have a traditional view of gender roles and limited understanding of the primary role of civil society organizations. Stateless individuals are concerned about their inability to participate in civil society due to their lack of official identification. Men tend to participate more in lawful demonstrations than women due to social stigma and judgement faced by women.

Factors such as social norms, religion, and political corruption influence the behaviours and perceptions of active citizenship, with deeply ingrained gender roles and stereotypes affecting women's education and employment opportunities. The findings were relatively similar across the eight different governorates although there were some notable differences at some points (e.g., political participation, community life). More details on the similarities and differences are presented in the report.

Based on the findings from the nine themes, it can be concluded that AC has the potential to promote gender equality in Lebanon.

Introduction

Qualisus Consulting was commissioned by ABAAD Resource Centre for Gender Equality (ABAAD) to conduct a research study on the utilization of active citizenship (AC) as a tool to promote gender equality (GE) in Lebanon. This research study is part of a bigger nationwide project funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) to engage civil society and youth in gender-inclusive citizenship and leadership in Lebanon.

This report represents the research study as the final product of the commissioned assignment, highlighting the key findings pertaining to AC as a tool to promote GE in Lebanon. It is divided into 7 main sections including:

- **Project Overview and Scope of Work** provides an overview of the project developed by ABAAD and funded by UNDEF, its purpose, and main components. It also presents the scope of work of the research study, its main purpose with respect to the whole project, and the three phases of research that led to its completion.

- **Contextual Background and Literature Review** unpacks the contextual background of the project and the research study through an overview of the Lebanese socioeconomic crisis, political unrest, and the civil and social implication on GE and AC. This section then presents the findings of the literature review of the main themes under this research study, including the meaning of AC, its political and social components and its relation to GE as examined by previous studies.

- **Study Relevance** highlights the gap identified by the literature review and how the present study addresses this gap. It also unpacks the relevance of the study to the Lebanese context along with its significance in promoting GE. The research question is also presented in this section of the report.

- **Methodology** unpacks the research design, methodology, sampling strategy, and data collection tools. It also presents the analysis plan, data management procedures, and the challenges faced during data collection and how they were mitigated. This section ends with highlighting the ethical considerations underpinning the research.

- **Results and Discussion** presents the key findings of the research study supported by appropriate quantitative and qualitative analysis. It also compares the results of the study with previous studies in the field.

- **Conclusion and Implications** discuss the implications of the findings for theory, practice, policy, and overall social change in Lebanon. It also discusses how it can inform ABAAD and UNDEF's project.

- **References and Annexes** present the references and attached annexes.

Project Overview & Scope of Work

Project Overview

Through the Engaging Civil Society and Youth in Gender-Inclusive Citizenship and Leadership in Lebanon project, ABAAD aims to strengthen youth's and women's sense of citizenship by empowering them to become better equipped to promote and advocate for gender inclusivity, protection of victims of gender-based violence, and more active inclusion in national legislative decision-making processes. Therefore, the project's objective is to combat Gender-based Violence (GBV) through gender-inclusive citizenship and leadership with the support of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Youths in Lebanon. The project will be implemented at a nationwide level which includes Beirut, Mount Lebanon, North, Akkar, Nabatiyeh, South, Baalbek-Hermel and Bekaa. It will work on three different tracks as explained below:

Track One aims at providing more concrete knowledge around existing and missing linkages between gender and active citizenship in Lebanon.

Track Two aims to engage with the (CSOs) and youths on advocating for gender equality through active

citizenship, then capacitate and train them on topics related to gender-inclusive citizenship.

Track Three will allow trained and capacitated youths and CSOs to put in practice acquired skills by initiating and launching community-based initiatives that focus on gender-inclusive citizenship and combatting GBV, including the rectification of penal codes that discriminate and hinder women's access to public and private spheres and legal protection from perpetrators and abusers (articles 503 to 521).

The project will target various groups, including members of women-led and youth-led CSOs, youth from different communities participating in the sensitization sessions and individuals reached by ABAAD's social media followers and web traffic. Additionally, the project will include individuals from all different sects in Lebanon, prioritizing involvement of marginalized populations such as people with special needs and LGBTQ+ in their intervention.

Scope of Work

This research study falls under Track One of the project, where it provides empirical knowledge on the level of AC in Lebanon and how it can promote GE both from quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The study will provide the basis for the capacitation component under track two and support in guiding the advocacy component under track three. Qualisus implemented three phases to complete the research study:

Phase I: Inception	Qualisus closely coordinated with ABAAD on the methodology and processes followed to conduct this study, including the use of mixed methods, the target population of interest, the development of the data collection tools, and the forecasted timeline of the study. This was accompanied with the definition of key terms that guided the research (i.e., active citizenship and gender equality), an extensive literature review, and preliminary key informant interviews (KIIs) with relevant experts and activists in the field of politics and gender. The input from ABAAD, the literature review and the KIIs were used to refine, contextualize and prioritise the indicators of the Active Citizenship Composite Indicators (ACCI), which is a tool used to measure the level AC among populations. The inception report detailing all the entire research plan was submitted to ABAAD the 20th of September, 2022, along with the final prioritization matrix of the ACCI.
Phase II: Data Collection	Data collection was sequential, starting with the quantitative part which informed the development and data collection of the qualitative part. Data collectors were recruited and trained on the quantitative survey and qualitative interview guide. Preliminary analysis was being conducted in parallel to capture key emerging trends and findings. These were discussed during the internal workshop Qualisus held to ensure data triangulation and comprehensive interpretation of the findings.
Phase III: Analysis and Reporting	Following the internal validation workshop, in-depth analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data was done using the appropriate analytical tools. In addition, the final research report was drafted.

Contextual Background and Literature Review

Lebanese Context

Lebanon has been experiencing a series of overlapping crises since 2019, including political instability, the COVID-19 pandemic, a financial meltdown, and the Beirut port blast. These events have resulted in an acute and prolonged economic depression, ranked in the top three most severe crisis episodes globally since the mid-nineteenth century (The World Bank, 2021), increased poverty rates with 82% of households suffering from multidimensional poverty, limited access to basic amenities and healthcare, and the need for humanitarian assistance for millions of individuals, with marginalized groups being among the most impacted.

As the aforementioned crises intensify in Lebanon, inter and intra-community tensions and protection risks especially for women, girls, and marginalized groups are increasing, thereby corroborating increased prevalence of GBV (UNFPA, 2020). According to a survey conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the number of reported cases of gender-based violence in Lebanon increased by 60% during the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNFPA, 2020). In Lebanon, increased rates of unemployment and loss of jobs, jointly with the home confinement, have increased household stress. Access to GBV services was further hindered during the pandemic, which has left women and girls at heightened risk of abuse (when confined with their perpetrators).

The combined crises have also impacted the young people in particular. The crisis is forcing youth to drop out of school and engage in ill-paid work to support their families. Others are contemplating leaving Lebanon to seek a better life elsewhere. According to UNICEF Youth-Focused Rapid Assessment, one-third of young people are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (UNICEF, 2022). Also, the report showed that enrolment in education dropped from 60 per cent in 2020-2021 to 43 per cent in the current academic year. Not to mention that young individuals face conservative and concerted opposition with respect to their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

Approach of the Literature Review

The literature review focused on three main concepts that compose the research question, which included the definition of AC, measuring AC, and the relationship between AC and GE. It consisted of searching for academic articles, commentaries, reports, research studies, book chapters, mainly through Google Scholar. After aggregating the findings of the literature review and discussing them with ABAAD, several concepts emerged which needed to be linked to the Lebanese context. These concepts encompass **the meaning of AC in Lebanon with respect to the political, social, and economic settings, the relationship between AC and GE, the promoters and barriers of AC, and the relationship between politics, religion, and civil society and AC in Lebanon.** As such, these concepts had to be considered when measuring AC to prioritise the most relevant and applicable indicators of AC in Lebanon. To achieve this, preliminary KIIs were conducted with experts and activists in the field of gender issues and political science in Lebanon. In total, 16 key informants were contacted for participation using a mixture of ABAAD recommendations and a snowballing approach, out of which 10 responded and were interviewed. The key informants consisted of university professors of political science and gender issues, social activists, and founders of NGOs focused on women and/or youth.

Findings of the Literature Review

a. Definition of AC

Based on the findings from the literature review and KIIs, it has been established that the meaning of AC is context-specific and dependent on several factors, such as law, democracy, political systems, and society (Hoskins, 2014). These concepts will be touched upon later in the upcoming sections. Nevertheless, the

definition of AC that is most used and referenced in the literature is by Hoskins et al. (2006), where it's defined as the "participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy". The rationale for choosing this definition, as the reference for this research study, is that it captures the different components of AC that are used to measure it and upon which the data collection tools were developed. The definition goes beyond the basic meaning of citizenship, which is focused on the relationship between the individual and the state and the rights and responsibilities that this relationship entails, to the participation and involvement of the individual with not only the state, but also the community and the civil society (Hoskins, 2014).

b. Measuring AC

Previous measurements of AC have been limited to Europe. A set of indicators were developed by the European Commission Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL) and the Council of Europe that capture AC from different dimensions and forms of participation, known as the Active Citizenship Composite Indicator (ACCI). It is composed of 63 different indicators which describe the participation in 4 main dimensions: (Hoskins et al., 2006).

Table 1: ACCI indicators

Political Life	Reflects forms of engagement (i.e., membership, participation, donating money, and volunteering), with the government such as voting, engagement with a political party, and women representation in the parliament.
Civil Society	Reflects forms of engagement (i.e., membership, participation, donating money, and volunteering), with non-governmental organizations that make up the civil society, such as human rights organizations, environmental organizations, and trade unions, in addition to protest activities.
Community Life	Reflects forms of participation (i.e., membership, participation, donating money, and volunteering), with community organizations such as religious, business, sport, cultural, social, and teacher organizations.
Values	Reflects forms of participation through democracy, human rights, and intercultural understanding.

The results of the study highlighted some factors that were considered as promoters of AC. The level of AC in Europe is higher among countries that have a higher gross domestic product (GDP) and a more equal distribution of income among the population (Hingels et al., 2009). Moreover, religion was an important determinant of AC, especially in countries with more diversity and heterogeneity. On the other hand, the barriers of AC in political life were reported by Hoskins et al., (2008) to be financial and time constraints, which restrict people from donating money or partaking in activities with political parties. In the context where the study was conducted, there were no observed significant differences in the level of AC between genders (Hingels et al., 2009).

The limitation of the ACCI was also considered to be the lack of data which makes it difficult to measure some sub-dimensions such as human rights according to Hoskins et al., (2006). The limitations were further highlighted by another study in Pakistan, where they used the ACCI to measure AC among university students and were faced by limited availability of data concerning participation and non-organized participation (Fatima & Fatima, 2021).

c. AC and ACCI in Lebanon

To be able to better contextualize the ACCI to the Lebanese context, and as part of the methodology to develop the data collection tools, Qualisus prioritised the ACCI dimensions based on the input from ABAAD, the literature review in addition to the findings of the KIIs. A few papers such as Hoskins et al (2006) and Hoskins & Mascherini (2008), proposed a weighing of indicators by experts, which was exercised through the KIIs. The key informants were asked to prioritise the dimensions and sub-indicators according to relevance to AC in the Lebanese context. According to them political life was the most important dimension for AC in Lebanon, followed by values, community, and civil society. The sub-indicators prioritised by the key informants can be found in the Annex section (refer to Annex 1). The results of the prioritization exercise by KIIs were similar to the initial exercise solely based on the literature review, with some discrepancies in a few of the indicators.

d. Gender Equality

When searching for the definition of gender equality, Qualisus identified several different versions. After consulting with ABAAD, the consultants formed a hybrid definition of GE that combines the definition set by ABAAD and that of UN Women: Gender equality is the ability of all people, regardless of their gender identities to have equal rights, responsibilities, resources, opportunities, and freedom of expression. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all individuals are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of people. Although the results from the ACCI in Europe did not find any significant association between the level of AC and gender, the literature review clearly states that there is a relationship between the two variables.

A deep search of the literature showed that the relationship between AC and gender equality (GE) is complex as there are no studies that directly measure the impact of the level of AC on GE. It should be noted that when using the term "gender" in the search process, the results were consistently binary.

◯ **Focus Box**

It is important to note that all gender identities, binary and nonbinary, are recognised. For the purpose and scope of this study, a binary definition is used, as nonbinary identities are outside of the scope of this project.

Study Relevance

Identification of Gap

The literature review identified major gaps around the topics of AC and GE. To begin with, there are no studies that clearly explore or quantify the relationship between AC and GE. The studies identified by Qualisus were mainly addressing fragments of the status quo of GE and AC without using a scientific research method to assess them or their relationship. Moreover, there is a lack of empirical research on women and AC in the MENA region.

When it comes to Lebanon, the research on AC is scarce and the level of AC among the population has not been measured before. Findings from the KII also suggest that the concept of AC is lost in Lebanon, and there is no definition that can describe it, given the sensitivity of the demographic, social, and political equilibrium. Due to the abstract nature of the concept of AC it is challenging to create a definition encompassing Lebanon and to measure it. To our knowledge this is the first study seeking to define active citizenship and further aiming to measure active citizenship in Lebanon. Moreover, this is the first study to observe the current relation or potential relation between AC and GE in the MENA Region.

Study Significance

This study will serve as a baseline study for ABAAD on which further projects will be based to observe whether AC is or could be a promoter or catalyst of GE in Lebanon. The results will provide a clearer definition of AC in Lebanon, quantify the level of activism and participation among the Lebanese population in political life, civil society, and community organizations, and assess the relationship between AC and GE in Lebanon and how it can be enhanced. This study will accomplish this primarily through answering the research question mentioned below.

Research Question

Given the findings from the literature review, the KIIs, the identified gaps, the multiple discussions with ABAAD and based on the provided ToR and project description Qualisus proposed the following research question:

"Is active citizenship a promoter of gender equality in Lebanon, or could active citizenship be a promoter of gender equality in Lebanon?".

Methodology

Study Design

A mixed-methods, sequential design was used in this study to triangulate data from multiple sources and provide a more comprehensive understanding of AC and its role in promoting GE in Lebanon, starting with the quantitative data collection, and followed by the qualitative. During the inception phase, the quantitative data collection was planned to take place through a survey administered face-to-face with a sample of youth participants (15-35 years old) across Lebanon's governorates (Beirut, Bekaa, Baalbek, Mount Lebanon, Akkar, Nabatiyeh, North, and South) following a random sampling approach, in addition to an online self-administered survey and poll. However, quantitative data collection was then completely shifted to being remote for all three types of surveys. This was due to the lack of access to field areas in the governorates, where it was difficult to issue an access letter from the Lebanese Intelligence Forces and clearance from the Lebanese Army for Qualisus' data collectors to access certain governorates. This combined with the limited time frame to proceed with data collection, pushed the decision to switch the quantitative data to be completely remote.

Therefore, quantitative data was conducted between **mid-December and mid-January remotely.** More on the data collection tools are referenced in Annex 2.

After the quantitative data collection was done and the preliminary findings were extracted, the qualitative data collection tools were designed based on the survey results. Initially, qualitative data was planned to be collected through face-to-face and online focus group discussions (FGDs) at the inception phase. However, due to difficulty in securing transportation for all the participants in a manner that is suitable for everyone's different schedules, the FGDs were shifted to online modality. FGDs were conducted primarily with participants who filled the surveys, in addition to others who were identified through snowball and consented to take part in the discussions at a later stage. The qualitative data collection took place between and **mid-March and mid-April**. The following table lays out the original methodology and the changes that were applied during the actual data collection phase along with the timeframe of each phase.

Table 2: Planned method vs Implemented method

	Political				Political			
Method	Survey	Online Survey	Online Poll	FGD	Survey	Online Survey	Online Poll	FGD
Sample Size	1000	NA	NA	22	1121	25	68	22
Modality	Face-to-face	Self-filled Online	Self-filled Online	Hybrid	Remote	Self-filled Online	Self-filled Online	Online

Sampling and Recruitment

Remote surveys

Random Sampling Approach for Remote Surveys: Utilized Geographic Information System (GIS) software to generate random points across each governorate. Approximately 125 surveys collected per governorate.

Recruitment of Participants: Data collectors visited GIS-generated random points to recruit survey participants.

Ensuring Randomness in Participant Selection:

- If more than one person resided at a certain point, one eligible person was randomly selected via an app.

- If selected individual was unavailable, contact information was obtained for later follow-up.

Online polls and surveys

Online Polls and Surveys Distribution: Shared by Qualisus and ABAAD through social media accounts, WhatsApp networks with stakeholders, mass mailing lists, and personal informal networks of alumni and groups.

Focus Group Discussions

Conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): FGDs were organized with interested survey participants, new participants, and stateless individuals who hadn't completed the survey. Stateless participants were selected through convenience sampling, with data collectors connecting with local community leaders and municipality workers. Interested individuals from these sourced lists were invited to the FGDs.

Table 3: Summary of FGDs conducted across governorates with stateless participants and general public participants.

Type	Gender	Areas Covered	Number of FGDs
General Public	Female	Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Nabatiyeh, South, North, Akkar, Baalbek, Bekaa	8
General Public	Male	Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Nabatiyeh, South, North, Akkar, Baalbek, Bekaa	8
Stateless	Mixed	Bekaa, Akkar, Tripoli	6
Total			**22**

Data Management

To ensure the accuracy and validity of the collected data, several quality and anonymity assurance measures were implemented throughout the evaluation process:

- Data collectors received two days of training - one for qualitative and one for quantitative methods - led by the Qualisus Research Team Leader. The training aimed to familiarize the team with the project's objectives, develop their understanding of the data collection tools via role-plays, provide a refresher on the key ethical considerations to be upheld and remind them of how to handle potential difficult situations (such as dominant participants or tense discussions resulting from sensitive FGD topics).

- Daily debriefs with the data collection team were also conducted to discuss emerging findings and determine the focus for subsequent phases.

- Qualisus conducted two-level daily quality checks on uploaded data to ensure transcription accuracy and validate collected data, with feedback provided to improve interview quality.

- Each FGD was done by two data collectors who facilitated, recorded notes, and transcribed the discussions, while a Qualisus programme team member oversaw their work.

- To guarantee the anonymization of personally identifiable information and comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), specific actions were taken:

> All project deliverables were uploaded into the SharePoint folder.

> Personal contact databases were encrypted with passwords.

> Data collection tools did not require mandatory personal identification fields such as name and surname.

> The quantitative data collection method assigned an ID to each respondent for use as a reference during data analysis, eliminating personal identification.

> All quotes included in the final report are anonymized and participants were informed of the possibility of including anonymized quotes in the final report.

Study Limitations

Several challenges were faced by the data collectors and the research team mainly during the sampling and recruitment of participants for the FGDs and during the facilitation of FGDs. Challenges during the research may impact the reliability and generalisability of findings. Unforeseeable factors like poor internet connection and last-minute commitments could have resulted in data loss. Mitigations were put in place to address the risks associated with the challenges faced during the research. This section will comprehensively present the challenges encountered during the study, along with their implications for the research. The challenges and mitigations are presented in the following table:

Table 4: Challenges and Mitigations.

Challenges	Description	Mitigations
FGD Modality	Low interest rate in face-to face participation modality (e.g., 12.7% and 23.3% interest rate in Mount Lebanon and Beirut respectively) Main reasons cited by declining participants were difficulty in meeting at a common pickup location, safety concerns, time constraints, and compensation for fuel.	After raising the challenges to ABAAD via email and phone call on March 22, 2023, the modality was shifted fully to online FGDs, which ensured higher participation rates throughout the FGDs in all governorates, while accounting for challenges related to remote data collection, such as internet connectivity, etc..
Low Participation Rate	Participants were dropping out of the FGDs due to lack of interest, time constraints, and getting tired of the discussion that lasted between 1.5 to 2 hours.	Important questions defining significant concepts such as gender equality and the difference between perception and behaviour were relocated to the beginning of the interview guide where participants are more energetic and active. This has ensured that critical information was captured and has reduced the risk of incomplete data where participants are more energetic and active.
Low participant turnout	Low participation turnout was identified due to last-minute commitments by the participants, changes in daylight saving time, poor internet connection, Easter Holidays, Ramadan or loss of interest. In some instances, such as in Baalbek and the South, a security incident between Lebanon and Israel that occurred on the same day of the scheduled interview has led to no participants showing up to the FGD.	FGDs with a turnout rate of less than 5 participants at the beginning of the FGD were rescheduled to ensure that all the discussions had sufficient participation and representation from the target population. In total, 4 FGDs had to be repeated and 11 rescheduled.
Insufficient Interest from initial Survey Samples	In some governorates, interest in participation among the sample identified from the surveys was considerably low, where the scheduling of FGDs was not possible due to only 2-3 participants confirming their attendance in each governorate. This was especially common in Beirut, South, and Baalbek.	To augment the sample size, pre-existing database from Qualisus was used in addition to convenience and snowball sampling to solicit additional participants who were interested and willing to take part in FGDs.
Lack of Male Interest	Persistently, FGDs with male participants in Beirut Bekaa, and South were not reaching the target sample size of 5 confirmed participants, despite rigorous scheduling protocols and the augmentation of the sample size, which has stretched out the duration of the qualitative data collection.	To prevent further delay in the qualitative data collection, FGDs in these areas were conducted with the number of participants available, regardless of reaching the target sample size of 5.
Resistance and Aggressiveness of Stateless Participants	Data collectors faced resistance to interact and aggressiveness from stateless participants in FGDs, especially in Tripoli and Akkar. This was due to the participants' pre-existing grudge against organizations that do not address the problems faced by stateless people in Lebanon due to their lack of registration as citizens and not possessing official documentations that they can use to access public services, such as health, education, and employment.	Questions were tailored to the context of stateless participants in different areas and restructured to make them more relevant to the issues they face daily.

🔍 Focus Box: Stateless participants

It is important to highlight the unique dynamics that emerged in FGDs conducted with stateless individuals, where participants were mixed between males and females. During these FGDs, female participants were frequently interrupted by their brothers or fathers when asked a question, with the male family members often answering on their behalf. Additionally, several female participants were only permitted to attend the FGDs with a male figure from their family present. The need for male family members to be present during the FGDs may have affected the willingness of female participants to speak openly and honestly. Therefore, the data collected from FGDs with stateless individuals should be analyzed with caution, taking into account the potential impact of gender dynamics on the participants' responses.

Additionally, the FGDs with stateless participants were perceived as a means for men and women to express their concerns and discuss the challenges they face on a daily basis, given that they reported feelings of exclusion from the public discussions and social programmes due to the lack of official recognition by the state as Lebanese citizens.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Purpose: Investigate if AC can serve as a promoter or catalyst of GE

Procedure: Conducted separate analysis for each quantitative tool, namely remote survey, online survey, and online polls using SPSS software

Post-analysis: Compared results for trends or discrepancies

Types of Analysis:

- **Univariate Analysis:**
  Procedure: Employed descriptive statistics for data summarization
  For continuous variables: Used mean, standard deviation, mode, median, and distribution
  For categorical variables: Used frequencies and percentages
- **Bivariate analysis:**
  Purpose: Assess relationships between two variables
  Targets: Identified associations between relevant demographics and AC, between relevant demographics and GE, and between AC and GE
- **Multivariate analysis:**
  Purpose: Examine associations between AC and GE while controlling for relevant or statistically significant demographics
  Findings: Reported any observed confounders or effect modifiers

Qualitative Data Analysis

Purpose: Explore how AC can promote GE

Procedure: Transcribed and coded FDG recordings with MAXQDA

Approach: Employed both inductive (focused on key areas of interest identified in literature review and preliminary KIIs) and deductive (explored emerging themes from FDG data) methods

Data Triangulation

Method: Conducted an internal workshop to present findings from both quantitative and qualitative tools; observed any trends or discrepancies

Team Involvement: Discussed results among team members to identify any inconsistencies or discrepancies and triangulate results.

Collaboration with ABAAD: Set up an external workshop after quantitative data collection to present preliminary findings and determine future data collection approaches; also discussed preliminary qualitative findings before in-depth analysis

Outcome: A more robust, nuanced understanding of the research topic, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data for a more complete picture of the research findings.

Ethical Considerations

This study involved the collection of data through surveys and focus group discussions with women and men from 8 governorates in Lebanon. The following ethical considerations were considered during the planning and implementation of the study:

Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits before participating. Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the study's purpose and procedures and were given the opportunity to ask questions before providing their written consent to participate. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All personal information collected from participants was kept strictly confidential and stored securely. The research team ensured that participant information was not shared with anyone outside the research team and that all data collected was anonymized to protect participants' identities.

Data Security

The research team took appropriate measures to ensure that the data collected was secure and protected. This included storing all data on password-protected computers and servers and limiting access to the data to authorized members of the research team.

Potential Risks and Benefits

The study did not involve any physical or emotional risks to participants. The benefits of participating in the study included the opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences on the research topic and to contribute to a better understanding of the issues facing women and men in Lebanon.

Results and Discussion

Sociodemographic Characteristics

The following figures present an overview of the sociodemographic composition of the participants of this study. The majority of participants were women, indicating an accurate representation of the current sociodemographic composition in Lebanon, where females outnumber males. The most common age group among our participants was between 25 and 35 years old. This suggests that the findings are representatives of the higher end of the youth in Lebanon, which have more experience in certain aspects of AC, such as political life and civil society. Almost all of our participants were Lebanese, with only 2% holding dual citizenship.

This is noteworthy because it suggests that our findings are representative of the experiences of Lebanese citizens. 60.79 % of the participants have a university degree, indicating a high level of education. 48.11% of the participants are employed and 16% are full-time students, indicating a substantial level of unemployment among the sample. Finally, the participants were almost equally distributed among the eight governorates in Lebanon. This means that our study has captured the perspectives and experiences of individuals from all regions of Lebanon, ensuring that our findings are representative of the country as a whole.

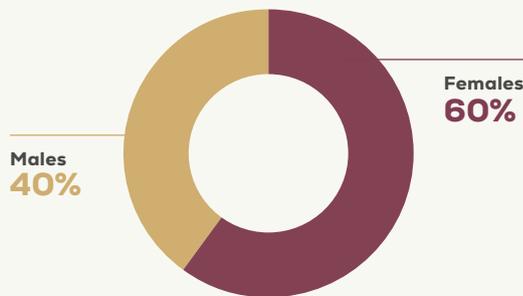**Figure 1:** Gender distribution of the study's participants

Females
60%

Males
40%

Figure 2: Age distribution of the study's participants

15-17 (52)
5%

25-35 (601)
54%

18-20 (177)
16%

21-24 (288)
26%
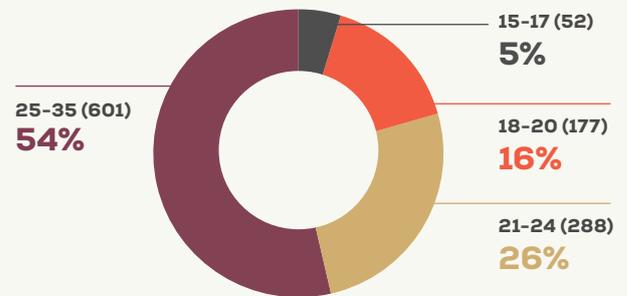
Figure 3: Marital status of participants

Separated, widowed, or cohabiting
1%

Married
25%

Single
60%

Divorced
1%
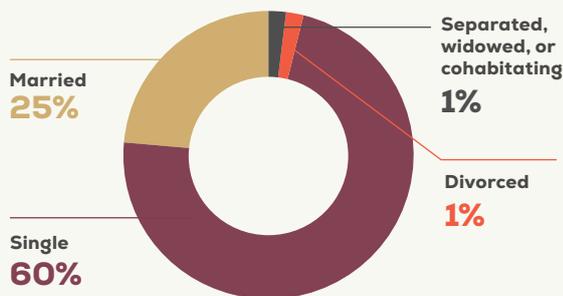
Figure 4: Nationality of study's participants

Others
1%

Lebanese
97%

Dual Citizenship
26%
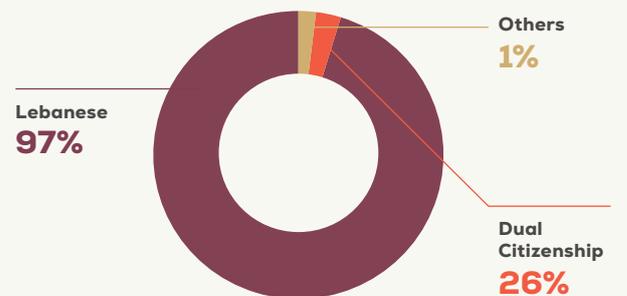
Figure 5: Highest level of education attained

Level	Percentage
University (Bachelor)	42.29%
University (Masters)	17.89%
High School	17.97%
Middle School	9.73%
Vocational Training	9.23%
Elementary School	1.32%
Training/ education in other organisations	0.58%
No Education	0.49%
PhD	0.49%
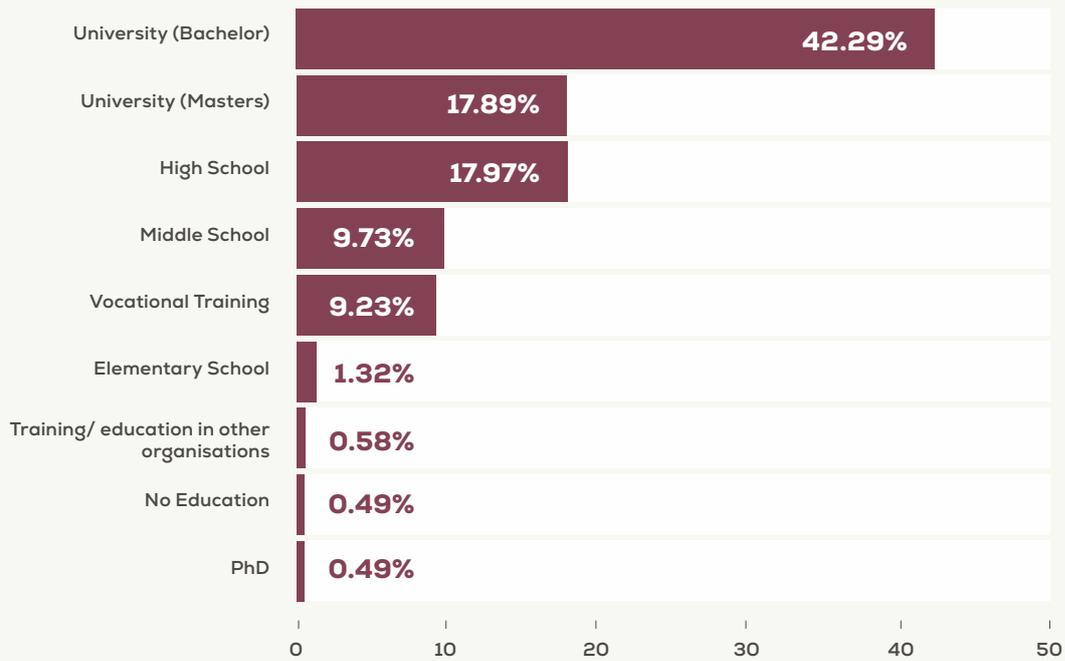
Figure 6: Geographic distribution

North Lebanon
130

Mount Lebanon
163

Beirut
129

South Lebanon
133

Akkar
131

Baalbek Hermel
130

Bekaa
143

Nabatieh
162

Figure 7: Employment status

Not looking
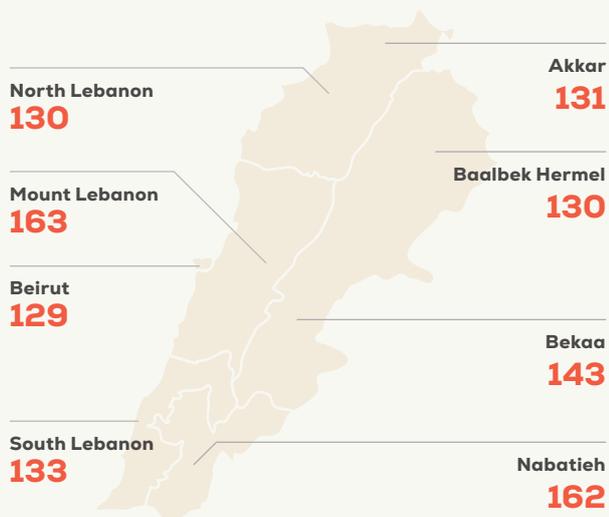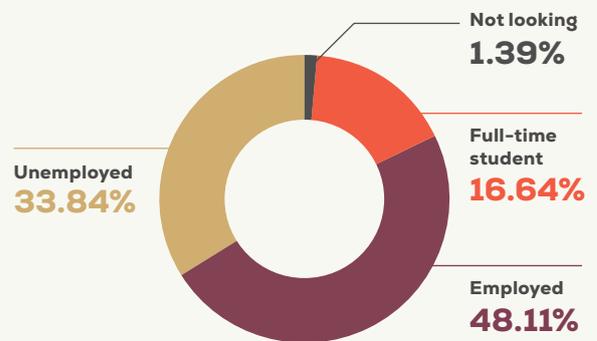**1.39%**

Unemployed
33.84%

Full-time student
**16.64%**

Employed
48.11%

Theme 1: Perceptions and Understanding of Active Citizenship

This theme explores the level of AC among the general public and stateless participants from their perspective, and how they understand AC. It is divided into four sub-themes: (1) Self-perception of AC, (2) Responsibility and Engagement, (3) Community and Collaboration, and (4) Diversity and inclusion.

For the general public, the self-perceived level of AC is high among male and female participants across Lebanon, yet the understanding of AC is highly contextual and varies based on gender, governorate, and employment status. Female participants define AC as being active in the social life through volunteering, advocating for change, and helping others, meanwhile male participants define AC as being politically active through voting and participating in political parties. Employment status and the type of employment also influences AC, where being employed, especially in social work, teaching and healthcare is associated with being

productive and hence active in society according to the participants. However, none of the stateless participants identified as AC due to their exclusion from the social, political, and economic spheres which they cannot access without official registration documents, such as an identity card. On the other hand, the understanding of AC by both the general public and stateless participants is summarized by three main elements, which have emerged as sub-themes throughout the qualitative thematic analysis, including (1) taking responsibility for one's actions and being engaged in the community to promote positive change (Sub-theme 2: Responsibility and Engagement), (2) collaborating with community members and working together to achieve common goals (Sub-theme 3: Community and Collaboration), and (3) embracing and respecting different backgrounds and diverse individuals and promoting equality and social justice (Sub-theme 4: Diversity and Inclusion).

Figure 8: Percentage of Respondents who Consider themselves Active Citizens

No
10%

Yes
90%
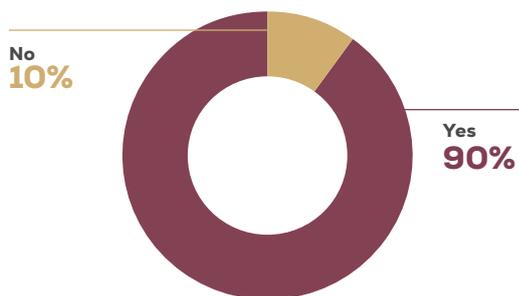
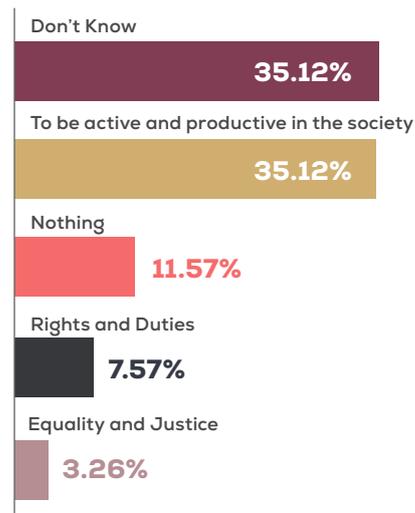## Sub-theme 1: Self-perception of Active Citizenship

According to the survey findings, **90% of the participants consider themselves active citizens yet to a varying degree, where 36% consider themselves average active citizens, 25% consider themselves substantially active citizens, and 12% consider themselves very highly active citizens**. The variations in self-perception are due to the different understandings and interpretations of AC by male and female participants across the eight governorates in Lebanon. The FGDs highlighted that the female definition of AC is more centered around the social aspect (volunteering, social work, advocating for social issues), while the male definition is more politically oriented (voting, participating in elections and political parties). This gendered difference in how AC is defined and practiced has been attributed to a variety of factors in the literature, including socialization, gender roles, and access to resources. A study conducted by McIlwaine and Moser (2013) in Latin America found that women were more likely to engage in activities

that were geared towards improving the well-being of their communities, such as community organizing and volunteering in health clinics.

These activities were seen as more directly beneficial to their families and communities and were often done in conjunction with other women. In contrast, men were more likely to engage in political activities, such as voting, attending political rallies, and participating in political parties. These activities were seen as more geared towards achieving broader societal goals and were often done in isolation from others. This finding suggests that the perceived definition of AC is strongly influenced by inherent gender constructs, which reinforces the isolation of men and women from social and political spheres respectively, and hence contradicts the purpose of AC, as described by researchers and experts in the field, which is to encourage individuals to take an active role **(socially and politically)** in shaping their communities and societies **as a whole** and to promote social justice, equality, and human rights (Kaya & Ozeren, 2019; Barrett, 2016; Lee, 2020). Moreover, social, and political issues are often interconnected and cannot be viewed in isolation. **Therefore, it is important to deconstruct the gendered definitions of AC by men and women to avoid reiterating social constructs of gender and encourage the convergence of views on AC between men and women to promote an inclusive and diverse approach to AC that values both social and political forms of participation.**

The results of this study suggest that both male and female participants associate AC with their occupation. The survey showed that **"being active and productive in society"** is the most common definition of AC, with **34.81% of respondents** choosing this option. This finding aligns with previous research, which has found that employment is a determinant of AC. Sabucedo et al. (2018) found that employment was positively associated with political participation, while De Vroome et al. (2014) found that employed individuals were more likely to participate in community activities and volunteer work. However, this study adds nuance to this relationship, as all the mentioned occupations were related to roles that involve direct interaction

Figure 9: Definitions of AC by survey respondents

Don't Know — 35.12%
To be active and productive in the society — 35.12%
Nothing — 11.57%
Rights and Duties — 7.57%
Equality and Justice — 3.26%

with members of the society (e.g., social worker, nurses, teachers, police officers), **indicating that the type of job a person has can impact their level of AC. The association between AC and occupation has important implications for AC in Lebanon. Encouraging individuals to pursue careers in fields that involve direct interaction with members of the society, such as social work and healthcare, may lead to greater levels of AC. Additionally, providing opportunities for employed individuals to engage in community activities and volunteer work may further promote AC. However, it is important to note that this can be an entry point to promote AC but it does not mean that people who do not work in these particular jobs are any less active in their citizenship. Therefore, while our finding provides insight into how some individuals in Lebanon view active citizenship, it should not be taken as a definitive measure of active citizenship or as a judgment of those who do not work in these jobs. Instead, it highlights the importance of considering the various factors that may shape individuals' understanding and practice of AC.**

Table 4 summarizes the quantitative findings related to the perceptions of AC of the general public across gender and governorates, where it shows that there is indeed a high level of AC perceived among participants who associate AC with various aspects of their lives, including their work as mentioned above, volunteerism, participating in elections, and helping others in their communities. It is also noteworthy that some participants perceive themselves as active citizens through non-traditional means, such as buying local products to support the economy, advocating for social justice and gender equality, and respecting others, which are the themes that will be further expanded upon in the subsequent sections. However, the table also shows that some participants, namely males in Akkar stand out with the lowest level of self-perception. According to them, AC is linked to employment status because it dictates their ability to help society financially. Since most of these male participants from Akkar (63%) were unemployed, their ability to contribute to their society is limited, leading to a low self-perception of AC. This finding implies that employment plays a crucial role in defining the self-perception of active citizenship among males in Akkar. Therefore,

initiatives to promote AC in Akkar should account for the high unemployment rate in this area and how it can affect individual's sense of AC. **A possible effective strategy to address this gap between employment and AC can be developing and enhancing job-seeking skills of the population in Akkar that were found to be highly associated with AC in the above analysis, such as social work. This can promote men's engagement in the social sphere of AC and at the same time foster the sense of agency and empowerment among these individuals, which increases the level of AC.**

Stateless participants have differing perceptions and experiences related to AC than the general public. The findings gathered from the FGDs show that stateless people in Lebanon feel that the **lack of nationality is a significant barrier to AC.** All the stateless participants believe that being an active citizen means having all the rights, including nationality, and without it, they cannot participate fully in society. A male participant from Akkar expressed their frustration with their stateless status:

"I do not consider myself an active citizen, I am not integrated into any aspect of this country, neither economical through work, nor political through voting. I didn't see anything from this country, we do not have an identity, even if we die, they do not register us as dead, so we are basically dead."

These statements show that the lack of nationality prevents stateless individuals from being recognised as full members of society. Although the participants have a desire to being active citizens, they face significant challenges that prevent them from participating in the social, political, and economic spheres. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has identified statelessness as a significant obstacle to active citizenship and political participation. Stateless individuals are often excluded from political processes and cannot access public services, such as healthcare, education, and social welfare. This lack of recognition and protection undermines the principles of AC and social development, as it deprives people of the agency, voice, and agency they need to create positive social change. In sum, the existence of stateless people represents a significant challenge to active citizenship and social development.

Table 5: Summary of findings per area and gender for Perceptions and Understandings of AC

	Beirut	Mount Lebanon	Bekaa	Baalbek	Nabatieh	Akkar	North	South
Females	80% consider themselves ACs because they participate in elections, work, and volunteer.	83% consider themselves ACs because they volunteer, and advocate for change through different forms of activism (demonstrating, campaigning)	80% consider themselves ACs because they attend seminars that discuss social issues, work in law and social issues, and help others in their communities.	100% consider themselves ACs because they work as teachers and social workers, volunteers, are scouts, study, are mothers and caregivers for their children.	100% consider themselves ACs because they work as nurses and teachers, pay taxes, abide by the law, and volunteer.	100% consider themselves ACs because they work as teachers and nurses and help other people.	100% consider themselves ACs because they work as teachers, social workers, and nurses, and take care of their households as housewives.	80% consider themselves ACs because they work with non-governmental organisations (e.g., Red Cross), participate in social activities, and are mothers and caregivers for their children.
Males	100% consider themselves ACs because they participate in elections, work, and volunteer.	100% consider themselves ACs because they participate in elections, work, buy local products to support the economy, respect others, volunteer, and help others in their communities.	80% consider themselves as ACs because they participate in elections, respect other people, and help each other in their communities.	100% consider themselves ACs because they participate in elections, work, and volunteer.	80% consider themselves ACs because they participate in elections, work as a police officer, respect other people, volunteer, and do not discriminate.	70% consider themselves ACs because they participate in elections, study, and work. 30% do not consider themselves ACs because they are unemployed and hence are not productive in society.	100% consider themselves ACs because they participate in elections, they promote social justice and gender equality through educating and raising awareness in their areas, work professionally in social issues.	100% consider themselves ACs because they participate in elections, work, and volunteer.

Sub-theme 2: Responsibility and Engagement

This sub-theme emerged from the FGDs with the general public and highlights the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions and being engaged in the community to promote change, whether that means volunteering, advocating for change, or simply staying informed and educated. For example, female participants in Akkar were involved in various organizations and initiatives aimed at addressing issues like bullying and promoting feminism.

In Bekaa, females mentioned their participation in elections, seminars, and studies related to law and social work as examples of their engagement and sense of responsibility as active citizens. They believed that expressing their opinions and working towards positive change in society is a responsibility that comes with citizenship. In Nabatiyeh, female participants mentioned fulfilling their responsibilities as active citizens, such as paying taxes, not polluting, and participating in elections. They also expressed their engagement in various aspects, including working in different fields, volunteering, and helping their community. These indicate a sense of accountability and commitment to contribute to society as active citizens. In Beirut, female participants shared that their job as social workers include safeguarding the rights of victims, suggesting a sense of responsibility towards their community.

The literature supports the findings of the study, where several authors emphasized the importance of the sense of responsibility among people in active citizens. One study conducted by Dahlberg and colleagues (2015) explored the concept of active citizenship among young people in Sweden and found that it is closely linked to a sense of responsibility and a desire to contribute to society. Participants in the study emphasized the importance of taking action to address social and political issues and saw this as a fundamental aspect of being an active citizen.

Figure 10: Example of Mentimeter responses during the FGD with Bekaa Females

Several other studies support these findings, hence the sense of responsibility and commitment to contributing to society as active citizens is a key aspect of active citizenship.

This sub-theme of Responsibility and Engagement sheds light on how people define and understand AC in Lebanon. It reveals that people view AC as a responsibility that involves taking actions to contribute positively to their communities. This view aligns with the study's chosen definition of AC, which emphasizes the importance of participation in civil society, community, and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence in accordance with human rights and democracy. Therefore, initiatives to promote AC in Lebanon should harness the findings of this theme to design programmes that account for the fact that people are already practicing AC through this lens of responsibility and engagement.

Sub-theme 3: Collaboration and Community

This sub-theme stresses how participants understand and perceive AC through the importance of collaboration and working together as a community to achieve common goals, building networks, and working towards shared objectives.

This theme emerged from rural areas, such as Bekaa, Akkar, indicating that participants residing in rural settings have a stronger perception of collaboration and community as forms of AC than participants residing in urban areas such as Beirut and Tripoli. There is some indication in the literature that collaboration and community may be a stronger determinant of AC in rural areas compared to urban areas. For example, a study by Putnam (2000) found that people in rural areas were more likely to participate in community-based activities and to trust their neighbours compared to people in urban areas. Other research suggests that urbanization and the decline of traditional community structures may have a negative impact on civic engagement (McAdam and Kloos, 2014). Several research studies highlighted

the importance of collaboration and community in promoting AC. For example, a study by Stoker and colleagues (2013) found that individuals who are more engaged in their local communities are more likely to be politically active and to view their role as citizens as important. Similarly, a study by Vromen and colleagues (2016) highlighted the importance of social networks and relationships in promoting civic engagement and active citizenship. The findings in this study highlighted that participants were active in several forms through collaborating and engaging in their communities. For example, in Nabatiyeh and Mount Lebanon, female participants shared that they were participating in activities in their area that promote youth development, such as scouts, and helping their neighbours in need, whether financially or sentimentally. In Bekaa, female participants mentioned their involvement with associations and organizations aimed at promoting social change, such as working towards gender equality and human rights. In Akkar, female participants shared that they were involved in community service projects such as cleaning up public spaces and helping families in need. Moreover, stateless people in both Bekaa and Akkar emphasized the importance of helping others as a key aspect of AC. For example, a male participant from Bekaa said that: "An active citizen is the person who works in his community for the benefit of its members and the one who help others in need". **This suggests that people value community and civic engagement. This sub-theme highlights another entry point for initiatives that promote community involvement and collaboration to further promote AC in Lebanon**.

It is important to highlight that sub-theme 2: Responsibility and Engagement differs from sub-theme 3: Community and Collaboration through focusing more on the individual's responsibility to being engaged in several aspects of AC, such as volunteering and voting, and its importance in promoting change. Meanwhile sub-theme 3 is more centred around the importance of **working together as a community** to achieve change and common goals.

Sub-theme 4: Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion, emphasises the importance of embracing diversity and inclusion in AC, promoting equality and social justice by advocating for the rights of marginalised groups and creating a society that is inclusive and respectful of all individuals. Research has consistently shown that AC is closely linked to social justice and equity. A study by Huybrechts and colleagues (2016) examined the concept of AC among immigrant youth in Belgium and found that diversity and inclusion were key components of the definition. Participants in the study emphasised the importance of promoting social inclusion and working towards greater equity and justice for marginalised groups. In addition, a study by Sassenberg and colleagues (2018) found that individuals who had more diverse social networks were more likely to engage in civic activities and view themselves as active citizens. The authors argue that promoting diversity and inclusion is an important aspect of promoting AC and creating a more just and equitable society. In this study, female and male participants in Mount Lebanon discussed the challenges facing women in Lebanon, including laws that do not allow Lebanese women to give their nationality to their children. Female participants in Beirut discussed the importance of advocating for the rights of domestic and foreign workers who are often excluded from the society. In the North, participants talked about the importance of including and empowering the youth in important social, political, and economic conversations who often face unemployment and lack of opportunities. Stateless participants also discussed the importance of creating ways to include them in the decision-making processes, especially that they are not legally eligible to participate in voting or any other form of civic engagement. **This sub-theme highlights the importance of considering diversity and inclusion in the design of initiatives to promote AC in Lebanon, by ensuring that all voices are heard and represented.**

In conclusion, the perceptions and understanding of AC vary by gender, employment, and area of residence in Lebanon. The level of self-perception is high among the general population; however females and males understand AC in different ways, which is important to address in the project's initiatives, especially that the aim is to promote gender equality through AC and thus men and women should have a close understanding of the concept, while remaining relevant to their experiences mentioned above. On the other hand, stateless people do not identify as AC and experience significant marginalisation from all forms of civic engagement.

Theme 2: Motivators and Barriers to Active Citizenship

This theme explores the factors that hinder or facilitate people's ability and or willingness to being active citizens and highlights the differences between males and females' experiences. The findings are discussed under two sub-themes, (1) Motivators of Active Citizenship and (2) Barriers to Active Citizenship.

The motivators of AC for both males and females across all areas are freedom of expression, desire to achieve positive social change, and human rights and equality. For females in particular, more women representation in political and social life is a motivator of AC since it provides women a sense of courage and assurance that

they can reach important roles in life. However, there are social and political obstacles that hinder females' participation in certain aspects of AC, such as political life, including gender stereotypes and a prevailing patriarchal system that confine women to domestic roles and limit their access to information and resources necessary for effective participation in political and social activities. On the contrary, males do not mention specific hindrances that prevent them from being active citizens. The survey even shows that men consider themselves more active than women, further highlighting that women are faced with significant barriers to exercise their AC.

Figure 11: Example of Mentimeter responses during the FGD with Baalbek Females

Sub-theme 1: Motivators of Active Citizenship

Several similar motivators were shared by both male and female participants from different areas in Lebanon. Figure 4 captures some of the responses shared by female participants in Baalbek on their motivators to becoming active citizens. Equality, social justice, respecting others' opinions, security, and human rights were some of the factors that motivate the participants to become AC. However, five main motivators were repeatedly shared by the participants in all areas.

The below table presents the 5 main motivators of AC which were shared by female and male participants across Lebanon.

Table 6: Motivators of Active Citizenship

Motivators of AC	Findings and Quotes
Freedom of expression ♀♂	• It allows individuals to participate in public debates, express their opinions on political issues, and hold their leaders accountable for their actions, in addition to exchange of different ideas and perspectives, which can lead to more informed and well-rounded decision-making. • However, participants were discouraged by the current situation in Lebanon where opinions are not respected and there is ongoing suppression of freedoms by the official authorities and individuals strongly affiliated with political parties be it through social media outlets, TV and press, or on the ground demonstrations. *"Being an active citizen means having the freedom to express my opinions without fear of persecution. It's not just a right, it's a responsibility to stand up for what I believe in and to contribute to the betterment of my community."* – Female participant, Nabatiyeh *"I think one of the most important motivators is to be able to tolerate all perspectives with an open mind and be able to discuss social and political issues objectively without bias or prejudice from people who are biased towards certain groups or political parties. "* – Male participant, Beirut
Desire to achieve positive social change ♀♂	• The desire to improve society, especially during the current dire living conditions characterized by social injustice and poor socioeconomic situation triggers the participants to be ACs to change the status quo and improve the situation. • Participants mentioned volunteering on several occasions with NGOs since the onset of the economic crisis with the rise in poverty, and unemployment to help people in need. *"The current economic situation encourages me to work towards improving society. I am volunteering in the Red Cross to help people affected by poverty and unemployment, and I feel that I am making a positive impact".* – Female participant, Akkar
Human rights and equality ♀♂	Accessing human rights and equality characterized by being equal regardless of religion, gender, ethnicity would encourage the participants to be more active in the society through participating in community organisations, volunteering to help those in need, and participating in elections. Although this is not the status quo for the participants in Lebanon, yet it is an important requirement for them to feel motivated to be an active citizen. *"For me to be able to be an active citizen, I should have the minimum human rights such as security and health".* – Male participant, North
More women representation in political and social life ♀	Participants were motivated to be AC when they see women already holding important roles in political and social life. This could include women politicians, community leaders, activists, or other prominent figures who serve as role models for other women. This provides them with a sense of courage and assures them that they can reach important roles in life. *"The role of the woman is important. When we do not see women participating in the parliament or in public institutions, it kind of discourages us. When we see a woman participating, we become very happy. The woman doesn't only have to work inside of her house, but she can reach very high positions."* – Female participant, Akkar

♀♂ *Identified by both males and females*   ♀ *Identified by females*

In the context of Lebanon, the motivators for active citizenship can be understood through the lens of the country's socioeconomic and political situation. The country has been facing an economic crisis, which has led to widespread poverty, unemployment, and social injustice. This situation has triggered a desire among the participants to be active citizens and work towards improving the status quo. Moreover, the high censorship on freedom of expression and ongoing suppression of freedoms by the official authorities and individuals strongly affiliated with political parties have discouraged participants from expressing their opinions and being active citizens. In recent years, the broad jurisdiction of the military courts has been increasingly used to persecute activists, journalists, media workers, and social media creators for sharing any form of criticism of governmental entities. In addition, TV channels and reporters are often physically attacked by armed members of religious and political groups with little to no protection from the authorities. All in all, both public and private expression of personal opinions have been constantly inhibited since October 17th movement in 2019.

Studies done globally and in the Middle East show that one major motivator for AC is a sense of duty or responsibility to contribute to society (Bekkers, 2013). This can be driven by personal values or societal expectations. This was highlighted in this study under Theme 1: Perceptions and Understanding of Active Citizenship, which reiterates having a sense of responsibility as a core driver of AC globally. Another motivator that is common between the study and the literature is the desire for social change or the improvement of the community (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2010). Hustinx and Lammertyn's (2010) study explored the motivations of individuals to engage in voluntary organizations, which are a form of active citizenship. They found that the desire for social change was a common motivator among participants. Specifically, individuals wanted to address social problems and inequalities that they observed in their communities. They felt a sense of responsibility to help those in

need and to contribute to the common good. Similarly, participants in this study are triggered by the high poverty rates, lack of access to basic needs such as clean water, electricity, and medicine, and high unemployment rates. For example, in Akkar and the North, female and male participants noted that they have always been marginalised and excluded from the rest of the country in terms of economic development projects, employment opportunities, and healthcare services. For them, this situation motivates them to participate in political, community, and social life to advocate for better living conditions and improve the socioeconomic situation in their community.

Sub-theme 2: Barriers to Active Citizenship

According to the FGDs, there are social and political obstacles that hinder females' participation in political life. Gender stereotypes and the prevailing patriarchal system confine women to domestic roles and limit their access to information and resources necessary for effective participation in political and social activities. This was shared by both females and male participants in Akkar, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa and Nabatiyeh. In particular, the lack of access to citizenship and nationality rights was noted as a major obstacle for women to become active citizens due to the lack of sense of belonging and identity to them and their families. Female participants indicated that if they were men, they would have had more power and fewer obstacles to participate in political and social activities. The statement suggests that the participants feel that there are inherent societal barriers in Lebanon that prevent women from participating fully in political and social activities. A study conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in 2020 found that women in the Middle East and North Africa region face significant gender-based discrimination that prevents them from engaging fully in the public sphere. Similarly, a study conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2019 found

that gender stereotypes were a significant barrier to women's political participation in countries such as Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen.

On the other hand, male participants expressed that they are not faced by any specific hindrances that prevent them as men from being active citizens. In fact, the survey highlights that men consider themselves active more than women, where they voted 3 out 5 compared to 2 out 5 on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not active at all and 5 is highly active. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, men in Akkar shared that they are not able to become active citizens due to the economic and social constrictions they face. These findings may seem contradictory; however, men were referring to gender-specific barriers when they said they do not face any hindrances as compared to women. In contrast, the men in Akkar who cited socioeconomic conditions and unemployment as barriers were likely referring to external factors that affect their ability to be active citizens in general. Therefore, the lack of gender-specific barriers does not necessarily mean that men do not face any barriers to AC.

In Beirut, female participants were more concerned about the prevalent fraud and corruption surrounding the political and governmental systems in Lebanon. They saw these issues as significant barriers to being active citizens because they defy their efforts towards positive social change. According to Ahrari and Alishahi (2018), corruption is one of the most critical challenges for active citizenship in developing countries. The authors argue that corruption undermines trust in democratic institutions and reduces citizens' motivation to participate in civic activities. However, there is evidence to suggest that addressing corruption can increase citizens' motivation to participate in civic activities. In a study of Ukraine, Gans-Morse and Mazzuca (2018) found that anti-corruption efforts led to increased citizen engagement in the democratic process. The authors argue that anti-corruption efforts can build trust in democratic institutions and create a sense of collective action

among citizens, motivating them to participate in civic activities. Therefore, corruption and fraud could be transformed to motivating factors in the approach of promoting AC in Lebanon.

As mentioned in the first theme, stateless participants' main barrier for AC is the lack of official recognition as citizens which makes it difficult for them to access many basic services and rights. Without proper recognition as citizens, stateless individuals may face challenges in obtaining official identification documents, accessing education and healthcare services, and participating in political processes.

In conclusion, the social and economic context in Lebanon predicates the motivators and barriers of AC for both females and males. The country's economic crisis and political situation were found to be motivators for active citizenship, driven by a sense of duty or responsibility to contribute to society and the desire for social change. Females expressed facing more gender-specific barriers than males, including gender stereotypes and discrimination. Nonetheless, the analysis highlighted that addressing corruption and empowering women to become active citizens can increase citizens' motivation to participate in civic activities and work towards positive change.

stateless people do not identify as AC and experience significant marginalisation from all forms of civic engagement.

Theme 3: Social Media and Active Citizenship

This theme explores the participants' perspectives of social media use in Lebanon, their level of engagement, and the key concepts related to how social media can promote or hinder AC.

Social media engagement with social issues among participants is relatively low, where only 40% of the respondents follow social issue pages, while only 7% highly interact with them. In addition, only 26% (females and males) follow pages related to gender equality issues in Lebanon, while only 8% highly interacts with them. This can be explained by the fact that participants from all the regions in Lebanon, both males and females face the problem of disrespectful responses or facing danger in the form of physical, threats, harassment, and cyberbullying from extremists or strongly affiliated individuals to political parties or certain sects whose beliefs go against the content of these pages. This indicates a lack of tolerance and openness to diverse perspectives on social media platforms and hinders freedom of expression as a main motivator for active citizenship. Moreover, females (53.11%) tend to follow social media pages that address women's issues more than males (43.78%) who follow social media pages the address news and politics in general (p= 0.007 <5%). Men were not interested in social media in general, preferred to watch TV as it is more credible, and do not have time to engage on social media pages.

The analysis presented here provides insights into social media engagement and active citizenship in different regions of Lebanon. Figure 5 shows that most of the respondents in the surveyed sample are "Somewhat Active", although more than 50% of the respondents think social media is helpful in giving awareness and improving social issues in Lebanon. The discrepancy between social media activity and the respondents' perceptions on the importance of social media was explored during the FGDs and participants from all areas in both males and females were found to be hesitant to engage on social media pages, especially those related to politics and social issue due to the backlash they receive from other users, including disrespectful responses, physical, threats, harassment, and cyberbullying from extreme supporters of some political parties and/or extremists whose beliefs do not align with the content of these pages.

"No, I am not very active on social networking sites. I have accounts on social networking sites. I am a little active on Instagram, I use social media just to know what is happening in Lebanon. The thing that prevents me from being active on social networking because I am afraid of fake accounts which can follow me and take information about my private life. I do not know what we should do regarding this issue. There is more and more monitoring of activity and posts by the government. It is not safe to use social media freely anymore."
Male participant, Beirut

"Currently I'm not active on social media because a lot of people respond in a very disrespectful way. Also, the political situation doesn't allow you to write anything. If you disturb anyone, they can easily hurt you or kill you. Social media now is very dangerous these days, we cannot express ourselves in a safe way."
Female Participant, Akkar

"I am not active on social networking sites, there is no particular reason. I'd rather spend my time on other things than on social media. I only follow the news, or I usually watch it most of the time on MTV".
Male Participant, Akkar

Figure 12: Definitions of AC by survey respondents

Not Active — 35.12%
Little Active — 35.12%
Somewhat Active — 11.57%
Active — 7.57%
Highly Active — 3.26%
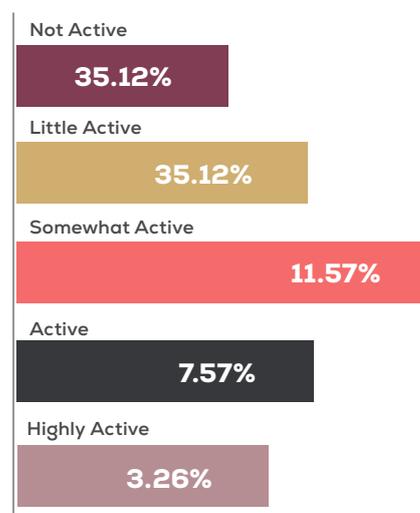
Research has shown that social media is an important tool for promoting AC, where it can be used to foster civic engagement, participation, and advocacy among individuals and communities. According to a study by Aouragh and Alexander (2015), social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can facilitate the formation of virtual communities that bring together individuals who are passionate about specific social or political issues. These communities can serve as a platform for sharing information, mobilizing support, and coordinating collective action. Social media can be an important tool for promoting transparency and accountability in government and other institutions. In a study by Chadwick and Howard (2017), social media platforms were found to be a powerful tool for holding governments and other institutions accountable for their actions. Through the use of social media, citizens can monitor the activities of their governments, expose corruption and other forms of malfeasance, and advocate for policy changes that promote greater transparency and accountability. Although this can work theoretically, in reality, social media in Lebanon is not an effective tool that promotes AC, given the limitations in the user experience. For example, a report by Human Rights Watch (2020) documented cases of online harassment, including threats of rape and murder, directed towards women who have spoken out about political issues on social media. These threats not only discourage women from engaging in active citizenship but also have a chilling effect on freedom of expression more broadly. Furthermore, the government in Lebanon has a history of monitoring social media and punishing those who express dissenting opinions. In 2017, the Lebanese government passed a cybercrime law that criminalizes online speech that is critical of public officials or institutions. This law has been used to arrest and prosecute individuals for their online activities, further chilling free speech and civic engagement. Hence, although people may be willing to engage in social media for civic participation and advocacy, the prevalence of online harassment and threats and the censorship on freedom of expression limits meaningful participation.

On the other hand, 69.52% of the respondents do not follow any entities on social media related to gender equality, indicating the lack of interest and awareness of

gender equality issues among the general population on social media platforms. Research by Hagen and Lutz (2019) suggests that social media platforms can be used to challenge gender stereotypes and promote positive representations of women and other marginalized groups. However, online awareness on gender equality issues will not produce any impactful progress towards gender equality since the potential for backlash remains high and counterproductive.

In addition, female participants (53.11%) mentioned following social media pages that address social and women's issues more than males (43.78%), such as Kafa, ABAAD, Fe-Male, Haki Nasawi. Male participants tend to follow social media pages that address news and politics in general, such as Thawrat Teshrin (p=0.007 ‹5%). Moreover, men were less engaged in social media than women, attributing this to their lack of interest, their preference to watch TV as it is more credible, and the lack of time available.

The importance of engaging men in promoting gender equality cannot be overstated. Research has consistently shown that the active participation of men is crucial to achieving gender equality goals. Therefore, it is imperative that social media pages and campaigns that focus on gender equality issues adopt strategies that effectively target and engage men. This may involve the development of content that appeals specifically to men, as well as the creation of safe and inclusive spaces for men to participate in discussions and advocacy around gender equality.

Stateless participants on the other hand were found to use Facebook the most to stay up to date with politics and any significant events that happen in the country. The social issue they are most concerned about is statelessness and hence they follow pages that are related to their situation, such as "Lebanon's Stateless" which has over 2,000 followers on Facebook and advocates for stateless' rights. Clearly, stateless people have different priorities than the general public which highlights the need to acknowledge their priorities in any approach to promote AC.
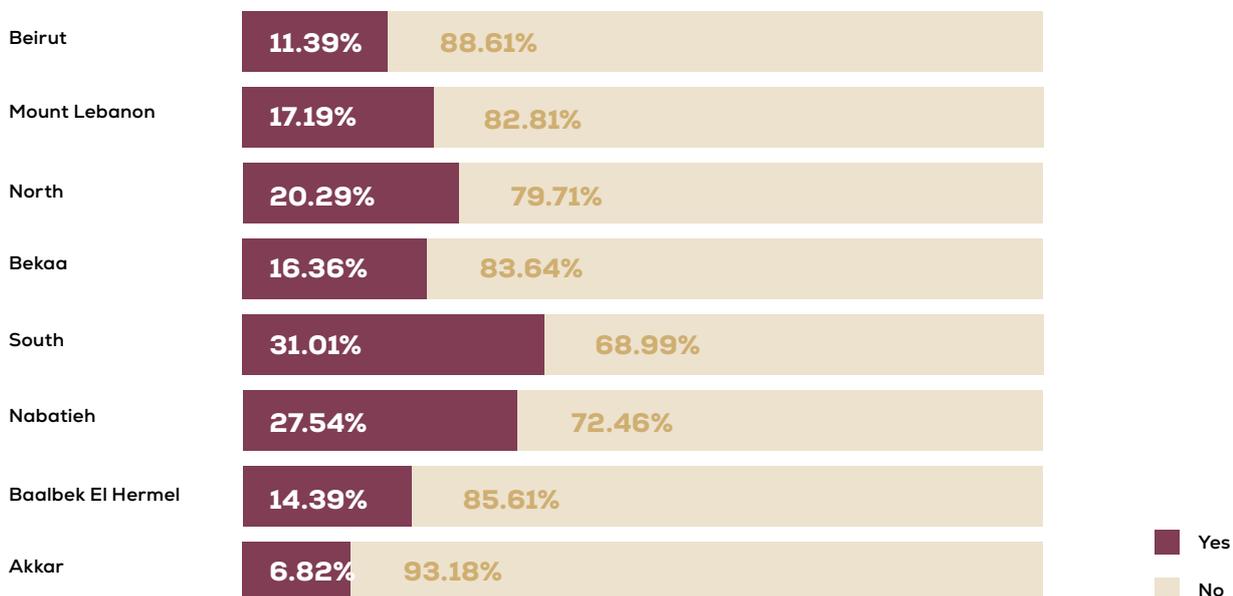
Theme 4: Political Life

This theme examines the participants' level of engagement and participation in political life, including voting, participating in political parties, attending public meetings and rallies, and engaging in activism or advocacy efforts related to political issues. It also explores the reasons behind individuals' level of involvement in politics and how different factors, such as socioeconomic status, gender, education level, and age, may impact their level of engagement. Hence it is divided into two sub-themes, (1) Factors Affecting Political Participation and (2) Women's Participation in Political Life.

Political participation among participants is a complex form of active citizenship in Lebanon, where several different factors play a role in the participants' willingness to be politically active and participate in voting, campaigning, contacting politicians, and/ or joining political parties. These factors seem to be centred around the gains and benefits that this political affiliation will yield for the participants in terms of

financial gains and access to employment opportunities and other basic services, in addition to pressure from family members to support certain political parties. The survey shows that 81.86% of the participants do not support any political party in Lebanon, and the qualitative findings revealed that it is due to the lack of trust in the political parties among all participants, males and females, and across all the regions. The South and Nabatiyeh were areas with the highest levels of political affiliation, but the lowest in terms of voter turnout. This was attributed to the financial gains and other benefits offered by political parties to retain their supporters and that people take advantage of, without necessarily casting a vote in favor of them during the elections. The finding suggests that the lack of trust in political parties and their representatives is a significant barrier to active citizenship and political participation in Lebanon. People may feel disillusioned with the political system and the parties that have been in power for a long time, leading to a sense of apathy or disengagement from the political process.

Sub-theme 1: Factors Affecting Political Participation

Figure 12: Percentage distribution of respondents who support a political party across the governorates

Governorate	Yes	No
Beirut	11.39%	88.61%
Mount Lebanon	17.19%	82.81%
North	20.29%	79.71%
Bekaa	16.36%	83.64%
South	31.01%	68.99%
Nabatieh	27.54%	72.46%
Baalbek El Hermel	14.39%	85.61%
Akkar	6.82%	93.18%

Statistical analysis has shown that the South (31.10%) and Nabatiyeh (27.54%) are the highest percentages of respondents who support political parties in Lebanon, but Nabatiyeh (56.67%) had the lowest percentages of respondents who voted in the previous elections (56.67%) (p=0.000 <5%). On the other hand, Akkar has the lowest percentage of respondents who support political parties in Lebanon (6.82%). Figures 6 and 7 represent the percentage distribution of political participation in each governorate. However, based on

UNDP figures of the 2022 parliamentary elections, voter turnout was lower (e.g., South 1: 49% compared to 70.71% in our study). This might be due to a bias in the selection or in the reporting, where it is important to note that discussions around political participation were tense during the FGDs and people were being conservative with the amount of information they share, which is another indicator of the fear around openly sharing opinions and the limitations on freedom of expression.

Figure 13: Percentage distribution of respondents who voted in the previous elections across the governorates
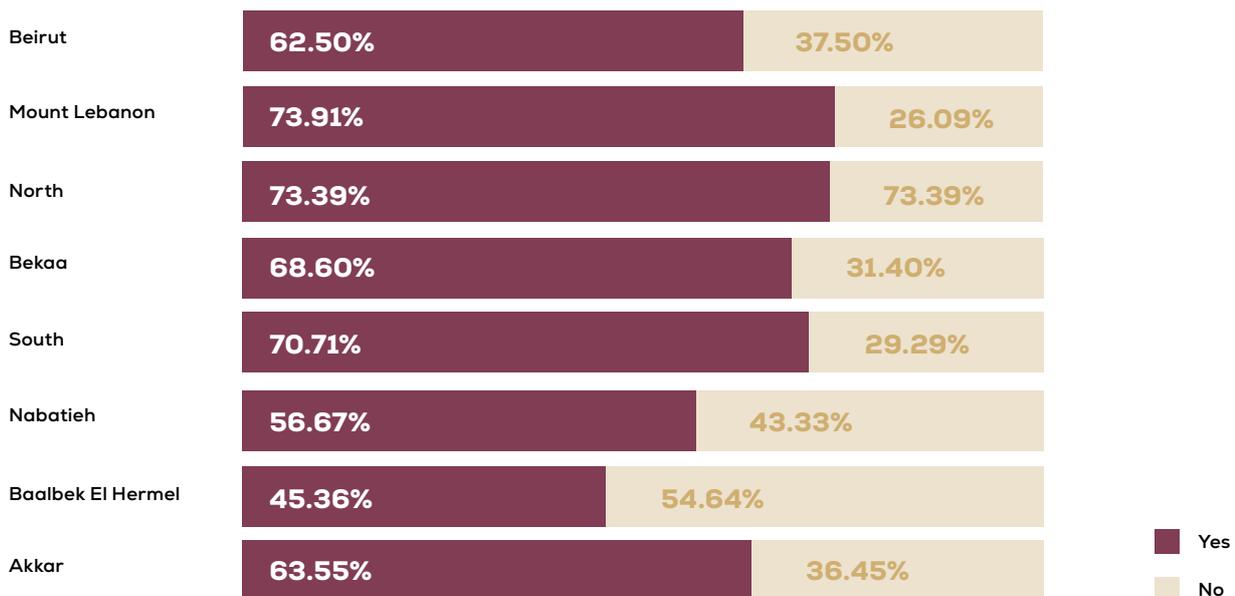
The above figures indicate that there is a lack of trust in the political parties expressed by all participants, males and females, and across all the regions. The low percentage of people who voted in the previous elections in the South and Nabatiyeh compared to high membership and participation in political parties as highlighted by the quantitative findings, were attributed to the financial gains and other benefits offered by political parties to retain their supporters. This is especially true after the October 17th revolution in Lebanon in 2019, where recent studies have shown that the movement had a significant impact on people's views of political parties in the country. The term "Kellon Yaane Kellon" or "All Means All" was a rallying

cry for the protestors, who demanded an end to corruption and sectarian politics. The movement was largely driven by young people who were frustrated with the existing political establishment, which they felt was unable to provide basic services or address the country's economic and social problems. As a result, the popularity of traditional political parties has declined, with many people feeling disillusioned with the status quo. According to a survey conducted by the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies in November 2019, 66% of respondents believed that the country's political parties were responsible for the economic crisis. The survey also found that 35% of respondents had lost faith in their political parties since the start

of the protests, while 24% had lost faith in the entire political system. Another survey conducted by the Arab Barometer in 2020 found that 77% of Lebanese respondents believed that the country's political system needed major reform. In terms of political affiliations, a 2021 poll by the International Republican Institute found that 75% of respondents did not identify with any political party in Lebanon, while only 10% identified with traditional parties. The same poll found that 80% of respondents believed that the country was headed in the wrong direction, and that the most important issues facing the country were economic, including inflation and unemployment. The findings of the study might be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, it can be considered that the October 17th revolution is an indicator of the rise in AC among Lebanese people, especially youth who were previously disengaged from politics but have become more politically active after the movement through participating in protests, attending town hall meetings and engaging with elected officials. There has also been an increase in the number of independent candidates running for office, as well as a rise in the number of grassroots political organisations and advocacy groups. However, the current study captures the perceptions of Lebanese people three and a half years after the October 17th revolution. The study reveals the attitudes and behaviours of people towards politics and political parties characterised by personal benefits and financial gains. This indicates that the demand for political reform and the desire for a more transparent and accountable government has not been fully realised and that people might be shifting away from AC by adapting to the status quo and capitalising on temporary gains while neglecting the root causes of their socioeconomic problems.

"If we want to talk about the past elections, neither men nor women were satisfied with the elections, and most of the people were suffering from financial incapacity, so those people worked for parties for financial reasons and did not vote because they were not convinced of the politicians"
– Female participant, Bekaa

"I might be in need, if one party offers me $500 and the other party offers me $1000, I'd elect the party that
offered me 1000$. There is electoral fraudulence and corruption. When a party tells you that I will educate your children and pay for their tuition, I will have doubts about the party that I had been supporting because it did nothing for me, so of course I will elect the party that helped me financially."
– Female participant, Mount Lebanon

In addition, the FGDs highlighted that several young women and men are enrolled in political parties in Mount Lebanon, Bekaa, and Nabatiyeh due to pressures from their parents, while they are not convinced with what this political party represents for the future of Lebanon. In fact, the survey identified that family (56.4%) and surrounding community (56.4%) is the number one influencer on people's opinions, followed by religion (49.4%), education (36.1%), and area (30.4%). Therefore, people might be participating in a certain political party due to family pressures, yet during elections they have voted for different people because they did not feel represented by their political party. Grose and Linden (2017) found that family members can discourage individuals from participating in politics, particularly when they perceive the political system to be corrupt or ineffective. The authors argue that family members can play a gatekeeping role, preventing individuals from participating in politics and reinforcing negative attitudes towards the political system. The impact of family pressure on political participation and voting behaviour is likely to be context-specific and influenced by a range of factors, including cultural norms, political environment, and socioeconomic status (Zhang, 2018). In collectivist societies, where family ties are strong, the influence of family pressure on political participation is likely to be more pronounced than in individualistic societies (Hofstede, 2015). Family, clan, and community ties are very strong in Lebanon, and social relationships are highly valued. Decision-making often involves consultation with and input from family and community members.

Overall, these findings suggest that while there is a growing disillusionment with traditional political parties and the status quo, there are also signs of a nascent AC movement, driven by independent candidates and grassroots organisations. However, family and

community pressures can still play a significant role in shaping political participation. Efforts to promote AC should address the holistic environment that forms the individual's political behaviour.

Sub-theme 2: Women's Participation in Political Life

Women's participation in political life is regarded as important for the participants, where 64.72% of the respondents (men and women) have rated it as very important in the survey and the satisfaction with the current number of women participating in the parliament and the cabinet of ministers is low as highlighted in Figure 8 and Figure 9.

Currently in 2023, 8 seats out of 128 belong to women in the Lebanese parliament while only 1 woman is present in the ministerial cabinet as the Minister of Administrative Development. In the 2018 parliamentary elections in Lebanon, there were a total of six women who were elected to the parliament out of 128 seats. This was an increase from the previous parliamentary elections held in 2009, where only four women were elected. Although the rate of parliamentary seats for women is increasing, yet it remains low as it makes up only 3 to 4% of the total number of seats. In 2017, a new electoral law was passed in Lebanon that introduced a quota system for women's representation in parliament. Under this law, women must constitute at least 30% of the candidates on each electoral list. However, this quota only applies to the names on the electoral lists, not the final elected members of parliament. In addition to the electoral law, there is also a quota system for women's representation in the cabinet of ministers. In 2014, the Lebanese government adopted a policy that requires at least one female minister to be included in the cabinet. However, this policy does not specify a percentage or a minimum number of female ministers. According to the survey, around most of the respondents (men and women) (73.45%) support female quotas in Lebanon, where females were more in favour than males. However, the participants in the

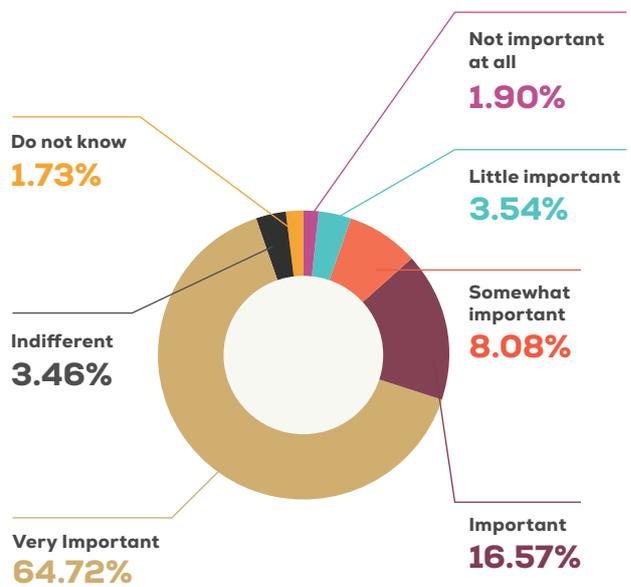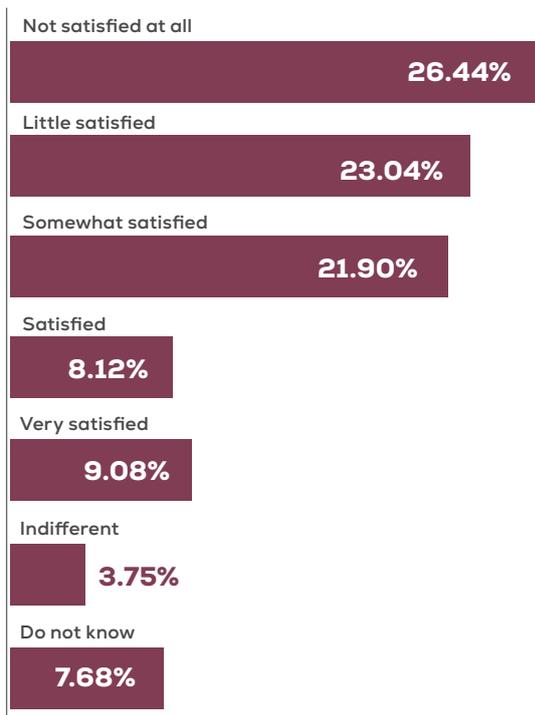**Figure 14:** Importance of women's participation in the national parliament

Not important at all
1.90%

Little important
3.54%

Somewhat important
8.08%

Do not know
1.73%

Indifferent
3.46%

Important
16.57%

Very Important
64.72%

Figure 15: Satisfaction with women's participation in the national parliament according to female and male respondents of the general public

Not satisfied at all

26.44%

Little satisfied

23.04%

Somewhat satisfied

21.90%

Satisfied

8.12%

Very satisfied

9.08%

Indifferent

3.75%

Do not know

7.68%

FGDs (both males and females) were split between supporters of gender quotas, who think they it's an initial step and necessary measure to increase women's political representations, and opponents of gender quotas who argue that quotas can lead to tokenism and undermine merit-based selection processes. Research has shown that women's political participation can have positive impacts on their sense of citizenship and political engagement. A study by Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2018) found that women who hold political positions are more likely to have a sense of political efficacy and engagement and are more likely to participate in political activities such

as voting and attending public meetings. However, in Lebanon, women face significant barriers to political participation including patriarchal attitudes, social norms that prioritise family responsibilities over political involvement and lack of access to resources and networks (Bazzi & Yabroudi, 2015).

The low representations of women in political positions in Lebanon has negative consequences for AC. According to a study by Aoun and Tohme (2017), the underrepresentation of women in political positions in Lebanon limits their ability to influence policy decisions that affect their lives and the lives of other citizens. Women's perspectives and experiences are often overlooked in political decision-making processes, which can result in policies that do not address their specific needs and concerns. Moreover, the low representation of women in political positions in Lebanon has implications for broader efforts to promote gender equality and empower women. Political positions are often key gateways to positions of influence and decision-making in other spheres of society, such as business, education, and civil society. When women are excluded from political positions, it becomes more difficult to achieve gender equality in these other spheres, leading to a vicious cycle of exclusion and inequality (Chamoun & Khawaja, 2016).

Overall, the findings show that political participation in Lebanon is distorted by the socioeconomic situation, where people are forced to make voting decisions and participate in political parties in hopes of gaining financial benefits and fulfilling their basic needs. This applies to all areas where no significant differences in perceptions were identified between rural and urban settings. Therefore, it is important that the efforts put towards promoting AC look at dissociating these perceptions and reinforcing the civic duty behind political participation.

applies to all areas where no significant differences in perceptions were identified between rural and urban settings. Therefore, it is important that the efforts put towards promoting AC look at dissociating these perceptions and reinforcing the civic duty behind political participation.

Theme 5: Civil Society Life

This theme explores the level of engagement of participants in civil society in the form of non-organised help and engagement with religious, cultural, or human rights organisations and the factors that affect this engagement.

For the general public, women and younger generations were found to be more active in CSOs, where females (36.60%) are engaged in a social or human rights organization more than males (29.30%). Both males and females seem to associate the role of CSOs as limited to helping women only, where the proper understanding of the role of CSOs in AC and broader social and political issues is absent among the participants. The findings highlight that both female and male participants have a traditional view towards gender roles, such as women being more social and sentimental and having more time to engage in social issues, while men's masculinity and focus on their career, limits their involvement in civil society. These views dictate men and women's involvement in civil society and reinforces that women's issues are separate from broader social and political issues and may limit women's participation from other aspects of AC, especially political life. Therefore, although women's high level of involvement in civil society may seem as a good indicator of AC, yet beneath this finding lies potential barriers for their effective involvement in other aspects of AC. As for stateless participants, their concern is fixed on their inability to participate in CSOs due to their lack of official identification.

As highlighted in Figure 10, the main form of engagement in civil society is through non-organised help, where 78.4% of the respondents participate in some form of non-organised helping neighbours of friends, participating in informal community groups and engaging in social or cultural activities. This indicates a viable entry point for initiatives to promote AC through leveraging existing non-organised networks and activities within civil society. By identifying and partnering with these informal groups and activities, initiatives can tap into a pre-existing culture of community engagement and build upon it to promote AC.

Both males and females agree on the importance of participating in civil society to promote social justice and human rights. However, females are more engaged in CSOs than males which reiterates the findings of Theme 1: Perceptions and Understandings of AC, where the difference between men and women's definitions of AC is that women tend to define and understand it from a social aspect, while men tend to define in from a political aspect. This theme highlights more reason as to why women have this tendency and are more engaged in civil society. According to men and women, CSOs mainly focus on supporting women, children and marginalised groups and the topics they work for (e.g., women's rights, domestic violence, early marriage…) are perceived to be related to women only. Therefore, in their perspective, CSOs target women to

Figure 16: Forms of participation in Civil Society

Non-organised help
53%

Religious organisations
14%

Cultural organisations
10%

Human rights organisations
33%

involve them in the society and help them gain their rights, and hence men should leave these spaces for women to be represented. In addition, female and male participants believe that the type of work that these organisations do, require female volunteers and members since they handle cases of other women who might be victims of rape, domestic violence, and other violations, and might not feel comfortable if men were working around them. This shows that both male and female participants misunderstand the primary role of CSOs, which is to advocate for the interests and rights of citizens, particularly the disadvantaged and view them as exclusive spaces for women, despite their role in handling several other socio-political causes such as mental health, environmental health, education, and human rights. Finally, it is important to recognise that the perception that CSOs focus exclusively on women's issues may contribute to the marginalization of women in formal political processes. By reinforcing the idea that women's issues are separate from broader social and political issues, this perception may perpetuate the idea that women's voices and experiences are not relevant to wider policy discussions. To address this, it is important to promote greater understanding of the role and impact of CSOs in advocating for the rights and interests of all citizens, and to encourage greater participation from diverse communities.

Moreover, female and male participants believe that women are more likely to participate in civil society activities because they have more time on their hands, are more sentimental, and are still fighting to attain their rights. They also shared that women are also more interactive and social, and they see participation in CSOs as a way to gain knowledge and improve their social lives. On the other hand, men are portrayed as being busier with work and less interested in volunteering or participating in CSOs, according to the FGDs. Men also perceive participation in these activities as belittling their masculinity or as not their place, especially if they think there will be more women participating than men. Additionally, both male and female participants shared that men might not care as much about attaining their rights or seeking help from NGOs because they are not as likely to have

their rights violated. This show that both men and women share traditional perceptions on gender roles which perpetuate gender differences in civil society participation. Moreover, assuming that men are less likely to have their rights violated can prevent them from understanding and participating in the work of CSOs, which affects their ability to advocate for their own rights and the rights of other marginalized groups. Therefore, it is important to challenge these gender stereotypes and encourage both men and women to engage in civil society activities, regardless of their gender or perceived gender roles. These findings are consistent with the literature which suggests that cultural and societal expectations around gender roles have an impact on participation in civil society, with women being more engaged due to the focus on issues affecting them and the types of work being better suited to female volunteers, while men may feel less inclined to participate due to concerns about masculinity and perceived lack of relevance to their interests (Al-Barghouthi et al., 2018; El-Khoury, 2016; Harb & Dib, 2019). These factors can influence the effectiveness of civil society organizations in promoting active citizenship and social justice, as gender-balanced participation may be necessary to adequately address the needs of diverse communities (Harb & Dib, 2019).

In summary, gender stereotypes affect men's participation in CSOs and have a significant impact on AC for both men and women. For men, the perception that participating in CSOs diminishes their masculinity limits their ability to engage in advocacy for human rights and social justice, two areas which were identified as significant factors that shape their understanding of AC as highlighted in Theme 1: Perceptions and Understandings of AC. For women, this reinforces that women's issues are separate from broader social and political issues and may limit women's participation from other aspects of AC, especially political life.

Theme 6: Community Life

This theme explores the level of engagement of participants in community life, with a focus on participation in lawful demonstrations and signing petitions.

Most of the participants (85%) did not sign any petition in the past 5 years, while the rest signed petitions related to school and university (23.26%), women's rights (13.18%), environmental topics (9.3%), and the Beirut port blast (6.98%). In addition, most of the participants (63.15%) did not participate in any lawful demonstrations in the past 5 years, while rest participated mostly in the October 17th movement in 2019 with only 2.81% participating in demonstrations related to women's rights. Men were more likely to participate in lawful demonstrations than women due to the social stigma and judgement that women receive from their surroundings, including family members, relatives, and neighbours if they decided to participate. However, both males and females felt discouraged to continue participating in the demonstrations of October 17th due to the interference of political parties and politically affiliated individuals. Finally, stateless participants were highly active in community life, as they were consistently engaging with the demonstrations to demand their rights to basic services.

In general, participation in community life is relatively low among both males and females, with only 36.85% of the respondents from the general public reported participating in lawful demonstrations in the past 5 years. However, in some areas, female participation was lower than others. In Bekaa and Akkar, women's participation in community life, including protests and signing petitions was less than women in Nabatiyeh. In Bekaa and Akkar, women expressed avoiding participating in any form of demonstrations or signing petitions. Several reasons were behind this, including the misalignment of the recent demonstrations with the participants' values and beliefs, as they thought that the demonstrations were not aimed at one common goal and that it led to harmful consequences on the general public through destroying public properties and cutting roads preventing people from reaching their work. In addition, female participants in other areas, including Mount Lebanon, Beirut, North and South avoided participating due to the social stigma and judgement that they receive from their surroundings, including family members, relatives, and neighbours.

This lack of participation in community life has several

implications for women's AC. Firstly, it suggests that women may feel excluded from important discussions and decisions that affect their lives and the lives of those around them. AC involves being engaged in the community and participating in decision-making processes that shape society. If women are not participating in community life, they may not have a voice in these important decisions, especially that important topics were being raised in the October 17th revolution, such as passing their nationality to their children, fighting violence against women, and women's participation in politics. Secondly, it may suggest that women feel disconnected from the issues being raised in the demonstrations and petitions. It is possible that the goals of these movements do not align with their own values and beliefs, which may indicate a lack of representation of women's perspectives in these movements.

On the other hand, in Nabatiyeh, women participants were active during the October 17th demonstrations, however, they chose to stop protesting when the demonstrations were interfered by political parties and affiliated individuals, viewing that this defies the purpose of the protests which was directed towards changing the current political class. Similarly, men in all regions also were discouraged by continuing their demonstrations during October 17th due to the political interference.

Therefore, the issues raised during the October 17th movement, such as employment, healthcare, electricity, medication, intersect with gender and are not separate from gender equality. Despite this, the influence of political parties on people's ability to participate in the demonstrations remained dominant to the extent that it halted their participation in community life. This presents a significant challenge for civic engagement and active citizenship.

On the other hand, stateless participants expressed that they were strongly present during the October 17th revolution and that they were fighting for their rights as people who were born and lived all their life in Lebanon and yet are excluded from the political process and denied access to basic services and rights. This highlights the importance of recognizing and including stateless individuals and communities in the concept of active citizenship, as they too have a stake in the society they live in and should have a say in its governance and decision-making processes.

Theme 7: Behaviour and Perceptions of Active Citizenship

This theme explores the relationship between people's behaviours and perceptions of AC and the various factors that influence them. It is divided into two sub-themes, Sub-theme 1: Societal and Religious influence and Sub-theme 2: Nepotism and Active Citizenship. These sub-themes analyse how behaviours and perceptions are affected and what creates gaps between the two variables.

Several factors influence the behaviours and perceptions of the participants towards AC, including societal norms, detachment from religion, nepotism, and political corruption. Societal norms, characterised by deeply ingrained social constructs of gender roles and

gender stereotypes are powerful in influencing people's perceptions, which translate into behaviours that limit AC, such as preventing women from education and employment. On the other hand, and for participants from the North and Akkar, fear and true belief in God lead people to having the right perceptions and behaviours of AC. This shows that perceptions of AC are highly subjective and contextual. In addition, reaching high positions in society and being highly engaged in the political life through nepotism was highlighted as an example of how people may be perceiving themselves as AC while they are actually engaging in behaviours that go against the essence of AC.

Sub-theme 1: Societal and Religious Influence

In all areas, societal norms were mentioned as a main factor that influence behaviours and perceptions of AC. According to the participants, behaviours are a product of perceptions and cultural norms and gender stereotypes are powerful tools that influence people's perceptions in Lebanon. These norms are passed on from generation to generation and affect the ways in which people can become AC. For example, gender roles and stereotypes limit women's level of AC since they prioritise her role as a caregiver, as discussed previously. These perceptions can then influence behaviour in a number of ways. If individuals believe that women should not pursue education or employment, then they may discourage their daughters or other female family members from doing so. If they believe that men should be the primary decision-makers in politics, then they may be less likely to vote for female candidates or to support policies that promote gender equality. This finding is consistent with that of the literature. For example, Barakat and Al Ali (2017) examined the relationship between societal norms and women's political participation in Lebanon. The study found that traditional gender roles and cultural norms that prioritise women's domestic

roles over their public participation hinder women's political participation in Lebanon. The study also found that women who challenge these norms and engage in political activism face social and familial backlash, which further limits their participation. Overall, perceptions and behaviours regarding AC can be influenced by deeply ingrained cultural and societal beliefs. Therefore, the influence of societal norms on behaviours and perceptions of active citizenship can have a significant impact on gender equality in Lebanon by limiting women's access to education, employment, and political representation, and perpetuating traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

On the other hand, religion was identified as an important factor that influences behaviours and perceptions of AC according to the participants in Akkar and the North. Participants believed that fear and belief in God automatically translates to being an AC through taking action to contribute to the benefit of the society. Therefore, the behaviours necessary for someone to be considered an active citizen include being respectful, fearing God, helping others, having good manners, and working for the good of everyone. They also mentioned examples of specific behaviours, such as stopping to help an elderly person cross the road. Accordingly, the gap in

perception and behaviour occurs when this religious aspect is missing from people's lives. The participants discussed the potential influence of perception on behaviour. Some suggested that being religious can motivate individuals to be active citizens. However, others noted that people may hide behind religion and not actually act on their beliefs. In fact, religion was listed among the top 3 actors that influence people's opinions in the quantitative data, which further highlights the importance of religion in guiding religious people towards AC. This perception of active citizenship being tied to religious beliefs and behaviours can create a barrier to gender equality, as traditional gender roles and norms are often tied to religious beliefs in Lebanon. Women's participation in public life may be limited if their actions are not seen as conforming to religious beliefs and expectations of gender roles. For example, a woman who challenges traditional gender roles by running for political office may face backlash if her actions are perceived as going against religious beliefs or societal norms.

Sub-theme 2: Nepotism, Politics, and Active Citizenship

Nepotism was identified by the participants as a prevalent case in Lebanon that depicts the gap between behaviours and perceptions of AC. Almost all participants in all areas were concerned about how many people in Lebanon get jobs because of nepotism, even if they are not qualified. This leads to people reaching higher positions, gaining employment opportunities, and participating in political parties and community life, hence becoming more active citizens. As previously explained, the participants in this study highly associate AC with employment, which explains why for them, nepotism in employment and job opportunities drives people to becoming active citizens, although it does not align with the essence of the ethics and values that AC entails. The impact of nepotism on active citizenship has been explored in some studies, though there is limited research specifically on this topic. One study by Hanlon and colleagues (2018) found that nepotism

in local government can have a negative impact on active citizenship. The study, which focused on a community in South Africa, found that nepotism reduced trust in local government and discouraged citizens from engaging in civic activities. Participants perceived nepotism as a form of corruption and felt that it undermined the principles of fairness and meritocracy. Another study by Lee (2019) examined the impact of nepotism on political engagement in South Korea. The study found that nepotism reduced citizens' trust in government and political parties, leading to decreased political engagement. The study also found that citizens who were less tolerant of nepotism were more likely to participate in political activities, such as voting and protesting. Therefore, nepotism can have a negative impact on AC by reducing trust in government and discouraging citizens from engaging in civic activities. This can have implications for promoting gender equality, as nepotism may perpetuate existing power structures and exclude qualified individuals, including women, from positions of influence and decision-making.

Moreover, criticism of politicians and authoritarian figures was common across all areas, where it highlights the gap between behaviours and perceptions of AC in Lebanon. According to the participants, politicians perceive themselves as active citizens, but their behaviours are not showcasing the right behaviour of an active citizen, which includes respect for other, tolerance of diversity, and collaboration. However, these examples of behaviours are not sound representations of AC as much as law-abiding citizens, which shows that "citizenship" and "active citizenship" are overlapping concepts for the participants. Hence, it is important to differentiate between the nuances of citizenship and active citizenship in the initiatives targeting the promotion of AC.

Furthermore, female participants from Bekaa cited examples of male politicians who claim to support women's rights but do not treat women as competent colleagues in the parliament. This includes the inappropriate comments that male politicians direct

toward female politicians in the parliament regarding their appearance and physical attributes, and the common mockery they make out of their speeches and public appearances. Hence, they do not respect them or take them seriously. Moreover, male participants from Nabatiyeh shared that the misbehaviour and corruption of political and municipal figures can discourage people from becoming active citizens by eroding people's trust in the government and making them feel powerless to effect change. Overall, this passage suggests that active citizenship in Lebanon faces significant challenges due to the gap between behaviours and perceptions, the negative influence of politicians, and the limitations placed on women's participation in politics.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that deeply ingrained cultural and societal beliefs, including gender stereotypes, can influence perceptions and behaviours of AC. Participants believe that religion plays an important role in determining whether a person is an AC. On the other hand, nepotism was identified as a prevalent issue in Lebanon, leading to people reaching higher positions, gaining employment opportunities, and participating in political parties and community life, hence becoming more active citizens, which has a negative impact on AC as it discourages people from being active and engaged in society. Overall, the study highlights the complexity of the relationship between behaviours and perceptions of active citizenship and the need to address societal norms and cultural beliefs to promote gender equality and active citizenship.

Theme 8: Perception on Gender Equality

This theme explores the perceptions of the participants towards gender equality, including their understanding of conditional and unconditional gender equality, the importance of gender equality and the reasons that push them to support or refuse gender equality.

Perceptions on gender equality were highly mixed and widely varied between participants, regardless of gender and region. According to the survey, 48% of the respondents believe in conditional gender equality while 44% believe in unconditional gender equality. It is important to note that many respondents may not have differentiated between the concepts of sex and gender in their responses. While sex refers to biological differences between males and females, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, and expectations associated with being male or female. The participants argued that men and women are not able to do the same things due to their biological and physical differences, considering women as more sentimental and hence can be better caregivers while men can be better leaders. It is important to recognise that these views reflect traditional gender roles that are influenced by cultural and societal norms. It is also important to note that biological differences between

the sexes do not necessarily determine one's abilities or potential for leadership. Additionally, according to the survey, men consider themselves more active citizens than women due to the prevailing societal and gender norms that limit women's roles to domestic duties, which can make it difficult for them to engage in political or civic activities. This reflects a broader societal issue where gender inequality impacts women's ability to fully participate in public life and civic activities.

The following table presents the views of the participants who support conditional gender equality as opposed to those who support unconditional gender equality. It can be observed that there is a significant divide in the participants' views regarding gender equality. While some participants support conditional gender equality and argue that men and women are biologically different and cannot do everything equally, others support unconditional gender equality and believe that gender equality affects everyone in society and cannot be achieved if it is conditional. This shows that the participants do not fully understand that gender equality is not related to the sex of the individual and that their beliefs and attitudes towards gender roles and capabilities are influenced by societal norms

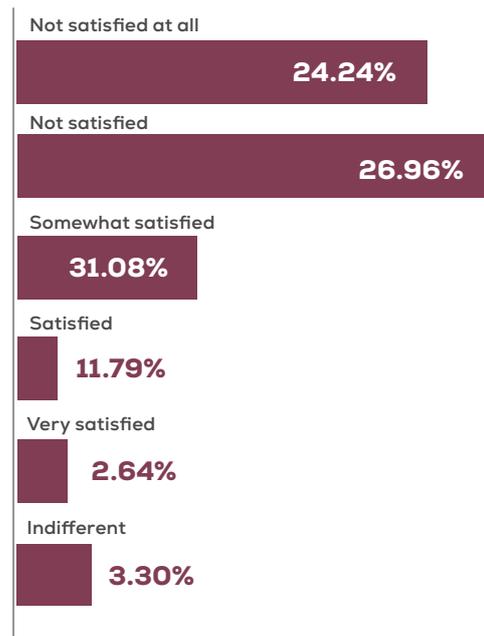**Table 7:** Participants views on conditional and unconditional gender equality

Conditional Gender Equality	Unconditional Gender Equality
• Men and women are biologically different and cannot do everything equally. • Men are physically more capable of working jobs that require strength than women. • Women are better caregivers and have a higher sentimental capacity to take care of children. • Women are more emotional and cannot take leadership and decision-making positions.	• Gender equality is not just a woman's issue, and it affects everyone in society. • Gender equality can only be achieved if it is unconditional, and any limitations perpetuate inequality. • Engaging men and boys in discussions about gender equality is an important step towards unconditional equality. • Gender equality is intertwined with matters of daily life, and it cannot be separated from other social and economic issues.

and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality. This gender essentialism reinforces gender stereotypes and restricts individuals' choices and opportunities based on their sex, which undermines gender equality and active citizenship. Several studies have explored the ways in which gender essentialism affects gender equality and active citizenship. For example, in a study by Brescoll and Uhlmann (2013), participants were asked to evaluate a fictional job candidate for a leadership position. The candidate's gender and the perceived gender-typicality of their name (i.e., whether it was considered more masculine or feminine) were manipulated in the study. The results showed that participants rated candidates with more gender-typical names as more suitable for the leadership role, even when their qualifications were identical to those of candidates with less gender-typical names. This demonstrates how gender essentialism can limit opportunities for women to take on leadership roles, even when they have the same qualifications as men.

In the following figure, the satisfaction with the level of gender equality in Lebanon appears to be low, indicating that the respondents are not satisfied with the current level of gender equality in Lebanon. However, when asked if they would engage in political activism for gender equality if they get the chance, more than 50% of the respondents answered with No. Based on the analysis in the previous themes, namely political life and community life, the participants have shown that they are not encouraged by the idea of political activism, especially that they showed low levels of participation in petitions and lawful demonstrations

in general, and for women's rights issues in particular. As previously explained, this might be due to the fear of political parties and the limitations on freedom of expression in Lebanon, which has pushed people to avoid engaging in political activism. Additionally, the complexity of the issue and the systemic and cultural factors that play a role in people's perception and understanding of gender equality also contribute to this reluctance to advocate for gender equality.

Figure 17: Satisfaction with the level of gender equality in Lebanon

Not satisfied at all
24.24%

Not satisfied
26.96%

Somewhat satisfied
31.08%

Satisfied
11.79%

Very satisfied
2.64%

Indifferent
3.30%

The lack of political activism and participation in petitions and demonstrations ultimately limits the progress towards gender equality. Without the active engagement of individuals and the community, it is difficult to bring about significant change in policies and practices that promote gender equality. Additionally, the low level of satisfaction with the current level of gender equality indicates a need for more advocacy and activism towards this cause. Furthermore, the fear of political parties and limitations on freedom of expression highlight the importance of creating a safe and inclusive space for individuals to engage in political activism without fear of retribution. According to a study by Hudson and Bowen (2018), women's political participation and activism are positively associated with gender equality across different regions and countries. The study found that women's representation in parliament, women's membership in civil society organizations, and women's participation in protests and demonstrations are all positively correlated with measures of gender equality.

Another study by Mikołajewska and Mikołajewska (2019) investigated the relationship between active citizenship and gender equality in the European Union (EU). The study found that countries with higher levels of active citizenship, such as higher levels of volunteering, political participation, and social trust, tend to have higher levels of gender equality, as measured by indicators such as the gender pay gap, the proportion of women in decision-making positions, and access to education and employment opportunities. Overall, these studies suggest that political activism and active citizenship can play an important role in promoting gender equality in different contexts and regions.

This theme brought some backlash from stateless participants, where they considered that the concept of gender equality manipulates girls and women's thoughts and therefore, they do not want to talk about it, according to male participants in the FGDs, and other male participants who were present in the discussions as chaperones to the women. Recent literature on statelessness and gender reveals that statelessness often exacerbates gender-based discrimination and inequality, leading to vulnerabilities and exclusions for stateless women and girls (Koser & Pinkerton, 2015). This is because statelessness deprives them of legal identity and recognition, making it difficult to access basic rights and services, such as education, healthcare, and employment (UNHCR, 2018). However, despite these challenges, gender equality remains a taboo topic among stateless communities, as it challenges deeply ingrained cultural and traditional norms and beliefs. In fact, some stateless women and men may even view gender equality as a threat to their traditional roles and identity, as the case in this study (Van Waas, 2021). In conclusion, while statelessness and gender equality are both complex issues, they are interconnected and cannot be addressed in isolation.

Theme 9: Active Citizenship as a Promoter of Gender Equality

This theme examines the participants' perceptions of AC as a promoter of gender equality and how can it be utilised in Lebanon to endorse equality between men and women.

Although all the FGD participants and the majority of the survey respondents (78.97%) agree that AC can be a powerful tool to promote gender equality in Lebanon, yet the participants believe that it is difficult to achieve gender equality through promoting AC because of the missing pre-requisites for gender equality in the country. These pre-requisites were defined by the participants as the enactment and enforcement of laws and policies that protect women and girls from violence before anything else. Other pre-requisites included challenging societal norms and patriarchy.

Both male and female participants recognise the importance of challenging patriarchal norms and advocating for legal and policy reforms that protect women's rights. The following table summarises the participants' responses on how AC can be a promoter of gender equality.

Although the participants show positive perceptions towards AC and how it can promote gender equality in Lebanon, their suggestions are hindered by their own experiences with the political, civil, and community lives. Therefore, it is important to take these findings into consideration when answering whether AC in Lebanon can promote gender equality and how.
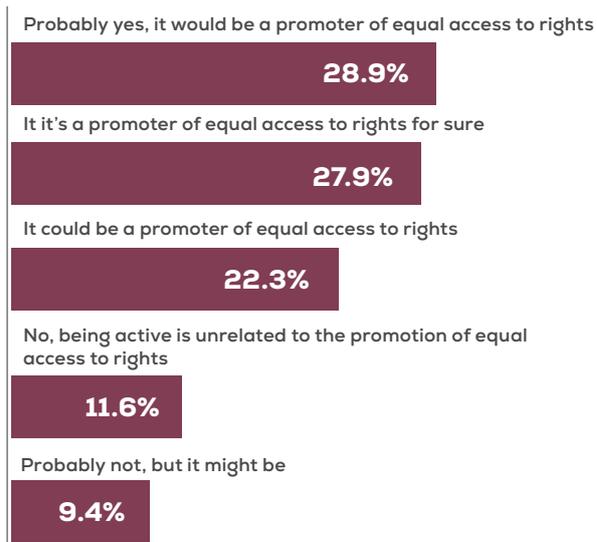
Figure 18: AC as a promoter of gender equality

Probably yes, it would be a promoter of equal access to rights

28.9%

It it's a promoter of equal access to rights for sure

27.9%

It could be a promoter of equal access to rights

22.3%

No, being active is unrelated to the promotion of equal access to rights

11.6%

Probably not, but it might be

9.4%

Table 8 : Role of AC in promoting gender equality in Lebanon

Role of AC	Mechanism	Interpretation
Exposure to diversity	AC often involves participating in civic activities, such as attending community meetings, volunteering for local organisations, and participating in protests or demonstrations. These activities provide opportunities for individuals to interact with people from different backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. This exposure can help break down stereotypes and promote understanding between different groups.	These suggestions were shared by both female and male participants. However, as the findings of this study have shown, women are participating in civic activities such as volunteering and social work more than men, hence, in reality, the diversity that the participants are suggesting is missing from the civic engagement in Lebanon. Moreover, and practically speaking this might be difficult to engage both men and women, given that men are hesitant to participate in gender equality activism due to the social stigma around their masculinity, as highlighted above, and women are faced with judgement and constraints from their families and communities to participate in collective action concerning this topic. In addition, activism through social media also has its limitations to effectively engage users in Lebanon. Finally, people's engagement in the democratic process is influenced by several complex factors such as financial gains, fear of political parties, and familial pressures, which might limit the effectiveness of this process in achieving better gender equality.
Empowering individuals to demand gender equality	AC can help individuals build strong coalitions with other like-minded individuals, organisations, and movements that share a commitment to gender equality. Through collective action, individuals can amplify their voices and increase their influence to demand change.	
Amplifying women's voices	AC can provide a platform for women to voice their concerns and opinions, amplifying their voices in the public sphere. By bringing attention to the issues that women face, active citizens can help to raise awareness about gender inequality and work towards building a more inclusive and equitable society.	
Advocating for policy change	AC can be used to advocate for policy changes that promote gender equality. By engaging in the democratic process, active citizens can advocate for laws and policies that protect women's rights, increase women's access to education and employment opportunities, and promote gender equity in all areas of society.	

Conclusion and Implications

Answering the Research Question

The research question that this study aims to answer is: **"Is active citizenship a promoter of gender equality in Lebanon, or could active citizenship be a promoter of gender equality in Lebanon?"** To answer this, the study looked at the level of AC in Lebanon through collecting quantitative and qualitative information from men and women residing across all the eight governorates in Lebanon about their understanding of AC, their motivators and barriers to becoming AC, the factors that influence their political, social and community participation, and their perceptions of gender equality and its link to AC.

Based on the findings from the nine themes, it can be concluded that AC has the potential to promote gender equality in Lebanon. The findings indicate that there is a general lack of understanding of what active citizenship means in Lebanon, and that this lack of understanding may limit the potential for active citizenship to promote gender equality. While some participants expressed a broad understanding of active citizenship as any form of participation in public life, many others had a narrower view of active citizenship that focused mainly on formal political participation, such as voting or running for office. This limited understanding of active citizenship may limit opportunities for women and other marginalized groups to engage in public life and participate in decision-making processes. However, there is a growing awareness of the importance of civic engagement and the role of citizens in shaping society.

Regarding motivators and barriers to active citizenship, the findings suggest that there are significant motivators and barriers to active citizenship in Lebanon, which may have differential impacts on women, men, and stateless individuals. For example, while many participants expressed a strong desire to participate in public life and contribute to their communities, they also identified various structural and cultural barriers to active citizenship, such as a lack of resources, social norms that discourage women's participation, and legal and administrative barriers that restrict the participation of stateless individuals. More specifically, the findings suggest that women in Lebanon are more likely to face obstacles in being AC and engaging in political and civic activities. This is reflected in Theme

3: Motivators and Barriers to AC, where it was clearly highlighted in Sub-theme 2: Barriers to AC that women face more barriers related to gender discrimination, stereotypes, and patriarchal systems and identify as less active citizens than men. While men referred to employment as a main barrier to being active citizen. Thus, addressing active citizenship with men through the employment lens, can help increase their involvement. Generally, several motivators were identified that could encourage active citizenship, including personal beliefs and values, the desire for social change, and a sense of responsibility towards the community. However, there are also several barriers to active citizenship, including political corruption, lack of trust in the government and political institutions, and a lack of awareness of available opportunities for civic engagement.

When it comes to social media and active citizenship, social media was identified as a powerful tool for promoting active citizenship, with participants citing its ability to facilitate communication, organize events, and mobilize individuals towards a common cause. However, there are concerns regarding the reliability and accuracy of information shared on social media, particularly from men who still prefer and rely on traditional media outlet, which can lead to the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Also, the findings indicate that social media can reinforce existing power structures and biases, such as gender-based discrimination, and that online activism may not always translate into meaningful change in the offline world.

When discussing active citizenship with participants, Theme 4: Political Life showcased the importance of political participation in promoting gender equality in Lebanon. The findings suggest that political life in Lebanon is characterized by significant gender-based inequalities, which may limit the potential for active citizenship to promote gender equality. Women are significantly underrepresented in formal political institutions, such as parliament, and face various forms of discrimination and marginalization in the political sphere, in addition to discriminatory laws and societal attitudes. However, AC, which involves engaging in political processes and advocacy, can help to challenge

these barriers and promote gender equality in political representation. Furthermore, the findings suggest that political life in Lebanon is often characterized by clientelism, corruption, and nepotism, which may limit opportunities for marginalized groups, stateless and women, to engage in meaningful political participation.

On the other hand, the findings also suggest that women can be powerful agents of change and promote gender equality through their AC. This is particularly true, as civil society was seen as a crucial driver of active citizenship, with participants, particularly women acknowledging the important role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting social change and providing services to marginalized communities. This is demonstrated in Theme 5: Civil Society Life which highlight that women are highly active in civil society, which are key players in advocating for human rights and gender equality. However, the findings also indicate that civil society organizations may be limited by a lack of resources, fragmentation, and political interference, which may limit their effectiveness in promoting gender equality. Nevertheless, the absence of men in this area restricts the topic of gender equality to a women's issue only and undermines its importance in all aspects of life. Therefore, AC can encourage men to be more active in civil society life and engage with conversations on gender equality, hence promoting its presence in Lebanon. In addition, AC promotes women's engagement in community life and encourage their presence in lawful demonstrations, which was found to be restricted by political interference and gender

stereotypes in Theme 6: Community Life. The findings suggest that community life in Lebanon is characterized by strong social networks and a sense of community solidarity, which may facilitate active citizenship and promote gender equality. Participants identified various forms of community-based activism, such as volunteering, organizing events, and providing services to vulnerable groups, as important ways to promote social change and engage in public life.

Finally, AC can initiate the dismantlement of patriarchy and systemic gender discrimination through identifying areas of privilege and advantage that men have over women and reducing the gatekeeping of educational, political, economic, and other public institutions, which were identified in Theme 8: Perceptions on Gender Equality and Theme 9: Active Citizenship as a Promoter of Gender Equality as significant hindrances to gender equality and women's AC in Lebanon.

Overall, AC can be a powerful tool for promoting gender equality in Lebanon through targeted efforts that include women and men from the general public and stateless communities to ensure that all individuals have equal access to their rights and can fully participate in society. However, for it to be a promoter several challenges need to be addressed, including the lack of awareness and understanding of active citizenship, the need for more diverse and inclusive communities, and the barriers to women's participation in politics and civil society.

Recommendations

This section outlines the recommendations for ABAAD and UNDEF's project "Engaging Civil Society and Youth in Gender-Inclusive Citizenship and Leadership in Lebanon" derived from the qualitative and quantitative findings on the link between active citizenship and gender equality in Lebanon.

The study identified the following key words that repeatedly emerged during the quantitative and qualitative data collection as they highly resonate with the participants' experiences and perceptions and can be used as entry points and/or hindrances to guide the initiatives in subsequent phases:

Table 9 : Common terms across governorates and genders

Role of AC	Relevance	Gender	Governorate
Helping others	Form of AC	Mostly Females	All
Volunteering	Form of AC	Females and Males	Bekaa Beirut Mount Lebanon Nabatieh Akkar
Political Interference	Barrier to AC	Females and Males	Bekaa Mount Lebanon North Nabatieh Akkar
Patriarchy	Barrier to AC Barrier to GE	Females and Males	All
Gender stereotype	Barrier to AC Barrier to GE	Females and Males	All
Freedom of Expression	Motivator of AC	Females and Males	All
Voting	Form of AC	Males	All
Biological differences between men and women	Barrier to GE	Females and Males	All
Social work	Form of AC	Females	Bekaa Akkar Mount Lebanon Beirut

Recommendation	Description	Relevant Themes
Distinguish between "sex" and "gender" and highlight the nuanced meanings of each term to avoid it's misconception and usage interchangeably. To do so, it is recommended to: • Develop educational campaigns that explain the difference between sex and gender, and the social and cultural factors that influence gender identity and expression. In these campaigns, clear and simple language should be used in communication materials that are accessible to a wide range of audiences. • Aside from campaigns, this can be done by including examples and case studies that illustrate the nuanced meanings of sex and gender, and how they intersect with other aspects of identity such as religion, age and class. • Encourage stakeholders, including staff members and volunteers, to use gender-inclusive language that respects the diversity of gender identities and expressions. • Fostering conversations and dialogue around gender identity and expression to promote greater understanding and acceptance. By doing the above, Abaad will raise awareness and understanding of the distinction between sex and gender and promote greater inclusivity and respect for diverse gender identities and expressions.	Themes 5 and 8 related to Women's participation in the political life and perceptions on gender equality show that the misconception that people have around the physical attributes and gender roles of men and women are barriers to gender equality and women's AC. ABAAD should debunk this confusion in order to promote AC for men and women equally.	5, 8
Deconstruct the perceived pre-requisite and conditions around AC. To deconstruct the perceived pre-requisites and conditions around Active Citizenship (AC) while accounting for national and local factors as well as individual differences, Qualisus recommends the following actionable strategies: • Advocate for policies and initiatives that address the systemic barriers and inequalities that prevent individuals from achieving AC. This may involve working with policymakers to promote access to education, healthcare, and other basic needs, and to address discrimination and inequality in the workplace and other spheres of society. • Develop tailored and targeted curriculum content accounting for the uniqueness of each area. • Use the individual differences at local level (education level, knowledge of AC, employment, etc..) to promote community-based initiatives and programs that foster a sense of collective responsibility and engagement around achieving AC. This may involve supporting community-led projects and campaigns that aim to improve access to resources and opportunities and promoting a culture of active citizenship and civic engagement. This can be done through peer-to-peer support by youth, in addition to working with local partners and community leaders to understand the specific context and issues facing each group. • Conduct regular evaluations and assessments to measure the impact of these strategies, and to identify areas where additional support and resources may be needed. This may involve gathering feedback and input from participants, partners, and stakeholders, and using this information to continuously improve and refine the program. By implementing these strategies, the program can deconstruct the perceived pre-requisites and conditions around AC while accounting for national and local factors and individual differences. This can help to promote greater access to resources and support for individuals who are facing economic, social, and cultural barriers to achieving AC, ultimately promoting greater well-being and empowerment for all members of society.	Themes 1 and 2 show that people understand that for a person to be an AC, good living conditions and pre-requisites such as being employed should prevail. ABAAD should highlight that AC is not conditional and that AC is attainable regardless of the socioeconomic situation and unemployment in Lebanon.	1, 2

Recommendation	Description	Relevant Themes
Engage men in the conversations related to gender equality and in all phases of gender equality initiatives. Address men in conversations related to gender equality using angles that are of interest as shown in the findings. For example, political engagement, employment, etc.. Provide the space and promote dialogue and discussion: ABAAD should create opportunities for men to engage in open and respectful dialogue about gender equality issues. This can help to break down barriers and promote mutual understanding between men and women, and to encourage men to become active supporters of gender equality. This should not be mixed up with awareness-raising sessions. Involve male community leaders and influencers: ABAAD should engage male community leaders and influencers in the project, to help promote gender equality at the community level. This can help to reach a wider audience and to create a more sustainable impact, by involving men who have significant influence and credibility in their communities. Use men role models as allies to initiate national and local level discussions related to gender equality and engage other men. At national level, a quick assessment could be done to identify influential man. At the local level, several religious leaders, man activists can play this role. By implementing these steps, ABAAD can actively engage men in conversations related to gender equality and in all phases of gender equality initiatives. This can help to promote a more inclusive and holistic approach to gender equality, and to address the underlying patriarchal norms and beliefs that hinder progress towards gender equality.	Themes 5, 6, and 9 highlighted the dissociation of men from the gender equality discussion and the perception that gender equality is a stand-alone topic. ABAAD should involve men in all aspects of the project, including sensitization sessions and community-based initiatives. It is important to engage men in discussions about gender equality and active citizenship, as they are often the gatekeepers of patriarchal norms and beliefs that hinder gender equality progress.	5, 6, 9
Acknowledge the role that religion plays in shaping the levels of AC among people and involve religious leaders in initiatives to promote AC and gender equality. This can be done, by designing interventions that are culturally sensitive and appropriate to the specific religious and cultural contexts in which they are being implemented. This can include using religious texts and teachings to promote gender equality and active citizenship, as well as highlighting the compatibility of these values with religious beliefs. This can help to address misconceptions and stereotypes about gender equality and active citizenship, and to build consensus around shared values and principles.	The findings indicate that religion plays an important role in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards active citizenship and gender equality in Lebanon. Many people think that gender equality goes against the teachings of their religions. Therefore, ABAAD should involve religious leaders in their interventions and engage them in discussions about gender equality and AC to demystify the taboo around gender equality.	7, 8, 9
Address the role of the family and the surrounding community in shaping people's behaviours and perceptions and their level of AC. To reduce possible negative impacts from families and communities on youth in relation to AC and gender equality, ABAAD should involve families and the community in different project activities, including sensitization sessions, training workshops, and community-based initiatives.	Family and the surrounding community play an important role in people's political views, their access to resources and information, and their participation in community life. The thematic analysis showed that family was affecting women's ability to participate in lawful demonstrations and young people's voting decisions. Thus, ABAAD should work with the surrounding community to effectively mobilise people towards AC and gender equality.	5, 6, 7, 8
Integrate gender in topics that resonate with men and women	The analysis showed that people place conditions on gender equality because they view it as a stand-alone topic and separate it from the events that happen around them. Also, people are reluctant to advocate for gender equality. By integrating gender in common issues such as healthcare, employment, economic security, ABAAD can overcome the resistance to accept gender equality as an issue concerning both men and women.	2, 4, 5, 8

Recommendation	Description	Relevant Themes
Integrate local TV channels in AC and gender equality campaigns along with social media to ensure higher outreach, particularly to ensure men inclusivity.	Themes 2 and 3 show how little engagement social media is receiving from both men and women and that men are more interested in TV channels as they view them more credible. ABAAD should address the limited engagement on social media and integrate popular TV channels to ensure higher outreach of AC and gender equality campaigns.	2, 3
Avoid one-size-fits-all content and account for geographic disparities to inform the tailoring on the curriculum. This can have a major influence on attendance, and impact of the activities.	The findings show that different geographic areas have different experiences with AC and GE. For example, in Akkar, they are suffering from unemployment, in the South, they are restricted in terms of political affiliation, and in rural areas, community and collaboration was more present as a form of AC. Therefore, ABAAD should tailor their interventions to the specific needs and challenges of each geographic area, taking into account the unique social, economic, and political contexts that shape people's experiences of AC and GE.	1, 2, 5
Include stateless people in the conversation of AC and gender equality accounting for the limitations in the legal framework. Consider the following question: What can stateless individuals do to be AC while being limited by the current legal framework?	Stateless people are a marginalized and vulnerable group who often face significant challenges in accessing their basic rights and participating fully in their communities. ABAAD should include stateless people in campaigns and initiatives to address their situation and advocate for their rights to become more active and engaged members in their communities.	8
Collaborate with governmental and legal entities to address structural barriers to AC and GE	Freedom of expression, social justice, and discriminatory laws have all appeared as barriers to AC and gender equality in the findings. To address them, ABAAD should collaborate with policy and decision-makers to advocate for legal and policy reforms that promote freedom of expression, social justice, and gender equality.	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

References and Annexes

References

Ahrari, S., & Alishahi, N. (2019). *The impact of corruption on active citizenship: A case study of Iran.* International Journal of Ethics and Society, 1(1), 7-16. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijs.20190101.12

Al-Barghouthi, L., Salem, R., & Sabatinelli, G. (2018). *Women's participation in civil society organizations in Jordan: An exploratory study.* The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies, 43(1), 85-106.

Aouragh, M., & Alexander, A. (2015). *The Arab Spring and social media: The case of Morocco.* Media, Culture & Society, 37(2), 291-307.

Barrett, G. A. (2016). *Active citizenship and community development.* Community Development Journal, 51(2), 219-236.

Bazzi, S., & Yabroudi, M. (2015). *Women's political participation in Lebanon.* Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

Bhabha, J. (2018). *The citizenship gap: Challenges for transnational migration.* Ethnic and Racial Studies, 41(8), 1418-1436.

Blais, M., Cloutier, É., & Gagné, É. (2021). *Political participation and feminist attitudes among Canadian women.* Canadian Journal of Political Science, 54(1), 1-19.

Brescoll, V. L., & Uhlmann, E. L. (2013). *Can an angry woman get ahead? Status conferral, gender, and expression of emotion in the workplace.* Psychological Science, 24(10), 1975-1980.

Chadwick, A., & Howard, P. N. (2017). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dahlberg, E., Dahlstedt, M., & Johansson, M. (2015). *Active citizenship and youth participation in Sweden.* European Journal of Social Work, 18(3), 292-304.

Dahlerup, D., & Freidenvall, L. (2018). *Women's political representation: The importance of ideology.* Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society, 25(3), 372-393.

De Vroome, T., Van der Lippe, T., & Kraaykamp, G. (2014). *Employment status and participation in voluntary work: The role of social resources.* Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 43(3), 496-515.

Denny, E., & Earp, J. (2018). *Women's rights activism and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea.* Social Science & Medicine, 200, 150-157.

El-Khoury, C. (2016). *The impact of women's leadership in civil society organizations on women's empowerment in Lebanon.* Journal of International Women's Studies, 17(3), 71-87.

Farhat, D. (2018). *Stateless Arabs in Lebanon: Marginality and the politics of citizenship.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Fawaz, M., Khawaja, M., & Samaha, A. (2020). *Women's experiences of gender-based violence in Lebanon: A systematic review and thematic synthesis.* BMC Women's Health, 20(1), 1-14.

Gans-Morse, J., & Mazzuca, S. (2019). *The civic consequences of corruption: Conceptual considerations and empirical evidence.* Annual Review of Political Science, 22, 271-289. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050317-070932

Goodwin-Gill, G. (2018). *The stateless as a challenge to international society.* Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(2), 233-249.

Grose, C. R., & Linden, L. L. (2017). *Political gatekeeping and family socialization.* Political Research Quarterly, 70(1), 20-31.

Hagen, L., & Lutz, C. (2019). *Social media as a tool for promoting gender equality: A critical review of the literature.* International Journal of Communication, 13, 4968-4990.

Hanlon, J., Barnes, T., & Newman, K. (2018). *Nepotism, trust and active citizenship in South Africa.* African Affairs, 117(469), 133-154.

Harb, C., & Dib, H. (2019). *Gendering civil society: Women's activism and the shaping of citizenship in Lebanon.* Citizenship Studies, 23(2), 122-139.

Hofstede, G. (2015). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations.* Sage publications.

Hudson, V. M., & Bowen, D. (2018). T*he impact of women's political representation on gender equality in a global context: A review of the literature.* Social Science Quarterly, 99(2), 593-610.

Huybrechts, B., Turcotte, D., & Roberts, K. (2016). *Defining and measuring active citizenship: a review of recent research literature.* Social Science Information, 55(4), 474-500.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). (2020). *"Women's Political Participation in the Middle East and North Africa."* https://www.ifes.org/publications/womens-political-participation-middle-east-and-north-africa

International Rescue Committee. (2018). *Stateless in Lebanon: An invisible crisis.* Retrieved from https://www.rescue.org/report/stateless-lebanon-invisible-crisis

Joppke, C., & Ersanilli, E. (2017). *Statelessness and the politics of immigration.* European Journal of Sociology, 58(1), 107-138.

Jubilut, L. L. (2016). *Statelessness and the right to citizenship in Africa.* African Human Rights Law Journal, 16(1), 1-22.

Kassis, M. (2019). *Statelessness and the crisis of citizenship in Lebanon.* Middle East Law and Governance, 11(1), 1-19.

Kaya, A., & Özeren, E. (2019). *Active citizenship in higher education: A systematic review of the literature.* Journal of Education and Practice, 10(30), 35-44.

Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL). (2016). *National survey on women's health and life experiences in Lebanon.* Retrieved from http://www.rdflwomen.org/files/file/En%20Survey%20Report.pdf

Lee, J. (2019). *The effect of nepotism on political engagement: evidence from South Korea.* Korea Observer, 50(3), 523-553.

Lee, K. (2020). *Understanding civic education and active citizenship in the digital age.* In Handbook of Research on the Facilitation of Civic Engagement through Community Art (pp. 1-19). IGI Global.

McAdam, D., & Kloos, K. (2014). *Collective action in urban America: Toward a theory of subpolitics.* Russell Sage Foundation.

Mikołajewska, E., & Mikołajewska, J. (2019). *Active citizenship and gender equality in the European Union.* Social Indicators Research, 142(1), 143-163.

Mollenhorst, G., Kraaykamp, G., & Van Oorschot, W. (2015). *Occupational status and volunteering in later life: A test of role and resource theories.* Ageing & Society, 35(1), 110-130.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* Simon and Schuster.

Sabucedo, J. M., Alzate, M., & Barreiro, C. (2018). *Political participation and employment: a comparative study of Spain and Portugal.* European Journal of Social Psychology, 48(3), 317-329.

Sassenberg, K., Postmes, T., & van der Meer, T. G. (2018). *Diversity and active citizenship: The role of social networks.* Political Psychology, 39(1), 185-199.

Stoker, G., Jordan, G., & Clarke, S. (2013). *Social capital, citizenship, and political participation.* Political Studies, 61(3), 526-546.

Stuenkel, O. (2020). *Stateless in Lebanon: An overlooked crisis.* Al Jazeera. Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/1/14/stateless-in-lebanon-an-overlooked-crisis

UN Women. (2016). *Facts and figures: Ending violence against women in Lebanon.* Retrieved from https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/11/facts-and-figures-ending-violence-against-women-in-lebanon

UN Women. (2020). *COVID-19 and women's rights in Lebanon.* Retrieved from https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/covid-19-and-womens-rights-in-lebanon

UNFPA. (2020). *COVID-19 and gender-based violence: Lebanon.* Retrieved from https://www.unfpa.org/resources/covid-19-and-gender-based-violence-lebanon

UNHCR. (2019). *Stateless in Lebanon: Life in limbo.* Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/lb/statelessness-in-lebanon-life-in-limbo/

UNHCR. (2019). *Statelessness in Lebanon: An overview.* Retrieved from https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/72975

UNHCR. (2021). *Stateless persons in Lebanon.* Retrieved from https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_refugees/item/7238

UNHCR. (2021). *UNHCR and partners appeal for $1.47 billion to support Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon.* Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/3/605c2d2a4/unhcr-partners-appeal-147-billion-support-syrian-refugees-host-communities.html

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2019). *"Gender and Political Participation in Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen: Challenges and Opportunities."* https://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/gender-and-political-participation-in-iraq--jordan--and-yemen-.html

Van Hear, N., Bloom, L., & Samers, M. (2019). *Citizenship in question: Evidentiary thresholds and statelessness in South Asia.* Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 45(12), 2209-2226.

Van Waas, L. (2019). T*he politics of statelessness: Comparative analyses of citizenship law and policy in Europe.* Oxford University Press.

Vromen, A., Xenos, M. A., & Loader, B. D. (2016). *Young people, social media, and civic participation.* Information, Communication & Society, 19(10), 1465-1487.

Widmer, M. (2020). I*n Lebanon, stateless Palestinians are hit hardest by COVID-19. Middle East Eye.* Retrieved from https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/lebanon-stateless-palestinians-hit-hardest-coronavirus-pandemic

World Bank. (2018). *Lebanon: Unlocking the potential of women.* Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2018/03/08/lebanon-unlocking-the-potential-of-women

Zhang, Y. (2018). *Parental influence on political participation: Evidence from the United States.* Social Science Quarterly, 99(2), 797-811.

Annexes

Annex 1: Prioritisation Matrix

The below matrix represents the priority level for each ACCI indicator as agreed with ABAAD team.

List of indicators in Active Citizenship Composite Indicator (ACCI)		
	Political Life Dimension Description	1. Top Priority
	Political parties: membership	1. Top Priority
	Political parties: participation	1. Top Priority
	Political parties: voluntary work	1. Top Priority
	National Parliament - Voting	1. Top Priority
	Women Participation in national parliament	1. Top Priority
Sub-dimensions	**Civil Society Dimension**	3. Low Importance
Protest	Signing a petition	2. Moderate Importance
Protest	Taking part in lawful demonstrations	1. Top Priority
Protest	Boycotting products and Ethical consumption	3. Low Importance
Protest	Protest Contacted a politician	3. Low Importance
HR Org	Human Rights Organization: engagement	2. Moderate Importance
TU Org	Trade Union Org.: engagement	3. Low Importance
Env. Org	Environmental Org.: engagement	3. Low Importance
Sub-dimensions	**Community Dimension Description**	3. Low Importance
Non-Organized Help	Non-organized help in the community	2. Moderate Importance
Religious Org	Religious Org.: engagement	1. Top Priority
Cultural Org	Cultural Org.: engagement	3. Low Importance
Social Org	Social Org.: engagement	2. Moderate Importance
Sub-dimension	**Values Dimension Description**	2. Moderate Importance
Human Rights	Immigrants should have same rights	2. Moderate Importance
Human Rights	Law against discrimination in the work place	2. Moderate Importance
Intercultural	Immigrants make country worse/better place	3. Low Importance
Democracy	How important for a citizen to vote	1. Top Priority
Democracy	How important for a citizen to obey laws	1. Top Priority
Democracy	How important for a citizen to develop an independent opinion	1. Top Priority
Democracy	How important for a citizen to be active in a voluntary org.	1. Top Priority
Democracy	How important for a citizen to be active in politics	1. Top Priority

Annex 2: Data Collection Tools

Tool	Aim and composition
Survey (face to face/ remote)	Section 1: Demographics (such as age, gender, sexuality, religion, area of origin, area of residence, education, occupation, income, etc). Section 2: Active citizenship based on the prioritised indicators from the ACCI. Section 3: Gender equality-based primality on the prioritised dimensions of gender equality (Political, Economic, Sociocultural and Perceptions of GE)
Survey (online)*	Includes the same content of the face-to-face survey but shared online and self-filled/ administered by the participants.
Poll (online)*	Compromised of 10 selected questions from the survey as a shortened version. The poll was designed as a shorter version of the survey to make it accessible and suitable for respondents who do not have enough time but are still interested in participating.
FGD guide	Includes exploratory questions derived from quantitative analysis findings aiming to further explain them, where the questions were tailored to the context of each area, gender, and whether the participants are stateless or not.

Annex 3: Literature Review

In this section, the key findings from the literature review are unpacked and "Take Away" focus boxes are presented to summarise the findings and their implications on the research's methodology.

a. Definition of AC

Based on the findings from the literature review and KIIs, it has been established that the meaning of AC is context-specific and dependent on several factors, such as law, democracy, political systems, and society (Hoskins, 2014). These concepts will be touched upon later in the upcoming sections. Researchers have defined AC in several different ways. De Weerd et al. (2005) focus in their definition of AC on the political aspect, defining active citizens as political participation through voting, peaceful protesting, partaking in public debate, and participating in political parties and interest groups. Similarly, Crick (2003) describes AC as collective action of citizens to create political change. Other researchers, such as Putnam (2000) and Bolin (2006), concentrated on civil society and community action in their definitions of AC, where it's viewed as the voluntary participation and action in the community and civil society to support social cohesion. This approach has also been

adapted by the British Council in their development of a toolkit to promote AC as part of their global programme, "Active Citizens", where they defined it as being engaged in voluntary activities, through civil society engagement or interacting with community decision-makers, that affect the community (British Council, 2018). Nevertheless, the definition of AC that is most used and referenced in the literature is by Hoskins et al. (2006), where it's defined as the **"participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy".** The rationale behind choosing this definition, as the reference for this research study, is that it captures the different components of AC that are used to measure it and upon which the data collection tools were developed. The definition goes beyond the basic meaning of citizenship, which is focused on the relationship between the individual and the state and the rights and responsibilities that this relationship entails, to the **participation and involvement** of the individual with not only the state, but also the community and the civil society (Hoskins, 2014). Moreover, in this definition, the researchers take into consideration all the previous definitions

that different researchers have developed, which are mentioned above (Hoskins, 2014).

b. Law, democracy, and forms of AC in different contexts:

This sub-section presents law and democracy as models that affect the meaning and forms of AC in different contexts, which are concepts that will emerge in the upcoming paragraphs and discussed in detail with respect to Lebanon and the findings from the KII.

Law is important in determining the way AC is practiced since it sets the legal rights and responsibilities for individuals that make them citizens of their states. In most cases, these rights include civil rights that offer the individual justice and freedom, political rights such as voting and running for elections, and social rights, such as health care and education (Hoskins, 2014). Moreover, the referenced definition of AC by Hoskins et al., emphasises that the way AC is practiced must be bound by law and human rights. Therefore, actions that violate the rights of others and work against the public good, are not considered under the concept of AC (Hoskins, 2014). However, laws and rights vary from one country to another, which influences the meaning of AC in different contexts. For example, LGBTQ+ rights are not recognised in 69 countries, including Lebanon, where laws criminalise homosexuality and non-binary gender identities (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Hence, any action towards demanding LGBTQ+ in these countries is considered illegal, which contravenes with the definition of AC. The referenced definition also highlights the implication of democracy on the way AC is demonstrated. In non-democratic countries, forms of AC are set and controlled by the government, where electoral participation is constricted or non-existent and the relationship between citizens and the state is passive (Owen, 2020). According to Crick (2003), democracies require citizens to be active, participating, and able to resist or provoke change within the political system. Hoskins (2014) considers that in non-democratic countries, citizens are considered active when they build a resistance to change the status quo. This creates a debate on the connotation around AC, and whether it's strictly applied on positive or good citizens.

c. Measuring AC:

Previous measurements of AC have been limited to

Europe. In Portugal, learning for AC was a central issue at the Lisbon European Council in 2000, where the goal was to invest in human resources for the social and economic development of the European community. Therefore, de Weerd et al., (2000) created a list of seven indicators to measure and monitor the promotion of AC and civic education among students in Europe (Table 1).

Table 1 : Active Citizenship Indicators (Weerd et al., 2000)

Indicators For Active Citizenship
1. Voluntary Work In Organisations And Networks
2. Organising Activities For The Community
3. Voting In Elections
4. Participation In Political Parties
5. Participation In Interest Groups
6. Participation In Forms Of Peaceful Protest
7. Participation In Public Debate

Weerd et al., (2000) defined AC as political participation under the rule of law and human rights. Researchers used information from five datasets to measure the identified indicators, however, not all indicators had data available that can be used to measure them. The results from this study are not relevant to be included in this literature review, however, it should be noted that a major limitation of the measurement was the limited data availability, which was also a limitation identified by Hoskins et al., (2006) in their more recent measurement of AC in Europe as part of a monitoring program to develop AC among European citizens, not just students, through education and training.

Within this process, a set of indicators were developed by the European Commission Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL) and the Council of Europe that capture AC from different dimensions and forms of participation, known as the Active Citizenship Composite Indicator (ACCI). It is composed of 63 different indicators (refer to Annex 1), which describe the participation in 4 main dimensions: (Hoskins et al., 2006).

Table 2 : ACCI indicators

Political Life	Reflects forms of engagement (i.e., membership, participation, donating money, and volunteering), with the government such as voting, engagement with a political party, and women representation in the parliament.
Civil Society	Reflects forms of engagement (i.e., membership, participation, donating money, and volunteering), with non-governmental organisations that make up the civil society, such as human rights organisations, environmental organisations, and trade unions, in addition to protest activities.
Community Life	Reflects forms of participation (i.e., membership, participation, donating money, and volunteering), with community organisations such as religious, business, sport, cultural, social, and teacher organisations.
Values	Reflects forms of participation through democracy, human rights, and intercultural understanding.

To use the ACCI, different equations were combined to reach one general formula, after which the indicators were standardised and weighted to give each dimension the same weight. The results of the measurement of the ACCI in Europe in 2009 by Hingels et al. (2009), highlight key findings which are to be taken into consideration in this study. Therefore, this tool is more developed and accounts for all the AC components that were discussed in the definition, which makes it the most suitable tool to adopt for this research study.

The results of the study highlighted some factors that were considered as promoters of AC. The level of AC in Europe is higher among countries that have a higher gross domestic product (GDP) and a more equal distribution of income among the population (Hingels et al., 2009). Moreover, religion was an important determinant of AC, especially in countries with more diversity and heterogeneity. On the other hand, the barriers of AC in the political life were reported by Hoskins et al., (2008) to be financial and time constraints, which restrict people from donating money or partaking in activities with political parties. When measuring religion and AC through the ACCI, Hingels et al., (2009) concluded that people with a clear idea of the role of religion in their lives, whether they consider it an important role or not, are more active than people who are ambiguous and uncertain about religion in their lives. Moreover, people who are religious and committed to their religious practices exhibited higher levels of AC than non-religious people (Hingels et al., 2009). An online article published by Samain (2016) in Jordan proposed

that religion can promote AC among youth with the influence of religious leaders. Similarly, Jakobsen (2019) explains that religious traditions are the source of values for citizens, and thus influence their actions in their political participation, social interactions, and community relationships. Therefore, the literature highlights the importance of religion and religious practices in fostering AC among people.

In the context where the study was conducted, there were no observed significant differences in the level of AC between genders (Hingels et al., 2009).

The limitation of the ACCI was also considered to be the lack of data which makes it difficult to measure some sub-dimensions such as human rights according to Hoskins et al., (2006). The limitations were further highlighted by another study in Pakistan, where they used the ACCI to measure AC among university students and were faced by limited availability of data concerning participation and non-organized participation (Fatima & Fatima, 2021).

d. AC and ACCI in Lebanon

To be able to better contextualize the ACCI to the Lebanese context, and as part of the methodology to develop the data collection tools, Qualisus prioritized the ACCI dimensions based on the input from ABAAD, the literature review in addition to the findings of the KIIs. A few papers such as Hoskins et al (2006) and Hoskins & Mascherini (2008), proposed a weighing of indicators by experts, which was exercised through the KIIs. The key informants were asked to prioritize the dimensions and sub-indicators according to relevance to AC in the Lebanese context.

According to them political life was the most important dimension for AC in Lebanon, followed by values, community, and civil society. The sub-indicators prioritized by the key informants can be found in the Annex section. The results of the prioritisation exercise by KIIs were similar to the initial exercise solely based on the literature review, with some discrepancies in few of the indicators.

Key informants unanimously eliminated the religion sub-indicator, meanwhile the literature review stressed on its importance for engaging citizens. According to them, religion deters AC in Lebanon, unlike what the findings of the literature have highlighted, because it shifts the sense of belonging away from Lebanon as a country and redirects it towards belonging to a religious sect and community. All of the key informants stressed on the importance of a civil, non-sectarian regime, that separates religion from politics as a pre-requisite for AC in Lebanon since religion is something personal that should be private to each individual and practiced at home as part of freedom of expression, but not beyond that.

"When we want to talk about a good and real citizen, religion will contradict it, especially in the case of Lebanon, because when we are not seen equal as women, we can't say we are citizens. Religion should be respected, but it should be a bit detached from this concept of citizenship because otherwise you will face a problem in conceiving a real citizen."
– Female KII Participant.

It's also important to note that the personal status laws in Lebanon that depend on each individual's religion instead of one civil law, is also disruptive of AC and gender equality, which is consistent with the findings of the literature, and will be further highlighted in the section below on AC and GE. Despite that, Qualisus, along with ABAAD, see that religion in Lebanon is intrinsically tied to politics and hence cannot be eliminated from the ACCI for the Lebanese context.

The forms of AC was another concept discussed during the KIIs. From the search of the literature, good citizens are those that "tend to obey the law, be polite and well-behaved, respect individual rights, address moral virtues of care and concern for others, be good neighbours, and generally relegate ideas of the good life to their private sphere" (Ke & Starkey, 2014). This is consistent with the definition of AC that Qualisus has specified as well as with the findings of the KIIs, where

the majority of the key informants viewed AC under the law and for the common good and that citizens who are being active towards causes that suppress the rights of others cannot be considered as active citizens.

"Active citizens are to taking care and serving the common good and public interest. Whenever you work against the common values you make a problem for the society"
– Female KII Participant.

Therefore, it can be inferred that to consider someone as an active citizen, they should be engaging in activities under the law (since citizenship is an agreement under the law), for the common good, and not in opposition to certain group's rights and existence (women, LGBTQ, refugees). Nevertheless, this inference contradicts the current law in Lebanon, where the rights of LGBTQ members are not declared, which by default makes a citizen who is demanding these rights appear to be acting against the law, thus cannot be considered an active citizen if the above conclusions was to be adopted. Therefore, it's best to focus on the notion of the common and public good, instead of basing the concept of AC on laws, which are different from one country to another.

When it comes to youth, both the literature search and the KII identified the important role that the youth play in AC, which should be further enhanced. The youth are underrepresented in Lebanon and don't have the opportunity to be active citizens, even though they have great potential. For example, youth are severely underrepresented in the parliament, where the median age is 60 years, while only 9.3% of parliamentarians being at 45 years or younger (WFD, 2022). Many youths, and especially young girls in Lebanon, are not fully aware of their rights and hence cannot be active and demand for them. This is worsened by certain laws in the country which limit the engagement of youth in the political life, such as voting age (minimum 21 years old). Studies on youth and AC highlight that a lot of effort and research is being done on promoting AC for young people to make it relevant and easier to understand (Fitzgerald, 2010; Malak-Minkiewicz &Torney-Purta, 2021; Fatima & Fatima, 2021; Gusia et al., 2019). However, when studying the youth voices in the literature, youth in Lebanon described their lives as a "survival exercise" as reported in British Council Next Steps series research which tries to highlight the concerns of youth on regular basis (British Council, 2021). Education and employment are the main concerns for youth,

yet their political participation was indeed awakened by the 17 October Uprising, but many are now less optimistic about their ability to make a change. This in turn explains the proportion of youth who have a desire to migrate to achieve their goals abroad (British Council, 2020).

Finally, the concept of false democracy was mentioned as a barrier for AC in Lebanon. False democracy is manifested in Lebanon through censorship on freedom of speech, random arrest of people in protest and demonstration, and the manipulations in the results of the recent parliamentary elections, according to the KIIs. While the literature doesn't explicitly examine false democracy and its implications on AC, there are studies that argue the importance of participatory democracy in active involvement in the society (Boje, 2010).

Take Away

The indicators used in the development of the data collection tools were based on the KIIs, the literature review, and the discussions with ABAAD include: political life, values, community life, and civil society (listed from high to low priority). Although key informants unanimously believe that religion should not be involved in AC in Lebanon, it was still important to take religion into consideration as a separate indicator when developing the data collection tools because it is the primary component of people's participation in the political life, their beliefs and value system, and the structure of their communities. The research question and methodology is centred around "good citizen" since citizenship is for the common good, according to both, the literature review and the KIIs. Furthermore, since youth play an important role in AC in Lebanon, the target population for this research was between the ages of 15 - 35 years.

---

e. Gender Equality

When searching for the definition of gender equality, Qualisus identified several different versions. The different definitions are presented in the table below. After consulting with ABAAD, the consultants formed a hybrid definition of GE that combines the definition set by ABAAD and that of UN Women: Gender equality is the ability of all people, regardless of their gender identities to have equal rights, responsibilities, resources, opportunities, and freedom of expression. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of everyone are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of people.

Although the results from the ACCI in Europe did not find any significant association between the level of AC and gender, the literature review clearly states that there is a relationship between the two variables.

A deep search of the literature showed that the relationship between AC and gender equality (GE) is complex as there are no studies that directly measure the impact of the level of AC on GE. It should be noted that when using the term "gender" in the search process, the results were consistently binary.

There is a consensus among academicians and intellectuals in the field of civics and social sciences that the meaning of AC is historically biased towards male characteristics and masculine qualities, such as dispassion, strength, honour, defending one's country, impartiality, and courage (Preece, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2010; Abou Habib, 2011; Siim, 2001). In contrast, feminine characteristics such as empathy, care, and nurturing were not associated with AC (Preece, 2009). Men and women have inherently different positions of "citizenship", where women were primarily caregivers, while men were breadwinners. These constructs of gender roles have been transmitted into governments' laws and policies which disregard women as active participants in society with social and economic entitlements (Abou-Habib, 2011).

In the MENA region, citizenship is strongly associated with traditional kinship and religion (Parolin, 2009; Abou-Habib, 2011). Cultural practices and family law limit women's rights and ability to become active

---

🔍 **Focus Box**

It is important to note that any and all gender identities, binary and nonbinary are recognized. For the purpose and scope of this study a binary definition is used, as nonbinary identities are outside of the scope of this project.

Table 3 : Definitions of GE by different agencies

Agency	Definition
ABAAD	Gender equality is the ability of all people, regardless of their gender identities to have the same access to their basic rights, resources, opportunities, and freedom of expression.
UN Women	Equality between women and men (gender equality): refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.
USAID	Gender equality is defined in USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy as a state "in which both men and women have equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to economic, social, cultural and political development; enjoy socially valued resources and rewards; and realize their human rights."
Government of Canada	Gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunity to realize their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results.
European Commission	Promoting equal economic independence for women and men, closing the gender pay gap, advancing gender balance in decision making, ending gender-based violence and promoting gender equality beyond the EU.

citizens (Al-Rabadi & Al-Rabadi; Abou-Habib, 2009). Women are often segregated from the government and have their rights decided by religious, familial, and social institutions that don't recognise their rights (Abou-Habib, 2011). As a result, women face barriers in education, political representation, economic activity, and healthcare. In Lebanon, citizens have to pursue their rights individually from public, religious, and political institutions under a patriarchy that pervades the Lebanese law (Abou-Habib, 2011; Shalaby et al., 2016). Findings from the KIIs emphasized how laws such as preventing women from transmitting their nationality to their spouse and children and not criminalizing domestic and gender-based violence (GBV), are main barriers to GE in Lebanon.

"… as a woman in Lebanon, I can't transmit my nationality to my children or my husband if he was a foreigner. Why? What is citizenship in Lebanon? According to 1925, article 1: citizenship is a person who is born from a Lebanese father. What about a woman, she can't transmit her nationality. You might tell me who cares about the Lebanese passport, yes, we care, because it gives us access to public hospitals, education, voting, political participation, how I can be an active citizen, without doing all of these things?"
– Female KII participant

Nevertheless, some progress in law reform and gender equality has been made over the years in Lebanon. In 2014, the Lebanese Parliament enacted the domestic violence law (Law 293) that protects women and family members from physical and domestic abuse, where women can receive protection orders from the court. In 2017, the Lebanese parliament abolished Article 522 of the Penal code which allowed rapists to marry their victims in order to avoid jail time. More recently, in 2020, Lebanon enacted a law (Law 205) that criminalises sexual harassment in the workplace and protects women from sexual harassment in employment. When it comes to political representation, efforts are being done every year to adjust the quota system for women in the Lebanese parliament, although it is being faced by constant resistance from the current political parties. Therefore, it is important to highlight this progression in policies and laws concerning GE, which protect women and pave their way to more engagement in the political and social life in Lebanon.

On the other hand, studies from Europe prove that increasing women's economic independence and incorporating women into politics promote the sense of agency and active citizenship. Hence, it can be inferred that the relationship between AC and GE is bidirectional. GE increases women's engagement

into the several dimensions of society and political life, thus promoting AC, and AC in its turn creates more opportunities and achieves social justice, thus denoting equality between citizens (Abou-Habib, 2011).

Following the literature review seven main dimensions of gender equality were identified (Celine et al, 2021),

which are Economic, Health, Human Development, Leadership, Psychological, Security and Justice, and finally Sociocultural. Following the input from the KIIs and after discussions with ABAAD the three main dimensions of GE to be prioritized are: Political, Economic and Sociocultural.

Take Away

AC influences GE through several dimensions, most importantly, political representation, economic independence, and sociocultural norms. These 3 dimensions of GE were focused on in developing the tools for the data collection. Moreover, the interview guide of the focus group discussions included in-depth questions about the concept of GE and whether it is intertwined with these dimensions of a standalone topic from the perspective of participants.

---

f. AC and Statelessness

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of AC for stateless people, as well as the barriers they face in engaging with their communities and participating in public life. According to Joppke and Ersanilli (2017), statelessness creates a sense of social exclusion that undermines individual agency and impedes social integration. At the same time, statelessness can also foster a sense of shared identity and collective action among stateless individuals (Jubilut, 2016). One of the key obstacles to AC for stateless people is their lack of legal status and protection, which limits their access to basic rights and services (Goodwin-Gill, 2018). Stateless individuals often face discrimination, marginalisation, and stigmatisation, which further inhibits their social and political participation (Bhabha, 2018).

Despite these challenges, recent research has identified several factors that can facilitate AC among stateless people. For example, community-based organisations (CBOs) and advocacy groups have played a crucial role in empowering stateless individuals and promoting their rights and interests (van Waas, 2019). Grassroots activism and collective mobilisation have also been effective in raising

public awareness and pressuring governments to address the issue of statelessness (Jubilut, 2016). Furthermore, some scholars have argued that AC can serve as a means of achieving legal recognition and citizenship for stateless people (Van Hear et al., 2019). By participating in local governance and CSOs, stateless individuals can demonstrate their commitment to their communities and contribute to the public good, thereby challenging the narrative that they are a burden or a threat to society (Goodwin-Gill, 2018). Therefore, the relationship between AC and statelessness is complex and multifaceted and involves both structural barriers and individual agency.

Despite these obstacles, recent research has highlighted the importance of AC for stateless people in Lebanon and the Middle East region. CBOs, civil society groups, and grassroots movements have played a crucial role in raising awareness about statelessness and advocating for the rights of stateless individuals (Shibley, 2019). These groups have also provided support and assistance to stateless individuals, including legal aid, education, and healthcare services (International Rescue Committee, 2018).

Take Away

Given the importance of AC for stateless people and the potential for community-based organizations and civil society groups to empower stateless individuals, including them in the research study could provide valuable insights into the ways in which AC can promote gender equality and contribute to social and political participation for marginalized groups. Furthermore, by including stateless people as participants, the research study can shed light on the experiences and perspectives of an often-overlooked group and contribute to more inclusive and equitable research practices.

List of Tables

List of Figures